
ФИЛОЛОГИЯ

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**MANIPULATION AS A COMPONENT
OF EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION****[Акопова А.С. Манипуляция как компонент
эффективной коммуникации]**

Communication is one of the key elements of human activity, since information exchange implemented through language predetermines the very existence of the society and satisfies the psychological requirement for human contact. Mutual transfer of information underlying the essence of the communicative process is viewed as a foundation of communication, which, in turn, is always associated with manipulative efforts exercised by the participants to the interaction. The present paper aims to analyse the factors determining the means of verbal manipulation as a component of efficient communication. Among such factors considered by the author are substantiation, conviction, persuasion, scrounging, inculcation, ordering, requesting and forcing.

Key words: efficient communication, manipulation, information exchange, decoding, encoding, communicative goal, communicative failure, theory of speech acts.

Communication is one of the key elements of human activity, since information exchange implemented through language predetermines the very existence of the society and satisfies the psychological requirement for human contact. Mutual transfer of information underlying the essence of the communicative process is viewed as a foundation of communication. Thus, O.S. Akhmanova's Dictionary of Linguistic Terms defines communication as 'transfer of some mental content through language' [2], and P.S. Gurevich's Dictionary of Psychology interprets it as 'a channel connecting the participants of information exchange' [6, p. 306]. 'Information exchange', 'a unit of transmitted information', 'informative message' are also listed among the key terms suggested by D. Jerry's Big Thesaurus of Sociology [7, p. 314]. Interaction between the parties to communication, determined by their interpersonal relations and individual characteristics, is also viewed as one of the key components of communication.

According to another popular opinion, communication should be viewed as a process of encoding and decoding of information [1; 3]. This particular interpretation is based on the Shannon-Weaver scheme describing message transfer [10].

In the framework of language studies, the code model gets a logical explanation: the sender of the message (the speaker, addresser) encodes the information and transmits it through the communications channel (dialogue interaction) to the recipient (listener, addressee), who, in turn, decodes the incoming data. In other words, the source message is transmitted through the transmitter to the communication channel to be further received by the recipient. Both parties to communication are equipped with encoding and decoding 'devices' (their worldviews, experiences, etc.) [8, p. 33-52; 13].

Another fundamental component of communication is the communicative goal, 'something that the speaker seeks to attain, the alleged result of verbal communication' [9, p. 150]. Purpose defines verbal behaviour, result-oriented organisation of utterances and texts. This is why anything that impedes the achievement of communicative goals, may ultimately trigger the overall communicative failure. At this point, it would be appropriate to consider mechanisms of manipulation that are chosen depending on the communicative goal set by the manipulator. In general, we can distinguish between five different mechanisms of manipulation, which are image-based, conventional, inferencing, exploitative and spiritual.

Image-based manipulation is a mechanism that relies on the fact that the content of every image bears certain requirement actualised by this image. Therefore, the agent operates some images in order to arouse certain needs associated with the stimulus presented. This mechanism is closely related to imaginary capacity of the addressee, his or her curiosity. Conventional mechanism of manipulation is applied in reference to social experience common to most human beings. This experience dictates certain rules of conduct in certain situations, some social scenarios and regulations that need to be adhered to. Conventional mechanism of manipulation implies elaboration of a set of key stimuli determining the peculiarities of a given communicative setting: distribution of roles, arrangement of scenario-driven identifications and reminders.

Inferencing mechanism of manipulation relies on the fact that every person is psychologically inclined to reason based on prerequisites presented. Therefore, this mechanism implies elaboration of certain stimuli to motivate the addressee to per-

form actions required. The most illustrative example would be the utterance “Are you getting off?”, which is not a request for information, but an appeal to step aside. Exploitative mechanism of manipulation basically implies that the addressee is given an opportunity to make his or her personal choice. This choice, however, is limited to a number of options set by the manipulator and, therefore, any decision made by the addressee turns out advantageous for the agent, while the object of manipulation rests assured that he was the one to have the last say.

Spiritual mechanism of manipulation exploits the nature of human psyche, its top levels, which are vital values. Reliance on values differs from the reliance on conventional requirement, mainly because human values are not viewed as adopted requirements, but are rather regarded as semantic paradigms gained through first-hand experience. Reliance on something that inspires differs from reliance on something that forces you in (when inducement appears to be nothing short of enforcement). In this regard, the issue of efficiency of communication assumes great importance. Communicative efficiency depends on a number of specific factors, such as a) personal demand for communicative interaction; b) orientation towards the inner world of the addressee (empathy); c) ability to comprehend another person’s communicative intentions; d) ability to consider the external circumstances of interaction; e) ability to adhere to the norms of linguistic conduct; f) compliance of plans and actual approaches to the implementation of intentions, etc. [4, p. 226-235]. The general factors of efficiency vary depending on the specific contextual and situational communication settings. These may, as a rule, be identified by analysing communicative failures.

