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OBSTACLES TO COMMUNICATION, ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNICATION, CRITERIA FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION

UDC 800

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Abstract. *With some exceptions, most people, most of the time, do want to communicate and strive to achieve effective communication. To do that, they have to overcome various obstacles to communication. In the terminology of information theory, all the obstacles to communication are subsumed under the term noise. These obstacles, in their turn, can be related to all the elements of the process of communication and to the pragmatics (use) of language in communication (different objectives of communication). This paper is an attempt to describe some of the possible obstacles (noise) to successful communication and to suggest a number of remedies.*

OBSTACLES TO COMMUNICATION

This is an attempt to use the theoretical assumptions of information theory

With some exceptions, most people, most of the time, do want to communicate and strive to achieve effective communication. To do that, they have to overcome various obstacles to communication. In the terminology of information theory, all the obstacles to communication are subsumed under the term noise. These obstacles, in their turn, can be related to all the elements of the process of communication and to the pragmatics (use) of language in communication (different objectives of communication). What follows is an attempt to describe some of the possible obstacles (noise) to successful communication (and suggest a number of remedies).

ELEMENTS OF THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

The schematic diagram of a general communication system may be said to consist of

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nine elements: information source, outgoing message, transmitter, outgoing signal, channel, incoming signal, receiver, incoming message and destination, all of them affected by noise. In the diagram, the human mind appears twice as an element of the system (process), each time in a double role. First, as the source of information and its encoder (at the initial stage of communication) and as the decoder of the message and its destination, the user of the information sent to it (at the final stage of communication). This is a very fine, but a very important dichotomy. As the source and the destination, the human mind stands for the human being, a creature with the free will and reasoning power. As the encoder and the decoder, the human mind stands for a tool, an interface between extralinguistic reality (ELR) and its first role. For instance, the mind of a person who has been given a job to do, a task to perform (a communication job or task), is not the source of information, but definitely an encoder of it. Likewise, the mind of a person receiving the message plays two roles. First, it decodes the message and then it decides whether to act upon it or not, exercising reason and free will.

Information source

In human communication, the source of information is the brain (mind) of the person initiating communication. The human mind, although probably one of the most complex phenomena in the universe, is not perfect. It has limitations and it is those limitations that present obstacles to successive communication. There are two types of limitations of the human mind. One is universal (systemic) and the other one is individual. By universal limitation we mean, first of all, the limitation of the human mind preventing it from handling more than a certain amount of information at any given time. The individual one refers to the limitations of individual minds, minds lacking training and/or ability to handle any communication above the level of survival.

Examples of information sources as obstacles to communication are well known to everybody. There are persons, intelligent persons at that, who are simply unable to communicate.

Suggested remedies: The remedies for the universal limitation are already built into the system. Human beings rarely handle independent, random bits of information, but meaningful utterances and sentences in meaningful contexts. Also, there is the process of abstraction in language perception and the corresponding linguistic means to help it. There are no remedies, or rather, there is one for individual limitations: a person who is not a good communicator should refrain from "practicing" communication in public.

Outgoing message

The term outgoing message refers to the mental aspect of language that the transmitter will change into the signal (apparent physical aspect of language) later on. In other words, the outgoing message is the idea, the notion, information we have in our mind and want to communicate. If that message is not clearly expressed (decoded), if our thinking is "fuzzy", if we do not really know what we want to communicate, or how to communicate it, we simply cannot communicate it.

A good example of the difference between the human mind acting as the source of information and the decoder of information can be seen in an intelligent person trying to communicate a clever idea in a language he is not quite familiar with. His mind, as the source, is functioning properly, but as a decoder, poorly. The same thing, but not so obvious, can happen to a person trying to express himself or herself in his or her mother

tongue.

Communicators are very often aware of the problems with the outgoing message. The phrase "I didn't mean it like that!" testifies to the fact. Some communicators (would be writers most of the time) are also prone to blaming the language for their failure to communicate.

