

A couple of studies have shown, that having more information does not automatically translate into better negotiation outcomes. O'Connor (1997) had pairs of participants negotiate a simulated union-management contract involving both integrative issues and compatible issues where both parties wanted the same outcome. Pairs encouraged to be cooperative (pursue collaborative problem solving) exchanged more information than pairs encouraged to be individualistic (pursue self-interest), but the amount of information exchanged did not improve the overall accuracy of the parties' perceptions of each other's preferences. More recently, Wiltermuth and Neale (2011) found in two studies that having information about an opponent that is not relevant to the task at hand impairs dealmaking because it interferes with the exchange of useful information. The findings of both of these studies suggest that the influence of the exchange of information on negotiation outcomes is not as direct as people might expect—that is, simply exchanging information does not automatically lead to better understanding of the other party's preferences or to better negotiation outcomes. Nor does it automatically result in the information-is-weakness effect. Rather, the effect of exchanging information during negotiation depends on the type of issues being discussed, the nature of the information exchanged, and the negotiators' motivation to use the information.

How People Communicate in Negotiation

While it may seem obvious that how negotiators communicate is as important as what they have to say, research has examined different aspects of how people communicate in negotiation. We address three aspects related to the “how” of communication: the characteristics of language that communicators use, the use of nonverbal communication in negotiation, and the selection of a communication channel for sending and receiving messages.

Characteristics of Language

Gibbons, Bradac, and Busch (1992) have proposed that negotiation “represents the exchange of information through language that coordinates and manages meaning” (p. 156). In negotiation, language operates at two levels: the logical level (for proposals or offers) and the pragmatic level (semantics, syntax, and style). The meaning conveyed by a proposition or statement is a combination of one logical surface message and several pragmatic (i.e., hinted or inferred) messages. In other words, it is not only what is said and how it is said that matters but also what additional, veiled, or subsurface information is intended, conveyed, or perceived in reception. By way of illustration, consider threats. We often react not only to the substance of a threatening statement but also (and frequently more strongly) to its unspoken messages that might imply something about the likelihood that the threat will be carried out or about our relationship or our prospects for working together in the future. Box 7.2 illustrates how threats, which on the surface seem straightforward enough as negotiation gambits intended to compel the other party to make a concession, are actually complex and nuanced when analyzed in terms of the specific elements of language used within them.

Whether the intent is to command and compel, sell, persuade, or gain commitment, how parties communicate in negotiation would seem to depend on the ability of the speaker to encode thoughts properly, as well as on the ability of the listener to understand and

Is a threat simply a statement about bad things that will happen to the others if they resist? Or is there more to it? Gibbons, Bradac, and Busch (1992) identify five linguistic dimensions of making threats:

1. The use of *polarized language*, in which negotiators use positive words when speaking of their own positions (e.g., generous, reasonable, or even-handed) and negative words when referring to the other party's position (e.g., tight-fisted, unreasonable, or heavy-handed).
2. The conveyance of *verbal immediacy* (a measure of intended immediacy, urgency, or relative psychological distance), either high and intended to engage or compel the other party ("OK, here is the deal" or "I take great care to . . .") or low and intended to create a sense of distance or aloofness ("Well, there it is" or "One should take great care to . . .").
3. The degree of *language intensity*, whereby high intensity conveys strong feelings to the recipient (as with statements of affirmation or the frequent use of profanity) and low intensity conveys weak feelings.
4. The degree of *lexical diversity* (i.e., the command of a broad, rich vocabulary), where high levels of lexical diversity denote comfort and competence with language and low levels denote discomfort, anxiety, or inexperience.
5. The extent of a *high-power language style*, with low power denoted by the use of verbal hedges, hesitations, or politeness to the point of deference and subordination and high power denoted by verbal dominance, clarity and firmness of expression, and self-assurance.

According to Gibbons, Bradac, and Busch, threats can be made more credible and more compelling if they carry negatively polarized descriptions of the other party and his or her position, high immediacy, high intensity, high lexical diversity, and a distinctively high-power style.

