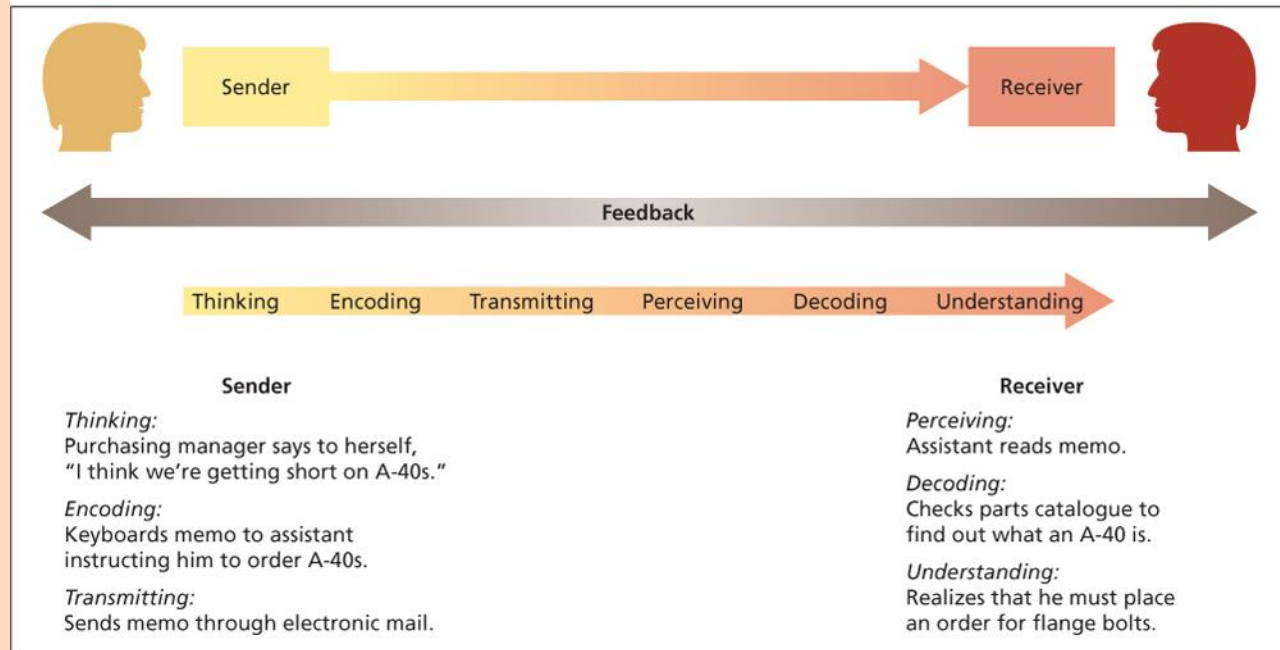# Chapter 10

Communication

What is Communication?

- The process by which information is exchanged between a sender and a receiver.

- *Interpersonal* communication involves the exchange of information between people.

- *Effective communication* occurs when the right people receive the right information in a timely manner.

