

A Brief Introduction of Communication

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Abstract

This essay uses the citation analysis method to analyse communication in terms of its components, characteristics, processes, forms and functions. A conclusion that communication is a transmission of messages from sender to receiver in forms of verbal and non-verbal, with its purpose oriented, social and symbolic characteristics is reached and a better understanding of how to communicate successfully is provided.

Keywords

Communication; Characteristics; Forms; Citation Analysis.

1. Introduction

Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior. This definition comes from the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary which defines communication from its elements, process and media. Communication (from Latin *comūnicāre*, meaning “to share”) is the purposeful activity of information exchange between two or more participants in order to convey or receive the intended meanings through a shared system of signs and semiotic rules. (H.Douglas,2013,6) According to Douglas opinion, communication is an activity with particular steps and purposes. Both of these two definition analyse the means, characteristic and function of communication but Douglas stresses the participants of communication. There is a further study about communication, from its elements, function, features, processes and forms and some other aspects.

2. The Basic Elements of Communication

Communication is an activity among two or more people who play the role of speaker and hearer. In an act of communication there is usually at least one speaker or sender, a message which is transmitted, and a person or persons for whom this message is intended (the receiver). (J.C. Richard, 2000) From what Richard said, it is easy to find the participants of a communicating activity--one or more speakers and hearers and signs which convey the messages with particular purpose. Except those elements, situation where the communication takes place is equally important.

2.1. Participants of Communication

The number of the speaker and the hearer is not less than one. They should have the ability to express and understand. Therefore, there is a need for the senders and receivers to communicate which asks them to have a sharing system of signs and semiotic rules.

2.2. Motivations of Communication

Motivations of communication are manifested as the person's expected purpose, desire, requirement, interest, etc. The behavior of communication is a process but not a purpose, while individuals communicate in order to meet their own needs. The motivation may come from the material or spiritual needs which are various from an individual to a country or a society.

Diplomacy is the best example for a country's communication with the motivation which seeks development for the country and happiness for people.

2.3. Situation of Communication

Situation of communication includes the social, cultural background, where and when the communication takes place. The situation has a significant effect on a communication. And also there are some differences in the process of communication between a formal and informal situation.

2.4. Carrier of Messages

The carrier of messages means the media of communication which conveys information that both sender and receiver intended. Here, the carrier refers to the symbols -- linguistic and non-linguistic symbols. Linguistic symbols are mainly used by human beings to communicate and convey information using audible verbal language and silent written language. Non-linguistic symbols mainly refer to invisible forms of information expression excluding the visible language, this invisible information communication is mainly through people's sensory organs to receive signals, for example, people's facial expressions, posture, subconscious posture, the style and the color of the clothing they wear are all a kind of invisible information.(Liang Liwen.2020:8-9)

3. The Features of Communication

A. Schaff points that communication carries its social and cultural functions using symbolic. Utterance types carry out their social tasks: for the process of communication, for human thought and for carrier of culture. Communication is conducted with the help of signs into which meanings are fed. A. Schaff analyzed communication from the perspective of the relation between signs and meanings. He suggested that communication is a social process. He termed communication process as sign-situation. (A. Schaff, 1962) Apart from symbolic, social, communication is also intentional, situational, acceptable, cognitive and constructive.

3.1. Communication is Symbolic

Communication is closely related to symbols. Symbols are tools for thinking and communication. Because human communication is carried out with the help of symbols and without them there is no communication, which is the symbolic nature of communication. Language is the best symbolic represent of communicating symbol which reveals the essential difference between human communication and the mutual activities of other animals.

3.2. Communication is Social

The participants of communication are the people who live in the society. Their mind, behavior, tradition are the reflections of society. Because of that, the participants of communication behave differently and their communicating activities form a particular community culture. People always use language which is viewed the most convenient way to communicate during communication. Gregory stress that language is not only human behavior but also a social behavior.(Gregory, Michael, 1967:177-198) The development of society changes the way of communication and communicative actions also promote the diversification of the society.

3.3. Communication is Bi-directional

Human communication is a process of interaction between communicative subjects, which is manifested in the two-way nature of communication. The bi-directional nature of communication makes the process of communication complex and subtle. It shows that the process of communication is not only a process of changing information between participants, but also a process of mutual influence. This influence can take place through verbal symbols or

produce effects through non-verbal symbols; it can be tangible or intangible; it can be visible or invisible.

3.4. Communication is Cognitive

The external world and our experiences gain meaning only when we perceive and attach significance to them. Perception is an active process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting people, objects, events, situations and activities, which involve people's cultural cognition of the world. Many misunderstandings in communication especially intercultural communication are the reflection of different cultural cognition. So, the different perceptions of the world make communication multiple and colourful.

