FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER

2ND SEMESTER 2019

Assignment number 1

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION 1B (ICO5211S)
Dear Students,

Firstly, thank you for uploading your work on the portal on time. Always make sure that you do not upload your work on the closing date, but at least a day or two before the closing date.

Secondly, let me remind you that NUST rules do not allow you to forward your assignments directly to your tutor-marker but to the university for administrative purposes and only after your assignment has been registered with the relevant office at the COLL, will it then be forwarded to me.

Thirdly, in this course, your assignment will only be graded if you uploaded it on the e-learning platform. The e-learning platform is a wonderful technological invention that minimises paper handling, (thus we are friendlier to our environment); it helps me to grade your work faster; it prevents your assignment from getting lost; it makes it possible for us to communicate via the platform; and it assists with identifying plagiarised work. We need to keep up with technological changes, thus using e-learning is something that we cannot avoid in the twenty-first century. I therefore beseech you to fall in love with the modern use of technology in education.
Fourthly, please stop copying and pasting others’ ideas without due consideration of referencing requirements. I have not deducted any marks in assignment 1, however marks will be deducted in assignment 2, if your answers a mere copy and paste of others’ work. Let us now look at the questions and possible answers.

Please take note that there is not always one correct answer to the questions in this assignment. The questions are structured so that you can apply the communication theories that you are studying in Communication 1B. The answers provided here are not definite but guides only. Remember two students may provide completely different responses to the questions, but both can be correct because of the logical justification provided. I have included two students’ responses in this letter, which I would like you to read and learn from carefully.

ASSIGNMENT 1

1. In Introduction to Communication 1B, you were introduced to 7 theories prevalent in studying communication.
   
a. Is a theory a fact or an opinion?  

   A Theory can be seen as a fact as it is often derived from supporting evidence based on observations or experiments. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

   A fact is something that is proved, it is real evidence. A fact can never be wrong. For example it is a fact that Namibia is in Africa. This fact cannot change. On the other hand an opinion is a view or judgement formed by someone, which can be based on their experiences, but not based on fact or knowledge. There are some theories that have been tried and tested such that they have almost become facts. But generally speaking a theory is an opinion. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

   b. What is your (own) understanding of the term theory?

   A theory is an underlying set of assumptions used to provide an explanation to a given observation or topic. It often attempts to provide answers about or conclude on a
perceived relationship between two or more variables under an observation. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

My understanding of the term theory is that it is a group or systems of ideas that are intended to explain something, or certain occurrences, especially based on past experiences or general principles, in most cases, especially the ones independent of being explained. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

2. Read the following abstracts 3 abstracts and an explanation, and then indicate the type of research method/s (experiments, survey research, textual analysis or ethnography) that is used in each study. Give one reason each of your choices. /9/

(a). Textual analysis - Data was gathered to provide researchers a better interpretation of the understanding of information by a certain group or culture.
(b). Survey research and textual analysis - Data was collected from a group of respondents. (c). Experimental research - The study focuses on determining a causality and it takes place in a controlled environment. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

3. Read the following short story, and then explain the meaning of the adjective "symbolic" as used in the name "Symbolic Interaction Theory (SIT)." Do not write more than 100 words. /5/

The adjective “symbolic” in this context refers to the depiction of meaning. Symbolic depictions of meaning are often derived from social, religious, and/or political symbols that assimilate to certain norms or behaviour in a given society thereby also shaping the perceptions, opinions and at times beliefs of the given society. Symbolic Interaction Theory therefore suggests that as people interact they identify symbols - be it through observed behaviour- that may carry deeper meanings than what is being verbally communicated (e.g. a firm handshake, a gesture, eye contact etc.). (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

Situations, objects, behaviors and words are according to the “Symbolic Interaction Theory” not just stimulus that triggers a response in an individual as in Behaviorism. These stimulus are interpreted by the individual and will therefore trigger different responses. They are symbols of something and the meaning of the symbol will vary according to the individuals interactions with the symbol. Therefore something like an
object will mean different things to people and thus trigger different thoughts, feelings and behaviours according to the interaction the individual has had with the object in question. An object thus has an individualistic symbolic meaning. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

4. Also read the short story and then identify how the three core principles (i.e. meaning, language & thought) of SIT are represented. See page 43 to 44 of the study guide how SIT was applied to a case study. Do the same to indicate miscommunications.  