Suggested remedies: There are no remedies for the message itself. To improve the message, the source and/or the decoder must be improved - provided they are "improvable". How can they be improved? The answer is: by knowledge and training. By reading books like this one and other books and articles dealing with communication.

Transmitter

In language communication, the term transmitter refers to the speech organs and the mental and physical states of the communicator at the moment of communicating. When something is wrong with them, the signal leaving the transmitter and, eventually, reaching the destination, in the form of the incoming message, will be impaired and communication made difficult. An example of the "malfunctioning" transmitter is a common cold. Also, when a person is, say, exhausted, he cannot speak well because he needs all the time for breathing. An upset or furious person will not be able to change the outgoing message into the signal properly, or rather, he will "color" it with his emotional state.

Suggested remedies: One, "repair" the transmitter. Two, add redundancy. Three, change the channel (and the transmitter) - from speech to writing or the other way round.

Outgoing signal

In language communication, the term outgoing signal refers to the apparent physical aspect of language and all paralinguistic and extralinguistic elements of communication issuing from the transmitter and manifested, realized, either as speech or writing (accompanied by paralinguistic and extralinguistic elements of communication). Like all other elements in the process of communication, the outgoing signal can be affected by noise, that is, can contain obstacles to communication.

There are at least two types of obstacles that can affect the outgoing signal: those inherent in the language system as a means of communication and those inherent in the people using the language as a means for communication.

As a system of communication among human beings, language is characterized by indeterminacy caused by its changing nature, by its deictic nature, and by its metonymic nature, and is influenced by the vagueness of ELR, the subject matter of communication. All these characteristics of language are both the qualities of language and the obstacles to language communication. They are qualities because they enhance language communication in the ever-changing world. They are obstacles because each act of language communication occurs at the moment of language use when, for all practical purposes, the world is static. We know, for instance, that the meanings of words change through time, but this does not help us much at the moment of speaking when we want to effect unique reference.

The other type of obstacles to language communication affecting the outgoing signal are those inherent in the people using the language as a means for communication. Although every normal human being is capable of using language, as speech, at the level that insures his survival as a member of the species (and of a language community), many

human beings are incapable of a more sophisticated use of language and of writing. Although children do acquire the ability to use language rather early in life (up to the age of seven), the real symbolic use of language becomes possible only after adolescence, that is, much later in life. This means that quite a number of people are not really familiar with the language, or not as familiar with it as some other people they (try to) communicate with. Also, there are different levels of proficiency in language since language is not limited to its "survival use" only. Also, there are such things as allegory, irony, jokes, puns, artistic use, social and professional dialects, scientific terminology...

Suggested remedies: The remedies for the obstacles inherent in the language system are already built into the system. Language communication never occurs in a vacuum, somewhere out of this world, but always and only in a particular linguistic and situational context. There are always at least two persons who communicate. There are the paralinguistic and extralinguistic elements of communication. They just have to be used properly. What this really means is that communicators have to be trained. Intuitive knowledge is simply not enough. The remedies for the obstacles to communication inherent in the people using the language, or rather, caused by the quantitative and qualitative differences between the knowledge (skill, information) at the disposal of the addressor and the addressee(s), can be overcome in a number of ways. One, adapt the signal (by changing the code, for instance) to fit the situation and the people you are talking to. Two, educate the people you are talking to.

Channel

The *channel*, in language communication, refers, first of all, to the medium the signal is sent through, that is, to sound (the vibrations of air molecules, for speech) and to light (light waves, for writing), but also to the form of language used, like dialogue, address, lecture, debate, private letter, official letter, court order, etc.

The channel used for speech is sound (air). If the air around us is saturated by some other sounds, or noise (in its original sense), speech sounds, that is, speech, will be difficult to hear and communication will be impaired.

The channel used for writing is light. In a dim light, for instance, the resolution between the marks (graphs, letters) and the background (paper) is lost and communication is impaired.

