

Communication

Communication styles

- Communication involves the transmission of a message from one person to another
- It depends on content and how content is conveyed
 - E.g media- visual, spoken or written can affect the way our messages are conceived
- Different communication styles can also have an impact on how effective we are at getting our message across

- Communication style: Examines the cultural and social aspects of language
- How we learn to speak depends on culture, socioeconomic background and gender
- Style involves accents, our vocabulary, grammar and how we express
- Our identity is how we speak, our self image, people make judgments about

Social background and style

- Basil and Bernstein (1971) had an interest in the relationship between language style and social class
 - Bernstein claimed that people from working and middle classes used different kinds of language codes
 - Working class relied on traditional roles and ways of interacting and used a restricted code (see p 212 table 15.1)
 - Middle class wanted to developed ideas in relation too their personal experiences so used both traditional and elaborated code in their interactions
 - Bernstein considered that children in working-class families had a language deficit because they could only use the inferior restricted code, this limited their ability to benefit from education
 - His theory had a major influence on education programs for young children in the USA in 1960's and 1970's with various projects to help poor children overcome their educational disadvantage

- Bernstein's language deficit position was opposed by William Labov (1970)
 - Labov's work was based on black children from NY who spoke Black English Vernacular (BEV)
 - Labov considered that BEV was just as complex and rule-governed as standard english and should be considered different not deficient
 - Labov said that there was nothing inherently more complex e.g "He doesn't know anything BEV- "He don't know nothing"
 - Labov pointed out that several languages used double negatives in the same way as BEV
 - He was concerned that teachers were being told not to accept BEV as it was useless for learning. 'They are being taught to hear every natural utterance of the child as evidence of his mental inferiority. As linguists, we are unanimous in condemning this view as bad observation, bad theory and bad practice" (Labov, 1970, p240)
 - There are still prejudices against particular styles in most communities

- Ian Malcolm and his colleagues (2003) consider that Aboriginal Children are still expected to submit to an education that only recognises standard English in which teachers have little appreciation of differences in speaking and learning styles
 - In aboriginal communities a person who has been asked a question has the right not to reply, in the classroom, the Aboriginal child may take this option, to the irritation of the teacher
 - Malcolm and his colleagues points out the important of understanding and respecting differences in communication styles for effective interactions

Gender differences- Tannen

- Deborah Tannen (1990) described styles that she considered to be typical of men and women
- Men tend to "report talk"
 - Type used in public speaking, when telling jokes, stories, imparting information etc
 - Men are comfortable holding centre stage, they talk as a way of gaining and holding the attention of their audience and to negotiate and maintain status

- Women tend to “rapport talk”
- Based on establishing relationships, understanding and negotiating differences, enjoy private conversation more than men which means sharing experiences
- Friction between men and women can occur due to a lack of understanding the differences in communication
- Women coming to couple counselling complain that their partners do not listen to them or want to talk
- Tannen considers that if men and women simply understand the differences in each other’s reasons for talking, a lot of anguish can be avoided

- Other researchers have attempted to look at the differences in forms of expression used by men and women to link them to power differences between the sexes
- Women have been shown to use more confirmatory noises e.g “mmm” and “yeah” to indicate they are listening, they use more indirect requests than men e.g a man might say “shut the door” a women would say “would you mind shutting the door?”
- Another grammatical form that is considered common in women’s speech is a “hedge” which is used to soften a request or statement e.g “Please shut the door, if you don't mind”- if you don't mind is the hedge

- Rudi Dallos (1996) noted that hedges are used by both men and women and are more thought of as strategic devices rather than powerless, they are also used to achieve an end

Persuasive Communication

- Persuasive communication is a form of communication used everyday and involves changing beliefs, feelings and behaviour of another, we need to know what affect the listener’s reactions if we want to be successful
- Petty and Cacioppo (1986) state that there are two routes to persuasion:
- Central: The central route to persuasion consists of thoughtful consideration of the content of the message by the receiver as an active participation in the process of persuasion, listener must have the motivation and ability to think about the message
- Peripheral: The peripheral routes to persuasion occurs when the listener decides whether to agree with the message based on cues other than the content of the message e.g may agree with the message because the source appears to be an expert or attractive, more passive than central processing
- Petty and Cacioppo explain that “Attitude changes that result mostly from processing issue-relevant arguments (central route) will show greater temporal persistence, greater predication of behaviour and greater resistance to counter persuasion than attitude changes that result from mostly peripheral cues” (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986, p21)

Source of the message

- Important to get the attention of the listener
- Research suggests that we are likely to accept the word of people with expertise in an area even without assessing the validity of their claim (Smith and Mackie 2000). Advertisers count on this.
- Listeners also assume that a fast speaker is more intelligent and knowledgeable
- Smith and Shaffer (1995) fast presentation makes it difficult for listeners to evaluate content properly
- Trustworthiness is another characteristic that persuades us, politicians are aware of this and in an election campaign will often try to convince us that their opponents are untrustworthy, by referring to broken political promises etc

Nature of the communication

- When people understand a message and respond favourably to it they are likely to be persuaded
- Research indicates that much persuasive information is misunderstood, although comprehension of printed advertisements and information is higher than for information presented on television (Smith and Mackie 2000) For this reason those using the media for persuasion need to remember to ‘keep it simple’.

