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Verbal Strategies in Small Group Communication

Christine Marie Bunsick
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Christine Marie Bunsick for the Master of
Science in Speech Communication presented July 22, 1976.

Title: Verbal Strategies in Small Group Communication

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

Dr. Theodore Grove, Chairperson

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The purpose of this study is to investigate certain types of verbal communications people use in small task-oriented groups. The verbal communications analyzed are certain phrases a speaker may use prior to the central idea of the statement uttered. These verbal communications are referred to as "language tactics".

Language tactics are defined here as specific phrases a speaker may use to excuse, justify, rationalize, or interpret for the listener(s) what the speaker is about to say before saying it. The purpose of this study is to look at language tactics as they are used by members of small task-oriented groups to answer two basic research questions:

1. Does the amount of previous interaction affect the use of language tactics by members of small task-oriented groups?
2. Does the type of task a small group is performing affect the use of language tactics by group members?

Twenty groups of students with membership ranging from four to six members per group participated in this experiment. Ten groups consisted of Ss who had worked together as classroom project groups prior to participating in the study (Old Groups). The remaining half of the Ss consisted of new students in Speech Communication classes who had never worked together as groups prior to this study (New Groups).

Two different tasks with differing levels of ambiguity were utilized. Ss were directed to achieve consensus on a particular task. One-half of the old groups and one-half of the new groups were assigned a relatively ambiguous task situation (T_A). The remaining old and new groups were assigned a relatively unambiguous task situation (T_U).

Data was collected by audio-tape recordings of group discussions. Transcripts of the discussions were prepared and content-analyzed by three judges for incidence of the occurrence of language tactics. The unit of analysis used in the content-analysis of the data was the

phrase. Criteria was established by the experimenter for the scoring of phrases.

The proposal stated that there are two sets of conditions that influence the probable use of language tactics by members of small task-oriented groups. Two research hypotheses were generated and tested. Both null hypotheses failed to be disconfirmed; thereby the research hypotheses were not supported by the data.

The study concludes with a review and critique of the study itself. Topics reviewed include the purpose of the study, the research questions the study proposed to answer, and the methods employed. Implications for future research are also discussed.

VERBAL STRATEGIES IN SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION

by

CHRISTINE MARIE BUNSICK

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH:

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Well, I've never written a thesis before, so...". The preceeding phrase is one example of the subject of the present investigation: language tactics. Language tactics come in a variety of shapes and forms; everyday life is a splendid place to observe their occurrence. Language tactics may serve a variety of purposes; we all use them so often that many times we are not conscious of their place in our everyday communications.

The above example represents a conscious use of a language tactic. Perhaps the author would like you the reader(s) to be aware of the fact that writing a paper of this nature is a new experience and wishes you to evaluate the paper with that in mind. This kind of language tactic is sometimes referred to as "special pleading". At other times, however, language tactics may be employed entirely outside of the speaker's awareness.

For example, a friend may invite me to play a game of tennis. My friend knows I play tennis; my tennis racket hangs on a wall in the livingroom. Obviously, my friend also plays tennis, or else the invitation to play would not have been extended. I reply: "I'm really not a very good tennis player, but I'll play."

At first, the only thing I remember telling my friend is that I accepted the invitation. Later, I can recall that I prefaced my acceptance of the invitation with the phrase "I'm really not a very good

tennis player.....".

Perhaps my reply served one of a number of different functions. For example, it might have mitigated the degree of personal humiliation that could attend defeat. It might have informed my friend of my awareness of my limitations in the game. It might have demonstrated that I recognize my friend's greater skill on the court. It may have been a simple courtesy so my friend could select a more challenging competitor if desired. The list of functions potentially served by such a comment is seemingly endless.

The purpose of this study is to investigate certain types of verbal communications people use in small task-oriented groups. The verbal communications analyzed are certain phrases a speaker may use prior to the central idea of the statement uttered. These verbal communications are referred to as language tactics.

Language tactics are defined here as specific phrases a speaker may use to excuse, justify, rationalize, or interpret for the listeners what the speaker is about to say before saying it. Examples of such language tactics might include phrases such as: "You're not going to like this but...." (interpreting for the listener); or "I'm not really sure of this but...." (excusing the speaker); or "Since I've spent five years studying...." (referring to the speaker's credentials). Language tactics of this sort are readily observable in everyday life and it is the purpose of this study to look at language tactics as they are used by members of small task-oriented groups to answer two basic research questions:

1. Does amount of previous interaction affect the use of language tactics by members of small task-oriented groups?

2. Does the type of task a small group is performing affect the use of language tactics by group members?

Chapter Two defines language tactics and discusses the main assumptions, theoretical hypotheses, and rationales of the study. Chapter Three states the research hypotheses and Chapter Four describes the hypotheses-testing operations performed including methods of securing and analyzing data. Chapter Five presents the results and Chapter Six, the conclusions and discussion.

CHAPTER II

ASSUMPTIONS, THEORETICAL HYPOTHESES AND RATIONALE

There are probably as many reasons for studying human communications as there are communicators. Since everything a person may say, think, believe, and feel in response to other people or to the physical environment can in some way be interpreted as communication, the possibilities for research in the area of communication are as broad and diverse as life itself.

This study proposes to look at one very limited aspect of the communicative process, language tactics. The assumption here is that through an understanding of the parts, a greater awareness of the whole may be achieved. Experimental controls seem to be an appropriate means to investigate this aspect of communication, which here-to-fore has been studied only casually. Such limitation of focus which laboratory controls provide permit management of the complex factors that typically attend any naturalistic communicative event.

As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this study is to investigate certain types of verbal communication people use in small task-oriented groups. The verbal communication analyzed are certain phrases a speaker may use prior to the central idea of the statement uttered. These verbal segments are referred to as "language tactics". Language tactics may include pre-interpretations¹ of statements, pre-apologies² by the speakers, softeners³, and opening lines⁴. In essence, language tactics are specific phrases whose content consists of excuses,

justifications, rationalizations, or interpretations which modify or qualify the speakers subsequent message.

