**Chapter 1: Fundamentals of Human Communication**

**Learning Objectives**

1.1 Define *human communication,* and identify the major forms, benefits, and myths.

1.2 Define the major elements of human communication: *context*, *source–receiver*, *messages*, *channels*, *noise*, *effects*, and *ethics*.

1.3 Paraphrase the principles of human communication.

1.4 Explain the characteristics of the competent communicator.

**Chapter Outline**

I. The Nature of Human Communication

1. The Forms of Human Communication
   1. **Intrapersonal communication -** Communication you have with yourself
   2. **Interpersonal communication -** Communication between two or more persons
   3. **Interviewing -** Communication through question and answer
   4. **Small group communication -** Communication among members of groups of about 5-10 people
   5. **Organizational communication -** Communication that takes place within an organization
   6. **Public speaking -** Communication between a speaker and an audience
   7. **Mass communication -** Communication from one source to many receivers
   8. **Computer-mediated communication**
      1. Communication between people that takes place through some computer, electronic or Internet connection
      2. **Synchronous and asynchronous**
2. The Benefits of Studying Human Communication
   1. **Critical thinking** and creative thinking skills
   2. Interaction skills
   3. Relationship skills
   4. Group membership and leadership skills
   5. Presentation skills
   6. **Media literacy** skills
3. The Myths of Human Communication

**II. Elements of Human Communication**

Journal 1.1 Communication Choice Point – Journals in this book

1. Communication Contexts
   1. **Physical** – The tangible or concrete environment in which communication takes place
   2. **Social-psychological –** The relationships among the communicators
   3. **Temporal** (or time)
   4. **Cultural –** Beliefs, values, and ways of behaving that are shared by a group of people
2. **Source**–**Receiver**
   1. **Encoding** – The act of producing messages
   2. **Decoding** – The act of receiving messages
3. Messages
   1. **Metamessages** – signals transmitted from source to receiver
   2. **Feedback Messages** – messages sent back to the sender reacting to what was said
   3. **Feedforward Messages** – information you provide before sending your primary message

Journal 1.2 Communication Choice Point - Silence

1. Channels
2. **Noise**
   1. Physical noise – interference that is external to the speaker and listener
   2. Physiological noise – created by barriers within the sender or receiver
   3. Psychological noise – mental interference in the speaker or listener
   4. Semantic noise – created when the speaker and listener have different meaning systems
3. Effects
   1. Cognitive effects – changes in your thinking
   2. Affective effects – changes in your attitudes, values, beliefs, and emotions
   3. Behavioral effects – changes in behaviors

**III. Principles of Human Communication**

1. Communication is Purposeful
   1. To learn
   2. To relate
   3. To help
   4. To influence
   5. To play
2. Communication is **Transactional**
   1. Communication is an ever-changing process.
   2. Each element relates integrally to every other element.
   3. Communication is influenced by a multitude of factors.
   4. Each person in an interaction is both sender and receiver.
3. Communication is a Package of Signals
4. Communication is a Process of Adjustment
5. Communication Involves Content and Relationship Dimensions
   1. Ignoring relationship dimensions
   2. Recognizing relationship dimensions
6. Communication is **Ambiguous**

Journal 1.3 Communication Choice Point – Relationship Ambiguity

1. Communication is **Punctuated**
2. Communication is Inevitable, Irreversible, and Unrepeatable
   1. **Inevitability**
   2. **Irreversibility**
   3. **Unrepeatability**

**IV. The Competent Communicator**

1. The Competent Communicator Makes Reasoned Choices
2. The Competent Communicator Thinks Critically and Mindfully

1. Create and recreate categories.

2. Be open to new information and points of view.

3. Beware of relying too heavily on first impressions.

4. Think before you act.

1. The Competent Communicator is an Effective **Code-Switcher**
2. The Competent Communicator is Culturally Sensitive

Journal 1.4 Communication Choice Point – Content and Relationship Messages

1. The Competent Communicator is **Ethical**
2. The Competent Communicator is an Effective Listener
3. The Competent Communicator is **Media Literate**

