

CONFIDENCE, REDUNDANCY, AND THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION

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American servicemen are trained to maintain silence in order to avoid drawing enemy fire. Wherever Americans have fought they have remarked about the noisiness of the enemy. Objective studies of communication during the Second World War question the wisdom of quietude, however.¹ Research indicated that talk was the means by which each man knew he had group support. Without the reassuring noise of his comrades each man feared he faced the enemy alone. Silence bred anxiety, noise developed confidence. These facts call for a new approach to theories of communication.

What is communication? Communication begins with a sender's intention to tell a receiver something about a topic. The sender puts his intention about the topic into code and sends his message. Every message has its content and structure. The structure relates the contents of the message in the way that mortar fastens bricks to make a wall.

The message must be sent over a channel in some medium. These, too, govern the message. We refer to the channel and medium together as the *process* aspect of communication. Messages may be altered when, for example, the medium changes from speech to writing.

The receiver decodes the message. Then he acts upon his inference about the sender's intent.

The sender, topic, and receiver share some characteristics. They belong to some community. We call this similarity among them their *rapport*.

The essential in communication which embraces the process and the rapport we call *confidence*. Theories of communication often overlook confidence.² The inclusion of confidence as an essential in communication clarifies paradoxes which otherwise arise. Witness

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1. S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire*, (Toronto: George J. McLeod, Ltd., 1947).

2. C. E. Osgood and T. A. Sebeck (Eds.), *Psycholinguistics*, (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1954).

the apparent ineffectiveness of chatter from a baseball team — ineffective except that noise builds confidence.

When does communication occur? Communication occurs whenever a sender *emits* a message toward a receiver. Notice, we do not demand the reception of the message. To define communication as transmission places greater emphasis upon reception than is called for by all purposes of communication, because transmission implies the message has been received.

Time and circumstance have often buried works of art such that no audience received them during the artist's lifetime. Can we say that the artist who painted those lost canvases did not communicate? No. Just because a receiver failed to get a message does not mean the message was not sent. Communication occurs when a message is emitted — regardless of its reception. In the special case where the sender is talking to himself our theory still applies. The importance of our definition is that it keeps the effect of communication separate from the definition of communication. Thus, we can speak of communication and "good" or "successful" communication. One does not mean the other.

What effects has communication? Each emission may expand or contract the facility of the medium and/or channel. Changes in the process affect the structure and content of the message. Messages, in turn, affect coding. Messages may also change rapport. Therefore, each emission may affect other or future communication. These effects we may call *feedback*. Feedback occurs regardless of reception. However, reception has greatest influence upon confidence.

This means that each canvas an artist paints may affect his other canvases. With each painting his technique may change. If someone reacts to his work, the artist may alter other paintings accordingly. But the very act of painting may change the rapport among artist, topic, and audience.

We fail to understand the import of communication when, as practical men, we define communication solely as a matter of *transmission*.

When is communication successful? Suppose a man were to call, "STOP!" He would communicate successfully to the degree that people stopped. Surely this is one effect of communication. When success is defined as the degree to which the receiver acts in

A TAXONOMY OF PURPOSE IN COMMUNICATION

Four purposes for communicating, the messages characteristic to them, their criteria of successful communication, and the conditions which govern the repetition of messages

<i>School</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>		<i>Message Figure-Ground Dominance</i>	<i>Criteria of Success</i>		<i>Redundancy Conditions for Repetition</i>
		<i>Time</i>	<i>Space</i>		<i>Emission</i>	<i>Transmission</i>	
Functional	Utility	Immediate	Widespread	Figure: Idiosyncratic	Sender Feedback	Manifest Reception	None, if correct manifest reception
Ascetic	Formality	Eternal	Conservative	Neither: Amorphous	Topic Message Feedback	None	Until perfect form achieved
Totalitarian	Conformity	Temporal	Restrictive	Ground: Massive	Process Feedback	Latent Reception	Until sender's intention changes
Integrative	Creativity	Infinite	Liberative	Both: Inter-active	Rapport Feedback	Manifest and Latent Reception	Until confidence and reception optimized

accordance with the sender's instruction, we speak of *manifest* reception.

We must recognize another effect upon receivers. A sender may wish his audience to correctly infer his intention. He may ask if the receiver experiences the same emotion as the sender tried to convey. When success is defined as the degree to which the receiver correctly infers the sender's intention, we speak of *latent* reception.

