

Basic Elements of Communication

Communication takes place when one person transmits ideas or feelings to another person or group of people. The effectiveness of the communication is measured by the similarity between the idea transmitted and the idea received. The process of communication is composed of three elements:

- Source (sender, speaker, writer, encoder, transmitter, or instructor)
- Symbols used in composing and transmitting the message (words or signs [model prop/desk lamp in *Figure 4-1*])
- Receiver (listener, reader, decoder, or learner)

The three elements are dynamically interrelated since each element is dependent on the others for effective communication to take place. The relationship between the source and the receiver is also dynamic and depends on the two-way flow of symbols between the source and the receiver. The source depends on feedback from the receiver to properly tailor the communication to the situation. The source also provides feedback to the receiver to reinforce the desired receiver responses.

Source

As indicated, the source in communication is the sender, speaker, writer, encoder, transmitter, or instructor. The effectiveness of persons acting in the role of communicators is related to at least three basic factors.

First, their ability to select and use language is essential for transmitting symbols that are meaningful to listeners and readers. It is the responsibility of the speaker or writer, as the source of communication, to realize that the effectiveness of the communication is dependent on the receiver's understanding of the symbols or words being used. For example, if an aviation maintenance instructor were to use aviation acronyms like ADs, TCDS or STCs or a flight instructor were to use aviation acronyms like ILS, TCAS, or TAWS with a new maintenance learner or learner pilot respectively, effective communication would be difficult if not impossible.

Second, communicators consciously or unconsciously reveal information about themselves. This includes their self-image, their view of the ideas being communicated, and their feelings toward the receivers. Communicators need to be confident; they should illustrate that the message is important, and that the receivers have a need to know the ideas presented.

Third, successful communicators speak or write from accurate, up-to-date, and stimulating material. Communicators should convey the most current and interesting information available. Doing so holds the receiver's interest. Out-of-date information causes the instructor to lose credibility, and uninteresting information may cause the receiver's attention to be lost.

Symbols

At its basic level, all communication is achieved through symbols, which are simple oral, visual, or tactile codes. The words in the vocabulary constitute a basic code. Common gestures and facial expressions form another, but codes and symbols alone do not communicate complex concepts. These are communicated only when symbols are combined in meaningful wholes as ideas, sentences, paragraphs, speeches, or chapters that mean something to the receiver. When symbols are combined into these units, each portion becomes important to effective communication.

On a higher level, communication with symbols relies upon different perceptions, sometimes referred to as channels. While many theories have been proposed, one popular theory indicates that the symbols are perceived through one of three sensory channels: visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. As discussed in Chapter 3, visual learners rely on seeing, auditory learners prefer listening and speaking, while kinesthetic learners process and store information through physical experience such as touching, manipulating, using, or doing.

The instructor may gain and retain the learner's attention by using a variety of channels. As an example, instead of telling a learner to adjust the trim, the instructor can move the trim wheel while the learner tries to maintain a given aircraft attitude. The learner experiences by feel that the trim wheel affects the amount of control pressure needed to maintain the attitude. At the same time, the instructor can explain to the learner that what is felt is forward or back pressure on the controls. After that, the learner begins to understand the correct meaning of control pressure and trim, and when told to adjust the trim to relieve control pressure, the learner responds in the manner desired by the instructor. Instructors commonly rely on the hearing and seeing channels of communication. However, using all channels may improve the learning process. For teaching motor skills, the sense of touch, or kinesthetic learning, is added as the learner practices the skill.