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Information in the oral communication of socially maladjusted youth enrolled in the Voluntary Labour Corps

Introduction

One of the functions of social communication is to inform. Other important features include socializing, motivating to activities, debating, educating, promoting culture, entertaining, integration¹.

Information is an “element of knowledge communicated to someone using language or other code; in a given situation, it can provide some knowledge; a message or insight” (SWJP Dun, p.v. *informacja I*). Information remains in close relationship with interpersonal communication².

In this article we analyse the communication of young people from dysfunctional families at risk of marginalization. We look at how information is relayed by young people enrolled in the Voluntary Labour Corps (hereinafter referred to as OHP). The main task of the OHP is to prepare for professional life young people who do not accept social norms. These young people have been excluded from education (those who do not attend compulsory school), professional and even social institutions. The subjects of this study are young people, aged 15–18, enrolled at the Centre of Education of the Voluntary Labour Corps in Tczew in Pomorskie voivodship. The study gathered data from the young people while they were in the dormitory of the OHP in Tczew. Those enrolled in OHP

¹ W. Pisarek, *Perswazja – jak ją widzą, jak ją piszą*, [in:] K. Mosiołek-Kłosińska, T. Zgółka (eds.), *Język perswazji publicznej*, Poznań 2003, p. 14.

² J. Mikułowski-Pomorski, *Informacja i komunikacja. Pojęcia, wzajemne relacje*, Wrocław 1988.

institutions are referred to as *participants*. People staying in the dormitory are called *non-stationary participants*.

A statement is an intentional (deliberate) action of the sender³. It serves an informative function and other non-informative functions: urging, causal, expressive, creative⁴. A sender's statement in interactions addressed to the recipient in a specific context combines a number of functions. Depending on the sender's intention, one of them is dominant⁵. The superior function of statements (text) is the communicative function. It reveals the sender-recipient interaction and is realised only in specific texts⁶.

The text function is dependent on the genre⁷. Along with the cognitive component, the structural and stylistic function of the text creates a genre pattern of the text⁸.

The information is communicated using verbal and nonverbal code. We deal with information in interpersonal interactions. This also applies to the world of animals and plants. The flow of information occurs between cells of living organisms and inside the cell (intercellular communication, primarily through chemical signalling)⁹. This takes place in molecules and determines their formation and correct construction. For example, the gene information about the stacking order of amino acids in the protein molecule is stored (genetic information stored in the DNA molecules, genetic code)¹⁰. In total, information is the foundation of life. In the human world information is contained in gestures, colours, clothing, how one reacts to sounds (issued by the human body and equipment) – beeps, in the intensity and colour of light – light signals. What distinguishes humans from their closest relatives in the animal world is the ability to communicate, transfer information using verbal code, spoken and written language¹¹. This article focuses on speech.

³ J. L. Austin, *Jak działać słowami*, [in:] J. L. Austin, *Mówienie i poznawanie. Rozprawy i wykłady filozoficzne*, Warszawa 1962–1993, p. 543–708.

⁴ R. Grzegorzczkova, *Problem funkcji języka i tekstu w świetle teorii aktów mowy*, „Język a kultura”, vol. 4. *Funkcje języka i wypowiedzi*, J. Bartmiński, R. Grzegorzczkova (ed.), Wrocław 1991, p. 26.

⁵ There are texts with informative, impressive (mainly persuasive), contact (phatic), performative, declarative, emotional-expressive function (U. Żydek-Bednarczuk, *Wprowadzenie do lingwistycznej analizy tekstu*, Kraków 2005, p. 227).

⁶ J. Puzynina, *O funkcjach języka, tekstu oraz ich elementów leksykalnych*, [in:] M. Szymczak (ed.), *Z zagadnień słownictwa współczesnego języka polskiego*, „Prace Językoznawcze”, 91/1978, p. 155–156.

