WEEK 1 EXERCISE 1

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

CASE STUDIES

These four short case studies illustrate different scenarios of communication breakdown. How do the two models of communication (examples below are from Archee et al, 2012) help explain the causes of the communication problems?

Class activity: In class form groups of 4-5 and discuss one of the case studies using the questions which follow to guide you. Nominate one group member to make notes as your group will be asked to discuss your answers. Use your answers to complete the following portfolio exercise.

PART 1: Write a brief (250 words each) commentary of **two** of these, identifying the problems and issues which you believe led to the breakdown. Use the questions plus the models to help guide your answers. Call it wk 1_ex1.doc and save it for inclusion in your portfolio.

PART 2: Read the extract from Chapter 1 of your textbook and write a brief definition of the following communication terms:

1. Encoder
2. Decoder
3. Feedback
4. Semantic noise
5. Psychological noise
6. Medium/channel

Give one example from any of the case studies above to illustrate your answer.

1) The Purpose

What end result did the sender have in mind? Did the sender seem to have a clear idea of what he or she wanted the receiver to think, feel or do?

2) The Channel

Did the sender choose the best method of communication? What alternatives were there? Consider the advantages of formal or informal, group or individual, written or oral communication. What other specific methods might have been used – letter, email memo, meeting, telephone call, individual conversation, report, company directive?

3) The Message

Is there too much or too little information? Is it simply and concisely expressed? Are ideas
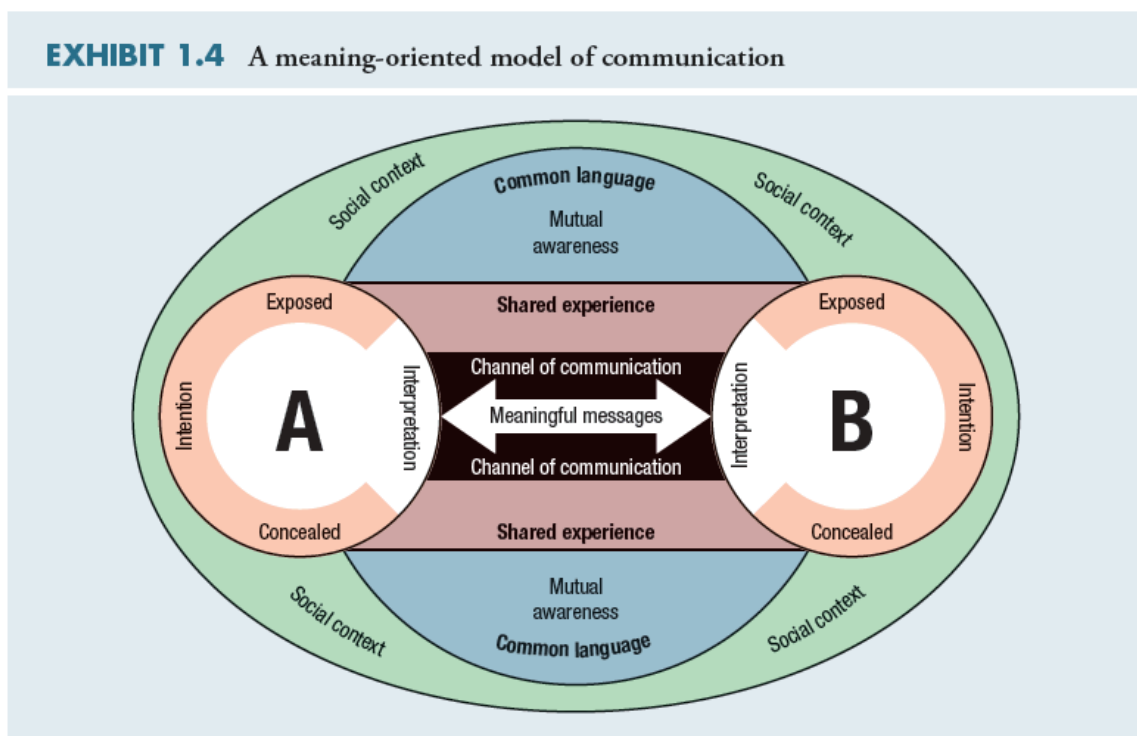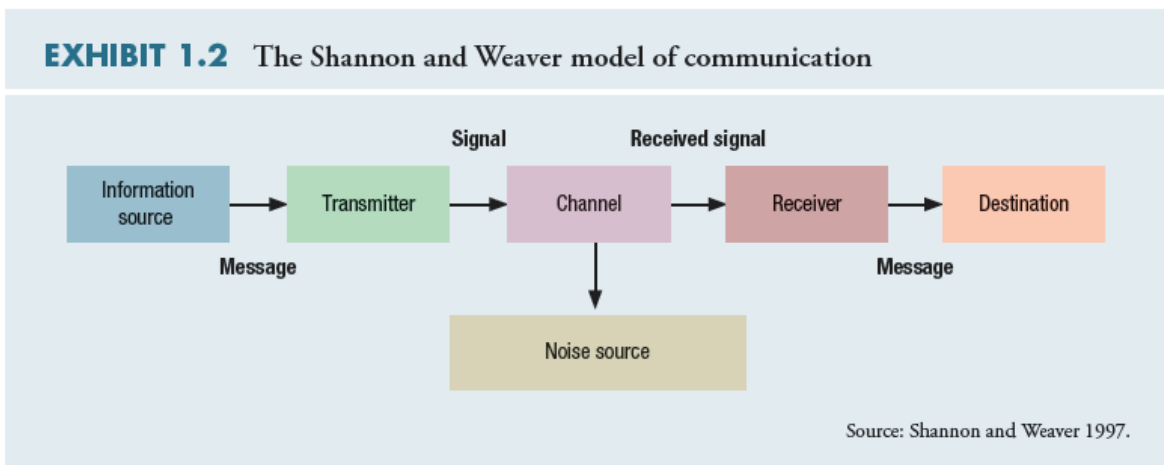
presented in the best possible order? Is the message structured to meet the receiver's needs? Does it take into account the receiver's frame of reference?

