Communicative Social Proximity, a Determinant of Attention to the Message in Organisations

Mbiah Anny Flore Tchouta

University of Maroua, Maroua, Cameroon

Organisations delude themselves on the fact that the obligation for employees to achieve their goals is the guarantee of a good attention to the managers' message. In order to examine the impact of communicative social proximity on the attention paid to the message in the organizational environment, an experimental study is used in which, through virtual communication, the impact of the affective and cognitive-emotional dimension of the message on the attention paid to the manager's instructions is explored. It emerges that the closer the employees are to the manager through the non-verbal and verbal dimensions of communication, the more they pay attention to the manager's message.

Keywords: communicative social proximity, message, attention, instruction

Introduction

Communication is for any type of organisation the central pillar on which the social bond as well as any other support and processes that enter into organizational productivity are based. It is based on the ability of the sender and the receiver to perfectly understand each other in order to achieve the goal expected by the interlocutors. In this sense, the verbal and non-verbal dimensions of communication should effectively interconnect. The non-verbal factors of communication will be more imperceptible if the speakers use indirect communication. The use of indirect media involves people communicating from distant physical spaces, making it impossible or difficult to perceive the non-verbal signals emitted from both sides by the speakers. However, non-verbal communication accounts for 70% of the transmission of information (Abric, 2003) during the transmission of information.

Considering the above-mentioned factors, the use of indirect channels inducing social distancing between interlocutors, when instructions have to be given to subordinates, becomes problematic. The understanding and appropriation of instruction in an organizational setting is already in its nature quite complex. Accuracy in performing the task, organizational contingencies, contingencies related to the task itself, language differences amongst individuals, their backgrounds that lead to an individualized perception of the instruction, the way it is given, the personality of the instructor, the work team in which the receiver works, etc. is all factors that can limit the quality of understanding an instruction (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2009; Rojot, 2003; Schermerhorn, Hunt, Osborn, & de Billy, 2014). Consequently, in an organizational environment with a rich communicational context that places a high value on what is not said in an exchange situation (Gauthey & Xardel, 1990), the

Mbiah Anny Flore Tchouta, Ph.D., Senior Lecturer, Department of Philosophy and Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Sciences Human, University of Maroua, Maroua, Cameroon.

problem becomes more acute.

The social distance or the degree of affective and cognitive proximity between verbal and non-verbal or written interlocutors poses the problem of actually grasping the content of the information conveyed by the latter. When people are in communication, factors, such as having the interlocutor in sight, the fact of knowing him/her, etc. ensure synchronization in communication. On the other hand, people from different backgrounds do not have the same behavioural patterns and, as a result, do not necessarily give the same meaning to the non-verbal elements of communication (Barrier, 2009; Abric, 2003). These factors that reduce the quality of the outcome of the communication cause inattention due to a lack of interest in the person or the message or due to difficulty in grasping its subjective dimension.

The problem here is that, when communicating in an organizational setting, people are forced to focus on the object of communication because it is critical to the achievement of objectives at work predominates. The purely human dimension is very often lost sight of, especially the proximity between the actors, which during communication can severely impact its quality. Thus, the receiver may put filters on the reception of the message or he may not be interested in it, thus not grasping it, not focusing his attention on it or not analysing it because of the quality of his proximity to his interlocutor.

This research is concerned with establishing the type of relationship that could be fostered by the communicative social proximity between speakers and the attention given to the message conveyed in an organizational setting. It will be done through an experimental study based on the ability of independent groups of workers to pay attention to instructions from their manager. The question to be answered is: Does the quality of attention paid to the message in the organizational environment vary according to the communicative social proximity between the speakers? From this question, arises the following general hypothesis: The quality of attention paid to a message in an organizational setting will depend on the communicative social proximity between the speakers. After laying the theoretical groundwork for this study, the experimental design underlying the research as well as the results and their interpretation will be presented.

