Chapter — 6

Conclusion
CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

General Semantics plays very crucial role in developing, maintaining and promoting relationship at any stage of life in any environment and so does Business Communication. Business Communication is primarily a designated mode of communicating the nuances of business activities. Any business achieves success through better external and internal communication.

In the introduction of his book ‘Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics’ the expression General Semantics was used by Alfred Korzybski to describe that by General Semantics he meant not only the linguistic definition or even response, but the involvement of psychological insight in defining the meaning. Later on, Alfred Korzybski began to refer to the phrase ‘Evaluative Response’ rather than the ‘Semantic’ one. By semantic response or evaluative response, Alfred Korzybski meant the total response - neurological, emotional, cognitive, semantic and behavioural - to the thing-event. The theory of General Semantics, introduced by Alfred Korzybski, 70 years ago, advocates, ‘evaluation’, that is very much close to ‘critical thinking’. Alfred Korzybski used the term
'evaluation' instead of 'thinking' mainly because he must have thought that the term 'evaluation' is more accurate representation of the psychological process referred. Alfred Korzybski has classified the term 'thinking' as 'elementalistic' in 'Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics'.

The main aim of General Semantics is better human relationships at all levels of our human interactions- personal, interpersonal, societal and international. This can be highly and unceasingly attentive to the ways one speaks, listens, understands, interprets, gives meanings to, gives values to, 'thinks' about and evaluates words, symbols and features of one's human and physical environment.

General Semantics as a critical evaluating system provides us with tools one can use not only to improve one's critical 'thinking skills' but also oneself. The primary application of General Semantics is in training individuals to view their environments using the General Semantics world view, to think in terms of levels of abstraction, to use the extensional devices, to become aware of making assumptions, to extensionally check them out, and to be prepared for them to be wrong. Besides scientific and linguistic inputs, the application of General Semantics goes into non-verbal areas such as music, painting, and mental awareness.
The important facet of this theory is to develop a new pattern of evaluation. Human beings are in normal conditions evaluated through language and behavior. Language helps in evaluating the issue through verbal aspect and with the help of non-verbal clues; one can judge and evaluate the human behavior. When language and behavior both are evaluated, one would have a better chance of judging the overall reactions of human beings to an event. General Semantics supports to cultivate the habit of evaluating objectively and find out better ways of maintaining human relationship so one could avoid unhappy situations and human problems.

General Semantics can be referred to as a general system of evaluation and awareness. It provides a systematic methodology to understand how you relate to the world around you, how you react to any incident, how you react to your reactions, and how you may adjust your behavior accordingly.

The span and influence of General Semantics as a way of evaluating personal experience may be tested and experienced with Korzybski’s emphasis on the human process of abstracting i.e. one abstracts from one’s experience only a fraction of the totally, and that fraction is not ‘random’, but depends on one’s particular nervous system, one’s physical state at the time, one’s needs and objectives, etc. Thus, what an
individual sees, hears, feels on any occasion is particular to that individual and will not be exactly the same for anyone else at the 'same' time and place. Human beings make abstractions all the time. An "abstraction", as used here, is that one simplifies, condenses or symbolizes what is going on in order to better talk about it or think about it. Alfred Korzybski introduced the two technical terms to explain the concept of abstraction in detail. The terms are: Intensional orientations and Extensional orientations.

The multiordinality of words makes the evaluation method more challenging and interesting. It indicates that words do not have one right meaning. A multi-ordinal term is one that can be applied to statements containing that same term infinitely.

The realization of the non-identity principle, illustrated by Alfred Korzybski's famous formulation, "Whatever you may say something is, it is not!" is at the root of the system of General Semantics. The world is continually in a state of flux and transform. Nothing remains the same. There aren't two truly identical thing-events in the world.

The theory of General Semantics advocates that knowledge consists of structure. A structure is an organization in which each part relates to other parts, and sequences occur in some order. One ought to do things in the right order to do anything in right way. Similarly, when building
something, one has to do things in the right order and connect things to the right parts. In order to learn or know, one needs to do things in the right sequence and relate things together appropriately. When one has the right relationships and the right order, then one has a mental structure which is knowledge.

