

Ibadan Distance Learning Centre Series

CLA 312
Interpersonal Communication

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LECTURE ONE

The Meaning of Interpersonal Communication

Introduction

Communication professionals have defined interpersonal communication by the context, or the situation. In other words, they viewed interpersonal communication as communication that occurred between, or among, a small group of communicators in a face-to-face setting, with the opportunity for immediate feedback (Miller, 1978). In this lecture, we shall attempt the meaning of interpersonal communication. Some of its characteristics shall also be discussed.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. define interpersonal communication.
2. discuss some characteristics of interpersonal communication.
3. explain the difference between a process and an event.

Pre-Test

1. What are the ways in which scholars have defined interpersonal communication?
2. Discuss the characteristics of interpersonal communication.
3. “Interpersonal communication is rooted on the exchange of meaning.” Explain

CONTENT

Anything we do with other people must involve communication. A writer once said that: “all social interaction is necessarily communicative

and any social process presumes communication process.” Some people seem to regard the essence of communication as being able to speak and write proper English whereas others would argue that good communicators are effective listeners.

Interpersonal communication does not simply involve the exchange of messages. It essentially involves the creation and exchange of meaning. One vital implication of the linear model of communication follows from its concern with “the message.” This implies that we can arrive at a faultless and unambiguous statement of whatever was communicated. Interpersonal communication involves the transmission of a message between two or more people. It is a process consisting of the sender, the message, a channel of communication, the receiver and feedback. In this form of communication, an individual sends and receives messages from another mostly in a face-to-face interaction. Such information-exchange cuts across verbal and non-verbal modes of communication. Interpersonal communication usually occurs within interpersonal relationships. This suggests a developmental perspective. Interpersonal communication is restricted to those situations in which we have knowledge of the personal characteristics, qualities, or behaviours of the other person. It entails an exchange of information with others based on some knowledge of their uniqueness as a person and a shared history. DeVito defines interpersonal communication as “communication that takes place between two persons who have an established relationship; the people are in some ways connected.” Indeed, it is a form of communication that permeates our lives. Hence, as interpersonal communication can occur between romantic partners, business associates

and doctors, it can also occur between patients. Often, your interpersonal interactions are devoted to attempts at influencing the other individual in some ways. Interpersonal communication can, therefore, be seen as the process involving the sending and receiving of information within a very small group, usually in a face-to-face situation where feedback is immediate and spontaneous. To Obilade (1989:74), interpersonal communication is the end of a process which begins with impersonal communication where our knowledge of the person with whom we are communicating is partial, and relationship formal.

Characteristics of Interpersonal Communication

From the various definitions of interpersonal communication above, the following characteristics can be inferred:

Interpersonal communication is highly ubiquitous. This makes it a form of communication that takes place everywhere on a daily basis between friends, workers, lovers, leaders and families. Also, feedback in interpersonal communication is spontaneous especially in face-to-face interaction unlike mass communication where it is delayed or mediated by technology.

It uses a multi-channel experience because its face-to-face variant allows individuals to use both verbal and non-verbal mode of communication. The five senses of sound, found, smell, taste and touch can be employed to send and receive messages.

Interpersonal communication does feature prominently in other forms of communication like mass communication, traditional communication and group communication. Research, for instance, has established that media

effects are mediated by interpersonal communication while there are also friendship networks within groups.

Interpersonal communication does not require a large bureaucratic set-up and sophisticated gadgets for information exchange unlike mass communication. It is not expensive.

Furthermore, it places great emphasis on the listening behaviour of participants. Poor listening habit can cause interpersonal communication to meet its Waterloo.

Interpersonal communication is rooted on the creation and exchange of meaning. One important implication of the linear model of communication follows from its concern with “the message.” This implies that we can arrive at an accurate and unambiguous statement of whatever was communicated.

Another characteristic of this form of communication is that it is an ongoing process rather than an event or series of events. An event is always something very definite which happens, and which has a definite start and a definite finish. It can, therefore, be misleading to think of interpersonal communication in this way.

Interpersonal communication is also cumulative over time. For instance, whatever Femi says to Ayo today will be interpreted on the basis of what others have said to the latter in the past and also what you expect them to say. If you wish to understand communication between people who have communicated before, then you need to take into account the history of their relationship as this might well affect how they interpret each other’s remarks at the moment.

Summary

This lecture should have explained the meaning and characteristics of interpersonal communication. Undoubtedly, it should also have informed you that this form of communication is not as simple or straight forward as many people seem to believe. For instance, we often act as if communication was linear- as if there was an unambiguous definition of the message and that feedback was unimportant. We do so at our peril, as the process of interpersonal communication will be discussed in the following lecture.

Post-Test

1. Attempt the pre-test questions again.
2. What is your own definition of interpersonal communication?
3. Examine other characteristics of interpersonal communication not discussed in this lecture.

References

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LECTURE TWO

The Process of Interpersonal Communication

Introduction

Your understanding of interpersonal communication will depend on how much you know, based on what you have observed and the wealth of your experience. Interpersonal communication is an ongoing process rather than an event or series of events. The aim of this lecture is to provide understanding of how interpersonal communication works by exploring the mechanics of the process, looking at its various components and how they relate to one another.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. discuss the process of interpersonal communication
2. explain interpersonal communication as a two-way flow of communication.

Pre-Test

1. Examine the process of interpersonal communication.
2. Why is interpersonal communication described as a two-way flow of communication?
3. Discuss the importance of noise in interpersonal communication.

CONTENT

Much research has been done to try to breakdown interpersonal communication into a number of elements in order that it can be more easily

understood. It is obvious that interpersonal communication is a process of exchange.

The elements involved include the communicators, the message, noise, feedback, context and channel. Let us examine the process step by step.

The Communicators

The involvement of at least two people is indispensable for a face-to-face communication to take place. It is easy to think about communication involving a sender and a receiver of a message. However, the problem with this way of seeing a relationship is that it presents communication as a one-way process where one person sends the message and the other receives it. That is, while one person is talking, another person is listening. In interpersonal situations, there is always a two-way flow of communication. For example, imagine a conversation where Ade is telling Akin about the good time he had on holiday. Ade does most if not all of the talking. Does that make him the sender? He is also able to observe Akin's reactions to what he is saying-receiving information from the way Akin is acting as an audience. In this sense, Ade is also both receiver and sender. Interpersonal communication is ALWAYS two way. In composing the message, a sender takes into account such things as the preoccupation of the message, such as to inform or persuade. Encoding is the transferring of your mental thoughts for the message into words.

The Message

Message does not only mean the speech used or information conveyed but also the non-verbal messages exchanged such as facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice and body language. Non-verbal behaviour can convey additional information about the spoken message. In particular, it can reveal more about emotional attitudes which may underlie the content of speech.

Noise

This has a special meaning in communication theory. It refers to anything that distorts the message so that what is received is different from what is intended by the speaker. Hence, the use of complicated jargon, inappropriate body language, inattention, disinterest and cultural differences can be considered noise in the context of interpersonal communication. In other words, noise is any inconsistency that occurs during an attempt to communicate.

Noise is a major concern in interpersonal communication. It is basically anything that interferes with the transmission and interpretation of the message from its sender to its receiver. There are different types of noise. Physical noise is the type of which you are most familiar; it is sound. Semantic noise occurs due to confusion caused by ambiguity in words and sentence structure. You are enjoined to consult CLA 304 for detailed information on other types of noise.

Feedback

Feedback consists of messages the receiver returns which allows the sender to know how accurately the message has been received as well as the receiver's reaction. The receiver may also respond to the unintentional message as well as the intentional message. Types of feedback range from direct statements such as "I don't understand" to subtle facial expressions or changes in posture that might indicate to the sender that the receiver feels uncomfortable with the message. Feedback allows the sender to regulate, adopt or respect the message in order to improve communication.

Context

All communication is influenced by the context in which it takes place. However, apart from looking at the situational context of where the interaction takes place, for example, in a room, an office or perhaps outdoors, the social context also needs to be considered. For example, the roles, responsibilities and relative status of the participants; the emotional climate and participants' expectations of the interaction will also affect the communication.

Channel

A channel is just a fancy word for the manner in which the message is sent. Channels include speaking, writing, video transmission, audio transmission, electronic transmission through an email, text, instant message or even non-verbal communication through body language and signals. The

channel refers to the physical means by which the message is transferred from one person to another.

Summary

Interpersonal communication is a process of exchange. In this lecture, we have discussed the components of the process which include the communicators, the message, noise, feedback, context and channel.

Post-Test

1. Attempt the pre-test questions again.
2. Assess the context of interpersonal communication.

References

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LECTURE THREE

The Skills of Interpersonal Communication

Introduction

The term 'skill' is normally used to refer to physical behaviours (what psychologists call motor skills). One difficulty when you are first learning any skill is the feeling of being overwhelmed by the number of different things you have to pay attention to. In this lecture, we shall discuss the components of interpersonal skills and the ways of improving your soft skills.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. explain the components of interpersonal skills.
2. discuss how to improve your interpersonal skills.
3. define interpersonal skills.