⁷ A. Duszak, *Tekst, dyskurs, komunikacja międzykulturowa*, Warszawa 1998; M. Wojtak, *Gatunki prasowe*, Lublin 2004; B. Witosz, *Genologia lingwistyczna. Zarys problematyki*, Katowice 2005, p. 171. According to Maria Wojtak, the function influences the pragmatic level of a genre. She comes to such a conclusion on the basis of a genre analysis of the press (M. Wojtak, *Gatunki...*, op. cit.; M. Wojtak, *Wzorce gatunkowe wypowiedzi a realizacje tekstowe*, [in:] D. Ostaszewska (ed.), *Gatunki mowy i ich ewolucja*, vol. 2. *Tekst a gatunek*, Katowice 2004).

⁸ M. Wojtak, *Gatunki...*, op. cit.; M. Wojtak, *Wzorce gatunkowe...*, op. cit.

⁹ As the authors of *Biologia* note, “Communication webs between cells might be even more complex than the World Wide Web” [N. A. Campbell and others, *Biologia*, przekład zbiorowy, first Polish edition (based on *Biology. Eighth Edition* 2008), Poznań 2014, p. 206–227].

¹⁰ N. A. Campbell and others, *Biologia...*, op. cit., p. 325–350.

¹¹ There are also alternative ways of communicating, e.g. Sign language, Braille alphabet.

The informative function of an utterance¹²

On arrival at the Voluntary Labour Corp a young person becomes an OHP *participant*. Knowledge of OHP is included in lexemes: *ohap, participant*. For example:

Po ohapie pójdę do roboty. [*ohap*, meaning OHP – G. M.]

[eng. *After OHP I'll go to a job.*]

W ohapie jest nudno.

[eng. *It is boring in OHP.*]

Uczestnicy wyszli na miasto. [from participant's utterance]

[eng. *The participants have gone into town.*]

The receiver gets information that the sender was sent to OHP in order to continue education at the Junior High school or vocational level in order to gain vocational qualifications. Knowledge about the *participant* (sender) is gained as the participant is accepted to OHP and assigned to a group. He or she learns about the basic data of the new *participant*: name, surname, age, education, place of living, family situation, etc. The sender's utterance is usually short, with a poor lexical resource¹³. The sender usually does not use complex sentences, and offers simple descriptions such as *glupia nauczycielka, która coś do mnie miała* [*stupid teacher, who had some kind of problem with me*] [*evaluating previous teacher from a school*]¹⁴. The sender, during the first contact with the form teacher, after being accepted, is usually with a parent or legal guardian. As a result the use of emotional or vulgar language in this context is rare. For example:

Nazywam się Krzysztof [nazwisko]. Przyjechałem do internatu. Mam 17 lat. Jestem z Żukowa. Nie lubię szkoły. Nauczycielka uwzięła się na mnie. Nie zdałem w drugiej klasie. Będę się uczyć za kucharza. Pracowałem już w kuchni w Niemczech ze znajomym. Lubię to. Pojadę do Niemiec.

[eng. *My name is Krzysztof (surname). I have come to the boarding house. I am 17. I am from Zukow. I don't like school. My teacher picked on me. I didn't graduate from grade 2. I'll be training to be a cook. I've already worked in a kitchen in Germany with my friends. I like it. I will go to Germany.*]

The receiver learns, besides basic data about the mentee, information about his particular emotional attitude to school, his former teacher and earlier problems with education: *Nie lubię szkoły. Nauczycielka uwzięła się na mnie. Nie zdałem w drugiej klasie.* Information

¹² More on informative function of statements made by maladjusted youth can be found in a monograph I am preparing.

¹³ Spoken utterances do not have, for instance, complex adjective groups, see A. Majkowska, *Układ linearny składników rozbudowanej grupy przymiotnikowej w polszczyźnie mówionej*, „Prace Filologiczne”, 49/2004, p. 347–355.

