DOCUMENT RESUME

ABSTRACT
          In preparing urban teachers to become effective
classroom communicators, urban speech teachers should involve their
students in interpersonal communication within an intergroup context
whenever possible. Students must be taught to become sensitive to
word choice, aware of the importance of verbal and nonverbal codes,
and more empathic. To accomplish this goal, teachers must investigate
the feelings and attitudes of people of other groups by learning
facts about them via children, parents, and books. They can also get
additional communication training through self-analysis and
intergroup and interpersonal situations designed to develop empathy.
Some approaches which may be used to accomplish this goal are
simulation games, communication effectiveness exercises, role
playing, and self-disclosure. Guidelines for future urban educators
include the following: (1) interracial communication is facilitated
when the communicators share a common coding system; (2) meaning
communication in transracial contexts requires the proximity of
source and receiver; and (3) interpersonal communication with
transracial contexts often fails because the sender and the receiver
do not share or seek each other's point of view. (SW)

MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNICATION JOURNAL

VOL. 6 No. 1

May, 1974

COMMUNICATION APPROACHES FOR THE
INTERGROUP EDUCATOR

by

Kathleen M. Galvin*

leave me alone, i would always shout
i may be Spanish, but i'm proud of it.[1]

> --Miriam La Santa,
> high school student

Hypocrites

I hate these people who say they care
But when you look at them
You can tell they don't
They fill your mind with fancy hopes
And then they let you down.[2]

> --"Monk" Tom Burns,
> high school student

"Miss Galvin, if I don't talk to you
when I'm in the hall with my friends,
it has nothing to do with you. I
can't talk to teachers when I'm with
them."

> --Conversation with
> high school student

Education can be a joyful and/or painful self-
discovery process for students and teachers, but
today many teachers are leaving the profession
before experiencing the joy because they are de-
feated by an inability to communicate with their
students. Students are dropping out or tuning
out because they aren't being heard or understood.

In this paper, I wish to focus on certain ap-
proaches an urban speech department can use as
it contributes to the preparation of urban school

-31-

teachers. This is a critical issue from a professional and personal point of view. Many urban speech departments serve students preparing to enter teaching careers and many departments have communication courses designed specifically for teachers. As a teacher for the past six years in an intergroup school, that is, one that contains several racial and/or ethnic groups, I have had to learn the hard way what affected the communication and thus the learning in my classes. Some basic assumptions underlying this paper are:

1. Teaching is a communication process.
2. Urban schools are intergroup schools that contain majority and minority teachers and students. In some cases, the teacher will represent one group and the class, another. In other cases, the class will be composed of several identifiable groups.
3. Effective interpersonal communication fosters learning.

It is my position that urban speech departments should involve potential urban teachers in interpersonal communication within an intergroup context to whatever degree possible. Teachers should be prepared to be empathic communicators in interpersonal, intergroup encounters.

Students preparing to teach in any situation need to be aware of the communication process as it applies to a classroom. They should begin to understand themselves as communicators through self-analysis and the feedback of others and should be able to develop communicative strategies to facilitate instruction of their students. This necessitates a theory-lab course applying communication theory to classroom issues.

A student preparing to teach in intergroup situations must have this experience with a focus on the intergroup classroom. She must analyze herself as a communicator, not only to members of her own group, but to members of other groups.

Throughout the speech-communication course, she should be challenged to analyze: 1) her purpose in preparing for urban school-teaching; 2) her feelings about members of other groups; 3) her ability to communicate with members of other groups. Only by a continuous process of self-analysis and discovery will she be able to reach an understanding of how she does communicate to members of other groups and how to modify her behavior if she desires or needs to do so.

The speech-communication class may provide a way of experiencing intergroup, interpersonal communication situations aimed at developing empathy for intergroup situations. If the speech class is an intergroup situation the learning will be enhanced.