Suggested remedies: One, improve the channel. Two, switch the channel. Three, increase redundancy.

Incoming signal

The term incoming signal refers to the two manifestations of the apparent physical aspect of language, speech and writing, plus the paralinguistic and extralinguistic elements of communication, reaching the receiver through the channel. Irrespective of the fact that the incoming signal is usually located between the channel and the receiver, we can, and should, think of the signal as the incoming signal from the moment it leaves the transmitter. Thus the changes affecting the signal during its passage through the channel are the changes of the incoming signal.

The noise affecting the incoming signal (as defined in the preceding paragraph), whether the literal noise (as in speech) or any other obstacle, is the most obvious noise in language communication, one that most people are aware of and try to combat, intuitively, most of the time.

Suggested remedies: There could be as many remedies as there are obstacles to communication, irrespective of where they are - in the source, in the message, in the transmitter, in the channel... Here is a list of some "general" remedies. One, improve the channel. Two, switch the channel. Three, increase redundancy. Four, remove the noise (whatever its source is).

Receiver

In language communication, the term receiver refers to the hearing and seeing organs of the person communication is addressed to. If they are not functioning properly, communication is impaired. In language communication, the receiver is the element of the process of communication most obviously affected by noise. You see a person with a hearing aid, or with thick glasses, and you are aware of their problems with hearing or seeing.

Suggested remedies: One, "repair" the receiver. Two, intensify the signal. Three, increase redundancy. Four, switch the channel.

Incoming message

The noise that can affect the incoming message, that is, the perception (decoding of the message) by the addressee of the incoming signal, originates with the destination, that is, the mind of the addressee. We have already spoken about the limitations of the human mind relative to the source of information. The same limitations apply to the human mind decoding and processing the information sent to it.

As already stated, the human mind appears twice as an element of the process of communication, each time in a double role. First, as the source of information and its encoder (at the initial stage of communication) and as the decoder of the message and its destination, the user of the information sent to it (at the final stage of communication). When we look at the human mind as a decoder, we are interested in its ability to process the message (information), the way we are interested in the seeing or hearing organs. When we look at it as the destination, we are interested in it as an inalienable part of the personality of a participant in an act of communication with all of his human characteristics, free will, reasoning power, emotions, attitudes...

For a successful communication, it is not enough for someone to extract information from the message, but to act (behave) in the manner intended by the source. We can have an almost ideal situation (as regards the elements of the process of communication up to the incoming message) and still have problems with communication. Once again, to help explain the point, we will refer to communication in a foreign language. An intelligent person, listening to some exposition or explanation in a foreign language which he is not quite familiar with, will have problems decoding the message, not understanding it.

Suggested remedies: One, change the code. Two, change the channel (the form of language used). Three, educate the "destination".

Destination

The term destination, in language communication, refers to the mind of the person communication is addressed to (or, to simplify the matter, the addressee himself). The quality and the quantity of information stored in the mind of the addressee, as well as the quality of the mind itself, are of paramount importance for successful communication.

Suggested remedies: One, adapt the message (and information) to fit the addressee.

Two, educate the addressee.

Subject matter of communication

Although neither information nor the subject matter of communication appear in the communication diagram, they are what language communication is all about. It is information (meaning) that is sent from the source to the destination. The subject matter of language communication is, by definition, ELR. However, it is not the ELR itself that is sent along the communication chain, but symbols standing for it, referring to it. In other words - information (meaning). It is because of this that we can speak of the subject matter of communication as information sent along the communication chain.

The notion of the subject matter of communication being an obstacle to communication might seem strange, but only to people who have never thought about it. As we know, the subject matter of language communication is ELR which may or may not comprise one or more of the following:

- part or parts of the physical world around us,
- part or parts of the creations of the human mind and spirit,
- some or all of the relationships between the participants in an act of communication,
- some or all of their attitudes toward each other and ELR,
- part, parts or all of the act of communication itself, with all that it implies.

