

Student name: Lucian Scobioala

Student number:1907758

Lecturer: Molly Jack

Effective Team Work and Communication

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1. Introduction

The report aims to show my understanding of communication theory and how it applies in practice by using the example of my father's workplace.

2. Communication

According to the dictionary communication is the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, signs, and other methods.

According to (Marlow et al, 2018, p. 145-170) communication is highly influential on job performance, especially among long-term, well known team-members, so we can conclude that it plays a large role in a team environment. Not only that, written and oral communication skills are soft transferrable skills that are very useful in getting employment and are looked for by employers in the European Union. (Andrews and Higson, 2010, p. 411-422)

3. Effective Communication and communication Models

According to Morgan (2017, p. 242-271) effective communication does not consist of just words but also has many other parts that include non-verbal communication through body language and message structure, prompting feedback and reflecting and using it to better explain your intent, understanding the differences in languages and cultures for context and confidence. Many of these are further illustrated in models of communication that focus our attention at different parts and serve as a guide to understanding communication.

There are many models of communication used to describe the interaction of people, the way messages are conveyed and what interferes with them, what affects the way people communicate, how messages are interpreted, etc. , and each goes to show the importance of particular parts of communication. In this report I will describe in my own terms the „Shannon and Weaver model”, „Berlo's model”, and „Schramm's model”.

3.1. Shannon-Weaver model

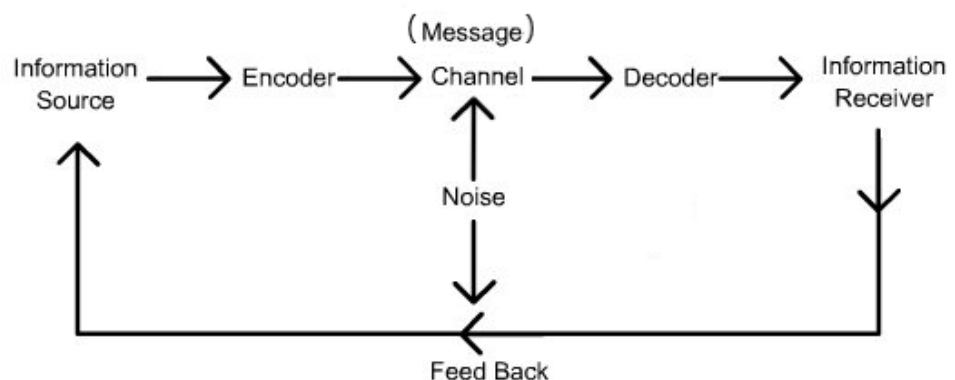
The Shannon Weaver model is one of the first models of communication, first devised by Claude Elwood Shannon and later further developed by Warren Weaver to include feedback. It has 6 parts which are:

- **Sender**- This is the source of the message and the one who creates and sends it.
- **Encoder**-This is the device or medium through which a message is transmitted by the sender. It can be writing, voice or a digital device such as a computer. Originally it was meant to be solely the device
- **Channel**-This is the pathway through which a message is sent. It can be through the air as sound waves or signs, or through writing or digitally.
- **Decoder**-This is the device or medium through which the message is received and understood by the receiver.
- **Receiver**-This is the person who receives the message and the one who sends feedback.
- **Noise**- This is one of the most important parts of the model as it describes the vast array of factors that may impede in communication. This category includes physical factors like a loud environment or people that distort the message, making it hard or outright impossible to decode.

The model is highly useful in showing the basic parts of interpersonal communication and how it can be affected by outside factors like physical noise. It serves as a shorthand model to describe communication thanks to its' simplicity.

The model has been criticised as well, as it cannot accurately describe communication in a group as opposed to between just 2 people and it does not place as much importance on the receiver or the feedback, which are mostly an afterthought.

In conclusion while the model is useful as a start to understanding the interactions in communications



(made by author of report)

3.2. Berlo's model

In 1960, David Berlo developed Berlo's Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver (SMCR).

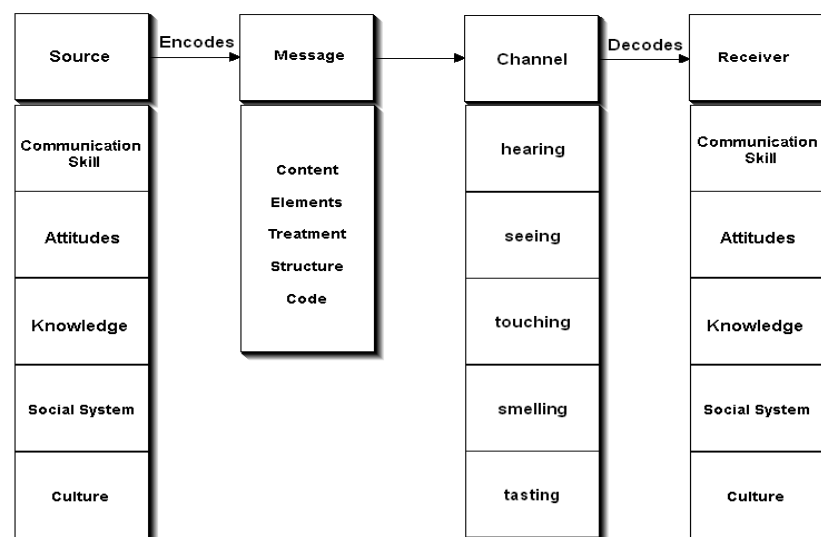
Its' 4 parts, the sender, message, channel and receiver each also have subcategories that show what they include to further describe and give context to each as well as to highlight what factors influence them.

