

ORAL COMMUNICATION

— *A Lecture Guide* —

By Gail-Ann Greaves-Venzen, Ph.D.



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ORAL
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ORAL COMMUNICATION

A LECTURE GUIDE

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Introduction to Communication

“I am a good Communicator. I am in control of my thoughts, words, and actions. I only think, speak, and act in ways that create and fulfill the best in me!”

—Dr. Shad Helmstetter

Point of Reference

The gas company dug up the sidewalk in front of the house to install new gas pipes. The next morning, as I was talking my six year old to school, she saw the mess and hole in the sidewalk. Immediately she stated, “I can’t believe this! They made a mess! Look at this mess, mommy. They did not clean it up!” As we drove off in the car, still upset by the hole in the sidewalk, she exclaimed: “They need to go back to school and learn how to do it correctly. They need to go back to Kindergarten and learn.” I smiled as I questioned: “Kindergarten?” “Yes, mommy. Kindergarten,” she said, proud to be a first grader. It dawned on me, “Yes Kindergarten.” It made sense to her because that was her point of reference. She was in first grade. Although she knew that one day she would attend university, she could only provide meaning based on her limited experiences. What is your point of reference? How does your point of reference affect the way in which you communicate and interpret messages? Too often we rush to judgment because we attach our meaning to others’ messages without understanding their point of reference. Before we dive into how to become dynamic presenters, we must

first understand what makes us effective communicators. To be a dynamic presenter, you must be an effective communicator by understanding your role and the role of the audience during the communication process.

What is Communication?

What is communication? What are some ways in which we communicate? If you thought that we communicate through talking, texting, emails, signs, advertisements, body language, facial expressions, eye contact, singing, dance, art, clothing, smoke signal, smelling, etc., you are right. Are you an effective communicator? If yes, then what makes you an effective communicator? These are some of the questions we will address in this chapter. In addition, we will clear up some misconceptions you may have about communication.

Communication is a process in which we share and understand ideas. The definition is a very simple one for such a complicated process. At a quick glance, communication seems simple. But is it? Initially, your definition of communication might have only focused on the written or spoken messages. There are, however, many other elements to consider.

To further understand the definition of communication let us define all the keywords in our previous definition of communication.

The first significant word in our definition is a **process**. What is a process? Merriam-Webster.com (2015) defines the process as “a series of actions that produce something or that lead to a particular result.” How does this definition fit into your ideas of communication? Let us go a little deeper in our definition of a process and equate communication to the process of baking a cake. Even if you have never baked a cake, you can easily picture the steps involved in the process.

TABLE 1.1 **Communication as a Process of Baking a Cake**

Cake	Communication
Ingredients	Elements
Tools	Five senses
Recipe	Theories
Mix together	Communication is dynamic and irreversible
Put in oven and wait	Communication occurs within a given context and time
Take the cake out of the oven	Input and outcomes

The first step in baking a cake is to gather your needed **ingredients**: eggs, milk, flour, water, sugar, etc. The ingredients required to communicate are called elements (Berlo, 1960): sender, receiver, channel, message, noise, context, encode, decode. These elements are dependent on one another. The second step in our process of baking a cake is to gather your tools: pans, bowls, spoons, etc. The tools needed to communicate are your **five senses**: see, hear, taste, smell, and touch.

