



A Chat, Banter or *Conversation*

Some ABC's of the spoken word

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Cambrensis
2007

What I Plan to Cover

- Introduction - Why Conversations
- An all too familiar example of poor conversation
- Exercise: What is the result
- Revising the Basics: Conversation 101
 - Responsibilities: Whose job is it to understand?
 - Components: Atmosphere, Dialogue, Emotions
 - Mechanics of a Conversation
- The Lighthouse – a model for holding constructive conversations
- Long term: How do we know we are improving?

Some Surprising Data

- Experts* suggest we speak 16,000 words a day!
- There is little difference in the number of words used by men and women in conversation
- The time needed to recognise a word may be less than 200 ms after the start

* Study completed in July 2007 by Matthias Mehl of the [University of Arizona](#)

Speed Dating Research*

Based on a UK study of 100 members of the public taking part in five-hundred 'speed dates'.

One key finding - People form impressions extremely quickly :

- 45% of women's decisions being made under thirty seconds,
- compared to just 22% of men's decisions.

The Takeaway for us: An ability to **listen** and show ***genuine understanding***, is central to forming rapport early in discussions.

*April 2006 by Professor Richard Wiseman

Why Constructive Conversations?

- Managers, engineers included, spend between 60% and 80 % of their day in conversation
- Misunderstandings cost us in frustration, time and money
- Little effort is devoted to improving how effective our conversations are in communicating
- We get into “autopilot” and do not have the impact we want – often without us realizing

A Conversation or Shouting Match?

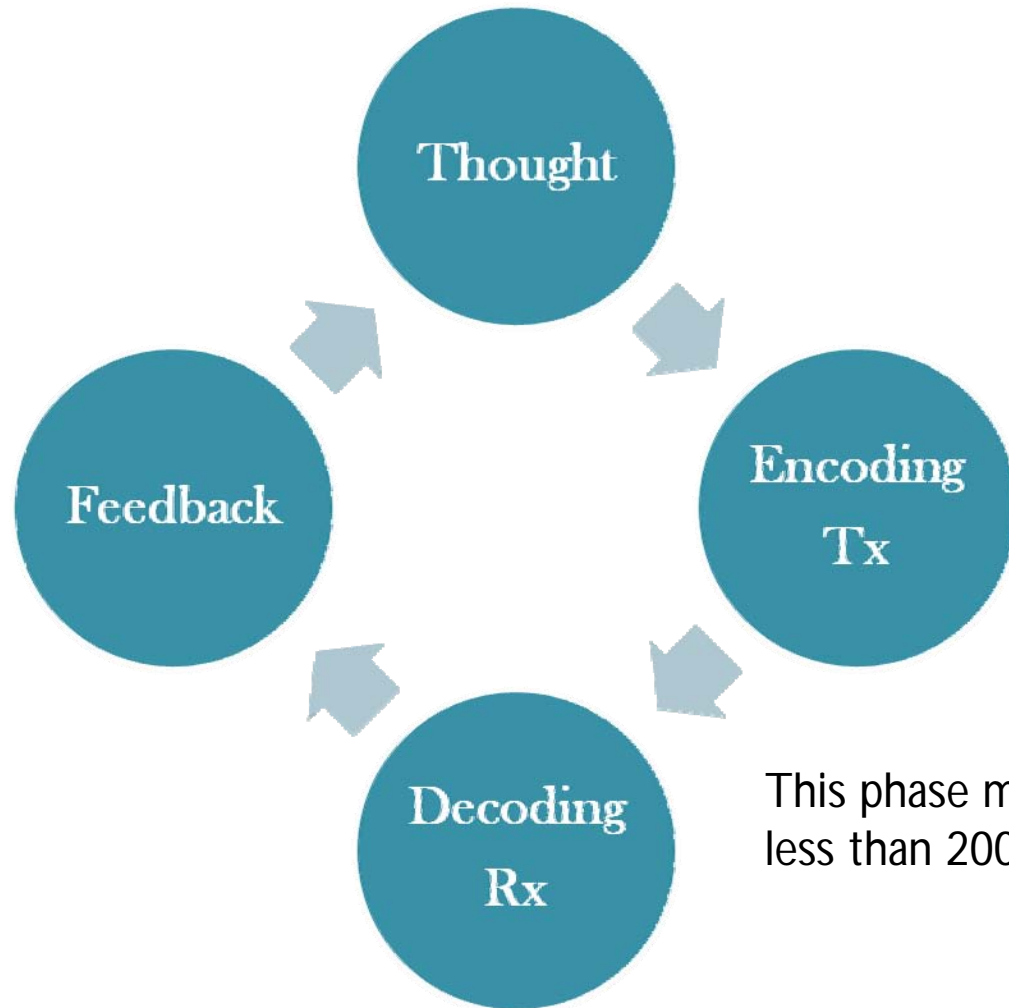
Exercise:

In your table groups consider the results of the encounter between Shirley and Danny

Consider:

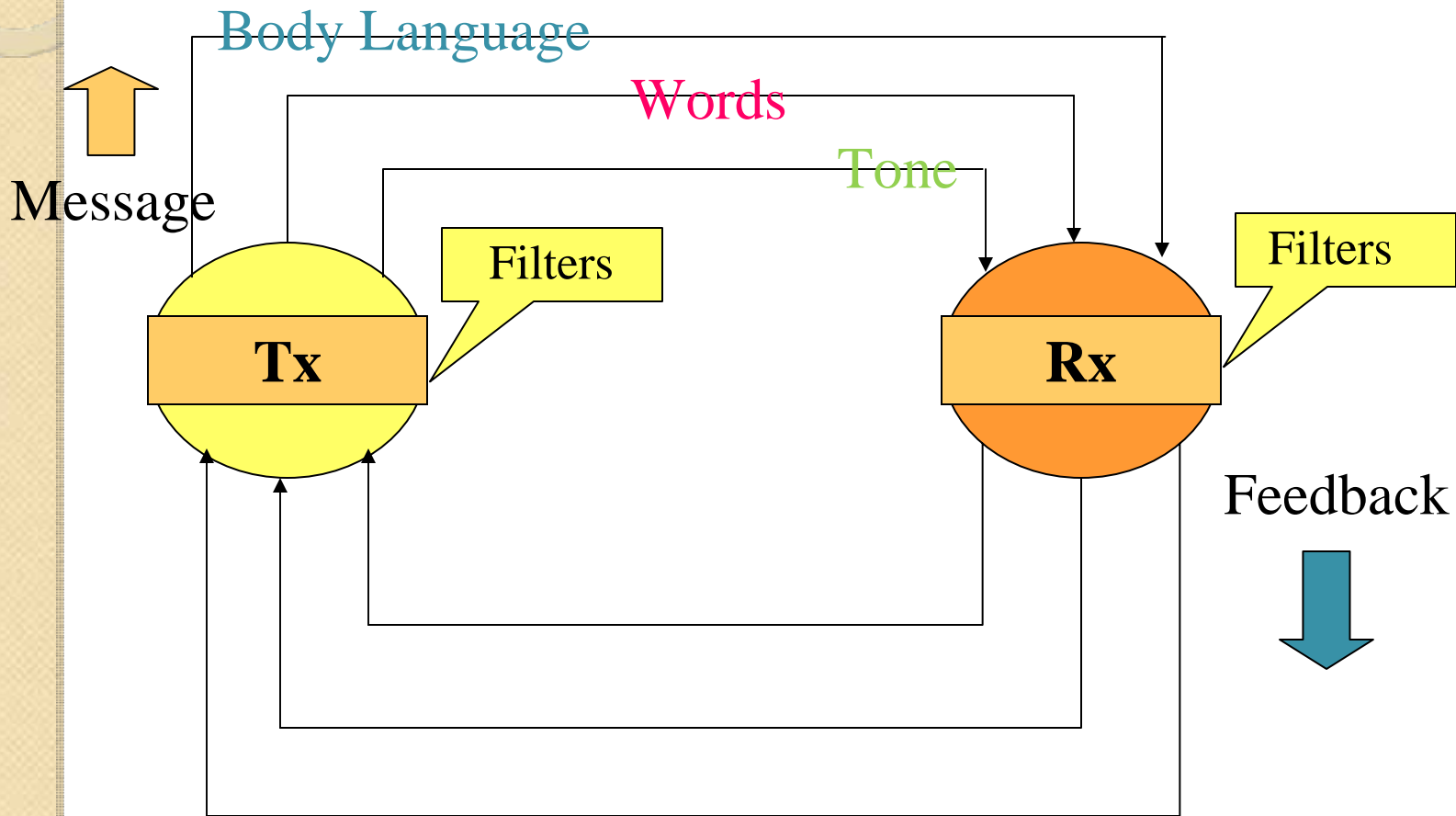
- Did Shirley achieve what she wanted?
- Did Shirley choose the right place?
- Did the intervention do any good?
- Did Shirley's words carry much meaning?

