

Visual and Verbal Communications: Similarities and Differences

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Abstract

Communication is a process of transmitting some information or data, ideas, thoughts, feelings, emotions through speech, writing, gestures, mimics, eyes and even nonverbal signals. In other words, communication is a process of establishing contacts and developing relations between people. The mostly widely spread types of communication is verbal and nonverbal. Namely this is the subject of research of the presented paper; though, it focuses on the subtype of nonverbal communication – visual communication. The papers deals with similarities and differences between these most important types of communication. The first and most vivid similarity between these types is that in both case we deal with the process of transferring and receiving the information. Secondly, both of them are connected with brain. In both cases, perceptual processing determines the type and amount of information that is sent to the brain for further thought. But if in verbal communication brain receives the information through the organs of hearing (by the uttered words), in the second case the process is accomplished through the organs of vision (by the viewed object). In both cases, the addressee should be very well aware of codes sent by the addresser; otherwise there will be no communication. But in case of verbal communication words, phrases and sentences should be properly understood and in case of visual communication – the objects, images should be properly perceived where symbolism should definitely be minded.

Keywords: Verbal communication, nonverbal communication, visual communication, addresser, addressee, transferring and receiving information

Introduction

The word communication comes from Latin “communicatio” that means the message or transfer. Generally speaking, we understand *communication* as exchange of information between interlocutors or transferring message from one person to another. One thing is obvious - if

communication between two and more participants of the dialogue is not effective, people will not be able to come to agreement and achieve any goal. Moreover, the term *communication* is closely connected with the social sphere of human life.

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Without communication it is impossible even to imagine nowadays life. It is an integral part of any kind of relation. Knowing its basic principles, it is possible to build more effective relations both in private life and in work.

Communication is a process as a result of which the message is transferred from the addresser to the recipient. If we want our message to be apprehended properly and our communication be effective, we have to show great consideration for creating the message, choosing channels of its transfer, a context, and also feedback. In the course of communication namely an addresser is a source of information. Namely addresser is a person on whom depends how the message is presented, whether it is emotionally colored, how subjective or objective it is, etc.

In the process of transferring the message different barriers can arise overcoming of which depends whether the expected effect of communication will be achieved or not. Barriers can be various: language barriers - if the sender and the recipient of the information are carriers of different languages; notional barriers - if people participating in communication belong to different social groups, have various education level, etc.; semantic barriers - when the sender and the receiver have different understanding of the sent message. The context or conditions of communication also play an important role in achieving efficiency of transferring and receiving the message. It is necessary to consider that the surrounding environment can both impede and contribute to this process.

Nowadays, there exist different types of communication: **Communication within social sciences** (political science, sociology, cultural science, linguistics, philosophy, history, etc.) is the process directed to establishing interrelations between members of society. **Communication in psychology** is focused on exchanging information between living beings, establishing contacts between particular people and groups of people. This is interrelation between an individual and society. **Mass communication** is a process of forming mass consciousness in society with the help of various kinds of media: TV and radio broadcasting, press, etc. **Cross-cultural communication** is communication between representatives of various cultures. But the main and mostly widely spread types of communication is

verbal and nonverbal. Namely this is the subject of research of the presented paper; though, it focuses on the subtype of nonverbal communication – visual communication.

In order to determine the concept "verbal communication" it is necessary to understand what its purpose is and what it is based on.

The closest meaning of the word "communication" is contact, relations between people. The most significant means of communication between people is the use of language. It acts as the tool of knowledge and the tool of thinking. However, the main goal of verbal communication is exchange of any kind of information. Though, this goal can be achieved not only by means of the language. From the earliest times, society used additional sources of transmitting information and establishing communication. Some of them exist even today. For instance, in some African countries, people still use drum signals, whistle language, signals of hand bells, etc. for exchanging messages. In the East, the so called "language of flowers" is used for this purpose. It is used when information cannot be put into words. For example, a rose is a symbol of love, an aster is a symbol of grief, etc. In this case symbolism is involved and in order to establish proper communication, everybody should be well aware of symbolic meanings of each flower. People of those societies consider the mentioned sounds or symbols as a part of verbal communication as they contribute to achieving the main goal - that is to exchange information. But we suppose that it would be better if we discuss them as a part of nonverbal communication owing to the fact that only exchanging information is not enough to refer something to verbal communication. In verbal communication using words should be a must.

Verbal communication is based on three important factors: verbal behavior, verbal relations and speech act. The term "speech relations" is the synonym of the term "verbal communication". Both of these concepts mean bilateral process, and also interaction of people in the course of communication.

The term "verbal behavior" is used to show a unilateral process. It includes the features characterizing speech reactions and the speech of one of participants of the situation - either the addressee, or the sender. This term can be applied to describe making speech at a meeting and in other situations. However, it cannot analyze dialogue because in this case it is necessary to reveal not only verbal behavior, but also mechanisms of verbal interactions. Thus, verbal relation just includes verbal behavior. The term "speech act" denotes specific speech actions of a person who speaks within any communicative situation.

It is clear that the process of verbal communication often assumes using these means of language, its grammar and vocabulary. However, for

successful exchange of information, it is important to know the conditions under which these or those language units and phrases are used. Thus, verbal communication is the broad concept including various methods of exchange of information that allows both - society in general and each person separately to develop.

In everyday life, everybody has got used to communicate with other people by means of words and the interrelated speech. But many of them are well aware of the expression "to understand each other without words". This phrase speaks namely about nonverbal communication.

