

Communicative Functions Content Analysis and different media



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Communication is much more than an exchange of true or false statements (descriptive propositions, information, facts)

Whenever we communicate we are in principle doing 6 things:

- We show something about ourselves *emotive function* SYMPTOM
- We are talking about something (topic, the world) *referential* SYMBOL
- We are trying to influence whoever we address *conative* SIGNAL
- We are showing how we relate to each other *phatic* SOCIAL
- We are toying with language and design options *poetic* SENSUOUS
- We are commenting on the act itself *meta-communicative* SYSTEMIC

communicatio

Something about community, meeting and sharing

Communication is “an interaction between persons”
(not a ‘transmission’ of data representing the world)



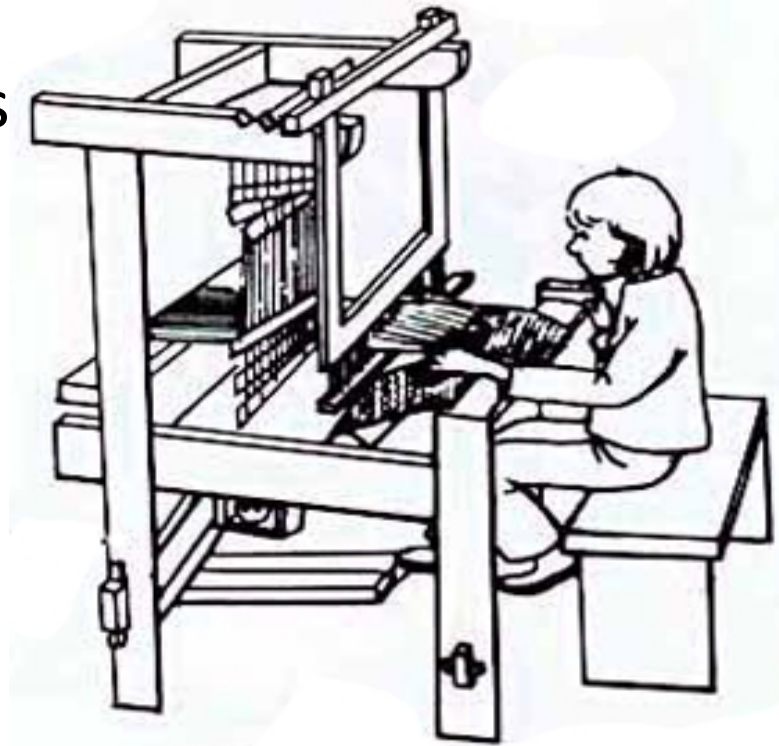
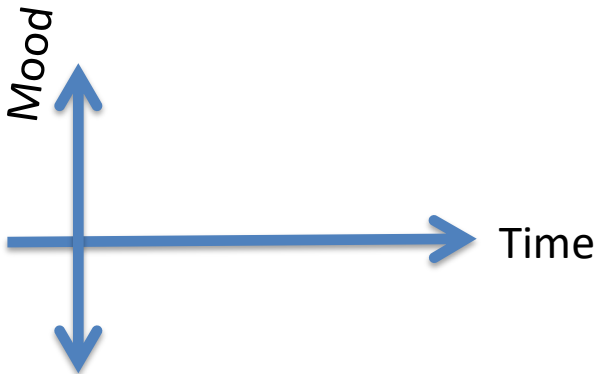
This interaction takes place by means of gestures, speech, drawings, writing, photo, video, sites, etc.

These “products” are often referred to academically as “texts” – and their *form* can be analyzed to reveal a *content*

