Education and Linguistic Communication in Pedagogy

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This paper analyses the relation that exists between educative and communicative processes in pedagogical research, underlining a multiplicity of sociological, philosophical and pedagogical perspectives, all linked to the specific object of pedagogical enquiry: the integral education and bio-psychic, anthropological and ontological development of man. These two pedagogical categories: education and communication, appear to be the principle sites in which interpersonal relations are realised. They become interactive and integral when carried out with respect for, and mutual attention to, the uniqueness of the person in the interactive duality. On the other hand, they are also the sites where the con-formations and de-formations of weak personalities manifest; those with only fragile roots in a society which is daily more fluid, chaotic and disoriented, in which it is possible to find all the participants in education: the family in primis, then teachers and social workers, all in collaboration attempting to construct and consolidate interpersonal relationships through authentic communication, with the aim of giving young people 'sensible and meaningful guidelines', enabling them to construct significant life projects for themselves.

**Key Words:** the integral education and bio-psychic, anthropological and ontological development of man

«When the final, instrumental functions of communication become part of lived experience, there you find an intelligence which is the method of everyday life as well as its prize, and a society worthy of affection, admiration and loyalty»

(J. Dewey, LW1:160; EN:169)

In the area of pedagogical debate between the end of the XX and the XXIst century, the last twenty years have witnessed the emergence of an important current concerning education as linguistic communication. This is an area of pedagogical enquiry which places the accent on educative processes, measured against the realities of educational praxis, in other words against the 'educational', understood in its historical-social as well as communicative and inter-subjective context. In the current climate, the two terms education and communication are seen as connected, and must be re-examined, in the light of recent research, on the levels of theoretical interaction and
educational implications. This is inevitable if, by the term ‘education’, which evokes notions of responsibility, of cure, and of future possibilities, we mean an education that is no longer Paideia (it is not harmony), nor Bildung (nor objectivisation of the spirit), but rather an uneasy, problematic and complex process involving a subject-person, an ‘I’ which is always restless, multiple and mobile in a historical and social setting of equal complexity. It therefore becomes urgent to reconsider the concept of education, given that school and society should aim to form the person, the citizen, his habits of thought, his professionality; because formative processes should consider both the organic structure of the individual and also the context in which he works and forms relationships. The term communication, on the other hand, refers to interaction between subjects, the exchange of social values, the sharing of meanings both verbally and by means of gesture, social relationships, physical posture, facial expression, glance and mimicry. «Praxis and language multiply, they emphasise communication until they create a world of symbols, rites, rules, structures, methods and social forms, all based on and for communication: our specific world, more important for us even when compared to nature, life and their codes».

In this regard, it is well-known that educative processes are developed and made concrete through the communicative dimension. If one remembers, for example, the primal form of communication established between the mother and her baby, on the basis of which, in a subject's life, all his successive relationships are founded. The various forms of pedagogic research and that conducted in psychology, sociology, philosophical anthropology and linguistics, demonstrate a sort of expropriation of communication, delineating a vast and complex phenomenology.

In this sense, «communication evolves by overcoming the classical mechanistic-deterministic vision of the universe, with its blind faith in linear causality, in reductionism of reality […]». Pedagogical studies, in particular, investigate the educative relationship by a dialectic which is mainly communicative in nature, with the aim of reflecting on the cultural transmission that is realised by specific cultural mediators, specific languages and codes. On this question many experts agree on the fact that in developing formative processes not only is information exchanged, but dialogic relations are also created, which give sense and meaning to the interaction also in teleological terms, precisely because the relationship tends to co-implication, to con-sensus, to intersubjectivity. In the light of the fact that communication has increased massively, pedagogy today reflects on the interpretative and operative aspects of communication, giving shape to a specific sector of study called formative communication; the new element around which the challenges of the future are arrayed. It therefore appears from recent studies that «[…] communication is partly the focus of the education of the subject, social and personal. Every subject realises himself, and his primary task is in constructive communication».

For this reason, it is necessary today to reflect on the epistemological foundations of education, paying attention to the educative relation between teacher and student; that is, to the subjects involved in the intersubjective relationship, apprehending the historical, social and cultural dimensions in which the formative and educational processes appear, outlining a historical-linguistic horizon which produces pre-judices and pre-cognitions and hence, at the same time forms, con-forms and de-forms.

From this new perspective, the interpersonal relationships established between people in a society and between teacher and pupil in educative and scholastic contexts assume a central role, since technological and technotronic progress have significantly modified both verbal and non-verbal communication.

