



# Principles of Professional Communication 1

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What is Communication  
– meaning or message?

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# What is communication?

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- The ordered transfer of meaning
- The process by which messages are sent and received
- Social interaction through messages
- The reciprocal creation of meaning
- The sharing of information, ideas and attitudes between or among people

# When constructing a message we consider ...

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- **WHAT** we wish to communicate
  - the content
- **WHO** we wish to communicate with
  - the audience
- **HOW** we wish to send the message
  - the medium or channel
- **WHEN** we wish to communicate
  - the timing of the message

# Why communication models?

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*According to Dennis (2012, p. 1), a model, be it a model car or an economic model, is a simplified representation of a more complex mechanism. A model is typically smaller, simpler and easier to build than a full scale replica. A model sheds light on the main features of the reality it seeks to represent.*

- They are useful but limited.

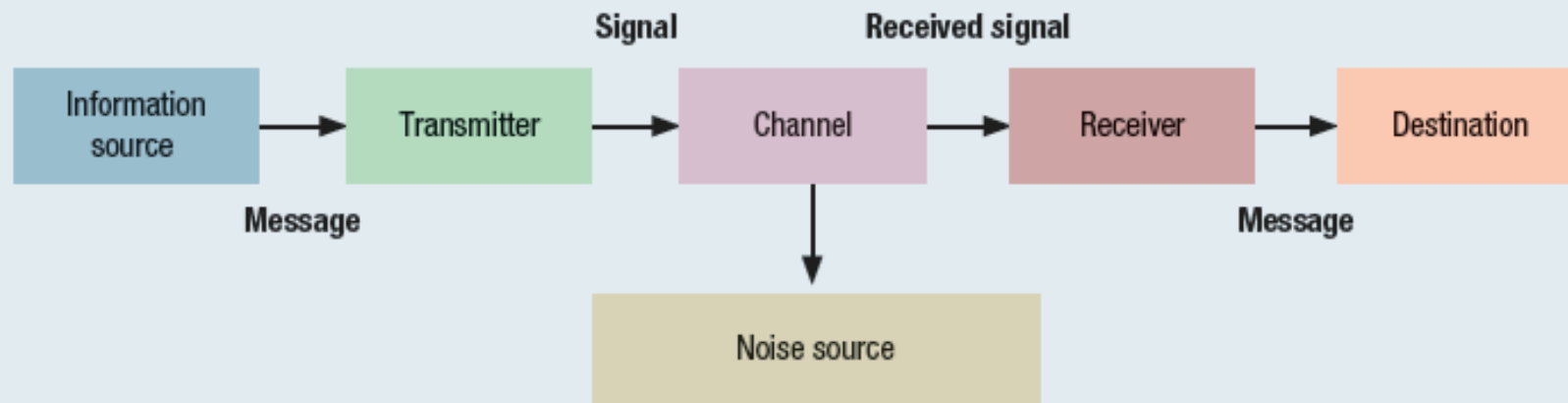
# Two ways of looking @ communication

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- **Transmission** models which see communication as the transfer of messages through various stages eg Shannon & Weaver, Berlo
- **Transaction** models which see communication as the creation or negotiation of meaning in two or more parties responding to the environment

# Shannon & Weaver's Model of Communication

**EXHIBIT 1.2** The Shannon and Weaver model of communication



Source: Shannon and Weaver 1997.

Source: Monan et al, 2008

# Shannon & Weaver's Model of Communication

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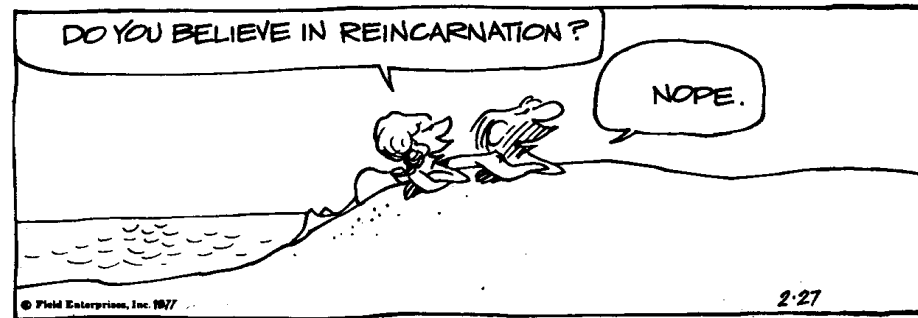
- Devised in 1949 to describe the process of telephonic transmissions
- Sees communication as **linear**
- Uses **mechanical** terms to describe the process eg encoder, decoder
- Identified the concept of **noise**
- Important because it was the first attempt to **systematically** analyse communication as a series of component parts or steps

