

Department of Communication Science

Fundamentals of Communication

Only study guide for

COM101-X

University of South Africa
Pretoria

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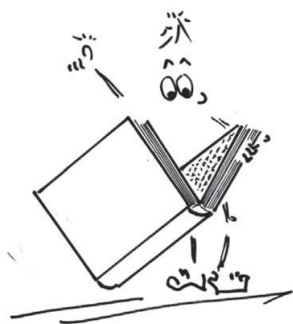
Printed and published by the
University of South Africa
Muckleneuk, Pretoria

COM101-X/1/2007

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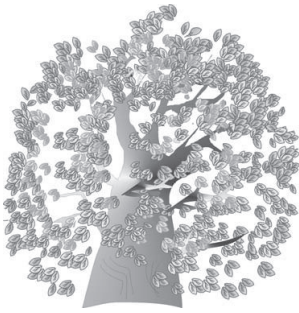
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FOREWORD

Thank you for registering for Communication 101-X and welcome to the course! May you find this study rewarding in your academic year and enriching and useful in your everyday life.

The purpose of this module is to introduce you to the basic principles of communication and to create an awareness of the skills and competencies needed to communicate effectively.

We envisage that this study guide will help you to do the following:

- Process and assess the information on the history of communication
- Demonstrate an awareness of
 - the functions of communication
 - the communication process
 - listening, feedback and perception
 - language and communication, as well as
 - nonverbal communication.
- Identify and solve communication problems in simulated and real-life contexts.

Icons used in this Study Guide:

Prescribed book



Activity



Looking back



The prescribed book *Communication studies: an introduction* by Sheila Steinberg, consists of two parts. Part 1 (the first six chapters) deals with COM101-X while Part 2 of the book (chapters 7-12) applies to COM102-Y. This study guide *Fundamentals of communication* relates only to COM101-X.

The prescribed book and this study guide cover a variety of aspects relating to communication. In each study unit of this study guide you will find information in support of the detail provided in the prescribed book as well as activities and feedback to assist you to understand the contents. The six study units applicable to COM101-X address the following main issues:

- Study unit 1: A brief history of communication
- Study unit 2: Communication and human needs
- Study unit 3: The communication process
- Study unit 4: Perception, listening and feedback
- Study unit 5: Nonverbal communication
- Study unit 6: Language and communication

Tutorial letters form part of the study material and should be used when working through the study guide. Tutorial Letter 101 not only contains information on assessment but also contains the assignments set for the current academic year. You need to study the contents of the tutorial letters to ensure that you know what is required in the assignments and for the examination.

Apart from providing explanations and additional information to the contents of the prescribed book, each study unit in this study guide contains key questions for you to answer and activities for you to do and self-evaluation questions at the end of each study unit. The inclusion of margin notes serves the purposes of clarifying concepts, providing structure to the content and can be used for referencing.



The purpose of the activities is to assist you to become acquainted with the content — to draw on your own experience and to practically apply theory to your own situation and environment. You are strongly advised to work through these activities since similar activities may be included in assignments and the examination.

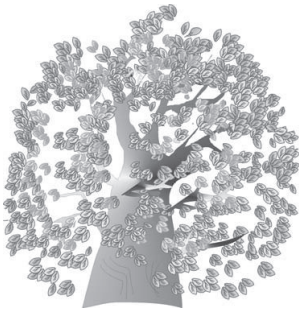
Your responsibility as a learner

We trust that you will familiarise yourself with new ideas, concepts and terminology and that these and the activities provided in this study guide will assist you in —

- enhancing your learning skills and developing a variety of learning strategies
- developing your self-responsibility skills
- working effectively with other learners in a group
- motivating yourself to make a positive contribution towards your community
- considering and improving your communicative competence
- stimulating your thoughts on communication as a science
- identifying, formulating and solving practical communication problems experienced personally or in your community
- being sensitive to multicultural communication
- encouraging you to pursue your studies in Communication Science
- becoming a successful life-long learner.

Many distance learners find it difficult to study at Unisa because they do not know how to plan and manage their studies. We strongly advise you to make a list of your expectations for the year, including the goals that you wish to achieve by studying at Unisa . Draw up a year planner to reflect how you will devote time to this course. Start at the bottom by recording the examination date and above that the closing dates for each assignment. Glancing at this year planner will give you an indication of how much time you have to complete assignments and study for the examination. Not only will you be able to monitor yourself if you work according to this year planner, but you will also stay focused on achieving your goals and attaining your set expectations.

We wish you all the best with your studies.



STUDY UNIT

1

A brief history of communication

Dr Elize Terblanché

1. INTRODUCTION

If you have to define communication, chances are that your definition will differ from that of your friend, colleague or spouse. Your definition will probably be something like, 'Communication takes place when two or more people talk to one another or transfer messages so that they can understand one another.' Have you ever wondered how and why people communicate? Where did communication originate and how did it develop? Think about these thoughts for a moment and discover the scientific definitions, development and other characteristics of communication as you work through the study material and perform the activities.

In this study unit of the study guide you will be guided to find answers to key questions, such as:

- How did communication evolve to become the advanced tool it is today?
- What effects did each stage in the development of communication have on modern-day society?
- How does the development of communication enhance your life today?

The art of communication or communication science also has a story — a history. Just as the growth of a baby to adulthood goes through a number of stages, so there have been various stages in the development of the discipline of communication science to the level that we know today.

1.1 Stages in the history of human communication

Communication as we know it today evolved over a period of time and went through various stages. In early civilisations there was a need to communicate and instruments such as ram's horn, drumbeats and smoke signals were used and, during the Middle Ages, homing pigeons were used to transmit messages (Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997). In modern times communication is often available by means of pressing a button (phoning someone, sending a message via your cellular phone, typing a letter on computer or switching on the television).

This study unit guides you through the various stages signifying the development of communication.

1.1.1 Age of speech and language

Speech

As indicated in the preceding paragraph, people used various methods to communicate. These forms of communication were used before any other forms of communication existed and can be regarded as forerunners of language, speech and writing.

The development of communication did not replace anything preceding it. Gestures, the development of language and the need for interaction with others merely contributed towards modern-day methods of expression.

Language

It is not very clear how language originated. Some believe words imitated sounds that accompanied gestures; others believe words came from expression of emotion (crying or laughing) while another school of thought believes that language resulted because of group activities (like working together).

There are more or less 3,000 languages spoken worldwide today (Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997). In South Africa we have 11 official languages and each of these languages has been influenced by other existing languages. Many language characteristics in your mother tongue have been taken over from older languages.

Activity 1.1



Draw a table like the one below. Complete the rest of the table as you work through this study unit of the study guide and the first chapter of the prescribed book and do the required activities.

Read section 1.1.1 in the prescribed book and fill out the detail under each heading of the table.

Name of stage in chronological order	Technological development	Contribution to societal development

It is evident that what happened in the age of speech and writing contributed towards self-expression and improved the quality of life for people. As people became more business orientated and educated, the need arose to keep record of various interactions, agreements and other matters. This necessitated the need and ability to write.



1.1.2 Age of writing

Cuneiform

In prehistoric times drawings and pictures of animals and people in cave paintings and cuneiform were used to communicate. Wedge-shaped strokes on clay tables (known as cuneiform — pictographic writing in which symbols represented objects) represented ideas. Sounds were later added to identify pictures and in about 3500 BCE (Before the Common Era) the Sumerians used words that sounded similar to create meaning (for example, 'bee' and 'leaf' created 'belief'). A complete cuneiform system had more than 600 signs and a cuneiform script discovered in 1929 contained an alphabet of consonants (Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997).

How has the development of writing enriched our lives and societies over time up to 2006? The translation of cuneiform writing has enriched our knowledge of early Assyria, Babylonia and the Middle East, provided knowledge of the history of ancient Egypt and revealed the contents of the Code of Hammurabi. This code, written in cuneiform by the Babylonian King, is known as the earliest legal code since it contains a collection of laws and edicts applicable to the Babylonians and to that time.

Alphabet

Although standard cuneiform could not succeed in having a sign represent a single word, the Ugaritic and Old Persian scripts achieved this and laid the foundation for the development of an *alphabet*. The first known alphabet (North Semitic) was developed in Palestine and Syria between 1700 and 1500 BCE. It consisted of 22 consonants and the speaker or reader had to provide the vowels. The Hebrew, Phoenician and Arab alphabets developed from this alphabet. The Greeks adapted the Phoenician variant of the Semitic alphabet and expanded the 22 consonant symbols to 24. They also set apart some consonant symbols that were used as vowels. The spread of the Latin language and the Roman conquests helped ensure that the Roman alphabet became the basic alphabet of the Western world (Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997).

Letters

Alphabetical codes (or letters) are used for the transmission of messages when other means of communication are impractical. The phonetic alphabet is used to clarify individual letters in radio messages and when you book a seat on an aeroplane, you are likely to encounter the use of this as well (for example, Alpha represents the letter A, Bravo represents the letter B and Zulu represents the letter Z). Semaphore is used in military signalling while the International Code of Signals (the International Flag Alphabet) is used in maritime communication to ensure safe navigating of the ship and communication between people of differing languages. Specific flags can indicate a warning or relay a distress message — for example, an O means that someone is overboard and a D indicates difficulty in steering (Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997).

Please turn to the inside cover of this guide for the International Code of Signals.



International Code of Signals
(Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997).

Although people in the Western world today use an alphabet comprising 26 letters, other systems of communication also exist. People who are hearing impaired make use of sign language, people who are visually impaired communicate by means of Braille, while those who are deaf and dumb use finger spelling to communicate (if you regularly watch the news broadcasts on television, you will probably have seen some bulletins in which an individual interprets verbal text and represents the news through sign language to those who are hearing impaired).

The table on the inside of book cover presents a summary of the codes discussed above.

TABLE 1: COMMON ALPHABETICAL CODES
(Reader's Digest book of facts 1989:251)

COMMON CODES					
	Sema- phore	Finger- spelling	Morse	Braille	Phonetic
A			· -	⠁	Alpha
B			- · · ·	⠃	Bravo
C			- · · -	⠉	Charlie
D			- · ·	⠙	Delta
E			·	⠑	Echo
F			- · · -	⠋	Foxtrot
G			- · -	⠒	Golf
H			- · · ·	⠓	Hotel
I			· ·	⠏	India
J			- · - -	⠊	Juliet
K			- · -	⠕	Kilo
L			- · · ·	⠕	Lima
M			- -	⠓	Mike
N			- ·	⠝	November
O			- - -	⠏	Oscar
P			- · - ·	⠏	Papa
Q			- - -	⠑	Quebec
R			- · ·	⠓	Romeo
S			- · · ·	⠑	Sierra
T			-	⠓	Tango
U			- · -	⠑	Uniform
V			- · -	⠑	Victor
W			- · -	⠑	Whisky
X			- · - ·	⠑	X-ray
Y			- · - -	⠑	Yankee
Z			- · - ·	⠑	Zulu

Activity 1.2



Remember that you are busy completing the table that you drew in activity 1.1.

- 1 Section 1.1.2 in the prescribed book contains important information on the earliest attempts at writing as a means of communication. While you are busy completing your table, consider the following issues:
 - Where these clay tablets could have been kept in order to preserve them
 - How these clay tablets were transported from one place to another
- 2 Imagine you live in a rural community where neighbours are separated by long distances. You have to inform your neighbours (5 kilometres away) that you have a newborn baby who needs food. You can only communicate with neighbours by means of a clay tablet. Indicate how you would convey your need of food for the new baby to neighbours.

Importance of clay tablets

Today we take speech and writing for granted but, in previous civilisations, these forms of communication did not exist. What was of importance of the clay tablets which were used? Archives of the ancient Roman city — Mari, at a site called Tell Hariri in Northern Syria, have revealed 23 600 clay tablets (all covered with cuneiform) covering a period of 500 years between 2285 and 1755 BCE. Another library of clay tablets, which was compiled for the Assyrian king Assurbanipal in the 7th century BC, contained specially commissioned Assyrian and Sumerian dictionaries and grammars. These provided an invaluable contribution to our understanding of ancient languages (*Reader's Digest book of facts* 1989:23).

Do you know why and how these clay tablets stayed preserved for so long? Not only did the Sumerians and Babylonians write down a great deal but they also sun baked the clay tablets, making them almost imperishable!

Can you imagine how long it may have taken to complete a clay tablet? If you were in the position indicated in activity number 2, how would you have sent the clay tablet to someone if there were no messenger to carry the clay tablet? Can you think of another more practical means of communicating your need?

Another development

Can you imagine a world without speech or printed material? The development of an alphabet enables us to achieve writing by means of arbitrary marks that form a system and this has contributed to the transmission of information in more than one way. Once people were able to write, it was just a matter of time before they discovered means to make communication more accessible to the masses. The fastest way to spread information to many people was by means of printing and it is important to remember that printed material supplemented oral communication — it never replaced it.

1.1.3 Age of print

Copying texts

In medieval Europe the preservation of learning was one of the major responsibilities of the monks. One way this task was done, was by meticulously copying entire texts onto papyrus (paper had not been invented yet). This activity was performed in a venue, in the monastery, designed specifically for this purpose — known as a scriptorium. Craftsmen and manuscript copyists also participated in this activity to ensure that books were made available and that information was communicated to people (Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997).

Can you imagine how long it took craftsmen and monks to rewrite (copy) books for others to read? How long would you have had to wait to obtain specific information for an assignment? If printing had not developed, how would you have been able to complete assignments without library books, newspapers, magazines or access to the Internet?

Printing

Printing — identical reproductions of an original — is done by means of a number of processes by which designs, pictures and words are reproduced on material such as fabric or paper. It must be remembered that before the Chinese developed paper, nothing could be printed because papyrus was too fragile for the printing process.



But where did the age of print all start? In China the printing of pictures on textiles preceded the printing of words. In the West, however, at around 1438 the German printer Johann Gutenberg invented a mould for casting individual letters in metal and published the first book in the 1450s. The Gutenberg Bible (1455) was the first work in Europe to be printed with movable type (about 200 copies were printed). Gutenberg teamed up with a lawyer and goldsmith, Johann Fust and borrowed some money from him. Because Gutenberg could not repay the loan, Fust claimed the press and its types and teamed up with his son-in-law (who was also a printer). Gutenberg died a poor man at the age of about 70. Today each of the estimated 48 copies of the Gutenberg Bible from the original printing is worth in excess of 1 million pounds. Book printing is known as the first mass media product (Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997).

Printing in South Africa

In South Africa, the first issue of the government paper, the *Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser/Kaapsche Stads Courant and Afrikaansche Berigter*, was published in 1800. Thomas Pringle and John Fairbairn were responsible for the first independent publication (*The South African Commercial Advertiser*) in 1824 and, although this publication was later banned, it reappeared after numerous presentations were made to authorities in London. Major press groups in South Africa today are Independent Newspapers (Pty) Ltd, Media24 Ltd, CTP/Caxton Publishers and Printers Ltd, and Johnnic Publishing Ltd, while Primedia, M&G Associated Magazines, Ramsay, Son & Parker and New Africa Investments Limited (NAIL) are other important media players (Burger 2004/2005:140-141).

PRINTING INFORMATION: SOUTH AFRICA

In 2003 the *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Independent*, *Sunday Sun*, *Rapport* and *City Press* were the only truly national newspapers in South Africa. By mid-2004 we had 18 daily and 8 Sunday papers while more or less 120 regional or community newspapers were being distributed in particular towns or districts. Thursday is the most popular publication day and the most popular language of choice for newspapers, is English. More than 4,5 million freebies (or knock-and-drop) papers (which are distributed free of charge in certain neighbourhoods) were being distributed weekly. According to an All Media Products Survey (AMPS) done for January to December 2003, 62,3% of adults in the Western Cape read at least one paper a day as opposed to Gauteng where 58,2% of the population read at least one paper a day. Almost 12 million people in South Africa read magazines.

Distribution figures for the period July to December 2003 provide the following information regarding papers and magazines in South Africa (Burger 2004/2005:141-144).

Paper	Distribution	Magazine	Distribution
<i>The Star</i>	165 948	<i>You</i>	225 454
<i>Sowetan</i>	123 590	<i>Sarie</i>	146 257
		<i>People</i>	140 133
		<i>True Love</i>	128 708

The newspaper *City Press* (27 November 2005:4) reported that according to the latest All Media Products Survey the readership of both the *Sunday Times* and *City Press* dropped, while weekly tabloids, such as *Sunday World* and *Sunday Sun* gained readers. The *Daily Sun*, South Africa's most controversial daily paper, is the most read paper in the country.



Activity 1.3



- 1 Read the last passage in section 1.1.3 in the prescribed book with a view to writing a short paragraph in which you explain what the social significance of printing is in your community and for your life as a student.

Use the following guidelines in support of your activity:

- Make a list of the publications that you read most often and make notes of your opinion on the following:
 - Why do you read these publications?
 - Do you ever pass the publications on to someone else to read? If not, how do you share the information that you have been exposed to?
 - To what extent has something that you have read helped to shape your opinion on a matter?
- 2 Go to your local community store and determine which publication has the highest circulation in your community.
 - 3 What is the most popular language of choice for publications in your community?

Effects of print on society

Printed communication affects both people and society and these *effects* can be interrelated. For example: if your local newspaper places a full-page advertisement on the latest fashion trend in denim jeans, it could have an effect on the buying behaviour of readers. The owner of the paper uses the extra income generated (by using the advertisement) to print an extra page in the paper. This extra page is devoted to corruption in a government department. Now, all of a sudden, the effects of the advertisement go beyond influencing the reader to buy the latest denim fashion ware — the

advertisement indirectly influences society as a whole and may touch the lives of many people. How, you may ask? If the government decides to ban the newspaper, many employees could be without employment; if the tax payable on the paper is increased and it becomes the most expensive newspaper on the market, fewer people would purchase the paper with resulting reduction in worker employment at the newspaper office (Du Plooy 1994:9).

Role of electricity

As indicated in section 1.1.4 of the prescribed book, media had to be physically transported from one place to another in early times. The need arose to distribute information globally and more quickly. The advent of *electricity* greatly contributed to this possibility and revolutionised not only the availability of information but also the standard of our living.

1.1.4 Electronic mass media

Electrically powered calculating machines paved the way for computers. Computers were initially used to perform lengthy calculations (mainframe) and the personal computer only became a household commodity in the mid-1980s. In modern times personal computers have become known as Multimedia PCs (multimedia personal computers) because various forms of media, such as cameras, telephones, videos, compact disks (CDs) and images can be integrated to enhance the accessibility and distribution of information. With the prolific development of computers and computer-related technology, the era of electronic mass media was born.



Activity 1.4



Before you start reading the section addressing the age of electronic mass media in the prescribed book, consider the following issues:

- What does the word 'electronic' mean? Take a dictionary and look it up in order to understand how electronic media differs from printed media.
- Which media can be regarded as mass media? Substantiate (explain) your claim.
- Explain to a friend what you understand mass media to be.
- Some people attach more value to a radio than to television or newspapers and magazines. Apart from personal preference, can you think of other reasons why a radio could play an important role in someone's life?
- Why is the film *Yesterday* important to South Africa?
- *Yiso yiso*, *7de Laan*, *Generations*, *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *Egoli* are very popular soap operas on television in South Africa. Oprah Winfrey's programme also entertains many viewers. How and why does watching your favourite television programme have an impact on your daily routine and life?

The phrase 'electronic mass media' implies the use of media that could make information available to the masses by electronic means (such as computers, fax machines, digital cameras, videos). Electronic equipment has components, such as microchips and transistors, that control and direct electronic currents. Where one previously had to go to the library to request an article on a specific topic, one can access the article immediately through the use of electronic equipment. If the article is available on a website, a registered user may be able to download the article to a personal computer or print a copy of it. *Mass media* is the term used to denote radio, newspapers, television and the Internet — media that can be used to reach the masses.

1.1.4.1 Early developments



Activity 1.5



- 1 Section 1.1.4 in the prescribed book states that 'information could be transmitted rather than transported'. In view of this statement, consider the following:
 - How has the development of electricity contributed to expanding society's communication needs?
 - How was information transmitted before the advent of the facsimile (fax) machine?
 - To which electronic mass media are you exposed daily and how has the use of these enriched your life?

The role of Morse code

In the section of the study guide dealing with the age of print reference was made to the fact that the lead type of printers assisted Morse with the development of his code that played a major role in the development of communication. This code was initially used to telegraph information. Morse code also influenced the development and use of teleprinters, telex and fax machines as well as (eventually) computers and the Internet — all requiring the use of electricity.

In essence, Morse code is a combination of long and short pulses of current representing each letter of the alphabet (see table 1). These pulses were transmitted along a cable by pressing on a switch and the receiver recorded the pulses as a series of dots and dashes. Messages were then decoded and made available by means of teleprinters or teletypewriters.

Telex enabled us to send telephonic messages typed on a teleprinter to another teleprinter. The receiving teleprinter decoded the signals and printed the original message. The telex system was later replaced by the use of fax machines in which the original document is scanned by a photoelectric converter. In a fax machine a series of electrical pulses are formed according to the light reflected from each part of the image, signals are transmitted via telephone to another machine that converts the text (pictures, sketches) and images or text are reproduced. Optical

cables under the sea carry signals from continent to continent to enable us to communicate globally (*Tree of knowledge* 1999:87-90).

Not only were people around the world writing or printing information; technology also enabled them to transmit or receive information and another invention that played a major role in the development of communication was the radio.

Radio

Marconi used radio waves to send a message across the Atlantic in 1901 (Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997). The first radio broadcast in South Africa took place under the auspices of a broadcasting committee of the South African Railways. The first experimental broadcast was made by the Western Electric Company on 18 December 1923 and the first radio station in South Africa was JB Calling.

RADIO STATISTICS AND INFORMATION: SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa the postmaster general controls all radio transmission and reception (Radio Act 20 of 1926). At the time of writing, the public and commercial services, roles and functions of radio stations are regulated and controlled by the Broadcasting Act 4 of 1999 (amended in 2002). The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was established on 1 August 1936. In July 2004 the national radio network of the SABC consisted of 18 stations broadcasting in 13 languages and reached an estimated 19 million people per day. Almost one million words per day are compiled into 300 news bulletins and 27 current affairs programmes that are broadcast on the SABC services. Channel Africa Network (a subsidiary company of the SABC) comprises four language services (English, Portuguese, French and Kiswahili) in an attempt to convey programmes with specific African content to millions of listeners throughout Africa.

Apart from the SABC acting as broadcaster, there are also several private radio stations on air daily and in July 2004 ICASA (Independent Communications Authority of South Africa) authorised licenses to 101 community radio stations throughout the country. These are represented as follows:

AREA	NUMBER of LICENSES	AREA	NUMBER of LICENSES
Mpumalanga	10	Northern Cape	3
Free State	9	Limpopo	8
Eastern Cape	11	North West	5
KwaZulu-Natal	11	Western Cape	15
Gauteng	19		

In 2004 the Department of Communications and the government established the Satellite Communications Network. The purpose of this network is to enable grassroots communities to access parliamentary proceedings, government information and services and general news through their community radio stations (Burger 2004/2005:136-139).



