

Language and Society in Mead and Schutz

Visar Dizdari

Correspondance: Visar Dizdari, University of Shkoder “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Sheshi 2 Prilli, Shkoder, 4001, Albania. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4167-3298

Received: July 22, 2023

Accepted: October 13, 2023

Online Published: October 16, 2023

doi:10.11114/smc.v11i7.6262

URL: <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v11i7.6262>

Abstract

The relationship between language and society has interested many scholars of various disciplines in the social sciences and communication studies. This article compared the viewpoints of two fundamental authors of the interpretive approach in sociology, Alfred Schutz – founder of phenomenological sociology, and George Herbert Mead – one of the founding fathers of the symbolic interactionism’s perspective, on the relationship between language and social interaction. The article first presents the theories of Mead and Schutz on the relationship between language and social interaction, then points out the similarities and the differences between these theories. Finally, the difficulties each theory encounters and how these difficulties are overcome is discussed. Although Mead’s and Schutz’s theories are complementary, the difficulties encountered in Mead’s simplistic theory of communication are overcome in Schutz’s phenomenological analyses of the everyday life world through the concepts of *interpretative* and *expressive schemes*, and of the relationship of *We* or the *mutual tuning in relationship*.

Keywords: Alfred Schutz, George H. Mead, intersubjectivity, communication, signs, language, society

1. Introduction

Language is central to social interaction in every society. The interrelationships between social structure and linguistic structure have long intrigued social investigators of different backgrounds and interests (Wardhaugh, (2006) who have conducted various studies for diverse purposes. Communication is important to every branch of the social sciences (Miller, 1951). Language has been linked to social action via sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, the frame analysis and discursive psychology, ethnomethodology, and conversation analysis among others (Maynard & Peräkylä, 2006). In the last decade, the traditional methods used to study the relationship between language and society have been supplemented with approaches such as digital ethnography, the study of linguistic and semiotic landscapes, in response to increasing globalization and the integration of digital technologies into nearly every aspect of society (Jones & Themistocleous, 2022).

Despite the new and varied directions of investigation and an increase in knowledge on the reciprocal relationship between language and society, it is essential to examine the perspectives of classical thinkers of the social sciences on the relationship between language and society.

This article compares the points of view of two fundamental authors of the interpretive approach in sociology, Alfred Schutz, and George Herbert Mead on the relationship between language and society.

The works published by George Herbert Mead, together with the preceding ones by William James, John Dewey, and Charles Horton Cooley, are at the genesis of the perspective of symbolic interactionism. These founding theorists argued for the interpretive subjective study of human experience, but also sought to build an objective science of human conduct. Mead was preoccupied with interior self-conversations and the place of the other in the act. But Mead rejected introspection because it was not scientific, and in its place hypothesized a vision of the self and society that united these two terms in a mutual process of interaction. One of Mead’s major works, *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934) quickly became a fundamental interactionist text that inspired an entire tradition of social studies.

Subsequently, Herbert Blumer (1937), transformed Mead into a sociologist by presenting a vision of society derived from Mead’s representation of social action. Moreover, Goffman (1959) built a dramaturgical framework for the understanding of the social actor by explicitly referring to Mead and Blumer. Additionally, Strauss (1959) reworked Mead’s theory of the symbolic model into a linguistic model. Furthermore, Stone (1962) reanalyzed Mead’s model of the act and the self, stressing the importance of appearance, discourse, and meaning in interaction. Overall, these authors rewrote Mead’s theory of self and created new paths of empirical research by introducing new metaphors into the interactionist tradition (Denzin, 1992).

