CHAPTER - 3
Co-relation between

GENERAL SEMANTICS

&

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION
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*General Semantics* & Business Communication

The concepts developed by Alfred Korzybski as the theory of *General Semantics* have already been discussed in detail in earlier chapters. A detailed discussion of each of these concepts in relation to Business Communication becomes imperative to reach to the end discussion. The present study of co-relation between *General Semantics* and Business Communication is based on following concepts:

1. Abstraction
2. Knowledge
3. Time Binding
4. Non-elementalistic
5. Multiordinality
6. Projection
7. Indexes
8. Dating
9. Et cetera
10. Hyphens
11. Similarity and Differences
(1) Abstraction

Abstraction is a constant process of selecting, omitting and organizing the details of reality so that people experience the world as patterned, intelligible and articulate. An abstraction is a kind of synopsis of what the world is like, a generalization about its structure. Abstracting by necessity involves evaluating, whether conscious or not, and so the process of abstracting may be considered as a process of evaluating stimuli. As mentioned by Alfred Korzybski, human beings abstract at the three levels: 'Neurological level', 'perceptual level' and 'verbal level'. All the systems of human beings, interacting with the world are involved in selecting data from the world, organizing data, generalizing data.

Communication is the process of passing information and understanding from the sender to the receiver. If this information reaches to the sender in its exact shade then one can say it is perfect communication. But if the information in the mind of the sender is not passed on and not understood exactly by the receiver, one can call it a miscommunication (or a communication gap). This is the time where one finds a connection between General Semantics and Business Communication through one of the important devices of General Semantics, which is 'Abstraction'.
In Business Communication, the process of abstraction starts when a sender of the message has an idea or thing-event in the mind. The sender wants to convey his/her message effectively and this can be done by selecting proper words and symbols which match with the thing-event that has developed in his/her mind. The process of selecting, analyzing, deleting and choosing starts in the psyche of the sender. The 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. 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.

To convey the message purposefully, the sender selects an appropriate mode of communication. The sender takes help of verbal means and then along with it, he/she also makes use of non verbal devices. At this juncture too, one may find out co relation between General Semantics and Business communication. Alfred Korzybski introduced the two technical terms to explain the concept of abstraction in detail. The terms are: Intensional orientations and Extensional orientations. Experts mean
by intensional meaning is that the meaning of a ‘word’ in terms of other words and by extensional meaning, they mean the ‘actual reality’ to which those words refer to. Extensional orientations are based on ordering, observations, investigations, etc first and the verbalization next in importance. Extensional orientations are the world of the events and things. The world of things we touch, see, hear or otherwise experience is called the extensional world. “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.”

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.

Abstraction is 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. "These three levels of abstraction are interesting insofar as - from the point of view of the study of communication - they separate "experience," "representation," and "judgment." These three distinctions entail that thinking and acting are precisely the practice and process of placing these faculties into relation across these three levels of abstraction."^{2}

The world of abstractions is not only a game of vision; it is also a game of observing, being observed, and observation. Whence the important to relation to some major thinkers in Communication, among whom one famous figure said that, in a manner to describe some of the new dilemmas of communication systems in society, that the world outside is not the same as the pictures in our heads.

When the sender in a communication process wants to convey a message about his/her product, he/she would initially explain the product by using words and phrases. If the sender fails to define the product exactly as per his/her ideas and beliefs then in the situation like this, the sender of the message shows sample of the similar product and he/she would be in a position to convince the customer about the product. When the sender makes use of words to talk about the product, one can find out easily that this is nothing else but it is the intensional orientation of abstraction. Similarly, when the sender pays attention to the sample of that particular
product to explain the product then one can say that it is the extensional orientation of abstraction. So there is a connection between *General Semantics* and Business Communication.

(2) Knowledge

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. For example, in Business Communication, if a letter of termination is to be issued from the higher authority to an employee on the job, the authority wouldn’t issue the termination letter first and then giving a show cause notice and then talking very informally. Looking to this sequence, anyone can say that the order is wrong and it would not bring the expected results.

One more example could be taken for the discussion to clarify the point more. A dealer in the business of soft drinks and beverages is interested in communicating about the product to customers. The theory of *General
Semantics in Business Communication plays a vital association in this case. One of the ways to understand 'structure' is to consider the simplest question: 'When someone sees the mango flavored soft drink, how that someone knows that you have the same sensation?' You can gather samples of mango flavored soft drinks, and ask the other to name them. You can carry out all sorts of test and you reach conformity on all of them. Structurally your response to colours appears to be the same but you still don't know whether you have the same sensation. But for all practical purposes you do. If you present a sample of what you call mango flavored soft drink, and someone says it is pineapple flavored soft drink and whenever you say mango flavored soft drink, or like a mango flavored soft drink, someone says pineapple flavored soft drink or like a pineapple flavored soft drink, you can figure out that you both are responding to the same thing-event but you both are calling it by different names. The structure is the same in both cases. The words you use are different.

