

Styles and Axioms of Communication

Introduction to the topic of communication

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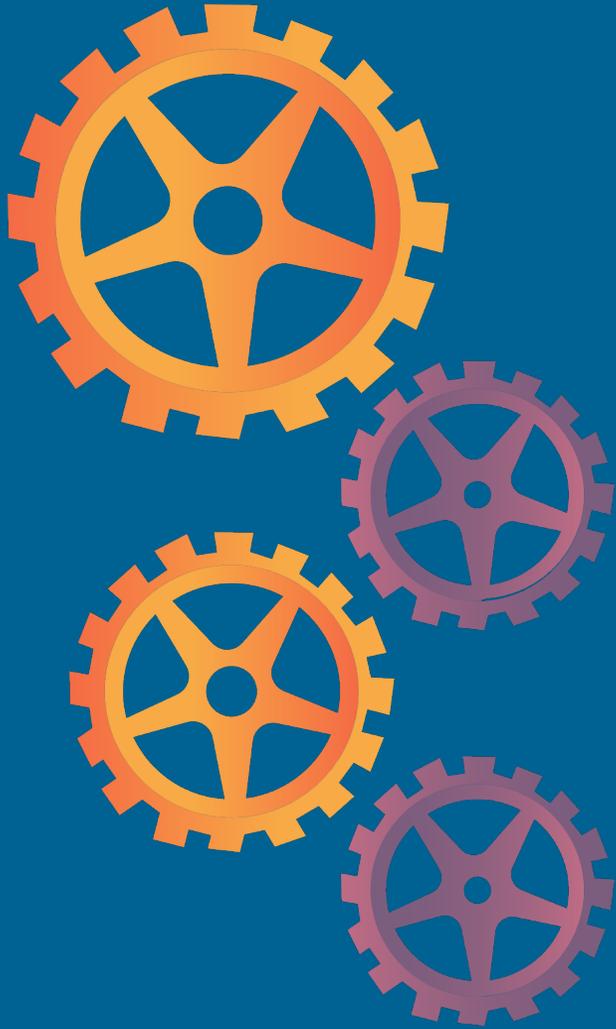
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Definition of Communication

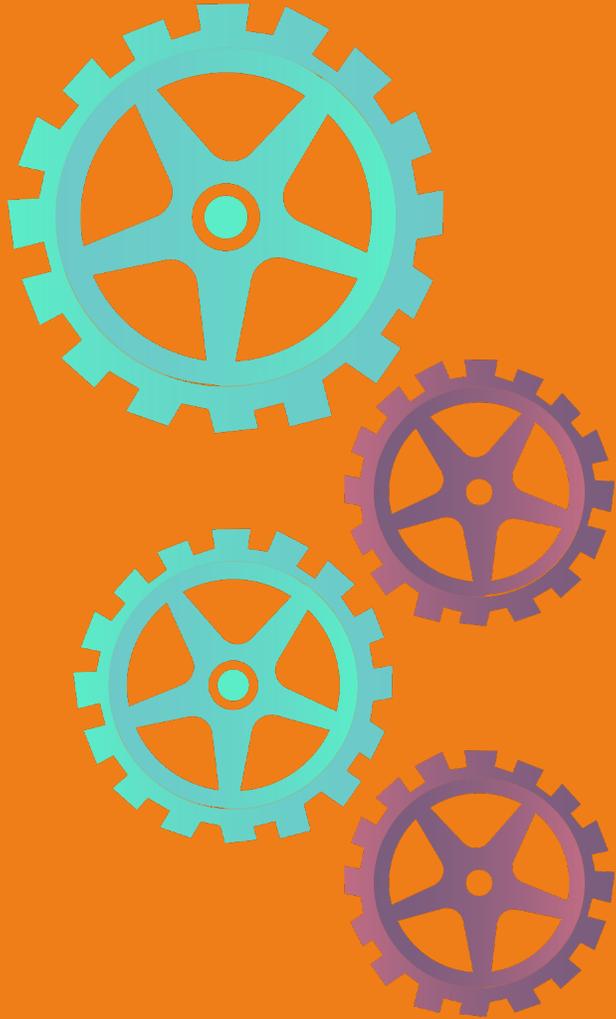
- The term communicate comes from Latin and can be broken down in two different ways:
- cum+munus: gift exchanged, refers to the passage and transmission of information.
- cum+moenia: fraternity within the same walls, refers to the fact that it is not possible to communicate without taking the social relationship into account.



