COMMUNICATION RESEARCH TRENDS

Interpersonal Communication

The story is told of a novice interpreter who once translated the English Biblical phrase 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak' into Russian as 'The vodka is excellent, but the meat is bad'!

Translation is not simply a problem for professional interpreters. All of us have to translate what other people are saying into words we can understand. More often than not we translate badly and the intended message is misunderstood. Even when talking with our closest friends and immediate family we can find ourselves struggling to reach a common understanding. How often is our speech littered with phrases expressing uncertainty and requesting enlightenment: 'Could you say that again, please?; 'I'm not sure what you mean'; or even the despairing 'I wish I knew what you were talking about'!

Over the past two or three decades communication researchers have sought to understand and elucidate the complex set of actions and words which go to make up communication between two people. How do people express their appreciation, show disagreement, reach common understandings, persuade, argue, cajole or deny? How are conversations begun, organized and ended? How does body language affect interpersonal communication? What makes communication successful, and why does it fail?

The research covered in this issue of *TRENDS* focuses on the interactions between two people (dyadic communication). The review reports on studies of communicative interactions, communicators, communication in relationships, communicative situations and mediated interpersonal communication.

REVIEW ARTICLE

I: Interpersonal Communication: History and Themes

Mark L. Knapp and Gerald R. Miller (eds.) *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication*. Beverly Hills, CA: London: Sage, 1985.

Most of our everyday communication relies upon an implicit social consensus that we are being relatively honest and truthful with each other. So long as that consensus is assumed we tend not to pay too much attention to the way we communicate; when that consensus is questioned, however, communication becomes problematic.

Many young Americans, like many young people elsewhere, in the mid-1960s began to question their society's implicit communication consensus. They began to feel that the public communication of political leaders, advertisers and the adult 'establishment' in general was untrustworthy, deceitful and hypocritical. One response to this public failure in communication was a 'counter-culture' that, among other things, claimed to offer young people an environment that allowed more intimate, open, and honest public and private communication.

The Origins of Interpersonal Communication Research

As communication became a 'problem' so a myriad of courses were set up to show people how 'better' and 'more honest' communication could help them make and keep both friends and lovers, or, on a more pragmatic level, how improved face-to-face communication skills could bring success in work and social life generally. Universities and colleges responded to the trend by setting up and extending programmes in interpersonal communication. Researchers described and analysed communication in social relationships (e.g. marriage and the family) and numerous textbooks suggested how people could adopt different communication strategies to overcome personal problems.

The burgeoning discipline of interpersonal communication began to draw together the thought of scholars from a number of scholarly disciplines. Among the most important influences was that of George Herbert Mead, whose 'symbolic interaction' perspective illuminated how interpersonal interaction helps people to define themselves as individuals and social actors. Also important was the work of anthropologist Gregory Bateson, who investigated how impaired patterns of communication contributed to mental health problems, notably schizophrenia. Ray Birdwhistell and Edward

Hall, also anthropologists, drew attention to the ways people communicate with gestures and other bodily movements. Erving Goffmann, a sociologist, argued that interpersonal interactions were 'dramatic' encounters in which individuals acted out roles according to various social 'scripts'.

By the late 1970s basic theories, such as the 'coordinated management of meaning' theory of Pearce and Cronen, had begun to emerge from the field of interpersonal communication itself. Pearce and Cronen's theory provided a model for the analysis of the rules which, shared by both speaker and hearer, govern the conduct of interpersonal interactions and make it possible to understand and exchange meaningful messages.

The Influence of Social Pyschology
In spite of the work of pioneers like Mead and Bateson, the dominant influence in the practice of early interpersonal communication research was social psychology. Like social pyschologists, communication researchers looked for the 'laws' governing behaviour and devised experiments to try and determine the causes and predict the outcomes of communication interaction. Laboratory studies, in which the researcher could isolate and control the behavioural variables under study, and the self-report questionnaire and/or scale, which was easy to administer to large numbers and a suitable basis for broad-based generalizations, were the most popular research methods.

Growing dissatisfaction with the inadequacies of this traditional approach emerged by the 1970s. Questionnaires tended to reveal what people thought they were doing and saying rather than what they actually said and did. Moreover these studies largely failed to take into account gestures and other bodily movements in interpersonal interactions. Laboratory studies were unable to find any significant 'laws' of communicative behaviour, and their results offered little insight into communication in everyday settings.