Human beings are influenced by the past and the future in their present pursuits because they are related to these through 'time binding'. Individuals' personal history affects them now and in the future because of 'time binding.' Time binding is the human ability to pass information and knowledge between generations at an accelerating rate. Human beings never experience all of the thing-event or the object and our words do not capture the whole of the object, the concept of non-allness reminds that there is always more than human beings know.

Non-elementalistic is related to non-identity. Whereas there is a concept of 'identity', where two things are made equal when they are merely similar, so there is also a concept of 'elementalism' wherein two things are separated when they should be kept together. The mind and the body might be wrongly separated when one says the one and the other are quite independent.

General Semantics doesn't only deal with philosophy, or psychology, or logic, in the ordinary sense. It is a new extensional discipline which
explains and trains us how to use our nervous systems most efficiently. The claim of *General Semantics* is that by applying its methods, disagreement will be reduced, some psychological disorders can be overcome, and reasoning will be improved.

There are so many techniques and strategies of evaluating human behavior or any event but language provides the means and the environment by which this evaluative process occurs, much of *General Semantics* deals with studying the effects of language on people's behavior, and vice-versa. So *General Semantics* invites us to become more conscious of the ways we use language and the ways language uses us. It 'invites' us to become more conscious of ourselves as evaluators, map-makers, story tellers, individual and unique expressions of human consciousness, if we hope to improve our behavior to ourselves and others.

Language serves as the basis for human communication and negotiation of conflicts. If understanding of language is incomplete or flawed on the part of a communicator, his/her abilities to solve problems through language, on personal and societal levels, will also be imperfect. The individual and societal sanity can be acquired by applying language and communication habits as suggested by Alfred Korzybski in 'Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics'. From a *General Semantics* perspective, the successes and
problems are functionally related to human beings' discriminate and indiscriminate use of words. *General Semantics* as a critical 'thinking' system provides the principles, formulations and practical devices to help the communication and the communicate become more attentive words users. *General Semantics* is a theory of evaluating human behavior. Words and language are also important tools of evaluating others. If the communicator develops the habit of evaluating the communicate by not only through words but also through total reactions of the communicate to anything or event could prove to be a great boon in making the Business Communication effective and would definitely give new dimension, too.

*General Semantics* is basically concerned with 'use of words', 'evaluation through language' 'critical thinking' and functioning of the 'human – organism – as – a whole – in – an environment.' The main focus is on the 'study of words' and 'study of meaning' but its main focus is on the relationship between language and reality. From a *General Semantics* perspective, successes and problems of human beings are functionally related to the discriminate use of words by their users. *General Semantics* as a critical evaluating system provides individuals with tools they can use not only to improve their critical 'thinking skills' but also themselves. In *General Semantics*, meanings are derived not only from the psychological perspective only but also from the
environmental and behavioral point of view. Each environment has its own meaning. So many territories are created from the map. No meaning is fixed. It keeps on changing and generates meanings as per the environment in which it is used.

Words are the important tools of the process of communication and on them only, a success or a failure in business largely depend. The noteworthy feature of words is that they do not have fixed meanings at all the time. Words provide us different meanings in different environment. They also bring different meanings in different situations. Words don’t just have one right meaning. Words and symbols have different meanings to different people and different meanings in different contexts. The user of the words must be conscious about this fact.

The main aim of communication is to establish, promote and develop human relationships amongst the people with whom you are connected. Communication is a process of establishing relationships, bring about understanding and convincing people through speaking, listening, behaving properly, adjusting and experimenting the words, symbols, etc, at all levels of human interactions- personal, interpersonal, societal and international. From a communication point of view too, the successes and the problems are functionally related to the discriminate and indiscriminate use of words.
The primary application of Communication is in training individuals as well as groups to view their environments and using the world view while communicating. By following these two simple views, disagreement may be reduced, some psychological disorders can be overcome, and reasoning will be improved. Communication is not simply, any "philosophy," or "psychology," or "logic," as people consider it in ordinary sense but it is a human engineering, a discipline which explains and trains people how to use their words most efficiently, effectively and purposefully. The primary application of General Semantics is in training individuals to view their environments using the General Semantics world view, to think in terms of levels of abstraction, to use the extensional devices, to become aware of making assumptions, to extensionally check them out, and to be prepared for them to be wrong. Primarily, a remarkable connection between General Semantics and Business Communication is seen that needs be assessed.

