

## LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING IN DIDACTIC COMMUNICATION

PETROVICI, M[erima] C[armen]; BEREZOVSKI, C[ristina]; BEREZOVSKI, R[obert] & JIANU, M[agda]

**Abstract:** *The communication and understanding processes are significant needs of any educational community. This paper approaches the didactic communication and its different levels of understanding, trying to emphasize the progressive steps that the process of understanding follows starting with the stage of informing to the ultimate stage of message interpretation. The levels identified are, hierarchically, the following: informing, describing, persuading, demonstrating, explaining, understanding, interpreting and finally, internalizing the information.*

**Key words:** *levels of understanding, didactic communication*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

It's a fact that people interact and express themselves by communication regardless of its form. Not only does communication enable knowledge, interaction, relationship building, but it is also the core of a metaknowledge, which lays in the power of hidden messages, generated by the response of each participant to the act of communication. (Sfez, 2002)

Nowadays, the volume of information grows exponentially, primarily due to the highly advanced computing technology. It is very important to convey/send messages in such a manner that allows the process of building intelligence to advance.

Communication works with signs and symbols that bear multiple meanings. They are part of the didactic communication process as well as of the message conveyed. Stringed together, by means of certain rules, these two are "chained so as to produce effects" (Drăgan, 2007), they can generate a message and consequently, communication.

### 2. INFLUENCE OF MESSAGE BUILDING ON ITS UNDERSTANDING

This paper has taken two perspectives into account considering the process of communication: the Palo Alto School perspective, which addresses the impossibility of not communicating specific to the teaching profession, while the pragmatic perspective considers communication to be a semiotic interaction, due to the interplay of signs.

Moreover, the comprehension of any message depends on its construction. Within this context, it seems natural to find out and analyze what the levels of understanding involved in didactic communication are. The didactic experience has proven that the knowledge conveyed by a teacher is differently perceived by the students of the same level of physical and mental development even if the message is sent to all of them by the same transmitter. The differentiated perception of the message is caused by the students' individual peculiarities, by the students' amount and systems of knowledge, by the teacher-student relationship, by the teacher's competences in building and conveying messages.

The research put forth aims to identify the levels of understanding that occur during the process of didactic communication. The research conducted has led us to believe that the different levels can be used as an instrument to assess

the degree of comprehension of the informational content delivered to students.

Such an analysis has come to strengthen the idea that understanding is determined by the construction of a message, without ignoring that the significance of the message varies from one individual to another.

At the same time a stratification of understanding can be observed, according to the different levels. In this respect, for example, primary understanding and interpretation can be considered the two levels comprising complete understanding. The suggested analogy is built upon Paul Cornea's statements (Cornea, 2006) regarding the stages of the understanding process that underline the fact that there is a first, elementary and self-acting phase. The process of understanding is developed in a common way when communication with the others is spontaneous and based on accepted agreements. The meanings are internalized only after having been understood and analyzed. Thus, interpretation does not represent only the performance of initial understanding, but it completes and develops the initial act.

Building on this differentiation offered by Paul Cornea, we have identified several other levels of understanding specific to the didactic communication: Informing; Describing; Persuading; Demonstrating; Explaining; Understanding; Interpreting; Internalizing meanings and using them in a personal way. This analysis is not limited to the levels aforementioned but for the scope of this paper is appropriate, since the process of understanding is present at all these levels, even though in different degrees. Each level displays several stages that advance from the simple to the more complex structures, according to certain variables of achievement (ex: the amount of the information conveyed, the code of signs, the characteristics of the sender and the receiver, the context and the type of performance aimed at in the communication).

Levels	Stages	Conditioning
<b>I. Information</b>	-stimulating the need for knowledge - integration of information into experience; - the achievement of significance; - reviewing the information to be further memorized.	The amount of information contained in message  Decoding the message in a hermeneutic manner  The relationship between the Sign and the Object (information about the object)
<b>II. Describing</b>	-developing the need for knowledge; -integration of information into experience; - organizing / presenting information; - reviewing the information to be further memorized.	Encoding the signs (in terms of language as an organized system of signs)  The Components of the language corpus
<b>III. Persuasion</b>	- drawing attention;	The levels of Communication