¹⁴ For example, linguistic texts are helpful in evaluating communicative competences, see I. Gryz, *Planowanie testów językowych – kryteria poprawności*, „Językoznawstwo”, 7/2013, p. 41–46.

about the experience of the young person as a worker is also provided: *Pracowałem już na kuchni w Niemczech ze znajomym. Lubię to.*

The sender, during the first contact with the form teacher, shows some skills, boasts (Galasiński 1992), in order to amplify him or herself. He or she gives information about him or herself, which is generally considered positive:

Umiem fajnie malować. Dużo maluję. Są tu farby? [the participant informs about art skills]

[*I can paint well. I paint a lot. Do you have paints?*]

The participant as the sender of the locution gives the receiver knowledge during the utterance. The receiver (form teacher) may, basing on the information gained, come to some conclusions. For example:

Nie chcę już być w tym pieprzonym miejscu [in the boarding house – G. M.].

[*I don't want to be in this fucking place.*]

The participant informs that they want to leave the boarding house: *Nie chcę już być w tym [...] miejscu* [internacie]. Additionally, the receiver learns the emotional state of the emitter and the level of their personal culture, their ability to use linguistic etiquette, their lack of self-control in case of communicating subtle opinions: *pieprzone miejsce*.

The receiver of the utterance gains knowledge about the official nomenclature of the OHP: *uczestnik, stacjonarny, niestacjonarny, internat, dom*. Information provided by the noun *uczestnicy* is expanded by adjectives *niestacjonarni, stacjonarni*. The specific verbal context in which expressions such as *uczestnicy niestacjonarni, uczestnicy stacjonarni, nouns internat, dom* are used provides additional information. For example:

Wszyscy uczestnicy niestacjonarni są już na terenie internatu.

[*All nonstationary participants are on campus.*]

Nie ma już uczestników stacjonarnych. Poszli po lekcjach do domu.

[*Nonstationary participants are not on campus. They went home after classes.*]

The receiver, by using verbal code, learns that the *participants* are a group of young people who form a collective of the socially maladjusted. It is evidenced by utterances saturated with vulgarisms expressing linguistic aggression¹⁵ and utterances communicating negation of social norms and lack of willingness to obey orders or to abide by the code of conduct of OHP and boarding house. For example:

¹⁵ S. Gajda, *Agresja językowa w stosunkach międzyludzkich*, [in:] W. Gruszczyński (ed.), *Język narzędziem myślenia i działania*, Warszawa 2002, p. 59–66; M. Kita, *Estetyzowanie wulgaryzmów*, „Stylistyka”, 25/2016, p. 349–369; M. Karwatowska, *Językowe środki wyrażania agresji w rozmowach nastolatek*, „Linguistica Bidgostiana”, vol. V/2008, p. 147–162; M. Grochowski, *Słownik polskich przekleństw i wulgaryzmów*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.

Odpierdol się, nie będę robił [the participant answering the order given by the teacher to clean the area around the boarding house].

[*Fuck off, I will not do it.*]

Nie chcę tego robić. [the participant answering the order given by the teacher to clean the common room].

[*I don't want to do it.*]

Wypierdalaj. Chuj z tobą.

[*Fuck off. Fuck you.*]

Pani, nie chcę się uczyć.

[*Miss, I don't want to study.*]

Nie będę rozmawiała z ojcem. Chuj z nimi.

[*I won't talk to my father. Fuck them.*]

The receiver learns that his or her mentees have a negative attitude towards execution of commands given by guardians related to the role of *the participant*, mainly the resident of the boarding house, for example towards cleaning of the rooms, kitchen, dining room etc. Thus the teacher gains knowledge of the system of values, in this case anti-values: niepracowitość, niesubordynacja, nieodpowiedzialność [unhardworkingness/laziness, insubordination, irresponsibility]:

Nie będę nosił tych krzesełek, kurwa. Mam to gdzieś.

[*I won't fucking be carrying those chairs. I've had it.*]

Nie idę na dyżur. Nie chce mi się.

[*I'm not going on duty. I can't be bothered.*]

Nie będę sprzątał na jadalni. Niech on to zrobi.

[*I won't clean the dining room. Make him do it.*]

The workers of the facility also learn that the *participants* try to avoid the execution of actions connected to vocational learning (and provision of work), e.g.:

Nie będę robił na kuchni.

