

Good misinterpretation of communication literature review example

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Introduction

Misinterpretation is a major barrier when it comes to communication. While misinterpretation is a massive barrier, it is one of those barriers that can be easily eliminated by being cautious and disciplined in communication. It is common in non-verbal communications while it is still evident in face-to-face conversations. During interactions among human beings, some individuals have a tendency of jumping into conclusions or misinterpret something that has either been uttered or communicated by any other means. The consequences of misinterpretation are so severe that they may lead to social conflicts and influence responses and beliefs as it will be indicated in the synthesis of scholarship. This research will demonstrate the needs to be sure of the meaning behind every communication and measures that can be used to ensure that the message has been clearly and accurately understood. On the basis of this study, scholars in communication and another range of practitioners will have a task to analyze non-verbal and verbal forms of communication and come up with better strategies to eliminate them (Wilczek, 2006) . To the general public, a glimpse of the content in this research will offer insight to boost interpersonal interactions. It will help in understanding on how to relate with people and maintain the relationships. The benefit will mostly come from understanding how to control facial expressions, sudden change in composure or posture. This will then guide in avoiding unnecessary conflicts and misunderstandings with one's partner, family, boss and friends.

In this research, there will attention given to misinterpretations in mainly in non-verbal communication, the consequences that come along due to that

inclusive of possible ways or the strategies to adopt to eliminate or minimize misinterpretations in communication. Discussed below is a paradigm upon which this research roots its foundation.

Theoretical Discussion

At present day, human perceptions and expectations have changed.

Technology has also stepped in to improve communication. To understand the connection between expectation and technology, there is a real life example. One common one is when one due to unavoidable circumstances is late to reply to a mobile phone message, an email or misses to receive a phone call (Button & Rossera, 1999). The source of the message, in this case the sender or caller will make conclusions that he/she has been ignored. This is an indication that, the failure to receive the phone call or delay in replying to a simple message is in itself communication. The sender or caller in this case will be frustrated that they have been ignored intentionally. That is misinterpretation in itself.

With the current generation, means of communication have changed, cultural interaction has increased, and globalization is on the rise as well while technological advancements has been on an upward boost. Taking all this factors in to consideration, misinterpretation has been noticed at all social levels. The synthesis of scholarship below sheds more light to more misinterpretation errors in communication while it attempts to offer possible solutions to the issues.

Synthesis of Scholarship

As indicated earlier, communication misinterpretations can have severe consequences. People that end up misinterpreting communication find themselves making enemies, offending superiors and burning bridges while they initially had positive intentions. In essence, communication is a complex process in which people end up giving contradictory nonverbal and verbal signals that end up obscuring the initially intended meaning. Factors that may lead to this include amongst others, ambiguity, cultural variations and mixed messages.

Ambiguity and Misinterpretation of Communication

Misinterpretation in verbal communication mainly arises from ambiguous words. Words that have more than one meaning will end up delivering misinterpretations if they have been used in the wrong contexts, (Neuliep, 2009). Taking an example, when an individual shouts out that, “ She makes a lot”, there are more than one conclusion that would be derived by the mind of the receiver. To begin with, the listener would hear that statement and his mind would race to a conclusion that she creates a lot of things upon which she is able to earn a lot of money from it. On the other hand, it could follow that she creates a lot of things but earns little or no money or that she possibly earns a lot of money but from passive investments. This are more than two conclusions coming out from a statement with only four words. This therefore is an indication that ambiguity will end up influencing how individuals interpret a message. A vague and imprecise language that fails to consider the context is a big barrier to communication as there are

possibilities that it may end up being misinterpreted.

In other cases, it has been identified that ambiguity also exists under the concept of nonverbal communication. For instance in the medical field, there are health care providers in their service provision have encountered patients who slump on their chairs and they are yawning. To the health care providers, they may look at the patients and derive unintended messages by the patients such as the fact that the patient may be bored, they did not have adequate sleep for the previous night, ate too much or too little, lack of confidence, over relaxation or possibly its due to being tired. According to such observations, the extent of the consequences of a single yawn and seating posture demonstrate how communication is critical.

