

Unleashed: the role of controlled anger to really communicate and the implications for Business Discourse.

John Gunson

University of Wales Institute Cardiff (UWIC)

Rakesh Godhwani

Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB) Alumni Association

Catherine Nickerson

Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB)

Abstract

In this paper we explore the difficulty for an expert to share knowledge and demonstrate expertise, and how controlled anger can facilitate this transfer. Two models are developed: a conceptual model to show controlled anger as part of the anger trajectory and a heuristic model that can be used to bring issues to light that can be applied in a Business Discourse context. A gap is filled in the literature, in terms of providing the stakeholders with conditions that encourage really communicating, in the zone of controlled anger resulting from a sense of injustice and frustration. Striving for a less noisy quality of communication, economy of words but more effective words, in an organisational context is important. This is especially so when there are emotive issues to be resolved or met head on: meeting a downturn in business cycles, mergers and acquisitions, downsizing / reducing headcount, outsourcing, negotiation, poor individual or collective performance, xenophobic reactions to jobs 'going abroad' or to arriving workers, etc.

Key words

Business Discourse, Anger, Communication

Introduction

Anger in the workplace is often in evidence and perhaps we only see the tip of the iceberg. Evidence can be in the form of strikes, go slow, work to rule, resistance to change, difficult negotiations with unions, disciplinary procedures and tribunals, unfair practice and lawsuits, etc. This in turn can impact statistics concerning staff rotation, performance indicators and organisations' ability to survive. Communication seems to be the key, and yet we see instances of poor communication all the time and all around us: from outright lies; to being economical with the truth; to spin; which then leads to escalating anger.

What characterises powerful communication? Are there ways of unleashing effective talk, without anger escalation? What is the application in the Business Discourse context?

The main research question in this paper is to examine how controlled anger can have a role in Business Discourse in order to heighten communication between two or more parties. We draw a parallel with the research method of semi-structured or unstructured interviewing, and demonstrate responses which achieved this higher communication. The achievement of expert articulation can mean that the novices and the less informed learn knowledge for the first time, which enables them to progress to the next incremental step on the staircase from novice to expert. The paper addresses novices and experts without the ‘ranking’ that often gets artificially applied – for example the idea of patients as experts is now recognised in the NHS. We use the term ‘expert’ in a wide sense. In our analysis we look for facilitators that allow latent anger to become expressed and then explore the transferability from a research context (researcher collecting primary data from a target group representing a population and a phenomenon under study) to a business discourse context (stakeholders e.g. suppliers, customers, employees, etc., negotiating or trying to create win-win situations).

Research Method

Our study of controlled anger and its role in communication is qualitative using an exploratory approach. A literature review serves to position controlled anger as a subset of anger. Then by means of oral history extracts (prior studies by ourselves or other researchers/authors) we seek to demonstrate examples of powerful communication with the context being one of latent anger. Reflecting on the background interview setting at the moment that these extracts are taken, we build a model of factors that seem to have facilitated such powerful communication and we discuss a way in which the conditions for controlled anger can be created in an interview situation, in order to elicit useful information. Finally we analyse whether there is an implication for those who wish to communicate powerfully in a Business Discourse context. [1]

The research method is opportunistic and follows the Glaser maxim, ‘All is data’. It is a pre-study and a discussion paper. It is designed to appeal to different audiences, academic and practitioner but also to a wider public. It is in part inspired by dendritic crystallisation and the looking at a research question from several dimensions and following different node threads, responding to the question so that different audiences are included (Smith 2009).

[1] The work has been divided between the co-authors: Dr. John Gunson has reviewed the literature and gives examples of powerful communication from interviews he conducted with head and neck cancer nurses (Dobbins *et al* 2005); from interviews with women in Palestine (his friend Ms. Ruth Gardner (Gardner 2009) having contributed to the book by Smith-Melton 2008); and chose the quote from an essay by Viviane Forrester (1996). Dr. Gunson created the conceptual model of anger trajectory and the heuristic model to facilitate the expression of controlled anger in interview or discourse. Mr. Rakesh Godhwani provided the three autoethnographic anecdotes (real situations from his career). The paper was 100% validated by our mentor Professor Catherine Nickerson, and also discussed with Professor Mary Neary (Neary 2009).

Background

In the 1970s in the UK, we used to talk of ‘sitting by Nelly’ as a means of induction for a new employee. This meant watching an expert at work so that the newcomer could begin to understand the job, without getting in the way or asking too many silly questions. But maybe

underlying this passive pedagogy was an understanding that experts (often) find it difficult to articulate their expertise.

Dreyfus (2004) gives us an insight into why experts can have difficulty in explaining the mechanics of their expertise:

‘The difficulty of getting an expert to articulate the rules he/she is using is that the expert is simply not following any rules. He/she is discriminating thousands of cases.’

Dreyfus also points out a danger:

‘...(the) increasingly bureaucratic nature of society is heightening the danger that in the future skill and expertise will be lost by over reliance on calculative rationality.’

He also points to what he terms deliberative rationality which happens roughly on the Competent level (with reference to the model Novice to Expert) and when to some extent there is a letting go of reliance purely on rules, procedures, calculation.

