

The Concept of Communication

Semiotics: theoretical basis of communication studies, derived from the word Semiosis:
“... a process in which something is a sign to some organism” (Morris 1946: 366)
All semiosis is communicative.

Communication

Literal meaning of communication: “a common sharing of information”.

OED, s. v. *communicate*: “communicare to make common to many, share, impart, divide, f. commun-is common + -ic- formative of factitive verbs.”

Basic definitions and types of communication:

Umberto Eco: Communication is any flow of information

Shannon & Weaver define communication as:

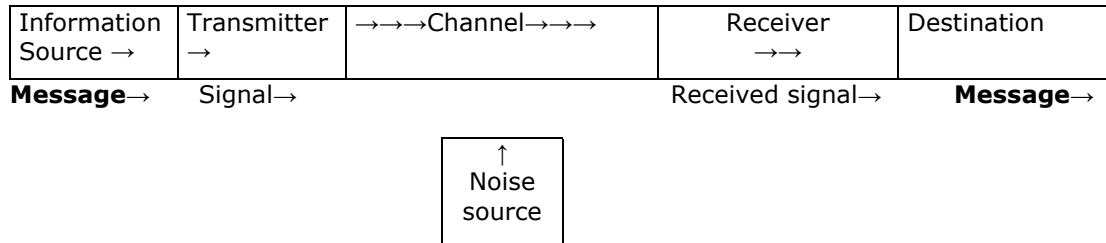
“all the procedures by which one mind may affect another. This ... involves not only written and oral speech, but also music, the pictorial arts, the theatre, the ballet, and in fact all human behaviour” (1949: 3).

Unilateral interaction: something is regarded as a sign by some organism”

Bilateral interaction: two organisms communicate with each other

Models of Communication

1. Linear model: Shannon & Weaver (1949: 7)



Characteristic feature: Distinction between the mental and the physiological / technical processes in communication.

Signal indicates physical element, the **sign** a mental one. The message is said to be a sequence of symbols or signs, therefore stands between source and transmitter, receiver and destination. Physical signals are transformed into signs by a cognitive process.

The communications channel is regarded as physical or technical medium (not as a code)

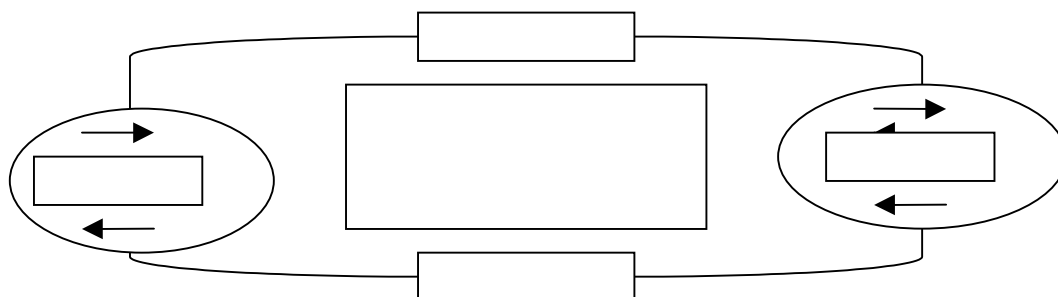
Code is a sign repertoire.

Implications of the linear model???

2. Circular model of communication: Ferdinand de Saussure

Audition

Phonation



Phonation

Audition

Source: Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 177

Information flow in two directions. Saussure suggested the same circle for the mental process.

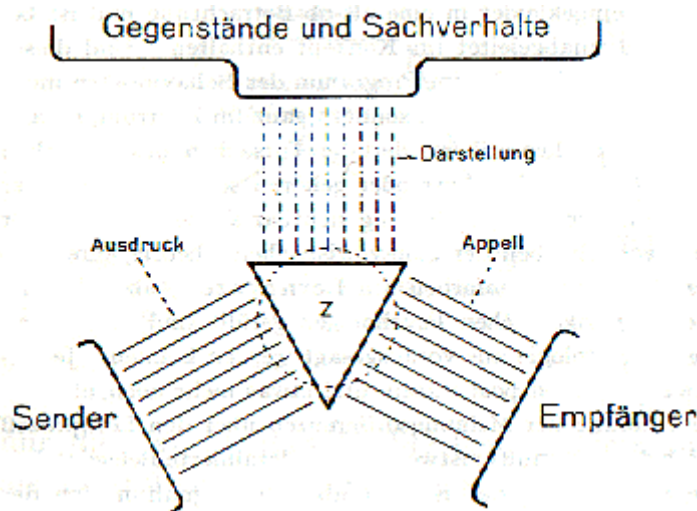
In **Cybernetics** the concept of circularity becomes communicative feedback.

3. Functional model of communication:

Karl Bühler (1879 - 1963): Psychologist and philosopher

Claim to fame: the “Organon-Modell”.

Philosophical background: Plato’s notion of language as an organon (tool) to inform someone of something (cf. Cratylos 388b).



The circle represents the specific sound phenomenon.

The triangle represents the linguistic sign with three relational areas. The sign functions as:

Symbol the sign represents things or conditions, focus on the object

Symptom: the sign expresses something on behalf of the sender, his “interiority”

Signal: the sign appeals to the receiver by exerting influence