
UNIT 2 MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit discusses why a model is an important tool to conceptualize, organize and thereby understand the process of communication. After going through this unit, you should be able to :

- explain the meaning of 'model';
- construct a model to explain the process of communication;
- describe the relationship between models and process of communication;
- develop simple to complex models of communication;
- describe, explain and comment on the working of communication process as visualized by some of the important communication scholars.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

We know that communication has become an important part of our life. In the previous unit, we considered the various definitions and functions of communication. We also examined the process and elements of communication and noted the four main kinds of communication: intrapersonal, interpersonal, group and mass. Recognising the important role which mass media have assumed in modern society, we dealt with the issues of media reach, access and impact.

Now, in this unit, we shall find out what a communication model is, how different models have developed and what are the characteristics of some well known models. Having done that, in the next unit we shall proceed to discuss the various media theories.

2.2 MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

In order to communicate effectively, knowledge of the dynamics underlying the communication process is essential. One way to analyse communication is to present it in the form of a 'model'. A model is nothing but the mechanistic perspective of human communication that effectively tells at a glance how it works.

2.2.1 Meaning and Definition

A model is an abstracted representation of a reality. A good model comes as close to reality as possible and it discusses and explains the reality as clearly as possible. But being an abstraction, a model is not a reality, it only represents the reality of communication for better understanding of the communication process. For example, an architectural model of a house is only a representation of the house giving a fair idea of the number of rooms, layout etc., but it is not the house 'per se'.

The discussion that follows explains the importance of model in unravelling the process from an initial simplistic version of communication to a very intricate, complex process of mass communication. A model is a pictorial presentation to show the structure of communication process in which various component elements are linked. Arrows are used to depict the transmission of messages from communicator to receiver. Models are based on assumptions that theorists make as to how communication functions and what effect it has upon individual and society. A variety of models exist all of which strive to explain the different components of communication and the role each part plays in the total process. Some of the important models of communication dealt with in this unit are specifically chosen to illustrate how a particular scholar highlights the significance of one or the other elements that are common to every act of communication.

Since communication is a transmission process, the mechanistic interpretation is rather a convenient way of viewing the relationship among the variables of human communication and of explaining how communication flows from one stage to the next and so on. Models are based on assumptions that theorists make as to how communication functions and what effect it has upon individual and society.

2.2.2 Process of Communication

In simple terms the basic process of communication, as explained in Unit-I of this block, comprises a sender or a communicator who has a message that he or she transmits or conveys through some means, say a channel, to a receiver who responds, according to his or her understanding of the message, to the sender (feedback). This is a simple, yet verbal version of communication process which when explained pictorially in the form of a model will look like this :

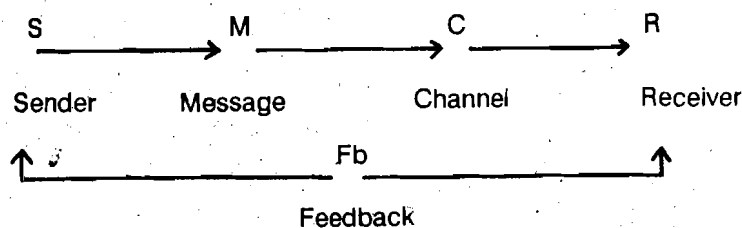


Diagram 2.1: A Simple Model of Communication Process

At a glance the model not only reveals the various elements of human communication but also their interdependence and the flow of communication from sender to receiver and back to sender. For instance, in a communication process there has to be a sender whose main intention is to communicate a message; what to convey is his/her thinking process; how to communicate the message is his/her choice of right means or channel; and whom to convey the message is his/her job to decide. The sender also needs to know the receiver's response to the message, whether or not it is being received as intended. Then only can the sender proceed further with the next act of communication and in this way it goes on and on. In this interaction process, there is an interdependence of relationship among the various variables of human communication. The mechanistic perspective of communication emphasizes the physical element of communication, the transmission and the reception of messages flowing in 'conveyor belt fashion' (B. Aubrey Fisher 1978).