(Dreyfus 2004)

Another dimension in the understanding of the Expert, is where the articulation of knowledge is tacit knowledge together with the notion that “we know more than we can say”. For example Polanyi considers that tacit knowledge is the dominant principle of all knowledge and discusses tacit knowing and object of attention which he distinguishes between subsidiary and proximal objects of attention and focal and distal objects of attention, and distinguishes between attending *from* (particulars) and attending *to* (whole or meaning) (Scott 1985).

‘the leap of imagination in a great discovery is the leap from a lot of known particulars to their joint meaning, the coherence to which there are clues’

(Scott 1985:52)

Dreyfus himself refers to Merleau-Ponty to speak of focus, and he illustrates with the analogy of a visitor contemplating a work of art in a gallery:

‘For each object, as for each picture in an art gallery, there is an optimum distance from which it requires to be seen, a direction viewed from which it vouchsafes most of itself: at a shorter or greater distance we have merely a perception blurred through excess or deficiency. We therefore tend towards the maximum visibility, and seek a better focus as with a microscope.’

(Merleau-Ponty cited in Dreyfus 2004)

So we see from these viewpoints that 1) considering instinct and intuition beyond rules and procedures, 2) not relying entirely on reason and 3) focusing by being at the right distance are necessary to fully understand the ‘it’ we are examining (Wittgenstein cited by Lave 2004).

Can controlled anger, facilitated by a discourse context, help the articulation of knowledge including tacit knowledge (built up through the lived experience of thousands of cases). Can controlled anger help us go beyond pure reason, and bring emotive issues more sharply into focus? Can the widening of the stakeholder groups (experts) listened to, and the attention given to providing conditions that promote a letting go of latent anger (and the communication flow that then results), help us to really communicate? In turn, can this real communication have a

positive effect in the running of our organisations and professions; a support to our better decisions – can it be a lynch-pin of Business Discourse? If the ‘it’ we are examining is charged with emotion: meeting a downturn in business cycles, mergers and acquisitions, downsizing / reducing headcount, outsourcing, negotiation, poor individual or collective performance, xenophobic reactions to jobs ‘going abroad’ or to arriving workers, etc. then the answer may lie, at least in part, in providing an outlet for suppressed anger. And the experts likely to contribute most to better decisions may be the employees who feel menaced. (Just as the patients in a hospital, the students in a school / university, or the players in an orchestra can pinpoint dysfunctions more clearly than other stakeholders).

Anger (and where controlled anger fits as a subset), aggression, violence.

First we need to discuss anger (from the Latin *angor*: a constriction of the throat, anguish or trouble (Averill 1982: 75)) and its links to aggression and violence.

Averill (1982: 317) gives us a definition of anger:

“...anger may be defined as a conflictive emotion that, on the biological level, is related to aggressive systems and, even more important, to the capacities for cooperative social living, symbolization, and reflective self-awareness; that on the psychological level is aimed at the correction of some appraised wrong; and that on the sociocultural level, functions to uphold accepted standards of conduct.”

Averill in his book *Anger and Aggression: An Essay on Emotion* (1982:73-102) also gives an excellent summary of historical teachings on anger (Plato to Descartes). He describes anger as being a highly complex emotion often irrational but not noncognitive, and as being an interpersonal emotion. Other related emotions include annoyance, indignation, hatred, wrath, jealousy, and envy.

Damasio (1994:149) places emotions as a variety of feelings and cites the most universal of emotions as Happiness, Sadness, Anger, Fear and Disgust. In his introduction to Descartes’ *Error* he states his opinion that:

“...reason may not be as pure as most of us think it is or wish it were, the emotions and feeling may not be intruders at all: they may be enmeshed in its networks, for worse *and* for better.”

Anger is a human emotion ‘born only where reason dwells’. (Seneca cited in Averill 1982)

Lazarus (1991:67) has this to say on emotions:

‘Emotions are complex, organised subsystems consisting of thoughts, beliefs, motives, meanings, subjective bodily experiences, and psychological states. They depend on appraisals, which arise from and facilitate our struggles to survive and flourish in the world.’

Anger is strongly linked, can lead to, but is not synonymous with aggression and violence. Megargee (1972) points out the problem of studying aggression and violence, or even coming to a satisfactory definition of terms. One reason is that it would be unethical to seek primary data concerning violence by means of experimentation. Neary (2009) suggests that while we may have a handle on conceptual definitions of anger, hostility, and aggression, we lack operational definitions.

Seneca (Lucius Annaeus Seneca, 4 B.C. – A.D. 65) in his work *De Ira* (On Anger)
‘sees absolutely no value in anger... no provocation justifies it, no situation permits it,
and no benefit is gained by it’

The main reason is its nature to be ‘unbridled’ and ‘ungovernable’. (Averill 1982:83)

But what if there is a state before anger is out of control as Seneca describes it, where anger is controlled and where it does not escalate? Can it be paradoxically unleashed and harnessed at the same time, and can it be found to be communication-useful?

This is not a new debate. Lactantius expresses a different opinion to Seneca, seeing just anger as ‘a movement of a mind arising to the restraint of offences’. Moreover he suggests that ‘anger (is) given by God for the protection of mankind’.