1. Educatice and communicative processes

It is therefore necessary to analyse formative processes in relation to communication, in which the subject is born, learns, socialises and becomes self-aware, through pedagogical reflexivity infused by the didactic implications of today's media, making sense of a specific anthropological and historical-anthropological perspective. We should think of education as it was conceived of in Christian thought, as a journey in interiore homine, in search of communication through transcendence, and as a process of recognition of the Word, in Logos, in the verb, or in
other words in the 'linguistics' of the divine nature, as the human emancipation outlined by Marxist anthropology. In this sense, all studies inspired by Marxism, in fact, show the double nature of the educative relation both as adequatio or, in contrast, as praxis, and identify ideologies in certain thinkers from the Frankfurt school and French philosophers like Foucault, Althusser and Lacan, that become tools of control, persuasion and consent. Formation is strictly tied to the educative relation as outlined in the Gramscian concept of hegemonic relation, and education will have its own political, historical and social linguistic character. But the empirical model, of analysis and construction of the formative and communicative processes, has led the cognitivists, from Bruner to Bloom and Gagnè, towards the construction of engineering models and techniques of formation.

Again, to go more deeply into this process of formation as linguistic communication, strictly in terms of the scientific literature, is to engage in a philosophical-linguistic enquiry rather than a primarily pedagogical one, since the educational problem with its multiple categories cannot be avoided: pedagogy, the school and didactics, amongst others. Hence, for the exponent of the philosophy of education, philosophical speculation is not about the specifics of pedagogy, so much as education itself, which becomes "one of the different declinations of philosophy".

It follows that the educational category becomes an object for study that is explored both on a linguistic level with conceptual clarifications and on that of logico-philosophical analysis. This implies that the educational relation and linguistic mediation itself must be seen as situations and events anchored in the world, as phenomena and processes that belong to history, to traditions, and to linguistics.

Gadamer had already maintained that «Language constitutes that absolute mediation of subjective conscience and objective spirit [...] and this because its absoluteness does not contradict, but is rather inextricably linked, to the finiteness and historicity of experience». Language is a means, 'the medium of comprehension', the fundamental sphere in which the hermeneutical experience is realised, but which is also defined as total mediation, in which every specific possible mediation of consciousness with the world is integrated. But language is also history, since it enacts the concretization of consciousness of the historical dimension. In this sense, Gadamer claims that «the essential nexus between language and comprehension appears, first of all, in the fact that existence in the medium of language is constituted by historical transmission, in such a way that the privileged object of interpretation is linguistic in kind». Wittgenstein's last studies, which conceived of language as a form of life, also followed this direction. Again, in the lesson at the Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) where the various experts spoke of meaningful communication, and of Dewey's concept of language, which was understood as the tool of the tools; all these are interesting perspectives to explore.

To proceed in order: for Wittgenstein the theory of language used two terms: the world, as a totality of facts and language as a totality of propositions which signify these same facts. In the Tractatus logico-philosophicus the relationship between the facts of the world and the constituents of language is expressed in the thesis that language is the logical representation of the world. For the Viennese philosopher, in short, there is no sphere of thought or consciousness which mediates between the world and language, the more so since he affirmed that «the logical representation of facts is thought» and again, that «the totality of true thought is the representation of the world» and that «thought is the significant proposition», citations in which the identification of thought and language is clearly delineated.

Analogously, the same limitation which applied to language is valid for thought: «nothing can be thought about or communicated which is not a fact of the world». In this weighty philosophical reflection we find Wittgenstein's approach to language, where linguistic comprehension is based not on something to explain or research, but rather on something to be noticed, since when we speak, «a series of natural facts are always in action, even if this is in a way that cannot objectively be said». For Wittgenstein, there are many forms of language, in continual creation and destruction. Language games, too, it follows, are also evolving not only in themselves but also in the anthropological context in which they are based and take root. «Our speech is based
on a series of material and natural constrictions that derive from the way we are made, from a
certain mnemonic, gestural, vocal, spatial and corporeal capacity. This is our 'form of life' that we
must accept as 'given'» . The expression 'form of life' «is not a rational or theoretical tool, but is a
modality of subjective and absolute experience: certainty».

There are thus different modes, amongst which the most useful is that of considering the
form of life as a way of referring to the cultural evolution of the human animal from his biological
roots; at the level of philosophical literature the notion form of life indicates consciousness,
subjectivity, agreement on our perceptions, which is found in the study of the historical forms
assumed by the language faculty: the study of the ways in which speaking subjects express their
biological specificity. «Sharing the same 'form of life' leaves space for the certainty of a feeling of
belonging» . The capacity to reflect on one's own mental states defines the consciousness of a
human being, his existential condition. In this case, the term consciousness is linked «to the
personal experience of feeling certain mental states, but also to the sharing of a specific way of
feeling them [...]» . Recognition of the productive nature of linguistic rules establishes their link to
the form of life of the user who follows them. The practical nexus in the conception of linguistic
rules refers to the capacity which 'every speaker' has in acting and interacting with the specific
case...