Pre-Test

1. Discuss the components of interpersonal communication skills.
2. How would you explain the social skills?
3. Explain the relevance of Johari's window to understanding the process of self-disclosure.

CONTENT

Interpersonal skills are life skills we used daily to communicate and interact with other people, both individually and in groups. People who have

worked on developing strong interpersonal skills are usually more successfully in both their professional and personal lives. Employers often seek to appoint staff who will work well in a team and able to communicate effectively with colleagues, customers and clients. Interpersonal skills are not just important in the workplace, our personal and social lives can also benefit from better interpersonal skills. People with good interpersonal skills are usually perceived as calm, confident and charismatic. These are qualities that are often endearing or appealing to others.

Interpersonal skills are sometimes referred to as social skills, people skills, soft skills, communication skills or life skills. The components of interpersonal skills include the following:

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication or bodily communication usually means a range of non-verbal signals which can include the following:

- Facial expression
- Gaze
- Gestures
- Posture
- Bodily contact
- Spatial behaviour
- Clothes and appearance
- Non-verbal vocalization
- Smell

As these comprise some of the most significant codes we employ, they shall be discussed in some detail in lecture eight.

Reinforcement

This refers to behaviours which encourage the other person to carry on or repeat whatever they happen to be doing. Various experiments have shown the reinforcing influence of expressions of praise, encouragement and support, even down to the use of head nods and the 'uh-huh.'

Questioning

A series of job interviews attended attested to the fact that some professional interviewers are much better than others at extracting information from the interviewees. This will be due in part to their question technique. For instance, while experienced interviewers are used to asking open-ended questions that encourage people to talk and expand thereby making the interviewers to get the elaborated answers which they really want, inexperienced interviewers are used to asking too many closed questions that provoke short and specific information.

Reflecting

This skill is often used by counsellors and other people who have to conduct very personal interviews and who want the other person to talk in some detail about their own attitudes and feelings. As questions can often direct the conversation in ways which reflect the interviewer's assumptions, it can be more revealing to use reflections which feedback to the speaker

some aspects of what they have just said. This acts as a cue for them to elaborate or extend what they have been saying. It is possible to reflect in different ways and achieve different results.

Opening and Closing

This refers to the ways in which we establish the beginning and ending of a particular interaction. For example, the choice of opening can be very important in more formal situations such as an interview where the opening can create a positive or negative atmosphere. Possible opening techniques include social opening, factual opening and motivational opening. While the interviewer makes sure to give the interviewee a positive welcome and spend sometime in social conversation, factual opening allows the interviewer to start with a clear description of important facts, perhaps by explaining how they see the goals of the interview. Motivational opening ensures that the interviewer starts with an attempt to encourage and motivate the interviewee, perhaps by introducing some visual aids or gadgets to stimulate interest.

Listening

It may seem odd to regard listening as a skill but that is because we tend to think of it as a passive activity rather than being an activity we have to concentrate on and work at. Good listening has been described as active listening. You do not only have to absorb and process internally the information you receive but you also have to encourage the other person to talk and demonstrate clearly that you are paying attention. No wonder some

authors have subdivided listening into more specific clusters such as attending skills following skills and reflecting skills.

The behaviours which seem to be associated with effective listening involve both bodily communication and internal thinking. Typical recommendations include being receptive to the other person, maintaining attention, removing distractions and the need to delay evaluation of what you have heard until you fully understand it.

A good listener detaches himself from typical listening barriers such as verbal battle and fact hunting. Verbal battle is the situation where, instead of listening and absorb what the other person has to say, the listener starts to debate the ideas in his own head and came up with criticisms or counter-arguments. Fact hunting, on the otherhand, involves concentrating on the detailed facts and losing sight of the overall message instead of listening for the main theme or general points.

Self-Disclosure

Sidney Jourard coined the term 'self-disclosure' to refer to the process of sharing information about ourselves other people. So when you self-disclose, your reveal to the other person some aspects of how you feel. Jourard was interested in how people came to reveal aspects of themselves to others and how this process influenced the development of good personal relationship.

The Johari window of Joe Luft and Herry Ingham is the best way of visualizing the process. The window categorizes information that you and others have about yourself into four segments.

What you know about yourself	What you don't know about yourself
What others know about you	Open Blind
What others don't know about you	Hidden Unknown

The Johari Window

Open

This contains information about myself which I know and which others know about me. For example, the fact that I am married with children.

Hidden

This is information which I know about myself and which I am not prepared to reveal to other people.

Blind

This is information which others know about me and which I am not aware of. For example, annoying habits which I do not notice in myself.

Unknown

This information is not known to me or others at present but may surface at some future points. For instance, I may have some very deep-noted unconscious anxieties which are currently controllable.

To improve your interpersonal skills, the following may be considered:

1. Take time to listen painstakingly to what others are saying verbally and non-verbally.
2. Be conscious of your diction.
3. Encourage others to engage in communication and use appropriate questioning to develop your understanding.
4. Through awareness of how you interact with others.
5. Through constant practice.
6. By developing oneself through an extensive library of quality content.

Summary

In this lecture, we have been able to account for the different behaviours which can contribute to skilled interpersonal performance. Of course, all of these behaviours are not appropriate in every situation. For example, in a job interview, the interviewer is likely to concentrate on questioning; in a counseling interview, the interviewer is likely to do more reflecting and reinforcing.

Post-Test

1. In what ways can you improve your interpersonal communication skills?
2. Explain the nucleus of active listening
3. Discuss other components of interpersonal skills not mentioned in this lecture.

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LECTURE FOUR

Interpersonal Relationships: Meaning, Importance and Stages

Introduction

Interpersonal relationship can be complicated, and they sometimes require a lot of work. But by expanding your knowledge and learning new skills, you can ensure the creation of utility within interpersonal relationship. In this lecture, you will not only learn about its concept but also about the importance and stages of interpersonal relationship.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. define interpersonal relationships
2. explain the importance of interpersonal relationship
3. explain the stages in interpersonal relationship

Pre-Test

1. What is interpersonal relationship?
2. Assess the stages in interpersonal relationships
3. The importance of interpersonal relationships cannot be underestimated. Elucidate

CONTENT

In our last lecture, we x-rayed the skills of interpersonal communication. In lectures one and two, we had discussed the meaning and process of interpersonal communication. In this lecture, we look at the nature of communication in interpersonal relationships. To do this, we

examine the meaning of interpersonal relationships, discuss its importance and end the discussion on the stages in interpersonal relationships.

What is Interpersonal Relationship?

On the simplest level, relationships are associations or connections. Interpersonal relationships, however, are far more complex. Interpersonal relationships may be defined as associations between two people who are interdependent, who use some consistent patterns of interaction, and who have interacted for an extended period of time. The different elements of this definition uncover the following:

First, interpersonal relationships comprise two or more people. For instance, two close friends or a dating couple. Often, interpersonal relationships consist of just two people.

Also, interpersonal relationship involve people who are interdependent. Friendship usually exemplifies this concept. For instance, your associate may be dependent on you for acceptance and guidance. On the other hand, you might require support and admiration. When individuals are independent of each other, or when dependence is unidirectional or parasitic in nature, we hardly define the resulting association as an interpersonal relationship. Therefore, interdependence refers to people's being mutually dependent on each other and having an impact on each other. This symbiotic relationship is what the educationists usually refer to as a resolution of dualism. Third, individuals in interpersonal relationships use some consistent pattern of interaction. A husband, for example, may always greet his wife with a kiss while the wife may have unique nicknames for her

husband that are not understood without the relationship. Lastly, individuals in interpersonal relationships generally have interacted for some time. For example, you do not have an interpersonal relationship when you meet a girlfriend's siblings for the first time. Although interpersonal communication is used to achieve your goals, one-time interactions do not mirror interpersonal relationships. It should be noted, however, that interpersonal relationship might last for varying lengths of time. While some continue for a lifetime, others are relatively short.

The importance of Interpersonal Relationships

Although we may be able to realize some of our physical, security and safety needs through interactions with relative strangers, we can fulfill the other needs only through our interpersonal relationships. The interdependence nature of interpersonal relationships suggests that people mutually satisfy their needs in this type of association. Interdependence means that one person is dependent on another to have some needs fulfilled and the other person is dependent on the first to have the same on other needs fulfilled. William Schutz (1976) says there are three basic interpersonal needs that are satisfied through interaction with others. These are:

1. The need for inclusion or becoming involved with others.
2. The need for affection or holding fond or tender feeling toward another person.
3. The need for control or the ability to influence others, our environment, and ourselves.

Also, the relevance of both the complementary relationships and symmetrical relationships has made interpersonal relationship much to be desired. Complementary relationships encourage each person to supply something the other person lacks while symmetrical relationships encourage the participants that are bird of a feather to mirror each other. This type of relationship is said to be horizontal in nature. For example, two people of similar background might take each other to the altar in order to preserve their heritage.

