

COMMUNICATION - ORGANIZATIONS' WORK DEVICE

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ABSTRACT: *Communication represents a complex process of transmitting messages, owing to which the emitter encodes the information transmitted through a specific channel towards a receiver that will decode it. Owing to communication, organizations transmit to their customers the fact that they are capable of meeting one of their needs, of settling a problem or of offering a profit. Non-verbal and para-verbal communications usually accompany verbal communication. The importance of assimilating the forms of communication is, at an organizational level, a complex device that determines the mastering of certain techniques, procedures, and algorithms of encoding and decoding intricate messages transmitted through various channels.*

KEY WORDS: *organizational communication; communication channels; verbal communication; non-verbal communication; para-verbal communication*

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1. DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Communication is a complex process of transmitting messages, owing to which the emitter encodes the information transmitted through a specific channel towards a receiver that is going to decode it. The efficiency of the transmission is evaluated owing to the feedback reaction. One can more and more notice the tendency of displaying the communication process as being a unidirectional one, namely targeting the deliberate influence of the receiver by the emitter. At a common level, communication - as a message exchange between individuals - is understood as being the transmission, written or oral, of data. Owing to communication, organizations transmit to those who are interested the fact that they are capable of meeting one of their needs, of settling a problem or of offering a profit. During the last twenty years various models of representing the communication process have been elaborated. The model below emphasizes the key factors that intervene during an efficient communication.

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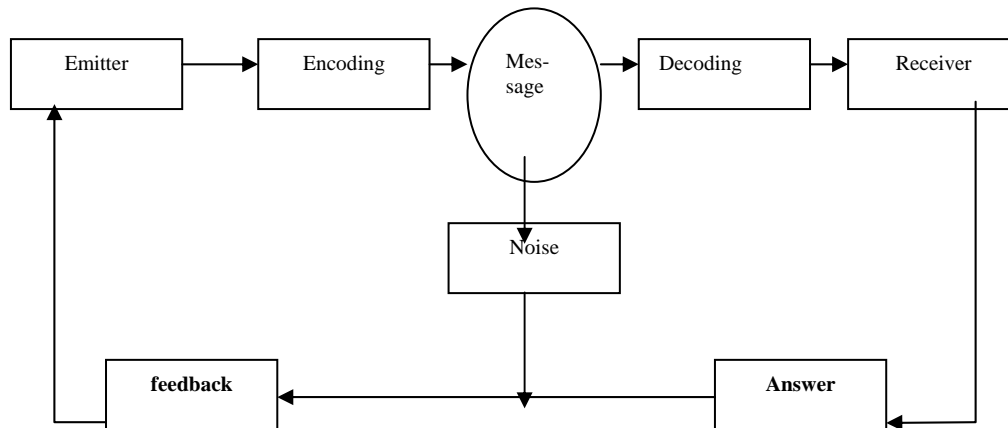


Figure 1. Graphic representation of the process of communication (Nita, 1999)

The communication process implies the following key elements:

- the emitter - the source of the message - that selects and encodes as a signal the data that are going to be transmitted towards the receiver;
- the channel - the means of transmitting the message;
- the code - a common system of rules, signs, and symbols which is specific to the members of a certain cultural community;
- the media - the manner of converting the message into a signal so that it can be transmitted through the specific channel;
- the noise - factors that influence the signal during its transmission (beginning with the encoding up to decoding). the noise limits the amount of information that can be transmitted under certain given circumstances; it can change the initial meaning of the message which, finally, determines perception and decoding errors at the level of the receiver;
- the receiver - the addressee of the message;
- the answer or the reverse reaction - the reaction of the receiver after decoding the message;
- feedback - the part of the receiver's answer backwardly transmitted to the emitter.

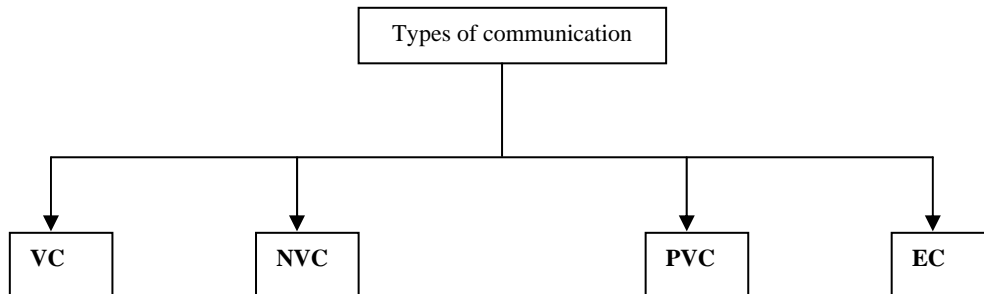
Inter-human communication is carried out according to four levels, namely: Logical (verbal): direct or oral; indirect or written; Para-verbal; Non-verbal; Energetic.

