



Good Communicative Skills: A *Sine Qua Non* for Effective Teaching and Learning of Business Education Programmes in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions

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ABSTRACT

As money is used as medium of exchange in the world over, so does communication in the teaching and learning of business education as a course of study in Nigeria. Effective communication does not occur unless the receiver of the information understands what is said and applies it to achieve goals. The level of student's understanding should be of paramount value to the teacher. Since teaching involves the art of human communication or interaction, concerted efforts must be made to adopt adequate communication network system in class management. Teaching is an interpersonal communication. It is the giving and receiving of instruction, information or knowledge from the teacher to students in the process of delivery of lessons/lectures. Therefore, the study looked at communication circuit which comprised of the sender, message, vehicle that carries the message, receiver and feedback. The study, equally examined the purpose of communication, importance of communication to effective teaching, methods of communication in the classroom and barriers to communication in the classroom. It is therefore recommended that business educator should always keep in mind that words may not evoke in the students' mind the same image that they do in theirs. Therefore, educator should use words that are as specific in meaning as possible.

Keywords: Communication skills, Effective Teaching, Business Education, Programmes, Tertiary Institutions

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication in the classroom is the river that gives life to student learning (Awotua Efebo, 1996). Communication can be defined as the imparting or conveying of information or knowledge from one person to another. It is a mutual exchange of ideas, thoughts, opinions, facts and/ or emotions. In other words, there must be presentation and there must be reception of what is presented if the communication is to be complete. The implication from this is that for the communication "circuit" to be complete, there must be

- a sender (who originates the idea, thought, information and emotions)
- a message
- a vehicle to carry the message (the presenter)
- a receiver

It is important to note that sometimes the sender of the message is also the carrier of the message that is the vehicle that carries the message. The sender can also use other media such as photographs, books,

overhead projectors, radio, TV, computer and the likes as vehicles to carry the message to the receiver (Gambo, Bello – Iman & Sule, 2013).

Component of Communication Circuit

The sender: The sender or source of the message is a very important one. It is here that the ideas, thoughts, and/or emotions originate. The message must be very well articulated before it is sent to the receiver. The sender plays a large part in the credibility and/or validity of any message, and this has certain implications for the teacher speaking to this/her students, colleagues, superiors mention but a few. For any communication to carry weight, the sender or source of the message must be such that it can be trusted. A teacher who is to teach a group of students must first examine himself/herself as the source, and see how he/she as the sender will affect meaning and the impact of the message (Awofua Efebo, 1999).

The stated message: The message as stated earlier is the idea, information, facts, emotions, knowledge skills that we want to send across to the receiver. In the classroom environment, where the teacher is concerned, these form the bulk of the lessons that he/she is to teach.

An important consideration in a message is the meaning it carries. Semanticists have devised endless delightful puzzles to show how easily people confuse value judgments, assumptions, and inferences with facts. It is also easy for the meaning of a message to be distorted by change of context and by careless people in the ways in which they alter meaning to conform to desires or whims or subjective needs. For example, if someone tells you a story and you reply “I hear you”, does it mean you are listening to the person or that you do not believe what the person has said”?

Educational technologists today know that in a communication circuit, as it relates to a message (Koko, 2006).

- a. Differences in background; experience and temperament between sender and receiver, cause usually slight, although in some cases great, differences in meaning of a message between one and the other. The words “goes” “fairness” and “hard – work” vary widely in meaning from one person to another.
- b. Messages, like words have a denotative that is a dictionary or literal meaning and a connotative or overtone meaning. A smoked fish in soup may have the denotation of a segment of a burnt dead fish, but its connotation makes it attractive and palatable, whereas the denotation does not. The words cannot convey the right meaning without the right tone.
- c. Messages have different meanings in context.
- d. Messages have latent as well as literal meanings. The tone of voice may change the meaning completely. Consider sarcasm and irony. Most messages have a significant, though usually easily grasped load of latent meaning.
- e. Messages, to be acceptable, must conform to or be tested against group norms or values. One group’s meat may be another group’s poison. Unpopular ideas, jokes, that is ideas not acceptable to one’s peers or reference group are more difficult to put over. In the ideas are a must for the receiver, then they must somehow be channeled or partly channeled into the accepted framework.
- f. Meaning is often determined from the subconscious and emotional needs. What a man says may not be what he means. A teacher may, come and complain constantly about his job, or a student may complain about not understanding his lectures or liking college. What he may mean is “I am not getting along at home (or with a relationship), (Okifo, 2015).

