

### 3. The influential problem: How effectively does the received meaning affect conduct?

Two primary influences on verbal communications are developmental age and cultural heritage. Developmental age affects verbal ability (the person's physiologic ability to change sounds into words) and cognitive ability (to symbolize through language) (see

). Through the process of acculturation, an individual develops culture-based variations from others in defining meanings for words. Although denotative (i.e., explicit) definitions of words are the same among different persons, connotative (i.e., associated) meanings often vary because of cultural difference, acculturation, and past experiences.

The verbal content of communication generates the content theme during the communication process. If one evaluates the seemingly varied topics of discussion, the words that underlie or link together several ideas will reflect the "what" (or content) of the communication.

Nonverbal communication usually exerts more influence on communication than verbal communication. Hunsaker and Alessandra (1980) suggested that 90% of meaning comes from nonverbal communication.

consists of all forms of communication that do not involve the spoken or written word. Perception of nonverbal communication involves all the senses, including hearing, that are used for the perception of verbal communication. Kinesics (facial expressions, gaze, gestures, and all body movements that are not specific signs), objects (all intentional and unintentional display of material things), and proxemics (the use of space) are powerful nonverbal messages perceived by the senses (Hosley & Molle, 2006; Northouse & Northouse, 1998).