A communicative failure is ‘a communicative setback, destruction of the parties’ communicative intentions’ [9, p. 150]. Such setback may occur due to different reasons: ignorance of the linguistic or cultural code, incorrect interpretation of partner’s intentions, interferences arising in the course of transmission or reception of information, incorrect interpretation of communicative contexts. This last aspect is especially important, because social situation ‘dictates specific rules of verbal behaviour, specifies the required tonality of speech, imposes certain lexical and syntactic constraints’ [11, p. 65]. Analysing the issues of efficiency and inefficiency of communicative interaction, it is necessary to consider the notion of entropy, or noise, introduced by K. Shannon and borrowed by linguists to describe the external factors distorting the message, violating its integrity and possi-

bility of perception by the addressee. In the framework of the theory of communication, the concept of entropy implies that perception of information by the recipient is often hindered by some interfering factors that affect the efficiency of communication. Therefore, efficient verbal performance is associated with optimal interaction between the parties: compliance with the communicative event, unity of speaker's intention and listener's perception. The speaker shapes his intention in the speech form, the listener perceives the utterance and decodes the speaker's intention. Whenever noise is part of the equation, no full match of the decoded and the encoded information appears to be possible. However, in order to ensure efficient communication, one should commit to maximising the concordance of intention and perception.

Possible techniques that could be implemented to ensure efficient communication have been put forward and analysed by researchers. For example, the theory of speech acts suggests the following regulations governing optimal verbal interaction:

1. the maxim of quantity, where one tries to be as informative as one possibly can, and gives as much information as is needed, and no more;
2. the maxim of quality, where one tries to be truthful, and does not give information that is false or that is not supported by evidence;
3. the maxim of relation, where one tries to be relevant, and says things that are pertinent to the discussion;
4. the maxim of manner, when one tries to be as clear, as brief, and as orderly as one can in what one says, and where one avoids obscurity and ambiguity [5, p. 41-58].

Using a variety of means to achieve efficient communication is an indispensable attribute of communication aimed at realisation of verbal interaction. Efficiency of communication depends on the factors of verbal interaction – communicative signals and techniques – among which are:

1. the factor of appearance;
2. the factor of compliance with communicative norms;
3. the factor of physical conduct accompanying verbal interaction (movement, gestures, posture);
4. the factor of manner (friendliness, honesty, emotional disposition, etc.);
5. the factor of space deployment;
6. the factor of content;

7. the factor of language;
8. the factor of message volume;
9. the factor of allocation of facts, arguments and ideas;
10. the factor of time;
11. the factor of the number of participants; etc.

These factors can be grouped into three mega-factors: speaker-specific (all that refers to the physical aspects of speaker's behaviour, including appearance and non-verbal behaviour), listener-specific (all that refers to the needs of the listener) and message-specific (all that refers to the content, organisation and linguistic implementation of a message, the terms of its transfer) factors. These factors determine the means of verbal manipulation as a component of efficient communication. According to I.A. Sternin, these include substantiation, conviction, persuasion, scrounging, inculcation, ordering, requesting and forcing [12, p. 59-61].

To substantiate means to adduce arguments validating the feasibility of a thesis. Substantiation implies that arguments are introduced systemically, in a careful manner, and in accordance with the laws of logic. Substantiation is a logical method of verbal manipulation, which implies appeal to human reasoning and, therefore, works perfectly well with the people of a logical mindset. However, logic is not always efficient, and not all people might be exposed to this kind of reasoning.

To convince means to make the listener believe that the truth has been validated and the thesis has been justified. Conviction makes use of both the logic and emotional pressure. Convincing someone, we actually try to impose our point of view.

To persuade means to resort to emotive means in order to make the listener give up his opinion and adopt the speaker's point of view. Persuasion always involves emotional expression, intensity, the use of personal motives, and is commonly based on repeated verbalisation of requests or offers. Persuasion appears to be most productive in the situations of emotional arousal and does not commonly work when serious issues are discussed.

To scrounge means to ask very emotionally using multiple requesting.

To inculcate means to encourage the listener to take your word and just believe whatever you are saying without critical apprehension. Inculcation is based on a strong psychological and emotional pressure and is often founded on the speaker's authority.

To order means to make the person do something on account of his subordinate official, social, etc. position without any explanation provided by the speak-

er. Orders are efficient with subordinates, younger people, people of lower social status, but are inefficient when dealing with equals or superiors. For most people, orders are difficult to perceive.

To request means to encourage the listener to do something for the benefit of the speaker based on nothing more than good fellowship and willingness to respond to the speaker's needs. Requests are more efficient than orders, but there are numerous communicative barriers restricting the application of requests in view of the listener's status, the nature of the request, its extent and moral content, etc. In addition, there are a variety of ways to reject a request.

To force means to make the listener do something against his will. Forcing commonly relies on rough pressuring or direct demonstration of force, as well as threats.

Verbal interaction as a science on efficient and civilised communication teaches us not to use force. Other methods mentioned above can be applied in a corresponding communicative setting to effectuate verbal manipulation and to ultimately achieve the greatest communicative effect.

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