

COMMUNICATION [14c: through French from Latin *communicatio/communicationis* making common]. A fundamental concept in the study of behaviour, whether by humans, animals, or machines, that acts as a frame of reference for the concept of *language*. Communication refers to the transmission of information (a *message*) between a source and a receiver, using a signalling system. In linguistic studies, both source and receiver are human, the system involved is a language, and the idea of response to feedback (a message) holds a central place. In theory, communication is said to have taken place if the information received is the same as that sent. In practice, we have to allow for all kinds of interfering factors (technically known as *noise*), which reduce the efficiency of the transmission, such as poor articulation or hearing, extraneous noise, and unconscious personal associations for words.

The study of human communication in all its modes is known as *semiotics*. Although in principle any of the five senses (six, if telepathy is conceded) can be used as a medium of communication, in practice only three (tactile, visual, aural) are implemented in both active (*expressive*) and passive (*receptive*) ways. Tactile communication involves touch (as in shaking hands, grasping someone's arm or shoulder, stroking, and punching) and the manipulation of physical distance and body orientation in order to communicate indifference or disagreement. The study of tactile communicative behaviour is *proxemics*. Visual communication involves the use of facial expressions (as in smiling, winking, and eyebrow flashing, which communicate a wide range of emotions) and gestures and body postures of varying levels of formality (such as waving, gesturing rudely, kneeling, bowing, blessing). Often, visual effects interact closely with speech: movements of the hands and head tend to coincide with points of greatest spoken emphasis, and may convey particular nuances of meaning not easy to communicate in speech (such as the drawing of inverted commas in the air to signal a special meaning). The study of visual non-verbal communicative behaviour is *kinesics*.

The chief branch of communication studies involves the oral-aural mode, in the form of speech, and its systematic visual reflex in the form of writing. These are the verbal aspects of

communication, distinguished from the non-verbal (kinesic and proxemic) aspects, often popularly referred to as *body language*. A clear boundary needs to be drawn between these domains. The term *language* is usually restricted to speech and writing (and sign, in the case of deaf sign language), because these mediums of transmission display a highly sophisticated internal structure and creativity. Non-verbal communication, by contrast, involves relatively little creativity. In language, it is commonplace to find new words being created, and sentences varying in practically infinite complexity. In this respect, languages differ markedly from the very limited set of facial expressions, gestures, and body movements.

See (A)ESTHETICS, AMBIGUITY, ARGUMENT, ARTIFICIAL LANGUAGE, BIBLIOGRAPHY, BODY LANGUAGE, BOOK, CHILD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION, CINEMA, CLASSICAL LANGUAGE, CODE, COMMUNICATIVE SHIFT, COMPUTER, CONTEXT, CONVERSATION, DIALOG(UE), DISAMBIGUATE, FEEDBACK, FLUENCY, FORMULA, GESTURE, HANDWRITING, HUMOR, INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE REPRESENTATION, LANGUAGE, LANGUAGE SHIFT, LIBRARY, LINGUA FRANCA, LINGUISTICS, LITERACY, LOGIC, MEANING, MEDIA, MEDIUM, MESSAGE, MNEMONIC, MONOLOG(UE), MOTION PICTURE, NARRATIVE, NONSENSE, NUMERAL, ORACY, ORALITY, PARAPHRASE, RADIO, REDUNDANCY, REFERENCE, SEMANTICS, SEMIOTICS, SENSE, SIGN, SIGNAL, SIGN LANGUAGE, SPEECH ACT, STANDARD, STRUCTURALISM, STRUCTURE, STYLE, STYLISTICS, SYLLOGISM, SYMBOL, TECHNOLOGY, TEIL, TRANSLATION, USAGE, VERNACULAR, WORD, WRITING (WRITING SYSTEM). [LANGUAGE, MEDIA]. D.C.

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