

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILL
DIFFERENCES IN EMPLOYEES: AN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING
CURRICULUM

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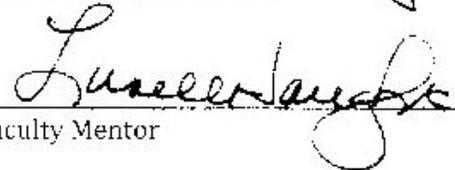
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ABSTRACT

The workforce is a social environment where particular skills are essential in order for employees to perform well, have a competitive edge and succeed in their careers. Interpersonal communication is one of the skills needed in every type of workplace setting. The ability to actively and empathetically listen, adapt communication style according to others and situations, confirm others in communication, resolve conflict, manage tone in writing and effectively communicate in a group are all crucial skills for employees that require exceptional interpersonal communication. However, constructivism theory suggests that due to variances in cognition, not everyone is able to communicate interpersonally at the same level. This thesis project examines the history of constructivism theory, interpersonal communication and its relevance in the workplace and interpersonal communication training to further study how they all interrelate. The project builds upon constructivism theory and phenomenological philosophy to develop an interpersonal communication training curriculum for adult employees that provides improvement in cognition by aiding employees in awareness of possible deficiencies and using skills to overcome them and interpersonally communicate effectively. The projects' goal is to decrease the divide in interpersonal communication differences in employees so that all employees have a stronger possibility of job satisfaction and have the opportunity to excel in their careers.

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM/GOAL

Importance of the Study

“Constructivism is a communication theory that seeks to explain individual differences in people’s ability to communicate skillfully in social situations” (Griffin, 2009, p. 97). Some people are better at communicating than others and according to constructivism theory; there is a cognitive explanation for this difference in communication competence (p. 97). Scholars suggest that those with complex systems of interpersonal constructs, the cognitive template people use from their reality that orders their perceptions of others, tend to have a more logically centered view of others and are better able to formulate sensitive adapted messages (Burlison, Delia, & Kline, 1979, p. 244). Those who possess cognitive complexity, the ability to figure out others’ personality traits and behavioral differences, are better able to communicate interpersonally (Griffin, 2009, p. 98).

In addition, constructivists claim that people who are cognitively complex in their perceptions of others have an advantage over those who have less developed mental structures because the cognitively complex are able to produce person-centered messages (Griffin, 2009, p. 100). A person-centered message is a message created for a specific individual and context and reflects the ability of the communicator to anticipate responses and adjust accordingly which gives them a better chance to achieve their communication goals (p. 100).

In today’s workforce strong interpersonal communication skills are vital. Employers desire employees with significant interpersonal communication skills. In a poll of 330 employees conducted by the University of Phoenix, 96% of executives rated communication and interpersonal communication as the most valuable employee trait (Cline, 2005). Employers

desire that college graduates and graduates have taken specific interpersonal communication courses to gain basic interpersonal communication skills such as situation analysis, relationship management, information exchange, conversation management and group communication, persuasion, informing and relating (Jones, 1994; Rubin 1995; Rubin & Morreale, 1996).

Employers find communication skills important because it benefits them. Employees who have graduated from college with strong interpersonal communication skills succeed in their careers and in business which in turn enhances organizational processes and organizational life and they are also better equipped to focus on emerging concerns such as health and crisis communication and crime and policing (Morreale, Osborn & Pearson, 2000; Morreale & Pearson, 2008).

An implication of this theory is people with better communication skills are more likely to get the job, a raise and a promotion as well as have better job satisfaction and be more effective at work. The problem is, if some people did not develop structurally more complex systems of interpersonal constructs as children (Burlison et al., 1979, p. 244) or do not possess cognitive complexity for interpersonal effectiveness (Griffin, 2009, p. 107), they cannot successfully compete in the workforce where interpersonal communication skills are detrimental.

Statement of the Problem/Goal

Constructivists have looked at the problem of communication skill differences from the perspective of why and how some are better able to communicate than others. In fact, they have a system to measure the cognitive complexity of individuals' interpersonal perceptions (p. 98). The measurement system is a responsive survey called the Role Category Questionnaire (RCQ) that focuses on the categories of personality and action that we use to define the character of another person (p. 98). The different descriptions used to describe different people are

constructs, the number of constructs is combined and the higher the score, the more elaborate the structure within the person's mind over which their interpersonal perceptions play (Griffin, 2009, p. 99).

Although knowing why individuals communicate differently is important, there also needs to be a focus on how to bridge the gap between those who can communicate well and those who cannot. Delia (1977) states that man's constructs are responsive to their own reality and transforms into greater complexity as people give reason to broader and more refined experience constructs (p. 69). Therefore there needs to be training that aids people in transforming their constructs by exposing them to different experiences within the classroom.

For this reason, this thesis project is designed to examine the theory of constructivism and the importance of interpersonal communication in the efforts to create an effective interpersonal communication training curriculum for adult employees. This curriculum will not only teach interpersonal communication theories and skills but seek to change employees' perceptions through an effective teaching style and varying training techniques that will potentially create higher levels of cognitive complexity and ultimately improve interpersonal communication.

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Cognitive Complexity – The mental ability to distinguish subtle personality and behavior differences among people (Griffin, 2009, p. 98).

Confirmation – The ability to socially validate people in relationships through nonverbal and verbal communication (Caputo, Hazel & McMahon, 1994, pp. 108 – 109).

Conflict Management – A learned social skill set that enables people to be able to be able to identify conflict types and make appropriate communication decisions on how to respond to the conflict (Larson & Meyers, 2005, p. 313).

Constructs or Interpersonal Constructs – The cognitive templates or stencils we fit over social reality to order our impressions of people (Griffin, 2009, p. 98).

Constructivism – A communication theory that seeks to explain individual differences in people's ability to communicate skillfully in social situations (Griffin, 2009, p. 97).

Group Communication – Interpersonal communication in a group of three or more people.

Interpersonal Communication – When the people involved talk and listen in ways that maximize the presence of the personal (Stewart, 2006, p. 38).

Listening – A highly specialized perception process that involves a particular application of the joint verbal-visual stimuli that occur in a communication situation (Heiman, 1974, p. 25).

Managing Tone in Writing – The ability to use insight into readers' psyches, sensitivities to the nuances of language and imagination to anticipate how readers will respond emotionally to the words chosen (Jameson, 2009, p. 334).

Noble Selves – People who do not adjust their communication strategies for others and do stick to their personal ideals (Caputo, et al., 1994, p. 109).

Perception – The process of extracting information from the world outside of us as well as from within the individual (Heiman, 1974, p. 2).

Phenomenology – A philosophy that refers to the intentional analysis of everyday life from the standpoint of the person who is living it (Griffin, 2009, p. 49). Places emphasis on people's perceptions and interpretations of their own subjective experiences (Griffin, 2009, p. 49).

Rhetorical Reflector – A person who molds him or herself to others’ wishes and does not have any particular scruples to follow (Caputo, et al., 1994, p.109).

Rhetorical Sensitivity – The ability to take into account the beliefs, values and mood of others and communicate accordingly (Caputo et al., 1994, pp. 108 – 109).

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) - The TKI is an assessment tool that has been created to measure a person’s behavior in conflict situations (Shell, 2001, p. 159). The TKI measures five categories in which people are predisposed to handling conflict according to assertiveness and cooperativeness: 1) competing, 2) collaborating, 3) compromising 4) avoiding and 5) accommodating (Shell, 2001, p. 161).

ORGANIZATION OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

This thesis project is divided into five chapters: Chapter 1 will provide an introduction to the theoretical basis of the project, constructivism. The chapter will establish the problem of differential interpersonal communication skills in employees based on the constructivist view and how it can affect their careers. The chapter will also verify the importance of the study of constructivism theory in an effort to create a training curriculum to improve interpersonal communication in adult employees.

Chapter 2 will examine the constructivism theory through a review of historical literature. The chapter will also ascertain the philosophical view of phenomenology, how it relates to constructivism and how this philosophy can aid in designing an interpersonal communication curriculum.

Chapter 3 will describe the scope and methodology of the study. It will elaborate on how the author came to the conclusion, through literature review, to design the interpersonal communication training curriculum for adult employees.

Chapter 4 will introduce the completed project. It will contain *The Interpersonal Communication Training Curriculum for Adult Employees* and briefly discuss the project.

Chapter 5 will discuss the findings of the project as well as the meaning and the implications of the findings in correlation to the literature review and theoretical basis of the study. Limitations of the project will be shared and further recommendations made.

Chapter 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND THEORETICAL BASIS

According to Stewart (2006), there is a direct link between the quality of a person's communication and the quality of that person's life (p. 6). In Griffin (2009), interpersonal communication is described as, "...a way in which overlapping messages simultaneously affect and are affected by the other person and other multiple factors" (p. 58). Both authors' descriptions surmise that interpersonal communication has an impact on people and the people with whom they interact.

The workplace is a critical social environment and an area in which the quality of employees' interpersonal communication skills can greatly affect their careers. However, employees' abilities to communicate differ. Those that are able to communicate better are more likely to thrive in their careers than those who cannot effectively communicate. In order for those employees who have difficulty communicating to successfully compete in the workforce, they must understand why they communicate the way they do and how they can develop their interpersonal communication skills.

This thesis project's supporting philosophical supposition is phenomenology and its theoretical foundation is constructivism. Phenomenological philosophy and constructivism theory correlate in that they both recognize and confront interpersonal communication from the standpoint of people's individual experiences and perceptions (Delia, 1977; Rogers, 1961).

Phenomenology is a philosophical term that refers to the intentional analysis of everyday life from the standpoint of the person; therefore it concentrates on people's perceptions and interpretation of their own subjective experience (Griffin, 2009). Psychologist, Carl Rogers' and philosopher and theologian, Martin Buber's works are grounded in phenomenology. Both

phenomenologists recognized that no two people perceive things the same way yet people have to implement skills and change of thought in order to achieve effective interpersonal communication (Buber, 1958; Rogers, 1958).

Rogers (1961) suggests that people develop empathetic understanding towards others and put aside their own views and values so they may seek to hear others' thoughts, feelings and meanings to communicate effectively (Rogers, 1958). Buber's dialogic ethics recommends that people step away from their own perceptions and seek to experience the relationship from the other person's perspective which can only be done through dialogue (Buber, 1958).

Constructivism focuses on attempting to explain individuals' differences in communicating skillfully (Griffin, 2009). Constructivists suggest that those with complex systems of interpersonal constructs, the cognitive template people use from their reality that orders their perceptions of others, tend to have a more logically centered view of others and are better able to formulate sensitive adapted messages (Burlison, Delia, & Kline, 1979, p. 244).

Both phenomenology philosophy and constructivism are strong underpinnings for this thesis project because both recognize that there are cognitive differences that affect interpersonal communication. The phenomenological tradition's emphasis is on people's interpretations and perceptions coming from their own experiences and constructivism theory centers on explaining why there are differences in perception that affect communication. Phenomenology goes a step further in trying to resolve perception differences that support this thesis project's premise in creating an interpersonal communication training curriculum that will seek to identify employees' social constructs and cognitive complexities in order to bridge the gap in interpersonal communication skills so that all employees can thrive in the workplace.

THE LITERATURE

This literature review will first look at constructivism and how constructivists have used this theory in explaining interpersonal communication differences in people. It will then examine the reason that strong interpersonal communication skills are important for all employees. Finally, the study of literature will explore various training areas and techniques that have been used to improve interpersonal communication skills.

Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory that explains the communication process through perception and is said to be one of recent theory-building's most developed theories in communication (Delia, 1976; Irwin, 1983). Although the theory was developed by communication scholars, it has its roots in social and cognitive psychology (Irwin, 1983). Parts of constructivism draw from Werner's cognitive-developmental theory which states that there are differences in construct system development in adults and children due to differentiation in cognitive complexity, construct abstractness and construct comprehensiveness (Irwin, 1983; Werner, 1948). Research in the constructive field has established that particular interpersonal communication skills are strongly influenced by the complexity or simplicity of individuals' construct systems (Irwin, 1983, p. 74).

Jesse Delia was a communication professor who emerged in the 1970's with various studies on constructivism. One of his earlier works was an analysis on the credibility concept in which he took the position that people view someone's credibility through their own interpretive process in human interaction (Delia, 1976; Delia, 1977). Further in the study, Delia (1976) describes the constructivist theory of interpersonal perception as being people's understanding of

other people in terms of images or impressions (p. 367). People erect constructs or images for the understanding of self and others in their “effort after meaning” (Irwin, 1983, p. 73).

