

# Research Challenges in Professional Communication

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Bill Gates-- the founder of Microsoft, the world's largest Software Company and the wealthiest man on the planet, strongly feels that "I'm a great believer that any tool that enhances communication has profound effects in terms of how people can learn from each other, and how they can achieve the kind of freedoms that they're interested in." Billionaire Warren Buffet highly places the value of Communication Skills by saying that "If you can't communicate, it's like winking at a girl in the dark. One can improve one's value 50 percent if one has better Communication Skills." Cline (2005) conducted a survey while he was undertaking his research in a Corporate sector. He based it on 330 employers. The result wasn't astonishing as 96 % of the executives considered Communication Skills to be the most important feature of an employee trait. It can be said that "Poor communication can negatively affect employee recruitment and retention (CCH, 2000), as well as the "bottom line" (Washatka, 2004).

The language of the Professionals depends upon their job and work culture. The Research done on this can help in Interdisciplinary undertaking and can help in getting the desired results. The research carried on language of the Professional can be based on the domain or the field which determines the use of language. According to Christopher N Candlin, its literature can be categorised into 3 heads:

1. Written Communication or Text-based Studies -- It relates to the written texts or communication which is an essential part of Business Communication. It includes the Letters, Tender Notice, Quotation, Reports, and the maintenance of the Registers which is a pre-requisite for any enterprise.

2. Interactive or Oral Communication-- It includes conversations or talks in meetings, discussions, job Interview, performance appraisal etc. It forms the routine in the Corporate Sector and there lies the success of a Business Enterprise. For lawyers it would be cross-examining the witnesses in courtrooms, for Managers and Doctors that would be a discussion, or a meeting or a Performance appraisal.

3. Problem-centered-- It includes the discourse based on hands-on experience—the real-life situations which a professional experiences and which marks the basis of communication research. It includes the discourse analyses which takes in between the Communication Specialist and other members of the Profession. The change in the structure or the delivery is discussed and analysed through interactions.

The Mission of Professional Communication Research is based on Trust involved in between the Speaker and the Listener, the level of Risk prevalent in a particular Profession and the Standard Quality or Satisfaction expected out of a particular job. The Research can be carried at both the levels-- Micro as well as

Macro level. The expected results determine the level. If an extensive research has to be made, various categories should be Identified. For this, the age is an important factor. For example, if the research has to be made on Novice Professional in Corporate Sector, then 30-35 age-group should be focused upon. If the research is based on Hotel Professionals in a five-star hotel, the Ethnic Class should be taken into consideration. If the Fashion Industry is being researched, both men and women would be taken into account. The culture of the people to a large extent, plays an important role in research. Various factors like food, language, behaviour, and attitude of the people decide the level of satisfaction and the efficiency of the people, and the resultant output. Attaining of Statistical data is an important factor in research, it display even the risk involved in outcome. The discussion between the researcher and other lay members lead to good reasoning and appropriate results. The analysis is based upon Knowledge, Attitude, and Skills of the Professionals.

Metaphoric expressions in language deserve special attention not only because of the positive and negative connotations evoked by their source domains but also because they often occur "at the scientific verge, (when) words routinely fail to refer" (Gross, 1996, p.84). A lot of metaphors are used in economics. The economy is shown as organism, namely, economic growth or infant; as a patient, like healthy economy and economic depression; as people like giant, sister company; as animate like the market is falling, the market is bouncing; types of traders as types of animals, for example, bear run, bull run, bullish, etc. Hedging has an important place in communicating the nature of Inter-Personal Communication. Stance and Engagement in writing, Politeness in television-mediated campaigns, Humour in Workplace, Pragmatics, Workplace Culture, Media Choice, Media Content, and Semantic Network has much influence on Verbal Communication.

Colour Metaphor in discourse, as mentioned by Lan Li and Mac Gregor Lucy, helps in imagination, clarifying the meaning of the language, and Effective Communication. Metaphors are used everywhere, in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action as well. Black, white, green, red, yellow, blue, brown, and grey colours Metaphors are used Internationally. Black and White are universal colours, the most common in world languages. Blacksmith, blacklist, black sheep, black cloud, black market, black and white, are used much as Black Metaphors in English Language. White elephant, white wash, white paper, white lie, white collar are common White Metaphors used in English Communication. Red carpet, red tape, red carpet, red letter days, red faced signify the usage of Red Metaphors mostly used in Politics, Economics and other fields. Green light, green belt, green paper, green chip, are Green Metaphors which are used in Science, Computer, Politics, Social-Science, and various other field. The Yellow metaphor signify negative attribute of an Individual, that is, one's Coward attitude.

Whereas yellow also attributes one's Positive attitude, one's nobility and wealth. Blue chips, blue ribbon, blue collar, bolt from the blue are common examples of Blue Metaphors. Grey and Brown Colour Metaphors are less used in Communication Skills. Grey is used as grey market, grey area, grey face, grey matter and so on. Brown is used as brown goods, brown majority and so on.

