

STEFAN FRYDRYCHOWICZ
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

THE INFLUENCE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The deliberations in this article concern the influence of interpersonal communication on human development. Taking into consideration the general characteristics of development, it is concluded that interpersonal communication can be recognized as an important factor in sender's and receiver's psychic development. For development to take place two conditions must be fulfilled. First: a particular course of the process of communication, in which the participants are able to efficiently advance from interaction to communication and then to contact. Second: appropriate coordination of the dimensions of communication: information, emotion / energy, joint activity /, participation and relation. Interpersonal communication which meets these requirements is effective, and as such can influence the development of the participants of the process of communication.

Introduction

The subject of this article is the influence of interpersonal communication on human development. Interpersonal communication is a phenomenon co-created by a sender and a receiver, though their involvement in it is not always proportional. This article will present general conditions which interpersonal communication should fulfil to have a positive impact on the development of the participants in the process of communication. In any particular instance of interpersonal communication, these general conditions often determine the course of the participants' interactive behavior. The capacity of participants to influence each other's development may depend on the character of that behavior.

Hence the question: What should be the course of interpersonal communication, and what characteristics should it have to warrant its impact on human development?

Before this question can be answered, some aspects of human development will be discussed. Their presentation may shed light on the relations between interpersonal communication and human development.

Selected aspects of human development and interpersonal communication

What is development? Lerner (1998, p. 2.) defines it as “a property of systemic change in the multiple and integrated levels of organization... comprising human life and its ecology.” Applying this definition to human development, the author maintains that “the individual is «systemized», that is, his or her development is embedded within an integrated matrix of variables derived from multiple levels of organization, and development is conceptualized as deriving from the dynamic relations among the variables within his multitiered matrix.” (ibidem, p2.)

Development is also understood as a construction of novel forms. Valsiner (1998, p. 191.) puts it as follows: “Development can be defined as constructive transformation of form in irreversible time through the process of organism and environment interchange.”

According to Zamiara (1988, p. 23.), “Development of a given type of object or structure can be said to take place when it is observed that they undergo a steady, gradual, unidirectional, and irreversible transformation towards greater complexity and inner integration, transformation occurring due to the factors inherent in these objects or structures. Development, therefore, is a relatively long-term process, whose determinants – all or only the principal ones – lie in the evolving structure. This is an idea of the absolute or relative autonomy of the developmental process.” It is worth emphasizing here that the idea of autonomy demands that the developing system be a structure.

The given definition can be applied to both the psyche as a whole and to the interpersonal communicating as one of its parts. Moreover, it follows that development is autonomous in nature and can be precipitated by factors intrinsic in that structure. Interpersonal communication, being part of the general psychic structure, is considered to be such a factor of development. Thus the conclusion that interpersonal communicating, as part of the larger whole, i.e., the human psyche, can influence its other parts. It follows that the interpersonal communication of a given person can affect other factors of his or her development, which in turn can also be influenced by interpersonal communication of other people. To fully understand the influence of interpersonal communication on human development it is necessary to apply the so-called “developmental approach” to the examined phenomena and their interrelations. Turner and Helms (1979, p. 2.) claim that, in compliance with the focus of interest of developmental psychology, it is essential to define what changes will be induced by interpersonal communication.

Therefore, applying the developmental approach to interpersonal communication one can do the following:

1. Analyze how it is developing and becoming a more and more complex skill. Examine the changes, e.g., in verbal and nonverbal communication occurring with age, and how individuals become more and more competent at communicating, that is, more and more able to attune their statements to the requirements of social situations (Hymes, 1971). In accordance with Trempała's suggestion (2000), one can assume that a person aspires to a certain developmental standard, which in the case of interpersonal communication means to achieve the ability to communicate effectively with others. The notion of effective communicating means proficient and efficient communication. Proficiency is associated with subject matter and form while efficiency refers to intention, i.e., a person's ability to choose and accomplish communication goals.
2. Examine how interpersonal communication impacts other psychic functions, such as cognitive, emotional, moral and personal development. Viewed in this way, as mentioned before, communication, being part of a more general system, influences the development of all the other parts. Thus, it can be assumed that interpersonal communication is a factor of development (Przetacznikowa, 1996).