Theory on Communication

Communication in the Organizational Environment

Communication is the process by which interlocutors exchange information via several elements, such as code, channel, referents, message, and feedback. In an organizational setting, it is mainly aimed at:

• Sharing of operational and strategic objectives and the means to achieve them. Within work teams, it intervenes during the transmission of instructions on the tasks to be carried out in order to give all members the means to have the databases up to date.

• Staff buy-in: This aspect of communication arises when two or more people are just beginning to work together or when there is a blockage during the completion of tasks. It is a matter of dialogue to reach an agreement, to get everyone on board. It can be an exchange around personal values or values shared by the group, the methods to be adopted to carry out the tasks, the collective functioning of the organisation, or the values to be adopted within the organisation for its smooth functioning. It ensures a healthy social climate within the organisation.

• Creating the link between the members of the organisation: This is about creating pleasant working conditions for the members of the organisation. Communication will therefore be based on the organizational culture to create a feeling of closeness between colleagues on the one hand and employees and the hierarchy on

the other. Enable them to realize that they have common references and shared tastes that they could learn from each other.

• The realization of company projects: The company project is a vision that must be shared by all. The staff must believe in it and be determined to achieve it. Therefore, through communication, this state of mind is conveyed to workers in order to prevent abuses.

• Supporting organizational performance: Through communication, the functional policies developed by the company to achieve its objectives and its policies for its human resources are relayed.

The Forms of Communication Adopted in the Organizational Environment

Communication in an organizational setting is usually in written or oral form. Written, more formal communication, is done through upward, downward and horizontal channels. It has the advantage of being more formal, hence the possibility in the long term of traceability and easy orientation towards several recipients. However, it requires good skills in transmitting information, ideas, and emotions through memos, reports, letters, etc., and in the process, the ability to communicate with a wide range of people (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2009; Lehnisch, 1988).

Audio (indirect) or audiovisual communication is a form that supports written and oral communication, but is more prevalent in larger organisations. Although it is expensive and requires a long process and a rather particular technicality for its design, it is affective, malleable, and effective for memorization.

Oral communication is the form of communication through which the message is conveyed by voice. It is impregnated with a high dose of non-verbal elements. It can be monologous, interpersonal, group or mass. It is based on signs or words whose meaning is universal. It has a rational and denotative aspect (Fischer, 2015).

According to several communication specialists, 30% of the message is conveyed orally and 70% by non-verbal indicators. Among the non-verbal signals, it can be mentioned:

• Body movements: gestures, facial expressions, gaze, touch, posture (kinetic elements), and other limb movements;

• Individual physical characteristics: body shape, physical form, attitudes, body odour or even breath, height, weight, hair and skin colour, etc.;

• The paralangulation: the volume, the rhythm of expression, the timbre and hesitation of the voice, the expression of onomatopoeia, laughter, yawning etc.;

• The use of space: the modalities of use and the perception of space, the organisation of the elements of the communicational space, the distance between the interlocutors, and the tendency to delimit a personal space;

• The material context: the design of the building and rooms, furniture and other objects, interior decorations, cleanliness, and lighting and noise;

• Time: delay, advances, expectations imposed on others, cultural differences in the perception of time, the relationship between time and status (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2009; Josien, 2007).

Communicative Social Proximity

According to *the Fundamental Dictionary of Psychology* by Bloch (1997), communication is a field of investigation that approaches by the experimental method the relations established between the verbal aspects of communication, its non-verbal aspects (in particular, gaze and gesture) and the psychological and social variables involved in the communicative process.

The concept of "communicative social proximity" initiated in the context of this study, far from the term

Proxemics evoked by Hall (1971), indicating: "the study of the perception and use of space by man" (Josien, 2007, p. 120), is based on the "psychological distance" between interlocutors. It expresses the affective and cognitive closeness between them and is expressed in the following communicative modalities:

• Face-to-face communication (verbal and non-verbal dimension): Communication is more affective because of the sharing, exchange of information and the link that is established between the interlocutors during communication. Moreover, in face-to-face communication, the fact of having exchanged with an interlocutor ensures verbal synchronization and, consequently, it optimizes the result of communication between interlocutors (Josien, 2007). In addition to the reception of verbal signals, it allows us to detect the content of the non-verbal dimension of communication.