3.5. Other Features of Communication

Symbolic, social, bi-directional and cognitive are the main character of communication. There are some other important features of communication like situational, acceptable, complex and constructive. Communication is situational which emphasizes the context of communicating activity. Linguistically, context refers to all the factors that can influence the language users in using and understanding language that they use in communication. (Lyons, 1977:572) What's more, communication is acceptable which means that the participants of communicating activity has the common knowledge to understand each other and they will have a successful or unsuccessful communication which they can control. Communication is a complex activity because the brain and society are complex systems, the use of language in communication is also fundamentally complex.(Wu Bingzhang, 2009.) Furthermore, communication is constructive, which means the addresser and addressee always having the same goal to make the conversation successful.

In response, there is a further understanding of the features of communication. In terms of the content of communication, it is cultural and acceptable. From the process of communication, it is complex and bi-directional. According to the subject of communication, it is social. In respect to the purpose of communication, it is constructive. In terms of its carrier of information, communication is symbolic. To sum up all the above, communication is a characteristic activity.

4. The Functions of Communication

By the term function, we mean the actual roles and effects shown by people or things in action. The functions of communication are mainly manifested in the following way: Exchange information and ideas, mediate relationships. Communication mediates interpersonal relations while conveying information. Any act of speaking and discourse is a compound behavior of conveying information and regulating interpersonal relations. (Wu Bingzhang, 2009.)

Communication can be about conveying a warning, stating a fact, explaining an observation, making a decision or judgement. Communication is complex and varied, it is richly personal, with intonations such as: ah, alas, etc. Despite its complexity, its primary function is to convey a sense of meaning. (Zhang Libing. 2002,75-75.) Communication has a wider range of content, more direct channels and faster speed than getting information from books. As the range of communication broadens, hundreds of people exchange ideas with each other, then each person has access to hundreds of ideas.

Communication is essential for regulating the emotions and behaviour of human beings in group activities, keeping their balance in social life and maintaining relatively stable interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relations between subjects will be maintained through certain communicative strategies such as the use of euphemisms and palliatives,etc. For example, people will use phatic utterances to greet when we meet our friends to show their kind. In order to achieve coordination of actions within a group or between individuals and to achieve collective harmony and unity, it is necessary to obtain an exchange of feelings and

information through communication between each other, so that the relationship between speakers and hearers, between the communicating participants, is coherent.

5. Two Forms of Communication

There are two forms of communication: Verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Obviously, verbal communication refers to the communicating behavior mainly realized by linguistic symbols, including oral, written and electronic communication. While non-verbal communication is defined as behavior outside the realm of language. The main forms of expression are gaze control, gestures, body languages, head movements, facial expressions, body distance, silence, etc..

Verbal communication begins when words are uttered, it uses the voice a channel to convey information, it enables control over words, is structured and is formally taught. While non-verbal communication is human attributes or actions that are expressed without words and are known to society, which are purposefully sent by the sender and consciously received and possibly fed back by the receiver.

6. The Process of Communication

The process of communication is, in fact, also a process of information exchange and ideas exchange. Firstly, there is a stimulus making speaker have the intention to express or convey some information. Secondly, the intention stimulates the brain of the speaker to organize verbal or non-verbal symbols according to related rules. Thirdly, the speaker expresses the idea with the help of articulatory organs or other body parts. Then the hearer receives the signals that the speaker conveys and analyzes them by means of related system in his or her mind. Next the hearer forms his understanding and make his reaction about the information. The communication continues until people have accomplished their communicative goals.

In H. Douglas's view, there are 7 basic steps of communication which are the forming of communicative intent, message composition, message encoding, transmission of signal, reception of signal, message decoding and finally interpretation of the message by the recipient. (H. Douglas, 2013,6)

From J. Locke's point of view, communication is an interacting activity between participants A and B. A has a certain message in his mind and he wants B to form the same message in his mind and reach agreement. This message is eventually transformed into a series of neural impulses which are sent to the muscles responsible for the actual production of speech. Then the sound is produced immediately. B must decode A's message by converting the sound into a semantic representation.

7. How to Make a Successful Communication

People's successful communication is based on the observance of the cooperative principle. Grice points four principles to observe which refer to the maxim of quantity, quality, relation and manner. The maxim of quantity ask human to make their contribution as informative as is required and not to make their contribution more informative than is required. The maxim of quantity ask people not to say what they believe to be false, and say that for which they lack adequate evidence. Make your conversation be relevant with the communication topic is the requirement of the maxim of relation. The maxim of manner means your expression should be perspicuous. There are some requirements for expression which are avoiding obscurity, ambiguity, unnecessary prolixity and disorder. Grice regards conversation as one of the purposeful and reasonable social acts of human beings, so the above principles are not only to be observed when engaging in conversation, but also when engaging in other social activities.

8. Conclusion

A brief introduction about communication is showed above. So, what is communication? Communication is an activity between two or more participants through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior to exchange their their information with particular purposes. Communication has various features such as symbolic, bi-directional, cognitive, social etc.. If a person want to communicate successfully, he cannot easily break Grice's cooperative principles which is about the maxim of quantity,quality,relation and manner.

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