The work of the Austrian scholar Alfred Schutz is considered central to phenomenological sociology (or social phenomenology), one of the three major traditions of phenomenology with the other two being phenomenology as existential philosophy, and phenomenology as hermeneutics of being (Pula, 2022). The initial questions that attracted Schutz's interest were the open questions of the theory and methodology of the social sciences (Wagner, 1983; Barber, 2004). Schutz solved these questions via the phenomenology of Husserl (Schutz, 1977). Through the thought of the father of phenomenological philosophy Schutz, in his first published work *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (1932) seeks to clarify many ambiguous concepts of Weberian sociology and to find the philosophical foundation for the social sciences, in what he called the *constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude*. After his arrival in America in 1939, Schutz published a series of articles, where his chosen topics would be the intersubjectivity and the communication between signs and symbols, rationality in the social world, finite provinces of meaning, social distribution of knowledge, the problem of choice, and the relationship between the constructs of practical thought and science. Even though he published his works in prestigious sociological journals (Denzin, 1992), Schutz's influence on American sociology during his lifetime was limited. However, in the 60s and 70s, there was a significant increase in interest in his works. Subsequently, many researchers acknowledged the direct personal influence of Schutz on their thinking, including sociologists H. Wagner, P. Berger, T. Luckmann, H. Garfinkel, as well as A. Cicourel, M. Rogers, and others who acknowledged his indirect influence (Psathas, 2004).

In cognizance of the significant influence that the works of Mead and Schutz have exercised in social sciences, this study aims to "return to the roots" by discussing their theories on language, society, and communication. The purpose of this article was to compare the perspectives of these two major authors, Alfred Schutz, and George Herbert Mead, on the relationship between language and social interaction and illustrate how each author resolved various difficulties encountered in their analytical paths.

First, the article presents theories of Mead and Schutz on the relationship between language and society. Then, the article details similarities and differences between the two theories. Finally, this article posits the difficulties encountered by each theory and how they were overcome.

The information gained from juxtaposing these two general theories of communication will encourage social researchers to adopt a theoretically informed approach in their empirical works in the field of language and social action, communication, media, and other related sub disciplines of social studies.

2. The Relationship between Language and Society in Mead's Works

Mind, Self and Society (1934) that represents Mead's most important ideas and serves as a basis for the symbolic interactionism theory, can be seen as a chronological analysis of the emergence of the Self and of the thinking. In *Mind, Self and Society* (1934), the emergence of mind is mainly explained by the stimulus – response key.

Thinking occurs when a person arouses in himself the response he seeks in others. He or she anticipates the response of others and expects it when he acts. When individuals arouse in themselves the response they expect from others, their action represents a *social attitude* that serves as basis of those collective organizations called societies. The process described is possible only through *meaningful gestures*. The most significant gestures are vocal gestures, i.e., words of speech. Vocal gestures occupy a noteworthy position among gestures because unlike bodily gestures, vocal gestures are perceived in the same way by whoever performs them and by whoever receives them. Therefore, vocal gestures can stimulate both the performer and receiver in the same way (Mead, 1934).

According to Mead, the mind necessarily arouses after the appearance of language. An individual cannot have this inner discourse, which is the thinking, if he or she did not possess a language and did not interact with others. Mead emphasizes the temporal and logical pre-existence of the social process vis-à-vis the self-consciousness of an individual. Gesture conversation is a part of the social process that is something an isolated individual could not make possible. What the development of language, and especially the significant symbol, has made possible is precisely the assumption of this external social situation in the conduct of the individual himself. The *mind* is nothing but the assumption of this external process in the conduct of the individual in such a way as to be able to deal with the problems that arise. This special organization develops from a social process which is its logical antecedent. Mead makes his thesis clear; the mind arose only after the establishment of a common basis of meaningful gestures and the common basis of meanings already presupposes the existence of social relations (Mead, 1934).

For many authors Mead accepted the *objective life of society* a priori (Cosser, 1977; cf. Rosenthal and Bourgeois, 1991; Etzrodt, 2008). But, as the above paragraph indicates, rather than an a priori acceptance, the pre-existence of the social world seems to emerge as a logical consequence in Mead's argumentation.

In Mead's social behavioral theory of communication, language occupies a central role due to its specificity as a stimulus that arouses the same response in the other and in oneself. For that reason, vocal gestures are more important than other

gestures as they enable an individual to respond to his own stimulus in the same way that another person would react (Mead, 1934). Contrary to Wundt (1912/1916) who explains the social act through *imitation*, Mead argues that imitation does not provide any solution to the problem of the origin of language. The imitation of a gesture can only be done in the sense of imitation of a response, only in the sense that an individual influences himself through a gesture to the same extent that he is influenced by others using the same gesture (Mead, 1934).