Interpersonal Communication in Everyday Settings
A scrutiny of the fifteen articles in the *Handbook* reveals that in the mid-1980s the influence of social psychology remains as strong as ever. In their introduction, however, Knapp and Miller point out that present-day studies recognize the need to anchor their findings in the close observation of overt behaviour in natural rather than artificial contexts.

Of course even the most careful and minutely exact observation of overt communication behaviour is insufficient to explain the meaning of any communication sequence. How people interact is bound up with their attitudes, expectations, intentions and the host of taken-for-granted mental 'scripts' and 'schemas' that they draw upon to guide their actions. Until these cognitive factors are taken into account, an observational study can only remain at the level of purely surface description and the significance of particular

communicative acts cannot be explicated. For this reason studies of social cognition, or how people think about other people, have become a major new area of interest.

Communication as a Temporal Process
The new emphasis on observation in natural situations has also made researchers more aware of the difficulties of analysing how communication changes over time. How can research best study, for example, the change from relatively formal to more intimate communication that takes place as two people get to know each other better?

Earlier research tended to pick out and analyse a number of discrete moments in communication encounters, while questionnaire-based studies drew conclusions from data collected before and after interactions. Both techniques were unable to give a sense of interpersonal communication as a complex and ever-changing process. Today researchers can use videotape and audiotape recorders to capture complete sequences of events in interpersonal encounters. With the help of sophisticated data processing and statistical tools, researchers are better able to analyse and interpret each participant's words and actions at specific moments in an encounter in the light of the sequence as a whole.

Individual Differences
Both observational studies and studies of communicators' thought processes have confirmed the importance of individual differences, such as personality traits, sex, age, or socio-economic status, as major influences on the course of human interactions. No two people, not even identical twins, communicate in precisely the same way. The biggest problem for the researcher is to identify which individual differences are most significant for any particular communication interaction.

Control, Persuasion and Competence
As interpersonal communication research has developed, the early concentration on studying communication in terms of improving relationships has been broadened. Earlier interpersonal research had relatively little to say about how people employ communication strategies to influence, manage, or persuade other people. As research has become more concerned with all aspects of naturally occuring communication behaviour, however, the place of control in communication has become increasingly salient.

There is also a growing interest in personal persuasion. The notion of communicative competence, for example, presupposes that communicators need to possess a repertoire of persuasive skills in order to be effective in social life. Knapp and Miller warn, however, that research should not fall into the trap of assuming that communicators are necessarily highly aware of the control and persuasive strategies they may employ.

II: Communicative Interactions: The Arts of Conversation

Marga Kreckel. *Communicative Acts and Shared Knowledge in Natural Discourse.* London: Academic Press, 1981.
Fernando Poyatos. *New Perspectives in Nonverbal Communication.* Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1983.

People engage every day in a host of conversations with others. Rarely, if ever, do they consciously advert to the nature or structure of the activity which they are undertaking. Conversation is one of the basic and taken-for-granted processes that undergird the complex routines of daily social interaction.

The Complexities of Conversation
If people did examine this task which they perform so naturally they would soon realise that conversation is a highly structured and intricate set of moves and counter-moves. Linguists and others who

have attempted to unravel the mysteries of conversation have devoted many hours in the search to tease out the implicit rules and conventions which enable conversationalists to coordinate their actions so that meaningful exchange can occur. The way in which conversational partners coordinate their speaking 'turns', for example, is one popular area of research.

The difficulty of discovering, describing and explicating these implicit rules is obvious once we realise that such rules and conventions are influenced by the individual, group, social and cultural presuppositions and expectations of the participants.

Conversations are influenced too by the situations in which conversations occur and the nonverbal as well as verbal dimensions of the encounter.

In the space of a short review it is impossible to give proper attention to the many strands of discourse and conversational analysis; so this discussion will concentrate on just two main points. First, the research by Marga Kreckel which makes clear just how dependent the transmission of messages in conversation is upon a ─' ared body of knowledge held by the participants; and second, the ─nalytical frame developed by Fernando Poyatos which highlights the interrelationship between nonverbal and verbal elements in conversation.

