

KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

Second Edition

People and Communication

G. A. LORD



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SECOND EDITION

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Preface to first edition

When the Business Education Council proposals appeared for the 'People and Communication' common core module, teachers of English or Communications to business students must have felt, as I did, a certain degree of misgiving if not outright dismay. Not only was the syllabus widened to include elements of what had previously been the prerogatives of Office Practice, Secretarial Duties, Organization and Methods, Sociology, and Management staff, but the addition of Human Relationships as a twin central theme seemed to indicate that a new and different approach to Communication studies was required.

In setting out that 'new and different approach' in this book I have worked under the following constraints:

1. To include material which would encompass the whole range of the syllabus

This has meant that together with practical considerations of space and cost, sometimes only one general example is given of a point raised, and 'English Exercise' material reduced to an essential minimum.

2. To provide sufficient essential English to enable students to improve standards of both oral and written communication

Since this is not intended to be a textbook concerning 'Business English' alone, I have limited the English content to that which seems to be most practical for the working environment. Taken into account have been two contributory factors: (a) basic weaknesses pointed out in examiners' reports over the years and (b) the belief that many students are ill-equipped when it comes to practising elementary grammar.

At the expense of masses of exercises for summarizing, comprehension and 'essay-type' composition, of which so much is available in the abundance of English textbooks around, I have concentrated on vocabulary development and on drawing attention to those errors which lead to misunderstanding and confusion.

3. To provide material for an 'assignment-based' course

Not only will an 'assignment-based' course be new to some teachers, but unless changes are made in BEC policy in the future, 'in-course' assessments based on moderated assignment submissions are to replace terminal written examinations for the Communication element of the course.

The further requirement is that assignments should be inter- and intra-modular, so that in those provided in this book there are elements of subjects or modules other than Communication and Human Relationships.

However, the hope is that teachers will not necessarily follow the assignments

slavishly but adapt, modify and develop them according to local needs of students, local employment requirements and teachers' own imaginative preferences.

4. To provide a format which is also a scheme of work

From what has just been stated about the importance of 'integrated' assignments, it is inevitable that much greater co-operation between teachers will have to take place than has normally been the case in the past.

So that assignment requirements can be met by students, very careful planning between teachers of all modules will be necessary, and while I am fully aware of the reluctance of some teachers to be 'tied down' to following a rigid scheme of work (and fully sympathize too!) it seems that this is a discipline we all have to follow.

The units of this book have been arranged so that:

- (a) they cover one academic year
- (b) they follow a pattern of progressive development
- (c) they achieve the learning objectives set out by BEC

However, a certain degree of flexibility has been incorporated. For example, the 'B' sections need not necessarily be studied in conjunction with the 'A' sections. Indeed, the book may be used either as 10 units each containing three sections, or as 30 separate units, any of which is interchangeable with any other.

5. To 'pitch' the level of language, style and learning objectives at national award level

Since eventually roughly only one-third of national award level students will have entered via the general level course, some of the material is provided on the assumption that for many this book will be an introduction to business studies, and organizational communication, together with consideration for the personality factors which affect communication.

6. To provide adequate material for those studying largely on their own

A glance at the syllabus will show that for part-time day release students attending perhaps 1½–2 hours a week for this module, a considerable amount of home study will be necessary. Directed private study course and correspondence course students will also have to work through much of the course on their own.

7. To provide also for those who may wish to take additional qualifications in English/Communications

Material is included which will be found useful for the following examinations in particular:

- RSA English Language Stage III
- AEB Business and Professional 'O' level English
- AEB 'A' level in Communication Studies

Single subject secretarial and commercial English offered by regional examination boards

Professional examinations in English/Communication for the Institutes of Transport, Shipbroking, Banking, Insurance, and the Chartered Institute of Secretaries and Administrators

LCC Communications examinations for Private Secretary's Certificate and Private Secretary's Diploma

Finally, a special point or two should perhaps be made regarding the 'Human Relationships' element in the BEC syllabus.