Mead attempts to solve the problem of the origin of language by improving the schematic stimulus – response association of the traditional behaviorism to allow different responses to a stimulus in humans (Elliott & Meltzer, 1981). The meaning given to a gesture occurs through a mechanism that rests on the selection of a particular group of responses among all those that the gesture stimulates. The (implicit) *criterion* of the selection is the repetition of the response in others and then the recall of the same when the gesture is performed (Mead, 1934).

At this point, it is important to introduce Mead's concept of *significant symbol*. Significant symbols are stimuli in the form of vocal gestures. Mead offered two interpretations of these significant symbols: on the one hand as causing the same reaction in each member of a group, and on the other hand as eliciting the same attitude towards an object in each member of a group (Etzrodt, 2008). A vocal gesture becomes a significant symbol through the relationship between the vocal gesture and a group of responses that manifest themselves in an individual as well as in others (Mead, 1934). Thus, the second interpretation of symbol, as it emerges in *Mind, Self and Society*, is closer to the Mead's social behaviorism.

The mechanism of giving a meaning to a gesture assumes the existence of individuals who share the meaning of a gesture, what Mead calls a *universe of discourse*. The significant gesture or symbol always presupposes that to have a meaning, a *universe of discourse* is constituted by a group of individuals who assist and participate in a common social process of experience. A universe of discourse is simply a system of common meanings or social meanings (Mead, 1934).

In conclusion, Mead believes that meaning is universal by taking up the concept of *universal* developed by Dewey in the fifth chapter of his *Experience and Nature* (1929). According to Dewey, thinking is expressed through universals, that is, it transcends all particular situations. The universal is formed by isolation, through the abstracting function of attention, of certain characteristics irrelevant for different cases, thanks to the social nature of thought. Mead says that meaning for an individual arises in experience through the assumption of the attitude of the other in his reaction towards an object (Mead, 1934).

Mead's theory of communication that is based on significant symbols has inspired the works and critique of sociologists of the current of symbolic interactionism. Collins (1988), when referring to Mead's idea that communication is made possible as interlocutors reproduce in themselves the other's response to their own gesture and vice versa, argues that such continuous back and forth leaps would make communication impossible. Collins concurs with Joas who felt that Mead's theory of communication and the origin of language refers only to a basic level of communication and does not give insights into the pragmatic use of language:

“... in his theory of the origin of language, Mead restricts himself to the level of symbolic interactions and of elementary, one- and two-word sentences. His theory lacks an adequate concept of syntax as much as it does a semantic comprehending word fields and fields of meaning, or a taxonomy of the various ways in which language can be pragmatically used” (Joas, 1985: 116 - 117).

3. The Relationship between Language and Society in Schutz's Works

In his early work published in 1932, *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (whose English translation *The Phenomenology of the Social World* was published in 1972), Alfred Schutz tries to clarify many of Max Weber's comprehensive sociology ambiguous concepts and to find the philosophical foundation of the social sciences by mainly making use of the conceptual apparatus of Edmund Husserl's phenomenological philosophy to affront the problem of communication through signs.

Husserl's program (1929 / 1971) originated a theoretical and rigorous science equipped with absolute foundations by analyzing the ways in which objects are given in experience. This procedure foresees a series of reductions of the acts of experience to phenomena, the last of them being transcendental reduction that allow the attainment of transcendental subjectivity.

But unlike Husserl, Schutz emphasizes that transcendental reduction is not required when analyzing the phenomena of meaning in the social world. Schutz therefore proceeds along the path of a *constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude* (Schutz, 1932/1972) to accept in his mundane analysis, the existence of a social world in which the members of a group act in typical ways (Vaitkus, 2005).

