

A tentative theory¹

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Abstract

Theoretical propositions related to an empirical research are the focus of this article. The paper discusses, preliminarily, the heuristic hypothesis that directs the research: the concept of interactional devices, characterized as the common empirical factor to arrange an apparently chaotic diversity of communication processes. This heuristic deals with the relationship between episodes and communication devices; encoded and inferential elements present in the device; and basic conditions for methodological approach, concerning descriptions, values and transversality. To explain the tentative theory proposed, the paper relates the hypothesis to the specific problem of ongoing research, and to an all-encompassing issue of knowledge in the area of Communication studies. This general issue covers the research and provides the meaning of the theoretical proposition.

Keywords

Interactional devices. Epistemology. Communications Research.

1 Introduction

The starting point for the reflection offered in this article is the issue raised by Luiz Signates in the Epistemology of Communication Work Group, in the XXth Compós, 2011, during the debate on the article *Dispositivos interacionais (Interactional devices)*: although we denied a theorizing development, emphasizing the proposal's empirical and pragmatic concern, we would actually be seeking to present a Communication Theory. The immediate reply was to refuse this idea and insist upon a pragmatic point of view.

Reflecting on this issue, we then realized that this exclusive positioning is an oversimplified one. If we understand that proposing a "Theory of Communication" means adopting a broad, explanatory view, which turns the diverse approaches in the same area into variations within a coherent body of knowledge, we can indeed say that the research does not aim at proposing a theory of Communication. One should, however, consider what the research, in

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its empirical approach, aims at achieving in order to apprehend, based on that issue, the theory the project implies.

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This specific research is a multiple case study. About ten interactional devices activated in certain communication episodes should be analyzed.

When looking for the kinds of phenomena observed in articles studied during a research conducted between 2008 and 2011 - the communication actions these articles addressed -, we found a good variety of processes recognizable as culturally developed ways to perform a communication action. For instance, processes of: information; critique; stimulation of an aesthetic experience; entertainment; learning; controversy; persuasion; so-called “self-help”; behavior and attitude shaping; trendsetting; interpretation / appropriation; recirculation or “social response”, among many others.

In each social mode or process, society experiments with interaction modes. These practices are eventually available to society, becoming models for the communication processes that are triggered. Correlatively, the communication episode that activates these models gives them shape, meaning, substance and direction. We propose that these

matrices, available in society, should be called “interactional devices”.

The communication process composes various swaths of established knowledge and interests different Human and Social Sciences (HSC), as well as different areas of research in Communication. This research studies various individual cases, but taking them as processes of the same “nature”, in order to observe how communication develops. The problem focuses on the following: how, despite their diversity, complexity of factors, extraordinary variation of specific achievements, such modes seem to work as interactional devices?

This leads to the need to clarify, conceptually as well as empirically, what would be appropriate interactional devices and how they would operate in this diversity of processes. How can we become aware of the similarity that, superimposed on an acknowledged variety of cases and situations, characterizes all these as “interactional devices” in the process of being constituted and activated?

An overarching premise in the research is the idea that contemporary interactional devices – either directly mediatized or developed in areas of mediatization incidence – encompass quite flexible coding aspects, relying heavily on invention and inferential processes. This

¹ This text was originally presented in the PROCAD Seminar “Crítica Epistemológica” (Unisinos, UFG, and UFJF), Goiânia meeting, 2011. This version benefits from comments and objections raised at that time.

makes them potentially volatile, occasionally shallow, thus generating fragile or fleeting communication experiences due to their very ease of replacement. Owing to their potential fragility and superficiality, these processes are often clumsy or even straightforwardly negative in human terms, and certainly manageable by the dominant sectors of society.

On the other hand, this historical circumstance (that will probably disappear in the long run) is an interregnum of ample opportunities for social experiment. Even devices that are more deeply rooted in tradition are diversifying into new experiences in the context of social mediatization. While this process unfolds, and despite its eventual evanescence, long lasting, more consistent, more pregnant attempts to future communication processes – whose difference and social productivity will only be noticed from their results - are being tested.