Actually, all people know nonverbal communication. In the English language there are a lot of such set phrases. For example, it is possible to tell about a joyful, smiling person that he/she "is shining with happiness", "is radiating with joy". When a person is frightened or horrified, it is possible to use such expressions as "fossilated with horror" or "stiffened from fear". The rage and anger are described by the expressions "will burst with rage" or "shivers from rage". At a nervous condition people begin to bite their lips. In all these cases feelings are expressed by means of nonverbal communication. While getting acquainted, interlocutors find nearly half of information about each other not through words, but through nonverbal communication.

Quite often nonverbal communication is called a language of gestures. Understanding of nonverbal language is really very important. Such necessity is conditioned owing to many reasons. Firstly, sometimes only words are not enough to fully understand a person's feelings and disposition. Very often people say such a phrase "I cannot put it into words". Secondly, a person's ability to understand the language of nonverbal communication speaks about his/her ability to be self-controlled. Nonverbal communication can tell what an interlocutor actually thinks of another person. Also, the value of nonverbal communication is that it happens unconsciously and spontaneously. Mimicry, gestures, intonation of a voice can tell about a person much more, than habitual words in everyday life.

Mimicry is a person's countenance. It is the most widespread and understandable manifestation of feelings in nonverbal communication. Positive emotions, such as love, surprise and joy are recognized best of all. It is more difficult to perceive negative emotions. It is more difficult to recognize anger or rage than joy as people can hide anger better than happiness.

There are several main characteristics which speak about a certain feeling what is called body language. For instance, raised eyebrows, widely open eyes, dropped down tips of lips and the slightly opened mouth can tell that a person is surprised. Anger is shown by lowered eyebrows, bent on a forehead wrinkles, closed lips and clenched teeth. A crumpled nose, lowered eyebrows and the lower lip which is stuck out forward express disgust.

Some people do not understand nonverbal communication at all, others understand it partially, and some of them know this language quite well.

One of the most important subtypes of nonverbal communication is visual communication. Visual communication is transmission of information by means of visual language (images, signs, etc.) on the one hand, and on the other hand – by means of visual perception (organs of vision, perception). In everyday life, visual communication can be defined as “everything I see”. However, nowadays visual communication is extremely developed and complicated both at the level of language and at the level of perception due to active development of visual art and electronic and digital technologies.

In XX century, visual communication deeply penetrated in all spheres of culture. Consequently, such concepts as *visual text*, *visual language* and *visual culture* were coined. Visual communication is one of the basic components of modern mass media creating the visual interface of transmitting information, and also transforming and transferring any information to visual language (images and press portraits, photos, etc.). Sometimes, in human consciousness visual side is more effective than content. Content is more forgettable for the mind than an image.

One of the most important pieces of visual communication puzzle is aesthetics. The nature of beauty and why it affects us so deeply seems to be mysterious. But we think that in reality it should be obvious. Beauty arises everything positive in a human being. So, it communicates. Very often, looking at somebody beautiful, one can understand this person’s nature. This fact can be proved by a well-known phrase "a sound mind in a sound body". It is a well-known fact that beauty cannot be put into words, it should be only perceived.

The aesthetic aspects of communication are visible, structural and configurational in nature. It is noteworthy that philosophy, art and science are those disciplines that should be minded while studying the issues about visual aesthetics. Out of the mentioned three disciplines visual art is most important as it gives really complete understanding of visual communication. It is certain that visual communication should apply the same human perception system as art objects do.

It is noteworthy that any physical object contains noticeable relational properties among and between all the visible elements. Every line, shape, value, color, and so on, is related to other visible elements. Out of the mentioned, we would like to emphasize color as, to our mind, color has the greatest power of communication. In this aspect symbolism plays the huge role. It is a well-known fact that colors have special symbolic meanings and in order the communication to be effective one should be have proper understanding of the symbolic value of this or that color.

Creating meaningful connection between the developing visible form and a hoped for message is the goal of the maker. The physical, particular nature is vital to both the viewer and the maker, helping them connect and communicate.

As the image-maker engages in shaping the emerging system of phenomenological elements, an intimate relationship develops between the object and its maker. To fully participate in the creative process, the maker must focus on all emerging physical relationships, mental nonmaterial relationships, plus the relationship to personal intentions and goals. There must also be a concern for the potential response of the viewing audience.

While creating, the maker also serves as an initial viewer of the emerging image. Other viewers will also get visible information from the perception of the object. Short of explicit verbal statements of intention by the maker, the visually literate viewer needs to complete the maker's creative act by interpreting these relationships among visible relationships in the created object.

After analyzing verbal and nonverbal communications (particularly, the subtype of the latter – visual communication) we would like to focus on similarities and differences between them.

Conclusion

The first and most vivid similarity between verbal and visual communications is that in both cases we deal with the process of transferring and receiving the information. Secondly, both of them are connected with brain. In both cases perceptual processing determines the type and amount of information that is sent to the brain for further thought. But if in verbal communication brain receives the information through the organs of hearing (by the uttered words), in the second case the process is accomplished through the organs of vision (by the viewed object). In both cases, the addressee should be very well aware of codes sent by the addresser; otherwise there will be no communication. But in case of verbal communication words, phrases and sentences should be properly understood and in case of visual communication – the objects, images should be properly perceived where symbolism should definitely be minded.

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