My dilemma was: Should the book be divided into two parts dealing separately with 'Communication' and 'People'? I concluded that such an artificial dichotomy was a departure from real life. 'People' and 'Communication' are inseparable in our day-to-day dealings with one another, and I do not believe it will help students to consider them as separate issues.

My next problem was language. Psychology is a specialization with its own highly technical vocabulary. But how far are technical terms helpful when what is really required is sound teaching and understandable explanation? It seemed common sense to try to acquaint students with the nature, taste and recipe for the jam rather than to discuss at length the meaning of the label on the pot! Hence there is no reference in this book *by name* to phobias, neuroses, psychoses, inhibitions, conditioned reflexes and the like. They are there, of course, but by virtue of their effect on communication, and by implication.

The even more difficult problem was how to sail between the Scylla and Charybdis of 'over-simplification' on the one hand and 'over-generalization' on the other. For those looking for an academic treatise on psychology it will be apparent that I have frequently crashed (albeit cheerfully!) into the one and half-drowned in the other! To try to compress 17 years' experience as a psychotherapist, and 16 years as a teacher of business communications into one shortish book is to invite both criticisms. So be it. This is a practical workbook for those wanting to find their way around in the world of business, commerce, and community life, and wanting also to have some idea of how to cope with the people involved in that world.

I am enormously grateful to those named and many more unnamed friends who have assisted in all kinds of ways to help others to tackle the problems of People and Communication.

Discrimination between the sexes

In a book on the subject of Communication in the business environment, it has not been possible to eliminate the use of gender and retain a fluent text. The reader is asked to accept that in the majority of cases a deliberate distinction between the sexes is not implied.

G.A.L.

Preface to second edition

One wonders if many people actually *read* prefaces! I must confess that on the whole I give prefaces a perfunctory glance and pass quickly on to the meat of the text. Perhaps most people do the same.

Nevertheless, *some* prefaces are worth reading. There are people who maintain that the prefaces to the plays by George Bernard Shaw, for example, are better reading than the plays themselves, and since most critics regard the plays as superb, this makes the prefaces quite remarkable.

The same cannot be said of *this* preface, alas, as there is very little to add to the preface of the first edition.

Naturally, there has had to be some updating of material: the development of the computer in the past five years or so has made the original commentary very 'old hat'; and I hope the text has been improved by a more generous spacing of items and a breaking up of some rather daunting and solid-looking sections.

A bright new cover has been added, and the advice of constructive reviewers borne in mind in that 'units' have been replaced by 'chapters' and the marginal notes have been omitted—though this was controversial!

Some of the sections on 'People' have been re-written and improved, it is hoped, and the cross-modular assignments have been dropped.

Much of the book remains as before, and many kind people have said it has been greatly helpful. I hope this new edition will be even more helpful, and I shall be more than pleased if it is also found to be even more enjoyable! Know what I mean?

G.A.L.
1984

Introduction

A little boy was standing on the pavement of a busy high street, the tears streaming down his face. He was bewildered and frightened for a very simple reason; he was lost.

At last a kindly passer-by took pity on him. 'What's the matter, sonny?' he asked. Between the sobs the boy managed to tell of his problem and gave the name of the street where he lived.

'No problem, son!' he was immediately assured. 'See, you go along the street here for five hundred yards or so, turn left, take the first turning on the right and continue till you reach the traffic lights. Now be careful how you cross—it's very busy just there—then you go on for a quarter of a mile or so till you come to St Michael's Church. Turn right again there and you'll be in the road where you live. OK?'

The boy nodded and moved off in the direction indicated. Five minutes later he was still sobbing, still lost.

A second passer-by took pity on him and was told the problem. Without hesitation he took out a piece of paper and pen from his pocket, and in a few moments had drawn a very competent map, complete with instructions, and handed it to the boy. 'There, son, that'll soon get you home if you follow it carefully.'

