

LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN CONFRONTATION RESOLVING SKILLS AT SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Shandru Mariyadas¹, Dr. AR. Saravanakumar²

¹PhD Research scholar, Dept. of Education, DDE, Alagappa university, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, India.

²Asst Professor, Dept. of Education, DDE, Alagappa university, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, India.

¹chandrumariyadas@yahoo.com and ²skumarar@alagappauniversity.ac.in

Abstract

Language in action can be seen in terms of verbal, non-verbal and written media. Therefore, language and communication is very important to any organization as a school management. What defines human's humanity is language which is the vehicle of communication. People, therefore, engage in communication for many reasons and for the purpose of this paper, we shall examine the roles and functions of communication as one of the means of non-violent methods of conflict resolution at school. Language is regarded by experts as the key to the heart of a people. Language and communication, therefore, are very crucial in the management and resolution of conflicts or disputes between the two parties in conflicts. The insights afforded from these reports guided in high performing schools in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. The researcher explored features of principal's conflict management style that were evident in high performing schools and required to discover the characteristics of principal's peaceful management ways. 72 schools from the total of 358 selected as five by one scale high performing schools were being selected from research area by Random Sampling Method where Principals have selected as the respondents of primary data collection to fill up the Questionnaire and face to face interview. And also, secondary data (Documentary) would be utilized to ensure the primary data as supportive documents for the data analysis. Conclusions As important as language and communication are in conflicts and conflict resolutions, they are not properly focused in the works of many writers and researchers. This paper, therefore, identifies communication as a significant means of resolving conflicts at organization. Other non-violent methods of management and resolution of conflicts where the use of language and communication are crucial and significantly inevitable include negotiation, dialogue, mediation, adjudication, arbitration as well as the use of the mass media. It is the opinion of this paper that the roles and functions of language and communication should be more focused, analyzed and utilized in order to find out the root causes, management, effects and resolutions of conflicts in the school administration.

Keywords: language, communication, confrontational resolving skills

INTRODUCTION

Language is considered to be an indispensable human endowment which is conceptualized, according to Crystal (1987), as having, perhaps, 'magical and mystical' and 'unique role in capturing the breath of human thought and endeavors'. Many studies derived from the famous Sapir-Wharf's hypothesis of 'linguistic determinism' and 'linguistic relativity' has shown that there exists relationship between language and thought. Such relationship clearly indicates that language is the vehicle for thought. The theoretical framework of the paper, therefore, is hinged on the significant relationship between languages and thought in conflict management and resolution. Peace is a desirable condition but conflicts are inevitable in any society. In view of this, language, information and communication are very essential in promoting, preventing and resolving conflict situations. Negotiation or dialogue can only take place where exchanging and sharing of information is possible. Communication, therefore, is the goal of language as mutual agreement is the goal of conflict resolution. In this paper, language, communication and conflict resolution are examined in a way to see their interconnectivity and productivity. Emphasis is placed on conflict management and resolution through language and effective communication in this paper. Peace, which is the prime value of this paper, is generally defined as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence, and about peaceful co-existence. The main goal is about creating and maintaining a just order in the society and the use of non-violent methods in resolving conflicts. Among the non-violent methods of conflict management and resolution is the application of communication to resolve disputes. Language itself is nothing without the substance of communication. According to David (2006), six meanings of peace are

generally agreed on by many peace researchers from the African perspectives: peace as the absence of war (absence of direct violence); peace as justice and development (absence of structural violence); peace as respect and tolerance between people; peace as Gaia (balance in and with the ecosphere); inner peace (spiritual peace); and peace as 'wholeness' and 'making whole'. Looking at the various interpretations of peace, it is obvious that everybody deserves it. However, when it is perceived that peace is threatened or absent, people search for it with peaceful approaches or demand for it with force thus leading to violent situations. Even in violent conflict situations, parties involved still look for a way out either through non-violent or force methods. As a result of too many violent situations, there is a desperate search for peace and conflict resolutions in our societies.