Aristotle has a middle position:

‘Anyone can get angry – that is easy;... but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, that is not for everyone nor is it easy; wherefore goodness is both rare and laudable and noble.’

(Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1947, 1109a25 cited in Power and Dalglish 1997)

In discussing anger, mention should also be made of the notion of anger-in (suppression of anger) and anger-out (expression of anger) (Spielberger *et al* 1985).

Controlled anger is at the extreme of anger-in and may surprise the speaker in their speech act – they may not even be aware that they were and are angry. Controlled anger may use as an outlet a mix of anger, humour and/or sarcasm.

Referring to recent findings from the longitudinal research from The Harvard Study of Adult Development (ongoing since 1965), Vaillant suggests:

‘People think of anger as a terribly dangerous emotion and are encouraged to practise ‘positive thinking’, but we find that approach is self-defeating and ultimately a damaging denial of dreadful reality... Psychologists, having dealt for generations with damaged psyches, should now be engaged in the psychological equivalent of reverse engineering. We all feel anger, but individuals who learn how to express their anger while avoiding the explosive and self-destructive consequences of unbridled fury have achieved something incredibly powerful in terms of overall emotional growth and mental health. If we can define and harness those skills, we can use them to achieve great things.’

Averill, cited in Hill 2009, shares this view that anger can have a positive role:

‘Anger can be used to aid intimate relationships, work interactions and political expression. When you look at everyday episodes of anger, as opposed to those that have more dramatic outcomes, the results are usually positive.’

To summarise, there is a connection between anger, aggression, and violence. Seneca suggests there is no place for anger. Other writers see a point to anger in certain circumstances. We argue that controlled anger has a place in Business Discourse and the avoidance of communication breakdown, and we illustrate the zone of value-added anger in our discussion below by means of a trajectory of anger.

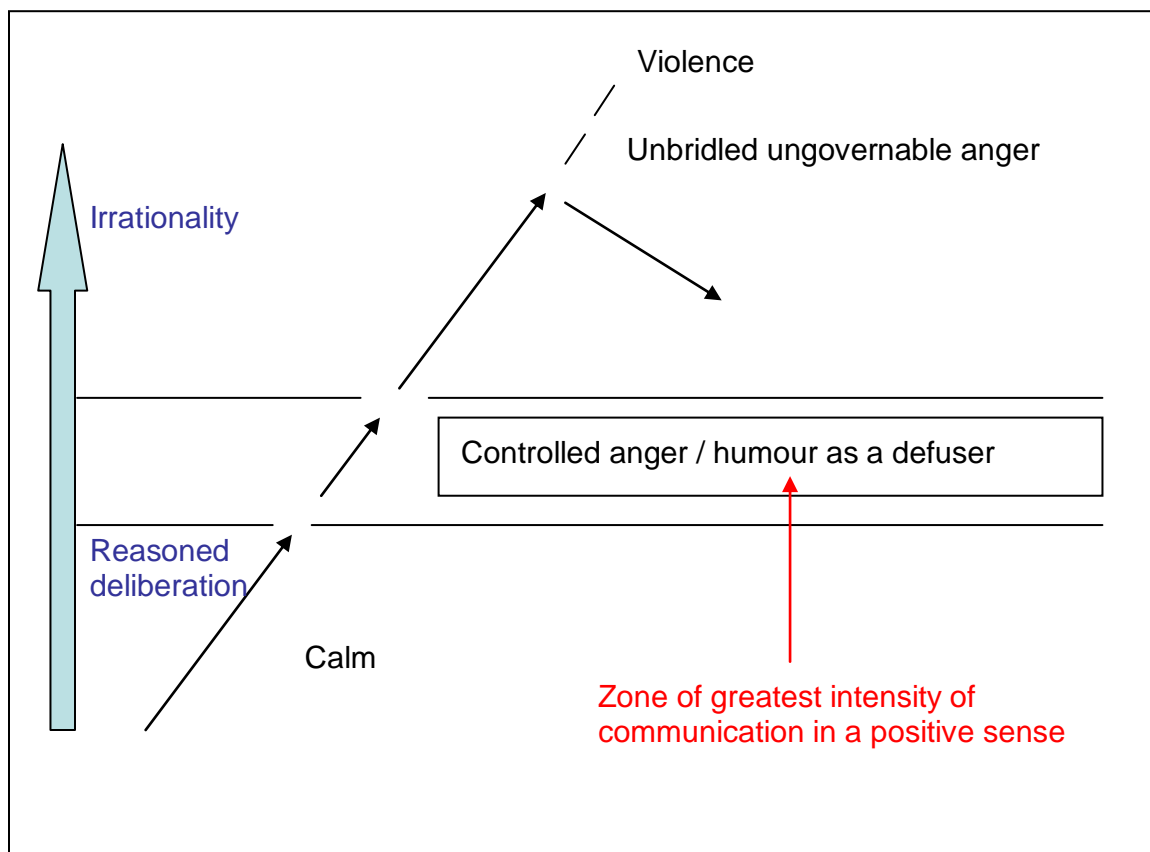


Figure 1: A basic trajectory of anger.