Definition of Communication

Different authors have proposed numerous definitions of communication over the years, which find a point of agreement in "***a communicative exchange between two or more participants, endowed with mutual intentionality and a certain level of awareness, capable of sharing a given meaning on the basis of symbolic and conventional systems of signification and signalling according to the reference culture***" (Watzlawick et al., 1967).

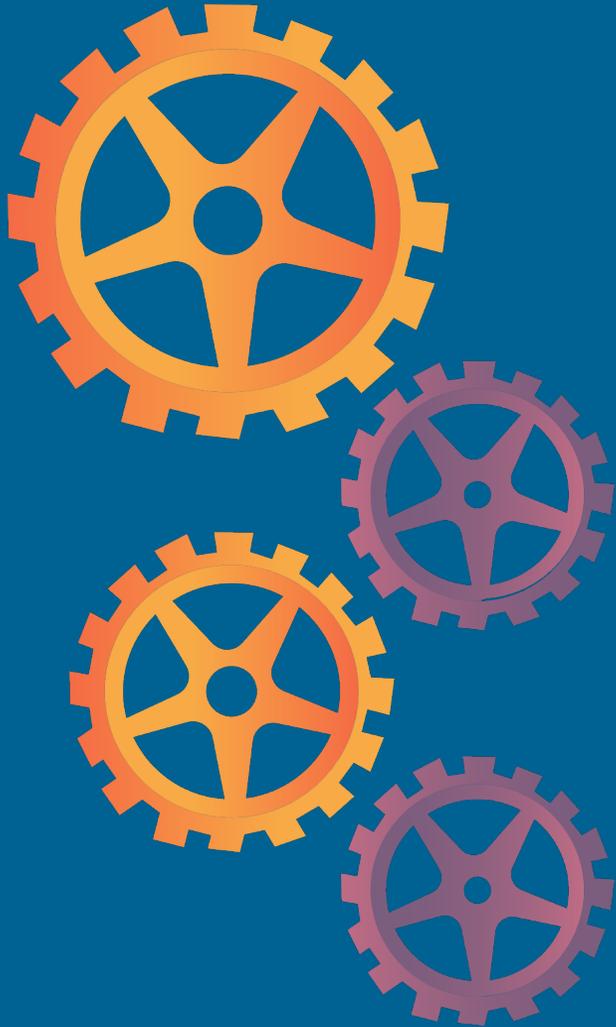
This definition has limitations because communication is not always conventional or intentional (e.g. some forms of communication are based on implicit thought processes, think of stereotypes that are automatic).



Roots of Communication

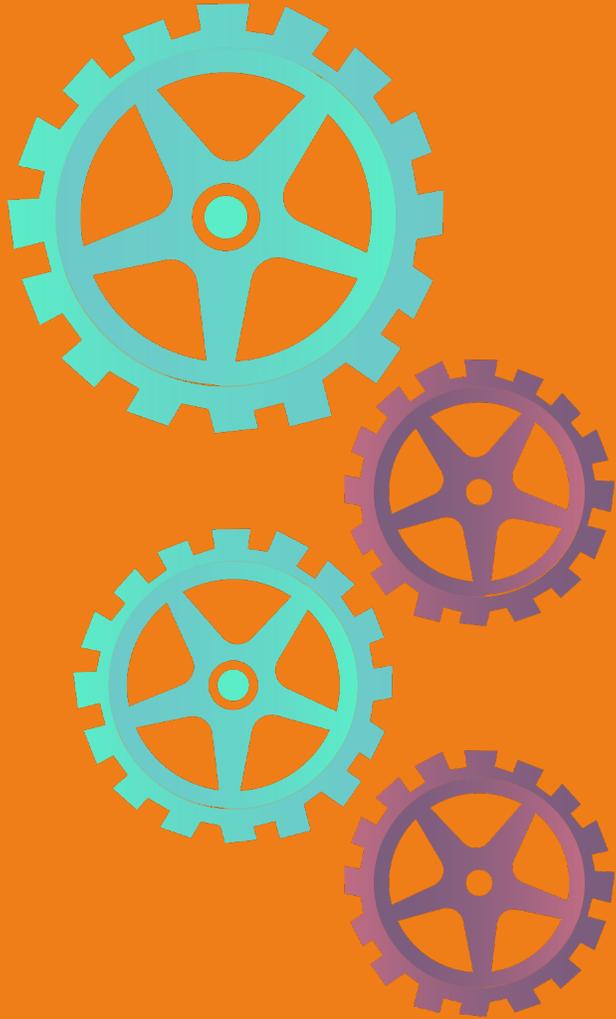
The most comprehensive ancient texts on communication to which we have access are those of the Greek and Roman societies. In both societies, communication is defined as synonymous with rhetoric, although that term was contested between Plato and Aristotle.