A Model of the Communication Process

EXHIBIT 10.1
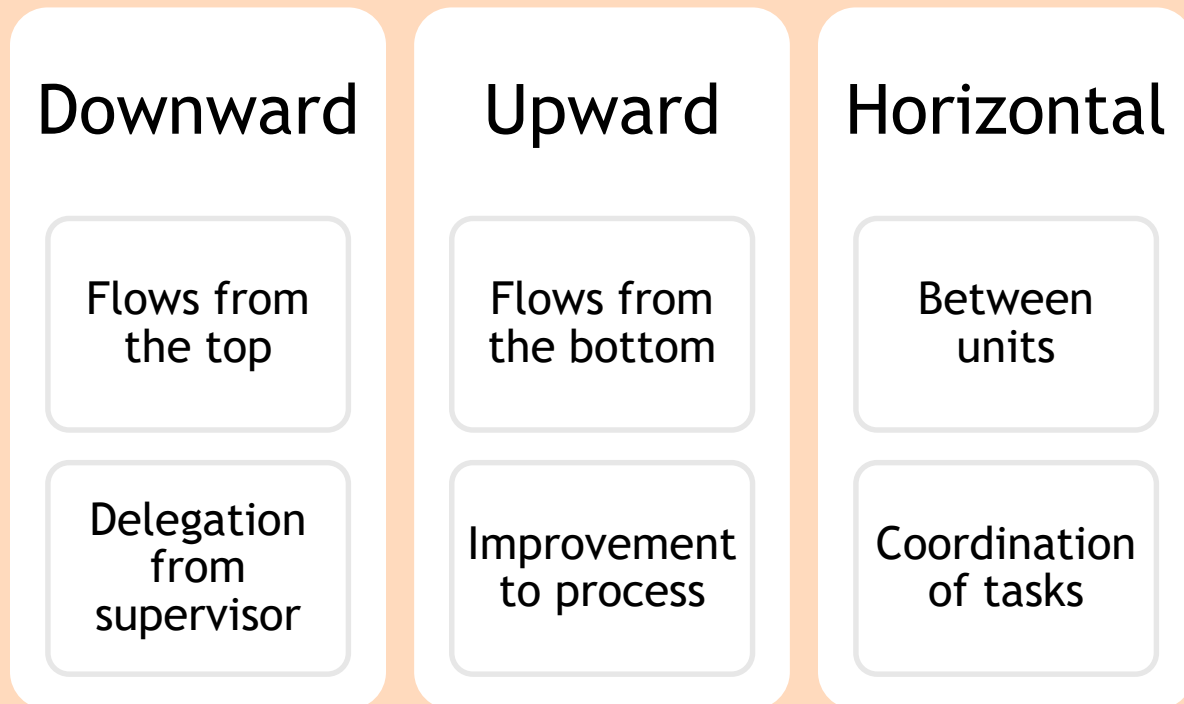**A model of the communication process and an example.**
Source: Glueck, W.F. (1980). *Management*, 2nd ed. South-Western, a part of Cengage Learning, Inc. Reproduced by permission, www.cengage.com/permissions.

Sender → Receiver

Feedback

Thinking → Encoding → Transmitting → Perceiving → Decoding → Understanding

Sender

Thinking:
Purchasing manager says to herself, "I think we're getting short on A-40s."

Encoding:
Keyboards memo to assistant instructing him to order A-40s.

Transmitting:
Sends memo through electronic mail.

Receiver

Perceiving:
Assistant reads memo.

Decoding:
Checks parts catalogue to find out what an A-40 is.

Understanding:
Realizes that he must place an order for flange bolts.

Communication by Strict Chain of Command

- The *chain of command* refers to the lines of authority and formal reporting relationships in an organization. Supports three types of communication:

Downward	Upward	Horizontal
Flows from the top	Flows from the bottom	Between units
Delegation from supervisor	Improvement to process	Coordination of tasks

Deficiencies in the Chain of Command

- The formal chain of command is sometimes an ineffective path. Things to consider:

Informal communication	Filtering	Slowness
Helps with efficiency	Can occur in any direction	Cross functional teams can short circuit
Doesn't always benefit the organization	Can lead to gaps in detail	Slowness is challenging for customers

Voice and Silence

- *Voice* refers to the constructive expression of disagreement or concern about work unit or organizational practices.

- Voice involves "speaking up" and it can be contrasted with *silence* which means withholding relevant information.

- It can be considered a form of organizational *citizenship behaviour*.

Voice and Silence

- More satisfied employees who identify more strongly with their work unit or organization are most likely to speak up as are those who are conscientious and extraverted.

- Direct supervisors and higher level managers play a critical role in creating a climate in which constructive dissent can emerge.

- A positive climate for voice can contribute to an atmosphere of *psychological safety*.

Voice and Silence

- *Psychological safety* refers to a shared belief that it is safe to take social risks.

- Self-censorship will result in a climate of silence.

- Another factor that can contribute to silence and works against voice is the *mum effect*.

The Mum Effect

- The *mum effect* refers to the tendency to avoid communicating unfavourable news to others.

- It is more likely when the sender *is* responsible for the bad news.