In 1977, Delia further elaborates on constructivism as it relates to the conduct of communication research and the development of theoretic understanding of human communication (Delia, 1977, p. 66). He concluded that theories within any specific worldview differ and a worldview can encompass every phenomenon and event because it provides a way for people to organize their experience (p. 67). This implies that constructivism is apparent in research and theorist thinking and that a person’s perception can affect the way they view theory or construct one.

The theoretical commitments of constructivism can be divided into four categories: (1) interpretive processes, (2) human action, (3) human interaction, and (4) human communication (Delia, O’Keefe & O’Keefe, 1982). All areas are important to build upon for clear understanding of the theory.

Interpretive processes rest on the view that people are both biological entities who approach the world through cognitive organization of experience and are members of a socio-cultural community (Delia et al., 1982, p. 151). This means that individuals’ actions take place in natural activity and through the use of cognitive schemes; their experiences are segmented into meaningful units and interpreted, they create beliefs about the world and assimilate those beliefs and then their behaviors are structured and controlled according to what they are experiencing (Delia et al., 1982).

An example of interpretive processing is not only classifying events and people but placing them within a larger context of meaning and expectation (Delia et al., 1982). If someone hears the sentences: “The baby cried. The mommy picked it up.” The two sentences are heard

coherently because “it” in the second sentence is understood to refer to the baby in the first sentence. Interpretive processing allows for the connection to be made between baby and mommy and other family members and a background understanding is formed which develops these short sentences into a familiar story (Delia et al., 1982, p.152).

According to constructivism theorists, culture has great influence on interpretive processing because people develop interpretive process through interaction in and with their socio-cultural world (Delia et al., 1982). People are born into community that is already defined, interpreted, organized and meaningful (Delia et al., 1982).

Individuals become part of their culture as they become members of the community, as they occupy the places prepared for them in the ongoing process of group life, as they participate in the most basic forms of social organization, and as they come to have cognitive systems in which their most fundamental forms of cognitive representation and behavioral organization are integrated with the meanings these hold for the social group (p. 155).

Human action stems from interpretive processing and is guided by context-relevant intentions and beliefs produced by schemes of interpretation (p. 155). People choose to actualize an intention in behavior by using strategy to meet their goals or intentions. There can be multiple strategies used to reach several goals or one strategy to meet multiple goals (Delia et al., 1982). Constructivism is relevant in human action in that people will choose their actions based on their interpretation of their history, then their belief system that comes from their history and choose a strategy based on their prediction of the future in which their prediction is based on their past experience (Delia et al., 1982). Therefore, when taking human action, people are using

the present as action to create the strategy as well as their past and future beliefs which causes every act to emerge from a new past into a new future (p. 156).

Once strategy or human action is determined, human interaction can take place. It is the foundation in which human interaction is made.

Human interaction is a process in which individual lines of action are coordinated through reciprocal recognition of communicative intent and in which actions are organized by communicative strategies, both the reciprocal recognition of communicative intent and the employment of communicative strategies depend centrally on the interpretive schemes interactants bring to bear on the world (Delia et al., 1982).

Human interaction requires negotiation but this can be difficult at times because each individual chooses interaction strategies based on their beliefs about their own reality of the situation. For successful interaction, it is important for individuals to align and realign their beliefs so that consensus can be shared with others (Delia et al., 1982).

The constructivist view of human communication is defined by its unique process of reciprocal intentions. The theory does not view interpretation or people's actions as communication although they are a part of it. Constructivists look at interpersonal communication as the strategic organization of behavior where choosing strategies depends on the intentions and beliefs of people and the process of interpretations in which intentions and beliefs originate (Delia et al., 1982, p. 158).

From a constructivist standpoint of interpersonal communication in humans, people use various cognitive subsystems to make sense of the world; one of which is making sense of others by composed constructs (Delia et al., 1982). "The interpersonal construct system is employed in construing persons and generates a variety of interpersonal judgments" (p. 160). Constructs

represent behavior, roles, personality characteristics, habits, attitudes, values, intentions, beliefs and emotions of others (Delia et. al., 1982). Constructivism theory proposes that people have different ranges of social experiences and therefore can have varying qualitative levels of social understanding and constructs (Delia, 1977). The larger interpersonal constructs are in individuals, the better they are able to communicate interpersonally (Burleson, Delia, & Kline, 1979; Delia et al., 1982).

One of the main criticisms of constructivism is that it can promote elitism. It focuses on the construct differentiation, cognitive complexity and advanced social perception and communication skills. Theorists have even given reasons such as culture and environment as to why there are construct differences among people but there has been no effort to create programs that will effectively enhance these skills (Burleson, 2007). This is a major factor for creating this thesis project.

The Importance of Interpersonal Communication Skills in Employees

Studies reveal that the reason it is important for employees to have strong interpersonal communication skills is that employers desire these skills and employees have increased job satisfaction (Cline, 2005; Morreale, Osborne & Pearson, 2000; Morreale & Pearson, 2008). Although some of the literature reviewed in this section did not explicitly use the term interpersonal communication, the content reflected that interpersonal communication was included.

In a 2007 survey of more than 1,200 purchasing professionals, communication, relationship building and interpersonal communication were considered to be the most valuable skills (“Buyers Rate,” 2007). In a poll of 330 employees conducted by the University of Phoenix, 96% of executives rated communication and interpersonal communication skills as the most

valuable employee trait (Cline, 2005). In addition, a 2003 Boyer report identified that potential employer's express concern about students' lack of good oral communication skills (Morreale, 2003, p. 4).

The reason employers find communication skills so important is because it benefits them. Graduates with strong interpersonal communication skills succeed in their careers and in business which in turn enhances organizational processes and organizational life and they are also better equipped to focus on emerging concerns such as health and crisis communication and crime and policing (Morreale et al., 2000; Morreale & Pearson, 2008).

One area in which interpersonal communication skills is important in the workplace is conflict management. In a study of 89 junior and senior students enrolled in an upper-level business communication class, 42% of the students stated that relational conflicts were at the core of their early work variances (Larson & Myers, 2005). Another study concluded that it is important to have good communication skills so relational conflict can be resolved quickly and not negatively affect job performance and employee job satisfaction (Jehn, 1997).

Interpersonal communication within a group of people can result in quality team dynamics and there is an increased emphasis on teamwork in the workplace (Cline, 2005). Employers want strong interpersonal communication skills that result in teamwork for efficiency and safety on the job. Reports have shown that poor communication and lack of teamwork were the most frequent contributory factors in patient safety hazards (Manser, 2009). An observational study in pediatric cardiac and orthopedic surgery found that effective teamwork was associated with fewer minor problems per operation (i.e. negative events that were seemingly innocuous but many of which contributed to major problems), higher intraoperative performance (i.e. less key operating tasks were disrupted), and shorter operating times (p. 145).

The military has recognized communication and teamwork as important among soldiers (Connelly, Dionne, Mumford & Yammarino, 2010). According to Connelly et al., (2010), “Over time, cognitive convergence occurs where team members gradually acquire enhanced overlap among their cognitive structures” (p. 27). As the team becomes more cohesive interpersonally, they are able to make effective decisions faster and have a clear focus and vision on tasks which is necessary in dangerous operational situations (Connelly et al., 2010).

The continuing and historically emergent process of human group life unfolds through the everyday actions and interactions of members of a human community (Delia et al., 1982, p. 159). The workplace is a human community in which human interaction unfolds and people create and extend their shared interpretations every day (Delia et al., 1982). Each individual has an opportunity to expand their interpersonal constructs in this arena; however, some may flourish more than others. It is important that there is training available for employees to improve their interpersonal communication skills so that they are able to succeed in an environment where those skills are sought out by their employers.

Interpersonal Communication Training

Interpersonal communication ability is acknowledged as being important and there have been varying advances toward teaching interpersonal communication skills. The most common avenue for people to be exposed to learning communication is in college. “Communication education and the basic or introductory communication course in particular are important pedagogical endeavors – given the basic course often is the only communication course undergraduates’ experience” (Hugenberg, Morreale, & Worley, 2010, p. 406).

Often only one communication course is required in colleges but many students prefer a class that includes interpersonal communication skills. In a 2009 study on the basic

communication course, 208 college students, 43 two-year and 165 four-year, responded to a survey regarding the basic communication course. Out of the 208 respondents, 36.3% of them indicated that a hybrid communication course that includes interpersonal and group communication as well as public speaking is most popular (Hugenberg et al., 2010).

There are a variety of scholarly works that propose best practices in teaching interpersonal communication. Some contend that an interactive or laboratory approach be used in teaching interpersonal communication while others are more lecture focused. Some practices of interpersonal communication training incorporate both.

There is a semester-long course created by Matthew Sanders (2010) called the Interpersonal Development Project (IDP) that centers on students making productive connections between interpersonal communication theories and their day-to-day communication practices (Sanders, 2010, p. 165). The course curriculum is divided into four sections: Theoretical Focus, Practical Focus, Debriefing and Appraisal.

Students are required to choose a person that they have a relationship with (boss, teacher, etc.) and use that person as the focus for the project throughout the semester (Sanders, 2010, p. 166). The students are then to apply the theoretical section of the course by writing a theory based literature review that coincides with the relationship of their person of focus (p. 166). The practical application portion of the course entails that students journal their communication and theory application and track any successes and failures (p. 167). The debriefing component of the course allows for students to share their experience and changes they seen in their relationships (p. 168). Students are then appraised by their commitment to the project, their literature reviews and their papers (p. 168).

Smith (1968) reported a course created for the General Motors Institute in 1965. It is a 12-week semester course for college undergraduates. The course's objective is to help students appreciate the importance of interpersonal and organizational communication and help them understand different types of communication behavior so that they become more effective communicators (Smith, 1969, pp. 19 – 20).

The course is divided into three major divisions: (1) The process of communication: communication models and information theory, (2) "Points of View" or disciplinary approaches to the study of interpersonal and organizational communication and (3) Individual study: literature surveys, field studies and creative essays (p. 20). The first two divisions are presented in lecture-seminar format and the last division is presented by the student in a written and oral format (p. 20). The syllabus includes detailed explanations of what each division entails. Each division includes a theoretical basis and interpersonal communication topics that would be explored. Topics included the definition of communication, linguistics and group dynamics.

An outline for teaching interpersonal communication was constructed by Hazel Heiman (1974). It is a 6 to 9-week course where the first three sections outline the goals of each unit, the objectives of each unit and the procedures for teaching the units. The remainder of the outline is separated into the seven units: (1) Knowing and Trusting Each Other, (2) The Sharing of Selves, (3) Trust, (4) Communication Theory, (5) Verbal Symbols, (6) Non-verbal Communication and (7) Listening. In each unit there are concepts and ideas about each topic and several activities for the students to perform in order to use practical application of the concepts.

John Caputo (1971) created a communication theory curriculum for lower-division college students. Although the curriculum is much broader than the one needed for this thesis project, it gives a substantial example of creating a communication curriculum. Caputo uses a

historical and creative approach to building the curriculum (Caputo, 1971, p. 21). He uses past strategies, innovative brainstorming and philosophy to create activities that will stimulate the lower-level student's learning (Caputo, 1971). There are 13 units that are each divided into two sections, one for the teachers' information and the second for the pupils' information (pp. 27 – 28). The curriculum is designed as a suggestion for the course but can be flexible for change according to the current need (p. 28).

Bob Eddy (2007) wrote an article titled “Making Sense Constructively” in which he describes through a constructivist's lens the reason it is difficult for people to communicate and gives actionable tools that they can use to make sense with those they communicate with.

Eddy (2007) stands on the premise that, “Words don't mean...people mean” (p. 12) and acknowledges that communication is a challenge because it involves reality structures constructed in peoples' lives, categorization, frames of reference and inventory meanings we collect (p. 12). In his efforts to help improve interpersonal communication, he focuses on how a sender of a message communicates with the receiver of the message, and how they both can contribute to the probability that the receiver will construct a close-to-the-same sense that the sender intended (Eddy, 2007). Eddy's interpersonal communication teaching focus is on feedback from both the sender and the receiver so that negotiation of meaning can occur and on understanding and accepting others when they see things and communicate things differently (Eddy, 2007).

One article proposes ways in which transformation should be a part of interpersonal communication training. Whereas traditionally many interpersonal communication classes have taken an informative approach by exposing students to research findings and theories, this

method of training takes an interdisciplinary approach by incorporating philosophy, ethics and exercises geared toward personal growth and awareness (Mortenson, 2007, p. 401).