The stages in Interpersonal Relationships

According to Miller (1976), communication and relationship development are symbiotic. As communication affects the growth of relationships, the growth of relationships affects communicative behaviour. Current theories on the growth of relationships rest on the original work of Altman and Taylor (1973). These authors' social penetration theory explains the development and depenetration of interpersonal relationships through the exchange of intimate information. The theory states that interpersonal exchanges move from superficial, non-intimate information transfers to more intimate information exchanges through the process of revealing personal information. The amount of interaction increases as the relationship develops. Dissolution or depenetration, is the reverse process of development, or penetration.

Relational Development

These stages deal with the process by which relationships grow. The stages comprise the following:

- 1. Initiating:** This first stage is the short beginning period of an interaction. It involves first impressions, the sizing up of the other person, and attempting to find commonality.
- 2. Experimenting:** This arises when two people have clearly decided to find out more about each other, to quit scouting, and to start getting serious about each other. This stage involves sharing personal information at a safe level.
- 3. Intensifying:** It entails active participation, mutual concern, and an awareness that the relationship is developing because neither party has withdrawn and both people are facilitating its development. The information exchanges become more personal and intimate.
- 4. Integrating:** Here, the duo start mirroring each other's behaviour in manner, dress and language. Interests and values are shared between each other.
- 5. Bonding:** The people in the relationship are committed to each other. They may participate in a public ritual that bonds them, as in the case of marriage.

Relationship Deterioration

The last five stages identified by Knapp and Vangelisti (2000) occur during relational deterioration, the process by which relationship disintegrates:

1. **Differentiating:** This takes place when the two partners start emphasizing their individual differences instead of their similarities.
2. **Circumscribing:** This stage is characterized by decreased interaction, shorter times together, and less depth to sharing. The two people might go to public events together but do little together in private.
3. **Stagnating:** This stage suggests a lack of activity, especially activity together. Interactions are minimal, functional and only for convenience.
4. **Avoiding:** A stage that provokes reluctance to interact, active avoidance, and even hostility. The two well known partners are now getting in each other's way, each seeing the other as an obstacle or a limitation.
5. **Terminating:** This is the situation when the two people are no longer seen by others as a pair. They ultimately dissociate, share nothing and get rid of the symbols of oneness. Divorce, annulment, and dissolution are manifestations of this stage.

Summary

In this lecture, you have learned that interpersonal relationship provides one context in which people communicate with each other. It has also been established that interpersonal relationships are meant for a variety of reasons. We have equally informed you that most relationships go through definable stages of development and deterioration.

Post-Test

1. Why do people initiate relationships?
2. Why do people terminate relationships?
3. Attempt the pre-test questions again.

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LECTURE FIVE

Intercultural Communication

Introduction

Lecture five introduces you to communication between cultures and co-cultures. Being an effective communicator means interacting with people from various racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The nucleus of this lecture is to increase your confidence in your ability to communicate with people of other cultures and co-cultures. The importance of communicating in an ever-changing world is stressed.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. explain why you should study intercultural communication.
2. identify cultures and co-cultures.
3. discuss potential intercultural communication problems.
4. explain strategies for improving intercultural communication skills.

Pre-Test

1. Why do you study intercultural communication?
2. What are cultures and co-cultures?
3. Explain ethnocentrism and stereotyping in intercultural communication.
4. What are the strategies for improving your intercultural communication skills?

CONTENT

Not long ago, intercultural communication involved only missionaries, foreign correspondents and some national political figures. Now, however, developments in technology and shifts in demographics have created a world on which intercultural communication is a sine-qua-non. Rogers and Steinfatt (1999) define intercultural communication as the exchange of information between individuals who are unlike culturally. Intercultural communication is essential because of our increasing exposure to people of other cultures and co-cultures. More people are exposed to different global cultures through vocation travel, global jobs, international conflicts, military and humanitarian service, lesbian and gay marriages.

The importance of Intercultural Communication

Today we sell our wheat, corn and crude oil, in Asia, America and Europe, and we buy cars, building materials and so forth from the developed countries. Therefore, the principle of comparative cost advantage that is borne out of our economic need makes a reason for studying intercultural communication.

Another reason for studying intercultural communication is our curiosity about others. We are eager to demystify the identities of people who do not look like us, sound like us or live like us. We are curious about arranged marriages, rituals, fanatics and sports. Intercultural communication preaches effective understanding of cultural and co-cultural friends and enemies.

Also, the convergence of technologies is a reason for an interest in intercultural communication. The new technologies have, indeed, transformed interpersonal and face-to-face communication. For most of the twentieth century, intercultural activity required an expensive flight or phone call. Now, people can communicate with each other around the world on the internet. Communication technology is now at our fingertips through the social media.

Also, the influx of foreign-born immigrants, aliens and refugees that has changed the face of America accounts for a reason to study intercultural communication. Today, America has become an exotic salad with many cultures contributing to its overall flavour. A communication teacher from Los Angeles reported that his public-speaking class had students from twelve countries, and most spoke English as a second language. You can communicate better with people from other cultures if you know something about theirs.

Cultures Versus Co-cultures

You have just learned that intercultural communication is the exchange of information between people of different cultures, but you may be skeptical about the definitions of culture and co-culture. Culture can be defined as a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and rituals that the members of a society use to cope with one another and with their world. Culture is usually transmitted from generation to generation through social learning. It represents a mechanism that allows human beings to make sense of the world around them. Cultures consist of a wide variety

of races, ethnic groups, and nationalities. In the United States, for example, a number of co-cultures exist based on language, race, religion, economics, age, gender and sexual orientation.

A co-culture is a group that is similar to and part of the larger culture but is distinguished by beliefs and behaviours that differ from the larger culture. Co-culture is used because the word subculture implies that these groups are somehow inferior to the dominant culture. In the United State, where the dominant culture is white and Christian, examples of co-cultures are African-American and Muslims. It should be noted that an individual can belong to a number of co-cultures.

Intercultural Communication Problems

Intercultural communication is subject to all the problems that impede effective interpersonal communication. Becoming aware of these problems can help you avoid or reduce their effects. The barriers identified include the following:

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is the belief that your own culture is superior to all other cultures or groups. You are ethnocentric if you assess and judge the rest of the world only from your own culture's perspective. The largest problem that occurs during intercultural communication is that people bring an ethnocentric perspective to the interaction. Ethnocentrism can create defensiveness on the part of the person whose culture is being relegated to the background. In ethnocentrism, you use your own culture as the yardstick

that others are expected to follow, but in cultural relativism another person's culture is judged by its own context. There is need to accept people whose values and norms maybe different from ours if we must ensure effective communication.

Stereotyping

A stereotype can be defined as a generalization about some group of people that oversimplifies their cultures. Stereotyping becomes a headache in communication when people make assumptions about an individual on the basis of simplified notions about the group to which he or she belongs. Stereotyping can be injurious to groups and individuals. Allport (1958) observed that people are more likely to stereotype individuals and groups with whom they have little or no contact.

Strategies for Improving Intercultural Communication

The following are some of the strategies for ensuring effective intercultural communication.

1. Have a personal self-assessment. One of the steps toward improving your intercultural communication skills is an honest assessment of your own communication style, beliefs and prejudices.
2. Practice supportive communication behaviours. Supportive behaviours, such as empathy, encourage success in intercultural exchanges.

3. Develop sensitivity toward diversity. One healthy communication perspective holds that you can learn something from all people. Take the time to learn about other cultures and co-cultures. Challenge yourself. You may be astonished by what you learn.
4. Avoid stereotypes. Always ensure that reckless assumptions are not made about other's cultures.
5. Avoid ethnocentrism. You will learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of your own culture by learning more about others. It is wrong to believe that your own culture is superior to all others.
6. Develop code sensitivity. This entails learning to use the verbal and non-verbal language appropriate to the cultural or co-cultural norms of the individual whom you are communicating.
7. Seek shared code. While you determine which communication style to adopt during intercultural communication, a key ingredient in establishing shared code is tolerating ambiguity, or being open minded about differences.
8. Use and encourage descriptive feedback. During intercultural communication, both participants should be willing to accept feedback and exhibit supportive behaviours. Feedback should be immediate, clear, honest and specific.
9. Open communication channel. Because intercultural communication can be frustrating, an important strategy to apply is to keep the lines of communication open.

10. Manage conflicting beliefs and practices. The need to think ahead about how to handle minor and major differences from everyday behaviour remains inevitable.

Summary

In this lecture, you have not only learned why the study of intercultural communication is vital but you have also known the meaning of a cultures and co-cultures. Some potential intercultural barriers and their remedies have equally been discussed in this lecture.

Post-Test

1. Attempt the pre-test questions again
2. With examples, explain cultures and co-cultures
3. Intercultural communication is not interpersonal communication. Do you agree? Discuss.

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LECTURE SIX

Models of Interpersonal Communication

Introduction

A model is a simple description of a system used for explaining how something works or calculating what might happen. It is an attempt to represent what something is and how it works. This lecture does try to explain the most popular models of interpersonal communication.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. define models of communication
2. explain some models of interpersonal communication.