Eugene A. Weinstein, for example, writes about "pre-interpretations" and "pre-apologies". His primary emphasis is that a communicator uses pre-interpretations and pre-apologies as well as post-interpretations and name-dropping as means of getting others to do what the communicator wants them to do. Weinstein's main focus is the purpose of the interaction and the techniques the communicator uses to elicit desired responses from others.⁵ Some examples that Weinstein lists are: pre-interpretations: "Now be sure not to take this the wrong way. I don't want you to think...."; pre-apologies: "I'm not quite sure of this... but...."; post-interpretations: "Oh, that's not what I meant.."; name-dropping; "Back at Harvard....".⁶

Erving Goffman writes about "standard opening phrases" a communicator may use "in order to get away with obtruding the self upon the interaction, either as speaker or subject matter".⁷ In other words, these are ways a speaker may enter a conversation. Some examples of standard opening phrases listed by Goffman include: "The way I see it..", "In my opinion....", "Well I don't know anything about that sort of thing but I've always felt that....", "Well, if you ask me...." and "The same thing happened to me. I was....".⁸

Nierenberg and Calero describe "softeners" as "expressions intended to influence the listeners in a positive manner".⁹ Some examples and reasons why a communicator may use softeners are listed by the authors in their book Meta-Talk. These include: "You're going to like what I'm about to tell you" (preparing the listeners for what we believe will be good news for them); "It goes without saying" (attempting to get

agreement before stating something); "What I'm about to tell you" (usually a disclosure that must be handled very carefully and usually involves the listener).¹⁰

In this investigation, "language tactics" refers to pre-interpretations, pre-apologies, softeners, standard opening lines, and other phrases or statements uttered prior to the central idea of the subsequent statement and having the qualifying character of excusing, justifying, rationalizing, or interpreting in advance for the listener(s) what the speaker is about to say. A very limited amount of empirical research has been done to date dealing with any of the afore-mentioned tactics, and the writer found no reports of experimental investigations in this specific area.

The present study proceeds from some general assumptions. A communicator uses language tactics in a variety of communicative situations. Language tactics are probably more likely to be used in some situations than in others. A careful analysis and investigation could lead to identification of those contexts of most frequent use. This information, if obtained, would provide a basis for understanding this aspect of communicative behavior and the relationship of language tactics to other communication variables.

Scholars in several fields have focused on issues that relate directly to these assumptions. For example, George A. Miller writes that:

If we concentrate primarily on the words that people say, we are likely to think that the only purpose of language is to exchange information. That is one of its purposes, of course, but certainly not the only one. People exchange many things.¹¹

Exchange is not a static entity. Rather, John Dewey writes, it is a

process that creates new transactions and forms new histories and affairs. Exchange is not an event that can be isolated.¹² George C. Homans looks at human behavior and interaction as an exchange process. His theory of social exchange, briefly summarized, states:

Human interaction involves the exchange of goods and services, and the responses individuals in interaction elicit from each other involve both rewards and costs.¹³

Implicit here is the idea that words do matter and can affect the outcome of interaction between people. When a communicator uses a language tactic, the message that is sent is explained verbally. According to Satir, in such a communication the communicator "is denotatively speaking at the meta-communicative level".¹⁴

Meta-communication, according to Ruesch and Bateson, is communication about communication.¹⁵ It is a message within a message that can be conveyed either verbally or nonverbally to the listener(s). Since this study deals with language tactics, only those meta-communications at the verbal level are considered.

Satir has described six different levels of abstraction for verbal meta-communications:

- a. A person can label what kind of message he sent telling the receiver how seriously he wishes him to receive it and how he should respond to it.
- b. He can say why he sent the message by referring to what the other did.
- c. He can say why he sent the message by referring to what he thinks the other's wishes, feelings, intentions towards him are.
- d. He can say why he sent the message by referring to a request made by the other.
- e. He can say why he sent the message by referring to the kind of response he was trying to elicit from the other.
- f. He can say why he sent the message by referring to what he was trying to get the other to do or say or not do and not say.¹⁶

Language tactics may occur at any of the six levels of abstraction formulated by Satir. Although the levels Satir lists give some reasons why a speaker may employ meta-communications, the present focus is concerned only with the occurrence of such language tactics in the speaker's utterances.

Use of language tactics by communicators may provide some insight into the relationship between communicators. Jay Haley writes that "as people communicate, their relationship is defined as much by the qualifications of their messages as by the presence or absence of messages."¹⁷

Barnlund writes that many messages contain both manifest and latent meanings.¹⁸ An example may be a situation where identity is being challenged. Barnlund describes such a situation:

At one level, talk flows around a common interest or problem; at another, communication becomes a competition for status. Participants present their credentials and challenge those of others.... Communication becomes an occasion for asserting and validating personal identity rather than for testing what we know. Status reminder phrases such as "I've devoted years to this matter...", "I've had much more experience....", or "You wouldn't be able to appreciate this...." are likely to invite reaction in kind.¹⁹

From the above discussion, it is apparent that many variables may participate in creating the conditions in which language tactics are found to occur. The aim of this investigation is to begin the process of identifying contexts which are conducive to the use of language tactics by communicators. Two theoretical hypotheses are proposed:

Theoretical

Hypothesis #1: Communicators use more language tactics in connection with relatively new relationships than in relatively old relationships. A relatively new relationship is defined as one in which participants have had no or minimal previous contact.

A relatively old relationship is defined as one in which participants have had moderate to a great deal of previous contact.

Rationale: Experiences in a variety of communication encounters supports the view that new people and/or new situations may create uncertainty. Through language and sense data, a way is found to relate to new others and gauge our stance in relation to them.

Grace de Laguna writes that "language, like the tool, is primarily an instrument to be used for the accomplishment of objective ends. It provides an indirect way of dealing with things."²⁰ Through the medium of language, new relationships can be formed, status' conferred, identities validated. Patton and Giffin write that: "As you interact with another person, it is likely that you gain a general impression of 'where you stand' with him or her."²¹

Gross and Stone state that:

In every social situation, selves must be established, defined, and accepted by the parties. Every person in the company of others is, in a sense, obligated to bring his best self forward to meet the selves of others also presumably best-fitted to the occasion.²²

All the above suggests that people who have never interacted with each other will use more language tactics in their exchange than people who have interacted with one another for a relatively long period of time.

Theoretical

Hypothesis #II: Communicators' use of language tactics will vary with the nature of the task requiring interaction.

Rationale: It is easier to communicate with someone about a topic in which one is well-versed than it is to communicate about a topic where one has little knowledge. This applies to all areas of communication,

from dyads to public address, from small groups to the symposiums.

In small groups, for example, the nature, or type, of task the group is engaged in will affect the communicative behaviors of the participants. Roby and Lanzetta refer to the distinctive features of particular tasks which require certain group behaviors for adequate performance as 'critical demands'.²³

When communicators are engaged in small group discussion, for example, information is exchanged between members in order to complete the task the group is engaged in. Collins and Guetzkow write that in such a situation, the information must not merely be presented to be accepted by the group; it must be documented as well.²⁴ Excuses, rationalizations, justifications or interpretations before statements may be one way of documenting information.

In this chapter, a definition of language tactics was given, major assumptions, theoretical hypotheses and rationales are listed. Chapter Three will focus on the research hypotheses.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

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²Ibid; p. 396.

³Nierenberg, Gerald I. and Henry H. Calero: Meta-Talk: Guide to Hidden Meanings in Conversations, Trident Press, New York, New York, 1973, p. 33.