Cultural Differences and Misinterpretation of Communication

Cultural differences also contribute to misinterpretation of both verbal and nonverbal communication. Culture in this context would refer to a person's belief, religion, and the place of origin, education levels, upbringing and other social aspects. Starting with the verbal aspect, Arabs have a belief that the word " Jihad" solely means " struggle" whether it is spiritually or militarily. In their informal communications and religion, that is the actual and only meaning of the word. However this is not the case amongst the inhabitants of the West. This is because, the same word has been translated to mean " holy war" (Boalt, 2009).

Cultural variations and diversity have a massive misinterpretation effect on communication. This has been explained through various communication researches that have come up with varying cultural examples that explain

possible situations where misinterpretations have occurred. Going by the Western culture, the symbol of putting a head down indicates signs that one has a low self-confidence. The same act among the Japanese is an indication of respect. At the current world, people also have varying characters. Others say that it is a polite and natural act to look directly into the eyes of an individual to whom you are having a conversation with. However, under different organization structures, it is at times interpreted as improper and disrespectful especially when conversing with an individual of a higher rank. With globalization, behaviors have been changing gradually. To some families, kissing, holding hands and embracing are perceived as normal and are cordially encouraged. To other cultures, such actions are deemed completely offensive and annoying especially if done in public (Boalt, 2009). To stress on this aspect, human personality indicates that there are those individuals who stand a foot away from the individual they are communicating to and have a comfortable conversation. To others however, the same distance between them feels extremely close and distracting. All this non-verbal actions thereby lead to multiple occasions upon which misinterpretation of communication may occur.

Mixed Messages and Misinterpretation of Communication

It has been concluded upon various events of research that there are occasions in which people end up using verbal and non-verbal forms of communication in a way that they tend to confuse the listener. The meaning of a word may be clear but the body language makes the entire process complicated. For instance, looking at interactions between two people, one

may clearly state that, “ I had fun and I’d like to meet you again.” The intentions of this words are clear and the message as well. The complication arises if the message was delivered by an individual who stated this while crossing arms and avoiding eye contact. There will be a question of sincerity in such a situation. At times, two non-verbal forms of communication may be used together while they deliver varying messages. For example one may demonstrate a warm smile while having his/her hands crossed. It is a complicated situation in which the smile indicates openness while the crossed arms are an indication of defensiveness.

Suggested Approaches in Managing Interpretations in Communication

As summarized above, there are many situations in which misinterpretations of communication would occur. Strategies that have been availed to deal with this are, clarification that the correct message has been received, avoidance of misunderstandings before they happen by reasoning on the possible interpretations, sticking to important information, communicate with a reason, avoid assumptions, respect for culture and diversity and relate information instead of giving orders(Neuliep, 2009). With the researches that have been conducted in research, these steps have focused on the source of the message as the main source of misinterpretations. Therefore, measures target at ensuring clear and reasoned information has been communicated.

Conclusion

The society we are living in is dynamic. Everything keeps changing. The researches that have been conducted on misinterpretation have indicated

cultural factors, ambiguity and mixing up communication are possible sources of misinterpretation. The possible strategies to avoid such events have been provided in response to the findings on the causes. However, the literature available has been very general. There is need that future research is focused at being specific. The specificity aspect is necessary in considering how technology has impacted on interpretations, how other factors such as age influence it and the role of the message recipient in relation to misinterpretation. These will deliver solutions and strategies on minimizing misinterpretation on a more specific level. Every factor that contributes to misinterpretation will be handled individually thus providing the most applicable and realistic solutions. Barriers to effective communication are broad. Most of them can be minimized through positive effort. Misinterpretation is one of such barriers, adequate, recent and continuous research on these events of misinterpretation will come in handy at giving a way forward in providing higher quality communication.

References

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