The most important sentence which is found in all the discussion about General Semantics is: "it is impossible to know everything" or "it is impossible to fully speak about anything" indicates some limitation in the process of communication.
(3) Time Binding

The human capacity of intercommunicating and transmitting the accumulated experiences of individuals and the race from individual to individual and generation to generation is characterized as the 'time binding' capacity. As time binders, human beings can accumulate knowledge from the past and communicate what they know to the future. So, 'time binding' is the unique human method of transmitting experience and knowledge over time. Human beings are influenced by the past and the future at the present time because they are related to these through 'time binding'. Our own personal history affects us 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. The main means of accomplishing the binding of time is the symbol. But human being's capacity to symbolize is dependent upon and integral to another process called 'abstraction'. This is the capacity that finds close connection with Business Communication. While a customer is reading a sales letter of any company about any product, introducing the company briefly and talking about the product vividly, what connects the customer with the company is 'time binding' capacity of human being. The quality of the product, the image and the reputation of the company, services rendered
by the company and the background of that company is communicated and transmitted from the customer of the earlier generation to the customer of this generation. As time binders, customers can accumulate knowledge from the past and communicate what they know to the future. Customers are influenced by the past and the future at the present time because they are related to these through ‘time binding’. The personal history affects the company or the product now and in the future because of ‘time binding’. So, ‘time binding’ is the unique human method of transmitting information and understanding over time which also plays an important role in business communication.

(4) Non-elementalistic

Elementalistic expressions are those expressions that are taken out of context and their relationship with other thing-events has been omitted. If human beings cannot think of any real representation of a word, then they might consider this word as elementalistic, and it may not have any meaning.

Non-elementalistic is related to non-identity, whereas we have the concept of identity, where two things are made equal when they are merely similar, so we have the concept of elementalism wherein two things are separated when they should be kept together. The mind and the
body might be wrongly separated when people say the one and the other are quite independent.

Language have structure, thus there may be language of elementalistic structure such as ‘intellect’ and ‘emotions’, ‘thinking’ and ‘feeling’, ‘thought’ and ‘intuition’; which allow verbal division and separation or we may have languages of a structure of non-elementalistic structure. In Business Communication, the communicators “see” the world through the structure of their languages; their attitudes, behavior, personal relationships, institutions, society international relations, etc; are functionally related to the structure of the languages they use to communicate with themselves and others. Human beings create their human world in the ‘light’ of their words. Everything is related to everything else and it is wrong to separate parts artificially which belong together. Words like communication have the same effect of abstracting, and therefore deleting the communicators, about what they are communicating, through which channel, in which media, etc. would not bring the expected result.

(5) Multi-ordinality

A multi-ordinal term is one that can be applied to statements containing that same term infinitely. Words don’t just have one right meaning. Words and symbols have different meanings to different people and
different meanings in different contexts. A word or sentence in itself doesn’t necessarily say anything finite, unless one finds out what it is linked up with.

If it is asked, “Do you know what a mouse is?” The respondent may say ‘yes’ but in one case, the mouse is a rat, a reptile animal but in another case it could be computer mouse. So the word ‘yes’ conveys different situations. The multiordinality of words makes the evaluation method more challenging and interesting. Alfred Korzybski says, “Multiordinality terms represent the most important words in our vocabulary. These have no general extensional meaning but their content is exclusively given by the given context. The realization of the extensional, multiordinality of such terms eliminates an endless array of misunderstandings quarrels and finally human maladjustments because people are using a language similar in structure to the facts of life”.

To substantiate the view, while advertising a product the advertising agency communicates with public by using a punch line such as ‘Never say never to our product’. In the sentence, both words ‘never’ look alike, are spelled similar; yet they are on different levels of abstraction and have different values, one unlimited, limiting the others.
The important thing is that it is not easy to determine that *multi-ordinality* may occur from examining just one utterance. The context of using the word is more important than the word itself and that makes the communication meaningful and effective. In the way the business communicator selects certain words which may have different meaning from the lexicon point of view but might convey a different meaning in a particular context. The same word could have different meanings in the different situations. Words like, 'Yes', 'No', 'True', 'False', 'Fact', 'reality', 'hate', 'love', 'affection', 'liking', 'doubt', etc are multiordinal terms.

(6) Projection

Intensional meanings can persist because people tend to experience the world in terms of these meanings. When you suspect your colleague's honesty, you might find all kinds of (false) evidence for this. People project meaning on the object and what might be rather insignificant might be made conclusive proof because of their projections on reality.

Since all people have to verbalize is an internal condition, they are able to have any knowledge of or to communicate anything about, reality only by projecting their internal condition into external events. If the sender is to speak about an apple as a public event, s/he must project the apple as
he/she experiences it, as 'manufactured by his/her nervous system', into
the apple as an object independent of himself/herself. He/she must, in
other words, speak about the apple “as if” it were outside himself/herself.
If the sender says, “There is an apple on the dining table,” he/she is
projecting, since all lie has to verbalize is a condition inside his/her own
nervous system. But the receiver replies, “Yes, I see the apple,” the
sender’s projection is thereby, to that extent, justified. If, however, the
sender says, “There is a blue ant on the wall,” and the receiver replies,” I
don’t see a blue ant,” one might, with sufficient evidence, conclude that
the sender is exhibiting the sort of illegitimate projection that may be
called ‘illusion’. “There is nothing abnormal about projection, as such; it
is like identification, unavoidable and necessary. It is an integral aspect of
the process of abstracting. What is essential, for purposes of effective
abstracting and communication is that there is adequate consciousness of
projection. We may, for practical emphasis, speak of consciousness of
projection as “to-me-ness.”

