

M.M. Poluzhyn, T.T. Vrabel

**Lectures on the Course**  
**BASICS OF SPEECH**  
**COMMUNICATION THEORY**

for the students of the English Department  
of the Faculty of Romance and Germanic Philology  
Uzhhorod National University

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**Рецензенти:**

канд. філол. наук, доцент Добровольська О.Я.

канд. філол. наук, доцент Мигoliniць О.І.

У цьому курсі лекцій систематизовано і впорядковано викладено англійською мовою історію виникнення, розвитку й сучасного стану теорії мовленнєвої комунікації, а також її зв'язок з іншими лінгвістичними дисциплінами, зокрема, прагматикою, соціолінгвістикою, психолінгвістикою та ін. Лекції викладено у логічному порядку – від елементів, моделей, аксіом, функцій комунікації до її семантичних та психологічних аспектів, зокрема, самооцімки, сприйняття, слухання, вирішення конфліктних ситуацій та переконливого мовлення. До кожної теми пропонується план та набір тестових завдань, які дають змогу студентам самостійно перевірити рівень своїх теоретичних знань не тільки з окремої лекції, але й з кожного її етапу. У кінці кожної лекції наводиться список літератури, який може бути використаний як для додаткового ознайомлення з тією чи іншою темою, так і при написанні курсових, дипломних і магістерських робіт.

Призначена для студентів, аспірантів, викладачів і всіх тих, хто вивчає комунікацію у всіх її різновидах.

## Lecture 1

### INTRODUCTION TO SPEECH COMMUNICATION THEORY

1. Defining communication and communicator.
2. Elements of communication.
3. Characteristics of communication.
4. Components of communicative competence.
5. Guiding principles of communicative language pedagogy.

#### 1. Defining Communication and Communicator

**Communication is the ground of meeting, the essential human connection. Communicators are people who enter into relationships with other people.** Without communication we would be unable to function. During the course of a single day we interact with others to share information and beliefs, exchange ideas and feelings, make plans and solve problems. Sometimes this is done interpersonally, sometimes in a small group and sometimes in a public forum. However, communication occurs, it is essential in helping us initiate, develop, control and sustain our contacts with others.

We are all **interpersonal** (one-to-one), **small-group** (one-to-a-few) and **public** (one-to-many) **communicators**. Every time we knowingly or unknowingly send a verbal or nonverbal message to a friend, lover, relative, stranger, audience, acquaintance, supervisor, employee, co-worker or a group of people. In effect, communication is the deliberate or accidental transfer of meaning. Thus, each facet of our lives from birth to death is dependent on and affected by our communication skills.

Communication is a very significant part of our life. However, simply communicating frequently or having many-to-person contacts each day, does not mean that you are as effective a communicator as you can be. Although we frequently neglect to consider the problems that plague our communicative relationships, these issues are at the heart of contemporary literature and art. Communication is basic to all our relationships with others throughout our lives. It is vital in social as well as educational settings.

#### 2. Elements of Communication

All communication encounters 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 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 in part determined by the verbal and nonverbal messages received from others.

**b) Messages.** During every interpersonal, small-group or public communication encounter 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 touch or your smell all communicate information. In effect, **the message is the content of a communicative act.** Some messages, we send, are private (a kiss accompanied by an “*I love you*”), and others are public and directed at hundreds or thousands of people. Some messages we send purposefully, e.g. “*I want you to realize ...*”, and others we send accidentally, e.g. “*I had no idea you were watching....*” Everything a sender or receiver does or says is a potential message as long as someone is to interpret the behaviour. When you smile, frown, shout, whisper or turn away, you are communicating and your communication is having some effect.

**c) Channel is a system or method that we use to send or obtain information in the process of communication,** e.g. *It is important that we open channels of communication with the police.*

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**, for example, you hear noises from the street, **sight messages**, for instance, you see how someone looks, **taste messages**, for example, you savour the flavour of a particular food, **smell messages**, for instance, you smell the eau-de-cologne of a friend, **touch messages**, for example, you feel the roughness of a fabric. Effective communicators are adept channel switchers. They recognize that communication is a multichannel experience.

**d) Noise.** From a communication perspective **noise is anything that interferes with, or distorts our ability to send or receive messages.** Thus, although we are accustomed to thinking of noise as some particular sound, or a group of sounds, the aware communicator realizes that noise can also be created by physical discomfort, psychological make-up, intellectual ability, or by the environment. So, noise includes distractions such as a loud siren, a disturbing odour, a hot room, as well as personal factors, such as prejudices, day dreaming or

feelings of inadequacy.

**e) 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*; *place/put/see etc. something in context*, for example, *“To appreciate what these changes will mean, it is necessary to look at them in context.”*; *in the context of something*, for example, *“These incidents are best understood in the broader context of developments in rural society.”*

**2) the words that come just before and after a word or sentence, and that help you understand its meaning, for example,** the meaning of “*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. Consider the extent to which your present environment influences the way you act towards others or determines the nature of the communication encounter that you share with them. Consider the extent to which certain environments might cause you to alter or modify your posture, manner of speaking, or attire. Take into account the fact that sometimes the conditions of place and time (context) affect our communications without our conscious realizing it.

**f) Feedback.** 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 extinguish behaviour and is a corrective rather than a reinforcing function. Thus, negative feedback serves to extinguish unwanted, ineffective behaviours. 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 feedback 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.

**g) 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 or

evade an issue (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. Since effects are not always visible or immediately observable, there is obviously more to a communication reaction than meets the eye or the ear.

### 3. Characteristics of Communication

Communication has the following characteristics:

- a) it is a form of social interaction and therefore is normally acquired and used in social interactions;
- b) it involves a high degree of unpredictability and creativity in form and message;
- c) it takes place in discourse and sociocultural context which provide constraints on appropriate language use and also clues as to the correct interpretation of utterances;
- d) it is carried out under limiting psychological and other conditions, such as memory constraints, fatigue and distractions;
- e) it always has a purpose (for example, to establish social relations, to persuade or to promise);
- f) it involves authentic, as opposed to text-book-contrived language;
- g) it is judged as successful or not on the basis of actual outcomes. For example, communication could be judged successful in the case of a non-native English speaker who was trying to find the train station in Toronto "*How to go train*" to a passer-by and was given directions to the train station.

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.

Like the human interactors who compose them, interpersonal, small-group and public communication relationships constantly evolve from and affect one another. 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. In other words, 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. Similarly, a communication encounter affects and changes the interactors so that the encounter

can never happen in exactly the same way again. 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.

Communication is understood as the exchange and negotiation of information between at least two individuals through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, oral and written/visual processes. Information, which is assumed to consist of conceptual, sociocultural, affective and other content, is never permanently worked out nor fixed, but is constantly changed and qualified by such factors, as further information, context of communication, choice of language forms, and non-verbal behaviour. In this sense, communication involves the continuous evaluation and negotiation of meaning on the part of the participants. Finally, it is assumed that authentic communication involves a “reduction of uncertainty” on behalf of the participants, for example, a speaker asking a (non-rhetorical) question will be uncertain as to the answer but this uncertainty will be reduced when an answer is provided. Ease of communication increases to the extent that uncertainty is reduced at all levels of information.

#### 4. Components of Communicative Competence

**Communicative competence is understood as the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication** (for example, knowledge of vocabulary and skill of using the sociolinguistic conventions for a given language).

**Actual communication is the realization of such knowledge and skill under limiting psychological and environmental conditions, such as fast memory and perceptual constraints, fatigue, nervousness, distractions and interfering background noises.**

The theoretical framework for communicative competence includes such four areas of knowledge and skill:

1. **Grammatical competence.** This type of competence remains concerned with mastery of the language code (verbal or non-verbal) itself. Thus, included here are features and rules of the language, such as vocabulary, word-formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, spelling and linguistic semantics. Such competence focuses directly on the knowledge and skill required to understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances as such. Grammatical competence will be an important concern for any second language programme.

2. **Sociolinguistic competence** addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic context depending on contextual factors, such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction, and norms or conventions of the interaction. Appropriateness of utterances refers to both appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form.

**Appropriateness of meaning** concerns the extent to which particular communicative functions (for example, commanding, complaining and inviting), attitudes (including politeness and formality), and ideas are judged to be proper in a given situation. For example, it would generally be inappropriate for a waiter in a

restaurant to command a customer to order a certain menu item regardless of how the utterance and communicative function (a command) were expressed grammatically.

**Appropriateness of form** concerns the extent to which a given meaning (including communicative functions, attitudes and ideas) is represented in a verbal or non-verbal form that is proper in a given sociolinguistic context. For example, a waiter trying to take an order politely in a tasteful restaurant would be using inappropriate grammatical form if he were to ask *“Ok, chump, what are you and this broad gonna eat?”*

There is a tendency to treat sociolinguistic competence as less important than grammatical competence. This tendency seems odd for two reasons:

**First** it gives the impression that grammatical correctness of utterances is more important than appropriateness of utterances in actual communication.

**Second** this tendency ignores the fact that sociolinguistic competence is crucial in interpreting utterances for their social meaning, for example, communicative function and attitude when this is not clear from a literal meaning of utterances or from non-verbal cues (for example, sociocultural context and gestures).

There are no doubt universal aspects of appropriate language use that need not be relearned to communicate appropriately in a second language, but there are language and culture-specific aspects too. There are three types of rules that interact in determining how effectively a given communicative function is conveyed and interpreted: pragmatic rules, social-appropriateness rules and linguistic-realization rules.

**Pragmatic rules** refer to the situational preconditions that must be satisfied to carry out a given communicative function (for example, to give a command one must have the right to do so).

**Social-appropriateness** rules deal with whether or not a given function would normally be conveyed at all, and if so, with how much directness (for example, asking of stranger how much he or she earns).

**Linguistic-realization rules** involve a number of considerations, such as the frequency with which a given grammatical form is used to convey a given function, the number and structural range of forms associated with each function, the generality of forms across functions and situations, and the means of modulating the attitudinal tone of a given function.

**3. Discourse competence** concerns mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres. By **genre** is meant the type of text, for example: oral and written narrative, an argumentative essay, a scientific report, a business letter and a set of instructions. Unity of a text is achieved through **cohesion** in form and **coherence** in meaning.

**Cohesion** deals with how utterances are linked structurally and facilitates interpretation of a text. For example, the use of cohesion devices such as pronouns, synonyms, ellipsis, conjunctions and parallel structures serve to relate individual utterances and to indicate how a group of utterances is to be understood (for example, logically or chronologically) as a text.

**Coherence** refers to relationships among the different meanings in a text, where



these meanings may be literal meanings, communicative functions and attitudes. For example, consider the following three utterances:

Speaker A: *That's the telephone.*

Speaker B: *I'm in the bath.*

Speaker A: *Ok.*

Although there is no overt signal of cohesion among these utterances, they do form coherent discourse to the extent that A's first utterance functions as a request, that B's reply functions as an excuse for not complying with A's request, and that A's final remark is an acceptance of B's excuse.

It is reasonably clear that this notion of discourse knowledge and skill can be distinguished from grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence. For example, consider the following conversation:

Speaker A: *What did the rain do?*

Speaker B: *The crops were destroyed by the rain.*

B's reply is grammatical and sociolinguistically appropriate within our framework, but does not tie in well with A's question. The violation in this example seems to be at the level of discourse. To involve the normal organization of sentences (and text) in English the topic (shared information) precedes comment (new information).

**4. Strategic competence** is composed of mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action for two main reasons:

a) to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting conditions in actual communication (for example, momentary inability to recall an idea or grammatical form) or to insufficient competence in one or more of the other areas of communicative competence;

b) to enhance the effectiveness of communication (for example, deliberately slow and soft speech for rhetorical effect). For instance, when one does not remember a given grammatical form, one compensatory strategy that can be used is **paraphrase**. Thus, if a learner did not know the English term "train station", he or she might try to go to the place for trains.

## 5. Guiding Principles of Communicative Language Pedagogy

**1. Coverage of competence area.** Communicative competence must be viewed as minimally including four areas of knowledge and skills: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. There is no evidence for the view that grammatical competence is any more or less crucial to successful communication than is sociolinguistic, discourse or strategic competence. The primary goal of a communicative approach must be to facilitate the integration of these types of competence for the learner.

**2. Communication needs.** A communicative approach must be based on and

respond to the learner's often changing communication needs and interests. These must be specified with respect to grammatical competence (for example, the levels of grammatical accuracy required in different situations), sociolinguistic competence (for instance, the settings, topics and communicative functions to be handled most frequently), discourse competence (for example, the types of text to be dealt with) and strategic competence (for instance, verbal compensatory strategies for paraphrasing lexical items that have not been mastered sufficiently). It is particularly important to have a communicative approach, at least in part, on the varieties of the second language that the learner is likely to be in contact with in genuine communicative situations, and on the minimum levels of competence that various groups of native speakers (such as age groups, occupational groups) expect of the learner in such situations and that the majority of learners may be expected to attain.

**3. Meaningful and realistic interaction.** The second language learner must have the opportunity to take part in meaningful communicative interaction with highly competent speakers of the language – that is to respond to genuine communication needs and interests in realistic second language situations. This principle is important not only with respect to classroom activities, but to testing as well. For example, it has been argued that paper-and-pencil tests, tape-recorded listening and speaking tests and the like do not allow the learner to try out his/her communication skills in a realistic communication situation, and thus cannot have the same psychological and instructional impact as do testing activities that directly involve more authentic and meaningful communicative interaction.

**4. The learners' native language skills.** Particularly at the early stages of second language learning optimal use must be made of those communication skills, that the learner has developed through use of the native (or dominant) language, and that are common to communication skills required in the second language. It is particularly important that the more arbitrary and less universal aspects of communication in the second language (for example, certain features of the grammatical code, such as vocabulary) be presented and practised in the context of less arbitrary and more universal ones, such as the basic sociolinguistic rules involved in greeting a peer in French or English).

**5. Curriculum-wide approach.** The primary objective of a communication-oriented second language programme must be to provide the learners with the information, practice and much of the experience needed to meet their communication needs in the second language. In addition, the learners should be taught about **language**, drawing as much as possible from the first language programme and about the **second language culture**, drawing as much as possible from other subject areas that will facilitate a natural integration of knowledge of the 2<sup>nd</sup> language, culture and language in general.

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. What is communication?
2. Who are communicators?

3. What kind of communicators are we?
4. What elements of communication do you know?
5. What kind of persons are senders and receivers?
6. What is message?
7. What is channel?
8. What is context?
9. What is feedback?
10. What characteristics of communication do you know?
11. What areas of knowledge does the theoretical framework for communicative competence include?
12. What are guiding principles of communicative language pedagogy?

### **Literature**

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## Lecture 2

### COMMUNICATION MODELS AND AXIOMS

1. What communication models can do.
2. Gerald R. Miller's communication model.
3. Wilber Schramm's communication model.
4. K. Gamble and M. Gamble's communication model.
5. Frank Dance's communication model.
6. Five axioms of communication.

#### 1. What Communication Models Can Do

Through communication we share meaning with others by sending and receiving sometimes intentional and sometimes unintentional messages. In other words, communication includes elements that could affect two or more individuals as they knowingly or unknowingly relate to one another.

At this point we can say that communication occurs whenever one person assigns significance or meaning to the behaviour of another person. And equally at this point you can ask, "So what? Will knowing this enable me to understand or establish better and more satisfying relationships with my friends, my spouse, my employer, my parents?" The answer is "Yes!" If you understand the process that permit people to contact and influence each other, if you understand the forces that one can foster or impede the development of effective communication contact of every kind, then you have a better chance of experiencing them yourself. Communication models can help to explain the process by which we initiate and maintain our communicative relationships with others. You will find these models useful tools in discovering how communication operates and in examining your own communication encounters.

#### 2. Gerald R. Miller's Communication Model

Figure 1

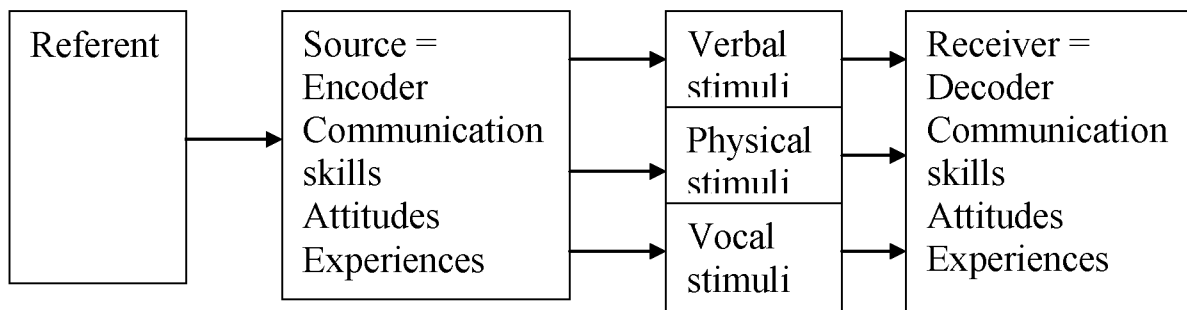


Figure 1 is a model adopted from the work of communication researcher Gerald R. Miller. It illustrates how a **source-encoder (a person)** sends out a message to a **receiver-decoder (another person)** about some **referent (an object, act, situation, experience or idea)**. The source encoder's message is made up of at

least three elements: **verbal stimuli (words), physical stimuli (such as gesture, facial expression, movements) and vocal stimuli (such as rate, loudness and pitch of voice, emphasis)**. The receiver-decoder who receives the message that has been consciously or unconsciously sent by the source-encoder responds to it in some way (positive or negative feedback). Both the source's message and the receiver's response are affected by the context response and by each person's communication skills, attitudes and past experiences.

As an illustration, let's analyze the following husband-wife dialogue with reference to the model.

She: *What's the matter with you? You are late again. We'll never get to the Adams' in time.*

He: *I tried my best.*

She: (Sarcastically) *Sure, you tried your best. You always try your best, don't you? (Shaking her finger). I'm not going to put up with it much longer.*

He: (Raising his voice) *You don't say! I happen to have been tied up at the office.*

She: *My job is every bit as demanding as yours, you know.*

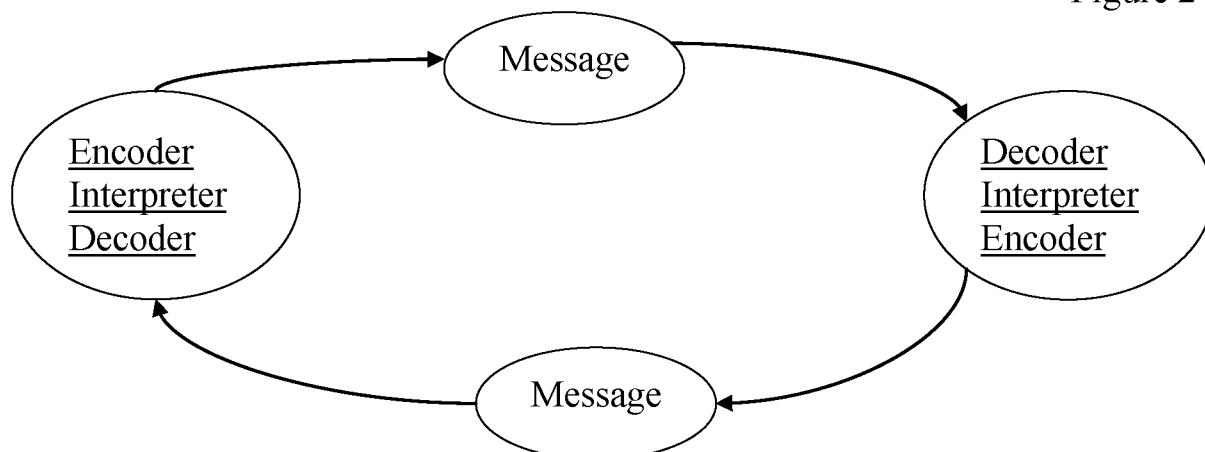
He: (Lowering his voice) *Okay. Okay. I know you work hard too. I don't question that. Listen, I really did get stuck in a conference (puts his hand on her shoulder). Let's not blow this up. Come on. I'll tell you about it on the way to Bill and Ellen's.*

What message is the wife (the initial source-encoder) sending to her husband (the receiver-decoder)? She is letting him know with her words, her voice, and her physical actions that she is upset and angry. Her husband responds, using words, vocal cues and gestures in an effort to explain his behaviour. Both individuals are affected by the nature of the situation (they are late for an appointment), by their attitudes (how they feel about what is occurring), and by their past experiences.

### 3. Wilbur Shramm's Communication Model

Next consider a model developed by a communication expert Wilbur Shramm

Figure 2



This model shows us more explicitly that human communication is a circle rather than a one-way event. Here each party to the communication process is perceived as both an encoder and a decoder. In addition, each party acts as an interpreter, understanding the messages he or she receives in a somewhat different way. This is because we are each affected by a field of experience or psychological frame of reference (a form of noise) that we carry with us whenever we go.

Wife: *Hey, kids, don't bother Dad now. He's really tired. I'll play with you.*

Husband: *Don't isolate me from my own children! You always need to have all their attention.*

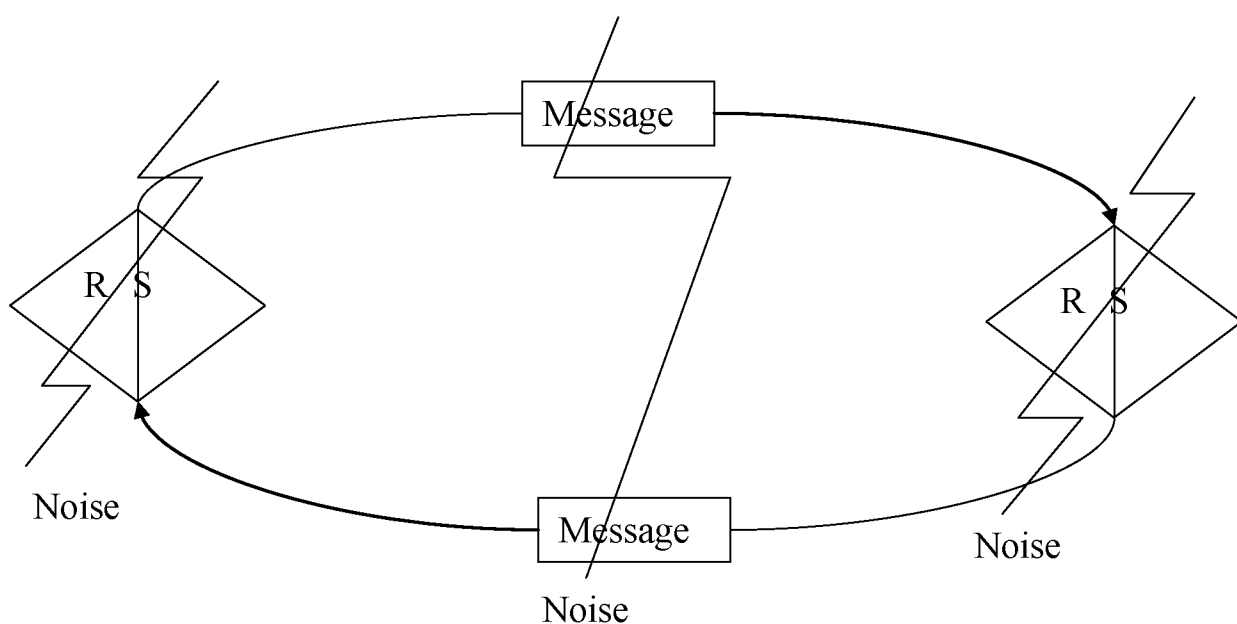
Wife: *I'm not trying to do that. I just know what it's like to have a really trying day and feel that I have to close my eyes to get back to myself.*

Husband: *I understand.*

Here we see how one's psychological frame of reference can influence the meaning given to a message received. In addition, we come to realize that neither party to the communicative encounter function solely as a sender or receiver of message. Rather, each sends and receives messages simultaneously. The wife receives the message that her husband is exhausted and sends a message that the kids should let him rest. The husband receives a message that his wife is trying to "alienate" him from the children and sends a message expressing his concern. By listening to her husband's message, the wife is able to determine how he has interpreted her message and is thus able to avoid a serious misunderstanding.

#### 4. Gamble and Gamble's Communication Model

Figure 3



The model in Figure 3 combines the strengths of the first two models. Here communication is a circle and the sending and receiving responsibilities are shared by the communicators. A message or messages may be sent through one or more channels, and the interaction occurs in and is affected by a definite context. Note that noise can enter the interaction process at any point and can affect either the sending or receiving abilities of the interactants. Furthermore noise can be caused by the context, can be present in the channel or can pop up in the message itself.

### 5. Frank Dance's Communication Model

Frank Dance, a noted communication theorist, has created a more abstract model to depict the dynamic nature of the communication process.

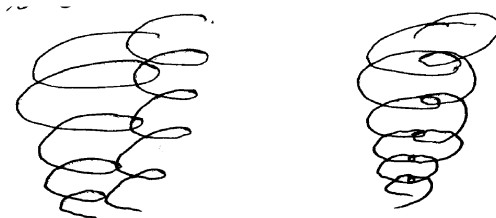
Figure 4



F. Dance's spiral or helix represents the way communication evolves or progresses in an individual from birth to the present moment. This model also emphasizes the fact that every individual's present behaviour is affected by his or her past experience and, likewise, present behaviour will have an impact on his or her future action. Thus Dance's helix indicates that communication is additive or accumulative, it has no clearly observable beginning or end.

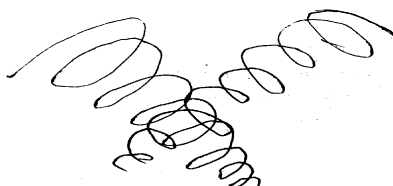
We can picture two communication spirals as meeting in a number of different ways. The points where the spirals touch is the point of contact; each time a contact occurs messages are sent and received by the interactants.

Figure 5



Some helical spirals touch each other only during a lifetime, whereas others crisscross or intertwine in a pattern that indicates an enduring relationship. Furthermore, the spirals (interactants) may sometimes develop in similar ways (grow together) and sometimes in different ways (grow apart).

Figure 6



## 6. Five Axioms of Communication

The following five axioms have functional implications and are essential to our understanding of the communication process.

**a) Axiom One: You cannot not communicate.** It's not uncommon for individuals to believe that we communicate only because we want to communicate and that all communication is purposeful, intentional and consciously motivated. Obviously this is always true, but just as often we communicate without the awareness of doing so – and at times even without wanting to.

Whenever we are involved in an interactional situation we must respond in some way. Even if we do not choose to respond verbally, even if we maintain absolute silence and attempt not to move a muscle, **our lack of response is itself a response** and therefore has message value, influences others and hence communicates. In other words, we can never voluntarily stop behaving – because behaviour has no opposite.

P. Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson have identified four basic strategies that we usually employ when trying not to communicate – when we want to avoid making contact with someone.

**First** we try to **reject** communication by making it clear to the other person that we are not interested in conversing. By doing this, however, not only do we not avoid communicating but instead we probably create a strained, embarrassing and sociably uncomfortable condition. Furthermore, as a result of this action a relationship now does exist between us and the person we want to avoid.

**Second**, we may decide to **accept** communication. In this strategy we operate according to the law of least effort, giving in reluctantly and agreeing to make conversation in the hope that the person will go away quickly.

**Third**, we may attempt to **disqualify** our communication. That is we communicate in a way that invalidates our own messages or the messages sent to us by the other person. We contradict ourselves, switch subjects or utter incomplete sentences in the hope that the other person will give up.

**Fourth**, we may simply **pretend**, we would like to talk but, because we are tired, nervous, sick, drunk, mourning, deaf, or otherwise incapacitated, we simply cannot communicate at the moment. In other words, we use some symptom as a form of communication.

**Axiom Two: Every interaction has a content and a relationship dimension.**

The content of communication is its information or data and describes the behaviour expected as a response. In contrast, the relationship level of a communication indicates how the exchange is to be interpreted, and it signals what one individual thinks of the other. For example, “*Close the door*” is a directive whose content asks the receiver to perform a certain action. However, the statement “*Close the door*” can be delivered in many ways – as a command, a plea, a request, a come-on or turn off. Each manner of delivery says something about the relationship between the source or sender and receiver. In this way we constantly give others clues about how we see ourselves in relationship to them.

Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson have also identified three types of responses



that we use to indicate our reactions to each other.

**First**, we can **confirm** our people's self-definitions or self-concepts and treat them as they believe they ought to be treated. For example, if your friend believes himself to be competent and smart, and if those around her reward her by asking for advice or seeking her help, her self-concept is being confirmed.

**Second** we can **reject** the other people's self-definitions by simply refusing to accept their beliefs about themselves. If your friend imagines himself to be a leader, but no one else treats him as if he had leadership potential, he may be forced to revise his picture of himself.

**Third**, we can **disconfirm** other people's self-definitions. While confirmation says, *"I accept you as you see yourself. Your self-assessment is correct"*, and rejection says *"I do not accept you as you see yourself. Your assessment is wrong"*, disconfirmation says simply, *"You do not exist. You are a nonentity"*.

Disconfirmation implies that we do not care and we always treat people the same way no matter what they say or do. In other words, we do not offer individuals any clues whatever to indicate that we believe they are or are not performing well. In effect, we totally ignore these people.

**c) Axiom Three. Every interaction is defined by how the interactants punctuate events.** Even though we understand that communication is continuous, we often act as if there were an identifiable starting point or a traceable cause for a particular elicited response. In many communication interactions it is extremely difficult to determine what is stimulus and what is response. For instance, it is quite as feasible for a father to believe he reads or daydreams to escape his child's screaming as it is for the child to believe she screams because her father is reading or daydreaming and won't play with her. The father sees behaviour as progressing from screaming to retreating, whereas the child sees it as progressing from retreating to screaming. In other words, what is stimulus for one is response for the other. We all divide up or punctuate a particular experience somewhat differently because each of us "sees" differently. Thus wherever you suggest that a certain communication began because of a particular stimulus, you are forgetting that communication has no clearly distinguishable starting point or end point. Try to remember that communication is circular – a continuous, ongoing series of events.

**d) Axiom Four. Messages are digital and analogic.** When we talk to others, we send out two kinds of messages: 1) discreet, digital, verbal symbols (words), and 2) continuous, analogic, nonverbal cues. According to Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson the content of a message is more likely to be communicated through the digital system, whereas the relationship level of the message is more likely to be carried through the analogic system. Although words are under our control and for the most part are uttered intentionally many of the nonverbal cues that we send are not. Thus, while you may lie with words, the nonverbal signals you emit are likely to give you away.

**e) Axiom Five. Communication exchanges are either symmetrical or complementary.** The terms **symmetrical** and **complementary** do not refer to good (normal) or bad (abnormal) communication exchanges but simply represent the two basic categories into which all communication interactions are divided.

Each type of interaction serves important functions, and both will be present in a healthy relationship.

During a communication encounter, if the behaviour of one person is mirrored a **symmetrical interaction** occurs. Thus if you act in a dominating fashion and the person you are relating to, acts the same way, or if you act happily and the other person also acts happily, or if you express anger and the other person likewise expresses anger, for the moment the two of you share a symmetrical relationship.

In contrast, if the behaviour of one interactant precipitates a different behaviour in the other, a **complementary interaction** occurs. In a complementary relationship you and your partner are engaged in opposite behaviours, with your behaviour serving to elicit the other person's behaviour or vice versa. Thus, if you behave in an outgoing manner, your partner may adopt a quiet mood; if you are aggressive, he or she might become submissive; if you become "the leader", your partner will become "the follower".

Neither the symmetrical nor the complementary relationship is trouble-free. Parties to a symmetrical relationship are apt to experience what is termed **symmetrical escalation**. Since they believe they are "equal", each also believes she or he has a right to assert control. When this happens, the interactants may feel compelled to engage in a battle to show how "equal" they really are. Since it is not uncommon for individuals sharing a symmetrical relationship to find themselves in a status struggle with each other, the main danger of this type of interaction is runaway sense of competitiveness.

In contrast, the problem that surfaces in many complementary relationships is **rigid complementarity**. This occurs when one party to an interaction begins to feel that control is automatically his or hers, and as a result the relationship becomes rigid or fixed. Control no longer alternates between the interactants, and as a result both persons lose a degree of freedom in choosing how they will behave. Thus, a teacher who never pictures herself as a learner, a father who cannot perceive that his child has reached adulthood and a leader who can never permit herself to act as a follower have all become locked into self-perpetuating, unrealistic, unchanging and unhealthy patterns of behaviour.

In this excerpt from the book "When Did I Become the Mother and the Mother Become the Child?" Emma Bombeck describes the switch in power that can occur in the parent-child relationship.

When did the Baby catch up with the mother? When indeed?

Does it begin one night when you are asleep and your mother is having a restless night and you go into her room and tuck the blanket around her bare arms?

Does it appear one afternoon, when in a moment of irritation you snap?

Or did it come the rainy afternoon when you were driving home from the store and you slammed on your brakes and your arms sprang protectively between her and the windshield, and your eyes met with a knowing sad look?

The transition comes slowly as it began between her and her mother: the changing of power, the transferring of responsibility, the passing down of duty. Suddenly you are spewing out the familiar phrases learned at the knee of your mother.

These five axioms of communication will provide you with the background knowledge you will need as you prepare to focus on increasing the effectiveness of your communication experience.

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. What elements does communication include?
2. When does communication occur?
3. What can communication models help to explain?
4. What does G. Miller's communication model illustrate?
5. What does W. Shramm's communication model show more explicitly?
6. What is communication in Gamble and Gamble's communication model?
7. What model has F. Dance created?
8. What basic strategies have been identified when trying not to communicate?
9. What are three types of responses that we use to indicate our reactions to each other?
10. What kinds of messages do we send out when we talk?
11. What are communication exchanges?

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## Lecture 3

### FUNCTIONS OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION

1. Phatic communion.
2. Self-other understanding.
3. Establishing meaningful relationships.
4. Recording-transmitting function.
5. Instrumental function.
6. Affective communication.
7. Catharsis.
8. Magic.
9. Ritual.
10. Metacommunication.
11. Prevention of communication.
12. On saying what you mean and meaning what you say.

