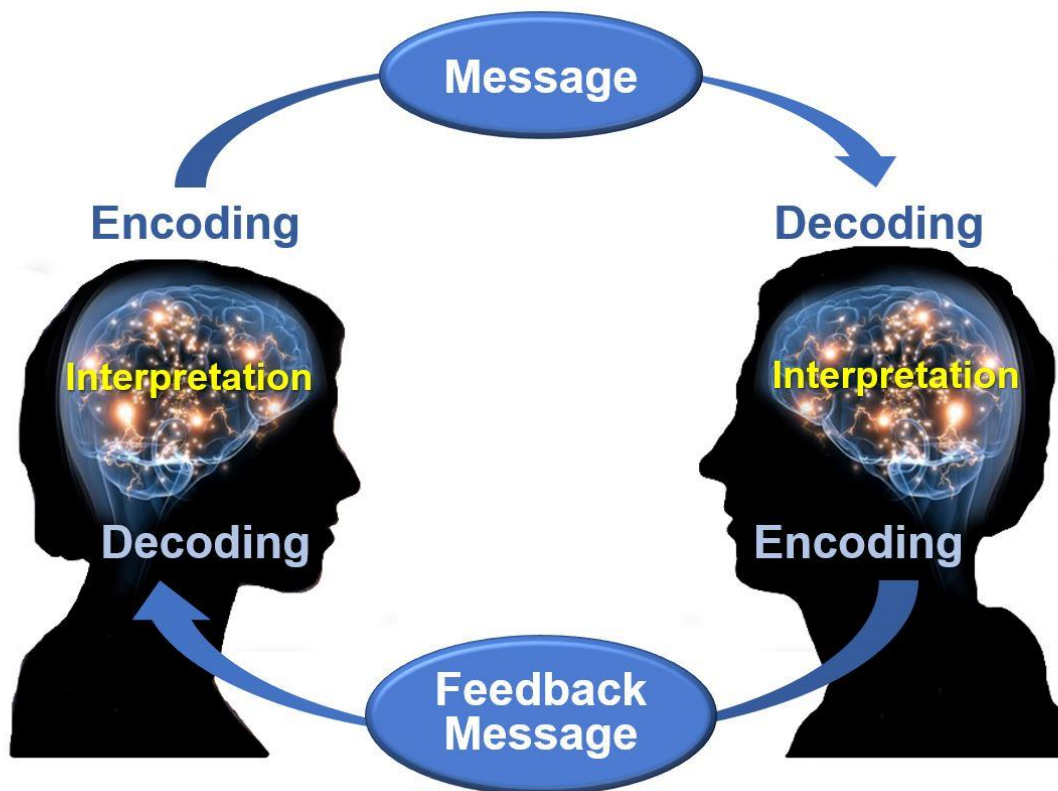


Public Speaking and Strategic Narratives for Leaders

The Communication Process



The Communication Process

Communication is the transmission of information from sender to receiver. Its purpose is to deliver meaning, and it can be broken into five steps:

- Sender forms idea influenced by several factors.
- Sender encodes idea in a message, using words or gestures.
- Message travels over a channel, which could be: e-mail, letter, text, smartphone, etc.
- Receiver decodes message and understands the meaning.
- Feedback travels to sender through a nod or responding message.

Barriers to Effective Listening

Many factors may keep the receiver from listening effectively:

- Physical Barriers: sick or uncomfortable; can't hear the speaker.
- Personal Barriers: values may conflict with the speaker.
- Language Problems: cannot understand the speaker.
- Thought Speed: we think faster than another person can talk.
- Distractions; Faking Attention: your smartphone, other elements in the environment.
- Grandstanding: many senders would rather speak than listen.
- Using an inappropriate channel: text for a complicated instruction; email for a quick check.

Active Listening

Better communications start with both sides practising active listening (few of us are as good at listening as we think we are!). The key word here is *active*. You are using your energy and attention to listen to the other person, *not* prepare your response:

- Stop talking.
- Control your surroundings.
- Establish a receptive mindset and keep an open mind.
- Listen for main points and summarize them for yourself.
- Capitalize on lag time.
- Listen between the lines.
- Judge ideas, not appearances.
- Be patient.
- Take selective notes (only important points).
- Provide feedback (ask questions, give opinions).

Nonverbal Cues

The eyes, face, and body send silent messages; successful communicators attend to nonverbal cues. Nonverbal cues are as, if not more, important than words.

- Eye contact: is it always a good thing?
- Facial expression.
- Posture and gestures.
- Time: we allocate more time if it's important to us.
- Space: formal or informal.
- Territory: their office or yours?

Cultural Effects on Communication

Cultural values can be compared along five key dimensions:

- Low vs. high context (depend little on context of situation to convey meaning).
- Individualism vs. collectivism (Canada is more collectivist than the United States, less collective than South America or Southern Europe).
- Formality (less emphasis on tradition).
- Communication style (straightforward, polite).
- Time orientation (formal and task oriented).

Tips for Better Oral Communications

- Use straightforward language.
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.
- Encourage feedback.
- Check frequently for comprehension by asking questions.
- Observe eye movements.
- Accept blame.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Remember to smile.
- Follow up in writing.