The basic process of human communication applies to mass communication process as well, but as the nature of the latter's elements differ markedly, the process becomes different and more complex. For instance, in mass communication a big organisation that takes on the role of a sender, the message is not single but

multiplied. Further, it is not as personal, specialized, and unique as in interpersonal communication. The multiplied messages are directed to large, scattered, heterogeneous audiences whose responses are delayed and diffused. Therefore, in mass communication the relationship between sender and receiver is often one-way and rarely interactional.

Check Your Progress 1

Note : i) Use the space below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Why are models needed in communication?

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.....

2) Name the primary elements of communication.

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Activity 1

1) Construct a simple model of communication based on a conversation you have had with your friend on a classroom lecture. Bring out the different elements and discuss the role each element plays during the conversation. You may use the space given below for your activity.

2.2.3 Developing Communication Models

Many attempts in the past several decades have been made by philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, political scientists and anthropologists to describe the communication process through various models. Some models are simple and others are complex deriving from the scholar's experiences in their respective fields of knowledge. The phenomenon is understandable. Everyone agrees that communication is a process, but the nature of the process and what process implies varies from one model to another. The significance of these models lies in the fact that each has been designed to provide an insight into the working and understanding of the dynamic process of communication so fundamental to human life. Let us examine how the models of communication have developed from simple ones to more complex ones.

The earlier models of communication were simple but inadequate. Aristotle constructed a model which had only three elements essential for communication to happen — speaker-speech-audience — and the basic function of communication was to 'persuade the other party'. Such a communication takes place only in face-to-face situations. Another model, constructed during World War II (1939-45) saw communication as a magic bullet that transferred ideas, feeling or knowledge almost automatically from one mind to another. For example, sender A sends a message to receiver B who is considered passive and is assumed to be accepting whatever is shot at him. It can be shown like this:

A sends a message to B
 A sends another message to B
 A sends a third message to B
 A sends a fourth message to B
 and so on

Diagram 2.2 : Bullet Model

This one way model of communication became redundant as more researches on the subject showed communication as a dynamic two-way process. By 1950s models became more elaborate and adequate contributing significantly to the understanding of the communication process. The important ones among the early models are those constructed by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, based on 'telephone communication'; and by Harold D. Lasswell, in the form of questions. Both these models explained the communication process so well that they influenced several later models, especially of Charles E. Osgood, Wilbur Schramm, and George Gerbner. The majority of the models are linear i.e. one directional. A simple model of communication process can be shown in this way (Schramm).



Diagram 2.3 : Wilbur Schramm Model

Here A, the source, formulates a message, as best as he can, in signs and symbols, and passes it on to B. Depending upon B's capacity to read the signs, he reads the message. In other words, message 'acts' upon B as much as B 'acts' on the message.

This can be shown as :

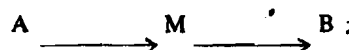


Diagram 2.4 : Action On Message

B, in turn, might respond and formulate his 'message', as best as he can, and communicate it to A. This can be shown as :

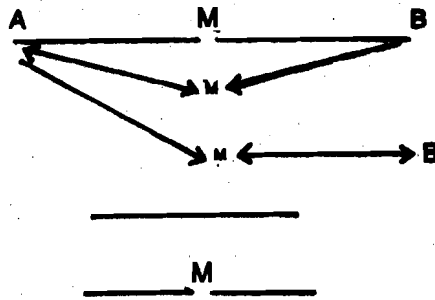


Fig. 2.1 : Interaction between sender and receiver of communication

And communication goes on and on. How this simple model of human communication process is adapted to a more complex form is apparent from a further discussion of some of the models of communication.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note :**
- i) Use the space below for your answers.
 - ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

Please tick () the appropriate answers.