⁴Goffman, Erving: Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction, The Bobs-Merrill Company, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana, 1961, pp. 50-51.

⁵Weinstein, Eugene A., op. cit., pp. 394-398.

⁶Ibid; pp. 394-398.

⁷Goffman, Erving, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

⁸Ibid: p. 50-51.

⁹Nierenberg, Gerald I. and Henry H. Calero, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁰Ibid: p. 33.

¹¹Miller, George A.: "Nonverbal Communication." in Communication, Language, and Meaning: Psychological Perspectives, George A. Miller, Editor, Basic Books, Inc., New York, New York, 1973, pp. 240-241.

¹²Dewey, John: "Nature, Communication and Meaning." in The Human Dialogue: Perspectives on Communication, edited by Floyd W. Matson and Ashley Montagu, The Free Press, New York, 1967, p. 513.

¹³Goldberg, Alvin and Carl E. Larson.: Group Communication; Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1975, pp. 44-45.

¹⁴Satir, Virginia: "Communication: A Verbal and Nonverbal Process of Making Requests of the Receiver." in Messages: A Reader in Human Communication, Jean M. Civikly, editor, Random House, New York, New York, 1974, pp. 14-15.

¹⁵Ruesch, Jurgen, M.D. and Gregory Bateson: Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry, W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., New York, New York, 1951, p. 209.

¹⁶Satir, Virginia, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

¹⁷Haley, Jay: "Establishment of an Interpersonal Relationship." in Interpersonal Communication: Basic Text and Reading, Bobby R. Patton and Kim Giffin, editors, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, New York, 1974, pp. 368-369.

¹⁸Barnlund, Dean C.: "A Transactional Model of Communication." in Language Behavior: A Book of Readings, Johnnaye Akin, Alvin Goldberg, Gail Myers, Joseph Stewart, editors, Moutin, The Hague, 1970, p. 52.

¹⁹Barnlund, Dean C.: "Communications: The Context of Change." in Interpersonal Communications: Basic Text and Readings, Bobby R. Patton and Kim Giffin, editors, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, New York, 1974, pp. 31-32.

²⁰de Laguna, Grace Andrus: Speech: Its Function and Development; Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1963, p. 208.

²¹Patton, Bobby R. and Kim Giffin: Interpersonal Communication: Basic Text and Reading; Harper and Row Publishers, New York, New York, 1974, p. 344.

²²Gross, Edward and Gregory P. Stone: "Embarassment and the Analysis of Role Requirements." in Problems in Social Psychology, edited by Carl W. Backman and Paul F. Secord, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, New York, 1966, p. 385.

²³Roby, T.B. and J.T. Lanzetta: "Considerations in the Analysis of Group Tasks." Psychological Bulletin, 1958, pp. 88-101; p. 95.

²⁴Collins, Barry E. and Harold Guetzkow: A Social Psychology of Group Process for Decision-Making, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, New York, 1964, p. 30.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The proposal here is that there are two sets of conditions that influence the probable use of language tactics by members of small task-oriented groups. Each set of conditions consists of a combination of several situational variables.

The first set of conditions is associated with the amount of prior interaction a group may have had: new groups as compared to old groups. It has been demonstrated that the set of conditions found in newly-formed groups consists of some of the following and other characteristics: no role relationships, no established status hierarchy, few tested expectations about acceptable behavior or unacceptable behavior, and no history of previous interaction. Old groups, on the other hand, have developed role relationships, established status hierarchy, many tested expectations, and a long history of interaction. Because of the vast differences between the two sets of conditions found in either group, the communication patterns and styles are expected to differ.

Research

Hypothesis #I: More language tactics will be used by communicators in new groups than by communicators in old groups.

New groups are defined here as groups whose members have had no prior contact with each other before participating in the experiment. Old groups are defined as groups that have been together as classroom project groups for ten weeks.

The second set of conditions is associated with the type of task with which a group is engaged. Different tasks a group may perform have different inherent characteristics. For example, there are tasks with a complex number of answers; there are tasks requiring only one answer. Different tasks require different types of verbal behavior on the part of the group: some tasks require an extreme division of labor, other tasks may utilize subgrouping, still others may require that the group work together at every step. There are tasks that have a single correct answer; there are other tasks for which there is no correct answer; still others where the answer is in series. Some tasks are completed only by performing several related sub-tasks; other tasks consist of a single phrase of work. There are some tasks where group members are given feedback as they work on the task, and others where they receive none. Works by Cecil Gibb (1949),¹ Carter and Nixon (1949),² Carter, Haythorn, and Howell (1950),³ Katz, Blau, Brown and Strodbeck (1957)⁴ and Mann and Mann (1950)⁵ have demonstrated that different tasks produce different effects on group behavior and its outcomes.

Research

Hypothesis #II: More language tactics will be used by communicators in a relatively uncertain task situation than by communicators in a relatively certain task situation.

A relatively uncertain task situation is defined as a task for which there is no correct answer or solution. A relatively certain task situation is defined as a task for which there is a correct answer or solution.

The present chapter has included research hypotheses and corresponding sets of conditions that define the terms of those hypotheses.

Chapter Four describes the hypotheses-testing operations performed, including methods of securing and analyzing data.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

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⁴Katz, Elihu, Peter M. Blau, Morton L. Brown, and F.L. Strodbeck (1957), "Leadership Stability and Social Change: An Experiment with Small Groups", Sociometry, 20, 36-50.

⁵Mann, John H. and Carola H. Mann (1959), "The Importance of Group Task in Producing Group-Member Personal and Behavioral Changes", Human Relations, 12, 65-74.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Subjects (Ss) for this study were undergraduate students enrolled in speech communication classes at Portland State University Winter and Spring Quarters, 1976.

Twenty groups of students with membership ranging from four to six members per group participated in this experiment. The smaller and larger membership groups were scattered rather evenly across the several experimental treatments.

Ten groups were comprised of Ss who had been together as a group for ten weeks as classroom project groups (Old Groups). These groups participated in the experiment during the last week of classes of Winter Quarter, 1976. The remaining half of the Ss were new students enrolled in speech communication classes, Spring Quarter, 1976 (New Groups). In this condition (New Groups), group members did not know one another prior to being in the group and had not participated in the experiment the preceding term. This was the first time group members had been placed into a group in the classroom.

Ss were told to achieve consensus as a requirement of task completion. This direction was given in order to ensure some participation by all members of the groups. Ss were informed that the task would take them approximately thirty minutes to complete and that their discussions were being tape-recorded but that no one was listening to the

discussion as it was in progress. Directions given to the groups are listed in Appendix #1.