First, Schutz defines the concept of *system of signs* with reference to the more general concept of interpretative scheme. He calls a *system of signs* a nexus of interpretative schemes in which a sign in question is inserted by a person who uses it by placing or interpreting it. Secondly, every particular system of signs has some general traits in common with other

signs: the significant nexus is not between the signs as such, but between what they signify. Thus the belonging of a sign to a system is independent of the knowledge of what the sign means, for example, one can recognize a written character as belonging to the Chinese language even without knowing the meaning of this character. Moreover, the subordination of a sign to the system of signs occurs on the basis of the total context of the experience in question by assuming a previous experience with signs within a system. Ultimately, although a sign may not be understood, every sign is significant and therefore comprehensible in principle (Schutz, 1932/1972).

Schutz distinguishes two different aspects in the concept of sense: the objective sense and the subjective sense. The objective sense is the understanding of the designated without having to know who places the sign and the circumstances in which he places it. It is a direct and unambiguous attachment of meaning to a sign. The subjective sense of the sign has to do with the function of expressing the experiences of conscience of a partner in a relationship that places the sign (Schutz, 1932/1972).

The subjective sense has both *subjective* and *occasional* components. The subjective component of the subjective sense of a sign has to do with attaching a meaning based on lived experiences by linking the sign with foreknowledge of both the one who places the sign and of the one who interprets it. The occasional component of the subjective sense refers to the meaning attributed to the sign based on the circumstances in which it is used: a meaning is attached to a sign based on the link it has with other signs that are placed or interpreted alongside it in a completed act.

For Schutz, the apprehension of the objective meaning of a sign remains in principle, an unachievable request; the subjective and occasional component of the meaning of a sign in question should be made explicit by means of rational concepts. A discourse is *precise* when all the occasional subjective meanings are sufficiently explicit based on the context (1932/1972).

The subjective and occasional components of the subjective sense envelop the objective sense of a sign providing it with a nucleus of identity. Schutz refers to the distinction James (1890/1950) makes between a term's core and *fringes*. The core of a term is the definition given to it in the dictionary, while its fringes are of different types: personal use, discourse context, person to whom it is directed, situation in which the discourse occurs, purpose of communication, problem, etc.

An important clarification that Schutz makes to the Weberian concepts in *Der sinnhafte Aufbau* is that of the *unity of the action* which is represented by the project of the actor. Thus, the unity of the meaning of a speech is based on the unity of the action. Therefore, meaning is represented by the project of the one who places the sign. The understanding of the discourse between two people succeeds when the one who puts the sign refers to the interpretative schemes of the other, fantasizes a project the purpose of which is to give the meaning he wants to convey with signs that will be interpreted precisely according to that meaning by the other (Schutz, 1932/1972).

In a later discussion about the communication and the symbols he points out that the communication assumes that the interpretative scheme attributed to the sign by the actor and the scheme that the interpreter will attribute to this sign substantially coincide. Schutz adds another characteristic of communication is it presupposes that similar *systems of relevance* exist between interlocutors. Hence communication can only succeed between people, social groups, nations, etc., who have similar systems of attribution of importance (Schutz, 1955).

The nature of pre-knowledge that interlocutors have about the other's interpretative schemes is in any case uncertain and approximate because it comes from previous self-interpretative experiences of the action of the other. Therefore, the subjective sense grasped by an interpreter is, in the best of cases, an approximation to the sense intended by the one who puts the sense, and never the intended sense itself. This is because such a sense always depends on the perspectives in which it is caught and on the fragmentary pre-knowledge relating to the interpretative schemes of *you* (Schutz, 1932/1972).

From these passages, one could erroneously infer that Schutz believed that true and proper understanding between individuals was impossible since one cannot grasp the meaning intended by the other. But Schutz makes it clear that communication in the social world is possible because, in their natural attitude, men do not go to a deeper level of the intended meaning of the other but stop at a practical level that would suffice for the purposes of everyday life.

Ethnomethodologists later studied the understanding between individuals and especially during conversations based on Schutz's idea. They studied the *practices* that enabled comprehension possible between members of a society (Garfinkel, 1969). Thus, they deepened Schutz's analysis of the idealizations on which everyday life communication is based.