#### 1. Phatic Communion

Every communication experience serves one or more functions. For example, communication can help us to discover who we are, aid us in establishing meaningful relationships or prompt us to examine and try to change either our own attitudes and behaviours or the attitudes and behaviours of others.

**Small talk, uninspired greetings and idle chatter are among the descriptions of a fundamental type of communication that Bronislaw Malinowski called phatic communion.** To show that we welcome communication, that we are friendly or that we at least acknowledge the presence of another person, we exchange words like, “*How are you?*” or “*Hello*” or “*Nice day*”. There may be variations, based on geography “*Howdy!*” or familiarity “*Hi ya, Baby!*” or specific conditions “*Cold enough for ya?*”. Whatever the words, the speaker is saying in effect, “I see you and I am friendly”. The channels of communication are opened.

In phatic communication the specific words exchanged are not important. This is illustrated in the story of a US businessman who, while travelling to Europe for the first time finds himself seated with a Frenchman at lunch. Neither speaks the other’s language, but each smiles a greeting. As the wine is served, the Frenchman raises his glass and gesturing to the American says, “*Bon appetite!*” The American does not understand and replies, “*Ginzberg*”. No other words are exchanged at lunch. That evening at dinner, the two again sit at the same table and again the Frenchman greets the American with the wine, saying “*Bon appetite!*” to which the American replies “*Ginzberg*”. The waiter notices this peculiar exchange and, after dinner calls the American aside to explain that the Frenchman is not giving his name – he is wishing you a good appetite; he is saying that he hopes you enjoy your meal. The following day the American seeks out the Frenchman at lunch wishing to correct his error. At the first opportunity the American raises his glass and says, “*Bon appetite!*” to which the Frenchman proudly replies “*Ginzberg*”.

Although in this story the ignorance of a common language made more significant communication impossible, it was the exchange of simple words like, “*Bon appetite*” and “*Ginzberg*” that broke the tension of silence and expressed friendship. Without the small talk first there can be no “big talk” later.

The only rule that seems to apply to phatic communion is that “the subject” of communication be such that each party can say something about it. That is why everybody talks about the weather. The important thing is to talk – and this is why so much of phatic communion begins with a question, for a question requires a reply.

We do not request specific information in phatic communion and we are not expected to reply with precision or accuracy. If we are greeted with a “*How are you?*” we do not reply as we might if our doctor asked the question. When we are precise, the result is likely to be humorous, as when James Thurber was once asked “*How’s your wife?*” and replied, “*Compared to what?*”

Specific information is sought in one kind of greeting, however. Members of secret organizations sometimes speak in code when they meet to determine whether each knows the password, special handshake or other symbol. If the answer to the secret question is not precise, then the other is not regarded as a brother Mason or sister Theta or whatever, and subsequent communication will be prevented. Such coded phatic communion dates from times when members of such organizations might be persecuted if discovered. Among some secret organizations today the reverse seems to be true. The coded greeting is often expressed loudly, more for the benefit of the outsiders than for the “secret” members. Phatic communion is usually the most casual, even careless form of communication. The stories of persons passing through receiving lines and saying something like “*I have just killed my mother-in-law*” which is met with a smile and a “*Fine, I hope you’re enjoying yourself*” are well-known. They illustrate what little is attached to phatic communion, so little that the speaker is not even listened to. In such extreme cases, however, we may wonder to what extent the channels of communication have been opened after that exchange of noises. In any case, it seems that we prefer some noise to no noise.

## **2. Self-Other Understanding**

One key function of communication is self-other understanding. When you get to know another person, you also get to know yourself, you learn how others affect you. In other words, we depend on communication to develop self-awareness. Communication theorist Thomas Hora put it this way, “To understand himself man needs to be understood by another. To be understood by another he needs to understand the other”.

We need feedback from others all the time and others are constantly in need of feedback from us. Interpersonal, small-group and public communications offer us numerous opportunities for self-other discovery. Through communication encounters we are able to learn why we are trusting or untrusting, whether we can make our thoughts and feelings clear, under what conditions we have the power to

influence others, and whether we can effectively make decisions and resolve conflicts and problems.

### 3. Establishing Meaningful Relationships

In order to build a relationship we cannot be overly concerned for ourselves but must consider the needs and wants of others. It is through effective interpersonal, small-group and public communication contacts that our basic social needs are met.

Communication offers each of us the chance to satisfy what psychologist William Schutz calls our “needs for inclusion, contact, and affection”. **The need for inclusion** is our need to be with others, our need for social contact. We like to feel that others accept and value us and we want to feel like a full partner in a relationship. **The need for control** is our need to feel that we are capable and responsible, that we are able to deal with and manage our environment. We like to feel that we can influence others. **The need for affection** is our need to express and receive love. Since communication allows each of these needs to be met if we are able to communicate meaningfully with others we are less likely to feel unwanted, unloved or incapable.

During interpersonal, small-group and public communication interactions individuals have ample opportunities to influence each other subtly or overtly. We spend much time trying to persuade one another to think as “we” think, do what “we” do, like what “we” like. Sometimes our efforts meet with success, and sometimes they do not. In any case our persuasion experiences afford each of us the change to influence another so that we may try to realize our goals.

### 4. Recording-Transmitting Function

Our definition of teaching goes something like this, “Teaching is the transmission of the professor’s notes into the students’ notebook without their having passed through the minds of either”. A professor at a large mid-western college put his lectures on tape and had the tape-recorder sent into his class-room and played every day. Weeks later when he stepped into the room to see if all was going well, he found on each student’s desk another machine recording lectures.

In one sense, **all communication is a process of transmitting some information that is received by another.** This is one definition of communication. But as we note the variety of ways in which we can describe the kind and purpose of a message sent, the category of transmitting-recording seems insufficient. Thus, asking when the next bus leaves and being told; asking what time is and being told; reporting or hearing the news, weather, classroom lectures and so on, all might be examples of this function of communication.

### 5. Instrumental Communication

When we say something and something happens as a result of our speaking,

then our comments have been instrumental in causing those events to happen. The instrumental function of communication is one of its most common purposes. We request a secretary to type three copies of a letter. We ask a friend at dinner to pass the butter, salt, etc. We order a salesman out of the house.

The category of instrumental communication is loose enough to allow for several kinds of statements. There are statements that are clearly instrumental in their wording. If we say "*Shut the door*" and the door is then shut, we may assume that the noise we made was influential in the shutting of the door. There are also statements for which the result cannot be easily attributed to our utterances. If on a day planned for a picnic it is raining and so we sing, "*Rain, rain, go away*" – and the rain does stop – it could be immodest to assume that our words caused that action. Much of prayer has been traditionally instrumental and if the faithful believe that some prayers have been answered we could say that for these people the prayer was an instrumental communication.

Some statements are instrumental in intent or effect, but are not phrased as such. For example, if you want the salt passed to you, you may request it directly (instrumental) or you comment that the food needs salt (transmitting information). If a wife wants a new fur coat, she may request it directly or she may comment on how well dressed her husband seems, especially when compared to her (apparently an effective technique). One instrumental request may result in a different instrumental action, as when commercial airlines do not ask passengers to stop smoking but to "observe the no smoking sign".

One characteristic of some instrumental statements is a faint resemblance between manner of speaking and the requested action itself. One sometimes speaks as if his words were instruments. The voice does its best to imitate the desired action, as do voices instrumentally cheering at a football game, "*Push'em back, push'em back, w-a-a-a-y back!*"

## 6. Affective Communication

**Communication in which the message is the emotional feelings of the speaker toward a listener is known as affective communication.** Compliments, praise, flattery, snide and cutting remarks may be so classified.

There are affective elements in many of the functions of communication. Phatic communication may contain praise as when old friends greet by saying, "*You are looking great!*" Instrumental purposes are often best served through effective communications too. It seems to be part of the woman's role in our society to use more affective communication than does the opposite sex. Where tradition has not given women authority in all situations women have had to achieve their goals indirectly. And this indirection may be reflected in instrumental desires disguised in affective language. The wife who says to her husband "*You look so handsome all dressed up*", might be requesting a new wardrobe for herself, or be asking to go out to dinner rather than just complimenting her husband.

The non-affecting language of fact and description or the language of clear and explicit request need not be any more desirable than it is common in interpersonal

communications. We admire and respect the clarity of the scientist in writing his report, but we may find him less explicit during his courtship. The reason is that whereas the scientist communicates with others pursuing one goal, the diplomats or the lovers may not be sure they are pursuing the same goal.

A study of the social gestures of dating indicated that each sex had its own mythology for the purpose of the gesture. To the woman the man performed the task out of respect. To the man he performed the task because he had to if he was going to get anywhere. Again, the man's purpose, even in the nonverbal language was far more instrumental than the woman's. If the words and notions were more specific, it would not be possible for the sexes to maintain their mutual self-comprehension.

Affective language is also **convincing** language. In many cases a person would not do something if asked to do it directly; he would be aware of reasons that might not be able to accept. We seem to prefer to do things we think we want to do, not things we are told to do. To make another person feel good or bad through language is a rather common and vital function of communication.

It is possible to characterize attitudes of speakers towards their listeners on the basis of instrumental affective content. Many criticism of the U.S. visitor or resident abroad have their basis in a lack of affective communication and preponderance of instrumental communication.

Being pragmatic Americans have a cultural tendency "to get down to business", to be more impersonal. Former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles is often quoted as having said with some pride that "The USA does not have friends; it has interests". If others are treated as "interests" when they are more accustomed to being treated as "brothers" or at least "cousins", surely they will resent the change. The non-affecting communication may be honest, fair, sincere. But to one who does not expect it the communication is cold, unfeeling, mechanical.

## 7. Catharsis

When you are angry or disturbed or hurt physically or mentally, probably you give expression to your feelings. It is curious that expressions, which could be as personal as the feelings that evoke them are rather stylized and predictable within a language. Words like "*ouch!*" or "*oh!*" are spoken by people who speak English, whereas our neighbours who speak Spanish will say "*ay!*" when they express a comparable feeling. Grunts may be the only universal expression of catharsis.

When pain or frustration is sufficient, our cathartic expression becomes more obviously symbolic. We move from the "*ouch!*" to words that might be used in other ways, most often words that are socially disapproved of. We swear or curse or substitute words that sound something like the popular curses we long ago learned were "adult" and special. We find that different kinds of expressions for releasing tension are appropriate among different ages and occupation. A sailor who is angry is not expected to say "*Oh, goodness me!*" and an angry nun is not expected to sound like a sailor.

The physical stimulus finds expression in a symbol. This symbol eventually



ceases to stand for directly anything in the outside world except an attitude towards whatever produced it. We move from physical sensation to verbal assault on that sensation (“*damn it!*”) to mere release of tension. The idea of cursing dates to times when the belief in magic language was more common. There was a time when “*God damn, you*” was meant as a magic curse to bring about suffering.

Because expressions of catharsis have no referential meaning, any word may serve the cathartic function. Probably each person has some favourite expressions for releasing anger. If you were to prepare a list of cathartic expressions, ranging them according to the degree of tension to be released, you might find it easy task too which indicates that there are personal favourites for a choice of catharsis. The meaning of any of these expressions is to be found in what they do for us, not in a dictionary or in what they do for anybody else. Through repetition we give our select swear words added significance, so that with each new experience and repeated expression we may recall the release of tension from past experiences.

If you have studied another language, you may have learned the kinds of swear words that are most common in that language. In the literal translation they may not seem “to do much for you”. Obviously, they cannot, for they have not yet come to be associated with the experiences that give them meaning. This same observation might be made for all words, but the language of catharsis, associated with the strongest of emotions is the most extreme example of the general principle.

## 8. Magic

The belief in the magic power of words exists in all cultures and takes the form of superstitions, instrumental curses, aspects of most religious and minor forms of wishful thinking. At the root of the attitude of magic is the assumption that words are part of the thing to which they refer and often, that words precede the thing (such as expressed in the Bible):

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”*

Another quality of the magic attitude of words is that “words stand for things” in the sense that a friend stands for a bride or groom in a marriage by proxy. With this belief it follows that one can alter a thing by altering its word. If I write your name on a piece of paper and burn it, you, too, will burn or at least suffer pain. Words in the magical interpretation must be treated with the same care as one would treat what the words stand for.

A common example of the belief in word-magic is the hesitancy to speak of possible dangers. If, on an airplane, you remark about the possibility of crashing, fellow passengers may turn on you as if your utterance of the possibility might just cause that to happen. In some cases, of course, it may be simply that others do not wish to think of unpleasant things; but the manner and intensity of the reply often indicates a very real fear of the words. If the belief in a magic function of

communication seems immature (that is, not at all what you would think or do), ask yourself whether in a plane, you ever avoided such “thoughts” or whether you have ever thought we will not crash.

For better or for worse, the belief that thinking or saying words will have some effect on what words stand for is an example of the magic function of communication. In many religions the magic function of language is still present. One would expect this of any institution that is centuries old and seeks to conserve the language and ritual of the past. The distinction between transubstantiation and consubstantiation of the Roman Catholic and Protestant sects is, in part, the difference in attitude towards the magic function of language. Do the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, or do they symbolize the body and blood? The Anglican and Roman Catholic faiths retain rituals for the exercising of spirits from a haunted house. One may wish to make a distinction between these examples that call for the intercession of the divine spirit (such as prayers of petition) where the effect is produced not by the utterance of the words but by the action upon the words by another being.

Symbols associated with persons have long been recognized for their magical associations. Personal names have been regarded as “part of the person”, so that what is done to the name results in affecting the person. Elements of this attitude are still very common today, as when parents give their child the name of somebody important to them so that the child will be like his namesake. The magical attitude toward personal names requires that these not be taken in vain or, in some cases, not even uttered. Here the name is never a mere symbol, but is part of the personal property by its bearer; property which is exclusively and jealously reserved to him.

The belief in the magic function of language is based on assumptions that are quite opposed to the discipline of semantics which regards words as conventional, convenient and without necessary associations with persons or objects in themselves. There is a sense, however, in which words do have “power”. Words have the “power” to limit our thoughts, though this is a different sense of the word “power”. With rumour, with labels that evoke signal reactions and with labels we try to live up to, we see some effects of “the power” of words. Such powers, however, are not magical, for they are not to be found in the words. Rather, the powers are social and thus they are effective only to the degree that we accept our language without evaluation and respond to words without evaluation. When we understand and evaluate our language habits, this social magic spell of words is broken.

## **9. Ritual**

The language of the rituals of secret organizations, social fraternities, lodges and some religious or political organizations is kept secret and is known only to their members. But the language of other rituals – patriotic, religious, academic and so on – is not kept private. Nevertheless, an oath of allegiance or a communal prayer can affect the nervous system as no statement of fact or judgement can.

The three characteristics of most rituals are:

- 1) the rituals must be performed with others (immediately or symbolically);
- 2) they must be performed on some occasion;
- 3) they must be performed with special care to details.

Conventions of many kinds, political, social, and academic serve more of a ritual function than the function of exchanging information or achieving some instrumental goal. What is called a report may better serve as an incantation. No group can maintain itself without strong cohesiveness. But if the main result of the group's effort is only cohesiveness then surely we have the origins of a new ritual.

## 10. Metacommunication

In communication there are always more than words that pass between persons. There are also cues that indicate to the persons how the spoken words are to be interpreted. **These communications about communication are called metacommunication cues.** These may be vocal inflections (as in the spoken dialogue) or nonverbal indicators, such as gestures and expressions (pounding the table or frowning). Even coughing and the distance between speakers may provide clues for interpreting the message correctly and thus, may also be classified as metacommunication.

These cues may reinforce the meaning of the words, may sometimes distract from the words spoken or may even contradict what the words seem to mean. When the cues are different from the words, a listener has difficulty in accepting the spoken message. Sometimes, for example, the words sound like phatic communion but the way in which they are spoken sounds more like the straight transmission of information with, perhaps, a vague hint of some ulterior instrumental purpose. Not only may a message be interpreted differently because of metacommunication cues, some messages may be greatly altered or even not spoken because the speaker has received such cues from the listener.

One other function served by metacommunication is that of feedback. Feedback, a term borrowed from the field of cybernetics, refers to signals, sent from the listener to the speaker in order to tell him how he is being understood. On receiving such signals, which are usually nonverbal the speaker alters his message accordingly. If a listener wrinkles his brow, the speaker explains more carefully; if a listener nods knowingly, the speaker may speed up or skip over parts of his message, assuming that the listener understands clearly. As with all metacommunication cues, those associated with feedback may conflict or be confusing. One smiles as if he is friendly to the message, while at the same time he taps his foot impatiently.

## 11. Prevention of Communication

The second function of communication is the opposite of the first. Just as we rarely open a conversation with, "*I see you and I am friendly*", when this may be

the real “message” of our greeting, we rarely prevent further communication by saying directly, *“I don’t want to talk to you any more”*. This is said sometimes, to be sure, but there are more sophisticated ways of rendering this idea.

1. There are dismissal reactions *“Ha!”*, *“That’s crazy!”* *“Yeah, I’ll bet!”* and so forth. Whether the speaker intends these to stop communication or whether they merely function in this way is often difficult to determine. In either case it takes but a few well chosen reactions to end a conversation and a few more to end a friendship.

2. Then there are guarded utterances of verbal grunts that seem to show a lack of interest in a speaker or subject, *“Oh, really?”*, *“I see”*, *“Indeed”* or *“Hmm”*.

These brief snips of uninterested responses will end a conversation, and often large hunks of verbiage will achieve the same end. Either the language seems to say nothing or it is so difficult to decipher that it does not seem worth the effort. A favourite technique of naughty children, students taking examinations and some US senators is to talk on and on about anything irrelevant to the subject at hand.

## 12. On Saying What you Mean, and Meaning What you Say

Semanticists are sometimes thought to desire complete honesty of expression, directness and “no beating around the bush”. An understanding of many purposes of communication should dispel that view. We use language for too many purposes and find ourselves forced to make some comment in too many difficult situations to hold to such a goal. Simple friendship, not to mention diplomacy and tact, prohibits us from always saying what we are thinking.

Suppose, for example, some friends are in a drama. You attend the opening – night performance, which is not, as accurate as you can judge it. Then, as you leave, you encounter your friends and the director. Do you say what you are thinking and maybe hurt a friendship? Do you betray your critical integrity? No. Assuming that you cannot avoid comment, you equivocate, you speak in ambiguities. The popular expressions for this moment of untruth are many; (to the director): *“Well, you’ve done it again!”*; (to the actors): *“You should have been in the audience!”*; (to the elderly bystander who may be the dean, the director’s father or the playwright: *“It was an unforgettable evening!”*

If you feel that the potential ridicule of the expression is too strong, you may equivocate further with the always safe *“Congratulations!”* One may protest that these comments are still lies and should not be excused. To regard them so is to confuse standards of different functions of communication. Affective communication directed to the emotional responses of the listener does not require the accuracy, even of judgements, that the transmission of specific information does. The purpose is always friendship, not a critical evaluation. Often it is much more important to tell a person that you like his tie, coat, smile, voice and so on, than to be bound by some standards of judgement which would severely limit your affective communication. A kind of friendly remark often does more for human understanding, than a diplomatic silence or a hundred “honest” judgements.

To be aware of the many functions of communication is to be alive and

sensitive to the most basic of human needs. As our needs for bodily health and comfort are met, we become more aware of and create new needs for symbolic health and comfort. To be loved or rejected, to help others, to feel trust – the list could be elaborated greatly – becomes extremely important. Each communication situation both reveals our frailty and offers some promise for support.

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. What can communication help us to do?
2. What is phatic communion?
3. What is one key function of communication?
4. What does communication offer each of us?
5. What kind of process is all communication?
6. When are our comments instrumental?
7. What is affective communication?
8. When does our cathartic expression become more obviously symbolic?
9. What is at the root of the attitude of magic?
10. What are three characteristics of most rituals?
11. What are called metacommunication cues?
12. What is a second function of communication?
13. What are semanticists thought to desire?

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## Lecture 4

### SEMANTIC ASPECTS OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION

1. Language and communication.
2. The triangle of meaning: words, things and thoughts.
3. Measuring denotative and connotative meaning.
4. Bypassing, and bypassing the bypass.
5. Word-thing confusions.
6. How to make words work for you.

#### 1. Language and Communication

We depend on language to help us communicate meaning to others and meaning is what communication is all about. If we understand how communication works, we shall be able to use words to help us share meaning with others.

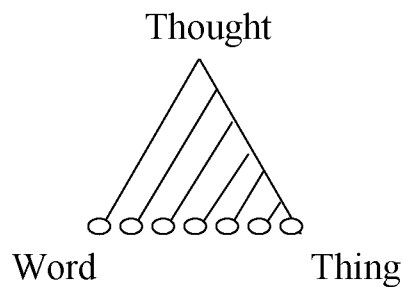
**Language** is a unified system of symbols that permit a sharing of meaning. A **symbol** stands for or represents something else. Words are symbols that represent things. Notice, that we have used the word “represent” and “stand for” rather than “are”. This is a very important distinction. Words **stand for** or **represent** things but **are not** things. Words are spoken sounds or the written representatives of sounds that we have agreed will stand for something else. Thus, by mutual consent we can make anything stand for anything.

The process of communication involves using words to help create meanings and expectations. However important, as words are in representing and describing objects and ideas, the meaning of a verbal message is not stamped on the face of the words we use. Meanings are in people, not in words. What is important to realize is that you have your meaning and other people have theirs. Even a common word such as *cat* can bring to mind meanings ranging from a fluffy angora to a sleek leopard. Your goal in communicating with another person is to have your meanings overlap so that you can each make sense out of the other’s messages and understand each other. Thus, in order to communicate you translate the meaning you want to express into language so that the person will respond to it by forming a meaning similar to yours.

#### 2. The Triangle of Meaning: Words, Things and Thoughts

Language can fulfil its potential only if we use it correctly; to do this, we must understand a number of things. The triangle of meaning, developed by communication theorists E.K. Ogden and A. Richards, help to explain how language works.

Fig. 7



The dotted line connecting **Word** (a symbol) and **Thing** (a referent of stimulus) indicates that the word is not the thing and that there is no direct relationship or connection between the two. Thus, when you use words, you must constantly remind yourself that the only relationship between the words you use, and the things they represent, are those that exist in people's minds (including, of course, your own). Frequently, even the existence of an image (a physical object of some type) does not establish meaning.

It is quite possible for two of us to look at the same object, but give it different meanings. No one else will respond to a stimulus word or thing exactly as you do, because the meaning of anything is inside each of us who experience it. Thus, if you are to be a successful communicator, you should understand the relationships that exist between words and people's thoughts and reactions. There are, however, many reasons why we may not be understood as we want to be and why the words we use can create barriers. For example, in Lewis Carroll's book "Alice in Wonderland" Humpty Dumpty and Alice have the following conversation:

*"I don't know what you mean by 'glory'", Alice said. Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously, "Of course you don't – till I tell you. I meant, 'There's a nice knock down, argument for you!'"*

*"But glory doesn't mean 'A nice knockdown, argument'", Alice objected.*

*"When I use a word", Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less."*

From this example we can see that we can make words mean whatever we want them to mean. Nothing stops us – except our desire to share meaning with others.

### 3. Measuring Denotative and Connotative Meanings

Sometimes we may experience a problem in communication if we consider only our own meaning for a word. The crucial question is, "What does our word bring to mind for those with whom we are communicating?"

**Meaning and Time.** A definition is not attached to a word forever. Words evolve new meanings from era to era, from generation to generation, and sometimes even from year to year. When we use a word that referred to a

particular object at one time, we should attempt to determine if it still means the same thing now. “Old” words often acquire vivid new meanings every decade or so. Remember this when speaking with others who are older or younger than you.

**Meaning and Place.** Not only do words change meaning with the time, they also change meaning from one region of the country to another. For example, what would you envision having if you were to stop for a “soda?” for an “egg cream?” for a “Danish?” for some “pop?” What each word brings to mind probably depends on what region of the country you grew up in. In some part of the United States a soda is a soft drink, but in others it refers to a concoction of ice cream and a soft drink. In some sections of the USA an egg cream refers to a seltzer, syrup, and milk mixture, but elsewhere it conjures up images of an egg mixed with cream. To people in certain parts of the USA a Danish is any kind of breakfast pastry; in other regions people expect to be served a particular kind of breakfast pastry. In still other places the waiter might think that you were ordering a foreign speciality – or even a foreigner!

A person whose curiosity causes him to slow traffic is called *a rubbernecker* in Texas, *a gonker* in Detroit and *a lookie* in Louisiana, *a gaper’s block* in Denver.

How do traffic-casters refer to stalled cars? By converting adjectives to nouns: a disabled vehicle is called *a disable* in Texas, and *a stall* in Baltimore. In Minneapolis *stalls* and *disables* along the icy roadways are called *snowbirds*. In Detroit on days when roadways are icy, listeners are warned of *bunch and crunch*; after dry spells in Texas, when oil on the road is suddenly mixed with rain, the danger spoken of is *slip and slide*.

**Meaning and Gender.** Sometimes the sex of communicators affects not only the meaning we give to our utterances. Women, for example, use more tentative phrases or qualifiers in their speech than men do. Phrases like “*I think*” (“*I guess*” in the USA), “*I wonder if*” abound in the speech patterns of women, but not in men. Women also tend to turn statements into questions more than men do. Women typically ask something like, “*Don’t you think it would be better to send them that report first?*” Men in contrast, typically respond with a more definitive “*Yes, it would be better to send them that report first*”.

According to language and gender researcher Robin Lakoff, women fail to lay claim to their statements as frequently as men do. In addition, women use more “tag” questions than men do. A tag is midway between an outright statement and a yes-no question. For instance, women often make “queries” like these, “*Joan is here, isn’t she?*” “*It’s hot in here, isn’t it?*” By seeking verbal confirmation for their perceptions women build a reputation for tentativeness. Similarly women use more disclaimers than men do, prefacing their remarks with statements like, “*This probably isn’t important, but...*” Such practices weaken the messages sent to others.

**Meaning and Experience.** The meanings we assign to words are based on our past experiences with the words and with the things they represent. Take the word *cancer*, for example. If you were dealing with three different people in a hospital – a surgeon, a patient and a statistician – how do you imagine, each would react to this word? The surgeon might think about operating procedures, diagnostic



techniques, or how to tell a patient that he or she has the disease. The patient might think about the drugs for recovery against death and might well experience fear. The statistician might see cancer as an important factor in human life-expectancy tables.

Unlike “denotative” (or “dictionary”) meanings, which are objective, “abstract”, and general in nature, “connotative” (or “personal”) meanings are subjective and emotional in nature. Thus, your own experience influences the meanings you assign to words; that is, your connotative meanings for a word vary according to your own feelings for the object or concept you are considering.

If we do not make an attempt to analyze how people’s backgrounds may influence them in assigning meaning we may have trouble communicating with them. For most of us words have more than a single meaning. In fact, commonly used words frequently have more than 20 different definitions. We know that, for example, *to strike a match* is not the same as *striking up the band*. For this reason, we must pay careful attention to the context of a message. Unfortunately, we frequently forget that words are rarely used in only one sense, and we assume when we speak to others that words are used in only the way we intend them to be understood. Like us, our receivers may assume that we intended our words the way they happen to interpret them. Let’s explore what happens when this occurs. If you cry “*Forward*” you must be sure to make clear the direction in which to go. If you fail to do that and simply call out a word to a monk and a revolutionary, they will go in precisely opposite directions.

#### 4. Bypassing, and Bypassing the Bypass

Sometimes people think they understand each other when in fact **they are really missing each other’s meaning**. This pattern of miscommunication is termed “**bypassing**” because the interactors’ meanings simply **pass by** one another. We can identify two main kinds of bypassing. One type occurs when people use different words or phrases to represent the same thing but are unaware that they are both talking about the same thing. For example, two politicians once argued over welfare programme. One stated that the city’s welfare programme should be totally overhauled, whereas the other believed that the programme’s concept should be kept intact but that minor changes should be made. Far too much time passed before one politician realized that what he termed “an overhaul” was equivalent to what the second politician considered “minor changes”. How many times have you argued unnecessarily because you were unaware that the other person was using a different word or words to mean the same thing you were expecting?

A more common type of bypassing occurs when people use the same word or phrase but give it different meanings. In such cases people appear to be in agreement when they substantially disagree. Sometimes this type of bypass is relatively harmless. A young man from England was astonished that he got slapped when he told an American acquaintance that he would “*knock her up*” before he returned to Britain. It was only after he explained that to him “*knock you up*”

meant “come and see you” that the young woman apologized.

Developing an awareness that bypassing can occur when you communicate is the first step in preventing it from interfering with or needlessly complicating your relationships. If you believe, it is possible for your listener to misunderstand you, then be willing to take the time needed to ensure that your meanings for words overlap. Try never to be caught saying, “*It never occurred to me that you would think*”, “*I meant*”, or “*I was certain you’d understand*”. To avoid bypassing you must be person-minded instead of word-minded. Remind yourself that your words may generate unpredictable or unexpected reactions in others. Trying to anticipate these reactions will help you forestall communication problems.

## 5. Word-Thing Confusions

Sometimes we forget that it is people, not words, who make meanings. When this happens, we pay far too much attention to labels and far too little attention to realities. For example, what type of behaviour would you exhibit around vats labelled “*Gasoline Drums?*” You would probably be careful not to light any matches, and if you smoked, you would be certain not to toss away any cigarette butts. Would you change your behaviour if the labels on the containers read “*Empty Gasoline Drums?*” You might give less thought to the possibility of starting a fire. Despite the labels, however, empty drums are actually more dangerous because they contain explosive gasoline vapour. Each of us has learned to see the world not as it is, but through the distorting glass of our words. It is through words that we are made human, and it is through words that we are dehumanized.

After studying such incidents linguistic researcher Benjamin Lee Whorf suggested that the way people define or label a situation has a dramatic impact on their behaviour. According to Whorf, a co-formulator of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the words we use, help to mould our perceptions of reality and the world around us. In other words, Whorf believes that our words actually **determine** the reality we are able to perceive. Thus, a person from a tropical country who rarely, if ever has experienced snow and who simply calls snow “snow”, probably “sees” only one thing “snow” when confronted with different kinds of frozen moisture, falling from the sky. In contrast, skiers, who depend on snow, seek out snow, and diligently follow snow reports, are able to label and distinguish approximately six different types.

Remember, if you react to a label without examining what the label represents, you display **an intentional orientation**. Individuals who are intentionally oriented are easily fooled by words and labels. In contrast, when you take the time to look beyond the label, when you inspect the things itself, you display **an extensional orientation**. Individuals who are extensionally oriented are disposed to reality rather than to fantasy.

Frequently our reactions to a person or event are totally changed by words or even a single word. We simply confuse words with things. If we are not aware of our responses, we can very easily be manipulated or deceived by language. Take

some time and analyze how your reactions may change as the labels in each of the following word sets change.

1	coffin	casket	slumber-chamber
2	the corpse	the deceased	the loved one
3	girl	woman	broad
4	backward	developing	underdeveloped
5	cheat	evade	find loopholes
6	janitor	custodian	sanitary engineer
7	kill	waste	annihilate
8	war	police action	defensive manoeuvre
9	toilet	bathroom	rest room
10.	senior citizens	aged	old people
11.	air-strike	bombing raid	protective reaction
12.	broke	poor	disadvantaged
13.	bill collector	debt chaser	adjuster
14.	love child	illegitimate child	bastard
15.	an illegal	an alien	an undocumented resident

Whenever we communicate we consciously or unconsciously select the level of language we will use. Normally, the words we select depend on whom we are communicating with. It is important to recognize that different styles of behaviour are required in different circumstances.

**A Call for Common Sense.** It should be apparent that just as particular styles of behaviour are appropriate for certain situations, so certain styles of language are appropriate at certain times and in certain places. Although we may use slang (a style of language used by special groups, but not considered “proper” by society at large), when talking with our friends, slang would be inappropriate and unwise, when speaking to an instructor or delivering a speech to the town council. You have the capability to adapt the language you use as you move from one situation to another, but first you need to be aware of the conditions and circumstances that can affect your language usage. Jonathan Swift said it long ago when he noted that style is simply “proper words in proper places”. However, what you think is proper may not always coincide with what someone else thinks is proper.

**A Call for Clarity.** In day-to-day communication, for any one of several reasons we far too frequently use language that our co-communicators cannot easily understand. It doesn’t matter how accurately a selected word or phrase expresses our ideas if, when the receivers hear it, they cannot comprehend it. If you want to be understood, you must make every attempt to select words with meaning for your listeners. If you accomplish this, you will have taken a giant step forward achieving understanding.

First as a communicator you want to be sure to use words adapted to the educational level of your listeners. Another rule to follow if you hope to achieve clarity is to keep jargon usage to a minimum unless your receiver is schooled in the

jargon. In other words, speak the same language as your listener. Most of us who live in one country share a common language, but many of us also frequently use one more sublanguages. A **sublanguage** is simply a special language used by members of a particular subculture. We all belong to several subcultures – a national group, an occupational group, an educational group, and perhaps an ethnic or religious group. Having a common sublanguage helps members of the group to attain the sense of identity. For example, when some blacks address their acquaintance as “brother” or “sister” in greeting each other in the street, they are affirming their subcultural membership. However, since all sublanguages are intended to enable communication only within a particular group, a sublanguage is probably not readily understood by outsider to that group. As an example, consider this brief dialogue between two doctors.

Doctor 1. *How’s that patient you were telling me about?*

Doctor 2. *Well, she is improving. But now she is suffering from cephalodynia complicated by agrypnia.*

In analysing this interchange you would probably not immediately guess that *cephalalgia* is the medical term for headache and that *agrypnia* refers to insomnia. Thus, people schooled in the technical language of a particular group should constantly guard against what may be termed an **innate temptation** to impress others rather than to communicate. In short, we must always ask ourselves “Who am I talking to?” if we want our receiver to understand us.