Activity 1.6

- 1 Study the section in the prescribed book dealing with radio and write short notes to illustrate
 - the important role that radios played in early years
 - differing kinds of radios and their uses
 - how the role of radio has impacted on your life
 - why the radio could be more important than other media to some people
- 2 Can you remember how information was communicated before the advent of radios? Write down four possibilities.
- 3 Complete the table you were asked to compile in activity 1.1 to illustrate where radio fits in.
- 4 Write a draft story for your community newspaper giving your views on the social significance that broadcasting the 2010 World Cup Soccer matches via radio will have in your community.

First radios in society

During the 1920s, with the onset of public broadcasting, people used headphones that were connected to simple crystal sets whenever they wanted to listen to the radio. As technology developed over time, the electronic parts and other components inside radios have become smaller. Radio technology has developed to such an extent that we can now have an audience listening to the same broadcast on the radio — we can all sit around the table after supper to listen to a particular programme broadcast on the radio.

Other types of radios

Apart from the gramophone or portable radio that we know today, several other types of radios are used for various purposes. Many businesses and truck drivers use CBs (Citizens' Band radios) to communicate while soldiers at war use walkie-talkies (if you watch some of the war-time films or documentaries, you will notice that certain radios used during the war had a telephone headset attached to the radio). In this day and age, when friends go on tour to neighbouring countries and travel in a convoy, they sometimes make use of walkie-talkies to communicate and stay in contact with one another.

Meaning of radio in society

People who are old, frail, sick or people with disabilities often count on the radio to be their friend in their circumstances. Most radio stations broadcast programmes in which the public can participate (phone in or send

in a message) and this provides the opportunity to include everyone in the community. Even South Africans living abroad (in another country) listen to their favourite radio station through satellite radio or via the Internet.

Radios have become indispensable and provide people with news, education, knowledge, entertainment, traffic reports and other information. Modern-day radios are multipurpose: in many households it has become general practice that people are woken up by the alarm clock that is built into their bedside radio.

Radios were not the only medium in which people found entertainment and information; films also satisfy various needs.

Film

Before the advent of television and video, people used to go to a cinema or drive-in theatre to watch a particular movie. Nowadays films are available on video, digital video disks (DVDs), as video clips on computer and even as clips on the latest cell phones.

Activity 1.7



Let's play trivial pursuit.

1 Draw the table below and complete the column on the right.

Question	Your response
Which male actor played the leading role in <i>Shaka Zulu</i> ?	
Whose voice was used as the donkey in <i>Shrek</i> ?	
Which popular musician wrote the music for <i>The Lion King</i> and also sang <i>Can you feel the love tonight</i> ?	
Who was the first South African actress to win an Oscar?	
Which South African film was nominated in the category Best Foreign Film at the 2006 Oscars?	
With whom do you associate the movie <i>Mr Bones</i> ?	
What is the name of the first-ever Zulu film produced by a South African?	
From which film does this quote come: ' <i>Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn</i> '?	

- 2 If you do not know the answers to all the questions posed, do a little research by visiting the library, by contacting another student or by discussing the questions with friends or someone in your neighbourhood.
- 3 Go to the nearest library or search the Internet to find articles illustrating the importance of the film industry in the development of communication.

In 2004 Charlize Theron won a Golden Globe award for best actress for her performance in *Monster*. She also went on to win an Oscar for her role in this film.

Tsotsi, based on the book by Athol Fugard, is a British/South African production and was shot in Johannesburg. This film is about an AIDS orphan who grows up on the streets, becomes a gangster and knows all too well about violence, poverty and crime. At the European Film Awards, the producer, Gavin Woods was nominated for the Screen International Award. In 2006 the film was also nominated for a Golden Globe in the category Best Foreign Language Film and in the same year (2006) it won an Oscar in the category Foreign Language Film (*Tsotsi* 2006). *Yesterday* was the first-ever Zulu film produced by Anant Singh. The film was shot in the Bergville region of KwaZulu-Natal, was nominated in 2005 for an Oscar in the category Best Foreign Language Film of the year, was awarded the inaugural Human Rights Film Award in 2004, won the Eiu Award and walked away with the Young Artists Award after being nominated in the category Best International Feature Film (Awards for *Yesterday* 2006).

SOUTH AFRICAN FILM INDUSTRY

Are you familiar with the following facts about the South African film industry?

- Cape Town and Johannesburg are the hubs of the South African film industry.
- There are more than 1 000 registered producers in the country; co-production treaties with various other countries exist.
- *Fespaco* is the biggest film festival on the African continent and takes place biannually in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso.
- Ster Kinekor, Nu-Metro and United International Pictures are the largest film distributors in South Africa (Burger 2004/2005:115-117).

South African films are regulated by the Films and Publications Act, 65 of 1996 as amended by the Films and Publications Amendment Act, 34 of 1999. The Act recognises the right of South Africans to read or watch what they choose and allows for the invasion of privacy where child pornography is concerned. Instead of applying censorship, films are classified for age appropriateness (there is no pre-classification of magazines) (Burger 2004/2005:116-117).

Roles of films in society

From the information displayed in the information box it should be evident film is a powerful medium in communication. Films are used to illustrate or address various aspects, such as *delivering social comment, fulfilling educational roles, addressing needs for entertainment and illustrating differing value systems*. Films can assist us in understanding why differences, prejudices and perspectives exist. These and other aspects about films are important in a country like South Africa with our multicultural and diverse composition. The information provided also illustrates that South Africa has a sound film industry and that many communication practitioners (people who have got a qualification in Communication Science) are employed and have a future in this field. The information provided can also assist those who wish to contextualise the development of the industry in South Africa in comparison with that existing in America and elsewhere.

People did not always want to go elsewhere to enjoy films; they wanted to watch them in the comfort of their own homes. The transmission of moving images from one place to another by electricity via digital television resulted in the comfort we have in our homes today — watching programmes and films on television.

Television

The meaning of the word 'television' is derived from

- *videre* (Latin for 'to see' *video* which literally means 'I see')
- 'at a distance' (from the Greek *tele*) (*Tree of knowledge* 1999:21).

Television is the transmission of images and sounds to distant screens by means of electrical or fibre-optic transmission lines or by radio waves. This medium, which can reach people irrespective of their class, ethnicity and gender, was the first medium to relay pictures across continents via communication satellites, has a powerful influence on public opinion and perception (because information is presented selectively), is the leading role player in presenting news and current affairs to the public and can be used to bring diverse groups of people together (Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997).

Activity 1.8



- 1 Consider the statement that 'television is also part of the culture of a society'. How does this statement apply to your society?
- 2 Enquire how television is used for training or educational purposes in your community.
- 3 Write a short paragraph in which you explain how television has influenced public opinion on a specific topic in your community.
- 4 You have to make a presentation to the university on the impact that television has had on social behaviour and cultural values in your

- community. Draw up a plan of action indicating the aspects that you will consider.
- 5 Complete the table you drew in activity 1.1 and establish how the social significance of television differs from that of film.
 - 6 Students not resident in South Africa: Select any one of the communication media discussed in this study unit. Make enquiries (at your library, via the Internet, encyclopaedias, et cetera) and determine which laws govern the functioning of that medium in your country. Obtain a copy of the law(s) and make notes to illustrate how provision is made for aspects relating to
 - distinction between local, community and public services
 - globalisation
 - ownership
 - code of ethics

Role of television in our daily lives

Spend a little time observing the habits of family members once everyone gets home in the evening. Try to determine what role the television plays in your household and how it influences the behaviour of other members of the family. It is important for some people to be entertained by the television every day and they make a point of watching certain series or stories (soap operas such as *Yiso, yiso, 7de Laan, Generations, The Bold and the Beautiful and Egoli*), documentaries, sports events, entertainment shows or news broadcasts on a regular basis. Some learners may watch the learning channel that provides additional explanations and exercises based on the school curriculum of certain subjects.

TELEVISION INFORMATION: SOUTH AFRICA

Do you know the following facts?

- The first television service in South Africa (a one-channel service) was introduced on 5 January 1976.
- SABC channels broadcast in all 11 languages and reach an estimated 18 million people.
- South Africa has more than 4 million licensed television households.
- M-Net, the first private subscription television service in South Africa was launched in 1986 and has more than 1,23 million subscribers in 49 countries across the African continent.
- A second channel (Community Service Network) offers specialised Community channels and niche sports programmes for local Indian, Portuguese, Jewish, Italian and Christian communities.
- MultiChoice Africa (MCA) is the first African company to offer digital satellite broadcasting on the African continent.
- MultiChoice has 638 000 subscribers in 50 countries, broadcasts 55 video and 48 audio channels, 24 hours a day.
- MultiChoice also offers interactive services, such as TV-Shopping and TV-Mail.
- Etv, the commercial service, which started broadcasting on 1 October 1998, has no subscription fees and is dependent on advertising (Burger 2004/2005:139-140).

The facts in the information box should indicate that television plays an important role in many households and, when considering the effects of television on social behaviour and cultural values, you may have to deal with some (or all) of the following issues:

- What is the relationship between time spent watching television and time spent on other recreational activities (such as reading)?
- Do the television habits of people affect their social interaction with others? If so, how?
- Do people who regularly watch television actively engage in discussions about characters, stories and/or presenters?
- Do television programmes contribute to an escalation of violence in the community? How and to what extent? Can there be other reasons or factors contributing to the increase in violence?
- Is there any deterioration in cultural standards because of the television habits of people in the community?
- Has there been a change in our culture because of the Western (mainly American) trends and norms to which people are exposed?

Technological development and globalisation

People all over the world can watch the Oscar ceremony in America while it takes place, irrespective of global time differences. This is possible because of the groundbreaking work resulting from the technological developments discussed thus far to highlight the historical development of communication that has contributed to the development of the information age that we are currently experiencing.

1.1.5 Information age

The rapid development of technology has provided greater access to information, in terms of both speed and information. The explosion brought about by computer technology has led to the revision of many laws regulating access to and communication of information. The integration of technology, coupled with the role of computers and the Internet, contributes to the fact that people spend much more time in front of their computers. Your workplace can now be at the office, at home or in both locations (Fielding 2006:356).

Activity 1.9



1. Read the extract from the article *Technology and the media* at the end of this study unit) and make notes on the following matters:
 - Identify the chronological development of media as expressed by the author.
 - Consider how the development of the printing press has influenced the way in which information is distributed today and how it contributed to the development of the 'web'.

- Identify the media mentioned in the article to which you have access, and use.
 - Indicate how the use of technology has revolutionised life in your community by presenting the facts in a short paragraph.
- 2 Consider the role that newspapers play in your community. Is it possible that, in future, newspapers will no longer be available in hard copy? Write a short paragraph in which you present arguments for and against this possibility.

The Internet

Vinton Cerf, an American computer scientist, is regarded as one of the 'founding fathers of the Internet' (Cerf 2006), *a system that enables computers and programmes to communicate directly*. The Internet makes use of almost any kind of electronic transmission — optical fibre, telephone lines and even radio or microwave channels and has become an indispensable tool because it is a means of building a universal information infrastructure, promoting the sharing of information, enhancing business transactions in terms of reducing time to send and access information and supporting global interaction between organisations and people.

Activity 1.10



- 1 Access the Unisa website (consult CMNALL-E/301/2007 and follow the guidelines to register and use myUnisa). If you do not have access to the Internet, (if possible) go to someone who can assist you. Let me know whether you are enjoying the course and pass on your suggestions and comments (terblej@unisa.ac.za).
- 2 Apart from obtaining information from the Internet, think of two other possible uses of the Internet that could be applied in our everyday lives.
- 3 What has the availability and use of Internet changed in your community?
- 4 The Internet can also pose a threat to society. Can you think of two possible negative influences the Internet has brought to modern-day societies and life?

The Internet can be regarded as a universal library, the 'world's first viable commercial democracy' (Fielding 2006:359). The Internet is not free and users have to register with a service provider (pay a monthly fee) and also pay for the time spent on the Internet (the use of the means — such as a telephone line — to transfer information electronically). Some websites provide information free of charge while others rely on subscription fees.

What the Internet used for?

The Internet provides information on a large number of topics, shows and news events around the world, is used to do business every day and also

provides opportunity for entertainment. At the touch of a few buttons you can access the latest world-wide news events (and sometimes see what is actually happening because pictures or video clips of events are available), obtain historical data, become acquainted with the latest stock exchange prices or play a game of cards (either on your own or via the Internet with someone totally unknown to you). Many students make use of Internet banking facilities. People send letters via email to one another, and even to friends and family living in countries outside our borders. School children also access the Internet for information on portfolio tasks that they have to complete.

myUnisa

myUnisa, the electronic service of the university, enables students registered for the same course to interact with one another on subject-related matter, provides another medium for students to communicate with lecturers, provides an additional platform where important announcements applicable to the course are made, allows the electronic access to study material and addresses frequently asked questions.

Downsides to the Internet

There are also, however, downsides to the availability of the Internet. Pornography on the Internet is a flourishing business and whoever knows where to search, will find it. The Internet can also provide information that parents may not want their children to be exposed to (for instance, provide a recipe for the building/manufacturing of dangerous devices). Some universities are experiencing an increase in plagiarism because information is copied from the Internet without acknowledging the source or authors.

The Internet also gives a user access to facilities such as electronic mail (e-mail) and this feature is discussed briefly.

E-mail

Electronic mail or e-mail basically allows a registered user to communicate with another registered user via a network. E-mails can also be sent to a number of addresses automatically, resulting in the fact that physical distance between communicators or the presence of the receiver has become irrelevant. Once a registered user has an e-mail address, electronic communication can commence. Technology in this field has developed to such an extent that both Internet and e-mail facilities are available on certain models and makes of cellphones.

Important aspects of electronic communication that should be borne in mind are Netiquette (informal code of conduct governing the acceptable way for online users to interact), the policies applicable to organisations where e-mail is used and the fact that personal information may not stay private once it has been sent.

Emoticons

E-mails have changed the formal way in which people in the business world used to write. Rules governing grammar and spelling have been destroyed since Weblish, a lower-case global language, full of mistakes, has been developed (Du Plooy 2000:21) and typing in capital letters is regarded as shouting at someone. *Emoticons*, also known as 'smileys', are also used to

represent the facial expressions or emotions of humans. Emoticons entail a sequence of keyboard characters for example ;) — a wink or :-) — a smile, shortened words ('plse', representing 'please') or abbreviations, such as 'gr8', representing 'great' and 'btw' representing 'by the way'. As a matter of fact, e-mails and the short message service (SMS) on cell phones have contributed to the birth of a new communication language. Even the spelling of certain words has changed (for instance, 'xtreme' instead of 'extreme'; 'xite' for 'excite' and 'nite' instead of 'night').



Activity 1.11

- 1 Have you participated in Buddy chat on *myUnisa*? If not, access *myUnisa* and the chatroom, Buddy chat. Scan the chatroom to familiarise yourself with the content of what has recently been discussed. If you are interested in the topic, make a contribution via your keyboard. If the topic does not interest you, how about starting a new topic of discussion by posting a new e-mail message?
- 2 Write a short paragraph on your views about the ethics of e-mail messages. Suggest netiquette that could be applicable to Buddy chat on *myUnisa*.
- 3 In the table below there is a list of emoticons in the left-hand column with possible meanings in the middle column. Match the text in the left-hand column with the correct option in the middle column and write the correct meanings in the right-hand column.

Text	Options	Correct meaning/option
Gr8	my lips are sealed	
Lol	angry	
Btw	kiss	
;)	laugh out load	
:-t	by the way	
:'(grin	
:->	friendly hug	
:&	tea for two	
:-)*	great minds think alike	
{ }	see you later	
Gmta	tear	
Imho	great	

Text	Options	Correct meaning/option
:(or 😞	wink	
T42	in my humble opinion	
Culater	tongue-tied	

When considering the issue of ethics, the following aspects could be amongst those that warrant attention:

- Are e-mail messages official or unofficial exchanges between people?
- Should organisations be permitted to monitor e-mail messages of their staff?
- Who has ownership of the e-mail message, the individual or the organisation?
- Are organisations responsible for the e-mails sent out by their employees?

Apart from finding answers to the questions posed above, it is essential for organisations to have a policy governing the use of e-mail.

You should remember that we are still addressing the age of electronic mass media and we are specifically dealing with the information age. As you can imagine, one of the biggest impacts on information — access to or distribution of it — was the World Wide Web — the biggest growth area of the Internet during 1994 and 1995 (*Tree of knowledge* 1999:35).

World Wide Web

The World Wide Web or WWW (popularly known as the Web) can be seen as a library of resources that is available to users through the Internet. It has also been defined as a collection of resources, a set of protocols (specifications) allowing transmission of pages over the Web or a collection of hypertext files which are available on web servers (An introduction to Usenet News 2006).

The Web was developed in 1989 for the purpose of sharing scientific information among teams of physics researchers who were spread across the world (Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997). Hypertext (created with a programming language called hypertext markup language [HTML]) allows links to other text, pages or network services on the Web (An introduction to Usenet News 2006).

Activity 1.12



- 1 Find a friend or an acquaintance who has his or her own web page. Conduct an informal interview to determine the following:
 - What communication purpose does this website serve?
 - How many visits does the website have (on average) per day or during a month?
 - Is the web page sponsored? If so, what are the implications for the owner of the website?
 - Has the web page contributed to increase in business? If so, how?

Some websites are visited more frequently than others. For instance, *SABCnews.com*, the online news service of the SABC, attracts an average of 600 000 website visits a month. During January and February 2006 Unisa (www.unisa.ac.za) had 562,073 and 502,968 visits respectively. With regard to Unisa registrations, there were 125 000 visits in January 2006 and 502 968 visits during February 2006. Major breaking news and special features on international events have contributed to a sharp increase in visits. Many users look for specific information but there are also websites that are accessed by chance.

1.1.5.1 Newsgroups and chatrooms

Newsgroup

A newsgroup is a bulletin board (discussion group) organised by topic that offers systematic access to users via Internet or email (Brooks, Nolan and Gallagher 2001:309). Newsgroups provide people with an opportunity to post an item or discussion on the bulletin board or to share opinions, knowledge and experiences irrespective of their status or priority.

Naming a newsgroup

In view of the fact that information posted on a newsgroup is accessible to all Internet users, some form of order has to be maintained to ensure that discussions and topics are grouped. Newsgroups are therefore named in a hierarchical fashion according to topic of interest. Newsgroup hierarchies are identified by the prefix (words identifying the topic) and subsequent words are separated by a period. The current 'Big 7' hierarchies of Usenet newsgroups and their reference to topics/groups are presented below.

Hierarchy	Topics/group
comp.*	computer-related topics
news.*	discussion of Usenet itself
sci.*	scientific subjects
rec.*	recreational activities (hobbies and games)
soc.*	socialising and discussion of social issues
talk.*	contentious issues, such as religion and politics
misc.*	miscellaneous discussion of anything that does not belong to any of the above-mentioned groups

Searching for a particular newsgroup

In the topics above, the asterisk (*) represents a wild card. If, for instance, one types *comp.periph.printers.laser*, each of the words following the prefix narrows down the topic. This *search* indicates that you are looking for the topic dealing with *computers*, *peripheral equipment* indicates that you are searching for peripheral equipment attached to the computer, *printers* narrows down the peripheral equipment and you are specifically interested in *laser* printers.

How are newsgroups created?

Before a new newsgroup can be created, it needs to be discussed and voting has to take place. Another requirement for a new newsgroup is that at least two-thirds of the voters have to be in favour of the new newsgroup and there must be a majority of 100 votes in favour of the new newsgroup (Newsgroup 2006).

Activity 1.13



In February 2006 a number of cartoons (about the prophet Mohammed) were published in a newspaper in Denmark. This resulted in outrage and marches by some members of the Muslim community worldwide.

- 1 If you have not subscribed to participate in a chatroom, do so now. Conduct a search on the chatroom to try and find information on the incident referred to above.
- 2 Track the relevant debate and determine the gist and outcome of this incident.
- 3 What would you consider to be amongst the most important communication lessons one can learn from participation in a chatroom?

Accessing a newsgroup

It is estimated that the global network connects about 100 million people and that more than 80 000 articles are presented daily to more than 50 000 Internet newsgroups (Fielding 2006:358). Participants in newsgroups have to subscribe to participate or track discussions in newsrooms and require software, such as an Internet web browser to read and post articles in a newsgroup. You are anonymous within a newsgroup and can read or observe interaction for as long as you like.

Caution regarding participation

Subscription to a newsgroup or participation in any debate on the Internet should make one aware of the sensitivity which has to be demonstrated towards the value systems of others. Mass media can never be neutral. Everyone can participate and a variety of preferences, prejudices, cultural influences and opinions are declared. Some people may be hurt or offended by comments and remarks made by others.

A news administrator (news admin) decides how long articles are kept on the server before deleting them.

Disadvantage

One of the disadvantages of a newsgroup is that when you post an article, your newsreader may reveal your e-mail address, name and optional signature, resulting in your receiving unsolicited e-mail or junk mail.

Chatrooms

The word 'chatrooms' refers to the electronic space made available on a website that enables two or more people to communicate online in real time. Everyone signed onto the chatroom can participate and when messages are typed and posted, they are displayed almost immediately on the screens of all participants. Many organisations have created a chatroom for staff on their intranet so that the e-mail is not clogged with unofficial information or general discussions and debates. myUnisa is an example of a space where chatrooms have been created for discussions among students or with lecturers.



Activity 1.14



- 1 Study the overview in the prescribed book once again. Consider the following issues in the light of the content:
 - With whom is Dawn communicating?
 - Which technology is Dawn using to interact with the other person?
 - Where did Dawn meet her partner?
 - List any aspects or characteristics of her partner with which Dawn is familiar.
 - Is it possible to determine the gender of the person with whom Dawn is communicating? Substantiate your claim.
- 2 Distinguish between a chatroom and a newsgroup.

Dawn is communicating with someone in Sweden via a chatroom. She has not met her partner in person, does not know whether it is a male or female because the date she is referring to, is a cyberdate. Their interaction will take place via computer (chatroom) and provided both have the correct equipment and resources, they may in future exchange photographs to see what the other party looks like.

Difference between newsgroup and chatroom

One of the major differences between a newsgroup and a chatroom is that whenever you send an e-mail message in a chatroom, that message is only visible to the recipients of your message. On the other hand, whenever you post an item on a newsgroup, that item is available to everyone who has access to the Internet.

1.1.5.2 Teleconferencing

Teleconferencing refers to the live exchange of information between people and machines that are remote from one another but linked by a telecommunication system. The telecommunication system may provide

services, such as audio, video, and data services and computer networking by one or more means such as telephone, radio, television or even telegraph (Telecommuting 2006).

Telecommunication system

A *telecommunication system* contains a transmitter, a medium (line), channel and a receiver. The transmitter encodes the message into a signal, the transmission medium can modify the signal from transmitter to receiver and the receiver's decoding mechanism can recover the message within the limits of the signal degradation. Let us illustrate this by demonstrating an example of human telecommunications.