Figure 1 shows the trajectory starting with calm and reason, moving upwards to a zone where anger and/or humour may be present and where reason is to some extent let go and the speaker is in the flow of the interaction and is communicating powerfully. The third phase, which can be missed out, is the phase of unbridled ungovernable anger. If placated the actor's anger may platform out and drop, or conversely escalate to violence [1]. Most writers agree that anger in the

third phase is counter-productive. Power and Dagleish (1997) express this as a movement from order to disorder, Averill (1982) speaks of anger 'gone awry'.

[1] One of the authors of this paper had an illustration of escalation of unbridled / ungovernable anger at the time of contributing to this study! : an example of road rage in a small side street of Bangalore after dark. A motorcyclist and a driver of a car were fighting. Initially this consisted of shouting and showing of fists (without connecting). A crowd gathered round, some enjoying the fight, some trying to intercede to stop the fight. At one point the anger increased to the point where the car driver was pushed, banging his head against a wall. The motorcyclist then moved off, returning with a large stone carried above his head. Luckily some of the crowd pulled him away and he left. I, as a UK citizen and a visitor, was stuck in a tuk-tuk (auto-rickshaw) behind this scene, asking myself if it would help if I joined the fray with the role of asking in English for calm. Next day my IIMB colleagues said they were rather glad that I did not, arguing that I might have been on the receiving end of the rock myself.

As an example of controlled anger, let us consider voices in this zone of greatest intensity of communication, on the cusp of anger. We demonstrate this by means of the anger of Palestinian women, the anger of a woman whose son lost hope of a bright future, and anecdotes of anger situations from the workplace.

Controlled Anger in Palestine.

In the first example we illustrate with interview responses from Palestinian women. The book *Sixty Years Sixty Voices* from which we cite needs to be read in its entirety – it relates sixty interviews, thirty from Israel, thirty from Palestine; all women. The common sense; the lucidity as to conflict, its consequences and possibly its resolution, is a main product of this book. The link to Business Discourse may seem tenuous; but entrenched positions, lack of common sense, predominance of male decision-making are the preserve of both regional conflict and the business world?

One is a voice of a Documentary Producer, from Palestine:

‘...And I see the American government becoming more tyrannical, trying to impose their political and economic wishes on the world. You can’t come in with guns and tanks, and claim you are bringing democracy. A joke we have is “Don’t be impolite to an American. He will bring democracy to your country.”’

And in the same interview:

‘Nonviolent resistance would make a difference and embarrass the Israelis. Women need to think of non-violent resistance. The Israeli army inspects all parcels at the checkpoints, so I would put dirty diapers in them. Then the Israeli would see what a silly position he is in.’

In a separate interview with another voice, this time of a Writer, Poet, Consultant and Lecturer, from Palestine, on being asked ‘What would you say to Palestinian and Israeli politicians?’:

‘Stop meeting unless you accomplish something. Negotiate only when you can bring something from your hearts that will give hope to the people...’
(Smith Melton, P. 2008)

We note that both anger and humour can underscore responses.

What is interesting to note also is the way the interviews with Israeli and Palestinian women cut across, often using common sense, other forms of discourse of war in the Middle East, such as media reporting and the use of Threats (predominantly Israel) and Appeals (predominantly Palestine) studied by Atawneh (2009).

Controlled Anger at the horror of the Economy and joblessness and despair provoked.

The second example to illustrate is that of a French journalist who wrote an essay *‘L’Horreur Economique’* inspired by the suicide of her son who could not find a job:

‘...why should this caste take into account those crowds of unconscious people, who insist, insanely, to occupy concrete worlds, established, situated, where to hammer nails, to tighten screws, to carry things, to file things, to calculate things, to get involved in everything, to act like flies around a mesh, with their slowness in keeping with their body constraints, with their obvious efforts, with their timings and rhythms already outdated; not to speak of their lives, their children, their health, their lodgings, their food, their salaries, their sexuality, their illnesses, their leisure time, their rights?’ [2]

(Forrester, 1996:32 ; translated Gunson, J.)

Again, the whole essay needs to be read to evidence the latent anger that underscores Forrester’s position on the economy and on employment. This extract shows the flow of ideas – one can imagine the frustration and injustice, and the fact that the suppressed anger helped the author to put words to paper incisively and quickly.

Controlled Anger at the experience of head and neck cancer patients

In a study by Dobbins *et al* (2005) reading the quotes from research interviews we see instances of powerful communication linked to latent anger, this time concerning nurses co-managing with their patients’ head and neck cancer trajectories :

‘He had nobody in his life, absolutely nobody. He’s a heavy drinker, he loved his fags. We took it all away from him, he was in hospital, he couldn’t communicate, he couldn’t speak, he was shaky, he was elderly, he wasn’t going to do very well, he couldn’t cope with Servox, he couldn’t cope with the valve – he was too shaky – clinically he was unwell anyway, he developed a rip-roaring chest infection, everything that could have

gone wrong went wrong for him. So we were really pushing him to eat and drink, push, push, push,...