All that we have said notwithstanding using readily understandable language need not keep you from aiming for accuracy. Never abandon your efforts to find the exact words to represent the ideas you want to communicate. Remember that a clear message is neither ambiguous nor confusing. Your precise meaning will be shared with other people only if your words tell them precisely what you mean. Thus, be concrete rather than vague in the words you select to represent your thoughts. For example, you were trying to convey how a man sounded when he spoke, you could state: “*He said*”, “*He yelled*”, “*He cried*”, “*He purred*”, “*He chuckled*”, “*He boomed*” or “*He sang*”. Each description would leave your listener with a somewhat different impression and feeling. Your words would shape the meaning you convey to others. As you increase your sensitivity to language, your awareness of the subtle shades of meaning that can be achieved with words will grow.

## 6. How to Make Words Work for You: A Guide to Further Skill Development

**a) Identify how word labels affect your behaviour.** We can formulate one of the most fundamental rules of language usage simply and directly: **Words are not things.** They are nothing more than symbols. No connection necessarily exists between a symbol and what people have agreed that symbol represents. In other words, symbols and their representations are independent of each other. All of us at times, respond as if words and things were one and the same, for example, when

we make statements resembling the following: *“A bathroom is a bathroom. It’s certainly not a water-closet”, “Pigs are called pigs because they wallow in mud and grime”*. How many times have you turned against a person because he or she is called *“liberal”, “conservative”, “feminist”, “chauvinist”, “intellectual”, or “brainless”*? Make certain you react to people not to the categories within which you or others have placed them.

Too often we let words trigger our responses, shape our ideas, affect our attitudes and direct our behaviour, because we assume that words have magical or mystical powers. We often transfer qualities implied by labels to the objects these labels represent. Becoming conscious of how labels affect you is the first step in changing your attitudes towards them. Don’t permit labels to blind you, fool you or imprison you.

**b) Identify how the words you use reflect your feelings and attitudes.** It is important to recognize that few of the words you select to describe things are neutral. We are too dignified to growl like dogs, but we do the next best thing and substitute series of words, such as *“You dirty double crosser!” “The filthy scum!”* Similarly, if we are pleurably agitated we may instead of purring or wagging the tail, say things, like, *“She is the sweetest girl in all the world”*.

We all use “snarl words” and “purr words”. These words do not describe the persons or things we are talking about; rather they describe our personal feelings for and attitudes towards the objects of our orientation. When we make statements like, *“He is a great American”, “She is a dirty politician”, “He is a bore”, “She is a radical”, “He is a Wall Street slicker”, “She is a greedy conservative”, “He is a male chauvinist pig”, or “She is a crazy feminist”* we should not delude ourselves into thinking that we are talking about anything but our own preferences. We are neither making reports nor describing conditions that necessarily exist. Instead, we are expressing our attitudes about something. Under such circumstances, if others are to determine what we mean by our descriptions, they are compelled to follow up and ask why.

It is important to realize that a word that does not function as a “snarl word” or “purr word” for you may function that way for someone else, even if you did not intend your words to be given such an interpretation. What does matter is the response of the person with whom you are interacting. Therefore, become conscious of the ways others react to words you use. Listen to the people around you and attempt to read their responses. Which words that incite them would incite you? Which words do they find unacceptable or offensive? Why?

We all have our own meanings for words. When engaging in communication, however, we have to be concerned with how others will react to the words we use. We have to consider the possible meanings they may have for our words. In order to accomplish this, you must make an honest effort to get to know the people with whom you interact. Become familiar with how their background could cause them to respond to certain words or phrases with hostility, anger, approval or joy. Remember, your ability to communicate effectively with someone else can be positively or adversely affected by the words we use.

**c) Identify how experience can affect meaning.** Since we give meaning based

on our experience and since no two people have had exactly the same set of experiences, it follows that no two people will have exactly the same meanings for the same word. This aspect of language should be neither approved nor cursed; it should simply be remembered.

Word meanings can change as the people who use words change. The fact that you might wear a sports jacket and slacks or a skirt and sweater if invited to a “casual” party does not mean that everyone else invited to the party would interpret “casual” in the same way. One person may wear jeans and sport shirt, another – shorts and a T-shirt. Likewise, because you feel that the word *freak* has only positive connotations does not exclude the possibility that another person might believe it has only negative connotations. The meanings, people attribute to symbols, are affected by their backgrounds, ages, educational levels and profession. Forgetting this can cause misunderstandings and lead to communication difficulties.

Be guided by the fact that words in themselves have no meaning; meaning resides in the minds of communicators. Try to identify how the life experiences of people, with whom you communicate, could cause them to respond to words in ways that you would not respond. Remember that responses of the people are neither right nor wrong, only different. Do not take your or anyone’s language for granted. Do not conclude that everyone thinks as you think and means what you mean. You know what a word means from your own frame of reference, but do you know what it means to someone with a different frame of reference? Have the patience to find out.

**d) Be sure that meaning is shared.** Since intended meanings are not necessarily the same as perceived, you may need to ask the individuals with whom you are speaking such questions as, “*What do you think about what I’ve just said?*” or “*What do my words mean to you?*” Their answers can serve two important purposes. They help you to determine whether you have been understood, and they permit the other people to become involved in the encounter by expressing their interpretations of your message. If differences in the assignment of meaning surface during this feedback process, you will be immediately able to clarify your meanings by substituting different symbols or relating your thoughts more closely to the background state of knowledge and experiences of your receivers.

Keeping each of these guidelines in mind as you interact with others should help to improve your communication skills.

### Summary

Language is a unified system of symbols that permit a sharing of meaning. Language allows minds to meet, merge and mesh. When we make sense out of people’s messages, we learn to understand people.

There is no direct relationship between words and things as Ogden and Richard’s Triangle of Meaning demonstrates. Words don’t “mean” – people give meanings to words. A principal barrier to communication is the fact that different

people give different meanings to the same words. Words change across time, from place to place and according to individual experience.

Among the communication problems that result from changes in word meaning are: 1) bypassing when people think they understand each other but in fact do not; 2) mistaking the label for the thing itself (displaying an intentional rather than extensional orientation).

These are the two strategies we can use to improve our oral language abilities. First, we can use common sense to recognize that certain styles of language are appropriate at certain times and in certain places. Second, we can seek to make ourselves as clear as possible by selecting words with meaning for our listeners, taking account of their educational level and sublanguages they understand.

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. What relation has language to communication?
2. What should you do if you are to be a successful communicator?
3. What problems may we experience in communication?
4. What is bypassing?
5. When do we display intentional or extensional orientation?
6. What must you do if you want to be understood?
7. What is sublanguage?
8. What is it important to recognize?
9. What do we have to be concerned with when engaging in communication?
10. Where does the meaning of words reside?

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## Lecture 5 SELF-CONCEPT

1. Defining self-concept.
2. Role taking and self-exploration.
3. Popular culture and you.
4. Self-fulfilling prophecy.
5. Developing self-awareness.
6. Making your self-image work for you.

### 1. Defining Self-Concept

We wear many different masks throughout our lives. We wear happy and sad masks, peaceful and angry masks, bored and excited masks, sorry and vengeful masks. Besides the masks we wear to display our innumerable feelings, we also wear those that are associated with the roles we play – student, brother, spouse, sister, boss, or whatever.

**Your self-concept is everything that you think and feel about yourself. It is the entire collection of attitudes and beliefs you hold about who and what you are.** This theory or picture you have of yourself is fairly stable and difficult to change. For example, have you ever tried to alter your parents or your friends' opinions about themselves. Did you have much luck? Our opinions about ourselves grow more and more resistant to change as we become older and “wiser”. How did your self-concept develop? To a large extent it was shaped by your environment and by those around you including your parents, relatives, teachers, supervisors, friends and co-workers. If people who are important to you have “sent you messages” that have made you feel accepted, valued, worthwhile, lovable and significant, you have probably developed a **positive self-concept**. On the other hand, if those who are important to you have made you feel left out, small, worthless, unloved or insignificant you have probably developed a **negative self-concept**. It is not difficult to see how people we value influence the picture we have of ourselves and help to determine the ways we behave.

**Self-concept**, besides, being your own theory of who and what you are **is the mental picture you have of yourself**. This mental image is easily translated into the faces, or masks, that you wear, the roles you play and the ways you behave. This mental picture of your self may be accurate or inaccurate. Your self-concept influences being positive or negative influence all aspects of your communicative behaviour with whom, where, why and how you choose to communicate.

Conditions and circumstances affect the nature of the self. Sometimes it seems that we become different “selves” as we move from situation to situation; demeanour is affected by our perceptions of others and we imagine they perceive us.

We can conclude that the nature of the self at any given moment is a composite of all the actors that interact in a particular environment. Thus, how you look at yourself is affected by how you look at people, how people actually look at you, and how you imagine or perceive that people look at you. In effect, we might say



that self-concept is determined from experience and projected into future behaviour.

## **2. Role Taking and Self-Exploration**

We vary the masks we wear and the roles we perform a number of times each day. The language we use, the attitudes we display, and the appearances we present constantly change. In effect we become different selves as we move from one set of conditions to another. The more we attempt to be ourselves, the more selves we find there are to be. We should recognize that conditions and circumstances affect the nature of the self. In every situation, how we see ourselves and how we think about ourselves in relation to others directs and modifies our behaviour. Our self-concept and demeanour are affected by our perceptions of others and how we think they will respond to us. Thus in part the roles we choose to play are a result of the values held by the members of our society.

Clues to self-understanding come to you continually as you interact with others and your environment. And if you understand yourself well, you need to be open to information that other people give about yourself. Just as we tend to categorize ourselves and others, so others also tend to categorize themselves and us. For better or worse, the categorization process is a basic part of interpersonal communication. We classify people according to their roles, their status and material possessions, their personality traits, their physical and vocal qualities, and their skills and accomplishments.

## **3. Popular Culture and You**

We are all influenced by television and film characters and their life styles to a greater extent than we may realize. Subtly but effectively these two media shape our views of ourselves and our relationship to our world. For many children the TV set acts as a looking glass, in which they see themselves as the characters on the screen.

Let's consider some actual ways that media affect the picture you have of yourself. Through the media we come face-to-face with the standard of living few of us can emulate or expect to achieve. Thus, our evaluations of ourselves can be seriously coloured by what we see. Television and film can also affect the ways in which parents and children perceive themselves and each other. After all, both parents and children are exposed to a steady diet of media counterparts who are either so "perfect" that even their mistakes become the raw material of a closer relationship or so absurd that their foibles can only constitute charming comedy.

Finally, the visual media can fill a need to have a bigger, better, smarter, prettier, stronger, personal image. When we were younger, it was easy and fun to "try on" television and film images. For example, you could put on a cape or mask and become Wonder woman, Spiderman, Superman. As we mature, however, the emulation process becomes a bit more subtle. Today we attempt to become like popular idols or heroes by imitating the fashion trends they set, by adopting their

speech mannerism, and by copying their movements and gestures. Thus, we communicate part of the picture we have, or would like to have of ourselves through the way we dress, move, speak, and arrange ourselves. When you put on a certain outfit, comb your hair in a new style, walk or speak in a particular way, or choose to wear a certain artefact, you are telling other people something about who you think you are, who you would like to resemble, and how you would like to be treated.

Programs and films offered by the media can support us or deflate us. They can cause us to feel good, adequate, or inferior.

#### 4. Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

A self-fulfilling prophecy occurs when your expectations of an event help to create the very conditions that will permit that event to happen. In other words, your predictions can cause you and others to behave in ways that will increase the likelihood of an unlikely occurrence. For example, have you ever had to perform a task that others told you would be dull and uninteresting? Was it? Why? If it was dull, did it occur to you that you may have acted in a way that caused the prediction to come true?

An example of the startling effects of self-fulfilling prophecies is the classroom experiment described by psychologist Robert Rosenthal. A number of teachers were notified that certain of their students were expected “to bloom”, or do exceptionally well, during the course of the school year. What the teachers did not know was that there was no real basis for this determination. The experimenters had simply selected the names of the “late bloomers” at random. Those students did perform at a higher level than would otherwise have been expected and did improve IQ scores. Why? First, because the expectations of the instructors apparently influenced the way they treated the late bloomers. The instructors gave these students extra positive verbal and nonverbal reinforcement, waited patiently for them to respond if they hesitated, and did not react negatively when they offered faulty answers. In turn it seems the way the teachers treated the students had a marked impact on the way the students perceived themselves and their own abilities. The late bloomers were simply responding to the prophecy that had been made about them by fulfilling it. This is called the **Pygmalion effect**.

Self-fulfilling prophecy has many important implications for one’s education as well as one’s personal life. Have you ever joined a group of people you were convinced would not like you? What happened? Very likely you were probably proven right. What you probably did was to act in a way that encouraged them to dislike you. Far too frequently we make assumptions about how others will behave and then act as if they had already behaved that way. For example, if you view yourself as a failure in school or in particular subject, it is likely that you will begin to act the part. Poor study habits, lack of participation in class, and poor grades will help to reinforce your feelings. In this way a growing negative image can mushroom into a vicious all-consuming spiral. Thus, how we and others answer the question, “Who are you?” affects how we behave .

## 5. Developing Self-Awareness

The self-concept represents who you think you are, not necessarily who you are. In general we are not usually very objective about our self-concepts. Sometimes your image of yourself may be more favourable than the one others have of you. For instance, you might view yourself as an extremely talented writer, but others might consider you a hack. There are many reasons why we are able to maintain a picture of ourselves that others may regard as unrealistic or ridiculous. For one thing, we might be so worried about the presentation of our self that we fail to pay attention to the feedback from others about how they see us; or others might send us distorted information about ourselves in an attempt not to hurt our feelings; or we might be basing our self-view on outdated obsolete information that allows us to cling to the memories of the past rather than face the realities of the present.

Just as there are times when we view ourselves more favourably than we should, so there are times when we view ourselves more harshly than we ought. For example, a person might be convinced of her “ugliness” despite the insistence of others that she is attractive. Why? Because this young woman might be acting on the basis of obsolete data. Perhaps, as a child she was gawky or fat, and even though she is now graceful and slender those past traits still pursue her. **Distorted feedback** can also nourish a negative self-image. Individuals who are strongly influenced by an overly critical parent, friend, teacher or employer can develop a self-view that is far harsher than the view others hold. Another reason people “cheat” themselves of a favourable self-concept is due to the social customs of our society. In the U.S., at least, it is far more acceptable for individuals to downplay, underrate and criticize themselves than for them to praise or boast about themselves or openly display their self-appreciation. To put it simply far too many people are taught SPS – self-praise stinks.

Walt Whitman in the poem “Song of Myself” writes “I celebrate myself and sing myself.” To what extent are you able to celebrate yourself? Do you possess a predominantly positive or negative self-concept? Take some time now to inventory what you perceive to be your own assets and liabilities. The practice of honestly reviewing your own strong and weak points can help to reshape your image of yourself.

## 6. Self-Disclosure

We need to realize that self-understanding is the basis for our self concept. To understand yourself, you must understand your own way of looking at the world. To understand others, you must understand how they look at the world.

We sometimes pattern our transactions in such a way that we repeatedly reenact the same script with a different set of players. In other words, it is not uncommon for us to attempt to “stage” a drama with casts of characters drawn from different points in our life cycle. This repetition urge can become a problem for you if it leads you to fail rather than to succeed.

At one time or another we all wish we knew ourselves or others better. The concept of self-awareness, so basic to all functions and forms of communication, may also be explored through a psychological testing feature known as Johari Window. Joseph Laft and Harrington Ingham devised an illustration of a paned window to help us examine both how we view ourselves and how others view us.

Fig. 8

	Known to Self	Not Known to Self
Known to Other	I Open Area	II Blind Area
Not known to Other	III Hidden Area	IV Unknown Area

The first square – “window pane” I – represents information about yourself that is known to you and to others. At times your name, age, religious affiliation, and food preferences might all be found in this plane. The size and contents of the quadrant vary from relationship to relationship, depending upon the degree of closeness you share with another individual.

Pane “Blind area” contains information about you that others, but not you, are aware of. Some people have a very large blind area and are oblivious to either the faults or virtues they possess. At times some individuals may feel compelled to seek outside help or therapy to reduce the size of their “blind panes”.

Pane III represents your “Hidden area”. It contains information you know about yourself but do not wish others to find out for fear they will reject you. Sometimes it takes a great deal of effort to avoid becoming known, and at one time or another each of us feels a need to have individuals important to us know us well and accept us for what we are. When we move information from quadrant III to quadrant I we engage in this self-disclosure process.

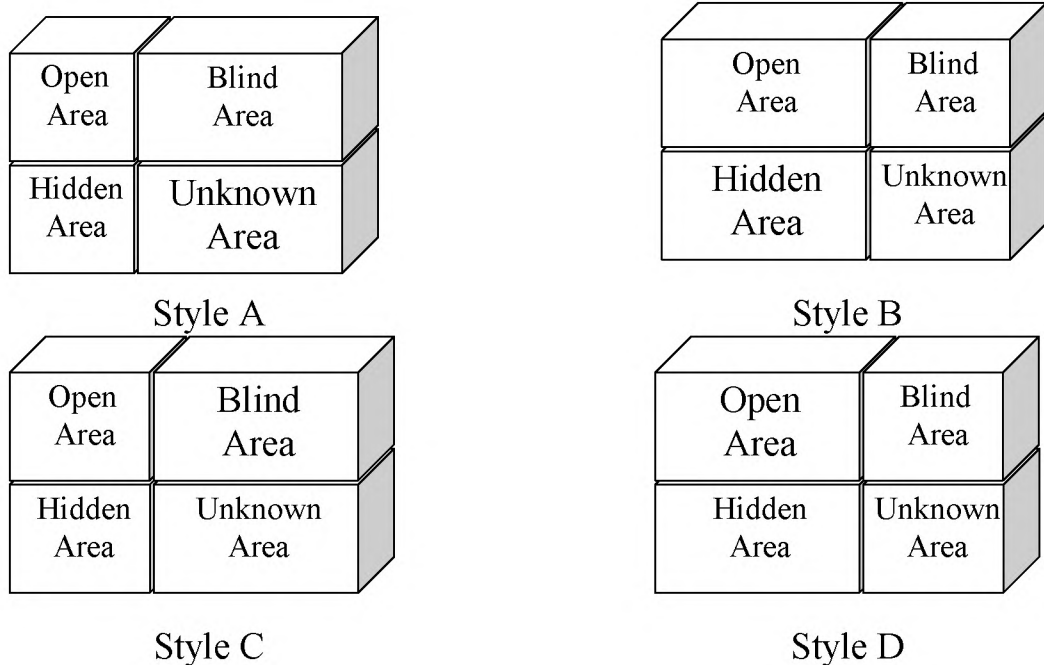
**Self-disclosure** occurs when we purposefully reveal to another individual personal information that the person would not otherwise know. By self-disclosure we show others that we trust them and care enough about them to reveal to them intimate information we would not willingly share with everyone. Often our attempts at self-disclosure will be reciprocated, and this sharing of hidden parts is essential if meaningful and asking relationships are to develop. None of this is to suggest that the hidden area should not be allowed to exist within each of us. It is up to you to decide when it is appropriate for you to share your innermost thoughts, feelings and intentions with others; it is also up to you to decide when complete openness is not in your best interest.

Pane IV is the unknown area in your make-up. It contains information about which neither you nor others are aware. Eventually education and life experiences

may help to bring some of the mysteries contained in this pane to the surface. Only then will its disclosure be available for examination.

People commonly develop an interpersonal style that is a consistent and preferred way of behaving interpersonally. Fig. 9 illustrates representative styles.

Fig.9



**Style A** is characteristic of people who adopt a fairly impersonal approach to interpersonal relationship. Dominated by their unknown areas, these individuals usually withdraw from contacts, avoid personal disclosures or involvements, and thus project an image that is rigid, aloof, and/or uncommunicative.

In **Style B** the hidden area or facade is the dominant window. Here we find individuals who desire relationships but also greatly fear exposure and generally mistrust others. Once others become aware of the facade, they are likely to lose trust in this individual.

**Style C** is dominated by the blind area and people who illustrate this style, are overly confident of their own opinions and painfully unaware of how they affect others or are perceived by others. Those who communicate with such individuals often feel that their ideas or insights are of little concern and thus they are apt to develop resentments and hostility.

In **style D** behaviour the open area or area of free activity is dominant, and relationships involve feelings of candour, openness, and sensitivity to others' needs and insights.

Communication of any depth or significance is sure to be lacking if the individuals involved have little open area common to them. In any relationship you hope to sustain, your goal should be to increase the size of the open area while you decrease the size of the hidden, blind and unknown areas of your make-up. The open area becomes larger whenever information is moved from any of the remaining quadrants into it as when you disclose any of your hidden perception to

others or when others reveal any hidden perception they may have about you. We know that as human beings, we are constantly thinking about others and what they think about us. The question is whether we are able and willing to share what we are thinking.

## 7. Making Your Self-Image Work for You

We have stressed that we all carry figurative pictures of ourselves and others with us wherever we go. Together these pictures form a mental “collage”. Contained within the collage are past, present and future images of us alone or interacting with people. If you closely examine your various images you probably will be able to discern that how you look in each is related to when the picture was taken, the environment you were in and the people you were communicating with. Even though each picture reveals something different for you because you change and grow from moment to moment, situation to situation, and year to year, you may tend to forget that your self-image also can change. Keeping “self-pictures” updated and current is indeed a challenge. Sharpening a fuzzy image, refocusing an old image, and developing a new one are processes that can help you discard worn-out inaccurate perceptions of yourself and others. The following guidelines can be used to further improve “picture-taking” skills you have gained.

**a) Continue taking pictures.** You can further your self-awareness by continuing to take the time to examine your self-image and your relationship to others. Developing a clear sense of who you are is one of the most worthwhile goals you can set for yourself. Be willing to watch yourself in action. Periodically examine your own self-perception and self-misconceptions. Consider how you feel about yourself, how you think you look, to what extent you approve of your values and behaviours. Study the composite picture that emerges as a result of your reflections. How close are you to becoming the person you would like to be?

**b) Encourage others to take pictures of you.** How others perceive you may be very different from how you perceive yourself. Obtaining information from others can help you assess how realistic your self-concept is. Others who come to know you may observe strengths you have overlooked, traits you undervalue, or weaknesses you choose to ignore. However, you do not have to accept all the pictures other individuals take of you. No one can prevent you from adhering to your original beliefs and rejecting the opinions of others. Looking at other pictures of you does mean however, that you are at least opening yourself to the possibility of change by attempting to see yourself as others see you. Receiving messages from others can help you acquire insight into who others think you are and how they think you are coming across.

**c) Refocus.** Carl Sandburg wrote, “Life is like an onion; you peel off one layer at a time” As you move from yesterday through today and into tomorrow, your self is in constant transition. Try not to let your view of yourself today prevent you from adopting to meet the demands of changing circumstances and conditions. Continually formulating new answers to the question “Who am I?” will allow you to discover the vibrant, flexible and dynamic qualities of your self. Self-discovery

is an unending, ongoing way of reacting to life.

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. Define “self-concept”.
2. Describe the part role taking place in the development of self-concept.
3. Identify dimensions of yourself that you had not recognized before.
4. Identify how popular culture helps to shape your self-concept.
5. Define self-fulfilling prophecy and explain how it can influence behaviour.
6. Identify factors that contribute to the development of an unrealistic self-concept.
7. Compare and contrast your own assets liabilities.
8. Identify the purposes and functions of the Johari Window and self-disclosure.
9. Provide examples of the types of information contained in the open, blind, hidden, and unknown areas of the self.
10. Describe how you see yourself and you think others see you.

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## Lecture 6

### PERCEPTION: I AM MORE THAN A CAMERA

1. What is perception? The “I” and the Eyes.
2. The “I” of the Beholder: through a glass darkly.
3. Perceiving others: what are you, please?
4. How to increase the accuracy of your perceptions?

#### 1. What is perception?

In many ways we each live in or inhabit different worlds. We each view reality from a different angle, perspective or vantage point. Our physical location, our interests or personal desires, our attitudes, our values, our personal experiences or bodily conditions, and our psychological states all interact to influence our judgments or perceptions.

Perceptual processes are highly selective and personally based. For this reason, different people will experience the same cues in very different ways. The kind of “sense” we make out of the people and situations in our world depends somewhat on the world outside but more on what kind of perceivers we are. In other words, everything that is seen, heard, tasted, felt, or smelled depends on who is doing the experiencing. Thus, your perceptions of a stimulus are shaped by your loves and hatreds, your desires, your physical capabilities, the quality of your senses, the organizational processes you employ, and interpretation of your past experiences. We could say, then, that your perception of a stimulus and the stimulus itself are not even one and the same thing. The stimulus is “out there”, whereas your perception of it is unique, personal and inside you.

Perception includes more than just the eye alone, more than just the ear alone, more than just the skin alone and more than just the tongue alone. Perception is the “I” behind the senses – the “I” behind the eye as it were. Keeping this in mind, we can define **perception as the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensory data in a way that enables us to make sense of our world.**

#### 2. The “I” of the Beholder: through a Glass Darkly

We have said that perception provides each of us with a unique view of the world – a view sometimes related to, but not necessarily identical with, what is held by others. Since we can never actually become one with the world out there, we are forced to use our senses to help create a personal picture of the people and objects that surround us. How do we make sense out of our world? How do we process the stimuli that compete for our attention? To be sure, during the perception process we are active, not passive participants. We do not simply relax and absorb stimuli available to us the way a sponge absorbs liquid. We select, we organize and we evaluate the multitude of stimuli that bombard us so that what we focus on becomes the figure and the rest of what we see becomes the ground.

**The educational experiences** we have had are an important part of our total



past experience. The amount and kind of education affect the way we process and perceive information. For instance, you may find that your views on television and other media have also changed since you were in grade school and that they will change again as you acquire additional education.

A key factor in how we view our world is the extent to which we open ourselves to experience. Despite the numerous sensory stimuli that compete for our attention we tend to select only those experiences that reaffirm existing attitudes, beliefs and values. We likewise tend to ignore or diminish the significance of those experiences that are incongruent or dissonant with our existing attitudes, beliefs and values.

A concept related to **selective exposure** is a **selective perception**. We see what we want to see and hear what we want to hear. Through the process of selective perception the same message or stimulus may be interpreted in different ways by different people. But why do we distort stimuli until they conform to what we want to express?

Each individual's perception of an event is influenced by his or her exiting attitudes. Thus, out of the swirling mass of information available to us we interpret and digest the information that conforms to our own beliefs, expectations or convictions, and we reject the information that contradicts our beliefs and convictions. Try viewing the same news broadcast with someone whose political views differ sharply from your own. How similar do you imagine your interpretations of the delivered information would be? Why?

**Closure** – is our desire to perceive a completed world.

### 3. Perceiving Others: What Are You, Please?

On what basis do you form first impressions or make initial judgements about the people you meet? What makes you decide if you like or dislike someone? Is it his economic status? Is it the job he/she holds? Perceiving others and the roles they play is an essential part of the communication process. Therefore exploration of the fact how we form first impression of others and why we sometimes stereotype others will answer the question why we often feel it necessary to “freeze” people and “squeeze” people until they fit into or conform to our expectations for them.

“You must make a good first impression” is advice frequently given to individuals as they start a new job, embark an interview or prepare to participate in some other communication encounter. How important is the first impression? First impressions can dramatically affect perception. In addition, the first impression, or “primacy effect” as it is sometimes termed, can even alter the result of communication efforts. Trial lawyers, for example, depend to some degree upon the primacy effect when selecting persons to serve on a jury.

A **stereotype** is a generalization about people, places or events that is held by many members of a society. For example, when we go into a physician's waiting room for the first time we carry with us a general idea, or stereotype about how to behave in that particular environment. In other words, we have developed an ability to identify and generalize about the actions we feel are appropriate to

display in a physician's office. To be sure we would not expect to find flashing coloured lights or people dancing to loud music while waiting to be examined! Our stereotype does not allow for this.

It would be difficult for us to operate without stereotypes. If, for example, you had formed no picture of how a salesperson, mechanic, waiter or politician functions in our society, you would find it somewhat difficult to get along in daily life. Knowing what categories people and things fit into helps us decide how to deal with them somehow. Knowing whether a stranger is a corporate president, a lawyer, or a teacher helps us decide how to behave in his or her presence. When we stereotype people we simply judge them on the basis of what we know about the category to which we feel they belong. We assume the individual possesses characteristics similar to those we attribute to others, in the group and we simplify our task by overlooking any discrepancies that may exist. By implication, when we stereotype, we say those who belong in the same niche all have the same traits. Those who belong in the same niche are alike.

The media help us to create and maintain stereotypes. Television news programs help us identify people, places, ideas and things by providing us with "standard" images of them. Unfortunately, stereotyping is rarely a positive force in interpersonal relations or in the various institutions that make up our society.

In the long run, although stereotyping simplifies and gives a sense of order and stability to our lives it can have limiting and debilitating effect. Far too frequently we fail to recognize the variations and differences in apparently similar individuals. We overlook differences and emphasize similarities. We enjoy classifying and categorizing and find differentiating too difficult. Yet, to improve our perceptual capabilities, we must make an effort to see the differences as well as the similarities among people.

#### **4. How to Increase the Accuracy of Your Perceptions**

**Your perceptual processes are personally based.** What you perceive is determined by the physical limitations of your past experiences, needs, fears, desires, and interests. Effective communicators are not in a hurry; rather they take the time they need to process information fairly and objectively. When we act too quickly, we often make careless decisions that display poor judgment. In our haste we overlook important clues, make inappropriate or unjustified inferences and jump at conclusions. To combat this, we need to take our time to be sure we have assessed a situation correctly. Delaying a response instead of acting impulsively gives us an opportunity to check or verify our perceptions.

Remember: quick, impulsive reactions contribute to faulty perceptions and make us act on inferences as if they were facts. Accurate interpretation of our perceptions does not occur instantaneously.

**Try to be more open.** Frequently we act like robots that have been programmed to look at the world in a set way. But a person is neither a robot nor a computer. We can take steps to become more observant and broaden our expectations. We need to become willing to expect the unexpected and expound

the size of our perceptual “window”. This will happen if we recognize that our reality is subjective, incomplete and unique. Thus, if we want to cultivate a fuller, more valid perception of our world, we must be willing to review, revise and update our view of the world.

As we work to internalize the premise of change, we should recognize that if we remove our self-imposed blinders, we will also remove some of the self-imposed restrictions that limit our ability to perceive accurately the individuals with whom we relate, the situations in which we become involved, and problems we would like to solve. If we want our perceptions to be valid, we must make a commitment to search our alternatives in an effort to acquire as much information as possible. Furthermore, we cannot expect our perceptions to be accurate or useful if we are unwilling to change them by adding to them, discarding them, or readjusting them as needed. Remember, the more valid your perceptions, the better your chances of communicating effectively with others.

### **Summary**

Perception is the process of selecting, organizing and interpreting sensory data in a way that enables us to make sense of our world. Perceptions are personally based. They are affected by the perspective we adopt, our sensory capabilities, and our past experiences. The accuracy of our perceptions is strongly influenced by perceptual sets (the readiness to process stimuli in predetermined ways), selective exposure (the tendency to close ourselves to new experiences), and selective perception (the indication to distort our perceptions of stimuli to make them conform to our need for internal consistency or closure).

How we perceive another person is a key determinant of the kind of relationship we will share with that person. Thus, perceiving others and the roles they play is an essential part of the communication process. A number of factors can prevent accurate perceptions. We frequently evaluate others on the basis of first impressions and we tend to stereotype people, to divide them into groups and place them in niches. Stereotyping can be especially harmful by promoting prejudice, since it encourages us to emphasize similarities and deemphasize differences. Other barrier to perceptual accuracy are: allness (the habit of thinking we know it all) blinding (the tendency to obscure solutions to problems by adding unnecessary restrictions and fact-inference confusions, i.e. the inability to distinguish observations from assumptions). It is important that you work to increase the validity of your perceptions. As a first step, you need to recognize the role you play in the perceptual process.

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. Explain why a person is “more than a camera”.
2. Demonstrate how an individual’s angle of vision, or perspective, affect perception.
3. Identify how we limit what we perceive.

4. Demonstrate how an individual's sensory capabilities affect perception.
5. Define perception.
6. Explain the figure-ground principle.
7. Describe the ways in which past experience can influence perception.
8. Distinguish between an «open orientation and a «closed orientation».
9. Compare and contrast «selective exposure» and selective perception».
10. Define closure.
11. Explain how first impressions affect perception.
12. Define stereotyping
13. Explain how the media perpetuate stereotypes
14. Identify common stereotypes that you and others hold.
15. Define and provide examples of “allness”.
16. Explain what is meant by blinding.
17. Distinguish between facts and inferences.
18. Identify ways to increase the accuracy of your perception.

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### **Skill Builder The Detective**

Read the story below. Assume that the information contained in it is true or accurate. On a sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow the story in order. Do not go back to change any of your answers. After you read a statement simply indicate whether you think the statement is definitely true by writing T, definitely false by writing F, or questionable by writing a question mark.

*A tired executive had just turned off the lights in the store when an individual approached and demanded money. The owner opened the safe. The contents of the safe were emptied and the person ran away. The alarm was triggered, notifying the police of the occurrence.*

1. An individual appeared after the owner had turned off the store's lights.
2. The robber was a man.
3. The person who appeared did not demand money.

4. The man who opened the safe was the owner.
5. The owner emptied the safe and ran away.
6. Someone opened the safe.
7. After the individual who demanded the money emptied the safe, he sped away.
8. Although the safe contained money, the story does not reveal how much.
9. The robber opened the safe.
10. The robber did not take the money.
11. In this story only three persons are referred to.

## Lecture 7

### LISTENING: A DELIBERATE PROCESS

1. The definition of listening.
2. Hearing versus listening.
3. Feedback: prerequisite for effective listening.
4. How to increase your “Ear Power”. A listening improvement programme.

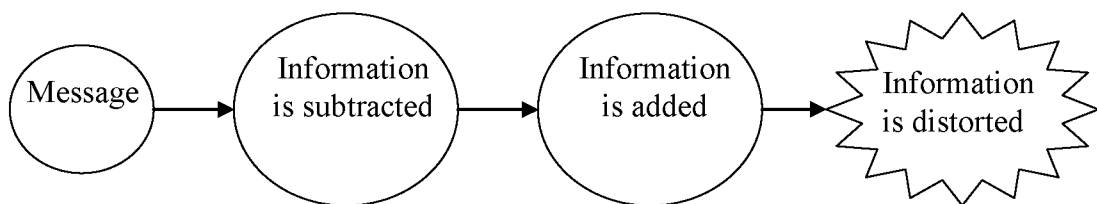
#### 1. Definition of Listening.

