



THE MAIN THEORETICAL FEATURES OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION IN TEACHING

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Abstract: This article is intended to give basic information on the fundamentals of speech communication to students who have little or no background in communication theory. It is essential and much more useful to help the students understand the pervasiveness of communication in their lives, to demystify the theoretical process, and to help students become more systematic and critical in their thinking about theory. Also there are given main features of communication and its various aspects in speech communication. Much attention has been paid to the analysis of communication component, forms and types as well as the models of communication.

Key words: The academic study of communication, communication theory, communicology, the process of communication and information transmission.

Communication theory as a named and unified discipline has a history that goes back to the Socratic dialogues, in many ways making it the first and most contestatory of all early sciences and philosophies. Aristotle first addressed the problem of communication and attempted to work out a theory of it in *The Rhetoric*. He was primarily focused on the art of persuasion. Communication has existed since the beginning of human beings, but it was not until the 20th century that people began to study the process. Humanistic and rhetorical viewpoints and theories dominated the discipline prior to the twentieth century, when more scientific methodologies and insights from psychology, sociology, linguistics and advertising began to influence communication thought and practice. As communication technologies developed, so did the serious study of communication. Communication studies focus on communication as central to the human experience, which involves understanding how people behave in creating, exchanging, and interpreting messages. When World War I ended, the interest in studying communication intensified. Before becoming simply communication theory, or communication studies, the discipline was formed from three other major studies: *psychology, sociology, and anthropology*. Psychology is the study of human behavior, sociology is the study of society and social process, and anthropology is the study of communication as a factor, which develops, maintains, and changes culture. Though communication theory remains a relatively young field of study, it is also closely connected with other disciplines such as philosophy. It is very difficult to expect a consensus understanding of communication across disciplines.

Communication theory has one universal law posited by S.F.Scudder. The universal communication law states that all living entities, beings and creatures communicate. All of the living communicates through movements, sounds, reactions, physical changes, gestures, languages, breath, etc. Communication is a means of survival - the cry of a child (communicates that it is hungry, hurt, cold, etc.), the browning of a leaf (communicates that it is dehydrated, thirsty and dying); the cry of an animal (communicates that it is injured, hungry, angry, etc.). Everything living communicates in its quest for survival.



Communication theory can also be studied and organized according to the *ontological, epistemological, and axiological* framework. Let us analyze these concepts.

Ontology poses the question of what the theorist is examining. One must consider the very nature of reality. The answer usually falls in one of three realms depending on whether the theorist sees the phenomena through the lens of a realist, nominalist, or social constructionist. Realist perspective considers the world objectively, believing that there is a world outside of our own experience and cognitions. Nominalists see the world subjectively, claiming that everything outside of one's cognitions is simply names and labels. Social constructionists straddle the fence between objective and subjective reality, claiming that reality is what we create together.

Epistemology is the examination of how the theorist studies the chosen phenomena. In studying epistemology, objective knowledge is said to be the result of a systematic look at the causal relationships of phenomena. This knowledge is usually attained through the usage of the scientific method. Scholars often think that empirical evidence (practical data) collected in an objective manner is most likely to reflect truth in the findings. Theories of this type are usually created to predict a phenomenon. Subjective theory holds that understanding is based on situated knowledge, typically found using interpretative methodology such as ethnography and interviews. Subjective theories are typically developed to explain or understand phenomena in the social world.

Axiology is concerned with what values drive a theorist to develop a theory. Theorists must be mindful of potential biases so that they will not influence or skew their findings.

In the early 1940's a mathematical theory, for dealing with the more fundamental aspects of communication systems, was developed. The distinguishing characteristics of this theory are, first, a great emphasis on probability theory and, second, a primary concern with the encoder and decoder, both in terms of their functional roles and in terms of the existence (or nonexistence) of encoders and decoders that achieve a given level of performance. In the past 20 years, information theory has been made more precise, has been extended, and brought to the point where it is being applied in practical communication systems. As in any mathematical theory, it deals only with mathematical models and not with physical sources and physical channels.

Communicology is the study of the art and science of communication. It studies the structure and dynamics of communication and is the result of decades of development within a range of subjects and fields: educational science, counseling, health, negotiation, cooperation, management, etc. and research within those fields. The material is built upon a research approach best characterized as comparative studies of practitioners, methods, theories, models within and between various subjects and fields. Similarities and differences in vast amounts of information, knowledge, competence, concepts have been studied for identifying, elucidating and making accessible "masterkeys" - the active ingredients in communication and change. It is specifically related to the advertising, marketing and media industry. Someone who studies communicology is called a communicologist.