Pre-Test

1. Define models of communication.
2. Attempt a critique of the linear model of interpersonal communication.
3. Discuss the differences between linear and transactional models of interpersonal communication.

CONTENT

Folarin (1998:50) defines a model as “a symbolic representation designed to help us visualize the relationships among various elements of a structure, system, or process, for purposes of discussion and analysis.”

Models are often confused with theories because they too are expressions of research findings. The distinction to note between theories and models is that while theories are general statements expressing the understanding of a subject of communication as informed by academic research, models are visual representations of relationships between the elements of a subject of inquiry. Models are sometimes conceived as the visual illustration of theories because they are primarily used to visualize, analyze and discuss complex processes which would be otherwise difficult to explain. Most important to the definition of models is its representation of relationships. Let us consider the Linear, Interactive and Transactional models of interpersonal communication.

Linear Models (1948)

Who

Says What

In Which Channel

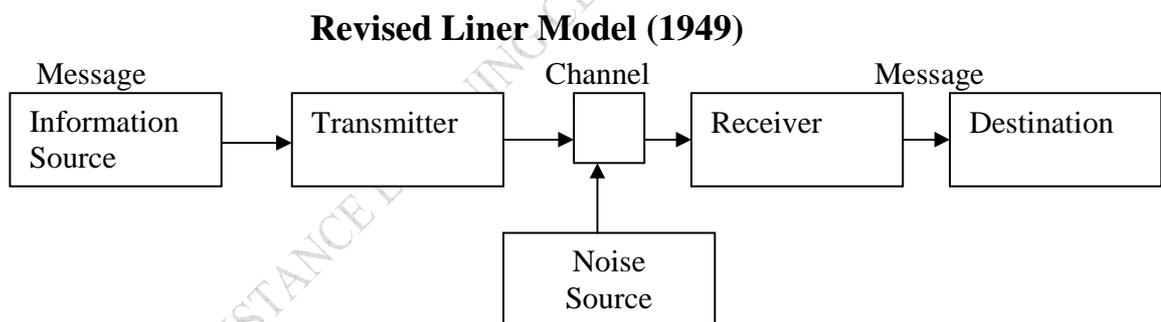
To Whom

With What Effect

This model is one of the most popular ways of representing communication. It suggests that our communication is linear and one way. In other words, the model consists of messages which flow from sender to receiver along particular channels. The model adequately represents the roles of sender, message, channel and receiver. It goes a step further by introducing the “effect” factor. The effect factor reveals that communication encounters are hardly without a particular physical, emotional or cognitive

impact on the participants. This impact is a response to the message. Examples of linear model of interpersonal communication include students reading examination instructions and military instructions. It has, however, been observed that Lasswell's model accommodates only one source/sender and one receiver. He neither gives room for the possibility of several sources of information nor provides for the likelihood of several receivers. In addition, he was silent about the possible alteration of the sent message. Noise creates a distortion in the message.

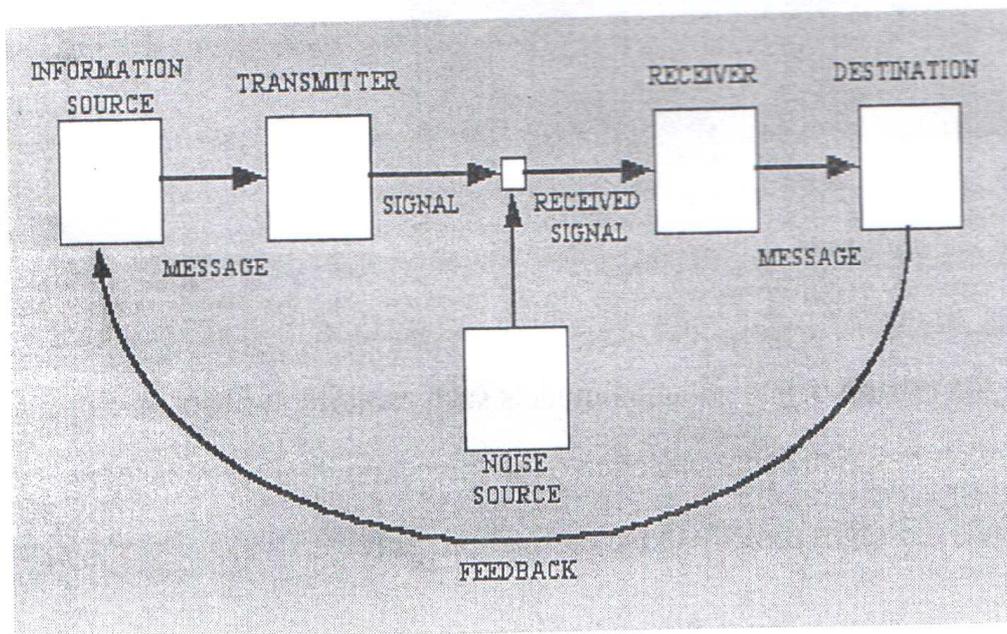
This oversimplified model has equally neglected one of the fundamental points in this resource material: in interpersonal situations, there is always a two-way flow of communication.



The Shannon and Weaver model has been very instrumental in the development of other models. In this model, the information source produces a message while the transmitter converts it to a signal. The channel transmits the signal from the transmitter to the receiver. Claude Shannon, a mathematician, developed the model to show what happens to 'information bits' as they travel from the source to the receiver (Folarin, 1998:51). It differentiates information from meaning. We usually assign meaning to

information based on our understanding as well as field of experience. Also, the model strategically positions noise between the sent signal and the received signal. This implies that sometimes, perceived meaning may not be equal to the sent meaning. The model reflects the scientific background of its initiator.

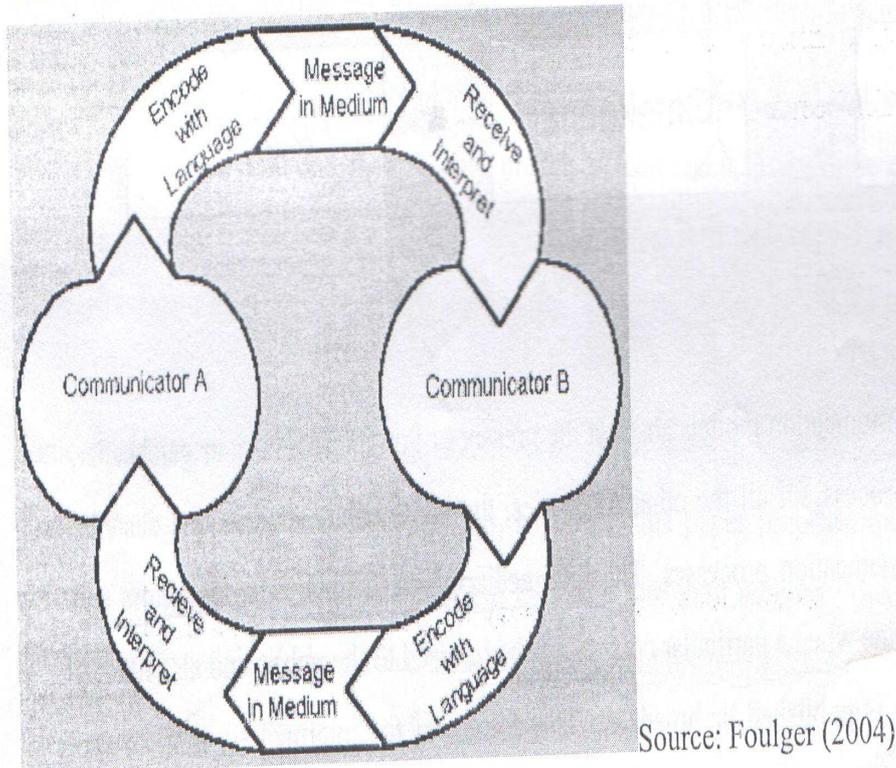
Interactive Communication Models



Interaction occurs when there is a relationship between two or more people which results in all participants influencing one another. Elements of an interaction include dialogue, discussion and arguments. Interaction communication is a communication process where both the source and the destination engage in a conversation. This model elaborates the Shannon and Weaver model as cited by Foulger (2004) from Weiner (1948, 1986). The key concept associated with this elaboration is that destinations provide

feedback on the messages they receive such that the information sources can adapt their messages. The interactive communication model represents the process of interpersonal communication. This model does not capture interpersonal communication as a dynamic process. It still represents communication as a sequential set of actions.

Transactional Communication Models



The major difference between interactive and transactional interpersonal communication models lies in the number of messages transmitted. The sender sends a message to the receiver and the receiver responds with a feedback in an interactive communication model while the

sender and the receiver switch roles more than once while exchanging multiple messages and sending multiple feedbacks in a transactional communication model. The transactional model of interpersonal communication, in an attempt to overcome the weaknesses of the interactive model, depicts multiple aspects like messages, noise, feedback and field of experience.