A little later the boy, clutching the piece of paper and still sobbing was approached by a third passer-by. 'Lost, sonny?' By now there was an element of hopelessness as well as fear in the boy's nod. The man listened carefully as the boy explained his problem and gave the name of the road he was seeking. The helper grinned. 'I know that street. Used to live round there when I was a boy.' He held out his hand. 'Come on, son, dry your eyes now. I'll take you home.'

That little story contains all the elements that this book is about. To be 'lost' is common in real life and not confined to little boys seeking the way home, but to all of us, whether we admit it or not, who are plunged from school or college into the bewildering world of business, industry and commerce. Trying to find our way about seems sometimes a frightening and seemingly hopeless task.

We are sometimes rather vague as to where exactly we want to get to, and are not always sure what we are aiming for. Even when our target is clear, being able to hit it is another matter.

Most of us realize that there are plenty of people ready to give us advice, but it seems not to have occurred to them sometimes that we either cannot understand what they say, or that we have difficulty in following the instructions. Equally, there is plenty of written material around, full of information, often graphically presented. A map can be a great help—if you can read a map!

Perhaps our greatest problem is that we feel no one *really listens* to us; our real

needs are not understood; other people are so filled with their own certainties and confidence that they fail to recognize that many of us lack both.

So the story illustrates a profound truth about the real nature of communication—it can never be really effective without understanding, sympathy and identification with the other person's point of view. In other words, communication cannot be separated from human relationships.

This book looks at the three main media of communication which the story illustrates: **speech** (verbal communication), **graphics** (all forms of visual aid including the written word) and **personal involvement**.

We have begun with a 'real-life' situation, and this is how we shall continue. We shall study a series of work-related or community-related problems, and try to discover what the appropriate action is through which solutions may be found. It will be necessary for the student:

1. To assume different 'roles' in order to put himself imaginatively into the place of a succession of people between whom communication has to take place.
2. To study carefully the problem of how to relate to 'difficult' people, i.e., those who present barriers because of personality problems.
3. To determine the *form* in which to present the communication, e.g., letter, memo, report, telephone conversation, telex, etc.
4. To decide on the *language* appropriate to the situation; how it should be constructed to have the desired effect; in what tone or style it should be delivered; and to try to assess its effect on the recipient.
5. To understand the various *factors which help or hinder communication*, such as moods, motives, distractions, anxieties and so on, and which influence negotiation, discussion and co-operation.

If the student is working on some directed study or correspondence course, he will need to subject himself to constant analysis, self-criticism, and be prepared to examine his prejudices, illogical thinking, irrational attitudes, and those personal habits and mannerisms of behaviour, voice, 'body-language' and other factors which may stand in the way of his effective communication with others. If working in a class or group, he must be prepared to 'give and take' comments and criticisms which will, it is hoped, be constructive, and to challenge opinions and judgements, not only those of others but also his own.

The assignments are constructed to provide for many communication factors to be examined in depth and practised, and it is hoped that no limits will be put on the range of discussion or on the appraisal of any assignment, so that the widest possible breadth of ideas can be shared in order to achieve the greatest number of learning objectives.

This book does not deal with Communication as a subject, but as a very important element in many aspects of the business world, and includes references to office practice, secretarial duties, commerce, statistics, book-keeping and accounting,

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INTRODUCTION

and together with elements of law, public administration, social structure and community studies.

on— Equally, although this is not primarily a textbook for the study of the English language, it contains what is believed to be essential knowledge for those involved in the use of English for business and commercial purposes.

tion
t be In the manner of the third passer-by in our story, this book is meant to take the student to where he wants to be—to a knowledge of those situations in the world of business, commerce, industry and social life in which, far from feeling 'lost' he will feel at home, recognize familiar landmarks, and have the confidence to cope with day-to-day problems in communication and human relationships which sooner or later face everyone.

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