General Semantics, a theory introduced by Alfred Korzybski, deals with studying the effects of language on the behavior of human beings, and vice-versa. The theory of General Semantics has proved itself as one of the important theories of evaluating human behavior. Korzybski believed that the improvement in language shall bring enormous improvement in human species and the human society. General Semantics functions at
both levels philosophical and technical. So does Business Communication. Both take advantage of culture, references and contexts. A deep association between General Semantics and Business Communication occur at the level of perception. The Sender and the receiver both perceive communication hence making it multi-layered and multi-dimensional. The concepts of General Semantics once transferred to Business Communication can play an effective role in bringing out contexts out of meaning. Much lesser effort can be required if language is used effectively. The combining of General Semantics with Business Communication lead to effective evaluation of the business environment diversifying into the evaluation of clients, agents, employees, employers, colleagues, advertising agencies, etc. for making the right decision. If the communicator is conscious about using the language appropriately then he/she would improve the chances of getting more business.

One of the important applications of General Semantics is that by applying the theory of General Semantics, one becomes a more effective, accurate and discriminative communicator with others and with oneself. As one ‘sees’ the world through the structure of one’s languages; one’s attitudes, behavior, personal relationships, institutions, behavior, society international relations, etc; are functionally related to the structure of the languages the individual users to communicate with oneself and others.
People create their human world in the ‘light’ of their words. *General Semantics* deals with the processes involved in how one perceives, constructs, evaluates and communicates one’s life experiences.

When it comes to relate to communicating the experience, the complexities increase as the communicator will use his/her stock of words and phrases, which won’t mean exactly the same to anyone else and which will not exactly match the experience the communicator wants to refer to.

A close connection between *General Semantics* and Business Communication is seen apparently and the role of *General Semantics* in Business Communication can be constructive and fruitful. But only correlation between any things is not enough to find out the functions of one thing in another thing. The calibration encouraged the researcher that theory of *General Semantics* could be applied to Business Communication. The purpose of Business Communication is to communicate with the different people about business. Almost all the happenings in life depend on business. Business primary depends on relationships and relationships are built and cemented by communication. Relationships play an important role in business communication. These relations could be formal or informal. Behavior and practical approach plays a crucial role in Business Communication. The success or failure either in life or business largely relies on communication.
The following attitude should be created for making the activities of Business Communication more effective and meaningful:

- Awareness that every statement is filtered through the nervous system of the speaker.
- The habit of looking at the speaker behind the statement.
- The consciousness should be developed that one abstracts some details and omits others.
- An attitude of "Wait, let's see — there's more to be said."
- The habitual use of the ETC. silently or orally to produce consciousness of factors left out.
- The consciousness should be created that life is lived on two levels: verbal and non-verbal.
- The attitude should be developed that words are not the fact.
- Awareness should be created that there are many ways of looking at a person or event.
- The habit of describing rather than labeling people and events should be formed. Words do not always match facts, but it is part of growing up to learn how to make words match the facts.
- Some of our misunderstandings may be due to our confusing words with objects or feelings.
• One must check everything one reads or hears with the non-verbal facts.

• Any newspaper reports and articles concerning business activities should be assessed that how the same event or object is presented by using different words.

• Communicator and communicate must be prepared to check when the facts do not match their expectations and to alter their opinions when they discover new facts.

• Awareness should be created that any word may have a whole list of uses.

• Awareness should be created that what is being said may not represent what they assume it does.

• The habit of direct questioning should be developed to find the use of a word or phrase.

• The consciousness should be created that we abstract some details and omit others.

• Awareness should be developed that of the uniqueness of each thing that exists.

• There should be preparedness for differences at any time.

• There should be a realization that failure to recognize difference leads to prejudice.
• The habitual use of the index should be consciously made to make language fit the fact of difference.

• It should always be kept in mind while communicating that no two of anything have ever been found identical, that is, alike in all respects.