- 1) A model is a pictorial representation of
 - () a theory
 - () an abstract
 - () a human communication

- 2) In communication 'feedback' can be explained as
 - () response from the receiver
 - () explanation of a theory
 - () process of communication

- 3) Aristotle constructed a model of communication and he thought that the basic function of communication was to
 - () speak and to listen
 - () persuade the other party
 - () defeat the other persons

- 4) During World War-II, a newly invented communication model was considered
 - () a bullet
 - () a pistol
 - () a gun

- 5) Communication models developed in 1950s were mostly
 - () one directional
 - () non-directional
 - () multi-directional

2.3 SOME IMPORTANT MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

The purpose of presenting some models of communication here is to illustrate the range of approaches to an investigation of the communication process.

Shannon and Weaver's and Gerbner's models are considered to be universally applicable for they can explain any example of communication. The widely quoted model of Lasswell verbalizes communication in terms that can be applied to mass media. Osgood, however emphasizes the dynamic relationship between source and receiver. Schramm, on the other hand, visualizes communication essentially as a process of sharing of experiences on the basis of commonness of social context and stresses the importance of feedback and noise in the process. Newcomb's triangular linear form of model is designed specifically in the interpersonal and social communication context. Finally, a 'gatekeeper' model developed by Westley and MacLean, is considered useful to the mass media and is often associated with news.

2.3.1 Harold D. Lasswell's Model (1948)

Lasswell presented a strictly verbal model which takes the form of a question:

Who

Says What

In Which Channel

To Whom

With What effect?

This model briefly and clearly introduces several highly significant variables in the communication process. Identification of source (who), analysis of message content (what), choice of channel (which channel), characteristics of audience (whom) and evaluation of effects (what effect) are the basic five components of communication process. It is the 'effect' that the model emphasizes the most. 'Effect' implies an observable and measurable change in the receiver that is caused by identifiable elements in the process. Change in one of these elements will lead to a change in the effect.

Check Your Progress 3

Note : i) Use the space below for your answers

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

It is said that mass communication research has followed the models of Harold Lasswell. Identify the areas/kinds of research implicit in this model.

Who :

What :

What Channel :

Whom :

What Effect :

2.3.2 Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver's Model (1949)

Shannon and Weaver were the first to develop an engineering model of human communication based on telephone communication. Diagrammatically, the process of communication can be shown like this :

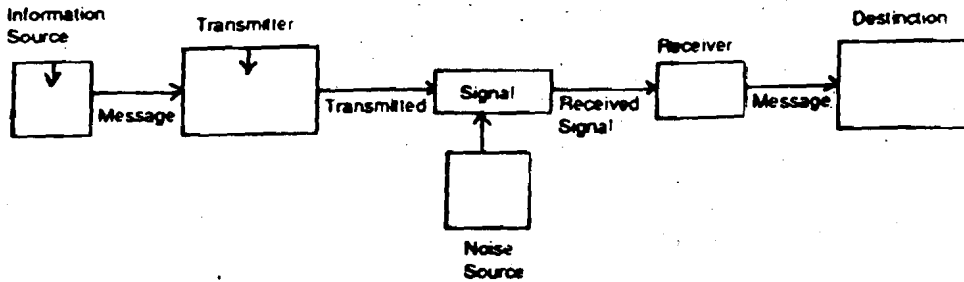


Diagram 2.5 : The Shannon and Weaver Model

In this model, communication begins with an information source who creates the message; he transmits it by means of his vocal apparatus which acts as a transmitter (a telephone speaker in telephone); through the air as the channel with noise interference (such as a telephone wire and sound waves) to the hearing mechanism of the person he is communicating with acting as the receiver (such as telephone receiver) which recreates the message so that another person, a receiver, as we have defined, can receive it.

Shannon and Weaver's model is important as it introduces the concept of 'Noise'. Noise in this model refers to disturbances in the channel that may interfere with the signals transmitted and produce different signals.

Later, based on the above principle, Shannon developed an "Information Theory" which says that the source has a **message** that it is trying to get through some **channel** to some **destination** :

- i) it requires a transmitter
- ii) to convert the message into transmittable signal
- iii) a complementary receiver
- iv) receive it from the channel.

It must contend with certain disruptive forces represented by a noise source.

Check Your Progress 4

Note : i) Use the space below for your answers.

ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Lasswell's Model mentioned five important elements in the process of communication. What are the elements?

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2) Who introduced 'noise'? Explain 'noise'.

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2.3.3 Charles E. Osgood's Model (1954)

The model of the communication process developed by C.E. Osgood is different from the earlier attempts in the sense that it does not follow the conventional pattern of communication from source to channel to receiver. He describes communication as a dynamic process and says that a given communication event may begin with receiving stimuli as shown in the figure below.

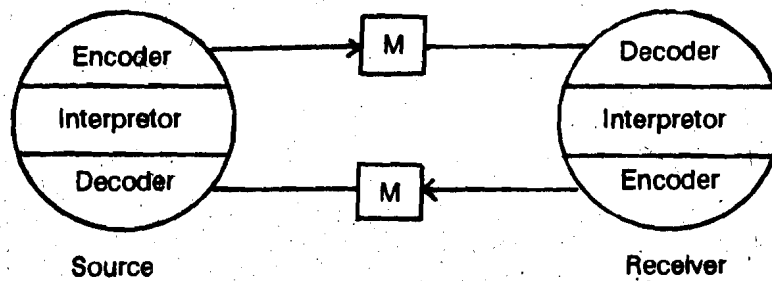


Diagram 2.6 : C. E. Osgood Model

Osgood emphasised the point that each participant in the communication process sends as well as receives messages and as such encodes, decodes, and interprets messages. Thus, according to him, communication is a dynamic process in which there is an interactive relationship between the source and the receiver where a person may be a source one moment, a receiver the next and again a source the following moment. This is particularly true in interpersonal communication.

2.3.4 Wilbur Schramm's Model (1971)

Wilbur Schramm, a leading communication expert, has provided an overview of the elements and processes of communication to explain how these work in practically all forms of communication — communication with ourselves, communication with one person or a group of persons, or communication with a mass audience of thousands and millions of people. In fact, Schramm's contribution in conceptualizing communication is so important that it has helped in formulating a more acceptable explanation about the working of the communication process. Wilbur Schramm adapted Shannon and Weaver's model to human communication and introduced two concepts of encoder, decoder, redundancy, feedback and noise into his model to explain the communication process.

In this model, Schramm has stressed the importance of feedback and noise which are considered essential elements of communication process. The feedback refers to the response that a receiver makes to a source's communication. He has formulated the following model :

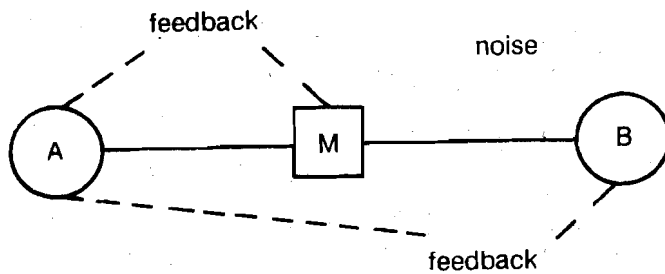


Diagram 2.7 : Schramm's Model

The situation described in the above model is like a conversation between two people, where one is constantly communicating back to the other. The feedback obtained in such situation plays a very important role in the communication process because it tells the source how his messages are being received and interpreted. An experienced communicator is attentive to the feedback and may constantly modify his messages in the light of what he observes or hears from his audience. In face-to-face interpersonal communication feedback is instant.

The 'Noise' emphasised here may contaminate the message and make communication ineffective. The 'noise' concept is taken from electronics and adapted to cover a multitude of phenomena in human communication. Noise here is not anything that the sender has put intentionally into the communication channel but is actual physical noise which may come from the roadside or the passing of an aeroplane, or it may emerge from a faulty transmission, a blurred picture in the newspaper or a much used and faded film on screen. In many such instances a message is likely to suffer deterioration before it is decoded and interpreted by a receiver.

