
(BMSW4002_LON) Soban Sadiq

EFFECTIVE TEAM WORKING AND COMMUNICATION

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Introduction

If we open the dictionary and find the definition of the word “communication” we will get a simple explanation:

“A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour.” (Meriam-Webster, n.d.)

Although the explanation is simple, communication itself has never been a simple process. Its evolution took thousands of years. It evolved from simple body language to complex sentences. From pictures on the wall of a cave to masterpieces created by artists who want to put an idea, a feeling or a message on paper or canvas. But the essence of communication is to allow us to transmit information. This information is the trading resource for cooperation.

Nowadays we exchange information by communicating in different ways. We have developed hundreds of technologies that are there to assist our need for communication. The driving force behind this expansion are our jobs. The more effectively we communicate, the better we are at doing our job. This has made us dependent on technology exponentially because of the many barriers we have encountered during the evolution of communication. From the invention of ink that solved the problem of us not being able to store information, to the digital apps that allow for real-time translation of verbal or written speech. There are many barriers to communication that still exist even today, but the first step to solving a problem is knowing what the problem is.

Models of Communication

In this document, we will examine three different models of communication in terms of how well they can be applied juxtaposed to the case study of “Maria and Pedro”, “The Professor and the Village People” and “A Day with the Chief” provided by the lecturer. We will also compare them to real-life experiences.

Shannon and Weaver (1948-1949)

Shannon and Weaver developed the model in the 40s and knowing that both worked in telecommunications will help us identify that the model has a technological aspect at its very core. The structure of the model as seen in “Figure 1” describes a process of information transmitted via a channel, from a sender who uses an encoder to a receiver who receives the message by possessing a decoder. They also introduce a “noise” factor that can influence the channel and thus the message itself.

SHANNON AND WEAVER MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

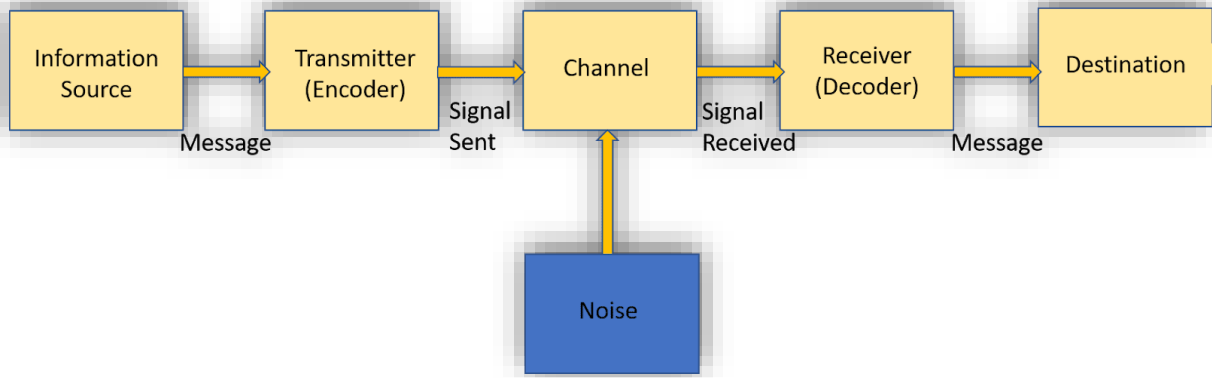


Figure 1 (Michelle, 2018)

Many would argue that due to its mathematical nature the model does not translate correctly the dynamics of real-life communication or non-verbal communication and it does not account for different factors like feedback or how to resolve issues caused by noise that has occurred in the channel phase.

In the case study of “Maria and Pedro” (UWTSD, n.d.), we can identify all the aspects of the Shannon and Weavers model as seen in “Figure 2” during their phone call.

SHANNON AND WEAVER MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

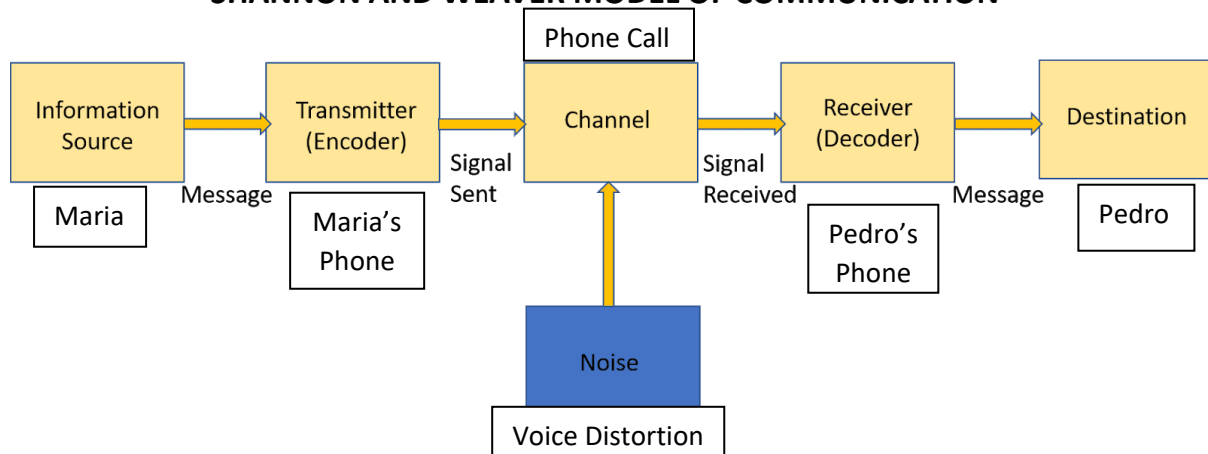


Figure 2 (Michelle, 2018)

