

Effective Team Working and Communication

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Introduction

This report is assessing the concept of communication, it defines effective communication and the different types of it and what kind of barriers can impact negatively the process.

The report also evaluates three models of communication, looking at the theoretical frame but also illustrating with practical examples from workplaces. It establishes what models explain poor communication in a selected case study, but also for the personal experiences at the workplace.

The concept of communication

Communication is realised for a major part of the life as is a pervasive activity. Communication is defined as the continuous process between two or more persons transferring information and understanding. Communication is considered to be a “bridge of meaning” that makes possible networking. Communication has three essential features: it transmits and receives verbal or non-verbal messages or both, it involves at least a sender and a receiver and it is reciprocal and dynamic. The communication presents the general components: sender, encoding, message, channel, decoding, receiver and feedback.

There are two main types of communication verbal or non verbal. Verbal communication happens when words are used and it can be oral or written. It occurs when we speak to others face to face, on the phone, online or when we write messages, letters etc. It can be informal using everyday language and codes or formal like scheduled meetings, organisational communications. Face to face communication can not be separated from non verbal elements. Non verbal communication refers to the gestures, appearance, body motion etc called body language. Studies have outlined that 35% of the message is realised using verbal communication and 65% non-verbal (Drexel, 2018).

In an organisation the importance of the communication process is given by its purposes to illustrate a person's views, to outline an impression of the sender to the receiver, to develop relationships, for meetings, for short term or permanence records, for contact with customer and other stakeholders. In organisations in order to avoid ambiguity is preferred to have verbal written communications and in many occasions by law the business has to have all types of documents specific to the business activity (Littlejohn, 1996).

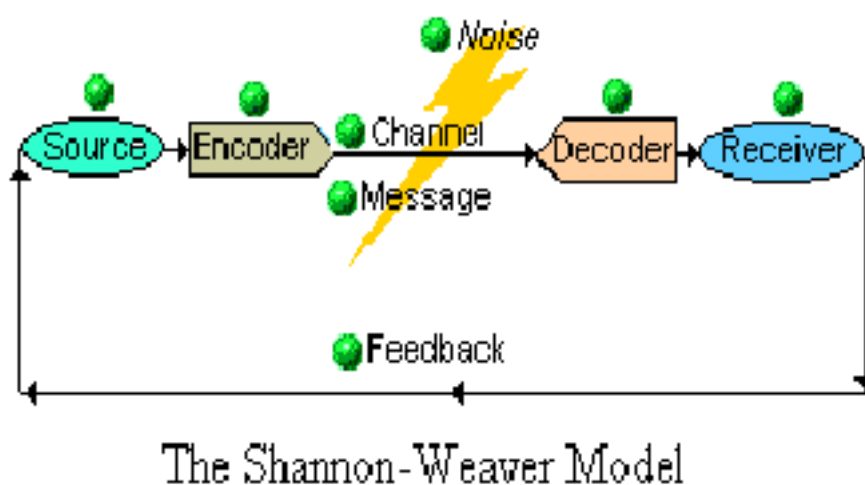
2. Models of communication

The Shannon-Weaver Model was created in 1948 and is a general model of communication which uses sub-systems to analyse the communication. It has six elements: the source, the encoder, the channel, the message, the decoder and the receiver. The noise is the sum of the factors that influence the transmission of the message. This model of communication was presented as a linear one-way process, but it was added the feedback in order to address the loop.

This model is more technological as it was created to improve technical communications with minimum noise. The sender is encoding the message, it can use technological devices for the channel such as mobile phones, the message is sent in codes or signal waves to the receiver who decodes it in order to understand and interpret it. In some communications the channel can present noises which influence the communication process. The feedback reveals if the message was received incomplete. Figure 1 The Shannon-Weaver Model illustrates the communication components (Casmir, 1994).

The strength of this model is that it can be applied to create an effective communication by removing the noise, but it does not apply very well to mass communication. Whilst the sender has the primary role, the receiver and the feedback is considered to be less important and that is why the model received criticism. Also it was considered that it misrepresents the nature of human communication through the mathematical systemisation.

