

Effective Team Working and Communication

BMSW4002

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Introduction

This report analyses the concept of communication and the growing importance of the communication skills in the working environments especially.

It emphasises the types of communications and it presents different models of communications: Shannon and Weaver (1948), Schramm (1954), Berlo (1960). The models assess the process of communication from different angles emphasising how some communications can be more effective than others.

The report presents different situations for exemplification and analysis and appropriate models are applied.

Body of the report

Communication has a central role in human interaction, making possible the different processes of analysis that lead to knowledge gain. Communication is the transfer of information or exchange of expression of feelings that can be realised in writing or verbal.

Another definition for the communication emphasises that is “a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour and it represents an information that is communicated: transmitted or conveyed” (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

Words are the fundamental modality to realise a communication, but body language is an important component as well. This exchange depends on the listening levels, but interpretation and context are also influencing factors (McMahan, 2015).

Communication can be verbal or non-verbal. The verbal communication is realised using words and it can be spoken or written and the non-verbal communication is realised through body language. An effective verbal communication can not fully exclude the non-verbal communication which provides aides in conveying the message. The way a person chooses the words, how to say them is more effective if are reinforced with non-verbal communication.

According to The Telegraph (2017) communication is an important skill to have it in an organisation at any level and in any industry are considered an indispensable tool. Communication skills is the ability to impart information to others creating a direct or indirect impact in order to achieve a certain objective.

Listening is an interpersonal communication skill as the communication is a two-way process and some authors consider to be a foundation in any kinds of relationships,

personal or professional and it is defined as the “process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/ or non-verbal messages” (International Listening Association). There is active listening where the receiver focuses and pays attention to the message and empathic listening where the listener shows acceptance to what is told and tries to mirror speaker’s feelings. For example during our lectures we should engage in active listening presenting interest and reflect it through comprehensive discussions or get involve in activities (McKay et al, 2009).

Therefore communication is a complex process, but along time many authors attempted to understand the process and created models of communication in order to present a simplified map that dissects its components.

A major influencing model of communication is the mathematical construct known as the *Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication* where the focus lies on the external components to the sender and receiver as it was mostly applied in the context of radio-telephone communication. The model is a linear presentation of steps involved in a communication which has the following components: an information source, an encoder, a message, a channel, a decoder and a receiver.

This model, the “transmission” model was widely accepted due to its foundation in scientific principles, despite suggesting that all communication would share the characteristics of electronic channels. It was considered that the model is the most basic approach to present the elements of a communication and it neglects many other aspects of a communication such as the meaning of the message. Other criticism was related to the fact that there is no distinction between nonsense words transmission and meaningful ones as both are considered communications (Pearson, 2014).

A solution to the criticism on the meaning of the message from the previous model was the model that presented substitute verbal equivalents and removed the mathematics. *Berlo’s Model of communication* (1960) has four main components: the source, the message, the channel and the receiver, but it provides multiple verbal descriptions to describe how it affects the process. The sender and the receiver relate to a number of factors such as communication skills, attitude, knowledge, social systems and culture. The communication skills improves the effectiveness of the communication and include speaking, presenting, writing, reading or listening capabilities. The attitude can change the effect of the message, as well as the knowledge on the information. The social systems are the sum of the values and beliefs and all the other social factors such as place and situation that influence the way of delivering the message. The culture could have great impact as some messages could be interpreted differently due to cultural differences. The message is affected by

factors such as content, elements, treatment, structure and code. The content is the whole message, the elements are the non verbal parts present with the message, the treatment is the modality in which the message is conveyed and affects the way a feedback is given, the structure is the arrangement of the message and the code is the form of the message for example the language chosen, video etc. The Channel is defined as the medium used to deliver the message such as the five senses of the human being, but it can also be realised using technical machines such as internet or telephone.

