

## Note

# Introduction to Communication Research: The First Basic Steps

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Since the articles published in Weekend Reviews and journals like *Pakistan Perspectives* are usually anchored in Communication Research it is incumbent that the first basic steps in that Research are delineated first. The first steps consist of three basic exposures i.e. selective exposure, selective perception and selective retention.

- a. Selective exposure means that you expose yourself to those events or developments you're already familiar with. If that is, if you're PML-N fan you don't usually expose yourself to PPP meetings or events. That is you strengthen your already antecedent perception all the more to the exclusion of other perceptions.
- b. Selective perception means that even when you expose yourself to selective exposure you try to pursue only those developments or events that you're at home with. Since you don't expose yourself to other perceptions you get yourself confirmed or strengthened in your own persistent views.
- c. Finally, selective retention means that you retain only such perceptions which again are antecedent to your previous perceptions.

In any case, the differences wrought by exposing yourself to different views are great, even monumental. This is seen in the respective stance of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi on the federal part of the Government of India Act, 1935-1940. Jinnah used to expose himself to all sorts of document, word by word and formulated his stance in the light of his readings. Hence during 1935-1937 he lambasted the federal part of the 1935 Act for conceding only

2% responsibility to Indians at the centre and got the All India Muslim League Bombay session in April 1936. To pass an anti-federal part of the 1935 constitution. This session was presided over by Jinnah's pro congress nominee, Sir Wazeer Hasan of Lucknow, till then the longest surviving Muslim League general secretary since the 1920s.

After the enforcement of the 1935 Act Jinnah found that the implementation of the federal part and its silence has resulted in 'culturicide' of Muslims all the way and he made this an issue against the setting up of a federal part. Jinnah howled against the federal part of 1935 Act on this basis from Lucknow Oct 1937 via Karachi (Oct 1938) and Patna (Dec 1938) to Lahore (March 1940) finally resulted in the HMG's August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1940 statement suspending the federal part and pledging to consult all political parties before setting up a constitutional assembly.

Thus, we may see Jinnah's success in getting his demand accepted was only because he was used to exposing himself to all sorts of communication and to constitutional documents in particular.

As against Jinnah, Gandhi confessed not to have read the 1935 constitution and that had it done so he would've joyously accepted the 1935 Act thus he lost an opportunity to take a more rational stance on the 1935 Act. That cost him a good deal of political loss.

In Jinnah's case, he even read reviews in the Hindu of distant Madras wherein he corrected its story about Rutten Vai's marriage and dowry based on a Muslim journalist's biography of Jinnah and titled "Meet Mr. Jinnah" (1943). He told the editor and reviewer that Rutten Vai has walked out of her parents house in the sari she wore and an umbrella to shade her from the scorching sun in April 1918 Bombay.

The difference wrought by exposing yourself to various exposures may also be seen in the case of Marxist exponent Prof Hamza Alavi. When he came across by *Misaq e Madina* by chance in his readings, he exploded with undue praise in his columns, and later devoted one whole piece to designating the implications of *Misaq e Madina* and its implications for non-Muslims within the grand concept of a Muslim Ummah in the republican Madina, and said that it could be a base and bases for a Muslim Ummah in Pakistan today and years to come.

Researchers at Harvard in the early 1960s have, with a theoretical approach to presentation of a mixed discourse to a non-selective audience. The order of presentation shows that any sort of discourse holds the audience spell bound for the first seven minutes. After that the audience spell wanes and the last seven minutes bring back the spell once again. Hence if you have to make a point in your discourse

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you should try to spell it out in the first seven minutes with the body of your discourse confined to the next seven minutes. Then you should try to conclude your argument with a flush and finish in the last few minutes. This is the theoretically model that speakers should follow in presenting their discourses.

Noise is another basic concept that hampers effective communication between its origin and effective delivery. Noise means that you're formulating your communication in a language that is not in mundane terms and the communicattee is able to understand. For instance, Jinnah spelled out his concept of Muslim nationhood on the masses or communicattees 'language when he called it a nation with his own culture and civilization, language and literature, sense of values, etc., he was speaking the language of the masses who could test him in their hearts and homes and, therefore, understand him and hence he got an astonishing positive response. As against him Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, in his tour of the Frontier after he had setup the Interim Government at New Delhi in October 1946, was unable to communicate with the tribal leaders and masses when he was speaking of Indian nationalism and united India because those concepts were far, far away from the tribal leaders and masses' mind. Hence he failed to get a positive response and had to return highly frustrated and discomforted and was forced by Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, to include the Muslim League nominees in the Interim Government. This shows how important a part 'Noise' plays in changing unintended developments—of course, from the communicators' viewpoint.

Likewise, Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi's adverse reference to Muslims as "a body of converts" during the marathon Jinnah-Gandhi talks in Bombay in October 1946 was hugely resisted by Muslims in favor of Jinnah's' Muslim Ummah concept. The Muslims now understood the ploys utilized by non-league Muslims and by non-Muslims to undercut their quest for Pakistan. Thus VC G.M. Sayed ploy to double against the official Muslims League candidates in the name of Muslims rights in Sindh in December 1946, got nowhere and remained frustrated and failed.

As we have seen about, Communication Research works both ways—for or against communication understanding, and it depends how you use it and in what ways. These are the first steps we ought to know.