Source: Adapted from Pamela Gibbons, James J. Bradac, and Jon D. Busch. "The Role of Language in Negotiations: Threats and Promises," in Linda L. Putnam and Michael E. Roloff (Eds.), *Communication and Negotiation* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992), pp. 156-75.

decode the intended message(s). In addition, negotiators' use of idioms or colloquialisms is often problematic, especially in cross-cultural negotiations (see Chapter 16). The meaning conveyed might be clear to the speaker but confusing to the listener (e.g., "I'm willing to stay until the last dog is hung"—a statement of positive commitment on the part of some regional Americans, but confusing at best to those with different cultural backgrounds, even within the United States). Even if the meaning is clear, the choice of a word or metaphor may convey a lack of sensitivity or create a sense of exclusion, as is often done when men relate strategic business concerns by using sports metaphors ("Well, it's fourth down and goal to go; this is no time to drop the ball"). Intentional or not, the message received or inferred by women may be that they're excluded from the club. Deborah Tannen (1990), in her aptly named book *You Just Don't Understand*, states that "male-female miscommunication may be more dangerous [than cross-cultural miscommunication] because it is more pervasive in our lives, and we are less prepared for it" (p. 281). Because people generally aren't aware of the potential for such miscommunication with someone from their own culture, they are less well prepared to deal with such miscommunication than they would be if the person were from a different culture.

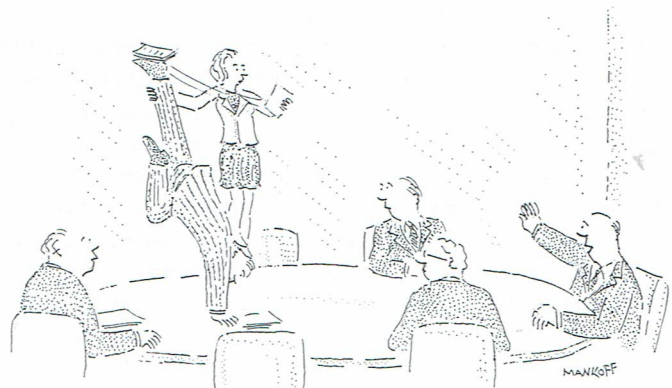
Finally, a negotiator's choice of words may not only signal a position but also shape and predict the conversation that ensues. Simons (1993) examined linguistic patterns of communication in negotiation; two of his findings are relevant here:

1. Parties whose statements communicated interests in both the substance of the negotiation (things) and the relationship with the other party achieved better, more integrative solutions than parties whose statements were concerned solely with either substance or relationship.
2. Linguistic patterns early in the negotiation help define issues in ways that may help the parties discover integrative possibilities later on.

Earlier in this chapter we mentioned research showing that the conversations that take place early in the negotiation can affect outcomes, and Simons' work reinforces that point. He found that language patterns that occur in the first half of a negotiation exchange are more predictive of agreements than the linguistic patterns found in the second half.

Use of Nonverbal Communication

Much of what people communicate to one another is transmitted with nonverbal communication. Examples include facial expressions, body language, head movements, and tone of voice, to name just a few. Some nonverbal acts, called *attending behaviors*, are particularly important in connecting with another person during a coordinated interaction like negotiation; they let the other know that you are listening and prepare the other party to receive your message. We discuss three important attending behaviors: eye contact, body position, and encouraging.



"O.K., O.K., we get the point."

Make Eye Contact Dishonest people and cowards are not supposed to be able to look people in the eye. Poets claim that the eye is the lens that permits us to look into a person's soul. These and other bits of conventional wisdom illustrate how important people believe eye contact to be. In general, making eye contact is one way to show others you are paying attention and listening and that you consider them important. If people do not look at you when you are speaking, you may question whether they are listening. Of course, it is possible to listen very well even when not looking at the other person; in fact, it may be easier to look away because you can focus on the spoken words and not be confused by visual information. But the point is that by not making eye contact, you are not providing the other person with an important cue that you are engaged and listening.