In his thesis, "The Role of Empathy in Reducing Intergroup Conflict in an Integrated High School," Michael Cohen discusses traditional methodologies for resolving intergroup tension and improving relations among groups. These include:

1) <u>Contact Theory</u> - which assumes increased contact with members of other groups will enable people to know each other better and therefore improve relationships between groups.
2) <u>Informational Theory</u> - which assumes that planting "right" ideas in the minds of receivers will be followed by "right" behavior.
3) <u>Group Discussion</u> - which assumes a series of intergroup meetings to air differences, let off steam and, perhaps, draw a plan of action will improve intergroup relations.
4) <u>Field Study</u> - which assumes that direct perceptual experiences in another community's life and affairs will improve relations.[3]

Taken as individual approaches, each above methodology has been generally unsatisfactory, but

-33-

taken as part of a communication approach de-
signed to increase awareness and empathy, they
may make unevenly valuable contributions to im-
proving intergroup communication.

Teachers must be aware of the verbal and non-
verbal codes of their students which convey in-
formation, attitudes, values and feelings, and
must begin to perceive situations from the stu-
dents' viewpoints. A strong social sensitivity
rests upon empathic responses; these are basic
to "assuming the role of another" and hence, to
social interaction and intergroup empathy. "The
sign of the absence of empathy is misunderstand-
ing."[4]

Verbal and Nonverbal Codes

Effective communication exists when the re-
ceiver decodes the message exactly as the sender
encoded (intended) it. In any situation accur-
ate communication is rare, but in intergroup sit-
uations it may be even more difficult to achieve.

As a prospective urban teacher investigates
the verbal and nonverbal communication codes, she
will be forced to consider the relationship of
perception to the accurate transmission of these
codes. For her, the importance of shared or com-
mon meanings based on common experiences will take
on new meaning when applied to an intergroup sit-
uation. If we accept the statement that communi-
cation is facilitated when the communicators share
a common coding system, we can begin to understand
the importance of encoding and decoding skills in
intergroup classroom learning.

Because the prospective teacher needs to develop
skills in dealing with different coding systems
she should be exposed to various examples of en-
coding and decoding situations to aid her in de-
veloping skills of understanding and analyzing dif-
ferent codification systems. She needs the ability
to handle new codes, not just the information to

deal with a specific code. As she moves from
school to school, or situation to situation, she
needs the ability to adapt to different codes be-
cause the shared codification system improves the
chances for achieving understanding and learning
in her classroom.

Let us examine the verbal code first. As a re-
ceiver, any teacher in an intergroup school must
be prepared to decode language which may not have
been part of her vocabulary before. One of our
student teachers reported, "Until last week I
never heard of a 'humbug' and now I know enough
to get concerned when I hear there's a humbug
down the hall." Words such as "dude, crib, hawk,
gig, space, jam" became an active part of her de-
coding vocabulary in a few weeks. If she taught
in another school it is likely that her decoding
vocabulary would include different verbal expres-
sions.

Some educators question the teacher's responsi-
bility to learn to decode or receive words of a
specific group. There seems to be little sub-
stance in their position if they are concerned
with communication, or sharing of a code, with-
in a classroom. Students can decode most words
within a teacher's verbal code and, I believe,
a teacher should be able to decode language used
by groups of students in her classes.

In discussing transracial communication, Arthur
Smith presents the following model of codifica-
tion systems:[5]

Majority Codification
        System

Minority Codification
        System
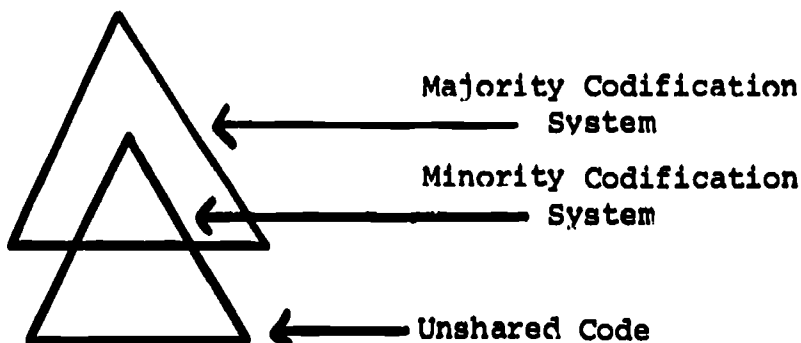
Unshared Code

From this diagram it is obvious that the larger the shared code, the greater the chances for effective communication. A teacher who shares a greater code opens channels of communication providing some students with opportunities to express themselves comfortably in non-threatening situations.

