



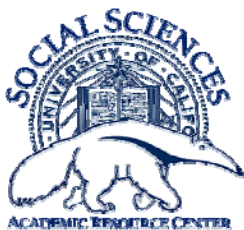
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Communication Theory and Practice

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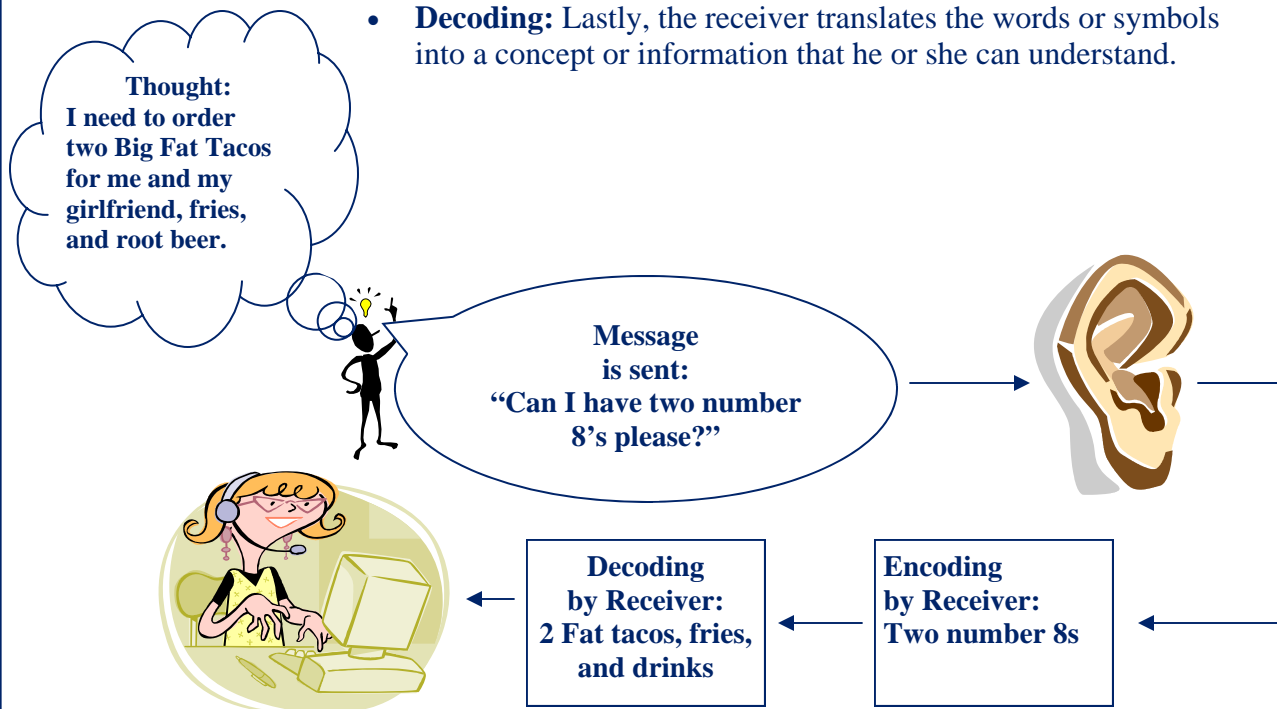
Communication

Communication is the exchange and flow of information and ideas from one person to another. It involves a sender transmitting an idea to a receiver.

“No one would talk much in society if they knew how often they misunderstood others.”
~ Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

The Communication Process

- **Thought:** First, information exists in the mind of the sender. This can be a concept, idea, information, or feelings.
- **Encoding:** Next, a message is sent to a receiver in words or other symbols.
- **Decoding:** Lastly, the receiver translates the words or symbols into a concept or information that he or she can understand.





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Physical and Psychological Barriers

“Nothing is so simple that it cannot be misunderstood.”

~ Freeman Teague, Jr.