It is appropriate, therefore, to consider the interest in the expansion of knowledge about what is experimental in mediatization, about what happens as a code and paracode generation process, about what is requested and made available as inferential skills - in brief: about characteristics of interactional devices, now strongly impregnated by mediatization.

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When I propose we should notice, based on such an approach and with such empirical goals, a kind of common empirical factor² – the interactional device as the general site where communication occurs – in the diversity of approaches and objects studied by a plurality of fellow researchers, this certainly implies a “theoretical motion,” a reflective decision that somehow must support the expected inquiry.

Thus, what I should try to clarify in this article, are the theoretical senses of early-stage empirical research by reflectively developing the issue raised by Signates. Although far from proposing a “Theory of Communication”, what are the relationships between my pragmatic approach and a theoretical production? Or: what theoretical view is proposed in the heuristic to which I resort in my research on interactional devices?

Resistance to claim a theory, establishing the work in the heuristic category, may seem a gesture of modesty (as “producing theory” is a lofty activity), or a way to avoid being exposed to criticism, which is more likely to hit very peremptory propositions. We intend, differently, to justify this heuristic preference as an objective requirement of the area, as we shall see at the end of this text.

In order to characterize the theoretical element in the research, we develop below, by constructing a hypothesis focused on certain

2 It is not an essence, but rather a pragmatic element.

findings, a number of propositions outlined in the article *Dispositivos interacionais*, thus justifying the intended heuristic approach. This involves a reflection on the object of the research, on what we intend to probe in this object, and on what kind of discoveries we mean to make.

2 The object of research

An early development of this object - “interactional devices” - is included in the article by the same title, presented at WG Epistemology of Communication, XXth Compós, in 2011. This is a way to observe social interactions, searching for conditions to empirically study their almost chaotic diversity, and proposing a specific perspective according to which not only the uniqueness of each episode is highlighted, but common processes can also be perceived.

This development has a *parti-pris* as its starting point: that the communication, whatever its characteristics, is pragmatically found in the interactions between people and in society in general. We do not assume “an essential positive value” in “communication”. The social process is important, but diverse in the way it is achieved: people communicate even when in conflict, under oppression or manipulation. Communication is only possible when there are specific interactions – we should then recognize the occurrences and

“logics” of interactions in social practice as the site where communication takes place. The human value of communication depends on how such occurrences and logics are socially produced. The difficulty that arises is the following: how to study them?

The concept of “devices”, by Michel Foucault (1980), is our starting point. The notion of “systems of relations that emerge between heterogeneous elements” is a vital clue. As we are dealing with a system of relations, this perspective is obviously interesting to study (communication) interactions. The perception that these systems are historically constituted - not stemming from “essences” that would be prior and external to social practice - is also basic.

Remember that Foucault proposes *disciplinary* device studies - which leads him to focus mainly on regulation processes. What interests us is, rather than the concept thus specified, what Deleuze (1989, p. 188) considers “a philosophy of devices” developed by Foucault and of which Deleuze points out core features. Given the extraordinary diversity of subsequent uses of this concept (of just the word sometimes), it is important to emphasize the qualifier. We seek to conceptually develop the notion of “interactional devices” – this is a significant displacement for my hypothesis.

I therefore highlight, alongside regulated elements (which correspond to what in interactions is

“code”), the contextual elements that always require a tentative inferential action from participants in an interaction.

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In the current state of development of the research object, we can put forward a number of propositions in relation to how we constituted it.

The interactional episodes are not mere epiphenomena of the devices. Rather, interactional devices only exist in concrete episodes that bring them about. The matrix expressed by an episode is neither an essence that would manifest itself nor an abstract idea consciously mentioned by participants in the interactional episode, but rather the activation of practices already tested in like episodes (in this sense, it is a paradigm). It is then the result of a transfer, with the burden of adjustments and improvisation that is inherent to any transfer made from other episodes in which a number of behaviors deemed appropriate, and in which a system of relationships between people, ideas and things was developed or triggered, allowing the interaction to unfold.

