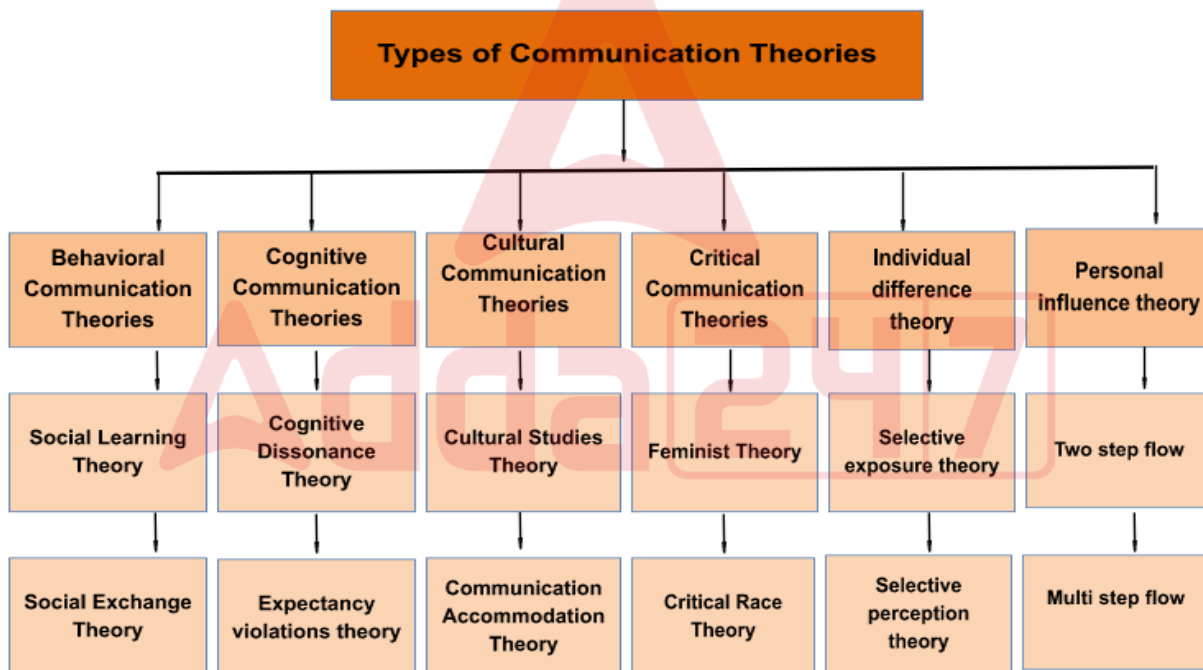


Communication Theories

Communication theories are frameworks or models that attempt to explain and predict how communication works and the factors that influence it. These theories provide a way to understand communication processes and help to explain why people communicate the way they do.

Communication theories can be descriptive, prescriptive, or both. Descriptive theories attempt to explain communication as it actually occurs, while prescriptive theories offer guidelines for effective communication. Some communication theories also seek to address the ethical implications of communication, particularly in situations where power dynamics are at play.

There are many different communication theories, and each theory has its own unique perspective and approach to understanding communication. Some of the most prominent communication theories, organized by category are as follows:



Behavioral Communication Theories

Behavioral Communication Theory is a communication theory that focuses on the observable behaviours that occur during communication. This theory emphasizes that communication is not just about what is said, but also about the behaviors that accompany the message.

According to this theory, **communication is most effective when the behaviours used by the sender are clear, direct, and consistent with the message being conveyed.** Conversely, ineffective communication can result from behaviours that are ambiguous, contradictory, or not aligned with the intended message.

The two most prominent behavioural communication theories are:

Types of behavioural theories	
Social Learning Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social learning theory proposes that people learn behaviour by observing others and modelling their behaviour. • This theory suggests that people learn how to communicate by observing others, such as parents, peers, and media figures. • Social learning theory also suggests that people are more likely to imitate behaviours that are rewarded and less likely to imitate behaviours that are punished.
Social Exchange Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social exchange theory suggests that people make decisions about communication based on the perceived costs and benefits of different behaviours. • This theory assumes that people are rational and will choose the behaviour that they believe will provide the most benefit while incurring the least cost.

Cognitive Communication Theories

Cognitive Communication Theory is a communication theory that emphasizes the role of mental processes in communication. This theory posits that communication is a cognitive activity that involves the interpretation and processing of information.