(Dobbins *et al* 2005:638)

[2] *Pourquoi cette caste tiendrait-elle compte des foules d'inconscients qui insistent, maniaques, pour occuper des périmètres concrets, établis, situés, où taper sur des clous, visser des vis, porter des machins, classer des choses, calculer des trucs, se mêler de tout, jouer les mouches du coche, avec des circuits lents à la mesure du corps, des efforts patents, des chronologies et des tempos déjà passés aux oubliettes et puis leurs vies, leurs enfants, leur santé, leurs logements, leurs nourritures, leurs rémunérations, leurs sexes, leurs maladies, leurs loisirs, leurs droits ?*

And a different staff member, scarcely pausing for breath and in the flow, tells the interviewer:

‘We tend to use picture cards. If we know that they cannot read and write, we give them a picture card. Examples: bottle, bedpan, or if they are cold and need a blanket. There are probably about 24 to 30 pictures in all. The patient just points to the picture. But you can imagine that when a patient, even those who are able to read and write, you can imagine that when the patient has just come back from theatre that have had a laryngectomy; you put a plastic tube in their throat which is absolutely alien to them; they’ve got a tube possibly that goes behind that for feeding which is keeping a fistula open for the prosthesis to go in at a later date (or for some reason if they cannot have one, the tube goes through their nose). They have drains in either side of their neck. They have a drip in their arm. They have a tube going from their bladder. They have facial swelling. And you are asking them to try and write on something, try to communicate. And they are probably at their most frustrated, at their most anxious, and suddenly all this is going on around them...’

(Dobbins *et al* 2005:638)

The above example of unleashed and effective communication reminds us of Seneca’s letter On Quiet Conversation:

‘... but when the aim is to make a man learn, and not merely wish to make him learn, we must have recourse to the low-toned words of conversation. They enter more easily, and stick in the memory; for we do not need many words, but, rather, effective words.’

(Gummere 1917:257)

One by-product of the speech acts we notice is that these oral history extracts can lead to scarcely a pause – the speaker is in the flow and truly unleashed – it is as though reason cannot catch up and that we are in a different almost disembodied form of communication. Both interviewer and interviewee can be surprised by the intensity of what is said. In Forrester’s (1996) case her words were not spoken, but written; but in fact the voice and anger comes through very clearly from the text. This is why we have taken the liberty of including this as an oral history example.

A metric for the effectiveness is that Forrester's essay was seminal and caused something of a sensation in her native France. The essay won the Prix Médicis in 1996. She later was asked to advise President Chirac on the problems experienced by the young and unemployed. On a much smaller scale our own research won an award (British Journal of Nursing BJN Clinical Practice Award 2005). In our opinion *Sixty Years Sixty Voices*, published at the end of 2008, also deserves and may win acclaim for giving voice to Israeli and Palestinian women.

Before looking at the factors that facilitate powerful communication in the interview situation, it should be mentioned that humour (or what Dobbins *et al* 2005 refer to as 'placed humour' as opposed to misplaced humour) can have a similar effect as controlled anger in heightening communication. And humour and anger can be present at the same time (one nurse described the need for gallows humour at times as a coping mechanism both for staff and for patients). For examples of humour in Business Discourse the recent body of work of Janet Holmes would be a good example (e.g. Holmes 2006). In this paper we concentrate on controlled anger in communication because there appears to be little research in this area. Novaco (1975:2) points out that the modification and self-control of anger arousal as a response to provocation has been virtually unexplored. Arguably this is still true thirty plus years later.

Controlled Anger in Business Discourse

In the following three cameos, a co-author of this paper relates real examples of workplace anger, including how controlled anger can be used to facilitate a work-place task, and equally how uncontrolled anger can be defused by humour or by empathy:

"In my days at a top MNC that works in the hi-tech space, we worked with a lot of Japanese clients. Those were my first days of working with the sales teams of my organization from Japan who would then interact with the sales and engineering teams of customers we would sell our products to. There was a critical issue with the product that one of the customers found out. We acknowledged the problem and in the conference call, informed them that we would fix it and send a revised version by Tuesday of that week. Now incidentally, I made two blunders. One was that I did not realize that in Japan, when a commitment is made, it is terrible to break it. And two, my engineering team was to give the revision on Tuesday US time, which is Wednesday in India and Japan. And I realized both blunders on Tuesday. The conference call was very unpleasant. For about 45 minutes, all I heard on the phone was someone screaming in Japanese. When there was a silence, I profusely apologized but the screaming continued. It went to a level where I requested my sales counterpart to break the meeting and reconvene when the party had calmed down. After few hours, we reconvened the meeting where I explained the problem of US and India time zones, fully accepted my mistake and promised that I will give them the release on Wednesday Japan time."

It is interesting to note here the halting of the discussion in order to debate the discussion process itself. Lewicki *et al* (2008) mentioned this as an excellent response to aggressive behavior tactics when in a process of negotiation.

In this second cameo humour comes to the fore, prior to what could have been a painful meeting, and preps the negotiators who are likely to be under fire:

“In one of a tough sales visits to a customer, who was very angry at us for giving us a bad product release a few weeks back, we all were preparing how to handle the meeting. We knew very well that all we are going to get is a mouthful of screaming, complaints etc. We also knew that since we were in a customer’s office, it was his home turf. So we had better keep our mouth shut and let the meeting take its own course. I don’t know what happened as we were about to enter the meeting room, but the director of our group suddenly says “Guys, imagine all of them inside that room sitting in their underpants. Ignore all the screaming and just keep your head down. When it’s over, smile, apologize and carry on as if nothing happened”. And we all laughed hard. It had a miraculous effect. We all loosened up and then it wasn’t that bad after all.”