The discussion in this article will concentrate on the latter developmental approach to interpersonal communication.

Let us now consider another important category describing development and connected with interpersonal communication, namely, the notion of change. Overton (1998, p. 109.) states that "development is about change". He further clarifies the term as "changes in expressive-constitutive and instrumental-communicative features of observed behavior" (or action – S.F.) (ibidem, p. 111.). In his view: "Expressive action reflects some fundamental organization or systems. Constitutive action refers to the creative function of human action. Instrumental action is understood as a means to attaining some outcome. Communicative action extends action into the domain of the intersubjective." (ibidem, p. 110.)

Trempała writes (2000, pp. 16-17) "The notion of development: ... is used in modern psychology in two basic meanings. The first: development is understood as growth of psychic activity, function or processes, from lower to higher, from less to more skilful, or from less to more complex. The other: development is seen as change in cognitive activity, function or processes in time. Most researchers believe the two meanings are not mutually exclusive, for development is characterized by changes implying growth."

Change is defined as the difference in the state of a given object or the organization of a structure observed in time. "Change is thus a function of time, which can be expressed by the following formula: $C = f(T)$, where C – change, f – function, T – time" (Tyszkowa, 1996, p. 49). This formula can be expanded so

Table 1. Forms of changeability in interpersonal communication

Forms of changeability	Realization in the process of interpersonal communication
Present	Process of establishing and maintaining contact. Interaction evolving into communication and contact
Past-Present-Future	Relationships between the participants of the process of communication built on the base of their prior interactions – communication and contact
Space	Change in the spatial parameters of interpersonal communication such as: distance, organization of place of interaction-communication-contact, positioning of participants, etc.
Situation	Change in communication dimensions and their proportions: information, conveying of energy/emotions, joint activity, participation, relation

that the measurement of the given phenomenon at two different points of time can be taken into account. “It can be presented as follows: $Cx = f(Sx T_2 - Sx T_1)$, where C means change, x – the examined phenomenon, S – state of the examined phenomenon, and T_1 and T_2 - two different points of time at which the observation (or measurement) of the given phenomenon took place” (ibidem, p. 50.).

Change is one of the core interests of developmental theories. Miller (1992, p. 7.) writes that “a developmental theory offers a set of general principles or rules for change. These principles specify necessary and sufficient antecedents for each change and identify variables that modify or modulate the rate or nature of each change.”

The above-mentioned definitions lead to the conclusion that if interpersonal communication influences the development of some psychic function, then the measurement of this function before and after the ‘working’ of the effective interpersonal communication should show a different result. ‘Working’ of the effective interpersonal communication is understood as the receiver’s participation in an interactive situation, in which the sender communicates with him in an effective way and influences him.

Trempała (2000) thinks that the change in the state of a psychic function in time is not the only form of developmental change. Other changes of this kind are the changes in human behavior conditioned situationally.

Interpersonal communication itself encompasses various forms of changeability, some of which are presented in Table 1.

The influence of interpersonal communication on development is exercised in a specific personal (a sender and a receiver), situational space-time continuum. Some of the forms of changeability in interpersonal communication and their impact on development (introduced in Table 1.) will be discussed later.

Furthermore, Trempała (2000, p. 18) believes that "... human development is not connected as much with the change of behavior in time, which may depend on the situation in which the observation is conducted, but rather with becoming a changed person." The question thus arises if it is possible to become a changed person as a result of contacts with a person communicating effectively?

Piaget, however, (1977, p. 60.) points out "...In all environments, individuals co-operate, discuss, inform and oppose one another. This constant interpersonal exchange lasts throughout the whole process of development in accordance with the process of socialization, and it applies to children's social life in their peer group as well as their relationships with teenagers or adults of varying ages." During that exchange, misunderstandings may arise and conflict may occur because of differing opinions on some subjects or different needs of the communicating parties. It is necessary, therefore, to work out some rules of co-operation, which play a regulatory role in such situations and make it possible to overcome the ensuing disturbances (Piaget, 1981). Understood in this way, the influence of interpersonal communication on development is possible when, in the situation of disturbed balance caused by the above-mentioned factors, an individual's manner of communicating contributes to overcoming these disturbances. In this way, the receiver's behavior is regulated by effective communication, in which the sender's communicating plays the role of the regulator.