Even though an International Listening Association now exists and even though listening is now taught in some schools and colleges, of four communication skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening – listening has received the least attention from educators. Yet, **listening is the fundamental process through which we initiate and maintain our relationships, and it is the primary process through which we take in information.**

Studies show that on the average we spend 42 per cent of our communicative time listening, 32 per cent speaking, 15 per cent reading, and only 11 per cent writing. Listening training is not neglected because we are innately good listeners, nor are we born knowing how to listen.

Unfortunately, despite years of supposed listening practice, errors in listening are extremely common. According to communication theorist William Haney, we frequently run into problems, when we use **serial communication** or chain-of-command transmissions to relay messages. What happens in **serial communication** is that person 1 sends a message to person 2. Person 2 then communicates his or her perceptions to person 3, who continues the process. See the message chain in the form of a figure.

Fig. 10



Whenever one individual speaks or delivers a message to a second individual, the message occurs in at least four different forms:

1. The message as it exists in the mind of the speaker (his or her thoughts).
2. The message as it is spoken (actually encoded by the speaker).
3. The message as it is interpreted (decoded by the listener).
4. The message as it is ultimately remembered by the listener (affected by the listener’s personal selectivities and rejection preferences).

In travelling down this clumsy “chain of command” from person to person, ideas can get distorted by as much as 80 per cent. A number of factors cause this:

**First**, because passing along complex, confusing information poses many problems, we generally like to simplify messages. As a result we unconsciously (and consciously) delete information from the messages we receive before transmitting the information to others.

**Second**, we like to think the messages we pass along to others, make sense. (We feel foolish if we convey a message we do not seem to understand, or if we deliver a message that appears to be illogical). Thus, we try to “make sense out of” the message before communicating it to someone else. We do this by adding to, subtracting from, or otherwise altering what we have heard. Unfortunately, once we make sense out of the message it may no longer correspond to the message originally sent to us (See Fig. 10). Such errors occur even though we have had years of practice in listening.

Listening takes up a very important and very significant portion of your working day, and since effective listening serves so many purposes you need to listen as if your life depended on it. People who listen effectively demonstrate a sense of caring and concern for those with whom they interact. In contrast, people who do not listen effectively tend to drive people away. Thus, by listening accurately, you help avoid communication difficulties and breakdown. Who has the primary responsibility for clear and effective communication – the speaker or the listener? An old proverb says “Nature gave us two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we speak.” The effective communicator is not afraid to be two parts listener and one part speaker. Actually since we all function both senders and receivers, we believe that each must assume “51 percent” of the communication responsibility. This practice might not be mathematically sound, but it would certainly increase the effectiveness of our interpersonal small-group, and public communication.

## 2. Hearing versus Listening

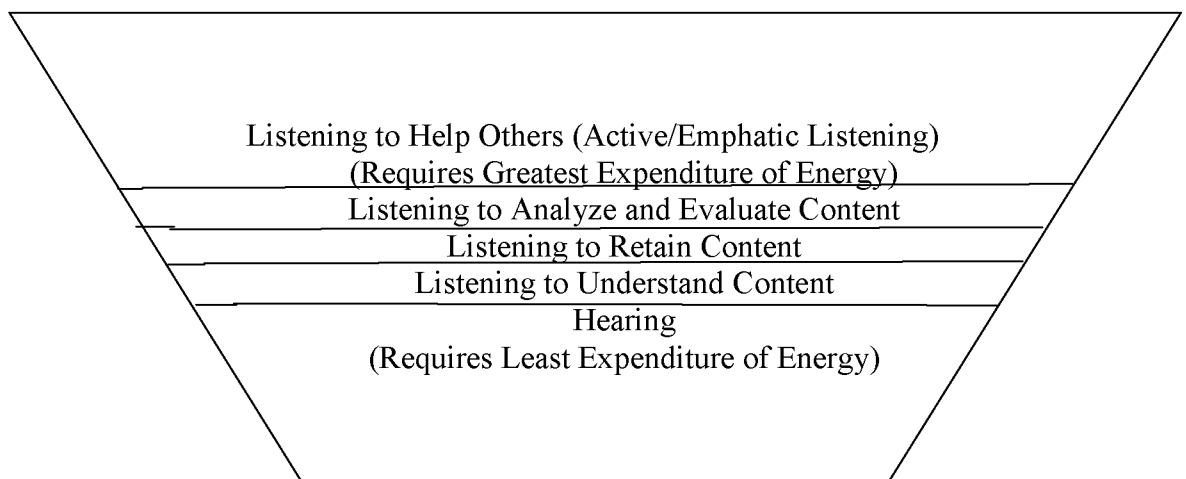
**Hearing** and **listening** are not one and the same thing. Most people are born with the ability to hear. Thus, hearing occurs automatically and requires no conscious effort on your part. But what is **listening**? As we will see it **is a deliberate process through which we seek to understand and retain heard stimuli**. Unlike hearing, listening depends upon a complex set of skills that we have to acquire. Thus, although hearing simply happens to us and cannot be manipulated, listening requires us to imagine an active, conscious effort to comprehend and remember what we hear. Furthermore, who we are affects the things we listen to. In your environment, from minute to minute, far too many sounds bombard you for you to be able to pay attention to each one. Thus, in listening you process the external sounds of your environment to select those that are relevant to you, your activities, and your interests. This is not to say, however, that listening is just an external process. It is also an internal process. We listen to the sounds we hear, and we listen to what others say, but we also listen to what we say about and what we say to ourselves in response.

Thus, hearing is a natural and passive process. When we hear, we employ little

if any conscious effort. Listening, on the other hand, is a deliberate process. How deliberate is it? How much effort must we expend in order to listen effectively? For example, do you work harder listening to a professor's lecture on important material or in listening to a disc jockey announcing your favourite recording on the radio? In many ways listening is similar to reading. Some material we read very carefully and closely while other material we scan quickly to abstract only relevant facts. For still other material we need only check the title and author to know we do not care to read it. We approach the information that we receive by hearing in much the same way. Some information we pass over lightly, and other information we attend with more care. If the information is important to us, we work harder to retain it.

Linguists identify four levels of receiving. An understanding of these levels should help you assess your own listening effectiveness. Let's begin by examining the Listening Level Energy Involvement Scale (Figure 11).

Fig. 11



As the scale indicates, hearing requires little if any energy expenditure or involvement on your part. In contrast, listening to understand requires a greater expenditure or energy. In listening you need to ensure that you comprehend what is being said. Remembering or retaining a message requires even more effort on your part, and working to analyze and evaluate what is said is still more difficult and thus consumes more energy. When we listen to help others (emphatic listening) we are required to exhibit an even greater degree of involvement and consequently expend even more energy.

A problem shared by many poor listeners is the inability to determine the listening or involvement level appropriate to a given situation. For example, in a course with large lecture sections it is not uncommon to find some students “turning out” – simply hearing when they should be listening to understand, analyze and evaluate content so as to improve their performance at examinations. All too frequently the same individuals are later quite adamant in asserting that certain points were “never covered” in class (“I was sitting right there and I never heard you say that!”).



### 3. Feedback: A Prerequisite for Effective Listening

a) **What is feedback?** The expression “feedback” implies that we are feeding someone by giving something back to the person. Simply put, feedback consists of all the verbal and non-verbal messages that a person consciously or unconsciously sends out in response to another person’s communication. As students you continually provide your instructors with feedback. Many of you, however, are probably not completely honest when you send feedback. At times when you are confused, or bored, you may nevertheless put on an “I’m interested” face and nod smiling, indicating that you understand and agree with everything your professor has said. Unfortunately, such behaviour tends to encourage the sending of unclear messages, whereas if class members admitted confusion, the instructor might be more likely to find alternative ways to present the concepts and formulate new, more interesting examples. To cite another instance, some individuals will respond more actively and talk at greater length when a listener is smiling at them than when the listener appears sad or bored. Whatever the circumstance, we must recognize that the nature of the feedback we give people will effect the communicative interactions we share with them.

b) **Types of feedback. Evaluative feedback.** When we provide another person with an **evaluative response**, we state our opinion about some matter being discussed. “*Thus, how did you like my speech?*” will almost always evoke a response that will be perceived as evaluative in tone. For example, a slight hesitation before the words, “*I loved it*” might be perceived as connoting a negative response. When we give evaluative feedback we make judgements – either good or bad – based on your own system of values. As we go about the business of daily life, judgement about the relative worth of ideas, the importance of projects, and the classifications of abilities are necessary.

By its very nature, the effect of evaluative feedback is either positive and rewarding or negative and punishing. **Positive evaluative feedback** tends to keep communication and its resulting behaviours moving in the direction in which they are already heading. If a company places an advertisement and receives a tremendous growth in sales, the company will tend to place the same or a very similar advertisement in the same or very similar media in the future. If a person wearing a new hair style is complimented, he will tend to keep that hair style. If you are speaking to your instructor and she appears receptive to your ideas and suggestions, you will tend to continue offering ideas and suggestions in the future. Thus, positive evaluative feedback serves to make us continue behaving as we are already behaving and enhances or reinforces existing conditions or actions.

**Negative evaluative feedback** serves a corrective function in that it helps to extinguish undesirable communicator behaviours. When we or others perceive feedback as negative in tone, we tend to change or modify our performance accordingly. For example, if you were to tell a number of off-colour stories that your listeners judge to be in bad taste, your listeners might send negative responses to you. They might turn away, attempt to change the subject, or simply maintain a cold, lengthy silence. Each cue would indicate that your message has overstepped

the bounds of propriety and as a result you would probably discontinue your anecdotes.

Whenever you send evaluative feedback messages, whether positive or negative, preface your statements in such a way that your co-communicator realizes that what you are offering is your opinion only. Such phrases as *“It seems to me”*, *“In my opinion”* or *“I think”* are usually helpful, because they allow the target of your remarks to know that you realize, that other interpretations and options are available. When possible, avoid using phrases of the “you must” or “that’s stupid” type. Such comments almost always elicit a certain amount of defensiveness, whereas couching both positive and negative feedback in less than adamant terms tends to create a more favourable and receptive climate for the relationship.

**Formative feedback** is a special kind of negative feedback. Don Tosti discovered that in learning situation it is best to first provide positive feedback to an individual **immediately after** the individual has displayed a desired behaviour. Thus, comments, such as *“You did a good job”* or *“Keep up the good work”* would be offered immediately following such behaviour, because these responses give people a sense of pride and pleasure in themselves and their work. However, Tosti also suggests that a particular negative – or what he calls “formative” feedback – should be given only **just before** the same (or similar) activity is repeated. In other words, Tosti believes withholding negative feedback until the individual can use it constructively makes the negative or formative feedback seem more like coaching than criticism. Comments such as *“Okay, team, let’s eliminate the errors we made last time”* or *“When you go out there today, try to ...”* help to alleviate the extent to which negative feedback is perceived as a harmful rather than a helpful force. Thus, saving formative feedback until just, before an activity is to be performed again can help eliminate the feelings of rejection that sometimes accompany other negative feedback. In contrast, it should be remembered that the immediate dispensing of positive feedback, can do wonders for your co-communicator’s self-image and morale.

The implications of Tosti’s findings for communication are many. For example, if you handed in a paper for your instructor, following Tosti’s guidelines the instructor would hand you a list containing only positive observations. Not until the instructor made the next assignment would you be offered formative or negative feedback in the form of a list containing errors to avoid. Formative feedback can also be used as a memory refresher or as a motivational tool to improve performance. With formative feedback, it is the timing that counts.

Unlike traditional negative feedback, formative feedback does not tend to discourage an individual from attempting to perform an activity again. Nor does it tend to demoralize a person.

**Nonevaluative feedback.** In contrast to evaluative feedback, nonevaluative (or nondirective) feedback makes no overt attempt to direct the actions of a communicator. Thus, we may use nonevaluative feedback when we want to learn more about a person’s feeling or when we want to aid another person in formulating thoughts about a particular subject. When we offer nonevaluative

feedback, we make no reference to our personal opinions or judgements. Instead, we simply describe, question or indicate an interest in what the other person is communicating to us.

Despite its nonjudgemental nature, nonevaluative feedback is often construed as being positive in tone. That is, our communication behaviour may be reinforced as we probe, interpret their messages, and offer support as they attempt to work through a problem. Nonevaluative feedback actually searches beyond the realm of positive feedback, however, by providing others with an opportunity to examine their own problems and arrive at their own solutions. For this reason, carefully phrased nonevaluative feedback can be enormously helpful and sustaining to people as they go through difficult periods.

We will consider four kinds of nonevaluative feedback. Three were identified by David Johnson – probing, understanding, and supporting and fourth – “I” messages was identified by Thomas Gordon.

**Probing** is a nonevaluative technique in which we ask individuals for additional information to draw them out and to demonstrate our willingness to listen to their problems. For example, suppose a student is concerned with her grades in a particular course and says to you, *“I am really upset. All of my friends are doing better in geology than I am”*. If you choose to utilize the nonevaluative technique of probing, you might ask *“Why does this situation bother you?”* or *“What is there about not getting good grades that concerns you?”* or *“What do you suppose caused this happen?”* Responding in this way gives the other person the chance to think through the overall nature of her problem while providing her with needed opportunities for emotional release. In contrast, comments like, *“So what? Who cares about that dumb class?”* or *“Grades don’t matter. What are you worrying about?”* or *“You really were dumb when you stopped studying,”* would tend to stop the student from thinking through and discussing her problem and instead would probably cause her to experience a feeling of defensiveness.

A second kind of nonevaluative response is what Johnson terms “understanding”. When we offer **understanding** we seek to comprehend what the other person is saying to us and we check ourselves by **paraphrasing** (restating) what we believe we have heard. Paraphrasing shows that we care about other people and the problems they face. Examine the following paraphrasing statements to develop a feeling for the nature of understanding response:

Person 1: *I don’t think I have the skill to be picked for the team.*

Person 2: *You believe you’re not good enough to make the team this year?*

Person 1: *I envy those guys so much.*

Person 2: *You mean you are jealous of the people in that group?*

If we use understanding responses early in a relationship, in effect we communicate to our partners that we care enough about the interaction and we comprehend what they are saying to us. Such responses encourage the relationship because they encourage the other person in describing and detailing personal feelings. By delivering understanding responses both verbally and nonverbally we

also support individuals by showing that we are sensitive to their feelings and are really willing to listen.

A **third kind** of nonevaluative feedback is referred to by Johnson as “supportive”. **Supportive feedback** indicates that the problem an individual finds important and significant is also viewed by the listener as important and significant. For example, suppose a friend comes to you with a problem that he feels is extremely serious. Perhaps he has worked himself into a state of extreme agitation and implies that you cannot possibly understand his situation. In offering supportive feedback you would attempt to calm your friend down by assuring him that the world has not ended. Offering others supportive feedback is difficult. We have to be able to reduce their intensity of feeling while letting them know that we believe their problems are real and serious. Such comments, as *“It’s stupid to worry about that”* or *“Is that all that’s worrying you”* are certainly not supportive. A better approach might be to say *“I can see you are upset. Let’s talk about it. I’m sure you can find a way to solve the problem.”* A friend who is upset because she just failed an exam needs supportive feedback. *“I can see you are worried. I don’t blame you for being upset”*. This is certainly not the time to suggest that she has no valid reason for being upset or that her feelings are inappropriate. It would be foolish to say *“Next time you’ll know better, I told you not studying wouldn’t get you anywhere.”* When we use supportive feedback we judge the problems to be important, we do not attempt to solve them ourselves, instead, we encourage people to discover their own solutions.

Finally, certain nonevaluative feedback messages are called **“I messages”**, a term coined by Thomas Gordon. When we deliver “I messages” to others we do not pass judgement on other actions but instead convey our feelings about the nature of the situation at hand. According to Gordon, when people interact with us, they are often unaware of how their actions affect us. We have an option to provide these persons with either evaluative or nonevaluative feedback. Neither type is inherently good or bad. However, far too often the way we formulate our evaluative feedback adversely affects the nature of our interactions and the growth of our relationships. For example, do any of these statements sound familiar? *“You made me angry!”* *“You’re no good!”* *“You’re in my way!”* *“You’re a slob”*. What does each of these statements have in common? As you have probably noticed, each one contains the word *you*. Each also places the blame on another person. As relationships experience difficulties, then involved parties tend to resort more and more to name-calling and blaming others. Such feedback messages serve to create schisms between people that are difficult and sometimes even impossible to bridge. To avoid this Gordon suggests that we replace “you” messages with “I” messages. If, for example, a parent tells a child, *“You’re pestering me”*, the child’s interpretation will probably be, *“I am bad”*, thereby precipitating a certain amount of defensiveness or hostility toward the parent (*“I am not bad!”*). But if the parent tells the child, *“I’m really very tired and I don’t feel like playing right now”*, the child’s reaction is more likely to be, *“Mom is tired”*. Such an approach is more apt to elicit the type of behaviour the parent desires than the name-calling and blaming that *“You are a pest”* would evoke. Keeping this in mind, which of the following

messages do you believe would be more likely to elicit a favourable response?

Supervisor to workers: *You lazy bums! We'll never meet the deadline if you don't work faster.*

Supervisor to workers: *I'm afraid that if we don't work faster, we'll miss the deadline and the company will lose a lot of money.*

Right! The second statement would not produce the feelings of defensiveness that would be engendered by the first.

There is one other quality you should realize about “I” messages and their use. It is quite common for any of us to say “*I am angry*” to another person. Anger, however, is a secondary emotion. We are angry **because of** or **due to**, some stimulus or stimuli. In actuality, we **develop** anger. For example, should your child or a child you are watching run into the street, your first response would probably be fear. Only after the child was safe would you develop anger, and then you would probably share your anger with the child. When formulating angry “I” messages during your communicative encounters, be certain to look beyond or below your anger and ask yourself why you are angry. Attempt to determine the forces that precipitate your anger – these are feelings that should be expressed. Thus, if someone says something that hurts you, try to find ways to express the **hurt** rather than simply venting the resulting **anger**. Using “I” messages as feedback will not always evoke the behaviour you want from the other party, but it will help to prevent the defensive self-serving behaviour that “you” messages frequently elicit.

As you probably realize, the categories and types of feedback we have discussed are neither good nor bad. Each can be put to good use. Thus, whether you choose to offer evaluative or nonevaluative responses depends on the individual with whom you are interacting and on the nature of the situation in which you find yourself.

**Effects of feedback.** How do you think feedback affects interpersonal communication? Suppose, for example, someone is telling a funny story. What would happen if you should consciously decide to treat this person politely but also to neither smile, nor laugh at the story? Such polite but sombre reactions can cause the best of storytellers to stop communicating. Sometimes in the middle of a story the teller will notice that the listener is not amused. At this point in an attempt to determine if the receiver heard what was said, the sender will repeat or rephrase key phrases of the story: “*Don't you understand? What happened was ...*” or “*You see, what this means, is ...*” The feedback given by the respondent in any encounter strongly influences the direction and outcome of that interaction. You might want to try the “no laugh” procedure the next time someone begins to relate a humorous incident or tale to you. If you do, be sure to note, how your not laughing affected the sender's abilities to formulate a message.

#### **4. How to Increase your “Ear Power”: A Listening Improvement Program**

The **first step** in developing effective listening habits is to develop an awareness of the importance and effects of listening. The **second step** is to develop an awareness of the importance and effects of feedback. The **next step** is to develop your listening skills by participating in a series of exercises and experiences. Your listening skills will improve only if you return to try these and similar experiences repeatedly.

**Focus your attention!** If we are to listen effectively we must be able to pay attention to what is being communicated. However, numerous internal and external stimuli bombard us and compete for our attention.

The difficulties we experience when attempting to focus attention are confirmed by the number of times, in various situations, that we are admonished to “Pay attention!” If you are to learn to focus your attention and improve your listening skills, one of your needs is **to handle your emotions**. Feelings of hate, anger, happiness and sadness can cause us to decrease our listening efficiency. As we become emotionally involved in a conversation, we simply are less able or less willing to focus our attention accurately. Ralph Nichols in the book “Are You Listening?” notes that single words will often cause us to react emotionally and thus reduce the extent to which we are able to pay attention. According to Nichols the latter trigger an emotional deafness that sends our listening efficiency down to zero. Among the words known to function as red flags for certain listeners are: picnic, mother-in-law, spastic and income tax. When particular individuals hear these words, they abandon efforts to understand and perceive. Instead, they take “side trips”, dwelling on endemic feelings and connections. The result is that, in effect, the emotional eruption they experience causes a listening description. It should be noted that like words, phrases or topics can also make us react emotionally and lessen our ability to concentrate. For these reasons, it is important to identify the words, phrases, or topics that tend to distract you emotionally. Your “distraction words” are personal and unique to you and therefore change as you change an issue that precipitated emotional deafness for you in the past, though they may not distract you even momentarily in the future. For this reason, it is a good practice for you to keep a record of all your attention distractors. If possible list them on cards, and re-examine them every three or four months. By constantly updating your distraction list, you will be better able to recognize and handle distractions during interpersonal encounters.

Physical factors can also act as attention distractors. For example, the room you are in can be too hot or cold for your comfort, the space may be too small or too large, or the seating arrangement can be inadequate. Other people can also be a distraction. Individuals you are relating to may speak too loudly or too softly. They may have an accent that you find difficult to comprehend or an appearance that interests or even alarms you.

One additional attention determinant should be noted. Simply we can think faster than we can speak. When communicating we usually speak at a rate of 125 to 150 words a minute. Researchers have found, however, that we can comprehend much higher rates of speech – perhaps even 500 words a minute. What does this mean for you, the listener? It means that when someone speaks at a normal rate

you have free time left over and may therefore tend to take mental excursions and daydream. When you return your attention to the speaker, however, you may find that he or she is far ahead of you. Thus we must make conscious efforts to use the speech-thought differential effectively. We can do this by internally summarizing and paraphrasing what is being said as we listen and by asking ourselves questions that help focus our attention instead of distracting it from the subject at hand.

Finally, attentive listeners adopt nonverbal behaviours that support the listening effort. Ineffective listeners employ traditionally **passive** listening poses – they do not face the person they are interacting with, they adopt a defensive posture, they lean away from the other person, they avoid eye contact. Attentive listeners exhibit **active** listening behaviours – they face the other person directly, they adopt an open posture, they lean slightly toward the other person and they maintain comfortable eye contact.

**Set appropriate listening goals.** Far too often we find ourselves listening to something without adequate understanding what we are listening for, and as a result we become bored and irritated. One way to combat the “listening plans” is to set specific listening goals. Research indicates that listening effectiveness increases after goals are identified. How can you make this evidence work for you?

**Listening goals** identify what you personally would like to gain during and after attending to a particular message. When you establish goals you answer the question: “*Why I am listening to this?*” Listening goals are closely related to the levels of listening according to which we listen to understand, retain, analyze, evaluate content and develop empathic relationship with others. Thus, one way to set your listening goals is to identify which level of listening is most appropriate to a particular situation. For example, if you are an employer who was expected to internalize a series of directions for handling highly explosive materials, you would listen to understand and retain instructions. If you were listening to a series of lectures on types of computer operations and your objective was to select a computer for your company, you would listen to understand and retain but also to analyze and evaluate. In contrast, suppose your friend has lost a parent. In this situation your goal would not be to retain or evaluate information but rather to listen in an emphatic manner.

Just as trains frequently switch tracks, so you should be able to switch listening goals. The goals you set are not meant to imprison you: rather you need to be flexible, able to adapt to the demands of each situation or experience.

**Listening to understand ideas.** After listening to information from another person, have you ever made a statement like, “*I’m sure I understand the main point*”, or “*The central idea is crystal clear.*” When we listen to understand, we listen for the main ideas or central concepts.

Listening to understand may be compared to a simple tooth extraction. When we visit the dentist to have a tooth pulled, we assume the dentist will not simply reach into our mouth and begin pulling our teeth at random. Instead we operate under the belief that the dentist will locate the tooth that needs to be extracted take hold of only that tooth, and remove it. When we listen to understand – a process that underlies all higher level of listening – we, like the dentist, must locate the

central concepts contained in the speaker's message and remove them (in this case for further examination). Since it is almost impossible for us to remember every word said to us, we should work to recall only those concepts that are most important – in other words, those ideas that comprise the main points of the person's message. Thus, when you listen to understand, you seek to identify key words and phrases that will help you accurately summarize the concepts being discussed. But remember that **unless the ideas you extract from the messages you receive are accurate representations of what was said you are only hearing, not listening.**

**Listening to retain information.** If you are to retain what you hear, you must learn **first**, how to focus your attention and, **second**, how to make certain that you understand what you have heard. Once you are able to focus your attention on what another person is saying and you are able to understand what the person has said, you are ready to move your listening selector up to the next level – listening to retain.

After receiving travel directions did you ever find yourself saying to yourself, *“Do I turn right or left here? What was I told?”* After having a discussion with a friend and assuming that you understood the friend's point of view, did you ever find yourself wondering, *“What that point of view was?”* Even worse, after being introduced to someone, do you ever find yourself asking *“What was that person's name?”* We will now explore several techniques that you can use to help you retain what you hear. Such aids are commonly referred to as **mnemonic devices**. Use the ones that work best for you.

**Repeat and paraphrase.** Your basic tool to help retain information you hear is **repetition**. The more you repeat a concept or idea, the more likely you are to be able to recall it later. Repetition has two faces: we use repetition when we repeat a statement verbatim (exactly reproduced what was said), and we use repetition when we paraphrase (restate what was said using other words).

One effective way to remember what others say is to reproduce their words in writing. The more proficient you are in note-taking, the more information you are likely to be able to retain. Of course, in interpersonal situations, it is neither advisable nor practical to take notes. However, it is a good idea to keep a few index cards or a small note pad handy to record important names, numbers, appointments, and information.

Paraphrasing can be also used to improve your personal retentiveness level. By restating what a person has said to you in your own words you not only check on your own understanding but also help yourself recall what the other person has said. Paraphrasing can help alleviate some of the problems created by the speech-thought time lapse. If you use some of your extra thinking time to replicate for yourself what has just been said, you give your mind fewer opportunities to wonder.

**Visualization.** Frequently we are better able to recall information if we picture something about it. For example, many people are able to associate names, places, and numbers with particular visual images. Often, the more outrageous or creative the picture, the better the image will help them recall a name.



**Listening to analyze and evaluate content.** Being able to analyze and evaluate what you listen to calls for even greater skill than retention. Often we let our prior convictions prevent us from processing and fairly evaluating what we hear. For instance, consider the following conversation:

Alice: *Did you hear? Sandy was arrested by the police for selling drugs.*

Jim: *Sandy? I don't believe it. The police made a mistake. She isn't that type.*

In this interchange Jim is jumping to a conclusion. Instead of analyzing the information he was given, he has reacted on the basis of his prior knowledge. How should Jim have reacted? Should he have agreed that the police were right to arrest Sandy? He doesn't think so. We think Jim should have asked what evidence the police had to support their claim and what evidence Sandy offered in her own defence. Effective listeners do not let their convictions run away with them but reserve judgement until the facts are in. In other words, they withhold evaluation until their comprehension of the situation is complete.

Attempts at persuasion often find one individual trying to make another believe something because everyone else believes it. If we accept such arrival, we may find ourselves swept away on the bandwagon. We may end up supporting a candidate simply because we imagine every one else does.

Effective listeners, however, realize that they have a choice. They do not feel compelled to follow the crowd.

If you become proficient at evaluating and analyzing the information you listen to, you will discover that people frequently argue or talk in circles: e.g.

Ellen: *Divorce is wrong.*

Jose: *Why?*

Ellen: *Because my minister told me it is wrong.*

Jose: *Why did he tell you that?*

Ellen: *Because it is wrong.*

We have a tendency to talk circularly when we argue without evidence, particularly if we feel an emotional tie to the topic under discussion or if we believe our stance is closely connected to our value system. When this occurs, we simply insist we are right: *"That's all there is to it"*. We tell ourselves that we do not need reasons. Effective listeners perceive the fallacy inherent in such behaviour and weigh the speaker's evidence by mentally questioning it. Effective listeners "listen between the lines".

**Listening empathically (actively).** The term empathic listening was popularized by the psychotherapist Carl Rogers, who believed that listening could be used to help individuals understand their own situations and problems. When you listen actively, or emphatically you do more than passively absorb the words that are spoken to you. Active listeners also try to internalize the other person's feelings and see life through his or her eyes.

Active emphatic listeners put themselves in the speaker's place in an effort to

understand the speaker's feelings. Active, emphatic listeners clearly appreciate both the meaning and the feeling behind what another person is saying. Thus, in effect, active emphatic listeners convey to the speaker that they are seeing things from the speaker's point of view. Active emphatic listeners rely heavily on paraphrasing:

Person 1: *I am so mad at my mother.*

Person 2: *If I am not mistaken, your mother is giving you trouble. Is that right?*

To paraphrase effectively, follow this three-step process:

1. Make a statement of tentativeness that invites correction, e.g.: *"If I am not mistaken."*
2. Repeat the basic idea(s) in your own words.
3. Check it out with the other person, e.g. *"Is that correct?"*

By paraphrasing the sender's thoughts, listeners accomplish at least two purposes: **First**, they let the other person know that they care enough to listen, and **second**, if the speaker's message has not been accurately received, they offer the other person the opportunity to adjust, change or modify the message so that they can understand it as intended:

Person 1: *I'm quitting my job soon.*

Person 2: *You're leaving your job tomorrow?*

Person 1: *Well, not that soon! But within a few weeks.*

In summary, when you listen actively or empathically, you listen for total meaning and you listen in order to respond to feelings. When you listen emphatically, the following statements will not appear in your conversation:

*"You must do ..."; "You should do ..."; "You're wrong!"; "Let me tell you what to do"; "You sure have a funny way of looking at things"; "The best answer is ..."; "Don't worry about it ..."; "You think you've got problems! Ha!; "That reminds me of the time I ...".*

Active emphatic listeners do not judge; they reflect, consider and often restate in their own words their impressions of the sender's expression. Active listeners also check to determine if their impressions are acceptable to the sender.

## Summary

Listening is a deliberate process through which we seek to understand and retain aural (heard) stimuli. Unlike hearing, which occurs automatically, listening depends on a complex set of acquired skills. The average person listens at only 25 percent efficiently, losing 75 percent of what is heard. A graphic illustration of the results of inefficient listening is the way a message is distorted in serial communication when a message is passed from one person to another in a series. A principal reason for poor listening is the failure to determine the listening or

involvement level appropriate to a particular situation.

A prerequisite for effective listening is effective feedback. Feedback consists of all the verbal and nonverbal messages that a person consciously or unconsciously sends out in response to another person's communication. Through feedback we either confirm or correct the impression others have of us and our attitudes. There are two main types of feedback: 1) **evaluative feedback** gives an opinion, positive or negative, and attempts to influence the behaviour of others; 2) **nonevaluative feedback** gives emotional support. Probing, understanding or paraphrasing, supporting feedback, and "I" messages are all forms of nonevaluative feedback that help to sustain interpersonal relationships.

You can improve your listening skills by learning to focus your attention while listening and by setting appropriate listening goals. Listening to understand ideas, to retain information, to analyze and evaluate and to emphasize each requires progressively more effort and attention.

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. Define "listening".
2. Explain the nature of serial communication.
3. Identify the amount of time you spend listening.
4. Compare and contrast helpful and harmful listening habits.
5. Distinguish between the hearing and listening processes.
6. Explain the Listening-Level Energy Involvement Scale.
7. Define "feedback".
8. Describe the ways in which feedback affects communication.
9. Demonstrate an ability to see different types of evaluative and nonevaluative feedback.
10. Focus your attention while listening.
11. Set appropriate listening goals.
12. Listen to understand ideas.
13. Listen to retain information.
14. Listen to evaluate and analyze content.
15. Listen emphatically.

### **Literature**

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## Lecture 8

### COMMUNICATING INTERPERSONALLY: UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS

1. Relationships and communication.
2. The role of relationships.
3. Relationship dimensions.
4. Relationship stages.
5. How to improve your relationship.

#### 1. Relationships and Communication

The one thing all our relationships have in common is communication. Through communication we not only establish and maintain but also withdraw from and end relationships. Through communication we define what we think of ourselves in relationship to others. Through communication we express ourselves and our needs to others. Some relationships, we share with others, are rich and intense; some are superficial and almost meaningless. In like fashion, so is the communication that characterizes these relationships. Whatever the nature of the experience, what causes us to come together in a relationship is communication, and what happens to the relationship over time is also a result of communication. Communication can function either as the life-blood or death knell of a relationship.

#### 2. The Role of Relationship

A vast body of research consistently attests that we attempt to meet our need for inclusion, control, and affection through our relationships.

Our need for **inclusion** involves the varying degrees to which we all need to establish and maintain a feeling of mutual interest with other people – that we can take an interest in others and that others can take an interest in us. We want others to pay attention to us, to take the time to understand us. When this need for inclusion is met, we tend to feel worthwhile and fulfilled. If it goes unmet, we tend to feel lonely and our health may even suffer.

Our need for **control** involves the ability to establish and maintain satisfactory levels of control and power in our relationships with people. To varying degrees we need to feel that we can take charge of a situation, whereas at other times we need to feel comfortable assuming a more submissive role. When our control need goes unmet we may conclude, that others do not respect or value our abilities and that we are viewed as incapable of making a sound decision or of directing others or our own future.

Finally our need for **affection** involves both giving and receiving love and/or experiencing an emotionally close relationship. If the need for affection goes unfulfilled, we are apt to conclude that we are unlovable and that, therefore, people remain emotionally detached from us, i.e. they avoid establishing close ties with us. In contrast, if our experiences with affection have been more pleasant, we

probably are comfortable handling both close and distant relationships, and most likely we recognize that everyone we come into contact with will not necessarily care for us in the same way.

These three basic needs differ from each other in another significant way. Inclusion comes first, that is, it is our need for inclusion that impels to establish a relationship in the first place. By comparison, our needs for control and affection are met via our already established relationships. So, as psychologist William Schutz notes, “Generally speaking, inclusion is concerned with the problem of **in** or **out**, control is concerned with **top** or **bottom**, and affection with **close** or **far**.”