In the middle of the '70s, certain works emphasized the share of each of the already mentioned four levels of the communication process. Accordingly, the logical (verbal) level of language (the words) represents only 7% of the whole act of communication; 38% of the communication takes place on a para-verbal level (tone, volume, pronunciation speed, frequency, etc.), and 55% at a non-verbal level (gestures, mimics, dynamics of mimics, movements of the body or of certain of its parts, etc.). One can notice that, at the time, the problem of energetic communication was not yet formulated.

2. TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

The study of the three levels of communication as a whole (verbal, para-verbal, and non-verbal) is going to determine the understanding of the message from the point of view of the complexity of the types of communication - figure 2 which accordingly display the specific characteristics of each type of communication, emphasizing the essential elements of communication at the level of organizations.

Verbal communication - regards what people communicate owing to the transmission and decoding of the symbolical meaning of the words. The word is the raw material of verbal communication; at its turn, it includes a series of signs having a symbolical value.



VC-verbal communication; NVC-non-verbal communication; PVC-para-verbal communication; EC-energetic communication (Nita, 1999)

Figure 2. Types of communication

The multitude of the combinations of verbal signs that have specific significations draws out the vocabulary of a certain language. In case of words, the smallest particles that cannot be divided anymore are letters which are understood as formal associations between a given graphical representation and a certain meaning. Accordingly, a graphical sign might have one or several meanings and, reversely, a meaning might have several graphical signs. Let's refer to the meaning of "B" which, depending on the various cultures, has several graphical representations. Indo-European languages attach the graphical sign B to the meaning of "B", while Arabian language has a totally different graphical sign to be attached to this meaning which is quite undecipherable to a non-speaker. Similarly, to the meaning of "B" the specific sound of certain cultures may be associated, this being in fact its pronunciation.

The association of graphical signs according to a certain order determines a new meaning; in case one refers to the graphical signs of letters, their ordering determines a word. Accordingly, the meaning of the word "tulip" associates various formal orderings of graphical signs: in Romanian - "lalea", in French - "tulipe", etc. A word means verbal, symbolical language, irrespective of its being pronounced or written. From this point of view, written communication is also a verbal

communication as it also relies upon the language of words. The sound expression of *viva voce* is replaced by the graphical expression of the written word.

As a conclusion, one can state that verbal communication is done owing to verbalized words or written words.

Para-verbal communication - regards what voice (volume, intonation, intensity, rhythm, accent, pauses, etc) and verbal manifestations without a verbal content (laughing, coughing, moaning, sighing, belching, screaming, etc.) communicate. The inflexions of voice, its intensity, the energetic load of sonorous waves are all forms of para-verbal communication.

Non-verbal communication - regards the gestures, mimics or tacit phrases/expressions. The multitude of gestures, of mimics and of attitudinal expressions can altogether make up a non-verbal language exhibiting characteristics according to the various cultures.

It is quite important to understand that the meanings of gestures and mimics are sometimes different from one culture to the other.

The last two forms of communication (para-verbal and non-verbal) accompany, as a rule, verbal communication; frequently, the true meaning of a message is non-verbally or para-verbally influenced. The decoding of the non-verbal or para-verbal message as well as its impact upon the receiver depends on the following factors:

- the inner coherence of the individual;
- the capacity of dissimulation;
- the individual's ability and strength of manipulation;
- the capacity of self-control of non-verbal and para-verbal communication.

In short, when among the three levels - logical, para-verbal, and non-verbal - there are no contradictions; communication can be efficient; it means that the message has a major impact upon the receiver.