- Plato, according to Peters (1999) defined rhetoric as fostering the ability for humans to connect as eros, or at a soulful level through stylish and poetic language;
- Aristotle's ideas about rhetoric are generally seen as explaining how humans influence each other ethically in public fora



Roots of Communication

Aristotle's ideas were frequently seen as cornerstones of democratic deliberation, while Plato's ideas provided a foundation for the study of literature. The differences between them were sometimes simplified to style ("mere rhetoric") vs. substance (rhetoric as an ancient and noble art).



Categories of communication



Communication as a language use

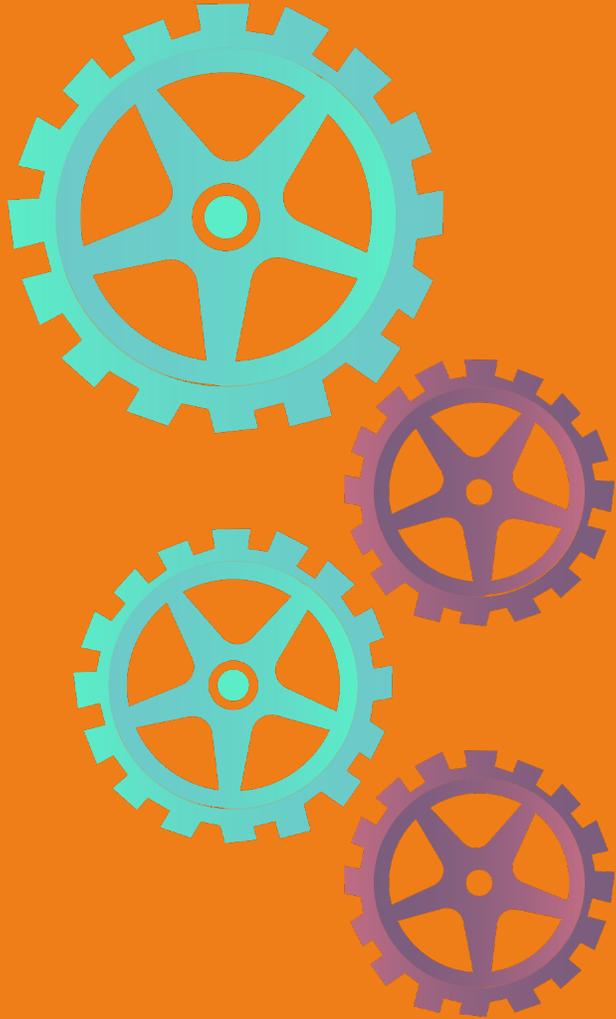
The study of communication stems from the interest in the nature of reality and the relationship of language to culture.

The theories following this approach are based on logical positivism and empiricism as a means of explaining the relationship of language to reality. Indeed, the language is the starting point and the focus to study the development of communication. Moreover, linguistics focuses more on structure and function of language

Communication as information transmission

This approach focuses on information and transmission, or in other words, how to get a message from point A to point B in the most intact fashion possible (Shannon & Weaver, 1949).

This approach is drawn from mathematical and engineering perspectives and focuses on how to reduce the level of uncertainty concerning the amount of noise and the extent it can be tolerated before the message would be transmitted inaccurately.



