

# Theories of Communication, Language, and Human Discourse

## A THEORY OF COSMOLOGICAL COMMUNICATION

### Introduction

"Communication" is a complicated and universal force. It exists in human discourse, permitting human discourse, but also apart from human existence. "Communication" exists in media such as light, sound, electricity, but also happily exists in the absence of a medium. Although humans communicate, so do other animals. Chimpanzees communicate their intentions to each other, flowers communicate their availability to the bees, the bees communicate the locations of the flowers, cells communicate their receptiveness to hormones, entangled particles communicate their identical relationships all the way across the universe.

Because human communication is so similar to the universal we call "communication," we confuse the two. But one is as natural as gravity while the other is a synthetic, a replica, a conscious human innovation. Consider for a moment different kinds of human communication. We all recognize writing is a form of human communication. But reading is a human act it is very much like the way we read the universe as we pass through it. In fact for reading theorists, "reading the world around us" is commonly discussed. Consider art. Even the most abstract art imitates the world around us. All art is measured by the extent to which imitates realities. Realism imitates the "reality" of the human condition. Impressionism imitates the "reality" of light and color. Even Cubism depicted a "reality" of "simultaneous vision."

Music is clearly a human form of communication that imitates the music we hear around us in nature. Now, I don't mean that the musicians are imitating nature, I mean that the musicians are using tools that imitate the natural sounding devices in nature.

### The nature of communication in nature

I stare into the night sky at the star Betelgeuse. There it is in the night sky on Orion's right shoulder. A few weeks later, I check for the star, and it is gone! (Well this is a fiction.) What do I know? and how did I get that information? It seems that it is the lack of information that informs me. Where there is no light, were I should see a light, there is information. It is the rhetoric of silence. The universe is filled with information. We, as humans, like all the other animals, are able to decipher much of that information. Lightning strikes; we recognize the flash (we read the flash), five seconds later we hear the thunder, and we know the thunder is about 5000 yards away. The knowledge comes not from the thunder but from the lack of information that occurs between the lightning and the thunder. Communication is not the intent to pass information. Is the existence of information and the ability to understand the meaning inherent in that information.

We have this amazing ability to understand much more than most animals (perhaps any animal). As we have survived close scrapes, our ability to read natural communication has improved. We don't need to be told the goal of the leopard stalking us. Somehow,

we were able to synthesize the natural flow of communication into language, writing, art, music and other forms of human communication.

This then, is my theory of communication laid out as a basic, perhaps ill considered, set of ideas. Dave

## **A SECOND THEORY OF COSMOLOGICAL COMMUNICATION**

My initial definition for communication was that it was the process of transferring information from one person to the next via a particular medium. I have learned through all of our discussions and reading so far that communication is truly more complicated than that. Communication is not simply a verbal interaction between two people. Body language and facial expression are also means of communicating messages to other people. Communication does not just occur among humans, it also occurs between all members of the animal kingdom. In fact, some sources say that animal communication may be a foundation of human communication. Communication always results in the acquisition of some bit of knowledge or information. This information may be something very concrete (the store is opening at noon, for example) , or something vague or even interpreted (reading someone's body language).

We often talk about communication as being an interaction between two or more parties, but this is inconsiderate of another form of communication – self-talk. We must consider that talking to ourselves for the purpose of motivation, relaxation, or maybe memory recall is a very important form of communication. It can either be performed silently or vocally for others to hear. Another twist on this would be prayer. Prayer is most certainly a type of communication. In both cases, self-talk and prayer, some information or message is being relayed.

Another aspect in my evolving theory of communication that I would like to investigate is the concept of a lack of communication (for example, lack of response) being communication in itself. In many cases, I think this lack of communication can be a very strong form of communication. Kim

## COMMUNICATION AND HUMAN DISCOURSE

This was way more difficult than I thought it would be, here are my initial ideas.

My original definition of communication stated during the first week of class was the following:

*I view communication as an exchange of ideas or information through any medium. I know it's a broad definition, but communication occurs across broad spectrums so I don't believe the definition should be pigeonholed.*

Communication in some form or another exists in all species, but we humans are the only beings to have adapted our language into speech. Along the way, reasoning became an accomplice of human language and speech. Ian Tattersall maintains that "Members of other species often display high levels of intuitive reasoning, reacting to stimuli from the environment in quite complex ways, but only human beings are able arbitrarily to combine and recombine mental symbols and to ask themselves questions such as "What if?" (Tattersall, 2006). Without language, can we have thoughts?

For human communication to take place we need intelligence, senses to perceive, reasoning, memory, imagination, meaning and interpretation. Social interaction was likely a major factor for the evolution of human intelligence. "We are forced by our very nature to interact with other people in a fundamentally different way than to interact with, say, stones and sticks" (Strawson, 1962).

Human communication is a multifaceted collection of systems that follow a snowball effect. Language allows us to communicate faster and simpler, but the language also elicits more language, thoughts, and ideas, which guides humans to devising improved methods (or worse ways) to carry out our communications through our social interactions.

Humans have cornered the market, so to speak, on communication since we are the only species on planet Earth that has developed profound ways to communicate with each other, or rather share our experiences. Take the art of film (cinema) for example. Film makers and writers use advanced audio/visual techniques to communicate stories about anything and everything from the little seemingly insignificant tales to important life altering stories of the human condition. These are communicated onto the big screen (and now the little screen in your home through DVD) for audiences to experience and react. *Please note I do not in any way mean to minimize film theory here – I am merely attempting a snippet of an idea.*

I could continue with advanced communication devices, but I don't want to get carried away, so I'll end there for now.....

## REFERENCES

Strawson, PF 1962: Freedom and Resentment. Proceedings of the British Academy 48, 187-211.

Tattersall, Ian. How we came to be HUMAN. Scientific American Special Edition; June 2006 Special Edition, Vol. 16 Issue 2, p66-73, 8p, 4c, 1bw. Barbara

Barbara,

You said: "Human communication is a multifaceted collection of systems that follow a snowball effect. Language allows us to communicate faster and simpler, but the language also elicits more language, thoughts, and ideas, which guides humans to devising improved methods (or worse ways) to carry out our communications through our social interactions."

Which made me think of the evolution of "culture," meaning that while social interactions may be improved by language, they are also inherently linked to the cultivation of a clan's cultural identities as well - language as a form of communication may be the first identifier.

Your theory made me think of cultural evolution as it might be linked directly to language. Kati

"For human communication to take place we need intelligence, senses to perceive, reasoning, memory, imagination, meaning and interpretation. "

Barbara, I like your distinction between human communication versus communication of other beings. Other creatures that do not have our level of imagination and interpretation communicate almost entirely through instinct. Their "hardwiring" seems to stop there, with additional techniques acquired by mimicking the actions of those around them. Terri

## COMMUNICATING AS A BYPRODUCT OF OPPORTUNITY

Human communication, as discussed so far this semester, has much to do with expressing needs with other humans. In our first reading assignment, Dr. Hailey gave us a story of a prehistoric community out on a hunt. The story represented how communication may have evolved in response to a basic human need, food. The basic needs of food, clothing, water, and shelter/safety are as important to humans today as they were thousands of years ago. Any child, or adult or that matter, will communicate that they are not happy if they are outside in a rainstorm without an umbrella when it's past suppertime. These basic needs are what drive our communication because without meeting basic needs a human life can be extinguished rather quickly. Before our prehistoric ancestors could communicate abstractly and metaphorically through petroglyphs and pictographs, it's reasonable to assume that they could communicate with others in their community to ensure that they were safe, sheltered, fed, warm, and hydrated.

This semester we've also described two theories of how simple human communication turned into complex language and spread geographically. The Kurgan theory asserts that human conflict has been the primary driving force of language migration. The Anatolian theory describes language being spread through the advances in agriculture. Once again communication, as language, is spread and advanced by fulfilling basic human needs. The Kurgan theory would suggest that humans have been more motivated to communicate to ensure their safety in the face of warring enemies. The Anatolian theory suggests that humans make advances in agriculture and commerce to make sure there is enough food on the table.

Human history has marked advances in communication apart from communication of basic needs only when those needs have been met. I assume folks like Socrates, DaVinci, Beethoven, (you fill your favorite artist, mathematician, scientist, etc) have made advances in the way we view the world only because they were for the most part well-fed, safe, and warm. Humans have the luxury to be more philosophical, creative, and metaphorical when their basic needs are properly communicated and met. I know there are probably some contradictory examples of this, but for the most part it's safe to assume that the next great composer, computer programmer, poet, etc is probably not going to come out of a refugee camp in Chad. Sean

Sean,

What would you say about the philosophers? Where would the next great "thinker" come from. Does strife (the refugee from Chad) sometimes move higher levels of communication forward? I'm not being snide, your comment on the composers and artists was interesting. Kati

Sean - Your thoughts about communication reminded me of Maslow's Hierarchy. Remember Maslow from Psych 101? He argued that humans seek to fulfill needs in a hierarchical fashion. Thus, someone who is near death by starvation or hasn't had water in a week will be willing to risk an attack by a lion for food or water. Someone who is well fed, though, won't risk his personal safety for food. A person at this level of the

hierarchy will seek to build a better shelter, or might search for a mate. Maslow put something he called self-actualization at the top of his hierarchy. Self-actualization is a state in which humans have met all other needs and desire to improve themselves. It seems to me that language might develop in much the same way, perhaps in parallel with cultural development as suggested in one of the other posts. As humans become more advanced culturally and socially, they will approach a group state of self-actualization in which language becomes highly complex and better suited to self-improvement. Food for thought... Steve

## HUMAN DISCOURSE AS A PRODUCT OF THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Perhaps more than any other creature, human beings are constantly searching for something they don't have. A lion lives on a savannah, content no matter what the weather. Eagles do not compete to build the largest or best aerie. A shark spends its entire life under water without wondering what life would be like on land.