Thus, each episode is paradigmatic in relation to other episodes that can be referenced to the same “matrix.” Or perhaps even better: each episode is instrumental in forming the matrix, which only exists through repeated

practice. As a consequence, episodes can be mutually referred. Episodes are not entirely determined by processes that would be external to interactional logics, although these processes certainly are influenced by all kinds of contextual factors (sociological, linguistic, psychological, neurological, cultural, etc.).

In summary, we believe that the practical need to communicate generates devices tentatively, so that these behave as the means to make interaction possible. Interactions in turn change and reinvent the activated devices.

When contextual conditions and interactional processes (through well established devices) no longer fit each other – due to coding stiffening of the device and / or changing contextual conditions -, devices become ineffective, favoring either the emergence of other competing tentative devices or refreshment of the device itself, with wider adjustments through new tentative responses, against the grain of standard replies, “reopening” the device, which is thus transformed.

The relationship system (the “interactional logic” which remains in a series of triggering episodes, thus characterizing the device) is a standard that participants share and can only be effectively shared because it is available within society. We proceed by imitation and adjustments, as culture scholars know very well.

While they are partially “code” (rule system), devices are also, in their practical implementation, potential diversion, creation, adjustment and “social invention” spaces. Being an invention space does not mean inventions will necessarily be positive, assessable in human, social, psychological, aesthetic, etc. terms. It just means that society and its members try to somehow develop interaction systems to achieve their goals - and in doing so, practical tentative actions themselves generate processes.

In order for the interaction to take place (i.e., for it to maintain some continuity, whatever its outcome, whatever the successes and frustrations of each participant), practical contextual conditions ought to provide senses, specificities, and singular interpretations. This requires participants to make inferences concerning what is uniquely happening and directions to which interactions might be oriented. These inferences are practical and / or “intuitive” calculations - abductive perceptions – on elements triggered because they are seen as relevant.

Thus, it is important not to emphasize the issue of “control” alone. The “control” aspects have to do with the “code” element it is indeed impossible to ignore. Without codes, we do not communicate - for instance, we have standardized language or cultural gestures. But the “inferential” element is also a part of

the interactional device; the first is the only link between the process and the specific circumstance, the non-determined historicity aspect, the tentative (precisely because it is non-coded). This definition is specific to “interactional devices”, and allows the study of variation of elements and systems of relations which, being case-specific, characterize a unique device and show their own logic.

Thus, interactional rules are necessary, but not sufficient. This insufficiency is not expressed in the need for more or better rules, but rather otherwise, in requiring other processes such as inference and trial-and-error. Furthermore, the process attempts go beyond participants’ attempts - the production of “interactional codes” itself is tentative and is fixed or diluted to the same extent as social outcomes are generated, according to the local objectives assigned to it, which, as we know, undergo displacements or mutations. That is to say that the social production of interaction codes stems from more or less successful - from a practical point of view - inferences (attempts), that, for this same reason, tend to be fixated and systematized in different ways. This is what we sought to develop in “Nem rara nem ausente, tentativa” (BRAGA, 2010).

In unusual situations, new devices need to be invented. The positive aspect of the current mediatization context is the multiplication of opportunities for experimentation. In like

situations, the plurality of attempts is inherent to the process and crucial to its development: devices are selected in social practice, and adapt successively (at the same time adapting their possibilities and activations) through a Darwinian process: those that fit better to a wide range of situations are more likely to be replicated and maintained.

Here we have the foreshadowing of an empirical object, organized to research. This object is not self-evident (unlike “media,” “media products” and “social media,” for instance). Therefore, it depends, more than these, on conceptualization and characterization. But nor is it less empirical. What interests us in this concept is that it provides a way to observe diverse interactional episodes that actually occur in society, related to its production process. The object thus outlined makes it possible to cast a single look into the diverse, thus being able to describe and compare, approaching the communication that occurs in this diversity.

