

An Overview of the Communication Process

Many things we take for granted about communication lead to ineffective communication

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Three Questions to Help You Think About Communication

- ① What does it mean when you say you communicated with someone?
- ① Do others typically interpret your messages the way you intended? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- ① How do you know when there have been misunderstandings when you communicate?

Communication

- Refers to the exchange of messages (not meaning) and the creation of meaning (that is, assigning significance to messages)
 - Transmitting messages
 - Interpreting messages
 - No two people interpret messages in the same way

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Communication

Symbols

- The things we use to represent something else
- The relationship of the symbol and its referent is arbitrary and varies from culture to culture

Content

- The information in the messages

Relationship

- How the messages are transmitted
- How the participants are relating to each other

Two Dimensions

- Habits—When we engage in habitual behavior, we are not highly aware of our communication
- Intentions—We may not intend to send messages but others may perceive that a message has been sent
- Emotions—Our effective responses to changing relationships

- Coping:

- Remove the problem
- Change the way we attend

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Communicative Predictions

- Cultural—We cannot base our communication predictions of people from other cultures on our own cultural rules
- Social—Based on our memberships in particular groups.
 - The principal kind we use to predict behavior of people from our culture
- We rely on cultural and social information for the vast majority of the interactions we have

Anxiety and Uncertainty

- Our attempts to deal with the ambiguity of new situations involves a pattern of information-seeking (uncertainty reduction) and tension (anxiety).
- Uncertainty from our inability to predict or explain others' behavior, attitudes, feelings, etc.
- Anxiety refers to the feeling of being uneasy, tense, worried, or apprehensive about what might happen.

Uncertainty

- Two types:
 - Predictive: The uncertainty we have about predicting the behavior, attitudes, or beliefs of people from other cultures
 - Explanatory: The uncertainty we have about being able to explain the behavior of people from other cultures
- There is greater uncertainty in our initial reactions with people from other cultures than with people from our own groups

Insufficient information to predict
behavior

**Maximum Uncertainty
Threshold**

Can make some predictions about the behavior of
people from other cultures comfortably

**Minimum Uncertainty
Threshold**

The behavior of others is highly predictable—It
is highly possible to misinterpret the behavior
of others because of the lack of incentive to be
mindful of the communication

Three Questions to Help You Think About Uncertainty

- ① What causes you to be uncertain about other's behavior?
- ① What type of information do you need to know in order to be able to predict the behavior of members of your own group?
- ① What type of information do you need to know in order to be able to predict the behavior of members of other groups ?

Anxiety

- Fear of negative consequences to our self-concepts
 - We feel incompetent, confused, a loss of self-esteem
- Fear of negative behavioral consequences
 - That we are being taken advantage of
- Fear of negative evaluation by those from other cultures
 - Ridicule, disapproval
- Fear of negative evaluation by members of our ingroups

We are so uneasy that we don't want to
communicate with those from other
cultures

**Maximum Anxiety
Threshold**

We are motivated to communicate with those
from a different culture

**Minimum Anxiety
Threshold**

Insufficient motivation to be mindful of the
communication

Effective Communication

Communication is effective to the extent that we are able to minimize misunderstandings

Misunderstanding occur because:

- ① Messages may be transmitted in a way not understood by either party
- ① The communication rules of the cultures may differ, which influences how messages are interpreted
- ① One of the communicators may be a non-native speaker

Misunderstanding occur because:

- There may be insufficient task competence by one of the communicators within the social context
- Errors of attribution due to expectations
- Topic unfamiliarity

Mindfulness

- Creation of new categories
 - To make more, not fewer, distinctions
- Openness to new information
 - Focusing on the process of the communication can help us determine how our interpretations of messages differ from other's interpretations of those messages
- An awareness of of more than one perspective