Understanding Theory and Research: Communication Theories and Research

**Key Terms**

adjustment

ambiguity

asynchronous

channel

code

code switching

communication competence

communication accommodation

theory

computer-mediated communication

content and relationship

dimensions

content message

context

critical thinking

cultural context

decoder

decoding

effect

encoder

encoding

ethics

feedback

feedforward

human communication

inevitability

intercultural communication

interpersonal communication

interviewing

intrapersonal communication

irreversibility

mass communication

media literacy

messages

metacommunication

metamessages

mindfulness

noise

organizational communication

physical context

public speaking

punctuation of communication

receiver

relationship message

research

responses

small group communication

social–psychological context

source

synchronous

temporal context

theory

transactional

unrepeatability

**Discussion Questions**

1. What are the eight types of human communication? Can you distinguish between the eight types? What makes each type unique? Why might it be important to know the differences?
2. What are some of the types of noise that you experience in your communication? What can you do to stop this noise? Is it always desirable to decrease this noise?
3. What are the eight principles of human communication? Can you think of examples from your own life that demonstrate each principle?
4. Explain how communication is a transactional process.
5. Define communication accommodation theory. Provide an example of when you would accommodate and match your style to another, and when you would *not* accommodate and would want to distinguish your communication style from another. What effects might accommodation (or lack of accommodation) have on the interaction?
6. The study of human communication involves the understanding of theory, research, and practical skills for increasing communication competence. Discuss the practical necessity of increasing your own personal communication competence.
7. What are the seven interrelated characteristics of a competent communicator? Which of these characteristics do you possess and which should you work toward improving?
8. How do you define ethics? Provide some specific examples to argue for your perspective.

**Activities**

* ***Activity One: Drawing a Model***

**Objective:** To apply the Elements of Communication (Figure 1.2) to the eight areas of communication.

**Time:** Approximately 20 minutes or can be extended to 50 minutes

**Group Size:** Small groups of two to three each; must have eight different groups.

**Description of Activity:**

Divide the class into eight groups. Each group will be assigned one of the eight types of human communication: intrapersonal, interpersonal, interviewing, small group, organizational, public speaking, computer-mediated, or mass communication. Groups are assigned the task of discovering the differences in the process of communication for their area. The focus should be on identifying the sender, the message direction, the channel(s), the receiver(s), and the feedback. Reference should be made to Figure 1.2 The Elements of Human Communication. The final product should be a drawing depicting their type of human communication. For example, a visual representation of the sender, the message, the channel, the receiver, and the feedback should be simply and creatively designed (stick figures, shapes, arrows, and labels). A representative from each group will explain what the group has created. Some ideas might include designing a mobile, a creative drawing, a cartoon, or a metaphorical drawing. Focus on guiding the students to specifically illustrate the eight types of human communication. Differences are highlighted in Table 1.1. Encourage students to visually depict the information explained in Figure 1.1.

**Debriefing:** Once groups have completed their model, have them present it to the class. Provide transitions between presentations asking debriefing questions such as:

1. Which of the communication models are most similar? Most different? How do these differences influence the communication process?
2. Which model of communication do you use the most in your own life?
3. How is communication competence different in each model? What different kinds of skills do we need to be effective in each model?
4. What kinds of noise might you encounter in each of these models?

* ***Activity Two: Deal-a-Dimension***

**Objective:** To apply the four contexts of communication (physical, social–psychological, temporal, and cultural contexts) to a single communicative event to understand its impact.

**Time:** One class period (50 minutes)

**Group Size:** Small groups of around four students each

**Description of Activity:**

Divide the class into groups of four. Each group will be given one index card from four separate communication context piles labeled “Physical Dimension,” “Social–Psychological Dimension,” “Temporal Dimension,” and “Cultural Dimension.”

*The physical context cards could include:*

* classroom
* bowling alley
* bar
* park
* funeral home
* hospital
* restaurant
* church or synagogue

*The social-psychological dimension cards could include:*

* young lovers
* grandma and grandpa with grandchildren
* married couple of 30 years
* a meeting of a student government group in conflict
* a baby’s first birthday
* two people from two different cultures (Japanese and American)
* a sick student meeting with a professor

*The temporal dimension cards could include:*

* morning
* evening
* 5:30 p.m.
* 1990
* 1968
* your birthday
* Halloween night

*The cultural context cards could include:*

* Hispanic females
* Nigerian males
* gay American males
* women between 40-45 years of age
* men between 25 and 30 years of age
* deaf children
* male and female inmates
* millionaires

The group will create a dialogue that can *best* illustrate how all the chosen dimensions come into play. Each context will influence the content of the message. Students will then act out their dialogues for the class. Upon completion, have the audience members guess the physical, social-psychological, temporal, and cultural contexts the groups chose.