Let us take a look at a number of communication situations.

(1) Peter: "What's that?"

John: "A letter."

We can say that the subject matter of communication in this rather simple communication situation is a part of ELR referred to by the noun phrase *a letter*. The following communication situation is a bit more complex:

(2) Peter: "What did you do?"

John: "I wrote a letter."

Although still rather simple, this act of language communication has three subject matters (or one fairly complex subject matter): one of the participants (John), his action (writing) and the result of his action (a letter). Let us take a look at yet another communication situation and its subject matter:

(3) Peter: "The other day Jim told me, gleefully, about some unfortunate people who might have been persuaded by their friends to believe that events from the past, even those that occurred before they themselves had been born, could, somehow, some day, catch up with them and influence their lives."

John: "Well..."

It is obvious that the subject matter (or matters) of this communication between Peter and John is (are) very complex. It includes a number of persons (Jim, people, friends), attitudes and/or beliefs (gleefully, unfortunate, might have, believe, could, somehow), events (told, persuaded, occurred, catch up, influence), time references (the other day, might have been persuaded, the past, before they had been born, some day). For you, who are reading this communication situation, it is even more complex and must include both Peter and John and a new time reference - the moment you are reading it. Now, take the role of an addressor and tell your friend about all this. The subject matter will get even more complex and complicated - almost to the degree where you might not be able to do it properly.

With all this complexity of the subject matter, and taking into consideration the

limitations of the human mind and the nature of language, it is easy to understand that something might go wrong with the act of communication. The inherent vagueness of ELR imposes additional obstacles to successful communication.

The best examples of the subject matter of communication being an obstacle to communication can be seen in elementary and secondary school curricula. If the subject matter to be taught to students is too complex or too abstract for them, no amount of teacher's effort to present it "as is" can make it understandable.

Suggested remedies: There are a number of remedies for complex subject matters of communication. One, simplify the matter. Two, simplify the terminology. Three, break down the subject matter into a number of simpler instructional objectives. Four, educate the "destination". Five, borrow from learning theories (something completely new cannot be learned unless it has been cushioned in old terminology and related to something old and familiar; sometimes, an intermediate step or steps are necessary).

The mechanism of language itself, the basic means of communication among human beings, reflects the awareness of the problem. We usually begin sentences with old information to cushion the new one coming later.

As for the subject matter that is too abstract, that is, at the level above the reasoning capacities of the students, there are no real, effective remedies. It simply has to be postponed until the cognitive development of the students catches up with it.

Ambiguity

The term *ambiguity* refers to the quality of being ambiguous. Phrases, utterances and sentences are said to be ambiguous if they have two or more possible meanings or interpretations. The text of the cable SHIP SAILS TODAY, for instance, is ambiguous, that is, it has two possible interpretations. One, the ship will sail today, and two, forward the sails, by ship, today.

Ambiguity is a phenomenon that appears at the level of phrases, sentences or utterances (that is, at the level of the clause, the basic unit of language communication), and not at the level of individual words. The reasons for ambiguity stem from the indeterminacy of language (caused by its metonymic and deictic nature), the fuzzy areas in language, the improper use of language, simultaneous use of speech and writing and, of course, from the vagueness of ELR.

Intentional and unintentional ambiguity

From the point of view of the information source (addressor), ambiguity can be either unintentional - the addressor is not aware of the ambiguity of his sentences and utterances, or intentional - the addressor is making his sentences and utterances ambiguous on purpose. From the point of view of the destination (addressee), ambiguity may be imperceptible, that is, resolved on the basis of context, without the addressee being aware of its existence, or it may be obvious, in which case the addressee must devote special attention to its resolution. Most of the time, in most forms and uses of language, ambiguity is unintentional and is caused by a number of factors. Sometimes, however, ambiguity is intentional, that is, the addressor is the "factor" causing ambiguity. Intentional ambiguity, if it is to serve its purpose, must be made obvious, that is, signaled, foregrounded so as not to be glossed over by context and remain imperceptible.