Summary

Models of interpersonal communication illustrate the communication process in different ways. These different ways reflect the authors' perception of the communication process and its vital components. In evaluating a model, we consider its ability to organize and order data; the implied predictions that can be verified with physical tests. No model is sufficient in itself; it only gives a straight forward explanation of reality. This lecture has discussed the relevant models of interpersonal communication such as the linear, interactive and transitional models. It has been established that models are a fundamental building block of theory. They are also a fundamental tool of instruction.

Post-Test

1. Attempt the pre-test questions again
2. Write comprehensively on the importance of feedback and noise in interpersonal communication process.
3. What is an interactive model of interpersonal communication?

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LECTURE SEVEN

Social Perception

Introduction

Lecture seven aims at giving you a better understanding of the communicative importance of how you see yourself and how you perceive others. In this lecture, we shall explain what perception is; describe why differences in perception occur and the errors we occasionally make in our perceptions of others. This lecture also examines a number of theoretical approaches which have been used to explain social perception.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. define perception
2. explain some of the reasons for differences in perception.
3. identify errors we might make when we perceive others.
4. explain a number of theoretical approaches used to explain social perception.

Pre-Test

1. Define social perception
2. Why do differences in perception occur?
3. Explain the theories of social perception.

CONTENT

Differences in perception affect the way we understand events, ourselves and others. Consequently, perception affects self-concept, self-efficacy and presentation of self perception influenced our experience and assessment of others and our communication with them. Nobody else sees the world your own way. Hence, the way you see the world is subjective, uniquely your own. The uniqueness of human experience is based largely on differences in perception.

DeVito (1986) sees perception as the process of becoming aware of objects and events from the senses. Since our perceptions are unique, communication between and among people becomes complicated. Perception is not passive but active because active perception means the mind selects, organises, and interprets that which is sensed. **What, therefore, is social perception?** By social perception, we mean those processes whereby an individual makes sense of and interprets the nature of the other people involved in the conversation, and the nature of the setting in which they find themselves. On the other hand, subjective perception is a person's uniquely constructed meaning attributed to sensed stimuli. For example, your perception of Ayobami is not the same as anyone else's perception of him.

Factors Responsible for Differences in Perception

Perception is subjective, active and creative. Differences in perception may be the result of physiological factors, people's past experiences and

roles, their cultures and co-cultures and their present feelings and circumstances.

Physiological Factor

You are physiologically different from anyone else. People differ from each other in height, weight, body type, sex and senses. Some authors have suggested that hemispheric differences in the cerebral cortex of the brain are sex-linked. Differences in perception also may arise from temporary conditions. A headache or fatigue can cause you to perceive a critical comment when a friendly one is being offered.

Past Experiences and Roles

Perceptual constancy is the concept that best explains the influence of your past experiences on your perceptions. Perceptual constancy is the idea that your past experiences lead you to see the world in a way that is difficult to change; your initial perceptions persist. What happened to you in the past influences your perception of the present and the future. For example, your experiences affect how you relate with policemen, lawyers and politicians.

Roles can also influence perceptions. A role is the part an individual plays in a group; an individual's function or expected behaviour DeVito (1986:269). Your roles affect your communication. You may be an academic, a student or a terrorist.

Culture and Co-culture

Culture is a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with one another and with their world. Singer (1982), an intercultural communication researcher, maintains that what people see, hear, taste, touch and smell are conditioned by their culture. He says that people's perceptions are largely learned; the greater the experiential differences among people, the greater the disparity in their perceptions.

Your co-culture equally affects your perceptions of the world. A co-culture is a group whose beliefs or behaviours distinguish it from the larger culture of which it is a part with which it shares numerous similarities.

Present Feelings and Circumstances

Your daily, weekly, monthly or yearly cycle may affect how you perceive stimuli. If you are having a bad week, for instance, you might be offended by the humor of an associate; later in the month, you might find the same comment very interesting.

Stages of Perception

The stages of perception include selection, organization and interpretation.

- 1. Selection:** This is the process of neglecting some stimuli in the environment to focus on other stimuli. For example, you might listen to the criticism a friend offers you, but not the corresponding praise.

2. **Organization:** This deals with the grouping of stimuli into meaningful units or wholes. You organize stimuli through figure and ground, closure, proximity and similarity. Figure is the focal point of a person's attention; ground is the background against which a person's focused attention occurs while closure is the tendency to fill in missing information in order to complete an otherwise incomplete figure or statement. The principle that objects that are physically close to each other will be perceived as unit or group is proximity. Similarity is about the principle that elements are grouped together because they share attributes such as size, colour or shape.
3. **Interpretation:** This is the third stage you engage in during perception. It is the assigning of meaning to stimuli. Therefore, interpretative perception is a blend of internal states and external stimuli. The more ambiguous the stimuli, the more room for interpretation. Context provides cues for how an action, an object or a situation is to be interpreted or perceived.

Theories of Social perception

There has been considerable research on the ways in which we perceive other people. Unfortunately, there has been less attention paid to our perception of social situations. We shall concentrate on the evidence that concerns person perception. The early work on person perception tended to focus on how people interpreted various personality traits. More recent

theories have concentrated on how people develop their own ideas about other people. Let us examine each of the theories.

Implicit Personality Theory

This notion is based upon a number of important findings, as follows:

Coherent perception: People do have a coherent picture of which personality traits tend to go together in other people. For example, if you hear someone described as warm then you are also liable to think that that person is popular, happy and successful.

Organized perceptions: These impressions are organized so that some traits are much more important or central than others. Although this approach generated a great deal of interesting research, it did not provide very convincing answers to a number of important questions, such as

- How are various traits organized?
- Why are certain traits central?

Personal Construct Theory

This theory was first developed by George Kelly who was concerned that theories such implicit personality failed to recognize that all human beings are in some ways unique and that they develop their own very individual ways of making sense of the world. According to Kelly, we all have an internal set of mental categories which we use to organize our perceptions. Personal construct theory was first developed for use in psychotherapy, for use with individuals.

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is a more recent development which attempts to explain how people perceive one another. This theory is particularly interested in how people decide the cause of other people's actions. It can also be used to examine how we explain our own actions. One way of explaining this theory is to explain the model proposed by Jones and Davis. Imagine yourself observing another person, A, behaving. You would be able to observe two main things:

1. A'S actions
2. The effect of A'S action.

Summary

This lecture has tried to highlight some of the major processes underlying our social perception. Almost inevitably the discussion has focused on errors and factors responsible for differences in perception. We have also examined the stages and theories of social perception.

Post-Test

1. Attempt the pre-test questions again
2. How accurate are your perceptions of other people?
3. Discuss the stages of perception.

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LECTURE EIGHT

Non-verbal Communication

Introduction

We shall discuss the relevance of non-verbal codes in this lecture. Some of the major non-verbal codes are identified and defined, including bodily movement and facial expression, bodily appearance, space, time, touching and vocal cues.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. define nonverbal communication
2. explain how verbal and nonverbal codes work
3. recognize the types of nonverbal communication

Pre-Test

1. Define nonverbal communication
2. Explain any five types of nonverbal codes
3. Justify the assertion that “nonverbal codes speak louder than words and shout the truth where words lie?”

CONTENT

Non-verbal communication is unique in the dissemination of information, feelings, thoughts, concepts and messages than verbal codification. Research has shown that 65 percent of all social meaning in

face-to-face communication is conveyed through nonverbal stimuli, while verbal stimuli account for no more than 35 percent Birdwhistell (1974). It is important to know that nonverbal codification in interpersonal communication actually depicts the true mind of the communicator. Hall (1959) agrees with this position that nonverbal codes speak louder than words and shout the truth where words lie. This makes communication incomplete without considering unspoken languages.

What is Non-verbal Communication?

Generally, when people refer to non-verbal codification they are talking about the signals to which the meaning will be attributed, not the process of attributing meaning. The term is commonly used to describe all human communication events that transcend spoken or written words. At the same time, it should be realized that these non-verbal events and behaviours can be interpreted through verbal symbols. According to Trenholm (1999:115), non verbal communication is any instances in which a stimulus other than words creates meaning in either a sender's or a receiver's mind. Indeed, non-verbal cues are reflex actions in communication process which the communicator does not intend. They come momentarily and unconsciously to complement messages and to convey the true mind of the communicator. Non-verbal behaviours may not be communicative if they are not interactive. Non-verbal communication is the process of sending wordless or speechless messages. It is the dissemination of information through silent language. It is also described as language within language. Burgoon and Saine (1978) define non-verbal communication as the

attributes or actions of humans, other than the use of words themselves, which have socially shared meaning, are intentionally sent or interpreted as intentional, are consciously sent or consciously received, and have the potential for feedback from the receiver. Communication is complex. We cannot quantify the relative contribution of non-verbal communication to verbal communication, but nonverbal communication often provides much more meaning than people realized.

The Nonverbal Codes

Nonverbal codes are codes of communication consisting of symbols that are not words, including nonword vocalizations. Facial expression, bodily movement, bodily appearance, the use of space, the use of time, vocal cues, clothing and other artifacts are all nonverbal codes.