Such propositions briefly characterize our hypothesis regarding the object at this stage of the investigation. Naturally, the empirical experience of investigating a number of interactional episodes will influence this outline, still quite tentative. This can be considered as the outline of a theoretical

proposition. However, the proposition does not intend to explain: what matters is what it allows to investigate.

3 What and how to observe

The theoretical-methodological approach we developed includes three basic research conditions along with the construction of the object. In these circumstances, the following premises appear to be necessary to produce knowledge in this area:

- 1) Try to put a descriptive emphasis on observables, damping the explanatory emphasis based on established theories;
- 2) Reduce previous and comprehensive valuating emphasis that sometimes go alongside with ready-made explanations, judgment functioning as an “explanation” for the observed processes;
- 3) Finally, take as much advantage as possible of knowledge already developed or developing produced by the activation of different theories about a variety of objects in this area, aiming at achieving some degree of transversality.

3.1 Descriptions

Favoring descriptions is not an unproblematic objective to set. Describing means describing from a certain angle. A description in itself is

inferential and provides inferences especially related to the descriptive angles.

Given the imprecision of our perception of the phenomenon, the issue here is then to define what we should describe. The intended descriptions are not made “neutrally” as they already suppose a problem that directs the eye and points to related primary and secondary indices.³

The answer to this difficulty is precisely what is presented as “theory.” Hypothesizing that the communication occurs in human and social interactions, we have to establish a minimum system that would provide minimum common perspective into a variety of interactions – asking them similar questions.

As shown above (see also BRAGA, 2010, 2011), the construction of the object as such raises questions and is a way of problematizing the object as it directs the kind of description to be made.

The main question, inherent to the very logic of the Foucauldian concept of “device”, is: “what relationship system can be found in the devices to be studied?” Another way to phrase this question is:

1) “What is the logic, the *rule of the game* which can be seen in the process, in its social activation?” Moreover, as I am studying *interactional* devices, heuristically assumed as indicated above, other

questions arise directly from this construction:

- 2) What differentiated *relevant components* can we find in different devices?
- 3) What *different social objectives* try to superimpose themselves in the same device?
- 4) What is *society trying* there? (We are referring here to the *process attempts*, which is different from asking what the participants in the interaction are trying to do).
- 5) How do participants’ attempts *trigger and redirect* this “process attempt”?
- 6) How are *contextual circulation relationships* presented in the device under study?
- 7) How does the *interplay of coding and inferences* work?
 - a. what *rules or codes are being developed* in these attempts?
 - b. what do these codes *enable or constrain* pursuant to the logic of the goals?
 - c. how do conjunctural tentative processes deal with *insufficiency inherent to codes*? What spaces are then *left to inference*?

I believe these questions will make accurate and unique descriptions possible that, while done on a case by case basis, will remain comparable in their variations, as they organize a single cleavage of the object.

What is required is observing actions and movements designed into the device and / or

3 On the issue of primary and secondary indices, see Braga (2008).

strategically triggered by participants. This is associated with another angle in our hypothesis construction: we considering communication episodes as forms of action, reason why we named this investigative approach “performative analysis.” An observation of the performance of the participants and the device will help clarify the process logics, criteria and objectives.

3.2 Evaluations

Communications phenomena that attract researchers’ attention are often related to tense and dramatic human and social issues and appear somehow as critiques. This requires taking stands and resorting to evaluative criteria which should be ethically and philosophically examined or simply assumed in an extra-scientific sphere, in participants’ own practical social insertion. The urgency of these evaluations sometimes forces us to assume values as a priority, with no further knowledge.

In order to achieve a reflective development of communication knowledge we have to avoid the tendency to assume preliminarily a (abstract or comparative) value criterion to try to explain a communication episode, a situation or a feature of the communication process. In this situation, the explanatory effort would focus on assuming a social, cultural, educational or artistic value and demonstrating that the observed processes are present in a number of relationships with

said value by encouraging or opposing it. Such relationships between value and reality are then taken as “the knowledge” that is imposed onto the process or episode being studied.