• Communication by voice exclusively (verbal dimension): The interlocutors can hear each other but do not perceive each other visually or do not perceive the meaning of the non-verbal signals emitted on either side. The fact that they are not in the same space diminishes the emotional dimension because of the absence of physical proximity and the absence of certain non-verbal elements, such as the look, the gestures, and the aura given off by the interlocutors. The cohesion and connection between the interlocutors on the cognitive level are reduced here because of the absence of non-verbal elements. The absence of factors, such as individual physical characteristics, material context, use of space, reinforces this state of affairs. As Gauthey and Xardel (1990) stated that, difficulty reading the unspoken is higher for those who prefer explicit verbal information, modern communication systems (telephone, telex ...) (p. 83). These are poor communicational context, contrary to the rich communicational context that favours the relationship, the intuitive, and a rather imprecise communicative style.

• Written communication (absence of the verbal dimension and almost absence of the non-verbal): It is based on written communication or signs. Much more than the previous one, it is even poorer both emotionally and cognitively because, the written word is a communicative approach that integrates very little or not at all the non-verbal dimension of communication. It is rather apathetic and impersonal. On the affective level, it is even poorer because the reader cannot perceive beyond the word the real state of mind of his interlocutor, the paralangulation underlying the elements that could have given more meaning or a more detailed meaning to the written word, and many other factors likely to optimize communication.

The Attention Paid to the Message

The attention paid to a message is the fact of taking into consideration its content, examining it, actively listening to the verbal or non-verbal signals emitted by the other party. Active listening requires a physiological dimension (related to the phonatory and visual organs, etc.) as well as a psychological dimension related to the personality of the receiver, his or her moods, his or her posture vis-à-vis the sender, the referent or the question being addressed, his or her cognitive skills in analysing information, etc. (Abric, 2003).

According to Fischer (2015), taking up Birdwhistell's work, this last dimension makes it possible to analyse what one feels through the illogical and confused expression of the message. For the latter, only knowledge is housed in the word. For Bloch (1997), it guides activity by goals and increases the efficiency of the processes of information gathering and action execution.

The attention is based on all the elements of the communication network: message, code, channel, referents, transmitter, receiver, and feedback. The receiver may, for a conscious or unconscious reason, apply filters to the information his or her hearing receives. The psychological phenomena likely to induce inattention

to the message are: distortion, which is the act of modifying the meaning of the message to conform to pre-existing ideas; retention, which is the selective act of partially retaining the message; assimilation, which is the act of reorganizing the message around some of its central points; accentuation, which is the act of reinforcing certain details of the message; the elements of meta-communication aimed at highlighting hypotheses, inferring and interpreting what the massage might be based on, the divergent intentions of the message, the lack of trust in the source of the message and the objectives of the latter, to name but a few (Hellriegel, & Slocum, 2009).

Experimental Context

Characteristics of the Actors and the Organizational Environment

The participants in the experiment come from three organisations operating in the same sector of activity. They are randomly selected from the 20 to 50 age group, both male and female. Their educational level ranges from Baccalaureate to Bachelor's degree. They are all under the authority of a senior manager who here is their N + 3. The latter is their manager's manager. The relationship of the staff with the computer tool is proven. The N + 1 and N + 2 use it when necessary to instruct them from time to time.

Profile of the manager. The manager is highly qualified. She has a minimum of Master II and a professional experience of 10 years. She is female.

Characteristics of the organizational environment. Organisations are highly computerized; all employees have access to an Internet terminal. The staff of the three organisations chosen by reasoned choice are accustomed to exchanges via information and communication technologies, regardless of the aspect of their work to be addressed.