The founding fathers of our country understood this need; in the Declaration of Independence they wrote, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

What does happiness have to do with communication? Communication began because of our need for happiness. Early man might not have been happy living in a cave, but to build a different type of dwelling – such as a house or a castle – he would need to communicate his needs, then negotiate for the materials or labor needed. An early woman may not have been happy with how her food was cooked – she needed to communicate with other women whose food smelled better to see how she prepared the meat.

This pursuit of happiness, then, led to the development of communication – including speech, writing, and cultural literacy.

(More to come later) Diane

"Any child, or adult or that matter, will communicate that they are not *happy* if they are outside in a rainstorm without an umbrella when it's past suppertime."

Interestingly enough, although his premise is slightly different, Sean used the word "happy" as well in his post above. Maybe you are on to something. Michelle

Diane - Your idea about a link between happiness and communication is interesting. Since reading your post, I've been trying to decide which came first, happiness or communication. I have tried to answer this question by thinking about other, non-human animals and deciding whether they experience happiness. I think they do, at least the large vertebrates. My daughter's beagle, Bosley, for example is overjoyed when someone new visits the house. Bosley also can communicate and let others know he is happy. Based on this observation, it seems to me that happiness and communication have existed jointly in animals for millions of years.

Tying this back to your post, it seems to me that communication and happiness might have fed one another: happier humans communicated more effectively, which led to a "fitter (my apologies to Darwin)" human species, which in turn became happier and more adept at communication. I suppose the answer hinges on whether happiness contributes to

evolutionary selection. I think it does - happier people live longer and probably have a genetic edge. What do you think? Steve

My premise addresses not happiness itself, but the *pursuit* of happiness. Sure, animals experience happiness; my son's dog jumps up and down in huge circles when she sees my dog getting his leash on. (Zoey, a 90-pound lab/greyhound mix, comes when she is called, so is seldom on a leash. The last time I walked her, I was in physical therapy for three months for my shoulder injury!).

Here's the difference, though -- Zoey is content to lay on the landing on the basement stairs until Bob comes home. She is not pursuing happiness; she only experiences happiness when it is triggered by something outside of her. If she was pursuing happiness, she would bring me Max's leash or run out of the yard to see if she could find Bob when he is at work. Diane

I like your theory, Diane. It reminds me of that Will Smith movie called "The Pursuit of Happiness." The film, based on a true story, tells the story of Chris Gardner (Smith) who gets the opportunity to train as a stockbroker in a six-month unpaid internship just as his wife abandons him and his five-year-old son. He and his son end up homeless and sleeping in subway bathrooms and homeless shelters to survive, but in spite of this, he shows up for his internship every day in the only suit and tie that he owns. At one point in the movie, as he describing his struggles, he says:

"And it was at that time that I thought about Thomas Jefferson writing that Declaration of Independence. Him saying that we have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And I thought about how he knew to put the 'pursuit' in there, like no one can actually have happiness. We can only pursue it."

I can see the link between communication and the pursuit of happiness--the refusal to give up and to change our lives for the better. That's pretty hard to do without communication. Terri

Diane - Thanks for the clarification. You're absolutely right; there is a significant difference between passively enjoying a happy experience and actively pursuing happiness. Pursuing happiness seems to be a trait unique to humans and perhaps a few other primates. In fact, we humans alone among the animals (with a few minor exceptions, such as rodents that gather shiny objects) have a propensity for seeking possessions, emotions, and activities that aren't necessary to survival and breeding. As you have said, this desire to pursue happiness seems to set us apart. Steve

Diane,

What you say about a more Freudian twist to your pursuit of happiness communication theory? Humans are pushed to communicate more effectively to maximize pleasure (happiness) and minimize pain? Sean

Diane, I very much agree with your interpretation that communication (especially in humans) is driven by the need for fulfillment-for happiness.

It is interesting that, as you mention, humans are never completely satisfied with what they have. More is always the goal and communication is needed to make that goal for more a constant reality.

I wonder if the lion with a full belly laying beneath the shade of a great tree (or any other creature with basic needs met) is ever completely fulfilled if even only for a moment in time? A possibility? Maybe, maybe not. It's hard to say since we don't really know what lions "think."

All I know is I've never met a person who was completely satisfied with anything.

Interesting post. Jean

## EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION

### Introduction

The readings we have studied during the first few weeks of class, coupled with my previous knowledge of communication, have altered my perspective of human language and speech. This altered perspective has led me to change my philosophy of communication. Previously, I believed that human communication was a characteristic of our species that had remained unchanged and static for millennia, and that would probably continue unchanged in the foreseeable future. My new philosophy is that human communication is a constantly changing and evolving feature of our species that has been improving for at least a million years, is changing during our lifetimes, and will continue to evolve as long as humans exist. My new philosophy of communication comprises the following four areas:

- Development of speech and language
- Emergence of written communication
- Creation of printed communication
- Birth of digital communication

### Development of speech and language

The first weeks of our class have concentrated on the development of language in early primates and the migration of speech out of Africa and into other parts of the world. A keystone of my philosophy of communication is that humans may never completely understand the early history of communication. Future genetic, archaeological, and linguistic evidence may help humanity develop a number of compelling theories about language, but language and language migration took place so far in the distant past that I doubt adequate evidence will ever exist to fully explain the history of communications in our species.

### Emergence of written communication

During the coming weeks, I imagine the class will begin to study the emergence of writing communication. Just as speech and language have evolved, particularly during the last 100,000 years, written communication also has moved forward. Written language has made a great deal of progress since the first cuneiform tablets were made by early humans in Mesopotamia, and the Egyptians painted their tombs with hieroglyphics. Modern written alphabets, many based on phonetics, have replaced these early systems of written language. An important element of my philosophy of communication is that written communication will continue to develop. In particular, I'm convinced that systems of written communications will become increasingly simpler. Complex systems, such as the characters of written Chinese, will eventually give way to more efficient written language.

### Creation of printed communication

The advent of the printing press at the dawn of the Renaissance was perhaps one of the most significant steps forward taken by human communication. Until multiple copies of written material could be produced quickly and inexpensively, written work was unavailable to common people. As a result, only the highly educated and wealthy were literate and able to enjoy the knowledge stored in written material. The creation of printed material gave the common man access to knowledge that only a handful had enjoyed just decades before. Furthermore, the spread of printed communication across Europe carried ideas at pace never before imaginable. Ironically, I'm convinced that the

printed word is the one stage of communication that will not continue to evolve, but instead will disappear. My philosophy of communication argues that natural selection will lead to the eventual extinction of printing in favor of the stronger, more-fit-for-survival digital communication.

#### Birth of digital communication

The birth of digital communication, which has taken place largely in the last 50 years, is one of the great steps in the evolution of human communication, on par with the invention of the printing press. Digital communication has increased tribal memory and accelerated the speed of communication in these 50 years more than any improvement that has taken place for tens of thousands of years. In addition, digital communication will eventually replace printing, which will fall into disfavor as the printed word shifts to faster, cheaper digital format.

#### Future of communication

What does the future hold for human communication? My philosophy of communication maintains that communication will continue to develop. I doubt future improvements will be in the biological or mental component of communications. Rather, I imagine that technology will continue to supplement the brain and mouth in ways that we can't even imagine. Steve

Steve, great theories. What do you think will happen to the human brain and mouth when digital does everything for us? Barbara

Barbara - I think as long as acoustic communication remains part of our society, the brain and mouth will remain unchanged. I wouldn't be surprised, though, that the day will come when technology and brain will be merged. I know this sounds a lot like the Borg from Star Trek, but we seem to be headed that way. Whenever I see someone driving down the road with a hands-free cell phone, I wonder when some sort of implantable communications device will be become available. It's a little scary, isn't it? Steve

I thought I was the only one who had these eerie thoughts about Blue Tooth. Just seeing people with them gives me the heebie-jeebies and I feel like the computers are taking over the humans. Good example. Erinn

Your theory made me think of the alien beings in A.I. (the film with Haley Joe Osment as a robotic type remake of someone's deceased child). At the end the aliens seemed to communicate at high levels of telepathy, no words at all, I think they didn't have mouths?? Anyone seen it? I may not be remembering it 100% accurately. Barbara

Barbara - My first thought when I read your question was that I hope mankind never reaches that point. Unfortunately, I think some sort of continuing evolution is inevitable, so eventually humans may lose their ability for acoustic communication and come to depend completely on digital communication. This future view raises an interesting communication: Will such a race even qualify as human, or will they be more advanced beings who look on their human ancestors as primitive creatures who were a few rungs below them on the evolutionary ladder? I hope I don't end up in a museum... Steve

Really, really thoughtful and good work here. Your discussion of the future of communication is of particular interest to me. Physicists, for example, suggest that communication is held to the speed of light (because quantum communication uses physical media. But what if communication doesn't need physical media?

Dave

Dave, you've got me biting here. So, what kind of communication are you referring to that might exceed the speed of light? Jean

Jean,

I think this brings us back to Dave's lightning and thunder example (I hope I'm not way off here)...

We see lightning in the distance and we hear thunder 5 seconds later. Knowing these two things we can conclude that the lightning is about a mile away. But what was the source and medium of that information (a distance of 1 mile) communicated to us? I think Dave would argue the communication occurred within the space between the lightning (medium of light) and the thunder (medium of air)...in other words, there was no medium.