4. Similarities between Mead's and Schutz's Theory on Communication

Both Schutz's and Mead theories on communication originate from the common idea of the dependence of language on the social organization of a linguistic community.

The theme of the conceptualization or construction of meanings by the actor in the world of everyday life occupies a central space in Schutz's reflections; by developing this theme in his analytical path, Schutz addresses the language –

society relationship. The meanings of substantially subjective experiences are objectified through the conceptualization represented by the typification of experiences. The typification of experiences in turn are provided by the language used in a specific society. Typification is a form of abstraction that leads to the common but vague conceptualization of common thought and to the necessary ambiguity of the terms of ordinary language. Most communicative signs are linguistic, so the typification required for a sufficient common basis is provided by the words and the syntactic structure of the mother tongue language (Schutz, 1955). Thus, the vocabulary of language used in a particular society is *the very repository* of the socially approved and distributed types through which that society organizes its lifeworld (Schutz, 1970).

The idea of language as a stratification of the life organization of the society that uses it is also portrayed in G. H. Mead's works. Mead says that a person who learns a new language moves into the attitude of those who speak that language. He cannot read the literature of that community nor converse with those belonging to it without assuming the community's peculiar attitudes. He becomes, in that sense, a different individual. A person cannot learn a language as if it were a pure abstraction; he or she also inevitably learns the life that is at the foundation of that language and organizes his or her attitudes to make that language his or her own; inevitably readjusting his or her views (Mead, 1934).

Beyond representing social organization, language marks the way in which an individual experiences the world as described by both Schutz and Mead.

Schutz, when referring to the process of learning mother tongue, highlights how language marks the experiences that an individual makes of the world, both with respect to the elements that deserve attention, and to the results to be pursued through acting in the world, and with regard to the means available to achieve these results. Learning one's mother tongue has a particularly important function in the process of transmitting socially approved knowledge. The language of origin is considered as a set of references which, according to the relatively natural conception of the world as approved by the linguistic community, have predetermined which aspects of the world are worthy of being expressed, and therefore which characteristics of these aspects and which relationships among them deserve attention, and which typifications, conceptualizations, abstractions, generalizations, and idealizations are relevant to achieving typical results through typical means. Both the vocabulary and the morphology and syntax of each language reflect the socially approved system of attribution of importance of a linguistic group notes Schutz (1955).

The function of language in determining what is relevant to the individual in the everyday world is similarly highlighted by Mead when discussing the appearance of *common-sense* objects. The social process is responsible, through the communication of the appearance of a whole series of objects of a new nature that exist in function of it. The language determines, conditions, and makes possible their abstraction from the total structure of events, as identities relevant to everyday social behavior (Mead, 1934). Not only does language determine what is relevant to man in the world; Mead's position is even stronger when he argues that language does not simply symbolize a particular situation or object as it is also part of the mechanism by which that situation or object is created (Mead, 1934).

Another point both authors have in common is that of the central importance assigned to language in the communication process. For Mead (1934) the vocal gesture enables an individual to respond to his own stimulus in the same way another person would react. Therefore, language is the only vocal gesture suitable for meaningful communication. Schutz also recognizes that in the social world, language is by general recognition the vehicle of communication par excellence; its conceptual structure and typifying power make it the preeminent tool for the transmission of meaning (Schutz, 1951).

5. Differences between Mead's and Schutz's Theories on Communication

The two authors differ in their analytical paths when addressing the problem of communication and language.

Mead, in an ontogenetic analysis of the Self, starts from society to arrive at the language, the mind and the Self. Schutz, in a constitutive analysis, starts from the experience of consciousness of the solitary Ego to arrive at the understanding of the Alter Ego in everyday life. But both must face in the middle of their theoretical path the problem of understanding the other, communication and the language.

I concur with authors who support the thesis of the complementarity between the two theories.