According to Wilbur Schramm, another form of feedback is getting response from our own messages i.e. we hear our own voices and correct our mispronunciations. For example, we can see our own writing and can correct any misspelling or change the style. Similarly, we can edit our own audio/visual programme before presentation. Feedback of this kind is shown below :

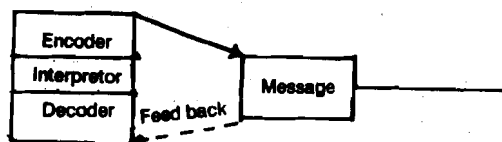


Diagram 2.8 : Schramm's Model of Communication

Wilbur Schramm further viewed the communication process as a complex one in the context of personal, social and cultural factors. He has visualised communication essentially as a process of sharing of experience, and how the shaping and reshaping of experience is. This is represented by him in a model as follows :

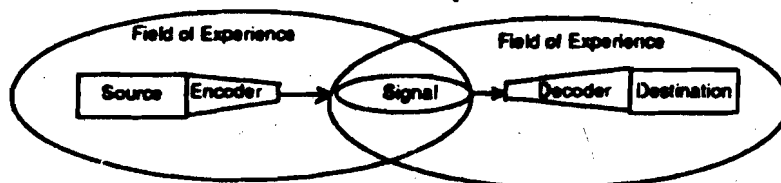


Diagram 2.9 : Schramm's Model

The circles here indicate accumulated experience of the two individuals trying to communicate. The source can encode and the destination can decode only in terms of experience each has had. For example, if we have never learned French, we can neither encode nor decode in that language. If the circles have a large area in common, then communication is easy. If the circles do not meet, there has been no common experience, and then communication is impossible.

Schramm further elaborated this model by bringing into focus the frames of reference of the persons participating in the communication process. He also look into account the wider societal situation and relationship both of which influence the communication process. Diagrammatically, it can be shown like this :

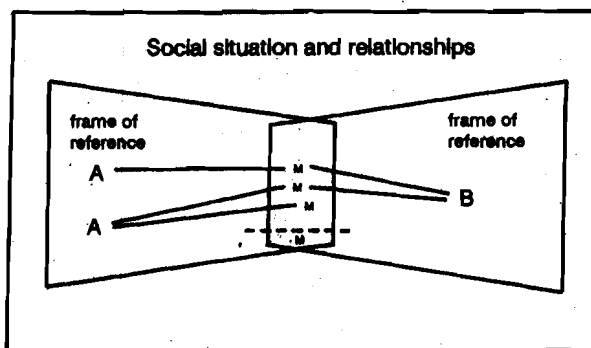


Diagram 2.10 : Schramm's Model

A (source) and B (destination) have the same kind of situation, have the same social resources and face similar constraints. If the destination decides that the message is interesting and promising enough, he selects some of it or all of it, interprets it according to his frame of reference and disposes it according to his needs, values, social imperatives and constraints.

Check Your Progress 5

- Note :**
- i) Use the space below for your answers.
 - ii) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

What is the main characteristic feature of each of following models?

- 1) Shannon Weaver's model :
- 2) Harold Lasswell's model :
- 3) Westley and MacLean's model :
- 4) Wilbur Schramm's model :

Activity 2

Suppose you have attended a lecture of an eminent scholar on the communal situation in the country. Describe pictorially the process of communication between the speaker and the audience based on Schramm's model. Highlight the role of feedback and noise. You may use the space given below.

2.3.5 George Gerbner's Model (1956)

George Gerbner attempts to produce a general purpose model of communication in which the communication act is seen as a transmission of messages. The model assumes significance as it is seen as an advancement over earlier models in two ways. It relates the messages to 'reality' and thus enables us to approach the question of perception and meaning; further it sees the communication process as consisting of two alternative dimensions — the perceptual or receptive dimension and the communicating or means and control dimension. The complex model of Gerbner looks like this :