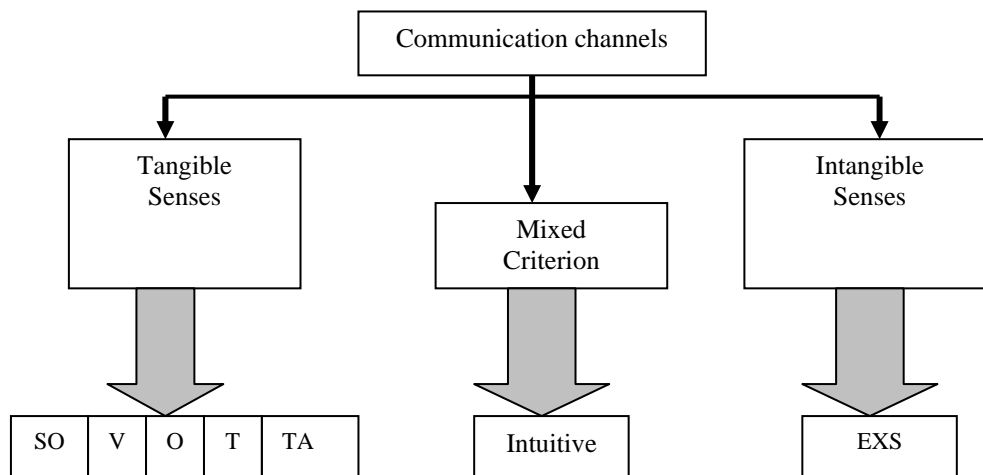
The transmitted message is not going to have the expected effect in case there is a contradiction among the levels and not a synchronism; contradiction determines the incoherence of the act of communication due to the different significance of the three levels of the message.

Energetic communication - lately, the specialists in communication have extended their researches towards a new domain, known as 'paranormal communication'. Specifically, two persons that find themselves at a certain distance from one another can transmit and receive messages without having a direct contact based on senses (auditory, visual, tactile, etc.). In fact, one deals with an energetic communication, energy being, according to physicists, a form of matter existence.

3. CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Individuals' interaction (visual, tactile, sound contact, etc.) can be done owing to anatomic analyzers. Conventionally, the various types of communication means are called channels (figure 3). The most known and used communication channel is the sound channel (according to certain authors, the verbal channel). When considering the key elements that occur within communication, one may regard it as a process of

initiation, of transmitting, with or without change, and of receiving a certain message/enunciation which is shared by one or several actors as emitters - E and receivers - R who can become, owing to a part inter-change, co-emitters and co-receivers.



SO-sound; V-visual; O-odorous; T-tasty; TA-tactile; EXS-extra-sensorial

Figure 3. Tangible, intangible and mixed channels

The capacity of inter-change of a communication process is the ability of the receiver to become co-emitter through initiating and transmitting a message that is synchronic or not with the received message. A communication process is, accordingly, reversible. The existence of a reverse, tangible reaction of the receiver determines its reversing character as a specific element of communication. Let's notice that, when, during an emitter's message, the receiver interferes with a single verbal, para-verbal or non-verbal message, the reverse reaction appears; the moment the receiver emits the message the inter-change of the parts under the given circumstances occurs, a fact that represents the inter-change capacity of the communication processes.

Within the context of inter-human communication, individuals are not aware, most of the time, of the complexity of the communication act whose success depends on the encoding capacity of the emitter - E and on the correct decoding of the receiver - R. People establish contacts among each other, not only through transmitting a correct verbal message - anticipating the fact that they have adequately used the channel of verbal communication, but also through "touching", "seeing", "smelling", "inferring" the person next to them. In short, individuals also interact owing to channels that differ from the sound one which, nevertheless, is the most used one. Quite often, as communication specialists have shown, the use of the visual or tactile channels in association with the verbal one has an even larger impact at the level of the receiver as compared with the circumstances when only the sound channel is employed.

In fact, during a communication process a mixture of messages is transmitted through several channels. It is wide known that usually a message is better

acknowledged (up to 60%) when it is accompanied by a retinal image which is synchronic with the message. Figure 3 displays the division of communication channels as they are perceived by anatomic analyzers.

4. THE IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE OF VERBAL, NON-VERBAL, AND PARA-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The tonality, frequency, and rhythm of speech are, most often, as important as the words. Certain authors consider that the meaning of the words represents 7% of inter-human communication, while tone 38%. The rest, namely 55%, represents the non-verbal message that is the “language of the body”. Most authors assign to verbal messages a maximum 10% share. The interference of para-verbal messages over the content of the oral message may determine the intensifying, weakening, distortion or annihilation of the significance of the words. Nevertheless, when adequately used, para-verbal messages become efficient devices of influencing and controlling the receiver. Para-verbal messages may determine, at the level of the organizations, the quick getting or losing of authority and control; it may also determine the approval or refuse of the issues in debate. Para-verbal messages encourage, intimidate, maintain pressure or give up control. During the process of inter-human communication, one should equally focus upon the logical (verbal), para-verbal, and non-verbal levels as a whole.

