

# Defining Communication and Its Development

Overview; SY-1; SS-1

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## Defining Communication



### General Definitions:

- ▶ "Processes by which verbal and nonverbal messages are used to create and share meanings" (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000).
  - Key elements: Messages & Meanings
- ▶ "An organized, standardized, culturally patterned system of behavior that sustains, regulates, and makes possible human relationships" (Schefflen, 1972)
  - Implies socially-shared activity
  - Multimodal: uses language and nonverbal code systems.

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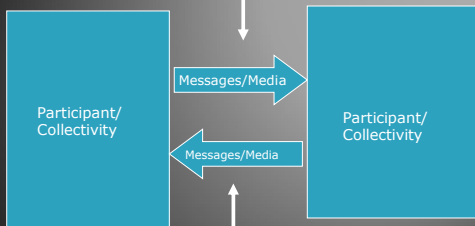
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## Elements of Communication

**Messages:** Verbal (Language) & Nonverbal



**Context(s):** Physical, Relational, Cultural, Social, Psychological, Historical, etc.

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### Communication is:

1. **inferential**
  - Implicit meanings assigned to objects, events, people
  - Tacit ways of linking information from various sources to create coherence & relevance
  - Children learn to make and manage inferences (parallels language and cognitive development)
2. **intentional**
  - Involves Goals
  - Task or Instrumental Goals, Identity Goals, Relational Goals
  - Means to reach goals and motive to reach goal
  - Children's goals understood as unique
3. **conventional**
  - Patterned
  - Communication routines (scripts & plans)
  - Routines and repetition are critical in children's communication learning.

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### Communication is:

4. **jointly negotiated** between speakers and hearers
  - Co-created, Coordinated
  - Difficult for children to learn early on due to limits in perspective taking ability
5. **Varies according to context and language user.**
  - Children's Primary Communication Contexts: Home/Family, Childcare/Preschool, School
  - Other important children's contexts: Churches, Entertainment Venues, etc.
  - Language and Culture (Mainstream, Ethnicity)

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### Communication is:

6. **sequential**
  - Retrospective and prospective
  - Children learn simple sequences and use these to build more complex patterns. Scaffolding (Bruner, 1977)
7. **accomplished in real time and space**
  - Limited by "real" world in children's early interaction
  - Expands later to time traveling
8. **systematic**
  - Organized at multiple levels
  - Four layers of structure: Sounds, Meanings, grammars, discourse
  - Develops at different rates, for different children

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## Communication is:

9. **interpretive**
  - Text, context, participants, relationships, etc. frame interpretation. (Coordinated Management of Meaning Theory, Pearce). Need to consider children's "realities"
10. Varied according to **participants' social and personal relationships.**
  - Children's survival goals drive early relationship formation
  - Children later learn that relationships are social constructions

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## Defining Development



### General definitions:

- ▶ A gradual unfolding, a bringing into fuller view; a fuller disclosure or working out of the details of anything, as a plan, a scheme, the plot of a novel.
- ▶ Evolution or bringing out from a latent or elementary condition; the production of a natural force, energy, or new form.
- ▶ Gradual advancement through progressive stages, growth from within.

[Oxford English Dictionary, 2008]

### Objective of Developmental research:

- ▶ Describing and explaining age-related behavioral changes (Baltes & Goulet, 1971)

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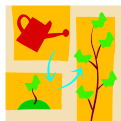
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## Defining Development

- ▶ "Stages" of development-
  - Distinct differences in modes of thinking and performing
  - An invariant sequence (not open to outside effects)
  - Activities/abilities form an structured whole
  - Hierarchical and integrative (one stage melds into another)

[Kohlberg, 1969]



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### Assumptions Concerning Children's Communication Development (Adapted from Powers)

1. Children's communication and its development involves learning about nonverbal messages, language, and verbal communication (using language) (Tier 1)
2. Children's communication and its development is affected by individual, social, and cultural considerations. (Tier 2)
3. Children's communication and its development is multi-leveled (interpersonal, group, public) (Tier 3)
4. Children's communication and its development occurs in a wide array of contexts or situations (of which some are unique to childhood) (Tier 4)

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### Defining Communication Development

- Individual level: Progressive refinement of communicators' message production and message interpretation competencies and performance abilities in managing routine to complex communication situations.
- Relational level: Progressive refinement of communicators' patterns of verbal and nonverbal relating in managing routine to complex communication situations.  
[Socha, working definition]

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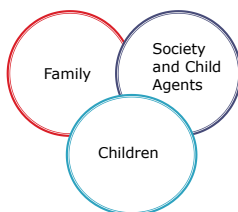
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### Triangles of Communication Development (Socha & Stamp, 2009)



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## Triangles of Communication Development

- ▶ Children's communication development is influenced by many factors that include:
  - Individual differences (Child)
  - Inside of Home: Primary caregivers and family (parents, siblings, relatives, family-friends) (Family)
  - Outside of Home: Human relationships outside the family (caregivers, educators, coaches, physicians, religious leaders, etc.), and Connections with electronic and print media (TV, internet, film, radio, books, etc.). (Society)
- ▶ Different goals, values, and interests are held by the three circles of participation in children's development that require coordination and management: family-child-society

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