

Definitions of Communication and Context

SPHSC 308
Winter 2010
Professor Olswang



What is communication?

How do you
communicate with
others?

What are the basic
elements?

Write: Requesting
permission from a
professor to miss class
for a significant family
event.

Communication

A shared symbol system for interacting with others

Elements:

- Participants: speaker/listener
- Modes: verbal/nonverbal
- Channels: audio/visual or both
- Mental state: conscious/unconscious
- Medium: face to face or other: telephone/written-text
- **CONTEXT**

Communication/ Language

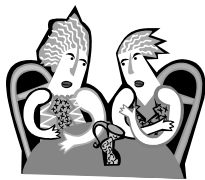
Components—Nature of
Message:

- Form
- Content
- Use

Form, Content, Use

- 11 month old baby pointing to a doll on a shelf, looking back and forth between you and the doll, vocalizing “uh uh uh”
 - Form
 - Content
 - Use
- 17 year old rifling through the refrigerator, “What’s for dinner?”
 - Form
 - Content
 - Use

Form of Communication



Form

- Verbal
 - Phonology
(segmentals/suprasegmentals)
 - Morphology
 - Syntax
- Non-verbal
 - Written - Graphemes
 - Art, Music, Dance
 - Signs
 - Gestures
 - Facial Features
 - Body Posture
 - Touch

Content

- Meaning—ideas, propositions
 - Semantics—meaning and words coming together
- Example of meaning without words?
- Remember: Content refers to meaning that is unconscious as well as conscious, expressed by words and other forms

Use

- Pragmatics-interpersonal communication-communication with others
- Mathethics-intrapersonal communication-communication with self
- Pragmatics
 - Communicative Intentions
 - Communicative Forces

Pragmatics: Communicative Intentions

Functions of communication

- Greeting
- Requesting (objects, actions, information, permission, clarification)
- Protesting
- Commenting
- Lecturing
- Entertaining
- Rehearsing
- Acknowledging
- Answering

Pragmatics: Communicative Forces

- **Perlocutionary-** communicative intention as interpreted by listener
- **Illocutionary-** communicative intention as intended by speaker
- **Locutionary-** communicative intention as carried by linguistic form

Communicative Forces Example

“Is your mother home?”

Locutionary = yes/no question
form-request for yes/no
information

Illocutionary = request for action

Perlocutionary = either request
for information or request for
action depending upon the
listener

Review

It's hot in here--pointing to the window.

Form: Verbal

Phonemes

Morphology and Syntax

- Simple active declarative
- Subject-verb contraction
adjective
- Present tense - copula "is"
- Prepositional phrase

Form: Nonverbal

Gestures

- Pointing

It's hot in here—pointing to the window.

Content: Meaning

Temperature of the room

Comfort of the room temperature

Use: Pragmatics

Locutionary: comment

Illocutionary: comment or
request for action

Perlocutionary: comment or
request for action

What is Context?

Three levels:

Situational

Social (Interpersonal)

Cultural

Levels of Context

- **Situational Context**

- The immediate setting for the communicative interaction including:

- setting/place, time, materials, people, activity, noise level, temperature, etc.

- How might the situation impact communication?

- Library

- Theater

- Soccer game

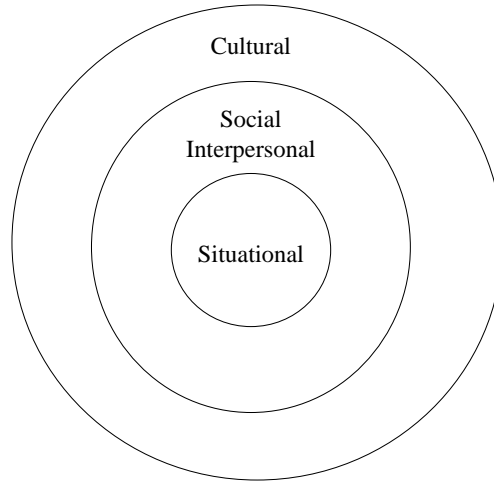
Levels of Context

- **Social-Interpersonal Context**
 - Individuals with whom you are communicating
 - Major social structures in a person's life at a particular point in time, including:
 - family, friends, peer group, camp friends, church group, neighbors, colleagues (strangers)
- How do you communicate with different people?
- Friends
 - Family
 - Boss

Levels of Context

- **Cultural Context**
 - Overarching social, institutional, ethnic, structure impacting the individual, including:
 - ethnicity, race, religion, economic group, nationality
- How does culture impact communication?
- East coast vs. west coast
 - U.S. vs. XXX

Levels of Context



Concentric circles – to illustrate that each level impacts the other.

Consider some communication variations—How would form and content change when context varies.

Example: ordering coffee

Situation: Neighborhood
Coffee House

Social - Interpersonal: Friend
Barista

Cultural: US Northwest

Situation: Fancy restaurant

Social - Interpersonal: Parents

Cultural: US East Coast

Situation: Café

Social – Interpersonal:
Strangers

Communication in Context – group activity

Set up a communication scenario illustrating how form, content, and use would change when the situational context, interpersonal/social context, and the cultural context vary.

One scenario---two variations on each type of context:
situational,
interpersonal/social, cultural
context