Through language and communication we can see the heart of a people. This implies that language makes it possible to express feelings, emotions, views, ideas, opinions, perceptions as well as judgment about people, objects, places, things, information and situations. Therefore, information about conflict and conflict situations can be expressed in language. Communication relates to the presence and sharing of accurate information about a conflict or conflict situation, being able to talk about feelings and concerns of parties, speaking about what parties would like to change, and discussing the nature and type of the conflict, touching on the positions, interests, needs, and fears of parties. Communication, therefore, has come to represent a key strategy of conflict prevention and resolution.

LANGUAGE

Sapir (1963) says "Language is the key to the heart of a people". Language is therefore conceived as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. This functional knowledge of language symbols that human experience has achieved in the way of dealing with situation can be communicated through language. This implies that language does not operate independently of culture. Looking at the definition of language from the perspective of Sapir, it is very clear that language is more than a means of communication. He clearly captures the definition of language with a pair of lenses: communicative function and culture (cultural experience and expression). Sansui (2001) defines language from the perspectives of social functions and psychology: "Language is used for phatic communication, that is, as a special regulator; for ceremonial purposes; as an instrument of action; to keep records; to convey orders and information; to influence people; to enable self-expression; and to embody and enable thought". Like the Biblical twin brothers of Esau and Jacob, peace and conflict are biologically well-seated in the heart of a people. Language as an instrument of communication may be used to influence personality; to declare war, to provoke, to incite, to oppose ideas, intentions and actions, to scatter, to condemn, blackmail, insult, destroy, tell lies, claim or testify falsely, to despise, abuse and to generate violence. In another perspective, it could be used to entertain, appeal, inspire, comfort, amuse, appreciate, build, enlighten, educate, establish cordial relationship, settle disputes and make peace with people or communities; to generate peace or to resolve conflicts within and among religious, political, community, industrial, ethnic /tribal groups. Judging from the above illustrative definitions, one can deduce that the function of language is to relay stimuli from one individual to another so as to provoke reactions in the person who hears or reads the communicative signals or linguistic form. Therefore, as Shipley (1970) has pointed out, the main function of language is social, in that it serves to bridge the gap between individual nervous systems. So far as each person is concerned, his or her language is almost of his contact with other persons. Furthermore, Moulton (1974) defines language as a wonderful and rich vehicle of communication, that is, expression of ideas, wishes and commands, conveyance of truths and lies, etc. He opines that only human beings have the attribute of sending and receiving an unlimited number of messages. Language, therefore, is what defines human's humanity. This means that language is species specific. Haugen (1974) describes language as 'man's most distinctive and significant type of social behaviour.... learned anew by every child'. Language and communication from all the considered definitions point to the fact that peace and conflict are well-seated in the heart of man. Through communication, the heart of man is revealed but we must not lose sight of the pretensions of man. However, no matter how long lies and pretensions last they will definitely be revealed one day through actions and reactions; verbal and non-verbal communication signals.

COMMUNICATION

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) defines communication as the process of obtaining information or expressing thought and feelings. Going by this definition, it is obvious that human beings are naturally communicators. Shannon and Weaver (1977) also define communication as "all the procedures by which one mind may affect another". This implies that communication can take place not only in oral and written media but also in music, pictorial arts, theatre and, of course, all human behaviour. The definitions above clearly indicate

that communication is a process that involves the transmission of message from a sender to a receiver and which has the goal of eliciting a reaction or reactions (feedback). What happens, therefore, can be explained in a way of stimulus – response process. What communication is all about can be summarized as follows:

- It is seen as a process.
- It takes place between two or more people.
- There has to be a message, which is sent from one person to another.
- That message is sent through a medium.
- The received message will generate or provoke appropriate behaviour or reaction.
- Communication is the bedrock of any social system.

