

Skills for Effective Business Communication: Efficiency, Collaboration, and Success

Michael Murphy
Shorenstein Center for Communication
Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
September 30, 2014

I: Introduction Communicative Competence and Self- Assessment

- Define the term “business communication;”
- Identify the elements of communication from a socio-linguistic perspective;
- Assess individual strengths and weaknesses in terms of communication skills.

II: Strategies for Efficient Reading

- Structure approaches to reading a text;
- Identify tips to increase speed as a reader;
- Apply the strategies to a text.

III. Strategies for Improving Writing

- Note the importance of giving and receiving feedback;
- Identify the “7Cs of Effective Business Writing;”
- Structure emails from subject heading to sign off;
- Note the limits of technology for writers and the dangers of excessive use of business jargon.

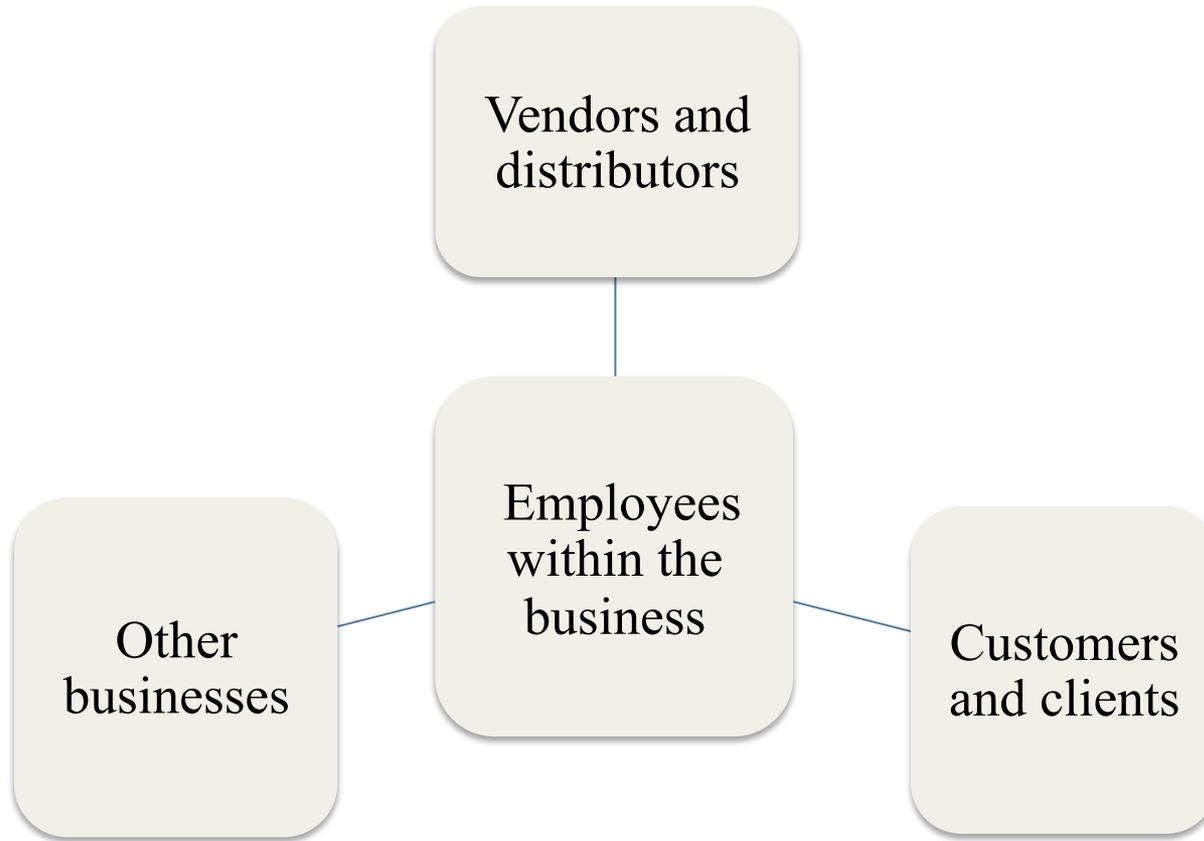
IV: On The Phone: Non-Verbal Skills and Collaborative Relationships in the Virtual Office

- Note the importance of non-verbal communication;
- Identify strategies for effective communication in virtual meetings;
- Examine current trends and predict future changes in business communication.

V. Conclusion

- Acknowledge the relationships between language, efficiency, collaboration, and success!

Communication is the key to success in business.
Business communication is the ability to build solid relationships based on the effective and efficient exchange of information between:



In other words, it's all about building trust.

Four Sociolinguist Competencies of Effective Communication

Grammatical Competence

Lexical, syntactic, semantic, morphological, and phonological knowledge.