These six items above have important implications that can help the teacher not only to plan the context of the lectures very well, but also to consider the characteristics of the audience (students), the nature of the message and how the message should be delivered to the students (NTI, 2000).

The Vehicle That Carries the Message

The vehicle that carries message can be considered as the mode or channel, through which the message gets to the receiver. In a general sense, this is the medium that the teacher uses to send the message across to the students.

Tertiary institutions in a developing nation like Nigeria, the lecturer who is the source of the message delivers, the message himself/herself to the receiver (the students). However, the lecturer does not have to deliver the message by himself/herself. Today, there are other modes of delivery that the lecturer would use to deliver all or part of the lessons. These include television/video cassette, computer, audio/slides, 8mm (16mm) films.

In situations where the lecturer is delivering the message (lessons), he/she uses a language (sound and non – sound symbols) to do so. Thus, he/she must examine his/her own prejudices and emotional set. A lesson that is blatantly self – serving for example, rarely has much credibility at the end of the day.

Receiver

The receiver is the target that the sender wants the message to get to. For the receiver to get the message correctly, he must be attentive and must have the capability to understand, the message.

Four components that the receiver must have in order for us to know that the proper message has been received are:

- Sensing (hearing)
- Interpreting
- Evaluating
- Responding (feedback)

The sensing component of receiving or listening is the ability to hear the message. In this busy world we live in, the sensing component has become highly selective. At any given time around us, there are so many messages bombarding us. In the lecture hall setting, these include the “noise” from outside the class, movement of persons, in class, students playing pranks, at the same time that a lesson is going on. The sensing component allows us to discriminate and receive those messages that are considered important to us at the material time (Dan, 2011).

There is discrimination between human sounds and those that our senses tell us are intelligible sounds in our environment. In the English Language which is the common language of delivering instructions in Nigeria, for example, there about 45 units of sound known as phonemes, 21 consonants, 9 vowels, 3 same vowels (y, w, r) 4 stresses, 4 pitches, 1 juncture and 3 terminal contours. According to Atama (2008) in Farb (1978) these are all we hear and use, but with theirs the speaker can create an infinity of utterances. Other languages have other sounds units that enable the speakers of those languages to create a great variety of expressions.

Sensing, thus, is the physical “auditory” response to what is being “said”. The second component we need to look at as far as the receiver is concerned is interpreting the message that has been received. By themselves, words have no meaning until we interpret them and ascribe meaning to them (Afolabi, Ikenga & oru, 2005).

Interpreting messages is not an easy task for anyone outside the receiver to explain. How do I know what you ‘understand’ the message in this paragraph to be? In short, we do not understand how we understand. No scientist can say for sure, that is hundred percent (100%), that he knows how the brain works. The brain still remains the terra incognita of the universe (Guffey & Rogin, 2010).

The ability to interpret, that is, to understand, to grasp, to comprehend, lies deeply buried in the matrix of the human brain, developing inextricably with the unique human ability to speak. There is relationship between one’s ability to interpret messages very well in a given language and the person’s ability to speak that language very well. Take a minute and think of how one, especially a child understands a given language in all its complexity and amazing variety, just from listening to the voices of native speak the language. The researcher believes that it is a miracle, one of the wonders of life that man pays little attention to.

Interpretation of messages is important in the teaching/learning environment. If the students misinterpret, then the wrong learning will take place. Interpretation in the classroom environment is matching the teacher’s meaning of a message to the student’s meaning of the same message.

Effective business educators know that giving several examples and repeating the message using different strategies, help the students to match their meaning of the message to the meaning of the message sent by the teacher. Effective business educators also know that misinterpretation of the message by the students can come from a teacher who:

- Has not prepared well his/her lesson
- does not have a clear objectives of his/her lesson;
- does not have a good knowledge base of the subject matter;
- is careless
- is fatigued
- is emotionally distorted (Idama, 2016).