I'm still chewing on this myself... Terri

Yeah, that's a good example, too. Actually, I think we will find more examples as we go. One interesting example is when no communication becomes meaningful (communication) -- ah, but I let the cat out of the beans. Dave

I certainly think that the concept of no communication is very important and that it can be a very powerful form of communication itself in certain situations. Kim

Terri, yes I think I remember Dave's thunder and lightning example and the point about the communication taking place in the gap of silence between the two - the gap where "nothing" exists being the medium of the communication (ironically).

But...I'm not sure I can think of this illustration (or think of any others either) that constitutes communication occurring, literally, faster than the speed of light. I mean, yes the communication happens in the gap between the lightning and thunder but it's not occurring faster than light can travel (in terms of speed). The individual interpreting the info in the silence still has to wait the 5 seconds to acquire the info and then process it in his/her head.

This is a very complicated topic, and I hope to get to it by the end of class. There are events in physics, however, where effect proceeds cause. If cause and effect can be seen as a communications issue ???

There is also an example of information exchange occurring between entangled particles that occurs instantly, no matter how far the particles are apart. For a while, physicists speculated that this might be used for faster than light communication, but they now think that is impossible. Nonetheless, the communication between particles seems to occur at infinite speed. Physicists don't know how it happens.

Dave

Ahhhh.....now your comment about communication beyond the speed of light makes sense to me.

Thanks for the clarification.

For what it's worth...that sounds like quality material for a Star Trek the Next Generation episode.

:-)

The future of communication I think it a great topic to look into. I think it will be very interesting to read this section of your theory once it is complete. I wonder if this could be a whole theory in communication alone (I think it would make a great paper by itself).  
Erinn

Steve, I think your post on this is fantastic. You've obviously given this a lot of thought.

I just wanted to say that it depresses me, though. There's nothing like the smell of a brand new book, one where the spine cracks because it's never been opened, and the pages are crisp and clean. There's a huge part of me that hopes your future is far beyond my lifetime. :-) Michelle

Steve, this sounds like a terrific start. I was especially intrigued by your mention of "future" communication. In my own thoughts, I kept focusing on the past and the present. I never thought to include what is to come. That's probably the most exciting part of contemplating communication-what hasn't come to pass yet. Jean

## COMMUNICATION AS HUMAN DISCOURSE

This is copied over from my introduction:

### **Why Communicate?**

Why do we communicate? I theorize that we communicate to give our existence meaning.

### **How do we communicate?**

Communication involves a sender(s) and receiver(s) of information. Communication begins when someone wants to send a message to a receiver of information. However, the way a message is communicated varies. There are several ways a sender can send a message... from verbal, written, technological (email, for example), mass media, music, nature, art (as we are discussing), silence, etc.

The way a message is received also varies between different recipients. A sender of information may have intended a specific message, but that message can be received so many different ways. I think the message can be interpreted so differently between recipients because of preconceptions, misconceptions, life experiences, knowledge (or lack thereof) of a particular topic, or receivers may have different experiences with the sender of the information.

### **What communication is not**

Communication can also break down, if someone is communicating in order to control someone else...that is not communication... that's dictating. That never seems to be successful...

I also think that if a receiver of communication doesn't like the message, they can manipulate the information and the received message is so far off of what the sender intended, that communication can break down.

**As of today, Feb 7, Other Ideas that I am pondering** \*thinking out loud here\*

What do I communicate to myself?

What do I communicate about myself (i.e., how I dress, how I speak, etc.)

(If I am making a presentation, and if I take time to remember your name and take time to present myself, what do I communicate? I am communicating something about myself, and about the other person).

Body Communication; loud, waving hands, Spaniards & Italians

Food - If I am buying or making you food, what does that communicate?

Dogs - Claiming their owners

What does the media communicate through music, pop culture, movies, etc. Does the media communicate lies or truth? Metaphor and reality are different.

What words do we use, or vocabulary (or lack thereof)

What if don't communicate? Do we lose meaning of our existence?

Lists - babies, animals, art, music, nature, written word, poetry,

Communicate thoughts; silence. - perhaps silence is not a bad thing. Sometimes nothing needs to be said, but there is still communication.

Communication with a higher power?

Communication in different cultures...

Offer opposing views in my theory...

Heather,

*we communicate to give our existence meaning*

I find your thought very interesting. Perhaps humans have been the only species to think "why am I here, why do I exist"? I often wonder myself and find many roads lead me to this question. Perhaps this in fact is one reason we've "evolved" - because we ask questions? Very philosophical. Barbara

Heather,

I loved your working ideas and questions for them. Isn't a dictatorship of ideas a form of communication in that a dictator tries to control everything, even at the most fundamental of levels - communication? You made some great points about how communication breaks down and becomes something that is still communicated but in lies, misconceptions, and deception. Kati

Heather,

I liked your thoughts on defining communication through summarizing what it is not and exploring miscommunication. Seems like you could make a good theory of communication based on concrete examples of why/how it sometimes fails. Sean

Heather wrote: "Communication can also break down, if someone is communicating in order to control someone else...that is not communication... that's dictating. That never seems to be successful..."

Heather, thanks for making this point. With all the info swimming through my head, I forgot about the prospect that communication can be abused too. It's good to be reminded that it is a two-way street and not a dictatorship.

thanks, Jean

## COMMUNICATION AS HUMAN NEED

I have to admit I've been a little bit overwhelmed by this assignment. So I decided that the easiest way to express my theory of communication as it exists at this point was to break it down into a few key ideas that I believe form the basis of communication. I realize that there are so many aspects of communication I have not even considered, and that it is quite likely most of my statements here are flawed in some way. But regardless of that fact, I suppose I won't get anywhere if I don't start somewhere☺. Here are a few concepts that are central to my current personal theory of communication:

**1- Communication is a basic human need.** From the time we are infants we are driven to connect with others and to express ourselves. The desire to share our thoughts and feelings can be suppressed, but I believe it is nearly always there to begin with. Communication is also driven by the other basic needs—for example, an infant feels impelled to cry to express his or her need for food, warmth, or loving attention.

**2- If certain avenues of communication are not available, humans are motivated to adapt and will find other ways to communicate their needs.** For example, the other day my 15-month-old son decided he wanted some yogurt. I was holding him and he started doing an indecipherable little yell and pointing up the stairs. I was in the middle of a conversation with my husband at the time, and I set my son down, not sure what he wanted. He crawled up the stairs, and a few moments later he came toddling back with an empty yogurt container that his brother had left sitting on the table. He did the little yell again and held the container up to show me. I said, "Oh, you want yogurt?" He smiled and lifted up his arms for me to carry him up to his highchair.

**3- Metaphor is a driving component of communication.** Successful verbal communication depends upon our ability to use metaphor in ways that will be significant to those with whom we are attempting to communicate.

**4- Human communication does not require premeditation or conscious action and is not always deliberate.** We communicate through our presence or absence, silence or speech, movement or stillness. We communicate layers of information through our behaviors, and not all of the information being conveyed is necessarily accurate. For example, if a two-year-old has a complete meltdown in the middle of the grocery store, her message on the surface (the one she believes she is conveying) might be "I want that candy!" But her discerning mother might take her meltdown as a sign that she is hungry and tired and that it's time to go home. Some onlookers might believe the child is spoiled; others might assume she lacks proper discipline at home. Others might come to the same conclusion as the mother. The truth might lie in the mother's discernment, or it might lie somewhere in the middle. The truth might be unclear to the communicator herself. But through her behavior she is communicating different messages to different people.

As we grow I think our layers of communication might become more complex—but I might be wrong. I'd like to consider this idea more fully.

Andrea wrote: "Human communication does not require premeditation or conscious action and is not always deliberate. We communicate through our presence or absence, silence or speech, movement or stillness. We communicate layers of information through our behaviors, and not all of the information being conveyed is necessarily accurate. " Andrea, that's a really good point I lost sight of until your post here reminded me of it. Human communication isn't always a conscious action. We often communicate without intent or choice. It just happens sometimes. Jean

Moreover, we often communicate when we don't want to. Poker players beat their opponents by discovering their "tells" -- absent minded mannerisms they display when they have a good hand or bad.

Also, people usually look down and to the left before lying. The suggestion is they are actually looking for their lie in the creative side of their minds.

I think you guys may have hit on a really important thing -- this may be one of the intersections between communication as a natural phenomenon and communication as a human construct.

Dave

I'd agree that human communication is not always deliberate or premeditated. I've seen instances where communication is more like a natural phenomenon rather than a human construct. A woman I used to work with was very bright, and very accurate and efficient in all that she did. But those that worked with her for the first few months (including myself) always thought that she was totally disinterested in her work and, to be honest, we thought she really just didn't give a hoot about anything. When talking to her, her eyes would always wander. And she rarely smiled or got excited about anything (or, at least if she did, she didn't *show* it). But in reality it wasn't that way at all. Our interpretations of her mannerisms were off. If you hung out with her outside of work, doing things she loved to do, she would demonstrate the same behaviors. It was simply her nature. It was nothing personal against anyone else, and she wasn't a miserable person by any means. She just had some built-in characteristics that were misleading in certain contexts. As Andrea pointed out, "not all of the information being conveyed is necessarily accurate." Terri

Terri, I know just what you mean about the whole body language issue--I notice this same type of body language throwing me off when I am speaking to people I know. It really bothers me because I guess I tend to "listen" to body language as much as I do a speaker's voice. If they tend not to make eye contact, speak with a disinterested or gruff

tone, and fidget like they'd really rather be someplace else than right here talking to me, then I get offended a little (okay, call me sensitive).