Non-verbal language together with the para-verbal one can support, contradict or even diminish the impact of the verbal message at the level of the receiver. Non-verbal message should be given most attention by the receiver as it is most close to the emitter’s reality. Non-verbal messages, irrespective of circumstances, have always an impact upon the sub-conscious. Most of the gestures and mimics involuntarily appear; they accordingly allow the actors implied in communication to also decode what lies beneath the verbal message and what is not intended to be transmitted. People say that there is a sixth sense that receives the information which is not verbally expressed by the emitter.

The preference for employing the verbal message is based upon the easiness of direct, oral communication, yet, only after it has been adequately acquired, namely after the individual attends various educational stages (elementary school, high school, faculty). Most often, when at the level of an organization, a serious matter should be analyzed, people consider that “face to face communication” is better employed and phone communication should be avoided. The fact resides in the obstructive character of the telephone which stops non-verbal communication and distorts para-verbal messages so that communication becomes incomplete and uncertain. The language of the body influences the impact of communication through the expression of the face, the movement of the body, the amplitude of the gestures, the form and position of the body, the general appearance, etc.

The impact is also wider owing to tactile communication - such as the texture of a cloth, the density of the cloth, the color, etc. as well as owing to the sound one - the rustle of a cloth, a shoe’s noise or a briefcase opening or closing.

The non-verbal communication transmitted through a visual channel has in view the expression of the face, the posture, the attitude, etc. The expression of the face includes the mimics (knitting the brows, pursing up the lips, etc.), the smile, and the eyes (the energetic contact of the eyes or its lack, the intensity of the sight, its expression and direction which can decisively influence the partner). Depending on the real internal feelings one can notice that people often involuntarily smile or frown, they fix the partner's eyes or grow red. The face is the most expressive part of the human body and its expression is an amazing means of communication. For instance, certain organization leaders consider that when talking with a business woman her eyes' expression is more important than the verbal message itself.

Mimics represent that expression of the face that communicates messages common or different from one culture to the other. Experimental decoding of the various messages transmitted by the expression of the face has shown that although one can identify certain standard expressions, nevertheless they differ from one individual to the other.

Accordingly, the forehead getting lined can express anger, anxiety, frustration or warning regarding the confidential character of a certain matter; the eyebrows lifted while having the eyes open usually express surprise, wonder; a wrinkled nose might show displeasure; enlarged nostrils may express anger; tightened lips show incertitude, hesitation, hiding certain data, preparing for a negative answer or scarcely dissimulated anger. Owing to the conscious control of the displayed non-verbal communication, a good communicator may also become a very good manipulator.

The smile is a complex gesture that requires a certain interpretation under specific circumstances. A smile is capable of transmitting a large gamut of data about the interlocutor's mood, beginning with pleasure, joy, satisfaction, and ending with promising, cynicism or embarrassment. The interpretation of the meaning of a smile varies from one culture to another, being strictly connected with those specific assumptions which are made in connection with the inter-human relations within the particular environment.

The sight represents a complex process with a strong emotional connotation. The manner people watch and the way they are watched is connected with people's need of approval, accepting, trust, and friendship as well as with people's desires and expectations. Even "looking to someone" or "not looking to someone" has certain significance. One generally considers that looking to someone means that the person's presence has been acknowledged. Intercepting somebody's eyes may be an invitation to communication or even a help demand. A direct sight might mean honesty and intimacy, although under certain circumstances it may express threat.

As a rule, a continual and insistent sight (of several seconds, even tens of seconds) disturbs, being able to determine a tensed mood of the person being watched. An intermittent and short sight contact may show lack of friendship, anxiousness or wish to communicate. The upward movement of the eyes expresses the attempt of reminding something; their downward movement shows sadness, modesty, shyness or hiding certain emotions or lies. Not to look to someone may show lack of interest or coldness. Avoiding the sight at the horizontal level of the two eyes means hiding the feelings, lack of comfort or guilt, even lie. The people who are not at ease with

themselves are going to avoid the interlocutor's eyes under certain circumstances when they feel threatened, while they will look for their interlocutor's eyes under favorable circumstances. Sight represents a "non-tactile" manner of touching somebody, of communicating what words cannot express; one deals, in fact, with an "energetic communication".

Dilated eye balls when the light intensity does not diminish in the environment show powerful emotions. The eye balls generally widen when something pleasant is being watched. The eye balls narrow when unpleasantness, anger or envy occur. Frequent blinking expresses anxiety, fear or even the risk of losing control while negotiating.