The misinterpretation of messages gives us results that are not pleasing and sometimes catastrophic. Unfortunately, sometimes we hear but we cannot understand because in the deeper part of us, we allow our beliefs, assumptions and prejudices to interfere.

The third component is that the receiver must have the ability to evaluate the message received and understood. Through evaluation, the receiver “puts a value” on the message that was received and understood. The receiver will want to know how relevant the message is to him; of what importance is the topic? Is it covered for example, in the scheme of work of ANA or ICAN examination?

Our ability to evaluate properly is influenced by our culture and the multitudinous experiences we have had in our lives. The human brain as we have said before, carries an extreme complex view of the world. Psychologists call this area of our mind the apperceptive mass, which may be defined as the sum of all the thoughts, feelings, emotions and experiences that an individual has had in his lifetime. The human mind has been said to consist of four kinds of thinking:

- a. *Reverie*: the unfocused day-dreaming that apparently makes up a large part of our cerebration and has certain values for the ego and or the development of creativity.
- b. *Decision making*: on which we, in many ways, spend a good part of our thought. Most of these decisions get us through our daily routines although they may not be momentous. Decisions such as, what do I eat for breakfast? What brand of soft drink to buy? What shoe and clothes to wear to school? What textbook to buy/read? Are all common in the lives of teachers and students daily.
- c. *Rationalization*- the kind of thinking with which we justify ourselves before the world.
- d. *Abstract thinking*- This is also referred to by some as creative thinking. Our orientations bring to bear on our talents and faculties in a constructive manner to make a change in things as they are.

In all the content of our thinking, evaluation influenced by the apperceptive mass within us, plays a major role in the way we listen, what we hear, and what we choose to hear. If the students evaluate the messages from you as unfriendly, they may choose to avoid your class. Even when in your class, they may be turned off.

Feedback

The last component to be considered in the receiver’s domain is response (feedback). This is often overlooked by most people. Most of us rush to draw conclusions without confirming through feedback if what we heard, the interpretation and the evaluation, are in congruence with the intent of the sender.

Response may not be over, but in whatever form, it is necessary for communication to be complete. Response builds relationship between the speaker and the listener, an ingredient so necessary in communication.

In the classroom environment, complete attention and interest are two of the most effective ways of responding. The outward signs of such attention and interest may vary with a teacher’s personality, whether interest is shown by him/her or with comments such as “is that so!”.

It does not imply that response necessarily means agreement. It only implies the warmth and receptivity that make the speaker feel that he/she has been given a full hearing that the message is understood and respected (Ugwuaruyi Eze, 2010).

Purpose of communication

There are five main reasons for communicating firstly “phatic” which covers all those small talks that build binding relationships, secondly is “cathartic” verifying emotions that have been building up; thirdly, is for interchange of information; fourthly, is persuasion and fifthly entertainment. An effective teacher knows the importance of all five, thus examining each of them in the more detail is imperative.

Phatic speech

This term is used for small, chit-chats that build binding relationships or establish an atmosphere of sociability. Phatic speech includes saying “Hi”, “Hello”, “How are you?” commenting about school politics asking about one’s health, one’s family. Most people regard phatic speech as trivial and equally often as a waste of time, but this is not true. They are the flavour of interpersonal relationships. How far off they are in this evaluation may be startlingly revealed when considering the need for this form of communication, its effect when properly used and the disasters incurred when it is completely ignored. The primary purpose of phatic communication is to establish a relationship with the person with whom one is communicating and without the relationship one will find that communication becomes difficult and sometimes ineffective.

It is not uncommon to teachers say “I find it difficult to talk to him” or “I can’t seem to reach that guy, he never comes around except he wants something”, or “All we say is good morning and that’s it”. These are all clues to serious failures in the area of phatic communication, in which no relationship has been established on the human level, and no binding or sharing has been achieved. Without this, it becomes difficult to communicate on any level (Newman & Ober, 2013).

Communication requires the formation of relationship which means dealing with people first as persons. Phatic communication recognises people as persons. Phatic communication recognizes people as persons and in that respect it must be considered primary to any other purpose if the communication is to be effective.

It is important to note that relationships are the foundation of all communications be it in the classroom, school, office, home or anywhere else. When no relationship has been established between two people, it is difficult to succeed in any kind of communication.