Shared Knowledge and Subjective Meanings
Kreckel asks the deceptively simple question, 'How do communicants transmit messages in natural discourse?'. In trying to answer that question Kreckel tries to identify the units of speech which might correspond to distinct messages, the nature of the messages themselves, and the degree to which a shared body of knowledge and a specific sign system or set of linguistic and nonverbal 'subcodes' are necessary for messages to be understood properly.

Much previous research on these topics has, according to Kreckel, been vitiated by inadequate methodologies. Conversations between strangers in laboratory settings and the reliance on 'objective' observers to code and interpret other people's conversations are of limited use. These methods do not help us to understand conversation in its natural setting or to understand what meanings the messages exchanged have for the the participants in the conversation.

Family Members Interpret Their Own Conversations
Kreckel tries to overcome the methodological problem by using as empirical data a videotape of a documentary cinema-verite film on a British family. The film recorded the everyday activities of the family in their own home over a number of weeks. The researcher was able, therefore, to study naturally occuring conversations in natural settings between members of a close-knit group and to obtain om family members interpretations of their own recorded conversations.

Kreckel analysed conversations which discussed family relationships as these interactions depended upon a large body of shared knowledge. It was hypothesised that this shared knowledge would enable family members to agree more closely in their interpretations of events than outside observers not privy to the specific communication 'sub-codes' used by family members.

As hypothesised, family members understood significantly better the messages conveyed by the speakers from the family than did outside observers. Furthermore the outside observers were shown to have major difficulties in understanding properly the messages conveyed by family members to non-family members. Hence it was shown that even though both observers and family members shared a 'common' cultural framework and a large body of 'common' social knowledge, this was highly inadequate when compared with the influence of the shared family knowledge. This research highlights the degree to which conversation depends upon shared implicit knowledge in group communication systems which non-group members do not share and of which they are not even conscious.

The Triple Structure of Communication
Kreckel's study, like most conversational analysis, concentrates on the verbal messages exchanged in conversation and so ignores the nonverbal dimension. It is the concern of Fernando Poyatos to urge researchers to remedy this one-sided approach. Poyatos has developed the idea of the 'basic triple structure' of communication.

According to him each interaction or communicative act can be analysed in terms of language, paralanguage (intonation, pitch, volume, accent, etc.) and kinesics ('body language', gestures, movement). The message in a communication exchange is conveyed in all three dimensions simultaneously. The same words of praise or disagreement expressed with different intonations and accompanied by different facial and body movements can have quite different meanings. Poyatos also makes a point of drawing attention to the crucial role of silence ('pauses') and body stillness in conversation.

The Structure of Conversation
Having developed the idea of the basic triple structure, Poyatos goes on to try and identify the basic structure of conversations with the aim of enabling the researcher to analyse conversations in various settings and cultures.

Poyatos' basic structure consists of six elements: (1) the essential rules to be displayed by the speaker; (2) essential rules to be displayed by the listener; (3) the activities displayed by the speaker within a conversational 'turn'; (4) those actions which are displayed by the listener or listeners toward the speaker or among the listeners; (5) the behaviour of both speakers and listeners that occurs simultaneously and even in an identical form; and (6) the different forms and functions of paralinguistic (acoustic, e.g. throat clearing) and kinesic (visual, e.g. pursed lips) pauses produced by the participants. In addition one has to understand the significance of the movements of the participants as they define and redefine the boundaries of the physical space in which they interact.

Poyatos' work indicates that the multi-leveled description of conversations has only just begun. Taken in conjunction with Kreckel's research, his approach suggests that we are still a long way from penetrating to the core of the messages, both verbal and nonverbal, which are exchanged in everyday encounters. One might note, for example, that while conversationalists may be able to say when one verbal message ends and another begins, it is quite likely that they are less sure of nonverbal cues.

III: Communicators: Characteristics and Behaviour

How do the differences between individuals affect their actions as communicators? How do the beliefs and attitudes held by listeners affect their responses to speakers with different speech habits or physical characteristics?

Effects of Differences on Behaviour
These two questions have dominated research on individuals in their ple as *communicators*. As the review by Giles and Street notes, individuals have generally been regarded as bundles of psychological or other characteristics which are presumed to have effects on communicative behaviour. This tendency fits easily into the dominant model of communication in which communication is regarded as a process of message exchange. The communicator transmits a package of information to a receiver who decodes the message and sends another message in return. The emphasis is on the transmitter of the message and on the message itself, not on the process of communication.