Types of unintentional ambiguity

There are at least three types of unintentional ambiguity, depending on the level of language causing it. Lexical ambiguity is caused by words, syntactic ambiguity by syntax and mixed ambiguity by both words and syntax. A special type of mixed ambiguity is the ambiguity created by a simultaneous use of speech and writing, or by a switch from one medium (channel) to the other.

Lexical ambiguity

Lexical ambiguity is due to the use of words with more than one sense which are impossible to "guess" from the context of the sentence, or utterance, in which they were used. Sometimes, a larger linguistic and/or situational context is needed to disambiguate it. Sometimes, it resists all efforts of disambiguation. Here is a sentence:

(4) They passed the port at midnight.

This sentence is ambiguous, that is, it can have more than one interpretation, two to be exact. The ambiguity here can be traced to the words *passed* and *port*, each of which can have two meanings (senses). In the first interpretation, *pass* is used in the sense of *go by* and *port* in the sense of *harbor*. In other words, this interpretation can be paraphrased as "They sailed by the harbor at midnight." The second interpretation requires the word *pass* to be used in the sense of *serve*, and the word *port* in the sense of *in*, so the paraphrase reads "They served wine at midnight."

This sentence is ambiguous only if used out of context. If it were used in a description of a sea voyage, the first interpretation would be naturally chosen, without a thought about the second possibility. If, on the other hand, it were used in a description of a party which had started at five in the afternoon, there is no doubt that only the second interpretation would enter the addressee's mind. Sometimes, if an ambiguous utterance (in speech, of course) is encountered, the addressee might require disambiguation on the spot. For instance:

(5) A: That's funny.
B: Funny strange, or funny ha-ha?

Syntactic ambiguity

Syntactic ambiguity can be caused by a number of syntactic structures present in an utterance or a sentence. For instance, the sentence

(6) I saw my friend sitting in the garden.

can have two different interpretations. The first one can be paraphrased as "While I was sitting in the garden, I saw my friend." The second could be paraphrased as "I saw my friend who was sitting in the garden."

The reason for the ambiguity of this sentence is its syntactic structure that can be interpreted in two different ways. In the first interpretation, the participial phrase *sitting in the garden* has a function independent of the other parts of the sentence, that is, the function of the end sentence adverbial (modifier). In the second, it is a part of the reduced relative clause *my friend (who was) sitting in the garden* which has the function of the object of the sentence. (What did you see? - My friend sitting in the garden.)

Mixed ambiguity

The term mixed ambiguity refers to an ambiguity caused by both words and syntax.

Here is a famous example:

(7) Flying planes can be dangerous.

This sentence has two, or possibly, three different interpretations. Here are their paraphrases: (1) Being the captain of the plane (or any other member of the crew) can be dangerous. (2) Planes, when they are flying (when they are in the air), can be dangerous. (3) To travel by plane can be dangerous.

In the first interpretation, the verb *fly* is a transitive verb so that, when used with the word *plane*, it means *to fly (to steer) a plane*, like, to drive (to steer) a car. It is the captain and the crew who can be said to fly planes. Because of that, the participial phrase *flying planes* is assigned the function of the subject of this sentence.

In the second interpretation, the verb *fly* is an intransitive verb, meaning *to travel through the air, like birds or planes*. Its participle *flying* is used here as a prenominal modifier modifying the noun *planes* and together, as a noun phrase *flying planes*, they perform the function of the subject of this sentence.

In the third interpretation, the verb *fly*, as a transitive verb, has the meaning *to travel by plane*, like to travel by car, by train, etc. Because of that, the participial phrase *flying planes* is assigned the interpretation of *to travel by plane*, which can be dangerous.