Management criteria of the group. The management applied here is authoritarian. Decisions on the work, its organisation and the organisation of the group are taken by the manager. The decisions are neither justified nor explained. The pace and level of progress in the activities are even less. The choice of the authoritarian managerial style aims to emphasize the obligation to follow the boss instructions and the possibility of sanctioning abuses. It also suits the overall cultural atmosphere in which the actors of these organisations are immersed, so as not to induce a mismatch between their habits and the management style of the group chosen in the framework of the experiment.

Experimental Conditions

• WhatApps is the application on which the groups are working. Its choice is justified by the ease of its access whatever the geographical position of the staff;

• The senior manager is the one who gives the orders. The senior manager is the one who gives the orders. She plays this role in the three experimental conditions;

• The rate of intervention of the senior manager is at most twice in each group, starting on the fourth day. The different members of the group freely carry out their daily activities. The manager is detached from them and only intervenes to redirect or channel their actions;

• The experiment takes place over two weeks. There are three experimental conditions based on three independent groups (Group A, Group B, and Group C). The instructions given are the same in all experimental conditions. Each group of subjects is subjected to a different experimental condition than the others. Thus, each group of subjects passes only one of the modalities of the independent variable.

First experimental condition. Group A—The manager is put in contact with the experimental group of this organisation. They have been working together for two weeks face-to-face. As part of the experimentation, she gives instructions and communicates with this group face-to-face.

Second experimental condition. Group B—This experimental group only knows their manager by his or her voice. As in the previous group, they were put in contact two weeks before. They had all their work sessions by audio conference. They were told that the manager who still lives in another city and will not actually come to take up her position until two months from now. As part of the experiment, she gives instructions and communicates with this group by Voice Mail.

Third experimental condition. Group C—The manager, as elsewhere, was assigned to the group two weeks ago. She contacted all the staff by e-mail. She often works via Google Drive with this group. All her instructions and interventions are made in mailing group. The same applies to the case of the experimentation. The staff is told that she lives in another city and will not actually come to take up her position until two months from now.

• Activity for the end of the experimentation: This articulation consists in asking all the members of the three groups to justify their attitudes towards their manager's instructions, relying mainly on non-verbal elements of communication. Here, the understanding of verbal elements is considered a given for all. Direct managers (N + 1) are responsible for asking these questions to their subordinates.

• The task to be carried out: For each member of the selected group, it consists of reading the staff regulations and making proposals, each according to the realities and requirements of his or her job. However, it is requested not to post any information other than that directly related to the work requested.

Results, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Each experimental condition corresponds to a hypothesis. These hypotheses are discussed before the results of each experimental group are reported. The behavioural tendency of the group is noted on the fourth, ninth, and 14th day. Attention is noted by the compliance or non-compliance with the instructions prescribed by the senior manager. For this purpose, deviation rates are recorded. The results of the second part of the experiment are introduced in the data interpretation section.

Results of the Study

HR1—The quality of attention paid to a message in an organizational setting will depend on whether the receiver communicates with the sender face-to-face.

Group A—This group is silent from the very first days, none of its members allude to anything, not even the work submitted to their appreciation.

At the end of the fourth day, this group remains very assiduous; the interventions remain very reduced and only concern the requested task. The senior manager does not intervene because she does not find this action necessary.

From the ninth day onwards, deviations surface (4%). These people deal with professional subjects, but not related to the requested task. They also tackle debates, not on the task requested, but relating to the organisation of work and its progress. The N + 1 and N + 2 immediately bring them back to order. They are carried out, but from the 14th day onwards, 1% is returned to the charge with non-professional concerns. Their direct bosses do not once again call for order, but rather block access to the floor to all members of the group

except managers and directors of the group.

HR2—The quality of attention paid to a message in an organizational environment will depend on the fact that only the verbal dimension is the communication medium between sender and receiver.

Group B—From the second to the fourth day of the experimental situation, a few members of the group share their concerns or difficulties on the discussion forum. In addition to them, 4.5% deviated from the operating standards. They are called to order by the senior manager.