Communication in this context refers to the process of sharing and exchanging information between personalities, groups and potential parties in a conflict situation. This implies that despite conflict situations, individuals or parties involved can still talk. Whenever it is possible to have a communication link between the two parties in conflict situations there is possibility of exchanging perceptions, assumptions, stereotypes, and attitudes, which have been built up by conflict groups *vis-à-vis* others. However, poor communication or the absence of communication can easily escalate conflicts between the parties or individuals in conflicts. The exchange and sharing of information can help in a great way to resolve crises and build confidence between the parties in conflicts and bring about peace. “Most of the non-violent methods of conflict management, according to Shedrack (2004), “such as collaboration, negotiation and dialogue as well as third party interventions like mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication, are largely dependent on effective communication.” In a situation whereby the parties in conflict can talk together on issues tearing them apart with the genuine purpose of finding a solution to the conflicting situations, it is envisaged that the resolution of such conflicts is at sight. The same process can also prevent crises or conflicts. Therefore, communication is a powerful and effective non-adversarial and cheap means of preventing and resolving conflicts if only the concerned parties realize it as an ingredient of peace. The following are some skills in communication:

COMMUNICATION VERBALLY AND NON-VERBALLY

Negotiations can only take place when communication is made to another person that a conflict has been identified and the communicator wishes to settle it. Effective communicator is the one that can facilitate dialogue while communicating. The personality indexes and emotions play a very important role in verbal communication while other characteristics are associated with non-verbal communication. For instance, the communicator’s use of gestures will ensure active participation by complementing speech with signs, usually hands and body movements, facial expressions and occasional unique vocal sounds, constant eye contact which refers to “eye magic” as a way of sustaining and connecting interest and attention of the parties involved in conflicts. It is always very important to note that non-verbal codes are somehow culture-bound or based. This implies that mediators should be well-versed in the cultural values and practices of the parties in conflicts as regards the use of non-verbal communication.

ACTIVE LISTENING

A good mediator displays effective listening skills. He inculcates the habit of wanting to listen to people more than engaging in talking nineteen to dozen i.e. talking too much. When a mediator becomes an active listener, he or she will be able to identify the fear, suspicion, lies, truths, interests, understanding, doubts, desires, feelings, distrust, misinterpretations, misinformation as well as other pretensions of the parties involved in the conflict situations. In this way, he or she can ask questions to clarify issues with the speaker and ensures that the other party is not in doubt or has heard the point. Mediators normally show their understanding on the matters of the two parties’ perspective through comments and nonverbal reactions. In fact, mediator shows good communication skills such as listening and being able to paraphrase and summaries what they have heard without distorting the main facts or messages. We shall discuss industrial and general conflicts and applied communication in terms of dialogue and negotiation in resolving disputes or conflicts.

INDUSTRIAL CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

Industrial conflicts are defined by Kornhauser and Rose (1954) as “the total range of behaviour and attitude that express opposition and divergent orientations between industrial owners and managers on the one hand and the working people and their organization on the other.”(Arije, 2000) In most places, strike, cessation of work, and refusal to continue to work including “go slow” and “lock – out” are some types of industrial

conflicts mostly common. The absence of these forms of industrial conflicts, however, does not mean that all is well or that it is indicative of a stable or peaceful industrial relations environment due to the fact that budding cleavages may be developing in the secret and if allowed to manifest, may be disruptive and destructive to any organization. In conflict situations, collective bargaining is the most scientific and accepted approach in handling industrial relationship. This term 'collective bargaining' refers to all negotiations which take place between an employer, a group of employers or one or more employers' organization, on the one hand, and one or more workers' organizations, on the other, concerning issues such as determining the terms and conditions of employment. The outcome of such negotiations which invariably helps to settle disputes between the parties is referred to as 'collective agreement' which must be signed and implemented by the parties involved.