It is easy to understand how you communicate through seeing with your eyes and hearing with your ears. But how do you use your other senses to communicate? Let us examine **touch**. In the United States business world, the handshake is one method of recognition. But do you know how the handshake originated? In the article “What is the origin of the Handshake?” Evan Andrews explains that it began as a way of conveying peaceful intentions. “Strangers extended empty right hands to show that they did not have weapons and bore no ill will toward one another, and the up-and-down motion of the handshake was supposed to dislodge any knives or daggers that might be hidden up a sleeve” (Evan Andrews, 2016). Today, the handshake can symbolize good faith when closing a deal. It is a symbol of power. If the handshake is too weak, it indicates that the individual is insecure. Likewise, if the handshake is too strong, it suggests that the person is trying to overcompensate. When go on a job interview, wait until the interviewer offers to shake your hand because you do not want to step into the interviewer’s personal space unless invited. If the interviewer offers to shake your hand as you approach him or her, look the interviewer in the eye and say, “Good morning, [their title and name.] My name is ... and I am here to interview for ... position. It is a pleasure to meet you.” Remember to give a good handshake where you grasp the entire hand and squeeze in a firm but non-aggressive manner. Web must meet web, and palm must meet palm before gripping. No grabbing of the fingers or limp handshake. In a study conducted by Stewart, Dustin, Barrick, & Darnold (2008), it was found that the “quality of handshake was related to interviewer hiring recommendations.” However, if the interviewer does not offer his or her hand, do not offer yours, as this action might be due to culture, gender, or personal preferences. You do not want to start the interview by putting your interviewer in an awkward position of having to explain his or herself. Simply greet the interviewer, and wait for his or her directive. Factors such as culture, profession, and gender can also influence the meaning of the handshake.

Human beings need touch. To feel secure, we self-touch and allow others to touch us. Touch is so important that hospitals have volunteers and staff members who hold abandoned babies or babies whose parents cannot visit frequently. Parents are encouraged to Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) premature babies. Kangaroo Mother Care is a process where a parent holds the newborn baby skin to skin on the chest. It decreases stress in mothers of premature babies and increases infants’ ability to make requests and respond to parental interaction (Suman Rao et al., 2008). In addition, KMC decreases neonatal deaths in pre-term birth complications (Sloan, Ahmed, Anderson, & Moore, 2011). When my daughter was born at 28 weeks, and weighed 3 pounds 4 ounces, the nurses in the NICU encouraged us to touch and kangaroo care her daily to enhance her development.

As with touch, **smell** is another tool we use to communicate. If you take milk from the refrigerator for your cereal and **see** that the expiration date has passed, what do you do next? You *smell* it. Our nose alerts us to dangerous gas or to pleasant scents of fine cuisine. We can also communicate attraction and emotions through smell. In order to investigate if human beings, like animals, communicate their emotional states through changes in body odor, researchers (Chen & Haviland-Jones, 2000) collected underarm odors from 25 young women and men who watched a funny movie on one day and a frightening movie on another. A week later, they found that 40 women and 37 men were able to identify “the odor of people when they are happy,” and “the odor of people when they are afraid.”

Since emotions are communicated through smell, you should not wear perfume or cologne when you go on a job interview. Why? There is something called smell recognition. Have you ever smelled a particular scent and automatically thought about someone

you knew? Wearing perfume or cologne is almost like playing Russian roulette, and for two reasons: The interviewer may be allergic to the scent, or if the smell reminds the interviewer of someone he or she dislikes, then that feeling will be transferred to you the interviewee. Newborn babies use smell to identify their mothers. One trick I used with my newborn daughter was to leave the blouse I was wearing in her crib when I needed to go out. It gave her the feeling that I was near her.

While communication through smell is interesting, just how do we communicate through **taste**? Taste helps us enjoy the flavor of our food or lets us know whether it has gone sour. It is reported that Thomas Edison would offer potential research assistant candidates a bowl of soup during an interview. If they seasoned it with salt and pepper before tasting it, he would disqualify them. Why? What do you think seasoning your food before tasting it indicates about the person? If you guess that they are judgmental, you would be correct. Edison wanted assistants who would not make assumptions (Jeff Haden, 2018). If we go back to the example of the milk, after you smell it, you then taste it to make sure it has not gone sour before pouring it on the cereal.

