

VERBAL AND NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION

► Linguistics

Linguistics is the scientific study of language, specifically its structure, development, and relationship with other languages. Linguistics draws on both the physical and the social sciences and is subdivided into several recognized categories.

- Historical linguistics studies the origins, development and relationships of various languages
- Field linguistics is an applied area that collects data on little-studied languages, particularly those with few speakers that are in danger of dying out.
- Phonology or linguistic phonetics is the study of the spoken language, particularly in its physical aspects of speech sounds. Specifically it is the study of phonemes, the basic sound structure of a language and is concerned with how speech changes over time and how one language differs from another. Phonology deals with how sounds function within a language, whereas a related field, phonetics, deals with the human vocalization of sounds.
- Morphology, meanwhile, focuses on morphemes, the basic unit of meaning within a language. This branch of linguistics deals with how sounds combine to form words and/or change the meaning of words.
- Semantics deals with the meaning of language. It is a branch of linguistics that deals with the way signs relate to things, specifically with the meaning of words, phrases and expressions. Semantics also deals with aspects of denotation and connotation.
- Syntax or syntactics focuses on the form of language, its rules and patterns. Syntax deals with how signs relate to other signs, specifically the patterns and flow of words as they intermingle in phrases and sentences. This is the branch of language study that involves rules of grammar and other proscriptive and descriptive patterns.

- Pragmatics is about the impact of language and how people use it. This branch of linguistics deals with how signs impact on human behavior and the social rules, often informal, that govern how language is used in different contexts and environments.
- Sociolinguistics is the study of how language is used in society, including its differences among cultures, age groups, genders, social class, and so on.
- Neurolinguistics or clinical linguistics is the clinical field of study that deals with language disorders (called aphasia). It also deals with how to prevent and overcome such disorders.
- Computational linguistics is a new area that includes automatic speech recognition, computer-assisted translation, and other uses associated with the use of computers to predict and interpret human communication. It also overlaps with both historical and field linguistics.

► Verbal Communication

All forms of communication can be categorized as either verbal or nonverbal. In turn, both verbal and nonverbal communication can be subdivided into either vocal or nonvocal.

Much of the communication that takes place between people is verbal; that is, it is based on language.

- Verbal communication of the vocal category includes spoken language.
- Nonvocal verbal communication involves written communication as well as communication that is transmitted through sign language, finger spelling, Braille, or other similar alternatives to verbal language.

Communication has been called the transfer of meaning from one mind to another. [Unit 1 definition: Communication is a sharing of meaning through the transmission of information via mutually understood signs.]

Because meanings exist in the human mind, they cannot be shared or communicated except through some external vehicle. The human body is capable of making sounds and movements which in turn can create a system of vehicles for sharing inner meanings and ideas with others. In general terms, such elements that codify meaning are called signs. The study of such signs is called semiotics.

► Semiotics

Semiotics (sometimes called semiosis or semiology):

- Theory or study of signs, specifically the theoretical relationship between language and signs or symbols used in the transmission of language
- An application of linguistic principals to objects other than natural language, such as facial expression or religious ritual
- Academic study focusing on both the signification of language (assigning and deriving meaning from signs) as well as its codification (attachment of rules and procedures for correct use)

As noted in Unit 1, the foundation of human communication is speech, a natural capability but one that requires learning in a cultural context to make it mutually understandable with others. During the course of human social interaction, people have found it useful to add to their inventory of vehicles to communicate. Particularly, they have tried to extend the possibility of communication beyond the limits of speech (which is restricted to words uttered and heard in the here and now; that is, with the hearer and listener in the same place at the same time). The way to communicate beyond speech is to communicate through signs.

Signs are nonverbal units of expression. A natural sign is a physical indicator, such as smoke as an indication of the presence of fire. Signs also are called signals or cues. Semiotics identifies three types of signs: symbols, indices and icons.

- A symbol stands in place of an object. It may be a physical object such as a flag standing for patriotism and national pride, a cross with strong religious meaning for Christians, even the Nike swoosh or the McDonald's arches. Or it may be a word or phrase, such as the "Allaho Akbar" printed in Arabic on flags or head bands. Symbols often have a metaphorical quality, such as the symbol of water as a sign of life or purity, as in the ritual washing in religious ceremonies. Likewise, people sometimes serve as symbolic signs, such as Adolph Hitler being considered as a face of hatred, Mother Teresa as a face of compassion, or Nelson Mandela or Malcolm X as faces of human struggle for dignity.
- An index points to something beyond itself. It is an indicator, such as words like "big" and arrows. An index also is sometimes called a natural sign because the relationship between the word and what it signifies is natural, such as smoke being an indexical sign of fire.
- An icon is a representation of an object that produces a mental image of the object represented. For example, the word tree, arbre and ki evoke a mental image only if you understand English, French and Japanese respectively. But the picture of a tree conjures up "tree" in the brain regardless of language ability.