But this knowledge, biased by a priori evaluative positions, seems too limited. While it offers some insight into perceptions of the object of knowledge, it prevents achieving a rigorous and specific perception of the very logic of the object you wish to know.

We have then to look for approaching ways and tactics that would be more descriptive and inferential, so as to perceive the “internal logics” of the communication action in the process or episode, as well as the logics of its insertion in its sense context, rather than deciding generically on values and un-values of the process.

This does not equal claiming this is neutral science, nor do we argue that the research should be driven by a contemplative curiosity. On the contrary, we know that the problems that drive research in HSC are stimulated from the outset by the positions that construct them. What is criticized is that a research would be limited to confirming pre-assumed positions, releasing itself from the need to descriptively grasp what is happening. The perspective adopted here is that, when focused on building knowledge, our axiological positions must, differently, demand a thorough knowledge of what our values allow

us to examine, not restricting knowledge to comforting aspects.

The descriptive possibilities we look for when constructing the object are the basis for meeting this second condition. Prior to generically judging a process as positive or negative, the research gesture requires a more practically descriptive question to be asked: what is happening there in interactional terms? What logics are being socially triggered and experimented with? This premise seems particularly relevant in studies on mediatization as, before devices in construction, it is easy to incur in judgment, proposed as if it were knowledge.

It is based on post-descriptive inferences (i.e. stemming from inquiry, not from *a priori* criteria) that we should reinstate our ethico-evaluative concerns, now informed by the expansion of knowledge we have developed about the object. This obviously increases the potential criticism it might elicit, since the critique quality always concerns the accuracy of the perception of the object that is criticized. Instead of a previous and generic value, we will have an *a posteriori*, specific evaluation, based on findings.

3.3 Transversality

We indeed claim the proposed object is comprehensive, as it assumes that communication

occurs in social interactions, and that these latter are systematically observable by studying interactional devices that are generated and modified within them.

This concept - directly developed for the purpose of looking from a “communication point of view” (however coarse the observation tool might still be) - allows us to ask the empirical reality questions that would not be asked by various HSC, however concerned these latter might be, as they indeed are, about the communication phenomenon as variable that influences their own concerns.

However, this comprehensiveness does not mean *replacing* or *subsuming* the most commonly asked questions about nearby empirical objects. It rather means a dialogue with these questions, stimulating, through this challenge, other reverse questions and tensions.

We propose, therefore, a kind of minimum object, quite close to common sense, about what “communication” is. That’s why we can find, in the diversity of empirical objects studied by fellow researchers in the same area, this interactional element or reference to a system (variously constituted and interpreted) that “moves” the interaction.

The constitution of the “interactional device” object of investigation should, therefore, allow it to establish a dialogue, elicit tension and be

tensioned by these other empirico-reflective constructions. This possibility, pursued in the construction of the heuristic hypothesis, is what we call “transversality”. Rather than comprehensive, I expect this object of study can prove transversal.

The goal of the transversality of the heuristic hypothesis is apparent in two aspects. First, we intend to make transversal inferences on differentiated objects (from other perspectives), gathered in the research as cases within a common general process, which is the activation of interactional devices. Second, we aim at going through different ways of looking – which are the propositions about nearby objects, suggested by other researchers based on the specific theories they resort to.

The expected productivity of this approach arises from the possibility of describing, in a transversal cleavage, processes to which other approaches ask other questions and give other explanations. We do not claim that these transversal descriptions are better than the others, but rather that they allow comparisons (on a descriptive level, not as a theoretical belief), which make it possible to develop mutual remissions and challenges.

4 The theoretical proposal

According to Popper, a hypothesis that is proposed to deal with a knowledge problem

already is a theory, exactly because theories remain provisional, tentative, in solving the problems they address.

We can then assume that the above perspectives are indeed articulated as a theoretical proposal, from the construction of the object to the goals of the research. The axis of this article is the following issue: what kind of proposal is characterized here and how does it fit in the framework of different perspectives concerning knowledge production in the Communication area.