Anyway, because I am so sensitive to other people's body language, I always try to make an extra effort to control my own body language when I am speaking to people. I consciously make eye contact, nod my head to show I understand, say "mmhmm," "sure," or "okay," ever so often to let them know I am still focused and following their train of thought, and purposely control the tone of my voice to communicate friendliness, understanding, and patience. I'm sure I am not always successful, but I try.

I think it's interesting how much we communicate in the "empty" space between our words (using our bodies) even when we don't intend to or realize we're doing it.

Kinda' like the space between thunder and lightning where you think there's "nothing" there but there really is and you just have to be aware of how to read and understand it.

Jean

It's OK Jean, you can call me sensitive too ;) I'm the same way. In fact, I'd even say I'm a bit paranoid sometimes! I'm overly conscious about my own body language when I am talking with someone, especially in work related situations. You are so right--it is quite interesting how much we really do communicate in our body language, in silence, even in absence. When it comes to communication, space isn't necessarily "empty". Terri

Terri - This whole body language discussion is fascinating. In fact, I've been leaning forward, making direct eye contact with my monitor as I've read the posts. Seriously, body language is an important element of communication that would be interesting to study further. I can walk into a room with my wife and read her mood immediately, without hearing a word. Her posture, the look on her face and other cues say as much as any words she could speak. In fact, her body language often warns me that her words aren't completely accurate. When she tells one of those little white lies that married couples tell another (No, dear, I'm not mad at all about the dent in the fender. I'm just glad you're OK.), I know immediately that she's upset, despite the words I hear. The importance of body language in human communication makes sense. It's a more primitive form of communication practiced by some of the lowest forms of living creatures, so it only seems reasonable that it would play an important role in human communication.

Steve

## COMMUNICATION (ASL) AMONG INFANTS

My theory on communication is driven by the recent turn of events in my personal life. Three years ago, after many years of pseudo-relentless searching I finally found someone I wanted to share my life with. A year ago, we got married and now we are expecting our first child. So as I sit here, gaining girth in my waistline I have begun to look at life in a different light. I no longer have the desire to be the semi-feminist and tireless engineer I once used to be, but now have a stronger desire to develop the more personal side of me: the wife and the soon-to-be mother, which I have been denying for many years.

With this new desire, I have begun to notice the many paths infants and toddlers take to developing their communication. My nephew, Zen, was taught sign language as an infant and quickly developed the ability to communicate words like “cookie,” “milk,” and “more” before he was one year old. By the time he was 18 months old, he could sign his entire alphabet and put together complex sentences far beyond the standard for his age. My family was amazed at how smart he seemed to be. Now, he is five years old and is extremely bright, very articulate, and advanced for his age in his cognitive abilities. So I wondered if this was due to the fact that he was taught sign language as an infant, therefore, enabling him to communicate at a very young age.

According to Robin Hansen, M.D., who is a pediatrician and chief of Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics at the University of California School of Medicine, scientific research funded by the National Institute of Health shows that “using Baby Signs, babies can communicate their needs and desires months before most babies otherwise can do so verbally. In addition, Baby Signs helps babies learn to talk sooner. It also boosts their self-esteem and allows them to develop their emotional awareness” (viii, Acredolo). Child development experts Drs. Linda Acredolo and Susan Goodwyn agree in their book Baby Signs and claim “babies who used Baby Signs had significantly higher IQ scores than their peers at age eight – years after they transitioned to speech” (xi, Acredolo).

So I begin to further explore my theory on communication that children who have been taught to sign at a young age have higher IQ scores, read at an earlier age, and develop communication skills faster than their peers who were not taught sign. What are the factors that come into play?

### *Reference:*

Acredolo, Linda, and Susan Goodwyn. Baby Signs. New York: McGraw-Hill. 2002.

Erin,

Part of an answer to your question might be the way parents and other people of influence in a child's life communicate their interest in and for the child. There is the idea of the "Mozart Effect" and children's ability to learn "better" while listening to Mozart, among other theories. I put headphones on my belly when I was pregnant and played "Mozart for

Mothers to be," whether this communicated anything to my children in the womb is unknown, but I suppose my point is that parental communication begins in the womb. No, I am not an advocate of Freudian theory. :) Kati

Erinn,

I sympathize with your current position in life. That was me a year ago. As such, I have a 10-month-old who is just learning how to talk (da da da da). I have played classical music for her and let her watch Baby Einstein videos, and she engages really well with those and with books. I think she would probably do fairly well with signs, if I knew how to teach them. I think that's probably one of many factors that contribute to a child's academic ability. You should start reading classics to it, too. Just in case. ;) Nicole

## LINEAR/NON-LINEAR THEORY ON COMMUNICATION

From a strictly empirical classification, communication is the physical, and in some ways, the physiological, means through which individuals process convey and process information.

Here is a brief, theoretical illustration of physiological communication:

A baby's body will tell the infant that it is hungry, the brain and stomach (and other organs) "communicate" with each other to tell the baby what to do so that he can be fed. The baby's brain intuitively knows what cry (inflection, pitch, and urgency) in order for this need for sustenance to be communicated to his parents. The parents hear this cry, and usually know exactly what it means through trial and error when the child was a newborn.

As many wiser and more articulate students have posted; communication is driven by necessity, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged.

The baby cries because he is hungry, the parents communicate an understanding of this need by feeding him. The point I am attempting to illustrate is that all living things communicate through need. A wilted house plant can communicate through its wilting that it needs to be watered. I am not trying to equate human intellect or need with plants, just that the definition of communication for humans can vary between person, species, and genus, depending on which "communication" is being observed or evaluated.

This is an obvious and simple explanation of biological communication, which leads me to my philosophical theory of human communication:

It is based on the need to define things and place them into orders of classification so we can understand the world around us. Communication is a cellular, hormonal, psychological, among other aspects of human nature that "need" to communicate "need" and "want." Part of this conveyance of need can be found in "semiotics," which is essentially the study of signs and symbols and their combinations as a method for transmission of meaning in various social situations. It encompasses the combination of verbal, nonverbal, visual, and aural signs and symbols that are employed to create messages – communicate.

The Nietzsche reading on metaphor made me think of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." Communication, whether it is verbal or not, is a means through which humans try to fill the gap between our perceptions and objective truths: Nietzsche would probably say that there can be no objective truths because they are metaphors, and are subjective to begin with. So...we communicate in metaphors to disassemble, to create perceptions as well as try to understand the parts of ourselves and world that have yet to be defined or remain ambiguous. Sometimes we find "truths" in these communications.

As such, I believe the "Allegory of the Cave," is a perfect metaphor for communication. Our reality, thus our communication, in many ways is like the shadows the prisoners see on the cave wall, they provide a "picture" of what might be the world outside the cave, but the prisoners can never know if the shadows are the reality or a "metaphor," for the reality. We, the prisoners, through the need to define and know about the worlds inside and outside of our own use various levels of communication to define the shadows and project that definition onto the objects making the shadows; thus fulfilling our need for truth in reality.

After reading this, I doubt I make any sense. And I am probably not the first person to think of Plato and his cave for communication. I can only speak for myself, but it takes so long to post because your head is filled with all these great and mostly ambiguous ideas that you want to communicate to the class, but to transmit the ideas into writing loses something in translation. Kati

Kati,

...it takes so long to post because your head is filled with all these great and mostly ambiguous ideas that you want to communicate to the class, but to transmit the ideas into writing loses something in translation.

I was intrigued by how your theory of communication post ended with your concern of how hard it is to communicate to each other our theories of communication! :-)

You are so right about having a head filled with ideas that seem to transform from genius quality to not quite flowing together when moving from thought to paper. I hope to make my own attempt this weekend, now that the work week is almost over. Sherry

Sherry,

Do you find that being tired of work and just plain tired inhibits your ability to communicate concisely? I am right there with you on waiting for the weekend - to do "other" work. :) Kati

Kati,

I agree with Sherry on the humor in each of us trying so hard to communicate our individual theories on defining communication itself. It is indeed hilarious that we strive so hard to communicate about communication and we more often fail than succeed.

I think in reality, communication is a simple attempt to convey an enormously complex idea that is our individual interpretations of the world around us. This is surely an impossible mission. How do we adequately convey the true essence of our thoughts and feelings, unique for each individual, to others without losing most of the important detail in the translation? I don't know. But I do know it's hard.

I think maybe with each attempt at communication we scratch away a little more at the infinitely large granite stone that blocks the cave entrance and keeps us from "escaping"

to the outside world where complete understanding is a reality. Will we ever escape the cave and achieve pure communication with unadulterated understanding amongst one another? Who knows....but we keep trying. Jean

Dave, I never read the book but I did see the movie and remember the part with the whale.

I think your analogy of each of us being a shrimp in that whale's belly is quite apt. The whole idea of the whale suddenly appearing into existence only to fall rapidly to the surface and die, all the while contemplating reality and existence, is very accurate representation of how we each live our lives in the greater scheme of things...we strive so hard for something we'll never reach in our lifetimes. But we keep trying and I think that's the point of it all. Jean

What is communication?

Communication is a broad term. At first, I believed communication to simply be the sending and receiving of information. So, when two computers send and receive data, are they communicating or just transferring information? I eventually realized that although this could be considered communication, I would have to make the question more specific to achieve a more accurate answer.

Communication is many things. It is transferring data, conveying an idea, interpreting an idea, stating a need for something, and replying to a query-just to name a few.

Communication must also typically involve two points: a point of origin and a point of receipt of the data being sent and/or received. But, to explore a more precise definition of the term “communication”, I think we need to ask a more specific question about the subject. For example, “Is there a difference between the plain transfer of information and the thoughtful reply of one human speaker to another?” The answer is certainly “yes.” I guess if I had to differentiate between types of communication, that I would probably create two main categories of communication: 1) information transfer and 2) complex interpretation and reply.

