

Correlation between Communication Model of Wilbur Schramm and Communication Method of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)

SHARIF ADNAN

Researcher, Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur

Abstract

Communication is a perpetual process. This operation is conducted since the beginning of mankind, though the communication styles never remain same in all era and communication scholars developed various communication model based on various types or forms of communication. The present research article will try to find out how the communication style of Prophet [PBUH] is correlated with the communication model of Schramm and the similarities they have. Content analysis and case study method have been used for the analysis. Case studies have been selected from the hadith of Shahih Bukhari, Shahih Muslim, Sahih Al-Tirmizi. From the findings, it is found that what Schramm showed in his model in 1954, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) conducted that communication process and gave emphasis directly or indirectly on those communication elements 1400 years ago. It is also found that, there remains semblance and correlation between the communication method of Prophet (ﷺ) and the communication model of Schramm.

Keywords: communication model, communication method, source - receiver, encoding-decoding, messages

INTRODUCTION:

Wilbur Schramm, an American scholar of mass communication founding and shaping the discipline of communication studies. In 1954, he developed a straightforward communications model in

his book “The Process and Effects of Mass Communications”. According to Schramm's communication model, communication is mainly done by first party and second party and both of them are playing as the sender role or source of messages and the receiver role who will receive the messages. According to him encoding and decoding are the two major factors while communicating. On the other hand, Muhammad (ﷺ), is the Prophet of Islam and proclaimer of the Qur'an. He is the last Messenger of Allah too. As a messenger, Prophet communicated with the people of different areas of the world in order to spread the religion of Allah. Just like the model, most of the time Prophet conducted the same communication style that means two-way communication method to preach the words of Allah. He also gave emphasis on clear messages to ensure swift encoding decoding process. This study will try to delineate the similarities and mutual relationship between the communication style of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and the communication model of Wilbur Schramm.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research includes the discussion on the elements and process of the Schramm's communication model. It will also analysis the conversation style and communication method of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Objectives of this research can be specified as under which spotlights on finding the answers of the following questions:

1. To find out is there any similarities between communication method of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and schramm's communication model.
2. If yes then how.

METHODOLOGY:

Qualitative method has been applied in this research article. Among the various forms of qualitative research approach considering the need, nature and objectives of this research paper; content analysis and case study methods have been used to justify and find out whether there remains any similarities or correlation between the communication style of Prophet (PBUH) and communication model of Schramm. The literatures in the paper cover journals, articles, pamphlets, books. Contents which are collected from secondary sources such as published research articles, books, journals, pamphlets are used to analyze and enrich the discussion of this paper. Three hadith from Shahih Bukhari, Shahih Muslim, Sahih Al-Tirmizi are selected as case studies to verify the attitudes of the participants and understanding the information transmission process during the communication conducted by Prophet(ﷺ). So that it can easily be compared with Schramm's communication model.

COMMUNICATION MODEL OF SCHRAMM

Wilbur Schramm, a well-known communication theorist, developed a straightforward communications model in (1954) where he showed that human communication is actually a two-way process between the first party and the second party and both of them play as a sender and receiver. In that model he also mentioned about three elements – the source, the message and the receiver or destination. According to Schramm's model, when the source sends the message towards the receiver, the receiver must interpret it according to the expected form of the source and give response to the source accordingly. So when the receiver gives feedback message from his point of view, he also sends message towards the first party and becomes source of message too. On the contrary after receiving the feedback message from the receiver, the source becomes receiver as well. Schramm also

emphasized about two most important factors encoding and decoding without which information can never flow between two individuals. Encoding occupies a vital part as it begins the communication steps by transforming the opinion into content. When the information reaches to its destination that means to the receiver who is the second party, his responsibility is to understand what the first party wants to tell. If the second party is unable to decode the information or fails to understand the message according to the sender or the first party's expected form, the message is valueless.