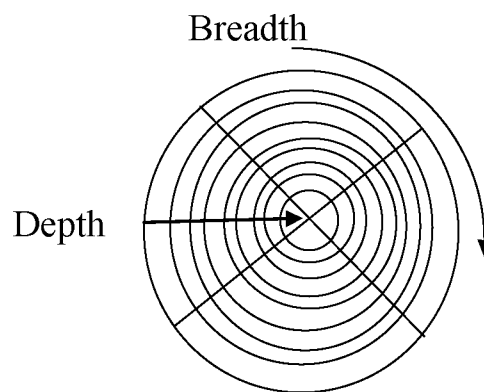
To what extent the preceding needs are felt and/or met differs from person to person. However, we can categorize people according to need levels. For example, if people do not attempt to satisfy a need, we say that their need level is deficient. In contrast, if people constantly try to satisfy a need we say that their need level is excessive. Consequently, a person, who has a deficient need for inclusion, control or affection might be described as, respectively, “undersocial”, “an abdicrat”, or “underpersonal” and a person whose needs were excessive in these areas could be labelled as, respectively, “oversocial”, “an autocrat” or “overpersonal”. Whereas undersocial people tend to avoid interacting with others, insisting instead that they value privacy, oversocial individuals seek to be with people constantly. The fears, experienced by each type are similar, however, both fear being ignored and/or being left out, but the overt behaviour they display to compensate for their fear is different. Similarly, the so-called abdicrat regularly assumes a submissive or subordinate role, whereas autocrats feel that they must dominate at all times.

Again, however, both types fear being viewed as incapable or irresponsible; they just compensate in different ways. In like fashion the underpersonal individual attempts to keep all relationships superficial, but the overpersonal individual always tries to become extremely close to others. Again, both are motivated by the same strong need for affection, and both fear rejection; they just express their needs via opposite behaviour. We are not suggesting that people who are satisfied with their relationships are an anomaly; a large number of us have what we might consider to be ideal relationships that satisfy our needs. We are “social” (comfortable with people or alone), “democratic” (content to give or take orders depending on the situation) and “personal” (able to share close or distant relationships). As we try to understand our own interpersonal needs, as we try to make sense out of our relationships, we should remember these needed classifications and how we express them through our behaviour.

### 3. Relationship Dimensions

Every relationship we share, whether it involves a friend, a family member or a business associate can be described in terms of two concepts: **breadth** (how many topics you display with others) and **depth** (how central the topics you discuss are to your self-concept and how much you reveal about topics). According to social psychologist Erwin Altman and Dalmás Taylor Figure 12 shows the two dimensions that characterize our relationships.

Fig. 12



Central to their theory of “social penetration” is the idea that relationships begin with relatively narrow breadth (few topics are spoken about) and shallow depth (the inner circles are not penetrated) and progress over time in intensity and intimacy as both breadth and depth increase. So our relationships may develop incrementally as we move from discussing few to many topics, from superficial discussions (the periphery of the circle) to intensely personal ones (the centre of the circle).

The breadth of topics we discuss may be high for casual as well as for intimate relationships, but the depth of penetration usually increases as the relationship becomes more intimate. Consequently, a highly intimate relationship between two people will probably have both high breadth and high depth as they extend the range of topics they discuss and reveal more about how they feel about these topics to each other.

Sometimes in an effort to get to know another person quickly, we may discuss topics at a depth that would normally be reserved for those with whom we are more intimate. When such disclosures occur too rapidly or prematurely in a relationship’s development they may accompany a feeling that “something is wrong” with the disclosing party, signalling that the other party was not ready for the relationship to progress quickly or to be that intense. For example, employees in one company complained when a supervisor discussed personal aspects of his relationship with his wife with them during the business day. Noting that hearing intimate disclosures made them feel uncomfortable, they requested that he limit the depth and scope of his communications with them.

When interactants are ready to deepen a relationship, they see breadth and depth increases as natural and comfortable developments.

#### 4. Relationship Stages

All relationships, we share are complex (each of us is a unique bundle of experiences, thoughts, fears and needs) and ever changing (as we change our relationships, they grow stronger or weaker over time). They pass through a number of changes as they strengthen or dissolve.

**Stage 1 – Initiating.** This stage involves those things that happen when we first make contact with each other. At this time, we look for signals that either impel us to initiate a conversation or tell us that we have nothing to gain by interacting. If we decide to make contact, we search for an appropriate conversation opener, for example, “*Nice to meet you*” or “*What’s happening?*”

**Stage 2 – Experimenting.** Once we have initiated contact, we try to find out more about the other person; we begin to probe the unknown. Often we exchange small talk, for example, we tell the other where we’re from and who we know in an effort to get acquainted. Although many of us may hate small talk or “cocktail party chatter”, according to Mark Knapp it serves several useful functions.

1. It provides a useful process for uncovering integrating topics and opening for more penetrating conversations.
2. It can serve as an audition for a future friendship or a way to increase the scope of a current friendship.
3. It provides a safe procedure for indicating who we are and how another can come to know us better (reduction of uncertainty)
4. It allows us to maintain a sense of community with our fellow human beings.

At this stage our relationships lack the depth we spoke of earlier; they are quite casual and superficial. The vast number of them never progress beyond this point.

**Stage 3 – Intensifying.** When a relationship does progress beyond experimenting, it enters the intensifying stage. During this stage people become “good friends” – they begin to stage things in common, disclose more, become better at predicting the other’s behaviour, and may even develop nicknames for each other or display similar postural and/or clothing cues. In a sense, they are beginning to be transformed from an “I” and an “I” into “we”.

**Stage 4 – Integrating.** The fusion of “I” and “I” really appears to coalesce in stage 4. The two individuals are identified as a pair, a couple or “a package”. Interpersonal synchrony is heightened; those involved may dress, act and speak more alike or share a song or a project.

**Stage 5 – Bonding.** In this stage interactants announce that their commitment to each other has been formally contracted. Their relationship is now institutionalized, formally recognized.

This recognition can be a wedding license or a business contract, for example. The relationship takes on a new character: it is no longer informal. It is now guided by specified rules and regulations. Sometimes, this alteration causes initial discomfort or rebellion as the parties attempt to adjust to the change.

**Stage 6 – Differentiating.** Instead of continuing to emphasize “we”, in this stage the parties to the relationship attempt to re-establish an “I” orientation in an effort to regain a unique identity. They ask, “*How are we different?*” “*How can I distinguish me from you?*” During this phase previously designated joint possessions take on a more individualized character “*our friends*” become “*my friends*”, “*our bedroom*” becomes “*my bedroom*”, “*our child*” becomes “*your son*” (especially when he misbehaves). Although an urge to differentiate the self from the other is not uncommon (we need to be individuals as well as members of a relationship), if it persists it can signal that the relationship is in for trouble or that

the process of uncoupling has begun.

**Stage 7 – Circumscribing.** In this stage both the quality and quantity of communication between the parties to the relationship decrease. Sometimes an effort is made to carefully limit areas open for discussion to those considered “safe”. Other times, there is no actual decrease in topic breadth, but subjects are no longer discussed with any real depth. In other words, fewer and less intimate disclosures are made signalling that withdrawal (mental and/or physical) from the relationship is desired. Dynamic communication between the parties has all but ceased; the relationship is characterized by a lack of energy, a shrinking of interest, and a general feeling of exhaustion.

**Stage 8 – Stagnating.** When circumscribing continues, the relationship stagnates. In stage 8 participants feel that they no longer need to relate to each other because they know how the interaction will proceed; thus, they conclude, “*It is better to say nothing*”. Communication is at a standstill. Only the shadow of a relationship remains as participants spend time by going through the motions while feeling nothing.

In reality, they are like strangers inhabiting the hollow shell of what once was a thriving relationship. While they still live in the same environment, they share little else.

**Stage 9 – Avoiding.** During this phase, participants actually go out of their way to be apart, they avoid contact with each other. Relating face to face or voice to voice has simply become too unpleasant for one or both to continue “the act”. Although sometimes communicated more directly “than others” (sometimes the “symptom” is used as a form of communication; other times an effort is made to disconfirm the other person), the dominant message is “*I don’t want to see you any more; I don’t wish to continue this relationship.*” At this point, the end of the relationship is in sight.

**Stage 10 – Termination.** At this point, the bounds that used to hold the relationship together are severed; the relationship ends. Depending on how the parties feel (whether they agree on termination), this stage can be short (or drawn out over time, can end cordially in person, over the telephone, via a letter or legal document) or bitterly. All relationships eventually terminate, but that does not mean that “saying goodbye” is easy or pleasant.

What is noteworthy about these stages is that relationships may stabilize at any one of them. For example, as we noted, many relationships never proceed beyond the experimenting stage; others, however, stabilize at the intensifying stage, the bonding stage; etc. When participants disagree about the point of stabilization, additional difficulties can arise. We should also recognize that movement through the preceding 10 stages may be forward or backward. For instance, we may advance and then retreat, deciding that a more superficial relationship is what we really desire. Additionally we proceed through the stage of a relationship to our own pace. Some relationships, especially those in which time is perceived to be limited, develop more quickly than others; the rate at which the parties to a relationship grow together or apart, however, usually depends on their individual needs.



Relationships are not always predictable. No relationship we share is prophesied in heaven or hell for success or failure. Rather, our relationships develop as a consequence of the energy we are willing to commit to them and as a result of what we are willing to do with and for one another.

Unless the individuals, who share a relationship, are able to continue to grow together and adapt to their continually changing environment, the relationship may begin to deteriorate at any point. For example, according to **cost-benefit theory**, we will work to maintain a relationship only as long as the benefits, we perceive for ourselves, outweigh the costs. Some of these benefits include a better feeling about the self personal growth, a greater sense of security, additional resources to accomplish tasks, and an increased ability to cope with problems. In comparison, relationship costs include the time spent trying to make the relationship work, psychological and/or physical stress and a damaged self-image.

The greater our rewards and the lower our costs, the more satisfying is our relationship. When costs begin to outweigh benefits, we are more and more likely to decide to terminate the relationship. In contrast, when benefits outweigh costs, relationship development probably will continue.

## 5. How to Improve Your Relationship

Our relationship can contribute to feelings of happiness or unhappiness, elation or depression. They can enrich us and stimulate us or they can limit us and harm us. To enhance your ability to develop relationships that satisfy, follow these guidelines:

**Actively seek information from others and reinforce others for attempting to seek information from you.** Individuals who fail to initiate contacts and/or who fail to reinforce the conversational attempts of others are less likely to build stable foundations for effective relationships. Passive, restrained communicators are simply more apt to remain chronically lonely. Although we will experience short-term loneliness from time to time, sustained chronic loneliness and social apathy feed on each other.

**Know the signs of friendship.** People who share effective friendship report that these qualities are present: enjoyment (they enjoy each other's company most of the time), acceptance (they accept each other as they are), trust (both assume that one will act in the other's life choice), mutual assistance (they are willing to assist and support each other), confiding (they share experiences and feelings with each other), understanding (they have a feeling for what the other thinks is important and why the other behaves as he or she does), and spontaneity (they each feel free to be themselves).

**Recognize that relationships evolve.** Ours is a mobile society, where each change we experience has the potential to bring us different relationships. Be prepared for relationship changes; recognize that in our lives we are apt to experience a certain amount of relationship turnover and change. As we grow and develop, so will our relationships.

**Know when to sever a relationship.** Not all relationships or connections are

meant to continue. When a relationship is draining our energies and our confidence, we need to extricate ourselves from the relationship before it destroys us.

**Recognize that communication is the lifeblood of a relationship.** Without communication relationships shrivel and die. Any relationship worth your time and energy depends on effective communication to sustain and nourish it. Your desire and motivation to communicate are key ingredients in relationship establishment and growth.

### Summary

Communication is the one variable common to all relationships. As a result of communication, we establish and nurture, withdraw from or end our relationships.

Relationships play many roles in our lives. They fulfil our needs for inclusion, control and affection. We each need to feel that others take an interest in us, that they view us as capable of exerting control over our lives and that we are lovable.

Every relationship we share is unique and varies in breadth (how many topics we discuss with the other) and depth (how much we are willing to reveal to the other about our feelings or a topic). Most relationships develop according to a social penetration model, beginning with narrow breadth and shallow depth; over time, some relationships increase in breadth and depth, becoming more intense and/or intimate.

Researchers have identified 10 stages our relationships may pass through: initiating, experimenting, intensifying, integrating, bonding, differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating, avoiding and termination. Note that a relationship may stabilize at any stage.

When participants disagree about the point of stabilization, relationship problems are apt to arise.

It is important that we recognize that how we communicate plays a key part in determining whether our relationships are as effective and rewarding for us as they could be.

### Assignment for Self-Control

1. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of a relationship you are now experiencing by identifying both the benefits you receive and the cost you spend as a result of the relationship. Based on your analysis, what is your prognosis for the relationship's future?
2. Explain the reasons behind our need for person to person contacts.
3. Define "inclusion", "control" and "affection".
4. Discuss what can happen when our needs for inclusion, control and affection are not met.
5. Describe relationships according to "breadth" and "depth" characteristics.
6. Explain the theory of "social penetration".
7. Discuss and distinguish between ten relationship stages.
8. Explain "cost-benefit theory".

9. Identify ways to enhance your relationship satisfaction quotient.

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## Lecture 9

### HANDLING EMOTIONS AND EXPRESSING FEELINGS IN RELATIONSHIPS

1. You and your emotions.
2. Relationship determiners.
3. The suppression and disclosure of feelings.
4. Handling feelings during conflicts.
5. How conflict arises: the tug of war.
6. Your relationships and conflict resolution: a look at expression styles.
7. How to express feelings effectively in relationships.

#### 1. You and Your Emotions

By exploring what feelings “feel” like, “look” like, and “sound” like, and by attempting to analyze how people handle their feelings, we will increase our ability to establish and sustain meaningful relationships with others. Since feelings can either enhance or disrupt our interpersonal lives, only when we are able to respond appropriately to our own feelings and to those of others, will we be able to communicate effectively.

**What do feelings feel like?** Feelings can be accompanied by a wide range of physical sensations and languages. Sometimes, as with anger, blood rushes to your face and your face reddens, your heartbeat and pulse quicken and you may experience a desire to wave your arms and legs, raise your voice, and use strong words to express to others what you are feeling. Becoming aware of our feelings can help us understand our reactions to ourselves and to those with whom we interact. Understanding bodily reactions to emotion can help us understand how we try to cope with emotion. Not everyone experiences feelings in the same way. Your ability to accept the reactions of other people indicates that you realize that they could experience unique physical sensation – responses quite separate and distinct from your own. Emotions affect us in many different ways. They may cause changes to occur in the circulatory or respiratory system. Increases and decreases in blood pressure and breathing rate can in turn affect the perceptions, outlook and actions of the person experiencing the feeling. As Carroll E. Izard observes, “The joyful person is more apt to see the world through rose coloured glasses, the distressed or sad individual is more apt to construe the remarks of others as critical, and fearful person is inclined only to see the frightening object (tunnel vision).” Feelings are our reaction to what we perceive; they function to define and colour image of the world.

**What do feelings look like?** Your face is the prime revealer of your emotions. In fact, although the rules for displaying emotions vary from culture to culture, the facial expressions of certain emotions (specifically fear, happiness, surprise, anger and sadness) appear to at least some degree to be universal. As early as 1872 Ch. Darwin in “The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals” observed that people the world over express basic feelings in similar ways. Thus, without

understanding a person's language you can freely determine whether he or she is angry, frightened or amused. It appears that certain basic facial expressions are innate.

According to Ekman and Izard **surprise** is a transient state and the briefest of all emotions, moving on and off the face quickly. Surprise can turn to happiness if the sudden or unexpected event that precipitated it promises something favourable, but it can turn to fear or anger if the event poses a threat or foretells aggression.

In contrast to surprise, **anger** results most typically from interference with the pursuit of our goals. Being either physically or psychologically restrained doing what you would like to do can produce anger. So can being personally insulted or rejected. Thus, an action that shows someone's disregard for our feelings and needs may anger us.

The appearance of **happiness** differs from the two preceding emotions in a number of ways. It is the easiest emotion for observers to recognize when expressed on the face.

**Sadness**, the opposite of happiness, often brings about a loss of facial muscle tone.

During **fear** the eyes are opened more widely than usual.

We cannot communicate effectively if we fail to respond to the feelings of others or if others fail to respond to our feelings. This is why it is important to be highly attuned to facial expressions. We cannot afford to let emotions pass by unattended or unnoticed.

## 2. Relationship Determiners

It is our feelings that make us human. It is our feelings that colour our relationships adding warmth, vitality and spirit to them. It is feelings that cause us to be moved or to move. In fact, feelings are at the heart of each of our established interpersonal relationships. In order to create liking, build trust, engage in self-disclosure, resolve conflicts and influence others, it is necessary to communicate feelings. The first step in the study of how feelings affect our relationships is to recognize what causes us to seek out the company of some people and not others.

**Attraction.** A number of researchers have identified the major variables that influence how attracted people feel towards one another. Attractiveness, proximity, similarity, reinforcement and complementarity are consistently named as attraction determiners. In fact, the first kind of information we process, when we interact with someone is a person's outward **attractiveness**. For the most part, we tend to like physically attractive people more than physically unattractive ones, and we tend to like people who exhibit pleasant personalities more than those who exhibit unpleasant personalities. Of course, judgements of what is physically attractive and what constitutes a pleasant personality are subjective.

The second factor influencing attraction is **proximity**. If we were to survey the people with whom we enjoy interacting, we would find that for the most part they are people with whom we work or who live close to us. Apparently the physical nearness of persons affects the amount of attraction we feel for them.

Living physically close to or working near another person gives us ample opportunity to interact, talk or share in similar activities and thus form attachments. For these reasons, research tells us that the closer two individuals of the opposite sex are situated geographically, the more likely it is that they will be attracted to each other and marry.

**Reinforcement** is the third factor that finds its way into practically all theories of interpersonal attraction. Simply put, the reinforcement principle tells us that we will feel positive about those individuals who reward us or are associated with our experience of reward, whereas we will feel animosity or dislike for those individuals who punish or are associated with our experience of punishment. So, for the most part, we like people who praise us more than people who criticize us, we like people who like us more than those who dislike us and we like people who cooperate with us more, than those who oppose us or compete with us. Of course, reinforcement can backfire if reinforcers become overzealous in their praise of us and fawn over us too much, thereby causing us to question their sincerity and motivation.

**Similarity** also affects our attachments to others. We are attracted to persons whose attitudes and interests are similar to our own and who like and dislike the things we like and dislike. Thus, we usually like people who agree with us more than those who disagree with us, especially when we are discussing issues we perceive to be salient and significant. In effect, similarity helps to provide us with social validation by giving us the evidence we need to evaluate the “correctness” of our opinions or beliefs. We also expect people who hold attitudes similar to our own to like us more than people who hold attitudes that are dissimilar to ours.

**Complementarity**, the last factor influencing interpersonal attraction suggests just the opposite. Instead of being attracted to people who are similar to us, we frequently find ourselves attracted to people who are dissimilar in several ways. Persons often tend to fall in love with people who possess characteristics that they admire, but that they themselves do not possess. Thus, a dominant woman might seek the company of a submissive man, and a socially awkward female might seek the companionship of a socially poised man.

**The Role of Feelings in Relationships.** It becomes quite important to be able to determine what the person with whom we are communicating is feeling. At that point it is just as necessary for us to understand the world of the other person as it is for us to understand ourselves. We need to realize that other people are as easily able to experience happiness, sadness, anger, fear or surprise as we are, and indeed, the feelings we express towards another are apt to be reciprocated by that individual.

Feelings by themselves are neither inherently good nor bad. Feelings do not disrupt relationships, “build walls”, or add problems to your life. Rather, it is what you think and how you act when experiencing a particular feeling that can affect a relationship for better or worse. For example, emotions such as anger or fear are not necessarily harmful. Thus, it is not the emotion itself that is an issue but how you deal with the emotion and the effect it has on you and on those who are important to you.

Individuals who share healthy relationships are able to pay direct attention to the emotional reactions that occur during their interactions with others. But healthy relationships are not composed totally of positive feelings. Other feelings are important to relationships too. Unfortunately, however, too many of us lack the commitment, courage and skill needed to express our feelings to others and to have others express our feelings to others and to have other express theirs to us. People are reluctant to work feelings through, choosing to ignore or deny them until they become unmanageable. Thus, we often either keep our feelings in check too much, or, when we do express them, we express them inaptly and incompletely. It may well be that many of the problems we have with friends, parents or employers are due to a mutual inability to express or accept feeling-related messages. Efforts to sacrifice or disregard feelings inevitably lead to relationship problems or failures.

### 3. The Suppression and Disclosure of Feelings

Sometimes the way we handle feelings impedes the improvement of relationships with others instead of helping those relationships. For example, we may bury our real feelings, hesitate to express them, unleash them uncontrollably.

**Censoring your feelings.** Feelings are not the enemies of healthy human relationships. However, for some reason we are taught to act as if this were so, and as a result many of us grow up afraid of feelings. Feelings and emotions are frequently perceived as dangerous, harmful, and something to be ashamed of. When this is the case, we in effect censor our feelings and become overly hesitant to express our feelings to others or to have others express theirs to us. We allow ourselves to exhibit only approved feelings due to fear of being judged to be irrational or emotionally volatile. This leads to communications with others that are shallow, contrived and frequently inappropriate.

**Display rules.** There are various types of unwritten law that guide us in deciding when or when not to show emotions. For instance, when we were younger we may have been told not to cry at school, not to yell in front of strangers, or not to kiss in public. Today we may be advised not to flirt at office parties, not to display anger when disciplined, or not to be too outspoken during a meeting.

In our society men are generally viewed as more rational, objective and independent than women. Women in contrast, are perceived to be more dependent, subjective and emotional than men. When asked, people indicate that the traits, the male exhibits are more desirable than those of the female. Thus, for the most part women are perceived as warm, while men are perceived as competent.

Another important determinant of display rules for emotions is national culture. For example, in some African societies, people assume you are friendly until you prove to them you are not. So when they smile it means they like you; if they don't smile, it means they distrust or even hate you. The Japanese often employ laughing and smiling to mask anger, sorrow or disgust. And people from Mediterranean countries often intensify felt emotions like grief, sadness and happiness, whereas the British deintensify, or understate these emotions.

In addition to rules prescribed by culture, males and females alike tend to

formulate **personal** display rules. In effect, we decide for ourselves under what conditions and with whom we will freely share or inhibit our emotional expressions. You might, for instance, feel it inappropriate to show anger before a parent, but you might readily reveal it to a boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse. You might be hesitant to express your innermost fears to a professor or employer, but you might readily disclose them to a close friend.

**Effects of suppressed feelings on relationships.** The suppression of feelings results in ineffective interpersonal behaviour. “Bottling up” your feelings can cause you to develop ulcers, headaches, heartburn, high blood pressure, a spastic colon and various psychosomatic problems. When we lose touch with our feelings, we lose touch with our most human qualities.

If either party in a relationship attempts to suppress his or her feelings, one or more of the following consequences may result. **First**, you may find it increasingly difficult to solve interpersonal problems. Research reveals that in a relationship the quality of problem solving improves when individuals feel free to express both positive and negative feelings. When either of the persons is inhibited, the quality of communication between them is diminished. **Second**, unresolved feelings foster a climate in which misinterpretation, distortion and non-objective judgements and actions can thrive. Unresolved feelings create or increase blind spots in our interpretation of people and events. **Third**, the repression of emotions can lead to serious relationship conflicts and blowups. Intense feelings that are not dealt with fester beneath the surface until they erupt due to mounting internal (self) and external (other) pressures. (Holding such feelings can make it impossible for you to think clearly). **Fourth**, maintaining an effective relationship means that the parties to it are honest with each other. To penalize or reject a person for expressing emotion honestly is to tell that person you refuse her or him the right to reveal an authentic self. You also deny yourself the ability to know the person. Finally, the continued repression of feelings can in time cause you to obliterate your capacity to feel anything.

**Effects of disclosed feelings on relationships.** Certainly there are people to whom you may not choose to reveal your feelings. And, most assuredly, there are also situations in which you decide that the disclosure of your feelings would be inappropriate.

By honestly revealing feelings, **first** you reduce the threat of making a similar revelation for the other person. You demonstrate that you care enough about that person to share your feelings with him or her and thus risk taking becomes a reciprocal process. **Second**, you acknowledge that emotions are okay. You do not censor the feelings the other person experiences, nor do you select which feelings she or he may feel and which she or he may not. You express an interest in the whole person, and instead of using emotions as weapons, you evidence a willingness to use them as tools. **Third**, by describing feelings and by sharing “feeling reports” and perceptions with others, you become more aware of what it is you are actually feeling. **Fourth**, you give yourself the opportunity to resolve relationship difficulties or conflicts in a productive way. **Finally**, by revealing your feelings you can help educate others about how you wish to be treated. In contrast,



by keeping quiet – by saying nothing – you encourage others to continue exhibiting behaviour of which you may disapprove. Feelings, when respected, are friendly and not dangerous.

#### 4. Handling Feelings during Conflicts

Conflict develops for a multitude of reasons and takes a variety of forms. It can arise due to individual's different needs, attitudes or beliefs. We can say that conflict tests each relationship we share with another individual and in so doing helps measure each relationship health or effectiveness. Handled well, conflict can help each party develop a clear picture of the other, as well as strengthen and cement a relationship. If handled poorly, conflicts can create schisms, inflict psychological scars, flame burning hostilities, and cause lasting resentment. Thus, conflicts have the ability to produce both highly constructive and highly destructive relational consequences.

We need to realize that every relationship is certain to experience moments of conflict. A conflict-free relationship is a sign that you really have no relationship at all, not that you have a good relationship. Thus, to say there should be no conflict is akin to saying we should have no relationships. If relationship is healthy, conflicts will occur regularly and be handled effectively. Survey results indicated that the most happily married wives were those who responded that both they and their husbands were able to reveal when they were displeased with each other, discuss it and try to resolve the problem in a calm and rational manner. Thus, it appears that avoiding conflicts, trying to settle them prematurely, or prohibiting the discussion of differences can lead to serious relationship problems.

Of the strategies available, only discussion or “levelling” can break impasses and solve difficulties. Thus the fate of any conflict is related to the communication strategies employed. Conflict, when necessary, forces individuals to select from available response patterns in order to forge an effective network of communication.

We see that in any situation problems can develop if we fail to deal with conflict appropriately. We can see equally that there are certain definite benefits to be derived from handling conflict effectively. There are four major values arising from conflict. **First**, many conflict situations can function to eliminate the probability of more serious disharmony in the future. **Second**, conflict can increase our innovativeness by helping us acquire new ways of looking at things new ways of thinking and new behaviours. **Third**, conflict can develop our increasing sense of defensiveness and togetherness by increasing our closeness and trust. **Fourth**, it can provide us with an invaluable opportunity to measure the strength or viability of our relationships. Conflict after all, is a natural result of diversity.

#### 5. How Conflict Arises: the Tug of War

**Conflict is the clash of opposing beliefs, opinions, values, needs, assumptions and goals.** It can result from honest differences, from

misunderstandings, from anger, or from expecting either too much or too little from people and/or situations. Conflicts can be handled rationally or irrationally. Also, conflict does not always require two or more to argue; we can sometimes be in conflict with ourselves. This, occurs when we find ourselves having to choose between two or more mutually exclusive options – two cars, two classes, two potential spouses, two activities. The internal struggle we experience while deciding is **intrapersonal conflict**. In contrast, **interpersonal conflict** occurs when the same type of opposition occurs between two or more individuals. Such encounters can be prompted by differences in perceptions and interests by a scarcity of resources, such as money, time and position, or by rivalries in which we find ourselves competing with someone else. Those involved in either an intrapersonal or an interpersonal conflict usually feel “pulled” in different directions at the same time.

We can categorise conflicts in different ways. **First**, we can identify the type of **goal** or **objective** about which a conflict resolves. Goals or objectives can be non-shareable (for example, two teams cannot win the same basketball game). Or they can be shareable (your team wins some games and the other team wins some). Or they can be fully claimed and possessed by each party to the conflict.

**Second**, conflicts can be categorized according to their **level of intensity**. In low intensity conflicts, the interactants do not want to destroy each other; they devise an acceptable procedure to help control their communications and permit them to discover a solution that is beneficial to each. In medium-intensity conflicts each party feels commitment to win, and winning is seen as sufficient. No one feels, that the opposition must be destroyed. In high-intensity conflicts, however, one party intends to destroy or seriously hurt the other. It is in this conflict that winning is the only part of the game, to mean anything, victory must be total.

A conflict can also be classified as a **pseudo-conflict**, a **content conflict**, a **value conflict**, or an **ego conflict**.

Although not really a conflict, a **pseudo-conflict** gives the appearance of a conflict. It occurs when a person mistakenly believes that two, or more goals cannot be simultaneously achieved. Pseudo-conflicts frequently revolve around false either-or judgements. (“Either I win or you win”) or simple misunderstandings (failing to realize that you really agree with the other person). A pseudo-conflict is resolved when the parties realize that no conflict actually exists.

A **content conflict** occurs when individuals disagree over the accuracy of a fact, the implication of a fact, a definition or the solution to a problem. If the opponents realize that facts can be verified, inferences tested, definitions checked, and solutions evaluated against criteria, then they can be shown that a content conflict can be settled rationally.

In contrast to a pseudo-conflict and a content conflict, a **value conflict** arises when people hold different views on some issue of a particular nature. As an example, take the welfare system in this country. A person who values individual independence and self-assertiveness will have very different opinions about public welfare than will one who believes we are ultimately responsible for the well-being of others. The realistic outcome of such an encounter would be that the parties to

the conflict would disagree without the issue and learn something from one another, even though they might continue to disagree. In effect, they would agree that it is acceptable to disagree.

**Ego conflicts**, in comparison with above mentioned, have the greatest potential to destroy a group. **An ego conflict** occurs whenever the opposing parties believe that “winning” or “losing” is a reflection of their own self-worth prestige, or competence. When this happens, the issue itself is no longer important because each person perceives himself or herself to be on the line. This in turn makes it almost impossible to deal with the situation rationally.

What we need to realize is that particular conflict generating behaviours affect each of us differently. Some of us perceive ourselves to be involved in a conflict, if we are deprived of need, whereas others are not.

## 6. Your Relationship and Conflict Resolution

You can make your feelings work for or against you. There are three possible ways of handling the emotionally charged or conflict-producing situations of your life: non-assertively, aggressively and assertively. Let's examine the characteristics of each approach.

**The non-assertive style.** If you have ever felt hesitant to express your feelings to others, intimidated by another person, or reluctant to speak up when you believed you were being treated unfairly, then you know what it is to be non-assertive. When you behave non-assertively **you force yourself to keep your real feelings inside.** Frequently, you function like a weather vane or “change colours like a chameleon” in order to fit the particular situation in which you find yourself. In other words, you become an echo of the feelings around you.

Experience shows that we hesitate to assert ourselves in our relationships for a number of different reasons. Sometimes inertia or laziness intervenes. At other time, apathy and a lack of interest are the factors that lead us to exhibit non-assertive responses – we simply do not care enough to become actively involved. Frequently, interpersonal fears can produce non-assertiveness. We become convinced that speaking up may make someone angry. Or we may feel we are not sufficiently equipped with the interpersonal skills needed for assertiveness.

Another important cause of non-assertiveness is shyness. Each of us experiences feelings of personal inadequacy from time to time. We might feel exploited or perhaps we feel stifled or imposed upon. These feelings manifest themselves in a variety of ways – as depression, weakness, loneliness, but most of all as shyness. In our society shyness or non-assertive behaviour is often perceived to be an asset for women but a liability for men. Unfortunately, shyness can ultimately make you fear entering into any social relationships at all just as it can inhibit you from acknowledging or expressing your emotions.

**Aggressive style.** Unlike non-assertive people who often permit others to victimize them and are reluctant to express feelings, **aggressive people insist on standing up for their own rights while ignoring and violating the rights of others.** Thus, whereas aggressive individuals manage to have more of their needs

met than non-assertive ones, they generally accomplish this at someone else's expense. The aggressor always aims to dominate and win in a relationship. The message of the aggressive person is selfish *"This is the way I feel. You're dumb for feeling differently."* *"This is what I want. What you want doesn't count and is of no consequence to me."* In contrast to the non-assertive person, who ventures forth in communication hesitantly, the aggressive person begins by attacking thereby precipitating conflict. It is therefore not surprising that conversations with aggressive persons often escalate out of control because the target of the aggressor frequently feels a need for retaliation. In such situations no one really wins, and the end result is a relationship stalemate.

People feel a need to act aggressively for a number of different reasons. **First**, we display a tendency to lash out when we feel ourselves becoming vulnerable to another; we simply attempt to project ourselves from the perceived threat of powerlessness. **Second**, unresolved, emotionally volatile experiences may cause us to overreact when faced with a relationship difficulty.

**Third**, we may firmly believe the only way for us to get our ideas and feelings across to the other person is through aggression. For some reason, we may think people will neither listen nor react to what we say if we take a merely mild-mannered approach.

**Fourth**, we simply may never have learned how to channel or handle our aggressive impulses. In other words, we may not have mastered a number of necessary interpersonal skills.

**Finally**, our aggression may be related to a pattern of repeated non-assertion in the past; thus the hurt, disappointment, bewilderment, and sense of personal violation that accompany previously non-assertive responses may have mounted to a boiling point. No longer able to keep these feelings inside, we abruptly vent them as aggressiveness. Needless to say, damaged or destroyed relationships are a frequent result of aggression.

As we have seen, neither the non-assertive nor the aggressive person has many meaningful relationships. For this reason, we must find the middle ground or "golden mean" between the extremes of non-assertion and aggression.

**The assertive style.** Whereas the intent of non-assertive behaviour is to avoid conflict of any kind, and the intent of aggressive behaviour is to dominate, **the intent of assertive behaviour is to communicate honestly clearly, directly and to support your beliefs and ideas without either harming others or being harmed yourself.** If we can assume that both non-assertion and aggression are due at least partly to learning inappropriate ways of reacting in interpersonal encounters, then we should be able to improve our interpersonal relationships if we work to develop appropriate ways of behaving. Understanding the meaning of assertiveness will help us accomplish this.