The research of Danilo Dolci, who placed a particular emphasis on the concept of
communication as a law of life for every human being, follows this same pathway . The lesson which
Shannon and Weaver gave on significant communication, in 1949, at the Palo Alto Research Center
(PARC), in which they deal with the refutation of the model of face to face, linear communication
appears especially interesting. "Communication", in this model elaborated by the Center, appears to
be understood principally as the transmission of information by means of five inter-connected
elements: sender, receiver, channel, code and context. Another concept which was later added to
Wiener's research work on cybernetics, resulting in an important step forward, relates to feedback,
through which communication is no longer a simple uni-directional passage of information but a bi-
directional exchange. The studies of biologist Bertalanffy also follow these lines; with the
elaboration of the General Theory of Systems, the theory on communication is further enriched by
the introduction of the term circularity . It follows, from this perspective, that 'the communicators'
are understood as 'open systems': complexes of interacting elements. These latter aspects were
explored more deeply by the research of the experts who frequented the Californian university of
Palo Alto in the Seventies, with the Pragmatic orientation in communication, whose major
exponents were: Bateson, Watzlawick, Beavin e Jackson . From their many studies it emerges that
communicative processes must also be analysed in relation to behaviour, to the ways in which
people communicate. It follows that the relations between subjects and human groups are modified
in dependence on the contexts that attribute meaning and sense to verbal and non-
verbal behaviour.

There are multiple scientific interpretations on the question proposed by behaviourists and
associationists, in particular those of Skinner, who was severely criticised in Chomsky's
demonstration of the impossibility of learning language 'by means of behaviourist and
associationist models', and in his proposal of an "innate fixed nucleus" which included necessary
structures, such as the relation between subject and predicate, thus basing language on intelligence.
It follows that the function of education is that of exercising a "rationality" which is already pre-
formed from the outset. In this sense, communication, or better, communications assume different
meanings according to the systems in which they are inserted. In the communication of Palo Alto
there are five principles, known as 'axioms', or self-evident truths: the impossibility of non-
communication; metacommunication, punctuation, numerical and analogical communication and
symmetrical and complementary relations . To these axioms there correspond five pathologies in
relation to the multiple individual psycho-pathologies.

2. Authentic communication in pedagogy

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A picture emerges, then, of an authentic communication constructed through an ecological dialectic that keeps the equilibrium between subjects and of these with all the social agencies in mind. The studies of Rogers and Postman, also followers of this school of thought, also follow this path. Rogers reflects on the concept of empathetic communication of the interlocutor, maintaining that the therapist must «adopt, to the degree he is able, the client's own scale of references, perceive the world as the client sees it, perceive the client as he sees himself and communicate something of this impression to the client». Postman, meanwhile, reflected on the language of television which ends by manifesting the variety of its effects, sparing none, and on the school, whose task it is to re-discover the equilibrium of the cultural system. It follows that «[…] it is the task of education, in any period of time, to control and adapt the informational context wherever possible, in such a way that its influence and impulses do not monopolise the intellect nor the character of our youth».

The Italian research of Massa, Lumbelli and Contini reveals, in line with what has been said so far, the most hidden elements of a pathology of the educational relationship which is the expression of an essential asymmetry that exists among adult, child, adolescent and youth, and could be resolved by communication. In this respect, Lumbelli, following Rogers' analysis, describes «a form of communication by means of which the instructor must demonstrate empathy with the pupil, demonstrating thereby his own attention to his mind and his own efforts to understand his discourse». Contini, meanwhile, explores communication which aims to empower both an interior dialectic that oscillates between the need for transparency and opacity typical of communication, and the educative value of dialectic itself, whose operative principle is to locate every process of formation within the educational act.

His theories of communication are based on reciprocal relationship and affective links, developed through activities that aim to form the subject, and to project him as a 'style' of his own existence, in an iter that is impervious and full of conflicts and asymmetries.