# What is noise?

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- Any **interference** in the process of communication (first identified by S &W)
- **Physical** noise eg telephone static, poor acoustics, background noise
- **Semantic** noise arises from the misuse, misunderstanding or misinterpretation of language
- **Psychological** noise where interpretation is affected by the attitudes, motivations or prejudices of the sender or receiver

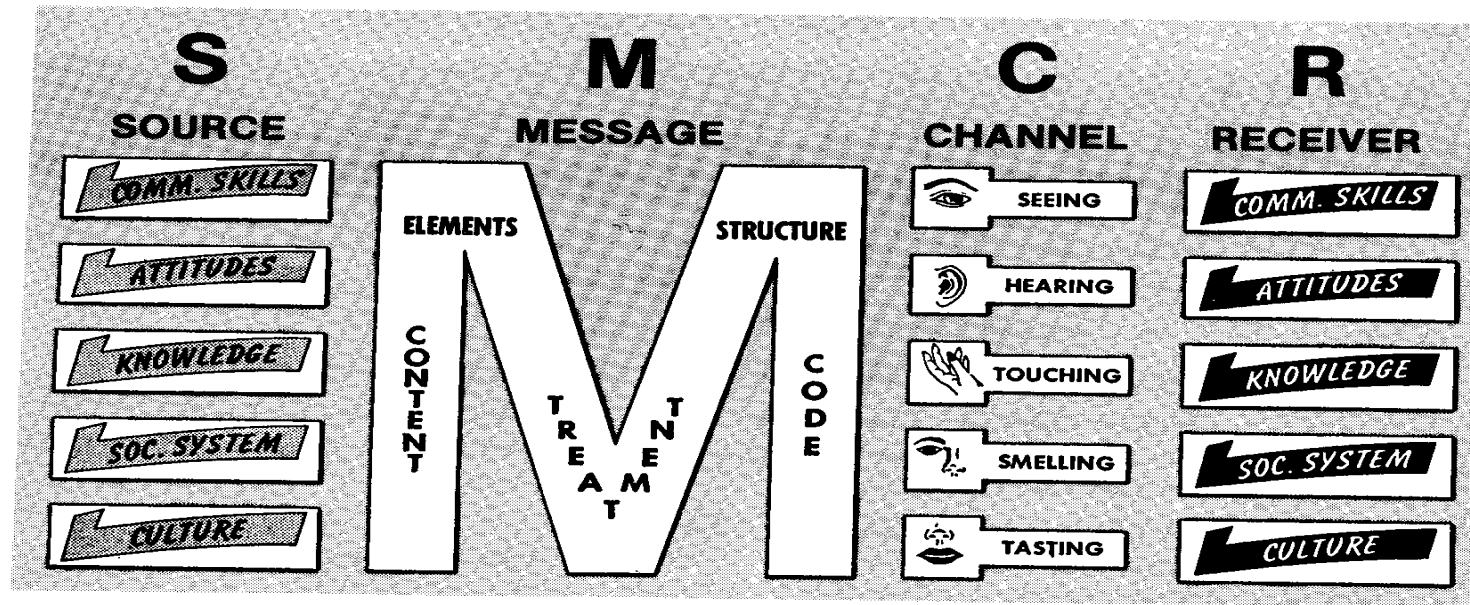




BC – an example of semantic noise in a message

Source: Sadler & Tucker, 1981, 3

# Berlo's Model of Communication



**Figure 2.3** Berlo's model of the communication process

- Devised in 1960 by David Berlo, from Michigan University
- Builds on Shannon & Weaver's model but shows communication as a **human** rather than a **mechanical** process
- Analyses the **elements** of each part of the process
- A problem in any part will impact on the rest
- Emphasises the need for communication to be **purposive**

