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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

Once you have read this chapter, you will be able to:
■ Discuss the importance of studying human communication.
■ Define communication.
■ Name and explain the seven primary components of communication.
■ Explain the Synergetic Model of Communication.
■ Understand the ethical responsibilities of speakers and listeners.
■ Formulate your own communication ethic.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. The Importance of Studying Human Communication
    1. Although we can all communicate, *good* communication isn't always easy, and it isn't always common sense
       a. Communication students learn how humans exchange messages to create meaning and how to improve that exchange in a variety of contexts.
       b. Communication is more than a set of skills to help accomplish practical goals.
       c. Communication is a complex process that requires understanding and critical thinking to improve communication experiences.
    2. Critical thinking is a key to successful communication. Five steps include:
       a.   Identify the assertion or action.
       b.   Ask, "what is the evidence for and against the assertion or action?"
       c.   Ask, "what does the bulk of the evidence point to?"
       d.   Ask, "what other explanations or conclusions are possible?"
       e.   Continue to keep an open mind.
    3. There are several advantages to studying human communication.
       a. We can use communication to develop satisfying relationships or terminate unsatisfying ones.
       b. We use communication to establish our identity to self and others.
       c. Poor communication can negatively transform lives, while good communication can positively transform lives.

II. What Is Human Communication?
    A. **Human communication** is a transactional process in which people generate meaning through the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages in specific contexts, influenced by individual and societal forces and embedded in culture.
    B. Human communication includes seven basic components:
       1. **Message creation** involves converting ideas into messages (**encoding**) and interpreting meaning from messages (**decoding**).
          a. Messages are symbolic; a **symbol** is something that represents something else and conveys meaning.

b. Verbal symbols are words or phrases, while nonverbal symbols are gestures, facial expressions, vocal tone, etc.

c. Symbols are arbitrary; they have no inherent meaning and must be negotiated and agreed on by communicators.

d. Signs may also be used to exchange messages; these are not arbitrary but have an implicit referent.

2. **Meaning Creation**

a. The goal of communication is to create meaning.

b. Each message carries two types of meaning:

a. **Content meaning** includes denotative and connotative significance.

b. **Relationship meaning** describes who parties are to one another.

c. Communication creates shared meaning that shape families, communities, and societies.

3. **Setting** refers to the location and environment of the communication.

4. **Participants** are the people engaged in communication. Participants vary in number, similarity, and relationship to one another.

5. **Channels** are the means by which messages are transmitted (i.e., radio, e-mail, face-to-face, etc.)

6. **Noise** is any stimulus that interferes with the quality of a message.

7. **Feedback** refers to verbal or nonverbal response to a message.

III. The Synergetic Model

A. Human communication has been modeled in two ways:

1. The earliest models were linear, and based on a sender encoding a message and then sending it to a receiver for decoding.

2. Following the linear approach, models acknowledged a more dynamic communication process.

a. In these models, communicators are both senders and receivers.

b. In the interactive models of communication, noise and channel play an important role in the communication process.

B. The **Synergetic Model** is a transactional model views communication as occurring when two or more people create meaning as they respond to one another and their environment.

1. It is based on the premise that individual, societal forces, contexts, and cultures are important to a communication experience.

2. Communication is transactional because:

a. Both one communicator is both sender and receiver at the same time

b. They are creating meaning with another

c. Through the ongoing process of communication

d. Within the background of previous communication events.

3. Communication is influenced by individual forces such as age, race, gender/sex, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class.

a. Individual forces include your **field of experience**, such as education and other experiences.

b. Our experiences are not value free and are unique to the individual.

4. Communication is influenced by societal forces such as politics, history, economics, and social structures.
   a. Values placed on individual characteristics come from societal values.
5. Communication is influenced by **culture**, or the learned patterns of perceptions, values, and behaviors shared by a group of people.
   a. Culture is dynamic and heterogeneous, meaning that it changes over time and is not the same for all members of a cultural group.
   b. Culture affects almost all of our communication interactions, as each culture has its own set of perceptions, values, behaviors, and communication principles.
6. Communication is influenced by the context or setting.