The transformation in interpersonal communication training method is important to this study because it coincides with what the thesis project curriculum seeks to accomplish. This technique attempts to assist students in questioning and assessing their current assumptions, consider others point of view and act on what they have learned (Mortenson, 2007, p. 401). This type of teaching allows for students to gain awareness of the sources of their assumptions and why they constrain them so that they can then make different choices in reasoning and perceiving and become changed by what they have learned (p. 402).

The course involves exercises in critical thinking and writing as well as strategies that use feeling and emotion as a means of reflection (Mortenson, 2007, p. 402). The instructor must create an environment that helps students to connect the reason and logic with feeling and intuition and work to make the classroom a “community of knowers” where trust and civility is fostered and effective interpersonal communication is exemplified (p. 402). The course curriculum has two components: Raising awareness of unconscious dynamics and reframing the familiar. The raising awareness section requires students to do real life exercises and experiments and the reframing of the familiar section involves students asking questions about themselves and their experiences and perceptions so that they can be aware and make changes (pp. 403 – 405).

There were a couple of articles in which the best practice of teaching interpersonal communication was to focus on one element of this form of communication. Conflict management is an interpersonal communication skill that has been looked at as needing to be taught before students graduate from college and enter into the workforce. Students going to

work for the first time as full-time employees experience conflict because of discrepancies between their expectations and reality occur, they have to learn new skills and adapt to cultures where behavioral norms are obscure (Larson & Myers, 2005). Scholars believe that viewing conflict as inevitable and preparing for it before it happens is the best approach to training (Larson & Myers, 2005).

A method used in workplace conflict training is to openly discuss the types of conflict that people will face. It is said that this communicative approach helps students to “read” the conflict so that they can better interpret its nature and be aware that one type of conflict can lead to another type of conflict (Larson & Myers, 2005). Encouraging students to use a third-party in conflict resolution is also taught. A third-party can help students become self-aware of how they play a role in the conflict and help them think critically in how to work on a resolution (Larson & Myers, 2005). Creating conflict scenarios is a training method that helps students to cipher underlying tension in a conflict situation (p. 313). Through role play, students are actively thinking about and practicing how to diffuse or manage conflict scenarios (Larson & Myers, 2005). These techniques are designed to give people practice in dealing with conflict rather than reading about how to do it.

Another avenue used in teaching conflict management is based on the work of Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode (TKI) is an assessment tool that has been used for over 30 years and was created to measure a person’s behavior in conflict situations (Shell, 2001, p. 159). The TKI measures five categories in which people are predispositioned to handling conflict according to assertiveness and cooperativeness: 1) competing, 2) collaborating, 3) compromising 4) avoiding and 5) accommodating (Shell, 2001, p. 161). The TKI’s premise is to identify which mode the individual prefers and point out when

that mode might be most and least useful. It suggests uses, advantages and disadvantages of all the modes, and recommends people become able to use all of them as appropriate (Shell, 2001).

The TKI can currently be taken online as a group exercise or individually. The TKI and conflict management online courses are found on the Kilmann Diagnostics website at <http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/>.

Employees' learning to manage tone in writing is a part of interpersonal communication training that has been looked at although not heavily taught. This type of training helps teach people how to communicate when they cannot see body language and may become more easily defensive. It uses many of the same techniques used in face-to-face interpersonal communication training. However, learning to manage tone in writing is complex because it requires insight into readers' psyches, sensitivity to the nuances of language, and imagination enough to anticipate how readers will emotionally respond to the words chosen (Jameson, 2009, p. 334).

Ways in which managing tone in writing is taught to employees is to have them write as if they are the reader and identify the interpersonal concept of defensiveness in writing, avoid writing defensively and not become defensive in retaliation to a suspected defensive document (Jameson, 2009). Training in reducing readers' defensiveness when reading includes teaching writers to describe a situation, issue or problem factually and dispassionately; use a problem orientation approach as a way to collaborate with others; be spontaneous, honest and straightforward with others; be personal by empathizing with others and acknowledging their feelings; express equality with others; and state opinions provisionally, that is, subject to change pending new information (Jameson, 2009).

Books were valuable assets in providing both the organization and the teaching of interpersonal communication. The book *The Interpersonal Communication Skills Workshop: A*

Trainer's Guide by Joshua Guilar (2001) gives trainers tools to design and conduct an interpersonal communication workshop. The training modules are listening, assertiveness, conflict resolution and listening. Each module lists materials that will be needed for training and provides exercises for the trainer to use. The curriculum is outlined in a way that trainers know when to conduct lecture, when to have trainees use workbooks and do exercises and when breaks should take place.

In 1974, Barbour and Goldberg wrote a book to facilitate in creating curricula for interpersonal communication training. The book provides a variety of information on several interpersonal communication topics and gives teaching techniques and strategies for each of the topics. Included is a section on the laboratory approach to teaching interpersonal communication. In addition, the authors provide resources for the teacher or trainer of the interpersonal communication course. There is a list of interpersonal communication theories and textbooks that the teacher can refer to and research for more information.

Duck and Nicholson (1999) wrote a section about teaching interpersonal communication in the book *Teaching Communication: Theory, Research and Methods*. They provide a step-by-step approach on choosing techniques that can be used to teach the interpersonal communication class curriculum. The course preparation section gives options of course format and descriptions of the formats. An instructor must decide if the class will be a lecture or skills format and if it will be an introductory or upper division course. The course organization section gives definitions of book, practical application, phenomenon and theory driven options for organizing the class. The evaluation section gives explanations of varying assessments that can be used to measure students' progress such as quizzes, reflection papers, tests and papers in an interpersonal course.

The book *Interpersonal Communication: Competence Through Critical Thinking* does not provide information on curriculum building but does provide pertinent information for this project on how to communicate skillfully. Chapter 5 in the book covers the areas of interpersonal communication such as self-disclosure; rhetorical sensitivity and confirmation that would be beneficial for employee communication and offers skill builders and a self-disclosure situation survey that can be used in the classroom.

Getting to YES (1991) is a book that solely focuses on training in interpersonal communication in conflict management. The book largely focuses on using negotiation in conflict management. The book is divided into five units: 1) The Problem, 2) The Method, 3) YES, but..., 4) In Conclusion and 5) Ten Questions People Ask About Getting to Yes. In The Method unit, the authors provide techniques on how to separate people from the problem; focus on interests not the positions, invent options for mutual gain, and insisting on using objective criteria.

Two books give alternative methods to teaching only. Christensen elaborates on discussion teaching in the book *Bridges Not Walls: A Book About Interpersonal Communication* and Palmer defines subject-centered teaching in the book *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. Christensen's approach to teaching allows for students to be the leader as well as the instructor so that discussion can take place about the topic (Stewart, 2006, p. 643). Palmer's teaching style allows for the subject to be the focus of the classroom, not the student and/or the instructor. With this approach, no one's idea is being analyzed but the subject matter (Palmer, 2007, p. 118).

The materials reviewed brought to light the fact that although there are many ways in which interpersonal communication has been and is being taught, there is not a lot of training

specific to first understanding why people communicate the way they do and how they can use that knowledge to communicate effectively. In particular, there is a deficiency in interpersonal communication training specific to adult employees whose interpersonal constructs may not be as complex as others but need to improve in interpersonal communication in the workplace.

RATIONALE

Constructivism theory proposes that there is a difference in cognition that affects how people communicate. People have interpersonal constructs that they use to bring order to perceptions of others and they have cognitive complexities then enable them to distinguish personality and behavior differences in people (Burlison et al., 1979; Delia, 1977). Individuals with more complex interpersonal constructs and broader cognitive complexities have the ability to get past their own perceptions and recognize differences in others so that they can communicate with them more effectively (Burlison et al., 1979). Something such as the environment a person was raised and the environment that they are constantly in can affect their perceptions they have on the world and therefore their communication (Burlison et al., 1979).

Employers need employees who can communicate effectively. They desire these kinds of employees because they aid in organizational efficiency. Employees with strong interpersonal communication skills are able to resolve conflict effectively and in a timely manner. Strong interpersonal communication skills also cause employees to work better with others or in a team which has proven to be important in the safety of patients in the medical field and in the military.

There have been several approaches at teaching good interpersonal communication skills but they are often intermingled with teaching other forms of communication in a basic communication course in colleges or focus on one type of interpersonal communication skill. There is not much training that goes beyond giving people simple techniques.

Therefore, this project is important because it uses constructivism theory as a way to specifically evaluate employee communication differences and increase interpersonal communication skills among employees with less effective communication skills. Constructivism will be used as a diagnosis of interpersonal communication challenges. Employer qualifications for employees will be used as the goal. Past and present interpersonal communication training and teaching techniques will be used as a spearhead to create a more effective interpersonal communication training geared specifically toward adult employees and interpersonal communication situations that take place in the workplace. The curriculum will be designed to first aid employees in understanding their interpersonal constructs and how they affect them and then help them to learn to get past them so that they can communicate more effectively with others.

DESIGN QUESTIONS

1. What kind of teaching method will be best to help employees recognize and understand their interpersonal constructs and how they affect them?
2. What type of activities and exercises could have employees recognize and understand their interpersonal constructs and how they affect their communication?
3. What type of activities and exercises can help employees learn to communicate more effectively despite their interpersonal constructs?
4. What type of an interpersonal communication training curriculum can be created in order to impact learners' perceptions and cause change in their interpersonal communication style?

Chapter 3. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to create a training program curriculum that will effectively develop interpersonal communication skills in adult employees so they are able to perform optimally in this area of their careers. The aim is to link constructivism with communication skills and find best practices for teaching interpersonal communication.

The study comes from a phenomenological point of view in that it is trying to determine which teaching techniques and interpersonal communication skills will enhance employees' capability to seek to understand others by putting aside their own perceptions and values so they can experience relationships from the other person's perspective and develop their interpersonal communication skills. In order to do this, some historical data from scholars had to first be observed to build on this study. Constructivism theory was examined so that the reasons for ineffective interpersonal communication could possibly be diagnosed. Employer's expectations for interpersonal communication skills in employees and why they want them was surveyed so that the importance of this study was justified. In addition, prior interpersonal communication subjects and training techniques were explored in order to provide insight into how this area of teaching communication has been approached before.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The library/documentary research method was used to look at all relevant published materials about interpersonal communication topics, teaching and training as well as general teaching methods (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis & Piele, 2010, p. 212). Interpersonal communication textbooks, articles, and a website pertaining to interpersonal communication training, and textbooks and articles about teaching styles were reviewed so that an understanding of what has

been learned about these subjects could be gained and appropriate research questions could be developed (Rubin et al., 2010). The documents were reviewed for best practices in the areas of interpersonal communication training and teaching methods. Information from those published materials that would best enhance adult employees' interpersonal communication skills was used to create the curriculum.

From the library/documentary research study, the following methodology to creating the curriculum emerged by using steps by Duck and Nicholson (1999):

Determine the Task

As stated above, segments of interpersonal communication that will be taught and the methods in which they will be taught were determined. The determination of what aspects of and how interpersonal communication will be taught was based on the task to improve employees' interpersonal communication skills by understanding others perceptions and gaining shared meaning with others so that employees can effectively and efficiently communicate and meet the goals of their employers.

Course Preparation: Lecture versus Skills

A lecture format involves the instructor speaking and giving information in front of the students. The instructor has great control over what is determined that the audience needs to hear or know, the course material and how many questions the audience may ask. This format can be good for interpersonal communication courses because the instructor can clarify key points and then open up the floor for discussion (p. 88).

The skills format's goal is to develop the students' ability to communicate and the instructor is not required to predominately carry the discussions. For the purpose of this study, a skills based format was concluded as the best to use. It is a hands-on approach and allows the

trainees to have high levels of discussion as well as use real-life situations as practice to learn how to better communicate interpersonally. Students are able to “do communication” and often find these skills they have learned as useful in their careers (p. 90). This type of course may result in trainees realizing changes in their interpersonal skills and becoming excited about learning how to manage processes in relating that they thought they could not manage prior to taking the course (p. 90).

The teaching style for the curriculum will also incorporate a combination of Parker Palmer’s subject-centered education and C. Roland Christensen’s discussion teaching. Interpersonal communication skills and theories will be given the independent voice (Palmer, 2007, p. 118) and the trainer and trainees will explore the subjects together through discussion (Stewart, 2006). This teaching technique will benefit the trainees by giving them the opportunity to learn through comprehension and dialogue of the subject matters rather than memorization of information and coincide with Duck and Nicholson’s (1999) advances.

Course Organization: Book, Practical Application, Phenomenon or Theory Driven

The book driven course uses a book and follows its format, the practical application driven course is drawn from students’ experiences, a phenomenon driven course has students reflect on the way processes may be understood to unfold in interpersonal life, and a theory driven course uses theory to introduce the course and applies it to the subject matters (p. 94). This training curriculum would work best with a primarily practical application driven approach and some theory and phenomenon driven components.