In this third cameo humour, this time during the meeting, takes away the tension:

“In a more recent case, I was in charge of bringing out a collateral (*sic*) for my company. The vendor was being very unprofessional, they never delivered on time and I had serious doubts on their credibility. But I had to go to them because the boss said so. This went on for 2 months and I couldn’t take it anymore. I went to my boss and spoke my mind. He didn’t like this one bit. Over the next few days, he kept on putting me on the spot for anything that went wrong on the collateral – its content, the way we were going about it etc. I realized that I was being made the sacrificial lamb for someone else’s incompetence. I was very upset and decided to call for a large meeting with everyone involved and my boss. I also called a very senior director who was considered a father figure. He too knew my problem and was aware that the vendor was not performing as per our needs. I knew this meeting won’t go well because the boss was just not willing to change the vendor. And that was precisely my objective. We entered the room of the boss. I could see his face contorted and the words “NO” written all over it. We opened the meeting with pleasantries and the samples the vendor sent to us. One of the samples was the article about the senior director himself. We all commented on the text and in a spur of the moment, he made a casual remark “ my photo makes me look old. Xxx (*name hidden for confidentiality purposes*) , remind me to wear my new designer suit and get a good photograph clicked for this . If it goes to print like this, my wife will leave me and

run for someone better looking”. It was a very natural remark but it made all of us laugh. The tension broke and we all relaxed. The meeting was very productive from then on and we all converged to an agreement.”

Is there a way that an outlet for controlled anger, can be facilitated? This could in part respond to Vaillant’s challenge of anger expression as a means of achieving great things. For example in a Business Discourse context it can be difficult to achieve win-win situations all the time and consensus and compromise is needed. This can be facilitated by communication where (figuratively) noise or static is removed and the speech acts pared down to the essential.

We can illustrate this with the anecdotal evidence of another of the co-authors and the situations where frustration and a sense of injustice needed an outlet. This is in the context of Information Technology (I.T.) management in a multinational affiliate company in France and Spain in the 1990s. At different times, anger examples include closing of sites in Clermont-Ferrand France and the move of key personnel to Paris; the need for a project actor to move from Madrid to Barcelona; a badly designed algorithm for bonuses that meant employees were likely to be earning more than their management; the need to ‘educate’ U.S. management that French legal fiscal and business practice constraints needed to be catered for in a new globally adopted I.T. platform. The ‘noise’ could include management who were not-French failing to see that Paris might as well have been the moon as far as a Clermont-Ferrand born-and-brought-up manager was concerned; or management that were not-Spanish failing to see that a professional from Madrid might think that Barcelona is the very last place they want to relocate to. Once these cultural implications are taken on board, the discourse can be concentrated on work-arounds and solutions. For the bonuses, a compromise can be reached by paying them in full and then discussing new algorithms which are win-win but capped. And factual convincing presentations by Local management to Head Office management can show that showstopper concerns for legal, fiscal, business practice constraints need to be respected (if the company wishes to operate in France). [3] While these solutions may seem self-evident, the anger (overt and latent) in these situations lasted several months, if not years, and was never properly addressed.

[3] We note research studies into aspects of multicultural communication and Business Discourse (Rogerson-Revell 2008; Rogerson-Revell 2007; Chew 2005; Charles and Marschan-Piekkari 2002) parallel to our own and also related to interviews and meetings.

We argue that the answer to revealing and understanding suppressed anger may lie in the speech act context of conversations, facilitated by a researcher, using the technique of semi-structured or unstructured interviews. Our contention is that if rich data can be obtained from this research

purpose discourse, then lessons can also be learnt for other professional and business discourse. In a research interview situation what is being looked for is a contribution to the response to a main research question. In a Business Discourse context what is being looked for is twofold: what has made you angry and what can we do about it? In the next section we will discuss interviewing as a way of eliciting controlled anger and, in doing so, accessing useful information that interviewees would not otherwise have shared. We developed the model (Figure 2) calling on our experience of interviewing head and neck cancer patients and staff who care for them. Ethically it would be wrong to interview in a manipulative or calculating way or to an undeclared agenda – what we are examining is the interview conditions which allow the interviewee free expression. This may lead to an expression of anger or rich data, or may not.

Towards a heuristic to eliciting controlled anger.

Figure 2 is based on our reflective practice of interview-taking among head and neck cancer patients and the staff who care for them, a longitudinal study in progress since 2004 and ongoing. In examining what conditions were in place when rich data emerged, linked to controlled anger, we were able to isolate some variables. We express these in a modified kiviatt diagramme. The red line shows the positive extreme of the success factors which prompted an unleashing of thought and what we term 'real communication'. This is based on the experience of the first 14 interviews, 60 to 90 minutes in duration. The richer data from this first wave of research led to '105 contributors to best practice i.e. changing or enhancing practice' (Dobbins *et al* 2005:636).

