

# Emotion in the Communication Process and the Power of Understanding the Message

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## ABSTRACT

The mechanisms we find in a communication process reveal to us a field of empathy, fundamental in a structured system of reading and interpreting concepts. In this way, homeostasis regulates our organism in a structured context and tries to maintain an emotional balance in the face of a world of prolific content. Thus, the conditions of environment and language reveal levels of interpretation to the messages consumed daily and in various conditions. And, in tune with the phonemes and graphemes, we find an association of meaning for the writing of information, poetry and, other media. However, the difficulty of interpreting and decoding the concepts implies a field of communicational skills knowledge levels, whose impact self-reveals trust in the receivers of these messages. How can these messages cause empathy in their receivers and enhance learning and knowledge levels to change attitudes and behaviors in a sophisticated environment? It is certain that the way of seduction, through careful communication, in whose approach of form, structure, and color, easily manipulates the presence of the word in a game of attraction and manipulation in the field such as information design. It is in the field of empathy that we witness a significant reduction in the reading of the contents and the understanding of the associated concepts. A clear approach to the world of abstract ideas and a certain egotism is demonstrated, at certain moments even with some aggressiveness, in whose lack of empathy no levels of generosity or collaboration are seen between the words spoken and the words that include said content. The broadening of the media and its general dispersal potentiates a varied manipulation of information and interests. However, the creation of empathy in the face of what is suggested and pronounced shows an artificiality in the way messages are associated with emotions, that is, they reveal themselves to be devoid of meaning. In this way, an approach is intended, reflecting the contemporary world, through the literacy of emotion in the context of verbal and non-verbal communication. In an effective communication process, we have emotions in our favor. And, in this context, we are faced with a set of tools with which nature has endowed us, in order to, create bonds of trust and thus achieve group harmony. Thus, considering the human evolutionary process, we find effective communication based on a message, whose origin is a common communication channel, a common language, and a genuine message, creating empathy in the receiver of the message, and provoking a reaction of complicity and connection to its content and context. If the message's origin has an emotional bond with the sender, it will certainly have a generous and collaborative impact on its receiver. On the contrary, a message whose emotion is reduced to thought, logic and strategy, aims to achieve in the receivers only information and a reaction of caution, selfishness and individualism, causing a social distancing from the group, enhancing the lack of empathy with the other.

**Keywords:** Communication, Emotion, Literacy, Empathy, Homeostasis

## ARTICLE

The communication process implies the treatment of information associated or coupled with emotion. We understand information as a set of observed, received, or collected data, which may be worked on or not, and transmitted between individuals in various ways, through speech, writing, or even through a common code of understanding.

We will approach visual messages similarly to verbal messages. The way the tone, vibrancy, impact of the composition, and/or transmission of the message can be retained by the receiver. Associate the term information literacy to define how the individual perceives and creates meanings for messages.

Literacy in the visual field according to Messaris and Moriarty (2005) has been defined by several authors as: “a hierarchy of skills (Fransecky & Debes 1972), a set of competencies (Debes, 1969), elements and strategies of communication (Dondis, 1973), a set of components or dimensions (Seels, 1994), a set of skill-oriented learning objectives (Schamber, 1987), and an aptitude for visual communication, visual thinking and visual learning (Seels, 1994)”.

According to these definitions, we can consider that visual literacy, as information literacy is a hierarchical set of components or dimensions oriented towards communication, thinking, and visual learning, as a strategic element of communication.

In this way, information literacy always presupposes an act of communication; however, communication does not always inform the message effectively and objectively. The way we construct the speech and appeal to the feeling may interfere with the reception and interpretation of information.

In citizens' daily lives, information literacy is present as an integral element of the educational, relational, working, or emotional environment. Each individual, reflecting how it will engage society, should transmit it critically, thoughtfully, and ethically.

CILIP, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (2018) defines “Information literacy is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgments about any information we find and use. It empowers us as citizens to reach and express informed views and to engage fully with society”.

Regarding the treatment of concepts associated with expectations, we can return to the communication process itself, and in this scope arises the trust in the source, by the receiver of the message. At this point, we verify the need to obtain a set of communicative skills whose relationship established with the attitude and knowledge of communication, exists within a social system and a cultural context that influences the way of reaction and response to the messages with which a link has been established.

Concerning meaning and its memorization, in order to rely on the read or heard transmission of content, chemistry also provides an answer. According to researcher Ginny Smith (2022), “All the time, in our daily lives, we try to predict what will happen next, based on our previous experiences. We do not relate to the world as it is, but rather according to these expectations. The role of dopamine is to let us know when something is better than we expected because unexpectedly good results must be remembered to ensure that we repeat them in the future.”

Thus, we arrive in a certain sense at messages of which the individual is constituted and which he/she is disposed to bind, in order to know other receivers and to know himself/herself. Still and according to David K. Berlo (1991), “we can define empathy as the process by which we arrive at the expectations and anticipations of others.”

However, in the field of understanding the message, we highlight at this point the study of iconography and the iconology of visual messages. Let us then try to understand the meaning and the signifier in relation to the form and the content of the message, in order to establish by this means an approach to emotion through the communication process.