The lack of feedback as to what Pedro has heard leads to a misunderstanding caused by the noise. In a real-life situation if some distortion had occurred during the call or communication was cutting out we would provide feedback and ask for the message to be clarified. But sometimes it is not clear that part of the message is distorted and missing.

I have been in a similar situation when one day I asked my father via text message if I can go out with my friends. His first message was “Yes, you can.”. At that point, I got so excited that I got dressed as fast as possible and went out with my friends. Later that day I received a second message from him: “But first wash the dishes, take out the trash and don’t forget to

sweep the leaves in front of the house.”. Low reception was the noise in the channel that resulted in a similar miscommunication between me and my father, same as in the case of Maria and Pedro.

Schramm (1954)

In 1954 Wilbur Schramm expanded further the aforementioned model of Shannon and Weaver by addressing one of the issues we mentioned in the previous paragraph. He successfully identified that feedback is a key element of human communication and a conversation is built upon continuous feedback until a resolution is achieved by either transmitting the necessary information or other reason as to why the communication process has come to a completion. This transforms the model from a linear to a cyclical model which resembles better the essence of human interaction as shown in “Figure 3”.

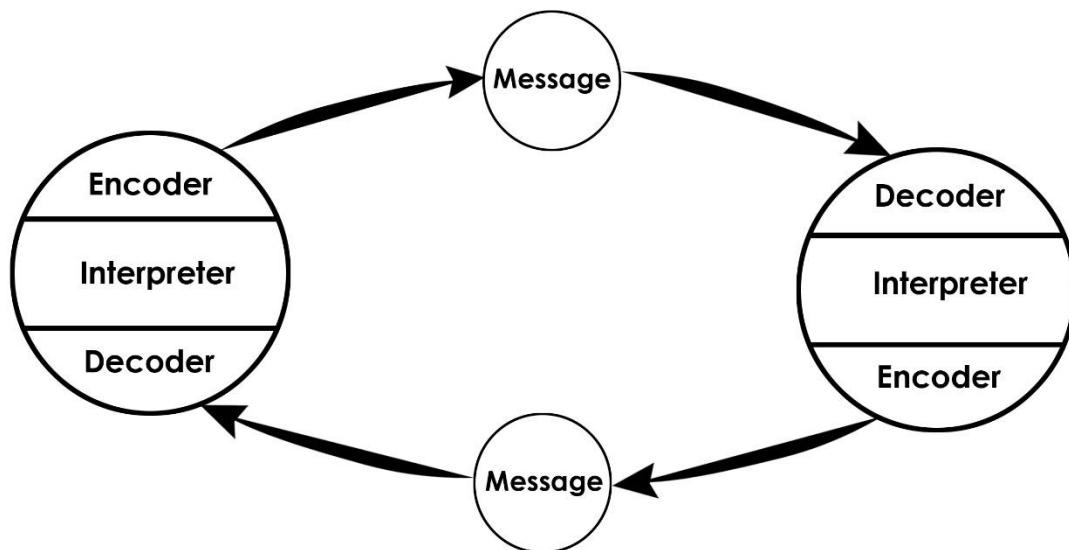


Figure 3 (Communication Theory, n.d.)

Going back to the “Maria and Pedro” case study (UWTSD, n.d.) if this model was applied and Pedro asked for a clarification, then the distortion of the information would have been detected and Maria would have repeated the correct message thus eliminating the chance of miscommunication due to the lack of feedback. Another personal example that can describe this model in action is when I recently had a phone call with my wife. It went as follows:

Me: Hey!

Wife: Hi!

Me: Do you want to have a hot dog?

Wife: What a random question?! No, I don't want to have a dog. We have a cat already.

Me: No, no, no, no! I SAID, Do. You. Want. Want. To. Have. A. HOT. DOG. for dinner.

Wife: Oooh! I only heard “dog”. Yeah, I would love to.

In this dialogue, we can notice that the feedback because of the noise was provided in the form of confusion which led me to repeat my question in a way that will ensure her confirmation of receiving it properly which resolved the confusion and did not result in my wife agreeing and expecting us to get a dog as a pet and not a hot-dog.

Berlo (1960)

The final model that we will examine is Berlo's SMCR (Source, Message, Channel, Receiver) Model of Communication which was developed by David Berlo in 1960. He based his model on Shannon and Weaver's linear model thus making this one linear as well. This brings us back to the original issue, lack of feedback and two-way communication. In addition, the model fails to account for noise or any other issue that can come up in a real-life scenario. The thing that this model does is an expanded analysis of each phase in it and by breaking them down into smaller components we can have a better picture of the dynamics as seen in "Figure 4".