*General Semantics* promotes a scientific approach to human behavior. It deals with critical thinking, communication system, rational behavior, general sanity and the "perception-evaluation-communication process". It deals with studying the effects of language and the symbol systems on human behavior. By integrating knowledge from various academic fields including language, communication studies and sciences, it attempts to develop a scientific temper and an effective communication skill required for the 21st century. It has a tremendous impact on the day-to-day activities, interaction and relationships.

*General Semantics* is a theory of language and meaning that shares a great deal of methodological and theoretical positions with the contemporary study of Business communication. *General Semantics* posits a fundamental distinction between the sensory world of experience and the verbal world of symbols and language. Business communication also does the same. In basic terms, together Business Communication and *General Semantics* posit a continually changing world - one of process,
flux, or becoming - much of which is inaccessible to direct observation or experience. What we do experience is therefore partial and incomplete, and human beings are characterized by an inescapable existential uncertainty about the world they live in. Much of what human beings understand about the world is an "abstraction" from what is there in reality; as an abstraction, much is left out of the representations human beings make about the world, representations / abstractions that operate for them as "common sense" information.

Business is an integrated field and people from all backgrounds mingle at the commercial platform. These abstractions differ from person to person based on their particular experiences, their backgrounds, capabilities, interests, biases, etc. General Semantics, in its pedagogical mode, aims to raise consciousness of this abstracting process, to teach people how to become more tolerant and accepting of the limitations and potentialities in themselves and others brought about by the process of abstracting. It gives a way to clear understanding. A consciousness of abstracting is more, however, than a form of mental hygiene - it constitutes, perhaps, a more general form of critical inquiry into the nature of language, mediation, perception, and action. Consequently, General Semantics can be understood, historically, within the tradition of critical theory, as a rigorous intellectual orientation and mode of inquiry that has serious
grounding - even if today, in many academic circles, that grounding is not well known. In Business Communication, Abstraction can be a kind of evaluation, in the sense that it picks out certain features of the world or of experience as of interest. The attempt to understand this distinction in a "scientific" fashion is meant to provide a basis for evaluating and modifying attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs of those being trained in General Semantics.

To convey exactly the meaning of each object and even with words would require that we use new and different words for each object and event. Once used, the words would have to be discarded, for they could never again apply because the precise event or object they cover would never again occur or exist obviously, such a system of symbols work. In the second place, for language to be effective, some form of the symbols must be agreed upon by the participants in communication. Words or statements, written or spoken, may be interpreted in several ways depending on the place, context, time, nature, usage and the position or stature of the speaker, object or writer.

Of course, misunderstanding of ideas or intent can also occur when there is an absence of communication between two groups. When two parties are not speaking, there is no way to clarify positions, intentions, or past actions; rumors can spread unchecked. Sometimes both parties make a
concerted effort to communicate as clearly as possible, but cultural differences or language barriers obstruct clear understanding. To dissolve such misunderstanding via business communication, General Semantics advances two negative premises that condition, and therefore organize the study of, human experience and communication. First: "words" are not the things we are speaking about (i.e., they "are" not the phenomena of objective existence, of the world out there). Whence Korzybski's famous dictum: the map is not the territory, the word is not the thing defined. Second: "there is no such thing as an object in absolute isolation," in the sense that objects are phenomena of reality connected to events, forces, mechanisms, and networks. Consequently, their meaning or definition is never independent of this radical interconnectedness; meaning exists "in between," not "within," in the relation, not the isolated object/word. These ideas are central to some of the other critical moves made by General Semantics with regard to "meaning:" that meaning is inseparable from difference (as opposed to identity), movement (as opposed to stability), and singularity (as opposed to some thing's classificatory properties). Crucially, this negative premise indicates the radical heterogeneity of the world and of human beings: all phenomena, like all human begins, must be understood and judge by first supposing that there is nothing else uniquely like him, her, the object, or the event. This radical heterogeneity is inspired by the "new physics" of the early
20th century, about which more will be said below. In any case, as to the problem of language, the critical move is that whereas before language may have occupied a privileged position in the study of human nature and the world, it now takes on a new relation: "we have a world of uniqueness that is mapped by a language of categories. From this point on, General Semantics as applied to Business Communication can be understood as the translation of these premises "into positive language," from which "can be built an A-prime system." A clear understanding of semantics is crucial to prevent misunderstandings. In communication with anyone if one is relatively not sure of something, one should start with expressing one's view with a qualifier such as:

In my opinion...
It appears to me...
To the best of my knowledge...
As far as I know....
From the data I have seen, I believe....