Tomasello (1999) proposes the distinction of three discourse types in which the mentioned regulation can be observed. The first discourse type – disagreement refers to the situation when the participants, while talking about some phenomenon, express different positions and perspectives explicitly. It can be linked to disagreement or misunderstanding. As the author argues (1999, p. 171): "Conflicting views of this type are thought by some theorists to be especially important in the case of peer or sibling discourse since the child is not inclined in these cases to simply defer to the authority of the other's expressed view (as often happens with adults), but rather seeks to find some rational way to deal with the discrepancy (...)".

The second discourse type – clarification sequences, refers to the situation when a child does not understand something an adult is talking about or the other way round, an adult does not understand what a child says. As a result an explanation of the fragment (fragments) that was (were) not understood is requested. The explanation must be linked with the switch to the other person's perspective.

The third discourse type – didactic interaction, can be observed when a child is expressing his/her opinion about a given situation and an adult is discussing this opinion. Tomasello (1999, p. 172) claims that: "(...) in comprehending the adult's communicative intentions in these kinds of exchanges, the child must understand the adult's expressed view on her own expressed view. This kind of discourse about previous discourse is very special because as the child comprehends it she is led to examine her own thinking from the perspective of the other".

To sum up the deliberations so far:

1. The cited definitions of development allow for the possibility of considering the influence of interpersonal communication on human development.
2. The forms of changeability in interpersonal communication may have an impact on the participants of the communication process and lead to developmental change.
3. Interpersonal communication of a sender can be a regulator of the behavior of a receiver.

Process of interpersonal communication as realization of the relation: interaction-communication-contact

Let us come back to the question posed above: What should be the course of interpersonal communication, and what characteristics should it have to warrant its impact on human development? This section will deal with the first part of the question.

As well as being individuals, human beings are social creatures and interact with others. The nature of these interactions gives rise to specific interpersonal relations. The quality of these relations depends, among others, on the ability to communicate as well as to establish and maintain contact between the interacting parties. So what are: interaction, communication and contact? How are they interdependent and how can they influence the development of the participants in the communication process?

Interaction is a simultaneous activity of two or more people, whose actions are interdependent or mutually conditioned (Newcomb et al., 1965). Interaction cannot be reduced to only psychic and behavioral activity of particular individuals.

According to the quoted authors: "We are interested in interaction ultimately only as long as its participants influence each other" (ibidem, p. 206.).

As stated by Dryll (2001, p. 8.) "Social interaction is understood as both an act of communication and an activity directed at an object within the common field of attention, characterized by co-operation as well as competition, in an unrestricted time frame."

Other authors maintain that interaction is a series of messages exchanged between persons, whereas communication is a single message (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1972). In accordance with this definition, a series of mutual quizzical looks between husband and wife would be interaction, while her one glance and his embarrassed facial expression in response would be communication.

Tyszkowa (1990, p. 15.) defines interaction as "... the process in which individuals make contact, communicate and influence one another in a given time period." In this definition interaction encompasses both communication and contact, thus the notion of interaction is primary to the other two notions.

Bullock (1980) also believes that the connotation of the concept 'interaction' is broader than that of 'communication'. Communication takes place during interaction, but it comes into being only when the following two conditions are fulfilled:

1. Information exchanged between two or more people has the same or similar meaning to them; implying either full or fragmentary communication.
2. A message is transmitted in order to be received, and to evoke a specific reaction in the receiver (intentionality).

Intentional conveying of information means the sender of the message is intent on the receiver's perceiving the information and interpreting it in the intended way. Therefore, the intentional conveying of meaning distinguishes communication from interaction. "Hence, interaction is more or less limited in time and implies a type of contact of two or more people in which (thanks to perception of persons and their behavior) they act as stimuli for one another, resulting in a change of behavior" (Tyszkowa, 1990, pp. 15-16.). Therefore, during interaction my behavior can be a stimulus for another person to change his behavior. During communication, on the other hand, my behavior will be intentionally 'directed' to achieve a specific result, i.e., a specific change in the behavior of the partner of the interaction. If the change of behavior is permanent and irreversible, it can be said that a developmental change has taken place.

