

Are sniffer dogs engaged in communication?

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



Are Sniffer Dogs Engaged in Communication? Introduction There are always sniffer dogs at an airport in the search for illicit drugs. The Customs of a government rely on dogs for this duty. However, how do Customs Officers communicate with and understand dogs? Is communication involved?

Broadly, communication means the sharing of experience. It could be verbal or nonverbal. Here is an influential definition in detail - " Communication takes place when one mind so acts upon its environment that another mind is influenced and in that other mind an experience occurs which is like the experience of the first mind and is caused in part by that experience. " (I. A. Richards, Encyclopedia Britannica) A system consists of inputs, processes and outputs. It is a set of things to run as a function unit. As Rodriques (1992) stated, a communication situation requires certain factors for its existence. The factors are Participants, Contact, Context, Common Code, Form of Message, and Goal of Communication. In the Richard's definition above, the communication system is also described. One mind influencing another mind means there are two parties who contact in a common code with a physical and temporal setting (Context). In the same form of message, they achieve the communication. The Communication Process

During the Drug Detection In the case of using sniffer dogs at an airport, the participants would be the sniffer dogs and the Customs Officers. There is contact when the dogs and officers are interacting. The Context would be the airport where the drug searching is taken place. If the dogs smell drugs, they will immediately bark to notice officers for further actions. In this situation, the form of message is very instant and brief. Whilst the dogs are able to express themselves and the officers understand the message, the goal of

communication is achieved — the finding of drugs. According to the revised Linear Model originally proposed by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, there are 6 constituents to make up the process of communication and they include a source, an encoder, a message, a channel, a decoder, and a receiver. The case of using sniffer dogs also adapt to this model. The Model is a one-way communication because there is no feedback included. The Source The dogs provide the information that is required in the communication. They patrolled with the officers and when they want to express, they encode. Thus, the dogs would be the source. The Encoder The encoder turns the idea of the source into a code that is understandable by the listener. In the communication process between the sniffer dogs and officers, the encoder would be the vocal folds. The dogs express themselves by barking when they can sniff drugs and even actions such as chasing the drug dealers or stay around the suspicious luggage. Thus, we can generally say that the encoding device in this case is the vocal folds that produce barking sound. The Message The message is actually the information that is presented by the source. The bark of the dogs implies the message — drugs found. Although there is no language included in the conversation, the dogs do want to notify the officers that they have found drugs or anything suspicious by barking, which is not a language. However, the bark is also a mean of transferring messages and it is effective enough whilst dogs can express their meanings clearly to the officers. Then, the message, i. e. drugs found, is transmitted from the source to the receiver. The Channel and the Noise The channel is the medium of transmission. The vibration of an object produces the sound. The sound source here, the bark, is transmitted through

air when sound wave is caused by vibration. Thus, the surrounding air is the channel that transmits the barking sound and makes it hearable by the officers. Meanwhile, there may be noise around that interrupts the conversation process. The message would not reach the receiver eventually. In other words, the goal or the destination of the communication is not met. At the airport, there may be another communication processing, say, the airport public announcement or the loud noise made by the passengers, which would make the bark less hearable by the officers. The Decoder The message transmitted through the channel needs to be decoded. If we say encoder translates the idea of sender into a form of message or a code, the decoder then retranslate the code to get the meaning of the code. The bark is hearable by ears of officers. Therefore, the decoder would be ears allow officers to hear and there will be no other way to hear the bark of dogs without ears. The Receiver Finally, the receiver here in this case is obviously the officers. They decode and retranslate the message by understanding the bark action of sniffer dogs. The communication is successful due to the strict training of detection. The bark is just an arbitrary symbol, even human language. The symbol or code is effective to tell and let both participants understand each other. Since the dogs are trained, they are able to express their ideas if drugs are found. The role of the receiver (the officers) is to translate the arbitrary symbol into the exact and particular meaning. The Feedback However, the situation here is different from the linear communication model because there is feedback by the officers. The linear model is a one-way model that includes no feedback. Nevertheless, the situation here does have feedback. When the officers receive the signal of

finding drugs, they will be alerted then take further action — investigation. This time, the officers will let the dogs know that they will take further action by different ways. For example, the officers can even ask the dogs in simple human language to find out the exact location of drugs as long as the dogs understand. Due to the need or purpose to communicate the response, the officers encode the feedback into arbitrary symbol or code (simple human language). The message will be transmitted through the channel to the dogs and decoding process will take place again. Conclusion Communication is involved in using sniffer dogs at an airport in the search for illicit drugs. Sniffer dogs are engaged in communication because when they notify the officers, they bark which is encoded and the message is implied. They are able to express through transmission of message by channel whilst the decoding process occurs to let the Customs Officers, which are the receiver, comprehend the idea from the dogs and react. Reference Communication. (2011). In EncyclopÃ¡dia Britannica. Retrieved 26 September 2011, from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/129024/communication> Rodriques, M. V. (2000). Perspectives of communication and communicative competence. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.