In making eye contact, however, people should not keep their eyes continually fixed on the other person. Otherwise they might be accused of staring, which usually leads to suspicion rather than trust. Instead, the eyes should momentarily leave the other person. Generally, breaks in eye contact are fewer and shorter when listening actively than when speaking. When speaking, one may occasionally look away, especially when searching for a word or phrase or trying to remember a detail. Averting the gaze briefly while speaking signals to the other party that the speaker is not finished.

When persuading someone, it is important to make eye contact when delivering the most important part of the message (Beebe, 1980; Burgoon, Coker, and Coker, 1986; Kleinke, 1986). Having the verbal and nonverbal systems in parallel at this point emphasizes the importance of the message that is being sent. Also, one should maintain eye contact not only when speaking but when receiving communication as well (Kellerman, Lewis, and Laird, 1989).

It is important to recognize, however, that the patterns described here are characteristic of Western society. In other parts of the world, different patterns prevail. In some Asian societies, for example, keeping one's eyes down while the other is speaking is a sign of respect (Ivey and Simek-Downing, 1980).

Adjust Body Position Parents frequently advise their children about how to stand and sit, particularly when they are in formal settings such as school, church, or dinner parties. The command "Sit up!" is often accompanied by "And pay attention!" Here the parent is teaching the child another widely held belief—one's body position indicates whether or not one is paying attention to the other party. To ensure that others know you are attentive to them, hold your body erect, lean slightly forward, and face the other person directly (Ivey and Simek-Downing, 1980). If you accept and endorse the others' message, care needs to be taken not to show disrespect with body position by slouching, turning away, or placing feet on the table (Stacks and Burgoon, 1981). In contrast, crossing arms, bowing the head, furrowing the brow, and squeezing eyebrows together all can signal strong rejection or disapproval of the message (Nierenberg and Calero, 1971).

Nonverbally Encourage or Discourage What the Other Says One can indicate attention and interest in what another is saying through a variety of simple behaviors. A head nod, a simple hand gesture to go on, or a murmured "unh hunh" to indicate understanding all tell the other person to continue, that you are listening. In fact, you can encourage someone to continue to speak about many subjects by simply nodding your head as he or she is

speaking. Brief eye contact or a smile and a nod of the head will both provide encouraging cues. Similarly, a frown, a scowl, a shake of the head, or a grab of one's chest in mock pain will signal disapproval of the other's message.

Nonverbal communication—done well—may help negotiators achieve better outcomes through mutual coordination. Drolet and Morris (2000) compared the development of rapport between negotiators who did or did not have visual access to each other while negotiating. They defined rapport as “a state of mutual positivity and interest that arises through the convergence of nonverbal expressive behavior in an interaction” (p. 27). *Findings indicated that face-to-face interaction stimulated rapport through nonverbal communication, which in turn enhanced coordination and led to higher joint gains. Of course, these benefits will presumably arise only to the extent that parties are able to interpret nonverbal communication accurately. This is easier said than done: The ability to judge nonverbal behavior varies with social context and gender, among other factors (Puccinelli, Tickle-Degnan, and Rosenthal, 2003).*

Selection of a Communication Channel

Communication is experienced differently when it occurs through different channels. We may think of negotiation as typically occurring face-to-face—an assumption reinforced by the common metaphor of the “negotiation table.” But the reality is that people negotiate through a variety of communication media: over the telephone, in writing, and increasingly through electronic channels such as e-mail, teleconferencing, and text messaging. The use of network-mediated information technologies in negotiation is sometimes referred to as *virtual negotiation* (also at times “e-negotiation”). The use of a particular channel shapes both perceptions of the communication task at hand and norms regarding appropriate behavior; accordingly, channel variations have potentially important effects on negotiation processes and outcomes (Bazerman, Curhan, Moore, and Valley, 2000; Lewicki and Dineen, 2002).