IV. Communication Ethics
   A. Many people in the United States struggle with making ethical choices, but we are responsible for the choices we make as communicators.
      1. These choices are vital to professional and personal relationships.
      2. Studying communication can help to equip someone with basic principles of ethical communication.
   B. **Ethics** are a system of moral principles by which actions are judged as good or bad, right or wrong.
      1. **Communication ethics** describes the standards of right and wrong that one applies to messages that are sent and received.
      2. Ethical communication involves several dimensions:
         a. Truthfulness is important because others naturally expect it because our messages have consequences.
         b. Sharing or withholding information must be balanced between legitimate privacy and inappropriate secrecy.
         a. Communicators should share information that others require to make informed decisions.
         c. The relative benefit or harm of messages is difficult to decipher because of the complexity of communication events.
         d. **Absolute** ethical standards would apply equally across all communication situations, while **relative** ethical standards would vary across each situation and for each person.
      3. It is the responsibility of the communicator to establish his/her own communication ethic according to his/her beliefs, values, and moral training.

KEY TERMS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Think about some current events. (Instructor can write some ideas up on the board.) How has communication been transformative for good or for bad in these situations?
- Many communication scholars believe that one cannot avoid communicating in interpersonal contexts. Given the definition of communication as a transactional process, do you agree or disagree? Why?
- Technology provides us with more channels for communication. Do you think that some channels allow for more competent (effective *and* appropriate) communication than others? Are there circumstances in which you would avoid a particular channel and use another?
- Your school represents its own type of culture. Do students at your school have their own ways of communicating? What are cultural forces that are unique to your school? (For example, if a school views education in part as a business transaction in which students pay for a product, how might that cultural value influence student communication with instructors?)
- What principles would guide your decisions about whether a given communication behavior is ethical or unethical? For example, how would you define gossip? Is that different from "venting" about another person? How so? Are these communication behaviors ethical or unethical?

CLASS EXERCISES

The Story of Us
Show a movie or television clip of two people interacting (although almost any interaction between a dyad will work, the movie "The Story of Us" is full of scenes that would work well). Either in small groups or as a large class discussion, have students identify the six basic components of human communication present in this clip. Ask how they perceive each of these elements shaping and influencing the communication encounter.   You may also want to discuss how proponents of linear, interactive, and transactional models of communication would analyze this encounter. Which of these three models of communication do your students stand behind?

Dramatizing Meaning
Each message contains both content and relational levels of meaning. To illustrate this in class, ask students to pair up in dyads and create a short dramatization. Give the students content messages to be communicated, such as:

> get someone to turn the television volume down;
> get someone to take out the trash;
> tell someone you disagree with his/her opinion;
> tell someone you think his/her new haircut isn't flattering.

Ask students to first role play the way that they would communicate the content to someone they have a close, positive relationship with (like a friend or valued family member) and then how they would communicate the content to someone they aren't very close to or don't like (like a

new roommate or an annoying co-worker). Have the remaining students watching the dramatization comment on how the same content is communicated with very different relational messages. Ask students what elements of communication change between the role plays of each group— they are likely to mention several elements of nonverbal communication (like tone, gestures, facial expressions, etc.) as well as the phrasing and forms of politeness of the verbal content.

Assuming Identities
Write down several elements of your own (or someone else's) identity on the board, such as Starbucks junkie, former zookeeper, Kanye West fan, resident of Barcelona, avid hiker, and vegetarian. Do not tell students who the person is, but allow them to consider these elements as separate people. Invite them to jot down characteristics of these categories (e.g., a Starbucks junkie is wired on caffeine, a yuppy, and reasonably wealthy). Then have them jot down how these people might communicate. At the end of the activity, reveal to them that the categories represent you, that they can all be combined into one person, and that the "field of experience" that someone has is vast and not easy to identify without extensive knowledge of the person. Discuss stereotypes, the impact of culture and context, and other relevant elements of the Synergetic Model. This is a useful way to introduce yourself to the class as well as a useful activity for a later discussion of stereotypes.

EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

Communication Careers

Make a list of all of the careers that you believe require good communication skills. Then, go to the University of North Carolina Wilmington's Career Services page located at:

uncw.edu/stuaff/career/Majors/communication.htm

Examine the list of careers for which a communication degree prepares students. What careers did you list that are not listed on the University of North Carolina Wilmington site? Why do you think the differences exist? Finally, create a list of careers you would post if you were responsible for creating such a site.

Famous People with Degrees in Communication

Go to the National Communication Association website "Famous People with Degrees in Communication" at:

natcom.org/Default.aspx?id=1165&terms=famous%20people

After reading the page, develop a list of at least ten different careers that famous people have pursued after obtaining degrees in communication.

Strategies for More Authentic Communication

www.hodu.com/authentic.shtml

Read the article on "Strategies for More Authentic Communication." After reading the article, answer the following questions: When are you most likely to lie? What benefits do you think you will accrue if you lie? What can you do to increase how authentic you are when you communicate with others?

Perception of Size

Go to Hanover College Sensation and Perception Tutorials at:

http://psych.hanover.edu/KRANTZ/sen_tut.html.

Click on the size constancy tutorial and complete the activity within the tutorial. Then write a brief paragraph summarizing what you have learned.

"Laws" of Perception

Go to this website that houses material on Gestalt Theory of Organization at:

http://chd.gmu.edu/immersion/knowledgebase/strategies/cognitivism/gestalt/gestalt.htm

Read the material and select one of the "laws" of perception and organization described on the website and write a brief summary of the three laws. Finally, explain how this law of organization can affect your perceptions of and communication with others.

CHAPTER TWO: PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

Once you have read this chapter, you will be able to:
- Describe the underlying assumptions of three contemporary approaches to the study of communication.
- Identify theories and methods of each of the three approaches.
- Identify ethical concerns of each approach.
- Describe the strengths and limitations of each of these three approaches.
- Understand the role of paradigm, theory, and methods in communication studies.
- Describe the major historical influences in communication studies: rhetoric and behaviorism.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Contemporary Approaches to Studying Human Communication
   A. There are three main ways to study communication: the social science, interpretive, and critical approaches.
   B. These areas of study represent different **paradigms** (approaches or belief systems) that guide the study of human communication.
      1. Each paradigm maintains a set of assumptions about knowledge, the nature of reality, and human nature.
      2. These assumptions influence the development of **theory** (explanations of phenomena) that address why people communicate in the way that they do.
      3. To test these theories, scholars use various **methods** (ways to collect and analyze data).

II. The Social Science Approach
   A. The **social science approach** focuses on the individual or, less frequently, the dyad.
   B. **Behaviorism** (study of behavior) influenced early social science researchers to make observations and formulate predictions about behavior.
   C. Social science researchers are interested in causality and study this by making initial hypotheses and testing those predictions.
      1. These tests can be done in a **naturalistic** (everyday, real-life) setting, in a laboratory, using surveys, or structured interviews.
      2. Once data is collected, social science researchers use **quantitative methods** (statistics) to analyze their data.
      3. One area of research in dyadic communication is the **demand-withdrawal** (criticism leads to partner disengagement) interaction pattern, which happens in many types of relationships.
         a. One partner criticizes the other partner, who responds with defensiveness and/or physical or psychological disengagement.
         b. It may have to do with how men and women are socialized to interact or may be about who wants change in the relationship and who does not.

         i. Caughlin and Vangelisti observed married couples, rated the demands and avoidance, had the couples fill out questionnaires, then converted their observations into numerical data for statistical analysis.

        ii. They found that gender did not influence demand/withdrawal interactions. Instead, whoever was desiring change was the one to demand, while the spouse would sometimes withdraw.

        iii. Other studies found similar results using conflict diaries and questionnaires that were converted into numerical data.