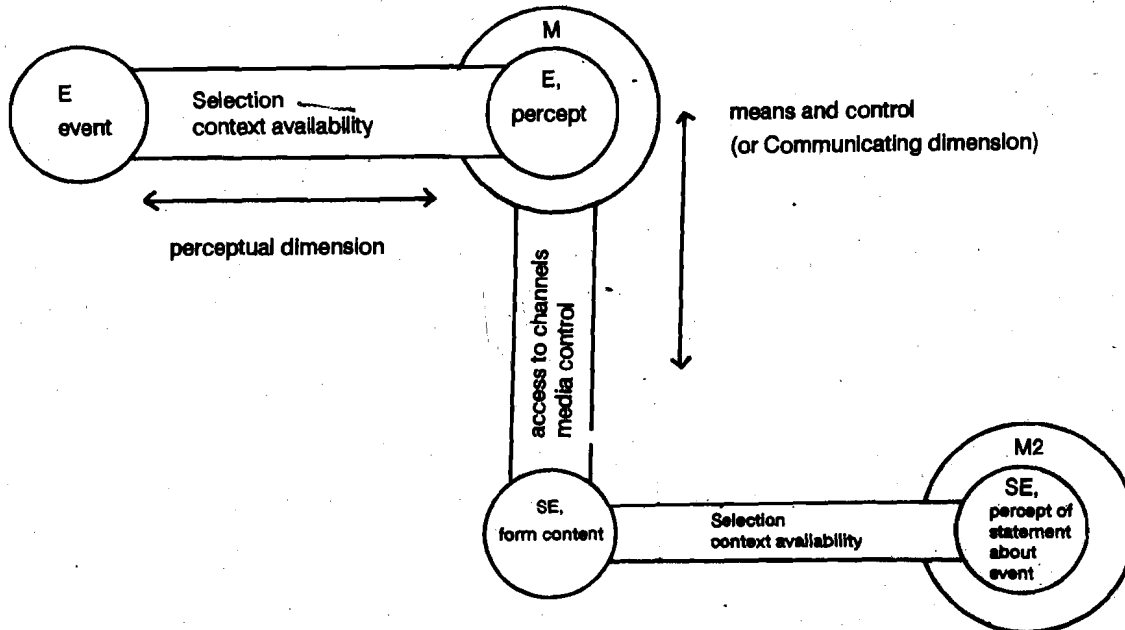


Diagram 2.11 : Gerbner's Model (modified)

In this model, the communication process can be explained in three stages. The first step is referred to as the horizontal dimension. It starts with an event E (external reality) as perceived by M (Human being directly or through a machine such as a camera or a microphone). M selects E according to his perception of the event. Since human perception is a complex phenomenon, the process involves interaction and negotiation. In this way, we try to match external stimuli with internal pattern of thought or concept and arrive at some perception of the event.

In the second stage, the vertical dimension, we give meaning to whatever we have perceived. It is then converted into a signal about SE. This is called message, that is, a singular statement about the event SE. Here, it is important to select the appropriate 'means' — the medium channel of communication. In this context, access to media assumes significance. So who makes the selection and whose picture of the world is transmitted as SE is obviously of prime importance. The media, especially television, often dubbed 'elitist', naturally would produce the elite biased version of an event.

The third stage of the process is again horizontal. M2 is not an event E, but a signal or statement about an event, or SE. The process here is something like we have explained in stage one, i.e. the meaning of the message is not 'contained' in the message itself, but is the result of an interaction or negotiation between the receiver and the message. M2 brings to SE a set of needs and concepts derived from his culture and sub-culture and if he can relate SE to them, we can say that he finds meaning in the message. And this can be realised only by interaction or negotiation between M2 and SF the resulting meaning is SE. For example, the government's policy of not showing programme containing sex and violence is a way of restricting their availability to people.

2.3.6 Theodore M. Newcomb's Model (1953)

Newcomb's model, unlike other models, takes the shape of a triangle and its main significance is that it tries to explain the role of communication in a society or a social relationship. According to it, communication maintains equilibrium within the social system and works like this.