► History of Semiotics

People have been studying language and how it is communicated since they first learned to communicate. Classically, the Greek Stoics considered the understanding of natural signs and the relationship between objects and their referents. Socrates and Plato presented discourses on the relationship between ideas and objects and/or language about them.

The Christian Bishop Augustine of Hippo in Northern Africa picked up the Stoic idea of signs, in particular the distinction between natural and conventional (or learned) signs. He identified words as conventional signs and believed that it is possible for words in different languages to share the same meaning.

The formal study of semiotics is associated with Ferdinand Saussure (1857-1913), a Swiss linguist who's posthumously published book became the foundation for contemporary study of semiotics. His premise was that an understanding of reality requires language, and that without language we have no way of analyzing or understanding the world around us. He also held that each language correlates sound and thought in its own way.

Saussure identified two aspects of a sign: a “concept” or a signified (signifiant as he wrote in French), and a “sound pattern” or a signifier (signifié).

Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914) is considered the founder of semiotics in the American tradition. Peirce taught that a sign (which he called technically, representamen) is the way human beings convey meaning. A sign consists of an object (the idea or reality being conveyed) and an interpretant (the meaning of the sign). For example, [drawing in history book] is the sign or representamen of [person], who is the object. The interpretant is the meaning that the reader draws from the drawing, to which the reader adds his or her own knowledge of [history]. Advertisements are full of signs that seek to lead the viewer/reader/listener to an interpretant.

Peirce identified three types of signs)

- An icon is a sign that resembles its referent object. For example, a photo identification card is an icon of the person identified on the card; a map is an icon of the territory it lays out. Icons often are intuitively understood because of their close relationship with their referents.
- An index is a sign that has a causal relationship with its referent; that is, with some physical or presumed connection. For example, smoke is an index or indicator of the presence of fire; sneezing is an indicator of allergies or a head cold. Some indices are natural (such as smoke) and thus can be intuitively understood. Others depend more on the informed understanding of the person receiving the indexed message. For example, the Crescent represents an event important to Muslims, and the cross represents a historic person and event for Christians – but neither can be understood or appreciated outside the context of that history, culture and belief.
- A symbol is a sign that is created arbitrarily, with no specific relationship to its reference, such as the letter written as M in Roman script, which symbolizes the same sound as the Arabic letter م – the sound “mmm.” In general, words in any language are conventional symbols because, as arbitrary sounds, they have no real connection with their referent – “ab” in Arabic, “baba” in Turkish, “pere” in French, “ojciec” in Polish, “chichi” in Japanese, all are arbitrary sounds to designate a person’s father. Because of their non-natural association with their referents, symbols generally must be learned.

Sometimes both indexes and symbols are used. For example, the number 1 (in Arabic numerals) or I (in Roman numerals) or 一 (in Japanese kanji numerals) all are indexes because they look like a single finger indicating only one object. However, the Roman system of numerals continues as an index with II, III, and so on and the Japanese uses 二 and 三 while the Arabic system of numerals (2, 3, 4) becomes purely symbolic in style.

Saussure identified three aspects of a sign: a signified (an abstract concept or idea in the mind), a signifier (the vehicle carrying the meaning) and a sign itself.

Emile Benveniste introduced a third categorization of signs that distinguished between form and substance, identifying the different types of signs.

- Linguistic signs are learned.
- Iconic signs are pictures, television images, computer graphics, and so on.
- Social decorum signs include expressions of gratitude and courtesies.
- Regulative signs are used for social control, such as traffic signs or “No Smoking” postings.
- Monetary signs reflect the values of economic life.

- Religious signs are used in rituals and in understanding and transmitting beliefs.
- Artistic signs are figurative images used for music and fine arts, such as musical notation or calligraphy.

The notion of semiotics has application in many different areas. Consider the situation of a television interview, in which camera shots serve as signifiers to various signified aspects of a screen. A long shot, for example with the camera lens apparently far away from the subject, signifies public distance and social relationships. A medium shot with the lens moderately close to the subject signifies a personal relationship. A close-up shot signifies emotional intimacy.

Connotation and denotation also can be conveyed with camera angles. For example, an eye-level shot suggests an equality between the interviewer and the interviewee. A worm's-eye view, with the camera pointed up on the interviewer, suggests a relationship in which the interviewer is more powerful or more important than the interviewee (or vice versa). Conversely, a bird's-eye view, with the camera looking down on the interviewer, would suggest lesser importance.