From Dewey's perspective, on the other hand, subjectivity links abstract with concrete in the thought, by means of language, the tool of thought, and educational action which is the element that links induction and deduction. For this «humanity is dialogue; true communication is made concrete in an open group». We thus arrive at the conclusion that «education consists, in fact, in transmission through communication, which is nothing more than a process by means of which we participate in the experience until it becomes part of our common heritage. That which men must have in common to form a society are aims, aspirations, beliefs, awareness, and the same way of understanding things. Such a concept of communication, which aims to construct a democratic education modifies the mental dispositions of those who participate in the communicative game». Thus is born the theory of experience which will be continuously communicated in a democratic community.

In this sense, «Experience consists in the first place in the active relations that exists between a human being and his natural environment. [...] In the same measure that connections can be found between what happens to a person and what they do in response, and between what he does to his environment and what it does in response, his actions and surrounding things acquire significance». This means that men exist, live and work in the community possessing things through communication, which also contributes to guaranteeing their participation in a 'common pattern of understanding'. Obviously this is not easy because each individual should know what the other means or, at least, should inform the other of his own goals and progress. It is necessary to achieve consensus which «necessitates communication». Another to explore this theme was Dewey's friend George Herbert Mead, according to whom communication is essential to the formation of the "self", as different from the self and this in virtue of the fact that he or she perceives him or herself as a communicating being. Furthermore, the formation of this "self", to be generous, must occur in a context which is both ample and varied».

3. Conclusions
From this examination, then, communication clearly exercises a function on processes of development and growth such as the construction of identity, as Buber argued in The Dialogic Principle of 1958; on recognizing differences, as Derrida explained in his book of 1967, on overcoming the egoistic vision through recognition of the Other as the Self, already announced by Lévinas in his work of 1961. Such a work of unveiling and interpretation undoubtedly compels pedagogy to adopt a plurality of enquiry perspectives and procedures, because having to plan and situate formation in a reference context that considers the subject in formation and his social and life context, implies the necessity to employ insights from aspects, data and processes from the research of a wide range of disciplinary fields. This means that formation must be understood as a collection of diachronic and synchronic processes through which the humanisation of the subject-person can be brought about, in the light of the complexity and problematicity of his own existence. Undoubtedly, in this dialectic of taking shape, the subject-person measures himself through communication and use of language with others, social reality, culture, nature and himself.

In the final analysis, formation and communication are two categories that can become the principle sites in which interpersonal relations are realised, become interactive, integral, respecting by mutual listening, the uniqueness of the person in the interactive duality, and vice versa. The various perspectives: anthropological, sociological and philosophical reveal the emergence and affirmation of inter-human relations, of inter-subjectivity, the «mystery of the person, the enigma of otherness and the secret of communication», against a philosophy of solitude, considered the 'evil of man'. It is clear that through meeting, participation and dialogue with the Other, with the You that 'the I makes', a person is built and becomes a subject-person. In such a perspective, and on the basis of an ethos of communication and a 'communicative action' it becomes possible to envisage the nearing of an openness towards pluralism, dialogue, respect and the closeness of another to the self; a nearness understood as enrichment, emotional and cognitive resource, affective rather than closing, reduction of differences and annulment of one's own identity. It is therefore vital to pay attention to the relation between teaching and learning, to privilege knowledge, the emotional and affective dimensions in order to conduct the subject educandus towards the discovery of languages, alphabets, procedures and the construction of sense and meaning through planning capacities which are attentive not only to 'knowing how' but also to 'knowing', to 'being' and to 'knowing how to relate to others'.

2 On this question see M. GENNARI, Storia della Bildung, La Scuola, Brescia 1995.
8 Cfr. F. CAMBI, L. TOSCHI, (eds), La comunicazione formativa. Strutture, percorsi, frontiere, cit.
9 F. CAMBI, Formazione e comunicazione oggi: un rapporto integrato e dialettico, in F. CAMBI, L. TOSCHI, (eds), La comunicazione formativa. Strutture, percorsi, frontiere, cit., pp. 63-64.
languages have diverse and multiple relations among themselves which cannot be reduced to a common concept, the more so because the various language games cannot be encompassed by a common concept, the more so because the various

For Gadamer language is «a universal means wherein comprehension itself is actuated. The means of actuation of comprehension is interpretation. [...] Each comprehension is interpretation, and each interpretation is developed through the medium of a language, which on the one hand wants to allow the object to express itself, and on the other, however, is the interpreter’s own language» (*Ivi*, p. 447).

*Ivi*, p. 447.


2. PALO ALTO, Research Center (PARC) .


The term language games indicates that language is an activity or a form of life. It follows that language games cannot be encompassed by a common concept, the more so because the various languages have diverse and multiple relations among themselves which cannot be reduced to a singularity.