- Messages often aim to provoke emotional responses if they don't we are unlikely to be persuaded
- Research linking good mood to ability to be persuaded is quite mixed, this is due to the fact that when in a good mood, people are less likely to process information carefully and so will not be swayed by a rational argument but they are more likely to be convinced by a supposed expert
- Some attempts at persuasion rely on inducing fear rather than a positive mood e.g political campaigns, parents warning, health campaigns
- Research shows us that this type of appeal to be successful must arouse sufficient anxiety to convince us to attend to the message but not too much emotion
- High levels of fear can lead to avoidance of the message, and stop us from being able to process the content of the message properly

Characteristics of the audience

- The content or presentation style of our message will change depending on a range of characteristics of the audience: their age, relationship to us, personality, level of education, culture, etc
- Research has shown that some people enjoy examining the issues, checking for inconsistencies, or weighing up the 'pros and cons' in a debate, such people are said to have a high 'need for cognition' (Cacioppo and Petty 1982) they are persuaded by strong arguments and unmoved by weak ones
- People who are low in their need for cognition are less likely to take the strength of an argument into account and to be swayed by such factors as the expertise or trustworthiness of the person presenting the message
- Min-Sun Kim and colleagues (1998) examined cultural differences in the way attempts at persuasion are evaluated, used students from mainland USA, Korea and Hawaii
 - They hypothesised that participants who valued interdependence (collectivist culture) would likely use hint strategies and consider them to be an effective means of persuasion, and people who valued independence (individualist cultures) would consider direct statements as the best way of making requests
 - Their hypothesis were supposed for "first attempt" requests but if confronted with non-compliance all participants reported that they would likely resort to more direct requests for the second attempts.

Features and Limitations of Theories of Language Development

- Researchers of language consider that there are 3 main types of knowledge that children acquire
 - Knowledge about what to say (content)
 - Knowledge about how to say it (form)
 - Knowledge about the use of language (use)
- All language have these components, even a deaf person)
- A child learning a spoken language must learn to discriminate and produce the sound of their language
- All the components change as the child develops
- If a child did not know how to use language that takes into account the person they are speaking with, then their intended message does not get across effectively
- Politeness is expected in most cultures, especially if the speaker is asking for something
- The value of politeness is soon learned

Innate and Learned Behaviours- Chomsky

- 1970s-1980s research examined how children develop or acquire language
- Chomsky (1968) proposed a language device (LAD) a mysterious 'black box' that was hard-wired for language
 - LAD worked by receiving as input the native language around the child and generated sentences in that same language as output
 - Chomsky's theory of language assumed that there were universal rules that could distinguish grammatical from ungrammatical sentences
 - One set of rules was developed to cover the grammatical, or deep, structure of language

- These are universal rules, applicable to all languages
- Surface structure rules described the grammatical structure of spoken language (ability to understand)
- Deep structure rules enabled the production of grammatical sentences (ability to produce)
- It was claimed that people are genetically predisposed to learn this universal grammar, so children learned language naturally
- LAD could deal with surface structure language received (sometimes ungrammatical, erroneous or irregular) and make sure children's output increasingly approximated the language of native speakers
- This theory paid little attention to the social environment in which the child was developing, except that the primary linguistic input came in the form of language being used in the family and in the community
- Children were innately predisposed to learn how to talk and how to understand the language around them
- This led to other researchers to propose a role for the social environment in the language development of children, recognising that communication is a fundamental function of language

Innate and Learned Behaviours- Bruner

- Children's language development takes place through parents talking to their children, it involves participation in shared activities where words and meanings develop in routines and activities regularly undertaken such as shopping, washing dishes and tending the garden
- Jerome Bruner (1983) described the processes through which language was learned
- Bruner (1983) proposed a language acquisition support system (LASS) which described how parents (mothers) guided their children's language through interaction based on a longitudinal study of 2 boys from 3 months age until they were about 24 months
- Not only did the children learn to talk but they learned the language of the social, historical and cultural group in which they were growing up
- Bruner thought that LASS required LAD and vice versa- Language could only develop through the interaction with others, the child contained the innate part to learn language and adult provides the social framework to encourage talk
- Scaffolding: The mother provides suitable framework for language e.g familiar games such as 'peek-a-boo', joint book reading and activities such as bath times and meal times (These routines are called 'formats')
- Reference: Is how people manage and direct each other's attention by linguistic means and is how language development is supported through mother-child interactions e.g pointing, turning you heard to look at someone
- An example of growth of reference is: Joint attention is the eye contact between an infant and mother, once established the mother will show objects to the infant
- Another example of growth of reference is: book reading. Bruner (1981), Garton and Pratt (1998, 2004) by the time book reading appears as a format, children are able to know many of the conventions of conversations
- Book reading supports the attempts to use language