Additional difficulty, or source of ambiguity, is added by the modal auxiliary *can*, because of its lack of person and singular and plural markers (the same form is used for all persons: I can..., He can..., We can...). If, instead of the auxiliary *can* we had the full verb, *be*, the ambiguity between the first and second interpretations would be resolved:

(8) Flying planes is dangerous. (The act of flying planes, which is what the captain and the crew do) is dangerous.

(9) Flying planes are dangerous. (Planes, when they are in the air, are dangerous.)

Even with this intervention the ambiguity between the first and the third interpretation (which is now a lexical ambiguity only) would still remain unresolved, to be resolved by context.

A special type of mixed ambiguity is a mixed speech and writing ambiguity, or rather, the ambiguity caused by a simultaneous use of the two channels (media), or by switching from one to the other. For instance, if the sentence *I scream.* were presented in speech, out of context, it could be interpreted both as *I scream.* and as *Ice cream.* This is a rather "straightforward" ambiguity, unlike the one in the sentence

(10) He put a finger in my I.

If this sentence were first received as speech, it would not be ambiguous. It would have a straightforward, metaphorical interpretation, something like *He angered me.* or *He hurt me badly.* The ambiguity would be created, the second interpretation would appear, only if the written form of the same sentences were presented simultaneously or immediately afterwards. The second interpretation belongs to those "unexpected, novel, unusual, strange, changing and impossible associations and referents".

Types of intentional ambiguity

Like unintentional ambiguity, intentional ambiguity can be caused by the same levels of language, that is, they can be lexical, syntactic, and mixed, caused by either words and syntax or by a simultaneous use of speech and writing, or by a switch from one medium (channel) to the other. In addition to these three types, there are many others, as yet unclassified means of creating ambiguity.

The purpose, the goal, of intentional ambiguity is to create unexpected, novel,

unusual, strange, changing and impossible associations and referents. This goal - intentional ambiguity - is at the opposite end from the goal of the addressor striving to achieve unique reference (as precise a communication as possible). If the achievement of unique reference is the goal of informative speech and writing, the achievement of intentional ambiguity is the goal of (some) artistic writing.

Intentional ambiguity is not a new invention. Some users of language have always been aware of the possibility of using the language in a manner that might not have been intended, but effective nevertheless. The figure of speech known as oxymoron, for instance, has been with us since ancient Greece and Rome. Oxymoron is a figure of speech in which opposite or contradictory ideas or terms are combined, like *thunderous silence*, *sweet sorrow*, etc.

A prosodic feature of poetry, known as enjambment - the running on of a sentence from one couplet or line into the next without pause at the line end - is another well-known example of intentionally created ambiguity. The reader of a poem with enjambment is forced to interpret the sentence in at least two ways. One interpretation is based on the syntactic and semantic structure of the sentence itself. The other (or others) would be based on the meter and rhyme of the poem.

In recent years, some writers, dissatisfied with the expressive means of "normal" use of "standard" language, have tried experimenting with language. Those experiments might be classified as purposeful creations of ambiguous sentences, paragraphs, or even complete works. The results of those experiments are, to say the least, ambiguous. Take e. e. cummings, for instance. Because of his experiments with language he was suspected of being a spy and had to spend time in a detention center. Faulkner's experiments, his techniques of creating, in the minds of his readers, the stream of consciousness of his characters, to force them "experience" the lives of his characters, was successful - which prevented him from achieving recognition in his homeland.

From the point of view of the general reading public, the greatest literary canondrum, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, was a fiasco. It simply is too ambiguous.

Disambiguation

Disambiguation is the process of resolving ambiguity. Most often, ambiguity is resolved intuitively, thanks to the larger context, and the addressee is not even aware of the existence of the ambiguity. Sometimes, however, both unintentional and intentional ambiguity must be resolved by conscious effort: by reflection, introspection, study...