In a normal conversation between two people the message is the sentence that the communicator (sender) wishes to communicate to the listener. The transmitter (the language areas in the human brain, vocal cords, larynx and mouth) produces sounds known as speech. The signal consists of the sound waves (speech) while the air carrying the sound waves is the channel. Other devices (such as telephones, a radio or television) may cause noise between the communicator and the listener. The auditory system of the listener and language areas in the human brain (regarded as receivers) decode the signal into meaningful information and filter out any background noise (Newsgroup 2006).

Audio conferencing

Audio conferencing permits several people, in different geographical locations, to be on the same line at the same time (Rudansky-Kloppers 2002:140). People across the world can apply for advertised positions at various institutions in South Africa. If a successful applicant lives in another country and is not able to attend the selection committee meeting (circumstances and approval permitted), members of the selection committee may conduct the interview with the applicant via audio conference. A specific time is pre-arranged between the parties and at that time, the applicant is called and by means of a speakerphone, all selection committee members can interact with the applicant on the other end of the line.

Video conference

A video conference involves the use of interactive telecommunication technologies allowing two or more locations to simultaneously interact via two-way video and audio transmissions, thus creating a two-way communication platform. Video conferencing is actually an 'electronic version of a long-distance face-to-face meeting' (Rudansky-Kloppers 2002:141). A typical example is to be seen when the presenter of a sports programme on television has a discussion with the trainer or manager of the national team in Cape Town and with a player from a regional team in Durban while the studio (from where the programme is broadcast) is in Johannesburg. The parties can see one another on screens and can interact with one another.

The evolution of technology has also created new opportunities for employers and employees. One aspect that has noticeably come to the fore of late is that of telecommuting.

Telecommuting (or distance working) refers to the enjoyment of flexibility of working hours and locations — working away from traditional offices, working from home, in ways that benefit both the organisation and employee — using telecommunication links.

First telecommuters

The term *telecommuting* was created by Jack Nilles and was first used in the United States of America. Although the first experiments in this field were done in 1973/74, it was only in the 1980s that employees began to work from their 'home offices' on desktop computers provided by their employers. Today telecommuters carry notebooks or laptops and are linked or connected to the office via their company network and other communication channels (Telecommuting 2006).

Activity 1.15



- 1 You have the possibility of being considered as a telecommuter and you are required to write a motivation in which the benefits of telecommuting are explored. What possible benefits will you elaborate on?

Benefits of telecommuting

Organisational outcomes are normally achieved through managing people. In other words, individual employees or their output are scrutinised. Telecommuting requires an approach of management by objectives to ensure that the desired results are attained. Successful telecommuting requires discipline from the employee. There could be many distractions and temptations at home that could impact on your time and eventually influence time spent on work activities and the reaching of desired goals. When considering the benefits of telecommuting, the following aspects could also be taken into account:

- Company problems experienced with office and parking facilities could be limited.
- Telecommuting could help solve traffic congestion (there could be fewer people travelling alone in their cars or by taxi to work daily). There may be fewer vehicles on the road resulting in less air pollution and the use of petrol.
- The wellbeing of staff may be improved (less stress related to travelling, allowing more quality time for family-related issues and working in the comfort of your own home at times which suits individual needs).
- Telecommuting could provide improved (better) employment opportunities to certain groups of people, such as mothers with small children, people living in remote areas and people with disabilities.
- Some companies could benefit from offshore outsourcing.
- Telecommuters can internationalise business since differing time zones in various countries around the world can ensure that business takes place around the clock, seven days a week (Telecommuting 2006).

Technology now makes information available at any time but simultaneously poses new challenges. People will need to be well trained in the use of electronic devices, good interaction, communication and feedback and a relationship of trust will have to exist between companies and their teleworkers.

1.2 Conclusion

This study unit is the first in a series in which you will be introduced to the basics of Communication as a science. From the information gleaned you should realise that communication has come a long way, that it is used every day in a number of ways, fulfils differing functions and continues to develop through technological advancement.

People will in future be able to access the Internet electronically by means of wireless devices (cellphones, hand-held computers and digital assistants). It is estimated that more than 80 million people globally are sending wireless messages already and that more than 1 billion cellphones are currently in use. The future seems to be in 'pervasive computing' where Internet-ready devices — digital devices, cellphones and televisions — are utilised on a daily basis instead of using desktop computers (Fielding 2006:360).

Despite all the latest developments and technologies, certain questions arise: Are we not overloaded with information and communication? Can we still be effectively productive as we daily have to pay attention to a large number of telephone calls, e-mails, voice-mail messages, cellphone calls, internal pieces of mail at the office, faxes and pager messages?

The important issue raised here could be investigated once you have been exposed to the information in the next study unit — that of communication research; after you have familiarised yourself with communication as a scientific discipline; and once you have taken note of the functions of communication.



1.3 Looking back

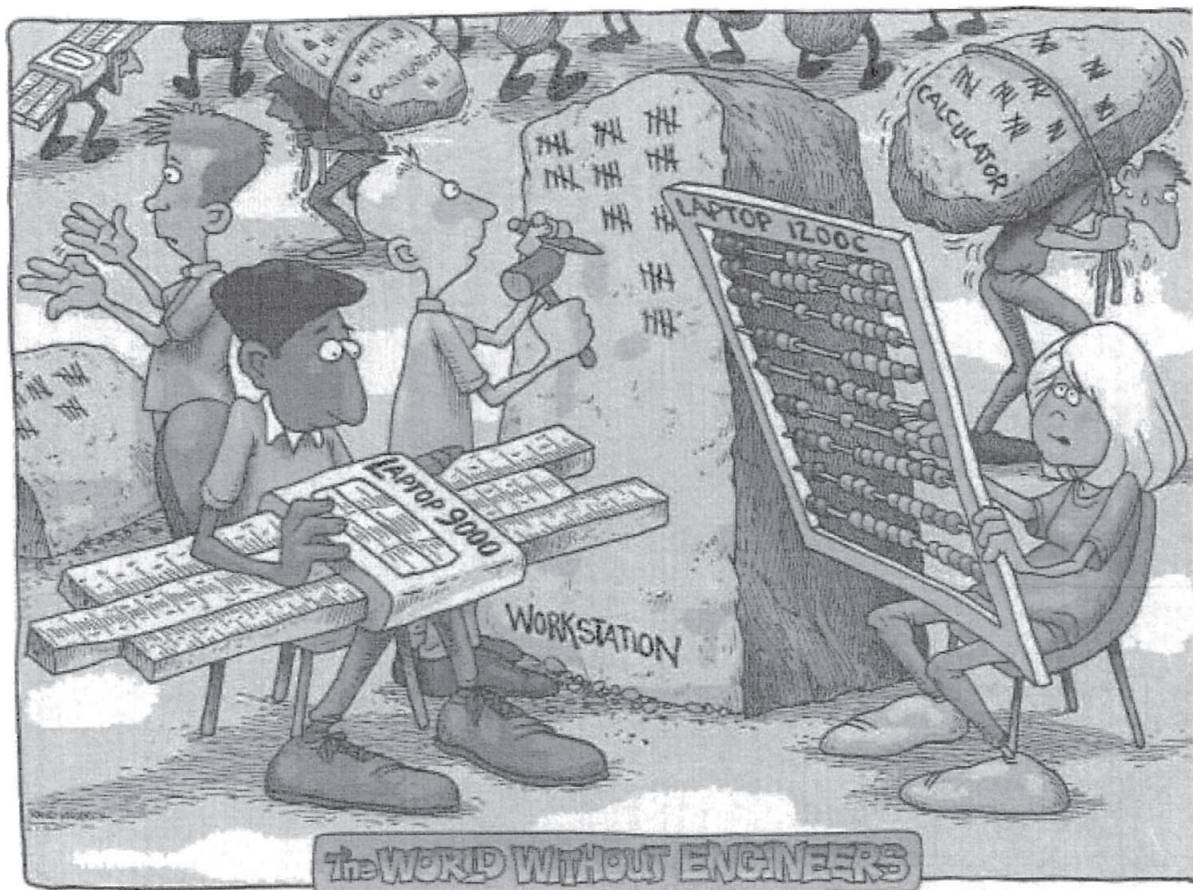
Test your understanding of the contents of this study unit by answering the following questions and by working through the activities below.

- 1 Provide three reasons why the various stages in the development of communication are important to societies today?
- 2 Why do we use an alphabet?
- 3 Write a short story to illustrate how the age of print has improved the effective and efficient distribution of information.
- 4 Draw a picture or diagram to illustrate the interrelationship of the various stages in the development of communication.
- 5 Identify your personal preference from among all electronic mass media. Explain to a friend why you prefer this specific mass medium above any other medium.
- 6 List any aspects discussed in this study unit which you feel you need to revisit for clarity in order to improve your understanding of the contents.

- 7 Now that you have worked through the first study unit, what has, in your opinion, been the most significant benefit in the development of communication from cave paintings and cuneiform to the modern marvels of computer technology?
- 8 What do you think the future holds for the development of Communication as a scientific discipline?
- 9 Consider each of the following statements and place a tick (✓) in the appropriate column (True or False):

Statement	True	False
Our knowledge of communication can only be tested according to our personal experiences.		
It is sufficient to consult folklore, parents, books and sangomas to test our knowledge about the origins of communication.		
The bestseller, <i>Long walk to freedom</i> , can be regarded as mass media.		

- 10 Imagine that your parents were born in 1935; you were born in 1960 and your child was born in 2002. You now have a friend visiting from Ghana and you want to elaborate on family history relating to each era. Which appropriate media (from each era) would you select in support of your story?
- 11 Study the cartoon below and answer the questions that follow.



A picture tells a story. Write a short paragraph in which you illustrate

- how the characters in the cartoon address differing aspects of the development of communication
- how they are communicating
- how this cartoon bridges the gap between 'then' and 'now'.

Technology and the Media

By Asa Briggs

The sense that the world is in the middle of a continuing communications revolution has been strong since the 1960s when television made its great breakthrough. It was then that the Canadian writer on communications, Marshall McLuhan made his memorable statements that 'the medium is the message' and that the world was becoming a global village. It was then too that the word 'media' became part of daily speech, covering not only electronic media, live television, but older print media, particularly the Press.

It was not until the 19th century that the newspaper became the dominant pre-electronic medium, following in the wake of the pamphlet and the book and in the company of the periodical. It was during the 19th century also that the communications revolution speeded up, beginning with transport, the railway, and leading on through the telegraph, the telephone, radio, and motion pictures.

It is generally recognized, however, that the introduction of the computer in the 20th century, changed the process, although its impact on the media was not immediately apparent. It now became possible to combine thousands, later millions, of individual transistors on a single chip. Computers became smaller and more powerful. They became 'personal' too, as well as institutional, with memory and storage increasing and display becoming crisper. They were thought of, like people, in terms of generations, with the distance between generations much smaller. It was within the computer age that the term 'information society' acquired wide currency to describe the context within which we now live.

Not everyone agreed — or agrees — about the 'causes' of the communications revolution. Were there single causes of particular episodes in it? The words 'cause' and 'effect', which have been applied to each technological change in turn, from the steam engine to the computer, are quite inadequate. It has never been possible to isolate each single effect, big or small. Technology by itself does not explain. The same technology was used in quite different ways in different political and social contexts. In Britain, for example, the national broadcasting agency had a monopoly both of radio and television until 1955, and was financed by licence fee, not by advertising. In the United States broadcasting from the beginning, radio and television, was dependent on advertising and on the business system. In some other countries, including the Soviet Union, all the media were viewed as instruments of propaganda. Such differences of purpose led to differences in programming, both news and entertainment. Only with satellite television and the prospects of 'globalization' were national systems threatened and with them, it was often argued — the debate continues — 'national cultures'.

Despite the popular use of the term global village, television did not create a new one. The words 'network' and 'web' seem far more

appropriate. Another new phrase of the 1990s, 'information superhighway', also demands critical attention. This raised the question of 'access' to new technology.

Meanwhile, within the changing communications pattern, the Internet, with less rhetoric, has been perhaps the most interesting development and has certainly most captured the imagination. At first, in the 1960s, the purposes of the Internet were limited, as were its users. The 'web' was designed to serve military and academic needs. Soon it attracted a wide range of participants, becoming an electronic exchange system, operating from below. Accessed, often graphical, 'pages' of information with embedded addresses, allowed users of all ages and types to link to other sites at the click of a 'mouse' button. The 'pages' created constituted 'hypertext', allowing compilation of pictures and words. There was scope for the exchange not only of information (with varying degrees of authenticity) but of ideas and creativity. The distinction between 'producers' and 'consumers' of content lost much of its point.

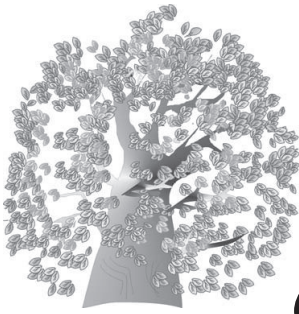
Digital technology, bringing together computing and solid-state electronics, certainly revolutionizes (this time the word cannot be argued about) telecommunications and the media. Binary digit signals enable language, numbers, images, patterns, and music to be communicated through a common technology. The possibilities seem almost limitless. They would have seemed in the past to have belonged not to science but to science fiction. The word 'information' itself seems to be inadequate. It covers 'entertainment', as it did in the McLuhanesque period, raising different issues, and it encompasses ways of learning as well as of communicating. It is difficult to keep a sense of perspective given the rate and scale of change.

What will be the next stages? Will old media disappear? For example, what will happen to the book or to the compact disc? How will the newspaper change? Will it ever become completely electronic? Can public broadcasting survive? What is the future of digital terrestrial television? Will we have new business alliances and consortia? They are already forming. At the individual level will E-mail displace letters or fax? Will the relationship between media producers and editors and users (or customers) become more interactive?

It may well be that through an effort to chart the words that we use, and the dates when they were first used, we can achieve a greater understanding of a continuing historical process that encompasses the future as well as the past.

Lord Briggs is a historian, broadcaster, and author of the five-volume *History of Broadcasting*, and other books.¹

¹ "Guest Essay: Technology and the Media", *Microsoft® Encarta® 98 Encyclopedia*. © 1993-1997 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.



STUDY UNIT 2

Communication and human needs

Dr Elize Terblanché

2. INTRODUCTION

The information provided in study unit 1 of this study guide should have illustrated that communication is a science and you could have deduced that effective communication can take place by means of a number of media.

Just as people eat for various reasons, so people also communicate for various reasons. In this study unit the focus will be on finding out the following:

- Why do people communicate?
- What are the purposes and functions of communication?
- Is it possible to conduct research on communication as a scientific discipline?
- What contribution does research make to a discipline such as Communication Science?

2.1 Purposes of communication

Imagine that you win the lotto this week. What is the first thing that you would do or consider? Surely you would talk to yourself (intrapersonal communication) and try and think of whom you would see or call to share (interpersonal communication) the news with.

The above scenario illustrates the basic purpose of communication: to satisfy a need. Communication can help satisfy a number of needs experienced by people — a need for warmth, shelter, clothing, and interaction with others, to feel wanted and valued, to obtain or exchange information. These and other needs have to do with the survival, personal, social, economic, practical, informative and playful nature of the human being and can be related to theories developed by needs theorists who believed that human behaviour is determined by specific needs.

Maslow's theory

According to Maslow's theory, people are motivated to progress from the most basic needs (to survive) to achieving the highest level of needs (to

fulfil one's potential and to become all that one is capable of becoming). Maslow believed that motivation deals with conscious and unconscious drives and a primary level need has to be satisfied before the next level of needs can be satisfied. Maslow proposed that those people who have fulfilled their need for self-actualisation can become aware of the fullest potential of humans at large (Maslow 2006).

Maslow's hierarchy

Maslow's hierarchy of needs — which he believed determines human behaviour — address (1) physiological needs; (2) security and safety needs; (3) love and feelings of belonging; (4) competence, prestige, and esteem; (5) self-fulfilment, curiosity and the need to understand (Microsoft Encarta 98, 1993-1997).



Activity 2.1



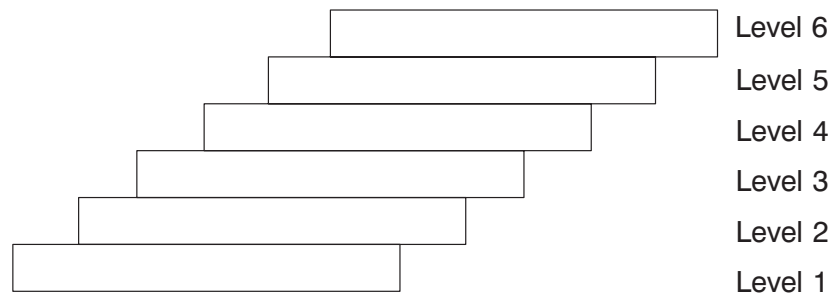
- 1 Study section 2.1 — 2.1.6 in the prescribed book and read the scenario below to answer the questions that follow.

You are a parent (male or female) of three children, married to someone who prefers you stay at home and raise the children. You have, however, completed your degree and have now been offered a job that will require you to be away from home for most of the day.

- Identify the various aspects that you need to consider and which you and your partner will have to discuss. Reflect on how the following might play a role in the discussion:
 - *Need for information.* What information will both of you need to ensure a successful outcome?
 - *Decision making.* Who needs to make which decisions? What thoughts could cross your or your partner's mind if you were to make this decision? What kind of arguments could have an effect on the decision-making process?
 - *Persuasion.* What kind of information and which communication strategies could be needed to ensure that either partner is persuaded and does understand?
 - *Social needs.* What benefits could be at stake and how would these contribute to or harm the relationship?
 - *Self-expression.* How will the individual parties express themselves to the other? Could nonverbal communication (body language) come into play?
 - *Power.* Will either or both parties communicate in such a manner as to persuade the other party to do what they want? Will one of the parties be put into a submissive position?
 - *Relationship building.* What kind of arguments can be made to ensure that your relationship stays healthy and is maintained?

- 2 Consider the communication skills (communication competence) that you will have to illustrate to ensure a successful outcome to the discussion.
- 3 Draw your own mind map to illustrate the needs which communication will address in this scenario and indicate whether the needs are inter-related.

- 4 Illustrate a hierarchy of your needs reflecting your cultural belief or custom by copying and completing the diagram below.



(Rudansky-Kloppers 2002:31)

- 5 In view of the times we currently live in, what possible criticism can be levied at Maslow's theory?

Communication competence

The success of your communication with your partner will depend on a number of factors, such as communication competence. You will, among other things, have to formulate the words carefully in order to express yourself clearly and concisely. You will have to understand and interpret nonverbal communication and also display the correct and most acceptable nonverbal behaviour.

Communication is a competence which one can learn. One can improve one's communication skills by understanding (1) the communication process; (2) different communication categories; (3) elements of communication; (4) verbal and nonverbal communication and by (5) developing effective listening skills (Erasmus, Bowler & Goliath 1998:1).

Functions of communication

Before engaging in discussion with your partner, you will have to collate all relevant information, such as determining the salary and benefits (information function). When discussing the job offer with your partner, you will have to communicate purposefully after you have decided (intrapersonal communication) to take up the offer (decision-making function). Furthermore, you will have to provide enough information to persuade your partner (interpersonal communication) to let you start working (persuasion function) and express yourself in such a manner that you do not harm your relationship (relationship function). You may even have to persuade your partner of the benefits (social needs function), which could result from the extra income (Du Plooy 1994:40). You will have to exert any and all skills to persuade your partner to think the way you do and to support your decision.

All these functions of communication help people to make sense of the world and satisfy the different needs they experience.

It is clear that the functions identified here are interrelated and one function impacts on another. You know that decision making could have an influence on your relationship. If you do not have all the information, everything that takes place in this communication endeavour will be influenced. The way in which you persuade your partner could have a

positive or negative impact on your relationship and the amount of power exerted or your style of communication could influence the decision-making process of your partner. The context in which we all find ourselves when communicating with others differs and each communication and learning experience is unique.

The purpose of referring to these functions of communication here are simply to illustrate the functions that communication fulfils in terms of human needs and the effects that these can have. In study unit 6 of both the study guide and the prescribed book you will find a discussion of the specific communicative functions of verbal language.

Shortcomings of Maslow's theory

In this modern day and age Maslow's theory seems to be outdated for a number of reasons. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was culture specific and despite his claim that people from all cultures all over the world behave in the same way, research (Frost, Vos & Dreyer 1997:129) has indicated that the Spanish and Japanese value social life more than wealth.

One should also get clarity on issues such as (1) When is a need satisfied? (2) How many of our needs are totally satisfied before we have another higher-order need? (3) Is it true that lower-order needs have to be satisfied before higher-order needs are satisfied? A few examples of human needs are provided to illustrate why information of this nature is required and to support the criticism levied at Maslow's hierarchy.

According to Maslow, the physiological needs, such as the need for oxygen, food, water, relief from pain and protection from elements, are the most basic of human needs. If you do not have food every day, will you necessarily neglect your need for safety (which is a higher-order need)? The next need in Maslow's hierarchy is the need for security and safety. Are you sure your job is safe or could you lose your job? How much insurance is enough? Many people are not employed, do not have the security of their own houses and yet they belong to various community or church groups in order to satisfy spiritual or social needs (which are supposed to be a higher-order need). These people also want to have friends, be loved and need affection. Extraordinary people (geniuses), such as artists with exceptional talent, are driven by their talent to find self-actualisation to such an extent that they ignore lower level needs (Frost, Vos & Dreyer 1997:129; Markin 1974:189).

Despite these shortcomings, Maslow's hierarchy of needs made a contribution to science and it is still useful today. Other scholars, such as Alderfer, McClelland (addressed needs in an organisational context), Herzberg (addressed job-related needs), McGregor (addressed management styles) and Packard have also made contributions to addressing human needs. For the purpose of this study guide, we focus mainly on the work of Alderfer and Packard because of their close relationship with the work of Maslow, but we also reflect on the implications that McGregor's theories X and Y have for communication.

2.1.1 Contribution of other theorists

Alderfer's theory

Clayton Alderfer, a talented writer on management, has reworked Maslow's needs and distinguishes three basic needs, namely **existence**, **relatedness** and **growth** (ERG). The group of needs related to existence closely resemble the first and second level needs postulated by Maslow since they address the needs for 'requirements of life, such as food, clothing and shelter' (Frost, Vos & Dreyer 1997:130). Building and maintaining relationships (focusing on social aspects) correspond to Maslow's need for belonging and may also correlate with his need for ego (status) satisfaction. The need for growth is similar to Maslow's need for self-actualisation but can also relate to aspects of status needs. According to Alderfer's theory, an individual who does not succeed in satisfying a particular need, may temporarily shift the focus to satisfying another need — if people cannot find a job, they may study to obtain a qualification in order to improve their chances of finding employment (Frost, Vos & Dreyer 1997:130).

McGregor's theories X and Y

Theories X and Y have implications for communication. In an organisation where the leadership style is based on theory X, communication is top-down, consisting mainly of instructions, reprimands and little (if any) praise and concentrates to job-related issues. Communication from the bottom is limited to factual reporting, whereas criticism of management or policies is not permitted. This restriction of communication leads to informal channels of communication, disguising facts and making it difficult to distinguish between facts, gossip and rumours (Frost, Vos & Dreyer 1997:141-142).