Discourse Competence

The combination of linguistic expressions and the appropriate way of connecting these expressions.

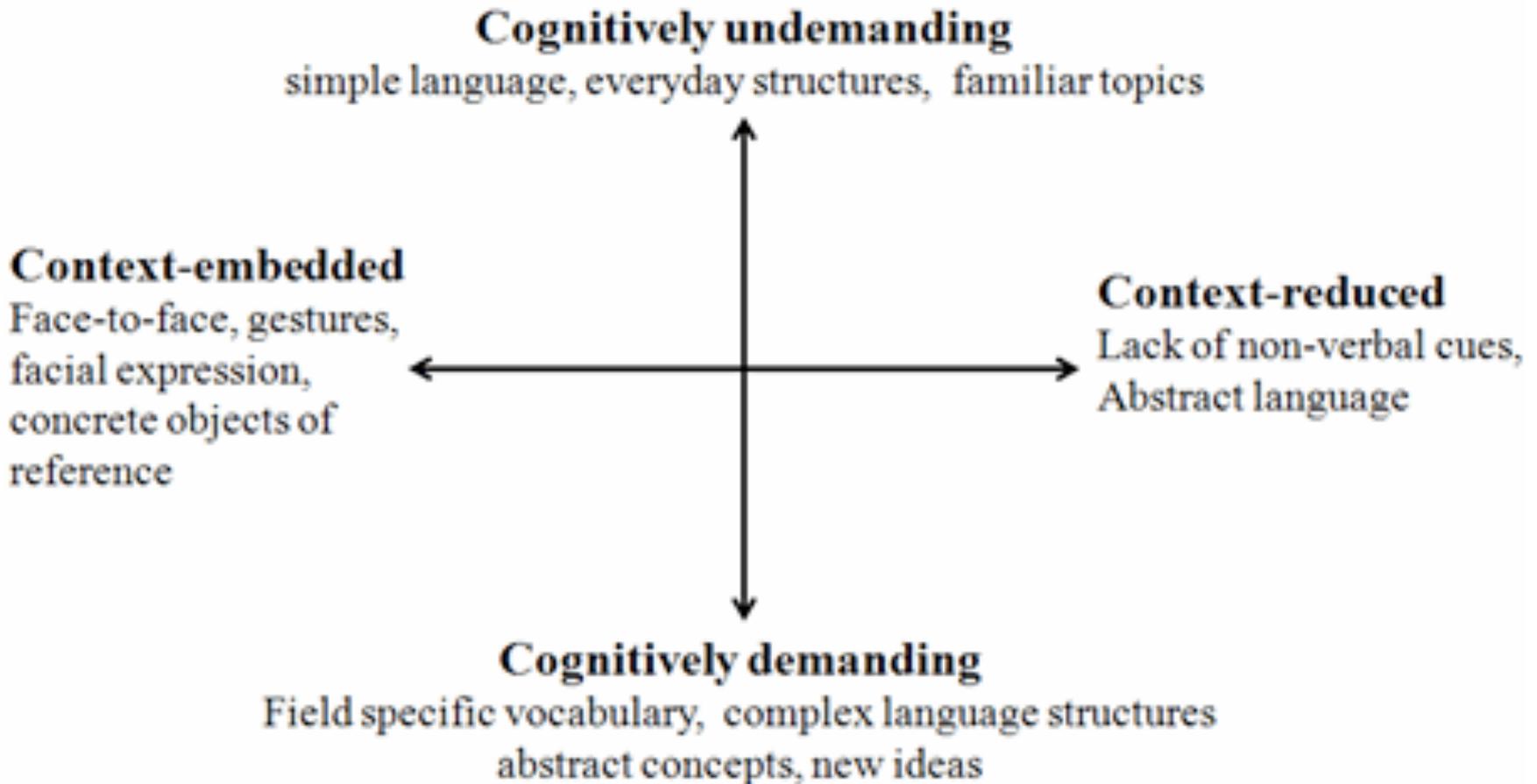
Sociolinguistic Competence

Communication in a social and cultural context with awareness of theme, roles, participants, situation and norms of interaction.

Strategic Competence

The ability to solve communication problems and compensate for deficiencies by verbal and non-verbal means.

On The Relationships Between Face-to-Face and Virtual Communication and Verbal and Non-verbal Communication:



Cummins's (1981b) model of language acquisition (as cited in Madyarov) with four quadrants.

Strategies for Efficient Reading (Part 1 of 3):

Preview:

- Read the title/subject line: Determine what the text is about;
- Read the first two paragraphs and the first sentence of each subsequent paragraph;
- Read the concluding paragraph.