A posture mainly expresses the social statute individuals think they possess or want to exhibit, namely their desire of getting a certain social status. The posture of the body may also provide data about attitude, emotions, kindness or the power of negotiation, including the openness towards a sincere communication. Let's notice that when a message exchange between two persons who are sitting on chairs occurs, the one that manifests a tendency to dominate is going to raise the head upwards and lean the body backwards while the interlocutor, subconsciously impressed, will adopt a submissive attitude with the head slightly bowed frontward. As a rule, the body's bowing frontward expresses interest in the interlocutor; nevertheless, it may show anxiety and preoccupation. A relaxed position, leaning backwards, may show detachment, boredom or excessive self-confidence, power of negotiation, but also self-defense when facing persons having a higher social status.

Non-verbal communication transmitted through the tactile channel manifests itself through the frequency, intensity, and duration of touch, through the manner people shake hands, clasp the arms or slap the shoulder, etc. Touches have various significations depending on different cultures. Certain individuals avoid all kind of touches. The intensity and type of the touch largely depend on age, statute, the kind of relations among individuals, culture.

Personal presence communicates owing to the body's shape, clothes, smell (perfume or specific odor of the body), jewels or other accessories, supplemental data about the individuals regarding their preferences, attitudes, degree of education, etc. Our culture acknowledges certain attitudes regarding the connection among the shape of the body, the exterior appearance, and the personality. Accordingly, one deals with three types of physical appearance:

- Ecto-morph (fragile, thin, and tall);
- Endomorph (fat, round, and short);
- Mezzo-morph (muscled, athletic, and tall).

Due to social determinations, people are used to associate certain behavioral traits with each of the three physical types mentioned above. Accordingly, one tends to perceive ecto-morphs as being young, ambitious, suspicious, strained, nervous, and less masculine; endomorphs are perceived as being old-fashioned, less physically resistant, talkative, trustful, friendly, and pleasant, depending on third parties; mezzo-morphs are perceived as stubborn, powerful, adventurous, displaying a mature behavior, self-confident, and always victorious.

Clothes, to the extent to which they are the result of a personal choice, emphasize the individual's personality; they are an extension of the human ego and, consequently, under such circumstances, transmit data about the individual. Clothes can be used to "play" a part at an organizational level during negotiations. Quite often, clothes give the individual a shape that does not match the individual's inner character, being a screen behind which a series of shortcomings can be hidden. Clothes and accessories may also point the real or claimed social status. Let's remind those women who have important managerial positions and who tend to particularly dress up: a sober two parts suit, and who bear accessories similar to the masculine ones: suitcases.

Non-conformist clothes generally communicate the fact that their bearer is an original person, a social rebel, a problem initiating person, artist or journalist. Negligent clothes are mainly associated with the inner value of the individual. When doing business, organizations appreciate elegant and quality clothes instead of sophisticated ones. Personal hygiene is also an important factor.

Odor transmits in the environment messages the individuals are aware or not of. Strong perfume, though a high quality one, inadequately draws attention and suggests a poor taste or provoking intentions.

The importance of acknowledging the forms of communication at an organizational level resides in the fact that a good communication specialist will always be able to master techniques, procedures, and algorithms of encoding and decoding complex messages transmitted through various channels. In order to be understood, messages should be:

- Short, clear, precise, coherent;
- Visible and legible;
- Easily decoded;
- Adequate to the communication channel;
- Adequate to the targeted goal;
- Adequate to target-groups;
- Adequate to space, time, and context;
- Capable of catching attention;
- Non-contradictory.

The obstacles of verbal communication are determined by:

- Message's ambiguity due to inefficiently expressed meanings;
- Polarity - the tendency of regarding reality as contradictory hypostases and of describing it owing to extreme words (good or bad, nice or ugly, etc.);
- Generalization - general enunciations determining confusion and frequently generating conflicts, especially when words like: never, nowhere, nobody are uttered;
- Obvious and repeated indiscretion (regarding religious convictions, sexual behaviors, private life, etc.);
- Logorrhea that does not consider the receiver's interest;
- Egocentrism that induces frustration and gradually puts aside the interlocutors;

- Secrecy which has a negative communicational and relational effect as those partners whom secrets are not shared to feel excluded, offended, and suspected;
- Jargon that determines communication blocking when the auditorium does not grasp the meaning or when it does not match the status or educational level;
- Abstract language which determines interpretation and credibility issues.

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