As we come to the Pragmatic linguistics, pragmatics - a subfield of linguistics developed in the late 1970s - studies how people comprehend and produce a communicative act or speech act in a concrete speech situation which is usually a conversation (hence conversation analysis). It distinguishes two intents or meanings in each utterance or communicative act of verbal communication. One is the *informative intent* or the sentence meaning, and the other one - the *communicative intent* or speaker meaning. The ability to



comprehend and produce a communicative act is referred to as pragmatic competence, which often includes one's knowledge about the social distance, social status between the speakers involved, the cultural knowledge such as politeness, and the linguistic knowledge explicit and implicit. Some of the aspects of language studied in pragmatics include:

-*Deictic*: meaning 'pointing to' something. In verbal communication however, deixis in its narrow sense refers to the contextual meaning of pronouns, and in its broad sense, what the speaker means by a particular utterance in a given speech context.

-*Presupposition*: referring to the logical meaning of a sentence or meanings logically associated with or entailed by a sentence.

-*Performative*: implying that by each utterance a speaker not only says something but also does certain things: giving information, stating a fact or hinting an attitude. The study of performatives led to the hypothesis of *speech act theory* that holds that a speech event embodies three acts: a locutionary act, an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act.

-*Implicature*: referring to an indirect or implicit meaning of an utterance derived from context that is not present from its conventional use.

Defining communication

Since the beginning of time, the need to communicate emerges from a set of universal questions: Who am I? Who needs to know? Why do they need to know? How do I want people to respond? It is often formed around the principles of respect, promises and the want for social improvement. People communicate to satisfy needs both in their work and non-work lives. People want to be heard, to be appreciated and to be wanted. They also want to accomplish tasks and achieve goals. Obviously, a major purpose of communication is to help people feel good about themselves and their friends, groups, and organizations. To satisfy this there must be a transmission of thoughts, ideas and feelings from one mind to another.

The word *communication* is abstract and, like many other words, possesses multiple meanings. Scholars have made many attempts to define its meaning. The subject of communication has concerned them since the time of ancient Greece. The word *communication* comes from the Latin *communis* which means "to impart, share," "to make common". When we communicate, we are trying to establish commonness with someone, that is, we are trying to share information, an idea or an attitude. Some scholars limit their definitions of communication rather narrowly, saying that communication is the process whereby one person tells another something through the written or spoken word. The idea of sharing the information is the principal one in most definitions. Some of the definitions of communication are very comprehensive, include several meanings, recognizing that animals and plants can communicate with each other as well as human beings. Some are narrow and include only human beings. C. Hovland, a well-known psychologist of a few years ago, said that communication is the process by which an individual (the communicator) transmits stimuli (usually verbal symbols) to modify the behavior of the other individuals. In 1928 the English literary critic and author I. Richards offered one of the first — and in some ways still the best — definitions of communication:

“Communication takes place when one mind so acts upon its environment that another mind is influenced, and in that other mind an experience occurs which is like the experience in the first mind, and is caused in part by that experience”. According to the encyclopedia Britannica communication is the exchange of information between individuals through a common system of verbal symbols.



Being seen as the processes of information transmission communication is governed by three levels of semiotic rules: *syntactic* (describe formal properties of signs and symbols), *pragmatic* (are concerned with the relations between signs/expressions and their users) and *semantic* (study the relationships between signs, symbols and what they represent).

Communication process

To communicate effectively we need to be familiar with the factors involved in the communication process. If we are aware of them, these factors will help us plan, analyze situations, solve problems, and in general do better our work no matter what our job might be. Communication is usually described along a few major dimensions:

1. *Content* {what type of things are communicated};
2. *Source* {by whom};
3. *Form* {in which form};
4. *Channel* {through which medium};
5. *Destination/Receiver* {to whom};
6. *Purpose/Pragmatic aspect* {with what kind of results}.

The process of information transmission. In the process of transmitting the message two processes will be received by the receiver: *content* and *context*. *Content* is the actual words or symbols of the message which is known as *language* - the spoken and written words combined into phrases that make grammatical and semantic sense. We all use and interpret the meanings of words differently, so even simple messages can be misunderstood. And many words have different meanings to confuse the issue even more. *Context* is the way the message is delivered and is known as *paralanguage* - it includes the tone of voice, the look in the sender's eyes, body language, hand gestures, and the state of emotions (anger, fear, uncertainty, confidence, etc.) that can be detected.