MISCONCEPTION #1: Communication is just speaking. This is not the case. Communication includes everything. Your five senses are always activated. Silence is a form of communication. You can say a lot by not saying anything. Have you ever had someone become upset with you, and you did not mention anything? But the individual might have seen something in your eyes or facial expressions that indicated to him or her that you were upset. Remember that communication is not just talking; everything you do encompasses some form of communication

The third step in the process of baking our cake is to **mix all the ingredients**. What you need to understand is that communication is **dynamic** (Samovar & Porter, 1988), meaning that communication changes and evolves. Just as the cake ingredients when mixed changes, so do the elements of communication. Once you mixed the cake ingredients their form changed and you can no longer see the eggs, milk, sugar, etc. Likewise, when the elements of communication interact with one another, the elements and the process change. You can never communicate the same way twice. Some of you are now probably saying, “NO, I can communicate the same way twice.” Notice I did not state that you couldn’t send the same message twice, but rather that you cannot communicate the same way twice. This means the process of communication can never be repeated the same way. Why? The reason is that communication is *dynamic*. You might say the same message twice. For example, you might say, “Go outside.” If I asked you to repeat what you said, you would repeat the same message or words. But would you use the same tone of voice, facial expression, and body language, etc.? Is the environment or time the same? And are the thought processes of the people communicating the same? Of course not! In addition, communication is irreversible. Once you mix the ingredients and they change forms, you cannot undo the change. So with communication, once you send a message you cannot take it back. Be careful when you send emails or text messages to someone. You cannot “unsend” them, and they are permanent records that can be used against you in the future.

The fourth step in the process of baking the cake is to **place the mixture in the oven and wait**. Communication occurs within a given **context and time**. For instance, while in the context of the doctor’s office, you expect your doctor to touch your body when performing a physical examination. In the context of the office setting, however,

it would be inappropriate for your boss to feel your body, even if he or she is a doctor. In the latter context, it would be considered sexual harassment. If you were taking this class online, it would be appropriate for you to wear pajamas and put your feet up on the chair in the context of your house. But if you were in the context of the classroom, these actions would be considered inappropriate.

The fifth step in our process is to **take the cake out the oven**. There are **inputs and outcomes** to our communication. If you input the information effectively by considering your audience, you will get the right result.

The second key word in our definition of communication is **sharing**. What is **sharing**? Do not say the trademark of the Salvation Army “sharing is caring.” Ever watch a group of year-old toddlers trying to share? Rather, sharing is the giving and receiving of messages. For us to communicate, we must share ideas. But what if you are alone? How are you then sharing? You are communicating with yourself through a process called intrapersonal communication. We will discuss that concept later in this chapter.

Finally, how would you define **understanding ideas**? Is your definition to know what someone is saying or to be able to explain ideas clearly? The definition of *understanding ideas* is to provide **meaning** for the message. Everyone provides meaning and everyone provides meaning differently. This is the reason why we communicate ineffectively—we tend to use our point of reference when defining other messages.

MISCONCEPTION #2: Most people believe the meaning is in the words. But meaning is NOT in the words but rather in the individual. Yes, we have dictionary meaning for words; however, five factors determine how we apply meaning to the messages and words. You provide meaning for messages based on your experiences, culture, emotions, environment, and physiological makeup.

Providing Meaning

How do you provide the meaning for the messages we receive? There are five basic factors that impact how we perceive messages and understand the world we live in. These five factors determine our point of reference. The first factor that determines our point of reference is past experiences. Your experiences determine how you perceive the world. You are a sum of your experiences. How so? Let us say you are in a relationship and everything is going well. One day your partner announces that he or she is going to *hang out with friends on Friday nights*. After a couple of months, you learn that your partner was cheating on you. You break off the relationship and move on. You start a new relationship, and everything is going well. Then one day your new partner announces that he or she will be *hanging out with friends on Friday nights*. What do you think? You are probably thinking that your partner will cheat on you. Unless you discuss your views with your partner, your definition of the words *hang out with friends on Friday nights* will cause a rift in your relationship. You will have arguments and fights over minor issues, but the underlying cause of the arguments is the unresolved issues of those words *hang out with friends on Friday nights*.