When you assert yourself, you protect yourself from being victimized; you meet more of your interpersonal needs, make more decisions about your own life, think and say what you believe, and establish closer interpersonal relationships without infringing on the right of other. To be assertive is to recognize that all individuals have the same fundamental rights and that neither titles nor roles alter this fact. We

all have the right to influence the ways others behave towards us. We all have the right to project ourselves from mistreatment. Furthermore, we all have the right to accomplish these objectives without guilt.

Assertive individuals have learned how to stop themselves from sending non-assertive messages or aggressive messages when such behaviour would be appropriate. Thus, assertive people announce what they think and feel without apologizing but equally without dominating. This involves learning to say “No”, “Yes”, “I like”, and “I think”. In this way neither one’s own self nor that of the other person is demeaned; both are respected.

Remember, to be assertive does not mean you must be intensive or selfish, nor does it mean you must be stubborn or pushy. It does not mean that you are willing to defend your rights and communicate your needs; and it does not mean that you are willing attempt to find mutually satisfactory solutions to interpersonal problems or conflicts that arise.

**The impact of assertion encounters.** Most assertion situations fall into at least one of the following four categories: 1) an interaction with a stranger where you are requesting something; 2) an interaction with a friend or intimate where you are requesting something; 3) an interaction with a stranger where you are refusing something; 4) an interaction with a friend or intimate where you are refusing something.

In order for any interpersonal relationship to grow, both individuals need to demonstrate at least a minimum level of assertiveness in their communication with each other. The important thing is to try to let your actions be dictated by the circumstances and the people. There is no one right way for you to act in every interpersonal encounter, and the choice of how you act should be your own. We can increase our feelings of self-worth by learning to be more assertive.

## 7. How to Express Feelings Effectively in Relationships

Many of us have trouble expressing our feelings. Either we behave non-assertively and keep our emotions too much in check, or we behave aggressively and become excessively demanding or belligerent. The net result is that our emotions impede the development of healthy relationships, fostering instead the development of unhealthy ones. It is said that we are rarely, if ever, taught how to reveal our emotions in a way that will help our relationships. The key to being able to use our feelings to promote effective relationships is to learn to express them effectively. The following guidelines should help you communicate feelings in positive ways and thereby enrich the quality of your interpersonal encounters and relationships.

**Work on feelings you have difficulty expressing or handling.** The first step is to let others know what feelings cause problems for you.

**Stand up for your emotional rights.** When we sacrifice our rights, we teach others to take advantage of us. When we demand rights that are not ours, we take advantage of others. Not revealing your feelings and thoughts to others can be just as damaging as disregarding the feelings and thoughts of others. Here is what we

conceive to Every Person's Bill of Rights:

1. The right to be treated with respect.
2. The right to make your own choice or decisions.
3. The right to make mistakes and/or change your mind.
4. The right to have needs and have these needs considered as important as the needs of others.
5. The right to express your feelings and opinions.
6. The right to judge your own behaviour.
7. The right to set your own priorities.
8. The right to say no without feeling guilty.
9. The right not to make choices for others.
10. The right not to assert yourself.

These rights provide the structure upon which you can build effective relationships. Internalizing them will enable you to learn new habits and formulate new expectations. Accepting your personal rights and the personal rights of others is an important first step.

**Check your perceptions.** Sometimes our interpretations of another's feelings are determined by our own. Checking your perception requires that you express your assessment of the other's feelings in a tentative fashion. You want to communicate to other people that you would like to understand their feelings and that you would like to refrain from acting on the basis of false assumptions that you might later regret. Sample perception checks might include the following:

*"Were you surprised at what Jim said to you?"*

*"Am I right, you feel angry that no one paid attention to your ideas?"*

*"I get the feeling what I said annoyed you. Am I right?"*

*"I'm not certain if your behaviour means that you're confused or embarrassed."*

**Display a respect for feelings.** Refrain from attempting to persuade yourself or other people, to deny honest feelings. Statements like *"Don't feel that way."* *"Calm down"* or *"Don't cry over spilt milk"* communicate that you believe the other person has no right to feel that way. You should avoid advising yourself or others to repress or ignore feelings. Feelings are potentially constructive and should not be treated as destructive forces.

**Handle feelings assertively.** By describing the bother you give yourself a chance to examine a situation and define your personal needs and goals. Once you have identified what there is about the other person's behaviour you find understandable, you are in a better position to handle it. However, use simple, concrete, specific and unbiased terms to describe the other's actions. For example, instead of saying *"You're always overcharging me, you dirty cheat"* try *"You told me that repairs would cost \$ 50, and now you are charging me \$ 110."* Or, instead of *"You're ignoring me, you don't care about me"* substitute, *"You never look at me when we speak"*. Instead of guessing at motives and saying *"You resent me and want Lisa"* use *"The last two times we've gone out to eat with Jack and Lisa"*

*you've criticized me in front of them."*

When hurt by the behaviour of an unthinking friend, you might say, *"I feel humiliated and demeaned when you make fun of me."*

Realize there are a number of ways in which feelings can be described. You can name a feeling: *"I feel disappointed."* *"I feel angry."* You can use comparisons: *"I feel like mashed potatoes without salt"* or *"I feel like a rose"* or you can indicate the type of action your feelings are prompting you to exhibit *"I feel like leaving the room"* or *"I feel like putting cotton in my ears."* By disclosing such feelings tactfully, you can make your position known without alienating the other person.

**Practice these basic assertive behaviours.**

1. Stop automatically asking permission to speak, think, or behave. Instead of saying, *"Do you mind if I ask to have this point clarified?"* say, *"I'd like to know if ..."* In other words, substitute declarative statements for permission requests.

2. Establish eye contact with individuals, with whom you interact. Instead of looking down or to the side (eyes that imply uncertainty or insecurity) look into the eyes of whomever you are speaking to. This lets people know you have the confidence to relate them honestly and directly.

3. Eliminate hesitations and fillers like the *"uhs"*, *"you knows"*, and *"hmmms"* from your speech. It's better to talk more slowly and deliberately than to broadcast lack of preparedness or lack of self-assurance.

4. Say *"no"* calmly, firmly and quietly; say *"yes"* sincerely and honestly; and say *"I want"* without fear or quiet.

## **Summary**

Our emotions have an impact on our intrapersonal and interpersonal lives. They can enhance our relationships or disrupt them. They can help increase our understanding of other people or they can prevent us from relating to them effectively. We are experiencing some emotion to some degree at all times. A temporary emotional reaction to a situation is an emotion state: a tendency to experience one particular emotion repeatedly is an emotion trait.

Feelings can be accompanied by a wide range of physical sensations. A number of basic feelings including surprise, anger, happiness, sadness and fear are also reflected by characteristic facial expressions that are similar around the world. We can improve our communication abilities by learning to read the facial expressions of others to discover their feelings and by letting our expressions convey our emotions to them.

Feelings are at the heart of all our important interpersonal relationships. Among the factors that can cause us to establish relationships with some people but not others are alternatives, proximity, reinforcement, similarity, and complementarity. How we deal with our emotions often influences the course of our relationships. When we censor or fail to disclose our feelings, we are apt to engage in interactions that are shallow or contrived rather than fulfilling and real. Sometimes we are simply obeying unwritten display rules – usually sexually or culturally based – when we decide which feelings we will reveal or conceal. Not expressing

our feelings honestly to others can lead to misunderstandings and even breakdowns in our relationships.

There are three ways of expressing feelings in emotionally charged or conflict-producing interpersonal situations; non-assertively, aggressively and assertively. Only the assertive style enables us to express our own beliefs and ideas without harming others or being victimized ourselves.

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. Think of an idea, belief, value need or goal that has involved you in a conflict situation.
2. Identify the aspects of yourself or the other individuals involved in the conflict situation. Briefly summarize each position.
3. Select class members to play the parts of those you perceived yourself to be in conflict with.
4. Determine how well you “read” and express feelings.
5. Define the terms “emotion state” and “emotion trait”.
6. Identify the physical sensations and facial expressions that accompany particular emotions.
7. Explain how attraction, proximity, reinforcement, similarity and complementarity function as relationship determiners.
8. Explain how the suppression and/or the disclosure of feelings can affect the development of a relationship.
9. Compare and contrast emotional display rules pertaining to men and women rules.
10. Explain how feelings can be handled effectively during conflicts.
11. Explain how assertiveness, nonassertiveness and aggressiveness differ.
12. Identify behaviours that foster and impede the development of a relationship based on assertiveness.
13. Explain how you can protect your emotional rights in the relationships you share.

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## Lecture 10 INTERVIEWING

1. Defining interview.
2. Interview stages.
3. The “heartbeat” of the interview.
4. Roles and responsibilities.
5. Focus of impression management.
6. How to improve your interview quotient.

### 1. Defining Interview

Just like other forms of communication, interviews usually involve face-to-face interaction. However, unlike ordinary person-to-person communication, in an interview at least one of participants has a purpose for the conversation that goes beyond informally interacting with, or talking to somebody, or simple enjoyment. The conversation that occurs during interview is planned and designed to achieve specific objectives. In fact, you could say that **the interview is the most common type of purposeful, planned, decision-making, person-to-person communication.** Thus, in the interview interaction is structured, questions are asked and answered and behaviour is interchanged in an effort to explore predetermined subject matter and realize a definite goal.

**Principles and techniques: a project text.** They state that an interview is “a form of oral communication involving two parties, at least, one of whom has a preconceived and serious purpose and both of whom speak and listen from time to time.” No matter how an interview is defined, its participants are involved in a process of contact and information exchange; they meet to both give and receive information in order to make educated decisions. Ideally there should also be a participation **balance** in the interview: both interviewer and interviewee should give themselves the opportunity to learn from the data given and opportunity to learn from the data given and receive during the interchange.

**The hiring interview** is among the best known and most widely experienced types of interview in which we find ourselves accepted or rejected for work by an individual employer, a business or a corporate organization. The employment interview offers the unique opportunity for the potential employer and employee to share meaningful information that will permit each to determine whether the mutual association will be a beneficial and productive one. In a sense, the employment interview gives both parties a chance to test each other by asking and answering relevant questions. The better prepared you are for the employment interview, the better your chances of performing effectively and realizing your job objectives. Remember, an interview is certainly not “just talk.”

An effective interviewer or interviewee should be apprehensible to a degree. If you are not concerned about what will happen during the interview then you won't care about making a good impression, and, as a result, will not perform as effectively as you could. Both the interviewer and the interviewee must plan and

prepare to participate in an interview. Only in this way will important questions and answers be shared and interview phobia eliminated.

## 2. Interview Stages

Most effective interviews have a discernable structure. Simply, they have a beginning, a middle and an end. The **beginning** or **opening** is that segment of the process that provides an orientation to what is to come. The **middle** or **body** is the largest segment and the one during which both parties really get down to business. The interview's **ends** or **close** is the segment during which the parties prepare to take leave of one another.

Just as the right kind of "*Hello*" at the start of a conversation can help create a feeling of friendliness between interactors, so, the opening of the interview should be used to help establish support between interviewer and interviewee. The primary purpose of this phase is to make it possible for both to participate freely and honestly by creating an atmosphere of trust and good will and by explaining the purpose and scope of the meeting. Conversational ice-breaker and orientation statements perform key interview-opening function. Typical icebreakers include comments about the weather, here-and-now surroundings, current events, or a compliment. The idea is to use small talk to help make the interview a human rather than a mechanical encounter. Typical orientation remarks include identification of the interview's purpose, a preview of the topics to be discussed, and statements that motivate the respondent and act as a conduit or transition into the body of the interview.

In the body of the interview, the interactors really get down to business. Here the interviewer and interviewee might discuss work experiences, including those things the applicant does best, his or her weakness, major accomplishments, difficult problems tackled in the past and career goals. Educational background and activities or interests are relevant areas to probe during this phase of the interview. Breadth of knowledge and time management abilities are also common areas of concern.

During the close of the interview the main points covered are reviewed and summarized. Since an interview that ends well can enhance any future meetings the interactors might hold, care must be taken to make the leave-taking comfortable. Expressing appreciation for the time and effort given is important; neither interviewee nor interviewer should be made to feel discarded. In other words, the door should be left open for future contacts.

## 3. Questions: "The Heartbeat" of the Interview

Questions asked in the course of typical interpersonal encounters, during a typical day perform a number of functions. They help us find out needed information, satisfy our curiosity, demonstrate our interest and test the knowledge of the individual questioned; at the same time they permit those questioned to reveal themselves to us. For these reasons, questions are the primary medium for

data collection in an interview. Not only do the questions set the tone for the interview, they also determine whether the interview will yield valuable information or prove to be practically worthless.

The interrogatives *what, where, when, who, how, and why* are used throughout the interview because they help to lay a foundation of knowledge on which to base decisions or conclusions.

During the course of an interview closed, open, primary and secondary questions may all be used and in any combination. **Closed questions** are highly structured and can be answered with a simple “yes”, “no” or a few brief words. The following are examples of closed questions:

1. *How old are you?*
2. *Where do you live?*
3. *What school did you attend?*
4. *Did you graduate in the top quarter of your class?*
5. *Would you work for the salary offered?*
6. *What starting salary do you expect?*

In contrast to closed questions, **open questions** are broader in nature, less restricting or structured and hence offer the respondent more freedom in the choice and scope of an answer. The following are examples:

- Tell me about yourself.*
- What are your feelings about our industry?*
- How do you judge success?*
- Why did you choose to interview for this particular job?*
- What are your career goals?*

Open questions give individuals a chance to express their feelings, attitudes and values. Furthermore, they let individuals know the interviewer is interested in understanding their perspective.

Open and closed questions may be either primary or secondary. **Primary questions** are used to introduce topics or to begin exploring a new area. “*What is your favourite hobby?*” and “*Tell me about your last job*”, are both examples of primary questions: the first is closed and the second is open. A smart interviewer will prepare a list of primary questions before coming to the interview, and smart interviewees will anticipate the primary questions they may be asked.

**Secondary questions** are used to follow up primary questions and are sometimes referred to as **probing questions**. They ask that the respondent explain the ideas and feelings behind answers, and they are frequently used when the answers to primary questions are vague or incomplete. Some examples are:

- Go on, what do you mean?*
- Would you explain that further?*
- Could you give me any example?*

*What did you have in mind when you said that?*

“*Uh huh*” and “*Humm*” are typical secondary-question comments.

To be an effective follow-up questioner requires that you be an effective listener. You must be sensitive to and on the lookout for feelings and attitudes of the interviewee in addition to the facts and opinions stated. You will need to develop techniques that will permit you to see the world through the other person’s eyes. Of course, it goes without saying that the interviewee must also be an effective listener.

#### **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

Both interviewer and interviewee come to the interview with certain goals in mind. Interviewers usually have a threefold objective. They hope to:

- 1) gather information that will enable them to judge accurately the interviewee’s future performance;
- 2) persuade applicants that the business or organization is a good one to work for;
- 3) ascertain whether the applicants and the people with whom they will work will be compatible.

Interviewers also work to keep their own jobs. Remember, a company invests both time and money in the hiring and training of a new employee. If the employee doesn’t work out, the investment is sacrificed and some of the blame obviously falls on the original interviewer.

To fulfil their objectives, interviewers need to master the art of structuring the successful interview, use effective questioning techniques and approach each interview situation with flexibility and sensitivity. Good interviewers work as information seekers, information givers and decision makers. They are active, not passive participants.

Interviewees also bear a great responsibility in the interview. They too need to speak and listen and provide and collect information to decide whether to accept the job. To accomplish these goals, interviewees need to research the company to which they are applying and try to anticipate the questions they will be asked. They also need to plan to ask questions themselves. It’s unfortunate and unproductive when only the interviewer gains information from the interview experience. The interviewee can often learn much about work conditions and the prospects for job advancement by asking questions and probing for answers. To the extent that interviewees have a right to share the control of the interview, they can affect its direction and content. Like interviewers, interviewees need to be good listeners, adaptable and sensitive to the image they project.

Effective interviewees work hard at self-assessment. In effect, they take stock of themselves in order to determine who they are, what their career needs and goals are, and how they can best sell themselves to the company of their choice. As a prospective interviewee you will find it useful to prepare by thinking about and answering the following questions:

1. For what types of positions has my training prepared me?

2. What has been my most rewarding experience?
3. What type of job do I want?
4. Would I be happier working more alone than with others?
5. What qualifications do I have that make me feel I would be successful in the job of my choice?
6. What type(s) of people do I want to work for?
7. What type(s) of people do I not want to work for?
8. What do I feel about receiving criticism?
9. What salary will enable me to meet my financial needs?
10. What salary will enable me to live comfortably?

## 5. Focus on Impression Management

Recent studies have revealed that if an employer formed a negative impression of an interviewee during the first five minutes of an interview, 90 percent of the time that person did not get the job. In contrast, if the employer's first impression was positive 75 percent of the time the interviewee was hired. What happens is that once interviewers form an initial impression, they selectively pick up on whichever information supports the initial impression.

**The interviewee.** It is important that you realize that as a job applicant you will have to work to manage the initial impression you give others. You will be evaluated on how you come across during the interaction and on how you present yourself. What you say and how you say are your basic resources – the key tools you have to work with. How you communicate your assets, your values, your attitudes and your overall credibility will affect whether you are hired.

Of necessity, interviewers need to find out a great deal about you in a short period of time. They want to evaluate your communication strengths, general personality, social effectiveness and character. The interviewer also wants to determine what your needs and wants are including your career goals, educational interests, and developmental aspirations, your ability to use body language effectively and your ability to maintain control during the interview. If you do not appear to be a cooperative and willing party to the interview, interviewers will feel that you are wasting their time and effort.

You can help cement a positive image by sending a brief thank you note to the person or persons who interviewed you.

**The interviewer.** It should be remembered that in any interview the interviewer who judges is equally judged by the interviewee. To the extent that the judgement is favourable, the interviewer can elicit the interviewee's fullest cooperation in accomplishing the aims and objectives of the interview. The interviewer's ability to set the tone by reducing the initial anxiety of the interviewee is extremely important in influencing the interviewee's initial impression. During the main body of the interview, the interviewer must work:

- 1) to maintain control of the interchange;
- 2) to deliver content so that it is clearly understood;
- 3) to listen for content as well as feelings;

- 4) to build trust, and;
- 5) to distinguish relevant from irrelevant information.

Interviewers must know when to pause and when to speak. Whenever interviewees perceive the interviewer's vocal communication and ability to listen to be high quality, they tend to enjoy the interview more and rate the interviewer favourably.

The interview, like any other interpersonal relationship, requires the cooperation skill and commitment of both parties in order to be effective.

## **6. How to Improve Your Interview Quotient**

1. Be prepared. Understand the purpose of the interview, plan or articulate the questions you will ask and be asked, understand your goals and be able to communicate them clearly.

2. Practise sending and receiving messages. By its very nature, the interview demands that each party to it be adept at sending and receiving verbal and nonverbal messages. Not only must both interactants clearly encode their messages, each must be skilled at reading the reactions and checking on the perceptions of the receiver.

3. Demonstrate effective listening skills. Problems occur in interviews when either the interviewer or the interviewee fails to listen closely to what the other is saying.

4. Have conviction. Ask and answer questions and express your opinions with enthusiasm.

5. Be flexible. Don't overprepare or memorize statements. Think things through thoroughly, but be prepared for questions or answers you didn't anticipate. Be able to adjust to the other person's style and pace.

6. Look. Pay attention to the nonverbal signals sent to you and by you. Be sure they convey positive, not negative messages. Give the other person your total attention.

7. Consider. Both interviewer and the interviewee need to consider the results of a job offer.

8. Chart your progress. Finally, each time you participate in an interview, fill out a copy of the following interview evaluation graph by circling the number that most closely describes your response.

## **Summary**

During the course of our lives we will each take part in a number of interviews as either interviewee or interviewer. The interview is the most common type of purposeful, planned, decision-making person-to-person communication.

Effective interviews are well-structured interactions. They have a beginning, which provides an orientation to what is to come; a middle, when the parties get down to business; and an end, when the main points are reviewed and the parties take leave of one another.

Questions are the heartbeat of the interview and the primary medium for data collection. Four basic types of questions are asked in an interview: closed, open, primary and secondary. Closed questions are highly structured and can be answered with a “yes”, “no”, or a few words. Open questions are broader and offer the interviewee more freedom in the choice of a response. Primary questions introduce topics or begin exploring a new area; secondary questions (probing questions) follow up primary questions by asking for further information.

Good interviewers and interviewees work hard during an interview, functioning simultaneously as information seekers, information givers and decision makers. To be a successful interviewee also requires preparation. Honest self-assessment, practice in answering typical interview questions, and mastery of the techniques of impression management are of prime importance.

### **Skill builder**

What secondary questions would you use to follow up this series of interviewer-interviewee exchanges?

1. Interviewer: *How do you feel about a job that requires 50 percent travel?*

Interviewee: *That depends.*

Interviewer:

2. Interviewer: *Why are you leaving your present position?*

Interviewee: *It's time for a change.*

Interviewer:

3. Interviewer: *What kind of job are you seeking?*

Interviewee: *An interesting one.*

Interviewer:

4. Interviewer: *What are your attitudes towards overtime.*

Interviewee: *A lot of employees object to overtime.*

Interviewer:

5. Interviewer: *What do you expect to be earning in five years?*

Interviewee: *A decent wage.*

Interviewer:

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. Define interview
2. Explain how an interview differs from a casual conversation.
3. Identify the types of information of both parties to an interview share with each other.
4. Explain the fears interviewer and interviewee may bring to the interview situation.
5. Determine your own level of “interview phobia”
6. Describe the key stages of an interview.
7. Explain the role played by questions during an interview.
8. Demonstrate an ability to formulate closed, open, primary and secondary

questions.

9. Compare and contrast the roles and responsibilities of interviewer and interviewee.
10. Demonstrate the ability to create a favourable impression while functioning as an interviewer or interviewee.
11. Determine how to enhance your “interview quotient”.

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## Lecture 11

### COMMUNICATING IN THE SMALL GROUP: THE ROLE OF THE GROUP IN PROBLEM SOLVING

1. Interacting with others to solve problems.
2. Group characteristics and components.
3. Decision making: reaching goals.
4. How to improve your problem-solving skills.

#### 1. Interacting with Others to Solve Problems

We form small groups to share information that will permit us to solve common problems and make particular decisions in order to achieve certain identified common goals. But why use small groups of people instead of a single individual?

**Advantages of the small group.** In many ways using a group to solve a complex problem is more logical than relying on one individual working alone. Group problem solving offers a number of important advantages. **First**, it permits a variety of people with different amounts of information and points of view to have input into the problem-solving, decision-making process, thus facilitating the pooling of resources. The broader the array of knowledge on any one particular problem, the more likely an effective solution. **Second**, group participation apparently increases individual motivation. Group effort often leads to greater commitment to finding a solution and then to a greater commitment to the solution itself once arrived at. **Third**, group functioning makes it easier to identify other people's mistakes and filter our errors before they can become costly or damaging. Groups are frequently better equipped than a single person to foresee difficulties, detect weaknesses, visualize consequences and explore possibilities. As a result they tend to produce superior decisions and solutions. **Fourth**, the decisions and solutions of a group tend to be better received by others than those of an individual. As the old proverb says, "There is strength in numbers." The person, to whom a group solution is reported, tends to respect the fact that a number of people working together came to one conclusion. **Fifth**, group effort is generally more pleasant and fulfilling than working alone. The group provides companionship, a chance for the affirmation of ideas and feelings, and an opportunity for self-confirmation. It is rewarding to know that others respect us enough to listen and react to what we have to say. It is even more rewarding to have our thoughts and concerns accepted by others.

**Disadvantages of the small group.** The following disadvantages of group problems solving have been identified. **First**, when working with a number of other people it sometimes becomes very tempting to "lay back" and let someone else perform your duties and responsibilities. Thus, the lazy group member maintains a low profile and simply coasts along on the efforts of others. **Second**, personal goals sometimes conflict with group goals. As a result, people may seek to use the group to fulfil particular self-oriented objectives despite the fact they might interfere with or sabotage the realization of group objectives. **Third**, the

decision-making, problem-solving process may be dominated by only a few forceful persistent members who do not take the time to ensure that all members have a chance to speak and be heard. Actual or perceived status plays a part here as well. Group members may be hesitant to criticize the comments of high status individuals and low-status individuals may be reluctant to participate at all. Consequently, position and power can affect whether ideas are offered, listened to, or incorporated into group decisions. **Fourth**, certain individuals who are set upon having their ideas and only their ideas accepted may be unwilling to compromise. When this happens, the group decision-making machinery breaks down, and frequently no solution is agreed upon. In other words, the group becomes deadlocked. **Fifth**, decisions reached and actions taken after a group discussion are often riskier than the decisions individuals would have made and actions they would have taken prior to discussion. This phenomenon has been termed “the risky shift”. **Sixth**, it often takes longer to reach a group solution than to formulate an individual one.

**When to use a group to solve a problem.** Experience has demonstrated that a group rather than an individual should be used to solve a problem if the answers to most of the following questions are “yes” instead of “no”.

1. Is the problem complex rather than simple?
2. Does the problem have many parts or facets?
3. Would any one person be unlikely to possess all the information needed to solve the problem?
4. Would it be advisable to divide-up the problem-solving responsibilities?
5. Are many potential solutions desired rather than a single potential solution?
6. Would the examination of diverse attitudes be helpful?
7. Are the group members more likely to engage in tasklike than non-tasklike behaviour?

In these complex times, it often makes sense for individuals of varied expertise to join together and pool their knowledge and insight to help solve the problems confronting them.

## 2. Group Characteristics and Components

Defining a group is tricky business. First, a **group** is a collection of people. It is not just a random assemblage of independent individuals, but is composed of individuals who interact verbally and nonverbally, who occupy certain roles with respect to one another, and who cooperate to accomplish a definite goal. The members of a group recognize the other individuals who are part of the activity, have certain kinds of attitudes towards these people, and obtain some degree of satisfaction from belonging to or participating in the group. The interactants within the group acknowledge the dos and don'ts of group life, the norms that specify and regulate the behaviour expected of members. Furthermore communication within a group involves more than the casual banter that occurs between strangers at bus stops or in department stores.

Just because a number of people are present in a particular space at the same

time does not mean a group exists. Thus, under ordinary conditions the passengers in a train or elevator are influenced by each other; that is interaction in the form of mutual influence occurs. The individual members of the group affect the character of the group and are also affected by it. Researchers have found that for most tasks groups of five to seven people work best. This size enables members to communicate directly with each other as they work towards accomplishing a common task or goal, such as, problem solving, information exchange, or the development of improved interpersonal relationships.

Every group establishes its own goals, its own structure and communication patterns, its own norms and its own “climate”. Every participant of the group usually has a stake in the outcome, will develop relationships with the other members of the group, and will assume roles that relate to group tasks and/or interpersonal relationships that either foster or impede group effectiveness. Thus, the interaction styles of members will have an impact on the kind of atmosphere or climate that develops in the group. And conversely, the climate will affect what members say to each other as well as the way they say it.

If the predominant group climate is cold, closed, mistrustful or uncooperative, individual members will frequently react in ways that sustain the feeling. In contrast, if the predominant group climate is warm, open, trusting and cooperative, members will usually react in ways that reinforce those characteristics. An effective climate consists of the following ingredients: 1) supportiveness, 2) participative decision making, 3) trust among group members, 4) openness and candour, 5) high performance goals. The healthier the group climate, the more cohesive is the group.

Group climate also affects group norms. In some groups interaction is formal and stuffy, in others it is informal and relaxed. Groups create standards that they expect members to live up to. In this way a group is able to foster a certain degree of uniformity. There are the following characteristics of an effective and well-functioning group:

1. The atmosphere tends to be informal, comfortable, relaxed.
2. There is a lot of discussion in which virtually everyone participates, but it remains pertinent to the task of the group.
3. The task or objective of the group is well understood and accepted by the members. There will have been free discussion of the objective at some point until it was formulated in such a way that the members of the group could commit themselves to it.
4. The members listen to each other. Every idea is given a hearing. People do not appear to be afraid of being foolish by putting forth a creative thought even if it seems fairly extreme.
5. There is disagreement. Disagreements are not suppressed or overridden by premature action. The reasons are carefully examined, and the group seeks to resolve them rather than to dominate the dissenter.
6. Most decisions are reached by a kind of consensus in which it is clear that everyone is in general agreement and willing to go along. Formal voting is at a minimum: the group does not accept a simple majority as a proper basis for action.

7. Criticism is frequent, frank, and relatively comfortable. There is little evidence of personal attack, either openly or in a hidden fashion.

8. People are free in expressing their feelings as well as their ideas both on the problem and on the group's operation.

9. When action is taken, clear assignments are made and accepted.

10. The chairman of the group does not dominate it, nor, on the contrary, does the group defer unduly to him. In fact, the leadership shifts from time to time, depending upon the circumstances. There is little evidence of a struggle for power as the group operates. The issue is not who controls but how to get the job done.

11. The group is self-conscious of its own operation.

### 3. Decision Making: Reaching Goals

In our society critical decisions are usually relegated to a group. Depending on a group a wide variety of decision-making strategies or approaches may be used. Let us investigate the diverse methods members can adopt to arrive at a decision as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

**Methods of decision-making.** There are a number of different methods that groups use in making decisions. Before we examine these, use the list below to decide which decision-making strategy or strategies a group you belong to would employ most often if you had your way.

1. Ask an expert on the topic to make the decision.
2. Flip a coin.
3. Let the majority rule.
4. Let the group leader make the decision.
5. Stall until a decision no longer needs to be made.
6. Let the minority rule, because that's sometimes fair.
7. Determine the "average" position since this will be least offensive to anyone.
8. Reach a decision by consensus, that is, be certain all, have had input into the discussion, understood the decision, can rephrase it and will publicly support it.

Do this by ranking the possibilities from 1 (most favourable) to 8 (least favourable). After considering these alternatives, examine the implications of your responses.

Among the methods employed by groups to make decisions are:

1) decision by an expert; 2) decision by chance; 3) decision by the majority; 4) decision by the leader; 5) total deferral of decision; 6) decision by minority; 7) decision by averaging individual decision, and 8) decision by consensus. Each method has certain advantages and is more appropriate and workable under certain conditions than others. An effective group bases its decision-making strategy on a number of variables, including: 1) the nature of the problem; 2) the time available to the group to solve the problem, and 3) the kind of climate in which the group enjoys operating.

Experience has shown that the decision-making methods of groups vary considerably in their effectiveness. **Majority vote** is the method used most

frequently. Most elections are decided in this way, many laws are passed using this approach and a large number of decisions are made on the basis of the vote of 51% of a group's members. Lest we overlook the importance of the **minority**, however, we should note that it too can carry weight.

Another popular decision-making strategy is **averaging**. Under the rule of averaging, the most popular decision becomes the group's decision. Letting the **expert** member decide what the group should do is also used at times. In this case the group simply defers its decision-making power to its most knowledgeable member. In many other groups the **leader** retains all the decision-making power. Sometimes this is done after consultation with group members, at other times prior to consultation.

The most effective decision-making strategy has been found to be **decision by consensus**. When a group achieves consensus, all members agree what the decision should be. Even more important, all help formulate the decision by voicing their feelings and airing their differences of opinion. Thus, all understand the decision and will support it. Research shows that the greater the **involvement** of members in the decision-making process, the more effective the decision will be. It should be remembered that it is the group that will usually be responsible for implementing the decision. If members disagree with a decision, or do not understand it, they may not work very hard to make it succeed. A leader may make routine decisions or may be called on to make decisions when little time is available for a real discussion on the issue, but under most circumstances, one person cannot be the best resource for all decisions. In addition, a drawback of the decision-by-expert method is that it is sometimes difficult to determine who the expert is. Also, it, like the decision by the leader system, fails to provide for the involvement of other group members. Averaging, on the whole, is superior to both the designated leader and the expert methods. The average position doesn't satisfy anyone too much, but neither does it satisfy anyone too much. So, although averaging permits individual errors to cancel themselves out and, at the least, all members to be consulted, commitment to the decision is usually not very great.

Thus, under most circumstances the quality of decision-making and the satisfaction of the participants are higher when the consensus approach is used, because consensus puts the resources of the entire group to effective use, permits the discussion of all issues and alternatives and ensures the commitment of all members to the decision's implementation. From this we can see that it is not just decision adequacy that is important in group interaction; we must also be concerned with the reactions and feelings of group members. Remember, if group members are afraid to speak up, are close-minded, reluctant to search for information, or not motivated to solve the problems at hand, they will not perform effectively.

**Brainstorming: the search for better ideas.** This method is used primarily to promote a free flow of ideas and can be incorporated into the problem-solving process itself. For instance, although brainstorming is used most frequently when group members are attempting to identify a solution, it can also be used to help identify the factors that caused the problem, the criteria that a solution should meet,

and ways to implement a solution.

To ensure that brainstorming sessions are successful, group members need to adhere to certain guidelines:

1. Temporarily suspend evaluation and criticism of ideas. Instead, adopt a “try anything” attitude. This will encourage rather than stifle the flow of ideas.
2. Encourage freewheeling. The wilder the ideas offered, the better. It is easier to tame an idea later than to invent or invigorate one. At this point the practicality of an idea is not of primary importance.
3. Think of as many ideas as you can. At this stage the quantity, not quality of ideas is important. The greater the number of ideas, the better the chance of finding a good one. Thus, no self- or group-censorship is permitted. All ideas should be expressed.
4. Build on and improve or modify the ideas of others. Work to mix ideas until they form interesting combinations. Remember, brainstorming is a group effort.
5. Record all ideas. This ensures that the group will have available all the ideas that have been generated during the session.
6. Only after the brainstorming session is finished should group members evaluate the ideas for usefulness and applicability.

Brainstorming is effective because it lessens the inhibitions of members and makes it easier for them to get their ideas heard; promotes a warmer, more playful, enthusiastic and cooperative atmosphere; and encourages each individual’s potential for creativity. But perhaps the most unique benefit of brainstorming is suspended judgement.