Bodily Movement and Facial Expression

The study of posture, movement, gestures and facial expression is called Kinesics. It is a word derived from the Greek word kinesis, meaning movement. Interpreting the meaning of nonverbal communication is partly a matter of assessing the other person's unique behaviour and considering the context. The consideration of its context means that the situation alters how you interpret nonverbal communication. Ekman (1999) categorized movement on the basis of its functions, origins and meanings. These categories are emblems, illustrators, affect displays, regulators and adaptors.

1. **Emblems:** They are movements that substitute for words and phrases. Examples include an open hand held up to mean “stop” and a forefinger and thumb together to mean “ok.”
2. **Illustrators:** These are movements that accompany or reinforce verbal messages. An example is when you stroke your stomach to say you are hungry.
3. **Affect displays:** They are movements of the face and body used to show emotion. People’s behaviour when the Super Eagles of Nigeria wins or loses a football match left much to be desired.
4. **Regulators:** These are nonverbal moves that control the flow or pace of communication. Good examples include yawning and looking at your watch when you are bored, starting to move away when you want the conversation to stop and fixing your eyes on the floor or looking away when you are indifferent to a discussion.
5. **Adaptors:** These are movements that you might perform fully in private but only partially in public. You might rub your nose in public but you would probably never pick it.

Bodily Appearance

The physical qualities or bodily appearance we possess is closely related to kinesics. Our body type such as height, weight, and physical attractiveness hold communication potential. Body types, also known as somatotype, have been grouped into ectomorph, mesomorph and endomorph. While an ectomorph is a tall, thin and sometimes trail person, a mesomorph is proportioned, athletic, trim, muscular and average in height.

An endomorph is short, soft and round. Physical attractiveness generally leads to more social success in adulthood. Both women and men who are attractive are seen as more sociable and sensitive Knapp and Hall (1992). Attractive people receive higher initial credibility ratings than those who are viewed as unattractive.

Space

The concept of proxemics was introduced by an Anthropologist, Edward T. Hall in his book The Hidden Dimension in 1966. proxemics is the study of the human use of space. He has demonstrated the role space plays in communication. Territoriality and personal space are two concepts considered vital to the study of space.

- 1. Territoriality:** This refers to the need to establish and maintain certain spaces as your own. In a neighbourhood, for instance, fences, hedges or trees might be used to mark a territory. This is a nonverbal indicator that signals ownership.
- 2. Personal space:** This is the distance you maintain between yourself and others. Large people usually claim more space because of their size. Personal space is the personal bubble of space that moves around with you. Distance is a nonverbal means of communicating everything from the size of your personal bubble to your relationship with the person to whom you are speaking or listening.

Time

Temporal communication or chronemics refers to the way that people organize and use time and the messages that are created because of our organization and use of it. Time can be examined based on how people perceive the past, future and present.

Touching

Tactile communication is the use of touch in communication. Touch commands attention because it always involves invasion of another personal space. Touch is a powerful means of communication. People who are comfortable with touch are more likely to be satisfied with their past and current lives. They are self-confident, assertive, socially acceptable and active in confronting problems.

Vocal Cues

Nonverbal communication includes some sounds as long as they are wordless. These are called paralinguistic features, the non word characteristics of language such as pitch, rate, inflection, volume, quality, pronunciation, articulation, silence, enunciation and nonword sounds. These vocal cues are vital because they are linked in our minds with a speaker's physical characteristics, emotional state, personality characteristics, gender characteristics and even credibility. Kramer (1963) says vocal cues frequently convey information about the speaker's characteristics such as age, height, appearance and body type. For example, speakers who tend to speak slowly and deliberately may be perceived as being high-status

individuals or as having high credibility. You are enjoined to get a copy of the reference material on CLA 304 for a more detail information on non verbal cues.

Clothing and Artifacts

Objectics or object language refers to the study of the human use of clothing and other artifacts as non verbal codes. Artifacts are ornaments or adornments we display that hold communicative potential, including jewelry, hairstyles, cosmetics, watches, shoes, portfolios, glasses, hats, tattoos and even the fillings in teeth. Your clothing and artifacts clarify the sort of person you believe you are; your personal expression and satisfy your need for creative self-expression. They provide physical and psychological protection and are used to indicate self-concept.

Summary

We constantly use non verbal communication to intentionally or unintentionally communicate messages to others. In this lecture, you have learned the meaning of non verbal communication and how verbal and nonverbal codes work. Also, the various types of nonverbal communication have been discussed.

Post-Test

1. Attempt the previous questions again
2. In what ways can you improve your nonverbal communication?
3. Explain tactile communication.

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LECTURE NINE

Assertive Communication

Introduction

The history of assertiveness training goes back several decades to the 1950s when a number of therapists started to devise ways of helping individual patients who had serious problems in expressing themselves and standing up for their rights. It was recognized that giving these individuals more self-confidence, along with specific skills and technique, would help them to cope effectively with everyday life. In this lecture, the reasons why assertiveness is such an important topic in interpersonal communication are discussed.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. define what we mean by assertiveness
2. explain the rationale for assertive communication
3. compare assertive, aggressive and submissive behaviour

Pre-Test

1. Define assertive communication.
2. Discuss the different styles of behaviour.
3. Why is assertiveness an important topic in interpersonal communication?

CONTENT

It has been discovered that assertiveness was not simply valuable for people with very serious difficulties. Many professionals and people in their everyday lives are of the opinion that they could benefit by communicating more assertively. So, what do we mean by assertive communication? A typical definition of assertiveness taken from a well-established reference material says: Assertion involves standing up for personal rights and expressing thoughts, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways which respect the rights of other people.

This definition brings out the following features of assertiveness:

1. recognizing that you have basic human rights which should be respected by others.
2. recognizing that these rights include being able to express your feelings and needs.
3. communication which is direct, honest and open
4. expressing mutual respect for other people and their rights.

Why is Assertiveness Important?

There are at least three reasons why assertiveness is an important topic within interpersonal communication. Firstly, it appears that assertion training has become one of the most popular, if not the most popular, ways of developing social skills. This popularity is not just confined to formal training courses and workshops. The discovery of assertive communication

has helped in changing lives as it has aided freedom of expression clearly and concisely without resorting to manipulation and intimidation. It has become a way to be direct, open and honest without being obnoxious.

The second reason for looking at assertiveness in a bit more detail is the way it claims to build an explicit relationships between values, attitudes and behaviour. This raises issues of ethical behaviour and morality which are often left implicit in other methods. Lastly, as with other popular theories, there is a danger that assertiveness will be accepted too uncritically.

Different Styles of Behaviour?

Every resource material on assertive behaviour defines three styles of behaviour: assertion, aggression and submission (or non-assertion). These are often expressed as a continuum with assertion in the middle: Aggression-Assertion-Submission

Aggressive Behaviour

This includes some form of threat which undermines the rights of the other person. It is about winning, regardless of the other person's feelings. The verbal and non-verbal accompaniments to aggressive behaviour include loud and abusive talk, interruption, and glaring or staring eye contact. Individuals who regularly use aggressive behaviour may well 'win' in the short term but will usually be disliked. They also run the risk of inviting an even more aggressive response.

Submissive Behaviour

This behaviour gives in to the demands of others by avoiding conflict and accepting being put upon. Verbal and non-verbal accompaniments include apologetic and hesitant speech, soft speech, nervous gestures and a reluctance to express opinions. Submissive individuals will be seen as weak and easily manipulated. They will certainly not inspire confidence in others.

Assertive Behaviour

The characteristics are open and clear expression, firm and fluent conversation, and quick spontaneous answers. The nonverbal components include medium levels of eye contact; appropriate facial expressions; smooth gestures; relaxed but upright body posture; and appropriate paralinguistic. Assertive individuals tend to derive more satisfaction from their relationship with others and achieve their goals more often. There are various ways of categorizing assertive behaviour. These include:

- 1. Basic assertion:** This is where you simply give the straight forward statement of what you need, want, believe or feel. For example, I bought this radio here yesterday and it will not pick up any signals on FM. I need to have it replaced.
- 2. Responsive assertion:** This where you check the other person's needs or feelings. For example, what do you think we should do?
- 3. Empathetic assertion:** This where you state your needs and wants but also explicitly recognize the other person's point of view or feelings.

4. **Consequence:** This is the strongest form of assertion. It is where you tell the other person what will happen to him if he does not change his behaviour.
5. **Discrepancy assertion:** This is where you point out the discrepancy between what you have agreed previously on what seems to be happening or is about to happen. This also usually means repeating what you want in the situation.
6. **Negative feelings assertion:** This is where you point out the effect that the other person's behaviour is having upon you.

Summary

As with many of the lectures covered in this resource material, one conclusion is that you need practical research on some aspects of assertiveness. For example, how should it work in multicultural organizations? Assertive behaviour is one style of behaviour which can be used in social situations, and which is worth considering if you feel that you are having difficulty in expressing yourself directly. The impact of assertive messages will depend upon a range of social and cultural factors.