Barriers to communication

Anything that prevents understanding of the message is a barrier to communication. Many physical and psychological barriers exist:

- **Culture, background, bias.** We allow our past experiences to change the meaning of the message. Our culture, background, and bias can be good as they allow us to use our past experiences to understand something new, it is when they change the meaning of the message then they interfere with the communication process.
- **Noise.** Noise impedes clear communication. The sender and the receiver must both be able to concentrate on the messages being sent to each other.

Types of the noise:

Environmental Noise: Noise that physically disrupts communication, such as standing next to loud speakers at a party, or the noise from a construction site next to a classroom making it difficult to hear the professor.

Physiological-Impairment Noise: Physical maladies that prevent effective communication, such as actual deafness or blindness preventing messages from being received as they were intended.

Semantic Noise: Different interpretations of the meanings of certain words. For example, the word "weed" can be interpreted as an undesirable plant in your yard, or as a euphemism for marijuana.

Syntactical Noise: Mistakes in grammar can disrupt communication, such as abrupt changes in verb tense during a sentence.



Organizational Noise: Poorly structured communication can prevent the receiver from accurate interpretation. For example, unclear and badly stated directions can make the receiver even more lost.

Cultural Noise: Stereotypical assumptions can cause misunderstandings, such as unintentionally offending non-Christian persons by wishing them a "Merry Christmas."

Psychological Noise: Certain attitudes can also make communication difficult. For instance, great anger or sadness may cause someone to lose focus on the present moment. Disorders such as autism may also severely hamper effective communication.

- **Ourselves.** Focusing on ourselves, rather than the other person, can lead to confusion and conflict. The "Me Generation" is out when it comes to effective communication. Some of the factors that cause this are defensiveness (we feel someone is attacking us), superiority (we feel we know more than the others), and ego (we feel we are the centre of the activity).
- **Perception.** If we feel the person is talking too fast, not fluently, does not articulate clearly, etc., we may dismiss this person. Our preconceived attitudes also affect our ability to listen. We listen uncritically to persons of high status and dismiss those of low status.
- **Message.** Distractions happen when we focus on the facts rather than the idea. Semantic distractions occur when a word is used differently than you prefer. For example, the word *chairman* instead of *chairperson*, may cause you to focus on the word and not on the message.
- **Environmental.** Bright lights, an attractive person, unusual sights, or any other stimulus provide a potential distraction.
- **Stress.** People do not see things the same way when under stress. What we see and believe at a given moment is influenced by our psychological frames of references - our beliefs, values, knowledge, experiences, and goals.

These barriers can be thought of as filters, that is, the message leaves the sender, goes through the above filters, and is then heard by the receiver. These filters muffle the message.

There are different ways how to overcome these filters/barriers of communication.

Components of communication

All communication contacts have certain common elements that together help to define the communication process. The better you understand these elements, the easier it will be for you to develop your own communication abilities. Let us begin by examining the essentials of communication - those components present during every interpersonal, small group and public communication contact.

a. People

Obviously every human communication contact of any kind involves people. Interpersonal, small group and public communication encounters take place between and among all types of "senders" and "receivers". "Senders" and "receivers", respectively, are simply persons who give out and take in messages. Although it is easy to picture an interpersonal, small group or public communication experience as beginning with a sender and ending with a receiver, it is important to understand that during communication the sending role does not belong exclusively to one person and receiving role to another. Instead, the sending and receiving processes are constantly being reversed, and thus, when we communicate with one or more individuals, we simultaneously send and receive. If we were just senders, we would simply emit signals without ever stopping to consider whom, if anyone, we were affecting. If we were

just the receivers, we would be no more than receptacles for signals from others, never having an opportunity to let anyone know how we were being affected. Fortunately, this is not how effective communication works. The verbal and nonverbal messages that we send out are often determined by the verbal and nonverbal messages received from the others.

b. Messages

During every interpersonal, small 1-group or public communication contact we all send and receive both verbal and nonverbal messages. What you talk about, the words you use to express your thoughts and feelings, the sounds you make, the way you sit and gesture, your facial expressions and perhaps even your touches or your smell all communicate information. In effect, *the message is the content of a communicative act*. Some messages that we send are private (a kiss accompanied by the words "I love you"), and the others are public and directed at hundreds or thousands of people.