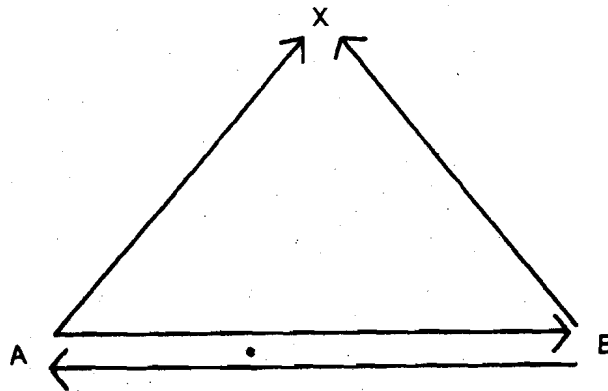


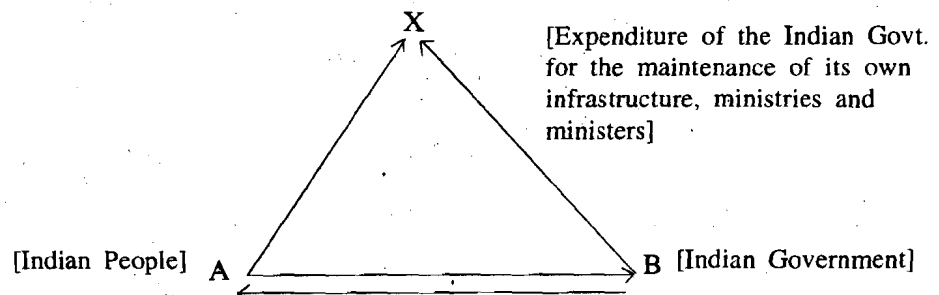
Diagram 2.12 : The Newcomb Model

Here A and B are communicator and receiver. They may be individuals, or management and union, or government and people. X is part of their social environment. ABX is a system, which means that its internal relations are interdependent: if A changes, B and X will change as well or if A changes his relationship to X, B will have to change either his relationship with X or with A. The A-B-X system will be in equilibrium only if A and B have similar attitude to X. The more important a place X has in A's and B's social environment, the more urgent will be their drive to share an orientation towards it. Take the example of War time. During such a time, A, the government, and B, the public, need to communicate to establish their co-orientation to the War X because it concerns both A and B. Both A's and B's dependence on media is increased. This is because the War X is not only of crucial importance but also because the situation is constantly changing. So, government and people (A and B) need to be in constant communication via mass media.

This model assumes significance in the light of people's increasing need for information. In fact, in a democracy people need adequate information about their social environment so that they can identify their problems and share with their peer group, and know how to react.

Check Your Progress 6

- Note :**
- i) Use the space below for your answer.
 - ii) Compare your answers with the one given at the end of this unit.



Use Newcomb's model and explain the above diagram. List down the areas for which information is to be disseminated for the maintenance of a democratic society.

2.3.7 Bruce H. Westley's and M.S. MacLean's Model (1957)

The model designed by Bruce Westley and Malcolm MacLean is an extension of Newcomb's model and specifically adapted for the mass media. It is based on the assumption that messages in mass communication pass through different check points called 'gatekeeper' before they are actually received by audience. The 'gatekeeper' concept is essentially sociological term applied to in mass media and is often associated with news. The model emphasizes the role gatekeepers play within the media organization. They decide on which messages are to be transmitted and how their content are to be modified. The model is explained as follows:

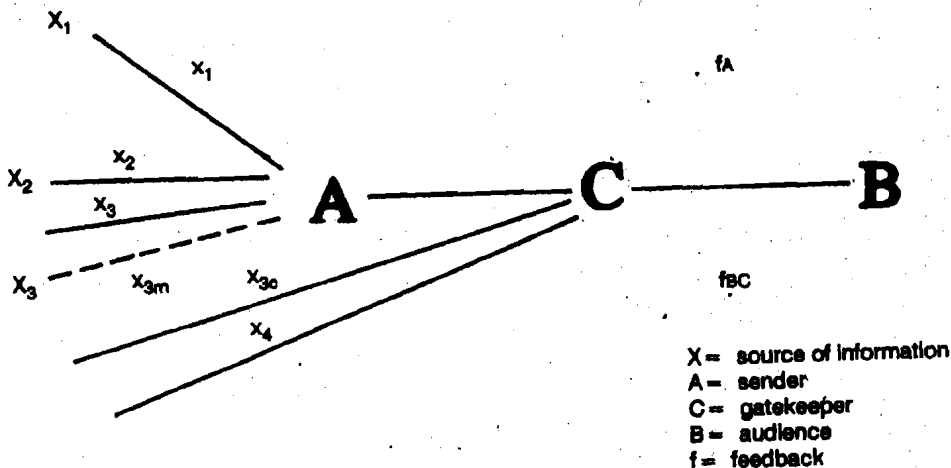


Diagram 2.13 : The Westley and MacLean Model

A, here, is sender (e.g. reporter) who receives messages from many sources X₁, X₂, X₃, X₄ X_n and according to his perception of event writes a report and sends it to gatekeeper C who performs the editorial-communicating function; that is the process of deciding what and how to communicate. C, therefore, keeping the specific audience in mind, may emphasize or deemphasize a certain point in the message to strike a balance and then sends it to the audience B. The audience,

therefore, receives the reporter's and editor's versions of the day's events and not necessarily what may be the reality. In fact, interposed between the sender and the audience are the editors whether in print journalism, film, TV or radio who as gatekeepers, determine what the public reads, listens to or watches. Therefore, the audience's exposure to an event's reality is in the gatekeeper's hands.

The drawback of this model is that it applies only to mass media and fails to take account of the relationship between the mass media and the other systems through which we fit into society like family, work, friendships, school, church, trade unions and all other formal and informal networks of relationship. Normally, one is not as dependent upon the media as this model implies.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

The purpose of this unit has been to build up an understanding of communication process through descriptions of a variety of models. A model is an important tool designed to explain pictorially the way communication works. The usefulness of a model is that : a) it highlights the different elements, b) it points to interrelationship among the elements, c) it describes the role each element plays in the process, d) it explains the communication flow, and finally, e) it brings out the definition and approach for further research. We have briefly traced the development of models, from extremely simple ones to very complex ones and noted the distinguishing characteristics of some models provided by eminent scholars.

2.5 FURTHER READING

- 1) B. Aubrey Fisher, MacMillan, 1978, *Perspective on Human Communication*.
- 2) Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Roberts (editors), 1971, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, Univ. of Illinois Press.
- 3) John Fiske, 1982, *Introduction to Communication Studies*, Methuen, London.

2.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: MODEL ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) A model represents a reality. Before a house is built, a model is made to represent how the house would look like when built. The geographical and psychological sphere of communication is complex and large. For easy understanding of the elements and process of communication, we require a model.
- 2)
 - a) Sender
 - b) Message
 - c) Channel
 - d) Receiver
 - e) Feedback

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) an abstract
- 2) response from the receiver
- 3) to persuade the other party
- 4) a bullet
- 5) one directional

Check Your Progress 3

Who	: Control Analysis	: studies of the communicator
What	: Content Analysis	: nature of messages going through the media
Which Channel	: Media Analysis	: Nature, and organisation of the media
Whom	: Audience Analysis	: nature of the audience
What Effect	: Effect Analysis	: intract of the message transmitted

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Source
Message
Channel
Receiver
Effect
- 2) Shannon and Weaver in their model of communication introduced the concept of 'noise'.

According to them 'noise' is disturbance caused in the channel during communication.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) Shannon Weaver's model : It introduced the concept of 'Noise'.
- 2) Harold Lasswell's model : It clearly outlines the areas of mass communication research.
- 3) Westley and MacLean's model : It brings up the concept of gatekeeper in mass communication.
- 4) Wilbur Schramm's model : It introduces the concept of shared orientation between sender and receiver.

Check Your Progress 6

India is a democratic society. The members of the parliament are elected directly by the people of India. The expenditure incurred by the government is directly met by the people in the form of taxes. Therefore, a constant interaction between the government and the people of India regarding the expenditure incurred by the government is essential for the maintenance of a healthy relationship.

- itemised expenses of each ministries
- itemised expenses incurred for the ministers
- expenses incurred for each development project
- plan outlay for the future projects.