A practical application driven course will develop the abilities of students in interaction and the students’ abilities to recognize that something is going on as they interact (p. 93). Some knowledge of theory will help them know what is going on when they interact and using the

phenomenon component will help them to realize “how” they normally handle interpersonal communication situations.

A transformation method will be included in practical application. Exercises will include real life situations and use strategies such as critical thinking and writing as well as those that promote feeling and emotion to enhance personal growth (Mortenson, 2007). The goal will be to allow trainees to gain awareness of their perceptions, evaluate them and notice how they correlate to their communication so they can then make appropriate changes (Mortenson, 2007).

Evaluation: Quizzes, Reflection Papers, Tests or Papers

There will be no quizzes, reflection papers, tests or papers for the training course. There will be a pre and post questionnaire for employees and their employers so that they can evaluate if they recognized differences in interpersonal communication as a result of the training course. For the employee it will be personal reflection and for the employer it will be performance or witnessing changes in interaction.

The method of creating the curriculum was much the same as Caputo, (1971), in that history and creativity were used. Historical texts and scholarly works were examined to determine the best techniques used and specific skills taught for the training course. Creativity was used in devising activities that will supply practical application and possible change of perception in interpersonal communication situations. Theory and philosophy also guided the building of the curriculum as every aspect of it had to be based in constructivism and phenomenology.

The specific areas of focus based on historical texts, creativity, theory and philosophy are: constructivism, phenomenology, conflict management, managing tone in writing, group communication, listening, rhetorical sensitivity and confirmation.

The curriculum is entitled, *The Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees*. It is a rigorous, four-day course designed to not only teach theory, philosophy and interpersonal communication terms but to promote reflective thought in employees and change in behavior. The goal of the course is to enhance employees' interpersonal communication so they can flourish in their relationships with their coworkers and careers.

Chapter 4: THE PROJECT

This interpersonal communication training curriculum serves as an intensive four-day interactive course for adult employees who either sign up for the course to enhance their interpersonal communication skills or are referred by their employers. The core of the curriculum is based on the constructivism theory and the phenomenological philosophy. Its emphasis is to apply both theory and philosophy to everyday interpersonal communication situations in the workplace so that employees will transform their way of thinking about communication and have better interpersonal communication outcomes.

The curriculum includes eight training modules that include: constructivism, phenomenology, listening, rhetorical sensitivity, confirmation, conflict management, managing tone in writing and group communication. Each module includes an explanation of the topic and discussions and activities that will allow for trainees to gain a deeper understanding of their communication styles and how to enhance or change them.

EXAMPLES OF THE WORK

The curriculum's objective is to help trainees to: 1) understand why interpersonal communication skills are important in their workplace, 2) understand the concept of interpersonal communication through the lens of constructivism theory, 3) develop self-awareness of how constructivism affects perception in interpersonal communication, 4) understand the phenomenology philosophy and how it relates to and can improve interpersonal communication, 5) develop an awareness and understanding of others' perceptions and interpersonal communication styles, and 6) develop skills to effectively communicate interpersonally with others despite different perceptions and interpersonal communication styles.

The first part of the curriculum gives a course description, training course objectives, training course textbooks and selected readings, training course days, training course time, attendees, recommended class size and trainer preparation. The next portion of the curriculum consists of eight modules: 1) Introduction to the Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees, 2) Theoretical and Philosophical Pillars: Constructivism and Phenomenology, 3) Listening, 4) Rhetorical Sensitivity, 5) Confirmation, 6) Conflict Management, 7) Managing Tone in Writing, and 8) Group Communication. The modules' outlines is as follows: objectives; trainer preparation; textbook and/or selected readings for the trainer to use to create PowerPoint presentations, equipment; materials, training room set-up; discussion, activities, and strategies; reflection and wrap-up. The other part of the curriculum consists of the syllabus and course schedule. The final portion of the curriculum includes the pre and post-questionnaires for employees and employers.

The curriculum is designed for trainers to develop an interactive interpersonal communication course for adult employees. The curriculum can be changed, at the trainers' discretion, to accommodate different days and times. All suggested textbooks and/or readings are to be used by trainers to create PowerPoint presentations that they decide will best provide information needed for the module.

Modules

Module 1 – Introduction to the Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult

Employees

This module commences the interpersonal communication course. Trainees will be introduced to the course, the trainer and each other. Interpersonal communication will be defined

and the reason strong interpersonal communication skills are a necessity in today's workforce will be explored.

Objectives:

- Trainees become familiar with the trainer and each other.
- The tone of the training class is set as a forum for open discussion and a comfortable and safe place to self-disclose and practice.
- Course syllabus is introduced and understood.
- Interpersonal communication is defined.
- Why effective interpersonal communication skills are important for employees is discussed.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings:

Griffin, E.A. (2009). A first look at communication theory. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

This text is suggested for the trainer to use in creating the PowerPoint presentation.

Module 2 - Theoretical and Philosophical Pillars: Constructivism and Phenomenology

This module surveys the core principles of the training course, constructivism theory and phenomenology. The module serves as a beginning step to improving interpersonal communication by recognizing potential problems and having an antidote to solve them. The information learned in this module will be applied to all remaining modules.

Objectives:

- Trainees gain an understanding of constructivism theory.
- Trainees gain an understanding of phenomenological philosophy.
- Trainees become aware of how constructivism affects their ability to communicate interpersonally.

- Trainees explore how phenomenology can be applied for affective interpersonal communication.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings:

Griffin, E.A. (2009). *A first look at communication theory*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

This text is suggested for the trainer to use in creating the PowerPoint presentation.

Module 3 – Listening

This module explores the concept and importance of listening in interpersonal communication and how employees can become better listeners.

Objectives:

- Understand that listening is a complex function of perception and attention (Heiman, 1974, p.26).
- Understand that listening is a selective process. People pick out those stimuli that fit their needs and purposes (p. 26).
- Understand that constructivism theory coincides with listening because as people listen, they make connections with their past (p. 26).
- Understand that people can train or force ourselves to become better listeners.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings:

Heiman, Hazel (1974). Teaching interpersonal communication. *North Dakota Speech and Theatre Association Bulletin*, 2(2), 7 – 29.

This text is suggested for the trainer to use in creating the PowerPoint presentation.

Module 4 – Rhetorical Sensitivity

In this module rhetorical sensitivity is examined as an important component to effective interpersonal communication.

Objectives:

- Understand how rhetorical sensitivity adheres to the phenomenological philosophy.
- Understand how rhetorical sensitivity relates to cognitive complexity.
- Understand the three communication types: Noble selves, rhetorical reflectors and rhetorical sensitives.
- Discover personal communication type.
- Understand how interpersonal communication requires an adaptive approach to others that balances one person's self-interest with the interests of others (Caputo, Hazel & McMahon, 1994, p.108).
- Understand how to adjust communication by taking into account the beliefs, values and mood of the other person (p. 108).

Textbook and/or Selected Readings:

Caputo, J. S., Hazel, H. C. & McMahon, C. (1994). *Interpersonal communication: competence through critical thinking*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

This text is suggested for the trainer to use in creating the PowerPoint presentation.

Module 5 – Confirmation

In this module the importance of confirmation in interpersonal communication and relationship building in the workplace is surveyed.

Objectives:

- Understand that confirmation displays respect and positivity to others (Caputo, Hazel & McMahon, 1994, p.112).
- Understand the varying types of disconfirming statements and be able to identify them.
- Understand the varying types of confirming statements and be able to identify them.

- Understand how confirmation allows for successful interpersonal communication in the workplace.
- Understand how constructivism and phenomenology relate to confirmation.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings:

Caputo, J. S., Hazel, H. C. & McMahon, C. (1994). *Interpersonal communication: competence through critical thinking*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

This text is suggested for the trainer to use in creating the PowerPoint presentation.

Module 6 – Conflict Management

This module examines using interpersonal communication skills for effective conflict management in the workplace.

Objectives:

- Understand the different types of conflicts that arise in organizations.
- Understand different conflict management styles.
- Understand the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) and how it can help in conflict management.
- Understand and apply Fisher, Patton and Ury's (1991) conflict management methods in Unit 2.
- Gain effective conflict management strategies.
- Understand how constructivism and phenomenology relate to conflict management.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings:

Fisher, R., Patton, B. & Ury, W. (1991). *Getting to yes* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Larson, R. S. & Myers, L. L. (2005). Preparing students for early work conflicts. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 68(3), 306 – 317. doi: 10.1177/1080569905278967

Shell, G. R. (2001). Bargaining styles and negotiation: The thomas-kilman conflict mode instrument in negotiating training. *Negotiation Journal*, 17(2), 155 – 174.

<http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/>

These texts and website are suggested for the trainer to use in creating the PowerPoint presentation.

Module 7 – Managing Tone in Writing

This module observes managing tone in writing and how applying interpersonal communication skills to it can be beneficial in workplace communication such as emails and memos.

Objectives:

Understand what managing tone in writing is.

- Understand that managing tone in writing can be an important interpersonal communication skill.
- Understand that managing tone in writing is different and more difficult than writing clearly.
- Understand how defensiveness correlates to poor writing tone.
- Understand how to apply interpersonal communication to manage tone in writing.
- Understand how to manage tone in writing by writing from the reader's point of view.
- Understand how constructivism and phenomenology relate to managing tone in writing.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings:

Jameson, D. A. (2009). Management consulting and teaching: lessons learned teaching professionals to control tone in writing. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 72(3), 333 – 338. doi: 10.1177/1080569909340626

This text is suggested for the trainer to use in creating the PowerPoint presentation.

Module 8 – Group Communication

This module identifies the importance of and how to incorporate interpersonal communication skills in group communication.

Objectives:

- Understand the importance of group communication in the workplace.
- Understand how constructivism affects group communication.
- Understand how phenomenology can be applied to group communication.
- Understand how to incorporate interpersonal communication skills to group communication for optimal results.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings

Cline, S. (2005). Soft skills make the difference in the workplace. *Colorado Springs*, 1.

Connelly, M. S., Dionne, S. D., Mumford, M. D., & Yammarino, F.J. (2010). Leadership and team dynamics for dangerous military contexts. *Military Psychology*, 22, 15 – 41. doi: 10.1080/08995601003644221

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These texts are suggested for the trainer to use in creating the PowerPoint presentation.

Chapter 5. SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS

This project has explored the history of constructivism theory, the importance of interpersonal communication skills in employees and interpersonal communication training and how they are interrelated in an effort to develop an effective interpersonal communication training course for adult employees. Constructivism theory explains the interpersonal communication process through perception (Delia, 1976; Irwin, 1983). Stewart (2006) states that communication correlates with the quality of a person's life (p. 6) and studies reveal that employees with strong interpersonal communication skills have better job satisfaction and are sought out by employers (Cline, 2005; Morreale et al., 2000 and Morreale & Pearson, 2008). The historical data studied implies that those with better interpersonal communication skills will be more effective in their careers. Therefore the project used constructivism theory as practical application to diagnose the potential problems with adult employees' interpersonal communication so that the variances in effective interpersonal communication in the workplace are lessened and all employees can have an increased chance in thriving in the workplace.

LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

There were some limitations to this project. One limitation was based on the criticism of constructivism promoting elitism. Although there was considerable literature found on constructivist theory and how culture and environment contribute to construct differences among people, there was no substantial literature that linked constructivism theory and constructivists with creating programs to remedy these differences (Burlison, 2007). There was substantial literature on interpersonal communication training but none that regarded constructivism, environment and culture. This was a major factor in creating this thesis project but it posed limitations on examples to follow in creating it.

The other limitation is the scope and effectiveness of the project. Constructivism is a theory that was developed by communication scholars but has roots in social and cognitive psychology (Irwin, 1983). There are differences in construct systems in adults and children due to differentiation in cognitive complexity (Irwin, 1983). As mentioned earlier, childhood environment and culture can determine construct differences (Burlison, 2007) but it was not evident in the historical context that training courses can change cognitive complexity and interpersonal constructs.

The project was designed so that trainees could become aware of what cognitive complexities are and how their interpersonal constructs affect their perception and their interpersonal communication and provide exercises to help them enhance their cognitive complexities, transcend above their interpersonal constructs and improve communication. However, there is no conclusive evidence that they will have significant psychological changes in their thinking that they have developed over many years as a result of a four-day training course. Behavioral changes may be determined by the post questionnaires from employees and employers at best just as with other interpersonal communication training courses.