Manifest and latent reception are not necessarily compatible. An artist may sell his painting only to find it hung upside down. Or he may receive a prize for his canvas and with it the question, "What does it mean?"

Actually, artist, scientist, and practitioner send message after message without much hope to correct reception. And certainly without much hope of immediate, drastic action by the receiver. Pilot-ground communication, for instance, approaches 99% redundancy. Each message repeats the prior message almost perfectly. We can bemoan the few manifest effects from each communication. We can speak of wasted words. But are these conclusions warranted? Redundancy between the pilot and the ground builds confidence. With greater confidence, the manifest effect, a safe landing, is more likely. Theories based solely upon reception effects cannot explain the confidence-building value of redundancy.

Effects upon confidence are the crux of the issue. Sending a message may increase confidence. Or it may not affect confidence at all. Worse yet, sending a message may decrease confidence. The more confidence two men have in each other, the less frequent and shorter their messages will have to be, and the greater will be the probability of successful communication. Most of our talk with family and friends is ineffective, but it builds confidence. So that at a later date the slightest gesture, the briefest word, may elicit the correct manifest and latent effects. Confidence effects are as important to communication as the reception effects we customarily consider.

Consider emission alone. An experiment no one else knows about may still improve a scientist's technique. In essence this is our intention whenever we re-run an experiment, retouch a painting, or edit a poem. The editing may not affect reception. Worst of all, it may destroy rapport.

"*Newspeak*," the language in George Orwell's *1984*, is edited continuously.³ Each time the number of words becomes fewer. Confidence shrinks with the shrunken vocabulary!

In another Orwell epic, *Animal Farm*, editions of the creed *add* to the message, "All animals are equal."⁴ With each edition confidence shrinks until at last the creed becomes, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

What are the purposes of communication? Confidence grows in importance as we examine the strategy of communication. "Purpose" does not refer to a single poem, dance, canvas, speech, or experiment but to a way of life. Purpose affects the success of communication.

We shall explore four purposes: communication as utility, communication-for-communication's-sake, communication as propaganda, and communication as creativity. The discussion of each purpose requires consideration of different effects. The distinctions among these schools are clearer in theory than in practice, for we have oversimplified them for emphasis.

Functionalism, communication as utility, is a philosophy of immediacy. Feedback to the sender himself is the desired effect. The speaker enjoys his own speech. The functionalist wants his audience to jump. Although manifest effects are short-lived they satisfy a utilitarian purpose of communication.

Communication-for-communication's-sake expresses another purpose. We call this *asceticism*. Painter, poet, speaker, dancer, whatever his field, searches for the correct form in which to express his topic. He does not recognize his own efforts. He tries to ignore reception. He only wishes to act as a medium through which the eternal form may be expressed.

Another school concerns itself with manipulation. This school seeks conformity. Communication has propaganda value. Senders try to increase acceptance of the process of communication. They try to develop receptive attitudes in lieu of manifest behavior. Their communication controls men without arousing consciousness. We call this the *totalitarian* school.

Creativity is another purpose for communication. Creativity implies respect for differences. *Integrators* strive to develop confidence. The sender attempts to develop confidence between himself, the

3. G. Orwell, *1984*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949).

4. G. Orwell, *Animal Farm*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946).

topic, and the receiver. He hopes that greater creativity on his part will enhance reception. Success is measured by both manifest and latent reception. Communicators working toward integrity respect differences and changes in men and nature. This respect for difference and change sharply divides integration from totalitarianism.

The diversities of purpose among these schools demand different tests be made of the effects of communication. One school accepts what another school rejects as successful communication.

When should communication be redundant? The proverb, "A picture is worth ten thousand words," is true in Chinese but false in English. Why? Because the Chinese language is not very redundant. Speaker, topic, and audience share great natural rapport. Confidence is naturally high. English, on the other hand, is highly redundant. In English, communication depends less upon natural rapport, which is customarily lower, and more upon rapport developed by redundancy. It is little wonder that an English-speaking artist often accompanies his painting with ten thousand words!

In functionalism, redundancy may reduce the success of manifest reception. The audience may wonder why the sender repeated his message. Thus, the audience may react differently to the second message than to the first. If they are accustomed to a utilitarian approach to communication, doubt about the need for repeating a message makes both sender and receiver anxious.

The audience has only ceremonial importance to the ascetic. The receiver criticizes the failure of the message to attain perfect form. The shame of having fallen short of perfection is the significant effect for the ascetic.