How to define communication? In *A Dictionary of Psychology*, Reber (1985, p. 136.) gives the following definition: "In the broad sense, communication is transmission of something from one place to another." Hybels & Waver (1986) consider communication to be a process in which people share information, feelings, and ideas. For Newcomb et al. (1965) communicating means relaying news. Likewise, Eicher (1995, p. 23.) writes: "The simplest definition of communication is to characterize it as a process of sending and receiving information." The dominant view in the above-mentioned definitions is that communication essentially consists in passing on information.

In Moles' opinion (1986), communication amounts to establishing partial compatibility of feeling between the personal realms of two individuals joined by a channel carrying material elements – signals grouped in information packets. He believes that communication can be defined as: "...activity inducing an organism or system situated in a given moment R to participate in stimuli and experiences of another individual or system situated in a different place and time E, applying the elements of knowledge common to them" (ibidem, p. 25.) Such an approach to communication presupposes exchange of experiences and joint activity, which also require sharing of knowledge, etc. An important issue connected with this definition is the question of conditions determining the possibility of conveying and assimilating experience by participants of interpersonal communication.

Another approach focuses on the participants of communication, i.e. the sender and the receiver of messages. According to Watzlawick et al. (1972), each act of communication presupposes the involvement of the participating parties, which

in turn leads to an emergence of a specific relation between them. Each situation of communication has two aspects: content and relation. The content aspect is connected with passing on information, while the relation aspect refers to the way information is comprehended, hence it determines the relation existing between the sender and the receiver. The above-mentioned authors believe that "... the more spontaneous and 'healthy' the relation is, the less important the 'relation' aspect gets. And vice versa, 'sick' relations are characterized by constant debate on the nature of the relation, while the content of communication loses importance" (ibidem, p. 50.).

Establishing the relation in communication between the sender and the receiver can have cardinal significance for the course of communication itself as well as for the interpretation of the conveyed information and for the actions undertaken by the participants.

To sum up, communication cannot be reduced to mere sharing of information. In the course of communication, the sender displays his emotional attitude towards the content being conveyed as well as to the receiver of his message. Communication also facilitates sharing of experiences and joint activity. The relation between the sender and the receiver is constantly defined and redefined throughout the process of communication. It follows that several dimensions are realized in this process: transmitting information, conveying energy / emotion, joint activity, participation, and establishing relations. These dimensions and their role in development will be characterized further on.

Joint activity, participation, and mutual empathy require, however, not only communication, but also contact. Contact takes place when at least two people are occupied with each other, or with one or more common objects (Vandel, & Mueller, 1980).

According to Bokus (1984), contact is possible when there is a common (shared), not only the same, field of attention. As mentioned before, it can focus on a common object of perception or action, or a common topic of conversation, etc.

In Stewart's opinion (2000), two people are in contact when they take turns speaking and listening, while emphasizing the personal element. Moles (1986) maintains that contact between the sender and the receiver is established on the basis of communication between them, but it should not involve a too high personal cost.

Strzemieczny (1987), however, stresses such important elements of contact as expression of interest in the other person and willingness to co-operate, as well as concentrated attention and appropriate responses to the other's behavior.

Szustrowa's statement (1987) about the dynamic nature of contact is also noteworthy: "Experiencing constant closeness is not a permanent feature of the relationship between two people. Even persons who usually communicate well with each other, remain in close contact only occasionally, when the good will of both allows for full openness and unreserved concentration on themselves, on each other, and on what is currently going on between them" (ibidem, p. 5.)

To summarize: contact is a particular kind of interpersonal relation. It is characterized by good communication, emotional and sometimes physical closeness between the sender and the receiver. Furthermore, their attention is focused simultaneously on the same object, subject matter, or problem, etc. Moreover, there is joint activity. Finally, the varying dynamic of contact means it is not established once and for all in a fixed manner.