In a theory Y organisation the interaction is alive and well. Although the top-down communication has limitations (for instance, not announcing the financial status of the organisation to all staff), employees are encouraged to interact with management, criticise and make suggestions on policy matters with a view to making improvements (Frost, Vos & Dreyer 1997:142).

Packard's hidden needs

It is believed that Packard's hidden needs are most effective if the appeal is to the emotion of a person and if that emotion is associated with a basic need. This theory is therefore of particular importance to communication practitioners in advertising.



COM101-X/1

Activity 2.2



- 1 Study the section in the prescribed book on Packard's hidden needs.
- 2 Identify advertisements (in magazines, newspapers or on the radio and television) that illustrate each of Packard's hidden needs.
- 3 Once you have identified the advertisements, link Packard's hidden need that could be associated with the particular advertisement and consider the possibility that more than one need could feature in one particular advertisement.

- 4 Compile your own portfolio of advertisements by collecting the advertisements that you like best. Analyse these advertisements and indicate the following:
 - Why do you like each particular advertisement?
 - To which of your needs does each advertisement appeal?
 - Does the advertisement appeal mostly to a particular gender, age, ethnic or language group? Why?
- 5 Select the most appropriate answer to the following statement: The logo *Proudly South African* appeals to the need for creative outlets/roots/immortality.
- 6 Write a short paragraph in which you explain the relationship between communication and the satisfaction of your specific needs.

In attempting to perform this activity, you could consider the following advertisements.

- Need for emotional security — burglar proofing and security gates in our homes, an alarm, gear lock and/or tracking devices in our vehicles.
- Need for reassurance of worth — motorcar advertisement with the slogan 'you are what you drive'. Could this advertisement also indicate that you are special (ego gratification) and therefore need a special car like this one to boost your ego?
- Need for ego gratification — cosmetic manufacturer that makes a facial moisturiser especially for men; an insurance company that encourages women to purchase a policy especially for women because of their special needs.
- Need for creative outlets — do-it-yourself programmes on television demonstrating tools and skills that can be used for creative projects in and around the house. Also consider the large number of home industry items on sale either at formal stalls at flea markets or at informal vendors on pavements in cities. Your personal touch could result in regular clients wanting to purchase your products.
- Need for love objects — television advertisements and programmes related to Idols. Advertisements for live concerts of popular artists (Soweto String Quartet, Mendoza, Robby Williams, Destiny's Child, Bone, Tugs and Harmony or DJ Cleo).
- Need for sense of power — a training company illustrating how making good presentations can give you the edge; creating an image that you are in a position of power because of the skill.
- Need for roots — an advertisement of a prominent South African bank thanking its customers in the Eastern Cape for their continued loyalty and support. This advertisement includes a man in traditional Xhosa dress. Any advertisement containing the logo *Proudly South African* also addresses this need. Just think of South Africans living abroad and seeing this logo on a product in a store.
- Need for immortality — funeral parlours advertise that you should invest in a policy which will pay for the funeral costs so that your family can have more money to spend after you have passed away (not having to incur this expense).

**Similarities:
theories of Maslow
and Packard**

When comparing the needs postulated by both *Maslow and Packard*, would you agree to these similarities?

- Maslow's need for survival and Packard's hidden need for immortality (Self-preservation needs are addressed.)
- Maslow's need for safety and Packard's hidden need for emotional security and roots
- Maslow's social needs and Packard's hidden need for love objects
- Maslow's need for esteem and Packard's hidden need for reassurance of worth, ego gratification and power.

Although we accept that human needs are universal, not all humans experience the same needs or in the same order. As one moves through different stages in life, one's needs and priorities also change. Teenagers may experience a higher need for socialisation than the parents of newborn twins.

In a country like South Africa (with such diversity), research is necessary to determine, among other things, what motivates differing cultures, how needs that guide communication are understood and how Communication as a subject satisfies the global need for scientific knowledge. In the next section some of these and other related aspects are addressed.

2.2 Communication as a scientific discipline

Have you ever wondered where authors of books get their facts and ideas from? The authenticity of facts represented in a text is the result of research — an enquiry, exploration or investigation into something with a view to producing knowledge in formal ways in academic contexts. Research is one of the most powerful tools of any discipline since it contributes to the growth of the subject content. It is an ongoing process and although facts are established and conclusions are reached, research is never final, since new avenues for exploring and new questions are always possible (Withers 1994:172). No wonder the American scientist, Erwin Chargaff stated that '[w]hat counts in science is not to be so much the first as the last' (Green 1982:218).

The discipline of Communication Science has unique requirements and rules according to which scientific research is done. In order for one to determine what a discipline is about, it is necessary to establish what definitions of the discipline are available and to formulate one's own definition for maximum understanding. It also helps to discuss the subject matter with others and to exchange ideas and thoughts.

Because the boundaries of each discipline change over time, methods and interests change and also because of developments in the discipline over time, it is essential for scholars to be acquainted with the history of the discipline they are studying. This is done by unpacking text, by familiarising oneself with the language of the discipline and by taking note of the central issues and methods to make the field of study one's own in order to

become part of it. Once this is achieved, one has become an active participant and can contribute towards development and changes in the discipline (Craig & Bradbury 1994:66-130).

Successful research

Successful research requires Communication scholars to be familiar with the theory related to the discipline they are studying. Communication scholars of the past have formulated communication theory which is still used today. Later in the study guide and prescribed book, you are introduced to a number of theories of communication, such as those related to models of the communication process, theories related to mass communication and theories on interpersonal communication.

It is also necessary to define concepts and assign meaning to the words which will be used so that everyone will have the same understanding. Arguments need to be presented to enhance existing knowledge so that respect can be gained or to ensure that one eventually becomes an expert or researcher in one's own right (Craig & Bradbury 1994:62) and produce scientific knowledge.



Activity 2.3



- 1 Study section 2.5.1 in the prescribed book and answer the questions below.
 - If you think back to the tasks performed in previous activities, how have your definitions of concepts assisted you to assign similar meanings to these concepts so that you can understand what you are learning?
 - Turn back to activity 2.1 in which you drew a mind map and consider the following:
 - Can your mind map be regarded as a model? Does it meet the requirements of a model? Substantiate your answer.
 - Identify two shortcomings (related to the communication process) of the mind map that you drew.

You may not have realised it but if you have completed the tasks provided in previous activities, you have already started to conduct research. You have collected data, explored options, explored and analysed content, described phenomena and finally, you have made interpretations.

The mind map that you drew is a model since it captured the most essential features of the situation. It illustrated the needs which would be addressed by means of communication and you could add a few lines to indicate the interrelationship of the various needs, either with one another or with the people involved. This model does not, however, indicate possible noise, body movements, tone of voice, interpretation or the relational level of meaning.

A model is a visual picture or diagram of something. Models can fulfil a number of functions, such as illustrating a process, the concepts of a process, relationships or merely represent the dynamics of a process visually. An in-depth discussion of particular communication models (illustrating the communication process) is presented in study unit 3 of this study guide.

2.3 Communication research

Why are you studying Communication Science? What makes the field of Communication different to that of Psychology, Social Work or Sociology? Most students with a qualification in Communication Science become part of the community of communication practitioners. They can be employed as communication specialists in (for instance) publication houses as copy writers, in the field of mass media — television, radio, newspapers (reporters), the film industry, the Internet — and in various organisations across the world where they fulfil a number of roles, such as managing the organisational communication policy of an institution. All of these people have a shared knowledge that is based on sound communication research.

Activity 2.4



- 1 Study the scenario below and then answer the questions posed.

You are a television reporter who has to report on the abduction of a 4-year-old toddler from her home in your community. You, the parents, grandparents, local religious leaders, the social worker, a psychologist, the police and a lawyer are involved in the matter. All the parties mentioned in the scenario are here for a specific purpose.

- Which commonalities will all parties share?
- How will the perspectives of the individual role players differ from yours? In other words, what will make your presence and purpose different from theirs?
- Why will all role players not share the same thoughts, focus on the same information, and make the same decisions?
- How will your communication differ from that of anyone else?

All of the parties involved in the scenario have come to find an amicable solution to the problem, but they all have their own agendas, perspectives and ways of behaving. These are based on previous experience, training and the nature of their specific jobs and responsibilities. All role players share the activity of communication — they will all have to communicate with the family (and possibly with other people not mentioned) as well as with one another.

Your approach to the matter will differ vastly from that of the social worker, psychologist or religious leaders. By the nature of their positions

and the roles that they play, their approach may be more sympathetic. Although you may feel empathy or sympathy for the family, you have to satisfy particular job requirements, such as making a recording based on sensation to ensure that you meet the news value of television reporting.

From the information in preceding paragraphs it could be deduced that specific disciplines require specific actions.

Activity 2.5



- 1 Physical violence has escalated in your community and claims are made that too many young children watch television (without parental supervision) and that these children mostly watch programmes of a violent nature. You have to do pilot research (research on a small scale) in your community and determine the following:
 - How many children in your community have access to television on a daily basis?
 - How many children in your community watch television without adult supervision?
 - Which programmes do children prefer to watch daily?
 - How much time does each child spend watching television programmes daily?
- 2 To get an understanding of the complexity and activities involved in research, reflect on the following issues:
 - How do you think you will go about collecting the data?
 - Whom will you approach to participate in the research?
 - Would you approach only children or both parents and children?
 - How would you record the responses?
 - What would you do with the data once you have collected it?
 - If you have to interview people, which questions would you consider asking?
 - What kind of data could assist you to understand the problem?

Research is usually done to identify problems, to collect data (information), to find solutions or to understand or improve a current practice. Before conducting research, the researcher has to decide whether to observe, question or to combine both methods.

Observation

The activity of observation is usually done when conducting historical research (examining old documents), doing content analyses (analysing mass media, such as television or advertisements) or when observing people's behaviour. When the behaviour of people is observed, the nature of the research could be that of

- *Ethnographic research.* The researcher will, for example, live among the people whose behaviour is being observed.

- *Field research.* Individual interviews or discussions in focus groups could be held with participants.
- *Participatory research.* The researcher can actively take part in activities which participants perform. An example would be that of unhappy employees toi-toing. The researcher would probably participate in this activity to observe the behaviour of participants.

Questioning

If a researcher decides to conduct research by means of questioning, the nature of research could be

- *Face-to-face.* In other words, the researcher conducts a personal interview with each respondent. To ensure that the same questions are posed to each respondent, an interview schedule could be used. Responses can be recorded by hand (writing them down), or on video or a tape recording could be made.
- *With a focus group.* The researcher conducts interviews with small groups of people.
- *By means of a questionnaire.* Structured, semi-structured and self-administered questionnaires can be used. A questionnaire can also be combined with an interview in instances where, for example, respondents are illiterate. Questionnaires could be sent by mail (postal mail or electronically) or the questionnaires could be group administered (handed out to a group of people meeting in a particular venue).

All of the aspects discussed above have, individually, specific requirements (methods and techniques) which should be considered before deciding on the nature of the research to be done and the appropriate technique to be used. It is important for the researcher to be familiar with the circumstances and factors which could play a role in the research before deciding on methods and techniques to be used. (You would not, for example, distribute questionnaires in an area where illiterate people are residents without appointing trained assistants to help.)

Circumstances (personal and in your community) could play a role in determining how the data would be collected. Depending on the size of the sample to be drawn (determining the number of participants) and accessibility to participants, the questions posed to both parents and children will have to address the issues which need to be researched. The researcher would typically include closed-ended questions (expecting Yes or No answers) to determine whether parents always supervise children when they watch television and whether parents allow children to watch all or only certain programmes. A list of television programmes will have to be listed and respondents will be asked to indicate which of the listed programmes they watch. The researcher will also have to formulate a question to include time intervals to determine how much time the children spend watching television daily. These questions only relate to the research issue and there are other questions, such as personal detail (age, gender, whether the household has a television set, et cetera) which will also have to be included. It is also important for the researcher to

explain (verbally when conducting interviews, or in a covering letter if a questionnaire is used) why the research is being done and what the purpose of the research is.

Sampling

Before data can be collected, a researcher has to select a sampling technique in order to draw a sample from the population. This refers to the way the researcher would select participants to take part in the research. This selection has to meet certain requirements for the research to be scientific and to generalise the findings.

Once the data (responses) have been collected, they will have to be analysed and interpreted. There are various methods of analysing data — computer programmes are also available for this purpose.

Depending on the nature of the research, the main research problem and the circumstances, a researcher can conduct qualitative or quantitative research or even combine both approaches.

Qualitative research: used to obtain opinions and inputs from respondents. Open-ended questions are used

Quantitative research: used to count (tally) specifics. Deals with statistics, and closed-ended questions are usually asked

Qualitative or quantitative research

Qualitative research is used when one wants to determine reasons (why) — for example, to describe why parents allow their children to watch any television programme or to obtain the opinion of parents on the effect of violent television programmes and violence in the community.

Quantitative research provides quantitative data (indicating how many). For example, counting how many hours a day children watch television or counting how many children watch the same television programme daily. Both these methods can also be combined when conducting research.

This brief overview of research is by no means comprehensive. The purpose of this information is mainly to provide general survey of research, to indicate that various methods, techniques and requirements are applicable and to illustrate how comprehensive a research project usually is. For example, in response to the last question ('What kind of data would assist you to understand the problem?'), you may have felt satisfied to list the responses which you recorded from parents and children living in certain households. However, remember that 'the problem' was suggested to be an escalation of physical violence in your community **due to** the assumption that children watch television programmes of a violent nature. Such a simplistic cause-and-effect relationship is almost impossible to prove, namely that watching violent television programmes results in children becoming violent. There are many other causal factors, such as poverty or children belonging to gangs which encourage crime, none of which may be related to television viewing behaviour.

The comments above should illustrate that, when conducting communication research, we need to realise that other factors such as the economic, environmental, social and educational are equally important.

Should you proceed with your studies in Communication Science, you will be introduced to more comprehensive communication research in modules dealing specifically with research.

2.4 Conclusion

It would seem that people have an insatiable needs-wants hierarchy and, as needs at the bottom of the hierarchy are fulfilled, higher needs emerge. One of our greatest needs must surely be to communicate. Communication often holds people together and can ensure success when groups of people have to work together to attain a certain goal. Successful communication is a purposeful activity — a process involving continuous exchange of meaningful messages. Communication can be intentional or unintentional.

Apart from exposing you to the needs hierarchy premised by Maslow and Packard's hidden needs, this study unit also introduced you to the subject of Communication as a scientific discipline and to research. Scientific research was illustrated to be the most acceptable form of research and to involve specific approaches, research methods and techniques.

In study unit 3 of the study guide and prescribed book, the communication process is examined. Not only do we discuss definitions of communication, but you are also introduced to various communication dimensions, the nature of communication, components of communication as well as to communication models and contexts.



2.5 Looking back

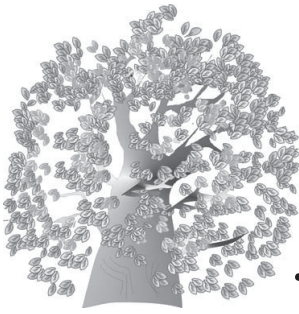
Put yourself to the test to see if you understood the contents of this study unit. Perform the activities below or provide answers to the stated questions:

- 1 Compare Maslow's hierarchy of needs with Packard's hidden needs with a view to highlighting similarities and differences.
- 2 Consider the contributions of each theorist discussed in this study unit. Identify one or more of your needs which each theory addresses.
- 3 Draw up a list of 4 aspects to illustrate what makes Communication different from other disciplines, such as Psychology or Social Work.
- 4 Consider each of the statements below and indicate with a tick (✓) which of these statements are true:

Statement	True	False
Scientific study enables us to understand why communication problems occur.		
When communication problems occur, they can be corrected by means of scientific study.		
One of the main reasons why scientific study of communication is undertaken, is to understand the meaning of effective communication.		

Statement	True	False
The word 'theory' can be explained by describing it as the way in which we think about communication in scientific terms.		
Models can illustrate the relationship between specific concepts.		
Models can simplify a complex phenomenon.		

- 5 You are the proprietor of a new franchise and have just opened an office in France and in Morocco. Which three media technologies would be the most appropriate for interaction with your partners in foreign countries and why?
- 6 You want to welcome a new resident in your street and have decided to arrange a small get together of close neighbours (6 households). Plan and make notes for yourself to indicate the following:
 - How would you conduct research on a small scale to determine the viability of this effort? Which steps would you follow? Which aspects would you consider? What information would you collect?
 - Which method would you use to collect information?
 - How would you obtain inputs from neighbours?
 - Which questions would you ask neighbours?



STUDY UNIT 3

The communication process

Mrs Therise Breet-van Niekerk

'Everything must be made as simple as possible, but not simpler'
~ Albert Einstein

3. INTRODUCTION

Communication can best be summarised as the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver in an understandable manner. The importance of effective communication is immeasurable in the world of business and in personal life. In this study unit our focus will be to determine the following:

- What is communication?
- What are the dimensions of communication?
- What are the components of the communication process?
- Which models and theories do we use to understand the communication process?
- What are the contextual approaches to communication?

3.1 What is communication?

In study unit 1 we looked at the history and development of communication as a scientific discipline. After studying this unit you probably became aware of how extremely interdisciplinary the study of Communication Science is. Communication forms part of all aspects of our lives, and it is this interdisciplinary nature that makes it impossible to come up with a concise and neat definition for a phenomenon such as communication. We can therefore say that one of the reasons for the proliferation of definitions is that there is no single approach to the study of communication. Definitions differ according to the theorists' views about communication. In this section we will highlight the various views on communication.



Activity 3.1



- 1 Study section 3.1 of your prescribed book to familiarise yourself with the various views on communication.
 - Put yourself in the shoes of the early theorists who developed the field of study. You are a theorist who supports the technical view of communication. Explain this view to your readers.
 - You are a theorist who supports the meaning-centred view of communication. Explain this view to your readers.
 - You are a theorist who believes that communication needs to be understood in terms of a process. Explain this to your readers.
 - As a theorist, you support the transactional view of communication. Explain this to your readers.

Technical view of communication

As a theorist who supports a *technical view of communication*, you are concerned with how accurately and efficiently messages can be transferred from one person to another along a channel such as a telephone wire or the airwaves that carry sound and pictures to radios and television sets. You see communication as a linear (one-way) sequence of events from Person A to Person B.

Meaning-centred view of communication

The theorist who supports the *meaning-centred view of communication* concentrates on issues such as what motivates people to communicate in the first place, how they give meaning to each other's messages, what happens between them during communication, and how they use language to create and exchange meaningful messages. The emphasis is on the *interaction* between the participants in communication.

Communication as a process

The theorist who *sees communication as a process*, will explain that communication is not a fixed, static thing; rather, it is dynamic, never-ending and ever-changing. It does not have a beginning or an end, nor does it follow a fixed sequence of events. A process is also irreversible, which means that each communication encounter you have influences the one that follows.

Transactional definition

If you are a theorist who supports the *transactional definition* of communication, you regard communication not only as an interactive process of exchanging meaningful messages, but as a *transaction* between the participants during which a relationship develops between them. Here, communication becomes a reciprocal process in which meaning is negotiated through the exchange of messages. It makes the communicators both the senders and receivers at the same time. Speakers are engaged in a constant transaction, simultaneously sending and receiving messages. Another aspect of the transactional model is that it recognises the effect communication has on its speakers. Messages have two dimensions: content and relationship. The content dimension is what is actually said while the relationship dimension explains how the content of the message changes the relationship between the two individuals communicating.

Activity 3.2



Now that you have learned about the different views on communication, you will probably be able to see that each of these views has its own set of implications, strengths and limitations.

What is your opinion regarding each of these views? Draw up a table of the different views and give your opinion on the implications, strengths and limitations of each view. The table below is an example of how you can go about drawing up your table.

	Technical view of communication	Meaning-centred view of communication	Communication as process	Transactional view of communication
<i>Strengths</i>				
<i>Limitations</i>				
<i>Implications</i>				

3.2 What are the dimensions of communication?

In this section we pay closer attention to the nature of communication. Furthermore, we develop our understanding of communication by examining the dimensions of verbal and nonverbal communication, oral and written communication, formal and informal communication, and intentional and unintentional communication.

Activity 3.3



Study section 3.2 in your prescribed book to familiarise yourself with the various dimensions of communication. Draw up a list of these dimensions and provide an example of each from your daily communication encounters.



Verbal and nonverbal communication

Verbal communication refers to the spoken or written signs called words that make up a particular language. *Nonverbal communication* refers to all human communication that does not use written or spoken signs. An example of verbal communication can be a conversation with a friend, and an example of nonverbal communication can be your waving a hand to someone you know who drives past you on your way to work.

Oral and written communication

Oral communication refers to messages that are transmitted aloud and includes speaking and listening. Your example of oral communication may

include a telephone conversation with a friend or attending a lecture at university. Although *written communication* involves mainly words, it also has a nonverbal dimension. As you are reading this study guide you are involved in written communication. The nonverbal dimension here may include the font size and colour, and the general layout of the text. Look at the different letter sizes (lower and upper case) used in the box below. Can you see that each provides a different feel. The first appears more romantic, while the second may be used in a more formal context.

<i>DEAR JOHN</i> <i>Dear John</i> DEAR JOHN Dear John
--

Formal and informal communication

Whether we communicate formally or informally depends largely on the situation or context in which we find ourselves. When we are involved in *formal communication*, we pay more attention to both our verbal and nonverbal messages. This may include a formal letter to the dean or attending a job interview. During *informal communication* encounters we are more relaxed and can communicate more naturally. Your example of informal communication may include a casual conversation between you and your best friend. You are both relaxed and not too concerned about your appearance.

Intentional and unintentional communication

When we communicate with a specific goal in mind, we are involved in *intentional communication*. Your example of intentional communication may include congratulating a friend on achieving a distinction for an examination paper. Your warm smile and hand gestures reinforce your verbal message. *Unintentional communication* refers to the occasions when communication takes place without our being aware of it. The unintentional messages we send out are mostly nonverbal. Your example may include sitting in a classroom and listening to a boring lecture. You are unaware that you are constantly looking at your watch, yawning and looking around the classroom. These nonverbal cues indicate that you are unintentionally communicating your boredom.

Understanding the multidimensional nature of communication certainly supports the idea that it is impossible to come up with a concise definition. In the next section, we go one step further. We unpack the idea of communication being a complex process, and we look at each of the individual components involved in this process.

3.3 What are the components of the communication process?

By analysing the parts of the communication process, we are better able to understand the whole. The communication process is a simple model that demonstrates all the factors that can affect communication. Communication is effective if the message that is received is the same

one that is sent. Understanding the communication process is one of the most important and fundamental concepts in your Communication Science studies.



Communicator:
intentionally forms
purposeful
messages and
attempt to express
them to others
through verbal and
nonverbal signs.
Recipient: active
participants —
intentionally and
consciously pay
attention to the
message in order to
understand and
interpret it.
Message:
communication
occurs through the
sending and
receiving of
messages.