For an understanding of the subject or meaning of content, Erwin Panofsky pointed out three stages that help us reach the meaning of the implicit messages in a decoding process, leading us to their intrinsic value. Thus, in the first stage, defined as primary or natural meaning, we find the “identification of pure forms that is certain configurations of line and color... of a particular configuration as representations and natural objects, human beings, animals, plants... The world of pure forms.” In a second phase, defined as secondary or conventional meaning, we find the “understanding that a male figure with a knife represents St. Bartholomew... we connect artistic motifs and combinations artistic motifs (compositions) with themes or concepts. Finally and considering a third phase, defined as intrinsic meaning or content, we find the apprehension and ascertainment of underlying principles, i.e. “that reveal the basic attitude of a nation, period, class, religious or philosophical convictions.” Through methods of composition and iconographic signification. This includes the symbolic values of the visual message. (Panofsky, 1989)

If, on the one hand, there is the constructed history and the intensifying tools or mechanisms of emotional appeal, on the other hand, the interpretation capacity and knowledge level of the individual may interfere in the decoding of the message. A globalization that, for some time now, has experienced a world of vertiginous verbal and non-verbal communication shows more and more nefarious implications in the objective transmission of messages.

In visual communication, the communication process is defined in terms of two variants: first, knowing how to use visual elements, textual and iconographic, as a means of expression and communication; and second, having the ability to understand visual elements.

According to David K. Berlo (1991) “what we get out of a communication situation depends on our values, the society, and culture in which we operate, our neurological capacity for prolonged tension, the time tolerance we possess which allows for delayed rewards.” Still, in the field of empathy, we create expectations by the source on the receiver, but this tendency creates above all expectations for each other, and that influences our communication behavior. In this way, we find in the creation of an image of ourselves the influence of communication processes whose empathy had an impact on each of us. This result comes from the outcome of the interaction between the sender or source and its receivers. Thus, our expectations about our behavior influence the messages we attend. As sources and receivers, we carry with us images of ourselves and a set of expectations about the communication of

others. We then use such expectations in encoding, decoding, and responding to messages.

The cultural and behavioral frameworks are reflective factors and have an enormous impact on the formation and interpretation of the communicational experience. There is a need for the receiver to understand the visual elements, but above all the sender has the ability to accurately create the message. Braden and Hortin (1982) emphasize both the understanding and the creation or use of visual messages: “Visual literacy is the ability to understand and use images, including the ability to think, learn, and express oneself in terms of images” (in Messaris & Moriarty, 2005).

In another dimension, we have the role of emotion, associated with meaning. Donald Norman (2004) demonstrates how knowledge through perception (cognitive system) is linked to emotional. For the author, there is the visceral level, the behavioral level, and the reflexive level of the cognitive and emotional system, and they are interconnected. The first, the visceral level is how the pre-consciousness, the pre-thought is reflected in the appearance and feeling of the product. Next, the behavioral level is the validation of the relevance of the experience, the compression of the function (fitness for purpose), performance (function validation), and usability (ease of understanding) of the product. Finally, the reflective level is the awareness of feelings and emotions; the way interpretation connects with memories and is reflected in emotions.

However, in a communication process in which the established relationship aims to create an emotional link or a bond with the transmitted message, we come to the issue of homeostasis, in which our attention is drawn to the process of communicating the reading of the environment. Through verbal communication the messages are linked to the receivers, however, it seems to us that it is in non-verbal communication that these are transferred to the field of emotion, and treated there with associated concepts such as trust in the source of provenance. Here we treat the answer to our questions in the way they are presented visually and how their receivers often decode them. The phenomenon of homeostasis enters this field, in order to drive the appropriate response to the transfer and absorption of its content through an appropriate response.

According to António Damásio (2020), life since its beginning has always been complex. “But life evolved without words and thoughts, without feelings and reasoning, devoid of minds and consciousness. Nevertheless, living organisms sensed the presence of others like them and sensed various elements of their environment. They responded, for example, to the “presence” of a molecule located on the surface of another organism, or to a molecule produced by another organism. However, detecting is not the same as perceiving - those first organisms could not create, within themselves, ‘representations’ of the world around them, just as bacteria today still cannot construct such representations. We can say that “sensing” is a primitive form of “feeling” and that it results in a primitive form of “knowing”. “(...)” This non-explicit intelligence was in charge of the curation of life, managing it according to the rules and regulations of homeostasis. Moreover, what is this homeostasis? Let’s think of homeostasis as being a compilation of rules

about ‘how to do’, executed inexorably according to a manual of implicit orders.”

Taking into consideration the aspects we approached and trying to find answers, we created an association between the several aspects we considered of greater pertinence. Thus, the emotional bond intended to be established in a communication process derives from non-verbal communication and the result of the interaction between the source and the receiver, based on homeostasis. Regarding how the content of a message is handled, this is influenced by the expectation that the receiver places on it, especially in relation to the pure form, through the first phase of signification.

## **CONCLUSION**

The way the sender constructs messages, and the receiver receives them are closely linked to culture, experience, and education.

These factors should be considered in the process of construction, transmission, and interpretation of messages. The challenge is present in expression and communication and, it can be an information literacy tool with an appeal to the emotion of great added value, in the sense that, the use of analogy, manipulation, implicit argumentation, or even the use of juxtaposition of meaning. However, more and more, in the field of communication we should use the methodology of social design, focus communication on the receiver, and thus define a discourse directed towards the objective and means of insertion. Not focused on the media or search for another way of doing, only centred on distinction and sometimes misrepresenting the true meaning and losing the main purpose, the power of understanding the message.

Thus, and in the context of this article, which focused on emotional literacy, to see an emotional bond established in a communication process. The questions raised were considered, and we came across some fields of knowledge that are interconnected to find synergies and facilitate the concept of trust and bond with the communication established, thus creating an understanding of the message, as well as trust and harmony in the decoding process in the receivers.

In this context, our senses come together to decode a message, as well as in the importance of achieving a physiological balance, in which we highlighted the significant role of homeostasis.

Thus, and in whose influence we have seen how the social values and culture implicit in an effective communication process stand out.

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