[*I won't work in the kitchen.*]

Nie idę robić na warsztaty.

[*I'm not going to work in the workshop.*]

The receiver learns that he or she is dealing with a group of people with a common view on particular issues. This knowledge is contained in utterances containing the pronoun *my* [eng. we] emphasising commonality and in verbal constructions: *trzymać: trzymamy się razem* [to stick together]. This knowledge is also uncovered by the construction: *tego nie zdradzimy* [we won't spill/tell]. The value of loyalty is verbalised in the following way:

My w internacie trzymamy się razem.

[*We in the boarding house stick together.*]

My tego nie zdradzimy Iwonie [teacher's name – G.M.].
[We won't spill it to Iwona.]

The receiver is informed that the group is capable of making a (collective) decision in certain matters (has a decision-making voice). This includes collective insubordination, and building and offering an opinion about a teacher or other participant. A characteristic, verbal signal of this are forms with inclusive *my* [eng. we], generalizing pronoun *wszyscy* [eng. everybody] and mandatory verb *wiedzieć* [to know]¹⁶: *my wiemy*; *wiedzą wszyscy* [we know; everyone knows]. In this way, the participant communicates that he or she is a representative of the group – a collective that is sure of having knowledge on a specific subject, knows social interactions on campus and thus has the right to form an opinion. The verb *wiedzieć* [eng. to know] is in this verbal and situational context used with an apparent persuasive intent, mainly in the case of the presence of the inclusive form *my* [we]: *wiemy* [we know] (I write about persuasive means later on). Here is some sample material:

Nie będziemy dzisiaj szli spać Panie wychowawco. **Pogramy** na laptopach.
[We won't go to bed, mister teacher. We'll play on the laptops.]

My wszyscy Panie **wiemy**, że kierowniczką to **stara kurwa**.

[We all know, mister, that the manager is an old bitch.]

[nazwisko] to kradnie pieniądze w internecie. **Wszyscy** o tym **wiedzą**.

[(surname) steals money here. Everybody knows it.]

My wiemy, że [nazwisko] to **cwany złodziej**.

[We know that (surname) is a cunning thief.]

In the examples given above, exponents of community are clearly visible – the inclusive *my* [we] and the generalising pronoun *wszyscy* [everybody] (those exponents are in bold in the excerpts). Adjective and noun attributes are obligatory in these utterances. They are usually in syntactic connections. They are contrary to linguistic etiquette and social norms, and communicate an emotional state and an attitude to the subject eg. *stara kurwa* [eng. old bitch], *cwany złodziej* [eng. cunning thief]. The receiver's lack of control over the communication of subjective opinions is noteworthy. The participant does not take into account social norms (it is evidenced by the nominal groups' vulgarisms and attributives characterising the subject negatively). In this case, the indirectness of the utterances, the poor manners, the direct expression of opinions in a way that violates the personal dignity of the subject are characteristic.

The receiver learns about a specific attitude of the sender to him or herself and to other people. Participants express emotional states, usually explicitly. The sender trusts or distrusts (it is shown in various examples above). Using the salutation *Pan, Pani* [Sir, Madam – the equivalent of the formal 'vous' form rather than the informal 'tu' form of address in French] indicates honouring the position of the receiver and accepting his or her role in the community. The noun *koledzy* [fellows, friends, buddies] indicates a positive attitude towards the receiver in the sender's utterances. The most cordial emotions are

¹⁶ The dictionary definition is 'to know a topic, be aware of something' (SWJP Dun, vol. 2 p – *żyzny*, s.v. *wiedzieć*, p. 513).

visible in the word *bracie* [vocative form of *brother*], sometimes along with an attributive emphasis: *bracie kochany* [*brother dear*], *bracie mój* [*brother mine*]. The receiver additionally learns that the sender is open to him or her and to other participants. According to psychologists, a human being is capable of honest opening towards another person only when he or she is positively oriented towards him or her¹⁷. Examples here include:

Koledzy mi pomogli przenieść szafę.