Tasks

Two different tasks were employed in this study. One-half of the old groups and one-half of the new groups were presented with a relatively ambiguous task situation. This task involved ranking from "most-liked" to "least-liked" five characters in a short story (see Appendix #2). This task was represented as relatively ambiguous because there was no correct solution and final ranking depended upon the various beliefs and values of group members.

The remaining old and new groups were presented a relatively unambiguous task situation. This task was also a ranking task which involved deciding which items were most essential to survival (see Appendix #3). This task represented a relatively unambiguous task situation because (1) it involved one correct answer, (2) the problem was technical in nature, and (3) the task directions stated that a correct answer was available.

From the two levels of task variable and the two levels of the group variable, four sets of experimental conditions were created, with five groups in each condition. Table I is a graphic representation of the task conditions.

TABLE I

TASK CONDITIONS

	Old Groups	New Groups
Task Ambiguous	5 groups	5 groups
Task Unambiguous	5 groups	5 groups

Data Collection

All twenty groups met in small rooms wired for tape-recording, so that audio tapes of the group discussions could be made without the presence of the tape recorder. Transcripts of the discussions were prepared and analyzed by three judges for incidence of language tactics.

Methods of Analysis

The unit of analysis used in the content analysis of the data was the phrase. The following criteria were established by the experimenter regarding the types of phrases to be scored:

1. Phrases must contain at least one verb or verb form.
2. Phrases must contain the first person singular pronoun. Phrases containing the first person plural pronoun are not to be scored.
3. Phrases must consist of an excuse, justification, rationalization or interpretation by the speaker for the listener(s) before the speaker utters the central idea of the statement.

Three judges (two males, one female) scored identical copies of the transcripts of the group discussions. Judges were instructed to score only those phrases meeting the criteria listed above. In light of the give-and-take nature of a small group discussion where a speaker may be interrupted before having a chance to complete a statement, judges were also told to score phrases if they met the established criteria even though the sentences may not be complete. In the prepared transcripts, a change of speaker was denoted by a series of dots (.....). Judges were instructed to look at statement between the series of dots (.....). Appendix #4 contains directions given to each judge.

Training of the Judges

Judges met three times as a group before being given actual data. At the first meeting, the general purpose of the study was stated and the directions for coding were explained. The judges however, were not informed of the hypotheses during any point of the investigation. Two pages of transcripts from each of the twenty group discussions (forty pages) were given to each judge. These three forty-page sets of transcribed material were obtained by drawing two pages at random from each of the twenty discussions and scrambled. One set was given to each judge along with instructions to read the excerpts and score any phrases that met the criteria listed. — own material

A second meeting was held two days later when the judges had completed all the excerpts. At the second meeting, all forty pages of the excerpts were reviewed together by the judges. Each judge explained his/her rationale for scoring particular phrases, and as a group, agreement was reached on what does or does not constitute a language tactic. Initially, all three judges were scoring an extremely large number of tactics. Apparently, all three were "reading in" too much. After this meeting, however, all were in agreement.

At the third meeting, judges reviewed and discussed the remaining excerpts. At the conclusion of this meeting, judges were given complete sets of transcripts from all twenty discussions, were reminded of the instructions, and directed to content-analyze these data for language tactics.

Copies of the transcripts were labeled by number (Group I, Group II, etc.) so that the judges did not know which groups were old groups and which groups were new groups. The position in which a given

discussion transcript appeared in the set of twenty such transcripts was determined by chance. The type of task was not included in the group label, but since there were only two tasks, the judges apparently could discern the task origin. However, since judges were unaware of the hypotheses to be tested, this was not felt to be a problem.

Inter-Rater Reliability

Various methods for assessing inter-rater reliability were considered. The ideal material for this purpose would be exceedingly similar to the content of the experimental group discussions but not actually part of them. A search for adequately lengthy and unedited texts of actual discussions did not produce any satisfactory material. Another option considered was plays. This was disregarded because of differences in style and format from the actual data. Eventually, the experimenter created eight pages of group interaction. Four pages each centered around one of the two task situations described in the design of this investigation. Throughout these eight pages, various quantities of language tactics were incorporated into each page, ranging from one tactic per page to fifteen tactics per page.

The resulting eight-page booklet consisted of a scrambled order for pages with respect to frequency of tactics per page, thus avoiding any pattern in the booklet as a whole. Each judge was given a copy of this booklet and instructed to score the phrases as previously directed.

Due to a combination of factors, some of which included experimenter oversight, conflicting class schedules of the judges, and difficulty in obtaining appropriate material to measure inter-rater reliability, the data for the reliability study was obtained after the actual

data were content-analyzed. However, this occurred prior to the data-analyses for the hypotheses of the study. In other words, the data for the reliability study was collected after the main data of the study was obtained but was analyzed prior to the data analyses for the hypotheses. Inter-rater reliability is listed in Chapter V.

This chapter dealt with the methods of data collection and analysis utilized in this study, Chapter V presents the results.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

In this chapter, the results are presented in the order in which various data analyses were performed.

The first analysis dealt with inter-rater reliability. Since the entire method of data analyses was dependent upon high levels of agreement between all three judges, this operation was performed first. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient equation was employed in this operation. A t-test of significance for dependent means was computed to assess statistical significance of the resulting correlational co-efficients. The results are listed in Table II.

TABLE II
RESULTS OF INTER-RATER RELIABILITY STUDY

	Judge #1	Judge #2
Judge #2	+ .98*	----
Judge #3	+ .97*	+ .96*

* significant at $p = .001$

Since a very high level of inter-rater reliability existed, the next step in the data analyses was to average the total number of language tactics per group across all ratings to obtain a single index of tactic frequency per group. This was accomplished by adding the three totals per group listed by each judge and dividing by three. These average ratings were used as data for subsequent analyses in this study

and are listed in Table III.

TABLE III

AVERAGE RATING PER GROUP, N = 20

<u>Group</u>	<u>Average</u>
Group 1	14.666
Group 2	11.333
Group 3	14.666
Group 4	2.666
Group 5	12.666
Group 6	20.000
Group 7	11.000
Group 8	4.666
Group 9	15.333
Group 10	5.666
Group 11	12.666
Group 12	15.333
Group 13	13.000
Group 14	5.000
Group 15	7.666
Group 16	5.333
Group 17	0.000
Group 18	6.666
Group 19	7.666
Group 20	4.666

The next step in the data analyses was to enter each average into the appropriate cell of a 2 x 2 fixed model analysis of variance data table. Table IV lists this breakdown by group type (old group, new group) and task origin [(T_A) relatively ambiguous, and (T_U) relatively unambiguous].