The core principles of SIT are represented as follows:

**Meaning:** Human actions are driven by what things mean to people based on their interactions with others. This is also evident from the story when the old lady screamed at the American customer for putting money with the King’s face on it under his feet. The screaming itself also carried a different form of meaning to both the old lady and the American customer which led to further miscommunication because the customer could not understand why the old lady was screaming until she elaborated on her anger by demonstration. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

**Language:** Language being a system of verbal and non-verbal symbols is also represented in the story. The initial miscommunication in meaning only became apparent to the American customer when the old lady grabbed the bill and proceeded to point at the King’s photo and the customer’s feet. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

**Thought:** Thought is a conversation that takes place from within. Hence, even after the heated interaction between the old and the customer, this further required a degree of mental interpretation of the situation for the customer to clearly understand and take ownership of what he has done wrong. This highlights the importance of thought as a core principle of SIT. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

Humans will act differently towards objects and people based on the **meaning** they attribute to those objects and things (West & Turner, 2010) For an American the king of
Thailand does not call for the same kind of respect and honor as for someone from Thailand. The king there is viewed as sacred and any act that demeans the king will likely create an emotional response from someone who views him as sacred. The American did not know this and perhaps did not even know that the king of Thailand was on the money notes he had in his shoes. For him the money note was just money, a symbol for a commercial value and not a portrayal of a sacred person. For the old lady the money notes from Thailand was also a representation of a person of great value and to be treated with respect. This serves to show that an object can mean different things to different people. It is also relevant here to note that putting something under your feet can mean different things in different cultures or that the degree to which it is seen as “dirty” can vary. For the American having the money there was seen as being safe, while for the old lady it meant keeping something in a very dirty place. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

As noted in the study guide, “Language gives humans a means by which to negotiate meaning through symbols. In the short story though verbal language does not serve as the reason for the miscommunication to the same degree as the meaning did. The miscommunication was more based on nonverbal communication. That keeping something under your feet can be an act of keeping something safe or keeping something in a dirty place. Though had the American been a part of Thai culture he would surly have picked up the importance of not dishonoring the king there and that one should not keep important things in a dirty place. The old lady on the other hand would have had a lifetime to negotiate through verbal communication the importance of treating their king with respect. When you come to a new culture you are sure to be unaware of the various meanings of objects in the new place. This goes to show that language serves as the tool to which one can attribute complex meanings to something as simple as a piece of paper. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

“An individual’s interpretation of symbols is modified by his or her own thought processes” (Griffin, 2006, p. 58). We often draw conclusions in social situations based on the thoughts that comes up under and after we are part of these situations. We
negotiate understanding through internal dialogues. It was the Americans internal
dialogue that led him to conclude that he was in an unsafe place and it was best to hide
the money. He acted out of self-interest to keep his money safe and had no thoughts or
intentions of dishonoring the king of Thailand. Neither would he think of money notes,
even if from his own country, as something that needed to be treated respectfully. The
old lady on the other hand was not in a situation where she felt unsafe and perhaps did
not understand that it was kept there for safety reasons. Coming from her own mind this
was an act of disrespect and something that needed to be pointed out to someone who
is in her “territory”. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

This short story shows us that objects can mean very different things to different people
and that it is through our language that we learn these meanings. It is also through
language, whether verbal or nonverbal, that these meanings surface and
miscommunication becomes apparent. Neither are we able to restore and process in
our mind all the meanings language, objects, situations, behaviors, etcetera, can have
and we are made to draw conclusions based on the recollections and understandings
that surface in our mind at any particular time. Thus we often conclude different even
though we have the same clues at hand. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

5. Relate expectancy violation theory (EVT) to the story of An American in Thailand. /5/
Expectancies are thoughts and behaviours that are anticipated in a conversation or
interaction between people and they include verbal and non-verbal behaviour. The
expectancy violation theory elevates the significance of people’s interaction patterns
on the gradual impressions they make on each other and the ultimate outcomes of their
interactions. In the story, it could be said that being in Thailand the American Customer
was expected to have at least observed some of the basic cultural norms or behaviour
and common courtesy may also rule that he ought to have prepared his money well in
advance to avoid having to remove his shoes inside the restaurant (an eating place) just
to pay his bill. This could explain why the old lady was very agitated at his behaviour all
together and was later not even willing to listen to any justifications thereof. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

...Hence in the case of an American in Thailand he violated the social expectations of the Thai old lady. The Thai people regards there king as sacred whether in person or on picture. Whilst the American have no sacred feature of any form on their money. Therefore the act of putting money in the shoes in a land where feet are considered filthy was a negative violation of the expectancy of the old lady. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

6. Use an example to explain positive valence as explained in EVT. /5/

Positive valence is basically the favourable assessment of an unexpected behaviour. As illustrated in EVT, humans tend to make predictions about the outcome of their interactions with others but this is somewhat also pre-informed or influenced by other factors including; the meaning derived from the interaction, the language used and the thought process that takes place during the interaction. Ultimately this shapes ones interpretation of such interaction and determines how they would react to an unexpected behaviour from a counterpart in the process. For example if you always prefer seating by yourself during lunch and a colleague one day decides to suddenly join you it could be interpreted as a violation of personal space, however if the colleague is someone of perceived stature and professional competence and offers to share their lunch with you, it then changes the way in which you might react to thereby compelling you to apportion a positive valence to their behaviour. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