c. Channel

It is the system or method that we use to send or obtain information in the process of communication. We send and receive messages with and through all our senses; equally messages may be sent and received through both verbal and nonverbal models. Thus, in effect, we are multichannel communicators. We receive *sound messages* (noises from the street), *sight messages* (you see how someone looks), *taste messages* (you taste particular food), *smell messages* (you smell the eau-de-cologne of a friend), *touch messages* (you feel the roughness of a fabric). Effective communicators are adept channel switchers. They recognize that communication is a multichannel experience

d. Context

Communication always takes place in some context or setting. Two things are meant by context:

1. the situation, events or information that are related to something and that help you to understand it: political/social/historical etc. context, for instance, the political context of the election;
2. the words that come just before and after a word or a sentence and help you understand its meaning (the meaning of the word "mad" depends on its context).

Sometimes the context is so natural that we hardly notice it. At other times, however, the context makes such an impression on us that it exerts considerable control over our behaviour.

e. Feedback

The purpose of feedback is to change and alter messages so the intention of the original communicator is understood by the second communicator. Whenever we communicate with one or more persons, we also receive information in return. The verbal and nonverbal cues that we perceive in reaction to our communication function as feedback. Feedback tells us how we are coming across. A smile, a frown, a chuckle, a sarcastic remark, a muttered thought, or simply silence can cause us to change, modify, continue or end a transaction. Feedback that encourages us to continue behaving as we are, is *positive feedback*, and it enhances our behaviour in progress. In contrast, negative feedback serves to modify our behaviour and has a corrective function. Note that positive and negative should not be interpreted as meaning "good" or "bad" but simply reflect the way these responses affect behaviour. Both positive and negative feedback can emanate from internal or external sources. *Internal feedback* is feedback you give yourself as you monitor your own behaviour or performance during a transaction. *External feedback* is the one from others, who are involved in the communication

event. To be an effective communicator, you must be sensitive to both types of feedback. You must pay attention to your own reactions and the reactions of others.

C. Rogers listed five main categories of feedback. They are listed in the order in which they occur most frequently in daily conversations. Notice that we make judgments more often than we try to understand:

- *Evaluative*: Making a judgment about the worth, goodness, or appropriateness of the other person's statement.
- *Interpretive*: Paraphrasing - attempting to explain what the other person's statement means.
- *Supportive*: Attempting to assist or bolster the other communicator.
- *Probing*: Attempting to gain additional information, continue the discussion, or clarify a point.
- *Understanding*: Attempting to discover what the other communicator means by her statements.

f. **Effect**

A communication experience always has some effect on you and on the person or people with whom you are interacting. An effect can be *emotional, physical, cognitive* or any combination of all three. An interpersonal, small-group or public communication contact can elicit feelings of joy, anger or sadness (emotional); communication can cause you to fight, argue, become apathetic (physical); or it can lead to new insights, increased knowledge, the formation or reconsideration of opinions, silence or confusion (cognitive). The result of a communication encounter can also be any combination of all three effects just mentioned.

Besides having specific ingredients or elements in common, all interpersonal, small-group and public communication experiences also share certain general characteristics:

- a. Communication is a dynamic process. When we call communication a dynamic process, we mean that all its elements constantly interact and affect each other. Since all people are interconnected, whatever happens to one person determines in part what happens to others. Nothing about communication is static, everything is accumulative. We communicate as long as we are alive, and thus, every interaction that we engage in, is part of series of connected happenings. So, all our present communication experiences may be thought of as points of arrival from past encounters, and as points of departure for future ones.
- b. Communication is unrepeatable and irreversible. Every human contact you experience is unique. It has never happened before, and it will never happen in just that way again. An old proverb says "You can never step into the same river twice", because the experience changes both you and the river forever. Thus, communication is both unrepeatable and irreversible. We can neither take back something we have said nor evade the effects of something we have done. And although we may be greatly influenced by our past, we can never reclaim it.

In conclusion, at the heart of our daily interactions lies the art of communication, an essential process through which we exchange information, ideas, and emotions with others. It's more than just talking; it's about connecting, understanding, and being understood. This exchange is fundamental to building relationships, fostering social interactions, and nurturing personal well-being. Whether through a smile, a written note, or a heartfelt conversation, every act of communication contributes to the fabric of our social lives and personal growth.



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