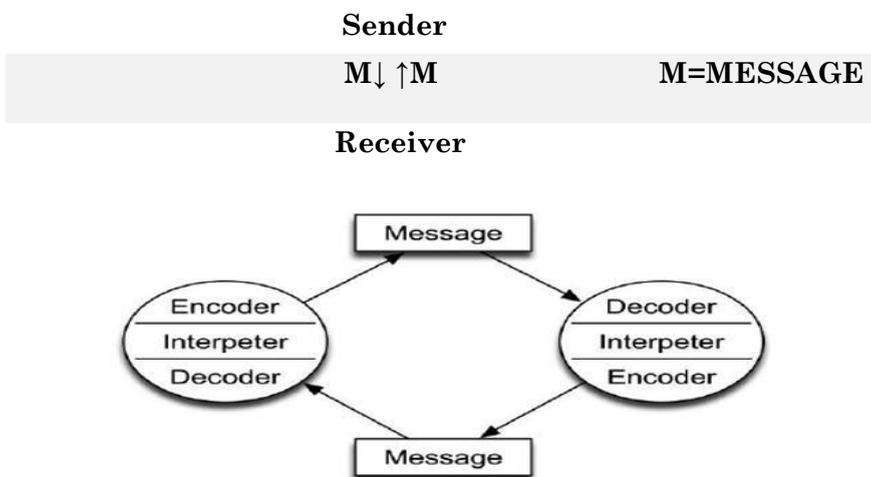


Figure 1: Communication Model of Schramm

Schramm believed that an individual's backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, values, experience and culture are also vital for communication because if two persons are from same belief, culture, experience and values there is a possibility of good communication. On the contrary, people from diverse cultures, religion or background tend to interpret the message in different ways such as using sign, body language, gesture.

Analysis of the Similarities between Communication Arts of Prophet Muhammad and Schramm's Communication Model:

In his model **Schramm** mentioned, communication is a two way between the first party and the second party and both of them play as a sender and receiver. He also talked about three elements – the source, the message and the receiver or destination.

Two-way communication conducted by Prophet (ﷺ)

Now, let us take a look about Prophet (ﷺ) communication style with his companions in case study 1.

Case study 1.

The Prophet Muhammad said to his companion: “If there was a river at your door and he took a bath in it five times a day, would you notice any dirt on him?” They said, “Not a trace of dirt would be left. “The Prophet Muhammad said: "The five prayers are like that. Allah wipes out the sins with them."(Source: Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 505, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 667)

Analysis and findings from the case study 1

Just like the model, while communicating with the people, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) acted as a first party(source) and presented his divine message gradually, starting with what was simple and easy to understand so that receiver can interpret it according to the expected form of the Prophet(ﷺ) and give response to him accordingly. Then he became receiver in course of communicating period after getting feedback message from other side. On the other hand, his companion though started as second party (Receiver) but became sender or source too, after responding and giving feedback message to Prophet.

Sometimes, especially in judging period, The Prophet Muhammad acted as a second party or message receiver. In that case he responded and gave feedback message with the language and style that was easier to comprehend. Let us take a look at the case study 2.

Case study 2:

Prophet (ﷺ) had a conversation with a Bedouin. Bedouin wife had given birth to a black child. As a result, the Bedouin denied that the child was his. The Bedouin said, "My wife gave birth to a black child. I want to reject this child". Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) asked: "Do you have camels?" he replied in affirmative and said yes my prophet. Prophet asked, "What color are those camels?". He replied "Red". The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Are any of them Grey?" He said, "There are Grey ones among them." The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whence do you think this color came to them?" The Bedouin said, "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! It resulted from hereditary disposition." The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "And this (i.e., your child) has inherited his color from his ancestors." (Sahih al-Bukhari 7314).

Analysis and findings from case study 2

In this case we see, Prophet(ﷺ) started communication as a second party (Receiver). After responding and giving feedback message to Bedouin he became sender or source too. On other hand, Bedouin started communication as a first party (source) who sent message to the second party that means Prophet (ﷺ). Then Bedouin became receiver too after getting feedback message from the other side.