Research on communicator differences has tried to test the effects of psychological traits (e.g. extraversion and introversion, reticence, dominance and submissiveness, anxiety, and self-monitoring) or

socio-demographic variables (e.g. sex, age, socio-economic status, race, culture and physical handicap) on behaviour. Other studies have investigated the effects on listeners of such speaker attributes as dialect, accent, speech rate, talk duration, vocal pitch, facial and other body movements.

Giles and Street argue that this research shows a 'noticeable empirical absence of substantive and main effect findings'. The variety of variables which have to be taken into account in analysing any interpersonal interaction (e.g. sex of communicator/receiver, race, culture, topic of conversation, stage of relationship, nature of setting, interactive goals) make it difficult, if not impossible, to isolate the effects of particular traits or attributes.

A New Model of Communicator Behaviour

In an attempt to improve on this approach Giles and Street develop a model of communicator behaviour which draws upon two major sources. The first is M. L. Patterson's model of nonverbal exchange, and the second, work in social pyschology derived from Goffman's theories of how people manage the 'impression' of themselves they wish others to have. Their model tries to remain faithful to the experience of an interpersonal encounter as a sequence of events in which the communicators are constantly adapting their actions.

The importance of this model lies its attempt to relate 'objective' personality traits and membership of specific social categories (age, sex, social status, etc.), to subjective cognitive characteristics, such as the communicator's past experiences and repertoire of behaviour (smiling, laughing, showing interest, etc.). The model also recognizes that communicators are constantly engaged in monitoring their own and the other person's behaviour, evaluati the course of the encounter and making decisions about their next moves.

Using such a model the researcher is forced to recognize that the precise significance of any objective or subjective communicator trait depends upon the exact stage reached in the particular interaction or set of interactions being studied. The significance of this new theoretical frame is that it begins to encompass something of the complex interaction between characteristics, cognition, and behaviour that is expressed in the act of communicating. In this model communicators can be seen as active agents rather than as merely passive possessors of a set of predetermined attributes.

IV: Relationships and Communication

All communication is affected by personal feelings, attitudes and expectations, which differ according to the kind of relationship people have with one another. The quality and significance of communication in an informal and brief relationship, for example, between interviewer and interviewee, differs markedly from that between husband and wife in a long-standing and intimate relationship.

In trying to understand how communication functions in relationships researchers have searched for underlying behavioural rules and regularities. They have classified relationships, and explored how and why people become intimately involved with others, how that personal involvement develops, and how it ends.

Much existing research concentrates on examining the attitudes and expectations of the individuals in the relationship. For Steve Duck and Daniel Perlman relationship research can only benefit from an increased attention to communication. By focusing on communication researchers have to treat people in relationships as active managers of a dynamic and ever-changing process rather than as relatively unchanging bundles of psychological characteristics.

Communication in Marriage

One relationship in which communication has received more research attention than most is marriage. A basic assumption has been that many relationship problems, e.g. emotional dissatisfaction, family quarrels, etc., are essentially communication problems, and that the task of research is to suggest changes in the patterns of communication which could benefit the marriage.

In Chapter 5 of Duck and Perlman, Kathryn Dindia and Mary Anne Fitzpatrick discuss three major research approaches to marital interaction and examine the role of communication in each. The first is the marital satisfaction approach, the second the marital interaction approach and the third is the typological approach.

The marital satisfaction approach tries to determine the overall level of contentment in a marriage as expressed in the partners' perceptions, behaviour and communication interactions. The results of marital satisfaction research have shown a high correlation between subjective feelings of satisfaction and 'good' communication; but whether 'good' communication is a cause or result of satisfaction is hard to determine.

Communication and Marital Interaction

Marital interaction research is based upon the relational communication theories derived from the work of Bateson and his colleagues in the Palo Alto group. It assumes that people struggle to define the nature of their relationship and that this struggle is expressed in their communication. Relational communication distinguishes between two levels associated with messages: the 'control' level which defines the nature of the message and expresses the attitude of the speaker, and the 'content' level, what is actually said.

Couples are categorized by marital interaction theory according to their predominant message exchange pattern. Partners in a *complementary* relationship maximize their differences because the messages exchanged are dissimilar; *symmetrical* couples minimize differences by exchanging similar types of messages; and *parallel* couples have a more balanced pattern which includes both complementary and symmetrical messages.