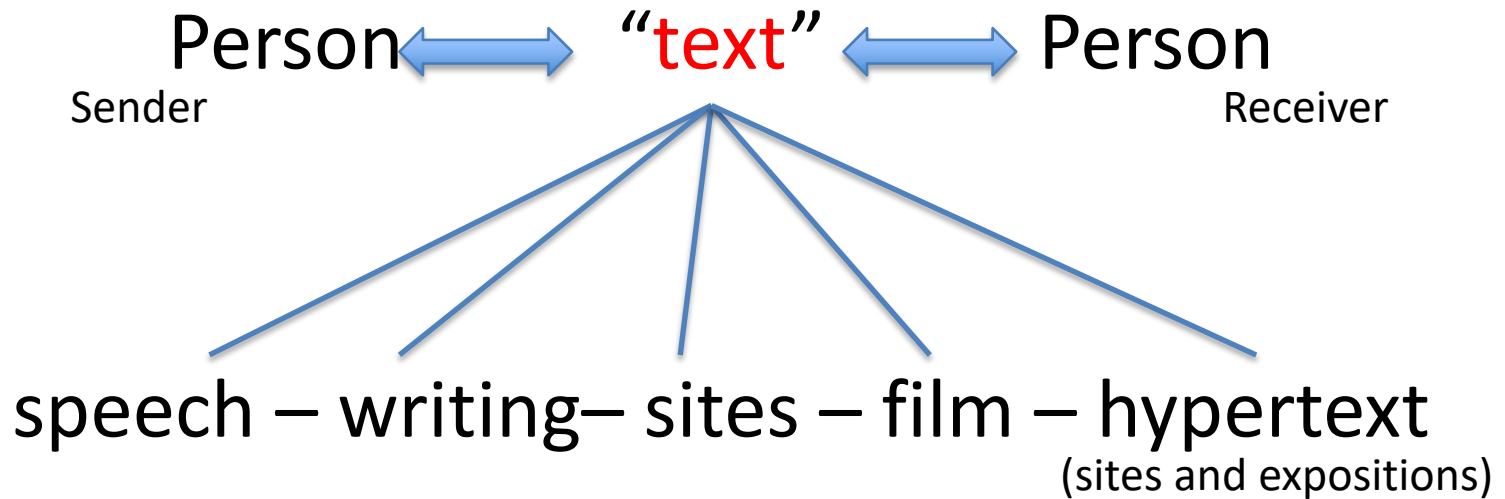
Textus = loom weaving

Just like a woven fabric
a text, a film, a web-site, an exhibition can have:

- many threads and layers
- in many colors
- in two main dimensions

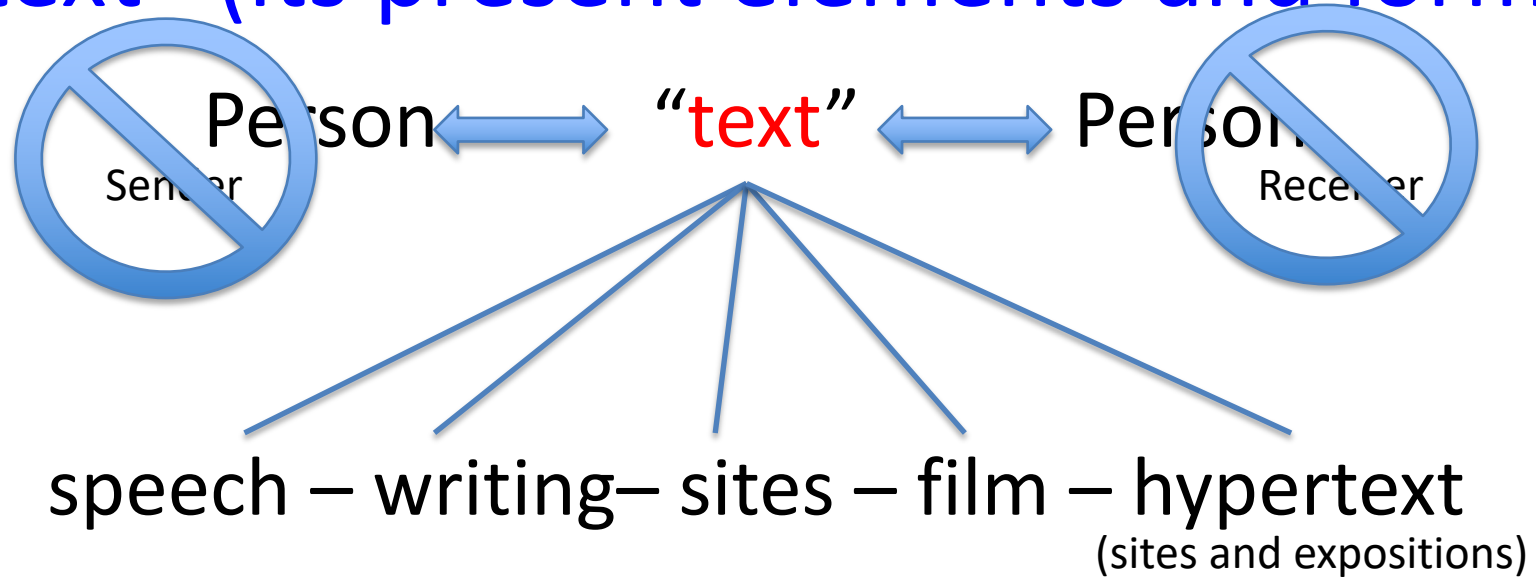


Communication is an interaction by means of “texts”



Content analysis examines what a specific “text” consists of, how its elements are formed and how they function (contribute to communication)

Content analysis is looking only at the
“text” (its present elements and form)



Content analysis is not – and should not – in itself be concerned with the intentions of the actual sender or the reception by an actual audience.