NEGOTIATION

Negotiation has to do with an organisation or form of carrying out a plan through some norms that are socially acceptable in achieving a predetermined goal or achieving a significant or high degree of purposeful steps taken or actions through dialogue. Negotiation is a back and- forth communication designed to reach an agreement when you and the other side have some interests that are shared and others that are opposed. As Akinawonu (2006) has argued, dialogue must be constructively employed in disputes or conflicts situations in order to impact positively on the peaceful resolution of conflicts. He further buttresses this claim by saying that: "Since the rule of law ensures peace rather than violence in the country, and knowing that dialogue is a necessary path to peace, it inevitably means that dialogue is a fundamental factor in ensuring the rule of law. In cases where there is no very radical conflict of essential principles, ill-feeling may commonly be alleviated by face to-face discussion." Many people believe that lack of opportunity for explanation is responsible for misunderstandings and suspicions between parties in conflicts. Effective communication, therefore, is central in negotiation which is a direct process of dialogue and discussion taking place between at least two parties who are faced with a conflict situation or a dispute. The University for Peace sees negotiation as: "communication, usually governed by pre-established procedures, between representatives of parties involved in a conflict or dispute". It is realised that parties in conflict situations have to come together, talk together, agree together in order to find a solution to their problem. The end result of negotiation, according to Jeong (2000), is "... to reach agreement through joint decision making between parties." Shedrack (2004) identifies two types of negotiation: positional and collaborative negotiations. The former is based on the aggressive pursuit of interest by parties, and it is typically adversarial and competitive and it breaks down easily while the latter is a process where the parties involved embark upon education and enlightenment about their needs and concerns in a manner to solve their problems amicably without further conflicting of interests. The principle of non-violent method, using dialogue is employed to talk and negotiate the interests of the two parties in conflict situations. Normally, there are no third parties involved in this process of "open communication" or negotiation. Dialogue as a form of negotiation was judiciously used to resolve the xenophobia attacks on Nigerians and other foreign nationals in South Africa. The Vice-President of South Africa flew to Nigeria to dialogue with the Nigerian Government when the violence became terribly unleashed on the Nigerians leading to about 64 casualties. This development is seen from the international parlance as a means of promoting peace and understanding between the two countries in order to avert possible retaliation.

MEDIATION

Mediation is a process of managing negotiation by a third party, realizing that the two parties involved in a conflict have agreed to resolve their problem. According to Godongs (2006), "Mediation is a special form of negotiation in which a neutral third party has a role. Such a role is to help the parties in conflict achieve a naturally acceptable settlement". To eradicate a kind of conceptual problem of interpretation, we shall regard conciliation, good offices and fact-finding approaches of non-adversarial method of management and resolution of conflicts as part of mediation. Conciliation involves the use of a trusted third party giving an informal communication between the two parties in a conflict. Also good offices are employed in mediation process to help identify problems and to lessen the tension being generated by such problems by direct negotiation. Intermediaries are engaged as a go-between. Fact-finding is the goal of these intermediaries whereby the conflict situation are assessed and reports are given to the concerned parties in order to proffer solutions to the conflict issues. Beer and Stief (1997) define mediation as "... any process for resolving dispute in which another person helps the parties negotiate a settlement". This paper agrees totally with the University for Peace Glossary of Terms which provides that: "In acute situations, mediation acts as means of facilitating communication, commonly termed 'good offices' through the consent of vested parties that are un-able to formulate mutually satisfactory resolution on their own. The process is usually initiated by the intended external mediator, such as an international organization as a school, a government, or non-governmental organisations as a school – or by the relatively weaker party of the conflict" (Miller, 2003).

LANGUAGE STRATEGIES IN SETTLING DISPUTES

There are no sacrosanct language strategies of settling disputes the world over. Experience, cognitive abilities, unquestionable personalities, tolerance, transparency, demonstration of understanding of the disputes, coupled with effective communicative skills are what many conflict researchers consider to be foremost requirements of mediators and of conflict resolution generally. However, some language and communicative strategies are practiced during dialogue, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, adjudication etc. The mediator usually welcomes the two parties involved in disputes with warm greetings and introduces all the personalities on the mediation team. Also, the representatives on the two divides of the conflicts are recognized with keen interest. Shortly after the introduction, the business of the meeting is unfolded by addressing the problem and stating the mission of the gathering which is to resolve the conflict on ground and restore peace. The implications of the disputes on the socio-economic development are highlighted and discussed. The full cooperation of the two parties is therefore sought, stressing the need to promote peace and love. The common language of the parties in conflict is automatically the language of the conflict resolution but where necessary, interpreters are engaged to make everybody share and exchange information. Since language and culture are interwoven, mediators are expected to show understanding and respect to the cultural values of the affected people. Presentation of the grievances by each of the two parties will definitely enable the mediator to know the heart of the people concerned in the conflict at hand. Both verbal and non-verbal communication media are very significant in understanding the problems, interests, desires and fears of the speakers and the parties they represent. Listening and speaking skills are very essential in order to follow and summarise the points made by individuals and the leaders of the two parties involved in the conflict. The following language and communication strategies are employed to disseminate information during industrial conflicts: letters, press release, speeches, bulletins, press conference, communiqué, internet communication etc.