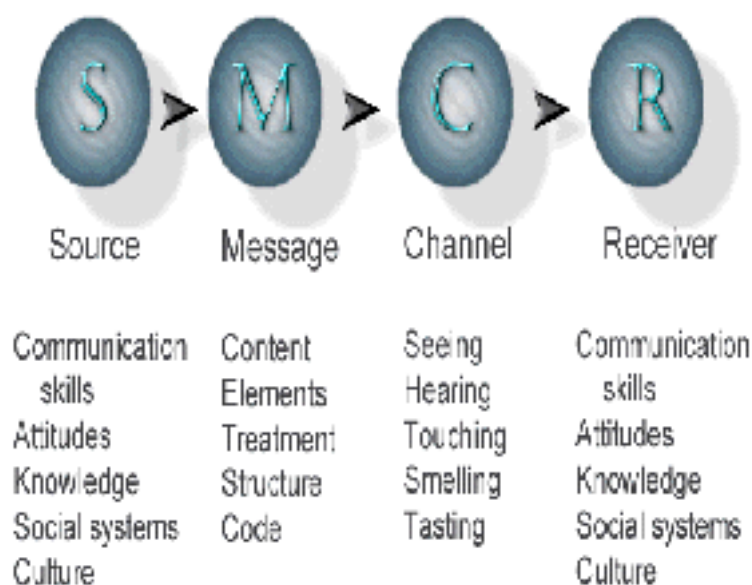
Figure 1



Berlo SMCR Model postulated in 1960 is based on Shanon-Weaver model. It focuses on the major components of the communication source, message, channel and receiver, but it analyses their individual characteristics whilst emphasising the equal importance of the source and the receiver. It considers that an effective communication depends on the communication skills, attitude, knowledge, social and cultural system to encode and decode the message. Therefore the source conveys a message based on individual elements such as communication skills, attitude, knowledge, social and cultural system; the message is transmitted through a channel that can be sight, hearing, touch smell, taste; the receiver interprets the message received based on same elements as the source as illustrated in figure 2. (Berlo,1960).

Figure 2

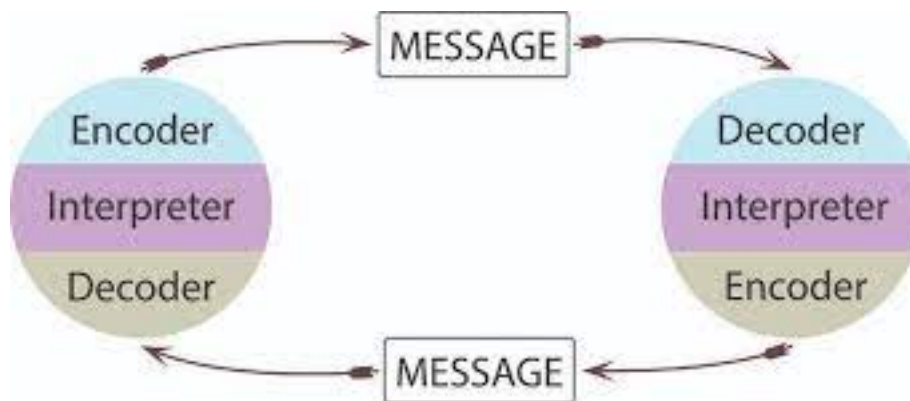
SMCR Model of Communication



Schramm's model of communication (1954) is another model of communication that has its roots in the Shannon-Weaver model. This model provides a more complex perspective on the communication process as it considers that information is of no use if thoughts are not carefully converted into content and conveyed. That is why the encoding is very important because it

initiates the communication. It is also emphasised that the receiver has to decode and understand the message to make the message relevant. Therefore encoding and decoding are considered to be most important in the process in order to have the flow of information. Another important aspect of this model is that is a two way process and until the receiver send his feedback, the communication is incomplete as illustrated in figure 3. Schramm theory considers knowledge, experience and culture to be important for the communication as it influences the differences in the interpretation of the message. There are messages where words have denotative meaning, which have general meaning for everyone and connotative meaning where words can be associated with different feelings or ideas (McQuail, Windhahl, 1993)..

Figure 3



3. Communication Skills

Effective communication

Effective communication is realised when the full meaning of the message is heard and understood. Effective communication implies that all the aspects of the message are understood the emotions, the intentions as it is more than an exchange of information. Problems with poor communication occurs all the time even when the speaker conveys a clear message if the listener does not pay full attention or is easily distracted.

The act of listening is an important skill for the an effective communication. Active listening in a communication makes possible the communication of a complete message, as the person hears and engages with the speaker.

There are three types of listening: informational, critical, empathetic. The informational type is when the listener intends to acquire knowledge, the critical listening is when the listener intends to make a decision based on the information received and empathetic is when listener identifies with what the speaker conveys, their views, feelings without judgement.

Barriers to communication

There are different types of barriers that can interfere in a communication and can be organised according to the different aspects involved: semantic, psychological, organisational, personal, mechanical, perceptual, specialisation, pressure of time, inattention. The first four barriers are considered to be major barriers, but for a complex analysis the report will look at the other types too. The semantic barriers are related to languages, codes and symbols. The semantic interpretations are the barriers that occur more often in communications. The psychological barriers can crate obstacles in communication as for example when a speaker is under emotion it can create confusion to the message. The organisational barriers are in the context of organisational policies and communication network within the business. The personal barriers refer to personal constraints, attitudes and perceptions. The mechanical barriers refer to the infrastructure such as layout, inadequate arrangements, wrong medium. The specialisation barriers tend to prevent communication between departments due to different functions and interests. The pressure of time barriers can lead to communication problems as well as inattention to the message (Economics Discussions, 2021).