The Conversation Process



This phase may take less than 200 ms

Conversation 101: The Mechanics



From What do we Take Meaning?



Words

- Verbal Conveys 7% of meaning

Body language

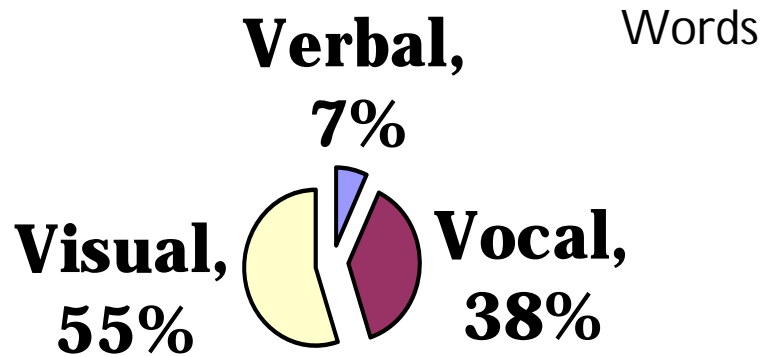
- Visual
- Conveys 35% of meaning

Tone

- Vocal
- Conveys 55% of meaning

From What do we Take Meaning?

- Albert Mehrabian's Data:



There are Human Physiological Challenges

We speak ?

100 to 175 wpm*



But we can listen to?

600 to 800 wpm



What do we do with the spare time?

*CBC reported the world record for speech is 586 words per minute.

Conversation 101: Responsibility

Engineer speaks to Engineer

**Comprehension
is the act of the
Listener**

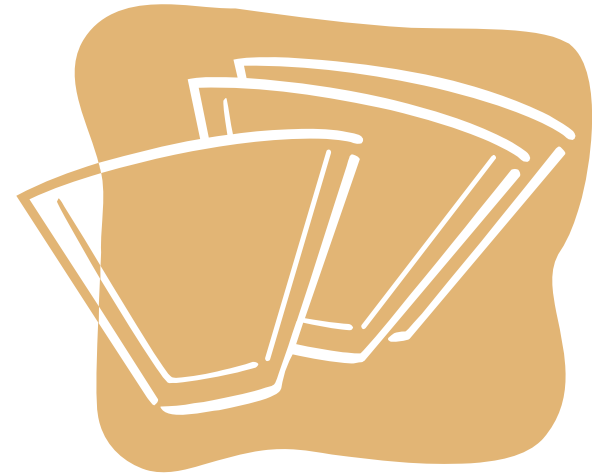
**BUT the
responsibility
of the Speaker**



Conversation 101: Filters

What's Inside?

Bias
Prejudice
Values
Needs
Goals
Assumptions
Perceptions
Experience
Education
Background
Culture



Each item can create a filter through which we hear everything

Conversation 101: Emotions and Assumptions

An iceberg floating in the ocean. The tip of the iceberg is above the water, and the much larger base is submerged. The sky is blue with light clouds, and the water is a deep blue. The iceberg is white and blue, with some snow on top.