That is to say, the sender exhibits consciousness of his own projecting
when he says, “It seems to me that there is a blue ant on the wall.” Or
“this apple tastes sweet to me. How does it taste to you?” In this way the
sender indicates an awareness that what he/she reports is a personal
experience, not a universal truth—a personal experience or evaluation

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which depends for its reliability as a social fact on the degree to which others concur in it. So long as the listener is aware of the speaker’s projection, the listener, at least, can allow for it and respond accordingly.

(7) Indexes

Indexes are used to identify the specific object. An object is indexed when it is specifically identified. People should remember that things with the same name could be different. Alfred Korzybski recommended that people should employ a simple form of indexing. Indian cricketer$_1$ is not Indian cricketer$_2$; Gujarati$_1$ is not Gujarati$_2$ and so on.

If one knows two or more people called Rahul and one hears that Rahul got promoted, then one need to find out which Rahul in particular the speaker is talking about. A rather academic way of doing this is to give each occurrence of the same word with a different referent a different number index. So the listener or receiver might refer to Rahul$_1$ and Rahul$_2$ to identify which one the communicator is writing or talking about. ‘Indexing’ is a simple but helpful technique of reminding people of differences alongside of similarities.

(8) Dating

People should frequently use ‘time markers’ which are known as ‘dating’. When one uses name, for example, one should accustom oneself
to affixing a date to it so that one will remember that people and things change over time. Sachin Tendulkar, Gujarat University, and so on are some examples.

Alfred Korzybski explains, “In dating, we force upon our attention the differences between the same person at different times. I remind myself that I’m not what I used to be.”

When a sales representative makes an attempt to explain a product to a customer with a purpose of selling the product, it happens so many times that the sales representative fails to convince the customer to buy the product. The sales representative would meet the customer again and continue his/her attempts of convincing the customer. The sales representative knows the psychology of customers very well that yesterday he/she failed to convince the customer but today he/she may convince him. The fact is that the customer did not purchase the product yesterday does not mean that the customer would not buy your product today as the concept of ‘Dating’ encourages that there are differences among the same person at different times.

(9) Et cetera

The use of ‘et cetera’ reminds people that whatever they experience is never the whole of what could be experienced or of what actually exists.
The use of a mental *et cetera* when they experience something or recall something can remind us that there is more than they have taken in. The use of 'etc' as a part of our evaluating processes leads to awareness of the indefinitely many factors in a process which can never be fully known or perceived.

In Business Communication also, we know, as a communicator that we cannot talk about each and every aspect of our products or services. The study of different literature of any product such as leaflets, pamphlet, brochure, etc, giving the detailed information about the content of the product has revealed that one common word is found in almost all material called 'etc'. At the end of the sentence which clearly indicates that a mental "et cetera" on the end of each sentence to remind ourselves that there is always more to say.

(10) **Hyphens**

*Hyphens* remind the complexities of the interrelatedness in the world. *Hyphens* enable us to avoid elementalism by properly relating thing-events. In Business Communication too, one finds word regularly with hyphens. *Hyphens*, therefore, remind the communicators of the complexity of the world and remind them to link together similar ideas:
• Co-ordination
• Co-worker
• Neuro-communication
• Psycho-sociological barriers

By eliminating the structural hyphen from such terms as Psycho-sociological barriers, the public is led to believe these issues are simple, while complexities today have increased beyond even professional understanding.

(11) Similarity and Differences

Certain objects, whether they be people, thing-events or processes are unique individuals and nothing is the same as anything else, yet some objects are similar to others, and other objects are different. Through the study of various business letters such as inquiry, sales, collection, complaint, adjustment, etc. one can easily find out that there is a similarity amongst these letters as far as the style and formats are concerned and at the same time they are not identical. The same matter is also found with almost all the business advertisements. Some are very similar but never identical and others are quite different, but never totally different, because everything is related to everything else. That is, they are both non-elemental and non-identical. By learning to recognize that
everything is unique and individual and that everything is part of the same interrelating thing-event, but not the same as this thing-event, one can learn to be more rational.

This chapter may be concluded by summarizing the fact that *General Semantics*, a theory introduced by Alfred Korzybski, deals with studying the effects of language on our behavior, 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 enviournment, 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.

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 us 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, we 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 people 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.

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 the theory of General Semantics.

A close connection between General Semantics and Business Communication is seen with wide effects and the role of General semantics in Business Communication can be constructive and fruitful. But only co-relation between any things is not enough to find out the functions of one thing in another thing. It is important to trace out that how the theory of General Semantics could be applied to Business Communication.

CITATIONS

1. <http://www.mcole@ucsd.edu>
2. <http://www.mcole@ucsd.edu>