### **How to Improve Your Problem-Solving Skills**

For a problem-solving group to be effective certain characteristics need to be present, and concerned individuals must work to realise these qualities when functioning as group members. By developing an awareness between optimal or ideal problem-solving behaviours and the behaviours with which you and your fellow group members approach problem-solving, you can begin to improve your group’s method and style of operation. An effective group exhibits these characteristics:

1. Group goals are clearly understood and cooperatively formulated by the members. Goals are not merely imposed. If group members are confused about the nature of the problem, they will not be able to solve it.
2. All members of the group are encouraged to communicate their ideas and feelings freely. Ideas and feelings are valued; they are neither ignored nor suppressed. Keynote personalized phrases to use are: “*I think*”, “*I see*” and “*I feel*.” These elements reveal a personal point of view and indicate that you recognize someone else may feel, think or see differently than you do.
3. Group members seek to reach a consensus when a decision is an important one. Input from all members is sought. Each member’s involvement is considered critically. Thus the decision is not left to an “authority” to make on the basis of little or no discussion.

4. Consideration is given to both the task and maintenance dimensions of the problem-solving effort. Both the quality of the decision and the well-being of the group-members are considered important.

5. Group members do not set about haphazardly to solve a problem. A problem-solving framework is used, and an outline is followed that aids the group in its search for relevant information.

6. The motivation level is high. Group members are anxious to search for information, speak up, listen to others, and engage in an active and honest research for a better solution. They neither jump impetuously at the first solution that presents itself, nor prematurely criticize and evaluate ideas.

7. An effort is made to assess the group's problem-solving style to identify and alleviate factors that impede its effectiveness as well as to identify and foster factors that enhance its effectiveness.

### Summary

In communication theory a **group** is defined as a collection of people who interact verbally or nonverbally, who occupy certain roles with respect to one another, and who cooperate with each other to accomplish a definite role. Some of our most important communication experiences occur in small groups. Small groups are used to solve common problems and make decisions by sharing information.

The advantages of using a group of people instead of an individual are that resources can be pooled, individual notification is increased, errors are more likely to be deleted, decisions are more readily accepted by those outside the group and the group members have an opportunity to enjoy the companionship and rewards of working with others. There are, however, potential disadvantages of group problem-solving: it may encourage laziness among particular members, conflict may arise between personal and group goals, the group may be dominated by a few, the stubbornness of one or two members may lead to deadlock, the group may make an excessively risky decision, and the decision itself usually takes longer to reach.

To operate effectively group members need to be supportive, exercise participative decision making, show trust, openness and candour, and set high performance goals. The healthier the group climate, the more cohesive the group.

There are a number of different methods groups use to make decisions – decisions by an expert, by chance, by majority, by the leader, by the minority, by averaging individual decisions and by consensus – or the group can defer a decision entirely. Making decisions by consensus is considered the most effective strategy. When a group achieves consensus, all members have helped to formulate the decision, all have agreed what the decision should be, and all will support the decision.

Most groups can improve their problem-solving effectiveness by using the reflective-thinking framework, a systematic six-step approach to decision-making. Another technique that is useful in some situations is brainstorming, which

encourages each member's potential for creativity.

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. Define a group.
2. Explain the role groups play in your life.
3. Identify those occasions when it is more appropriate to have a group rather than an individual attempt to solve a problem.
4. Enumerate potential advantages and disadvantages of group problem-solving.
5. Provide examples of how climate affects the cooperation of a group.
6. Compare and contrast a variety of decision-making methods.
7. Demonstrate an ability to apply the reflective-thinking framework to increase your problem-solving effectiveness.
8. Describe and use the "brainstorming" technique.
9. How to improve your problem-solving skills?

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## Lecture 12

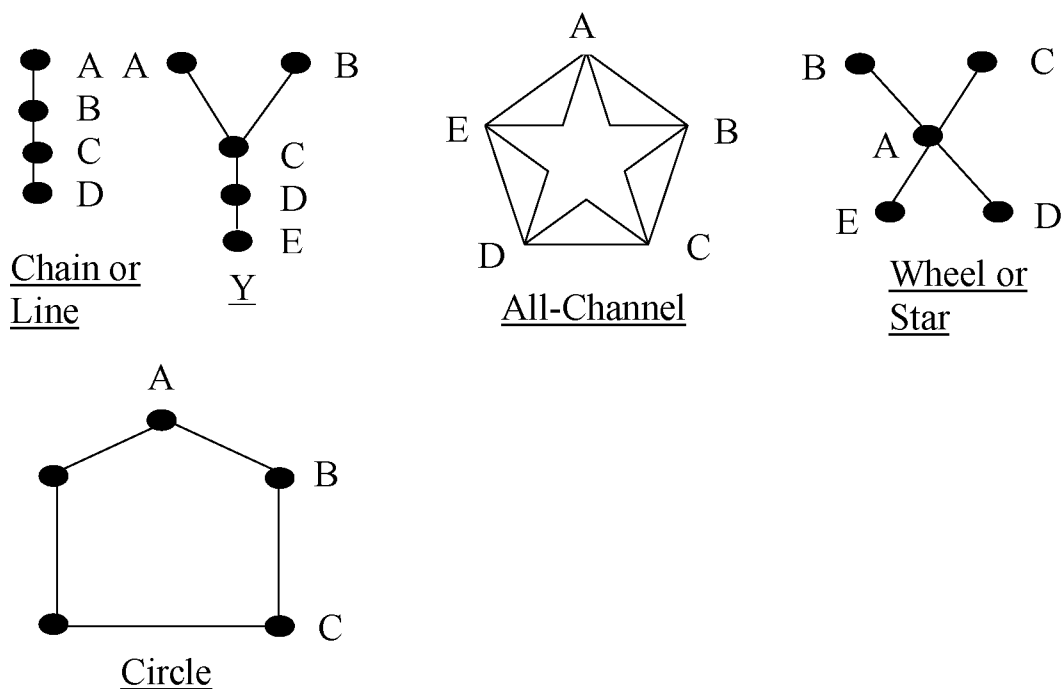
### GROUP NETWORKS, MEMBERSHIP, AND LEADERSHIP

1. Defining group networks.
2. Member responsibilities: group roles.
3. Approaches to leadership: the leader in you.
4. Group interaction and the social environment
5. How to improve communication among group members.

#### 1. Defining Group Networks

Any group's ability to accomplish its task is related to the interactions of its members. It is all but impossible for a small group to communicate well unless members are comfortable in speaking with one another, feel free to express their ideas and feelings to each other and have an opportunity to receive feedback about how they are coming across. If you are able and willing to communicate with most, if not all, the members of your group, you can be said to occupy a **central position** in the group. In contrast, if you relate to only one or, at the most, a few people in your group, you occupy a **peripheral position**. It is the group's networks that determine the communication paths open to members and effectiveness of their interactions. Figure 13 illustrates representative types of networks.

Fig. 13



The first group network studies were conducted by the sociological researchers Bavelas and Leavitt. Bavelas studied four communication patterns: the circle, the line, the star (or wheel) and the Y. For each pattern he measured the time it took group members to solve a simple problem and the satisfaction of group members with the operation of their group. Bavelas discovered that the Y pattern was the

most efficient, that is, it enabled the members to solve the problem presented to them in the shortest time. However, he also discovered that members who belonged to the circle group had the highest morale. In addition, results indicated that persons who occupied central positions in group networks were more satisfied with their group's operation than were members who occupied peripheral positions.

Like Bavelas, Leavitt studied four patterns of communication: the circle, the chain (or line), the Y and the wheel (or star). In his experiments the members in each of these groups had to discover a common symbol included on cards provided to them. Leavitt's results indicated that the network with the greatest degree of shared centrality (the circle) produced the highest morale among group members; members limited to using the network with the least degree of shared centrality (the wheel) required the shortest time to come up with an accurate solution. In addition, in most groups the person who occupied the centralmost position was declared to be the leader.

We can see that the particular type of communication network, employed by a group, determines which communication channels are open or closed and thus helps to determine who talks to whom. When people are cut off from relating to each other, individual satisfaction suffers. Thus it makes sense that overall group morale increases when decentralized networks (networks with **shared centrality**) are used. In addition, other studies have shown that although centralized networks (networks with highly isolated or peripheral members) produce faster solutions to a simple problem, decentralized networks are more efficient if the problem is more complex. (It seems that if the problem is complex and the group network is centralized, the member in the central position begins to suffer from "information overload", thereby decreasing efficiency.)

Having an opportunity to interact with others, to give and gain information directly from others, and to exert some control over the operation of the group are essential if members are to believe they can contribute to the group, are to be satisfied with the group process and are to be motivated to continue their participation in the group. For a group to be effective, members need to realize that it is up to them to elicit contributions from one another and to encourage effective communication among all members. Thus, a completely connected pattern of group communication is usually the most desirable.

## 2. Member Responsibilities: Group Roles

What type of group member do you consider yourself? In order to be an effective member, you need to consider the assets or liabilities you bring with you to the group experience (the roles you perform in your group and how your behaviour either contributes to or detracts from your group's effectiveness).

At this point it will be useful for us to examine a number of different group roles in order to determine how each contributes to or detracts from a group's performance. First, let us clarify that a **group role** is a type of behaviour that is a particular kind of communicative act exhibited by a group member. Naturally, a

group will perform more effectively when group members assume positive roles (functions that help to accomplish the group's purpose) and avoid negative roles (behaviours that distract or frustrate the group). We may perform a number of different roles in a group or we may prefer to perform a particular role. We may also perform certain roles in one group and completely different roles in another. For example, sometimes we may contribute in ways that promote the accomplishment of the group task, at other times we may function in ways that help to maintain relationships among group members; at still other times we may deemphasize group objectives by exhibiting self-serving behaviours and actively seeking to meet only personal needs or goals.

Even though their role classification model was formulated more than 30 years ago, the system proposed by Kenneth Benne and Paul Sheats is still commonly used today. It describes the functions participants should seek to assume and avoid during the life of a group. Benne and Sheats consider **goal achievement** (completing the task) and **group maintenance** (relationship building) the two basic objectives of any group. They further reasoned that eliminating nonfunctional behaviours is a requirement or condition that must be met if the preceding goals are to be realized. With this premise to guide them, these researchers identified three role dimensions: 1) task-oriented roles; 2) maintenance oriented roles; and 3) self-serving roles.

Among the **task behaviours** that group members may perform are the following:

1. **Initiating.** The member defines the problem; suggests methods, goals and procedures; and starts the group moving along new paths or in different directions by offering a plan.
2. **Information seeking.** The member asks for facts and opinions and seeks relevant information on the problem.
3. **Opinion seeking.** The member solicits expressions of feeling and value in order to discover the values underlying the group's effort.
4. **Information giving.** The member provides ideas and suggestions and supplies personal experiences as well as factual data.
5. **Opinion giving.** The member supplies opinions, values and beliefs and reveals what he or she feels about what is being discussed.
6. **Clarifying.** The member elaborates on the ideas of others, supplies, paraphrases, offers examples and enhances clarity.
7. **Coordinating.** The member summarizes ideas and tries to constructively draw together various contributions.
8. **Evaluating.** The member evaluates the group's decisions or proposed solutions; she or he helps to establish standards for judgement.
9. **Consensus testing.** The member checks on the state of group agreement to see if the group is nearing a decision.

Among the **maintenance behaviours** members may perform are the following:

1. **Encouraging.** The member is warm, receptive, and responsive to others and praises others and their ideas.
2. **Gate keeping.** The member attempts to keep the communication channels open;

he or she keeps reticent members contribute to the group and works to keep the discussion from being dominated by only one or two members.

3. **Harmonizing.** The member mediates differences between participants and attempts to reconcile misunderstandings or disagreements; she or he also tries to reduce tension levels in the group by the use of humour or other relief meanings at appropriate junctures.
4. **Compromising.** The member is willing to compromise his or her position to maintain group cohesion; she or he is willing to admit error and modify beliefs to achieve group growth.
5. **Standard setting.** The member assesses whether group members are satisfied with the procedures being used and indicates that criteria have been set for evaluating group functioning.

Finally, among the **self-serving** roles members may perform are the following:

1. **Blocking.** The member is disagreeable and disagrees in an effort to ensure that nothing is accomplished.
2. **Aggressive.** The member criticizes or blames others and works to deflate the egos of other group members in an effort to enhance his or her own status.
3. **Recognition seeking.** The member attempts to become the focus of attention by boasting about her or his own accomplishments rather than dealing with the group tasks; he or she may speak loudly and exhibit behaviour that is unusual.
4. **Withdrawing.** The member appears indifferent, daydreams, and/or sulks.
5. **Dominating.** The member insists on getting her or his own way, interrupts others and gives directions in an effort to “run” the group.
6. **Joking.** The member appears cynical and/or engages in horseplay or other “out-of-field” behaviours.
7. **Self-confessing.** The member uses other group members as an audience and reveals personal non-group oriented “feelings” or “insights”.
8. **Help seeking.** The member tries to elicit sympathy or pity from fellow members.

As we have seen, every group member affects the operation of his or her group; sometimes the members exhibit behaviours that improve task performance, and sometimes they exhibit behaviours that reflect their concern for human needs and feelings. Sometimes they exhibit helpful behaviours, and sometimes they behave in ways that announce their minimal regard for the group experience.

### 3. Approaches to Leadership: the Leader in You

**Leadership is the ability to influence others.** Thus, every person who influences others can be said to exert leadership. Leadership can be either a positive or a negative force. When its influence is positive, leadership facilitates group-task accomplishment. If the leadership influence is negative, group-task accomplishment is inhibited. Every group member has leadership potential. Whether the potential is used wisely or abused, used effectively or ineffectively, depends on each individual’s skills, personal objectives and commitment to the group.

Groups, especially problem-solving ones, need effective leadership in order to achieve their goals. Effective leadership can be demonstrated by one or more of the members in the group. We should point out here that there is a difference between being appointed a leader – that is, serving as a designated leader – and exhibiting leadership behaviours. When you function as the designated leader you have been “dubbed” the group’s leader; this means that an outside force has given you the authority to exert your influence within the group. When you simply engage in effective leadership behaviour, without being appointed or directed to do so, you achieve leadership, that is you automatically perform those roles that help a group attain its task and/or maintenance objectives. Effective leaders perform combinations of the **role versatility**. Such leaders help establish a group climate that encourages and stimulates interaction; they make certain that an agenda is planned for a meeting, they take responsibility for ensuring that group communication proceeds smoothly. When group members get off the track, it is this type of leader who asks relevant questions, offers internal summaries, and keeps the discussion going. This is also the kind of leader who encourages continual group-member evaluation and improvement.

**Leadership styles.** The assumptions we make about how people work together will influence the type of leadership style we adopt. Here are eight assumptions that a leader might make about how and why people work. Choose the four you are most comfortable with.

1. The average group member will avoid working if he or she can.
2. The average group member views work as a natural activity.
3. The typical group member must be forced to work and must be closely supervised.
4. The typical group member is self-directed when it comes to meeting performance standards and realizing group objectives.
5. A group member should be threatened with punishment to get him or her to put forth an adequate effort.
6. A group member’s commitment to objectives is not related to punishment but to rewards.
7. The average individual prefers to avoid responsibility and would rather be led.
8. The average individual not only can learn to accept responsibility but actually seeks responsibility.

If you picked mostly odd-numbered items in the list above, you represent what management theorist Douglas McGregor calls a “type X” leader. In contrast, if you checked mostly even-numbered items, you possess the perceptions belonging to his “type Y” leader. The type Y leader is more of a risk taker than is the type X leader. A Y leader is willing to let the members of her or his team grow and develop in order for them to realize their individual potentials. An X leader, however, does not readily delegate responsibility; unlike the Y leader, he or she is not concerned with the personal sense of achievement that members receive as a result of their experiences.

Three categories in addition to type X and type Y also usually come up: the autocratic leader (“the boss”), the democratic leader (“the participator”), and the

*laissez-faire* leader (“the do-your-own-thing-er”).

**Autocratic or authoritarian leaders** are dominators who view their task as a directive one. In a group with an autocratic leader, it is the leader who determines all policies and gives orders to the other group members. In other words, one boss typically assumes almost all leadership roles; thus, in effect this person becomes the singular decision-maker. Although such an approach may be effective and efficient during crisis situations, the usual outcome of this behaviour is low group satisfaction.

The opposite of the authoritarian leader is the ***laissez faire* leader**. This type of leader employs a “leave-them-alone” attitude. In other words, this person diminishes the leadership function to the point where it is almost nonexistent. The result is that group members are free to develop and progress on their own; they are indeed free to “do their own thing”. Unfortunately the members of a *laissez-faire* group may often be distracted from the task at hand and suffer loss of direction with the result that the quality of the work they produce suffers.

The middle leadership position – and the one that has proven to be most effective – is **democratic leadership**. In groups with the democratic leadership style members are directly involved in the problem-solving process; the power to make decisions is neither usurped by “the boss” nor abandoned by him or her. Instead, behaviour representing a reasonable compromise between these two extremes is practised. Whereas these leaders do not dominate the group with one point of view, they do attempt to provide direction to ensure that both task and maintenance leadership functions are met. The group is free to identify its own goals, follow its own procedures, and reach its own conclusions. Most people prefer belonging to democratic groups. Member morale, motivation to work, group mindedness and the desire to communicate all increase under the guidance of a democratic leader.

It should be emphasized that although the democratic style of leadership is traditionally preferred, all three leadership styles can be effective under the appropriate conditions. Thus, when an urgent decision is required, the autocratic style may be in the group’s best interest. When a minimum interference is needed for members to work together effectively, the *laissez-faire* style might be more effective. When commitment to the group decision is of the greatest importance, the democratic style should be practised.

**Theories of leadership. The trait theory.** The earliest view of leadership was the **trait theory**, which maintained that leaders were people who were born to lead. Theorists further believed there were special built-in leadership traits that could be identified, and an attempt was made to design a test that would predict whether an individual would become a leader. After many years of research, however, proof of this hypothesis is still lacking. Simply put, personality traits are not surefire leadership predictors. For one thing, no one set characteristics can be common to all leaders, and, moreover, leaders and followers alike share many of the same characteristics. Finally, the particular situation one finds oneself in appears at least in part to determine which individual comes forward to exert leadership. This is not to suggest that trait research did not yield valuable findings. In fact, while the

statement “Leaders **must** possess the following traits...” is not valid, the research that was conducted does enable us to note that certain traits are indeed **more likely** to be found in leaders than in non-leaders.

On a separate paper use the following scale to measure the extent to which you possess these attributes:

1	Dependability	Low	1	2	3	4	5	High
2	Cooperativeness		1	2	3	4	5	
3	Desire to win		1	2	3	4	5	
4	Enthusiasm		1	2	3	4	5	
5	Drive		1	2	3	4	5	
6	Persistence		1	2	3	4	5	
7	Responsibility		1	2	3	4	5	
8	Intelligence		1	2	3	4	5	
9	Foresight		1	2	3	4	5	
10	Communication ability		1	2	3	4	5	
11	Popularity		1	2	3	4	5	

Calculate your leadership score by adding up the numbers you have chosen. Next use the scale to rate a person you perceive to possess definite leadership ability. And finally use the scale to rate a person whom you definitely perceive **not** to be a leader. The highest possible score is 55. Such a score probably indicates strong leadership potential and means that the individual definitely perceives himself or herself to be a leader or is so perceived by others. A person who does not exhibit these traits is unlikely to be a leader.

**The situation theory.** This theory stresses that whether an individual displays leadership skills and behaviours and exercises leadership roles is dependent upon the situation. In other words, the development and emergence of leadership can be affected by such factors as the nature of the problem itself, the social climate, the personalities of the group members, the size of the group and the time available to accomplish the leadership task. The leader and his group interact not in a vacuum, but at a particular time and within a specific set of “circumstances”. A leader is not necessarily a person “for all seasons”.

**The functional theory.** In contrast to the preceding two theories, which emphasize the emergence of one particular individual as the group leader, the functional theory suggests that a number of different group members should be ready to show leadership because various actions are needed if a group is to achieve its goals. Advocates of functional leadership believe that any of the task or maintenance activities can be considered leadership functions. In other words, when you perform any needed task or maintenance function, you are thereby assuming a leadership role. Thus, according to functional theory, leadership changes from person to person and is shared. Of course, sometimes one or two group members perform more leadership functions than do others. Consequently, it

is often the case that one member might become the main task leader, whereas another might assume the role of the main socioemotional leader. However, the point is that we can each enhance our leadership potential by learning to perform needed group functions more effectively.

From the functional viewpoint, then, leadership is not necessarily a birth right; nor is it simply a matter of being in the right situation at a critical juncture. Instead, we are all capable of leadership, and what is required is that we have enough self-assertion and sensitivity to perform the functions that are needed as they are needed. In effect, this is asserting that good membership is good leadership. And the converse is also true: Good leadership is good membership.

#### 4. Group Interaction and the Social Environment

**Cooperation or competition.** Obviously, the personal goals of each individual have an impact on the operation of the group of which that person is a member. If individual members view their goals as congruent or coinciding, then an atmosphere of group cooperation can be fostered. However, if individual members see their goals as mutually contradictory, then a competitive atmosphere will be engendered. Too frequently, group members attempt to compete with one another when cooperating with one another would be more beneficial to the group. The idea that competing when cooperating would make better sense according to psychologists L. Nelson and S. Kagen is actually irrational and self-defeating. If a group develops into a “dog-eat-dog” phenomenon, all members may go “hungry”.

Few variables do more to damage a group’s ability to maintain itself in operation and complete a task than competition among members. Yet highly competitive individuals do belong to groups and do in fact affect the group’s communication climate and emergent goal structure. The term **goal structure** describes the way members relate to each other. Under a **cooperative goal structure**, in which members of a group work together to achieve their objectives, the goals of each person are perceived to be compatible or complementary with those of the others. Group members really pool resources and coordinate their efforts to obtain what they consider mutual aims. In contrast, when a group develops a **competitive goal structure**, members do not share resources, efforts are not coordinated, and, consciously or unconsciously, individuals work to hinder one another’s efforts to obtain the goal. Members who have a competitive orientation believe they can achieve their goals only if other members of the group fail to do so.

In order for the members of a group to cooperate with each other, certain requirements need to be met. **First**, group members need to agree that each has an equal right to satisfy needs. **Second**, conditions must be such that each person in the group is able to get what she or he wants at least some of the time. **Third**, plays for power that rely on techniques such as threatening, yelling, or demanding are viewed with disdain and are avoided. Finally, members do not attempt to manipulate each other by withholding information or dissembling. Consequently, when you cooperate as a group member, you do not aim to “win”, “beat”, or



“outsmart” others. Unlike competition, cooperation does not require that you “gain an edge” over the other member of your group; for this reason, unlike competition, cooperation does not promote defensiveness.

**Supportiveness or defensiveness.** For our purpose **defensive behaviour** can be said to occur when a group member perceives or anticipates a threat. We tend to become defensive when we perceive others attacking our self-concept. In fact, when we behave defensively, we devote a great amount of our energies to defending the **self**. We become preoccupied with thinking about how the self appears to others; and we become obsessed with discovering ways to make others see us more favourably. Whenever a member of a group becomes overly concerned with self-protection, he or she may compensate either by withdrawing or by attacking the other members. When this happens, the conditions necessary for the maintenance of the group begin to deteriorate. In short, defensive behaviour on your part gives rise to “defensive listening” in others. Once the defensiveness of a group member has been aroused, the person no longer feels free to concentrate on the actual meaning of messages you are trying to send. Instead, the defensive recipient feels compelled to distort your messages. Thus, as group members become more and more defensive, they experience a corresponding inability to process accurately the emotions, values and intentions of those with whom they are relating. For this reason the consequences of defensiveness include destroyed or partly damaged person-to-person relationships, continuing intergroup conflicts and increased personal anxiety, as well as wounded egos and hurt feelings.

Before we can work to eliminate or even minimize the arousal of defensiveness in our group relationships, we must understand the stimuli that can cause us to become defensive in the first place. The sociological researcher J. Cribb identified six such defence-causing behaviours and he also isolated six contrasting behaviours that help to allay or reduce the level of threat experienced.

Chart 1.

Behaviour Characteristics of Defensive and Supportive Climates	
Defensive Climate	Supportive Climate
1. Evaluation	1. Description
2. Control	2. Problem orientation
3. Strategy	3. Spontaneity
4. Neutrality	4. Empathy
5. Superiority	5. Equality
6. Certainty	6. Provisionalism

Intragroup relationships can run into trouble if a group member makes **judgemental** or **evaluative statements**. Far too often we are apt to offhandedly label the actions of others “stupid”, “ridiculous”, “absurd”, “wonderful” or “extraordinary” because we simply are predisposed to use judgemental terms. Although some people, we communicate with, do not mind having their actions praised, the anticipation of judgement can hinder the creation of a positive

communication climate. In contrast to evaluative behaviours, descriptive behaviours recount particular observable actions of a communicator without labelling those behaviours as good or bad, right or wrong. When you are descriptive, you do not advise receivers to change their behaviours. Instead, you simply report or question what you saw, heard or felt.

Communication that group members see as seeking to **control** them can also arouse defensiveness, rather than trust. In other words, if your intent is to control other group members, to get them to do something or change their beliefs, you are apt to evoke resistance. The amount of resistance you meet will depend partly on the openness with which you approach these individuals and the degrees to which your behaviour causes them to question or doubt your motives. When we conclude that someone is trying to control us, we also tend to conclude that this person thinks we are ignorant or unable to make our own decisions. A **problem orientation**, however, promotes just the opposite type of response from a receiver. When senders communicate that they have not yet formulated solutions and will not attempt to force their opinions on us we feel free to cooperate in solving the problems at hand.

Our level of defensiveness will also be increased if we feel another group member is using a **strategy** or is trying to “put something over on us”. No one likes to be “conned” and no one likes to be the victim of a hidden plan. We are suspicious of strategies that are concealed or tricky. We do not appreciate others making decisions for us and often attempting to persuade us that we made the decisions ourselves. Thus, when we perceive ourselves being manipulated, of necessity we become defensive and self-protective. In contrast, **spontaneous** behaviour that is honest and free of deception reduces defensiveness. Under such conditions the receiver does not feel a need to question the motivations of the source, and trust is engendered.

Another behaviour that can function to increase defensiveness in group members is **neutrality**. For the most part we need to feel that others empathize with us, that we are seen as worthwhile, valued and well liked. We need to feel that others care about us and will take the time to establish a meaningful relationship with us. If, instead of communicating empathy, warmth and concern, a fellow group member communicates neutrality or indifference we may well interpret this as worth than rejection. We feel that such an individual is not interested in us, and we may even conclude that the individual perceives us as a “nonperson”.

The fifth pair of behaviours related to the development of defensiveness or trust in intragroup relationships is **superiority** and **equality**. Our defensiveness will be aroused if another group member communicates feelings of superiority about social position, power, wealth, intellectual endowment, appearance, or other characteristics. When we receive such a message, we tend to react by attempting to compete with the sender, by feeling frustrated or jealous, or by disregarding or forgetting the sender’s message altogether. On the other hand, a sender who communicates equality can decrease defensive behaviour in us. We perceive such an individual as willing to develop a shared problem-solving relationship with us, as willing to trust us and as concluding that any differences that exist between us

are unimportant.

The last two behaviours are **certainty** and **provisionalism**. The expression of absolute certainty or dogmatism on the part of a group member will probably succeed in making us defensive. We are simply suspicious of those who believe they have all the answers, who view themselves as our guides rather than as our fellow-travellers and who reject all information that we attempt to offer. In contrast, an attitude of provisionalism or open-mindedness encourages the development of trust. Instead of attempting to win arguments, to be right, and to defend their ideas to the utter end, individuals who communicate a spirit of provisionalism are perceived as flexible and open rather than rigid and closed.

## 5. How to Improve Communication among Group Members

Here are a number of things you can do to help ensure that the members of your group communicate and function effectively:

1. **Encourage an open, supportive environment.** Group members must feel free to contribute ideas and feelings. They must also believe that their ideas and feelings will be listened to. Unless members feel free to exchange information and feelings, it is unlikely they will achieve their objectives. It is only through the transmission and accurate reception of task-and-maintenance-related content that groups progress towards goal realization. Thus, experienced group members realize how essential it is to elicit contributions from all members and to encourage communication among all members.

2. **Establish a cooperative “climate”.** A competitive goal structure can impede effective group interaction. Instead of dealing honestly with each other, as is the practice in a cooperative group members sometimes begin to dissemble and deliberately mislead each other. In order to guard against this and foster a cooperative orientation, members need to work to demonstrate minimal trust and respect. Thus, participative planning is essential. The key is coordination, not manipulation.

3. **Be ready to perform needed leadership and membership roles.** Members can help the group accomplish its tasks if they contribute to rather than detract from, effective group functioning. To the extent that

- 1) task roles are “present and accounted for”
- 2) maintenance roles are effectively carried out and
- 3) negative, individual, or self-centred roles are de-emphasized, member satisfaction with the group experience will increase and the group will prosper.

4. **Encourage continual improvement.** Since there is no such thing as being **too effective** at communicating with others in a group setting, we should continually make every effort to improve communication ability. Become a group communication process observer. Pay careful attention to how your behaviour affects others and how theirs affects you. Only in this way can you develop the insights needed to facilitate more effective group interaction.

## Summary

A group's ability to complete its task depends on the way its members interact with each other. The five most common kinds of communication networks in groups are the chain (or line), star (or wheel), circle, Y and all-channel networks. The all-channel network is usually the most effective and satisfying, since each group member communicates directly with all the others and no one occupies a peripheral position.

Every group member performs a specific group role. We contribute to the group's objective when we play a task-oriented role (behaving in a way that promotes the accomplishment of the group task) or a maintenance-oriented role (helping to maintain the relationships among group members). However we can undercut the group's effectiveness by playing a self-serving role-seeking to satisfy only our own needs or goals.

In order to achieve their objectives, groups need effective leadership. Leadership is simply the ability to influence others, and there are many different leadership styles. For example, the autocratic leader dominates and directs all the other members of the group but the laissez-faire leader lets them "do their own thing". Preferable in most situations is the democratic leader, who encourages all the members to be involved constructively in decision making and problem solving. There are three principal explanations of how people become leaders. The trait theory asserts that some men and women are simply born to lead; the situation theory maintains that the situation itself – the nature of the problem and the characteristics of the group – determine who assumes the leadership role. The functional theory argues that a number of group members can and should share the various leadership functions that have to be performed if the group is to achieve its goals.

In addition to effective leadership, a group needs cooperation among its members and a supportive group climate to be able to work toward achieving its objectives.

### Assignments for Self-Control

1. What conditions are necessary for you to feel comfortable exerting leadership?
2. What conditions could inhibit you from making an attempt to become a leader?
3. Describe an instance when either you or someone you know tried to lead a group but failed. What factors can you point to as contributing to the failure?
4. Describe an instance when either you or someone you knew emerged as the leader of a group. What factors can you point to as contributing to such leadership development?
5. Explain how networks affect group interaction.
6. Define "group role".
7. Compare and contrast task, maintenance, and self-serving roles.
8. Define leadership.
9. Distinguish between the following leadership styles: type X, type Y, the

- autocratic leader, the democratic leader, and the laissez-faire leader.
10. Describe how trait theory, situation theory and functional theory contribute to our knowledge of leadership.
  11. Explain how cooperation and competition manifest themselves in group interactions.
  12. Identify those behaviours that contribute to the formation of defensive and supportive group climates.
  13. Demonstrate your ability to improve communication among the members of a group.

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## Lecture 13

### HOLDING GROUP CONFLICT

1. Defining conflict.
2. Cooperative versus competitive conflict.
3. Managing conflict successfully: skills and strategies.

#### 1. Defining conflict

The word “**conflict**” means different things to different people. The dictionary defines “**conflict**” as “disagreement... war, battle and collision...”. These definitions suggest that conflict is a negative force that of necessity leads to undesirable consequences. Unfortunately, many of us have been led to believe that conflict is “evil”, one of the prime causes of divorce, disorder, or violence and that to disagree, argue, or fight with another person will either dissolve whatever relationship exists or prevent one from forming.

When every group member tries to think alike no one thinks very much. In our opinion, conflict is neither a positive or negative phenomenon. We do believe that how you view conflict and how you handle it in any group to which you belong will determine the nature of the group’s experience and your satisfaction with it. Conflict can be productive if you meet its challenge, but it can be counterproductive if you deal with it improperly. In other words, whether a group conflict is helpful or harmful, destructive or facilitating, depends on how constructively you cope with it.

Conflict is an inevitable part of the life of any group, and sooner or later it touches all group members. A conflict can be started by anyone and can occur at any point in a group’s existence. Forces within us that oppose each other can build conflicts or we can find ourselves experiencing tension as external forces build and create conflicts. Thus, a conflict can originate within a single group member or between two or more group members.

A group experiences conflict whenever a member’s thoughts or acts limit, prevent or interfere with the thoughts or acts of that member or another.

#### 2. Cooperative versus Competitive Conflict

In many conflict situations we are too quick to view our own position as “correct” or “true”, while we condemn or misperceive the other person’s position. Besides causing us to be too hasty in defending our own position and condemning someone else’s conflicts can also make us compete when we should cooperate. When a conflict first develops, one of the key variables affecting the outcome is whether the participants’ attitudes are **cooperative** or **competitive**. Will one person achieve victory while the position of others is destroyed? Will they argue to a draw? Or will they share the goal?

If individuals bring a competitive orientation to the conflict, then each will tend to be ego-involved and will view winning as a test of personal worth and

competence. In contrast, if individuals bring a cooperative orientation to the conflict, then each will tend to look for a mutually beneficial way to resolve the agreement.

In general, we can say that individuals come to a conflict situation with one or two orientations or perspectives: competition or cooperation. People who have a competitive set perceive a conflict situation in all-or-nothing terms and believe that to attain victory they must defeat the other parties. A person who has a cooperative set believes that a way to share the rewards of the situation can be discovered.

For a conflict to be defined as **cooperative**, each party to it must demonstrate a willingness to resolve it in a mutually satisfactory way. In other words, each party must avoid behaving in a way that would escalate the conflict. If the parties to a conflict are treated with respect by all the others involved, if they are neither demeaned nor provoked, and if communication is free and open instead of underhanded and closed, the disagreement may be settled amicably.