The second factor is our culture. Our culture has an enormous effect on how we perceive messages and the world (Hall, 1959, 1966). It defines who we are as individuals. Culture is defined as “the manifold ways of perceiving and organizing the world that

are held in common by a group of people and passed on interpersonally and intergenerationally.” (Hecht, Andersen, Ribeau, 1989 p. 163) It includes our language, religion, beliefs, values, attitudes, knowledge, experiences, roles, etc. Messages can have different meanings depending on someone’s culture. In the United States, people view the peace sign as something positive. But in some countries, such as Australia and England, the backward peace sign is a derogatory gesture. In Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, it’s okay to arrive late for a social event, whereas in Germany and Switzerland arriving late would be considered rude. Most people believe that individuals who migrate to the United States assimilate to U.S. culture—the melting pot theory. But sociologist Milton Gordon (1976) described three models of assimilation in the United States: Anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism. The term *cultural pluralism*—when smaller groups within a larger society maintain their unique cultural identities—best describes what is occurring when individuals migrate to the United States. Today it is not unusual to find pockets of cultures in different areas within a cultural village. When individuals leave the cultural village to go to school or work, they do not leave their cultural norms or practices behind. Sometimes disagreements at school or work may be due to cultural differences. In African American and Caribbean cultures it is disrespectful for a child to look an adult in the eyes when being disciplined. In most Eurocentric cultures, however, the child should look at the adult to show respect. It is important to learn about a culture before visiting another country so that you do not inadvertently send the wrong message.

The third factor that influences how we perceive messages are our emotions. Our emotions determine how we perceive our world, organize our memory, and make important decisions. In the article “5 Ways Your Emotions Influence Your World,” Stephanie Pappas (2014) provides results from 5 major studies that revealed 1) that being in love makes food and drinks taste sweeter; 2) that giving an interviewer a heavy clipboard can make them think job candidates are more serious; 3) that people with a weak physical pose feel powerless and perceive items as heavier; 4) that lonely people have a stronger perception of cold; and 5) that holding a warm beverage makes people see stranger as warmer and more friendly. If you ride the train during rush hour in New York City, you become accustomed to people being in close proximity. But if you are not feeling well or are upset, you tend to hate everything, including the train, the people, your job, etc. Same experience but two different emotions can lead to two distinct meanings. Therefore, you should not make major decisions when you are emotional. My father, a detective, always said there are a lot of people in jail because of emotion. For instance, you get into an argument with someone. You hit the individual, and he or she falls, hits his or her head, and dies. Now you are headed to prison for manslaughter. Before I left the hospital with my daughter, my husband and I were required to view the shaken baby syndrome video. The hospital also advised us that if we ever felt stressed because the baby was continuously crying, to then walk away and let her cry rather than deal with her while we were emotional. Hospitals are being proactive because most people do not know that shaking a baby to stop it from crying causes permanent brain damage or even death.

Our environment is the fourth factor that determines how we perceive messages. When you enter the classroom, your professors expect you to come to the class properly dressed, to sit up, and to take notes. If you were taking the class online, however, you might be lying in bed in your pajamas watching TV or even texting. Have you ever gone to a party and arrived either underdressed or overdressed? How did that make you feel? You might have left because you felt uncomfortable.

Our physiological makeup determines how we perceive messages. Your age, agenda, ethnicity, height, hair color, body type, etc., all determine how you view messages. I am 5 feet 3 inches tall, but I grew up in a family where everyone was tall. My father and brother were both 6 feet and my mother 5 feet 8 inches. I took after the ladies on my dad's side of the family, who were short. The short jokes are not funny to me. You must be careful when you're making jokes about people's physical characteristics. They are NOT politically correct, and you could be creating unknown enemies.

It is important to understand that when you are communicating with someone, all five of these factors are influencing you both. Therefore, you have to take time to understand your receiver(s).

MISCONCEPTION #3: Most people believe that if someone disagrees with them or provides a different meaning to their message, there was no communication. But this is false! Remember, you are always communicating because you are always sharing and understanding ideas.

The Process of Communication

In the process of communication, a sender encodes or formulates a message and sends it through a particular channel(s) to the receiver, who decodes the message and encodes a feedback message to the sender, who in turn decodes the feedback message. Within the communication process, there is noise that prevents the communication from being effective. The process occurs within a given context. This is the theoretical explanation of the process of communication.