TABLE IV

BREAKDOWN BY GROUP TYPE AND TASK ORIGIN

T _A	<u>Old Groups</u>	<u>New Groups</u>
	Group 3 - 14.666	Group 12 - 15.333
	Group 6 - 20.000	Group 14 - 5.000
	Group 7 - 11.000	Group 16 - 5.333
	Group 8 - 4.666	Group 17 - 0.000
	Group 9 - 15.333	Group 19 - 7.666
	TOTAL = 65.665	TOTAL = 33.332

TABLE IV
(continued)

	Old Groups	New Groups
T_U	Group 1 - 14.666	Group 11 - 12.666
	Group 2 - 11.333	Group 13 - 13.000
	Group 4 - 2.666	Group 15 - 7.666
	Group 5 - 12.666	Group 18 - 6.666
	Group 10 - 5.666	Group 20 - 4.666
	TOTAL = 46.997	TOTAL = 44.664

An analysis of variance statistical procedure contains the assumption of homogeneity of variance within the obtained data across all treatment conditions. An f-max test for homogeneity of variance was computed resulting in an index of 20.6 with 4 degrees of freedom for both the numerator and the denominator (pq,n-1). This failed significance at p .05, satisfying the homogeneity of variance requirement.

The main body of data for analyses of the experimental hypotheses consisted of language tactic scores for five groups in each of the four experimental treatment conditions (N=20). Table V lists total scores for each of the four five-group sets.

TABLE V
LANGUAGE TACTIC TOTALS PER TREATMENT CONDITION

	<u>Old Groups</u>	<u>New Groups</u>	<u>Totals</u>
T_A	65.665	33.332	98.997
T_U	<u>46.997</u>	<u>44.664</u>	91.661
Totals	112.662	77.996	

All analyses of variance procedures followed B.J. Winer.¹ This data is presented in Table VI.

TABLE VI
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE TABLE

	ss	df	ms	F
A	60.23	1	60.23	2.33*
B	2.84	1	2.84	0.11*
AB	44.85	1	44.85	1.74*
Error	412.43	16	25.77	
Total	520.35	19		

* n.s. at alpha (insert symbol) .05

The first research hypothesis, represented by factor A in the analysis (see Table VI), stated that more language tactics will be used by communicators in new groups than by communicators in old groups. The null hypothesis was not supported by this data. The total number of language tactics used by members of new groups in both task conditions equalled 77.996 (T_A 33.332 + T_U 44.664). The total number of language tactics used by members of old groups in both task conditions equalled 112.662 (T_A 65.665 + T_U 46.997). The members of old groups used 34.666 more language tactics than members of new groups.

The second research hypothesis, represented by factor B in the analysis (see Table VI), stated that more language tactics will be used by communicators in a relatively uncertain task situation (T_A) than by communicators in a relatively certain task situation (T_U). The research hypothesis was not supported because the null hypothesis failed to be disconfirmed. In the relatively ambiguous task situation (T_A), the total number of language tactics used by members of both the old groups and the new groups equalled 98.997 (65.665(old group) + 33.332(new groups)). In the relatively unambiguous task situation (T_U),

a total of 91.661 language tactics were used (46.997(old groups) + 44.664(new groups)). In this experimental condition, 7.336 more language tactics were used by members of both old and new groups in the relatively ambiguous task situation than by members in the relatively unambiguous task situation.

Overall, members of old groups used more language tactics than members of new groups in all experimental conditions. In the relatively unambiguous task situation, members of old groups used 2.333 more language tactics than members of new groups. In the relatively ambiguous task situation, old group members used 32.333 more language tactics than members of new groups. Some plausible reasons for these differences will be discussed in the next chapter.

The final data analyses performed dealt with the interaction effects of the task and the group variables, represented by factor AB in Table VI. In checking the F-table at .95 with $df = 1, 16$ is 4.49. Therefore, neither the main effects of A (task variable) the main effects of B (group variable), or the interaction effects (AB) were significant.

This chapter presented the results of the study. The test for inter-rater reliability produced a significantly high correlation. Both research hypotheses failed to be supported by the obtained data. Chapter VI will discuss the results of this study as well as implications and suggestions for further research.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER V

¹Winer, B.J.: Statistical Principles in Experimental Design,
New York, McGraw-Hill, 1962.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this chapter will be largely on the study itself: the positive points as well as the negative, the limitations as well as the potentials for future research. The study will be reviewed and critiqued and occasionally apologized for with the insight only hindsight can give. Areas to be discussed will include the purpose of the study itself, the research questions it attempted to answer as well as the underlying rationale/theory of "language tactics". The research hypotheses and the methods will be critiqued and implications for future research discussed. The format will be to list each topic area and give the respective pros and cons. It is hoped that this approach will give the reader a more concise means of judging the merits of this study.

THE PURPOSE

As stated at the beginning of this study, the purpose was to investigate certain types of verbal communications people use in small task-oriented groups. These verbal communications were labelled "language tactics" and defined as certain phrases a speaker may use prior to the central idea of the statement uttered. The aim of the investigation was to begin the process of identifying contexts that may be conducive to the use of language tactics by communicators.

Advantages of the Purpose

1. The definition of what constituted a "language tactic" limited verbal communications analysed to those occurring prior to the central idea of the statement. This served to establish a manageable hold on the variety of communications exchanged between members of small task-oriented groups.

2. By focusing only on the occurrence of language tactics in small task-oriented groups, the sticky question of motive was not dealt with.

3. In restricting the study to two variables (group and task) a degree of control was established so that four possible contexts of the use of language tactics could be explored.

Disadvantages of the Purpose

1. While the definition of what constitutes a "language tactic" was established and held to, this definition was perhaps too all-encompassing. In retrospect, excuses and justifications do not appear to belong in the same category as name-dropping and special pleading.

2. The motive for the use of a language tactic must be studied. A mere count of the occurrence of language tactics tells nothing about the climate of the small task-oriented group.

3. The limit of the study was perhaps too severe. Ideally, there should have been three group variables as opposed to two. Utilizing groups that perhaps had been together for five weeks (half as long as the old groups) would perhaps result in a better understanding of the development of language tactic usage by group members. A laboratory setting also has definite drawbacks to encouraging "normal" communications.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two basic research questions were asked. These dealt with (1) the amount of previous interaction group members may have had with each other and (2) the type of task a group was performing. The question asked if either of these variables (amount of interaction and type of task) affected the use of language tactics by group members.

Advantages of the Research Questions

1. Limiting the study to small task-oriented groups established a degree of control and a limit of focus on the study.
2. Utilizing only two tasks having relatively different degrees of ambiguity in the task origin served to confine communications among group members to a set topic, thereby making comparisons between groups possible.