Berlo's model of communication known as the SMCR Model was criticised for having some lacks such as feedback, noise, concept of two-way communication. Despite that it is considered to be a useful model as it encourages the analysis of the central components highlighting the nature of the sender and receiver.

Another model of communication was developed by Schramm (1954) who presented a different theory that stated that a communication is a continuous interaction where sender and receiver alternates. *Schramm's Model of Communication* has three main components the source, the message and the destination and encoding and decoding play a major role. The encoder transforms the message in codes, selecting the desired order of words to communicate and the decoder has to analyse and interpret the message in order to understand it. Another component is the medium which refers to the channel used and the noise which refers to interferences during the process. The feedback happens when the receiver acknowledges receiving the message.

This model presents cyclical characteristics with the advantage of having the feedback as central feature. Whilst stressing the importance of interpretation of the message in order to be understood, it was identified by critics of the model that during the process a lot of meaning can be lost and encounter semantic barriers such as beliefs and background knowledge. That is why the semantic noise could be a weaknesses of the model.

Other criticism was related to the possibilities of having unequal communications where only one speaker is leading the communication as for example the mass communication. Nowadays communication can be realised very differently from the past due to the development of the technology and internet usage and mass communication is very practised.

The models of communication presented in this report were developed from mathematical perspective or by analysing the semantic aspects. This models help in the analysis of effective communications. It enables anticipation of poor communication and it offers solutions in order to rectify poor communications. The models present specific code procedures for reducing or eliminating noise from the communication channels. This report

will make use of case studies and practical examples from the working environments (Suresh, 2003).

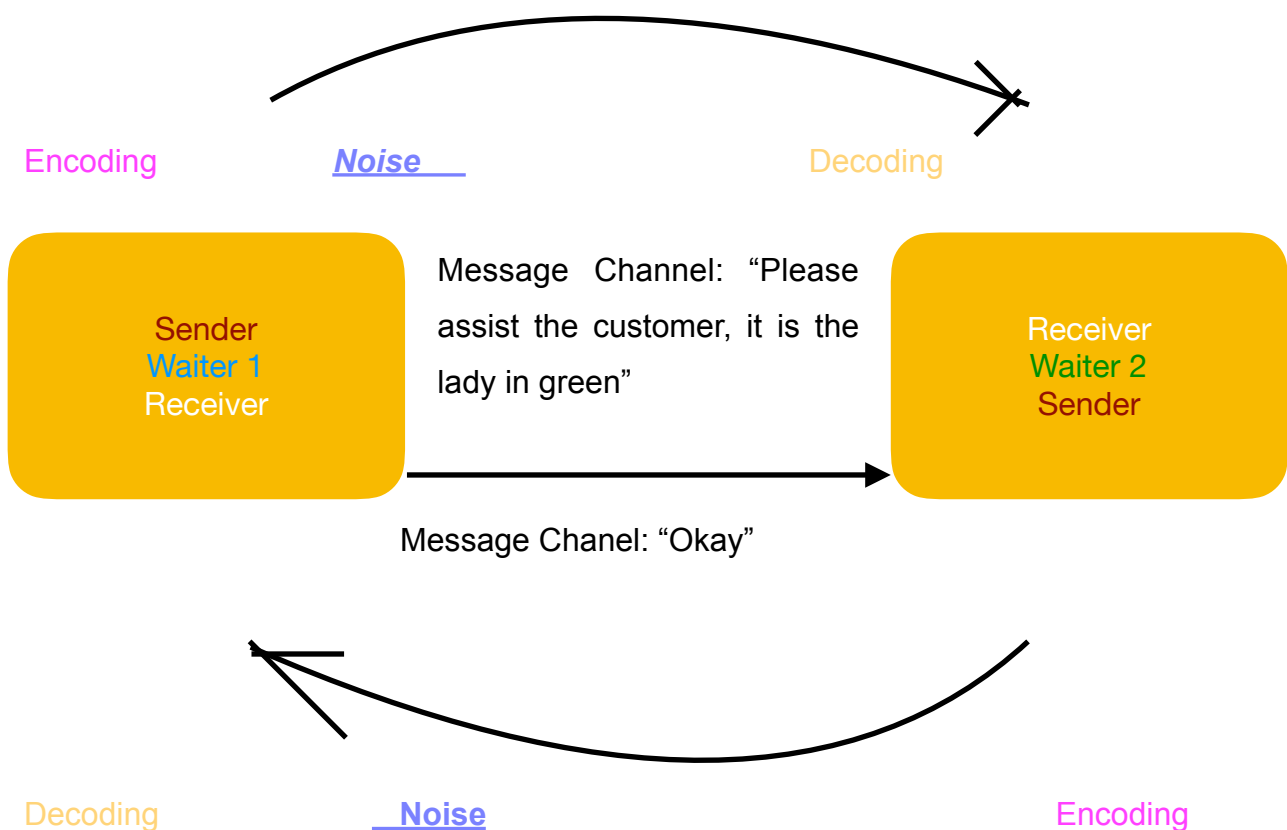
The case study “Maria and Pedro” presents a situation where the persons have a communication on the phone, where the woman asks her husband Pedro to get her a chicken. The man answers positively, but when he gets home he goes into the kitchen and waits for his wife. He then calls her and asks her where she is. The woman being in the sitting room questions him about the chicken, to which Pedro is puzzled as he does not know what she is talking about. Maria reminds him that she asked him to get a chicken on the way back, but the man did not understand that, he understood that when he comes back to see her in the kitchen. It can appear to be a simple misunderstanding in the communication. Using the communication models can determine the cause of the misunderstanding and how this could have been anticipated and prevented.