Information Transfer:

This category would be nothing more than data being sent from one point to another. As long as “point A” sends something and “point B” receives it, then communication in this sense has occurred. The recipient of the data need not possess the ability to understand, interpret, comprehend or otherwise respond to the stimulus of the data being sent. The simple receipt of the data is enough to constitute communication in this method.

Very interesting point, I hadn't considered. Transmission of data is not communication. Communication requires the data be received.

Complex Interpretation and Reply:

This type of communication would involve at least one party (either the sender or receiver or even both) possessing the ability to receive, interpret, and autonomously and creatively respond to the stimulus of the data being sent. I guess you could say this type of communication involves a level of sentience where the creative nature of the reply is not dependent on the nature of the data being sent. That is, if a computer receives data from another computer and responds with one of several preprogrammed replies, based on what data was sent, then such communication wouldn't be “complex” according to my description. The responding computer is restricted to a possible set of answers depending on what data has been received. If a person answers a question another person asks, however, then such a communication could be considered complex because the person answering is not restricted in any way by the information in the asker's question. Any reply is realistically possible in this situation. Of course, it is surely possible to replicate such an autonomous question/response scenario with other than human subjects-and that is why I did not stipulate that humans must be in the position of sender or receiver to fulfill the definition of “complex” communication.

Also interesting . . . you have gotten out of the box of equating communication with human discourse.

How did human communication start?

Although I don't think it's possible to pinpoint an exact moment in history where communication "officially and technically" began, I do think it's possible to understand how communication might have started.

I actually believe that communication is something every human is born with. It is a function, a skill, a hard-wired survival tool that we all have from the moment we are born. We may not know words, syntax, or language of any kind when we are born into this world, but we certainly know how to "communicate." Even in their rudimentary efforts, human infants are communicating needs and desires to their parents—they scream when they are hungry, scream when they are frustrated, scream when they've soiled their diapers...etc. Though they have only one primary communication vocalization (screaming), they are nonetheless communicating their needs to their parents. It will take the parents awhile to figure out what the scream is communicating and it will take the infants months to figure out that communication is better when there are specific sounds (and eventually words) to associate with specific needs. But the point is that communication is taking place at a very basic level. The secondary point is that this basic communication centers around the infants' needs. Human needs.

I think that as long as human need has existed, that communication has existed. However audibly primitive that communication may have started out as, it was still communication because it conveyed a need in a form ready to be interpreted by someone or something else. Over the centuries, humans have obviously refined the communication process considerably. But still to this day, our communications revolve around what we need (and what we want too).

Is language/communication unique to humans?

The answer to this question is a resounding "no." However, it is important to note that humans have obviously adapted and refined their means and complexity of communication to levels that reflect the equally complex nature of society today. There are no other creatures (that I can think of) that even come close to the level of detail present in human communication today. Sure, there are primates that display traits and communication abilities strikingly similar to human expression. However, there is no creature—not primates, dolphins, whales, cats or dogs or anything that even comes close to rivaling the communication and cognitive abilities of humans. Primates didn't invent currency or economy. Dolphins didn't discover the power of electricity. Whales don't apply aerodynamic principles to fly above the earth in planes. Cats don't communicate via e-mail using machines that transfer and store data based on a bunch of "0s" and "1s." And dogs certainly never harnessed the power of the atom. I'm not trying to arrogantly immortalize the accomplishments of the human race over other species on this planet. I simply wish to illustrate the obvious differences in our levels of mastering our environments—not because we are superior necessarily but because our ability to

manipulate language in a far more detailed, intricate manner has given us the upper hand as it were.

The human ability to communicate complex ideas with language is a unique trait among creatures in the natural world. It is a powerful tool that allows us to conquer environments and creatures far more physically capable than we are in many circumstances.

So, to answer my question, “no,” language and communication is not unique only to humans. Many species communicate (even in ways one might consider a language) and do it well. But only humans have mastered and applied language and communication in ways other species have not even come close to achieving. Our mastery of language and communication is so advanced over other species that there truly is little comparison between humans and any other creatures.

Why did we “evolve” to this level of skill with communication and not other species? I don’t know that anybody knows the entire answer to that question yet.

How did language spread?

There are many theories about how communication spread through the known world. I find it highly unlikely we will ever unravel the truth about how language spread across the earth. There are many theories, or “tales” if you will, attempting to explain away the complex spread of language with a seemingly simple plan. But I argue that no simple, singular source insight, explanation really exists. I think the truth is far more complex than that.

I think that there is some sliver of truth to every tale told because legend is almost always the product of embellished reality. Thus, I want to believe that the spread of language was, and still is, a function of necessity. That is, people need things and usually are motivated to act in order to possess the things they want or need. For example, people are hungry, tired, greedy, lustful, lonely, thirsty, hot, cold, etc.-you get the picture. We need things. We always need things. Whether it be constant needs for mere survival or new needs to help meet sudden fancies of heart, humans always need something. It is this driving desire to acquire or possess what we don’t have that motivates us to take action. But to successfully take action and achieve our goals, communication is required to grease the cogs and make things work right. It is extremely difficult (dare I say impossible?) to accomplish specific, complex goals without the aid of communication. Now, back to my point: I don’t think language was spread across the globe by a mere agricultural movement or even by our seeming inability to remain at peace with each other for any length of time. I think language was spread (and continues to spread today) due to simple human needs. For example, a company in New Jersey that sells custom office furniture to businesses in Japan may be motivated to train their personnel to learn basic Japanese as a means of improving their sales. Another example might be American soldiers being trained to learn a middle-eastern language so interpreters can be placed with each unit being deployed into hostile guerilla territory where knowing the native tongue could help units with intelligence gathering and ultimately in saving lives. A third example might be a Texas farmer learning to speak Spanish so he can better communicate with the influx of Hispanic farm hands he’s been hiring lately. Another example could be a couple from Switzerland learning to speak English because they just immigrated to Great Britain-permanently. A final example might be a housewife learning

to speak Swedish simply so she can understand the cooking instructions on the Swedish-only videos she just bought.

These are modern examples that are based in agriculture, war, commerce, cultural integration, and also plain personal fancy. The reasons in these examples are not necessarily modern, though. The basic motivations for learning a new language (in other words, the spread of language) have been around for centuries and have always influenced how and why languages are spread.

Yes, I think agriculture and war may have played significant roles in “language migration patterns.” But no, I certainly don’t believe they were singular forces in making languages go places. I think it may be naïve not to consider the unending complexity of the human condition and the inherent needs of human existence as factors that influenced the spread of language in our world. Citing one or two specific factors as singular causes for the spread of language is like choosing to only view an iceberg above the water. It’s quite plausible that there is so much more to it than that. Jean

Jean, this is a fantastic discussion. Your excellent examples of why language might have spread and while it is still spreading today brought to mind a personal example sitting right under my nose that I hadn't really thought about until reading your post.

My little sister is 25. She wants to enter the FBI academy in the worst way; however, she knows how difficult it can be to be accepted. So she's working hard and waiting to apply until 1) she's in better physical shape and 2) she's finished her masters in an IT field.

She will probably finish her two goals in another year. Interestingly enough, she recently told me that her plans include a third goal: an Arabic class in a local community college. You can imagine why she feels that will work in her favor.

So as you and many others have suggested, whether categorized as a need, want, or pursuit of happiness, she is pursuing at least exposure to another language for personal gain. Michelle

Michelle,

Wow! That's an admirable goal that your sister has. Sounds like she's working really hard to achieve it--I really hope she succeeds in achieving her dreams.

You're right too--that's a terrific example of what I was trying to illustrate about human desire being a motivating force behind the spread of language. Sometimes we learn languages out of necessity (college requirements or maybe you're going on a mission to a foreign country) and sometimes because we really want to for a personal reason (like your sister). Either way, I think it's wise never to doubt the perseverance and determination of the human spirit as motivating factors behind the spread of many things--not just language. Jean

# A THEORY OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

## Sender and Receiver

This view of communication is probably a little antiquated, but I think communication requires a sender and a receiver. A telephone pole can communicate something, but it requires someone or something to receive that message. And that message can be different for every person or thing that looks at the telephone pole (I saw a very nice-looking telephone pole just the other day and it communicated stateliness to me). The catch: sometimes there is no one *else* to be the receiver. That is to say that even people speaking or writing or thinking to themselves are still communicating, but they are playing both the part of the sender and the receiver. I know I write to myself all the time, in my journal (at least, I hope no one else ever reads it). Thought, speech, and actions are still communication if the sender happens to also be the receiver.

## Verbal Communication (Oral and Written)

Verbal communication is contrived. Anyone can sound any way they want with speech. Receivers in verbal communication are always free to interpret language, but only a limited amount can be understood from verbal communication without reaching into non-verbal cues to contradict or complicate the message.

## Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication takes a lot more intelligence to interpret. Verbal communication can be interpreted in limited ways, most often in the literal fashion. Non-verbal messages, however, can be interpreted in an infinite amount of ways, but the receiver must be fairly intuitive to read the messages clearly. Yet, for some reason, in our first years, this seems to be the type of communication we clearly understand.

## Age Changes Communication

Infants and even younger children are very good at interpreting non-verbally communicated messages. They understand anger, love, and sadness even though they supposedly can't understand spoken language quite yet. They understand facial expressions, arm movements, and even distance or closeness. Infants don't quite acquire their sight for a little while, so they have to rely on other senses even more. While their noses and mouths can tell them some things, my theory is that they rely on their intuition to pick up on non-verbal cues like who they're being held by, how that person feels about them, and how they should respond to that person. If they don't feel comfortable with someone, babies will certainly "speak up" and let them know.

