


## Semiosis of the message in graphic design

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### ABSTRACT

A message is made up of one or more ideas that an individual wants to convey in some way to other individuals or a group. To emit any message, multiple verbal and non-verbal forms are used with which we access the intelligence of human beings in their capacity for understanding, reasoning and judgment. That is why we can talk about some superficial, light or trivial messages or those that are profound, complex and transcendent. The levels vary and therefore the ways in which we can communicate messages, sometimes a nudge or a glance is enough, other times we require sophisticated technology to send missives that even, due to their content, are hidden under keys, that is, they are encrypted.

The essence of this phenomenon of exchange of information or knowledge is the process through which intimate, familial, socio-cultural and political ties are established. These spheres, as mentioned by Sloterdijk (Vázquez, 2006), can be the microspheres, through which coherent ontological associations between people are implanted in a physical or symbolic way, or they are abstract structures that take the form of integrated groups such as States or countries, which are the macrospheres.

In the course of the actions to interrelate, associations, alliances, agreements and dependencies or dissimilarities are established, antagonisms by contrast, to mention some of the connecting nodes. The reference is to communication, this conscious dynamic that living beings develop, according to some theorists, to make something known to others. Signs play a decisive role in specifying and concretizing the emission and reception of a message, and these signs can have a diverse origin, always referring to sensory and perceptual capacities; These are collections that make up codes and these in turn constitute languages, some well identified by specialists and others in constant decoding and interpretation.

**Keywords:** Design, Message, Meaning, Research, Interpretation.

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## INTRODUCTION

### THE WORLD OF LANGUAGES

Since its origin, communication as a theoretical vision has been conditioned by the concepts emanating from the theories of mass communication, fundamentally those that emerged from the functionalist aspects. Thus, this phenomenon is understood from the basic linear scheme of sender-message-receiver, generated in turn from the interpretation of direct communication towards collective communication, in its multiple variants. Today it is possible to determine and describe it concretely from a deep knowledge of its own constants and variables.

It must start from the imperative that it is understood from two planes of reality, one belongs to the external reality in which the actors of communication themselves are understood and the other is the one that is integrated into the materialized configuration of the message. This approach allows the recognition of all participating and non-participating actors and facilitates the presentation and understanding of the series of events that take place before and after the phenomenon of communication itself.

In order for simple data to become knowledge, it is necessary to relate them to each other. The way in which they are assimilated depends on the preceding knowledge we possess. We do not start from absolute ignorance, there are anticipated structures and prejudices. The data are linked according to seven methodological categories, which Ponce Rivas (1997) calls methodological columns: schema, contrast, sequence, hierarchy, visualization, implication, and integration. It tells us that there are no single ideas, only messy ideas. And because we can only learn the next step to what we know, we must ensure that the prior knowledge with which we analyze reality seeks the relationships between data, and not the data itself. If we build each column piece by piece, we will obtain a frame of reference that will allow, through experience and contact with reality, to receive abundant data that can be related to each other in a firm way.

The construction of these structures of thought is based on the mastery of some language. It is only possible to share, exchange and understand messages with the support of a logical grammar, which can be verbal, visual, verb-iconic, auditory, gestural, tactile, etc., the possibilities of languages have not yet been fully determined. The truth is that communication, as the transmission of ideas and experiences in the form of recognized sign relationships, is the alternative to consider possible personal, group and global alliances.

### IMPORTANCE OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN OUR DAILY LIVES

Nonverbal communication is defined as the intentional or unintentional use of "objects, actions, sounds, time and space that generate meanings in others" (De Fleur, 2005: 53). Body language is a complex of micro-expressions, and although it is true that we depend on each word,



research shows that only 7% of communication corresponds to words (Baró, 2012: 23), tone of voice between 20% and 30% and body language between 60% and 80%, that is, almost 93% is made up of non-verbal communication.

[...] Sometimes the body communicates on its own, not just by the way it moves or the postures it adopts. There may also be a message in the shape of the body itself, and in the distribution of facial features. Birdwhistell believes that physical appearance is often culturally programmed. (Davis, 2013: 62)

We do not know how to read body language and this is crucial for the understanding of strength, truthfulness, power, leadership, equality, willpower or, on the contrary, alertness, fear, insecurity, vulnerability, conformism, shyness, embarrassment, confusion, clumsiness, etc. No large gestures are required, they are subtle samples of the different parts of the body, eyes, mouth, eyebrows, corners, hands, sweating, blushing, among others. Body language can betray a person, especially when they are under pressure, for example when someone says something categorically and backs down, maybe crosses their arms, it is because they have told a lie.

