UNIT - 3 : MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1. Learning Objectives
3.2. Introduction
3.3. Concepts and functions of model
3.4. Some important models of communication
    3.4.1 SMR model
    3.4.2 SMCR model
    3.4.3 Shannon and Weaver's model
    3.4.4 Lasswell's model
    3.4.5 Osgood's model
    3.4.6 Schramm's model
    3.4.7 Gerbner's model
    3.4.8 Newcombe's model
    3.4.9 Gate-Keeping model
3.5. Let Us Sum Up
3.6. Further Readings
3.7. Answers To Check Your Progress
3.8. Possible Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Explain the concept and functions of models
- Describe the different models of communication

3.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous two units we have introduced you to the concept of communication in general and Mass Communication in particular. Now, in this unit we will try to understand the process of communication a little more deeply by studying some communication models.

Several communication experts have formulated illustrative models for explaining the process of communication which facilitates its understanding. All the models have their own characteristics, advantages and disadvantages. It is important that we should have a fair knowledge of them.

There are several models of communication and it is not really possible to discuss all of them in one unit. So, we have introduced only the basic communication models for your understanding. We hope that after completing this unit, you will be better conversant with the process of how communication takes place and how several communication experts have made efforts in describing the system through models. So let us start this unit by understanding what a model is and what is its purpose and function.

3.3 CONCEPT AND FUNCTIONS OF MODEL

A model is a graphical presentation of a concept designed to help us in understanding a concept or activity better. We know that such an explanation is always better than a theoretical presentation from the question of understanding it.

It is an important tool for knowing something. Studies and experiments in this direction are highly helpful in pursuing further analysis for discovering a better communication process in due course of time which would be of immense help to us in future.

Now, in communication parlance it is commonly said that a picture is worth a thousand words. It means that a picture accords an event such a vision that it cuts down the need of words to explain it to us. A model also helps us realize something more clearly than a description in written language.

This is a system that allows us to understand how communication works in actual life in this case. It can be compared to the complex or simple drawings of mechanical or electrical circuits and activities. A model shows us how a message moves from one source to another and back through a specific medium that enriches our experiences in due course of time.

It also helps us in visualizing the process of communication under any circumstances. If we know the process of communication in a graphical system, it helps us better in understanding them and then improving our communication efforts. In other words it helps us in improving our communication in the subsequent times as the process moves on further.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – A

1. What is a model?

.....

.....

.....

2. What is the significance of a model?

.....

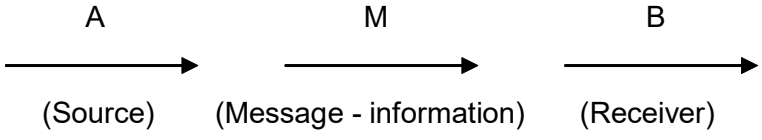
.....

.....

3.4 SOME IMPORTANT MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

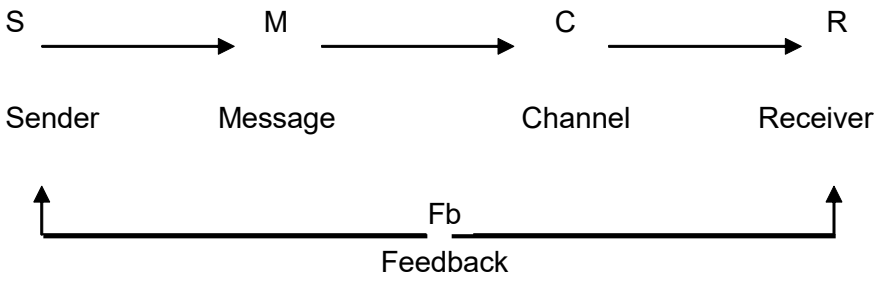
3.4.1 SMR Model

It is one of the earliest and the most basic models of communication. Two persons are involved in this model - a **Source** (who sends the messages first) from whom the message originates and a **Receiver** to whom the message is to be sent across. So **Source** + **Message** + **Receiver** or SMR model is a basic model of the communication system.