Disadvantages of the Research Questions

1. The verbal exchanges between group members was the only aspect studied. The expectations of group members at the interpersonal level was not dealt with but merely assumed - i.e. it was simply assumed that group members brought different expectations to the group, but this was never verified.
2. The tasks themselves had no direct relationship to the lives of any group members. Perhaps group members performed the tasks merely because they were required to do so.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The theoretical assumptions for this study came largely from the works of Weinstein, Goffman, Satir, Reusch and Bateson, and Nierenberg

and Calero. All these authors either write directly about or refer to one or more aspects of what the study defines as "language tactics". The major advantage of these theoretical assumptions lies in the fact that all of the afore-mentioned researchers acknowledge the existence of what has been defined here as "language tactics" but cite ^{to} empirical research relating to the occurrence of this phenomena. This study developed from an interest on the part of the author pertaining to the phenomena of interpreting, justifying, rationalizing or excusing statements.

The major disadvantage of the theoretical assumptions lies in the fact that most, if not all, of the authors cited refer to the possible motives a speaker may have that initiates the use of a language tactic as defined by this study. This study, however, deliberately avoided the motivational aspect and concentrated solely on the contextual. That is, of itself, an inherent drawback. The author now realizes that motives must be studied in order to gain a better understanding of the contextual variables.

THEORETICAL HYPOTHESES AND RATIONALES

Two theoretical hypotheses were developed and rationales for each discussed. In retrospect, several inherent discrepancies existed between both theoretical hypotheses and their respective rationales.

The first theoretical hypothesis stated that communicators would use more language tactics in relatively new relationships than in relatively old relationships. Relatively old and new relationships were arbitrarily defined by the experimenter. The primary weakness of the rationale was the speculation upon individual strategies and motives and the neglect of the group and situational variables. Perhaps a more

logical rationalization might be Erving Goffman's discussion of how a "working consensus" is achieved and maintained within the small group. By concentrating on the group as a whole instead of individual communicators with the group, more congruency between the theoretical hypothesis, the rationalization, and the study itself might have been achieved.

The second theoretical hypothesis stated that communicators use of language tactics would vary with the nature of the task requiring interaction. The major weakness of this hypothesis and rationale is twofold:

1. The theoretical hypothesis as stated incorrectly assumes that the task situation is the only situation in which people communicate with each other. Various communication experiences tells one that such is not the case.
2. The theoretical hypothesis, as stated, assumes that language tactics are a task, and not a social phenomena.

While the use of language tactics may be influenced by a task situation, the task situation is not necessarily the primary stimulant for the implementation of language tactics by communicators. The first theoretical hypothesis, for example, lists other reasons why communicators may use language tactics.

In summary then, the major weaknesses of both theoretical hypotheses lies in the discrepancies between the hypotheses themselves and the supporting rationales. In retrospect, the author is aware of these incongruencies, which were not readily apparent at the time the study was designed and implemented. If these discrepancies had been noticed earlier, the study might have been approached differently. In all likelihood, the major emphasis of the study would have been that of language tactics as a purely social phenomena which may or may not occur in the

building and maintaining of a "working consensus". The second theoretical hypothesis would have been disregarded and the phenomena of language tactic usage as related to task origin would have been suggested as an area of further study, and not dealt with at all in the study itself at such an early point.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND RESULTS

Two research hypotheses were established, but both null hypotheses failed to be disproved, thus invalidating the research hypotheses.

The first research hypothesis stated that communicators in new groups would use more language tactics than communicators in old groups. The assumption was that since new groups had no role relationships or status hierarchies, few tested expectations about acceptable behaviors and no previous interaction, language tactics would be utilized more by members in the forming stage to ascertain all group norms. Perhaps the fact that old groups used more language tactics indicates that group members were aware of the group norms and structure and were acknowledging that structure in communications with other members. Since members of the new groups were not sure if they would ever be in the same group again they were not as concerned about their communications with other members. Again, the phenomena/perspectives motives would have had to be examined.

The second research hypothesis stated that more language tactics would be used by communicators in a relatively ambiguous task situation than by communicators in a relatively unambiguous task situation. The assumption was that different types of tasks produce different effects on group behavior. In this study, however, no real difference existed

in the amount of language tactics used by group members in the two different task situations employed. Perhaps the fault lies in the tasks themselves, or perhaps other group variables such as those discussed in reference to the first research hypothesis come into play. Perhaps too the tasks were too similar in format - i.e. both solutions required ranking, there was no need for a division of labor, and both consisted of a single phase. The outcomes of both tasks had no effects whatsoever on the lives of any group members nor did either task have any real direct relationship to past life experiences of group members.

METHODS

A laboratory situation does not lend itself well to real-life communication patterns. When group members are placed in small rooms and informed that their discussion is being tape-recorded, communication patterns may be altered. The only advantage to the laboratory method as opposed to field observation lies in the degree of control the experimenter can place on the study.

Ideally, the field observation method would be the best. In such a situation, communicators may not be aware that their verbal discourses are being studied and the communicators would be responding to real situations as opposed to laboratory tasks. Perhaps motives would be easier to discern. For example, consider the job interview. In such a situation, the applicant would most likely be very careful in the selection of words and phrases in response to questions asked by the interviewer. In all likelihood, the applicant's responses would be influenced by the desire to secure employment, possibly causing the person to use more "language tactics" in responding to the interviewer's questions. Another

interesting place to document the occurrence of language tactics may be meetings conducted by various university departments, especially those meetings which deal specifically with funding. The assumption here is that an observer would record a much higher incidence of the use of language tactics at such a meeting, where very definite motives exist, than at a bridge club meeting, which is primarily social.

Rather than merely recording the number of language tactics uttered by the group as a whole, another approach might be to list all members of a group and then record the number of language tactics each uses in reference to other group members. Perhaps a pattern of deference can thereby be ascertained and the relative status of each member gauged.

To conclude the discussion of methods, a field study would have been a better place to do a study of this nature. The laboratory situation restricts and alters normal communication patterns, if not by the physical environment itself (a small closed room), then most likely by the knowledge group members have that their discussion is being tape recorded.

SUBJECTS

Middle-class college undergraduates may not be the best subjects to be used in a study of this nature. College students are, for the most part, full-time students whose main concern is getting through college and earning a degree. Work experience for the most part is limited to after-school jobs and summer-time employment. In terms of age, social class, and educational background the similarity is astounding. Contact with the "real world" is minimal. The question raised here is "can data drawn from such a pool be applicable to the rest of the culture?" This is a

question that any researcher who uses college students as subjects must consider.

Subjects in this study participated for one of two reasons: (1) their instructor told them they had to, and (2) they were given the incentive of extra project credit for participating. These two reasons no doubt had some effect on the resulting discussions. No groups participated because they expressed any real concern for any of the tasks themselves. The outcome of the discussions in no way affected them directly with the exception of the extra project credit. In all likelihood, all subjects probably participated in the experiment because there was some outside force involved. It is doubtful that any subjects ego or self-concept was called on the line and in all likelihood there are no after-effects to the tasks. Perhaps subjects looked at the task as simply another requirement to be done and proceeded from there. Whatever the case, there was probably no strong motivational force involved in the completion of either task. There were no immediate or long-term goals to be realized by performing the tasks, so perhaps involvement in the tasks was not as keen as it may have been given another situation.