Using these qualifiers actually helps prevent arguments, stimulates discussion, and sometimes makes people believe you are smarter than you are. This will help business people to communicate their ideas without having fear of spoiling relationships.
In business environment, the communication with anyone if one is relatively not sure of something, one should start with expressing one’s view with qualifiers. Using these qualifiers actually helps prevent arguments, stimulates discussion, and sometimes makes people believe you are smarter than you are. This will help business people to communicate their ideas without having fear of spoiling relationships.

*General Semantics* is used when the symbols are not fixed to one particular meaning. This saves situations from the breakdowns as it provides vast locales of meanings. One interesting line of development in *General Semantics* argues that the limits of knowledge and representation are co-extensive with the limits of action. Stated differently, an "operational definition" of man means that the conditions for the limits of knowledge are identical to those of the faculty of semantic reaction. In *General Semantics*, platitudes such as "it is impossible to know everything" or "it is impossible to fully speak about anything" are developed, in short, as limits on communication. The constraints imposed by a semantic environment are the same that make semantic reactions possible.

According to Korzybski, there are two categories of words: one is descriptive or "functional" words and the other one is inferential words, "which involve assumptions or inferences." Words and symbols "serve as
forms of representation and belong to a different universe - the universe of 'discourse' - since they are not the un-speakable levels we are speaking about." They are "high order" abstractions, not low order abstractions given to us by "lower nerves centers." Fortunately, breakdowns in communication are usually repairable. Misunderstandings can be explained, languages can be translated, relationships can be restored, rumors can be controlled, and escalation limited -- all through clear, verbal communication, i.e. talking.

We are now in a better position to understand the meaning of the liaison made by Korzybski between science and sanity. That's the reason that fields like Business Communication can prosper in right direction and can fulfill more satisfying role of communication. If the objective world of reality and the abstracted verbal world of men share a feature, it is their structure-ness, their rational-ability - which is to say, a feature shared by each allowing them to be ordered together by the scientific method. In a parallel, reversing motion, Korzybski and *General Semantics* will broaden the scientific method into a form of self-reflexivity, personal ethic, and internal dialogue - which is the source of its often remarked upon therapeutic aspirations. Generally speaking, however, *General Semantics* will try to become a mode of problematization for the human "sciences" that have, crucially, become
increasingly intertwined with the ascendancy of communication phenomena in human societies.

This communication is at least two-fold: the communication with others is grounded in a communication with one-self; in both cases, the relations are mediated by a "semantic environment." From these considerations derived Korzybski's project to provide an "operational definition of Man." In its more pragmatic dimensions, this "operational definition" will have its articulation in "extensional devices" - tools or artifacts (e.g., maps and words) that produce a relation to the extensional (i.e., objective) world.

Such a definition allows individuals to momentarily stabilize and align their subjective experience in relation to the generalizations of high predictive value, perpetual observation, description, and experimentation. We will see that such an alignment has its own "process" and, interestingly, its own notion of "fact." As will be explained below, this liaison of science and sanity will operate at the center of defining what is "common" to (between) individuals, how this common is a function of their communication and, finally, how conflicts (internal and external) arise. How "facts" are common to "us" in a communicative society is not self-evident; the answer provided by General Semantics is quite suggestive; facts are dominant in General Semantics' therapeutic modes.
The formulations of *General Semantics* are intended to provide a mature, scientific, creative orientation. The important feature of *General Semantics* 'Delayed Reaction', simply coined as 'evaluate before you act', could be applied in Business Communication to get the better results and minimizing misunderstanding.

*General Semantics* provides a useful way to come to grips with the new paradigms of human relations and human interaction that have resulted as the forms of communication and mediation between individuals, groups and societies has expanded in the last few centuries. While traditionally considered a critical reflection on the nature of language as a principal medium of human interactions, *General Semantics* also recognizes that language is inadequate to mediate many new forms of interaction and that; moreover, other kinds of media and tools also regulate the relations of individuals. The "theory" of action implicit in *General Semantics* (it is currently under-developed) proposes, in line with many of its intellectual kin of the early 20th century, new concepts that undermine the traditional "linear" model of action.