In the past, communication was thought to be *linear*, meaning that a sender sent a message to the receiver.

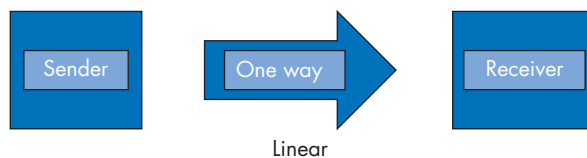


FIGURE 1.1.

Linear

In 1948, mathematician Claude Elwood Shannon developed and published the first linear model for communication.

But this was later changed when David Berlo expanded this linear model to an interactive 'the Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR) Model of Communication. He realized that the linear view did not include the receiver's response or feedback and context. His model also included the 5 senses of human perception as channels in the process.

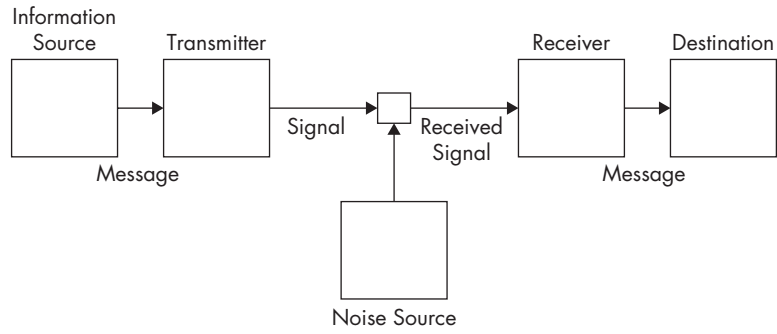


FIGURE 1.2. Shannon Model of Communication

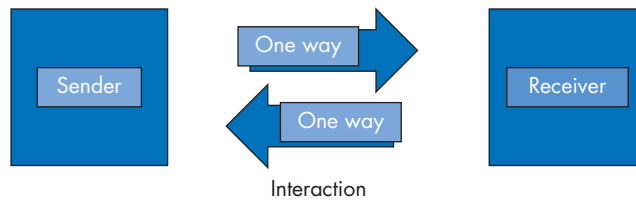


FIGURE 1.3.

Interaction

Although these models gave us an understanding on how we communicate, they were too simple. Thanks to the efforts of Wilbur Schramm (1954), whose model included the encoding, decoding, feedback, and the McCroskey Model (1968), which include noise, today we regard communication as *transaction*, meaning that both the sender and receiver are sending and receiving messages at the same time. When you put together all the theories, the process looks like the following diagram.

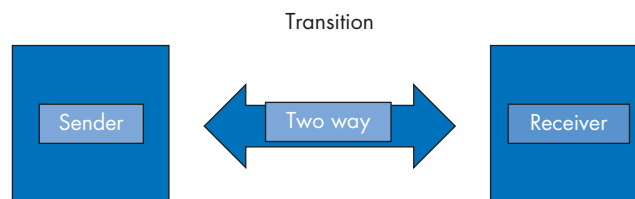


FIGURE 1.4.