FURTHER STUDIES OR RECOMMENDATIONS

This project sought to explore constructivism theory and its association to the importance of interpersonal communication skills in employees. It is crucial that adult employees have effective interpersonal communication skills to keep themselves marketable and compatible in a tumultuous workforce, as well as keep them effective and productive with others. Employees cannot afford to be unequal in the interpersonal communication skill set when that is what employers desire. Further study and exploration of cognitive complexities and interpersonal

constructs and how to change them in adult employees after years of them being embedded is recommended.

It is also recommended that constructivism theory be applied practically in a curriculum for school-age children and young adults in college. Theorists suggest that environment and culture play a role in how individuals develop cognitively and therefore develop in their interpersonal communication, therefore it would be beneficial to create interpersonal communication curriculums in elementary, junior high and high schools as well as colleges that help to enhance cognitive complexities and interpersonal communication skills so that students can become exceptional employees.

The final recommendation is that there be further study testing the effectiveness of the training curriculum presented in this thesis project, *The Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees*. A pre and post-questionnaire was created in the curriculum for employees to evaluate their interpersonal communication skills prior to and after taking the course as well as a pre and post-questionnaire for employers to evaluate their employees prior to and after taking the course. However, there needs to be a long-term study conducted to see if actual cognition and behavioral changes will permanently take place as a result of the four-day course.

CONCLUSIONS

This study hypothesized that an interpersonal communication training curriculum needed to be created to bridge the gap between interpersonal communication skill differences in adult employees. The study was designed to not only improve their interpersonal communication skills but cause them to think about why and how they communicate and make changes in their thinking about interpersonal communication.

The purpose of the thesis project was to provide a four-day interactive interpersonal communication training course for adult employees. The curriculum that was designed included eight modules that covered constructivism, phenomenology, listening, rhetorical sensitivity, confirmation, conflict management, managing tone in writing, and group communication.

Chapter 2 laid the theoretical and philosophical foundation for the study as well as explored the literature. Historical data on constructivism, phenomenology, the importance of interpersonal communication in the workplace and interpersonal communication training were examined. Articles, books, a website and journals were reviewed in order to prove the essentialness to create and to help develop an interpersonal communication course for adult employees.

In Chapter 3 the scope and methodology of the study was introduced. Best practices for teaching interpersonal communication and general teaching techniques were determined in this chapter. A library/documentary research method was used to look at all relevant published materials (Rubin et al., 2010, p. 212) and creativity in order to develop the curriculum.

The methodology for outlining the course of action in the curriculum was influenced by Duck and Nicholson (1999). The task that was determined was to have employees' interpersonal communication skills enhanced through understanding their perceptions and others so that they can communicate effectively and meet their employers' goals. In course preparation a skills format was chosen for a hands on approach to teaching interpersonal communication and to have open discussion. A primarily practical application approach to course organization was chosen with no quizzes, tests or papers. The course was designed to be reflective in nature with students and employers completing a pre and post-questionnaire to evaluate how their interpersonal communication skills have changed.

The Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees was presented in Chapter 4 in eight modules: 1) Introduction to the Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees, 2) Theoretical and Philosophical Pillars: Constructivism and Phenomenology, 3) Listening, 4) Rhetorical Sensitivity, 5) Confirmation, 6) Conflict Management, 7) Managing Tone in Writing, and 8) Group Communication. The first part of the curriculum gives a course description, training course objectives, training course textbooks and selected readings, training course days, training course time, attendees, recommended class size and trainer preparation. The next portion of the curriculum consisted of the modules and their outline: objectives; trainer preparation; textbook and/or selected readings, equipment; materials, training room set-up; discussion, activities, and strategies; reflection and wrap-up. The other part of the curriculum consisted of the syllabus and course schedule. The final portion of the curriculum included the pre and post-questionnaires for employees and employers.

The curriculum 's objective was to help trainees to: 1) understand why interpersonal communication skills are important in their workplace, 2) understand the concept of interpersonal communication through the lens of constructivism theory, 3) develop self-awareness of how constructivism affects perception in interpersonal communication, 4) understand the phenomenology philosophy and how it relates to and can improve interpersonal communication, 5) develop an awareness and understand others' perceptions and interpersonal communication styles, and 6) develop skills to effectively communicate interpersonally with others despite different perceptions and interpersonal communication styles.

It is desired that this curriculum would enable trainees to apply constructivism theory and phenomenological philosophy to their everyday interpersonal communication encounters in the workplace. Theory and philosophical application and interactive exercises were designed for

employees to enhance their interpersonal communication skills in their careers and bridge the gap in interpersonal communication differences so that the workforce is a more leveled playing field.

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Appendix

See attached.

The Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees

Bridging the Gap between Interpersonal
Communication Skill Differences in Adult
Employees

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TRAINING COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interpersonal communication training curriculum serves as an intensive four-day interactive course for adult employees. The core of the curriculum is based on the constructivism theory and the phenomenological philosophy. Its emphasis will be to apply both theory and philosophy to everyday interpersonal communication situations in the workplace so that employees will transform their way of thinking about communication and have better interpersonal communication outcomes.

The curriculum includes eight training modules: an introduction to the interpersonal communication training course for adult employees, constructivism, phenomenology, listening, rhetorical sensitivity, confirmation, conflict management, managing tone in writing and group communication. Each module will include an explanation of the topic, discussions and activities that will allow for trainees to gain a deeper understanding of their communication styles and how to enhance or change them.

Training Course Definition of Terms Used:

Cognitive Complexity – The mental ability to distinguish subtle personality and behavior differences among people (Griffin, 2009, p. 98).

Confirmation – The ability to socially validate people in relationships through nonverbal and verbal communication (Caputo, Hazel & McMahon, 1994, pp. 108 – 109).

Conflict Management – A learned social skill set that enables people to be able to identify conflict types and make appropriate communication decisions on how to respond to the conflict (Larson & Meyers, 2005, p. 313).

Constructs or Interpersonal Constructs – The cognitive templates or stencils we fit over social reality to order our impressions of people (Griffin, 2009, p. 98).

Constructivism – a communication theory that seeks to explain individual differences in people's ability to communicate skillfully in social situations (Griffin, 2009, p. 97).

Group Communication – Interpersonal communication in a group of three or more people.

Interpersonal Communication – When the people involved talk and listen in ways that maximize the presence of the personal (Stewart, 2006, p. 38).

Listening – A highly specialized perception process that involves a particular application of the joint verbal-visual stimuli that occur in a communication situation (Heiman, 1974, p. 25).

Managing Tone in Writing – The ability to use insight into readers' psyches, sensitivities to the nuances of language and imagination to anticipate how readers will respond emotionally to the words chosen (Jameson, 2009, p. 334).

Noble Selves – People who do not adjust their communication strategies for others and do stick to their personal ideals (Caputo, et al., 1994, p. 109).

Perception – The process of extracting information from the world outside of us as well as from within the individual (Heiman, 1974, p. 2).

Phenomenology – A philosophy that refers to the intentional analysis of everyday life from the standpoint of the person who is living it (Griffin, 2009, p. 49). Places emphasis on people's perceptions and interpretations of their own subjective experiences (Griffin, 2009, p. 49).

Rhetorical Reflector – A person who molds him or herself to others' wishes and does not have any particular scruples to follow (Caputo, et al., 1994, p.109).

Rhetorical Sensitivity – The ability to take into account the beliefs, values and mood of others and communicate accordingly (Caputo et al., 1994, pp. 108 – 109).

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) - An assessment tool that has been created to measure a person's behavior in conflict situations (Shell, 2001, p. 159). The TKI measures five categories in which people are predisposed to handling conflict according to assertiveness and cooperativeness: 1) competing, 2) collaborating, 3) compromising 4) avoiding and 5) accommodating (Shell, 2001, p. 161).

Training Course Objectives:

- Understand why interpersonal communication skills are important in the workplace.

- Understand the concept of interpersonal communication through the lens of constructivism theory.
- Develop self-awareness of how constructivism affects perception in interpersonal communication.
- Understand the phenomenology philosophy and how it relates to and can improve interpersonal communication.
- Develop an awareness and understand others perceptions and interpersonal communication styles.
- Develop skills to effectively communicate interpersonally with others despite different perceptions and interpersonal communication styles.

TRAINING COURSE TEXTBOOKS AND SELECTED READINGS

Caputo, J. S. (1971). *A communication theory curriculum for the lower-division college student* (Master's thesis). California State College, Long Beach.

Caputo, J. S., Hazel, H. C. & McMahon, C. (1994). *Interpersonal communication: competence through critical thinking*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

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- Manser, T. (2009). Teamwork and patient safety in dynamic domains of healthcare: a review of the literature. *Acta Anaesthesiol Scand*, 53,143-151. doi: 10.1111/j.1399-6576.2008.01717.x
- Shell, G. R. (2001). Bargaining styles and negotiation: The thomas-kilman conflict mode instrument in negotiating training. *Negotiation Journal*, 17(2), 155 – 174.
- Stewart, J. (Ed.) *Bridges not walls: A book about interpersonal communication* (9th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

TRAINING COURSE DAYS

Monday thru Thursday

TRAINING COURSE TIME

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Class times may vary depending on length of discussions and activities.

ATTENDEES

The training course is open to adult employees who want to improve their interpersonal communication skills or who have been referred by their employers so they can improve their interpersonal communication skills.

RECOMMENDED CLASS SIZE

10 – 16 participants

TRAINING COURSE MODULES

2 Modules per day in 4 hour blocks:

Module 1 - Introduction to the Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees

Module 2 - Theoretical & Philosophical Pillars: Constructivism & Phenomenology

Module 3 - Listening

Module 4 - Rhetorical Sensitivity

Module 5 - Confirmation

Module 6 - Conflict Management

Module 7 - Managing Tone in Writing

Module 8 - Group Communication

TRAINER PREPARATION PRIOR TO DAY 1 OF CLASS

- Send copies of employee pre and post questionnaires to trainees two weeks prior to start date of the class and request that they bring them completed on day 1 of class.
- Send copies of employer pre and post questionnaires to trainees' managers/supervisors two weeks prior to start date of the class and request they complete and send them back at least one week prior to day 1 of the class.

DAY 1

MODULE 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING COURSE FOR ADULTS

This module commences the interpersonal communication course. Trainees will be introduced to the course, the trainer and each other. Interpersonal communication will be defined and the reason strong interpersonal skills are a necessity in today's workforce will be explored.

Objectives

- Trainees become familiar with the trainer and each other.
- The tone of the training class is set as a forum for open discussion and a comfortable and safe place to self-disclose and practice.
- Course syllabus is introduced and understood.
- Interpersonal communication is defined.

- Why effective interpersonal communication skills are important for employees is discussed.

Trainer Preparation

- Prepare copies of training course syllabus.
- Create a PowerPoint presentation defining interpersonal communication from Griffin (2009) and why interpersonal communication skills are important for employees.
- Create copies of PowerPoint presentation with the definition of interpersonal communication from Griffin (2009) and why interpersonal communication skills are important for employees as handouts.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings

- Griffin, E. A. (2009). *A first look at communication theory*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Equipment

- PowerPoint Projector

Materials

- 5 x 7 Spiral Bound Notebooks (for trainee's journals)

Training Room Set-Up

- Place desks or chairs in a semi- circle so that the room is conducive to open and face-to-face discussions among the trainees.

Discussion, Activities and Strategies

- Introduce yourself as trainer as well as fellow participant of the interpersonal communication training course. Share information about yourself and why you find it important to train employees in interpersonal communication.
- Ask students to share their first and last names.
- Review the syllabus, training course schedule and course expectations.
- Establish training course conduct: The classroom is to be a model of effective interpersonal communication
 - Explain to trainees that the training classroom is to be an environment of trust and acceptance and respect for every individual's opinions. Also elaborate on the fact that what is discussed in the classroom can be sensitive and that confidentiality of information shared is important.
 - Review daily journaling requirements.
- Distribute 5 x 7 notebooks and syllabus
- Allow for questions and comments.

What is interpersonal communication?

- Have trainees define their perception of interpersonal communication.
- Have trainees discuss why they feel interpersonal communication is important to their careers.
- Present PowerPoint presentation on what interpersonal communication is and why it is important in the workplace.

- Allow for questions and comments.
- Have trainees write journal entries about specific interpersonal communication areas they would like to improve at work and/or specific interpersonal communication situations or conflicts they have encountered at work.

