O-CITY PROJECT

MODULE IV.1 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

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1. **Lesson Document**

Lesson 1 Topic 4 Communicate with others

Verbal language

Introduction

Verbal communication is about the use of written and spoken languages using words for the exchange of information. It includes the emission of sounds, words, and sentences that are combined to produce a message designated to a receptor.

Once this lesson is completed and approved, learners will be able to:

1. Differentiate the different type of verbal languages.

2. Adapt their verbal language to the intended message that they want to deliver.

3. Increase their capacity to produce effective verbal language.

In this lesson, we will learn how to use different language styles for different purposes.

1. **Preliminary requirements to verbal language.**

For verbal language to be effective as a communication tool, some preliminary requirements are needed, and especially the set-up of common denominators for understanding.

For the verbal language to be correctly received, it is fundamental that both the sender and the receiver of the message "speak the same language". Yet, the most basic principle will be to use a language (English, Spanish, French…) that all the participants in the communication are familiar with. But not only.

Language is formed by verbal symbols that we associate to a meaning. Those have distinct qualities: they are arbitrary, ambiguous, and abstract. But they should refer to the same picture or idea.

For instance, when saying or writing the word "dog". Most people will get a mental picture of a dog, and thus understand the same concept.

You might not see the exact same dog as represented in the above picture, but you will for sure have in mind a "common animal with four legs, especially kept by people as a pet or to hunt or guard things" (definition from Cambridge dictionary)

However, this might be more complicated while expressing abstract concepts such as "danger", as the understanding of the level of risk might differ from one individual to the other, etc. Also, an important component of the verbal language relies on the cultural environment of the individual taking part in the communication, and that will influence their understanding and interpretation of a message.

2. Categorisation of language and verbal communications

Language can be classified in different types of categories, according to the context, the level of formality, the tone... We will present here the categorisation most commonly used.

a. The contextual types of verbal communication

- Intrapersonal communication
This refers to the communication one has with oneself. This will be a very personal communication that happens in the head or in a loud voice, but where the receptor and the emitter of the message is actually the same individual.

- One to one communication
This communication when 2 individuals are involved in a direct exchange, where they will be able to exchange information being alternatively emetors and receptors of different messages that will be the subject for their conversation.

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- Small group conversation
This type of verbal communication takes place when more than 2 participants take part in a conversation, and that the group is small enough so everybody can potentially participate and interact with others.

- Public speech
In this kind of communication, one orator oversees delivering a message to an audience, with a limited place for interaction.

Each one of these categories implies a different relation between the emitter of the message and his interlocutor. Depending on the type of communication, an individual can endorse different roles, always the same or alternating between sender or receiver.

b. Formal or informal language

Depending on the context and the nature of the relation that we have with the receptor, the type of language used will change, from formal to informal.

- Formal language
It will be used with people we do not know very well or with which there is a hierarchical relation to be respected. Formal language is also more common when we write. In this type of language, we will avoid colloquialism and the use of direct forms of language, such as imperative forms, or the use of familiarity (for instance the use of Tu in French or Spanish will be avoided, while it will be better to use "usted" in Spanish or "Vous" in French)

- Informal language
It will be used when people already have a high degree of mutual understanding and long-term relationship, for instance family and relatives, in situations that are most relaxed. Then, use of colloquialism and even bad language might be tolerated.

c. Grammatics and common verbal moods

In addition to the above, we can approach the language under the perspective of the moods. The moods, or modes, are the features of the verbs employed and the will determine the inflections that speakers will give to the language to express what they are saying.

Some examples of moods are:
- Indicative: to express a fact

- Imperative: for an order
- subjunctive or conditional: for the expression of hypothesis
- Interrogative
…

Most languages used in European countries use similar verbal moods, that will enable the orator to express his feeling belonging to the real or irreal nature of the message expressed and giving clues to the auditor about his perception.

3. Match the verbal language to the purpose of communication.

A communication can be spontaneous, it can also be prepared to better serve its purpose. Then, the individuals that will participate to the communication get the opportunity to prepare this activity, by analysing the situation they will face and choosing the correct elements of languages that will better enable them to express themselves and defend their point of view, having in mind the following elements:

- Need for clarity (to make sure the the audience understand the idea expressed)
- Simplicity. Long sentences won't help with clarity but will add complexity. Keeping things simple will help deliver a clear message.
- Technicism: depending on the audience, the orator should make sure that obscure language or jargon will be understood correctly
- Variety of the vocabulary, to avoid monotonous speeches where the attention of the audience will get lost.

As additional tip, an interesting research from Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon called "the interpersonal communication book" provides examples of powerful and powerless language a speaker can use. Powerless language should generally be avoided in public speaking because it can damage audience perceptions of the speaker's credibility. Here is the table:

Language Strategy	Definition	Example
Powerful Language		
Direct Requests	Asking the audience to engage in a specific behavior.	"At the conclusion of today's speech, I want you to go out and buy a bottle of hand sanitizer and start using it to protect your life."

Bargaining	An agreement that affects both parties of a situation.	"If you vote for me, I promise to make sure that our schools get the funding they so desperately need."
Ingratiation	Attempting to bring oneself into the favor or good graces of an audience.	"Because you are all smart and talented people, I know that you will see why we need to cut government spending."
Powerless Language		
Hesitations	Language that makes the speaker sound unprepared or uncertain.	"Well, as best I was able to find out, or I should say, from what little material I was able to dig up, I kind of think that this is a pretty interesting topic."
Intensifiers	Overemphasizing all aspects of the speech.	"Great! Fantastic! This topic is absolutely amazing and fabulous!"
Disqualifiers	Attempts to downplay one's qualifications and competence about a specific topic.	"I'm not really an expert on this topic, and I'm not very good at doing research, but here goes nothing."
Tag Questions	A question added to the end of a phrase seeking the audience's consent for what was said.	"This is an important behaviour, isn't it?" or "You really should do this, don't you think?"
Self-Critical Statements	Downplaying one's own abilities and making one's lack of confidence public.	"I have to tell you that I'm not a great public speaker, but I'll go ahead and give it a try."
Hedges	Modifiers used to indicate that one is not completely sure of the statement just made.	"I really believe this may be true, sort of." "Maybe my conclusion is a good idea. Possibly not."
Verbal Surrogates	Utterances used to fill space while speaking; filler words.	"I was, like, err, going to, uhhh, say something, um, important, like, about this."

Source:https://2012books.lardbucket.org/books/public-speaking-practice-and-ethics/s16-03-six-elements-of-language.html#wrench_1.0-ch13_s03_s05_t01

The use of verbal language is not enough to serve communication. Many other elements will enter in the communication process, being this one oral or written or

even audio-visual: non-verbal language and body language, pictures, colours, contextual environment will also influence the way a message is understood and as such, are an integral part of the communication process.

Conclusion

Verbal language is fundamental for oneself to communicate, understand what is being said and express effective messages. For this, it is important to analyse the situation and adapt our language to the context, as the same words might have different meanings according to the context in which they are employed and the cultural background of the interlocutors. Also, adapting the type of language to the context and the intended message is crucial.