- **Culture, background, and bias** - We allow our past experiences to change the meaning of the message. Our culture, background, and bias can be good as they allow us use our past experiences to understand something new, it is when they change the meaning of the message then they interfere with the communication process.
- **Noise** - Equipment or environmental noise impede clear communication. The sender and the receiver must both be able to concentrate on the messages being sent to each other.
- **Ourselves** - Focusing on ourselves, rather than the other person can lead to confusion and conflict. The "Me Generation" is out when it comes to effective communication. Some of the factors that cause this are defensiveness (we feel someone is attacking us), superiority (we feel we know more than the other), and ego (we feel we are the center of the activity).
- **Perception** - If we feel the person is talking too fast, not fluently, does not articulate clearly, etc., we may dismiss the person. Also our preconceived attitudes affect our ability to listen. We listen uncritically to persons of high status and dismiss those of low status.
- **Message** - Distractions happen when we focus on the facts rather than the idea. Our educational institutions reinforce this with tests and questions. Semantic distractions occur when a word is used differently than you prefer. For example, the word chairman instead of chairperson, may cause you to focus on the word and not the message.
- **Environmental** - Bright lights, an attractive person, unusual sights, or any other stimulus provides a potential distraction.
- **Smothering** - We take it for granted that the impulse to send useful information is automatic. Not true! Too often we believe that certain information has no value to others or they are already aware of the facts.
- **Stress** - People do not see things the same way when under stress. What we see and believe at a given moment is influenced by our psychological frames of references - our beliefs, values, knowledge, experiences, and goals.



*“...Be quick to listen, slow to speak,
and slow to anger.”
~ James 1:19*

Hearing and Listening

- **Hearing** is the act of perceiving sound.
- **Listening** is a selective activity which involves the reception *and* the interpretation of aural stimuli.
 - ⇒ Passive Listening
 - ⇒ Active Listening

Active Listening involves listening with a purpose. It requires the receiver to hear the various messages, understand the meaning, and then verify the meaning by offering feedback.

Active Listening

The following are a few traits of active listeners:

- Spends more time listening than talking
- Does not finish the sentence of others
- Does not answer questions with questions
- Are aware of biases
- Never daydreams or becomes preoccupied with their own thoughts when others talk
- Lets the other speaker talk/Does not dominate
- Plans responses after the other person has finish speaking, NOT while they are speaking
- Provides feedback, but does not interrupt incessantly
- Analyzes by looking at all the relevant factors and asking open-ended questions
- Keeps the conversation on what the speaker says...NOT on what interests them
- Takes brief notes



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Feedback

*“When you know something, say what you know.
When you don’t know something, say that you
don’t know. That is knowledge.”
~ Confucius*

The purpose of feedback is to change and alter messages so the intention of the original communicator is understood by the second communicator. It includes verbal and nonverbal responses to another person’s message.

Providing feedback is accomplished by paraphrasing the words of the sender.

Carl Roger's Five Main Categories of Feedback

In the order in which we actually engage in conversation

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

Question: What is wrong with this order? What would happen if it was reversed?



Non-Verbal Behaviors of Communication

- **Eye contact:** This helps to regulate the flow of communication. It signals interest in others and increases the speaker's credibility. People who make eye contact open the flow of communication and convey interest, concern, warmth, and credibility.
- **Facial Expressions:** Smiling is a powerful cue that transmits happiness, friendliness, warmth, and liking. So, if you smile frequently you will be perceived as more likable, friendly, warm and approachable. Smiling is often contagious and people will react favorably. They will be more comfortable around you and will want to listen more.
- **Gestures:** If you fail to gesture while speaking you may be perceived as boring and stiff. A lively speaking style captures the listener's attention, makes the conversation more interesting, and facilitates understanding.
- **Posture and body orientation:** You communicate numerous messages by the way you talk and move. Standing erect and leaning forward communicates to listeners that you are approachable, receptive and friendly. Interpersonal closeness results when you and the listener face each other. Speaking with your back turned or looking at the floor or ceiling should be avoided as it communicates disinterest.
- **Proximity:** Cultural norms dictate a comfortable distance for interaction with others. You should look for signals of discomfort caused by invading the other person's space. Some of these are: rocking, leg swinging, tapping, and gaze aversion.
- **Vocal:** Speaking can signal nonverbal communication when you include such vocal elements as: tone, pitch, rhythm, timbre, loudness, and inflection. For maximum teaching effectiveness, learn to vary these six elements of your voice. One of the major criticisms of many speakers is that they speak in a monotone voice. Listeners perceive this type of speaker as boring and dull.