So infants eventually gain sight and speech, but they still rely on many non-verbal cues. For example, my little one knows when I'm about to take her away from something she's not supposed to touch. I say "Baby" in a certain tone and then look at her in a warning-type of way, so as soon as I get up and move towards her, she sits down: "What, Mom? I wasn't doing anything wrong." Even the five-year-old I watch knows how to

read my facial expressions, but he's losing a little of that intuition he was born with—for example, he doesn't always pick up on my mood cues if I haven't said anything in a certain manner that would indicate the mood.

My theory is that as we grow older, we rely increasingly on verbal communication in interpersonal relationships. For some reason, our earliest form of communication is slowly neglected until we rely almost entirely on verbal communication. It takes a fairly intuitive adult to interpret non-verbal cues without at least a small verbal hint.

This is the topic I think I want to do my research project on: how communication works for infants and adults, and how and why that changes throughout a person's life span.

Nicole, I particularly enjoyed your distinguishing between verbal and non-verbal communication—and I agree with your points.

Verbal communication is indeed contrived. I hadn't stopped to think about just how limited or speech and language is at capturing the details of what we are thinking and want to convey to others and other things.

I also agree with your emphasis on the need for non-verbal communication to often clarify verbal communication. I thought it was very true also, that you pointed out how the ability to interpret non-verbal communication can be a sign of higher intelligence. These are two excellent points I don't have in my own "theory" of communication so far. If you don't mind?, I think I may add these two significant points to my own theory as well. Jean

Interesting, Nicole. I never thought about communicating with myself. As I think about it, I wonder if thinking is really sending and receiving though. When I think, it seems that the thought just appears—not that I send it to myself and then receive it. Your journal example is a little more tricky though, and I'm not quite sure about that yet. It's a good point, because we do consider a letter communication...so what does it matter that I wrote the letter myself? Hmm. Jake

Nicole, Jake, you're touching on points that I've been wrestling with myself. I find it hard to call some communication with myself as anything other than "thought." But where do we distinguish between thought and communication, or is a distinction even necessary? It seems fair to classify thought as a type of communication, because in essence, as Nicole mentions, there is a sender and receiver, they just happen to be the same person.

I agree with you Jake, that the journal example is tough. Once Nicole's thoughts are written down, while the immediate audience is Nicole, who's to say the journals might not survive and be read by millions? I'm sure Anne Frank didn't expect her journal to be read by so many of all ages.

It seems that textual communication might pose problems in some of our definitions simply because of its ability to be preserved so well. Nicole has begun to hit upon something that I didn't give much thought to. Michelle

Jake, this is a very interesting prospect and I didn't really catch the dilemma of it the first time I read Nicole's post.

Your point about the journal being a possible example of "self-communication" caught my attention in particular. I think you said, "we do consider a letter communication...so what does it matter that I wrote the letter myself?"

This got me thinking about how we tend to define communication as a "send" and "receive" operation--usually between two sentient entities (ie-humans, usually). And, we usually think of the sender and receiver as two different individuals. But, I asked myself, "what is our definition of 'individual'?"

Is an individual necessarily a person in a completely separate physical body? I mean, what about the multiple-personality disorders psychologists (or is it psychiatrists?--I always get the two mixed up) say exist in a single patient? I think I remember reading somewhere that, for all intents and purposes, these "personalities" in such patients are completely different and separate "individuals" living within the mind of the mental-patient.

Okay, so, I'm NOT saying we all have to have multiple personality disorders to be able to "talk" to ourselves. I was thinking more along the lines of our conscious and subconscious minds...or whatever you want to call it.

Example: I sometimes feel like I'm "divided" within myself on certain issues. That is, a part of me feels strongly about something from one perspective but another part of me feels really strongly from an opposing viewpoint. I think that's kind of why we keep journals sometimes--to "talk" these issues out in a forum that allows us to more formally "talk" to our "other" personalities within us that don't all agree with each other all the time.

Personally, I don't keep any journals--I just argue with myself out loud--usually while I'm driving alone in my car so nobody sees me doing it--except the little kid in the backseat of the car next to me at the stoplight that I only notice when the light turns green and glance over casually to see him staring at me and realize he's been watching me in awe all along....okay, okay, that's TMI.

But anyway ... your post got me thinking about how we define what communication is based on how we define the two points involved in communication (a sender and receiver). Do the points both have to be two separate human individuals? How do we define "individual?" Do the points have to be human to be individuals? Do the points have to be human at all?

I don't know the real answer but I'm gonna go out on a limb here and say "Yes, it's possible and OKAY to communicate (talk) to yourself."

I do it.

Frequently... Okay, I'll stop now.

Jean

## COMMUNICATION AS “INFORMED INTENT”

As I've thought about what communication is, I've thought about lots of things I do consider communication and lots of things I don't. Then, I've tried to find some underpinning for how I make this distinction. I guess my theory is largely an attempt to nail down what I mean by “communication.”

### **How we use the word *communication***

We use the word *communication* in very disparate ways. We might say that a computer communicates with another computer through a network, that a painting communicates a message to us, or that a natural phenomenon communicates something about the world we live in. However, these uses of the word *communication* are very different from what we mean by human communication, which I think is the primary sense of the word *communication*. We say computers can communicate because they can exchange information, but when we talk about human communication, we're talking about more than information moving from one place to another.

So far, this is more or less what I think communication is: *I think communication is the sharing of information between two or more beings capable of intentional mental states.* (I'll explain later what I mean by “intentional mental states.”)

Yes, we use the word *communication* to describe other things, because we see that other processes share characteristics with the process of human communication; however, this doesn't mean everything we call “communication” is really communication in the primary sense. When we talk about non-human animal communication, we're mostly comparing what animals do to the benchmark of human communication: are animals behaving enough like us to say that they are communicating?

Many of the ways we use the *word* communication are figurative. If I say that a painting communicates something to me, I don't really think any communication has taken place between me and the painting: interpretation is not communication. Rather, I would mean that the painter has communicated something to me through the medium of painting. Similarly, if I say that the sun has communicated the time of day to me, I don't really think I have communicated with the sun. I simply mean I have inferred the time of day from the position of the sun, and again, I don't think interpretation is the same as communication.

### **Intentionality**

I said communication requires beings that are capable of intentional mental states, but I don't mean “intentional” here in the common sense of “intending” something. When philosophers talk about “intentionality,” they mean mental states that are *about* something. Essentially, intentionality is mental representation: I can think, believe, and feel *about* things—even things that don't exist.

Intentionality seems necessary for communication, because the passing or gaining of information doesn't seem to me like the essence of communication. Communication is only one way of gaining information. Going back to my earlier example, suppose I say to you, "It is around noon." If you understand what I mean, this is communication; you know that it is around noon, because I wanted you to know and I shared the information. There was something I was thinking about, and now you know what I was thinking about too. Now suppose you look outside and see for yourself that the sun is straight overhead. You could say the sun communicated "it is around noon" to you, but this is in no way like the exchange of information between two people. The sun was never thinking anything, and it never shared anything; it was simply there. You gained some information you didn't have before, but I don't think communication took place.

### **Lots of questions**

My theory leaves me with lots of questions and possible objections to myself. To what extent can animals have intentional mental states, and if they can't, are they really communicating? Should unconscious body language be considered communication, or is the other person just interpreting the way things are. And I could go on. Truthfully, I feel like I'm on pretty shaky ground here, but this is my thinking so far.

jake

Jake, I like how you've challenged the notion of communication happening from an object to a human. I initially had problems with this idea as well, mainly because I was thinking of communication as something that only happens between conscious beings, mainly humans. Going by your definition, "the sharing of information between two or more beings capable of intentional mental states," I wouldn't consider the sun as something that's communicating either; rather, we are simply interpreting what it is, what it is doing, and what that means to us in the greater scheme of things (i.e., its position means that it's noon).

However, those who argue a much broader definition of communication would say that communication is happening because the sun, through its actions, is emitting information and humans are receiving that information. Others would argue that the sun is a ball of information, and since we have found meaning inherent in that information, communication has occurred.

Your definition of communication and thoughts about the intentionality of animals made me stop and think...if humans didn't exist, would communication still exist? I'd have to say that it would. Rattlesnakes will still rattle their tails to warn predators not to come near, some animals will leave their scent marks to mark places they've been (e.g., cats have scent glands, and dogs will urinate), and frogs would still have their mating calls. From this perspective, wouldn't you agree that animals do in fact communicate, even if only on a very basic level? Just some food for thought... Terri

Well considered and well written. I must ask, however, why intentionality. I have never read anything that implies communication need be an intentional act between sentient beings. On the other hand I have stacks of books in my office on the subject of animal communication, mammal communication, and primate communication. Nothing in these studies implies the communication need be intentional.

On the other hand, "Communication Theory" is about human communication, and your description below is completely in keeping with many of the tenants of communication theory -- a long and respected scholarly community. The core and most conservative community of communication theorists suggest that communication is a discourse-based phenomenon and exists only between humans. So your theory is supported by a valued scholarly community.

Dave

Dave wrote: "The core and most conservative community of communication theorists suggest that communication is a discourse-based phenomenon and exists only between humans. "

Dave,

Jake's point about intentionality seemed very relevant to me. I feel like a lot of our discussion this semester hinged on the notion that "real" communication involves some kind of consciousness, some kind of sentience either in sender or receiver or both, such that unique, unrestricted interpretation and response is the preferred result of "real" communication. This, as compared to simply "transferring information" from point A to point B (as 2 computers might do).

I think intentionality may have a lot to do with the "true" nature of communication. I can't imagine a computer "intentionally" performing a certain function of communication because it has no choice (intentionality to me implies deliberate action). A computer can only do exactly what it is programmed to do in a "communication" situation. A sentient being, on the other hand, is capable of unrestricted, often metaphorical interpretation and response.