Body language is the most important, fluid, lyrical and revealing communication system we have. This branch of psychology is suggestive [...] as a communication mechanism, body language accounts for more than 50% of the perceived impact of all messages conveyed face-to-face. (James, 2013: 11)

Each person has a different body language and peculiarities, although experts recognize something called the norm or what is normal for each particular person, from which a template is obtained with which it is possible to carry out a reading. Context also helps to understand the norm, from the clothes we wear, glasses, caps, style, to the scenarios that are chosen for communication.

The rhythmic use of gesture, its interlocutory function, the gesture as a regulator of discourse, the gesture that governs the march, the pauses and the continuation of the word, and how this marks, exalts or neutralizes it, all are at the center of the so-called syncretic semiotics [...] whose center is the analysis of the very processes of production of forms, more than the forms produced. (Magli, 2002: 39)

Famous people usually have the so-called image consultants, who advise or direct them regarding each of their postures, gestures, bearings, appearances, and to understand that body language cannot be considered in isolation, words usually magnify it. The most important test is facing a difficult situation.

Non-verbal language fulfills different functions, among which are: emphasizing oral language, expressing feelings and emotions, substituting words, guiding the way in which verbal language should be interpreted, enabling contradictions with verbal communication, regulating communication, through facial expressions, mimicry, postures, gestures and approach to the other. (Pérez, 2013)



Our daily life, then, is inconceivable without the expressions of non-verbal communication, particularly body language, and we achieve assertive messages to the extent that we are able to control the coherence between what we say and our gestures, between what we do and the gestures with which we carry it out.

## THE FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION DESIGNED

Decades ago, civilization surpassed the possibilities of personalized communication to give way to strong communication. In the beginning, it was print that allowed large groups to access news, information and knowledge that would otherwise never have reached the hands of many.

The precedents of design then emerged, as the missives began to be organized based on the various technical resources. Typography replaces calligraphic writing and texts are presented in columns distributed in consistent lines. Space and composition are part of the optimal results. A printed page requires a secure and standardized order, since paper, an archaic but current support of culture dating back several centuries, continues to validate its effectiveness as a resource of knowledge.

In the course of time, design emerged, as such, thanks to schooling, to the implementation of study programs that began to train communication professionals. The study programs were based on two roots, architecture and the visual arts, with which professionals were trained with opposite ways of thinking, it was systematized structure versus sublimated creativity.

In just a few years, and since the immersion in new communication technologies, reciprocity between individuals has been replaced by virtual collaboration. The transactional nature of communicative action is currently conditioned to negotiation and interaction at a distance, it is considered participatory because various subjects intervene from distant confines and virtuality, previously drawn, becomes viable.

## DESIGN AS TEXT AND ITS SEMANTIC IMPORTANCE

The concept of design and its variants in the specific context of communication has become one of the most important reflections, whose expressions and styles have an impact on all cultural contexts: propagandistic, advertising, educational, informative, recreational and even environmental and special learning spaces. This is the main reason to reflect on the various visual discourses that society receives, the characteristics of its messages and the various types and techniques that perceivers constantly interpret, based on which feedback is received, since "we need communication to live in groups and societies" (Fonseca, 2011:154)

Visual communication has changed the way we understand the world and others, generating great impact in multiple environments, a phenomenon that dates back to the invention of writing.



This, described by some as discourse theory, is complex because, from a semiotic point of view, codes are integrated into syntactic, semantic and pragmatic modalities, and visions that emerge as languages or metalanguages.

The various visual narratives allude to interactive communication (De Fleur, 2005:17-20) that integrates: coding and decoding, functions, meaning and sociocultural influences. The results of this reflection support the foundations of verbo-iconic and visual communication, as an important frame of reference for the visual arts and design, within which it is not possible to ignore the vision of ethics to make assertive decisions about communication, its perspectives and consequences.

In order to understand the narratives of the designed communication, it is necessary to start from the identification of the semantic field of each of them, since they correspond to different fields of expression, because at the individual level they configure the specific limits of naming, explaining and understanding some aspect of the world. It will be clear that the conditions of possibility of the knowledge of what is designed presuppose specific categories that allow us to mediate between the disciplinary and interdisciplinary semantic fields, thus sustaining the relevance of any affirmation or argumentation expressed through images. Without understanding the existence and consequences of semantic fields, visual communication cannot be fully understood.

