

Chapter 5

Communicating Archaeology: A Theoretical Outline and Analysis of Developments

Enrico Proietti

Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and for Tourism, Italy

ABSTRACT

This chapter is not an essay on the theory of communication, but an outline that flanks the main themes with those of the reality of archaeology in the era of globalization. It starts from an inescapable base, on which any other approach can be grafted: the physical-mathematical theory of communication. From here, after attention to various possible logical fallacies in which those who communicate archeology may encounter, cases are examined in the light of the media theories, established in the second half of the 20th century, that predicted the current computer-dominated situation. Finally, some shortcomings are identified which must be remedied to not compromise the effectiveness of communication in archaeology.

INTRODUCTION

The communication that comes first to anyone's mind is the verbal human one. A subfield of the disciplines that study it concerns with how words can be used both to transmit information and to perform actions: it is the Theory of Speech Acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), which splits acts into three parts:

- Locutionary act (production of a statement with grammatical correctness, and meaning);
- Illocutionary act (expression of will, intention, purpose, etc., by the person saying it);
- Perlocutionary act (results and consequences in those who received the illocutionary act).

Each in turn can be defined according to various characteristics. But here, it just interests to recall the need that effective communication focus heavily on the illocutionary and perlocutionary parts. Often the archaeologist, to come to the case in question, is concerned with producing an excellent statement, full of meaning and very correct in his scientific grammar. However, it happens that this statement does

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-1059-9.ch005

Communicating Archaeology

not express a real finalized will. It is formal, “cold”. Still less does it examine the recipients and the effects it produces on them.

Effectiveness, aimed at improving the purpose of the fruition of archaeology and archaeological heritage, is achieved through communication design, through knowledge of what communication is.

Communication must be inherent in archaeologists' profession. Between others, Manacorda (2009) says:

Communication for us must not become the goal, as it would already be a lot if it happened, but a mental form ... because attention to communication changes in origin the way we do research and makes us work differently since the first day. Having this concept in mind radically changes the conceptual and operational tools of our making news. ... We need to ask the communication system to help us transmit, together, the sense of contextual reading of the territory in which we live and the objects that circulate there, and the historical depth of our behavior, of the choices we consciously or unknowingly make. (p. 262)

There are lots of approaches to communication theory. This is not the place to deal with them, but a few mentions will be needed to better clarify proposed topics. Since many readers of this book will not be communication experts, this is for them. It certainly does not want to be a treaty, but only a starting point for reflecting on scientific basis about communication in archaeology.

BACKGROUND

Much has been written on the themes of communication and/of/for archaeology. All sides of the matter have been exhaustively treated. Not a few accurate publications can be quoted. Harding & Venclová (2007), for example, edited a very stimulating one; as well as the *Dossier...* (2014). Other interesting ones can easily be found, and their research is recommended.

Anyway, even though so important texts make a vast literature constitute a solid theoretical basis, and many practices have been carried out, something still seems to miss as outcome. People lack an actual archaeological literacy, all around the world with their different nuances. The consequent risks are high.

Yet communication efforts are remarkable every day. The amount of activity in this regard is very high. The scientific quality varies, but globally it certainly cannot be said that quantity is lacking.

Nevertheless, the perception and consideration by society of what comes from the archaeological sphere still leave everybody unhappy. The daily difficulties faced by archaeologists in their work bear witness to this. Bureaucratic obstacles; aversion of the owners and hostility of certain communities (up to terroristic damages); tolerance of clandestine activities; spite and sabotage; scorn; volatility of funding; job insecurity and low pay. The list could be enriched. In the office where the author of this chapter works there are thirteen archaeologists. Eleven are women, really very capable: but the point is that in families it is not considered a “men’s” job. In Western world!

Communication of archaeological sphere must improve, so that society can fully enjoy it. First step is to understand what is being discussed.

23 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/communicating-archaeology/240465

Related Content

The Effect of Colonialism on the Bangladeshi Female Immigrant in Britain

J. Sunita Peacock and Shaheen A. Chowdhury (2016). *Discourse Analysis as a Tool for Understanding Gender Identity, Representation, and Equality* (pp. 90-98).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-effect-of-colonialism-on-the-bangladeshi-female-immigrant-in-britain/154609

Reflections of the Impact of Umunthu/Ubuntu on My Upbringing: Moral Shock, Rediscovery of the African Worldview, Approaches to Ubuntu, Ubuntu Critique

Augustine Chingwala Musopole (2021). *Understanding Ubuntu for Enhancing Intercultural Communications* (pp. 52-67).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/reflections-of-the-impact-of-umunthuubuntu-on-my-upbringing/276722

The Traffic Sign as A Sign: Silent Speech Acts

Frank Nuessel (2017). *International Journal of Semiotics and Visual Rhetoric* (pp. 1-10).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-traffic-sign-as-a-sign/183635

Journalism in Violent Times: Mexican Journalists' Responses to Threats and Aggressions

Ruben Arnaldo Gonzalez (2020). *Handbook of Research on Combating Threats to Media Freedom and Journalist Safety* (pp. 278-297).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/journalism-in-violent-times/246440

Vision of the Other: Word and Image in Mikhail Bakhtin

Susan Petrilli (2018). *International Journal of Semiotics and Visual Rhetoric* (pp. 120-136).

www.irma-international.org/article/vision-of-the-other/202479