According to Ho Janet in "Fear in Stock Market Crash: A Corpus-based Metaphoric Study", Metaphors have been used for Journals based on various domains or sources. About 36% of journals and its content are used as metaphors which arise from organic source. It co-relates to a living entity. About 66% of Journals are personified, for example, Journal is endeavouring....Remaining equate to an animal or a plant like 'in a healthy state' personifies an animal, whereas, if it says that 'issues to a large extent are intertwined'..., then it personifies a plant. About 27 % of the Journals are functional. According to this, Journal is a vehicle which is to be steered in the right direction by its editor. It will be controlling the reins. Or it can be a source of entertainment, for example, 'last exciting change'. About 20 % of the journals are called as container metaphors which can be opened and filled with contributions, for example, 'the issue contains a set of book reviews', or building metaphors, for example, 'strictures derived from...' About 17 % of the Journals have Spatial source. These metaphors represent the journal's life as a journey by road like 'looking back at the first issue', or 'We are reaching a stage'.

If we see various across domains, the use of Metaphors experience Variations. In Applied Linguistics, the editor is endowed with multi-faceted identity but never appears as a conversant or host. The journal is qualified by organic, functional or spatial metaphors. In Economics, the editor has a multi-faceted identity which hardly ever involves the family. The journal is identified by organic-human, functional- vehicle or material- container metaphors. In Law, the editor is represented either as an enquirer or as a part of a family. The journal is qualified by organic or functional- vehicle metaphors. In Medicine, the editor has a multi-faceted identity but without any instances of emoting.

The Media influences much the effect which the language produces on its readers. The year 2008 experienced crisis in global financial market and there was decline in banking and investment sector. But some journalists tried to tone down the emotion in their news reports regarding the shift in stock market " This year, the media have been accused of contributing to the collapse of both Stearns and Lady Mac, a large California thrift, so journalists are more aware of the risk of stoking fear and the risk of being blamed... In fact, 'panic' heads the list of words that major news organisations have avoided using because they are seen as potentially self-fulfilling."

( The New York Times, September 22 2008). Media plays an important in the construction of emotions. One of the ways to express emotional attitude is the use of metaphors.(Kovecses,1995). Two metaphors--'fear' and 'panic' show different degrees of fear. If we see Webster's Dictionary, panic is a sudden overpowering fright', whereas fear means 'to have a reverent awe of God. If semantic meaning is studied, fear means something unpleasant may happen or can cause danger. But panic focus on the consequences of such human emotions,

and hence in panic people may take action without thinking. In Media, Few Disaster Metaphors are used. Turmoil whose frequency is 186, is the highest. Other metaphors in financial market are Meltdown, Wall street meltdown, credit market meltdown, crash, catastrophe, tsunami, whirlwind etc.

Use of Hedging Expressions in Language—certain words or phrases, can soften or weaken a speaker's standpoint. This helps him to shield himself from being challenged by the hearer.

It has been recognised that an appropriate use of hedges is essential in successful communication ( Brown & Levinson, 1987). Modal auxiliary verbs are used as hedging.

Modals like may, might, can, could, should, and would are used maximum times, which comprise 30.23 percent. May is used 37.20 percent as hedge, could 18.60 percent.

Action verbs like to appear, to see, to believe, to think, to argue, to propose, to speculate, to assume also act as hedging. Adjective like possible, probable, un-likely; Nouns like assumption, claim, possibility, estimate, and suggestion and Adverbs like virtually, sapparently, practically are also used to make Communication effective. In Professional Written Texts, Status, occupational role, ethnicity, gender, and power are important features. In Appointment Letter, Farewell Letter, Re-Union Gathering, Quotation, Tender etc also Modals are used extensively like Could You Please...; Would You Please....

Use of politeness Marker—"Po" in Media, is widely used in Philippines . Research has shown that 'Po' is one of the ways of showing respect not only to elders, but also to peers or even younger people. Bonvillain (2003) cites Japanese language. They use 'sensei', which means 'teacher', although the person may be a doctor, politician, or any other person in other profession. Ide( as cited in Bonvillain,2003) gives 3 other rules in Japanese social etiquette ( p.136). Japanese give much importance to courtesy. They feel that one should be polite to a person of higher social position, to a person with power and to an older person. Indians also consider Courtesy to be one of the main features for Effective Oral Communication.

Recently, the Corporate Sector has analysed and found that both IQ- Intelligence Quotient and EQ-Emotional Quotient play an important role in making competent leaders. IQ helps an individual to trace academic qualities of an individual, and EQ enables an individual to understand and empathize with the team so as to give the desired results. According to [Fvodor Dostovevsky](#), "Much unhappiness has come into the world because of bewilderment and things left unsaid." That supports the need for research and training in Professional Communication as a pre-requisite for a successful enterprise.

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