So, this makes me wonder about how we define the sender and receiver in a communication. Must "real" communication genuinely only involve two humans as the core of communication theory suggests? Is it possible for some animals/other entities to fill the role that we currently perceive only a human being is capable of fulfilling?

I thought Jake brought up a key aspect of what defining communication is all about.

BUT, as always, I could be wrong... :-) Jean

I must ask, however, why intentionality. I have never read anything that implies communication need be an intentional act between sentient beings. On the other hand I have stacks of books in my office on the subject of animal communication, mammal communication, and primate communication. "Communication theory" is about computer communication.

Dave, I will try to elaborate. Although, I do admit that there's lots of problems for my theory that I don't have very good answers for right now.

Part of the problem here is that I'm not trying to prescribe the ways we can use the word, "communication." I'm fine saying that computers can communicate, I just want to recognize that it is something completely different than when humans communicate. And it's not just that I think they are degrees of the same thing; I think they're fundamentally different.

So why intentionality? I started off with the assumption that humans are the prime example of communicators. Surely, if anything is communication, it is one person talking to another. Then, I thought about the difference between two people talking and, say, two computers "talking." Both seem to have a sender, receiver, and information...but they still seem completely different to me.

Going back to my example of telling someone "it's around noon," a key part of this communication seems to be that *I* am communicating *my thoughts* to *them*; if the communication is successful, they not only have new information, but part of their thoughts about that information (meta-information, I guess) is that the information came from me. The point is not just that they have information that once they didn't. If I were to brainwash the person into knowing that it's around noon, it's not the same: the person would know that it's around noon, but they wouldn't know anything about my thoughts. The two cases, me telling the person and brainwashing, seem like two completely different processes for information transfer.

But a computer getting information from another computer isn't capable of forming any thoughts about the information it receives. The whole point is the information, not how it is received. This is not like humans: when I say that I "communicated" with someone, the point isn't that they have new information at all; it's that I told them something. In this sense, "communication" is referring to a process of sharing information that seems to require intentionality.

Being capable of intentionality means that I can form thoughts about the information I'm receiving. So it's not just thoughts, but thoughts about thoughts. When I communicate, I am sending and receiving information—but I am also capable of thinking *about* what I am sending and receiving.

I have no idea if this makes sense to anyone but me. It just seems like there's something that distinguishes true communication from all the other ways we use the word, "communication." Intentionality is my best guess so far.

Oh, by the way...my explanation of how I'm using the word "intentionality" is probably horrible. I didn't want to make it too long, but there's a decent intro article on Wikipedia if anyone is interested.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intentionality>

Also, I've been able to find only one article so far that explicitly links intentionality and communication (I haven't looked very hard though), and it's just some guy's blog. :) This is where I got the idea for the brainwashing example above.

<http://pixnaps.blogspot.com/2005/08/intentional-communication.html>

jake

[Jake is supported by much more than a blog or two. The author of the book we will soon read will largely support him.]

However, those who argue a much broader definition of communication would say that communication is happening because the sun, through its actions, is emitting information and humans are receiving that information. Others would argue that the sun is a ball of information, and since we have found meaning inherent in that information, communication has occurred.

Terri, I know I'm limiting communication a lot more than some are willing to do. But I think it is misleading to talk of the sun like it's capable of "emitting" information or meaning. Yes, I know we all talk like that, but conceptually, I don't think it's right. The sun is just there—completely meaningless. It is not trying to tell us what time it is outside. If we were to break down what that would actually mean, we would have to say that the position of the Earth in relation to the sun is what's emitting information, so our sender is "the position of the Earth in relation to the sun." But can a position of anything "send" a message? (This is a genuine question, because my theory seems to rule out unconscious body language as true communication; I'm not sure what I think about that yet.)

Communication involves interpretation, but it is not *just* interpretation; it is something more. When I think of the sun example, I can't see any entity that could be likened to a "sender" except just "the world as it is." And I don't think the world just existing as it does counts as communication, because when we say that humans can communicate or animals can communicate, we are talking about something completely different.

I guess my position is...sure, we can call the sun a "communicator," but then what real meaning does "communication" have? Once we count simple cause and effect relationships as communication, it seems to me that pretty much everything counts as communication—and the term basically loses all of its power to describe what's peculiar or distinct about a person talking to another person.

If that makes *any* sense at all... Jake

Jake,

It makes total sense. I'm actually not disagreeing with you. I think I just may have misunderstood what you were saying in your earlier post. I think we both agree that there are differences and varying levels of communication out there (sun vs. animals vs. humans, etc.). Those "levels" are basically the gist of my theory on communication. You point out that it's not just about levels but that there are fundamental differences among the forms. You recognize that communication exists in more places than just between humans, but you're making a valid point about the uniqueness of communication between humans. I see what you mean about the "aboutness" ability (or intentionality) that humans have. There's certainly a lot more to it than just cause and effect. Nice focus for your theory. I look forward to seeing how it develops. Terri

Jake,

Thanks for your post. You brought some ideas that I was thinking but didn't have the background necessary to articulate as well as you did.

I really liked your distinction between interpretation and communication. I remember saying during week one, when so many people had so many different reactions to Dave's painting, that we were each, in essence, bringing personal experiences to the mix. The painting wasn't intending to communicate anything to do with Harry Potter, but that was my interpretation based upon personal recent experiences.

Similarly, different species may have different understanding of the sun and the role it has in their lives, but to use your example, the sun is not sending out different messages. The receivers are interpreting the sun based on what they bring personally. Also, the same sun can cause different receivers to react differently depending upon their intent: perhaps they're thinking how warm it is and how good this is for the flowers they just planted, or as you mentioned, they can tell the time by the sun's position, or one of my frequent thoughts, being of Irish decent, somebody please hand me the sunscreen.

I guess the question here is: if the sender is not really sending anything, and if the sender emits the same behavior day after day, yet different messages are received by the receiver based upon the receiver's feelings, emotions, activities, etc., can it really be called communication? I don't know at this point. Michelle

I guess the question here is: if the sender is not really sending anything, and if the sender emits the same behavior day after day, yet different messages are received by the receiver based upon the receiver's feelings, emotions, activities, etc., can it really be called communication? I don't know at this point.

Michelle, if you come up with anything, please share! I've been thinking about this a lot, but I'm not sure I know what to say at this point. I've been trying to work through cases like these...

If I see a man in a coffin, what is the more accurate description: 1) the dead man communicated to me that he was dead, or 2) I saw that the man was dead. Now, if I have

an **unconscious** nervous twitch in a job interview, which is more accurate: 1) I communicated to the interviewer that I was nervous, or 2) the interviewer observed that I was nervous.

In the dead man example, I would definitely say the dead man did not communicate; I just observed and interpreted. In the nervous twitch example, I think I would also say that I did not communicate; the interviewer observed my nervousness. But I think many more people would agree with me on the dead man example than on the nervous twitch example. We always assume body language is communication, because after all, it has "language" in its name. I'm beginning to question this assumption, but I'm not finding any firm conclusions yet. Jake.

Jake, I'm not sure if I understand your meaning about animals having "intentional" mental states, but it did remind me of a question that has been on my mind about my dog. Does she have "intentional" thoughts, like "what will Barbara do if I do this?" Of course we have this little game, I call the bone game. She knows when she goes outside to the bathroom, and comes back in, she'll get a bone. Some nights, she plays the bone game and whines to go outside, she turns right around to come back in to get a bone. Of course we always know when the bone game is occurring - but to what sense is she "intentionally" thinking, man I could really use another bone, let me see if I can get one. Or is this just Pavlov's theory of conditioned response? How would we know? Barbara.

Barbara wrote: "How would we know?"

Barbara, this is exactly what I've been wondering all semester on this and other topics. The topics we discuss are indeed interesting. But, I wonder more about whether or not we'll ever "get there" (in terms of enlightenment/understanding), than the answers to any specific questions.

Very apt question you ask. Jean

Jean, thanks. Its been bugging me too. Look how far we've come toward "getting there" on many of the questions of evolution we discussed earlier. Its the same thing, varied scientists are studying different ideas and running different tests of their hypotheses. But we can still only get to, "this is what we think" and here is my evidence. Then every other scientist either agrees or refutes it. Many people, like myself, want the answers to be black and white - obviously they're not. Barbara.

You have hit it exactly on the nose. That is why I have never expected everybody to jump into lockstep with me. An important part of what I am introducing in this section and in this class is the importance of the organic narrative. Your knowledge is not a static truth, it is organic, and it is subject to change as new "truths" come to you.

In this area, people who insist on black and white are looking for Truth and not truth. All you can know for sure is whether your search is honest. My "Truth" is that honest investigation, not truth, is be the goal. Dave

Jake, your distinguishing between the intentionality of human communication and animal communication is very interesting.

I think you're on to something significant here. It is often perceived/assumed by many that animals (a good example being pets like cats and dogs) seem to intentionally communicate things with us that we readily relate to and understand--things like emotion or loyalty for example.

But what if these perceived acts of communication are not intentional but merely ingrained instinctual responses?

Personally, I've owned cats and dogs and other pets over the years and I want to believe that this isn't true at all.

I was just wondering out loud...

Interesting stuff.

Jean

## A BIG PICTURE VIEW OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is an extremely loaded concept. Communication is not something unique to humans. It exists anywhere it can be received, in spoken and unspoken forms. It can range from simple to complex, but no matter the complexity it always bears meaning. It can be unintended or completely strategic. It can be interpreted correctly or incorrectly. It can be found within or without a medium, and in silence. It can even exist within the absence of a message, because even in absence we find meaning. It is essential to the survival, growth, and evolution of many species, especially humans. Communication is never fixed; like the world around us, it is continuously subject to change.