3.4.2 SMCR Model

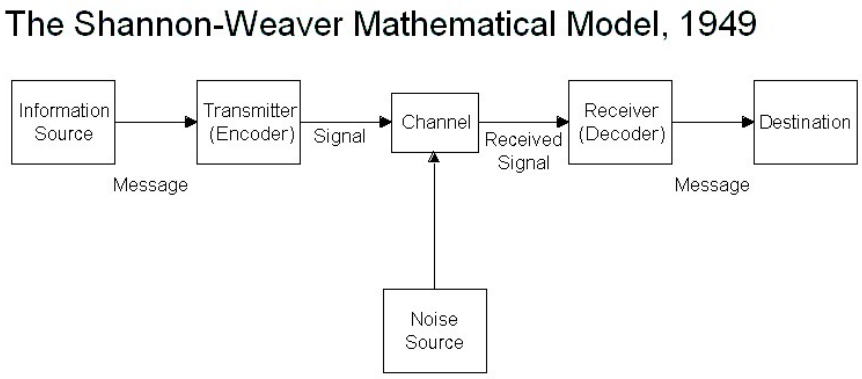
It is another basic and simple model that tries to examine the communication process in the following manner —



It is a sort of an extension of the SMR model. This model says that the messages are transmitted through a medium – that is a **channel.** So, here four elements are involved in the process – **Sender, Message, Channel** and **Receiver** and thus it is called the SMCR model.

Once the sender sends across the messages to the receiver, he or she in turn prepares a reply or expresses a reaction, depending upon the message, and sends the same back to the sender of the first message. It is called feedback. This exchange continues as long as both the parties want or unless one of the parties put a stop to it after sometime.

3.4.3 Shannon and Weaver's Model



Developed by communication experts Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver in 1949, it is a unique model compared to the other models as this is the first engineering model of human communication developed on the telephonic communication system.

This model says that the process moves from an 'information source' (the first communicator or Sender) transmitted through a specific mode (normally the voice of the Sender in this case) to a 'destination'. The model also says that these messages are nothing but verbal signals meant for the receiver. The receiver, on the other hand, goes through the same process in order to continue the communication process. And, while the communication is on, noise or disturbances enter into it creating some disturbances in the activity. Here, the term 'destination' means the receiver of the messages or the target audience.

An essential element of this model is a transmitter for converting the messages into signals which can be sent to the receiver in the same way as a telephone. This model claims that human communication also takes place in this manner only. The process is repeated from the other participant also in the same manner.

One important characteristic of this model is that for the first time it focused on the aspect of 'noise' in the communication process. Noise – not to be used in the strict literary meaning of the term – means the interferences, barriers and disturbances which cause problems in allowing the participants in the communication process to continue smoothly, rendering it difficult to understand the messages and information properly.

It can be of two types. First – technical or channel noise which implies the disturbances generated due to malfunctioning of mechanical means, winds or aeroplane sounds obstructing the natural and proper flow of information or messages back and forth.

Secondly, there is the human noise which arises due to lack of an equal footing or status of the intellectual level of those taking part in the communication process. This is one aspect that sets it apart from all other models, specially those developed prior to it.

3.4.4 Harold D Lasswell's Model

Primarily developed as a verbal model of communication way back in 1948, it mainly emphasized upon a questioning pattern. The model proceeds through the following steps, each step signifying an important link in the whole process -

WHO (the sender or the initiator of the communication process),
Says WHAT (the message / information),
In WHICH CHANNEL (the media)
To WHOM (the receiver of the messages or the initial communication),
With WHAT EFFECT (feedback / response generated)

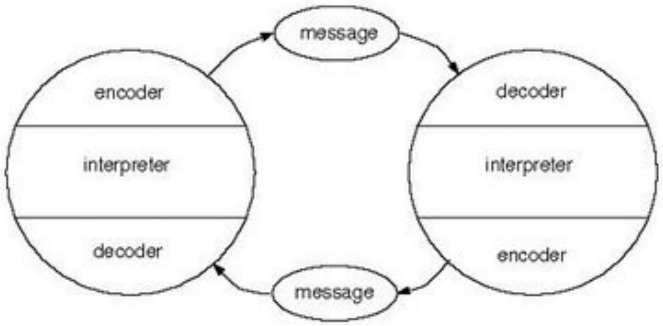
who (speaker) → **what** (message) → **channel** (or medium) → **whom** (audience or listener) = **effect**

These five steps of the model adequately describe the whole communication process. You may remember that communication is a continuous process with no definite point which can be termed as the beginning or end of it. So any change in these links is definitely going to affect the whole process also.