TASKS

Two different tasks were utilized in this study. The tasks were chosen on the basis of relative ambiguity of the task origin. The relatively unambiguous task situation (NASA-Lost on the Moon) was initially difficult in concept for group members. The ambiguous task situation (Castaways) offered no positive characters to choose from and therefore it may have been better to choose a different task such as the Kidney Machine Problem. Neither task (NASA and Castaways) demanded much

involvement on the part of all group members. Language tactics recorded may have been mere instances of politeness. Neither task directly related to group members either as a group or individuals.

In summary, while the tasks had the potential for generating discussion among group members, perhaps more relevant tasks could have been selected.

GROUPS

Twenty groups ranging in membership from four to six members per group participated in the study. One half of the groups (ten groups) had been together all of Winter Quarter, 1976, as classroom project groups. In these groups, conversation was constant, members interrupted each other frequently, and two or more members occasionally spoke at the same time. There were very few periods of silence on the tape-recordings of their discussions and these groups usually had to be told to stop their discussions when time ran out.

The remaining ten groups consisted of individuals who had never been together with other group members prior to participating in this experiment. In this situation, there were long periods of silence on the audio tapes, generally only one person spoke at a time, and speakers had a tendency to trail off before completing a sentence. In old groups, however, the speaker would most likely be interrupted. Perhaps this difference in the amount of speech uttered contributed to the difference in the number of language tactics uttered by members of old and new groups.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While limited in scope (only the occurrence of language tactics

was documented), in subjects (only college students were used as subjects), and in methods (only the laboratory approach was utilized), this study nonetheless carries implications for future research into the area of human communications.

While exploratory in nature and in general a failure in terms of hypotheses-testing, this study nonetheless is a beginning step in the study of communication as a process as opposed to a static entity. The process of communication is a many faceted one, with as many variables present as the physical and psychological environments allow. By looking at verbal communications within a specific context, perhaps inner environments may be better understood.

All too often in research, the process is overlooked. In small group research for example, much is written about group norms and status hierarchies. Little, if anything at all, is written about how these norms and hierarchies come into being. A student of communications may be left with the understanding that these variables do exist but how they actually come into being is not explained or even guessed at. Perhaps verbal communications, similar to language tactics, create the norms and the hierarchies.

Thayer writes that "taking the process for granted obscures those elements which might otherwise lead to more fruitful explanations of the obvious."¹ Future research, then, might concentrate on how language is employed in interpersonal interactions as part of the means of understanding the process.

The following recommendation was drafted by the 1968 New Orleans Conference on Research and Instructional Development. It merits mention here because so little has been done even eight years after the conference

with respect to studying communication as a process and not as a static entity.

Recommendation 29: The conferees encourage research emphasizing the interactive, on-going, process nature of speech communication.

Research to date in speech communication often has oversimplified the multi-dimensional, real-life communicative process by taking a static view of communicative behaviors. Studies most often have been restricted to the consequences of single messages. Too few studies have focused on interactions, with detailed and specific examination of moment-to-moment, sequential, contingent behavior.

Greater emphasis on intensive analysis of process should lead to:

- (a): Consideration of new and significant research questions regarding such matters as strategies and constraints in message choice.
- (b): Concern with a wider range of communicative environments and their relationships, extending from dyadic communication to small-group deliberations to polarized mass communication, and:
- (c): Study of previously unformulated speech functions beyond the traditional informative-persuasive-entertaining trilogy, such as "rapport-establishing" and "territory-claiming".²

While the present study by no means approaches any of the above-stated recommendations, the author was nonetheless comforted to learn that research into the process (of which spoken language is a part) is a type of research that is encouraged in the field. Of course, the chances of failure in such a study are much greater. Nonetheless, it is by failing that one learns. Just as one learns from one's own mistakes, so too can others.

Future research dealing with language tactics might explore motives and expectations using the critical incident approach. Such an investigation may reveal how personal goals are pursued in any interaction as well as give insight into the motives various communicators may have in a specific situation. Another area might be that of interaction between communicators of different established statuses. It is this researcher's guess that high status communicators will use

more language tactics in addressing lower status communicators than lower status communicators will use in addressing communicators of higher status. The potential for fruitful study of language tactics/seems limitless.

CONCLUSION

While no research hypotheses were supported in this study, the redeeming factor may be that this study represents the first attempt to empirically study and define "language tactics". More research into this area is definitely warranted to understand this one aspect of our communicative behavior. Future research may conclude that language tactics are definite strategies employed to consciously accomplish personal goals, simply filler words, or mere courtesy terms. Language tactics may be all or none of these. Only the future will tell. Perhaps, too, the language tactic is a mere phenomena of spoken English. A study of the conversation styles of other cultures and languages might prove interesting.

This study represents one person's attempt to empirically define and study "language tactics". In this study it was found that the variables of group and task origin had minimal effect upon the use of language tactics by communicators. Perhaps future research will yield different results.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER VI

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¹⁷Nierenberg, Gerald I. and Henry H. Calero: Meta-Talk: Guide to Hidden Meanings in Conversations, Trident Press, New York, New York, 1973.

¹⁸Patton, Bobby R. and Kim Griffin: Interpersonal Communication: Basic Text and Reading, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, New York, 1974.

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APPENDIX A

DIRECTIONS GIVEN TO Ss

Before going over the directions for this experiment, I would like to take the time now to personally thank all of you for taking some of your time to participate in this experiment. I will try to get my results back to you by the end of this term; if that is impossible to do, please see your instructor at the beginning of next term. He or she will be able to put you in touch with me.

What you all will be doing is an exercise that requires achieving consensus on the part of your group in reaching your decision. You all must be in agreement on the final decision.

The task is not very long and you and your group will probably be close to consensus by the end of the 30 minute time period. Your group discussion will be tape-recorded but no one will be watching your group while you are working on the task. With the exception of one minute checks on the recording process, no one will be listening to your discussion either. The tapes will be coded by numbers so that you will remain anonymous.

Consensus demands participation by all group members, not only one or two or three people in your group. If your group should arrive at consensus in less than 5 to 10 minutes, that indicates to me that the decision was probably not group consensus at all but a decision pushed through by one or two members. If this should happen, I will have to reschedule your group. Your final decision should reflect the

criteria as well as being a logical, thoughtful one, the product of all members contributions. Group consensus takes time to achieve and I personally prefer that each and every member of your group be provided with the maximum opportunity to contribute something to your group decision.

I hope you enjoy the task, which incidentally is specifically designed to encourage discussion among all your group members.