We try to “isolate” the product and to hear and see – with an open mind - what it is “saying” in and by itself (this is where we practice phenomenology and hermeneutics)

Does any of this really count when you analyze the 'text' (form and content) of a film?

- the TV overview labels the film a “documentary”
- your well conducted interview with the director
- film reviews in papers and magazines
- information about the location of the recordings
- information about payment of participants
- discovering factual mistakes in the film
- public political debate following the broadcast
- your friends immediate reaction
- who paid for the film
- the reception in other countries

NOPE!

Content analysis:

What is being said!

Analysis of the form:

The specific design and features of the text (the media product) that scholars, and in principle everybody, can note are present and active

Reception research:

What is being heard!

Investigating the reaction of the audience:

A specific target groups actual reaction, understanding and use of a text (a media product)

General tools of communication analysis:

Type of appeal:

logos, ethos, pathos (Aristotle)

and type of communicative function:

emotive, referential, conative, phatic, poetic and meta-communicative (Roman Jakobson)

Neither language nor pictures are just copies of reality – but this is the ‘positivism’ that still haunts us!

Persuasiveness

Topic

Logos (matter-of-fact,
info, evidence)

“Speaker”

Ethos

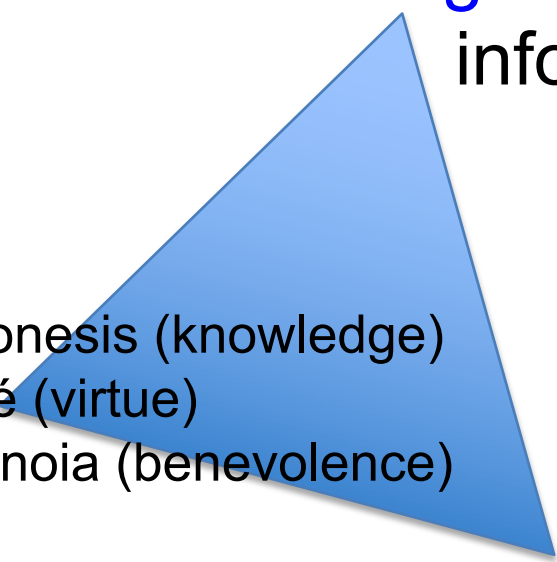
(character
trust-
worthiness)

Fronesis (knowledge)
Areté (virtue)
Eunoia (benevolence)

Audience

Pathos

(emotion,
passion)



Roman Jakobson's first model



Note that “Message” is ambiguous here – “Text” would have made it more clear

Roman Jakobson's second model
we are now going into the **message (text)** of the
first model

Referential

Emotive

Poetic

Conative

Phatic

Metalingual*

* I rename this as “Meta-communicative” hereafter in order to
apply it to all sorts of media texts, also non-verbal ones

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Again again

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The six communicative functions (examples from verbal language)

Referential

SYMBOL

The temperature here is 25°

Conative

SIGNAL

Open the window!

Emotive

SYMPTOM

Gosh, I am feeling hot.

Phatic

SOCIAL

Hello, anyone here?

Poetic

SENSUAL

In Spain the rain falls

Meta-

mainly on the plains

communicative

SYSTEMIC

This is an example of
a comment on the meta-level.

The six communicative functions can be found also in "audio-visuals": pictures, film, tv, and web-sites

Referential

The sound-image deals with a subject, and issue.

Conative

The sound-image is trying to persuade you or making you do something

Emotive

The sound-image is expressive, revealing something about (the mood) of the (implied) sender

Phatic

The sound-image is establishing or maintaining contact between sender and receiver.