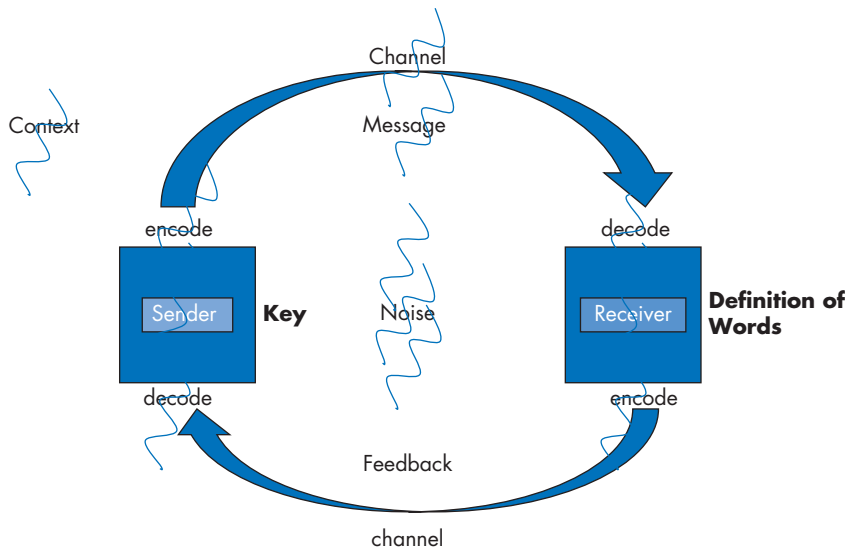


FIGURE 1.5.

The **sender** is the person who starts or initiates the process. We are all senders of messages. Sometimes the message is sent intentionally and other times unintentionally. The message is sent intentionally when we consciously encode it. If you are going to a day party and access Pinterest to see what people are wearing at day parties, then you are intentionally sending the message. But sometimes through our nonverbal messages, we do not intentionally mean to send messages—but we do. If you make a disgusted facial expression while your mother is scolding you, but it was not your intention to communicate this feeling, then your messages were sent unintentionally.

Encoding is the formulating or putting together of the message. There is a time factor involved when you are encoding the message. When you are engaged in a conversation, you tend to encode messages quickly; however, if you are sending an email or writing a paper, the encoding process is longer. The more relevant the message, the more time we take to encode it.

The **channel** is the audio or visual pathway used to transmit the **message**. The message is the idea you are communicating. The message can be **verbal**, which is communication through words, languages, or symbols, or **nonverbal**, which is communication through actions not through words, languages, or symbols.

Verbal vs. Nonverbal Communication

Most people confuse *verbal* communication with *vocal* communication. Therefore, to be considered verbal communication they think the message has to be spoken. This view is false. The message could be spoken or written. What are some examples of verbal communication? Texting, emails, signs, books, etc., are all examples of verbal messages. If you send a text to your friend to meet you at 5 p.m. and your friend meets you at 5 p.m., then you sent the message through verbal communication. Once the

message comes from the language, the words, or the symbols, it is verbal communication. What about sign language? Is it verbal or nonverbal communication? Most of you will probably answer nonverbal communication because the individuals are using their hands to communicate. But since the messages are coming from the symbols, then sign language is a form of verbal communication.

Nonverbal communication is based on actions. So what are some examples of nonverbal communication? Facial expressions, body language, eye contact, artifacts, etc., are all forms of nonverbal communication. Does the voice carry elements of nonverbal communication? Yes, it does. How so? Through your tone, rate, pitch, volume, articulation, and pronunciation the voice communicates nonverbal messages. It is not what you say but how you say it. Have you ever had a friend tell you during a phone conversation that he or she is okay but you perceived that something was wrong? The message that *something was wrong* came through nonverbal communication, called paralanguage.

Which do you think is more effective—your verbal messages or nonverbal messages? Most people are tempted to say verbal communication. Nonverbal communication, however, has more effect than verbal communication; 55%–66% of your communication comes from nonverbal sources, and if you add vocal communications that percentage jumps to 85%–90%. If there is a contradiction between verbal and nonverbal messages, people tend to believe your nonverbal communication. Have you ever heard the saying, “Actions speak louder than words”? People look to your nonverbal messages for clarification. For instance, on an employment interview you are asked whether you work well under pressure. If you reply “yes” but your hands and voice are shaking, the interviewer will not believe your words.

The **receiver** is the person who decodes the sender’s message and provides feedback to the sender. **Decoding** occurs when the sender or receiver interprets or provides meaning for the message received. **Feedback** is the verbal or nonverbal response to the sender’s message. It is vital to ensure that communication is effective.