The repertoires of graphic design and its combinatorial rules emerge directly from semiotics, they are not necessarily forms or properties, they are conceived as semantic units sustained by a set of articulatory dispositions. The indicators correspond to the elements that Umberto Eco uses to define those semantic trajectories whose starting point is the sign, manifested in multidimensional topological links, made up of semantic fields or axes (Eco, 1978:128-30), an intentional interrelation that includes conceptual crossroads and implies connotative connections.

This gives rise to a continuous semantic movement on the basis of which the transformation of the graphic sign is understood, from the minimum and simplest, such as the letter, to the complex such as a comic strip. This is about the use of language as a semiotic apparatus in which what is fixed and communicated visually implements messages in the context of visual literacy.

The communication designed cannot be explained from the notions of language, syntagm and immutability (Saussure, 1965: 109-117), it must be understood from the dimensions analogous to the concepts of mutability and paradigmatic condition. Graphic language is a system of signs that, in addition to arbitrariness, is characterized by constant alteration and signification.

The principle of morphological continuity, whose validity is generated in conceptual primitives, shows in its codification and materialization a permanent displacement. In the styles of visual communication, the sociocultural factors that transfer the relationship of meanings and signifiers to each moment are not controlled, the continuity of the sign is intimately linked to its spatiotemporal modification.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH FOR THE CONNOTATION OF DESIGN

With the bases explained, the understanding of the phenomenon of expressiveness in graphic design communication must be understood from the principles of Barthes and Eco's semiotics of signification (Mounin, 1970:12-17), which includes intentional communication and any signifying fact or sign phenomenon.

The decision that is established between what is designed and its semantic connotations, even with its surplus of meaning, must be conceptualized, because every representation embodies qualifying evidences. Visual texts or designs have an implicit didactics that exalts the presence of the moral in its rhetorically formative character, which acts as a result of the visual arguments. The moral is an example of the resources to make a message more explicit and establish clear guidelines for behavior.

[...] In the traditional story, the moral was the space in which the problem was raised. The modern narrative suggests an open semiotics in which the reader has to feel involved [...] it becomes valid in the depth of a universal questioning of the condition of man [...] (Sadurni, 2003: 55,185)

Thus, we are presented with visual communication needs in which reflections are carried out on the consequences of precision and the importance of the fact that it is spatially and temporally correct in order to achieve the objective: to send a message to others. However, designers sometimes fail to notice several factors in this phenomenon:

- That it is of great importance to manifest oneself in some viable way, so that there is understanding.
- That there are multiple languages with which to express oneself efficiently.
- That if you are not rigorous in the way you approach others, perhaps you will achieve assertive communication; But, if it has been solved intuitively, it may be failed because it has been incomplete.

There is an essential need for clarity in the language of design for any activity related to life and intelligence, and this can only be acquired in research. Human beings require visuality, as a general resource to communicate, countless people with different abilities resort to visual texts, - images, internal or external devices, etc.- to transmit their ideas, they require conceptual precision.

Investigating is an action parallel to the need to communicate. It is essential to read the poetic synthesis that Julio Cortázar made of it in his *Tale without a moral*, telling the story of the man who sold cries and words, and how some came to think that these were something that can be sold but not bought... "Even if it seems absurd," the writer said. Undoubtedly, visual communication, one of the most significant qualities of the globalized world, is a characteristic and a necessity of the cybersociety that requires the rigor of inquiry.



There is a concept in the study of communication that is fundamental: understanding, and its search has led human groups throughout history to seek the best ways to achieve communication. According to Paulo Freire (2001), education is communication and research is education, because both the former and the latter involve not only the transfer of knowledge, but a cognitive encounter between subjects who seek the meaning and meanings of the coded signs they perceive.

## CONCLUSIONS

The ability to communicate visually has become the usual way of relating to others, there are those who claim that man without images is a socially invalid being because we live in the age of design, therefore, in the time of the image.

The visually expressed word has been consolidated as the platform on which the warp of knowledge, understanding, recognition, identity and, at the same time, indifference and marginalization among human beings is woven. (Verdeber, 2010) Therefore, designers require semantic research to express ideas, thoughts, feelings, emotions, or solve basic problems of survival, knowledge and adaptation to the environment.

Significance in design cannot be ignored, it is one of its fundamental transversalities, if the meaning is not understood, it is because the message and its transcendence have not been deepened. Numerous surpluses of meaning circulate today, so it is increasingly important to show the objective, subjective and intersubjective capacities of designers.



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