# Components of a message

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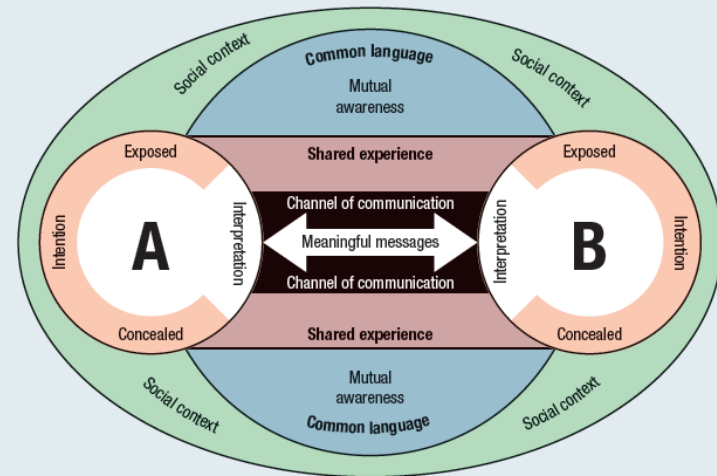
- **The Elements** – letters in words, non verbal actions or gestures
- **The Structure** – the way the elements are assembled eg order of information
- **The Content** – information of the message as the source intends it
- **The Treatment** – the way the message is presented eg use of humour, series of quotes
- **The Code** – how particular elements are combined eg certain style of language, pictures, use of colour, font types etc

# Transaction models take a more holistic approach

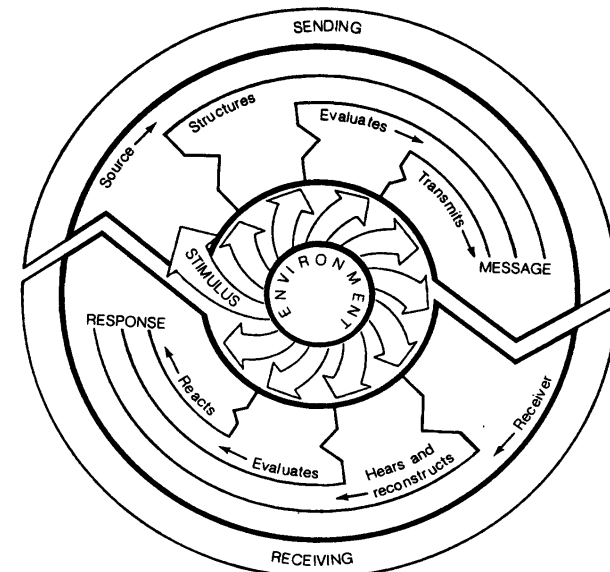
- See communication as a the result of the *interaction* between a range of elements
- More focus on *contextual*, *situational* or *environmental* factors
- See meaning as *negotiated* not *fixed* but
- Meaning is an *evolution* not a *process*

Source: Mohan et al, 1997, 40

EXHIBIT 1.4 A meaning-oriented model of communication



Source: Price 1996, p. 44, based on description in McQuail 1984.



# Comparison of the two approaches

Transmission models	Transaction models
See communication as <b>linear</b> or as a series of steps	See communication as <b>dynamic, circular</b> and <b>unrepeatable</b>
Assume the “ <b>meaning</b> ” lies in the components of the message itself: words chosen, treatment etc	Believe the “ <b>meaning</b> ” lies in the individuals who participate in the communication. Shared experiences and common language important.
Show that any <b>variation</b> in the <i>elements</i> eg inappropriate channel, can impact on the clarity of the message	See communication as being <b>dependant</b> on a wide range of factors, including: situations, contexts, psychological characteristics of the sender (encoder) and receiver (decoder) of a message
Believe communication describes the <b>production of messages</b> .	Believe communication describes the <b>evolution of meaning</b> rather than the <b>production of messages</b> .

# Cultural contexts

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- Culture has a profound effect on communication
- Cultural norms dictate the meanings of objects, symbols (including words), and actions
- Sometimes we can be blinded by our own culture

# Communication Breakdown

- Can be said to occur when the message sent differs from the message received in ways not intended
- People look at the same things and can interpret differently
- People misunderstand each other's motives
- People fail to transmit messages, leaving gaps in the data available



# Communication Breakdown

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- People can be reluctant to risk embarrassment, conflict or animosity by making contact to negotiate differences in their readings of a situation
- Too much information or information overload can cause messages to be missed or misinterpreted
- Too many links in the communication chain can create “Chinese whispers” syndrome



# What happens when we get it wrong?