Activity I: Getting “Interpersonal”

1. Trainees are to wander around the room; they can look at bulletin boards, pictures, out the window but not chat with each other. Trainees are to pass and speak nonverbally to every person in the room. They may wink, smile, shake hands, nudge each other, slap a shoulder, or in any other nonverbal manner say hello or recognize each other. (Approximately ten minutes)
2. Then each trainee is to find another trainee that he or she does not know or knows least well and the two are to sit down beside each other. They are to take two or three minutes to introduce themselves to each other. They are to tell each other who they are as a person.
3. Next the trainees are to find another person they do not know well and the two of them are to share what they want to get out of the study of interpersonal communication. (Two or three minutes)
4. They are to find another person they do not know well and they are to share a recent interpersonal communication experience that is significant to them. (Two or three minutes)
5. They are to find another they do not know well and this time share a goal of theirs such as ideal job or career advancement, etc.

6. Have the class form small groups of four to eight. They are to try and be in a group that has a number of the individuals to whom they talked in previous activities. Once the groups are formed they are to discuss:
 - a. What activity was the most helpful in getting to know a person and why.
 - b. If there are individuals in the group whom they do not know, they should decide how all the members can become acquainted with each other. What they should share to get to know each other.

Activity is from: Heiman, Hazel (1974). Teaching interpersonal communication. *North Dakota Speech and Theatre Association Bulletin*, 2(2), 7 – 29.

Reflection

Have trainees discuss how they felt about the activity.

Wrap-Up

Distribute PowerPoint copies for trainees' reference.

MODULE 2 – THEORETICAL AND PHYLOSOPHICAL PILLARS: CONSTRUCTIVISM AND PHENOMENOLOGY

This module surveys the core principles of the training course, constructivism theory and phenomenology. The module serves as a beginning step to improving interpersonal communication by recognizing potential problems and having an antidote to solve them.

The information learned in this module will be applied to all remaining modules.

Objectives

- Trainees gain an understanding of constructivism theory.

- Trainees gain an understanding of phenomenological philosophy.
- Trainees become aware of how constructivism affects their ability to communicate interpersonally.
- Trainees explore how phenomenology can be applied for affective interpersonal communication.

Trainer Preparation

- Create a PowerPoint presentation defining constructivism theory and phenomenology from Griffin (2009).
- Create copies of PowerPoint presentation with definitions of constructivism theory and phenomenology from Griffin (2009) as handouts.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings

- Griffin, E. A. (2009). *A first look at communication theory*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

Equipment

- PowerPoint Projector

Materials

- N/A

Training Room Set-Up

- Place desks or chairs in a circle so that the room is conducive to open and face-to-face discussions among the trainees.

Discussion, Activities and Strategies

What is constructivism theory and phenomenological philosophy?

- Ask the class what they think hinders them from effective interpersonal communication and desired outcomes at work.
- Ask the class what traits they see in themselves or others that enables them to effectively communicate interpersonally and get desired outcomes at work.
- Explain to the class that constructivism theory seeks to explain why people communicate differently from each other.
- Explain to the class that phenomenology seeks to explain why people communicate differently from each other much the same way as constructivism theory does as well as provides skills that will improve interpersonal communication.
- Present PowerPoint presentation on constructivism and phenomenology.
- Allow for questions and comments on the PowerPoint presentation.

Activity I: Perception Exercise

1. Divide the class into pairs. Each is to take a piece of paper and divide the paper into two columns. At the top of one column trainees write “me” and at the top of the other column they write “you”. Then each is to write about himself or herself as he or she sees himself or herself. (This may take ten minutes.) They then fold the paper so that the other person cannot see what is written and then under the “you” column the other person writes how he or she sees the other.

After they have finished they are to read their papers to each other. “I see myself as,” “You see me as.” Then between themselves they can discuss the differences in their self and other perceptions.

Activity II: Applying Phenomenology

1. The same pairs in activity I arrange their chairs (or if they wish they may sit on the floor) back to back. Assign to each pair the task of understanding one another. For the first period (approximately ten minutes) they may talk with each other back to back without physical contact. After this initial period is over, ask the pairs to face each other and to continue the development of better understanding. Suggest to the groups that the usual casual information found on any vita is not enough to allow you to find a way to each other. Each person must seek the other out and allow him or herself to be sought out. Ask the trainees to seek for areas of mutual understanding. When this has progressed to the point where you feel there are some real bonds developing, stop the exercise.

Activity III: Self Examination

1. Have trainees straighten the chairs or desks and go back to their seats.
2. Have trainees retrieve their journals.
3. Have each trainee examine his or her family background to determine ethnic, religious, racial, economic, social and regional influences that might have affected him or her as a person and which might affect how he or she sends and receives messages, or how he or she speaks and responds. The list should probably include

parental and regional attitudes, worship, prejudices, entertainment and reading, family customs, recreation, home furnishings, food, etc.

- Engage the class in open discussion of what happened in activities I and II and how it affected each person. Encourage those trainees that would like to share their journal entries regarding what they learned about themselves in the self examination activity.
- Allow for questions and comments.

Activity I: Perception Exercise is from: Heiman, Hazel (1974). Teaching interpersonal communication. *North Dakota Speech and Theatre Association Bulletin*, 2(2), 7 – 29.

Activity II: Applying phenomenology is from: Caputo, J. S. (1971). *A communication theory curriculum for the lower-division college student* (Master's thesis). California State College, Long Beach.

Activity III: Self examination is from: Heiman, Hazel (1974). Teaching interpersonal communication. *North Dakota Speech and Theatre Association Bulletin*, 2(2), 7 – 29.

Reflection

Encourage trainees to look at their first journal entries from Module I on interpersonal communication at work and reflect on how constructivism and phenomenology may contribute to the areas they wish to improve

Wrap-Up

Distribute PowerPoint copies for trainees' reference.

DAY 2

MODULE 3 – LISTENING

This module explores the concept and importance of listening in interpersonal communication and how employees can become better listeners.

Objectives

- Understand that listening is a complex function of perception and attention (Heiman, 1974, p.26).
- Understand that listening is a selective process. People pick out those stimuli that fit their needs and purposes (p. 26).
- Understand that constructivism theory coincides with listening because as people listen, they make connections with their past (p. 26).
- Understand that people can train or force ourselves to become better listeners.

Trainer Preparation:

- Create a PowerPoint presentation defining and exploring the concept of listening in interpersonal communication from Heiman (1974).
- Create copies of the PowerPoint presentation that defines and explores the concept of listening in interpersonal communication from Heiman (1974) as handouts.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings

- Heiman, Hazel (1974). Teaching interpersonal communication. *North Dakota Speech and Theatre Association Bulletin*, 2(2), 7 – 29.

Equipment

- PowerPoint Projector

Materials

- N/A

Training Room Set-Up

Place desks or chairs in a circle so that the room is conducive to open and face-to-face discussions among the trainees.

Discussion, Activities and Strategies

What is listening?

- Ask the trainees what is effective listening and why is it important in interpersonal communication at work?
- Present PowerPoint presentation on listening.
- Allow for questions and comments on the PowerPoint presentation.

Activity I

1. Divide the class into pairs. One person relays an incident with some detail to the other person. The listener will listen with the purpose of telling the incident back again to the original sender's satisfaction.

Activity II

1. Have trainees go back to their desks/seats.
2. Have trainees make a list of ideas to which they are most likely to listen regardless of their source. Then have them make a list of ideas which they are not likely to hear or perceive no matter where they originate or are told.

Activity III

1. Have trainees make a list of things, people and ideas against which they are prejudiced. Would they “tune out” when they hear these words?
 - Engage the class in an open discussion regarding their findings from activities I through III.
 - Remind students that some of the comments will be sensitive in nature and that they may not agree with all of them. Encourage them to keep an open mind and to respect each trainee’s thoughts by not disputing with them.
 - Allow for questions and comments.

Activities I – II are from: Heiman, Hazel (1974). Teaching interpersonal communication.

North Dakota Speech and Theatre Association Bulletin, 2(2), 7 – 29.

Reflection

Encourage trainees to reflect that evening on their first journal entries from Module I on interpersonal communication at work and ponder how they could be a better listener in those situations and how listening would improve their interpersonal communication and their outcomes at work.

Wrap-Up

Distribute PowerPoint copies for trainees' reference.

MODULE 4 – RHETORICAL SENSITIVITY

In this module rhetorical sensitivity is examined as an important component to effective interpersonal communication.

Objectives

- Understand how rhetorical sensitivity adheres to the phenomenological philosophy.
- Understand how rhetorical sensitivity relates to cognitive complexity.
- Understand the three communication types: Noble selves, rhetorical reflectors and rhetorical sensitives.
- Discover personal communication type.
- Understand how interpersonal communication requires an adaptive approach to others that balances one person's self-interest with the interests of others (Caputo, Hazel & McMahon, 1994, p.108).
- Understand how to adjust communication by taking into account the beliefs, values and mood of the other person (p. 108).

Trainer Preparation

- Create a PowerPoint presentation defining and exploring the concept of rhetorical sensitivity from Caputo et al. (1994).

- Create copies of the PowerPoint presentation that defines and explores the concept of rhetorical sensitivity from Caputo et al. (1994) as handouts.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings

- Caputo, J. S., Hazel, H. C. & McMahon, C. (1994). *Interpersonal communication: competence through critical thinking*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Equipment

- PowerPoint Projector

Materials

- N/A

Training Room Set-Up

Place desks or chairs in a circle so that the room is conducive to open and face-to-face discussions among the trainees.

Discussion, Activities and Strategies

Review constructivism and phenomenology

- Ask trainees to discuss what constructivism is from Module 2.
- Ask trainees to discuss what phenomenology is from Module 2.

What is rhetorical sensitivity?

- Present PowerPoint presentation on rhetorical sensitivity.
- Allow for questions and comments on the PowerPoint presentation.

- Ask students to discuss how people who are rhetorically sensitive accept others' personal complexities and how that relates to cognitive complexity in constructivism.
- Ask trainees to relate rhetorical sensitivity to the phenomenological philosophy.

Activity: Role-play

Role-play situation: You and another employee are supposed to meet at a restaurant after work to work on a project. You go to the restaurant at the time decided on but your coworker never shows up, and you leave feeling angry. The next day you see each other in the office and start to talk about what happened the night before.

1. Divide the class into small groups.
 2. Have each group role-play this situation in front of the class.
 3. Each person alternates roles being noble self, rhetorical reflector or rhetorically sensitive.
 4. Have the class guess which trait each person is role-playing.
 5. Have trainees go back in their groups and discuss how it felt to communicate from each trait type.
 6. Each trainee reflects on and discusses which type they predominately are.
- Trainees go back to their desks/seats.
 - Allow for questions and comments regarding the role-play exercise.

Activity is based from: Caputo, J. S., Hazel, H. C. & McMahon, C. (1994). *Interpersonal communication: competence through critical thinking*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Reflection

Encourage trainees to reflect that evening on their first journal entries from Module 1 on interpersonal communication situations at work and think about where they used the different communication traits. Then have them reflect on which trait they use the most and which they appreciate most in others and why. Have them write down possible steps of developing a rhetorically sensitive interpersonal communication style.

Wrap-Up

Distribute PowerPoint copies for trainees' reference.

DAY 3

MODULE 5 – CONFIRMATION

In this module the importance of confirmation in interpersonal communication and relationship building in the workplace is surveyed.

Objectives

- Understand that confirmation displays respect and positivity to others (Caputo, Hazel & McMahon, 1994, p.112).
- Understand the varying types of disconfirming statements and be able to identify them.

- Understand the varying types of confirming statements and be able to identify them.
- Understand how confirmation allows for successful interpersonal communication in the workplace.
- Understand how constructivism and phenomenology relate to confirmation.

Trainer Preparation

- Create a PowerPoint presentation defining and exploring the concept of confirmation from Caputo et al. (1994).
- Create copies of the PowerPoint presentation that defines and explores the concept of confirmation from Caputo et al. (1994) as handouts.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings

- Caputo, J. S., Hazel, H. C. & McMahon, C. (1994). *Interpersonal communication: competence through critical thinking*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Equipment

- PowerPoint Projector

Materials

- N/A

Training Room Set-Up

- Place desks or chairs in a circle so that the room is conducive to open and face-to-face discussions among the trainees.

Discussion, Activities and Strategies

What is confirmation?

- Present PowerPoint presentation on confirmation.
- Allow for questions and comments on the PowerPoint presentation.
- Ask students to discuss how confirmation relates to constructivism.
- Ask trainees to discuss how confirmation relates to the phenomenological philosophy.

Activity: Role-play

Role-play situation: Two employees are working on a project for their department. Both have different ideas on how the project should be executed. One person believes that it should be rolled out in phases in four weeks. The other thinks it should be presented all at once.