    4. Another area of social science relational research is in **attachment** (emotional ties between child and caregiver), which influences whether or not people view themselves and others as valuable.

        a. Avoidant behaviors in an interaction may occur because of the person's attachment style.

        b. Researchers may test this using survey methods. One study found that ineffective conflict behaviors may result from an attachment history that includes rejection and abandonment.

  D. The American Psychological Association maintains strict standards of ethics for social science researchers, requiring that all participants receive full information about the research study.

  E. Predicting communication patterns is a strength of this approach, but a weakness is that human communication is not always predictable outside of a controlled setting, nor is it only influenced by individual factors.

III.   The Interpretive Approach

  A. The **interpretive approach** (humanistic study) finds its roots in **rhetoric** (persuasion) and **humanism** (celebration of human nature and potential).

    1. This approach focuses on the individual in specific situations, from the perspective of the communicator.

    2. The approach looks at the uniqueness or creativity of human behavior in constructing individual realities, rather than the predictability of peoples' actions.

  B. Interpretive researchers use **qualitative methods** (non-numeric method of understanding what people believe and do).

    1. Studying defensive communication behavior might involve interviewing participants and asking them to reflect on why they became defensive in a recalled conversation.

    2. Researchers take recordings of these interviews and transcribe them in order to search for and identify specific, refined themes across the responses of all participants.

    3. This approach is a type of **content analysis** (a technique to identify specified characteristics of messages) that can lead to theory generation.

    4. Another approach is **ethnography** (field study), a technique in which researchers actively engage with their participants through observation and interviewing, often to study a culture different from the researcher's.

    5. **Rhetorical analysis** (examination and analysis of texts) is one of the earliest forms of interpretive research and requires researchers to be attentive to the

meaning of texts in their original setting as well as the accuracy of their description of the text.

    C. Interpretive research ethics goes beyond avoiding harm to participants, but focuses on maintaining equality and reciprocity, and a mutual respect in relationships with participants.
        1. Part of this mutual respect includes representing participant views accurately, which may require sharing interpretations and conclusions with participants.

    D. A strength of the interpretive approach is its in-depth understanding of communication in specific situations, but a limitation is that it usually does not include a large number of participants, which prevents researchers from making generalizable conclusions.
        1. Another limitation is that interpretations may not be correct because researchers are outsiders to the communities they study.

IV. The Critical Approach
    A. The **critical approach** is interested in how societal forces such as power and hierarchy interact with individual forces, with the goal of changing society for the better.
        1. By examining oppression in society and writing about it, people can gain an understanding of and desire for social resistance.
        2. Cultural studies is one form of critical studies and reveals the complex ways in which people participate in their culture and resist its powerful influences through big or small communication behaviors.
        3. Critical scholars believe that individuals construct their own realities that have real consequences in their lives.

    B. Critical scholars may use methods such as ethnography or **textual analysis**, which is a method of analyzing cultural products such as media or public speeches.
        1. These methods may be used to study television shows, photographs, or interpersonal interaction, always emphasizing larger societal influences such as politics, religion, and history.

    C. A key ethical question for critical scholars pertains to the right to study and represent other people's views because of their natural biases as researchers.

    D. Strengths of critical scholarship include the focus on societal forces in communication and its emphasis on power.
        1. Limitations include the lack of attention to face-to-face interaction and an inability to generalize conclusions.

V. A multifaceted understanding of all three approaches allows students of human communication to understand communication more completely.

KEY TERMS

paradigm 33
theory 33
methods 33
rhetoricians 34
elocutionist 34
social science approach 35
behaviorism 35
naturalistic 35
quantitative methods 35
demand-withdrawal 35
attachment 36
interpretive approach 41
rhetoric 41
humanism 41
qualitative methods 42
content analysis 42
ethnographic 43
rhetorical analysis 43
critical approach 45
textual analysis 45

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you think that reality is objective (true for everyone) or subjective (true for the individual)? Why? What factors in your life lead you to believe those things?
- What are some of the communication questions that you would most like to see answered? For you? For society? Which of the approaches discussed in the chapter is/are most likely to answer those questions for you? Why? Which do you think would be least useful in answering those questions?
- Contrast the way that you have heard the term "rhetoric" used in everyday conversation with the way that rhetoric is presented in this chapter of the text. How is the formal study of rhetoric different from the common perception of rhetoric as manipulative communication? Considering the strong influence of rhetors throughout history, describe which public speaker/rhetor you most respect, and why.