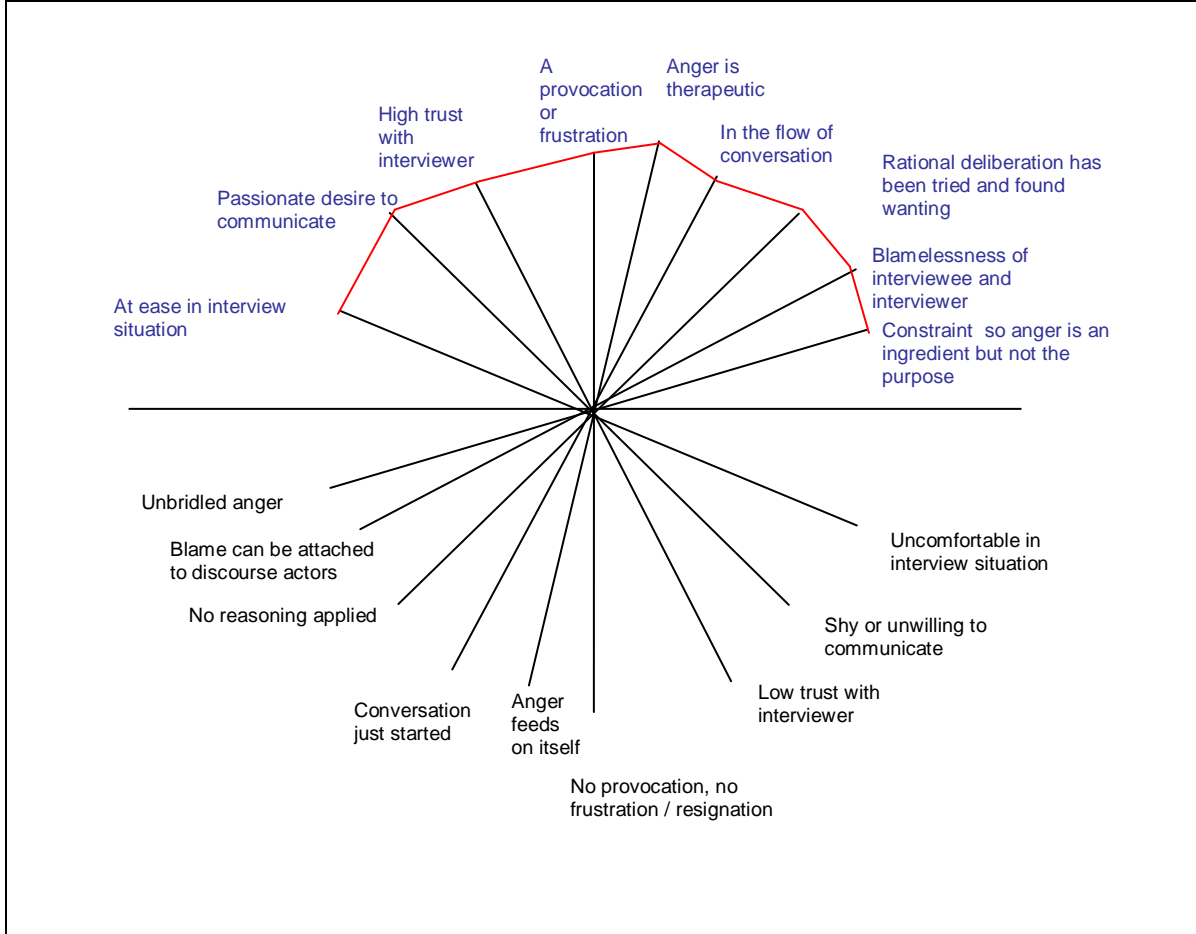


Figure 2:
Modified Kiviat diagramme to show factors to facilitate the expression of controlled anger in interview or discourse

In Figure 2 we show above the middle line factors that facilitate the collection of richer data, and conversely the opposite. If we concentrate on the nine positive factors we can explain further what we mean:

At ease in interview situation

The interview setting needs to be comfortable, free from interruption. Provision should be made for refreshment. Informed consent needs to be addressed, the main research question posed, icebreakers introduced. The interviewer must respect silences and not be quick to prompt. The interviewer needs to be in Parse's words 'truly present' (Parse 1992). And this must be spontaneous i.e. the interviewer must have these as innate born-with qualities, rather than following a script as to 'good' interviewing. In our opinion if the interviewer or interviewee have

a history of difficulty in anger control, or have a behavioural disorder, the interview should not take place.

Risk assessment is to be a part of the interview preparation, to include measures to be taken if there is an adverse event. In our own interviews we were governed by the procedures required by NHS (UK National Health Service) Ethics Committees. In a Business Discourse context the rules may be less stringent than for a vulnerable patient group but the same principles apply in terms for example of confidentiality and avoidance of harm.

Passionate desire to communicate

The interviewee needs to be in a mind-frame of wanting to engage, to communicate. If the interviewee is passive or disinterested, the spark will not ignite and the discourse is likely to be dull and uninteresting.

High trust with interviewer

The unleashing of powerful communication depends on a trust between interviewer and interviewee. Again the spark cannot ignite if either party are wary of the other, or the other's intentions.