3.4.5 Charles E Osgood's Model

This 1954 model assumes communication as a dynamic process in which the status of the communicators keeps constantly changing from Sender to Receiver and vice versa. It is quite simple - in any situation someone has to start the communication process which causes a certain response from the targeted receivers of this effort.

And, in response to this reaction or feedback, the first communicator again sends back a reaction or feedback to the second partner in the process. Thus it goes on to start a chain reaction where roles of the Senders and Receivers continuously interchange or alternate. The same person functions both as a Sender and Receiver of the communication in the subsequent times.



Here also, like any other communication process, the activity involving both the parties (sender and receiver) go through the basic steps of communication — encoding (by sender) followed by interpretation (by the receiver) and again decoding (by the first communicator) of the feedback. The process is repeated infinitely.

Encoding here signifies framing a certain signal based on verbal signs (written and spoken language) or non-verbal signs (body expressions, gestures etc.).

On the opposite side when the receiver receives this encoded messages he or she first analyses it and draws out its meaning and connotation, which is decoding. After decoding or understanding the meaning of the message, he or she again encodes a response in return and sends it back to the first sender.

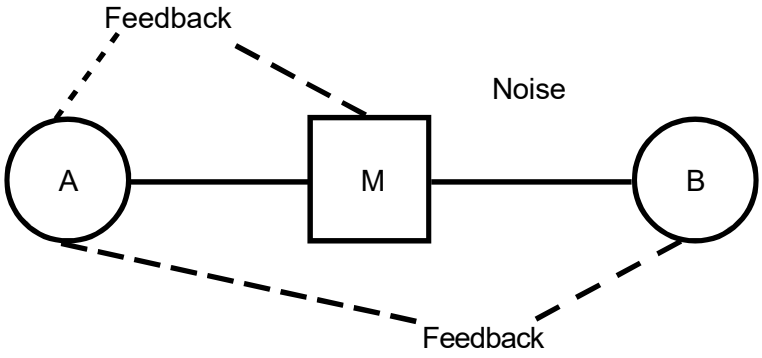
The system of preparation of a message and also its successful transmission plays a highly-important role in making the receiver understand the same with the minimum loss of meaning or distortion. In other words, if the message can not be transmitted properly and its formation is faulty then the participating parties would not be able to

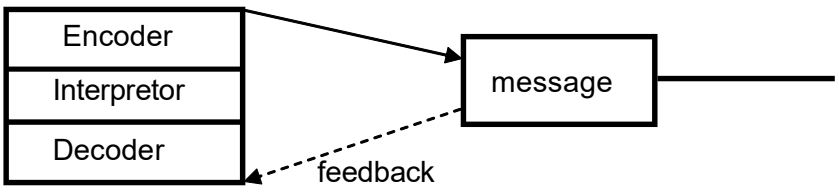
understand its true meaning as it was desired. This will render the communication efforts defective and unsuccessful unable to achieve the desired effect on the receivers.

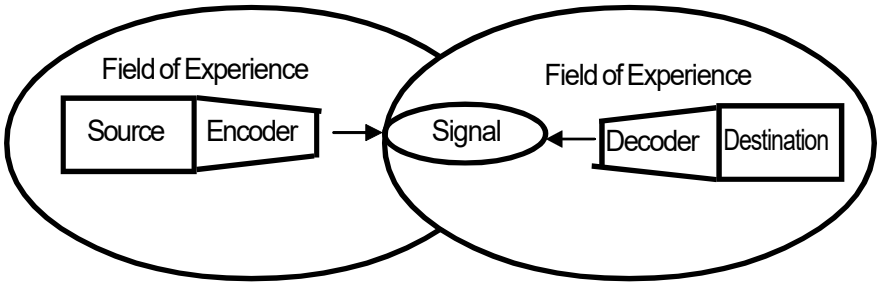
3.4.6 Wilbur Schramm's Model

This model, developed in 1971 is also unique as it presented us with a more convenient and acceptable description of the communication process for the first time as against all other conventional models developed till then.