Human relationships have been defined as a series of transactions called “ego states” in which we approach one another as parent, adult or child, Awotua – Efebo (1996) in Bernes (1974). At any given moment, he posited that we operate under one of these ego states in relating to others. We bring to them the exchanges, the emotional and intellectual sum of our experiences as a parent – with its authoritative aspects, as a child who requires support or nurturing, or as an adult who regards the other as his peer.

In Phatic communication, these relationships form almost immediately with the use of phatic language. In the parent ego state, we tend to operate towards the other person somewhat in the same way our parents operated towards us. We are emulating subconsciously the behaviour of our parents. In the child ego state, we tend to be demanding, we expect to be treated in a nurturing or support manner as our parents treated us as children. In the adult ego state, we are apparently free to approach and treat the other person as an equal and to establish an essential healthy relationship for mostly career purpose. If we understand the kind of relationship that can be set up by phatic communication, we can understand better how to communicate with others. If we understand who they are where they come from, and how they wish to relate to us, we can then understand better how to reach them.

Phatic communication has implications for the business educator. To motivate and manage the classroom, a business educator must to a large degree, use phatic speech to gain the confidence of his students. Students will feel unthreatened and open up to a teacher who they trust and has their interest at heart (Ogbeta 2011; Ovbiagele & Ekwu, 2011; Nwaogwugwu & Okoye 2009).

Cathartic Communication:

An official who must listen to the pleas of his clients should listen patiently and with rancour, because a petitioner wants attention to what

he says even more than the accomplishing
of that which he came...

This, to a large extent, depicts the experience of a lot of people .someone comes to you to vent anger, allows out hot steam that has been stomached for a long time, thereby releasing tension and stress. All the person want is just for you to listen. He/she does not want to hear one word from you. This type of communication, the need to vent emotions, is known as the Cathartic form of communicating and is as necessary for human survival as other forms of communication.

One time or the other, we all have our bad days and communicate in this way, raising our voice at someone who may even be innocent, telling him off. For the person at the receiving end, his reaction at such a time is extremely important. It can be handled in a quiet way allowing the person to vent out his emotions, or it can be botched depending on the receiver's understanding of what is being communicated (letting out steam). The less emphatic listener in a situation like this can easily destroy a valuable relationship, even a true friendship. When instinct fails us, we let our knowledge of the purposes of communication come to our rescue.

It is not uncommon for us to find friends, colleagues, superiors, or even our students say we "got on their nerves". Some people allow pressures to get them easily and then blow up when nothing to them seems to be going right. You meet a colleague, school mate or student with tensed face, eyes clouded and you say "How ol' boy, how you dey?". And the ol' boy lets you have it – everything has gone wrong; the world has turned upside down; the roof is collapsing; people can seem to understand him; you and everyone else are trying to make life difficult for him and you help make his life miserable (Dan, 2011).

If you understand the Catharsis of communicating, you will not respond with impatience or anger or even with irrelevant cheerfulness. You will listen and let them get it out. Then, usually, the storm will pass and perhaps, in some cases, you would have made a friend for life. Remember always the wise saying that sounds thus; usually, the storm will pass and perhaps, in some cases, you would have made a friend for life. Remember always the wise saying that sounds thus;

*One friend, one person who is truly understanding,
who takes the trouble to listen to us we consider our
problems, can change our, whole outlook on the world*

The Informing Purpose

Guffey & Rogin (2010) noted that the purpose of communicating is the most commonly recognized. The informing purpose is most often considered the *raison d'être* of our educational system. It is the skill that has given us knowledge and to a large extent power for we have all heard before that "knowledge is power".

The information sector is one of the fastest developing sectors in the world today. People have termed this the information age. We spend more to be informed than any other thing today. We listen to radio, TV, we read books, magazines, we listen to friends tell us hot and not-so-hot news and so forth. Our civilization is hinged on the gathering and processing of data into information on which we then take decisions. Man has the tendency to tell everything he/she knows (Gart, 2013).

The packaging and delivering of information for commercial, entertainment and educational purposes seem to have increased in the past two decades. The effect of this is that our ability to filter the "noise" component of the information we receive has diminished. The information that has no bearing on our lives has increased tremendously and we are constantly trying to make sense out of what we consider relevant.