For an average user of language, the goal of disambiguation of an unintentional ambiguity is to arrive at an interpretation that would fit the given context. In case of intentional ambiguity, his goal might be to arrive at an interpretation that would fit the given context and an awareness of the possibility for different interpretations, or even understanding of these different interpretations. For a language specialist, however, to disambiguate a sentence means to be able to provide paraphrases (descriptions) of the possible interpretations and, which is even more important, to provide a linguistic explanation of the reasons for ambiguity.

The first step in any process of disambiguation is an awareness of the ambiguity. The second step would be to identify the different interpretations, that is, to paraphrase them. The third step is the linguistic explanation of the reasons for ambiguity.

Enhancement of communication

There are a number of ways to enhance communication, to make it more effective. They could be, roughly, divided into three groups: those inherent in the participants in the process of communication, those inherent in the means of communication itself and inherent in the actual use of the means of communication by the participants in the process of communication.

Enhancement by participants

This group includes the need and the desire to communicate and the principle of cooperation, as well as the training and the motivation of the participants.

Although the need and the desire to communicate, together with the principle of cooperation, seem to be genetically built in to ensure the survival of the individual and thus of the species, they do not seem to be enough for the level of language use beyond the level of survival. To achieve that level, people have to be trained and, additionally, motivated.

Enhancement by the means of communication

This group includes all the elements and levels of language that can be used to enhance communication. They are, of course, all those elements and levels of language used for communication in the first place. If, for instance, our goal in communication were to avoid ambiguity and/or misunderstanding, we should try to avoid ambiguity as much as possible. So, depending on what we wanted to say, we should say either *While I was sitting in the garden, I saw my friend.* or *I saw my friend who was sitting in the garden.* instead of the ambiguous *I saw my friend sitting in the garden.* In other words, with very, very few exceptions, ambiguity could be avoided and communication enhanced by the expressive means of the language used for communication.

Enhancement by the actual use of the means of communication

One of the main tenets of this article is that language and the meaning in language cannot and should not be studied in isolation, but always and only in an act of language communication which implies the existence of at least two participants, of the subject matter of communication, of the use of paralinguistic and extralinguistic elements of communication, of the existence of linguistic and situational contexts. It is only in an act of language communication, as described here, that the changing, deictic and metonymic nature of language can be arrested, for a moment, and made to mean, to point to something, for a moment, in the ever changing ELR.

Take, for instance, the words *trustees, raise, salary, staff* and their referents in ELR. The words are indeterminate and the referents themselves are vague - which is as it should be if one (language, verbal symbols) is to stand for the other (ELR). For instance: It is within the authority of the trustees to raise or cut the salary of the college staff. This particular sentence does not refer to any particular part, or parts, of ELR, but to a particular relationship among all the trustees, salaries and staff there are. It is the indeterminacy of language and the vagueness of ELR that have been relied upon to achieve this level of universality of the statement expressed in the above sentence.

Sometimes, however, the goal of communication may not be a general statement, but unique reference. For instance: *In the fall of 1968, the trustees decided to raise the salary*

of the staff of King's College. In this sentence, because the addressor used the sentence adverbial, *in the fall of 1968*, and the name of the college, *King's College*, the words *trustees, raise, salary* and *staff* were made to refer to definite parts of ELR: the trustees of King's College of 1968, the staff of King's College in the fall of 1968, the particular salary, the particular raise...

Criteria for successful communication

As could be expected, there are criteria for successful communication. Different "communicators" take different views on how far a communication process has to progress for a successful communication to take place. From a theoretical point of view, those criteria appear to be based on whether (1) the message has been sent, (2) the message has been sent and received by the destination, (3) the message has been sent, received and the meaning contained in it has been extracted and (4) the message has been sent and received, the meaning has been extracted and the destination has acted (the behavior of the destination has changed) in the manner intended by the source.

The message has been sent

The "belief" that communication has been established provided the message has been sent is the main characteristic of the "power communication" where persons or institutions of authority initiating communication, for one reason or another, assume that communication has been established when the message has been sent. Whether or not the addressees have received the message, extracted the information contained within and acted accordingly is no concern of theirs.