Skim:

- If it's short enough, look for key words;
- Use text features such as **bold** or *italics*.

Cluster:

- Train your eyes to read in groups of four to five words rather than one-by-one.

Strategies for Efficient Reading (Part 2 of 3): Conduct a STAP Analysis:

Identify the **Subject**:

- The subject is usually one word.

Identify the **Thesis**:

- What is the author's attitude/opinion about the subject?

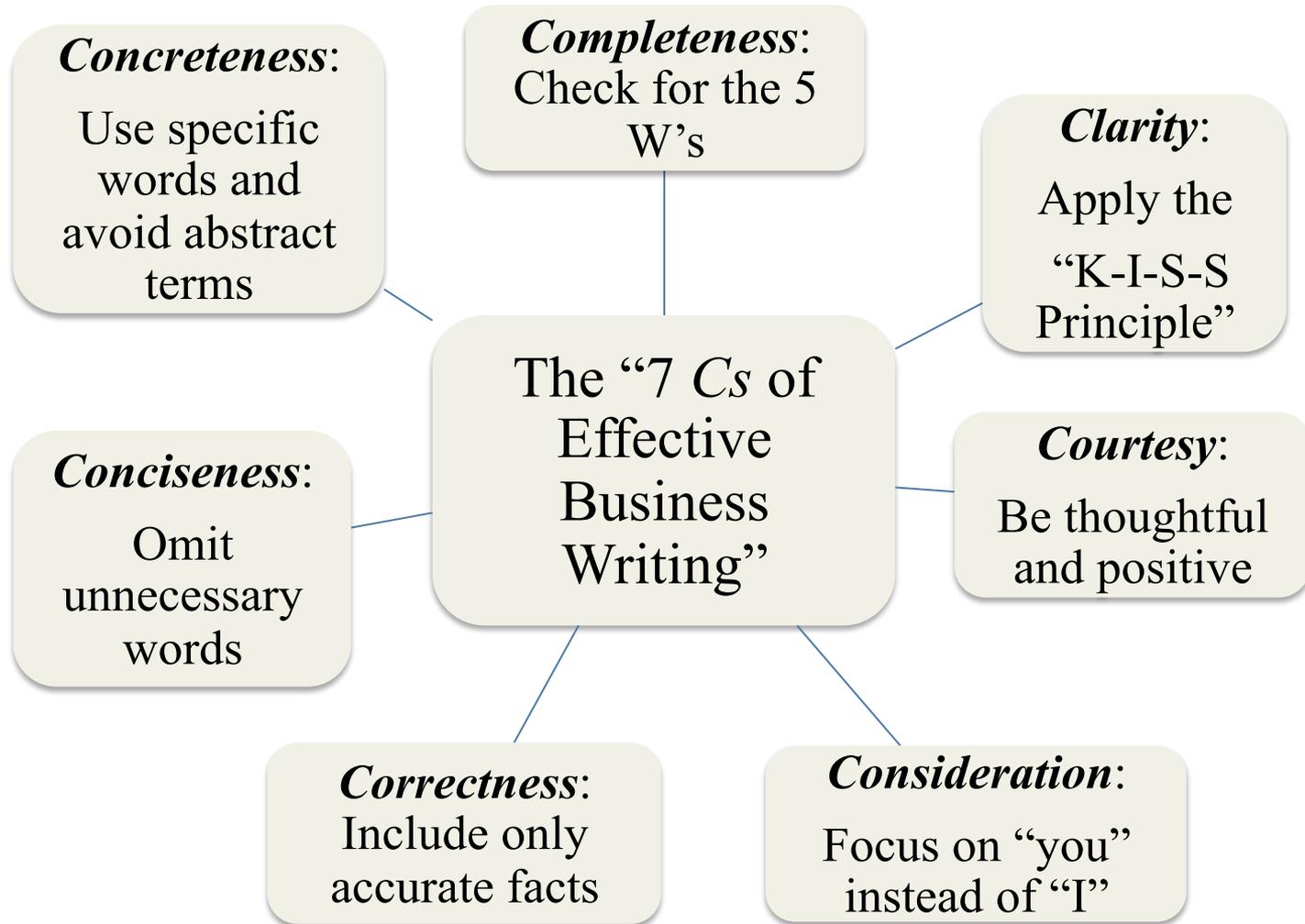
Identify the **Audience**:

- Evaluate the tone, vocabulary, and syntax to determine the audience.

Identify the **Purpose**:

- Determine whether the author is complaining, informing, evaluating, explaining, etc.