PROBLEMS OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Generally speaking, many communication experts often argue that in conflict situations, it is not easy to bring the two parties involved together except the two parties have identified the need for them to be together for the sake of making peace. Many communication barriers are responsible for prolonged disputes. In this situation, information will not flow and rumours of plans of secret attacks will be gaining ground. The situation may even become worse if the two disputing parties fail to share and exchange information through all the information channels put in place by mediators or arbiters. Without any doubt, volunteers often meet with some communication setback because of misinterpretation of the genuine intentions. The sociologist and psychologist may not bother by the behavioural dispositions of the disputants for failing to cooperate at the initial stage of the moves to settle the disputes. The answer to the display of anger and hatred could be justified by the nature of human behaviour which sometimes could be based on cultural perspectives, values and suspicion or lack of trust. Negotiation, therefore, will be hindered as a result of the perceptions and psychological impact of the outcomes from such suspected negotiations, relationships and the disputed subject-matter.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the importance of language and communication in resolving disputes between the two parties involved in an organization as a school administration, the following recommendations are given:

- a.) Many communication channels should be opened and utilized in settling disputes.
- b.) Language and communication skills should be effectively used during the process of sharing and exchanging information between individuals, groups, communities and parties in conflicts or disputes at school.
- c.) Also confidence must be reposed in the principals and teachers or non-academic staff volunteers and the parties in conflicts
- d.) Principals and teachers in conflicts or disputes should be able to talk freely about their feelings, concerns, interests, needs, and fears.
- e.) The cultural values of the parties involved in conflicts must be understood and respected.
- f.) Judgments must be given by adjudicators, arbitrators and mediators in clear terms without elements of ambiguity.
- g.) The language of leaders must package and communicate justice and peace.

CONCLUSION

Many writers have focused on the causes, operational modalities and effects of disputes or conflicts as well as the forms of conflict settlement or resolution without at school admiration. However, they shy away from

identifying the significant role of language and communication as the key factor of tracing the heart of the two parties involved in conflicts at school. This paper is of the opinion that language and communication can be used to trace the causes and management or resolution (or both) of the prevalent violent confrontation in the school. Communication could be verbal, non-verbal or written. Therefore, this paper considers communication as one of the non-adversarial methods in Western Alternative Dispute Resolution. In view of this, it should be given more attention in order to get to the root causes, information, understanding and school management or resolution of the continued eruptions of conflicts or disputes in the 21st century. Although, some principals and staff may argue that it is neither the language nor the communication forms that actually resolve disputes but the willingness of the two parties involved in a dispute to restore peace and the level of agreement reached. Such critics argue further that sanctions and armed forces or war could do the magic of restoring peace. The point is that non-adversarial methods of conflict resolution are apparently as the most acceptable scientific approach to restoring peace. Frankly speaking, the ability and willingness to accept and allow such a confrontation resolving skills, peace to reign, firstly, lies in the mind (thought); and secondly, resides in actions. Since there is a relationship between language and thought, therefore, communication is the vehicle for thought by peaceful school administration process. (Crystal, 1987).