Therefore the Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication would determine that the information source, the sender is Maria. She calls her husband Pedro and she encodes the message using the English Language. The message is converted in signal waves and transmitted through the phone which is the channel. The receiver is Pedro who decodes the message. The noise source interferes with the message and creates disturbances. This is why Pedro did not understand the message transmitted by Maria. This confusion would have been avoided by applying another model of communication, Schramm’s model of communication which has the advantage of having feedback as a central feature and presents cyclical characteristics. The sender, Maria should have asked for a complex feedback to ensure Pedro understood her message and acknowledge the receiving of the accurate message.

Another situation to be analysed in this report is a communication from the working place. As I work in a restaurant as a waitress, an example from my work place of poor communication often happens between members of team. If one of the waiters finishes their shift and does not communicate effectively with the other waiters that start the shift next, it could influence their performance as they would not be able to provide the best customer service. It happened to me at my work place where I started my shift after lunch time and I had to take over from one of my colleagues. One customer was waiting for assistance and my colleague described me the customer, but he did not specify the table number. My colleague did not wait for my feedback to acknowledge that I understood accurately his message and I did not recognise the customer in need of assistance. This poor communication led to customer dissatisfaction that could have been avoided. By applying Schramm’s two-way communication model with the cycling characteristics, would

have been ensured a clearer transmission of the message for this situation. It would have been provided a feedback though which the sender, my colleague would have realised that I did not understand his message and that I did not know which customer he refers to. The noise in this communication was the environment, as restaurants can get very busy and that interfered also the way the communication took place.

Figure 1. Schramm's model of communication to enhance the cyclical characteristics



Conclusion

Problems are at the centre of what many people do at work every day and communication is the modality to prevent and overcome them.

In some other situations even if data is exchanged following Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication, the communication can not take place if the information has no meaning.

Further that the communication models that consider the semantic level are more valid to the complexity of human communication and influences significantly the process.

The examples presented in the report are based on case studies and experiences from the work environment which are analysed using various models of communication that could apply to the communications.

In conclusion communication is part of our everyday life and any tools that would help improving it should be applied, such as the theory presented in this report as it benefits the effectiveness of the human interaction.

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