From the ninth day onwards, the trend is towards serenity. Several interventions relating to the work requested are observed. The tendency to deviant attitudes decreases. It is 3%.

On the 14th day of the experiment, the tendency to deviance is 2.5%. When they are questioned about their behaviour by the senior manager, half apologize.

HR3—The quality of attention paid to a message in an organizational setting will depend on whether the written dimension alone is the communication medium between sender and receiver.

Group C—From the beginning of the experiment to the fourth day, the focus group is very lively. The discussion forum is almost a free forum where subordinates talk about professional activities in general. Only 3% of the members of the group make interventions that are in line with the work requested. Twenty-five percent do not discuss the subject they have been asked to discuss. The direct managers intervene to refocus the members around the expectations of the senior manager. In spite of their interventions, the same dynamic continues, but is diminishing. On the sixth day, we observe that 15% of people are involved in all kinds of deviances. Moreover, against all expectations, two people leave the group. The senior manager intervenes on the seventh day, reminding the group of the principles of the group's operation and promises a sanction to those who deviate from the norm. In spite of this intervention, 10% of cases of deviation are recorded up to the eighth day. It suspends 04 members of the group on the eighth day.

On the ninth day, the excitement of yesteryear resumes with ardour. The other members of the group intervene to support the action of the direct managers and the chief manager in their action to restore order. Despite these joint actions, 15% of the group were found to be deviants. The senior manager suspends 05 other band members on the tenth day. After two days there is a lull. It is a latency period during which deviances drop to 5%. After this period of latency, from the 13th to the 14th day, there is an experiment, with a curve that increases again. The deviation rate is 8%. In addition, another member leaves the group.

NB: The group members who intervene to refocus the deviants are not the accomplice. Their action is spontaneous, just like that of the direct managers.

Comparative Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The above experiment was designed to explore the relationship between communicative social proximity and attention to the message in an organizational setting. After putting three independent groups in three experimental conditions into situation, the first of which presents a verbal and non-verbal communicative social proximity between the interlocutors, the second a vocal communicative social proximity, and the last a written communicative social proximity, the following realities emerge.

Comparative analysis of the quality of attention and social communicational proximity with the manager. From the very beginning of the experience until the 4th day, when in Group A, having experienced complete communicative social proximity with the manager, manifests a kind of silence that could denote the fact that having received the instructions face-to-face, the members of the group have assimilated it well, we

will observe in the group having experienced proximity through the voice of the manager (Group B), a deviation rate of 4.5%. The group having had a social proximity communicating in writing with the manager has a deviation rate four times higher, i.e., 25%. It signs that the manager's instructions are not taken into account in this case. The advantage of the continuity of the information presented in writing would have been a major asset for this group in terms of following the manager's instructions.

Group A has approximately the same deviation rate on Day 9 as Group B on Day 4. This is a sign that the members of the group remain focused on what they have to do. Group C has a 15% deviation rate on Day 9, which is four times higher than Group B (3%). This rate of deviation persists and is a sign that the manager's instructions are not being taken into account.

On the 14th day, Group A's rate at ¼ dropped from its previous trend. Group B remained almost constant at 2.5%, and Group C dropped about half of its previous rate. This rate of deviation reinforces the reality of not taking the manager's instructions into account.

Comparative analysis of the quality of attention, social and communicative proximity with managers and justification of group attitudes. The senior manager intervenes only once in Group A, which has experienced total communicative social proximity with her, and this after the ninth day. In this group, her intervention causes the number of deviants at ¼ to drop. For the few who re-offend, the direct managers do not give the opportunity for new actions. They block the possibility for them to express themselves again. They do this in order to preserve good relations between the members of the group and the senior manager. Direct managers will justify their actions by the perfect knowledge of their manager. They will mention, among other things, elements deduced from his individual mental characteristics, the rigorous organisation and the rational use of his space which made them understand that by attacking it, one could suffer heavy consequences. The rest of the members of the group give the same reasons, adding to it the material context (clean desks, rangers, silence...) in which it is deployed, while demanding it from others. In order to highlight the rigour and seriousness of their manager, still others will dwell on physical characteristics such as beauty and the care given to his person, which makes one want to follow his instructions.