Based on these deliberations, one can conclude that interpersonal communication is a series of events occurring between the sender and the receiver. Some of these events are interactive, others communicative, and still others contactual in character, which means, in fact, that they consist in the participants' interactive, communicative and contactual behaviors.

Contact is treated as an effect of interaction and communication, i.e. the final objective. The distinguishing feature between interaction, communication and contact is the degree of closeness and trust between two people. It is the highest in contact and the lowest in interaction. The characteristic attribute of interpersonal communication interpreted in this way is its direction from interaction through communication to contact and then further interaction, and so on. This relation can be viewed as cause and effect as well as circular. In the case of the former, communication has to be preceded by interaction and, provided it is effective, it antecedes contact. As for the latter, the starting point for the relation between the sender and the receiver is interaction. Communication, in turn, enables them to make contact, which then results in further maintaining of interaction, etc.

People interact in many situations, but only some of them involve communication, and even fewer lead to contact. It is an important developmental task for all the participants of the process of interpersonal communication to improve the skills of advancing from interaction to communication and finally to contact. "When two individuals interact on consecutive occasions and each interaction can influence the following interactions, it is said that these persons are in a specific relation" (Hinde & Stevenson-Hinde, 1987, p. 2.). Advancing from interaction to communication and to contact is made possible owing to common knowledge (common ground) about joint activity, which in turn enables the participants of the process of communication to take common action. (Clark, 1996).

In summation let me assess the significance of the participants' capacity to progress from interaction to communication and contact for their development:

1. This capacity enables them to build and maintain good relations.
2. These relations influence their ability to develop common ground or understanding, drawing on which becomes particularly important in conflict or otherwise difficult situations, when problems need to be solved and agreement has to be reached.
3. Good relations and common ground allow not only for sharing experiences but also enhance the chance of their being assimilated and used for modification of behavior.

4. Proficient advancement from interaction to communication and contact brings about a significant qualitative change in a person's interpersonal communication and is itself an essential developmental task.

Dimensions of interpersonal communication and their influence on human development

Characterization of the dimensions of interpersonal communication refers to the second part of the question posed at the beginning of this article, namely, to the characteristics of interpersonal communication that influence human development. The definitions of communication quoted above show that communication cannot be reduced to mere transmission of information. In communication, as part of interaction-communication-contact, which in turn is an element of the process of interpersonal communication, other dimensions are also vital: conveying energy-emotion, joint activity, participation and establishing relations.

The term *dimensions* of communication seems more appropriate than *functions* of communication. The term dimensions of communication points to important planes that should be incorporated in communication so that it can be complete, and thus effective. The term functions of communication indicates what can be accomplished by communicating. It is easy to imagine a situation in which communication between the sender and the receiver, while based on the above-mentioned dimensions, does not go beyond them. An example of such function of communication can be the sender's exerting influence on the receiver. To perform this function, all the dimensions of communication are needed, but are not sufficient. In addition, knowledge of techniques of wielding influence and grasp of personality traits of the receiver are necessary. Dimensions of communication are primary and functions of communication are the spin-off.

The presentation of dimensions of communication will start with the dimension of information. Communication consists certainly in transmitting information/news. By passing on information to the receiver, the sender can diminish the receiver's uncertainty about the subject of communication as well as broaden his or her knowledge or, to put it another way, enrich his or her experience. To reach this goal, the sender must first face the difficult task of recognizing the present state of knowledge of the receiver and of choosing the appropriate information that would enhance his or her experience as intended by the sender or as already agreed on by both parties. It must be mentioned here that Grice's (1980) principle of reality and especially three of his four rules of co-operation have special significance for the dimension of information, namely, the rules of amount, appropriateness and quality. Transmitting information pertaining to the subject of conversation and supplying the proper amount, including vital and true information, is essential for the full realization of the dimension of information in communication. It is assumed that the fourth rule, i.e. the rule of manner is also applied.

To sum up, it can be said that the sender can influence the growth of experience of the receiver, that is shape and enrich it, by applying the dimension of information in communication. This would not be possible, however, if transmission of information was not accompanied by a certain amount of emotion and energy.