Marital interaction research has had some success when therapists have used its insights to help people understand their struggles for control and take steps to change their communication patterns so as to minimize conflict.

Traditional, Independent and Separate Couples

Finally, the typological approach tries to categorize marriages into types and classifies couples according to their beliefs about how they behave and ought to behave. This approach thus takes into account the subjective perceptions of the couples. The three major types are traditional, independent, and separates.

Traditional couples reported that they were more conservative about husband and wife roles, more willing to give and accept self-disclosure, and more happy and adjusted in their marriage. These couples were willing to face up to conflict over serious matters and had a communication style that favoured the negotiation of problems. Independent couples reported themselves as liberal with regard to male/female role behaviour and not happy and adjusted in their marriage, though capable of having fun with one another. Their communication patterns evidenced a struggle for control, though they tended to avoid conflict on the verbal level.

Separates reported themselves as very conservative in regard to role behaviour, engaging in very little self-disclosure, not very happy or adjusted yet displaying a high degree of consensus on relational issues. Their communication pattern indicated a strong desire to avoid conflicts and they also tended to speak to each other less than the other couples.

In addition to these 'ideal' types there are also 'mixed' couples. Of these the mixture of a 'traditional' with a 'separate' displayed the most unusual features. The spouses were capable of speaking about themselves yet did not presume to understand the thoughts and feelings of the other. Other mixed types displayed an interaction style similar to traditionals but struggled for control in conversations in a similar style to the 'independents'.

Understanding Relationships From The Inside
In their analysis of this research Dindia and Fitzpatrick reach a similar conclusion to Kreckel. They urge that research should begin to incorporate the ways in which couples understand their own behaviour and the messages they exchange. It is important also to take account of the ways in which the spouses think about their relationship and the expectations they have of it. Only when the inside view of the relationship is taken fully into account will research be able to approach the different meanings that various messages have for couples. Dindia and Fitzpatrick are convinced, too, that categorizing couples according to their perceptions of the relationship will provide a useful framework within which to study interaction.

V: Communicative Situations: Places and Information Systems

Joshua Meyrowitz. *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior.* New York: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Interpersonal communication takes place not only in a relational context but also in a more general social context. The social situations in which people find themselves affect their behaviour as communicators.

Meyrowitz suggests that it is 'disconnectedness', the separation of social situations and the interactions which take place within them, that is of major importance in shaping social reality. He argues that a social situation is a pattern of access to information about particular kinds of social behaviour. The process of socialization consists in learning a culture's conventional definitions of social situations so that one can display the appropriate behaviour in any number of distinct settings. Thus the information needed to act or communicate appropriately at home is quite different from that needed in the workplace. Problems can arise when people commingle previously separate sets of behaviours, for example, when a hitherto happy relationship is disrupted when one or other partner redefines the domestic setting by doing work at home.

Television as a Social Stage
According to Meyrowitz the most significant social effect of television is its blurring of the boundaries between previously distinct sets of behaviours. Every day millions of people sit in front of television screens and watch the activities of other people, either real, as in the news or documentaries, or fictional, as in dramas and soap operas. The interaction among these media 'actors' is scrutinized and commented upon by children and adults, men and women, the well off and the poor, in a vast variety of cultures.

Television brings together in one setting what Erving Goffman terms 'backstage' and 'onstage' behaviour. Public performances 'onstage' are subtly changed when the actors know that the audience is aware of 'backstage', behind-the-scenes behaviour. The television audience has a privileged access to social information that was formerly restricted. Children who watch television are introduced in the adult world in a way that is largely outside the control of their parents. Parents who want their children to respect and obey them without question are challenged when those same children can see on television adults acting in foolish and childish ways. Politicians and others in authority find it more difficult to project a 'heroic' image of leadership when the voters can see them in their shirtsleeves (behind-the-scenes documentaries) or aggressively questioned by disrespectful reporters.

Television and Communication Styles
In addition to providing information about social behaviour, television influences the styles and language of interpersonal communication by rearranging the social 'stages' upon which people act out their social 'roles'. This rearrangement influences interpersonal communication by changing notions of what is 'appropriate' behaviour in different face-to-face encounters.