Thank you and please begin.....(by turning the page)

Chris Bunsick

APPENDIX B

RELATIVELY AMBIGUOUS TASK

Your Task: Achieve consensus as to the rankings of the five people in this story.

The Story:

Five shipwrecked people are cast upon two islands. They are close together and in plain sight of each other, but the narrow strait that separates them teems with sharks. Swimming is plainly impossible.

Upon arrival, Mister B sets about gathering up all the wood on Island One. Miss C goes to him and says: "Let me make a raft of your wood so that I can cross over and join Mister D. He and I are engaged and hope to be married". Mister B looks at Miss C and says: "Sure you can make a raft if you spend the night with me." "Beast", shrieks Miss C, appalled. "I could never do that." "Okay," gruffs Mister B, "swim."

In despair Miss C approaches Mister A. He is inspecting grains of sand. "Please sir would you try to persuade Mister B to make me a raft of your wood so that I can cross over and join Mister D. I love him and want to be with him." Mister A shakes his head. "My dear child," he says, "I am trying to find a crystal so that I can make a radio, communicate with the world, and get us all rescued. Do you really expect me to stop that to help solve your petty personal problems?"

Distraught, Miss C returns to B and accepts his terms. Next

morning as good as his word, B makes a raft. Miss C crosses safely to Island Two. She runs to D crying, "Darling, I'm here." "So what?" snarls D. "I don't want anything more to do with you. I never knew you were that kind of girl."

Shaken, Miss C turns back to the beach, clearly resolved to feed herself to the sharks. Just as she is about to plunge in, a hand grasps her firmly by the hair. It is Mister E. "Don't," he says, "I saw what you did too, but I think I know why you did it and it's a fine, noble thing. I've been hoping all my life to find someone capable of such a selfless act, and now I found her. Will you marry me?"

Miss C accepts. Rescue is soon at hand. Miss C and Mister E are married by the captain of the rescue ship, and all the castaways return to civilization and live as happily as possible ever after.

Now, list the castaways in the order that you and all members of your group agree on from "like the most" to "like the least". Be sure to give the reasons for your list and your final decision. I should like to have one completed list back from each group listing rank-order and reasons for the rank. Remember, all of you must be in agreement as to the final list.

1. _____ Like Most
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____ Like Least

APPENDIX C

RELATIVELY UNAMBIGUOUS TASK

Your Task: Achieve consensus as to the rankings of the following items.

The Story:

You are a member of a space crew originally scheduled to rendezvous with a mother ship on the lighted surface of the moon. Due to mechanical difficulties, however, your ship was forced to land at a spot some 200 miles from the rendezvous point. During landing, much of the equipment aboard was damaged, and since survival depends on reaching the mother ship, the most critical items available must be chosen for the 200-mile trip. Below are listed the fifteen items left intact and undamaged after landing. Your task is to rank order them in terms of their importance to your crew in allowing them to reach the rendezvous point. Place the number 1 by the most important item, the number 2 by the second most important item, and so on, through number 15, the least important. All members in your group must be in agreement as to the ranking. Your answers will be compared to the answers given by NASA at the end of this exercise.

The 15 items:

- _____ Box of matches
- _____ Food Concentrate
- _____ 50 feet of nylon rope
- _____ Parachute silk
- _____ Portable heating unit

- _____ Two .45 caliber pistols
- _____ One case dehydrated Pet milk
- _____ Two 100-pound tanks of oxygen
- _____ Stellar map (of the moon's constellation)
- _____ Life raft
- _____ Magnetic compass
- _____ 5 gallons water
- _____ Signal flares
- _____ First-aid kit containing injection needles
- _____ Solar-powered FM receiver-transmitter

APPENDIX D

DIRECTIONS TO CODERS

To: Karla, Mark, Denny

From: Chris

Regarding: The procedure for coding data.

Before I begin with a description of what you are supposed to do, I would like to thank the three of you for giving me part of your valuable time to help me with this research. It means a lot to me, and it's sure nice to have such neat friends. I'm not at all sure if such "pleasantries" belong in an introduction to research, but it's my study and I'll put them in if I so desire. Thanks a lot for your help.

One important thing to remember is the fact that there are no right or wrong answers in this coding process. All three of you will have identical copies of the transcripts and I will be checking to see how much agreement there is between your respective totals, but as far as "rightness" or "wrongness" of the answers, the real test is in how accurate my directions are to you, the coders, in achieving similar results.

My experiment concerns itself with certain language qualifiers people consciously or subconsciously use in communicating with others. I want you to look for instances when the speaker is excusing, justifying, rationalizing, or interpreting for his listeners what he is about to say before he says it. Because of the give and take nature of small group discussions (interruptions, incomplete thoughts, etc.)

you may come across some statements which are not complete sentences but nonetheless contain elements of qualification or justification on the part of the speaker, modifying what he is about to say. Score these phrases, whether they occur within a complete sentence or are fragments of a sentence which the speaker never completed due to interruption by others. Examples of such a statement or phrase might include: "You're not going to like this, but.....", or "I'm not really sure of this.....", or "Off the top of my head I'd say.....", or "Now be sure not to take this the wrong way.....", or "I don't want you to think.....", or "It goes without saying.....", or "I'd venture to guess that.....", or "Since I've spent 5 years studying....." These are just a few examples of the variety of phrases I'd like you to be sensitive to when you are reading over the transcripts. IMPORTANT REMINDER: Discount filler words such as "yeah", "but", "if", "uh-uh", "you know", "I mean", etc., when they appear alone and not in the context of a phrase or sentence. All the phrases I want you to score should include at least one verb or verb form.

Change of speakers is denoted by a series of.....in the transcript. What I would like you to do is:

1. Read each transcript completely.
2. A series of.....indicates a change in speakers. When you see this, read the next general thought units or fragments and see if the speaker uses any words or statements which qualify in some way the speaker's intention in expressing that idea. (See examples of phrases of this type above.) When you find such a qualifier (whether completed or fragmented), underline the phrase with the yellow highlighter I

have enclosed. (An example may be: "Since I favor women's lib, I would choose Miss C for top rank." You would underline "Since I favor women's lib" in yellow. The speaker in this instance is justifying the choice.) Then go to the next.....and so forth. At the end of each section, total the number of phrases you have underlined for that section and write the number at the bottom of the paper.

FINAL NOTE: Perhaps an easier way of looking at this is to look at each phrase or statement and to see what the main idea is (in the case of interrupted statements, what the main idea might have been if the speaker had not been interrupted) and then re-read the statement and see if there are any phrases used that would indicate to you that the speaker is justifying, apologizing for, interpreting, or qualifying his reasons for making the statement. If there are any of these phrases, underline them in yellow.

Thank-you and have fun!!!!!!