Sign: something
that stands for
something else
Code: a system for
using signs

Activity 3.4



- 1 Section 3.3 in your prescribed book deals with the components of the communication process. Study this section and do the following activity:
 - Imagine yourself in a classroom situation and identify the components of the communication process in this communication situation.
 - Think back to the most recent telephone conversation you have had. Identify the components of the communication process in this encounter.

Firstly it should come to mind that in order for communication to take place we need *people*. So, the first component in your situation is the people involved, these are the lecturer and the students. Here the lecturer is the message source and the students, the message receivers. As a *communicator*, the lecturer intentionally forms purposeful messages and try to express them to the students through verbal and nonverbal signs. As the *recipients*, the students do not merely receive messages, they are active participants in the communication process in that they intentionally and consciously pay attention to the message in order to understand and interpret it.

The next component you may have identified is the *message*. Communication takes place through the sending and receiving of messages. The message has a content that is conveyed during the communication encounter. The content may be factual information, for example where the lecturer communicates information regarding the subject or it may be the ideas, thoughts and feelings expressed by the participants.

The lecturer uses signs and codes to formulate messages. It would not be possible for the lecturer to communicate ideas if he or she did not have signs to represent them. A *sign* is something that stands for something else. Here, the lecturer uses words as signs. Signs are combined in a systematic way according to codes. A code is a system for using signs. In this scenario the lecturer uses language as code for systematically putting together words (signs).

The process of *encoding* entails the lecturer taking the ideas in his or her mind and transforming them into verbal and nonverbal signs so that they

can be transmitted as messages to the students. The students on the other hand are involved in a process of *decoding*, taking the verbal and nonverbal messages that they receive and giving them meaning.

Medium: physical means by which messages are transmitted

Channel: the route by which the messages travel

The medium and the channel are both links between the communicator and the recipient. The *medium* is the physical means by which messages are transmitted between people in communication. The lecturer's voice, his or her body movements as well as technological and electronic means of communication such as the lecturer's use of an overhead projector or loudspeaker are mediums of communication. The *channel* is the route by which the messages travel. The airwaves that carry the sound of the lecturer's voice are the channels of communication in this communication situation.

Meaning: abstract in nature. Can be regarded as the product or result of communication.

Messages contain two types of information to which we attach *meaning*: content information and relational information. The *content level* refers to factual information about the topic of the message. The *relational level* determines how the participants understand their relationship. So, in your classroom scenario you attach meaning to *content information* such as the factual content of the lecture. You also attach meaning to *relational information*, that is your understanding of the professional relationship between you and your lecturer, and this relationship determines the interpretation of messages.

Interpretation: adding one's own individual meaning to what is being conveyed

The meaning of the lecturer's message must be interpreted. *Interpretation* means that the students add their own individual meaning to what is being conveyed. Interpretation depends on both social (shared) meanings and individual (personal or subjective) meanings. *Social* in this sense indicates that, to be able to begin communicating, we must have something in common. In this scenario this can be that the lecturer and all the students understand the English language. The individual (personal or subjective) meanings that students may attach to messages are influenced by their own unique frame of reference; this may include previous experiences, values, morals and belief systems.

Noise: any stimulus that interferes with the transmission and reception of messages

The next component that plays a role in the communication process is *noise*. Any stimulus that interferes with the transmission and reception of messages creates a barrier between the communicator and the recipient. In this classroom situation *external noise* may be other students talking, and making it difficult for you to hear what the lecturer is saying. External noise is stimuli in the environment that distract your attention. *Internal noise* consists of the thoughts and feelings in oneself that interfere with the communication situation. You may for example have a sick relative at home, and as you are sitting in the classroom trying to focus on the lecture, your worrying about your relative prevents you from concentrating on the lecture. If whenever you are able to say 'I don't understand', you are experiencing *semantic noises*. This may happen when a person speaks in an unfamiliar language or uses words that you do not understand. If your lecturer for example uses complicated terminology and high academic language, you experience semantic noise. One way of overcoming noise is by means of feedback. Ask the lecturer to repeat the previous statement in a more understandable way.

Feedback: the response of participants to each other

During communication, the participants continuously send messages or *feedback* to each other. Feedback gives communication its dynamic nature by making it an *interactive* rather than a *linear process*. Instead of just standing in front of the class and talking, the lecturer involves the students by asking questions. Without feedback, it is not possible to discuss an issue or a feeling, exchange opinions or arrive at a mutually satisfactory conclusion to the communication encounter.

Context: refers to the environment, the place or conditions, in which the encounter takes place.

The last component of the communication process you may have identified in this scenario is the *context* in which the communication took place. People express themselves differently depending on the context they find themselves in. In your scenario the classroom provides the context for the communication encounter. Your behaviour in the classroom may differ greatly from your behaviour outside the classroom.

Using this activity we clearly illustrated how the various components of the communication process make up the whole. After applying these concepts to a classroom situation, you should be able to identify the components in various other communication encounters.

3.4 Which models and theories do we use to understand the communication process?

Models: visual diagrams of abstract ideas

A model is a simplified, symbolic representation. Dolls, for example, are models of the people or animals they represent. Most *models* are smaller than the actual object and delete certain details, distort others, and generalise about several more. One of the ways in which scholars have sought to understand the nature of communication is by making use of *models* to describe and explain the communication process. A limitation of models is that they often provide a simplified picture of a very complex and dynamic process. Despite the fact that they present a simplified view of communication, models are useful 'tools' in that they allow us to start thinking more critically about communication.

Some of the earliest views on communication were those of Lasswell, Shannon and Weaver, and Schramm. The models they created reflect the development of communication from a linear to an interactive process. To end the section on models of the communication process, the author of the prescribed book provides a brief overview of some the more advanced theories of communication. You do not study all these theories in this introductory course, but this brief overview simply serves to make you aware of developments in the field and to help you understand other models and theories that you will come across during your Communication studies.



Activity 3.5



- 1 Section 3.4.1 of your prescribed book deals with **Lasswell's view of communication**. Study this section and answer the following questions:
 - How does this theorist explain the communication process?
 - Why do we say that this is not a technical view of communication?

Lasswell's view suggests that the communication process can be explained by asking the following compound question: **Who says what to whom in what channel, with what effect?** In the model, *who* refers to the communicator who formulates the message; *what* is the content of message; *channel* indicates the medium of transmission; and *whom* describes either an individual recipient or the audience of mass communication. *Effect* refers to the outcome of the message.

Even though it does not provide for feedback, Lasswell's is not a technical model of communication because he draws our attention to the importance of the content or meaning of the message. Lasswell highlights that, for a message to have the intended effect on the recipient(s), it is important for the source of the message to consider, from the recipients' point of view, who the best person would be to actually communicate the message, what sort of content would most appeal to the intended recipients and which medium would be the most effective means of transmitting the message. By asking *With what effect?*, Lasswell suggests that there could be a range of outcomes or effects of communication, some of which may be unintentional.



Activity 3.6



- 1 Read section 3.4.2 of your prescribed book and answer the following questions:
 - What were these theorist's greatest concern regarding the communication process?
 - Explain why we say **Shannon and Weaver's view** is a technical model of communication.

Shannon and Weaver's greatest concern was the efficient transmission of information from communicator to recipient and the clarity of the message that is transmitted. They did not consider the content of the message or the meaning that is conveyed and interpreted by the participants. For this reason, Shannon and Weaver's model is referred to as a transmission or

technical model — it depicts the relationship between the communicator, message and recipient as a linear (one-way) process. Theorists who assume a technical view of communication give attention to improving the transmission process — the tools and techniques that help us to communicate more efficiently. Although it is technical, the model is considered important because it provided a basis for developing other models that deal more specifically with the process of *human* communication.



Activity 3.7



Study section 3.4.3 of your prescribed book on **Schramm's view of communication** and explain what this theorist regarded to be most important aspect of the communication process.

Schramm's view of communication regards *meaning*, not transmission, as the most important aspect of the communication process. It holds that, even if a message is transmitted and received clearly and accurately, its meaning may not be understood in the same way by the participants because they may not share similar circumstances. Unlike Shannon and Weaver, they do not believe that there is only one correct meaning to a message. The person who is interpreting it determines the meaning. Schramm's model describes communication as a dynamic interaction in which two active participants exchange meaningful messages. Communicator and recipient encode, transmit, receive, decode and interpret messages. That is, both play the roles of communicator and recipient. When we highlight the importance of feedback, the process becomes two way instead of linear. The model thus moves away from emphasising the channel through which messages are transmitted to the *interpretation of meaning* by the people in the process.



Activity 3.8



- 1 Study section 3.4.4 of your prescribed book and answer the following questions.
 - What does a transactional communication process involve?
 - What is the main difference between Schramm's view of communication and the *transactional model of communication*?

A transactional process is one in which the people communicating are mutually responsible for the result of the communication encounter as they transmit information, create meaning and elicit responses. The focus is on the quality of the relationship that develops between them, as well as on

the transfer and interpretation of messages. Communication becomes a reciprocal process in which meaning is negotiated through the exchange of messages.

The main difference is that communication is seen within the context of a relationship between two participants who are *simultaneously* involved in the *negotiation* of meaning. 'Simultaneously' implies that, instead of a two-way flow, both people are continually encoding and decoding messages. For example, even as I talk to you, I am watching your nonverbal reactions and interpreting them so that there is, in fact, no longer a separation between the two communicators. The transactional model also highlights the point that the creation of meaning is *negotiated* between the participants.



Activity 3.9



Section 3.5 of your prescribed book deals with more advanced communication theories. Read this section and then do the following activity:

- 1 Explain in a few sentences the most important aspects of the following theories or fields of study in communication:
 - systems theory
 - semiotics
 - theories that concentrate on message production and reception
 - symbolic interactionism and theories of social and cultural reality
 - phenomenology and hermeneutics
 - critical theory
 - cultural studies and feminist studies.
- 2 As you progress with your Communication Science studies, you will develop a more focused interest in the field. The area of specialisation that you choose to pursue will be founded on its own set of communication theories. The theories we discuss in this section may give you an idea of the direction your studies may take. Work through these theories and make notes on which theories you find interesting, and would want to develop a better understanding of.

Symbolic interaction

Systems theory is particularly relevant to the study of communication in organisations. Systems theory rests on two main principles: First, that all the parts of a system (in our case, an organisation) are *interdependent*; thus, if one part changes, all the other parts of the system are affected. Second, that of *synergism*, which is the interaction of the parts of the system where a result greater than the sum of its parts is created. An important goal of the system is to maintain itself in balance or *equilibrium* in order to remain viable.

Another trend in the study of communication was the importance of signs and symbols, language, and discourse in human life. In general, the study of

signs is referred to as *semiotics*. You were introduced to the concept of signs and codes in section 2.3.3 of the prescribed book. Signs and codes are the basis of the language we use to communicate in our everyday life. There is a group of theories that concentrates on *message production and reception* — how messages are created and processed, and how information is produced and shared.

**Symbolic
interaction**

Symbolic interaction highlights that we use symbols (language) to negotiate meaning in interaction with others. During this process we learn the rules and norms of our society and also learn to behave in ways that our social group prescribes. Theories of *social and cultural reality* expand the ideas laid down in symbolic interactionism. These theories suggest that, not only meaning, but our conception of reality — including how we understand ourselves — is constructed by the social and cultural influences around us.

**Phenomenology
Hermeneutics**

Phenomenology studies people's perception and interpretation of objects and events from their subjective experiences of them. *Hermeneutics* is mainly concerned with understanding how individuals interpret written texts, such as the Bible and literature, and also mass media messages. Some theorists have also extended hermeneutics to explain how people arrive at subjective interpretations of social actions.

Critical theory

Critical theory is concerned with the social conditions that influence the way people interpret their circumstances. Critical theory attempts to reveal the oppressive power arrangements under which people come to understand their conditions of existence. Critical theorists are particularly interested in how messages reinforce oppression and subvert the interests of certain groups and classes. They see the solution to domination and oppression in making people aware of the injustices in society — and thereby empowering them to change social conditions and emancipate themselves.

**Cultural studies
Feminist studies**

Cultural studies are mainly concerned with the ways that culture is produced among competing ideologies and the influence that it exerts on society. Studying the mass media is extremely important because the media communicate the ideas of the dominant ideology. *Feminist studies* have become increasingly popular in the study of communication and explore the meaning of gender in society. Feminist theorists maintain that every aspect of life, including language, work, family roles, education and socialisation, are experienced in terms of the masculine and the feminine.

3.5 What are the contextual approaches to communication?

Communication takes place all the time and in a variety of contexts. We communicate interpersonally with people close to us and we communicate in organisations, groups, and in masses. As the focus of communication studies broadened, the way in which communication was studied also began to change. One of the important developments was a move away from general models and theories to an approach that deals with specific

contexts of communication. The contexts we are looking at in this section are: the intrapersonal, interpersonal, small-group, public-speaking and mass-communication contexts.



Activity 3.10



Study section 3.6 of your prescribed book and do the following activity.

Think of examples from your own experiences of times and/or situations where you were involved in (or communicating in) the following communication contexts:

- the intrapersonal communication context
- the interpersonal communication context
- the small-group communication context
- the publicspeaking context
- the mass-communication context.

Intrapersonal communication

Intrapersonal communication refers to communication that takes place within oneself. Think back for example to the last time you had to make an important decision. You were working through all the options on an *intrapersonal* level, and were probably going through all the pros and cons in your mind.

Interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication occurs between people in a face-to-face situation. Let us use the above-mentioned example of your having to make an important decision. If, perhaps, you confided in a friend or partner and discussed all the pros and cons with him or her, you were communicating *interpersonally*.

Small-group communication

Interpersonal communication refers to communication within a group of between three and twelve people. If, for example, you discussed your problematic situation of having to make an important decision with a group of friends or colleagues — you were communicating in a *small-group* context.

public-speaking context

When a group becomes too large for direct interaction between the members, we talk about the *public-speaking context* or an oral presentation. In public speaking one person addresses an audience in a public setting. The last time you attended a lecture or seminar, the communication you were involved in took place in the *public-speaking* context.

Mass communication

Mass communication is communication to large masses of people who do not know each other and who are usually not in the same place. Every time you read the news paper, listen to the radio or watch television, the communication you are involved in takes place in the *mass-communication* context.

3.6 Conclusion

After studying this unit you should have a better understanding of the different ways we approach and study communication. Communication is a highly interdisciplinary field of study, and we communicate in a variety of contexts. In this section we explained how the communication process works, and highlighted each individual component within this process. We also introduced you to several theories used to develop our understanding of communication. Communication Science is a fascinating and dynamic discipline, and the theories we develop and use are also continually advancing to keep up with the times.



3.7 Looking back

Let us look back at what we have learnt in this section. Put yourself to the test and answer the following questions:

- 1 Explain why we say that the theories of Lasswell, Shannon and Weaver, and Schramm reflect the development of communication from a linear to an interactive process.
- 2 Working either on your own, or with a fellow student, develop an original model of the one-to-one communication process. Try to include all the components that comprise and influence the process, and label each part.
- 3 Think about the different views on communication we have described and how each changes the way in which the concept of communication is understood. Then formulate your own definition, emphasising the aspects of communication you consider to be important. Would you say that your definition offers a technical or a meaning-centred view of communication?
- 4 Define five contexts in which communication takes place. Explain the basis on which we differentiate between the contexts, illustrating your answers with examples from your own experience of communication.



STUDY UNIT

4

Perception, listening and feedback

Mrs Therise Breet-van Niekerk

'As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate.' ~ Albert Schweitzer

4. INTRODUCTION

Husbands and wives separate, friends become estranged, and coworkers refuse to cooperate. What causes these sad developments? More often than not they are caused by miscommunication. People grow apart because of misunderstanding. They thought they were communicating, but they were not. They were talking (arguing may be more accurate). What is the difference between talking and communicating? Communicating has two parts: talking and listening. The root of the verb 'communicate' means to share. How can we share thoughts and feelings unless all parties in the conversation listen with understanding as well as speak?

We hear, but we do not listen. We do not absorb the points being made. What causes this breakdown in communication? It is simply because we have different backgrounds, experiences, and histories. The way we perceive the world and interpret events differs. A feature of perception is that it is a personal process that provides each of us with a unique view of the world. It does not however always provide us with an accurate representation of the world. The result is that our understanding of many situations can be distorted. This can easily lead to clashes. Once tempers rise, we say what we choose instead of choosing what we say. These quarrels amplify the misunderstanding and further the separation. True, if we share the same ideas, there would be no disagreements, but what a dull world it would be!

In this study unit we emphasise the importance of perception, listening and feedback in the communication process. To develop a better understanding of these concepts, we need to find answers to the following key questions:

- What is perception?
- How does the perception process work?
- What does it mean to listen?

- What are the different levels at which we listen?
- What are the different barriers to listening?
- How can we improve the feedback we give in communication situations?

4.1 What is perception?

The first step toward eliminating misunderstanding is to realise that we are all both different and the same. Because of our different backgrounds, we have different points of view. Yet, we are the same in that we have a need to be understood and appreciated. Knowledge of these simple facts is necessary to end misunderstanding.

Perception and listening are receptive aspects of interpersonal communication. Neither is a passive process. Rather, each is an active mental, emotional and physical processing of messages that we receive.

In living our lives and communicating with each other our perception of reality is more important than reality itself. Some would argue that there is no ultimate reality, only the illusion of our perceptions.

Our perceptions are influenced by

- physical elements — what information your eye or ear can actually take in; how your brain processes it
- environmental elements — what information is out there to receive; its context
- learnt elements — culture, personality, habit: what filters we use to select what we take in and how we react to it.

In section 4.1 of your prescribed book perception is defined as 'information which is taken in by the senses, processed by the brain, stored in memory and produces some form of physical or mental response'. Familiarise yourself with this section and also pay particular attention to the author's explanation of how we perceive the world around us through a frame of reference.



Activity 4.1



- Section 4.1.1 in your prescribed book explains how our senses can create perceptual inaccuracies. Look at these two well-known figures, The Müller-Lyer illusion and the Illusion of quantity related to space (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). It is interesting to realise that we do not always see what we think we see, or hear what we think we hear. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 on the next page are further examples.
- After studying the two above-mentioned figures, provide examples of situations where you have experienced perceptual inaccuracies.

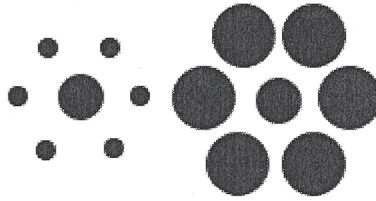


FIGURE 4.1

Both centre circles are the same size.

Source: <http://www.scientificpsychic.com/graphics>

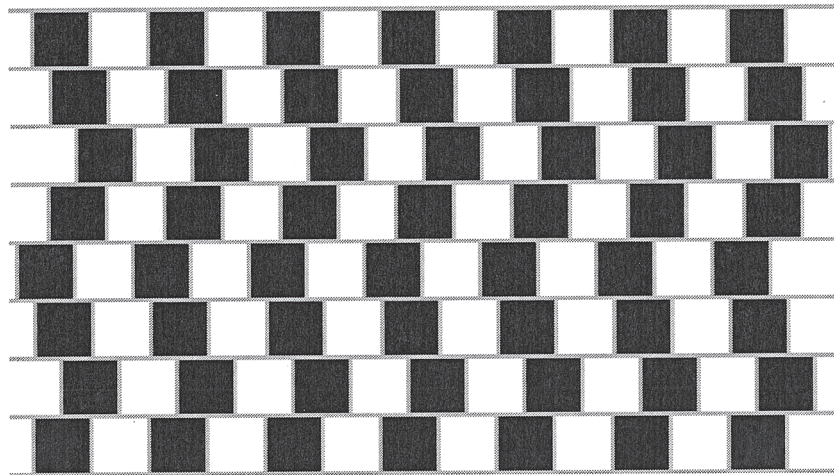


FIGURE 4.2

The rows of black and white squares are all parallel.

The vertical zigzag patterns disrupt our horizontal perception.

Source: <http://www.scientificpsychic.com/graphics>

We are all familiar with situations where we misunderstood or misheard someone. My husband and I, for example had a misunderstanding a while ago which led to a problematic situation. He was away on a business trip. Before going to bed I wanted to set the alarm. I called my husband asking him for instructions. He replied by saying, 'press the top left-hand button and set the time'. After doing what he said, the house alarm went off and the alarm company had to come and assist me. After things went back to normal I again, called my husband telling him what happened. Well, my husband had inaccurately assumed I wanted to set my alarm clock, and had therefore given me the wrong information. The cartoon on the next page also provides a comic example of the outcome of a misunderstanding.



"I'm afraid you misunderstood. ... I said
I'd like a mango."

4.2 How does the perception process work?

The information we get through our senses is not the only factor that determines how we experience the world around us. Section 4.1.2 in your prescribed book explains how the people we are also influences our perception. This is explained by examining the perception process. The process of perception occurs in three stages: selection, organisation and interpretation. The three stages take place relatively unconsciously and almost simultaneously.



Activity 4.2



Study section 4.1.2 in your prescribed book that deals with the three stages of the perception process. See if you can apply these three stages to the activity below.

- All of us are exposed to a large amount of advertising and marketing messages on a daily base. Make a list of the ten advertisements you think of first.
- Look at your list and try to think why these ten advertisements came to mind first.

Your list of advertisements may include billboard advertisements that you noticed on driving past on your way to work or university. You may also have

remembered advertisements you saw when reading the newspaper this morning. Others may be advertisements you heard on the radio or saw on television.

Your list will to a great extent depend on the kind of person you are. In section 4.1.2.1 of your prescribed book the author explains that we selectively expose ourselves to messages that reaffirm our frame of reference — our existing attitudes, values and beliefs. We likewise tend to ignore those experiences that are incongruent with our existing attitudes, values and beliefs.

Furthermore, the author explains that our selection of messages is influenced by our interests and needs. Two factors that influence the selection process are *selective exposure* and *selective attention*. These concepts may sound foreign but they are in fact part of our daily lives. If, for example, you are a person who takes care of your appearance, your list of advertisements may include advertisements for beauty and hair care products. If you enjoy outdoor activities, you may be more aware of advertisements for motor vehicles or camping equipment.

It is clear that the first step in the perception process is that of *selection* (selective exposure and selective attention). So, during your exposure to several media messages, you selectively paid attention to some advertisements. This is not a conscious act, and you probably were not even aware that you 'block out' or ignore advertisements that are not important to you.

You then *organise* these messages and *interpret* them according to your own frame of reference. The brain arranges its selections into meaningful patterns according to our frame of reference. This is known as *perceptual organisation*. The organisation of what we perceive is largely affected by our *expectations* and our desire to form a *whole image* (a phenomenon called *closure*). Figures 4.4 and 4.5 in your prescribed book provide interesting examples of this process.

We give meaning to messages in the light of our frame of reference in what is called *perceptual interpretation*. In your prescribed book, interpretation is described as 'the process of explaining and evaluating what has been selected and organized'. Because we are all different, we are unlikely to select the same sensory information or organise it in the same way. We are thus unlikely to arrive at the same interpretation of messages.

4.3 What does it mean to listen?

Listening takes up more waking hours than any other communication activity, yet the typical person receives very little explicit listening

Selective exposure: from all the sensory stimuli that compete for our attention, we tend to select only those that re-affirm our frame of reference.
Selective attention: describes how we see what we want to see and hear what we want to hear.