► Nonverbal Communication

While verbal communication is much studied and is the focus of much applied attention in areas ranging from journalism to governance to entertainment, the fact is that human beings communicate more through nonverbal means. Some estimates are that so-called body language accounts for 65, 70, even 90 percent of human communication. Using the 70-percent figure for body language, the voice accounts for another 20 percent or so, and specific words only about 10 percent. Research conclusions may vary a bit, but the consensus is clear: Nonverbal communication is hugely important in human interaction.

Nonverbal communication also is bound to culture. In particular, there are differences among cultures and nationalities about the relative value of speech versus silence, the relative value of talk versus action, the social role of small talk or gossip, and the role of animation, rhyme and exaggeration in speech. Because of these differences, the study of verbal and nonverbal communication always must be done within a social or cultural context.

As noted above, nonverbal communication may be vocal (focusing on vocal characteristics such as pitch, rate, and so on) or nonvocal (focusing on body language, environment, attire and the like).

Some linguists identify an aspect of nonverbal communication called paralanguage. This refers to a range of nonlinguistic elements of speech, such as facial expressions, gestures, the use of time and space, and so on. However, most linguists adhere to stricter categorization. Commonly, the study of nonverbal communication is divided into several specific categories.

- Kinesics (simplistically called body language) deals with physical movement, sometimes called affective displays. This study applies traditional linguistic principles to the body as a whole or to specific parts, particularly the face, hands and arms. It also deals with posture in standing and sitting, as well as with eye and facial expressions, such as the arching of eyebrows or rolling of the eyes. Kinesics vary culturally. For example, a person of Mediterranean culture may use extensive hand movements and body gestures as an expression of anger, whereas a Japanese person may be apparently less excited, but perhaps no less angry. Kinesics also includes the use of smiling, frowning, giggling and so on, which also differs by culture. While universally, smiling reveals happiness, in some cultures it also is used to mask sadness or to hide embarrassment.

Kinesics generally refers not to sign language that relies on gestures and expressions in a grammatical context as an alternative to spoken language. But it is associated with the use of emblems, physical gestures that support or reinforce what is said verbally. Some emblems seem to be universal, while others are cultural, with different interpretations in various cultures, or perhaps with different uses by men and women. An example of a universal emblem is the uplifted shoulders and upturned hands that indicate “I don’t know” virtually everywhere in the world. An example of a culture-bound emblem is the encircled thumb and forefinger. That gesture can be interpreted as worthless in France, money in Japan, OK in the United States, a curse in Arab cultures, and an obscenity in Germany, Brazil and Australia.

- Occulesics is closely related to kinesics. Occulesics deals with eye behavior as an element of communication. Some aspects of occulesics deal with a static or fixed gaze versus dynamic eye movement. This so-called eye contact is the subject of much interpretation by the observer, making it difficult to predict its exact communication impact. In the West, direct eye contact (looking into the eyes of the other person) is common about 40 percent of the time while talking and 70 percent while listening. In Japan, it is more common to look at the throat of the other person. In China and Indonesia, the practice is to lower the eyes because direct eye contact is considered bad manners, and in Hispanic culture direct eye contact is a form of challenge and disrespect. In Arab culture, it is common for both speakers and listeners to look directly into each others’ eyes for long periods of time, indicating keen interest in the conversation. In Mediterranean society, men often look at women for long periods of time that may be interpreted as staring by women from other cultures. Even the same kinesic gesture can be interpreted differently. For example, the facial gesture of downcast eyes during conversation can suggest social deference, evasion, insincerity or boredom.
- Proxemics involves the social use of space in a communication situation. One aspect of this is the closeness between and among people when they speak, and the significant role that culture plays in this. Distance is generally described on a continuum from intimate space (0-18 inches) to personal space or informal distance (18 inches to 4 feet) to social space or formal distance (4-12 feet), and public space or distance (beyond 12 feet). Proxemics also deals with the effective use of space in social settings, such as businesses and homes, ranging and the arrangement of space to encourage or inhibit communication.
- Haptics focuses on touching as an element of communication, indicating both the type of touch as well as its frequency and intensity. Like many other elements of nonverbal communication, haptics is very much a function of culture. It has been noted, for example, that Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Latin American cultures employ much social touching in conversation, including embraces and hand-holding; these are called high-contact (or high-touch) cultures. In moderate-touch cultures such as North America and Northern Europe, touching is used only occasionally, such as in handshakes and sporadic shoulder touching or back slapping. In low-contact cultures such as in Northern Asian cultures, meanwhile, social touching is rarely used at all. But the geography is by no means that simple. People in the Asian nation of the Philippines, for example, use a large amount of social touching in conversation and personal interaction. Even within a culture, haptics vary. For example, handshakes vary in length and strength of grip depending on the actual (or hoped for) degree of intimacy between the two people shaking hands.
- Vocalics (also called paralanguage) deals with vocal cues, more accurately referred to as the nonphonemic qualities of language. These include accent, loudness, tempo, pitch, cadence, rate of speech, nasality and tone, insofar as these convey meaning. Vocalics is sometimes subdivided