REFERENCES

- [1] Akinawonu BM (2006). The Methods of Conflict Resolution in Peace and Conflict Studies: An Introductory Text, ed. S. Amuseghan, T. Obamuyi and K. Ogen, 178-185. Akure: Stebak.
- [2] Arije O (2000). Industrial Relations and Collective Bargaining in Nigeria. Lagos: Fadec & Company Ltd.
- [3] Beer M, Stief T (1997). The Mediator's Handbook. Gabriola Island B.C. Canada: New Study Publishers.
- [4] Crystal D (1987) The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Linguistics. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [5] David JF (2006). Peace and Conflict Studies: An African Overview of Basic Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies: An Introductory Text, ed.
- [6] S. Amuseghan, T. Obamuyi and K. Ogen, 15-34. Godongs S (2006). Mediation and the Mediation Process in Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa, ed. B.Shedrack, 130-144. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.
- [7] Haugen E (1974). The Curse of Babel in Language as a Human Problem, ed. M. Bloomfield and E. Haugen, 125-339. New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc.
- [8] Jeong H (2000). Peace and Conflict Studies: An Introduction. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- [9] Kleiboer M (1998). The Multiple Realities of International Mediation. Colorado: Lynne Reiner Inc.
- [10] Kornhauser AD, Ross M (1954). Industrial Conflicts. New York:
- [11] McGraw-Hill. Miall H, Hugh R, Oliver R, Woodhouse T (1999). Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- [12] Miller C (2003). A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies. Geneva: University of Peace p. 8.
- [13] Moulton WO (1974). The Nature of Language in Language as a Human Problem, ed. M. Bloomfield and E. Haugen, 58-73. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.
- [14] Sapir E (1963). Language – An Introduction to the Study of Speech. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- [15] Shannon C, Weaver W (1977). The Mathematical Theory of Communication in The Process and Effects of Mass Communication, ed. W. Schram and D. F. Roberts, 412-428. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- [16] Shedrack G.B. (2004). Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- [17] Shipley J (1970). Dictionary of World Literary Terms. London: George Allen and Unwin. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995). London: Longman Publishers
- [18] Dr.Saravanakumar, AR., Paniadima, A., (2017). Cognitive Dissonance, Locus of Control, Self-efficacy and Academic Performance of Novice Teachers, *Journal of Research and Reflection of Education*, Vol.6, ISSN No.0976-648X.
- [19] Saravanakumar AR (2008). Effectiveness of Motivational Strategies on Enhancing Academic Achievement, *Journal of Research and Reflections on Education*, 16(2).
- [20] Saravanakumar AR (2016). Role of ICT in transforming Sri Lankan Higher Education, *International Journal of Advanced Research Trends in Engineering and Technology*, 3(20).
- [21] Saravanakumar AR., & Padmini Devi KR. (2020). Indian Higher Education: Issues and Opportunities, *Journal of Critical Reviews*. 7(2), 542-545.

- [22] Saravanakumar AR, Paavizhi K., & Palanisamy P. (2019). Effectiveness of Video-Assisted Learning Module. *International Journal of Control and Automation*, 12(06), 268-275.
- [23] Saravanakumar AR. (2018). Role of ICT on Enhancing Quality of Education, *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 3(12), 717-719.
- [24] Saravanakumar, A. R. (2014). Present Scenario and Future Prospects of Higher Education in India. Proceeding of the Social Sciences Research ICSSR, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. Organized by <http://WorldConferences.net>.
- [25] Saravanakumar, AR. (2014). Present Scenario and Future Prospects of Higher Education in India, *Proceeding of the Social Sciences Research ICSSR 2014* (e-ISBN 978-967-11768-7-0).
- [26] Saravanakumar, AR., & Paniadima, A. (2017). Cognitive Dissonance, Locus of Control, Self-efficacy and Academic Performance of Novice Teachers, *Journal of Research and Reflection of Education*, 6.
- [27] Sivakumar, I., & Anitha, M. (2012). Education and Girl Children in Puducherry Region: Problems and Perspective. *International Journal of Social Science and Interdisciplinary Research*, 1, 175-184.
- [28] Sivakumar, I., & Usha V.T. (2013). Education and Women in India: In Theoretical Perspective, Development and Displacement: Social Justice Paradigm. (Ed) Gurusamy, S. APH: New Delhi; 141-148.
- [29] Sivakumar, I & Usha V.T. (2015). Gender Bias and Women's Education: Status of Illiterate Women in the Fishing Community, *Indian Journal of Women's Studies*, 8(8), 28-35.