The prospect of “de-emphasizing” (but not abandoning) explanations that would directly derive from established theories stems from the idea that these typically assume as crucial a number of privileged angles in the complex communication process and tend to ignore others or consider these as secondary. Precisely because there are no unfailing criteria available based on which to choose from different “essentialities,” it seems wise not to put all bets on any of them. This does not mean refusing the validity and interest of these studies. On the contrary, within “normal science” (cf. Thomas Kuhn, 2011) where such explanations are developing, knowledge about a whole range of aspects of the “communication phenomenon” has been greatly developed.

On the other hand, such knowledges tend to reinforce the theoretical specific sphere within

which they originate. Considering that such perspectives (in any of their spheres) do not really properly consolidate communication knowledge, we ought to recognize that restricting ourselves to normal science does not seem enough to enable the full development of the area.

This does not mean we should place ourselves directly opposite to normal science, i.e. in “revolutionary science” or “rupture science.”⁴ The paradigm shift supposes a historical period of normal science in progress, during which well founded theories that worked on a variety of knowledge riddles constructed according to these theories’ very logic cease to be productive.

However, we know that in the Communication sphere there are no established theories that would be comprehensive and consolidated enough to have generated an organized collection of riddles. We also know that most theories to which the Communication area resorts have not exhausted the generation of riddles that can be addressed according to their logics.

Thus, we would apparently find ourselves in a paradoxical space where neither of the two alternatives would be preferred.⁵ Actually, things might be simpler. The area of Communication – precisely as a space with open knowledge potentials - would be in a third space, very conducive to “tentative theories.”⁶

This possibility is addressed by Popper, when the nature of the very problem to be tackled is not clearly understood - a situation that seems very close to that which characterizes the area of Communication studies:

[...] There is only one way to learn to understand a problem we do not yet understand – and this is to try to solve it, and to fail. This might seem paradoxical. As how can we try to solve a problem we do not even understand? (POPPER, 2009, p. 253).

Although it looks paradoxical, this proposition makes sense because, for Popper, the main result of the sequence “problem > attempted solution (theory) > critique (fallibility)” is precisely a new, more elaborate problem – even though (tentative) theories fail. Ongoing research assumes this character of theories as attempts to deal with complex problems.

⁴ Popper (2009, p. 27) believes that all science is revolutionary: “we replace old theories with new ones.” Kuhn (2011, p. 288), also stressing paradigm shifts, mentions, nevertheless, the productivity of normal science periods: solving riddles that suppose “current theory as the rules of the game.”

⁵ We do not exclude that unexpected revolutionary theories might appear – i.e., might generate a whole new problem within the area. But we only realize such things a posteriori.

⁶ As we pointed out above, all theories are, generically, tentative (liable to fail). Here we use tentative in a strict sense, for two specific reasons: a) it is a heuristic – thus focusing on discovery, not on explanations; and b) our tentative “attempt” is to enhance both the perception and the construction of the problem itself.

Popper (2009, p. 252, italics author's) proposes, moreover, that "understanding a theory means [...] *understanding it as an attempt to solve a given problem.*" By extension it should be possible to clarify a theoretical proposal being elaborated based on the kind of problem it seeks to address.

5 The problem to be addressed

The problem of this research is apprehending the interaction systems of cases to be studied by describing its features and making transversal inferences that might encompass their variations. The theory to which we resorted for this research proposes a way to construct the object and modes of inquiry to this end.

However, the purpose of this construction is to approach a different, more comprehensive problem, which is the interest in stimulating the search for more specifically communication questions. In this respect, our goal is to test them and generate better questions that might be perceived as: a) properly communication questions, and b) embodying some transversality - for a certain diversity of communication objects. It is this possibility that includes the proposal in the set of the area's perspectives for knowledge production.

This is a strong claim, as we assume (not positivistically) that a knowledge discipline is founded not on the specificity of a research method for a "separate" object, but rather

on the specificity of the questions it asks objects in the world in general for which such questions might be relevant, working as tool and motivation for discovery.