4) Feedback

Has the sender made adequate provision for feedback? Will the sender be able to tell whether the message has been understood? Can the sender tell how the receiver feels about the message?

TRANSMISSION AND TRANSACTION MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

These two models have been widely used to explain problems with communication. Exhibit 1.2 is an example of a Transmission Model of Communication and Exhibit 1.4 is an example of a Transaction Model of Communication. Please see Archee et al (2012: 10-17) for a more detailed discussion of these models.

EXHIBIT 1.2 The Shannon and Weaver model of communication

Source: Shannon and Weaver 1997.

EXHIBIT 1.4 A meaning-oriented model of communication

CASE STUDIES

Mark Neggo had to give his secretary instructions for typing a nineteen-page progress report on the section's work for the past quarter. Because he was in a hurry, he scribbled a note and attached it to the front of his draft report.

> Attached is a rough draft of the section's progress report which needs to be retyped. Leave pages 8 and 9 blank for tables from the Accounts Section. Georgina should give you those this afternoon. You will need to use A4 letterhead for the original. Three copies will be enough – one for each department head. You can look up the file on previous reports (or the company manual) if you have any problems with the format. Then manual has examples and specific instructions. I have to submit the report by the end of the week, so please get onto it straight away.
>
> See me before lunch if you have any questions as I'll be out at Head Office all the afternoon. If Georgina doesn't get in contact by 4 p.m. you had better contact here because she might not be able to get computer time to do the tables tomorrow. Don't forget to make a copy to keep here.
>
> Thanks *Mark Neggo*

CASE 2

Petra Valos has to advise her staff (7 people) of a new policy that affects their working hours. Just before knock-off time on Friday, she calls her staff together and speaks to them.

> Look, I'll try not to hold you up too long …I know you are keen to get away. I've been told to inform you that working hours for our department, (in fact this policy affects the whole company), are going to be changed. You've probably noticed what a mess it is down at the gate at knock-off time. Because of these rush hour conditions and considering all the problems that they create it seems that the best solution is to get different departments to report and knock-off at different times. Because of the increased traffic on Mayer Road, there have been major traffic jams when all the staff try to get here by 8.30 and leave at 4.30. We have decided to change your knock-off time to 4.00 and have you start at 8.00 each morning. These new hours will come into effect from the last Monday in February. We appreciate your cooperation. Sorry to keep you so late. If there are no questions, have a good weekend and I'll see you on Monday."

CASE 3

Rhonda has failed to submit the Credit Section's monthly report to her Accounts Manager, George. As he comes out of his private office into the main accounting area, George finds Rhonda talking to his secretary. The following conversation takes place.

George: Can I see you for a minute?

Rhonda: O.K.

George: Where is your section's monthly report?

Rhonda: Oh, I've just about finished it.

George: Just about finished it? This is the second month in a row that your report has

been late. Don't you know that it is costing money because you are holding up billing? I'm sure it is just forgetfulness on your part, but it mustn't happen again.

Rhonda: O.K. I said it is nearly finished. I've been too busy lately.

George: Well the monthly report is vital. Maybe you have your priorities wrong. What do you think?

Rhonda: Perhaps …

George: When will your report be ready?

Rhonda: Leah said the typing would be finished in half an hour.

George: Good. Let's have a look at it then and review your work load at the same time. It's important that you get on top of it for next month. O.K.?

Rhonda: O.K. See you in half an hour.

CASE 4

Rick Smith has worked as manager of the information services division of Personal Office Solutions (POS) for twelve years. His department is considered one of the most productive in the whole company, and he is well liked by everyone with whom he works.

Because of technological developments, POS plans to reorganise the information services division. Any personnel changes resulting from this reorganisation will be made on the basis of seniority.

Rick and his boss agree that the changes will benefit the organisation, will improve working conditions for current employees, and will result in additional employment opportunities for members of the community rather than retrenchment of current staff. Rick's boss has asked Rick to avoid discussing any of the planned changes until all the details have been finalised.

Many of Rick's subordinates have noticed that whenever they make suggestions about improving work procedures, Rick acts a little nervous and says "Let's talk about this later." Additionally, Rick's administrative assistant unknowingly "leaked" to a colleague that "some big changes are going to take place around here, and, they have something to do with technological change."

Rick's staff begin to talk. Rumours spread about sackings. Morale drops noticeably. Lateness and absenteeism rise sharply. The department becomes much less productive. Rick begins to spend most of his time trying to get his staff to work better, and in writing reports for their personnel files.

Rick becomes very dissatisfied with his job. His boss picks up the signals and calls Rick into his office for a serious discussion about his future with the company.