into several categories. Vocal characterizers include laughing, crying, yawning, and so on. These can be associated with culture, such as the different ways various cultures accept the practice of belching. Vocal qualifiers such as volume, pitch, rhythm and tempo also are associated with cultural distinctions. In Arab culture, for example, speaking loudly connotes sincerity, whereas in North America it often is interpreted as aggressive. Vocal segregates (sounds such as mmmm, uh-huh, oooo) likewise also differ among various cultures. Vocal rate deals with the speed at which people talk, another factor that offers various interpretations.

- Chronemics deals with the use of time as an element of communication. Formal time is measured in minutes, hours, days, and so on. Informal time is measured relative to seasons, social customs, lunar cycles, etc. Chronemics involves specifics such as punctuality (which can be monochronic or M-time and polychronic or P-time) along with patterns of dominance or deference within a communication situations. For example, studies show that men are more likely than women to dominate a conversation and interrupt another speaker. Chronemics also deals with time from the standpoint of social settings, such as the likelihood among Americans of arriving early for business meetings but being “fashionably late” for social activities, while in Latin American and Arab culture, business people often arrive at a time Westerns would consider “late,” taking business meetings as occasions for hospitality and socializing. Meanwhile, the Sioux language doesn’t even have a word for “late,” reflecting a very relaxed attitude toward time. Chronemics also considers the use of monochronemics (doing one thing at a time, emphasis on schedules and promptness, getting to the point quickly) versus polychronemics (doing several things at a time, emphasis on people and the whole of a relationship). Studies show that the monochronemic conversation (talking about one thing at a time) is common in Northern Europe and North America. Meanwhile, Latin American, Asian, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures are more likely to use polychronemic conversation (multiple conversations at the same time, and frequent interruption by other speaker-listeners).
- Appearance deals with the communication role played by a person’s look or physical appearance (as compared with physical gestures associated with kinesics). It deals with physical aspects of body shape, hair color and skin tone, as well as grooming, dress (both clothing and jewelry) and use of appearance enhancements such as body piercings, brandings and tattoos. Consider, for example, how attire is an essential part of nonvocal communication among areas influenced by Arab culture. Among North and Western Africans, public speakers prefer long robes and big sleeves so that when they raise their hands, extra sleeve cloth slips through the arms and puffs up their shoulder, making them look bigger and more elegant. The Arab and North African head covering with different bands of cloth and the color of the robes (white in daytime, dark at night) are more than fashion statements.
- Environment involves the communicative value of the physical space, such as room size, color, accessibility and location. Business people, for example, assume significant meaning about desk size, offices with (or without) windows, and so on. Generally it is assumed that the most important people in a company occupy the uppermost floor in a building.
- Artifacts similarly deals with the communicative aspect of apparent objects visible in the room – art, possessions and so on – in that these may be personal, indicative of status, and/or revealing of lifestyle. In some societies, much meaning is presumed by one’s choice of automobile. Artifacts almost always have cultural significance. For example, in many Western countries, pets have great emotional significance; among many Arabs, rugs are prestigious.

- Olfactics is an aspect of nonverbal communication dealing with smells. Though not widely studied from a communication perspective, olfactics might include the use of perfumes and spices. It is associated with proxemics in that, the closer people are in communication, the more likely that the smell will be relevant. In some high-contact cultures such as Samoan or Arab, it is customary to get close enough in conversation to smell the other person. Indeed, Arabs and religious Muslims are known for using perfumes, according to the teaching the Prophet that it is a charity to smell nice for others.
- Synchrony focuses on the amount of coordination in people's behavior when their nonverbal cues are in sync with one another. Some examples include mirroring, mimicry, or behavioral meshing.

► Uses of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication provides individuals and groups with many options for presenting their messages. Here are some of the uses of nonverbal communication.

- To create impressions beyond the verbal element of communication (kinesics, chronemics, vocalics, environment)
- To repeat and reinforce what is said verbally (oculesics, kinesics)
- To manage and regulate the interaction among participants in the communication exchange (kinesics, oculesics, proxemics, synchrony)
- To express emotion beyond the verbal element (kinesics, oculesics, haptics, vocalics, proxemics)
- To convey relational messages of affection, power, dominance, respect, and so on (proxemics, oculesics, haptics)
- To promote honest communication by detecting deception or conveying suspicion (kinesics, oculesics, vocalics)
- To provide group or social leadership by sending messages of power and persuasion (kinesics, vocalics, chronemics)