Categories of communication

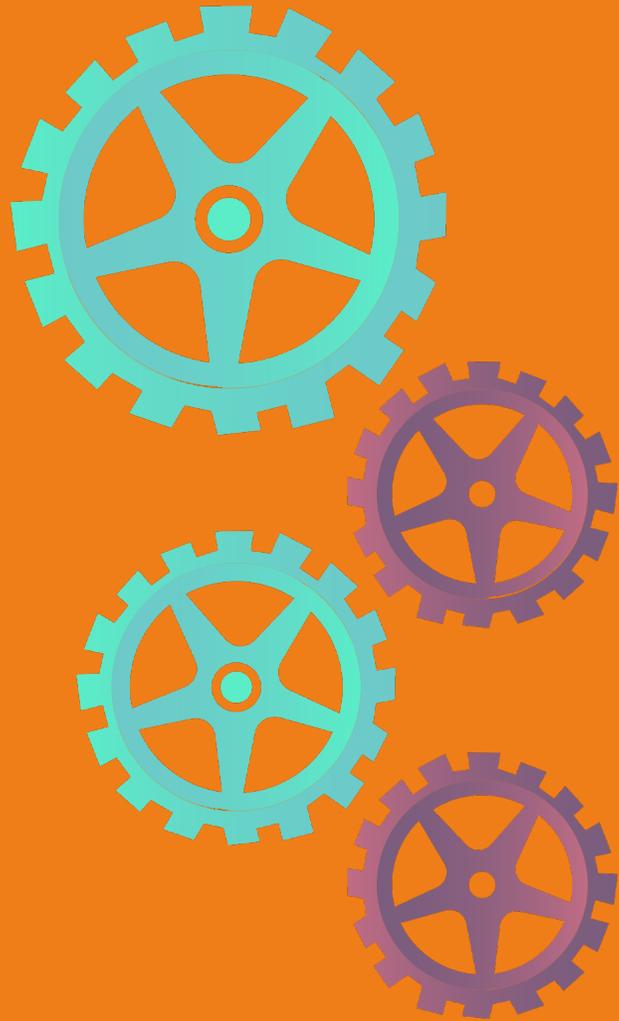


Communication as relationship (1)

This approach states that the motivation leading each type of communicative act lies in the will of get into relation with others (Watzlawick et al., 1967).

The representative model of this approach is the one developed by Watzlawick, grouping the rules of relational communication into 5 axioms.

Relational communication has also been studied qualitatively, through interviews, personal narratives, and ethnographic approaches. An exemplar of a theory emerging from such study is Relational Dialectics Theory

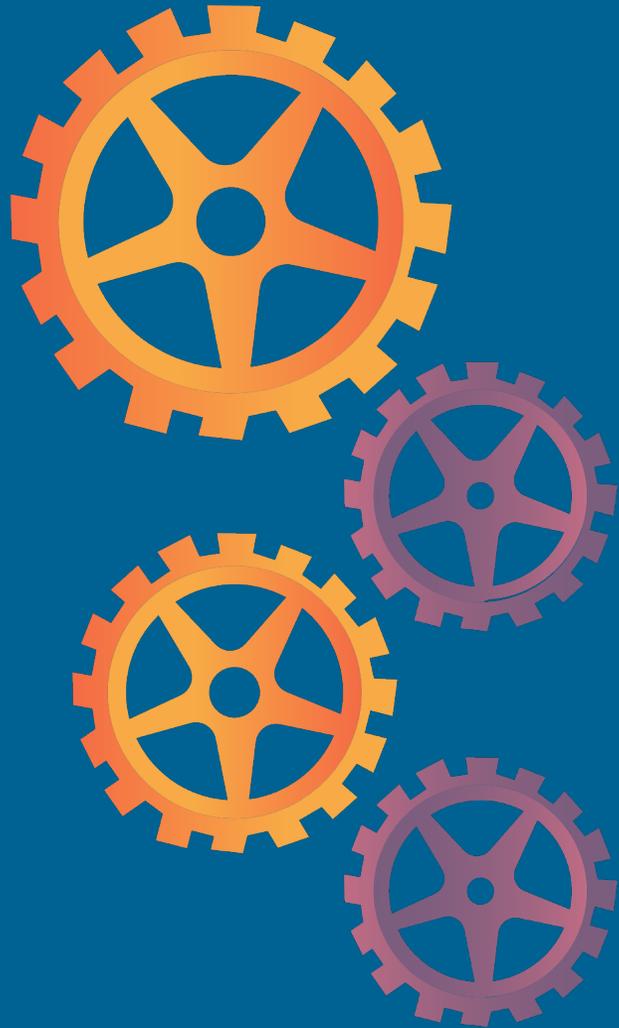


Communication as relationship (2)

The theory proposes that relationships are developed out of the push and pull of interaction.