**Debriefing:**

Once each group has presented its dialogue to the class, discuss the importance of the various dimensions of context. Some questions to consider:

1. How did the context influence the content of the message?
2. Which dimension had the greatest influence on each dialogue?
3. Which dimension was the most difficult to incorporate in the dialogues? Why?
4. If I switch one dimension (for example, if a group had young lovers but you switched it to a married couple of 30 years), how does it change the overall context?

* ***Activity Three: Getting to Know You***

**Objective:** To introduce the students to speech communication.

**Time:** Approximately 30 minutes

**Group Size:** Entire class

**Description of Activity:**

Students are asked to find out specific information about each other. The form on page 7 should be distributed to the class and they should be asked to find someone who meets one of the descriptions listed. Once the students have found someone that meets a description they should have that person sign in the designated space. Make sure that students do *not* have the same student sign for more than one space. Also, tell the students that their goal is to fill in as many spaces as possible as quickly as they can. A prize may also be given to the winner(s).

**Journal Prompts**

**JOURNAL 1.1 COMMUNICATION CHOICE POINT** - **JOURNALS IN THIS** <CORE>**BOOK<**/CORE><ALT1>TEXT</ALT1>

Throughout this <CORE>book</CORE><ALT1>text</ALT1>, you’ll find marginal items labeled **Journal** Communication Choice Point. These brief scenarios are designed to encourage you to apply the material in the text to specific situations by first analyzing your available choices and then making a communication decision. In making your choices, try to identify as specifically as possible your reasons for selecting one choice and rejecting the others; ask yourself what are the advantages and disadvantages of each choice. How might considering these choices help you in the course? How might they help you in life?</PHO\_CAP></BX1>

**JOURNAL 1.2 COMMUNICATION CHOICE POINT - SILENCE**

Your partner (who is extremely sensitive to criticism) talks constantly. There is never any silence, which you desperately crave. You’re determined to combat this and create periods of occasional silence. Yet you don’t want to start an argument. What are some of your choices for introducing the topic? What are some of the things you might say? What are some of the things you’d want to be sure not to say?

**JOURNAL 1.3 COMMUNICATION CHOICE POINT** - **RELATIONSHIP AMBIGUITY**

You’ve been dating someone on and off for a year or so, and you’d like to invite your date to meet your parents as a friendly gesture but aren’t sure how your date will perceive this invitation. You don’t want your partner to think that meeting your parents means that you want a closer romantic bond; you’re comfortable with the way things are. *What are some of your choices for reducing the ambiguity? What would you say? In what context? Through what channel?*

**JOURNAL 1.4 COMMUNICATION CHOICE POINT** - **CONTENT AND RELATIONSHIP MESSAGES**

An older relative frequently belittles you, though always in a playful way. But it’s uncomfortable and probably not very good for your self-esteem. You’re determined to stop the behavior but not lose the relationship. *What are some of the things you might say? Through what channel?*

Shared Writing

IRREVERSIBILITY

You post a really negative remark on your friend’s Facebook wall, which many of your mutual friends and work colleagues have seen. The next day you realize you shouldn’t have been so negative. You really want to remain friends. You need to say something. *What are your options for communicating your feelings? What communication channels could you use?*

**Using the Internet in the Classroom**

**National Communication Association’s (NCA) website**

<http://www.natcom.org/>

This is NCA’s home page; NCA is the largest professional organization for people interested in communication.

**Claude Shannon’s Mathematical Model of Communication website**

<http://cm.bell-labs.com/cm/ms/what/shannonday/paper.html>

This page on Bell Lab’s website presents the original model of communication on which many of today’s models are still based.

**NCA’s Code of Professional Ethics**

<http://www.natcom.org/Default.aspx?id=135&libID=156>

The National Communication Association has created a code of ethics for communication students, scholars, and professionals. This site is useful for supplementing the discussion of ethics in Chapter 1.

**Getting to Know You**

**Name**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:**

Find someone in your class who fits one of the following descriptions. Have the student sign his or her last name in the space provided. Do not have one student sign more than one space. Good luck!

Likes fishing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Is a business major \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Likes country music \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Can say the Pledge of Allegiance to you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Has snow skied \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Has a tattoo \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Rides a bike to class \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Born in August \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Plays or played the piano \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Has gone to the gym this week \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Likes guacamole \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Has eaten frog legs \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Likes to dance \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Owns a pair of red socks \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Born in another country \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Nervous about this class \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Has been on a tropical beach \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Has made lasagna \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Has a body piercing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Speaks another language \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_