This approach to "communication" can have severe consequences for the addressees, particularly in cases where the knowledge of information, or the lack of it, can endanger their well-being or even their lives. There are many examples of such an approach to communication. The best and, probably, ubiquitous example is to be found in the legal systems of almost every country. Although the "law of the land", nowadays, is generally available to the public, that is, the citizens of the country, few of those citizens have ever seen or read it. In addition, even if they had read it, few of them would have been able to really understand it. All this, however, does not free the people who have broken the law from punishment.

Other examples of this type of communication can be found (again) in communication between governments and their agencies and the citizens, or between large and powerful corporations (government or private) with their clients and/or consumers. When a government wants to communicate with the citizens, a government official, usually a secretary or a public relations officer of a dignitary, or the dignitary himself, calls a press conference, or goes on TV, to send the message.

There are even more extreme cases where the addressees are expected to follow the rules contained in the "message" that has never been made public, like secret official gazettes, pacts, agreements (like Yalta), etc. Fine print in contracts, agreements, warranty, insurance, advertising etc. are yet another example of the message hidden in the manner suggested by E. A. Poe in his *The Purloined Letter*.

The message has been sent and received by the destination

The second criterion for a successful communication - the message has been sent and received by the destination - is the most common one, both in theory and in practice.

Most of the formalized teaching (educational system) is based on this criterion. There are teachers and there are students. To ensure that the students do receive the message, they are obliged to attend classes (the purpose of roll calls).

The people effecting "power communication" can very often decide that this type of communication is "enough". A court order delivered "at the door" is considered, by the court, as a successful communication.

**The message has been sent, received
and the meaning contained in it has been extracted.**

The third criterion - the message has been sent, received and the meaning contained in it has been extracted - is also, although not very often, present in formalized teaching. A teacher teaches, the students attend classes and listen, and then the teacher checks whether the students can repeat what they have been told. This type of communication enhances what is known as rote learning.

Here is an example of rote learning in language teaching. A teacher teaches, for instance, the principles of reported speech in English (involving the sequence of tenses). The students attend classes and listen. Then the teacher checks whether they "understand" the principles by giving them a sentence (in isolation) and an introductory phrase. If the students can "turn" it into reported speech, the teacher will consider his or her communication successful, his or her job done. For some areas of human activity, this type of communication might be sufficient, for some it is not.

The message has been sent and received, the meaning has been extracted and the destination has acted (the behavior of the destination has changed) in the manner intended by the source.

The fourth criterion - the message has been sent and received, the meaning has been extracted and the destination has acted (the behavior of the destination has changed) in the manner intended by the source - is the only criterion describing true, successful communication.

To take the last look at our formalized teaching example. For communication (teaching) to be successful, the students should not only be able to repeat what they have been told, but to apply the new knowledge in the manner intended by the teacher. In language teaching, for instance, it is not enough for the students to know the principles of reported speech and the sequence of tenses in English, or to show they know it by juggling individual sentences, but to use the sequence of tenses in real life oral or written communication.

Communication. If it were easy, it would not be difficult!

**PREPREKE U KOMUNIKACIJI, POBOLJŠANJE
KOMUNIKACIJE, KRITERIJUMI USPEŠNE KOMUNIKACIJE**

Mladen Jovanović

Mnogi ljudi, s malim izuzecima, žele da komuniciraju i da postignu uspešnu komunikaciju. Da bi to postigli, suočavaju se s problemima prevazilaženja različitih prepreka u komunikaciji. U terminologiji teorije informacije, sve prepreke u komunikaciji svedene su na termin buke. Ove

prepreke odnose se na sve elemente procesa komunikacije i na pragmatiku (upotrebu) jezika u komunikaciji (različiti ciljevi komunikacije). Rad opisuje neke moguće prepreke (buku) koje se javljaju pri ostvarivanju uspešne komunikacije i predlaže odgovarajuća poboljšanja u komunikaciji.