For our purposes here, the key variation that distinguishes one communication channel from another is *social bandwidth* (Barry and Fulmer, 2004)—the ability of a channel to carry and convey subtle social and relational cues from sender to receiver that go beyond the literal text of the message itself (see also Short, Williams, and Christie, 1976, who used the term “social presence”). Greater social bandwidth means that a channel can convey more cues having social, relational, or symbolic content. For example, as an alternative to face-to-face interaction, the telephone preserves one's ability to transmit social cues through inflection or tone of voice but forfeits the ability to communicate through facial expressions or physical gestures. In written communication, there are only the words and symbols on paper, although one's choice of words and the way they are arranged can certainly convey tone, (in)formality, and emotion.

E-mail, as a ubiquitous mode of personal and organizational communication, can be viewed as simply another form of written communication that happens to involve electronic transmission. There are, however, important distinctions between e-mail and other forms of written communication. Many people, treating e-mail as a highly informal medium, are comfortable sending messages that are stylistically or grammatically unpolished in situations (such as on the job) where they would never send a carelessly written communication

on paper. Some people incorporate text-based *emoticons* to convey emotional social cues in their messages (the notorious smiley face [:-]) is the best known emoticon). Early research on interpersonal and small-group communication through computers indicated that the lack of social cues lowers communicator inhibition and leads to more aggressive communication behavior that is unrestrained by social norms, such as *flaming*—a term that refers generally to hostile or insulting communication (Sproull and Kiesler, 1986). However, much of that early research into computer-mediated communication focused on anonymous interaction. It is not clear that reduced social cues have the same effect in a communication context, such as negotiation, where the parties are known to each other, and in fact may know each other quite well (Barry and Fulmer, 2004).

Treating e-mail as just another vehicle for written communication is analytically simplistic because e-mail interactions frequently substitute for communication that would otherwise occur via telephone, face-to-face, or perhaps not at all. Accordingly, it is not enough to ask how e-mail communication differs from conventional writing; we also need to understand how interaction (such as negotiation) is affected when people choose to use e-mail rather than communicate through channels with higher social bandwidth.

Researchers have been examining the effects of channels in general, and e-mail in particular, on negotiation processes and outcomes for several years. Unfortunately, there are few consistent findings that point to clear effects. We do know that interacting parties can more easily develop personal rapport in face-to-face communication compared with other channels (Drolet and Morris, 2000) and that face-to-face negotiators are more inclined to disclose information truthfully, increasing their ability to attain mutual gain (Valley, Moag, and Bazerman, 1998). Research has found that negotiation through written channels is more likely to end in impasse than negotiation that occurs face to face or by phone (Valley et al., 1998).

Developing rapport and sharing information truthfully are aspects of face-to-face communication that promote cooperation, but face-to-face interaction may also enhance toughness in negotiation. One research team studying distributive negotiation looked at how the advantage of hard bargaining over soft concession-oriented bargaining is affected by whether or not negotiators have face-to-face access (Hüffmeier, Freund, Zerres, Backhaus, and Hertel, 2011). They found that when negotiators can see each other (as opposed to when there is no visual contact), competitive approaches become even more effective, yielding additional gains for the hard bargainer who makes extreme offers and few concessions. With face-to-face access, these researchers argued, the hard bargainer can communicate his or her "tough" message unambiguously, which in turn limits the other party's aspirations and thereby triggers concessions.

Using e-mail communication instead of face-to-face interaction can have the effect of masking or reducing power differences between negotiators. Croson (1999) found that e-mail negotiators reach agreements that are more equal (a balanced division of resources) than face-to-face negotiators. This may occur, Croson theorized, because electronic communication "levels the playing field" between stronger and weaker negotiators" (p. 33). By giving the individual a chance to ponder at length the other party's message, and to review and revise one's own communication, e-mail may indeed help less interpersonally skilled parties improve their performance, especially when the alternative is negotiating spontaneously (face-to-face or by phone) with a more accomplished other party. Analyzing