Conversations which take place on television 'chat shows', for example, are neither wholly public nor wholly private encounters. Such conversations are conducted in a language that, in Kreckel's terminology, draws upon a stock of common cultural knowledge but lacks a private shared dimension. Chat show conversations are public performances which yet allow the audience to feel that they are part of an intimate encounter. In a wider setting television's opening up of male and female worlds has influenced male/female communication by legitimating discussion of formerly taboo topics and redefining the boundaries of what is a socially acceptable vocabulary.

VI: Interpersonal Communication via Media

Robert Cathcart and Gary Gumpert. 'Mediated Interpersonal Communication: Toward A New Typology'. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol.69, No.3 (August) 1983, pp.267-277.

Cathcart and Gumpert extend the insights developed by Meyrowitz by drawing attention to the pervasiveness of communication media at all levels of human communication. In particular, they argue that there is a need for a new typology of interpersonal communication which would incorporate the reality of mediated interpersonal communication.

Mediated interpersonal communication can be divided into four main categories: (1.) interpersonal mediated communication, e.g. letter-writing, telephone conversations, computer conferencing;

(2.) media-simulated interpersonal communication, e.g. para-social interaction, radio phone-ins, etc.; (3.) person-computer interpersonal communication; and (4.) uni-communication, e.g. car bumper stickers, T-shirts carrying slogans, etc.

Interpersonal Mediated Communication
Interpersonal encounters carried on via a technology are inevitably shaped by that technology. Personal letters, for example, use a secondary and rather formal coding system (writing), are subject

to a time delay, and lack immediate feedback. Moreover, letters can be kept and reread, perhaps years after they were first written. This gives them a context-free and permanent quality. Thus a letter may be eminently suitable for expressing one's carefully thought out opinion on a certain subject and less suitable for articulating elusive and intimate feelings.

The telephone, letters, and now computer conferencing and electronic mail systems have altered the ways we conduct face-to-face relationships. A first face-to-face meeting with a person known to us through any one of these media will be able to draw upon an already established body of shared discourse and common interests. Conversations on the telephone enable two people situated miles apart to have a degree of intimacy with each other that they may not have with people occupying the same physical space. Computer conferencing by allowing the possibility of immediate feedback brings more of the face-to-face experience into written communication.

Media-simulated Interpersonal Communication
Mass media 'personalities' are, for many people, their best friends and closest confidants. While watching television or listening to their favourite radio programme people can feel themselves in communication with another human being. This para-social interaction may function as a substitute for normal interpersonal relationships, and indeed people may find face-to-face encounters less than adequate when compared with the 'ideal' relationship with a media performer.

Closely related to para-social interaction is the interaction between a radio talk show host and the listeners who phone in to express their opinions. These conversations, like the television talk show inter-views, are both private revelation and public performances. However spontaneous and informal they may seem, these conversations are orchestrated and regulated to serve the needs of entertainment.

Person-Computer Interpersonal Communication
The person-computer dialogue includes situations in which people interact with the machine as if it were human. Perhaps the famous example of this kind of interaction is the experience of people with the ELIZA programme devised by Joseph Weizenbaum. The ELIZA programme was so successful in simulating the responses of a human psychotherapist in an exchange that users of the system began to respond to the computer as if it were a human being.

Uni-communication
Clothes and other personal accessories such as jewellery have always been used to send messages about the wearer's status and social role. Cathcart and Gumpert, however, think that the modern use of T-shirts, lapel badges and other items of clothing to display specific printed messages marks a significantly new use of clothing. What they term uni-communication is a form of 'broadcasting' mass media messages. These messages do not normally originate with the person who displays them; they are mass produced and distributed by groups campaigning for specific causes. The message, therefore, is a statement of a social position or role rather than a purely individual statement. Another aspect of uni-communication is that responses to the displayed messages are rarely overt, the communication interaction with others being generally carried on silently over a distance.

Exploring Interpersonal Communication in a Media World

A successful communication encounter is one in which the participants are able to share meaning and values; it is the result of collaboration in the building of a common universe of discourse. The particular universe of discourse established in any one encounter, however, also depends upon a wider range of common assumptions and understandings, shared points of reference which enable the communication partners to feel that they are inhabiting a mutually intelligible world.