In "Teaching Teachers to Comprehend Nego Nonstandard English," Williams and Rundell conclude:

> Currently, there is speculation that the inner city Black child is separated from the standard-English-speaking-teacher far more by his lack of production capabilities in standard English than by his comprehension capability. Accordingly, teaching the teacher to at least comprehend Nego Nonstandard English may be a most practical and economical way to lessen this linguistic barrier in the classroom.[6]

This does not mean that a teacher must speak in the verbal code of groups in her classroom, but it does mean she participates in the communication process with them using whatever codes are necessary for effective communication. Many intergroup communication situations have been harmed when a teacher affected the verbal code of a class in an attempt to be "in" or "accepted." Charlotte Epstein, an educator concerned with intergroup communication, strongly discourages a parroting of a group's communication. She states:

> No one is suggesting that teachers begin to use obscenities when speaking to poor children. Nor is the image of the middle-class educated adult using the current slang particularly attractive. But there is a big difference between listening carefully to all words to understand meanings and to establish communication, and parroting

the youngsters' language when one
feels neither comfortable nor parti-
cularly communicative doing so.[7]

As an encoder of verbal messages, a teacher
needs to be sensitive to her receivers. Dis-
cussions of certain subjects, such as religion
or family, may be handled differently accord-
ing to the receiving group. Very often teach-
ers are unaware of expressions which may be
offensive to members of other groups or they
assume the group member will be amused by, or
ignore the words. Sensitivity to word choice
facilitates classroom communication. Sometimes
teachers must be educated to potentially offen-
sive language. In discussing this issue, Ep-
stein suggests:

> We must, of course, learn not to use
> words or terms which members of other
> groups find offensive. Many people who
> maintain that they never employ racial
> or religious epithets are surprised to
> learn that words like "boy," when used
> to describe a minority-group man, and
> expressions like "I jew him down" imply
> prejudice, or at least gross insensitiv-
> ity, to minority-group people. A major-
> ity-group person may protest that he
> "didn't mean anything" by his choice of
> words, or that "we always use that ex-
> pression." But such terms originated
> in stereotypic thinking and discrimina-
> tory behavior, and the sensitive person
> w 1 recognize the hurt and anger they
> evoke ard so eliminate them from his
> vocabulary.[8]

Thus, potential teachers must become aware of the
importance of shared verbal codes for effective
classroom communication.

The nonverbal code is critical and often more difficult to explore than the verbal code. For example, Thomas Kochman describes a nonverbal communication breakdown in a classroom:

> In an urban classroom an Anglo teacher is reproaching a Puerto Rican child. Part of his response includes the lowering of his eyes. The teacher moves toward the child, lifts his chin and even more harshly than before, scolds, "You look me in the eye when I'm talking to you!" The child is hurt and bewildered. Rapport between this student and teacher is irreparably damaged.[9]

Kochman explains that the teacher "misread" the Puerto Rican child's lowering of the eyes as minimizing the reproach whereas the child was expressing respect for the teacher's authority, "for in his culture to look an adult in the eyes when being scolded would be a sign of impudence and gross disrespect."[10]

As an encoder of a nonverbal message, a teacher needs to be sensitive to her receivers. Backing away from a student, or immediately changing a tone of voice when approached by a student of another group, communicates much to the student receivers. Discipline issues in many schools center on the unequal treatment of members of different groups, either an ignoring of one's behavior or a more severe punishment of their behavior.

For a teacher to establish strong lines of communication with any students, she has to develop an empathy for their perception of the world. Empathic communication is different among those who share the same cultural patterns and codes, but the task becomes even greater among people who not only operate from different codes and are unaware of how these differences may interfere with effective communication, but are also unaware that

there are even different codes in operation.
Thus, a teacher must be aware of the potential
differences in codes and the ways to build a
bridge of common meanings.

Because each situation may be different, po-
tential teachers may develop certain expectan-
cies from individual examples, but they must
learn to investigate another's perception of
the world for the purpose of sharing a codifi-
cation system.

Processes of Investigation

Some of the basic ways of investigation are
contained in the following suggestions for the
teacher who wishes to learn more about attitudes
and feelings of people of other groups.