- The mum effect applies to both subordinates and managers.

Characteristics of the Grapevine

- The *grapevine* is an organization's informal communication network.

- The grapevine cuts across formal lines of communication.

- Organizations often have several grapevine systems.

- It can transmit information relevant to the performance of the organization as well as personal gossip. Tends to be fairly accurate.

Who Participates in the Grapevine and Why?

- Personality characteristics play a role in grapevine participation (e.g., extraverts).

- It can be a timely and inexpensive source of information.

- It can provide an alternative source of power and influence available to all.

- The exchange of delicate information builds a bond of trust between senders and receivers.

- It provides social and intellectual stimulation.

Question: what are the pros and cons?

Rumours

- A *rumour* is an unverified belief that is in general circulation.

- <u>Rumours spread fastest and farthest when</u>:
  - The information is especially ambiguous.
  - The content of the rumour is important to those involved.
  - The rumour seems credible.
  - The recipient is anxious.

Activity

BREAKING THE SILENCE

Discussion Question (groups 4-6)

List 3 reasons why employees might respond with silence rather than voice to an organizational problem. Then for each, explain how the organization could act to encourage voice.

Don't pick obvious examples – help your peers understand the potential scope of issues.

The Verbal Language of Work

- In many jobs, occupations, and organizations we see the development of jargon.

- *Jargon* refers to the specialized language used by job holders or members.

- Jargon can be an efficient means of communicating with peers and provides

- Jargon can be a *barrier* to clear communication

- Jargon can be intimidating and confusing to new organizational members.

Question: has anyone struggled to get used to new jargon? Can you share an example?

The Non-verbal Language of Work

- *Non-verbal communication* refers to the transmission of messages by some medium other than speech or writing such as body language.

- Major forms of non-verbal communication include:

    - Body language

    - Props, artifacts, and costumes (form or dress e.g. uniform or dress code).

Body Language

- *Body language* is non-verbal communication that occurs by means of the sender's bodily motions and facial expressions or the sender's physical location in relation to the receiver.

- Two important messages sent via body language:

  – The extent to which the sender likes and is interested in the receiver.

  – The sender's views concerning the relative status of the sender and the receiver.

  – Relaxation can denote status over another

Props, Artifacts, and Costumes

- Non-verbal communication can also occur through the use of various objects such as props, artifacts, and costumes.

- Consider how the following can communicate information about an individual: office décor, arrangements, clothing.

- The manner in which people decorate and arrange their offices conveys non-verbal information about the occupant.

Example: Paramount - Meeting with the VP

Does Clothing Communicate?

- The clothing organizational members wear sends signals about their competence, seriousness, and promotability.

- Research indicates that clothing does communicate.

- It communicates partly because it can enhance the wearer's self-esteem and self-confidence.

Question: What do uniforms communicate e.g. retail vs. military vs. business suit?

Gender Differences in Communication

- Gender differences in communication styles influence the way that men and women are perceived and treated in the workplace.

- We have long associated masculinity with leadership

- Differences tend *not* to favour women

Example: Transformational Leadership

Cross-Cultural Communication

- Many failures in business and management across cultures are due to ineffective communication.

- Some important dimensions of cross-cultural communication include:

  - Language differences

  - Non-verbal communication

  - Etiquette and politeness

  - Social conventions

  - Cultural context

Cross Cultural Communication

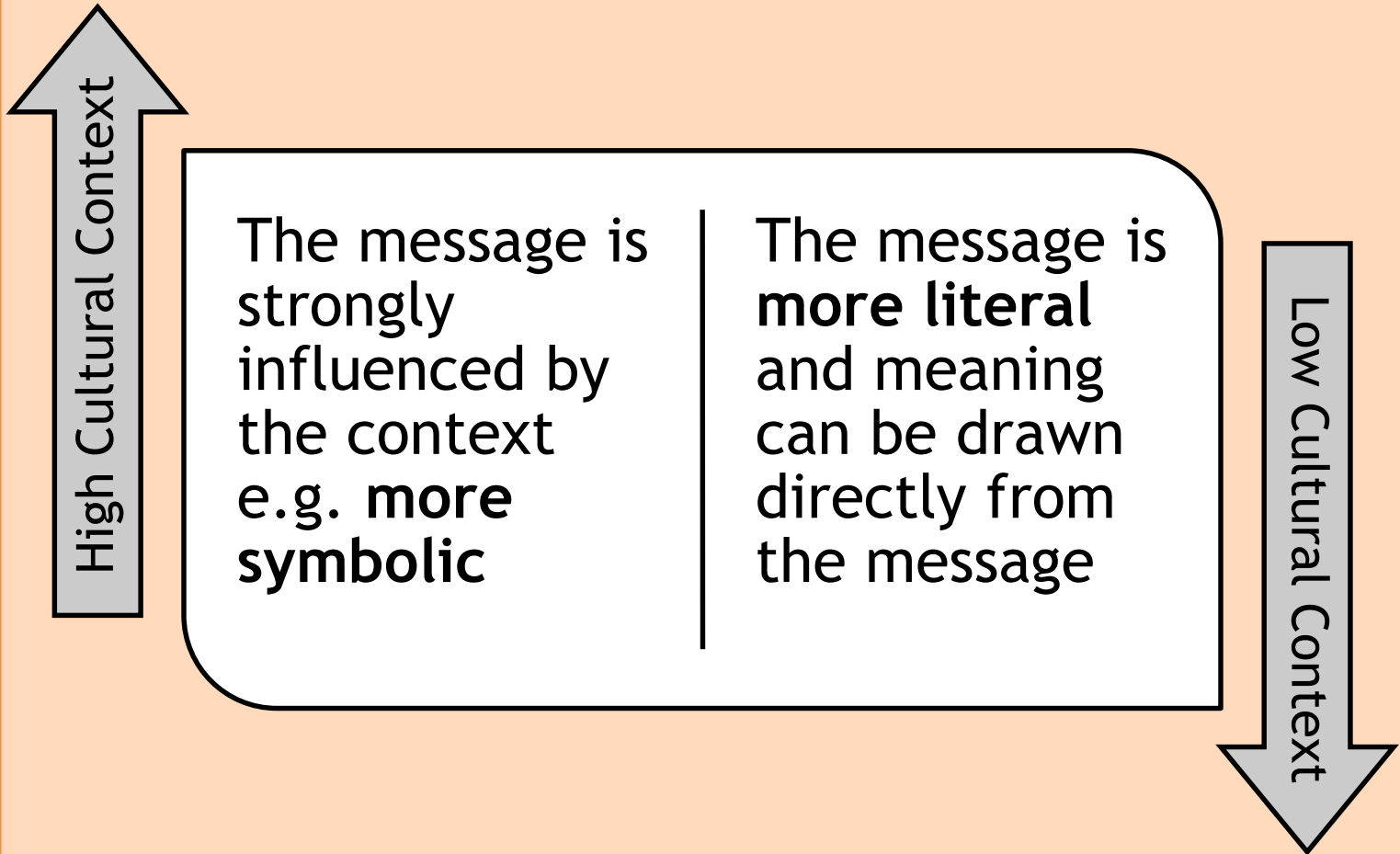The same **language** is no guarantee of perfect communication

Non-verbal communication does not translate (except facial expressions)

Cultures differ in how **etiquette and politeness** are expressed

Social conventions vary across culture (behaviours, approaches and reactions)