One of the reasons why communication is ineffective is due to **noise**. Noise, not to be confused with sound, is anything that interferes with the process. There is always noise in the communication process. It is a part of every element. We cannot get rid of the noise, but as a communicator our goal is to minimize the noise. There are three types of noises. **Internal** is the psychological and physiological interferences in the communication process. For instance, if before you go to school you had an argument with one of your parents, when you get to school it would be difficult to concentrate on the professor’s lecture. You would probably focus more on the argument than on the lecture. To minimize the noise, you should take good notes that you can review later. An example of physiological noise would be a stomachache or headache that prevents you from concentrating on the lecture.

External noise refers to the physical conditions surrounding you that interfere with the communication process. For example, if while your professor is lecturing it begins to rain heavily, your focus will now be on getting home and not on the professor’s lecture. As a speaker, it is important to consider external noise. At my graduation, the speaker was on a covered dais while the graduates, friends, and families sat in the open. A plane began to skywrite the message, “Will you marry me?” Once the skywriter added the name, everyone began to cheer, and the speaker thought we were applauding her, but we were more focused on reading the message and looking for the program to find the individual. If the room temperature is too hot or too cold or the light is too bright or too dark, it would be difficult for the audience to focus on the lecturer or speaker.

External communication noise can be a microphone squeaking, your PowerPoint being too small, or protesters making noise outside the building.

Semantic deals with how we define the words that we use. For instance, someone might say, “You look PHAT/fat.” But did the person compliment or insult you? Remember, we said earlier that the meaning is not in the words but in the individual. When people are about to get married, it is recommended that they receive marriage counseling. Why? Because your definition of marriage is based on what you have seen. If your definition of marriage conflicts with your partner’s definition of marriage, then chances are there will be problems within the marriage. When someone uses the word *love*, is he or she defining the term the same as you? I tell my three-year-old daughter all the time that I love her, and she responds in kind; however, our definition of love is different from each other. Does she understand what love is? She probably defines love as happiness. When she grows older, and she experiences more in life, she will change her definition of love. It is important to understand how people are defining the words they use. To be an effective communicator you cannot assume that someone is defining words similar to you. You must always take the time to understand the other person’s definition. It is good to ask the question: What do you mean?

The **context** is the type, time, and place where the communication process occurs. As I mentioned earlier, your meaning to a particular message might be different depending on the context.

Effective Communication

To communicate effectively, what should be your primary focus? No, it is not the sender or the message, or the noise. The answer is the **receiver**. It is important to understand as much as possible about the person with whom you are communicating. Therefore, if communication is not effective, whose fault is it? The answer is the **sender**. I know you are having trouble believing that you are responsible for ineffective communication. But to communicate effectively, you need to know your receiver. If the receiver speaks only Spanish and you send the message in English, you will not be effective. For those of you with siblings, do your parents discipline each child similarly? Of course not, because they know that each child responds differently to different types of punishments. Since you are the sender who wants the results, you have to encode the message in a way that the receiver can understand ideas. Remember that communication is not just talking and that action speaks louder than words. It takes work to communicate effectively.

Communication Context

Intrapersonal Communication

Intrapersonal communication is communication with yourself. Since the process of communication is transaction, you function as both the sender and receiver of the message. Unfortunately, sometimes we communicate ineffectively with ourselves. Too often we tell ourselves the wrong things. Dr. Shad Helmstetter (1987) in his book *What Do I*

Say When I Talk to Myself addresses the concerns when intrapersonal communication is ineffective. He provides short sentences that individuals can repeat daily to improve their self-image. He calls this *self-talk*. The premise behind self-talk is that everything we hear, see, and do is recorded in our brain through our five senses. Through the *law of repetition* the more you or others repeat messages, the more the messages are stored permanently in your brain. Whether good or bad, the more the messages are repeated to you, or you repeat them, the more it becomes who you are. Positive messages equal positive images and negative messages equate to negative images. Athletes will never say to themselves before a game: *I am going to lose. I am going to play badly. Or, I can't do this.* Similarly, you should never say before an exam: *I'm going to fail. I don't know the information. Or, I can't do this.* See how it works? Be careful what or who you listen to because they affect your subconscious and self-image.