The almost zero overall deviance rate in this group stems from the fact that the communicative social closeness between the members of this group and their manager was complete, so the non-verbal dimension of communication strongly supported their attention to the message.

In Group B, which only knew the manager by voice, she only intervened once after the fourth day. The deviation rate fell by only 1/3. However, without further intervention on her part, the rate decreases until Day 14, but only slightly (2.5%). In addition, deviants apologize when questioned, which is a sign of their willingness to pay attention to the message.

This group had the opportunity to evaluate the paralanguage dimension of the message of their interlocutor. Thus, in addition to the raw message, the members of the group affirm that they could perceive through the firmness and rigour of the manager's voice that she was keen to respect her instructions. Her tone and the rhythm of her expression were persuasive. They use the following words to justify their tendency to comply with the instructions: "the lady there must be severe, her tone is dry ... but she seems nice", "I am ready to make peace for the days when she will be at her post ...", and "... she seems not to banter with her instructions...". Other elements of paralanguage are evoked, such as the soft voice, despite its firmness, which arouses the desire to conform.

The slightly high tendency to deviancy in this group can be justified by the exclusive use of paralanguage

outside of the information received, as a support to focus attention on the massage.

In the group that has not experienced any form of communicative social proximity with the manager, the coalition between the intervention of the latter and those of the direct hierarchical superiors is not long in coming. In spite of this fact, on the sixth day, the deviation rate is still 15%. To reinforce the casual attitude, two members leave the group. The hard interventions and the promises of sanctions from the senior manager only bring the deviation rate down to 10% by the eighth day. The fact that the rate of deviation from instructions continues to rise is indicative of the fact that the band members hardly pay any attention to the instructions given.

This attitude of inattention is even more revealing when, following the application of sanctions, the rate of non-compliance with instructions rises to 15% on Day 9. On that day, the manager suspended another 05 members of the band. Following this suspension, colleagues of the same rank intervene to call the deviants to order. The rate drops by 5% on the 12th day. At the end of the experiment, it has gone back up to 8% and one person leaves the group once again.

It is perceptible here that neither the manager's blames nor her sanctions are really dissuasive in the case of these aberrations. Indeed, the rate of decline in deviance is very low. If we refer to the deviation rates on Day 6, we realize that the intervention of the direct managers and other colleagues has more effect on the members of this group than the intervention of their senior manager. Moreover, not only does a synergy of these actors need to be created to deter some deviants, but also coercive measures need to be associated with it. Moreover, the deterrent force of colleagues that takes precedence over the legitimate power of the manager indicates the strength of the effect of the communicative social proximity existing between these people on the deviants. However, it only took two days of relaxation on the part of the managers to see the rate of deviance increase further.

Group C is the group in which the manager and line managers were most involved.

It was the only group that was sanctioned, but also the one in which the deviation rate remained very high and permanent. For the justification of their attitude, the experimental subjects index themselves (followership, group confusion, forgetfulness), either the rules (no attention paid to them, little importance given to them), or the other members of the organisation, or the work required in itself (complex and arduous). Those who remain focused on standards refer to the ethical need to respect the instructions of managers in organizational environments and the need to prepare a favourable ground for the relationship with their future manager. However, it is important to note that almost no accusations are directed at the manager or the clarity of her instructions. This lack of reference to their senior manager as a direct cause of their failure to pay attention may indicate that their attention is almost non-existent in their mental universe.

The lack of communicative social proximity with the manager has led to a strong inattention to his instructions.