Cultural context is important for decoding messages

High Cultural Context and Low Cultural Context

High Cultural Context

Low Cultural Context

The message is strongly influenced by the context e.g. **more symbolic**

The message is **more literal** and meaning can be drawn directly from the message
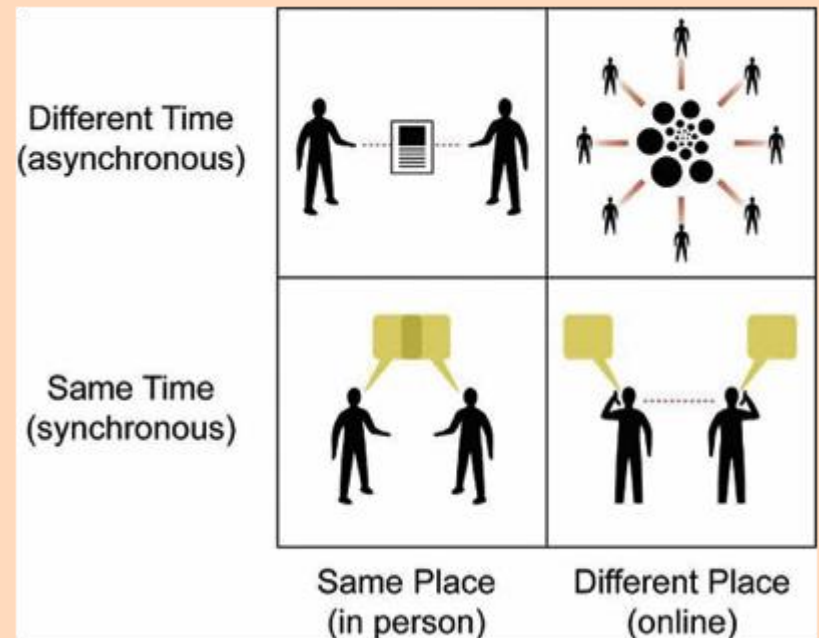
Computer-Mediated Communication

- *Information richness* refers to the potential information-carrying capacity (efficacy) of a communication medium.

- Communication media can be ranked in terms of information richness.

- **Face-to-face** transmission of information is very high in richness (visual and audio cues).

- A **telephone conversation** is also fairly rich but limited to the audio channel (audio cues only).

Computer-Mediated Communication

- <u>Two important dimensions of information richness</u>:

  - The degree to which information is *synchronous* between senders and receivers.

  - The extent to which both parties can receive **non-verbal cues.**

Different Time (asynchronous)

Same Time (synchronous)

Same Place (in person)

Different Place (online)

Computer-Mediated Communication

- The lack of non-verbal cues may make it difficult to recognize subtle trends toward consensus.

- Although computer mediation can reduce status differences and promote equality, people can still detect some differences in text-based messages.

- A good rule to follow is that less routine communication requires richer communication media.

Example: Email incivility study

Basic Principles of Effective Communication

- There are a number of basic principles of effective face-to-face communication:
  - Take the time
  - Be accepting of the other person
  - Do not confuse the person with the problem
  - Say what you feel
  - Listen actively
  - Give timely and specific feedback

Organizational Approaches to Improving Communication

- Organizational techniques that can improve communication:

  - Provision of Explanations

  - 360-Degree Feedback

  - Employee Surveys and Survey Feedback

  - Suggestion Systems

  - Telephone Hotlines, Intranets, and Webcasts

  - Management Training

Activity

CASE INCIDENT

Email Madness

The email just said "Cancel it." Carol Graves couldn't believe her eyes. Carol was a marketing coordinator for Monkland Pharmaceuticals. One of her duties was to organize a professional development visiting speaker series for her marketing colleagues, mostly featuring prominent university professors or health care professionals. Given how busy people were, it was very hard to get a commitment from speakers and to schedule the talks at times that were suitable for all. Even getting a proper room for the speakers' presentations was difficult, due to competition for meeting space. The "cancel it" email had come from Carol's boss, Anastasia Bulos, when Carol had informed her (by email) that the monthly coordination meeting that Anastasia had just announced conflicted with one of Carol's hard-gotten scheduled speakers.

In response to the "cancel it" message, Carol had composed a heated message that accused Anastasia of undermining her, exhibiting professional disinterest, and ignoring the unit events calendar. Just before Carol was about to hit the send icon, a ping alerted her to another email from Anastasia. The sole message consisted of "☺". The "cancel it" message had been a joke! Shortly thereafter, Anastasia announced a new date for the monthly meeting that did not conflict with the planned speaker.

1. Communication problems can occur in any medium, but what particular problems with email are apparent in this incident?

2. What are some informal "rules" about using email that might avoid the problems illustrated in incidents of this nature?