Example of positive valence:

"We were in the restaurant at the country club. It was a peak hour, at 7pm and the restaurant was full. Suddenly a gentleman knelt beside a lady in the middle of the restaurant and proposed to the lady. This particular lady was equally surprised as everyone else. When she said "yes" to the proposal everyone was relieved and clapped for them."
To relate the above example to the EVT, people's expectancy in the restaurant was violated, but in a positive way. The people placed positive valence on the act of proposing in the restaurant, hence they were not offended. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

7. In one sentence, paraphrase the definition for cognitive dissonance theory (CDT). Cognitive Dissonance Theory entails having multiple beliefs that are self-contradicting and often lead one into a state of psychological agitation resulting from being mentally opposed to new ideas or beliefs. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

Cognitive dissonance occurs when two cognitions, typically their belief and a behavior, create a state of psychological discomfort that motivates the individual to either avoid the type of behavior, change their belief or distort or rationalize the situation that caused the dissonance. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

8. Give an example/scenario that will explain the second hypothesis of CDT. The second hypothesis of CDT suggests that people will often try to avoid dissonance in future by isolating themselves from uncomfortable and challenging situations and often restricting themselves to new information to the extent that it resonates with their inherent cognitive nature. This is often the case in many current situations of conflict especially in the current American political atmosphere where most people that support President Donald Trump do so primarily because they feel he appeals to their true beliefs of American nationalism and that he is bringing back the core values of their forefathers upon which American democracy was founded. However many do so from a position of convenience as it allows them to be proudly intolerant of any differing views without fear of appearing to be being somewhat discriminatory. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

Consider a person who has many negative beliefs and evaluations of Muslims. He then finds himself in a situation where a Muslim comes to great help. By the second hypothesis, one would expect that this person would try to even more strongly avoid coming into contact with other Muslims and make rationalizations like “he must be the
exception that confirms the rule” and seek out information that would restore his perception of Muslims. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

9. What is the difference between cognitive distortion and cognitive assonance? /2/
Cognitive distortions are the extreme and hyperbolic thoughts and ideas that may deem rational in framing their mind around a specific issue or person. Cognitive assonance refers to the recurring mental assimilations that one adopts in order to create a uniform pattern of thought that is consistent with their inherent beliefs which may also result in changed behaviour including choosing to associate more with certain individuals whose views are perceived to be more receptive or agreeable. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

10. Suggest possible "cognitive restructuring" for persons experiencing these cognitive distortions:
   a. emotional reasoning /2/
   A possible cognitive restructuring for emotional reasoning would be learning to apply objective apathy when composing arguments that hinge on how one personally feels they are affected by a given subject matter. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)
   b. catastrophizing /2/
   Adopting more positive thinking would help reduce the distortion of catastrophizing as it opens you up to a new possibility especially if one is able to find and use universal or relatable cases that have proven to have worked out for the best despite all odds. (Hewicke, G. 200565885)

   **Cognitive restructuring for persons with emotional reasoning.**
   1. The first step is awareness.
   It is difficult to change something that we are unaware of in our thinking patterns. With many cognitive distortions such as emotional reasoning it can be difficult to realize that any distortions are taking place. The effect of this can lead to distorted emotional reasoning hence awareness is the first vital step in cognitive restructuring that can help in overcoming negative thinking patterns. Tembo N. S. (218123620)
2. Actively focus on the positive

Positively keeping track of your gratitude list on a daily basis can be helpful in overcoming negative thinking. One needs to actively focus on the positive things rather than dwelling on the negative.

“As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he”. Proverbs 23vs7

Cognitive restructuring for catastrophizing

1. Consider other positive outcomes

One must not only consider negative predictions, but they must consider positive predictions as well as neutral predictions and mildly negative predictions or fifty-fifty predictions.

2. High personal perception of ability to cope with negative events

Belief in own self’s ability to cope with negative events can reduce the problems of anxiety. Tembo N. S. (218123620)

Closing remarks

Our assignment questions are set in such a way that the student does not merely rewrite from the study guide; instead we require you to apply the theories that you have read about in this course. It is a pity that there are number of you who merely regurgitated information from the study guide into the assignment, even when assignment questions do not ask you to.

On the other hand, during formal examination writing, there is no time for you to consult the study guide, prescribed or recommended material, hence repeating verbatim the content is slightly acceptable. In the examination, you might be given cases to dissect how they relate to the cognitive theories that you have read about. Thus, I say make sure that you read and understand your concepts in the study guide.

In assignment 2, you will write essays, and I'm looking forward to reading those.

Use my preferred means of communication if you need to contact me, which are my office telephone number: 061 206-4557 and my e-mail, ppaulus@unam.na Thank you
for taking time to read through the feedback letter. Good luck with assignment 2. My office remains at UNAM main campus, in the Language Centre, D151.

Your Tutor Marker

Patrick P. Paulus