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APPROACHES TO THE COMMUNICATION LEARNING

What is communication? Communication is one of the main skills that students must acquire in the process of mastering a foreign language not only at school but at university also.

Our communication moved forward to include a fuller vocabulary of symbols and words. Small human groups or tribes could now look further afield, not only geographically in space but imaginatively in time, by laying down plans for the future, accounting for the past, negotiating the coalition of territories, or winning over the terrain through ever more elaborate strategies of aggression.

As the abundance of language increased, so too did the abundance of what humans were able to achieve with it, and as the ways in which language was able to be broadcast around the globe increased, so too did the power that language could have over vast swaths of land, and the people who lived in those lands.

It is the simple signs, sounds, signals, pictures, hieroglyphs, words, publications, and broadcasts disseminated across all channels and media, throughout time and space, that have revolutionized and advanced our world and our understandings within it. With our various sophisticated forms of communication, humankind has evolved into the major intelligent biological force on this planet.

It is worth noting that, on the flip side, poor communication has meant certain death for some groups that have been unable to sustain, or have lost control of, their communication methods, channels, or technologies, and so have disappeared or been subsumed by others—by losing the power of communication, they have often lost their political, social, artistic, economic, and ecological niches. For example, the decline of the Roman Empire could be argued as resulting from the collapse of their expansive, expensive, and consequently unsustainable communication network.

The Art and Science of Communication. It is perhaps this ability to pass our skill and ability down through the generations that explains why the techniques, models, and

processes that you are about to learn come from ancient traditions of art going back to before the first civilizations, starting with the first professional storytellers, presenters, or public speakers - the mediators between the physical world and the realm of the imagination - the shaman, witch doctor, or magician.

Learn to speak well. Most people think a decent standard of competence in speaking to a group is part of the basic professional is of any job; but too many professionals are nervous about speaking, and afraid that they do not speak well. The basic premise of this book, as I have said, is that such a decent standard can be learned, and this confidence is based on many years of experience in training people to speak. A first stage in building up the confidence to speak is to think about the job of speaking, what tools you will use, and what effects you aim to achieve. Language is the basic tool, and language is a mysterious phenomenon. Consider, for a moment, the basic skills in communicating that everyone possesses.

Language is used by all human beings; we use it copiously and without second thought every day of our lives. Indeed, our ability and confidence in manipulating language is a central part of the personality we present to those around us. But there is nothing unalterable about these abilities.

So individually, you and those around you may have great brains that come up with superbly intelligent ideas, but without communication, you are totally isolated. Your individual intellects can very quickly become quite valueless to any organization, because without your being able to integrate with the organizational system as a whole, the greater good for everyone cannot be served.

Remember, the human mind is naturally programmed to assign a negative perception to anything that is unknown. It's a primal survival mechanism. And this shows in your body language every second of the day when you come across an unknown entity - for example, somebody in business who is new to you or somebody who is known to you who has a new idea.

When you respond to an idea or a person in a way that gives you pause, your audience can see the elements of resistance in your body - you don't have to say anything (remember that potentially 55 percent of the feeling that people have about

another person's intentions is based on what they say, people have an idea of their status in relation to others. We are constantly sizing each other up and trying to determine where we stand, and this uncertainty affects our mental processes in many, many important ways.

Tests using social rejection as a lever to cause the participants to lose status have shown, with electromagnetic resonance brain scanning technology, that such a reduction in one's status results in the same regions of the brain showing up as active as with physical pain. Thus, in business as in life, being rejected literally hurts.

Raising Other People's Status. We naturally and unconsciously move toward increasing our status and away from decreasing our status. So it stands to reason that if you could communicate nonverbally in such a way that you were able to increase another person's status at work, that person would unconsciously be attracted to you and your business message. Of course, this would also have to be done in such a way that your own status was not lowered - your unconscious mind would probably block you from committing any actions that might raise another's status at the cost of your.

Speech came first. Spoken language was the first form of communication between human beings. It came long before written language, and writing is a transcript of speech, not vice versa. This more primitive form of communication still provides the most direct access to other minds. The reason why people prefer to listen to a spoken explanation is that it seems to need less effort to understand than the more formal medium of writing. Yet some speakers try to make speech as close to writing as possible, and destroy its freshness and immediacy. Speaking is the direct route from one mind to another, and is the way we usually choose when we want to ask a question, or give an explanation. Research shows that ideas and information are more easily understood and processed through speech than through writing.

Think about the audience. Thinking about the audience is the first stage in preparing to give a successful talk or presentation. They are the recipients of the information; it must be selected and tailored for their needs. They are also the people whose presence will make you nervous when you speak, whose reactions will depress or encourage you, and whose judgment will measure your success or failure.