The Atmosphere: Place, Time,
Surroundings

What we say: words, body language, tone

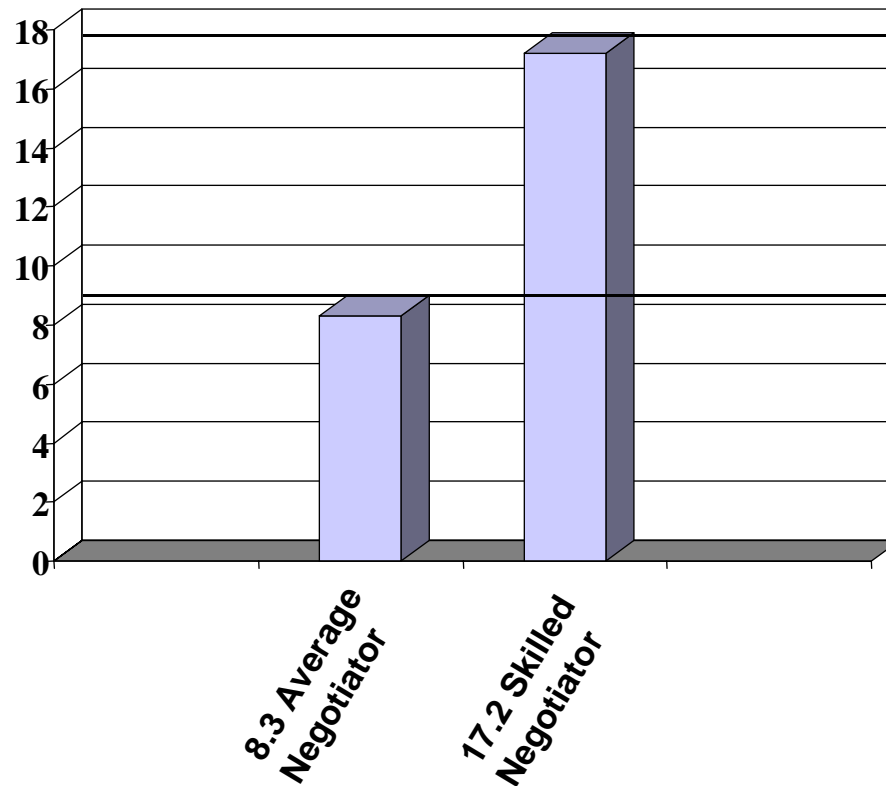
What we feel -but often leave unsaid:
Assumptions
Attitudes
Emotions
Values
Beliefs

Skills for Better Conversations

- Being Present
- Listening
- Observing Body Language
- Questions
 - Types of questions
 - How we ask them