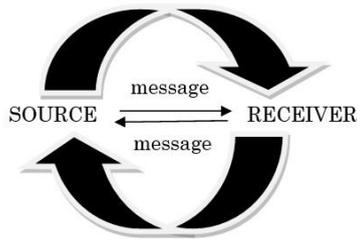


Figure 2: Communication Style of Prophet (ﷺ)

Schramm also emphasized about two most important factors encoding and decoding. In the process of encoding, the sender (i.e. encoder) uses verbal (e.g. words, signs, images, video) and non-verbal (e.g. body language, hand gestures, face expressions) symbols for which he or she believes the receiver (that is, the decoder) will understand. The symbols can be words and numbers, images, face expressions, signals and/or actions. It is very important how a message will be encoded; it partially depends on the purpose of the message, The decoding of a message is how an audience member is able to understand, and interpret the message. It is a process of interpretation. (Wikipedia)

Prophet (ﷺ) gave importance on words too for ease of encoding and decoding process:

Just like Schramm, Prophet (ﷺ), also emphasized on the words of speech for the ease of encoding and decoding process. Let us take a look at case study 3.

Case study 3:

Prophet stated that:

“You will not talk to the people, something that they do not understand, except that it will become an object of slander among them.” (Muslim, Bab al-Nahy ‘an al-hadith bi kul ma sami’, hadith number 9)

Analysis and findings from case study 3

In here we see Prophet (ﷺ), forbid to use those words which have ambiguous meaning or difficult to understand. Reason behind forbidding to use complicated, confused words by Rasulallah (saas) is that, if such types of words are used messages will be hard to decode for receiver. He knew that unless and until the second party is able to understand or decode the information what the sender wants to communicate, the message is actually of no use.

Rasulallah (saas) himself used to talk little and everything was expressed in this brief talk. In his speech, there was no defect of excess or brevity. The words came one after another like pearls. Whoever heard them remembered them. Aisha (ra) stated:

“The speech of Rasulallah (saas) was not quick and continuous as that of yours. He spoke clearly, word by word”.

So, Prophet (ﷺ) encoded his messages in such a way that the receiver could easily decoded it and from above discussions it is clear that, Prophet (ﷺ), emphasized on encoding and decoding process indirectly.

Let's look at **Figure 3**

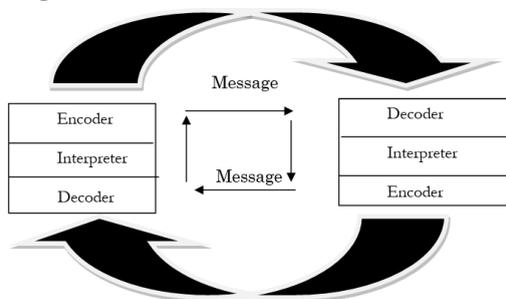


Figure 3: Encoding – Decoding process during Prophet (ﷺ) Conversation

According to Schramm an individual's backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, values, experience and culture are important for communication because if two persons have similar

backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge there is a possibility of good communication. On the other hand, people from different backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, values tend to interpret the message in different ways such as using sign, body language, gesture.

Now let us discuss some speech of Prophet Muhammad:

Ali reported that the Messenger of Allah said: "Talk to people with speech that they can understand. Do you wish that people believe in Allah and His messenger?" [Al-Bukhari]

The Prophet also said, 'Address people according to their understanding and knowledge.' He said, 'I was ordered to address people according to their understanding.

Prophet (ﷺ) gave above speech because he also believed that an individual's backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, values, experience and culture are important for communication. As a Prophet, Muhammad's mission and goal was to spread Islam in the whole world through communicating with people and to do this, he not only used the various means of communication that belonged to his era, he also took into account the psychological peculiarities of the individual and society in order to present the message in the best and most effective way. Therefore, during Islamic invitation, he was careful about the characteristics of the society and people around him. Prophet Muhammad was able to understand the social psychology as well as the individual characteristics, belief of the people who made up the society, and thus used different methods of communication. For example, in above discussed Bedouin incident, we see The Prophet (ﷺ) did not allow him to deny his paternity of the child. The Prophet did not merely say, relying on his authority as prophet: "No, I tell you as the Prophet of Allah that this is your child." Rather, he spoke in a way that the Bedouin could understand, taking care to use an example that is related to the Bedouin's life, and thus, by benefiting from the experiences of the addressee he was able to solve a problem in a convincing manner by having the Bedouin come up with the solution himself.

The face-to face relationship between the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions and followers developed an effective and unique mode of communicating Islamic teachings and behavior through Observational learning. Moreover, Prophet (PBUH) gave direction to them orally as they have same belief, culture, language, values. This style was essential because of the novelty of the religion and its rituals, and because most of the companions and followers were illiterate. That's why he used that communication technique because he believed too that persons who are from same belief, culture, experience and values have a possibility of good communication.