Though the proponent of this model – Wilbur Schramm took the framework of the Weaver and Shannon's Model for explaining his presentation, he also introduced new concepts such as encoder, decoder, redundancy, feedback, noise etc. into it.







Different facets of Wilbur Schramm's model of communication

This model lays a good emphasis upon 'feedback' as it believes that this aspect plays a very important role in continuation and also the success of the process. This happens because once the process is started by the sender a certain feedback is sure to follow suit. Now, the third step of the communication process would be highly dependent upon the first feedback or reaction that was developed by the initial sender of messages. This happens because with every successive reaction or feedback from our messages we become wiser with the new information being generated which helps us in improving our communication with the other partners of the process. It is true also for the other partners of the communication process.

Now let us look at a few features of this model. Such as -

a) Noise is an important feature of the model. Noise is the disturbance that may affect the communication process making the desired result less effective. For example – mechanical sound disturbing our conversation, bad printing of photographs or text, printing mistakes, bad pronunciation, lack of ground work or preparatory work prior to a lecture or a class, faulty transmission of messages or programmes by the electronic media etc. are 'noise' which disturb the communication process and makes it difficult to understand.

b) Schramm is presenting a different meaning of the term 'feedback' in contrast to the normal popular version of the term. That is, feedback in the form of responses generated by our own messages. For example, by observing our own preparation of a lecture, writing, pronunciations etc. we can gather if there is anything amiss or any lacunae in it. This helps us to improve our own preparations for future usage. This is somewhat different from the feedback that is generated from our messages to the receivers or someone else.

c) According to Schramm, communication is essentially a process of sharing basically our experiences which are influenced by the prevailing socio-cultural and economic situation and factors which are invariably reflected in our communication. In his words, the communication process is basically sharing of our experiences and shaping and reshaping of the same in view of the feedback we receive from the constant interaction with our counterparts in the society at any moment of time.

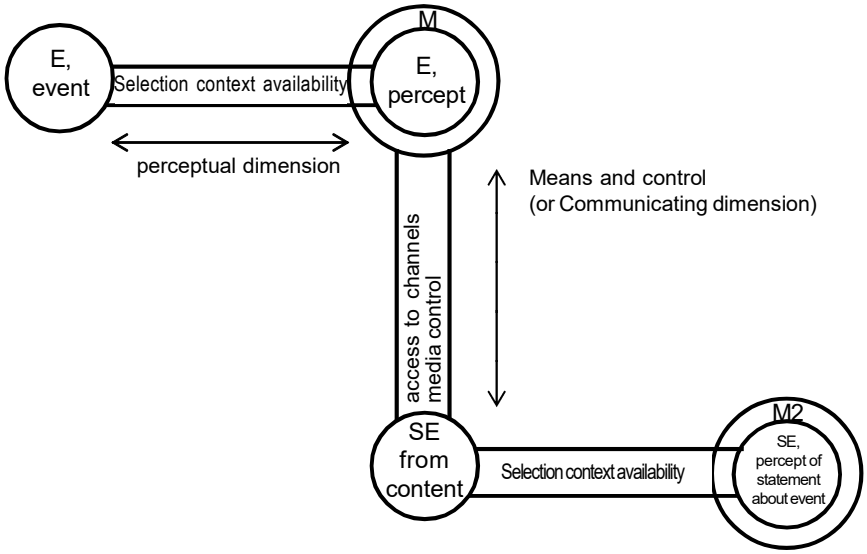
d) Schramm also emphasized the fact that all communicators or parties involved in the communication process are driven by his or her personality or the group's characteristics which are based upon a complex set of factors including family background, socio-cultural development etc. And more importantly, people encode, interpret, decode and send back feedback according to these values and set of beliefs. So, those influencing factors are constantly at work every moment throughout the entire communication process.