Selection: from the variety of information your senses receive, your brain selects that which is relevant in a particular situation.

(Perceptual) organisation: arrangement of selection into a meaningful whole

(Perceptual) interpretation: the process of explaining and evaluating what has been selected and organised

instruction. In addition, people tend to think of listening as a passive rather than active behaviour and, as a result, fail to recognise the amount of effort and skill it takes to be a good listener.

Activity 4.3



The scenario below illustrates what a major role hearing and listening play in our daily activities. Everything we hear and listen to provides us with information about our environment. Read the scenario and do the following activity:

- Get a pen and paper and find a place where you can sit quietly and listen to everything around you. Write a scenario similar to the one below where you identify everything you can hear in your environment.

Suddenly, Palesa awoke. Still scared from the nightmare she was having, she listened intently. She could hear nothing. After a while, she could only make out the soft noise of someone watching soccer on TV. Then, suddenly, her cellphone buzzed and beeped with an incoming SMS. The sudden noise gave her such a fright that she screamed at the top of her lungs.

Linda next door, who had not been able to sleep all night, was sitting outside humming softly along to the music playing on her earphones. Her younger brother William was also having trouble sleeping, but finally dozed off to the soft comforting sound of Linda's voice. On hearing a scream close by, she stopped at once. She listened carefully, but could not hear any more noises, so she decided to walk by Palesa's to investigate. The sudden absence of Linda's humming caused William to wake up again. He could hear the security gate open and close.

Concerned about his sister being alone outside, William got up carefully to prevent his squeaky bed from waking up the rest of their family. On tiptoe, he followed Linda into the darkness outside. He did not see the empty cola can lying in the street until he stepped on it. The cracking sound of the cola can crushing against the tar was very loud in contrast to the otherwise quiet night. Linda, standing right next to Palesa's window, shrieked in fright while she swung around. Seeing William running back to their home, she followed suit. For the second time that night, Palesa woke up, but this time there was only quiet until the noises of her early-rising neighbours announced the arrival of the morning. Sitting in bed listening to the morning news on the radio, Palesa contemplated what to wear to work. As the weather report on the radio indicated that it was going to be a scorching hot day, she opted for something light and comfortable. On her way to work she listened to two people sitting behind her on the bus, discussing their political viewpoints. As she did not agree with them, she carefully listened to their arguments and quietly mulled over the discussion.

After a long day at work Palesa decided to visit Linda next door

before returning home. She remembered the strange happenings of the night before and discussed it with Linda. Palesa told Linda about the terrible nightmare she had, and Linda sympathetically listened to her while she attempted to get it off her mind. As the evening drew closer, Palesa decided to return home, and made it an early night.

hearing and listening

After doing this activity you most likely realised how much information we are able to get from our environment through listening. Another aspect regarding listening that also became clear in the scenario above is that it occurs at different levels. In section 4.4 of this unit, we deal with the different levels at which we listen. Before we move on to this section it is important to highlight the difference between hearing and listening. *Hearing* is a passive process. When sound waves vibrate against the eardrum and the brain registers these sounds, we hear. *Listening* on the other hand is a dynamic, active process involving both the communicator and the recipient.



In section 4.2 of your prescribed book the author distinguishes between hearing and listening. Study this section and see if you can provide examples of times where you heard someone or something but did not listen.

You are probably also familiar with the situation of listening to a boring lecture. While you are sitting in the classroom you hear the lecturer talking, but because you are tired and bored you do not really listen. It often happens that we hear but we do not listen. Think for example of times when you are listening to the radio or watching television while being busy with something else. You hear people talking, but you do not pay attention and are therefore not able to recall what you have just heard.

Listening occurs when the signals or sounds sent to the brain are processed and used — that is, when we attend to what is being said, select what is relevant, and then understand and interpret it for ourselves. Efficient listening also requires us to remember what has been conveyed to us and that we respond to the communicator.

The listening process becomes more complex when we communicate with others rather than listen to sounds. *Interactive listening* entails *listening or paying attention* both to what is said (the verbal or content level of the message) and to the manner in which it is conveyed (the nonverbal or relational level of the message). We have to listen to the words that are being spoken and, at the same time, pay attention to the nonverbal cues that accompany the words. The reason is that the nonverbal part of the

Activity 4.4



Interactive listening: both listening to what is said and paying attention to the manner in which it is conveyed

message carries the feelings and emotions of the speaker, and often communicates more than the words that are used.

Active listening therefore helps us to interpret messages and responses more accurately and thereby to gain a better understanding of the people with whom we come into contact. In fact, poor listening is one of the major roots of misunderstanding in both our personal and professional relationships.

4.4 What are the different levels at which we listen?

Your level of involvement in a given interaction and the amount of energy you expend in listening distinguish at what level you are listening. In this section we deal with four levels of listening namely: listening for enjoyment; comprehensive or discriminative listening; critical listening as well as conversational and reflective listening.



Activity 4.5



- 1 Study the four different types of listening as described in section 4.2.2 of your prescribed book and do the following activities:
 - Refer back to the scenario in section 4.3 of this unit, carefully read through the scenario again and write down examples of:
 - listening for enjoyment
 - comprehensive or discriminative listening
 - critical listening
 - conversational and reflective listening.
- 2 Think of a personal communication experience that illustrates each type of listening.

Listening for enjoyment: we may suspend our critical faculties, relax and enjoy the stimulation

In the scenario you will find several examples of listening for enjoyment. These include the instance where Palesa could hear the soft noise of someone watching soccer on TV. Another example is that of Linda next door who was listening to music playing on her earphones. When we listen for enjoyment we relax and enjoy the stimulation. Your own examples may also include watching your favourite show on television or listening to music on the radio.

Comprehensive or discriminative listening: listening to obtain information

An example of *comprehensive or discriminative listening* was when Palesa listened to the morning news on the radio. She *listened* to the weather report *to gain information* regarding the weather conditions for that day. When we are busy with comprehensive or discriminative listening, we are listening mainly to obtain information. Your own examples may include listening to a lecture to obtain information on the subject matter, or perhaps listening to your friend giving you directions on how to get to a specific destination.

Critical listening: requires the skills needed to analyse, evaluate and challenge the content of the information

When you are involved in critical listening, you probably suspect that the source of the information may be biased. *Critical listening* requires the skills needed to *analyse, evaluate and challenge* the content of the information. Say, for example, you are interested in buying a new car, you will critically listen to the salesperson when he or she is trying to convince you to buy the firm's specific make. In the scenario, Palesa was involved in critical listening when she listened to two the people sitting behind her on the bus, discussing their political viewpoints. As she did not agree with them, she carefully listened to their arguments and quietly mulled over the discussion.

Conversational listening: a constant exchange between the roles of the participants
Reflective listening: conversational listening which shows affection, caring and empathy

In the scenario you will also find an example of *conversational and reflective listening*. This was when Palesa decided to visit Linda next door before returning home. She remembered the strange happenings of the night before and discussed them with Linda. Palesa told Linda about the terrible nightmare she had had and Linda sympathetically listened to her while she attempted to get it off her mind. *Conversational listening* implies a constant exchange between the roles of the participants. You and the other participant are expected to concentrate on each other's messages and to provide appropriate feedback. In close relationships, you engage in a different type of conversational listening by showing affection, caring, and warmth to your partner. This is called *reflective or empathic listening*. Sometimes the situation arises where, for example, a friend in distress may need to talk to someone and you provide the necessary support by listening. In this situation, you are not usually required to listen for information or to be critical, but to listen for *feelings*.

4.5 What are the different barriers to listening?

In this section we look at two aspects that can interfere with effective listening. Firstly we will deal with inefficient listening behaviour, and then we will look at the different barriers to listening.



Activity 4.6



- 1 Study sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4 in your prescribed book to familiarise yourself with what is considered to be inefficient listening behaviour and barriers to effective listening. Do the following activities:
 - Think back to the last time you attended a lecture, listened to a political speech or perhaps a sermon in church. Can you remember displaying inefficient listening behaviour?
 - Try to remember if you experienced any noise while listening to the speaker. Make a list where you distinguish between the internal and external noise you experienced.

While listening to the speaker your *fidgiting* may have indicated to the lecturer that you are distracted or not interested in the lecture. You may

have continually looked around the classroom, scratched your head or kept looking at your watch. Because you allowed your mind to wander, your *lack of concentration* caused ineffective listening. *Inaccurate listening* means that you either pay too much attention to the communicator's ideas and forget to interpret the emotions that are being expressed, or that you pay too much attention to emotional messages and neglect the ideas that are being expressed.

External barriers to listening

With respect to listening, noise refers not only to loud sounds, but to anything that distracts us from listening. *External barriers* to listening are distractions in the listening environment. They include background sounds such as doors slamming, telephones ringing or pneumatic drilling in the street outside. While students were listening to the lecture, the noise of other students coming in late may have caused a distraction. Perhaps a group of students sitting behind you, talking to each other, prevented you from hearing the lecturer properly.

Internal barriers to listening

Internal barriers are the physical and psychological conditions that we bring to the communication situation that may inhibit active listening. Perhaps you had a fight with your partner the evening before the lecture. This caused you to be in a bad mood, and your negative mind-set causes you to perceive the lecturer negatively. The *judgments* we make based on stereotypes also causes internal barriers to listening.

4.6 How can we improve the feedback we give in communication situations?

Feedback

In section 4.3.1 of the prescribed book the author said that the last stage in the listening process is responding or giving feedback to the communicator. *Feedback* is described as the response of the participants to one another. Feedback tells us whether our message is being understood, and how it is being perceived. We have to listen attentively to both the verbal and the nonverbal elements of a message and respond to them. It is therefore important to remember that even silence is a form of feedback.



Activity 4.7



- 1 Section 4.3.1 of your prescribed book explains how inappropriate feedback can hamper communication situations, and how appropriate feedback can improve our communication with others. Familiarise yourself with these aspects, so that you will be able to provide someone with advice on how to improve their feedback.
- 2 One of your friends and her partner are experiencing relationship problems. She feels that their problems are a result of their not communicating very well. She asks you for advice on how she can improve the feedback she gives in their communication situations.

**Immediate;
irrelevant
responses**

First of all, you could advise your friend it is important to give *immediate feedback* because it will be more specific and accurate than feedback given at a later stage. Also, it is generally better to deal with negative feelings immediately and discuss them with the other person rather than to allow them to grow out of proportion. She should not reply to her partner with *irrelevant responses*, as this will create the impression that she is not paying attention or not interested in what her partner is saying.

**Descriptive
feedback**

Your friend can also improve her feedback by being *descriptive* rather than judgmental. If, for example, she is unhappy because her partner always arrives home late, it would be better to reply by saying something like 'I understand that your job is very demanding and that you have to put in long hours, however I really miss spending time with you', than to say something like 'You clearly don't care about me. If you did, you would have been home more often'.

**Impervious
response;
tangential response**

It will also be important for your friend to not react to her partner with an *impervious response*. This occurs when a person fails to acknowledge your attempt to communicate. If, for instance, your friend's partner tells her about his day at work, and she doesn't look away from the television screen, it will indicate that she is not interested. A *tangential response* will also cause a breakdown in their communication because it sidetracks the topic of conversation.

You can also advise your friend that it is important not to over-respond to her partner. Particularly in dyadic situations, if she constantly smiles and nods her head, her partner will not be sure whether she is really listening or listening superficially. If she continually interrupts the flow of her partner's conversation with comments, he may start feeling uneasy because she may seem to be trying to control the direction that their thoughts are taking.

4.7 Conclusion

After studying this unit you probably became aware of the importance of perception, listening and feedback in communication. Perception and listening are receptive aspects of interpersonal communication. Neither is a passive process. Rather, each is an active, mental, emotional and physical processing of messages that we receive.

In this study unit we introduced you to the concept of perception, and outlined the stages in the perception process. We also focused on the importance of effective listening, and highlighted the different levels at which we listen. Lastly we looked at feedback, and suggested methods we can use to improve the feedback we give in communication situations.



4.8 Looking back

By the time you have reached the end of this module you should have developed a good understanding of the relevant concepts. Test yourself by answering the following questions:

- 1 Briefly explain the process of perception by referring to selection, organisation and interpretation.
- 2 Think about a varied number of situations in which you are involved in listening. Identify the types of listening you are engaged in.
- 3 Explain the types of verbal and nonverbal feedback you can use as a good listener.
- 4 Write down three examples of ineffective feedback and three examples of appropriate feedback based on your own experiences of interpersonal communication.



STUDY UNIT

5

Nonverbal communication

Mrs Therise Breet-van Niekerk

5. INTRODUCTION

Nonverbal communication is a silent infiltrator, having a broad influence over our social environment. It provides us with a mode for conveying messages without the use of verbal language. It may enhance or detract from a verbal communication. It regulates relationships by affecting the likelihood of introduction and continued interaction. We are able to infer emotion through nonverbal communication and influence others' perception of our competence, power and vulnerability. It also plays a role in the perception of the actual message we are trying to convey. It affects our lives in numerous ways from childhood through to adulthood, and as long as we intend to communicate with others. In this unit our focus will be to determine the following:

- What is nonverbal communication?
- What are the functions of nonverbal communication, and why is it important in our daily communication interactions?
- What are the categories of nonverbal communication?

5.1 What is nonverbal communication?

Nonverbal
communication

The term *nonverbal* is commonly used to describe all intentional and unintentional messages that are not written or spoken. But *nonverbal communication* is however also concerned with messages we send through our body movements, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and eye behaviour, as well as our use of space, time and touch.

Activity 5.1



Look at the pictures on the next page. These three men are clearly busy with a discussion on a particular topic. Make a list of all the information about them you can gather by paying attention to their nonverbal cues.



Although we have never seen the three men in the pictures before, there is a lot we can tell about them just by looking at their nonverbal cues. This is something we do every day; although we may not be aware of it, we are continuously forming perceptions of people based on their nonverbal behaviour.

Artefacts:
personal items
worn or kept close
to a person

The first thing we can deduce from these pictures is that the men are communicating in a business context. Since they are wearing formal clothing like ties and long-sleeved shirts, we can tell that they are probably in a business meeting or a boardroom situation. Although we have never met the man in picture (a) we know that he is married because he is wearing a wedding ring. This is what we refer to as an *artefact*, a personal item worn or kept close to a person. We will deal with this concept in greater detail later in this unit.

By looking at the facial expressions of the three men we can see that their interaction in the scenario is neither antagonistic nor aggressive. If we look at their posture and body movements we can deduce that they are relatively relaxed. The two men in pictures (a) and (b) are leaning over the armrests of their chairs and the man in picture (c) is leaning back in his chair. The men in pictures (a) and (b) are using hand gestures to reinforce what they are saying and the man in picture (c) is lifting his eyebrows. These gestures can indicate to us that the three men are interested and involved in the conversation.

Can you see how much information we receive from people's nonverbal behaviour? Although we are not necessarily aware of it, we are really experts in interpreting this information, as it is something we do every day.

Activity 5.2



You have now interpreted the nonverbal cues of the three men in the pictures. It is remarkable that, although you have never met them before, you already now some things about them.

Now, think of a situation in your own life, observe the people in this situation and see what you can learn from their nonverbal behaviour. You can use a group of friends socialising at an informal gathering. It is also interesting to observe people in public places like a restaurant or bus stop. Choose a scenario and make a list of nonverbal cues that communicate some information regarding the people involved.

It is important to bear in mind that the potential for misunderstanding a nonverbal message is greater than that for misunderstanding a verbal message. In the following section we will look at the aspects of nonverbal communication that contribute to its potential for creating misunderstanding.



Activity 5.3



Study the introduction of study unit 5 as well as section 5.2 of your prescribed book that deals with the various aspects and concepts relating to nonverbal communication, and then answer the following questions:

- When do we refer to nonverbal cues as 'leakage', and what do we mean by this? Use an example from your own daily communication encounters to illustrate this concept.
- What do we mean when we say nonverbal behaviour is contextual? Think of an example where the same nonverbal cue can be interpreted differently in different contexts.
- Why do we say that culture has an important impact on the meaning we attach to nonverbal communication?

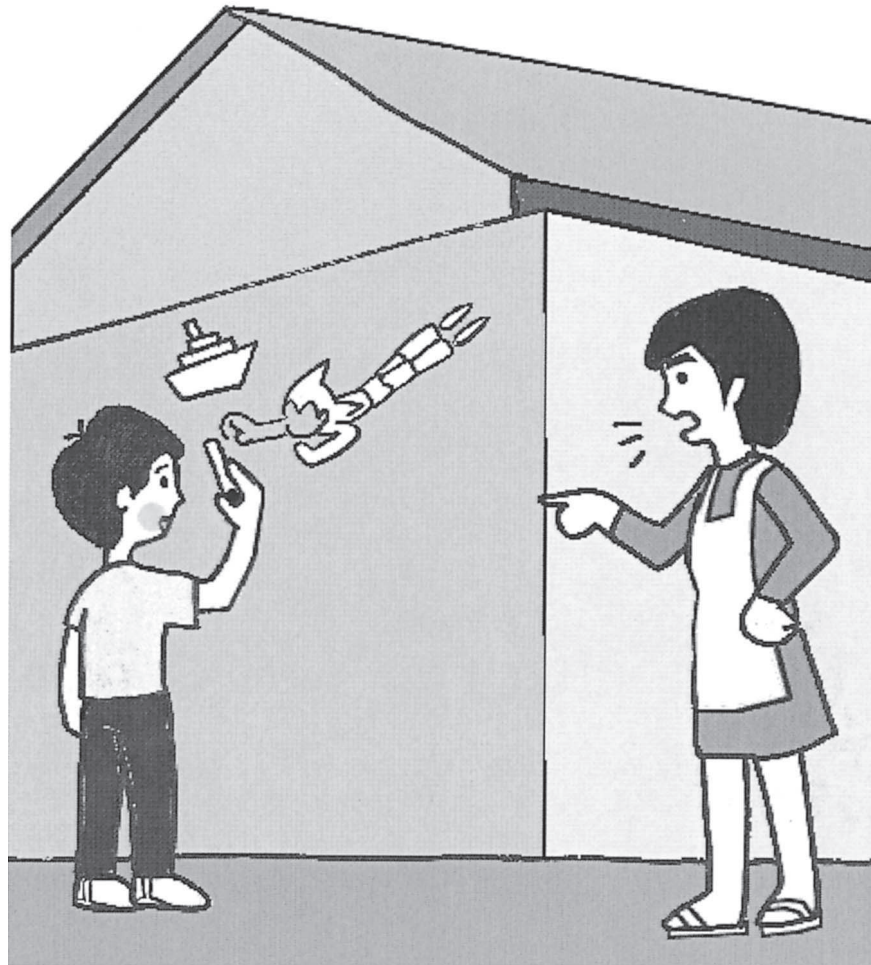
Nonverbal communication is often beyond our control. Although we can plan what we say very carefully and stop talking at will, we cannot simply 'switch off' nonverbal behaviour. Even if we consciously control our facial expression and hand movements to hide the fact that we are nervous, for example, our strained voice or shaking knees may give us away. We call such nonverbal cues *leakage* because we are in fact leaking information about ourselves that we cannot hide.

Leakage

Another factor that has to be taken into account is that nonverbal behaviour is *contextual*. We said earlier that verbal and nonverbal signs work together to convey the total meaning of a message. Whereas verbal communication primarily conveys content information, nonverbal communication primarily conveys relational information (emotions and feelings), depending on the circumstances or context in which it occurs. Think for example of the use of a pointed finger. If you are in a meeting and the chair of the meeting points his or her finger to you, that nonverbal cue is used to indicate that it is your turn to speak. In another context a pointed finger may have an entirely different meaning. Look at the picture on the next page for example. Can you see that the picture of a mother

Contextual

pointing a finger at a child who has done something wrong communicates something entirely different. Now do you understand that this one nonverbal cue (pointing a finger at someone) can be interpreted differently depending on the context of the communication encounter?



In a multicultural country like South Africa, it becomes even more important to be aware that all nonverbal communication conveys information that must be evaluated or interpreted within the context in which it occurs. Think for example of the use of eye contact. In some South African cultures, not making eye contact with a person conveys respect. In other cultures a person that avoids making eye contact creates the impression that he or she cannot be trusted.

Culture

We are often unaware of the influence that *culture* has on the meaning we attach to nonverbal communication. Each culture provides its members with a code of behaviour that is acceptable in different situations. Attaching fixed meanings to nonverbal signs without taking the cultural context into account often results in misunderstanding and the creation of *stereotypes*. A stereotype is a fixed and standardised version of a person or a group of people. Stereotypes are often associated with prejudice and do not reflect reality. One kind of stereotyping is racial stereotyping, which involves thinking that all people of a certain ethnic or cultural group have similar traits. Stereotyped ideas about people can influence the way we expect them to behave and the way we behave towards them.

Stereotypes

5.2 What are the functions of nonverbal communication?

The functions of nonverbal messages must be studied in relation to verbal messages: How do they affect verbal messages? Essentially, a nonverbal message functions in one of five ways: it reinforces, complements, contradicts, replaces, or regulates a verbal message.



Activity 5.4



- 1 Study section 5.1 of your prescribed book to familiarise yourself with the various functions of nonverbal communication.
- 2 Place yourself in a small-group communication situation. Think of an informal meeting between family members or friends; or perhaps a more formal meeting in an organisational setting. With this scenario in mind, indicate which functions of nonverbal communication are being fulfilled by the members' nonverbal behaviour.

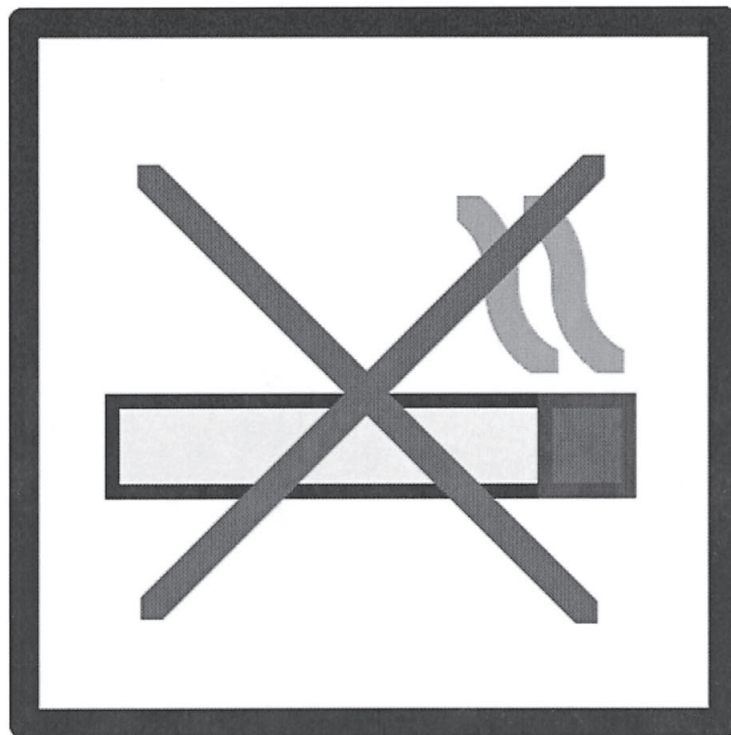
In your scenario a member's nonverbal message may *reinforce* or *accentuate* the verbal message. In other words, it is used to place more emphasis on the verbal message. If the chairperson of a meeting feels strongly about something, he or she may pound his or her fist on the table to reinforce or emphasise the importance of the matter.