According to this theory, communication involves three mental processes:

- Attention
- Comprehension
- Memory

Attention refers to the ability to focus on and attend to the communication message. Comprehension involves understanding the meaning of the message and making sense of it. Memory refers to the ability to store and recall information from the message.

The two most prominent cognitive communication theories are:

Types of Cognitive-Communication Theories	
Cognitive Dissonance Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that people experience discomfort when their beliefs and behaviours are inconsistent with each other. • This discomfort motivates people to change either their beliefs or their behaviours in order to reduce the inconsistency. • It suggests that people may change their attitudes or behaviours based on the messages they receive from others.
Expectancy violations theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectancy violations theory suggests that people have expectations about how others will behave in certain situations. • When these expectations are violated, people experience a state of uncertainty and may feel either positively or negatively about the violation. • This theory proposes that people's reactions to communication are influenced by their expectations about the behaviour of the person they are communicating with.

Cultural Communication Theories

Cultural Communication Theory is a communication theory that emphasizes the role of culture in communication. This theory posits that communication is influenced by cultural norms, values, beliefs, and practices, and that culture plays a significant role in shaping communication patterns and styles.

According to this theory, **culture shapes the way individuals encode and decode messages, as well as the ways in which they interpret and respond to communication cues.** Different cultural groups may have different communication styles, which can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts between individuals from different cultures.

The two most prominent cultural communication theories are:

Types of Cultural Communication Theories	
Cultural Studies Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural studies theory suggests that culture is a site of struggle and conflict, and that communication plays a central role in this struggle.• This theory proposes that communication is not neutral, but is shaped by power relations and the interests of different groups.• Cultural studies theory suggests that communication is not just a tool for conveying information, but is also a site where power is exercised and contested.
Communication Accommodation Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication accommodation theory suggests that people adjust their communication style to match the communication style of the person they are interacting with.• This theory proposes that people use communication to signal their group identity and to create social bonds.• This theory suggests that people's communication style is influenced by their cultural background and by the cultural background of the person they are communicating with.

Critical Communication Theories

Critical Communication Theories are a group of communication theories that challenge dominant power structures and social inequalities. These theories aim to expose and critique the ways in which communication is used to maintain and reinforce social, economic, and political power.

One key aspect of Critical Communication Theories is their focus on the relationship between power and communication. These theories emphasize that communication is not neutral, but is shaped by power dynamics and social hierarchies.

The two most prominent critical communication theories are:

Types of Critical Communication Theories	
Feminist Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feminist theory suggests that communication is a site of gendered power relations and that women are often marginalized and excluded from dominant modes of communication. • This theory proposes that communication can be used to challenge gender inequality and create a more equitable society.
Critical Race Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical race theory suggests that communication is a site of racial power relations and that people of colour are often marginalized and excluded from dominant modes of communication. • This theory proposes that communication can be used to challenge racial inequality and to create a more equitable society.

Individual difference theory

According to this theory, different personality variables result in different reactions to the same stimuli. In other words, an individual's psychological mechanism accounts for his reactions to media messages. In other words, the reaction to media content differs according to the motivation of audience members, their predisposition to accept or reject a given message, their intelligence, beliefs, opinions, values, needs, moods, prejudices, perceptibility, etc.

Concepts in Individual difference theory	
Selective exposure	It occurs when people used to expose themselves selectively only to communications which are in general accordance with their established convictions and prevent communications which seem to challenge their beliefs.
Selective perception	It implies the tendencies of media audience members to misperceive and misinterpret persuasive messages according to their own predispositions.

Personal influence theory

The findings revealed that no voters normally are directly influenced by mass media. It turned out that interpersonal relationships had more influence than mass media.

Concepts in Individual difference theory	
Two-step Flow	This theory provides that the flow of information and influence from the mass media to their audiences includes two steps: from the media to certain individuals (i.e., the opinion leaders) and from them to the public.
Multi-step flow	This theory states that opinion leaders interfere between the "media's direct message and the audience's reaction to that message." Opinion leaders used to have a great influence on those they are most similar to—based on personality, interests, demographics, or socioeconomic aspects.

Conclusion

Overall, communication theories are important tools for understanding and improving communication. They provide a framework for analyzing communication situations, identifying communication barriers, and developing effective communication strategies. By studying communication theories, researchers and practitioners can gain a deeper understanding of the complex nature of communication and work towards creating more effective and equitable communication practices.