3.4.7 George Gerbner's Model

This model which was Developed in 1956 stands out from the others because of its stress upon two distinct aspects - relating messages to 'reality' and establishing that communication process comprises two dimensions – the receptive/ perceptual dimensions and the communicating dimensions.

This model can be said to be based on three parts – two perceptual dimensions and one communicating dimension.

The perceptual dimension is also called as the Horizontal dimension in which a person (say A), the communicator perceives a certain event (an external reality) directly or through a device like a camera or a microphone. Now, A selects or perceives the events according to his or her perception of the event which in itself is shaped by long years of

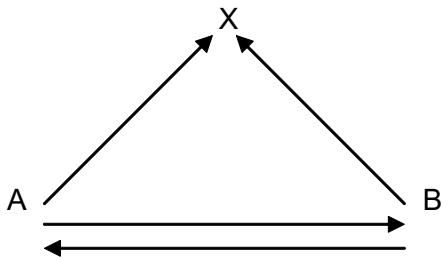


experience and the overall personality. Human perception is quite a complex phenomenon which may vary any moment without the slightest of any hint and the socio-cultural, economic and political developments of the time actually do have an impact on it which determine further how the person would perceive a certain event.

In the second stage or communicating stage, we imply a certain meaning to what we have perceived which is then converted into a message for onward transmission to the receiver. At this stage it is also important to select a suitable channel for putting forward the messages so that there is the minimum of disturbance during the transmission. At this point the selection of channel acquires a major significance as the media selected would also entail a major credibility to the messages.

3.4.8 Newcombe Model

Communication expert Theodore M Newcombe's model was developed in 1953 and is based on examining the communication process as an interaction between two or among more persons which is affected by the contemporary developments in the society.

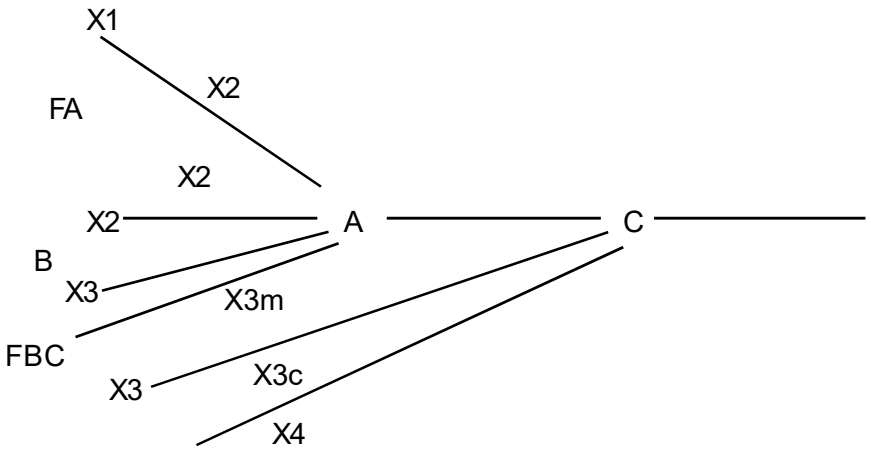


In an illustrative diagram here 'A' and 'B' are common citizens and they have to communicate between themselves. So, if they meet during the time of the Muzaffarabad – Kashmir bus journey launching time definitely their conversation would be more concerned with it rather than anything else. Similarly, the general trend of conversation amongst the people of Assam would normally tend to veer towards the major issues confronting the society as a whole like insurgency, unemployment, floods etc. In this diagram 'X' is the issue concerning the society at that time.

This diagram also says that significant developments in every walk of life or society actually affect the lifestyle of the people of that the society or nation. In a chain reaction it also affects the communication relationship among the people as well as between the government and the society as a whole.

3.4.8 Westley and Maclean's Model

More widely known as the Gatekeeping model, it was developed in 1957. It advocates that messages or information in Mass Communication have essentially to pass through several layers of scrutiny or gates so that everything received in the media offices are not aired or broadcast or published without any check. In simple terms this means that mass media is a 'dignified gatekeeper' allowing only selective messages or information to be passed through, rejecting others. Some of the these messages are rejected as they do not meet the approval of that particular mass media agency like newspaper, TV or Radio channel.