1. Divide the class into pairs.
 2. Have each pair role-play this situation amongst themselves.
 3. Each person first does the role-play and uses disconfirming responses: indifference, impervious and disqualifying.
 4. Next each person does the role-play and uses confirming responses: recognition, acknowledgement and endorsement.
- Trainees go back to their desks/seats.

- Have trainees discuss the outcomes of the different scenarios. Which was the best outcome? Was it easy or hard to be disconfirming? Was it easy or hard to be confirming? Which felt better?
- Allow for additional questions and comments regarding the role-play exercise.

Reflection

Encourage trainees to reflect that evening on their first journal entries from Module 1 on interpersonal communication situations at work and think about if they were disconfirmed or confirmed or if they disconfirmed or confirmed someone. Have them write down possible statements to confirm someone in those situations without giving up themselves.

Wrap-Up

Distribute PowerPoint copies for trainees' reference.

MODULE 6 – CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

This module examines using interpersonal communication skills for effective conflict management in the workplace.

Objectives

- Understand the different types of conflicts that arise in organizations.
- Understand different conflict management styles.
- Understand the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) and how it can help in conflict management.

- Understand and apply Fisher, Patton and Ury's (1991) conflict management methods in Unit 2.
- Gain effective conflict management strategies.
- Understand how constructivism and phenomenology relate to conflict management.

Trainer Preparation

- Create a PowerPoint presentation defining and exploring conflict management from Fisher, Patton and Ury (1991), Larson and Meyers (2005) and Shellar (2001).
- Create copies of the PowerPoint presentation that defines and explores conflict management from Fisher, Patton and Ury, (1991), Larson and Meyers (2005) and Sheller (2001) as handouts.
- Purchase the TKI from <http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/> for the amount of trainees.
- Purchase the Basic Training course from <http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/>. Only one course needs to be purchased per class.
- Download and print Basic Training course manual.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings

- Fisher, R., Patton, B. & Ury, W. (1991). *Getting to yes* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.

- Larson, R. S. & Myers, L. L. (2005). Preparing students for early work conflicts. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 68(3), 306 – 317. doi: 10.1177/1080569905278967
- Shell, G. R. (2001). Bargaining styles and negotiation: The thomas-kilman conflict mode instrument in negotiating training. *Negotiation Journal*, 17(2), 155 – 174.
- <http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/>

Equipment

- PowerPoint Projector/Projector
- Laptops for trainer and trainees
- Internet Connection

Materials

- <http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/> to take the TKI and to take the Basic Training Course as an exercise

Training Room Set-Up

- Place desks or chairs in a circle so that the room is conducive to open and face-to-face discussions among the trainees.

Discussion, Activities and Strategies

What is conflict and conflict resolution?

- Ask trainees to explain what they perceive the definition of conflict to be.
- Ask trainees to discuss varying conflict scenarios in their work environments.
- Present PowerPoint presentation on conflict management.

- Allow for questions and comments on the PowerPoint presentation.
- Ask students to discuss how perceptions affect conflict management.
- Ask students how they can show empathy and concern for another person in conflict management.

Activity I: Taking the TKI

1. Have trainees log on to <http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/> and go to Take the TKI under the Navigation tab on the left hand side of the website (approximately 10 – 15 minutes).
2. Have trainees view the results of the assessment.
3. Have trainees discuss the results of their assessments.

Activity II: Basic Training in Conflict Management Exercise

1. Go to <http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/> on your laptop and make sure it displays from the projector for the class to view.
2. Choose the Online Courses tab at the top of the website and choose 1. Basic Training in the drop-down menu.
3. Have trainees participate in the Basic Training course (approximately 80 minutes) as a class.
4. Have trainees discuss the Basic Training course exercise.
 - a. Have trainees discuss how the TKI assessment correlated with the exercise.

- b. Have trainees discuss how the methods to solving conflict from Unit 2 in *Getting to Yes (1991)* apply to the collaborating method discussed in the TKI and Shell (2001) to solve conflict situations.

Activity I – Taking the TKI is based from: Kilmann Diagnostics at

<http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/>.

Activity II – Basic Training in Conflict Management exercise is based from: Kilmann

Diagnostics at <http://www.kilmanndiagnostics.com/>.

Reflection

Encourage trainees to reflect that evening on conflicts they have been involved in at their jobs. Have them use their TKI results, Basic Training course exercise information and the conflict management methods from unit 2 in *Getting to YES* to determine how they could have resolved conflict with their coworker in order to attain the optimal outcome for the assignment or company.

Wrap-Up

Distribute PowerPoint copies for trainees' reference.

DAY 4

MODULE 7 – MANAGING TONE IN WRITING

This module teaches managing tone in writing and how applying interpersonal communication skills to it can be beneficial in workplace communication such as emails and memos.

Objectives

- Understand what managing tone in writing is.
- Understand that managing tone in writing can be an important interpersonal communication skill.
- Understand that managing tone in writing is different and more difficult than writing clearly.
- Understand how defensiveness correlates to poor writing tone.
- Understand how to apply interpersonal communication to manage tone in writing.
- Understand how to manage tone in writing by writing from the reader's point of view.
- Understand how constructivism and phenomenology relate to managing tone in writing.

Trainer Preparation

- Create a PowerPoint presentation defining and exploring managing tone in writing from Jameson (2009).
- Create copies of the PowerPoint presentation that defines and explores managing tone in writing from Jameson (2009) as handouts.
- Create handouts of Gibb's Categories of Defensive Communication Applied to Tone in Writing found in Jameson (2009).

Textbook and/or Selected Readings

- Jameson, D. A. (2009). Management consulting and teaching: lessons learned teaching professionals to control tone in writing. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 72(3), 333 – 338. doi: 10.1177/1080569909340626

Equipment

- Projector
- Laptops for trainer and trainees
- Whiteboard or Flipchart and markers
- Internet Connection

Materials

- N/A

Training Room Set-Up

- Place desks or chairs in a circle so that the room is conducive to open and face-to-face discussions among the trainees.
- Place laptops on desks or chairs.

Discussion, Activities and Strategies

What is managing tone in writing?

- Ask trainees if they have heard of the term managing tone in writing.
- Ask trainees to explain what they perceive managing tone in writing to mean.
- Ask trainees if they have ever been offended by a communication received at work and what components of it offended them.

- Present PowerPoint presentation on managing tone in writing.
- Allow for questions and comments on the PowerPoint presentation.
- From laptop trainer displays through projector emails and/or memos that have been received through his or her company of a non-confidential nature. Choose those that may evoke defensiveness and those that where tone are managed.
- Have trainees read and respond to the communications and identify what is wrong or right with them.
- Have trainees discuss how their personal constructs may aid in them perceiving the communications to be a certain way.
- Have trainees discuss how personal constructs may aid in how the writers wrote the communications.
- Have trainees discuss how they can apply phenomenology to improve their tone in writing.

Activity: Learning to Manage Tone in Writing

1. Have trainees work in pairs.
2. Distribute copies of Gibb's Categories of Defensive Communication Applied to Tone in Writing.
3. Have trainees create a memo or email for each scenario and send to their partner using tones that prevent or reduce defensiveness from Gibb's Categories of Defensive Communication Applied to Tone in Writing handout.

4. Have trainees discuss with their partners if their communications displayed managed tones or not and why?

Reflection

Encourage trainees to reflect that evening on how they can manage tone in writing in their communications at work and journal their ideas.

Wrap-Up

Distribute PowerPoint copies for trainees' reference.

MODULE 8 – GROUP COMMUNICATION

This module identifies the importance of and how to incorporate interpersonal communication skills in group communication.

Objectives

- Understand the importance of group communication in the workplace.
- Understand how constructivism affects group communication.
- Understand how phenomenology can be applied to group communication.
- Understand how to incorporate interpersonal communication skills to group communication for optimal results.

Trainer Preparation

- Create a PowerPoint presentation with statistics from Cline (2005), Manser (2009) and Connelly, Dionne, Mumford, and Yammarino (2010) that show the benefits and importance of group communication at work.

Textbook and/or Selected Readings

- Cline, S. (2005). Soft skills make the difference in the workplace. *Colorado Springs*,
- Connelly, M. S., Dionne, S. D., Mumford, M. D., & Yammarino, F.J. (2010). Leadership and team dynamics for dangerous military contexts. *Military Psychology*, 22, 15 – 41. doi: 10.1080/08995601003644221
- Manser, T. (2009). Teamwork and patient safety in dynamic domains of healthcare: a review of the literature. *Acta Anaesthesiol Scand*, 53,143-151. doi: 10.1111/j.1399-6576.2008.01717.x

Equipment

- PowerPoint Projector

Materials

- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Crayons, colored pencils or colored markers

Training Room Set-Up

- Place desks or chairs in a circle so that the room is conducive to open and face-to-face discussions among the trainees.

Discussion, Activities and Strategies

What is group communication?

- Have trainees discuss various forms of group communication at their companies.

- Ask trainees to discuss how their personal constructs may affect them in group communication.
- Ask trainees to discuss how phenomenology could improve their group communication skills.

Activity: Creating a Comic Group Communication Exercise

1. Have trainees get in groups of four or eight.
2. Distribute paper, pencils or pens and drawing utensils.
3. Explain that the object of the activity is to communicate ideas with others and make group decisions based upon discussion using interpersonal communication skills.
4. Encourage students to use the interpersonal skills learned in the prior modules: listening, conveying empathy, rhetorical sensitivity, confirmation and conflict management.
5. Instruct the groups that they are to create an original comic strip and each person in the group must draw one frame of the strip (if there are four people in a group, the comic strip will contain four frames).
6. The group must decide what to draw, the story line and who will draw what (there is a lot of communication involved in this part).
7. Once the discussion has taken place about the comic strip and the decisions have been made, each person draws the frame he or she is responsible for on his or her own piece of paper.

8. Everyone should be drawing at the same time and not taking turns with their group members. (If you want to make it really challenging, don't allow group members to see each others' papers when they are drawing.)
9. After the comic strips are completed, allow time for sharing and give each group a chance to show their comic strip to the other groups.

Discussion Prompts

1. What different communication skills were needed for this activity?
2. How important was communication during this activity?
3. What was the most difficult part of this activity for you?
4. Did your comic strip flow? Why or why not?
5. When involved in part of a group process, do you want things to always go your way or do you allow others to contribute ideas?
6. Why is it important to be able to make decisions with other people?
7. What things do you need to do when making decisions with others?
8. Did you use listening skills, rhetorical sensitivity, confirmation and conflict management in this activity?

Reflection

Encourage trainees to reflect that evening on how they felt about the group communication exercise in their journals.

Wrap-Up

- Distribute PowerPoint copies for trainees' reference.

- Distribute employee post questionnaires for trainees to complete and send in.
- Give overview of entire training course and reinforce to students how it all ties to constructivism theory and phenomenological philosophy.
- Allow for final questions and comments.
- Thank the trainees for attending.
- Send managers/supervisors of trainees their employer post-questionnaires to complete and send in.

SYLLABUS

TRAINING COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interpersonal communication training course is an intensive four-day interactive course for adult employees. The course is based on the constructivism theory and the phenomenological philosophy. Its emphasis is to apply both theory and philosophy to everyday interpersonal communication situations in the workplace so that employees will transform their way of thinking about communication and have better interpersonal communication outcomes.

The curriculum includes eight training modules that include: an introduction to the interpersonal communication training course for adult employees, constructivism, phenomenology, listening, rhetorical sensitivity, confirmation, conflict management, managing tone in writing and group communication. Each module will include an explanation of the topic and discussions and activities that will allow for trainees to gain a deeper understanding of their communication styles and how to enhance or change them.

Training Course Objectives:

- Understand why interpersonal communication skills are important in the workplace.
- Understand the concept of interpersonal communication through the lens of constructivism theory.

- Develop self-awareness of how constructivism affects perception in interpersonal communication.
- Understand the phenomenology philosophy and how it relates to interpersonal communication.
- Develop an awareness and understand others perceptions and interpersonal communication styles.
- Develop skills to effectively communicate interpersonally with others despite different perceptions and interpersonal communication styles.

TRAINING COURSE DAYS

Monday thru Thursday

TRAINING COURSE TIME

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

TRAINING COURSE MODULES

2 Modules per day in 4 hour blocks:

Module 1 - Introduction to the Interpersonal Communication Training Course

Module 2 - Theoretical & Philosophical Pillars: Constructivism & Phenomenology

Module 3 - Listening

Module 4 - Rhetorical Sensitivity

Module 5 - Confirmation

Module 6 - Conflict Management

Module 7 - Managing Tone in Writing

Module 8 - Group Communication

CONDUCT

This course is designed so that effective interpersonal communication is in practice. It will be based on interpersonal interaction among trainees and the trainer. Open discussion and interpersonal activities will be a large part of the course, therefore it is asked that all trainees show respect to each other and the trainer as well as remain positive so that there is a comfortable and trustworthy atmosphere where learning new skills and transforming thoughts can take place.