On these axioms it is worth remembering that «1) It is not possible not to communicate (Behaviour has no opposite. There is no such thing as non-behaviour). […] 2) Every communication has a content and a relational aspect, so that the second classifies the first and is, hence, meta-communication (the capacity for metacomunication in an adequate manner is not only the condition, sine qua non for effective communication, but is also strictly linked to the great problem of self and other- awareness). […] 3) The nature of a relationship depends on the punctuation of the sequence of communication between the communicators. (A series of communications can be considered as an uninterrupted sequence of exchanges). […] 4) Human beings communicate both with a numerical and with an analogical model. The numerical language has an extremely complex and efficient logical syntax, but it lacks an adequate semantics in the sector of relationships, while analogical language has the semantics, but not and adequate syntax to define the nature of relations in an unambiguous manner. […] 5) All exchanges of communication are symmetrical or complementary, according to whether they are based on equality or difference», (P. WATZLAWICK, J. H. BEAVIN, D. D. JACKSON, Pragmatica della comunicazione umana. Studio dei modelli interattivi, delle patologie e dei paradossi, cit., pp. 40-61).

C.S. ROGERS, Client-centered therapy, Houghton Mifflin, Chicago, Chicago 1951 (transl. it. La Meridiana, Molfetta 2007).

Jvi, pp. 26-27.


L. LUMBELLI, La comprensione come problema. Il punto di vista cognitivo, Edizioni Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2009, p.142. For Lumbelli empathy «is not only the effort to understand but it is also functional communication which aims to show the other this effort» (Ivi, p. 144, italics in the original); V. BOFFO, Per una comunicazione empatica. La conversazione nella formazione familiare, ETS, Pisa 2005.

M. CONTINI, Comunicazione tra opacità e trasparenza, Mondadori, Milano 1984.


J. DEWEY, Democrazia ed educazione, cit., p. 301.


Already Ferdinand Ebner, in the early years of the 20th century, maintained that «the problem of man consists in solidarity, in being alone, in the lack of the ‘you’, so that he cannot hear and [...] pronounce the word, and hence, cannot live according to his own nature», (G. CHIOSSO, Novecento pedagogico, La Scuola, Brescia, 1997, p. 334). On this author cfr. E. DUCCI, Essere e comunicare, cit., pp. 66-77.

In that sense, Dewey already believed that «the hard, firm, uncrossable line which is imagined to exist between “emotive” and “scientific” language is the reflection of the void that currently exists between the individual and emotiveness in human relations and activities. The separation that exists in current social life between ideas and emotions, especially between the ideas with scientific authority and the uncontrollable emotions they dominate, the divide between objective and cognitive, is probably one of the main sources of the inadaptability and the powerful tensions from which the world is suffering. Thus, the practical problem to be faced is the foundation of cultural conditions which produce the kinds of behaviour where emotions and ideas, desires and evaluations, are integrated», (J. M. RICH, On Educating the Emotions, in «Educational Theory», vol. 27, n. 4, Fall 1977, pp. 291-296).

In this context, Dewey had already asked, in Experience and Education: «What benefit is there in accumulating the prescribed details of geography and history, to learn how to read and write, if by this the individual should lose his soul, discernment of good things, of the values they refer to; if he should lose his desire to apply what he has learnt and, above all, [...] the capacity to extract meaning from the future experiences which he will gradually encounter?» (J. DEWEY, Esperienza e educazione, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1972 (1938), pp. 33-34).

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Образование и языковая коммуникация в педагогике

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В данной работе анализируется связь, которая существует между воспитательными и коммуникативными процессами в педагогических исследованиях, подчеркивая многообразие социологических, философских и педагогических перспектив, связанных с конкретным объектом педагогической экспертизы: интегрального образования и биопсихических, антропологических и онтологических развитий человека. Данные педагогические категории: образование и коммуникация, по-видимому, связаны между собой, именно в них реализуются межличностные отношения. Они становятся интерактивными и взаимодействуют друг с другом, если она осуществляется с уважением, и взаимным вниманием, учитывается уникальность человека в интерактивной двойственности. С другой стороны, данная связь может послужить основой для развития кон-формаций и де-формаций слабых личностей; тех, кто имеет только слабое положение в обществе, у которых существует способность к приспособлению, хаотичным и сомнительным личностям. Среди таких личностей могут быть все участники воспитания: семья, затем учителя и социальные работники, все те, которые пытаются в сотрудничестве построить и укрепить межличностные отношения через подлинные связи, с целью передачи молодым людям 'разумные и осмысленные советы', давая им возможность построить значительные жизненные проекты для себя окружающих в целом.

Keywords: интегральное образование, психическое развитие, антропологическое и онтологические развитие человека.

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