Poetic

The sound-image has aesthetic qualities, form and style is predominant

Meta-comm

The sound-image makes meta-comments or references to itself

6 communicative functions – ready at hand

Me: the thumb *emotive*

That: index *referential*

!“@!!”: the long *conative*

Us: the ring *phatic*

Playing: little *poetic*

About it all: the whole hand
meta-communicative

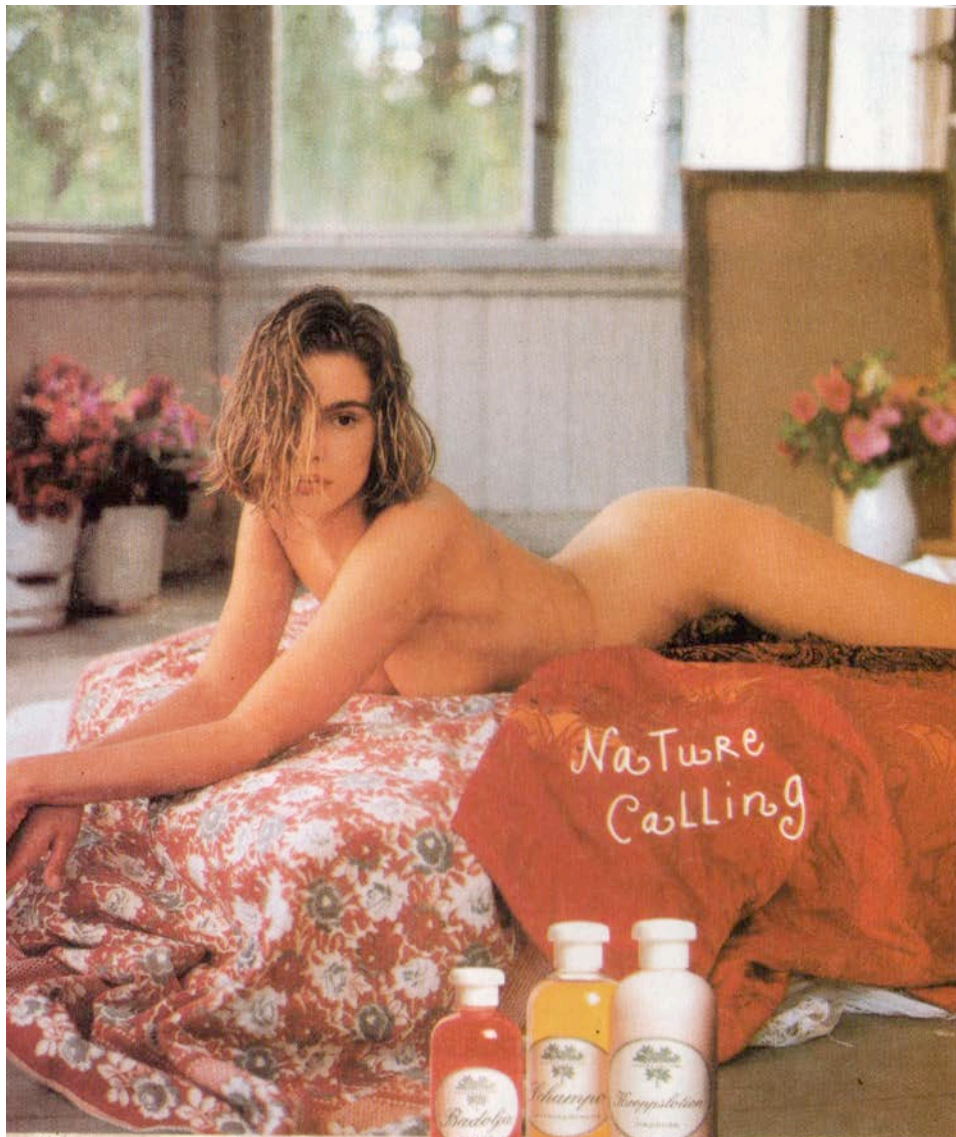


“Method”

- Notice what stands out
- Always look for all functions
- What is most dominant?

- The analysis is based on your observation and interpretation, but it can be repeated and discussed and refined with colleagues





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Procedure:

or "method" - a way to structure your findings:

1. **First impressions** (what you immediately experience, observe, feel and think) *phenomenological*

1. **Descriptive analysis** of the different parts, elements and forms (the design): *analytical*

Note the dominant elements and look also for the "unnoticed" but influential aspects/forms/features: turn up-side down, "alienate", repeat, look for design and marks of intentions and preconceptions, go through the 5 senses, and both the horizontal aspect (development, story) and the vertical aspects (mood, montage). Use Aristotle and Jakobson.

2. **Interpretation** of the text as a whole, its aim and "message". Contextualize, draw in information from "outside" the text itself: *hermeneutical, critical*

References

- Roman Jakobson: “Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics” in *Style in Language* ed. Thomas A. Seabeok, M.I.T. Press, 1960 (Conference 1958, Indiana University).
- See more on: <http://www.henrikjuel.dk/>