X= Source of information

A= Sender

C= Gatekeeper

B= Audience

F= Feedback

For example, everyday several hundred news items, opinions, views (both important and ordinary) arrive at the offices of the newspapers or TV / Radio news channels. But it does not mean that all those news items would be published or broadcast without subjecting them to a detailed scrutiny which is very much like the gatekeeping function. This scrutiny is done not only at one level, but also at several levels. In addition to this scrutiny, messages are also modified according to that newspaper or the channel's principles and attitudes etc.

You may well remember the concept of professional communicators in different media organizations. This group of professionals also act as the gatekeepers in those organizations who keep a control over which messages will actually be published and which will not be published or broadcast. He or she can be a journalist / a programme producer etc.

It is true to a big extent even for our personal life because we also receive messages from different sources but after receiving them we decode or interpret them according to our own perception and express our feedback depending upon this aspect.

Further, in our day-to-day life we meet so many persons, see so many events happening but we are not bothered by all the events or persons equally. Some of them affect us more than the others and differently compared to the others.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – B

1. What is the Westley and McLean's model better known as?

.....

.....

.....

2. Which model was based on the concept of telecommunications?

.....

.....

.....

3. Which model is best applicable to Journalism?

.....

.....

.....

4. Which model proceeds in a question answer pattern?

.....

.....

.....

5. Which is the most basic and simplest model of communication?

.....

.....

6. What new element did the SMCR model introduce?

.....

.....

.....

7. How many dimensions does the Gerbner's model talk about? What are they?

.....

.....

3.5 LET US SUM UP

1. A model of communication facilitates a graphic presentation of the entire communication process which makes it convenient for understanding,
2. There are several models from simple to complex ones which focus on different interesting aspects of communication and mass communication,
3. These models were evolved following extensive scientific observations of human behaviour and activity under various circumstances,
4. The models of Shannon and Weaver and Gerbner are considered to be universally applicable as they can explain any form of communication,
5. Lasswell's model verbalizes the communication process in such terms which can be applied to mass media,
6. Osgood stresses upon a dynamic relationship between the source and the receiver through his model,
7. Schramm's model has several interesting features which include – emphasis upon sharing of experiences on the basis of commonness as well as stressing on the importance of feedback and noise in Interpersonal and also social communications,
8. Westley and McLean's model is very much suitable to journalism media,

3.6 FURTHER READINGS

- **Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication** — *VB Agarwal & VS Gupta, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi*
- **Mass Communication in India** — *KJ Kumar, Jaico Books, Mumbai*
- **Understanding Human Communication** — *Ronald B Adler & George Rodman, Harcourt Brace College publishers*
- **Mass Communication in India**, *JV Vilanilam, Sage Publications, New Delhi*
- **Mass Communication, Theory and Practice**, *Uma Narula, Harchand Publication, New Delhi*

3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - A

1) A model is a graphical presentation of a concept designed to help us in understanding the concept or activity better.

2) Communication is an extremely complex process that becomes more complex with the ever-changing communication phenomenon. Complexity and constant change in communication makes it necessary to be presented in simple and generalized way to understand the structure and functions of communication. Now, it is commonly said that a picture is worth a thousand words. It means that a picture accords an event with such a vision that it cuts down the need of words to explain it to us. As such a model helps us realize something more clearly than a description in written language.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - B

1) Gatekeeping model.

2) Shannon and Weaver's Model

3) Gatekeeping Model

4) Lasswell's Model

5) SMR Model

6) Channel

7) Two dimensions – Perceptive or horizontal dimension and Communicating or Vertical dimension.



3.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by the term 'model of communication'?
2. What is a Model and why do we need to study models of communication?
3. What are the different models of communication? Explain a few of them with illustrations.
4. Discuss about the importance of the Gate-keeping model of communication. Justify your answer.
5. Which model is suitable from the point of view of Journalism and how?
6. Is the Gate-keeping model relevant for our personal life? Justify your answer.

*****