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inducing the need;</li> <li>- Satisfaction;</li> <li>- Involvement / participation to the identification of the solutions and the adopting of effective attitudes and behaviours</li> </ul>	<p>Number of components involved in the communication situation</p> <p>Transmitter's characteristics</p> <p>The context</p>
<b>IV. Demonstration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-presentation of the thesis basic</li> <li>- Defining the thesis(conclusion)</li> <li>- Demonstration process.</li> </ul>	<p>Complexity of the didactic communication process</p> <p>The expression level of the message</p>
<b>V. Explanation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-augmenting the need for knowledge;</li> <li>- integration of information into experience;</li> <li>- Organization / presentation of the explanation;</li> <li>- Replay / reformulation of the explanation for memorizing</li> </ul>	<p>Interaction (E - R) in terms of clarifying the assumptions - message</p> <p>Validity of the information and opinions in a communicative action</p> <p>The validity of information (search for truth)</p>
<b>VI. Understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agreement;</li> <li>- Thinking</li> </ul>	<p>Psycho-logical processes involved</p>
<b>VII. Interpretation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Basic/current Understanding</li> <li>- Interpretation.</li> </ul>	
<b>VIII. Assuming</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in depth understanding;</li> <li>- Creativity</li> </ul>	<p>Type of explanation</p> <p>Type of performance achieved / required by the discursive intervention</p> <p>type of performance obtained / expected in discursive intervention</p> <p>Mental characteristics of the of individual</p> <p>Establishing the levels of the argumentative discourse (logical semiotic)</p> <p>The stages of evolution from natural language to formalism (satisfactory)</p>

The paper presents understanding at different stages, especially as a phase of the learning process and as a result of semiosis (the signifying act). We emphasized the dynamic interaction between the sign- the interpreter – the object, as well as the linguistic valences of coding the signs (the language understanding): the sociological valences (societal manner of living) as well as the hermeneutic valences based on sense and words meaning.

The situation of communication (semioza) is represented by the well known model of Laswell, based on the sequence of questions: "Who says what, who, how and with what effect?" Although the message in itself offers only one answer to only one of the five responses, its role is particularly important especially in the case of the communication between teacher and students, when "the message becomes information only in

its the movement between the two poles, with the purpose of developing the cognitive potential of the partners or interlocutors by unveiling hidden meanings and significances" (Șoitu, 2001).

In this comprehensive approach, we focus on the model proposed by Traian D. Stănculescu (Stănculescu, 2004), which aims to generate and communicate meanings, establishing four stages: the primary encoding of the message and its transmission as well as the secondary meaning, particularly, the factors that we customize for teaching communication.

From the point of view of hermeneutics, understanding concerns the demarcation of word meaning and significance, benefiting from contact with the speaker and his speech.

Pearson, an American researcher said that it completed the definition of understanding so as to find answers to their questions. Hence we readily accept that the process is not linear and unidirectional, but it simultaneously converges and diverges meanings. We have parallel, but simultaneous and successive structures.

The conclusion is that the process of understanding runs at two levels: primary understanding and full understanding, which require achieving, or browsing the full sequence of eight levels in the table above, without forgetting, however, that understanding is present at different degrees at all levels. Thus we consider understanding finds full completion after having been filtered by each individual/student's cognition, that's means more than simple knowledge acquisition. It is the key of interpretation and meaning internalization, fundamental pillars of cognitive development.

### 3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion we can say that interpretation leads to a better understanding or develops the meaning. A high quality type of understanding creates potential new interpretations. These two cyclic processes follows the semiosis pattern proposed by T. Stănculescu (Stănculescu,2004) namely that primary understanding enables an interpretation that leads to a higher degree of understanding, generates new interpretations and these two processes interact in a conditioning manner.

This paper can stand for a fresh start in approaching the construction of as a valuable source of enriching the didactic content conveyed to students.

### 4. REFERENCES

- Cornea, P. (2006). *Interpretare și raționalitate(Interpretation and rationality)*, Polirom Publishing House, ISBN(10)973-46-0281-0; ISBN(13)978-973-46-0281-08, Iași
- Drăgan, I. (2007). *Comunicarea paradigme și teorii, (Communication paradigms and theories)* vol. I, RAO International Publishing Company, ISBN 978-973-103-467-6; ISBN 978-973-103-468-3 (1 vol.), Bucharest.
- Stănculescu, T.D. (2004). *La început a fost semnul. O altă introducere în semiotică, (At beginning it was the sign. Another introduction to semiotics)* Performantica Publishing House, ISBN 973-7994-68-X81.22, Iași
- Șoitu, L. (2001). *Pedagogia comunicării (Pedagogy of communication)*, Institutul European (European Institute) Publishing House, ISBN 973—611-199-7, Iași
- Sfez, L. (2002). *Comunicarea, (Communication)*, translation by Margaret Samoil, foreword by Dan Lungu, Institutul European, (European Institute) Publishing House, ISBN-973-611-181-4, Iași