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Call for Papers

Studies in Communication Sciences (SComS)
An International Journal

Special Section on the Subject of:

COMMUNICATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF MEDIA CHARACTERISTICS INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

The special section of the forthcoming issue will be dedicated to internationally and interculturally observable immanent media effects on communication. We thus invite high-quality, original contributions that examine how the “channel characteristics” of a certain medium impact on communication processes and this in various cultures. The focus of our interest will not be in media-generated content, its reception or its effects, but on what consequences media might have as results of their pure existence and their typical, immanent *characteristics*. In order to get some validity on this complex and difficult subject, we’d like to ask for papers that are written from an international and/or intercultural perspective. The subject was a field of critical debate already during the 1950s, though mainly theoretically (authors such as Marshall McLuhan, Harold Innis or Walter Ong are still frequently quoted). At the time, awareness was so high that even *UNESCO* invested in projects that used such (presumed) effects in order to “modernize” developing countries, as it was thought that the very existence of specific media (at the time: radio and television) could change society and lead to some kind of “nation building.” However, it soon became clear that those high aims were unrealistic and had to make room for more sophisticated views. For example, peer-group affiliation was much more important than the media. Furthermore, different media had specific and differently strong effects. In consequence to these observations, empirical as well as theoretical research declined. Today, however, media are globally available on a much larger scale and capture a lot of time and a much higher importance in the lives of individuals

almost everywhere in the world. Thus, research could be conducted on a much better empirical basis, and (maybe) on effects that could not be examined until now, under conditions of general media diffusion and penetration. Therefore it now seems to be the time – and a necessity – to re-focus on the question of internationally and interculturably observable immanent media effects. Some examples to make a point on what we aim for: Nowadays, many companies or universities use videoconferencing in order to organize “virtual meetings”. These meetings are globally very similar to each other regarding, for example, time management, forms of presentation, or rituals – in contrast to “real meetings” that differ very much between certain cultures. The similarities don’t necessarily correspond to the “home culture” of the organizing institution but seem to be induced by the medium. Thus, there are many hints that there might be media effects that are consequences of the respective media-specific characteristics. Moreover, it seems that these effects now can be observed better than ever. How do they work? How can they be examined? We are also interested in papers that might falsify a widely held assumption on effects of a specific medium. We welcome empirical as well as theoretical works. There are no restrictions regarding the research methods used; thus articles on media effects as well as audience studies, or studies on reception or reaction processes are welcome.

Guest editor:

P. D. habil. Hans Giessen, Universität des Saarlandes

Key Dates:

Submission deadline:	1 st of September 2008
Notification of Acceptance:	15 th of October 2008
Final Paper version due:	30 th of October 2008
Publication of the Journal:	December 2008

Special Section on the Subject of:

INTERSUBJECTIVITY FOR COMMUNICATION

In the last decade a new trend in cognitive research investigates the mental capacities that allow humans to relate to each other and to engage in cooperative activities, communication included. One of the mainstream is the study of *intersubjectivity*, namely the “mutual sharing of experiences,” conceived of as a basic dimension of consciousness on which communication is grounded. Communication, as any other form of joint activity, requires the agents involved to understand each other as an agent endowed with mental states. A communicative intention is in fact a particular type of intention aimed at modifying the partner’s mental states: this implies a representation of the other’s beliefs, desires, intentions, emotions and so on, and of the ongoing interaction as well. The development of cognitive science in the past two decades shows a shift from the classical view of mind as an information-processing engine using symbols in a language of thought, to the “enactive” or “embodied” view, according to which mental processes are embodied in sensory-motor processes and situated in specific environments. While the classical view has mainly supported the “theory of mind” approach, the embodied one takes a different stance, derived from the idea that, in social creatures like us, embodied cognition emerges from the dynamic co-determination of self and other. This means that an experiential coupling of self and other is operative from birth and is primarily based on perceptual recognition of other human beings, especially along affective dimensions. Interpersonal body schemas allow emotional contagion (i.e. to feel an emotion similar to the one of another person) and facial imitation, these schemas offering the basis for the development of more sophisticated form of social intelligence. An essential ingredient for social intelligence is the ability to understand what another person is doing. The fact that we are able to interpret others as agents in pre-conceptual and embodied way, has been recently illuminated in cognitive neuroscience by the impressive discovery of a class of neurons they call “mirror neurons” that allows us to recognize the meaning of others’ intentional actions. In spite of the wealth of work done on intersubjectivity a general look on contemporary studies shows an intense

debate revolving around a central still open question. What is the role of intersubjectivity for intentional communication? The thematic session aims to give insights on this relevant and innovative area of research and to offer a perspective on communication deeply grounded on how humans exploit their unique capacities to relate to each other, to share experiences and mental states. We invite chapters which approach the study of intersubjectivity for communication from a wide variety of perspectives. The relevant topics include the following (but are not limited to):

- Intersubjectivity for communication and collaborative activities
- Shared intentionality in cooperative activities
- Embodied communication
- Action recognition in communication
- Cognitive neuroscience of empathy, imitation and perspective taking
- Development of self-other representations
- Emotional attunement in communication
- Enactive knowledge acquisition and sharing

Guest editors:

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Giuseppe Riva, Department of Psychology, Catholic University of Milan

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