[*Friends helped me move the wardrobe.*]

Kozioł [nickname], ***bracie kochany, co ja bym bez ciebie zrobił?***

[*Kozioł (nickname), bro [literally: brother dear], what would I do without you?*]

Kozioł [nickname], ***bracie, wyszedłeś z tego.***

[*Kozioł (nickname), bro [literally: brother dear], you're out/you've made it.*]

Information about the negative actions of *participants* reaches the recipient via verbal code. Here is an example:

Panie, niech Pan uważa. [nazwisko] to złodziej. On kradnie pieniądze na dopalacze.

[*Hey, mister, look out. (surname) is a thief. He steals money for boosters.*]

The recipient learns also about actions contrary to the norms of social interaction in the dormitory, for example:

Wczoraj zginęły pieniądze Agacie.

[*Yesterday Agata's money went missing.*]

When the directions affect other *participants*, they need to be thoroughly analyzed and verified by OHP staff.

Conclusion

The flow of information diminishes the distance between the sender and the receiver. Social activities can enhance communication. The key is being open to contact. A lot depends on the sender – *participant*, who has to feel the need to verbally communicate with teachers. The receiver is also of importance. Communicative effectiveness and effectiveness of social activities can be achieved along with high teaching competence.

Noteworthy are characteristic transitions from...to...¹⁸. We can observe, for example, the transition from general information concerning community to personal information.

¹⁷ R. B. Adler and others, *Relacje interpersonalne. Proces porozumiewania się*, Poznań 2014; W. Łosiak, *Psychologia emocji*, Warszawa 2007.

¹⁸ Linguists dealing with geontology observe the transition in different genres e.g. press: M. Wojtak, *Gatunki...*, op. cit., election leaflets: in the debate of the Parliamentary Committee on: A. Majkowska, *Debata sejmowa jako gatunek wypowiedzi*, Opole 2012; G. Majkowski, *Ulotka jako gatunek tekstu wyborczego*, Warszawa 2015. Maria Wojtak calls it *paradoxes*.

The sender – participant uses short, single-sentence utterances, usually saturated with vulgarisms, with limited information about the world. The receiver can draw conclusions about the sender's level of knowledge, his/her emotional state, level of culture, linguistic self-control and linguistic competences.

Information contained in utterances concerns not only knowledge about the world but also the intention of the sender. Utterances inform about the emotional state of the sender, his or her attitude towards the receiver and other members of the community, family environment, system of values (and anti-values)¹⁹.

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¹⁹ More on this subject in my forthcoming monograph.

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Dictionary shortcuts

SPPW Groch 2008 – Grochowski M., *Słownik polskich przekleństw i wulgaryzmów*, 3th edition, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.

SWJP Dun 1998 – Dunaj B., red. nauk., (zespół autorski B. Dunaj, J. Kąś, M. Mycałka, R. Przybylska, K. Sikora), *Słownik współczesnego języka polskiego*, vol. 1 a – ówdzie, vol. 2 p – żyzny, Reader's Digest Przegląd Sp. z o.o., Warszawa.

Abstract

Information in the oral communication of socially maladjusted youth enrolled in the Voluntary Labour Corps

The article analyses the informative function of statements made by young people under the care of the Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP). These young people come from dysfunctional families and are often marginalised / at risk of marginalisation. These young people (senders) tend to employ short, mono-sentenced statements usually saturated with vulgarisms and have little knowledge of the world. Their utterances reveal the young person's emotional state, his or her attitude towards the receiver and other members of the community, family environment and social reality. Analysis of senders' statements sheds light on their level of personal culture, degree of self control, linguistic control, linguistic aggression, and provides insight into the young persons' values. Assessment of utterances demonstrates a transition from the provision of general information

concerning the community to information concerning the young persons' personal life and positive or negative evaluations of his or her actions. Over time, the flow of information diminishes the distance between the sender and the receiver. The communicative effectiveness of the young persons' statements increases as does the effectiveness of socializing activities.

Keywords: information, informative function of an utterance, marginalised youth, Voluntary Labour Corps, participant vulgarism, linguistic aggression, values, anti-values.