When you are thinking about this audience, you must remember, too, that they are active, not passive, participants. They are not empty jugs, sitting waiting for you to pour information into their ears. They have attitudes, interests, likes and dislikes of their own. So the speaker has a personnel management role; he or she has to deal with people and not just with facts. He must not only dole out the information, but anticipate difficulties, deal with problems, to smooth the whole process. So what does a speaker need to know about his audience?

Firstly, he or she should be aware that all audiences have some of the qualities of a crowd. An audience is a group of individuals, many of whom the speaker may know personally, yet collected together they acquire a new personality. When individuals are collected in a room, in enforced silence, all facing one other individual, the speaker, they change. For instance, it is obvious to anyone who watches an audience that their emotions, such as laughter, boredom, and enthusiasm, are both stronger and more sustained.

Be prepared. The confidence comes from the speaker's knowledge that he or she has everything ready, has thought through the whole subject, and has enough of the right material to support the presentation. The sense of organization comes from the careful arrangements and selection of what is said, so that all the points are part of a logical order. Neither of these virtues is available to the speaker who bets on his luck (or cheek) and just talks off the cuff.

Good speakers are prepared. How do you achieve this? The whole of this chapter is about preparation. It is as much to do with the audience's abilities as the speaker's, and it is about the logic of organization, as much as the psychology of presentation. But the aim of all the advice is the same - that secure and admirable sense of being well prepared. There are two simple pieces of advice which start this process of preparation in the right way. Firstly, ask yourself what the aim of the talk is, rather than what the subject of the talk is. The first is much more specific than the second. If you plan to talk about a particular subject, you may feel the need to mention everything there is to know about that subject. But if the aim of the talk is to arouse the audience's enthusiasm for a research project on that topic, a brief sketch of the more exciting

possibilities would be more relevant. A complete catalogue of every aspect will merely bore them, and will achieve exactly the opposite result.

There are many cases where the aim may be rather different from the subject. The advantage of thinking about the aim is also that then the decisions include the audience, and the audience's perceptions and needs, not just the speaker's ideas and knowledge. In practice, a very common mistake is to prepare a presentation as a speech on, for example, 'Heavy water reactors', without thinking whether the audience is interested in technical details or scare stories. If the aim is to reassure a local population that the heavy water reactor being built next to them is perfectly safe, then a lot of technical details about the design will probably scare them witless! Think of all your decisions when preparing the talk in terms of what you want the talk to achieve, and not in terms of what the bare topic of the talk is.

The second piece of simple advice is to prepare more material than you need. The idea of preparing 'just the right amount' is foolish. Until you start talking, you won't really know how much material you are going to get through, And if you insist on battling on to the bitter end of what you have prepared, you will almost certainly get the timing wrong, as well as turning the talk into a marathon. Talking should never be a dutiful forced march; it should always be an exploration, a discussion, a fascinating glimpse of the subject. It is an opportunity to learn about something new, which has to stop when the allotted time runs out. The best talks all end too soon, and the sense of having more to say, but having no more time, is the most satisfactory impression to leave.

The talk is also more interesting if the audience feel you are stepping smartly through the topic, summarizing far deeper knowledge and just mentioning the more interesting aspects. This impression is created if the speaker has more material than he needs at his finger tips; the need to summarize and curtail while he or she talks keeps up the level of tension, interest, and expectation. An audience should never come out of a talk feeling that the subject, like them, is exhausted. They should always be fired, rather than quenched. This happens best, if you prepare more material than you need.

The habit of having extra material also allows you flexibility in timing when giving the talk, and helps you to answer questions at the end.

Feedback. The problems of interacting with an audience can never be solved entirely in advance. Preparation is always needed, of course, and a speaker who has not thought in advance about the composition, interests, and attitudes of the audience is not likely to achieve success by sheer chance. His talk is already doomed to some misjudgment or other. But even when careful preparation has been made, there is one further element in the equation. Watchful attention to the way the audience is reacting during the talk itself will give you a chance to correct mistakes, and fine tune your judgments about what does and does not need saying.

The feedback the speaker gets from his audience while he is talking is the last component of effective speaking. Many naive speakers ignore the signals from the audience completely. They may not even be looking at the audience, but be gazing nervously at their feet, or staring airily at the ceiling. By failing to study the audience such speakers miss the vital non-verbal signals that should guide the shaping of the talk. We suggest in the next chapter that the range of examples you use, and the speed at which you run through new or difficult ideas, should be controlled by the way the audience responds.

Communication develops students' intelligence. It helps to develop their memory, will, imagination.

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