Examples of poor communication

In the workplace communication is essential to ensure the business success. In my workplace I communicate daily with customers and suppliers over the phone. In my role as a secretary for a transport business is required of me to contact or to be contacted by the customers to ensure the service provision. An example of this model of communication at my workplace can be applied in many of my communications. The customer, the source of information called to let the company know what dates it needs our services. Due to the noises on the channel, I, the receiver, could not hear him clearly and did not get his message. Through feedback I let him know that I was not able to hear him well. This way the customer was able to call again making sure we hear each other clearly and he communicated me when he requires our services. On this example, the poor communication was avoided by using this model of communication and making sure noises were canceled. In other business, poor communication can greatly impact the business and the lives of the parties affected by it. In some industries poor communications can not be afforded and requires clear and accurate messages transmission, such as healthcare, military, airline etc.

Similarly in the case study "Maria and Pedro" it is presented a phone call communication. Maria calls Pedro to ask him to buy him a chicken. Maria is the source, she encodes the message into codes, English language, the channel used is the telephone. Pedro is the receiver who gives feedback to Maria by answering "Yes". Despite that it seems that Pedro received the message when he arrives home he does not have the chicken. He goes into the kitchen and asks Maria where she is and finds out that he did not need to go to the kitchen, he ended to buy a chicken. An explanation to this case of poor communication can be related to the noise on the channel as it is specified that Pedro works on a building site which can be very noisy. The misunderstanding would have been prevented if Pedro would have provided a more complex feedback through which the sender would have realised that he did not understand the message. This example highlights the weaknesses of this model of communication where the sender has the primary role, the receiver and the feedback is considered to be less important.

Berlo's model of communication presents limitations in relation to the lack of feedback and that there is no room for noise. Also the assumption that people are on the same level it is not practicable in real life communications. For example an effective communication would be if the source has good knowledge, then the receiver should have good knowledge on the subject. An example of poor communication from my workplace when the source had different levels of knowledge than the receiver, was when an employee called me to let me know that his truck has broken down. The source the driver encoded a message, that his car broke down, using the mobile phone as a channel to the receiver which was me. In the position of a secretary I had to think of all the elements of the source, but I did not have all his technical knowledge to understand what was the problem with the car and therefore it was not an effective communication (Figure 4).

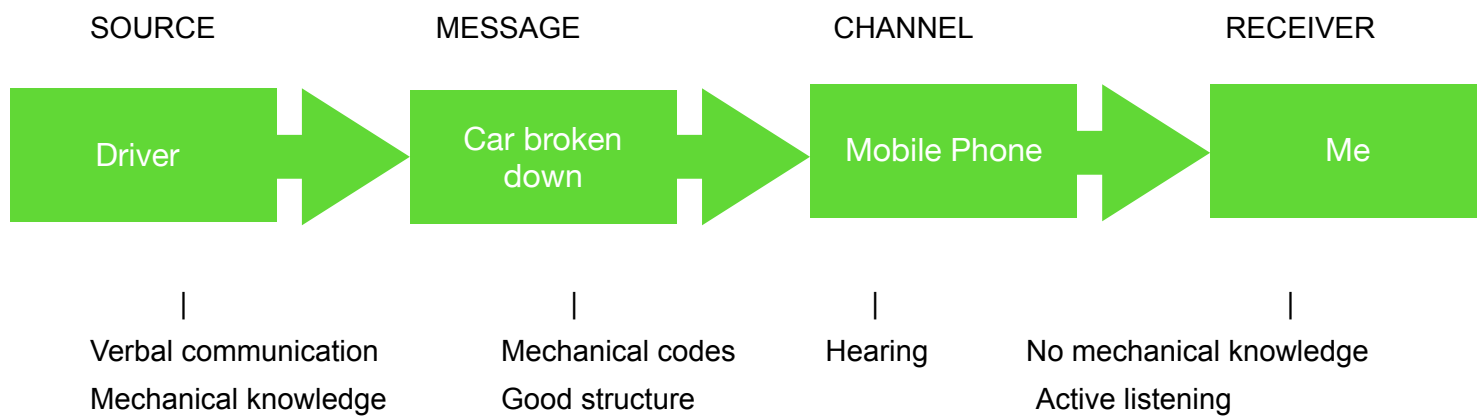


Figure 4. Berlo's model of communication applied on practical examples from the workplace

Another example of poor communication from my workplace was in one of the communication with a colleagues from the Eastern Europe branch. Schramm considers factors such as cultural backgrounds as important to the communication process. When I communicated a change of routes that would benefit the firm more to my colleague from abroad, I received a positive answer thinking that he took the information on board and will act accordingly, only to realise later that saying yes it does not mean agreeing to the message, saying yes he just acknowledged the information. This poor communication was in connection to different cultural background were in that situation the words had a connotative meaning.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion in order to have an effective communication there are a multitude of factors related to the speaker capabilities to convey the message as well as the receiver willingness to active listening.

Poor communication in the workplace leads to a multitude of problems such as disorganisation or duplication of workload. It can even lead to lack of motivation employee performance and therefore success of the business.

Effective communication in the work place requires great effort and skills and most important good leadership. Implementing a communication culture can ensure employees engagement and motivation, but also increase in productivity.

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