A nonverbal message *complements* the verbal message when it conveys the same meaning. In your scenario members who agree with the speaker's or chair's message may nod their heads simultaneously to indicate that 'Yes, we definitely agree'. Here their nonverbal cue complements their verbal communication. Remember that a nonverbal message can also complement a written message. Look at the picture below, for example. Can you see that the picture of the glass with a cross drawn across it complements the text reading 'NO DRINKS'.



A nonverbal message may also **contradict** the verbal message. Say, for example, a decision has been taken in your scenario, and the chair of the meeting asks whether everyone is happy with the decision. If a member says 'Yes' but his or her face looks sad and dull, the facial expression then serves to contradict the verbal message.

A nonverbal message may **replace** the verbal message. After the meeting is adjourned some of the members want to go to the cafeteria and ask the way. Instead of saying, 'The cafeteria is this way', the chairperson points his or her hand in the direction of the cafeteria. Here the chair's nonverbal communication replaces a nonverbal response. The example below also shows how a picture can be used to replace a written message. Instead of using a sign reading 'NO SMOKING' the use of the sign below communicates the intended meaning.



Nonverbal behaviour can also function to **regulate** the flow of verbal interaction. In your scenario the chairperson at the meeting might use eye contact or hand gestures instead of words to indicate whose turn it is to speak, and these gestures regulate the flow of interaction in the meeting.

5.3 What are the categories of nonverbal communication?

In this section we briefly discuss the following categories of nonverbal communication: kinesics, proxemics, haptics, chronemics, personal appearance, and paralanguage.



Activity 5.5



- 1 Study section 5.3 of your prescribed book and do the following activity:

Draw up a table of all the categories of nonverbal communication. Drawing up a table of all the categories of nonverbal communication will help to form a holistic understanding of the topic. Create a column for the category, another column for keyword(s) to summarise the category, and a final column where you can add an example of nonverbal cues that fall within that category. See the table to follow, where we have listed emblems, illustrators and affect displays. Continue to do the same for all the other categories.

Category	Key words	Examples
Emblems	Give a direct translation into words. Substitute for or replace the verbal message.	Waving to a friend driving by. A wave can be directly translated into the word 'Hi'.
Illustrators	Accentuate emphasise or reinforce words	Gestures that illustrate the shape or size of an object
Affect displays	Facial expressions of emotion	Smiling, frowning, lifting the eyebrows, and pursing the lips

- 2 Throughout your daily life you are part of several communication situations. These may include a meeting between friends after work, a family gathering on special occasions or perhaps a discussion between a group of colleagues during lunchtime. Use one of these communication encounters to ask the members whether you may study them while their interactions take place. Pay careful attention to their non-verbal behaviour and identify the category of nonverbal communication it belongs to. Use the following table to organise your observations. We used two observations as an example in the table.

What did I observe?			
Category	Who?	What?	Why?
Body movements	May	Slumping in her chair	She feels shy or intimidated.
Paralanguage	William	Uses vocal interferences like 'um', 'er'.	He is unsure about what he wants to say.

**Kinesics and
body movements**

The nonverbal behaviour of the group you decided to study may initially fall within the category of *kinesics*. This includes body movement, gestures, posture, facial expressions and eye contact. *Body movements* are strong indicators of how you feel. In your chosen communication situation, you may interpret a person sitting with his or her shoulders up straight as more assertive than someone who is slumping in his or her chair. In other words, the person's *posture* communicates his or her current state of mind.

Posture

Emblems

Illustrators

Also be aware of members' use of *emblems*, which are nonverbal signs that have a direct translation into words, for example a nodding head that can be directly translated into the word 'Yes'. They may also use *illustrators* to emphasise or reinforce words. Examples are gestures that illustrate the shape or size of an object (look at the picture below, for example), such as the large fish that you caught, as well as the hand movements that illustrate the directions you might give someone about how to reach a particular destination.



Affect displays

Regulators

Adaptors

Affect displays are members' facial expressions of emotion. Facial expressions communicate emotional states or reactions to a message. Examples include smiling, frowning, lifting the eyebrows, and pursing the lips. The members in the group may also use *regulators* as subtle signs to control the give-and-take of conversation. Regulators can include head nods, puzzled looks, and changes in posture. A member in your scenario who may have arrived late, might use an *adaptor* to adjust himself or herself to the communication situation. The person may quickly straighten his or her clothes and clear his or her throat before sitting down to join the conversation. Adaptors can also be described as movements designed to meet physical or emotional needs.

Gestures

When studying the group's interaction, also be aware of their use of *gestures*. These include movements of hands, legs, arms and feet. People vary in the amount of gesturing they use. Hand gestures are commonly used to describe or emphasise a verbal description or to communicate attitudes. In your scenario a person crossing his or her arms may be interpreted as less aggressive than a person who puts hands on hips.

Eye contact

Another important aspect of nonverbal communication that you have to be aware of when studying your group's nonverbal behaviour is their use of *eye contact*. Eye contact refers to the way we use our eyes to regulate and

monitor the effects of communication. If, for example, all members in your group look at one member after being asked a question, this may indicate that they are anticipating an answer from this member.

Proxemics

Another category of nonverbal communication you need to consider when studying your group's behaviour is that of *proxemics*. This category deals with how people's perception of space communicates information. Simply stated, how close people sit or stand together will convey information regarding their relationship. In section 4.3.2 of your prescribed book, the author identifies four distance zones. Look at figure 4.2 and see if you can use these distance zones to make certain assumptions about the relationships between people in the group. Look at the two pictures below for example. Can you see that the group of people in picture (a) is in a social distance zone, and the couple in picture (b) in a personal distance zone?

ADVERTISEMENT
PROMOTION





CHEERS!

To friends, fun and Zonnebloem Chardonnay

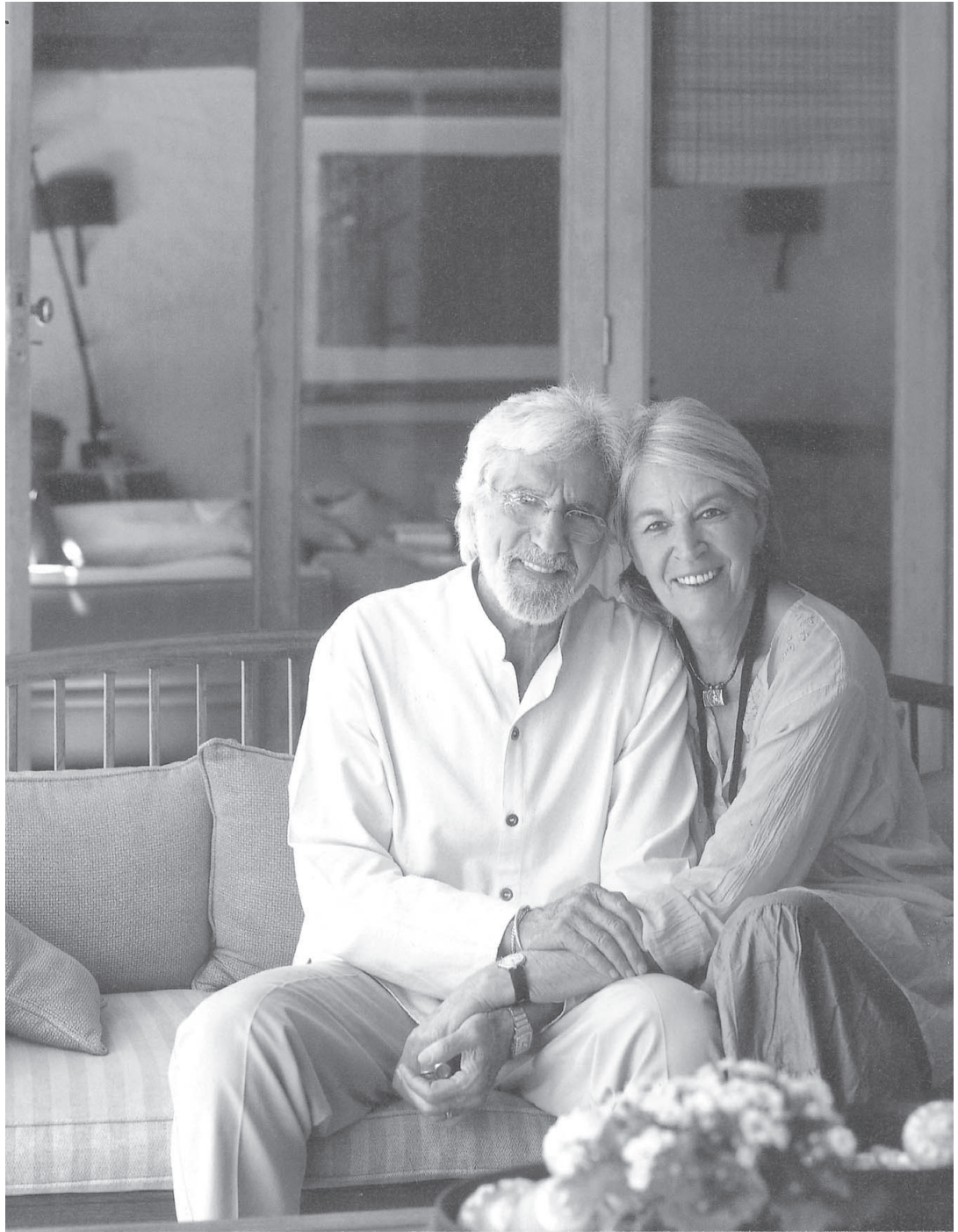
Great company, a good laugh, fabulous sushi ... what's needed is a drink to toast this great gathering. Top up your glasses with Zonnebloem Chardonnay, a straw-coloured wine with citrus undertones. This light and easy drinking white is the perfect complement to great food and company. Just like your friends, Zonnebloem can be trusted to bring the night to life. Visit www.zonnebloem.co.za, where you can stand a chance of winning this wonderful wine. □







PHOTOGRAPHS: IAN FULFORD/STYLING: STYLING OF THE WINE/STYLING: STYLING OF THE WINE/STYLING: STYLING OF THE WINE
 MODEL NETWORK: MARC, JONATHAN, MARSHALL AND MONIQUE/STYLING: STYLING OF THE WINE/STYLING: STYLING OF THE WINE
 OF ZONNEBLOEM SUSHI COURTESY OF MAKAMU DECOR COURTESY OF WETLANDS HOMES/STYLING: STYLING OF THE WINE



Haptics

The field of study that examines messages that are conveyed by our use of touch is called *haptics*. As with distance, touch communicates information about the nature of the relationship between people. Lovers usually touch each other more frequently in conversation than do friends. People who have just been introduced shake hands more formally than relatives. In your chosen scenario you will probably also be able to draw certain conclusions regarding relationships in the group, based on the members' use of touch

Chronemics

Chronemics is the field of study that is concerned with the use of time. The most important aspect of *chronemics* is that people's use of time is greatly influenced by their culture. Some cultures have a more flexible

attitude towards time than others. When studying your group, see if you can draw connections between the people in the group's culture and their use of time.

**Personal
appearance;**

Personal appearance is probably the category of nonverbal communication we are most familiar with. You have probably heard the saying that 'you can tell a lot about a person by the clothes he or she wears'. A person's appearance provides visual clues to their age, gender, status, personality and attitudes. When looking at your group, see what conclusions you can draw about the members based on their appearance. Some members may use or wear *artefacts*. These are the personal items worn or kept close to a person and present another important aspect of their physical appearance. Jewellery, cars, watches and make-up all communicate a message about who and what a person is.

Artefacts

Another aspect of nonverbal communication that you need to be aware of is that of the environment in which communication takes place. The environment in which we communicate sends another powerful nonverbal message because our surroundings influence how we feel and how we will react to people and situations. Take note of the surroundings or environment in your chosen communication situation. If you are sitting outside under a large tree, your interaction may be influenced by the calm surroundings. If on the other hand you are sitting in a formal lounge, communication may be more formal or restricted.

**Paralanguage;
Sound of voice;**

**Vocal
characteristics;**

**Vocal
interferences**

The members in your chosen communication situation may also make use of paralanguage. The vocal signs that accompany spoken language are termed *paralanguage*. This refers to the *sound* of the voice and the range of meanings that people convey through their voices rather than the words they use. Individual members' *vocal characteristics* may communicate their anger they talk very loudly. You also may be able to tell that another member is excited, based on the high pitch of his or her voice. By a member's use of *vocal interferences* you may be able to tell that he or she is a little unsure of a word or exactly what to say. This could include sounds like 'uh', 'er', 'well', and 'you know' et cetera.

In this activity your observations of the group you chose probably provided you with a great deal of information about the people in the group as well as their position towards one another. After studying all the categories of nonverbal communication and applying them to your own setting, you are likely to agree that a large percentage of the meaning in a message is conveyed by nonverbal behaviour

5.4 Conclusion

In section 5.4 of your prescribed book the author provides some handy activities that you can use to improve your nonverbal skills. Read through these activities and see if you can apply them in your daily communication situations.

The impact of nonverbal communication is often underestimated. After studying this unit you probably realised that nonverbal communication has a

powerful influence on all our communication encounters. In a multicultural society such as South Africa it is very important to be aware of one's nonverbal behaviour, since these cues can easily be misinterpreted and create misunderstanding and even lead to conflict.



5.5 Looking back

Put yourself to the test to see if you understand the contents of this study unit. Perform the activities below or provide answers to the stated questions:

- 1 Why do we say that the potential for misunderstanding a nonverbal message is greater than for misunderstanding a verbal message?
- 2 Explain how nonverbal messages can affect verbal messages.
- 3 Provide an example for each of the following:
 - emblems
 - illustrators
 - affect displays
 - regulators
 - adaptors
- 4 Indicate the distance between people if they are at
 - an intimate distance
 - a personal distance
 - a social distance
 - a public distance
- 5 Briefly explain the meaning of the following categories of nonverbal communication and illustrate each with an example from your own experience: kinesics, proxemics, haptics, chronemics, personal appearance, the environment and paralanguage.



STUDY UNIT

6

Language and communication

Dr Elize Terblanché

A man's language is an index of his mind ~ McKenzie 1980:291

6. INTRODUCTION

People take language for granted and hardly ever consider how language influences thoughts and perceptions. Only when you have to interact with someone who is familiar with a language other than your own, do you realise the primary role that language plays in your ability to perform, achieve and successfully interact with others.

The sections in this study unit of the study guide do not follow the chronological sections of the prescribed book. The guidance provided here should assist you in becoming familiar with issues such as the following:

- Why do we need to study verbal language?
- What does language consist of to ensure that people understand one another when communicating?
- Is there an interrelation between language and thought?
- Does language determine our views of the world? Why? Why not?
- What are the functions of language?
- What are the different purposes of language?
- What role does language as a social phenomenon play in our lives?

6.1 Why is the study of language important?

Language denotes different things to different people but language consists of signs (arbitrary and symbolic), has different levels of meaning (denotative and connotative) and has various functions, uses and purposes.

Symbol: A symbol represents something else

Language is needed for people to interpret their social world, to think about experiences and to share information with others because language is the tool by means of which communication processes (interactions) are mediated. None of the intrapersonal or interpersonal communication processes would be possible without the use of verbal language. Objects — pen, book, designer wear clothes or films — as well as phenomena (love, hate and affection) become meaningful when they are given names (or when words are assigned to them). We hear, see, think and experience the world via words. Imagine how you would describe an aeroplane if you had no idea or word assigning meaning to that object.



Activity 6.1



- 1 Study section 6.7 in the prescribed book. Would you agree with the claim that language shapes our view of the world? Substantiate your opinion.
- 2 List at least two words used in a non-English language with which you are familiar for which you know there is no translation into English to reflect exactly the same meaning. Consider how you use language to communicate these words to someone speaking English.
- 3 Compare the following situations and your use of language:
 - In activity 2.1 you were asked what you would do if you won the lotto. Would you have constructed the words in your mind before telling someone that you had won the lotto?
 - You and your partner have had a serious fight and you want to resolve the outstanding issues to continue with the relationship. Will you first consider how you would formulate words to address sensitive issues which could not be clarified during the argument or would you just simply start talking about outstanding issues?

A question that is difficult to answer is whether people first think and then use words to express their thoughts in words or whether the words used affect the way people think. In an attempt to provide an answer to this question, Edward Sapir (an anthropologist) and a student of his, Benjamin Whorf, developed the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which is also known as the theory of linguistic relativity (Lustig & Koester 1993:165). This theory is used to illustrate that language shapes our view of the world.

Hypothesis:
Implies the formulation of a testable statement which contains a cause-and-effect relationship (in other words, 'If this ... then that ...'). For example, 'If you do not hand in and pass your first assignment, then you will not qualify to write the examination.'

6.1.1 Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

The major contribution of Sapir-Whorf was to intercultural communication and their focusing of attention on the relationship between language, culture and thought. They believed that *language influenced and determined the way people think and experience the world* (Lustig & Koester 1993:167).

In order to understand the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the following could be stated:

- *If different cultures speak different languages, then each of these cultures will perceive the world differently.*

- *If different cultures perceive the world differently, then language restricts each community speaking that particular language to a particular view of the world.*
- *If people learn language with particular meaning in their culture, then that language shapes the way these people think and behave.*
- *If people learn to direct their attention to particular aspects of the environment that is important to their culture, then language represents the perceptions which that particular community has of the world (Du Plooy 1994:80-81).*

Cognitive thinking processes play a major role in perceptions. The nature of the relation between language and thought is selective and active and there is a definitive relation between language (signs) and thought (meaning) which people use every day.

Language does shape our views of the world. The Eskimo language has between 8 and 50 words for snow, while the English language has only a few words for it. According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis a person growing up with the Eskimo language will perceive snow differently to people elsewhere in the world. This means that, in terms of the hypothesis, linguistic and conceptual differences contribute to the differing (cultural) views of snow (Lustig & Koester 1993:168).

In some indigenous African languages there are no specific words for the colours blue and green. When these words are used, reference is made to the colour of grass to represent green and the colour of the sky to represent blue. In Northern Sotho there were no specific words for the colours purple and pink. Cultural contact with other language groups which distinguish these colours, resulted in adaptations from English so that *purepure* and *-pink* is used in Northern Sotho today. In many African languages people with specific qualities are referred to by using a single word while in European languages these meanings are expressed through the use of adjectives. For example: a strong person is represented as

phankga in Northern Sotho

sephankga in Southern Sotho

seganka in Tswana

isigololwane in Xhosa

nhenha in Tsonga

muhal in Venda (to name only but a few African languages.)

In Shona more than forty words can describe the various ways of walking while other African languages have fewer words to describe the same concept. All these examples serve to illustrate that the culture of a particular language group is reflected in the use of their language. This underlines the importance of knowing the language as well as the culture to ensure effective communication (Unisa 1987:88-92).

The Dani of West New Guinea use only two words to refer to colour which in English refer to 'light' and 'dark'. The question now arises as to whether speakers of this language can distinguish between differing colours (yellow, blue, red) or whether they can only identify the colours according to the words available to them (Lustig & Koester 1993:168).

According to Tubbs and Moss (2003:81) Hopi (a Native American language) classifies words by duration, whereas nouns and/or verbs exist in the English language. In Hopi 'flame' and 'spark' are regarded as events of brief duration, not as nouns as in English. The Nootka language (spoken by inhabitants of Vancouver Island) does not provide for categories reflecting events and things. For instance, they say 'A house occurs' or 'It houses' while in English we would say 'A house is built.'

These examples illustrate that it is not always possible to translate effectively and successfully between languages since some languages may not have a specific word which is used in another language. What, for example, are the words for *franchise*, *Potjiekos* and *Eish* in your mother tongue?

Criticism: Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

According to Lustig and Koester (1993:172) the assumption of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that our reality is determined by language, is an important aspect. However, although language shapes thoughts and behaviours, it does not 'determine your ability to sense the physical world, nor does the language first learned create modes of thinking from which there is no escape.' The authors also believe the following:

- Your vocabulary indicates what you need to know to manage and cope in your environment and culture.
- Various components of language 'create habitual response patterns to people, events and messages' around you.
- 'Your language intermingles with other aspects of your culture to reinforce the cultural patterns you are taught'.

6.2 Language as a system of signs

We present language as pictures and signs (an alphabet). Whenever we want to express ourselves verbally, we make use of language. Human language comprises not only a system of signs (also known as lexemes) but also the grammars by which these are manipulated. Grammar refers to the rules governing the language and each language has its own grammar (Language 2006; Lustig & Koester 1993:159).

Effective communication implies a sound knowledge of vocabulary, the rules of the language, the grammatical construction of the language (sentences) and an understanding of the pictures in our minds. The five components of language (phonology, morphology, semantics, syntactics and pragmatics) are interrelated and are used to create verbal codes or language (Lustig & Koester 1993:159), and a basic understanding of these aspects is required to ensure that effective communication takes place.

If you think of or refer back to study unit 1 of the study guide and prescribed book, you may recall reading that communication took place before language originated. Strokes on clay tablets and pictures on cave walls meant something and civilisations of those periods could understand what each sign or picture meant.

Signs

For communication to be effective and have the intended outcome, the

recipient has to create meaning similar to that in the mind of the communicator. This is attained through words which are the basic elements of language and which are verbal signs. Signs are the smallest units of meaning and make communication possible because they are the vehicles allowing for the transfer of meaning.

A sign can be regarded as the representation of an idea, concept, object or quality (Lustig & Koester 1993:159). A wink is a symbolic sign and, at a formal meeting, it could be a sign indicating a form of recognition, saying hello or a sign indicating that you agree with the other person. Depending on the circumstances, a wink over a glass of wine can be a sign that you are flirting with someone. It could also, however, serve as a greeting. In order to understand a sign such as this correctly, you need to contextualise it, understand it in relation to other signs around you and connect that sign with the appropriate meaning.

Signs are not universal in all languages and can have different meanings to different people. The same sign can have more than one meaning and a sign does not indicate meaning. The thumbs up sign can mean 'OK', 'Thank you', 'Everything is fine' or that the communicator is gay (depending in which country it is used). Although there are a number of different signs, this study guide focuses on natural, arbitrary and symbolic signs.

Semiotics (the study of how signs convey meaning) is a research approach that deals with language as a system of signs, the rules and conventions that make it possible for signs to communicate meaning(s).



Activity 6.2



- 1 Study section 6.4 in the prescribed book with a view to distinguishing between natural, arbitrary and symbolic signs.
- 2 Read the passage below aloud and consider the following:
 - Can you pronounce the words as you read them?
 - Did you understand what each word meant?
 - Did the contents of the paragraph make sense to you?
 - What does this exercise prove or demonstrate with regard to arbitrary signs, meaning and understanding?