For Muzzetto, the sociological complementarity of Schutz's analyzes is revealed in completing the path started by interactionism: if Mead's analysis is mainly centered on the ways in which the social produces the self, Schutz attempts to analyze the ways in which the Ego reconstitutes the social (1997: 238). Other authors also support the complementarity between Mead's approach and that of Schutz. According to Wagner (1969: 85), Schutz's analytical path begins where Mead's ends. The polarity of the starting points distinguishes the two approaches. Each theory has its strengths and weaknesses. The Meadian theory's strong point is in its analysis of the development of consciousness despite its limited analysis of the complexity of a mature consciousness. Phenomenology effectively analyzes issues such as subjective meaning, motivations, and relevancies, but scarcely analyses the birth of consciousness in the human individual. (Wagner, 1969: 105). Turner argues that traditions that emerge from Mead's approach and the phenomenological one of Schutzian

aspiration are complementary. Schutz's model of intersubjectivity adds many insights to the Meadian position, such as a better conceptualization of both the process by which individuals interpret each other's gestures, of social roles involving various levels of subjectivity, and insights into signaling and interpreting that emphasizes context as a basis for determining the meaning of the gestures (Turner, 1988: 82).

In addition to the shared idea of the complementarity of Mead's and Schutz's analyzes in terms of understanding, communication, and language, Schutz's analyzes go beyond Mead's regarding the question of the primacy of the social relations over actual communication. The question is addressed in the essay *Making Music Together* (1951), which is not only a study of applied theory, but also an explicit philosophical ambition to shed light on the structure of the social relationship first exemplified by listening to music (Pedone, 1996: 21).

In this essay Schutz examines Mead's theory of communication. He recognizes the originality of Mead's attempt to explain the origin of language by the reciprocal relationship of significant gestures starting from the assumption that it is possible a paralinguistic *conversation* of gestures made up of *attitudes* (Schutz, 1951). But the assumption remains implicit, and Mead does not clarify this passage in his works. The social process in Mead is an *objectively founded structure*. Mead does not specify what *social* and *sociality* mean, and what it means to say that two individuals are in a social relationship. The social relationship remains an element that Mead takes for granted (Natanson, 1973).

Schutz clearly states that every communication must presuppose the existence of some sort of social interaction which does not enter into the communicative process and is not able to be grasped by it despite being an indispensable condition for every possible communication. Examples of this form of social interaction are activities such as the relationship between pitcher and catcher in baseball, between tennis players, marching bands marching together, dancers dancing together, lovers making love, musicians making music together etc. (Schutz, 1951).

Schutz further delves into the example of the social relationship of making music together. First, musical work has a particularity: its meaning *is of an essentially polythetic nature* and cannot be grasped monothetically (Schutz, 1951). In a later reflection on the theme, Schutz reiterates that the process of reproducing a musical work can only take place through the reconstruction of the polythetic passages in which it was constituted, mentally or effectively reproducing its development from the first to the last bar, following its progression over time. Also, the meaning of music which cannot be grasped monothetically, is only a corollary of the thesis according to which meaning is unrelated to a conceptual schema (Schutz, 1976).

Second, Schutz highlights two modalities of the social relationship established through music. The first has to do with the communication of meaning between a composer and listeners (and between a composer and performers). The second mode concerns the relationship between the performers themselves. The first relationship is based on sharing in the internal time in which the flow of musical events takes place. The second relationship is not based only on the sharing of internal time but also of external time. The performers are in a face-to-face relationship, in a common space which causes the flows of internal time to unify, guaranteeing their synchronization in the vivid present. Communication therefore resides in the primordial relationship of *We*, or as he calls it, in the *mutual tuning in relationship* which is based on the simultaneous participation of partners in the flow of internal time and in the immediacy of space, it presupposes *growing old together* (Schutz, 1951).

6. Conclusions

The relationships between language and social interaction have long intrigued social thinkers. The focus of this article was a juxtaposition of the points of view of two classical authors on the question of the interpretive approach in sociology, Alfred Schutz – founder of phenomenological sociology, and George Herbert Mead – one of the founding fathers of the symbolic interactionism's perspective.