Research: Behaviors of Skilled Negotiators

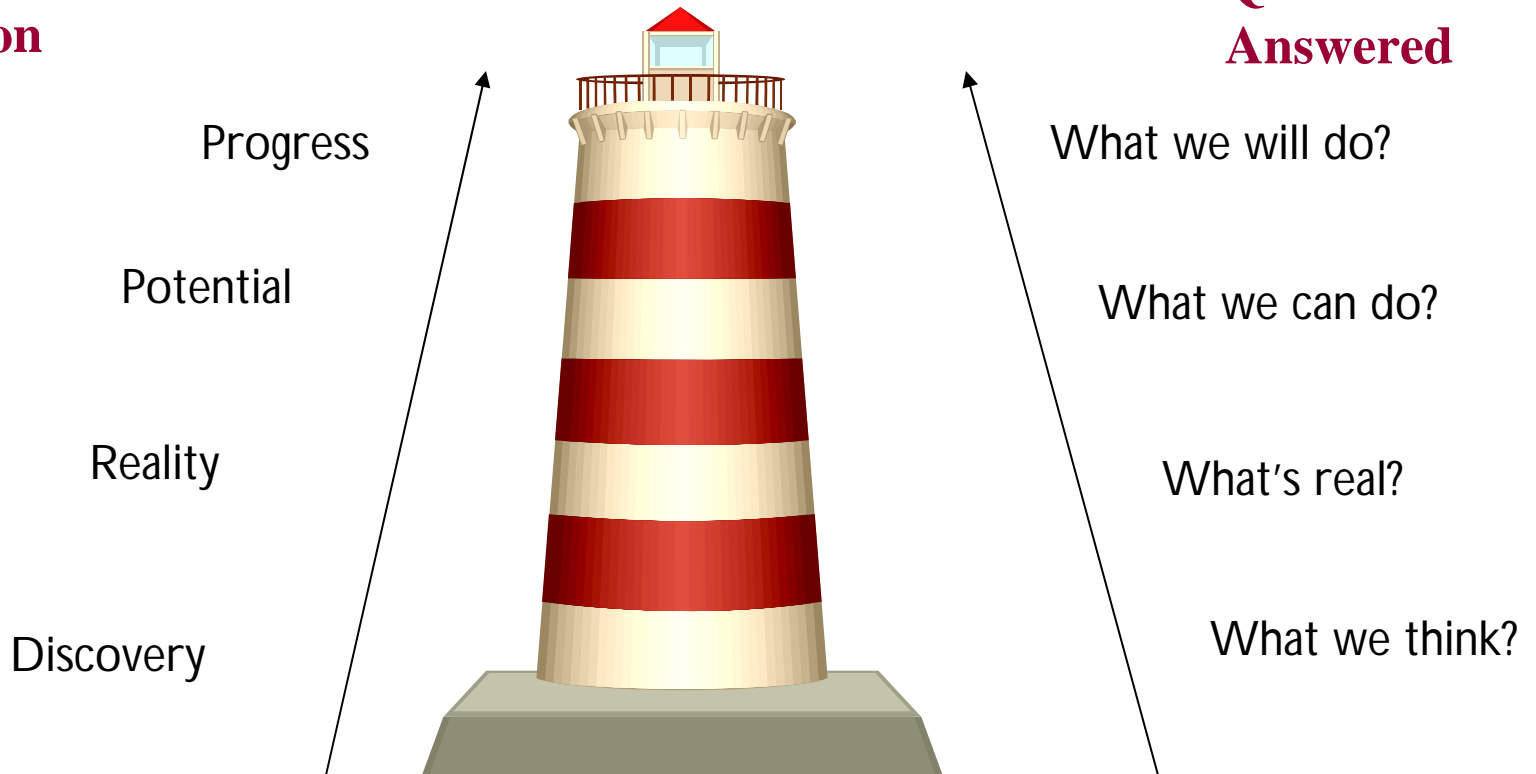
Percentage of Checking Understanding



The Lighthouse Model

**Stages of a
Conversation**

**Questions
Answered**

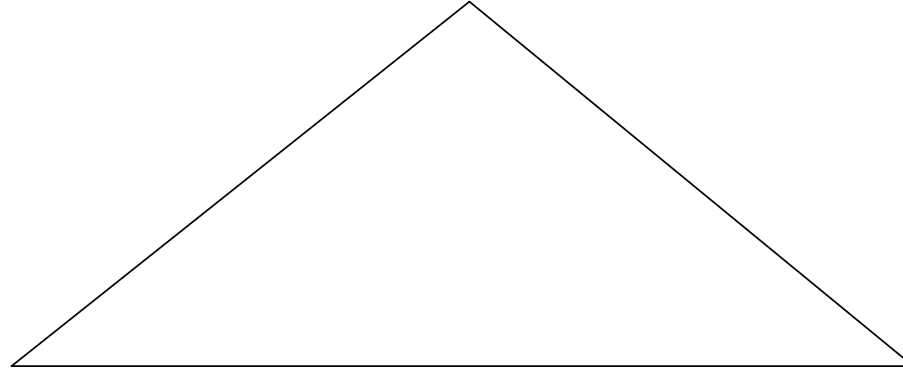


“Life’s the Pits” – The “Avenue of Pain”

Gossip, Hearsay, Innuendo, Whines, Resignation, Complaint,
Rumor, Criticism, Moans

Measuring a Conversation

1. Did I improve my understanding?



2. Did I improve our relationship?

3. Did we make progress?

Measuring Conversation – 3 Questions



Questions?