The “7 Cs of Effective Business Writing” (Part 1 of 6):

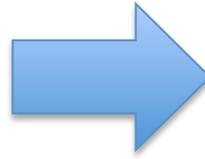


Phone Etiquette:

Use Signaling Phrases

(say):

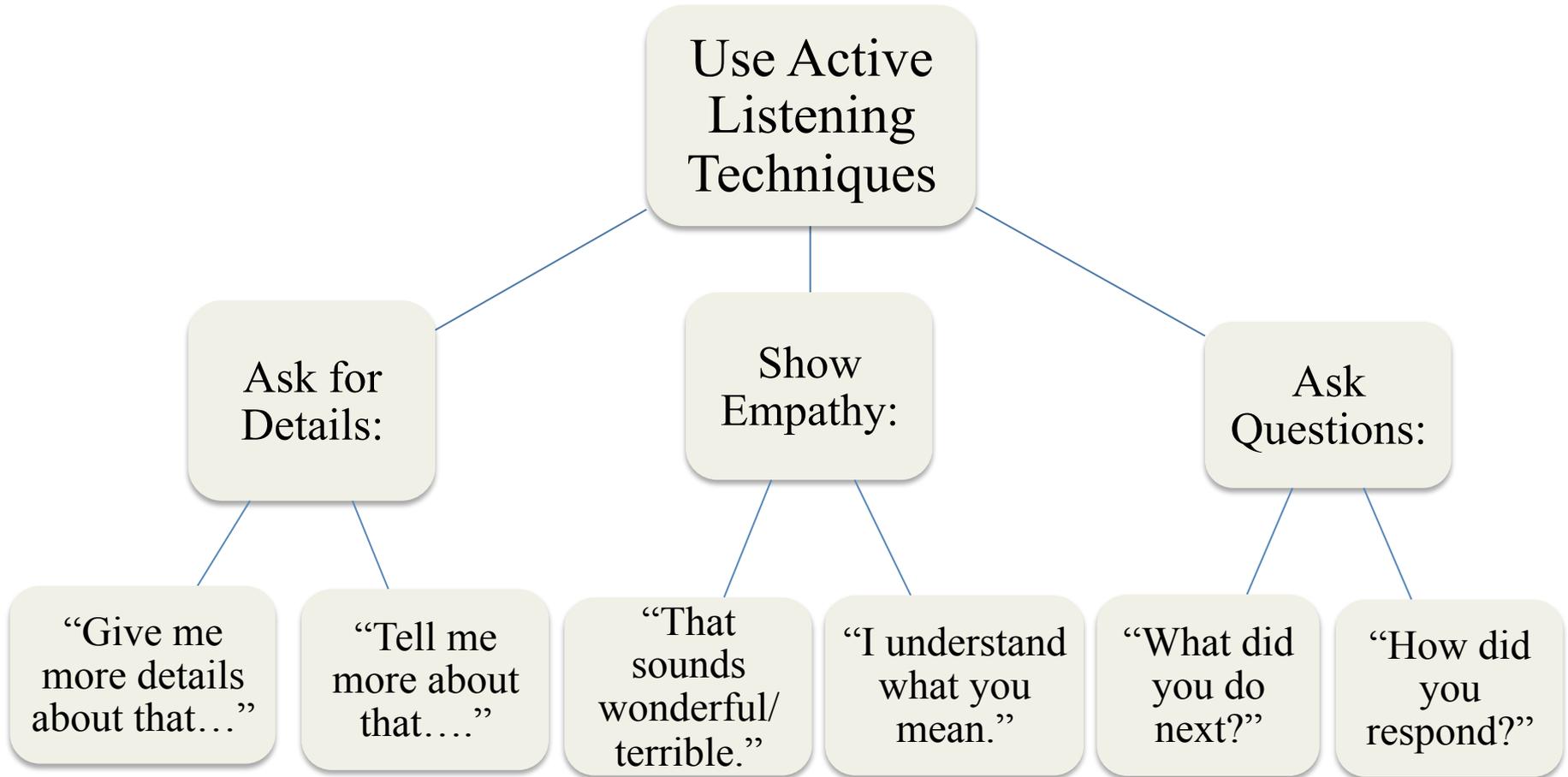
- “Let me ask a question”
- “Let me suggest...”
- “Let me clarify....”
- “Let me summarize....”



(do):

- Then, ask the question...
- Then, make the suggestion....
- Then, make the clarification...
- Then, summarize the discussion....

Phone Etiquette (Cont.)



Summary

- Get feedback from colleagues and clients on your communication skills.
- Give feedback to your colleagues and clients.
- Recognize the limits of technology.
- Be positive.
- Remember that efficiency is a skill to be mastered.
- Remember that collaboration is key to building strong relationships.
- Remember that the success of the individual and the organization depends on effective communication!

Thank you!