Post-Test

1. Attempt the pre-test questions again
2. Does assertiveness always work?
3. Explain the different types of assertive behaviour.

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LECTURE TEN

Styles and Principles of Interpersonal Communication

Introduction

This lecture aims at introducing you to the styles and principles of interpersonal communication. A definition of interpersonal communication may be insufficient to clarify its nature. To explain interpersonal communication in more detail, we consider here the various styles and principles of this form of communication.

Objectives

At the end of the lecture, you should be able to:

1. explain the styles of interpersonal communication
2. discuss the principles of interpersonal communication.

Pre-Test

1. What is dyadic communication? Explain its principles.
2. Discuss the styles of interpersonal communication.
3. Interpersonal communication occurs for a variety of reasons. What are these reasons?

CONTENT

Interpersonal communication is the personal process of coordinating meaning between at least two people in a situation that allows mutual opportunities for both speaking and listening. When you move from intrapersonal to interpersonal communication, you move from

communication that occurs within your own mind to communication that involves one or more other persons. Like intrapersonal communication, interpersonal takes place for a variety of reasons: to solve problems, to resolve conflicts, to share information, to prove your perception of your self, or to fulfill social needs. People are able to establish relationships with others through our interpersonal communication. Dyadic and small-group communication are two subjects of interpersonal communication. Dyadic or two-person communication may include interviews between an employer and an employee. Small group communication is the interaction of a small group of people to achieve an interdependence goal. This type of communication does occur in families, religious groups and study groups. It is time we considered the styles of interpersonal communication.

Controlling style

This is the style of interpersonal communication where the sender of a message leaves little or no room for the receiver to provide feedback. This style is always adopted by the chief executives and heads of organizations when passing instructions to their subordinates. The controlling style might prove to be an efficient form of communication during crisis situations.

Egalitarian Style

This style is much more efficient and friendly than the controlling style as it favours and facilitates healthy two-way communication whereby information is mutually shared. The egalitarian style encourages the participants to air their own views on a topical issue.

Structuring Style

The structuring style is generally used to communicate specific goals and brings coordination to an organization. To avoid making this a one-way conversation, it is always better to modify this style and keep it more open to responses from the audience.

Dynamic Style

This is an approach which involves the use of motivation and praises to encourage a person to get inspired and achieve a certain goal. However, this style does not function where the receiver lacks enough knowledge about the required action expected of him or her.

Relinquishing Style

This style is highly open for ideas to the extent that it can transfer the responsibility of the communicator to the receiver. It is a style that thrives when the sender and the receiver are equally interested in carrying the conversation ahead.

Withdrawal Style

A style where any of the communicators displays absolute indifference to participate in the communication process. The style is basically the failure or lack of communication.

Principles of Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is a selective, systematic, unique and ongoing process of interaction between individuals who reflect and build personal knowledge of one another as they create meaning. Having discussed the functions of interpersonal communication in the first lecture, let us examine its principles.

1. Communication Begins with the Self

How you see yourself can make a great difference in how you communicate. Rogers (1957) says every individual exists in a continually changing world of experience of which he is central. We cannot not communicate. Many communication scholars and social scientists believe that people are products of how others treat them and of the messages others send them.

2. Communication Involves Others

Communication itself is probably best understood as a dialogic process. A dialogue is simply the act of taking part in a conversation, discussion or negotiation. An effective communicator considers the other person's needs and expectations when selecting messages to share. A child, for instance, learns to accept roles in response to the expectations of others through verbal and nonverbal symbols.

3. Communication is Complicated

Communication is far more than simple information transmission. It involves choices about the multiple aspects of the message-the verbal,

nonverbal, behavioural aspects, the channels used, the characteristics of the participants and the situation in which the communication occurs.

4. Communication is Inevitable, Irreversible and Unrepeatable

Communication takes place almost every minute of your life. Even if the other person did not intend a message for you, you gather observations and draw specific conclusions. As you understand the irreversibility of communication, you may become more careful in your conversations with others and you may be meticulous in making your speeches and comments. It is difficult to go back in time and erase your messages to others.

Summary

In this lecture, you have learned that a definition of interpersonal communication may not be sufficient to clarify its nature. To discuss interpersonal communication in more detail, we have been able to x-ray some of the styles and principles that guide our understanding of interpersonal communication.

Post-Test

1. Attempt the pre-test questions again.
2. Why do you study interpersonal communication?
3. Discuss the ways in which intrapersonal and interpersonal communication differ from each other.

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LECTURE ELEVEN

Nature of Interpersonal Communication Theory

Introduction

Interpersonal communication is an exchange of information between two or more people. It is also an area of study. Successful interpersonal communication is when the message senders and the message receivers understand the message. This lecture examines the theories that can aid our understanding of the working of interpersonal communication.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. define a theory
2. explain the various theories of interpersonal communication.

Pre-Test

1. What is a theory?
2. Why do you study the theories of interpersonal communication?
3. Discuss any five theories of interpersonal communication.

CONTENT

Force and Richer (1973) defines a theory as a model that has been tested. This means that its concepts have been operationalized and the relationship among the variables verified. They add that a theory consists of a set of propositions that are interrelated, a proposition taken to mean a verified statement of relationship between variables. Babbie (1986:37)

defines a theory as a systematic explanation for the observed facts and laws that relate to a particular aspect of life. Folarin (1998) sees a theory as “a crap detector which enables us to separate scientific statements from unscientific ones.” The following theories of interpersonal communication have been identified. They are: uncertainty reduction theory, social exchange theory, symbolic interaction theory, relational dialectics theory, onion theory and social penetration theory.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Uncertainty reduction theory originated from the socio psychological perspective. It addresses the basic process of how we gain knowledge about other people. The theory posits that people have difficulty with uncertainty, they want to be able to predict behaviour and are, therefore, motivated to seek more information about people.

Social Exchange Theory

This theory falls under the symbolic interaction perspective. The theory predicts, explains and describes when and why people reveal certain information about themselves to others. The Social Exchange Theory rests on Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) theory of interdependence. This theory states that relationships grow, develop, deteriorate and dissolve as a consequence of an unfolding social-exchange process, which may be conceived as a battering of rewards and cost both between the partners and between members of the partnership and others.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic Interaction Theory originated from the socio-cultural perspective in that it relies on the creation of shared meaning through interactions with others. This theory focuses on the ways in which people form meaning and structure in society through interactions. People are motivated based on the meanings assigned to people, things and events. Symbolic interaction theory argues the world is made up of social objects that are named and have socially determined meanings. When people interact overtime, they come to shared meaning for certain terms and actions and thus come to understand events in particular ways.

Relational Dialectics Theory

This theory emerges from the interplay of competing discourses. Discourses are systems of meaning that are uttered whenever we make intelligible utterances aloud with others or in our heads when we hold internal conversations. Relational Dialectics theory poses the primary assumption that assumptions insinuate the concept of creating meaning within ourselves and others when we communicate. However, it also shows how the meanings within our conversations may be interpreted, understood and of course, misunderstood.

Onion Theory

This is an analogy that suggests that like an onion, personalities have layers that start from the outside (what the public sees) all the way to the core (ones private self). Often, when a relationship begins to develop, it is

customary for the individuals within the relationship to undergo a process of self-disclosure. As people divulge information about themselves, their layers begin to peel, and once those layers peel away they cannot go back, just as the layers on an onion cannot be replaced.

Social Penetration Theory

Irwin Attman and Dallas Taylor are the originators of the social penetration theory. The theory was made to provide conceptual framework that describes the development in interpersonal relationships. It refers to the reciprocity of behaviours between two people who are in the process of developing a relationship. The behaviour vary based on the different levels of intimacy that a relationship encounters.

Summary

In this lecture, we have been able to assess some of the definitions of a theory. The lecture has equally familiarized you with the notable theories of interpersonal communication.

Post-Test

1. Attempt the pre-test questions again.
2. Apart from the theories of interpersonal communication discussed in this lecture, carry out an individual assignment on, at least, six other theories of interpersonal communication.

References

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LECTURE TWELVE

Computer-Mediated Interpersonal Communication

Introduction

In lecture six, we were rather critical of the linear model of communication. However, it is useful in some respects. It does make it clear that all messages are conveyed through particular channels of communication. This is not surprising, as Shannon and Weaver were particularly interested in one channel of communication—the telephone. In this lecture, you shall learn the importance of computer mediated communication, how mediated communication affects us through the communication process, and how to be a more critical consumer of mediated messages.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. define computer-mediated communication and explain its importance.
2. analyse the differences between computer-mediated communication and interpersonal communication.
3. Identify types of computer-mediated communication.

Pre-Test

1. Define computer-mediated communication.
2. Explain synchronous communication and asynchronous communication.
3. Explain the differences between computer-mediated communication and interpersonal communication.