The model is useful in showing the influence of various factors on communication. It shows that misalignment of different values, cultures, knowledge, skills, etc. of the sender and receiver can greatly affect communication, thus bringing light to the true reasons why some instances of communication are unsuccessful. In conveying their messages, one must be aware of these factors and what influences them and how to convey information that would not be misunderstood in a hostile way, or as distasteful to the receiver, and that he is even able to receive such information. For example, differences in culture can lead to one translating an idiom or proverb literally which to the receiver seems like nonsense because he would be lacking the necessary cultural context. An example of not receiving a message would be when trying to verbally talk with a deaf person, and in this context the hearing channel is non-existent leading to no information being transmitted. While these examples seem obvious, they can also lead to further understanding of the differences between people thus making it easier to relate to them and to communicate with them. So in conclusion the model helps us understand that each individual has a different context in which they interpret a message so tailoring the message to it will help in understanding and thus effective communication.

The model has its criticisms, mainly being that people with big differences in culture, attitudes or values cannot communicate which is a wrong assumption that is contradicted by the many communication attempts and successes in history at communication between completely unrelated groups and people, for example between the native Americans and first European colonists, though the importance of shared identity between those communicating in order to achieve effective communication is still relevant.(Greenway et al, 2015, p 171-182)

Nevertheless this model is still useful in explaining the possible obstacles and pitfalls in communicating with people, and it shows us the ways in which we can improve to communicate more efficiently, such as learning about the cultural differences between you and the one you are speaking with and understanding them, or structuring sentences better for the receiver to understand. It also shows the ways humans interpret information through our senses and sometime failing to account for that the message can not be transmitted.

Berlo's Model of Communication



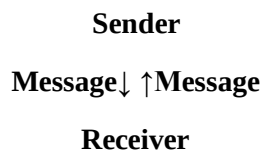
A Source encodes a message for a channel to a receiver who decodes the message:
S-M-C-R Model.

(taken from UWTSO Moodle description of Berlo's model)

3.3. Schramm's model

Schramm's model is a further improvement upon the Shannon-Weaver model, and its' main point is that two-way communication and the encoding and decoding are far more important than first described in Shannon-Weaver. Wilbur Schramm states that one-sided communication that does not include feedback from the receiver is not complete and the sender in such cases misses whether the receiver understood the message or misinterpreted it. The model also states that encoding and decoding are the main parts of the communication and the point at which it often fails, as a message that is not understood and decoded is not in fact sent, thus making the attempt at communication null. This again shows the meaning of a conversation being the transmission of information, and if it does not happen it can not be considered a conversation.

This model also acknowledges the importance and role of differences in culture, language, values, etc. in the interpretation i.e. decoding of the message as well as in the encoding, making it valuable for the sender to consider their effects.



(taken from UWTSD Moodle description of Schramm's model)

4. My father's communication experience in his workplace

My father's communication experience in the UK is especially relevant to this report as he has rather poor English skills, so it was a learning experience for him. He works in the construction industry as an independent contractor, and while he has worked with people from my native country, he has also worked with foreigners.

One of the first things that impeded his communication, besides his lack of language knowledge was the noise of the construction site, from the constant work of the machines. We can reference the Shannon-Weaver model to explain it as a form of noise in the transmission of the message in the model, though other factors like the misunderstanding of the words and the need for correction also can be interpreted as noise.

The main factor, as stated previously is in fact my father's little knowledge of English, both the language as well as the culture, him and I both being from the Republic of Moldova, an Eastern European Post-Soviet country. Thus, the culture clash that he felt the first time working in the UK was significant in his communication quality. We can reference Berlo's model as it shows that the differences in culture, values and language played a big part in the communication efficiency with his colleagues and his managers. Even if the language problems could be attenuated with modern translation apps and the experience he accumulated, as well as the similarity between the Romanian language and many words of the English language, those of Latin and French origin, still the cultural differences impeded in his understanding.

A big problem in my father's workplace was the lack of two-way communication and understanding as well. The misunderstandings, while mostly trivial, did in fact lead to some delays in his work.

4.1. Possible improvements in my father's communication

There are many ways my father could improve his communication skills to better perform in his workplace as well as to lead to fewer misunderstandings and delays.

The most obvious improvement would be to further learn the English language to better understand what is stated in the first place, as well as to immerse himself in and understand the cultures of his co-workers and managers in order to understand idioms and other ways to express ideas not known to him.

Another improvement of my father's communication skills would be for him to give more feedback of what he understood, which would improve his language skills while giving important information to his interlocutor about the amount of information that was lost or misinterpreted. For example my father could repeat what he understood and put it in his own words back to the sender.