However, if a conflict is perceived as **competitive**, the “combatants” believe that, to attain victory, they must defeat the other party. Unfortunately, competing with or defeating another person with whom we are interacting is a characteristic of encounters in our society. The phrases we use reflect this orientation. We speak of “outsmarting” others, of putting people “in their place”, of getting ourselves “one up” and someone else “one down”.

We can define a conflict as a win-lose situation, or as a win-win situation. If we interpret it as **win-lose** we will tend to pursue our own goals, misrepresent our needs, attempt to avoid emphasizing with or understanding the feelings of others and use threats or promises to get others to go along with us. If we define a conflict as **win-win**, we will tend to view it as a mutual problem, try to pursue common goals, honestly reveal our needs to others, work to understand their position and frame of reference, and make every effort to reduce rather than increase defensiveness levels.

To transform a conflict from a competitive situation into a cooperative one, you must use effective communication techniques. One of four goals is to help you discover workable strategies and give you an opportunity to practise them until you can use them for yourself. You should aim to become a conflict processor and develop the ability to view a conflict encounter from the eyes of others.

The role-reversal technique can help parties to a conflict understand each other, find creative ways to integrate their interests and concerns, and work toward a common goal. Reversing roles helps you avoid judging others by enabling you to see things from their perspective. Once you can replace a statement like, “*You’re wrong*” or “*You are stupid*”, with one like, “*What you believe is not what I believe*”, you will be on your way to developing a cooperative orientation.

If we are to develop and sustain meaningful group relationships, we need to learn to handle conflicts constructively. A conflict has been productive if all parties to it are satisfied with the outcomes and believe they have gained as a result of a conflict. In other words, no one loses, everyone wins. In contrast, a conflict has had a destructive outcome if all parties to it are dissatisfied with the outcomes and believe they have lost as a result of the conflict. Perhaps, one of the most important

questions facing each of us today is whether we can turn our conflicts into productive rather than destructive interactions.

We will be most likely to succeed in creating constructive rather than destructive interactions if our conflicts are characterized by cooperative problem solving methods, attempts to reach mutual understanding, accurate and complete communication, and a demonstrated willingness by each party to trust the other. We will be most likely to fail, however, if our conflicts become win-lose encounters characterized by misconceptions and misperceptions, inaccurate, sketchy, and disruptive communication, and a demonstrated hesitancy by each party to trust the other. It is apparent that in a conflict situation the best approach to a constructive resolution is cooperation.

### 3. Managing Conflict Successfully: Skills and Strategies

Conflict can be resolved productively by applying principles of effective communication. When you use effective communication techniques, you reduce the likelihood that your comments will escalate a conflict by eliciting angry, defensive, or belligerent reactions from others. Learning to handle conflict successfully is an attainable goal that can lead to increased self-confidence, improved relationships, and a greater ability to handle stressful situations. Let us examine the behaviours that can turn conflict situations into problem-solving ones. The following suggestions will function as a basis guide to conflict resolution.

**Recognize that conflicts can be settled rationally.** A conflict stands a better chance of being settled rationally if you do not:

- 1) pretend it does not exist (act like an ostrich);
- 2) withdraw from discussing it (act like a turtle);
- 3) placate or surrender to the individual(s) with whom you are in conflict (act like a sheep);
- 4) try to create distractions so that the conflict will not be dealt with (act like a cuckoo);
- 5) overintellectualize or rationalize the conflict (act like an owl);
- 6) blame or find fault with the other parties to the conflict (act like a screeching parrot);
- 7) Attempt to force all others to accept your way of seeing things (act like a gorilla).

Conflicts can be settled rationally if you act like a capable, competent problem-solver and adopt a person-to-person orientation.

Recognizing unproductive behaviours is the first step in learning to handle your conflict situations more effectively. Being willing to express your feelings openly, directly and constructively without resorting to irrational techniques that destroy mutual trust and respect is a prerequisite to becoming a productive conflict manager. Thus, instead of insulting or attacking others or withdrawing from a conflict, be willing to describe the situation, behaviour or action you find upsetting. Do this without negatively evaluating other people or causing them to become defensive. Focus on **issues** not **personalities**. Be willing to listen to and react to



what the other person is saying.

**Define the conflict.** What can we do about it? Avoid sending “blame” messages to other people (“*You do everything wrong*”, “*You are a spoiled brat*”, “*You will make us fail yet*”). Be very clear that you would like to join with your fellow group members in discovering a solution that will be acceptable and beneficial for all of you – a solution where none of you will lose and each will win.

**Check your perceptions.** A conflict is a conflict when it is perceived to be one. Conflict-ripe situations, however, frequently give rise to our internalized distortions of the behaviour, position, or motivations of the other person involved. We prefer to attribute one set of motivations rather than another to an individual because it meets our own need to see the situation that way. When we do this, we deny the person the legitimacy of any other position. Thus, it is not uncommon for each party in a conflict to believe mistakenly, that the other is committing underhanded and vicious acts. It is not extraordinary for each party to make certain erroneous assumptions regarding the other’s feelings, nor is it unusual for individuals to think they are disagreeing with each other simply because they have been unable to communicate their agreement. For these reasons, it is important that each party take some time to explain his or her assumptions and frame of reference to the others. It is important that all the parties involved feel that their contributions are listened to and taken seriously.

After each of you has identified how you feel, it is time to determine whether you understand one another. This calls for active empathic listening techniques. Each of you should be able to paraphrase what the other has said in a way the other finds satisfactory. Doing this before you respond to the feelings expressed can help avert conflict escalations. Along with active listening, the role-research techniques are also effective in helping individuals in conflict understand one another. Like active listening, role reversal permits us to see things as others in our group see them. If we are willing to listen to and experience another person’s point of view, that person will be more likely to listen to and experience ours.

**Suggest possible solutions.** The goal during this phase is for you and your fellow group members to put your heads together and come up with a variety of solutions. Most important, neither you nor anyone else in the group should evaluate, condemn or make fun of any of the solutions suggested. You must suspend judgement and honestly believe that the conflict can potentially be resolved in a variety of ways.

**Assess the alternative solutions and pick the best one.** After the possible solutions have all been generated, it is time to see which each person thinks are best. It is legitimate to try to determine which solutions will let one party “win” at the other’s expense, which will make all parties “lose”, and which will let all parties “win”. Your objective is to discover which solutions are **totally unacceptable** to each party and which are **mutually acceptable**. (It is crucially important to be honest during this stage). Once all the solutions have been assessed, you are in a position to determine if one of the mutually acceptable solutions is clearly superior to all the others – that is, if it has the most advantages and the fewest disadvantages. Also, be sure to explore whether it is the most

constructive solution.

**Try out the solution and evaluate it.** During this stage we see to what extent the chosen solution is working. We try to ascertain who is doing what, when, where and under what conditions, and we ask how all this is affecting each person in the group. We want to know if the parties involved were able to carry out the job as planned, whether the adopted solution solved the problem, and whether the outcomes have been mutually rewarding. If not, we know it is time to begin the conflict resolution process again.

Remember, conflict situations can be learning experiences, if handled properly, they can help us discover ways of improving our ability to relate to others. Thus, your goal should not necessarily have fewer conflicts but rather make those conflicts you do have constructive. Instead of eliminating conflicts from our group relationships, we simply need to learn how to use them.

### Summary

Conflict is an inevitable part of the life of any group. A group experiences conflict whenever a member's thoughts or acts limit, prevent or interfere with the thoughts or acts of that member or another. However, conflict is not always a negative force. In fact, the absence or avoidance of conflict can result in the problem of group thinking, which occurs when a group allows the desire for consensus to override careful group analysis and reasoned decision making.

Whether a conflict helps or hinders the group's operation depends on how the members react to it. If they resort to strategies such as blaming, withdrawing, intellectualizing, or distracting, group effectiveness will be impaired. However, if they use a levelling strategy (agreeing to have a calm discussion of the issues), they can break group impasses and solve group difficulties. The most effective style is that of the win-win problem-solver collaborator, who has high concern both for producing results and for the feelings of other people.

A number of communication techniques can help us resolve conflicts. The first step is simply to recognize that conflicts can be settled rationally by focusing on the issues and not personalities. Next we should define the conflict and check the accuracy of our perceptions using empathetic listening and role-reversal techniques as appropriate. Then we should suggest and assess a variety of solutions to the conflict, pick the best one that is mutually acceptable, and try it out.

### Skill Builder

Select a current topic of interest that is controversial (for example, abortion, the draft, capital punishment, nuclear energy). You will be assigned to defend or oppose the issue under consideration. Defenders and opposers will have a chance to meet in order to prepare their cases. Each defender (A) will be paired with an opposer (B). Person A will have five minutes to present the defence's position of the controversy to person B. Person B then has five minutes to present the opposition's perceptions to person A. Players will then switch roles so that B

presents A's case and A presents B's case.

1. To what extent did reversing roles permit you to understand and appreciate another's point of view?
2. How could utilizing such a procedure help turn an individual with a win-lose orientation into one with a win-win orientation?

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. Define "conflict".
2. Explain how you feel when involved in a group conflict.
3. Define "groupthink" and explain its consequences.
4. Identify the benefits that can be derived from effective handling of group conflict.
5. Provide examples of what can happen if group conflicts are handled poorly.
6. Distinguish between healthy and unhealthy conflict management styles or strategies.
7. Demonstrate an ability to use constructive strategies to resolve conflicts.
8. Discuss how conflicts can be categorized.
9. Explain the difference between a competitive and a cooperative conflict orientation.
10. Identify behaviours that can be used to help resolve conflicts effectively.

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## Lecture 14

### COMMUNICATING TO THE PUBLIC: THE SPEAKER AND THE AUDIENCE

1. Preparing to meet the speechmaker's challenge.
2. Turning the spotlight on the speaker.
3. Turning the spotlight on the audience.

#### 1. Preparing to Meet the Speechmaker's Challenge

If we do not want to waste our words, have them ignored or misunderstood, we must learn to use the tools that will help people understand us. We must prepare to meet the speechmaker's challenge. People respond to the challenge of becoming public communicators in a variety of ways. Some believe speechmaking is an inborn skill: *"I talk a lot, so this public-speaking business poses no difficulty for me."* Others view the situation as torture: *"I'm scared off! This will be traumatic!"* Both extremes of attitude can cause problems. Overconfident people run the risk of being less than adequate speakers because they conduct little research and thus are ill prepared. Similarly, the person who is overly anxious or fearful may find it terribly trying and nerve-racking to stand before an audience and deliver a talk. The most effective speaker is the one who displays a healthy respect for the challenges involved in speaking before others and who works in a systematic manner to create, prepare and deliver an admirable presentation.

**What do you expect from a speaker?** Good speakers share a number of behaviours that you may want to keep in mind as you prepare your own presentations.

**First**, good speakers have insight. They know their strength and their limitations. They understand and have considered the reservoir of experience upon which they may draw. **Second**, good speakers know their audiences. They work to understand the nature and concerns of the particular public they have been called to address. They are able to tap into the pulse of this public, to stand in the shoes of the audience members, and to view the speaking event or occasion through their eyes so that they are able to share with them something that will be of value to them. **Third**, good speakers believe that what they are doing is important; they know why they are speaking and they know what they hope to accomplish by speaking. They are clear as to their purpose and the main ideas they want to communicate. In addition they are adept at formulating and delivering a message that is organized and supportive of the purpose. **Fourth**, good speakers always practise. They conduct dry runs of their presentation, each time adapting to potential changes in audience needs. They also prepare well for questions audience members may ask. **Fifth**, good speakers think of the speaking event as if it were a performance. They know they will need to work hard to keep audience members interested in what they have to say; they understand the essential fickleness of the audience so they make it easy and pleasurable for listeners to "stay tuned" to their ideas. **Finally**, good speakers conduct a critique or postpresentation analysis of

their speech. They know that there is much to learn from each experience, much that they may be able to apply the next time they enter the speaker's spotlight.

**Approaching public speaking systematically.** It is important to realize that public speaking is a creative undertaking and not something that just happens when you stand before a group of people. The process actually begins when you first consider addressing a group of people, and it is not finished until you have completed a postpresentation analysis of your work. This creative process can be approached systematically, as shown in the chart.

Chart 2

The Systematic speaking Process	
Stage	Quality
Topic Selection	Analyse yourself Analyse your audience Consider the occasion Select your subject area Narrow your topic
Topic Development	Gather support Organize materials Conduct an oral try out and revise
Presentation	Work to control anxiety Rehearse the presentation Deliver the presentation
Postpresentation Analysis	Conduct a postpresentation analysis

During the **topic selection stage** your job is to analyze yourself, your audience, and the nature of the occasion, choose a general subject area, focus in on the subject, and narrow its scope until you hit upon a particular aspect of the topic you can handle in the time allotted. This then becomes your purpose or reason for speaking. During the **development stage** you gather your evidence, organize the evidence according to your purpose, prepare visuals, and rehearse. During the **presentation stage** your main task is to control your anxiety level, so that you will be able to deliver your ideas clearly and effectively. During the **postpresentation analysis stage** you determine (with the aid of your instructor fellow class members or on your own) the strengths and weaknesses of your presentation in order to be better prepared to meet the speechmaker's challenge when another public-speaking occasion arises.

## 2. Turning the Spotlight on the Speaker

A thorough self-analysis is a prerequisite to effective speechmaking. When the topic is spelled out, it is recommended that you conduct a self-analysis to help you uncover any aspects of the subject that you may find particularly interesting or appealing.

We suggest that at the outset of your preparation you take some time for what

corporate trainers call a “front-end analysis” or preliminary examination of the possibilities.

Your “autobiography”, your “right now” observations, and today’s news should provide you with an ample number of potential subjects.

### 3. Turning the Spotlight on the Audience

It is important for you to consider what your listeners are thinking about what their needs are and what their hopes are. To pay proper attention to the members of your audience, you must know something about them. For example, how familiar are they with what you are going to talk about? What attitude do they hold towards your topic? What are they anxious about? What would they like to know? What are their expectations? If you don’t find out the answers to questions like these, you run the risk of having your words fall on deaf ears. Unfortunately, audience analysis is the most overlooked step in the public-speaking process. In other words, when preparing any speech, you must be audience-centred. Therefore, it is from behind the eyes of your audience that you must also approach your speechmaking task. Let’s see how this works.

**Beginning your audience analysis: who are they?** Although discovering information about the people you will speak to is a simple task, it can also often appear to be a nearly impossible one. What you are doing at this stage of the process is creating a mental picture of the people to whom you are going to speak. Once you have created such an image or “snapshot” for yourself, you will be better able to continue planning your presentation.

People meet to listen to speakers in a number of different settings, including lecture halls, auditoriums, parties, houses of worship, as well as in front of radio and television sets. They meet to gain information, to praise or pay homage to others, to evaluate ideas and proposals, to assess attitudes and beliefs, to be entertained, to be spiritually uplifted and to be comforted in sorrow.

**Zeroing in on demographics; what are they like?** Since the background and composition of your audience are important speech-planning ingredients, every effort must be made to determine audience demographics. Determining **demographics** means you must work to acquire information regarding such factors as age, sex, marital status, religion, cultural background, occupation, economic status, and special organizational memberships. Despite the fact that no audience is significantly uniform in all of these categories, you should consider each during your initial planning sessions.

**Age.** The adult student would bring many more years of experience to your presentation than the child. Adults may have been through economic conflicts, that a child has probably not yet had to face. Of course, the maturity levels of the adult and the younger audience would also differ. And although you might choose to speak on draft registration or birth control to a college audience, the same material would probably have less intrinsic appeal to a group of senior citizens. Younger people can process oral information at a somewhat faster rate than older persons. Thus, audiences of older citizens might prefer that you use a slower, more evenly

placed, step-by-step delivery than would happen to younger people.

It's also wise to consider how your own age will affect your presentation. If you are about the same age as the potential audience members, your job may be a little easier. If you are much older or much younger than they, you will need to attempt to see your topic through their eyes and adjust it accordingly.

**Sex.** Sex can also influence your audience's reaction to your speech. Although the same topics may appeal to both men and women, biological considerations may affect the ways in which audiences composed predominantly of males or females respond. For example, a discussion of rape or abortion may precipitate a stronger emotional reaction from the women in your class than from men.

**Marital status.** Are most of the members of your audience single? Married? Widowed? These factors might also influence their reactions to your presentation. The concerns of one group are not necessarily the concerns of another.

**Religion.** If you are speaking to a religious group with whom you have little familiarity, make a point of discussing your topic with some group members in advance. Some groups have formulated very clear guidelines concerning issues such as divorce, birth control and abortion. It is important for you to understand the audience and its feelings if you are to be able to relate effectively to its members.

**Cultural background.** Use your knowledge of your audience's culture and mind set to create a bond with the members.

**Occupational role.** People are interested in issues that relate to their employment and the employment of those important to them. Consequently, if possible, relate your subject to the occupational concerns of your audience. Also, if you are speaking before an audience whose members belong to a particular occupational group, you must attempt to find or create examples and illustrations that reflect the job concerns of that audience.

**Education.** Although it is important to determine the educational level of potential listeners, you cannot let your feelings trap you into making unwarranted assumptions – either positive or negative – regarding the audience's intellectual ability. You will probably find that the higher people's level of education, the more general their knowledge and the more insightful their questions will be. They may be far more aware of the impact of various political and social programs, say, a group composed of high school dropouts. The less educated may need to be provided with additional background information that more educated members may find trivial.

Whatever educational level of your listeners, here are three precepts to keep in mind:

1. Don't underestimate the intelligence of your listeners, don't speak down to them.
2. Don't overestimate their need for information, don't try to do too much in the time you have available to you.
3. Don't use jargon if there's a chance your listeners might be unfamiliar with it; listeners will quickly turn off to what they don't understand.

**Additional factors.** You may find that you need to consider several additional variables as you prepare your presentation. Do class members belong to a

particular campus organization, for example? Do members of the class involve themselves in any particular types of prospects? Do the interests of the group relate in any way to your speech? Do members have any goals, fears, frustrations, loves or hates that could be tied in? How has their environment influenced the perception of key issues?

**Zeroing in on attitudes: how to determine what they care about.** Your next step is to try to predict the attitudes the listeners will have towards you and your presentation. For example, you should consider whether audience members are being coerced to attend, whether the audience is homogeneous in nature, and whether they favour your stand or are actively opposed to it.

**Coercion.** People attend or “tune in” on a presentation because they want to (that is they do so willingly), they have to (they are coerced to do so), or because they are curious.

**Homogeneity.** A second factor worthy of your consideration is the degree of audience **homogeneity**, that is the extent to which everyone possesses similar values and attitudes. Of course, it is easier to address a homogeneous audience than a heterogeneous one. When addressing heterogeneous groups, appeals need to be more varied to ensure that all segments of the audience spectrum are considered.

**Level of agreement.** Does your audience agree with your position? Whatever your topic, you must attempt to predict your audience’s reaction to the stance you take. For example, they may oppose you, they may support you, or they may be neutral or disinterested. The accuracy of your prediction will to some extent determine the reception your presentation will receive. Your objective when speaking to an audience that **agrees** with your position is to maintain its support. Your aim when speaking to a **neutral** audience is to gain your listener’s attention and show them how your presentation can be of value to them. When facing an audience that **disagrees** with you, you need to be especially careful and diplomatic in your approach. Remember, your goal is to move audience members closer to the agreement-with-you side of the continuum. The task becomes easier if you establish common ground with audience members, that is, if you stress values and interests that you share first. Keep in mind that your goal is to increase the likelihood that a voluntary audience will attend to your message and that a “captive” audience will give you a fair hearing.

**Level of commitment.** Finally, how much does the intended audience care about your topic? Is it very important to them? Do you feel strongly enough to be moved to action? Or are your concerns irrelevant to your listeners?

## Summary

Public communication, unlike an interpersonal one, occurs in a somewhat formal setting and requires the communicator to be well-prepared. Effective speakers understand the challenges involved in speaking before others and work in a systematic manner to create, prepare, and deliver their presentation.

The public-speaking process begins when you first consider addressing a group of people. The four main stages of speechmaking then follow: topic selection, topic



development, the presentation itself, and the postpresentation analysis.

A thorough analysis of yourself and a thorough analysis of your audience are the essential preliminary steps in topic selection. Information about your audience should come from your prior personal experience with the group and/or original research (e.g., news releases or interviews). First, you need to determine audience demographics, including such factors as age, sex, marital status, religion, cultural background, occupation, economic status, education and special organizational memberships. Then you should try to predict the attitudes the listeners will have towards you and your presentation. It will help you to know whether audience members are being coerced to attend, homogeneous in their attitudes, favourably or unfavourably disposed toward your position, or uninterested in your position, or uninterested in your topic altogether.

### **Assignments for Self-Control**

1. Describe the behaviours exhibited by the most effective speaker you have ever had the good fortune to experience.
2. Contrast that description with a description of the most ineffective speaker you ever had the misfortune to experience.
3. Identify the characteristics shared by effective public speakers.
4. Enumerate steps to be taken in approaching public speaking automatically.
5. Explain why self-analysis is a prerequisite to effective speech-making.
6. Conduct a thorough audience analysis.
7. Explain how the attitudes of audience members can affect their reception of a presentation.

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## Lecture 15

### PERSUASIVE SPEAKING

1. Speaking persuasively.
2. The persuader's purpose.
3. How to become a more effective public persuader.
4. How to become a more credible persuader.
5. Delivery options.

#### 1. Speaking Persuasively

Whenever you deliver a **persuasive speech**, your goal is to modify the thoughts, feelings and/or actions of your audience. You hope your listeners will eliminate attitudes or behaviours you do not approve of and adopt those that are compatible with your interests and the way you see the world. Today persuasive discourse is becoming increasingly important; today more than ever, in fact, we are concerned with being able to influence others.

#### 2. The Persuader's Purpose

Typically, speakers desire two general outcomes. They want to convince listeners that something is so (they want to change the way audience members **think**), or they want to change the way they **behave**. Whatever the general nature of the proposition, however, it most likely will reflect at least these persuasive goals: adoption, discontinuance, deterrence, or continuance.

When your goal is adoption, you hope to convince audience members to accept a new idea, attitude or belief (e.g., that saccharin is hazardous to their health) with the hope that in time that belief will also be supported by action (they will totally eliminate saccharin from their diets).

When your goal is discontinuance, you hope to convince audience members to stop doing something that they are now doing (drinking while pregnant, for example). When your goal is deterrence, you want to encourage audience members to avoid some activity or way of thinking (for example, if you don't smoke now, don't begin). Finally, if your goal is continuance of a way of believing or acting, you want to encourage people to continue to think or behave as they now do (for instance, do not falter in your support of economic sanctions against terrorism supporting countries).

What is noteworthy is that adoption and discontinuance goals ask listeners to alter their way of thinking and/or behaving, whereas deterrence and continuance goals ask them not to alter the way they think or behave but rather to reinforce and sustain it. In general, persuaders find the latter two objectives easier to accomplish. That doesn't mean, however, that accomplishing the first two is impossible. Although they may be more difficult to achieve, by using a variety of appeals, a sound organizational scheme, and speaker credibility, the goals can be realized.

### 3. How to Become a More Effective Public Persuader

Whenever we try to cause others to change their beliefs, attitudes or behaviours, or whenever others try to influence us, we are participating in the **persuasive process**. Let's now examine a number of the procedures you can use to increase your persuasiveness as a speaker.

**Identify your persuasive goal.** To be a successful persuader, you must have a clearly defined purpose. You must in fact be able to answer these questions:

*What response do I want from audience members?*

*Would I like them to think differently, act differently, or both?*

*Which of their attitudes or beliefs am I trying to alter? Why?*

Unless you know what you want your listeners to think, feel, or do, you will not be able to realize your objective.

**Know who you are trying to reach.** The nature of your persuasive task is partly related to the extent and type of change you hope to bring about in people. Your task will be simplified if you have some idea of how the audience members feel about your proposed change. For example, to what extent do they favour the change? How important is it to them? What is at stake? The more ego-involved the members of your audience are, the more committed they will be to their current positions and hence the harder it will be for you to affect them.

**Understand listener attitudes.** In order to be able to influence others, you need to understand the favourable and unfavourable mental sets or predispositions that audiences bring to a speech event; that is, you need to understand attitudes – including how they are formed, how they are sustained, and how they may be changed by you. The following forces or factors are the most important shapers of our attitudes.

**Family.** Many of our parents' attitudes are communicated to us and eventually are acquired by us.

**Religion.** Believers and nonbelievers alike are affected by religion. In fact, the impact of religion is becoming ever more widespread as churches strive to generate and guide attitudes on such social issues as abortion, civil rights, the death-penalty, child abuse and divorce.

**Schools.** The subjects taught, the instructors who teach them, the books assigned, and the films shown all help shape attitudes.

**Economic and social class.** Economic and social status also shape our attitudes. Our economic status helps to determine the social arena we frequent. Our view of the world is likewise affected by the company we keep and the amount of money we have.

**Culture.** Our social environment contains the ingredients that help to determine our mental sets and, in turn, our attitudes. We shape our social institutions and are reciprocally shaped by them.

**Understand listener beliefs.** Beliefs and attitudes are related to each other as buildings are related to the bricks used to construct them. In many ways, beliefs are the "building blocks" of attitudes. Whereas attitudes are measured on a favourable-unfavourable scale, beliefs are measured on a probable-improbable scale. Thus, if

you say you think something is true, you are really saying you believe it. Your belief system is made up of everything which you agree is true. This includes all the information and biases you have accumulated from birth. Forming along with this system is your disbelief system, which is composed of all the things you do not think are true. Together, the two significantly affect the way you process information.

It is necessary to recognize that some beliefs will be more important than others to members of your audience. The more central or important a belief, the harder we will work to defend it. Thus, the more significant a belief is, the less willing your audience will be to change it and the more resistant they will be to your persuasive efforts.

**Prepare to use these principles of influence.** **First**, we have a desire to be consistent with what we have already done. In other words, once we take a stand, our tendency is to behave consistently with that commitment. Therefore, it is important for you, the would-be persuader, to determine how your speech can engage force. **Second**, we respond to social proof. That is, one method we use to determine what is right is to find out what other people think is right. Consequently, as an aspiring persuader, you can use the actions of others to convince your listeners that what you are advocating is right.

**Prepare to use effective reasoning techniques.** You will be more apt to achieve your persuasive goal if you can explain to audience members the logical reasons that they should support what you advocate.

**Gain the attention of your receivers.** Before you can persuade or convince other persons about something, you must first get their attention. Indisputably, you will need to find ways to encourage your audience to listen to you. It is your responsibility to put them into a receptive frame of mind. You can do this in several different ways: you can compliment your listeners, or you can question them. You can relate your message directly to listener interests; or you can surprise your audience by relating to them in a way they would not expect. Once you get the attention of your receivers, you must then work to hold it.

**Make audience members feel, not just think logically.** Many changes in human behaviour result from messages that mix emotional appeals with rational reasons. Since few people will change their attitudes or take action if they are unmoved or bored, effective speakers develop emotional appeals that are designed to make listeners feel. Whether that feeling is sadness, anger, fear, sympathy, happiness, greed, nostalgia, jealousy, pride or guilt depends on the speaker's topic and the type of audience response desired. As a speaker you must appeal not just to their heads. Thus, although your speech should be grounded on a firm foundation of logic and fact, it should also be dressed in feeling.

**Arouse needs and issues to your purpose.** Balance is a state of psychological health or comfort in which our actions, feelings and beliefs are related to each other as we would like them to be. When we are in a balanced state we are content or satisfied. Thus, we engage in a perennial struggle to keep ourselves "in balance".

What message does it carry for you as a persuasive speaker? If you wish to

convince your listeners to change their attitudes or beliefs, you must first demonstrate to them that the current situation or state of affairs has created an imbalance in their lives and that you can help alleviate that problem. Remember, human behaviour depends on motivation. If you are to convince your receivers to believe and do what you would like them to do, you must make your persuasive messages appeal to the needs and goals.

**Promise a reward.** Demonstrate how personal needs can be satisfied by your proposal. You should stress how your ideas can personally benefit the persons you are trying to persuade. Make the individuals believe that your proposal will supply a reward.

#### 4. How to Become a More Credible Persuader

In part, your success as a persuader will be determined by what the “targets” of your efforts think of you – in other words, by your credibility. When we use the term **source credibility** we are talking about how an audience perceives you, not what you are “really” like. If your receivers accept you as a credible source, then they probably believe you are a person of good character (trustworthy and fair), knowledgeable (trained, competent to discuss your topic, and a reliable source of information) and personable (dynamic and/or charismatic, active and energetic). As a result, your ideas are more likely to get a fair hearing. However, if your receivers believe you are a liar (untrustworthy), incompetent (not knowledgeable enough about your topic), and passive (lacking in dynamism), then they are less apt to respond as you desire.

Regardless of the circumstances, however, it will be up to you to help build your credibility by giving your listeners reasons for viewing you as competent, trustworthy and dynamic. To help listeners perceive you as competent, you can reveal your own experiences with the subject to them, and you can suggest why you feel you’ve earned the right to share your ideas with them. You can help your listeners perceive you as trustworthy by demonstrating a respect for different points of view and by communicating a sense of sincerity about the issue being considered. Of course, you can also help audience members perceive you as a dynamic source if you speak with energy, use assured and forceful gestures, and exhibit vocal variety.

Note that the audience’s assessment of your credibility can change during or as a result of your presentation. Thus, we can identify three types of credibility:

1. Initial credibility – your credibility before you actually start to speak.
2. Derived credibility – your credibility during your speech.
3. Terminal credibility – your credibility at the end of the speech.

Of course, if you have high initial credibility, your task should be easier. But keep in mind, that your actual speech can destroy high initial credibility just as easily as it can enhance an initial judgement of low credibility. So what you say and how you deliver that message are important credibility determiners.

You should realize that public persuasion involves more than simply communicating with others in a public setting. It is your responsibility to

familiarize yourself with the beliefs, attitudes, and needs of those you hope to persuade. Only by doing so will you be in a position to influence others and understand how they try to influence you.

## 5. Delivery Options

There are four general types of delivery available to you as a speechmaker: 1) manuscript, 2) memorization, 3) impromptu, and 4) extemporaneous.

**Manuscript.** A manuscript speech is written out word-for-word and then read aloud by the speechmaker. Such presentations are delivered in situations where it is imperative that precise language be used. Since presidential addresses are often held up for closed scrutiny, they will often be read from a typed page or a teleprompter. Similarly, corporate speakers, whose task is to discuss matters that may have sensitive legal and commercial results, may also choose to deliver a manuscript speech. Unfortunately, the use of a manuscript tends to reduce the amount of eye contact between the speaker and his or her audience. Furthermore, speakers, reading aloud, often sound as if they are reading to rather than talking to the audience and thus it is difficult if not impossible to establish the much needed conversational quality.

**Memorization.** A **memorized speech** is a manuscript speech that the speaker has committed to memory. This delivery style helps perpetuate – and frequently even accentuates – a “channel” speech quality. Speakers who have memorized their lines are simply less able to respond to audience feedback than if they were working from notes. And then, of course, there is the problem of retention. Speechmakers who insist on memorizing their presentations word-for-word often find themselves plagued by long awkward silences during which they may valiantly attempt to recall forgotten material. You may indeed wish to memorize certain key words, phrases or segments of your speech, but at this point in your career there is little reason for you to commit the entire presentation to memory.

**Impromptu.** A presentation that is delivered as an impromptu speech is in many ways the antithesis of one delivered from memory. While the memorized style requires extensive preparation, the individual who delivers an impromptu speech often has no more than a few seconds or minutes to gather his or her thoughts. Impromptu speaking situations may be precipitated by a boss who without prior warning asks an employee to discuss the status of a project that is still in its development stages. If you are faced with such a request, you will need to rely on what you have learned about patterning your ideas; that is, using an introduction – body – conclusion structure will facilitate your task.

**Extemporaneous.** The **extemporaneous speech** is researched, outlined and then delivered after careful rehearsal. Extemporaneous speaking is more audience-centred than any of the previously considered styles. Since it is prepared in advance and rehearsed, the speaker is free to establish eye contact with the members of the audience; and he or she is also free to respond to feedback. In addition, as the extemporaneous speaker may utilize notes, he or she is not plagued by the need to commit the entire presentation to memory. Nor is the speechmaker

handicapped by the use of the manuscript that must be read word-for-word, thus inhibiting needed adaptations.

Unfortunately, many speakers confuse the manuscript, memorized, and impromptu styles of speaking with extemporaneous delivery. Although asked to give an extemporaneous speech, some individuals insist on writing their speeches out word-for-word and then either memorize or read them. Others spend too little time preparing their addresses and deliver what is essentially a poorly developed impromptu presentation. Either approach defeats their purposes and both approaches decrease speechmaking effectiveness. Since the extemporaneous mode has been found to be the most effective style for most public speakers, we suggest you use it.

### Summary

The goal of a persuasive speech is to modify the thoughts, feelings, and/or actions of an audience. To be an effective persuasive speaker you need first to identify your persuasive goal and learn as much as you can about the general attitudes and beliefs of your audience as well as what their opinion of your specific proposal is likely to be. You should then tailor your presentation accordingly, to get their attention, appeal to their needs and goals, and promise them a meaningful reward for accepting your proposal.

Source credibility – what the audience thinks of you – will also help to determine whether your persuasive efforts will be successful. A credible speaker is one perceived by audience members as a person of good character who is knowledgeable and personable.

### Assignments for Self-Control

1. Think of 10 different completions of this sentence: *I believe...*
2. Next think of 10 different completions of this sentence: *I do not believe...*
3. Attempt to identify how what you **believe** and **do not believe** influence you by describing how each belief and nonbelief listed above affected what you did or said in a particular situation.
4. Finally, attempt to describe how your behaviour would change if you **did not believe** what you said you believed and if you **believed** what you said you did not believe.
5. Define “persuasive speaking”.
6. Identify how your perceptions of your persuasive goal and your audience influence your ability to be an effective persuader.
7. Define and distinguish between attitudes and beliefs.
8. Explain the concept “source credibility”.
9. Develop and present a speech to persuade.

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