So the next dimension of communication is the dimension of emotion and energy. Its essence is the sender's emotional attitude towards the message and its receiver. Analogies to Jakobson's (1989) expressive and impressive language functions can be found here. The crucial factor in the dimension under consideration is the participants' emotional involvement in the process of interpersonal communication and exchange of energy, which serves as a regulator for their communicative behavior. The energy or liveliness of the message is understood here as a factor motivating the sender and the receiver to change, remodel their experience as well as undertake purposeful action. If the message is to play this role, the sender's emotions and the energy level of the message have to be balanced. Balance of the sender's emotions and energy means their adjustment to the content of the message as well as to the emotional state and energy level of the receiver. When it takes place, both the emotions and energy of the sender can be a regulator of the analogous aspects in the receiver, influencing the development of the participants.

Joint activity and participation constitute the third dimension of communication. Adding it to the other dimensions, the sender and the receiver can create common ground, consisting in their shared understanding, common experiences and actions. Including the dimension of joint activity and participation in the process of interpersonal communication makes progress from communication to contact viable. Co-operation of the sender and the receiver is the essence of this dimension. During communication, senders and receivers functioning properly in this dimension are likely to be more concentrated on the subject of communication than on each other. One of the most important developmental aspects of the discussed dimension is the idea of participation. The receiver of the message becomes aware that creating something new, solving problems, etc. demands his or her somewhat symmetrical participation in these enterprises. This participation is indispensable to accomplish the goal that communication revolves around.

The last of the four, the dimension of relation refers to the relationship between the sender and the receiver of messages. This relationship can be determined by earlier relations between them, the roles they have played, etc. Watzlawick et al. (1972) believe that there are two types of relationships between individuals: symmetrical and complementary. The former is characterized by equality and reflecting each other's behavior, whereas the latter involves complementing each other's behavior. In a complementary relationship one person has a superior and the other subordinate position. Both types of relationship are determined by social context and participant roles. Therefore, interpersonal communication between two friends can be symmetrical in character, while a mother-child or doctor-patient relation is usually complementary. It is important, however, to transcend,

whenever possible or desired, the complementary nature of some human relations in order to approximate symmetry. Greater equality between participants of communication then arises, which can enhance transmission of information and create an appropriate emotional climate and energy level for the course of interpersonal communication.

The developmental consequences of the dimension of relation stem from the fact that participants of communication learn how to function both in symmetrical and complementary relationships. They become skilful in recognizing social contexts in which each type of relation is appropriate and useful. In addition, they learn how to transcend them, especially the complementary relationship, whenever possible. A complementary relationship teaches humility, discipline and respect for the communication partner, while a symmetrical relationship makes close relations with others possible. However, the greatest developmental potential is realized when the participants transcend the superior-subordinate relation towards a more equal footing, which enables them to establish common ground and close contact.

To summarize: the four above-mentioned dimensions of communication can influence human behavior in communication on the following conditions:

1. All of them occur simultaneously in the course of interpersonal communication.
2. They occur in specific proportions depending on the situation and individuals participating in communication.

The four dimensions seem to apply to the fullest extent in contact and less so in interaction.

Conclusion

This article attempted to answer the question on conditions that have to be fulfilled so that interpersonal communication can influence human development. Passing over characteristics of the participants, the discussion focused primarily on the course of interpersonal communication and its selected features and the way they influence human development. It is essential for the process of interpersonal communication to progress in that order: interaction – communication – contact. The participants' ability to enter into and maintain contact makes it viable for them to consider important issues while relying upon established common ground and a close interpersonal relationship. It leads to growing trust in the sender and receiver and significantly influences successful exchange of experiences and effective edification in many other vital areas of human functioning. It could be said that development thrives on closeness and trust, but requires independence as well. Therefore, it is also important for communication to include all the dimensions of communication: information, emotion/energy, joint activity/participation and establishing relation. Simultaneous application of these dimensions in appropriate proportions can give rise to the desired closeness, trust and

independence and certainly determines the effectiveness of the process of interpersonal communication.

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