Thus, although we are working on the primary basis of Communication, the issue here is neither clarifying what "communication" is nor trying to define what would the "object" of this sphere of knowledge be. The issue here is rather looking for perspectives aimed at enhancing knowledge productivity, thus challenging the area to generate new questions.

As we do not believe an "epistemological gesture" would happen that would suddenly open radical new fronts of problem solving, and as we do believe that some interesting knowledge has been diversely produced by this area of study, we point out the mutual indifference of these knowledge findings as being this area's main practical problem.

Tension between these perspectives ought to be productive for unfurling communication issues, which would then be "distilled" from a comparison between different points of view, which otherwise would risk being quartered in their "specialized" ways of looking and asking questions. It is important to the area that such perspectives see themselves as "competing interpretations" (CAMPBELL, 2005, p. 7). To this end, it is important to generate spheres of comparability.

It is clear that this is a tentative generation, as it would not abstractly define a specific spot where the various theories and approaches would meet - this would be the objective of the comprehensive epistemological gesture. It would rather generate descriptions and questions about observables that, to the extent they can effectively engage in dialogue from different angles, will work to challenge dispersion. The idea here is that, if challenged by other perspectives that would also be concerned (from their specific angle) about the communication issue, any of the subareas and lines developing partial knowledge will tend to generate more acutely “communication” questions.

Based on this premise, the research develops its problematization and its hypothesis (its theoretical proposal) in order to generate questions that might, in turn, would cause tension within propositions from a variety of subareas of the area.

What can be justified as being an “objective basis” (as proposed in the introduction of this article) is obviously not a claim that this will work, but rather consistency between the theoretical elaboration and the comprehensive problem under consideration. It is the problem itself we claim to be objectively relevant. The proposed heuristic is just an attempt to address it.

I am especially grateful to Luiz Signates, whose remark compelled me to develop my reflection.

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Uma teoria tentativa

Resumo

Proposições teóricas envolvidas em uma pesquisa empírica constituem o eixo deste artigo. Discute preliminarmente a hipótese heurística que direciona a pesquisa: o conceito de dispositivos interacionais, caracterizado como fator empírico comum para organizar uma diversidade aparentemente caótica de processos de comunicação. A partir dessa heurística, são tratadas as relações entre episódios comunicacionais e dispositivos; elementos codificados e inferenciais no dispositivo; e condições básicas para aproximação metodológica, referentes a descrições, valorações e transversalidade. O artigo relaciona a hipótese ao problema específico da pesquisa em curso; e a uma questão abrangente sobre conhecimento em Comunicação. Esse problema geral direciona a investigação e estipula o sentido da proposição teórica.

Palavras-chave

Interactional devices. Epistemology.
Communications Research.

Una teoría tentativa

Resumen

Proposiciones teóricas involucradas en una investigación empírica constituyen el foco de este artículo. El documento discute preliminarmente la hipótesis heurística que direcciona la investigación: el concepto de dispositivos de interacción, caracterizado como un factor empírico común para organizar una diversidad aparentemente caótica de procesos de comunicación. A partir de esa heurística, son tratadas las relaciones entre episodios comunicacionales y dispositivos; elementos codificados y inferenciales en el dispositivo; y condiciones básicas para aproximación metodológica, referentes a descripciones, valoraciones y transversalidad. Con base en estos elementos, el artículo relaciona la teoría tentativa al problema específico de la investigación en curso; y a una cuestión amplia de conocimiento en el campo de estudios en Comunicación. Ese problema general orienta el proyecto y proporciona el significado de la proposición teórica.

Palabras claves

Dispositivos de Interacción. Epistemología.
Investigación en Comunicación

Expediente

A revista E-Compós é a publicação científica em formato eletrônico da Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação (Compós). Lançada em 2004, tem como principal finalidade difundir a produção acadêmica de pesquisadores da área de Comunicação, inseridos em instituições do Brasil e do exterior.

E-COMPÓS | www.e-compos.org.br | E-ISSN 1808-2599

Revista da Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação. E-compós, Brasília, v.15, n.3, set./dez. 2012. A identificação das edições, a partir de 2008, passa a ser volume anual com três números.

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