> First, she needs the facts. They can
> help her to expand and deepen her aware-
> ness of how people think and what they
> feel about intergroup matters--all peo-
> ple, not just members of her own group.
> And she must begin to listen to other
> people. If she is of the majority
> group, she may listen to Negro com-
> mentators and read novels, poems,
> stories and essays by minority writ-
> ers--a superb way to listen in a psych-
> ologically safe atmosphere. She must
> listen to the children she teaches,
> and, as much as possible, to their
> parents. She must open her mind to
> listen with recriminations, signs of
> rejection or devaluation of what she
> hears. For feelings are facts and no
> amount of recrimination will change
> the fact that the feelings she hears
> expressed exist. She knows that famil-
> iarity with people's feelings undergirds
> any approach to teaching new behavior
> and attitudes.[11]

A potential teacher may learn a great deal from

the above approach but this may be strengthened by the addition of communication training, including self-analysis as a communicator and studying and experiencing intergroup and interpersonal situations designed to develop empathy.

The speech-communication class may utilize the aforementioned approaches (contact theory, informational theory, group discussion, field study) as part of a theory-laboratory approach to an intergroup classroom. These approaches, coupled with interpersonal theory and exercises, may foster a sharing of information, attitudes, values, and feelings aimed at developing empathy. The theory and exercises would give a prospective teacher present personal growth and a method for improving interpersonal communication in future intergroup situations.

The following are approaches which may be used as part of the speech-communication course.

Simulation Games

Simulation games can provide exciting student interaction and an excellent point of departure for future discussion. Within a safe situation students are given the chance to make decisions from a different perceptual framework and to live with the consequences of those decisions. Cohen defends the use of simulation games in teaching intergroup communication because he believes that "although the superordinate goals are artificial in nature they nevertheless produce real consequences in interpersonal emotional involvement. Simulations may offer a meaningful human relationship between students of different backgrounds and experiences."[12]

Some examples of appropriate packaged simulation games are:

Black and Whites - Psychology Today
Sunshine - Interact Company
Confrontation - B'nai B'rith Anti Defamation
                     League.

Communication Effectiveness Exercises

A class may engage in exercises related to communication accuracy, directed feedback and perception pitfalls. To develop intergroup communication accuracy students may engage in dialogues and role-reversal testing, restatement exercises, word-association tests and the sharing of terminology. (In an interracial communication class at UCLA black students devised a "black lexicon" and white students tested it in the white community.)13

Direct feedback situations allow students to receive feedback from intergroup receivers on their communicative behavior with suggestions for possible modification of the behavior. The modified behavior may be attempted within the safe setting and further feedback may be received. The class may progress through levels of descriptive, interpretative and evaluative feedback.

Perception pitfall exercises may include the use of case studies, art materials and pictures by which to consider traditional stereotypes or the creation of masks. Completion tests and projective techniques may be used to introduce the concept of expectancies within intergroup situations.

Role Playing

Similar to the simulation games, role playing allows a student to work out problems in different ways in safe situations. A student may attempt to alter his own behavior or to put himself in another's place and respond as he thinks the other would respond. Teachers have used role playing successfully in demonstrating discrimination behaviors within the classroom. Epstein justifies this approach to intergroup situations in the following manner:

> Role playing may serve to overcome
> the initial difficulty of speaking
> directly to intergroup problems ...
> As the class tries to understand
> people's fears of each other, they
> may develop some case in discussing
> the subject and eventually find the
> courage to admit their own fears.
> There is no shortcut to, or substi-
> tute for, speaking candidly about
> one's feelings and beliefs, if we
> are to develop self-insight, under-
> standing and acceptance of ourselves
> and others.[14]

<u>Self-Disclosure</u>

The sharing of feelings among members of dif-
ferent groups depends on a developed trust level.
Students may be encouraged to engage in progress-
ively open self-disclosure throughout the term
focused on reactions and feelings in intergroup
situations. Psychologist David Johnson defines
self-disclosure as "revealing how you are reacting
to the present situation and giving any informa-
tion about the past that is relevant to understand-
ing how you are reacting to the present."[15] Thus,
self-disclosure may occur as a regular follow-up
to role playing, simulation games or communication
effectiveness exercises.