CONTENT

We are all involved in mediated communication which is any communication interaction using technology as the primary channel. Mediated communication is more than just the electronic and the print media. It is any form of communication that employs electronic means. Computer-mediated communication, often referred to as CMC, is human-to-human communication using networked computer environments to facilitate interaction. Computer-mediated communication is different from mediated communication because the human-to-human interaction is interactive. Individuals involved in the computer-mediated interaction serve simultaneously as source and receiver. Computers, connected via the Internet or a computer network, act as the channel of communication. Because the interaction is personal, the message can consist of anything the two people wish to discuss. And because CMC is interactive, feedback naturally occurs through the exchange of interactive messages. Computer-mediated communication is defined as any communication that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices. The term has traditionally been referred to those communications that occur via computer-mediated formats. The popular forms of CMC include e-mail, video, audio or text chat, text conferencing, instant messaging, bulletin boards and weblogs.

Importance of Mediated Communication

Many of the rationale for the study of interpersonal communication are also relevant to the study of mediated communication.

First, an understanding of the process of mediated communication will enable you to learn to think critically about the messages the media send to you. You will become a more thoughtful media consumer.

Second, as a citizen of a world in which technology seems to be bringing people closer together, it will help you to understand how the media function and to develop the skills to interpret their significance.

Also, another reason to study mediated communication is to become a more thoughtful producer of mediated messages. Sending an e-mail message, creating a web page, and posting to an online chat room or discussion board are all examples of mediated communication.

Differences between Computer-Mediated Communication and Interpersonal Communication

The following are some of the differences between CMC and interpersonal communication.

- 1. Missing Signals:** There is a considerable body of research into situations where the usual range of non-verbal cues can only play a limited part—such as making a phone call. A theory of cuelessness developed by Derek Rutter is a good example. The theory suggests that we are influenced by the aggregate number of usable cues or signals we can perceive from the other person. There is lack of non-verbal cues in electronic communication.

2. **The Language of CMC:** Researchers have tried to investigate the special linguistic characteristics of CMC as well as special features which writers have used to insert emotional comments. That you are typing into a computer, and writing messages in CMC does not mean that the messages are like other writing. This is because exchanges are often rapid and informal, and hence more like spoken language.
3. **Identity in CMC:** The notion that CMC is more impersonal has led to predictions that CMC will encourage people to behave in less orderly ways. Because of the anonymity and impersonality, people will be much more inclined to be rude, abusive and antisocial.
4. **Community in CMC:** In CMC, we can create identities for ourselves which mean that we are not automatically judged in terms of all the usual social cues such as race, gender and class. Some writers have argued that this gives an opportunity for more democratic communication across existing social boundaries. On-line communities have certainly been created and we can observe how they have developed norms for interaction and handle conflict between members with more or less success.

Types of Computer-mediated Communication

One way to classify types of CMC is to determine whether the communication is synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronous communication occurs when members of the communication interaction are able to interact in real time and each participant is simultaneously a sender and receiver. For instance, a face-to-face conversation or telephone call is

synchronous. Asynchronous communication occurs when the communication interaction has delays and each participant must take turns being the sender or receiver. You must have engaged in asynchronous communication if you have ever kept in touch with a friend or family member by mail. Some of the popular types of CMC include e-mail, bulletin board systems, instant messaging/chat, audio-video conferencing and multi-user environments.

- 1. Electronic mail or e-mail:** This uses Internet or a computer network to send addressable messages to another person connected to the Internet or network. It is a popular form of asynchronous CMC.
- 2. Bulletin Board Systems (BBS):** They are text based on asynchronous communication tools that allow you to disseminate information to a large number of people. BBS discussions housed on websites are focused on a particular topic of interest.
- 3. Instant Messaging and Chat:** This form of synchronous communication is a text that allows users to connect two computers over the Internet and have a “conversation” through their computers. It requires specialized software, often free, that allows you to contact other people and establish instant messaging. Various websites host chat rooms that allow multiple users to log on and interact with other users. Internet relay chat (IRC) is a text-based synchronous communication system that allows multiple users to interact in real time via the Internet.
- 4. Audio-Video Conferencing:** It uses the Internet or a network to connect two or more multi-media-capable computers for live, interactive conversations using visual and auditory channels of communication.

Computer microphones are usually made use of to conduct conversations over the Internet.

- 5. Multiuser Environments (MUDs):** These are Web-based virtual worlds where participants can interact and engage in fantasy role-playing. This type of synchronous CMC is far less functional than e-mail, video conferencing and instant message. They are primarily for entertainment purpose.

Summary

Interpersonal communication has obviously become increasingly important as computer-mediated communication becomes more widespread. Perhaps a future review of this resource material will have to mirror the fact that face-to-face communication and CMC are both major forms of interaction for the majority of people, and the relationship between the two will be a critical issue for every seasoned communicator.

Pre-Test

1. Attempt the pre-test question again
2. How can the channel affect communication?
3. Is computer-mediated communication a new form of interpersonal communication?

References

- Lea, M. (1992) *Contexts of Computer-Mediated Communication*. London: Harvester-Wheatsheaf
- Turkle, S. (1996) *Life on the Screen: Identity in the age of the Internet*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson
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LECTURE THIRTEEN

Conflict And Interpersonal Communication

Introduction

Communicating in organizations is not an easy task. In fact, a pervasive part of organizational life is conflict. Conflict can be both destructive and productive. This lecture shall give you a working definition of conflict. The styles of interpersonal conflict management are also discussed.

Objectives

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1. define interpersonal conflict
2. compare and contrast the styles of interpersonal conflict management

Pre-Test

1. Define interpersonal conflict
2. Explain the styles of interpersonal conflict management.
3. Distinguish between interpersonal conflict and interpersonal violence.

CONTENT

Conflict is an inevitable part of close relationships and can take a negative emotional toll. Numerous research studies have shown that quantity of conflict in a relationship is not as important as how the conflict is

handled. Interpersonal conflict is distinct from interpersonal violence which goes beyond communication to include abuse. What exactly is conflict? Putnam and Poole's (1987) definition highlights several critical components of conflict: "The interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals." Conflict can destroy work relationships or create a needed impetus for organizational change and development. Interpersonal conflict occurs in interactions where there are real or perceived incompatible goals, scarce resources, or opposing view points. Interpersonal conflict may be expressed verbally or non verbally along a continuum ranging from a nearly imperceptible cold shoulder to a very obvious blowout.

Conflict Management Styles

There has been much research done on different types of conflict management styles, which are communication strategies that attempt to avoid, address or resolve a conflict. It must be noted that styles are not always consciously chosen. We may instead be caught up in emotion and become reactionary. The strategies for managing conflict include competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising and collaborating.

Competing Style

The competing style indicates a high concern for self and a low concern for others. When we compete, we are striving to win the conflict, potentially at the expense or loss of the other person. One way we may gauge our win is by being granted or taking concessions from the other

person. The competing style also involves the use of power, which can be coercive or non coercive. This style has been linked to aggression, although the two are not always paired if assertiveness does not work. There is a chance it could escalate to hostility.

Avoiding Style

This often indicates low concern for self and a low concern for others, and no direct communication about the conflict. In some situations, avoiding a conflict can show a high level of concern for the other. In general, avoidance does not mean that there is no communication about the conflict. Remember, you cannot NOT communicate! Even when you try to avoid conflict, you may intentionally or unintentionally give your feelings away through verbal and non verbal communication. This style is either passive or indirect, meaning there is little information exchange.

Accommodating Style

A style that indicates a low concern for self and a high concern for others and is often viewed as passive or submissive. This is because someone complies with or obliges another without providing personal input. Generally, we accommodate because we are being generous, we are obeying or we are yielding. Accommodating can be suitable when there is little chance that our own goals can be achieved. Research has shown that the accommodating style is more likely to occur when there are time restraints and less likely to occur when someone does not want to appear weak. The context for and motivation behind accommodating play a vital role in whether or not it is an appropriate conflict management strategy.

Compromising Style

This style shows a moderate concern for self and others and may indicate that there is a low investment in the conflict or relationship. Even though it is always said that the best way to handle a conflict is to compromise, the compromising style is not a win, win solution. It is a partial win and lose. In essence, when we compromise, we give up some or most of what we want. It may be a good strategy when there are time limitations or when prolonging a conflict may lead to relationship deterioration. Compromise may also be good when both parties have equal power or when other resolution strategies have refused to work.

Collaborating Style

This is a style that involves a high degree of concern for self and others. It usually indicates investment in the conflict situation and the relationship. Although the collaborating style takes the most work in terms of communication competence, it ultimately leads to a win/win situation in which neither party has to make concessions because a mutually beneficial solution is discovered. Its obvious advantage is that both parties are satisfied and which could lead to positive problem solving in the future. It could also strengthen the overall relationship. The disadvantage lies in the fact that it is time consuming and only one person may be willing to embrace this approach.

Summary

In this lecture, it has been established that interpersonal conflict is distinct from interpersonal violence, which goes beyond communication to include abuse. When conflict is well managed, it has the potential to lead to more rewarding and satisfactory relationships.

Post-Test

1. Explain how perception and culture influence interpersonal conflict
2. Discuss the strategies for effectively managing conflict
3. Attempt the pre-test questions again.

References

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