Berlos's SMCR Model of communication

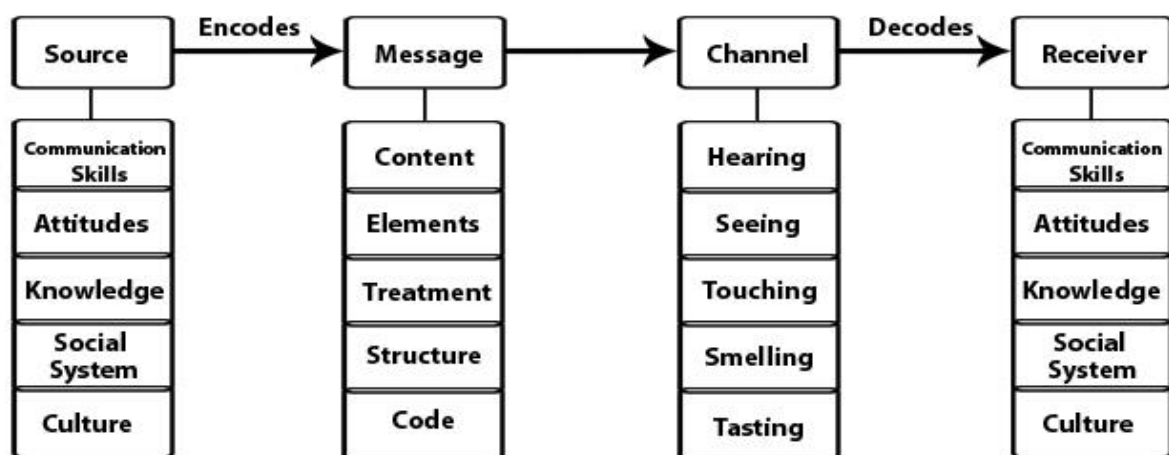


Figure 4 (Communication Theory, n.d.)

- In the Source and Receiver categories, he points out that both participants have to have similar listening, reading, writing and speaking skills.
- The attitude of both of them has to allow for the communication process to occur.
- Knowledge describes their familiarity with the subject.
- Their values, religion, social standing, education, law, etc. are part of the social system section.
- And finally, culture is where factors such as how different notions are perceived by different nationalities.

In the next category, he separates the message into five sub-sections.

- Content refers to the entire message that was communicated from beginning to end.
- Elements refer to the non-verbal aspects or meanings that have been implied in written communication.
- Structure is the section that refers to how a message has been built and arranged.

- Code is there to tell us in what form was the message sent. Either verbally, via text, video or other means.

In the last category, he describes what medium was used to send the message. Our senses are the means by which we receive information from the world that surrounds us. That includes information that is part of a communication instance.

We can identify this model in the case study about “The professor and the village people” (UWTSD, n.d.). There was a clear mismatch between several sections of the source/receiver categories that resulted in miscommunication or lack of as seen in the example. Adjusting those parameters would have allowed for the issue to be resolved with a positive outcome.

Communication Skills

In order for communication to be a successful process and the message to be clearly received by all the participants, there are certain skills that are required in order to meet these criteria:

Verbal Skill

Both sides have to possess the appropriate level of lingual knowledge, confidence, the effects of the tone and pitch of the voice and choose precisely the necessary words to convey a message.

Non-Verbal Skills

Participants must use or interpret correctly body language, facial expressions and gestures in order to successfully navigate the nuances of human communication.

Active Listening

The ability to follow the conversation, contribute to it and retain the information for future reference is a key component of mastering communication.

Empathic Listening

Being able to follow a conversation by utilizing in parallel to the other participant an emotional response similar to his can lead to a deeper and further development of the communicational possibilities.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Communication Theory

Communication is the essence of human society. Every accomplishment so far is a culmination of the effect of communication. The advantages clearly outweigh the disadvantages, but that does not mean they are not important and have to be resolved. The introduction of technology has brought further the possibility of what can be achieved and allowed us to communicate on a global scale and in many more possible ways. This has also brought additional challenges to providing a unified all-encompassing communication theory. In addition, due to the non-stop growth of the society, different cultures, religions, age groups, etc., that are now participants in the global communication phenomenon, we have identified new issues caused by a clash between all of those factors. Change in moral values has also brought a new age in communication where some words or expressions are no longer acceptable. Gender perception has been a driving force behind the use of correct pronouns. Following the rules of proper communication given to us by different communication theories can only have a positive outcome, and as such proof serves the corporate environment, which has led to the development of these theories.

Conclusion

One of the building blocks of what makes us human and has been the main reason for our evolution has been our ability to communicate. It has taken many centuries to perfect this ability and it is still an ongoing process because we can define it as a living thing. It has grown from simple grunts, shouts and gestures used by our ancestors, to words in comprehensive sentences that are accompanied by complex body language. From the first crude drawings on the walls of caves to memes, GIFs and TikToks sent via chat apps. But no matter how far the evolution of communication goes there will always be a foundation that has been described by those theories. Their purpose is to give us a better understanding of what communication is and how it works and allow us to further build on it and adapt it to our needs.

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