Both authors agree on the central role of language in human communication.

In Mead's behavioristic theory of sign, meaningful communication is only possible through linguistic references which specifically enables an individual to respond to his own stimulus in the same way that another person would react. For Schutz, in the social world, the typifying power of language is its solitary ability to transmit meaning.

Both authors also concur on the bi-directional relationship between language and society. Mead and Schutz share the idea that language, on one hand, represents a stratification of the life organization of the society that uses it, and on the other hand, it marks the way in which an individual experiences the everyday world.

The authors differ in their analytical paths of addressing the problem of communication. Mead undertakes an ontogenetic analysis starting from society to arrive at the language, the mind, and the Self. But Schutz's analysis is a constitutive one starting from the experience of consciousness to arrive at the understanding of the other in everyday life. But both have to face the problem of understanding, communication and language. This makes the two theories complementary.

Schutz's analytical path begins where Mead's ends. Analyzing the ways in which the Ego reconstitutes the social, Schutz completes Mead's analysis centered on the ways the social produces the Self. Also, the strengths of one's theory complete the weaknesses of the other. Mead's theory is effective in analyzing the development of consciousness, but not the mature consciousness. Schutz effectively analyses the subjective meaning, motivations, systems of relevance, but not the birth of consciousness. Moreover, Schutzian phenomenological analysis on intersubjectivity give insights to a better conceptualization of the process by which individuals determine the meaning and interpret each other's gestures.

However, Meadian theory is a simplistic theory of communication and of the origin of language that cannot explain communication beyond a basic level. Although Mead attempted to develop a better behavioristic theory, his theory of communication faces difficulties related to the use he continues to make of stimulus – response mechanism. These difficulties are overcome by Schutz with the use of concepts of *interpretative* and *expressive schema*.

Furthermore, Mead's attempt to explain the origin of language starting from the assumption that is possible a paralinguistic conversation of gestures, remains implicit and unclarified. On the other hand, Schutz clarifies that communication resides in the relationship of *We* or in the *mutual tuning in relationship*, based on the simultaneous participation of partners in the internal flow of time and in the immediacy of space.

Conflict of interest: The author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

Not applicable.

Authors contributions

All parts of the article are the contribution of the author Visar Dizdari.

Funding

No funding was received for conducting this study.

Competing interests

The author declares that he have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Not applicable.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Redfame Publishing.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