Communications occur in numerous ways, several of which include sounds (e.g., chirping, hoof beats, spoken language), silence (e.g., an attentive audience, hiding still in the bushes), visual cues (e.g., camouflage, tail between the legs, body language), touch (e.g., hugging, grooming, antenna taps [ants recognizing nest members]), even chemical substances (e.g., sex pheromones, squid ink, unpleasant odors).

From organs to animals to humans, we see communication happening, in varying levels of complexity. My bladder neurologically communicates with my brain when it needs to be emptied. My parent's dog leans her behind up against my leg when she needs to use the outdoor bathroom. And I have the ability to ask a retail worker where the store's bathroom is located through vocal words, sign language, or by writing down the question.

Communication has been, and continues to be, essential to the survival and evolution of our species and others. It allows both animals and humans to lead, plan, or simply take part in organized and collaborative events that are essential to living and, for humans, that are also desired in order to succeed in life (i.e., increased standards of living). Warnings are sent when danger is near. Migration routes are coordinated events. Mimicry offers protection from predators. Courtship rituals promote reproduction. Teaching enables others to learn the use of tools and agricultural techniques. Teams fight for their country, form governments, grow a business, and shoot for the playoffs. Without communication, none of this could happen. Furthermore, communication methods are not fixed but are continuously subject to change. Human communication co-evolves along with human culture, each shaping the other.

### **Communication in the absence of communication?**

Earlier I mentioned that communication could exist without a medium and without a message (i.e., communication). The best way that I can explain this at this point in time is by example. At least I hope this exemplifies the theory, but there may be a disconnect. So here it goes.

Perhaps a modern-day example would be receiving no response to a sent email that had solicited a response.

This happened to me the other day (made me furious actually) and it reminded me of this theory. I play in a basketball league and I've been looking for a replacement player for next season. I posted an ad online, and sure enough I received an email from someone who was interested in playing on our team. We exchanged several emails over the course of a week, about league information, skill level, fees, etc. I had told her I'd send her the pre-season schedule as soon as I received it (in roughly 2 weeks), and she replied saying that she was looking forward to hearing from me. So, it seemed my search was over. Two weeks later, I emailed her the schedule, and asked her to let me know if she could make it during the scheduled times. But unlike our previous email conversations, this one was one-sided. I received no response. I re-sent the email. Still no response. And the first game has come and gone...she was a no-show.

So, in my view, what the absence of the player's communication communicated to me was that, for whatever reason, she changed her mind and doesn't want to play on our team anymore. She probably joined another team and didn't have the courtesy to let me know.

Of course, this is the meaning that I derived out of her lack of communication; it is not to say that there couldn't be other reasons why she hasn't responded. Perhaps her computer crashed or she never received my final emails (yeah, riiiiight ;). Or, maybe she became insanely and ever-so-suddenly busy and has had no time to write me back (no way, I call this wishful thinking!). Nonetheless, she has communicated to me without a medium (right?) and without communicating. I found meaning—whether accurate or not—in her lack of response.

### **The Languages of Wild Animals, Humans, and Domesticated Animals**

As pointed out by many others, both animals and humans have, to some degree, language (a complex form of communication), and that language need not be spoken. There's body language, sign language, dance, music, and many other forms, I'm sure. Plus, how on earth could we play charades if language had to be spoken? ;)

Animals and humans all have some form of language but our languages vary in degree of complexity. Humans, of course, have come to possess the most complex of them all. Humans have their sophisticated brains (and to a lesser degree their mouth structures) to thank for their complex communication abilities—that is, our unique ability to invent symbolic language. In other words, we have the ability to communicate through the use of what seems to be an infinite number metaphorical expressions. It seems as though we can invent different and new ways of expressing the same thing. Can other species do this? Wild animals, from what I understand through our readings and posts this semester, have their own universal and limited set of metaphors for things, which are based on instinct (i.e., they're hardwired, and to some extent learned through observation, not invention). It is because of this that I tend to think animals do not wonder about the meaning of their existence and their relationship to the world around them like humans do. I don't think their brains allow them to do so. Of course, we cannot prove that animals do not wonder, but if they could, then wouldn't they also be able to come up with a more complex language to articulate what they wonder (like we do)?

At any rate, there is a big gap in the evolution of animal and human communication systems: animals do not have any kind of structured spoken language, one with any kind of formal syntax. Animals may assign a sound or even a word to an object, probably through conditional learning (e.g., Vervet monkeys use specific calls to warn about specific predators) but the complexity of their communication system stops there.

If animals had the ability to invent like humans do, then life just might be like a Gary Larson "The Far Side" cartoon, where animals are walking around as bipeds having conversations (formal syntax and everything) with humans. But for reasons we still don't really know, animal brains and mouth structures just didn't develop like ours. So until that happens, I'll still find the Far Side cartoons quite humorous. ☺

For reasons not clearly understood, our early bipedal ancestors became anatomically and physiologically designed for language. Apparently language was so important that we actually risked choking over it (the descent of the human larynx during infancy prevents our ability to drink/eat and breathe at the same time, but gives us the advantage in producing a wide range of sounds used in human language). Plus, as I mentioned before and more importantly, our brains got bigger and more sophisticated, enabling us to invent metaphors in the form of spoken words and other utterances to images and concepts in our brains.

Complex language also provided humans with a tremendous power: the power to share our knowledge and ideas with other humans. This is powerful because it provided us with unlimited possibilities in all aspects of cultural advancement because we could now bounce ideas off each other, build upon them, reject them, offer different approaches, steal them, etc.

But, back to animals...

What I find interesting is where domesticated animals fall on the communication spectrum.

On the one side, we have wild animals, each species having its own universal and limited set of metaphors, which are based on instinct. On the other side, we have humans who have a seemingly unlimited use of metaphors, thanks to our unique brains and ability to invent symbolic language. But where, for example, do dogs and cats fall? I would say that they're closer to the wild animal level of communication, BUT, don't they possess some ability to invent symbolic language to a certain extent? I don't mean in the sense of the spoken word and formal syntax, but in the sense that they invent ways of communicating that aren't common among their species?

I mentioned earlier that my parent's dog leans her butt against my leg when she wants to go outside. No one in the family taught her that. This method of asking to go outside is certainly not a universal method that all dogs use. And the dog didn't watch my mom lean up against my father's leg and then see my father let my mom outside. So, the dog didn't learn it by observation. Somehow, she came up with the idea herself, and eventually my

mother and father figured out that whenever she did this it meant she had to "use the bathroom." Hmmmmm...I'm still mulling over this.

As I said in the beginning, communication is an extremely loaded concept, one that I doubt any creature on this earth other than humans have the ability to ponder and attempt to explain. Terri

## LANGUAGE AS A SOCIATAL REQUIREMENT

### Human Communication

Human communication, in the most basic sense, is the conveyance of meaning. Regardless of the intelligence of the parties involved, as long as meaning is conveyed, communication has occurred. In a more expanded sense, communication is the transmitting of information, be it emotions, ideas, facts, etc., usually based upon a shared language or pre-assigned meaning to a set of signs. It is this criteria of understanding that clearly defines genuine communication--language or signs, where there is no clear understanding by the recipient, communicates nothing. Only at the point of understanding does communication truly exist.

Human communication does not require spoken or written language. Often, a wink, a nod, or a freezing stare can convey meaning more eloquently and succinctly than speech or text. Other actions, such as flowers sent to a friend or the slamming down of the telephone receiver can be just as effective, if not more so, as anything one could say. However, while understanding that language is not required, it is clear that language is an enormous component of human communication, a component that our global society is built upon.

### The Need for Spoken Language

Theories abound regarding why and where language first developed. Suffice it to say that language is a societal need. A man alone simply needs to hunt, fish, bathe, and sleep. A man with a wife and child suddenly needs to provide for and protect them as well. Perhaps the child likes to play, and the man needs to teach. He will need to be able to teach safety, and express ideas. Maybe gestures and grunts are still all that is needed at this point. However, what happens when that man meets another man and his family? What about when the community grows, perhaps learning agriculture and trade? How do you barter, celebrate, and bury your dead without speech?

Michelle,

I agree with your thoughts on unspoken communication. But isn't interesting that while we are nonverbally communicating, there is a non-verbal language of thoughts while we use the rhetoric of silence or gestures to convey an emotion or need? This might be off the point, but when people learn other languages and actually live in other countries and speak the "new" language, they begin to dream and think in that language. Kati

These are excellent points, Kati. I just read a book last semester called The Rhetoric of Rhetoric by Wayne C. Booth. In it, he mentions the rhetoric of listening, and I have been chewing on that for some time. It seems to me that spoken language is just an extension of the unspoken, be it thoughts, emotions, gestures, listening, whatever. I think the real key for me is trying to nail down the *why* question. Why did the unspoken become the spoken? Is it happiness like Diane mentions? Or need, like Sean mentions? Or

something else entirely? I think grasping a personal *why* will be a moment of epiphany for me. I always write better papers when I really grab onto and believe what I'm writing about—I'm just not even close yet.

Your mention of dreaming is very interesting. I never really thought about it, but it's obvious that not only is society a driving force behind the need for language, it can be so influential as to change not just outer but inner, unconscious behaviors. Wayne Booth mentions that *rhetoric makes realities*. Obviously, language has an enormous impact, even when there is no direct intention to change anything. Exposure alone is enough to cause dreams. The influence that language allows a man to have over his fellow man is mind boggling. I think I'll morph my theory to include this concept. Michelle