This forces us to seek for the means that will enable us capture all information around us so that we can spend time to interpret and evaluate them. The danger with this is that it reinforces the habit of not hearing. It also implies that stronger devices to get information and knowledge across must be sought. Every lecturer of business education programmes must have heard the following statement: You remember 10% of what you hear, 50% of what you see and 90% of what you do: and almost every

teacher will testify to its validity. It appears to have raised the requirement of educators and teachers to both persuasive and entertaining as it has relieved the students of the duties of being curious, eager and attentive.

Nevertheless, we all live in a world so complex that all of us suffer from time to time not only from information overload, but also from information undernourishment – the need to know more than we do to get through the day.

Persuading Purpose

In Nigeria, as in most other developing nations, we live in a consumer society. Sales persons try to get our attention and convince us through persuasion to buy one brand of a product or the other. We, in turn, try to persuade others in our own interests, throughout our lives, we are subject to and attempt to use all the art of persuasion.

Persuasive form of communication is the art of letting our views across in a non- threatening way, in a subtle manner that opens the heart of the other person. Communicating as the purpose of persuasion requires that one has self-confidence and positive self-image. It requires also a good measure of trust. You must be a keeper of your words; slow to making promises, but excited and will go the extra mile to make sure a promise is fulfilled. We use encouragement, reassurance and praise, and also place the other person in a comfortable situation. You should also be enthusiastic.

Knowing the purpose of communication will give you the handle required on how to put over your ideas, thoughts, knowledge or proposals. It will enable you to understand the circumstances in which your ideas can be presented. One will not make fruitless and sometimes counterproductive attempts to reach someone who needs to express his/her tensions and frustrations in a Cathartic manner, or to approach without trying to build some sort of human relationship (phatic communication).

Entertainment Purpose

The main reason for entertainment is relaxation. Entertainment communication is multifaceted. It includes most of the elements that make us most hum. It includes literature, arts, drama, sports all forms of humour.

Workaholics who do not have time for this form of communication or people who cannot take and laugh at jokes, who have no time to read novels, go on sight –seeing have shut themselves off many of the deepest joys and most profound experiences of life.

Importance of Communication to Effective Teaching

Communication circuit is made of a sender, a message, a vehicle and a receiver. The major reasons why people communicate is equally identified.

These are:

- to establish relationship (phatic communication)
- to relieve emotional tension (Cathartic communication)
- to inform
- to persuade
- to entertain

In the remaining part of this study, the researcher will look at the importance of communication to educator/teacher.

The ability of a teacher to communicate effectively is very important. This is why the researcher has taken the trouble to discuss communication the way he did in this study. It is through communication that one can see a teacher can make things known to the students. There is a popular saying which sound thus, ‘he knows his subject, but can’t get it across’. The inability to get it across is due to the teacher’s failure to communicate; unless you can express your ideas clearly and fluently; unless you can make yourself understood and maintain interest, you will not be an effective teacher. A good understanding of the four components of the communication circuit sender, message, vehicle that carries the message, and receiver will help you.

Methods of Communication

In the classroom and/or lecture hall, there are three main methods of communication that can be identified. These are oral, written and non-verbal (Bello-Iman & Sule, 2013, Obi, 2011).

Oral Communication

This is communication through spoken words. We are all very conversant with this method of communication. It is the method used in conversation. To be effective with oral communication in class we must know the reason(s) of the communication. For whatever reason we may have, oral communication is the most common and direct method in a face – to – face situation, which is typical of our classroom/lecture hall setting today. As a teacher you will make use of oral communication in delivering your lessons/lectures.

Written Communication

Written communication refers to that which is in writing, lesson notes, textbooks, assignments on a chalkboard, and comments on a student's exercise book.

Usually, a teacher refers students to textbooks, photocopied materials, handouts magazine, and newspapers to supplement oral presentation in class. Besides these, you will have things like pictures, charts, maps that are not normally under written communication but are printed materials.

Non-Verbal Communication

The third method of communication is either non-verbal or paralinguistic communication. In some quarters people refer to this as body language.