An improvement that could be made by the companies employing him would be to minimise physical noise by talking in more sound-proof places and by using written and digital communication in order to lower the risk of mishearing due to the noise.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion I found that communication is a highly important in a working environment, both in finding and keeping employment as well as in keeping up your performance. By finding ways to improve my father's communication skills and reduce the amount of misunderstandings he has at his workplace I can also use the information to improve my own communication skills in order to find and keep employment. I have also learned that communication is a complicated subject with many factors influencing the outcome, and that by understanding the models of communication I could focus on developing a more inclusive communication style. I have also learned the importance of feedback in communication and will improve upon my own way of giving feedback which I now find lacking information. Having seen my previous limitations more clearly I also now understand that further learning about different factors regarding communications besides the 3 models and how to improve upon them is necessary.

References

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Morgan, P. (2017) *Business student's guide to study and employability*, pp 242-271, London: Sage Publications Ltd;

Student Name: Lucian Scobioala Student ID: 1907758
Time allocated: 1 hour. Please return your paper to the lecturer upon completion. It will be returned to you at the next session. You will need to include a scanned copy of this exercise in the form of an appendix together with your Task 1 (part of the Assignment for this module).

Ex.1. Read the following brief and write a business email according to the instructions.

You are the Director of Communications at your company and you would like a Supervisor, Mary December, to go on a training course in non-verbal communication because you have observed that her non-verbal skills sometimes send the wrong message.

- Tell Mary why you are writing
- Say what you have observed about her communication skills
- Tell her how you think this course would improve her skills and her relationship with her fellow workers.

Dear madam December,

As the Director of Communications at the company I wish to instruct you to go on a training course in non-verbal communication.

I have been observing your performance and found that while your verbal communication is clear and understandable, your body language and facial expressions tend to be unclear and indeed, they might undermine the message you are trying to send.

I believe that the course will help you improve your communication skills greatly. This, in turn, will drastically reduce the mistakes and delays of those you manage, improve employee satisfaction and your personal standing within the company. Adding to these, non-verbal communication is also relevant in your personal life and in your career development.

I hope to see your improvements.

Yours sincerely,

Lucian Scobioala, Director of Communication.

Exercise2: COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY

As you read their case, think about how you might help communicate with the employee to remedy the conflict. Answer the critical thinking questions at the end of the case and, wherever possible, say whose communication model is relevant.

BARRY AND HIS STAFF

Barry is a 27-year old who is the manager of a restaurant. He is responsible for supervising and managing all employees in the kitchen. Employees working there range from 16 years old to 55 years old. In addition, the employees come from varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds. For many, English is not their primary language.

Barry has a Health and Safety (Food) Certificate and tries his best to keep up with food safety issues in the kitchen, but he admits it's not easy. Employees receive "on the job training" about food safety basics (for example, appropriate hygiene and handwashing, time/temperature, and cleaning and sanitizing). But with high turnover of employees, training is often hurried, and some new employees are put right into the job without training if it is a busy day.

One day Barry overslept because he had been working on his car until 2 a.m. He was rushing around and realized that he didn't have a clean uniform. However, he managed to find one that was not very dirty. As he dressed, he realized that he needed a haircut and a good hand scrubbing, especially after working on his car.

When he arrived at work, he dashed into the kitchen and noticed several trays of uncooked meat on the work tops. They appeared to have been sitting at room temperature overnight. He called one of the kitchen staff and asked: 'Why did you leave the chicken out when I told you to put them in the fridge?'

The man replied: 'I heard you screaming but I thought you were trying to talk to the chef above the noise of the food mixer he was using. I didn't know you were talking to me'. Barry is frustrated and doesn't know what to do. He felt like he was beating his head against a brick wall in trying to get his employees to practise food safety.

He has made many efforts to get them to learn how to handle food safely. He has put large signs all over the kitchen: KEEP HOT FOOD HOT AND COLD FOOD COLD and WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN.

Questions:

1. What are the communication challenges and obstacles that Barry faces?
2. Which communication models can you use to explain Barry's problems?
3. What solutions might Barry consider in addressing each of these challenges or obstacles?



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48MP TRIPLE CAMERA

Barry faces a number of obstacles in trying to properly instruct the staff. The obstacles could be described as noise by the shannon and weaver model, and range from differences in in culture native language and accents to stress and to literal noise from the kitchen machinery. Many of the problems are aggravated due to the high turnover of the employees, busy environment and Barry's own failings in communicating and drawing the attention of the employees as exemplified by the example of the man not even noticing he was being talked to. A big problem Barry's lack of feedback from the employees which means that he lacks the knowledge on whether or not the employees understand him.

There is no single solution to the obstacles Barry faces, but among them possible ones are his familiarization with different accents, non-verbal communication classes to improve his presence and attract the attention of the people he is directing as well as systemic solutions like longer and more comprehensive training, better acoustics in the kitchen and a way to keep experienced employees. Beside these he could also improve his time management and stress-relieving skills so that his stress does not become an internal noise and show in his communication.

Lecturer's comments: _____

