Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application

Fourth Edition

Richard West

Lynn H. Turner
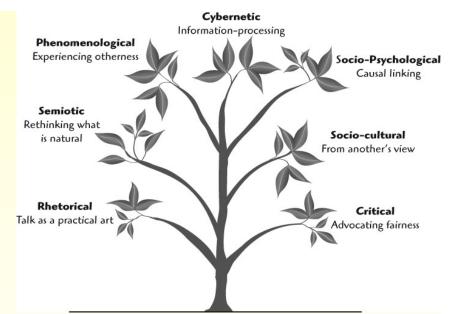
Thinking about the Field

Chapter Overview

- Seven Traditions in the Communication Field

- Seven Contexts in the Communication Field

Seven Traditions (Craig, 1999; Craig & Muller, 2007)

- Rhetorical
- Semiotic
- Phenomenological
- Cybernetic
- Socio-psychological
- Socio-cultural
- Critical+++++

Cybernetic
Information–processing

Phenomenological
Experiencing otherness

Socio-Psychological
Causal linking

Semiotic
Rethinking what is natural

Socio-cultural
From another's view

Rhetorical
Talk as a practical art

Critical
Advocating fairness

The Rhetorical Tradition

- Emphasizes talk as a practical art

- Reflects an interest in public speaking and its societal functions

- Involves elements pertaining to language

- Acknowledges audience appeals

The Semiotic Tradition

- Emphasizes rethinking what is natural

- Involves the study of signs

- Meaning is achieved when we share a common language

- Values and belief structures are passed down from previous generations

The Phenomenological Tradition

- Emphasizes experiencing otherness

- Reflects the personal interpretation of everyday life and activities

- Involves communication as attaining authenticity

- Acknowledges the impact of one's biases

The Cybernetic Tradition

- Emphasizes information processing

- Reflects communication as information science

- Involves a broader, systemic viewpoint of communication

- Acknowledges differing levels of ability

The Socio-Psychological Tradition

- Emphasizes causal linking

- Reflects the notion that behavior is influenced by one or more variables

- Acknowledges that patterns vary across people but can be detected

- Uses experimental research

The Socio-Cultural Tradition

- Emphasizes seeing from another's view

- Acknowledges that shared cultural patterns and social structures influence communication

- Involves viewing social order and reality as co-created
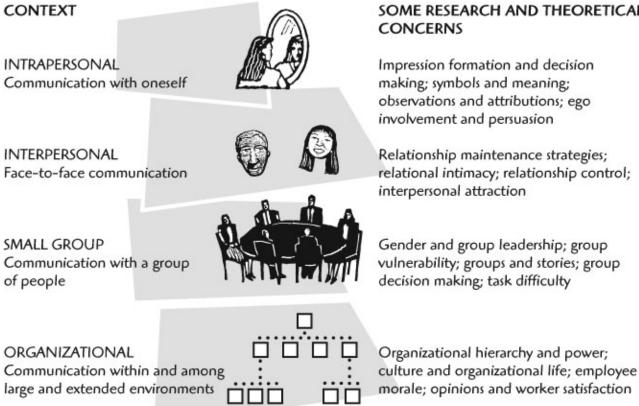
The Critical Tradition

- Emphasizes advocacy of fairness

- Reflects a concern for injustice, oppression, power, and inequality

- Involves a critique of the social order

- Acknowledges the importance of openly questioning assumptions

Seven Contexts of Communication

- Intrapersonal

- Interpersonal

- Small Group

- Organizational

- Public/Rhetorical

- Mass/Media

- Cultural

Contexts of Communication

CONTEXT		SOME RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL CONCERNS
INTRAPERSONAL Communication with oneself		Impression formation and decision making; symbols and meaning; observations and attributions; ego involvement and persuasion
INTERPERSONAL Face-to-face communication		Relationship maintenance strategies; relational intimacy; relationship control; interpersonal attraction
SMALL GROUP Communication with a group of people		Gender and group leadership; group vulnerability; groups and stories; group decision making; task difficulty
ORGANIZATIONAL Communication within and among large and extended environments		Organizational hierarchy and power; culture and organizational life; employee morale; opinions and worker satisfaction

Contexts of Communication

PUBLIC/RHETORICAL
Communication to a large group of listeners (audience)

Communication apprehension; delivery effectiveness; speech and text criticism; ethical speechmaking; popular culture analysis

MASS/MEDIA
Communication to a very large audience through mediated forms

Use of media; affiliation and television programming; television and values; media and need fulfillment; effects of social networking sites

CULTURAL
Communication between and among members of different cultures

Culture and rule–setting; culture and anxiety; hegemony; ethnocentrism

Intrapersonal Communication

- *Communication with oneself*
- Focuses on the role of cognition in behavior
- Includes imagining, perceiving, daydreaming, and problem-solving
- Includes attributions you make about another's character and yourself
- May bolster self-esteem

Interpersonal Communication

- *Face-to-face communication between people*
- Investigates how various types of relationships begin, are maintained, and dissolve
- Sub-contexts include family, friendships, long-term marriages, workplace, etc.
- Issues include risk, teasing, attraction, etc.

Small Group Communication

- *Three or more people working toward a common task-related purpose*

- Concerned with the dynamic nature of groups

- Disagreement about what number constitutes a small group

- People are influenced by the presence of others

- Networking and role behavior

Organizational Communication

- *Communication within and among large, extended environments*
- Concerned with climate, rules, etc.
- Distinguished by clearly defined hierarchy
- Foundation of contemporary research lies in Hawthorne experiments
- Organizational issues investigated include: the *Challenger* disaster, whistle-blowing, etc.

Example of Hierarchy

Public/Rhetorical Communication

- *Dissemination of information from one person to a large group*

- Goals of public speaking: to inform, to entertain, or to persuade

- Early rhetorical principles of Aristotle applied to texts of speeches

- Research has shifted from textual analysis to analysis of themes and issues

- Communication apprehension

Mass/Media Communication

- *Mass media refers to the channels for mass messages, including newspapers, radio, television, the Internet, etc.*

- Mass communication context includes both channel and audience

- Both senders and receivers exercise control

- Research has focused on media content, effects, and related phenomena

Cultural Communication

- *Communication between individuals whose cultural backgrounds differ*

- Culture as a "community of meaning"

- Co-cultures exist within a larger common culture

- Academic roots begin in the 1950s and have grown due to globalization and population shifts