The body mirrors our verbal language. We communicate with our body gestures, eye contact/motions, skin/touch sensations, space (standing or sitting far apart). For example, a teacher/lecturer standing in front of a class with hands folded on the stomach may be communicating insecurity. A frown by a teacher may be interpreted as dissatisfaction with the class or individual, or a particular comment. In a class during lesson/lecture, a student(s) leaning forward or sitting back may signal "tell me more, I am interested" or "let me think about it, I may not be that interested". It is important to know that in most cases a gesture may be distracting (Awotua – Efebo, 1999).

Non-verbal communication also includes the way we dress; keep our hair, finger nails or smell. Your dressing may be suggestive if for female, it is above your knees and tight; for a male, tight clothes may be showing off your masculinity. Hair and/or finger nails that are unkempt may indicate that the teacher or student is dirty and thrives in filth.

Barriers to Effective Communication in the Classroom/Lecture – Hall

It is important to note that some barriers may affect effective communication between the teacher and the students. Some of these barriers may be caused by either-conditions outside the classroom, or by conditions in it. An effective teacher must always be alert for any interference that will prevent him or her from teaching his/her students. He or she must not only recognize possible sources of interference, but also know how clear channels of communication can be established and maintained.

In the classroom, the clear reception of messages depends on the avoidance of, among others the following major barriers to effective communication:

- too much verbalization
- confusion over referents
- day-dreaming
- perceptual difficulties
- physical discomfort and
- inability to listen (Ugwuanyi & Eze, 2010).

Too Much Verbalization

Effective teachers/educators know that they lose their students when they do all the talking and leave no room for students to contribute. They also know that the effectiveness of words declines as students all through hours of teaching/lecturing. Interest and attention decrease in the face of seemingly endless barrage of words.

Confusion over Referents

People turn to seemingly related experiences for help in understanding something new. When reference to previous experience helps a student to comprehend new materials, a positive transfer of insights is said to occur. However, this is not always the case, as previously acquired insights to new problems may result in what is called referent confusion. The experience a student draws on to deal with new material is not relevant, especially in verbal communication where differences in frames of reference can make two different students to use the same word to mean different things.

Day – Dreaming

A common yet avoidable obstacle to efficient communication in the classroom is day – dreaming or absent – mindedness. Many students are remarkably adepts at it. A student may be looking attentively at the teacher in front of the class, yet his/her thought is far away.

Perception Difficulties

Every educator/teacher knows that students learn by the use of their senses ie. eyes (visual), taste, feel and smell). What is not yet very clear is how the brain receives and deals with messages (the reason we have so many learning theories). Individual variations in the efficient use of the senses are not uncommon among students in a classroom. These physiological differences affect the experience students go through in the same teaching/learning environment. Individual students may react differently to the same stimulus.

Physical Discomfort

Everyone is aware that our physical environment can affect the way we react for example, a seat that is not comfortable will make a student to be useless. So also is a room that is stuffy and hot. A poorly lit room will make seeing difficult. All these will effect on the emotions of the student.

Listening

All the barriers to effective communication have effect on the way all students and teachers listen. Without a good listening skill, no communication can take place.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria is an Anglophone country and English language is generally used as a medium of communication and delivering of lessons/lectures. On this note, if a teacher comprehends all that have been written in this study as well as the Ministry of Education be it Local, state or Federal and put them into practice, such teacher will have no problem communicating effectively in class. Everything that a teacher (male or female alike) does in the class effects his/her communication. The following recommendations are therefore suggested for effective classroom communication.

1. Words are the symbols teachers/educators use to convey their ideas. They should only use the best words which express the meaning they have in mind.
2. Teachers should use language the students can understand in the academic and intellectual level i.e age level, of the students.
3. Educators/teachers should always keep in mind that their words may not evoke in the students' mind the same image they do in theirs. They should therefore use words that are as specific in meaning as possible.
4. Students hear their teachers in order for them to understand. Therefore they should communicate in a distinct and pronunciation correct. They should not mumble.
5. The teaching environment should be made as comfortable as possible. Proper lighting and ventilation should be given the attention they desire. This can make a notable difference to a student that is apathetic.
6. An effective teacher is a good listener; therefore to communicate, a teacher must listen effectively.

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