Thus, the student in an intergroup interpersonal
communication class is provided with personal in-
sight and a series of approaches for analyzing
and improving her communication behavior in future
intergroup situations. She should be able to reach
a point where she no longer says, "How would I
feel in that situation?" but "If I were (Maria,
Darrell, Mike...) how would I feel in that situa-
tion?"

In discussing transracial communication contexts

Arthur Smith presents the following princi-
ples as some of those derived from theory.
I believe we can substitute "intergroup" for
"interracial" and "transracial" and derive
valuable guidelines for a future urban educa-
tor.

1. Interracial communication is facilitated
    when the communicators share a common
    coding system.

2. Meaningful communication in transracial
    contexts requires the proximity of source
    and receiver.

3. Interpersonal communication with transracial
    contexts often fails because the sender and
    the receiver do not share nor do they seek
    each other's point of view.[16]

When a teacher becomes open to the way of life
as experienced by her students and when she can
place her world in theirs at the risk of changing
her own perceptions she opens the door for mean-
ingful communication and learning. We must help
our students begin to reach this goal.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Virginia Baron, ed., _Here I Am_ (New York: Bantam
Pathfinder edition, 1971), p. 18.

[2] Baron, p. 42.

[3] Michael Cohen, "The Role of Empathy in Reducing
Intergroup Conflict Within an Integrated High
School" (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Northwestern
University, 1971), pp. 11-35.

[4] Cohen, p. 36.

[5] Arthur Smith, "Interpersonal Communication With-
in Transracial Contexts," in _Speech Communication
Behavior_, ed. by Larry Barker and Robert Kibler
(Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1971),
p. 312.

[6] Frederick Williams and Edward Rundell, "Teaching
Teachers to Comprehend Negro Nonstandard English,"
The Speech Teacher (Sept., 1971), p. 177.

[7] Charlotte Epstein, _Intergroup Relations for the
Classroom Teacher_ (New York: Houghton Mifflin,
1968), p. 88.

[8] Epstein, p. 51.

[9] Thomas Kochman, "Cross-Cultural Communication:
Contrasting Perspectives conflicting Sensibili-
ties," (Mimeo issued by Department of Linguis-
tics, Northeastern Illinois State College,
July, 1970), p. 1

[10] Kochman, p. 6.

[11] Epstein, p. 50.

[12] Cohen, p. 57.

[13] Andrea Rich and Arthur Smith, "An Approach to Teaching Interracial Comunication," _The Speech Teacher_, (March, 1970), p. 145.

[14] Epstein, p. 108.

[15] David Johnson, _Reaching Out_ (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972), p. 10

[16] Smith, pp. 311-316.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bacon, Virginia, ed. _Here I Am_. New York: Bantam-Pathfinder edition, 1971.

Cohen, Michael. _The Role of Empathy in Reducing Intergroup Conflict Within an Integrated High School_. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Northwestern University, 1971.

Epstein, Charlotte. _Intergroup Relations for the Classroom Teacher_. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1968.

Johnson, David. _Reaching Out_. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972.

Kochman, Thomas. "Cross-Cultural Communication: Contrasting Perspectives, Conflicting Sensibilities," Mimeo issued by Department of Linguistics Northeastern Illinois State College, July, 1970.

Smith, Arthur L. "Interpersonal Communication Within Transracial Contexts," _Speech Communication Behavior_. Ed. by Larry Barker and Robert Kibler. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971.

Smith, Arthur and Rich, Andrea. "An Approach to Teaching Interracial Communication," _The Speech Teacher_ (March, 1970), 138-144.

Stone, James and Schneider, Frederick, eds. _Teaching in the Inner City_. New York: Thomas Crowell Co., 1970.

Williams, Frederick and Rundell, Edward. "Teach-
ing Teachers to Comprehend Negro Nonstandard
English," The Speech Teacher (September, 1971)
p. 174-177.

---

* Dr. Galvin is Chairman, Department of Speech
Education, Northwestern University, Evanston,
Illinois. She is co-author of Speech Communi-
cation: An Interpersonal Approach for Teachers
and Person to Person: An Introduction to Speech
Communication, both published by National Text-
book Company, Skokie, Illinois.