Mind boggling

I cdnuolt blveiee that I cluod aulacilty uesdnatnrd what I was rdgnieg. The phaomnneal power of the hmuam mnid. Aoccdrnig to rscheearch it deos not mttair inwaht oredr ltteers are in a wrod, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a mses and you wlll sitll be albe to raed it. This is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey ltter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. And you thought slpeling was ipmorant?

Natural signs

Natural signs are the result of cause and effect. Irrespective of your culture, *natural signs* should be understood by all people, such as television images of East Asia indicating that the area was subject to disaster (after the Tsunami); if someone coughs continuously, the cough is associated with illness of a kind (pneumonia, bronchitis, asthma or a common cold).

[Arbitrary: based on or derived from uninformed opinion, random choice or personal whim; used without constraint; despotic; autocratic]

Arbitrary signs

Arbitrary signs, which *represent agreed-upon* meanings, are used in effective communicative exchanges. The letters of the alphabet are the most basic arbitrary signs and are used to make up words. These arbitrary signs have to be learnt since they do not resemble what you visually read or physically hear or say (speech). In other words, letters of the alphabet do not as such represent any object or thought. For example, the arbitrary signs F-L-O-O-R, when read or heard, do not in any manner represent or resemble the lower surface of a room, the bottom of the sea, part of the House of Parliament where members sit and speak or a set of rooms on the same level in a house. The arbitrary signs C-O-W, when read or heard, do not visually represent or resemble the farm animal which can produce milk. If you have not learnt that B-O-A-B-A-B refers to a very large African tree (one that actually looks like an upside-down tree) with a thick trunk, you will find the arbitrary signs meaningless.

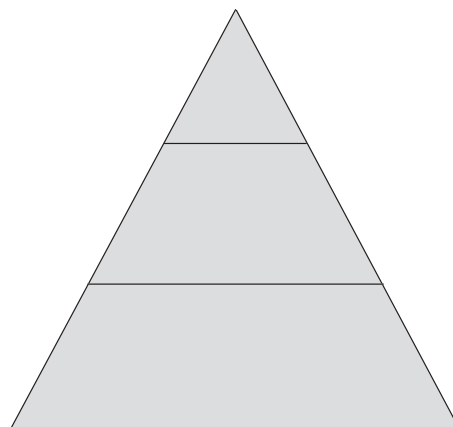
Triangle of meaning

This triangle illustrates the relationship between words, thoughts and meaning assigned to these words. There is no direct relationship between a specific word and a specific thing. In the graphical presentation below, C-O-W does not visually look like the animal we know as a cow. There is an arbitrary relationship between the letters (signs) C-O-W and the thing (the animal).

The *Triangle of meaning* is a graphical representation of the interrelationship between a thought (remember to milk Milly), a word (C-O-W) and a thing (farm animal which can produce milk).

Triangle of Meaning

I must remember to milk Milly



C-O-W

Farm animal that can produce milk

Symbolic signs

People have learnt the meaning of these letters and when combined in one word, have learnt that, on a denotative level, these arbitrary signs represent a farm animal that can produce milk. The word cow is an arbitrary sign that stands for the farm animal and is called a *referent*.

Language is used to make sounds, structure sentences and to assign meaning to words or a combination thereof in order to communicate. The meanings conveyed by words as *symbolic signs* are abstract and are rooted in our social, cultural and language past. Words as symbols therefore also have to be learnt and usually represent stronger emotional connections than arbitrary signs.

When some people read the word O-W-L (a nocturnal bird of prey) they are reminded of impending death, while others associate the word O-W-L with an animal that looks after you at night. The nocturnal bird of prey, an O-W-L also signifies wisdom.

Tourism is of particular importance in South Africa and each province has its own logo. These logos not only identify a particular province, but are also used in the branding (as a label to serve as an identifying trade mark) of a province. B-U-F-F-A-L-O (one of two species of oxen with horns) is used by the Limpopo province to symbolise unity, strength and political stability (*Sake-Rapport* 2006:9).

From the information provided in preceding paragraphs, the following can be deduced:

- Language refers to a unified system of signs (words) that enable humans to share meaning.
- A word can be an arbitrary sign which can represent something else or a spoken sound or it can be a written representation of a sound.
- The arbitrary nature of words means that there is no direct resemblance or relation between the word and that which it represents.
- A referent could be regarded as a 'thing' represented by a word. Referents could be concrete, such as objects, or abstract, such as feelings (Du Plooy 1994:76).

It is also clear that there is a relationship between verbal signs and the meanings assigned to them. This is clearly illustrated when language is used as a social phenomenon.

6.3 Language as a social phenomenon

Verbal language is used when people interact (communicate) with one another and to build relationships between people. Verbal communication is conveyed either orally or in printed form and can be found in different settings, such as face-to-face communication, mass media (listening to the radio, watching television, reading a newspaper) or when using the Internet.

Before people can effectively communicate with one another by means of a language, they need to acquire an understanding of what words actually mean **and** a mutual understanding of connotations attached to words.



Activity 6.3



- 1 Read section 6.2 in the prescribed book to familiarise yourself with the different purposes of language.
- 2 Study sections 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 in the prescribed book to familiarise yourself with the difference between the denotative and connotative meanings of words.
- 3 With this information in mind, consider the following language issues:
 - What connotative meanings come to mind when you think of the word 'dog'? Write down the meaning you attach to this word.
 - Use a dictionary, Internet, Thesaurus or another resource to determine what the denotative meaning of the word is.
 - Compare your connotative meaning to the denotative meaning and highlight the differences.

Levels of the meaning of words

The three possible levels of meaning of words which can be distinguished are the

- denotative level of meaning
- connotative level of meaning
- mythological or ideological level of meaning.

Denotative level of meaning

The *denotative meaning* of a word refers to the explicit and literal meaning as described in a dictionary. According to a number of dictionaries, a dog is a four-legged animal from the genus *canis*. It is also a pet of many breeds or can be a wild animal. 'Dog' also refers to the male of a dog or fox.

Connotative level of meaning

The *connotative meaning* of a word refers to the connotation that you, the communicator or recipient attach to the word — your emotions, feelings and the associations that you attach to a word. These meanings are often determined by past personal experiences and/or by meanings constructed by society. The connotative meaning that you assign to the word 'dog' could, for instance, be that of a protector watching over you and your property, or that of a vicious, fighting animal (if you have been bitten by a dog) or that of a companion for life (if you are single and care for the animal as if it were your partner).

Mythological or ideological level of meaning

The *mythological or ideological meaning* of words illustrates or refers to a deeper meaning of the word and ideology can in some instances be related to culture or traditional beliefs.

On an ideological or mythological level the proverb 'Let sleeping dogs lie' means that you should not upset that which could have bad consequences. Similarly, to 'lead a dog's life' means to lead a hard or difficult life.



If the proverb 'Let sleeping dogs lie' is analysed on all three the above levels, the following meaning is applicable on each level:

Denotative level: The dog lies asleep somewhere.

Connotative level: If you have had a bad experience with a dog before, the sleeping dog may bite you if you wake it up or touch it.

Ideological level: Do not stir (disturb) or do anything to cause trouble.

Activity 6.4



- 1 Find two differing advertisements in which washing powder is advertised. Analyse the meaning of the words 'washing powder' on a denotative, connotative and mythological or ideological level.
- 2 Consider the wording of your country's National Anthem (e.g. *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*). Select a particular contextual situation (e.g. a funeral, graduation ceremony, national sports event) and analyse the three levels of meanings conveyed by the anthem when sung in your chosen context.

With regard to the words 'washing powder', the meaning on each level could be:

Denotative: Powder of soap or detergent for washing clothes.

Connotative: Cleans laundry (clothing and other items) and removes stains. White cloth becomes brighter and whiter.

Ideological: White is associated with purity, virtue and innocence. (Think of a wedding and the associated convention of a bride wearing a white wedding gown.)

Depending of the context in which language is used and in which communication takes place, people can assign different meanings (connotations) to words. In view of the fact that some words can have more than one meaning, the context of a word in a sentence becomes important.

The next time you read a newspaper or magazine, take note of how specific words (in advertisements, political reviews or viewpoints and editorial commentaries) can convey different meanings, depending on whether the reader interprets them on a denotative, connotative or ideological level.

Misunderstanding

Despite our knowledge of language, and its functions and purposes, miscommunication still occurs because communicator and recipient do not always assign the same meaning to words. Although there can be various reasons why *misunderstanding* occurs (e.g. internal noise, haste, bad temper, being uninterested), the most obvious in terms of language and communication could be because of misinterpretations of denotative and connotative meanings as well as the distinction between concrete and abstract words.

Concrete words

Something is concrete when you can feel or touch it — it is an object (study guides, spectacles and television). *Concrete words* name things, or a class of things. The referent is that which is being named (Steinberg 1995:52) — the object for which the word stands.

Abstract words

Abstract words have a theoretical or conceptual rather than a concrete meaning and can be influenced by past experiences and background. Abstract words represent qualities and attributes — consider words such as 'fair', 'justice', 'love' and 'ethics'.

You will surely agree that although everyone will assign the same meaning to and have the same understanding of a word like 'computer', the same cannot be said of a word such as 'adult'. When are you an 'adult'? When you turn 21; have a baby; obtain a license to drive a vehicle; start working or when you become financially independent?

Interpretations and definitions differ from culture to culture. Different people may assign different meanings to words and have different understandings of concrete and abstract words. All these factors could contribute towards a breakdown in effective communication.

6.4 Why do we use verbal language?

Some people use language to express thought, others to conceal thought, and others instead of thought
(McKenzie 1980:291).

Purposes of language

Language is used for specific purposes, such as for (1) entertainment (sending pictures and stories to friends via the Internet or watching a television programme); (2) becoming acquainted with issues outside our immediate experience (being informed about the incident involving the Twin Towers either by reading about it or by viewing images of it); (3) labelling or identifying (baptising a newborn baby or calling someone by his or her name) and (4) for evaluation purposes (commenting on an assignment: 'This is a great effort!'). When the purpose of language is to evaluate, a positive, neutral or negative judgment can be uttered.

Whenever people communicate, more than one communication purpose can be fulfilled at the same time. You could tell someone a story he or she is eager to hear but at the same time also convey unknown information and illustrate your knowledge of the topic or subject.

Effective communicators demonstrate sensitivity to multicultural communication and variations in language. Most importantly, effective communicators use language as a tool and know that understanding the interaction means language must be used and interpreted in context.

Language is used to express oneself, verbally or nonverbally, to exchange information (give or receive information); to build, establish or maintain relationships; to assist with decision making; to gain or exert power over others; to persuade others to change their thoughts and actions; to help us make sense of the world and the way we understand it and to simply express our imagination and ourselves to other people. When you communicate, there is intent behind what you communicate (Du Plessis 1991:15-19; Language 2006). In other words, people use verbal language to communicate purposefully to fulfil various human needs. Communication serves various purposes but also fulfils specific communicative functions.

6.5 Communicative functions of language

When people speak, they use language not only to convey particular messages but to fulfil particular communicative functions. When people discuss a particular aspect or topic, they share information and interact for a purpose. Depending on the language used, and the purpose of the communication, the communicative functions of language can differ from one communicative interaction to another.



Activity 6.5



- 1 Make sure that you understand the functions of language as explained in section 6.3 of the prescribed book.
- 2 Find three different newspapers and compare each newspaper page by page to see where in each newspaper advertisements are strategically placed. Consider the following:
 - Do you think it is coincidence that all three newspapers place advertisements here (e.g. at the bottom of page 1)?
 - What communicative function do you think could be served by this particular position of the advertisement?
 - Why do you think advertisements are placed in this specific position?
 - Make a list of the different functions of language fulfilled by each advertisement.

The following communicative functions of language can generally be distinguished:

**Referential
function**

The *referential (contextual or informational) function* indicates that concrete, factual information is conveyed. For instance, if you tell someone in the household that the school starts at 8:00 daily, your communication serves the referential function. With this function the main focus is on the contents of the information or on the relationship between a sign and its referent or object.

[Referent: The object for which a symbol stands. Words on their own mean nothing but become meaningful once we associate them with referents.]

Expressive function

The *expressive function* of communication applies mostly to the communicator since it reflects affective meaning, that is it conveys a communicator's feelings, emotions and opinions. Whenever communication is used to reprimand, condemn, apologise or praise, language focuses on the communicator and the expressive function of communication is used. An example is that of someone who apologises for making a mistake: such individuals may cry or give you a gift (flowers, chocolates, a compact disk) to demonstrate their sincerity. Examples include the use of swearwords or the trembling of your lip while you are telling someone of a recent death in the family. In these instances both verbal and nonverbal communication are used.

The form of a message can also fulfil an expressive function. In speech the tone of voice, pitch, volume, hesitations and speed of speech add an expressive meaning to the referential content of what is being said. In written or printed language the expressive function is not conveyed by the actual words, but by the size and colour of letters used and by punctuation marks. When you type in capital letters in an e-mail, it is regarded as shouting at the recipient. Similarly, the emphasis on the word 'am', together with the question mark, changes the expressive function of communication in the following examples:

I **am** pregnant!
Am I pregnant?

The position of articles and advertisements in newspapers or magazines conveys an important message and fulfils an expressive function in terms of communication. Articles or advertisements positioned on the right-hand side, at the top of a page, are conventionally regarded as more important than those positioned on the left-hand side of the page or at the bottom of a page.

Conative function

Messages that have *conative (regulative or directive) functions* are concerned with the relationship between the sign and the recipient. Language is used to influence the belief, emotions, attitude, actions or behaviour of the recipient of a message to follow the communication wishes or orders of the communicator. The message can contain instructions, commands, warnings or threats. A practical example of this is in your first tutorial letter where it is stated that if you do not submit and pass at least two assignments, you will not be permitted to write the examination at the end of the year. This message contains both a warning and a threat. Another instance is pleading of a teenager — Lara who is 14 years old —

who is trying to convince her mother that she is old enough now to start wearing make-up and nail polish. Two people arguing is yet another example. The communication used by each of the parties will serve the purpose of making their point to convince the other party that they are correct — to influence the attitude of the other party. In these examples the intention of the communicator is to *have an effect on the recipient*.

Phatic function

The *phatic (or interactional) function* of communication has to do with keeping the lines of communication open and maintaining social relationships. In other words, to *make and maintain contact with others*. That is why we regularly ask people 'How are you?' Another example is when we talk about the weather simply to keep the conversation going, since it is considered inappropriate (or awkward) to keep quiet. Through this kind of communication we take notice of people and (sometimes) invite or welcome communication.

Poetic function

The *poetic function* of communication has to do with the message's concern with itself and the function is not confined to poetry; it is also found in slogans. The essence of this function is in the use of language aspects such as alliteration, assonance, rhyme, diction, and syntax to serve the purpose. This is applicable when people use language for pleasure. They may enjoy the sounds of words in poetry that rhyme, they may use expressions, such as 'a bee in your bonnet'; 'you are a poet and you don't know it' or 'Go well, Go Shell' Metaphors, such as 'You are a star' also serve this function of communication.

Metalinguistic function

The core of the *metalinguistic function* of communication is its comment on language — you talk about the language used to make sure that what has been said (the code that has been used) is understood in exactly the same way by all parties. Phrases, such as 'Is my understanding correct that ?' or 'Do you mean?' are examples. Advertisements for products, such as cars, can provide further technical detail (speed over a distance, power output or fuel consumption) while advertisements for medical products could explain the message conveyed in the advertisement by telling you what ingredients each tablet contains. In the last two examples, both the referential and metalinguistic functions of language are illustrated.

In other words, each communicative function of language has a specific orientation. This is illustrated in the summary below:

Communicative function of language	Orientation towards
Referential	Subject-matter/message
Expressive	Speaker/author
Conative	Listener/reader
Phatic	Communication channel
Metalinguistic	Message
Poetic	Message

(Leech 1975:47-49)

Having dealt with the purposes and communicative functions which language fulfils, we now turn to the following which are worth noting:

- Purposes of language are not necessarily mutually exclusive. (You can inform and simultaneously entertain. Consider the television programmes which you watch most frequently).
- The functions of communication are also not mutually exclusive. This means that your message can fulfil both a referential and an expressive function: mother yelling (expressive function) at son to tidy his room (the referential function).
- An interrelationship can be drawn between purposes and functions of language. For example, your main purpose may be to inform and your language (or message) could fulfil referential and conative functions, as in asking someone to turn down the disturbing volume of the radio. The main purpose is to inform, while the referential function is to refer to the volume of the radio and the conative function is to persuade the person to take action. Also, the communicative purpose of an argument between you and your supervisor about a work-related matter could be to clarify an issue, while the main communicative function being fulfilled by either of you could be to get rid of your anger or frustration. In this case the communication fulfils an expressive function.



Activity 6.6

- 3 Study the Madam & Eve cartoon below and then do (or answer) the following:
 - Identify at least three functions which the verbal communication in the cartoon fulfils.
 - Explain the denotative and connotative meaning of *Hit me* uttered in the third frame.
 - Identify the communicative function which is represented in frame four of the cartoon.
 - What purpose do you think the last frame serves? What happened?

EXAMPLE 3



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Eve's comment in the first frame of the cartoon can fulfil both the referential and expressive functions of communication. Eve is asking a

question related to factual information and at the same time she is giving her opinion. The response in frame 2 of the cartoon can be regarded as fulfilling the referential or conative function of communication. The grandma is telling Eve that she must follow her instructions if she wants to learn how to play the game and at the same time the grandma is instructing Eve to do exactly what she is told.

The denotative and connotative meanings which Eve and the grandma assign to the words 'Hit me' clearly differ. In the context of playing 21, grandma meant 'Deal the cards' while Eve interpreted the instruction literally. Eve is not familiar with the game or with the terminology (jargon) applicable to the card game.

The last frame can also be interpreted to fulfil the metalinguistic function of communication. This frame provides information on the communication in the third frame ('Hit me') and also comments on what happened after the instruction was given, without showing the reader what actually happened. It can mean that Eve struck grandma — the V and the L indicate that violence and bad or foul language was used. V and L could also be interpreted as grandma's response to having being dealt bad cards.

6.6 Improving language skills

Despite knowledge of all the phenomena discussed in this study unit, it may still be necessary to improve language skills. This can be done by making sure that you express yourself clearly; that you use correct words which will convey the meaning exactly as you intend. It may even be necessary to elaborate on a specific statement to ensure understanding on the part of both communicator and recipient. It is of critical importance to remember that if English is used as the language of communication, it may be the third language of other people.

Communicative competence will also improve if appropriate language is used. Language used should be suitable to the people and context in which it is used. You will not, for instance, use the same terminology with a six-year-old child as with an adult to explain what studying at Unisa entails. Slang (non-standard words and phrases) and jargon (technical language of occupational, professional and other groups) have become acceptable in many communication contexts. When some teenagers communicate with one another, they often make use of slang. If you go to a pharmacy and the pharmacist uses jargon, you may not understand what is being conveyed. Yet, on the other hand, if your grocer speaks a mixture of two languages, it is appropriate in the context since that is his or her preference. Sensitivity towards multiculturalism and sexist language could only be to your benefit and expanding your vocabulary will definitely improve communication. Expansion of vocabulary implies that you develop fluency in the use of language and this only occurs when you practise and grow by correcting communication mistakes. Not only will you be able to express yourself better, you will also be able to replace common words (e.g. good,

bad) with more appropriate terminology in its context. One of the best ways to improve vocabulary is to read more often and to use a dictionary when you come across words that are unfamiliar or unknown.

6.7 Conclusion

In a multicultural environment such as South Africa, common ground needs to be established in terms of communication to ensure effective outcomes. We need to build a bridge to promote intercultural communication and, in order to do this successfully, we require an understanding of language, signs, verbal codes, the functions of language and an indication of how language skills can be improved.



6.8 Looking back

Are you familiar with the various aspects of communication which were addressed in this study unit? Perform the activities below and answer the questions to determine to what extent you have mastered the contents of this study unit.

- 1 Compile an observation schedule similar to the one below. Consider the verbal speech communicated with a view to identifying the communicative functions being fulfilled by each communicator.

The setting is as follows: This very traditional family gathers in the lounge to watch cricket on television while the mother is preparing dinner.

Communicator	Verbal speech	Function fulfilled
James: (Son)	'Lovey, your smoking is getting worse.'	
Judith: (Daughter)	'It's a beautiful day today.'	
Stephen: (Father)	'Power play in cricket implies that no more than two players may be outside the circle!'	
Martha: (Friend)	'Do you mean that batsman is out?'	
Veronica: (Mother)	'Ding-dong, dinner is ready.'	
Jerome: (Cousin)	'Please pass the (television) remote.'	

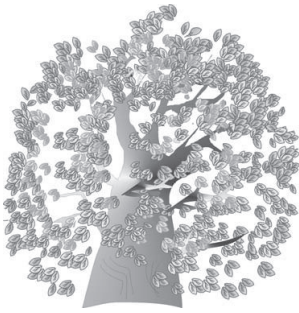
- 2 Study the following descriptions and identify the functions which language fulfils in each scenario.
 - A radio presenter reads the minimum and maximum temperatures for the day.

- During a motivation session with grade 12 learners in preparation for the examination, the principal of the school uses the following in her speech: 'No pain, no gain' and 'Walala wasala' (you snooze, you lose).
 - Your favourite magazine prints the ingredients and method for baking a special cake.
 - Your neighbour greeted you this morning with the words, 'Hi, nice rain last night, hey?'
 - Bafana Bafana at last have something to celebrate. The coach congratulates Lukas Radebe on scoring a goal by saying, 'Well done, Lukas'.
 - An oil company advertises its brand of motorcar oil and includes an explanation of the ingredients found in their oil (these ingredients distinguish their oil from that of other manufacturers).
- 3 Write down how many meanings you can assign to the word 'cut'.
 - 4 What is the denotative meaning of the word 'body'?
 - 5 Which connotative meaning will you assign to the word 'body'?
 - 6 You have to prepare a speech on a topic of your choice for the examination. Prepare the speech, select four friends, arrange a meeting and present your speech to them and illustrate how the metalinguistic function of communication will help you improve your communicative competence. Ask their attention to relevant matters, such as phrasing, formulation, use of vocabulary, pronunciation and clarity in the expression of ideas.
 - 7 Study the Garfield cartoon and complete the following activities:

We get heavier as we get older because there's a lot more information in our heads. So I'm just really intelligent and my head couldn't hold any more and it started filling up the rest of me.



- Complete the hypothesis: 'If there is a lot of information in our heads, then '
 - What are the denotative and implied connotative meanings of the word 'heavier'?
 - Make a list of the concrete and abstract words found in the cartoon.
 - Identify the functions of communication being fulfilled by 'That's my story and I'm sticking to it.'
- 8 Select the most appropriate option in each of the following multiple-choice questions:
- 'An agreed-upon system of signs' is one way in which we can define
 - (1) language
 - (2) meaning
 - (3) referent
 - (4) thought
 - The relation between the word 'house' and the building which it represents, is
 - (1) direct
 - (2) arbitrary
 - (3) personal
 - (4) visual
 - A referent can be defined as
 - (1) something represented by a word
 - (2) a word which is defined as a sign
 - (3) the meaning conveyed by a word
 - (4) the relation between words and thoughts



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