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is communication with other people. There are six major principles of interpersonal communication. We cannot not communicate! This statement means you are always communicating. This is one of the most debated principles because some scholars believe there must be intentionality to communicate while others say it does not matter.

Communication is irreversible. Once you send the message, you cannot take it back. So if you and your partner had a disagreement and you text that *I am breaking up with you. It is OVER*, you cannot take that message back. You can explain why you send it. But once the message is sent you cannot reverse it.

Communication involves ethical choices. As a communicator, we have the moral choice not to say things that will hurt, mislead, or affect lives in a negative way. My one-year-old started saying, "You look funny" when she meant "That was funny." I had to explain to her that it is not nice to say someone looks funny because it could hurt that person's feelings.

The meaning is in the individual. We addressed this earlier when we examined the five factors for determining meaning.

Interpersonal communication is how we build and maintain relationships with others.

Interpersonal communication effectiveness can be learned. Since it is a skill, we can learn to communicate more effectively.

Brian Tracy, the author of the *Eat Your Frog* books, provides us with *Three Ways to Improve Your Communication Skills* on his YouTube Success Channel. He offers the following advice to become a better great conversationalist. First, pause three to five seconds before replying to someone to avoid interrupting. This is done to show the other person that you are listening, and to hear the person better. Secondly, do not assume that you understand what someone is saying. If you are unsure, ask the question: "How do you mean?" The question forces the person to elaborate. Thirdly, paraphrase the speaker's words in your words: "So what you are saying is ..." Or "What you asked me was ... ?" Paraphrasing shows you are trying to understand and that you are listening. Once people see that you are listening to them, they are more likely to trust you and connect with you because people like to feel that someone is hearing them.

Four Types of Interpersonal Communication

Dyadic communication is communication between two individuals. When you are on the phone speaking or texting with your friend in a one-on-one conversation, you're engaging in dyadic communication. If you are at a job interview, you're engaging in dyadic communication.

Small group communication is communication among three or more individuals interacting with each other to come up with a common goal. So when you're on your social media chat group or talking with three or more of your friends about which movie you should attend, you are engaging in small group communication.

Public communication is a speaker addressing an audience or group of people. The president delivering a speech to the American people is an example of public communication. You can deliver speeches to inspire, to inform, to entertain, to convince, or to persuade a small or a large audience.

Mass communication is when an organization communicates to a large group. Newspapers, magazines, billboards, radio, and television are all forms of mass communication. Dr. Michael Morgan, professor of communication at the University of Massachusetts, stated on eHow (2009) that a book was one of the first mass-produced products. Hundreds of prints of the same messages were distributed to thousands of people, which leads to the concept of *agenda setting*. Who sets the agenda for how you think? For most people, it is the media. The media use words, create images, and present views based on that organization's agenda. Some media stations are liberal in their views while others are conservative. So who decides what is newsworthy? Who sets the agenda for how you think or what you think?

Why Study Communication?

Why study communication? Why should I learn about communication? I communicate every day. I am a good communicator. Communication, however, is a skill. If you work on improving your skills, then you'll improve your ability to communicate effectively. As communication professors, our goal is to help you strengthen your communication skills through practice so you can become a more effective communicator. After assisting you in clearing up some basic misconceptions you might have about communication and developing your communication skills, you will improve your relationships with your friends, family, and coworkers. Professor James McCoy (2011) in his YouTube video *Why Study Communication?* states that researchers asked CEOs and human resource hiring managers of Fortune 500 companies what skills are most critical for helping college graduates gain and maintain employment. The top answers were oral communication, interpersonal skills, and listening skills. Your ability to get along with your coworkers is vital. When asked what skills are needed to be a good manager or leader, the answers

were strong oral and written communication skills, the ability to listen, and the ability to have good relationships with coworkers.

Thus, communication is a process in which you share and understand ideas. Our goal is to develop our skills to become more effective communicators, to build and strengthen relationships with our friends and family, and to influence other people's lives.

Credit

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