Discussion

The experimentation undertaken confirmed the general hypothesis according to which: The quality of attention paid to a message in an organizational environment will depend on the communicative social proximity that exists between the interlocutors. Despite the fact that experimental conditions were well framed to explore the above-mentioned phenomenon, a few elements may have impacted the quality of the results. The following factors can be mentioned:

• The interventions of colleagues of the same hierarchical rank and of senior managers: They were not foreseen when the experimental conditions were prepared, they arrived unexpectedly. These interventions reinforced the refocusing of group members and thus refocused their attention on the manager's instructions, thus reducing the rate of deviation that could have been observed. However, each of the interventions for these categories of people arrived as predicted by one of the experimental conditions, after the fourth day. They unduly enhanced the quality of the data because these experimental subjects, who had interacted many times face-to-face in the past, therefore, tuned their violins better at the verbal level and had the symbolism of the non-verbal charge that could accompany their messages, obeyed these categories of employees better than their manager.

• The fact that some members left the group: This attitude was much unexpected in the context of this experiment, especially as it was a work forum. The departure of these members of the group being a casual attitude must have reinforced the deviant tendencies of not being interested in the work requested. It in turn further defocused the other members of the group from the attention that had to be paid to the instructions of the manager. However, the interventions of the managers and other group members affected the extent to which these withdrawal attitudes could have an impact on the result during the experiment. This was clearly seen in the decrease in deviant behaviour after the joint action of these actors.

Truly, if unexpected factors occurred during the experimentation, it can also be noted that they did not reduce the quality of the results. For these factors were taken into account during the analysis and interpretation of the results, so that they did not constitute any bias in the experimental conclusions.

Conclusion

To the question to know whether the quality of attention paid to the message in the organizational environment varies according to the communicative social proximity between the interlocutors, an experiment was undertaken to respond to this concern. It is based on three degrees of communicative social proximity, namely, verbal and non-verbal proximity, verbal proximity and written proximity between interlocutors. At the end of the experiment carried out with three independent groups of subjects who had been called upon to pay attention to the instructions of a manager in an organizational setting, it was found that attention to a message was almost complete if the interlocutors had face-to-face contact. It decreases if the proximity is exclusively verbal, and decreases even more when it is exclusively written.

It is now accepted that in an organizational setting, beyond the obligations to achieve objectives, the fear of sanctions, the legitimate power that some members of the organisation may embody, the quality of the attention given to a message will be more subordinated to the quality of the communicative social proximity between the interlocutors. Despite the multiple advantages of written communication in an organizational setting, the use of face-to-face communication remains the major asset for both horizontal and vertical communication. Exclusively verbal communication, which is increasingly used in organisations today because of new information and communication technologies, is more effective in capturing the attention of the receiver than written communication, which is often highly recommended in an organizational setting.

In this sense, managers should resort to the mode of communication involving a communicative social proximity including more face-to-face and verbal communication as a support to written communication. However, they should not fall into the trap of verbalization tendencies noticed in rich organizational environments. The authors of African management are constantly returning to their tendency to prefer the

non-formal to the formal in terms of administrative procedures, because of their non-preference to writing. Moreover, in an organizational environment with a rich communicational context, in which the non-verbal is preponderant over the verbal, a communication not accompanied by communicative social proximity could be a real limiting factor on the managerial level.

However, in spite of these results, it would be advisable to explore the limits of a communicational situation involving communicational social proximity, centred on the manager. Mainly, the factors related to the latter and likely to limit or amplify the perception of non-verbal signals emitted by subordinates.

References

Abric, J. C. (2003). *Psychologie de la communication: Théories et méthodes.* Paris: Armand Colin.

Barrier, G. (2009). *La communication non verbale comprendre: Les gestes et perception et signification.* ESF: Issy-les-Moulinaux/France

Bloch, H. (1997). *Dictionnaire fondamental de la psychologie (A-K).* Paris: Larousse-Bordas.

Demont-Lugol, L., & Kempf, A. (2006). *Communication des entreprises: Stratégies et Pratiques* (2e éd.). Paris: Armand Colin.