Some of the contradictory dynamics that the theory offers are:

1. Autonomy vs. connectedness (i.e., how much “I” and how much “we” are needed by relational partners);
2. Favoritism vs. impartiality (i.e., how much is each partner treated “fairly,” as opposed to how much each partner is valued as “special”);
3. Openness vs. closedness (i.e., how much information is disclosed between partners, as opposed to how much information is kept private);
4. Novelty vs. predictability (i.e., how much the relationship feels exciting and new, as opposed to how much it feels comfortable and old);
5. Instrumentality vs. affection (i.e., how much continuing the relationship is based on tangible rewards, as opposed to how much continuing the relationship is based on emotional rewards).



Communication as definer, interpreter, and critic of culture (1)

This approach can be considered as one of several paradigm shifts in communication theory.

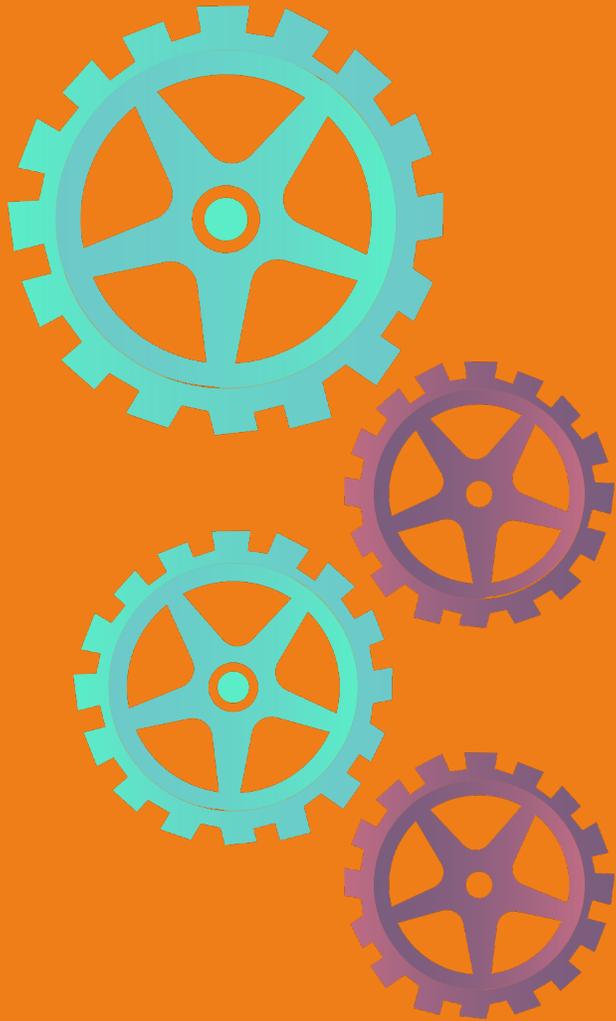
An essential element of the new paradigm is to redefine and refocus the meaning of communication

The emerging idea was to think of communication as “structure produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments – production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction” itself (Eadie & Goret, 2013).

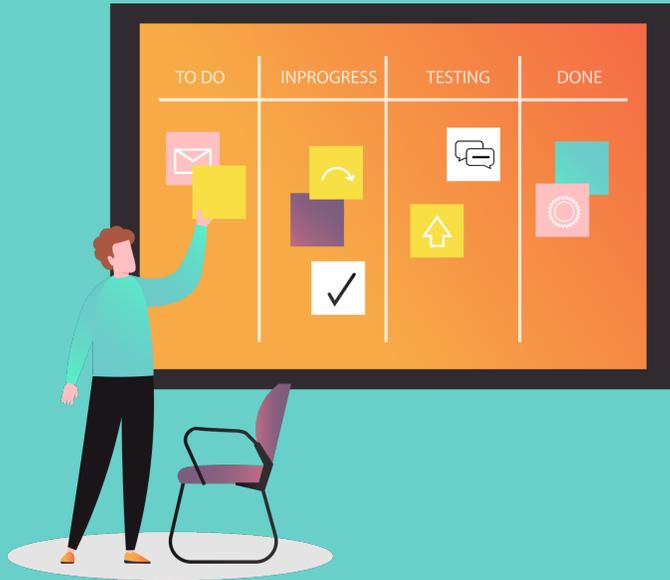
Communication as definer, interpreter, and critic of culture (2)

According to structuralism theories, the encoding of a communication event is only part of the process of communication itself, carrying no essential meaning without an audience (or receiver) to decode what the meaning is. By decoding the message, the audience constructs the meaning.

The meaning of sentences, the understanding of sentence meanings cannot be separated from language's interest in relation to the validity of statements.



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