

Communication Conundrums: Ideas through the noise

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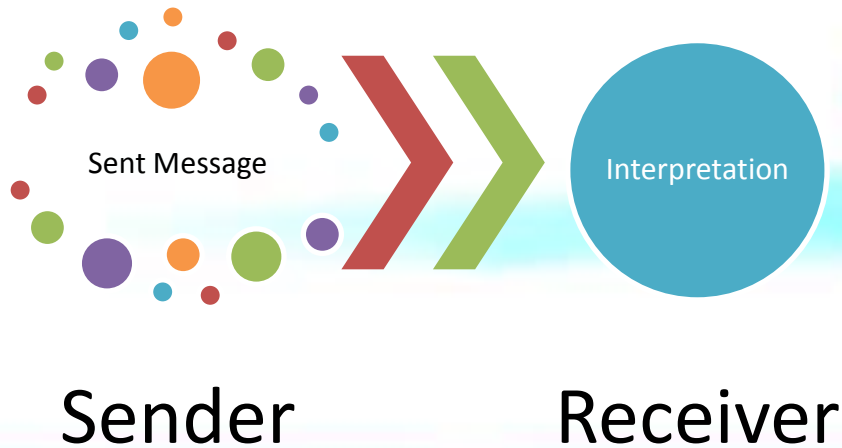
What is Communication?

“Communication is something so simple and difficult that we can never put it in simple words”

T.S. Matthews

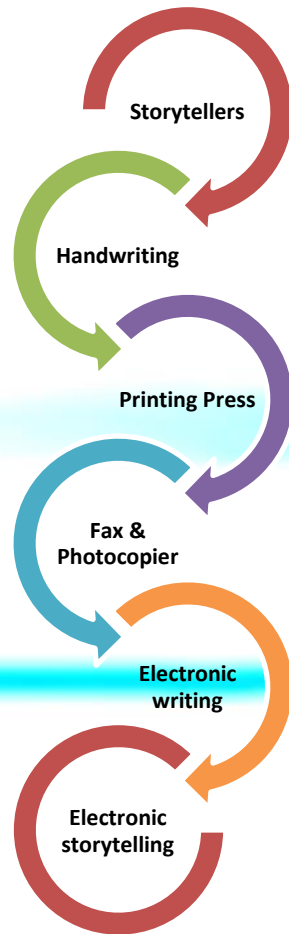


Traditional Communication Theory



- Modelled on the 'broadcast transmission' concept
 - A message is encoded by the sender and sent to a receiver to decode
 - Later added the concept of 'noise' that affects what is received
- Individuals interpret according to their individual knowledge and assumptions
 - What is meant and what is understood does not always match

Modern Communication Streams



- Communication is always adapting to current needs
- First was verbal communication, writing came later
- Written talking: chat rooms, SMS, and some YouTube videos are written forms of verbal discussion
- Communication and language changes constantly to catch up with technologies and social needs

More Communication Theories

Social Contagion Theory

- Emotions can be transmitted and shared by communication:
 - “Flame wars” on internet forums
 - “Poe’s Law” that humour may be misinterpreted if not accompanied by indicators of satire

Belkin, 2009

Functional Communication

- Integrative Communication: constructively integrates disclosure, volunteering information, aims at mutual problem-solving
- Dysfunctional Communication: making unilateral demands, withdrawing, or coping strategy

Miller, Reznik & Roloff, 2012

Communication and Productivity



- For a message to be interpreted the way it was intended, the sender and receiver need to share:
 - Perspective
 - Meaning
 - Attention or focus
 - Noise
- Misunderstandings need patience and understanding to resolve

Communication and Conflict

- Emotions impair communication
- ‘Written speaking’ such as SMS or Twitter can easily be misinterpreted like speech, but remain permanent like writing

“The two words ‘information’ and ‘communication’ are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through”

– Sydney J. Harris



Communication: Thought-Starters

When communicating, remember that...

- Noise, expectations and personal ideas affect how your ideas are interpreted by others
- Communication is constantly changing to meet social needs
- Written discussions are a form of that change, and work far more like a verbal conversation than a structured essay
- Emotions are transmitted by communication, even written ones
- Individual meaning may not be shared for a variety of reasons including culture, language barriers, or other life events
- Silence may indicate agreement but it may also be a sign of dysfunctional coping mechanisms
- Talking is easy... communicating is difficult

Is it me, or is it my staff?

Ideas on making sure the right message is being sent, to save effort and trouble later on -

- What do you do to check that the listener has understood the message as intended?
- What can you do to remove confusion or misunderstanding after initial communication?
- Who will be responsible for failures to communicate?
- When should people show that they understand, when should they come back with questions or queries?

References

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- Goldin-Meadow, S., & Alibali M.W. (2013) “Gesture’s Role in Speaking, Learning, and Creating Language” in *Annual Review of Psychology*, 64: 257-284.
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