References

- Barber, M. D. (2004). *The Participating Citizen: A Biography of Alfred Schutz*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. <https://doi.org/10.1353/book4831>
- Blumer, H. (1937). Social Psychology, in E. P. Schmidt (ed.), *Man and Society*, (pp. 144-198). Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.
- Collins, R. (1988). *Theoretical Sociology*. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Coser, L. A. (1977). *Masters of sociological thought: Ideas in historical and social context* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Denzin, N. (1992). *Symbolic Interactionism and Cultural Studies. The Politics of Interpretation*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Dewey, J. (1929). *Experience and Nature* (revised edition). New York, NY: Norton. <https://doi.org/10.1037/13377-000>
- Elliott, R. D., & Meltzer, B. N. (1981). Symbolic interactionism and psychoanalysis: Some convergences, divergences, and complementarities. *Symbolic Interaction*, 4(2), 225-244. <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.1981.4.2.225>
- Etzrodt, C. (2008). The Foundation of an Interpretative Sociology: A Critical Review of the Attempts of George H. Mead and Alfred Schutz. *Human Studies*, 31, 157-177. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-008-9082-0>
- Garfinkel, H. (1969). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- Husserl, E. (1971). Phenomenology. (R. Palmer, Trans.) *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 2, 77-90. (First version published in 1929). <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071773.1971.11006182>
- James, W. (1950). *The Principles of Psychology*. 2 volumes in 1. New York, NY: Dover Publications. (First edition published 1890).
- Joas, H. (1985). *G. H. Mead: A Contemporary Re-examination of his Thought*. London, UK: Polity Press. <https://doi.org/10.3817/1285066143>
- Jones, R. H., & Themistocleous, C. (2022). *Introducing language and society*. Cambridge, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Maynard, D.W., Peräkylä, A. (2006). Language and Social Interaction. In Delamater, J. (Eds.). *Handbook of Social Psychology*, (pp 233–257). Boston, MA: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-36921-X_10
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society. From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist*. Ch. W. Morris (Ed.), Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Miller, G. A. (1951). *Language and communication*. New York: McGraw-Hill. <https://doi.org/10.1037/11135-000>
- Muzzetto, L. (1997). *Fenomenologia, etnometodologia: percorsi della teoria dell'azione*. Milano, Italy: FrancoAngeli.
- Natanson, M. (1973). *The Social Dynamics of George H. Mead*. The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-2408-2>
- Pedone, N. (1996). *Intersoggettività, tempo e relazione sociale nella filosofia della musica di Alfred Schutz*. In N. Pedone (eds.) Schutz, A. *Frammenti di fenomenologia della musica*, (pp. 9-27). Milano, Italy: Guerrini e Associati.
- Psathas, G. (2004). Alfred Schutz's Influence on American Sociologists and Sociology. *Human Studies*, 27, 1-35. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:HUMA.0000012249.47522.56>
- Pula, B. (2022). Does Phenomenology (Still) Matter? Three Phenomenological Traditions and Sociological Theory. *Int. J. Polit. Cult. Soc.*, 35, 411-431. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-021-09404-9>
- Rosenthal, S. B., Bourgeois, P. L. (1991). *Mead and Merleau-Ponty*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Schutz, A. (1932). *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt*. Wien, Austria: Spinger-Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-7091-3108-4>
- Schutz, A. (1951). Making Music Together: A Study in Social Relationship. *Social Research*, 13, 6-97.
- Schutz, A. (1955). Symbol, Reality and Society. In L. Bryson, L. Finkelstein, H. Hoagland & R. M. MacIver (eds.), *Symbols and Society*. Fourteenth Symposium on Science, Philosophy, and Religion, (pp. 135-202), NY: Harper.
- Schutz, A. (1970). *Reflections on the problem of relevance*. R. Zaner (Eds.) New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press.

- Schutz, A. (1972). *The phenomenology of the social world*. (G. Walsh & F. Lehnert, Trans.), Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1932).
- Schutz, A. (1976). Fragments on the Phenomenology of Music. In F. J. Smith (eds.) *In Search of Musical Method*, (pp. 23-71). London, UK: Gordon and Breach. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411897608574487>
- Schutz, A. (1977). Husserl and his Influence on Me. *The Annals of Phenomenological Sociology*, 2, 41-44. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-6893-7_7
- Stone, G. P. (1962). Appearance and the Self. In A. M. Rose (Ed.), *Human Behavior and Social Processes: An Interactionist Approach*, (pp. 86-118). New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Strauss, A. (1959). *Mirrors and Masks*. New York: Free Press.
- Turner, J. H. (1988). *A Theory of Social Interaction*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Vaitkus, S. (2005). The “naturalness” of Alfred Schutz’s natural attitude of the life-world. In M. Endress, G. Psathas & H. Nasu (Eds.), *Explorations of the life-world*, (pp. 97-121). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-3220-X_5
- Wagner, H. R. (1969). Phenomenology and Contemporary Sociological Theory, *Sociological Focus*, 2, 73-86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380237.1969.10570677>
- Wagner, H. R. (1974). Signs, Symbols and Interaction Theory. *Sociological Focus*, 7, 101-111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380237.1974.10570888>
- Wagner, H. R. (1983). *Alfred Schutz. An Intellectual Biography*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Wardhaugh, R. (2006). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (5th Ed.). Padstow, Cornwall, UK: Blackwell.
- Wundt, W. (1916). *Elements of folk psychology: Outlines of a psychological history of the development of mankind*. (E. L. Schaub, Trans.), London, UK: G. Allen & Unwin. (Original work published 1912). <https://doi.org/10.1037/13042-000>