JOURNALING

Each evening after the course, trainees are encouraged to journal their thoughts about what they have learned that day in the course and how they can apply the skills to interpersonal communication scenarios that have taken place at work. This process will allow students to openly reflect on how they see themselves as communicator, analyze why they communicate the way they do and determine how to apply theory, philosophy and skills learned in the course to their interpersonal communication situations at work.

TRAINING COURSE SCHEDULE

Day 1

Module 1 – Introduction to the Interpersonal Communication Training Course

Objectives:

This module commences the interpersonal communication course. Trainees will be introduced to the course, the trainer and each other. Interpersonal communication will be defined and the reason strong interpersonal skills are a necessity in today's workforce will be explored.

- Trainees become familiar with the trainer and each other.
- The tone of the training class is set as a forum for open discussion and a comfortable and safe place to self-disclose and practice.
- Course syllabus is introduced and understood.
- Interpersonal communication is defined.
- Why effective interpersonal communication skills are important for employees is discussed.

Introductions

Review syllabus

What is Interpersonal Communication?

BREAK

Activity: Getting “Interpersonal”

Reflection

Wrap-Up

LUNCH

Module 2 – Theoretical & Philosophical Pillars: Constructivism & Phenomenology

Objectives:

This module surveys the core principles of the training course, constructivism theory and phenomenology. The module serves as a beginning step to improving interpersonal communication by recognizing potential problems and having an antidote to solve them.

The information learned in this module will be applied to all remaining modules.

- Trainees gain an understanding of constructivism theory.
- Trainees gain an understanding of phenomenological philosophy.
- Trainees become aware of how constructivism affects their ability to communicate interpersonally.
- Trainees explore how phenomenology can be applied for effective interpersonal communication.

What is constructivism theory and phenomenological philosophy?

BREAK

Activity I: Perception Exercise

Activity II: Applying Phenomenology

Activity III: Self Examination

Reflection

Wrap-Up

Day 2

Module 3 – Listening

Objectives:

This module explores the concept and importance of listening in interpersonal communication and how employees can become better listeners.

- Understand that listening is a complex function of perception and attention (Heiman, 1974, p.26).
- Understand that listening is a selective process. People pick out those stimuli that fit their needs and purposes (p. 26).
- Understand that constructivism theory coincides with listening because as people listen, they make connections with their past (p. 26).
- Understand that people can train or force ourselves to become better listeners.

What is listening?

BREAK

Activity I

Activity II

Activity III

Reflection

Wrap-Up

LUNCH

Module 4 – Rhetorical Sensitivity

In this module rhetorical sensitivity is examined as an important component to effective interpersonal communication.

Objectives

- Understand how rhetorical sensitivity adheres to the phenomenological philosophy.
- Understand how rhetorical sensitivity relates to cognitive complexity.
- Understand the three communication types: Noble selves, rhetorical reflectors and rhetorical sensitives.
- Discover personal communication type.
- Understand how interpersonal communication requires an adaptive approach to others that balances one person's self-interest with the interests of others (Caputo, Hazel & McMahon, 1994, p.108).
- Understand how to adjust communication by taking into account the beliefs, values and mood of the other person (p. 108).

Review Constructivism and Phenomenology

What is rhetorical sensitivity?

Break

Activity: Role-play

Reflection

Wrap-up

Day 3

Module 5 – Confirmation

In this module the importance of confirmation in interpersonal communication and relationship building in the workplace is surveyed.

Objectives

- Understand that confirmation displays respect and positivity to others (Caputo, Hazel & McMahon, 1994, p.112).
- Understand the varying types of disconfirming statements and be able to identify them.
- Understand the varying types of confirming statements and be able to identify them.
- Understand how confirmation allows for successful interpersonal communication in the workplace.
- Understand how constructivism and phenomenology relate to confirmation.

What is confirmation?

BREAK

Activity: Role-play

Reflection

Wrap-up

LUNCH

Module 6 – Conflict Management

This module examines using interpersonal communication skills for effective conflict management in the workplace.

Objectives:

- Understand the different types of conflicts that arise in organizations.
- Understand different conflict management styles.
- Understand the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) and how it can help in conflict management.
- Understand and apply Fisher, Patton and Ury's (1991) conflict management methods in Unit 2.
- Gain effective conflict management strategies.
- Understand how constructivism and phenomenology relate to conflict management.

What is conflict and conflict resolution?

BREAK

Activity I: Taking the TKI

Activity II: Basic Training in Conflict Management Exercise

Reflection

Wrap-up

Day 4

Module 7 - Managing Tone in Writing

This module observes managing tone in writing and how applying interpersonal communication skills to it can be beneficial in workplace communication such as emails and memos.

Objectives

- Understand what managing tone in writing is.
- Understand that managing tone in writing can be an important interpersonal communication skill.
- Understand that managing tone in writing is different and more difficult than writing clearly.
- Understand how defensiveness correlates to poor writing tone.
- Understand how to apply interpersonal communication to manage tone in writing.
- Understand how to manage tone in writing by writing from the reader's point of view.
- Understand how constructivism and phenomenology relate to managing tone in writing.

What is managing tone in writing?

BREAK

Activity: Learning to Manage Tone in Writing

Reflection

Wrap-up

LUNCH

Module 8 - Group Communication

This module identifies the importance of and how to incorporate interpersonal communication skills in group communication.

Objectives

- Understand the importance of group communication in the workplace.
- Understand how constructivism affects group communication.
- Understand how phenomenology can be applied to group communication.
- Understand how to incorporate interpersonal communication skills to group communication for optimal results.

What is group communication?

BREAK

Activity: Creating a Comic Group Communication Exercise

Reflection

Wrap-up

The Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees

Employee Pre-Questionnaire

This is a personal assessment for you to understand how you communicate and an indicator of how the course can be designed to benefit you. Please answer all questions to the best of your ability.

Please complete and bring with you to day 1 of the class.

Thank you.

Name _____

Current Place of Employment _____

Current Position _____

1. How long have you been in your current position?

2. Are there any particular skills (what you do or how you work with people) that you possess that have helped you get to your current position status? If yes, please list.

3. Are you satisfied with your current position status? If not, why?

16. Are you sensitive to the mood, personal beliefs or values of other people at work?

17. Are you able to and do you tailor your communication according to the mood, personal beliefs or values of another person or the situation at work without giving up your own beliefs and values?

18. Do you believe that tailoring your communication to fit the needs of others and the situation is an important interpersonal skill at work?

19. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate your ability to display respect and positivity to others while communicating at work?

20. Are you able to recognize when you are ignoring someone's presence or communication either verbally or non-verbally in your communication?

21. Do you believe that displaying respect and positivity to others in communication is an important interpersonal communication skill at work?

22. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate your ability to manage conflict at work?
23. Are able to and do you negotiate when in a conflict situation at work?
24. Are you able to and do you recognize the other persons' point of view when in a conflict situation at work?
25. Do you work towards gaining the best outcome for all when in conflict at work?
26. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate your ability to relay information in writing in a way that is clear and that does not promote defensiveness at work?
27. Are you aware of the term "managing tone in writing"?

28. Are you able to and do you write in a way that the reader would be less defensive at work?

29. Do you believe that managing tone in writing is an important interpersonal communication skill at work?

30. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate your interpersonal communication skills in a group?

31. Do you think that you can communicate comfortably and effectively in a group?

32. Do you believe that having effective interpersonal skills in group communication is important at work?

The Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees

Employee Post-Questionnaire

This is a personal assessment for you to understand how you communicate and an indicator of how the course can be designed to benefit you. Please answer all questions to the best of your ability.

Please complete and return 1 to 3 months after you have assessed yourself in varying situations to the following address:

Thank you.

Name _____

Current Place of Employment _____

Current Position _____

1. Have you been talked to about improving your interpersonal communication skills since you took The Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees? If so, what specific areas?
2. Are there areas that you still think you need to improve in your interpersonal skills at work? If so, what specific areas?
3. On a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you now rate your interpersonal communication skills at work?

10. Are you more sensitive to the mood, personal beliefs or values of other people at work?

11. Are you able to and do you now tailor your communication according to the mood, personal beliefs or values of another person or the situation at work without giving up your own beliefs and values?

12. Do you believe that tailoring your communication to fit the needs of others and the situation is an important interpersonal skill at work?

13. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you now rate your ability to confirm others by recognizing, acknowledging and endorsing them (displaying respect and positivity) while communicating at work?

14. Are you better able to recognize when you are relaying disconfirming statements by being indifferent, impervious or disqualifying (ignoring someone's presence or communication either verbally or non-verbally) in your communication?

15. Do you believe that using confirming responses (displaying respect and positivity) in communication is an important interpersonal communication skill at work?

22. Are you better able to and do you now write in a way that the reader would be less defensive at work?
23. Do you believe that managing tone in writing is an important interpersonal communication skill at work?
24. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you now rate your interpersonal communication skills in a group?
25. Do you think that you can communicate more comfortably and effectively in a group?
26. Do you believe that having effective interpersonal skills in group communication is important at work?
27. Do you think that your interpersonal communication skills overall have improved at work as a result of this course? If so, how?

28. What could make this course better?

Please share changes in you and/or your position status as a result of this training course.

The Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees

Employer Pre-Questionnaire

This is an assessment for you to understand how your employee communicates and an indicator on how the course can be designed to benefit the employee. Please answer all questions to the best of your ability.

Please complete and send one week prior to the first day of the employee's class to the following address:

Thank you.

Name of Employee _____

Company _____

Employee's Current Position _____

Your Name _____

Your Position as it relates to the employee _____

1. How long has the employee been in his/her current position?

2. Is the employee satisfied with his/her current position status? If the employee is not satisfied with his/her current position status, has he/she indicated to you why?

3. If the employee is satisfied with his/her current position status, what skills do you feel helped get the employee there?

10. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate the employee's listening skills are at work?

11. Does the employee actively listen to things that do not interest him/her and fits his/her needs or purposes?

12. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate the employee's ability to be able to adapt his/her communication to another person or situation at work?

13. Is the employee sensitive to the mood, personal beliefs or values of other people at work?

14. Is the employee able to tailor his/her communication according to the mood, personal beliefs or values of another person or the situation at work without giving up his/her own beliefs and values?

15. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate the employee's ability display respect and positivity while communicating at work?

16. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate the employee's ability to manage conflict at work?

17. Is the employee able to negotiate when in a conflict situation at work?

18. Does the employee display the ability to recognize the other person's point of view when in a conflict situation at work?

19. Does the employee appear to work towards gaining the best outcome for the situation when in conflict at work?

20. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate the employee's ability to relay information in writing in a way that is clear and that does not promote defensiveness at work?

21. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate the employee's interpersonal communication skills in a group?

22. Do you believe that the employee can communicate comfortably and effectively in a group?

The Interpersonal Communication Training Course for Adult Employees

Employer Post-Questionnaire

This is an assessment for you to measure the employee's improvement in interpersonal communication, if any and is an indicator on how the course can improve. Please answer all questions to the best of your ability.

Please complete and return 1 to 3 months after you have assessed the employee to the following address:

Thank you.

Name of Employee _____

Company _____

Employee's Current Position _____

Your Name _____

Your Position as it relates to the employee _____

1. Have you had to talk to the employee about improving his/her interpersonal communication skills in the last one to three months? If so, what specific areas?

2. Do you think that the employee has improved in his/her interpersonal communication skills? If so, what specific areas?

3. On a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you now rate the employee's interpersonal communication skills at work?

10. Has the employee improved in the ability to tailor his/her communication according to the mood, personal beliefs or values of another person or the situation at work without giving up their own beliefs and values?

11. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you now rate the employee's ability to confirm others by recognizing, acknowledging and endorsing them (display respect and positivity) while communicating at work?

12. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you now rate the employee's ability to manage conflict at work?

13. Has the employee improved in the ability to negotiate when in a conflict situation at work?

14. Does the employee display a better ability to recognize the other persons' point of view when in a conflict situation at work?

15. Does the employee now appear to work towards gaining the best outcome for the situation when in conflict at work?

16. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you now rate the employee's ability to relay information in writing in a way that is clear and that does not promote defensiveness at work?

17. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, how would you now rate the employee's interpersonal communication skills in a group?

18. Do you believe that the employee has improved in communicating comfortably and effectively in a group?

Please share changes in the employee or the employee's position status as possibly a result of this training course.