Fischer, G. N. (2015). *Les concepts fondamentaux de la psychologie sociale* (5e éd.). Paris: Dunod.

Gauthey, F., & Xardel, D. (1990). *Le management interculturel* (2nd ed.). Paris: PUF.

Hellriegel, D., & Slocum, J. (2009). *Management des organisations* (2nd ed.). Paris: New Horizons Edition.

Josien, M. (2007). *Techniques de communication interpersonnelle.* Paris: Eyrolles.

Lehnisch, J. P. (1988). *Maitriser la communication dans l'entreprise.* Paris: Les Éditions d'Organisation.

Moscovici, S. (1984). *Psychologie sociale.* Paris: PUF.

Rojot, J. (2003). *Théorie des organisations.* Paris: Éditions ESKA.

Schermerhorn, J. R., Hunt, J. G., Osborn, R. N., & de Billy, C. (2014). *Comportement humain en organisation* (5^{èm} éd.). Quebec: Pearson.
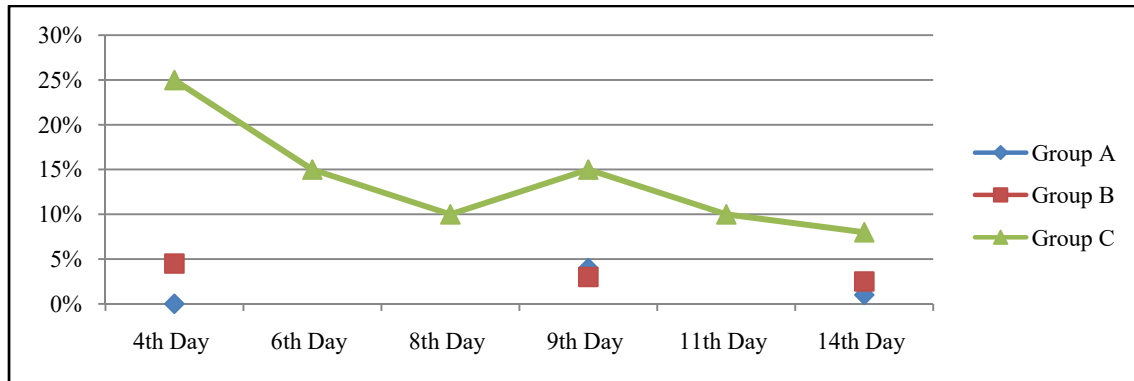
Appendix
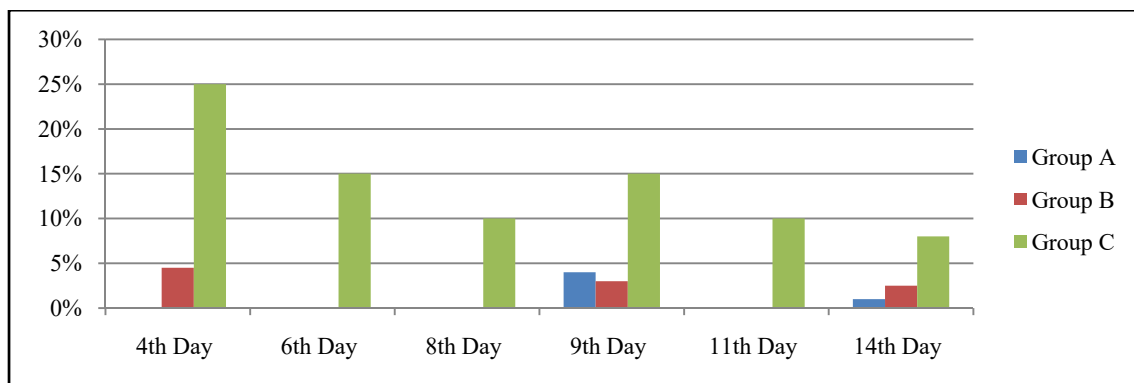

Figure 1. Curve of comparative tables of inattention.

Figure 2: Histogram of comparative tables of inattention.