Thus concepts such as feedback, action-network, and action-contingency are concepts that order the effects of individual actions within the institutions, organizations, relations, and technologies increasingly governed by new communication media. This is particularly interesting
when Korzybski and *General Semantics* consider such phenomena as public opinion, which they can describe as having its own space-time dynamics of expansion, modes of persuasion, and techniques of distribution or reproduction, etc. In short, within a new social order of relations, institutions, and forms of government, General Semantics was part of a more general intellectual movement that tried to develop new concepts by which to understand the modes of communication - indeed the fact of communication - in societies where media and "communicativity" had expanded beyond the ken of any preceding order of society or corresponding academic theorizing.

It is precisely within new paradigms of "communicativity" that we might also understand what Korzybski and *General Semantics* means, at least in one important register, by three of its distinct terms: facts, inferences, assumptions. At first blush, these terms are distinguished by their temporality; but this temporality - or temporal ordering - has critical implications for the nature of common life, public life, and conflict / peace in human interactions. First, assumptions come from prior knowledge and are not equivalent to experience. Experience refers to the singularity and novelty of the moment, within the momentary discriminations of an event. Vis-à-vis experience, assumptions operate, at best, as heuristics and first-order approximations - they are those stable, "crystallized terms and tools that have worked for prior experiences, but
are inappropriate to a new semantic situation. Second, a statement of inference unfolds in the moment — any number of them can be made about anything, and the claims made by inferences oftentimes extend beyond the relative position of the subject who makes them. One can expect disagreement "if only inferential statements can be made in situation."

Third, facts are made after an observation, are limited in number, subjectively confined, and close to "certainty" — that is, facts are in the first instance the application of the scientific method to subjective experience that can then be brought to bear in our communication with others. Presuming that others have done the same, it will be much easier to find agreement between the shared experiences of individuals. Two things are interesting to notice in this regard. First, General Semantics makes it clear that not all contexts, not all environments, are conducive for the production of inferences, assumptions, or especially facts. An attention to the conditions under which individuals encounter, meet, and interact with each other is as critical to the quality of their interaction as is the interaction itself. The second interesting development is that a fact unfolds first in the relation between oneself and the world / environment / context, and then it assumes a status whereby it becomes material for what is common between individuals. Facts are not only statements of "truth," they are, more specifically, the products of a dialogue with oneself in relation to the world amenable to agreements and conventions.
with others who, because they are engaging in a similar process, are common with us. This development of the "category" of facts is quite intriguing. It undoubtedly bears some resemblance to the facts we refer to when we speak of "common sense." But it is also an intellectual response to the "fact" that "events" have completely new space-time dynamics in modern societies; we are still mystified by the fact that events space and time, "reality," nevertheless exist for each of us on different orders of space-time experience. To order "facts" first within a self-reflexive mode of production and interaction is to begin to make sense of the strange conditions under which human beings live together in modern societies.

Although there is no explicit "ethics" developed in *General Semantics*, an ethics of communication ordered around "facts" is implicit; it revolves around the principal that individuals are always "becoming." An ethics of interaction goes hand in hand with the ethics of person-to-self and person-to-world relations. And this ethics is what might be called an ethics of "encounter," which we find in many philosophers, including Hegel, which stipulates not only those others are "becoming," but also that others must be acknowledged, received, accepted, and recognized. The imperative, under these conditions, is to maintain the relation with others; hence *General Semantics'* insistence on the importance of small talk: to maintain a speaking relation is to maintain an ethical relation, since to maintain any relation at all is to avoid confliction in relations and
misunderstandings. Of course, this requires one to remember that "words don't mean, people mean," or that they are always meaning-making-doing. Operating on "vague definitions" makes mutuality and mutual ends impossible to produce; to rely heavily on perspective-less speech is a form of blackmail. To keep speaking and reciprocating - to maintain a relation with the other - is, as functional systems theory would develop it, a central mode of actions that has as its effect to maintain a social institution.