Under totalitarian influence the receiver expects redundancy. Repeated messages build latent, subconscious attitudes. Redundancy boomerangs, however. Suppose the sender suddenly seeks manifest reception, the audience concerned only with an attitude may not respond. A similar problem occurs when the sender's intention changes. The audience, saturated by previous redundancy, may remain unmoved by the shift in dogma. This failure successfully fosters guilt on the part of both sender and receiver.

The integrator must change his communication according to the effect each message has. Redundancy depends upon both confidence and reception. The demand for communication continues as long as differences and changes occur.

Redundancy is no straight-forward proposition. It may back-fire. The boy who cried "wolf" learned too late that repetition, *per se*, does not develop successful communication. Each *non*-successful message may maintain the present degree of confidence. Each *un*successful message may reduce confidence. Each successful message may increase confidence. Redundancy, therefore, must be judged in view of the school of communication being investigated.

How can communication be investigated? The school to which an artist, scientist, or practitioner belongs may be *uncovered* by questioning him. It may be *recovered* from analyses of his paintings, poems, dances, speeches, articles, whatever his messages might be. Or it may be *discovered* by experiments on communication.⁵

Functionalism fosters idiosyncrasy. Senders individualize their technique. Single figures contrast sharply with their backgrounds. The purpose of this communication is to produce immediate, wide-spread effects.

Asceticism ignores individuality. Imitation may be so perfect that neither time, place, nor author can be identified. Figure and ground blend amorously. The purposes of asceticism are conservative and eternal.

Totalitarian communication exploits mass. Grandiosity plays a major role. Groups attract attention. Alterations to suit dogma rather than imitations of form receive emphasis. Totalitarian messages are temporal and restrictive.

Many artists, scientists, and practitioners hope their messages will liberate men. They recognize the infinite task of creating greater integrity among men. They respect confidence and the audience whose behavior and attitude so clearly affect rapport.

What can we conclude about communication? Communication includes a sender, a topic, a receiver, and the confidence among them. Communication occurs when a sender emits a message toward a receiver. Communication may affect the sender, the topic/message, and/or the confidence by feedback; it may effect the receiver by stimulation.

The success of communication is measured by its effect. Manifest reception pertains to overt behavior, latent reception to the sequence of or attitude reflected by overt behavior. Confidence effects include changes in the process (medium/channel) and rapport.

5. H. A. Grace, "When is science?," *Journal of Educational Theory*, in press.

The purpose of communication defines the effects to be considered in measuring success. Functionalism considers sender feedback and manifest reception. Asceticism considers topic/message feedback. Totalitarianism considers process feedback and latent reception. Integration considers rapport feedback and both manifest and latent reception.

This theory emphasizes certain points. (1) Confidence is an essential in communication. (2) Communication is defined as emission alone. (3) Changes in confidence, process, and rapport may be criteria for successful communication. (4) A classification of purposes for communicating is suggested. (5) Senders whose purposes differ define successful communication differently. (6) Whether or not a message should be repeated depends upon the sender's purpose for communicating.

RESEARCH NOTES

Arnold S. Gebel, "Self Perception and Leaderless Group Discussion Status," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 40 (November 1954) 309-318.

"This investigation sought to discover, through a phenomenological approach to personality, whether the emerged leader of an initially leaderless group discussion had a different way of seeing himself than the person who did not attain high leadership status. . . ." "Subjects were nine sorority girls who attained the highest discussion status and nine who attained the lowest discussion status in their respective seven-member discussion groups. Each subject was interviewed for one hour; each interview was tape recorded."

The investigation revealed that "Leaders tended to have more positive attitudes toward themselves, tended to perceive others' affect on them to be more positive, and tended to perceive the world with a lower positive affect than nonleaders. Leaders perceived themselves less negatively, they perceived their affect on others less negatively. Various indices of the conceptual matrix suggested that leaders perceived a lack of threat in the situation, and more importantly it suggested an active, outgoing, or maybe even extravertive trend. Nonleaders higher on the last conceptual category hinted at a passive, spectator type of role." Further, nonleaders tended to express much stronger negative feelings than leaders. Nonleaders tended to be much more restricted in what they talked about in the interviews than did the leaders. "Nonleaders tended to strongly identify themselves with the group to which they belonged, i.e., the sorority; they tended to be more prejudiced towards out-groups, and they tended to think more in stereotypes."