Moreover, in the era of Apostleship, the Prophet Muhammad used to answer the question by using his hand signal, as told in this hadith which recorded by al-Tirmizi:

“The people who take care orphans and myself are like these two (by signaling his thumb and his middle finger to signify closeness)”.

It was narrated that the Prophet [pbuh] never used foul speech, nor did he like to listen to it.” [Al-Bukhari] If a bad word was used in his presence, he would turn his face away to reflect his objection to it.

Hence, communication, symbolically or non-verbally was practiced by the Prophet Muhammad to consolidate his verbal acts because he believed too that people from different backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, values tend to interpret the message in different ways such as using sign, body language, gesture. That's why He acted according to the conditions of the region he was in while eating, drinking or dressing.

Comparison Table

<i>Prophet (PBUH) communication style</i>	<i>Schramm communication model</i>
Two way process	Two way process
Both communicators are playing as the sender role or source of messages and the receiver role who will receive the messages	Both of them are playing as source and receiver part.
Prophet (ﷺ), emphasized on encoding and decoding process indirectly.	Schramm also emphasized about two most important factors encoding and decoding process directly.
Prophet (ﷺ) believed too that people from different backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, values tend to interpret the message in different ways such as using sign, body language, gesture.	According to Schramm, an individual's backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, values, experience and culture are important for communication.

FINDINGS:

Based on the facts, information, analysis and evaluation, the following matters are crystal clear that:

- Just like the Schramm's model, we see while communicating with the people, sometimes Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) acted as a first party(source) and then he became receiver in course of communicating period after getting feedback message from other side. On the other hand, his companion though started as second party (Receiver) but became sender or source too, after responding and giving feedback message to Prophet. Also, Sometimes Prophet(ﷺ) communicated with people as second party or receiver. Thus we see, what Schramm said, communication is a two-way process, first party and second party and both of them play as sender is receiver; was highlighted in the communication approach or method of Prophet (pbuh).

- Schramm also emphasized about two most important factors encoding and decoding. Just like Schramm, Prophet (ﷺ) also emphasized on using simple words in speech for the ease of encoding and decoding process. At case study 3, we see Prophet (ﷺ), forbade to use those words which have ambiguous meaning or difficult to understand because using such types of words may become difficult for receiver to decode the message.
- According to Schramm, an individual's backgrounds, beliefs, knowledge, values, experience and culture are important for communication. Rasulallah (saas) also believed that. That's why he used oral language when he had a conversation with his familiar companions. He also used sign language or gave facial gestures, so that people from different place could also understand what he was trying to say.
- In his model schramm mentioned about three elements – the source, the message and the receiver or destination. According to Schramm's model, when the source sends the message towards the receiver, the receiver must interpret it according to the expected form of the source and give response to the source accordingly. Rasulallah (saas) himself used to talk little and everything was expressed in this brief talk. In his speech, there was no defect of excess or brevity. The words came one after another like pearls. Whoever heard them remembered them. So in his communication method we also find that he acted both sender and receiver and gave clear and concise message so that everyone could understand his messages.

So after discussing the findings, it is certain that, there remains similarities in the communication arts of Prophet and Schramm's communication model.

CONCLUSION:

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had a mission and goal which was to spread Islam in the whole world. That's why he used to communicate with the people of different area. Prophet Muhammad was able to understand the social psychology as well as the individual characteristics, belief of the people where he went for preaching, and thus he had to use different methods of communication. he used oral language when he had a conversation with his familiar companions. He also used sign language sometimes, so that people from different place could also understand what he was trying to say and the receiver could be able to decode his message. Sometimes while communicating he acted as a first party and the sometimes as a second party. Sometime he became sender or sometimes he started communicating as a receiver but he always gave priority to the messages. Prophet [pbuh] never used foul speech, nor did he like to listen to it. He spoke clearly and word by word. All these communication styles, elements and methods have a mutual relationship with what is described in communication model of Wilbur schramm . So no doubt the communication method of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and communication model of Wilbur schramm have certainly similarities and mutuality.

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