A provocation or frustration

This can come from the situation or something the interviewer has said (wittingly or unwittingly) or something the interviewee remembers or thinks of suddenly. For instance we angered a nurse by asking whether a pen and paper was not the answer to the patient being able to communicate after the laryngectomy operation. This led to the quotation mentioned earlier relating to picture cards. The nurse wanted to correct by explaining that not all patients are literate, and then went on to describe more fully the patient's focus when trying to adjust both physically and psychologically during the post-surgery phase (i.e. communication with others not necessarily uppermost in their minds)

Anger is therapeutic

The unleashing of powerful communication and/or the interview itself can be cathartic. For example a nurse or patient looking back over a career or of an illness trajectory, may become upset or start to cry. In our experience the interviewee never wanted to halt the interview process for long, and afterwards say that the experience of talking to the other is helping them.

In the flow of conversation

The rich data tends to come unannounced in the midst of the discourse, rather than at the start or the end. It tends to surprise the speaker and the spoken-to.

Rational deliberation has been tried and found wanting

The parts of discourse that are especially powerful tend to come where reason has left off. For example where arguments have been tried but nothing concrete has happened. This not being listened to wells up as latent anger and spills over into articulating what has (so far) not convinced. Often this final argumentation is the last word. In some instances it would be obscene to continue debating and conversing. Rosenwein (1998:234) refers to anger as welling up or 'pneumatic' as opposed to purposive and rational. What we are suggesting is that there can be a hierarchy to anger, the pneumatic anger can start as such or can be the next step when purposive and rational anger has not met its goals.

Blamelessness of interviewee and interviewer

Linked to trust, it is difficult to have unleashed anger and powerful communication expressed, and without it escalating beyond the zone of controlled anger, if the interviewer or interviewee are 'to blame'.

In *Sixty Years Sixty Voices* the Israeli and Palestinian women were not interviewed together. Both the interviewers and interviewees were women. This means the interviewees could rail if appropriate against their political masters (even though certain interviewees were politicians themselves) or against men in general for their stupidity. For the nurses they could rail against political masters or trust and hospital management if appropriate and with impunity as their conversations were confidential and tagged.

Constraint so anger is an ingredient but not the purpose

Again to avoid the anger becoming unbridled and ungovernable and communication-breaking, the expression of anger itself is not the purpose but a by-product of an emotively charged issue discussed.

Implications for Business Discourse

Is this transferable to Business Discourse?

An example would be in the accompanying of major change.

For discourse to reach a higher level there are two pre-requisites: 1) the identification of stakeholders and 2) the respect of each stakeholder category to be considered as expert. [4]

[4] One of the co-authors saw the advantage of this early on in his career in Switzerland as an International Operations Auditor. Along with his colleagues there was a healthy competition to find the 'audit point of the century'. The best audit points were found very often by listening to people on the production line, people using forklift trucks in the warehouse, clerical and accounting staff, sales people in the field, rather than their managers or senior managers. Much later the same was true in the hospital interviews: the auxiliary nurses and the ward hostesses providing often the richest contributors to practice. Yet most often it is the powerful and high up post-holders that we make a beeline for. Is there a lesson to be learned?

Although this would appear on the face of it to be a truism, when we evaluate why things have gone wrong, often the failure factors are linked to not having identified the stakeholders or to refusing to accept that they have anything worthwhile to say i.e. paying lip service at best to their

being Expert. For example if you run a hospital and do not see the patients as stakeholders or experts, or a Business School and do not see students as stakeholders and experts, or if you are implementing a new terminal at Heathrow Airport and do not see baggage handling employees as stakeholders and experts or you are at the head of Connecting for Health (National Programme for Information Technology) and do not see medical clerical staff as stakeholders and experts – where an important stakeholder group has been forgotten or neglected.

This is true in situations for change and project management but also for day-to-day operations. For example sophisticated Customer Relationship Management systems and accompanying technology still can result in an inability to find an automated choice that fits the customer requirement, or even a living voice to discourse with when options are exhausted. ‘Please select from the following five options’; followed by ‘please select from the following seven options’; is not very helpful even if you have a high level of cognitive skills (and not all the population has). Try booking for special assistance (wheelchair and agent) for air travel on a weekend when your ticket price is economy.

The implication for Business Discourse is then threefold:

- 1) the identification of all stakeholder categories even when their relative power may seem slight and they are not considered as ‘deciders’
- 2) the recognition that each stakeholder category is an expert, that they must be fully incorporated in their betterment rather than things being ‘done for their betterment’
- 3) a solicitation of their advice, input, involvement as equal partners. This means providing an interview or discussion setting as per Figure 2, to encourage real communication, not shying away from controlled anger if this emerges.

Summary:

Paradoxically despite this being the Information Age and despite the wealth of communication technology available, are we not in danger of losing sight of communication in its purest form? Have we got any closer to Experts (in its widest sense) being able to articulate their knowledge clearly and forcibly demonstrate their expertise?

This paper analyses the role of controlled anger in levitating communication to a higher plane than pure reason allows. A positioning of controlled anger within a trajectory of anger is suggested. A model of factors which facilitate an interviewee to let go of their natural reserve and unleash what they need to say is demonstrated. And the implication for more effective Business Discourse is discussed.

Our further research challenge will be to closely analyse discourse in a Business context and to test our model outside of a research interview context.

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