CLASS EXERCISES

Outlining the Approaches
Break students into groups of six. Give each group a topic of study in communication (such as detection of deception, maintenance of long-distance relationships, the power of speeches during the Women's Suffrage movement, the effects of teasing in friendships, etc.) and ask two students from each group to outline how this topic could be studied from the social science approach, two students to outline how the topic could be studied from the interpretivist approach, and two to outline the topic from the critical approach. Once they have had some time to prepare in their dyads (about 10-15 minutes) have each group of six debate and discuss among themselves which approach is best suited to the topic and why. Afterwards, have a larger class discussion: Did some of the groups of four agree that the topic could be studied from both perspectives? Were there groups who decided the topic could only be viewed from one approach? What methodologies were brought up in the debates that were considered useful for studying these topics?

Identifying the Approaches
Offer students a page with abstracts from several different communication studies, and ask them to pair up with a partner to decide which of the three contemporary approaches to communication was probably used in the study. What information in the abstract leads them to believe this? (To make this exercise appropriately challenging, you may alter the abstract very slightly to take out a specific descriptor like "rhetorical study" from the abstract, but do be sure to choose abstracts which offer enough information for students to make an educated supposition about the approach of the authors. See the citations printed below for abstracts you may consider:

Trethewey, A. (2001). Reproducing and resisting the master narrative of decline: Midlife professional women's experiences of aging. *Management Communication Quarterly, 15*, 183-226.

Hayden, S. (2001). Teenage bodies, teenage selves: Tracing the implications of bio-power in contemporary sexuality education texts. *Women's Studies in Communication. 24* (1), 30-61.

Floyd, K., & A. C. Mikkelson, (2003). Effects of brain laterality on accuracy of decoding facial displays of emotion. *Communication Quarterly, 51* (4), 419-437.

Alberts, J. K., Yoshimura, C. G., Rabby, M., & Loschiavo, R. (2005). Mapping the topography of couples' daily conversation. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 22* (3 June), 299-322.

Practicing Textual Analysis

Show a clip from the film *Twilight* in which the female character, Bella, is saved by the male character, Edward (there are several moments of this) and ask students to identify the messages that the clip creates about the nature of femininity and masculinity. Create two columns on the board, one for women and one for men. Write down the characteristics and messages that students identify in each column. Ask them how these representations of women and men reflect power and hierarchy in culture, what potential problems exist in these representations, and what might be changed to send a more positive message about gender roles and relationships. (NB: This activity could also work well with clips from *The Jersey Shore, Friends,* or other shows with foci on male/female relationships. Also consider texts that address race issues such as *All in the Family* or *Blazing Saddles.*)

EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

Bringing Home the Bacon

http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/bacon/

This is a website with a compilation of Francis Bacon's works. Click on "Quotes." How many of his famous quotes deal with communication? What aspects of communication was he interested in?

The American Rhetor

http://www.americanrhetoric.com/

This website "The American Rhetor" has a speech bank, movie clips of famous speeches, quizzes, and lots of interesting material about American rhetoric, "Plato on rhetoric," and "Aristotle on rhetoric." It also has a section on 9/11 rhetoric (speeches about 9/11 from Osama Ben Laden, Bush, Netanyahu). Take a "rhetoric quiz" at: http://www.americanrhetoric.com/americanrhetoricquiz1.htm.

Smiling about Smiling

http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/ron_gutman_the_hidden_power_of_smiling.html

This brief TED talk (7:26) reviews a raft of research about smiling as a form of nonverbal communication. Identify which approach the research studies addressed employ, then generate 3 ways that this information can make a difference in society.