The Importance of Context
The research discussed in this issue of *TRENDS* is conscious of the importance of elucidating how different contexts affect communication interactions and of how communicators set about sharing meaning and values. As yet, however, research on interpersonal communication has failed to devote enough attention to the broader cultural and social context which frames and sets the conditions for interpersonal encounters. Of course, research into the rules and conventions which guide interpersonal communication cannot escape dealing with the general socio-cultural climate, but the focus of attention tends to be the idiosyncratic and unique personal rules established by the communicators under study. Meyrowitz draws attention to the insufficiency of research in this regard when he points to the mass media as a context for interpersonal communication.

Meyrowitz's claims that the media provide a significantly new 'pattern of access to social information' and Cathcart and Gumpert's suggested typology of mediated interpersonal communication provoke some interesting questions. These questions may be grouped under three main headings.

Mass Media Use and Interpersonal Communication
The first heading groups questions about the relationship between mass media use and interpersonal communication in everyday life.

In many homes certain television or radio programmes are privileged times when face-to-face verbal communication is severely curtailed. How do people regard these periods in the light of their normal patterns of interpersonal communication? How far do people consciously use the media to avoid, curtail or redirect face-to-face communication?

The Media and Access to Social Information
The second heading groups questions about the precise ways in which individuals' access to social information through the media influences their face-to-face encounters. To what extent do the media provide topics of conversation or suggest patterns of social interaction? How does television use by an individual affect his or her interpersonal communication strategies? Is it possible to relate research on individual differences in interpersonal communication to various habits in using the media? Can one determine how far changes in general social rules governing interpersonal interactions might have been affected by the emergence and diffusion of different media?

The Influence of Mediated Communication
Finally, the third heading groups questions about the distinct ways in which mediated interpersonal communication systems affect people's behaviour. We still know very little, for example, about interpersonal communication that is mediated by the telephone or the letter. How have such mediated encounters been affected by the rise of other media and more general socio-cultural changes? How far will the rules and conventions of computer-mediated communication differ from those governing telephone use, letter-writing and face-to-face encounters? How do communicators decide which form of interpersonal communication to use in particular situations?

Extending the Range of Interpersonal Research

These topics and questions suggest how interpersonal communication research might illuminate some of the social and cultural changes that have occurred over the past two or three decades. Serious attention to such issues will, however, challenge researchers to broaden the bases of their studies. It makes little sense, for example, to try to study the influence of media on the social rules governing interpersonal interaction unless one makes some effort to compare such changes across a range of ethnic and social groups.

If research does begin to take these questions seriously, both interpersonal and mass media studies can only benefit. The coming together of these two strands of scholarship will be a significant step forward in illuminating the processes of personal communication in a mass-mediated culture.

Jim McDonnell
Issue Editor

Current Research on Interpersonal Communication

AUSTRALIA

Univ of Queensland, Dept of Psychology (St Lucia, Qld 4067) **Cynthia Gallois** and **Victor J. Callan** are investigating the impact of social rules about speech style and nonverbal behaviour across gender and ethnic groups. **Patricia Noller** studies marital and parent-adolescent communication and gave with **H Hiscock** 'Fitzpatrick's marital typology – an Australian replication' at the International Conference on Personal Relationships at Tel Aviv in July 1986.

CANADA

Univ of Victoria, Dept of Psychology (Victoria, B.C. V8Z 5N8) **Janet Beavin Bavelas** and her research team of **Alex Black, Nicole Chovill,** and **Jennifer Mullett** are studying mimetic synchrony (noverbal mirroring) after completing *Equivocal Communication*, about their experiments on disqualification.

INDIA

Biswajit Das (Dept of Sociology, Islamia Univ, Jamia Nagar, New Dehli 110025) is writing a Ph.D. thesis on 'Communication structure and interpersonal communication in an Indian village; a sociocultural analysis'.

Uma Narula (Dept of Comm. Research, Indian Inst. of Mass Comm, D-13, S Extension II, New Dehli 110 049) researches persuasion, relational and mediated communication in the context of development.

NORWAY

Rolv Mikkel Blakar (Dept of Psychology, Univ of Oslo, PO Box 1094 Blindern, Oslo 3). Much of his research on the prerequisites for successful human communication is in *Communication: A Social Perspective on Clinical Issues*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget; NY: Columbia Univ Press, 1984.

UNITED KINGDOM

Howard Giles (Dept of Psychology, Univ of Bristol, 8-10 Berkeley Sq, BS8 1HH) continues empirical research on language attitudes, speech accommodation, and second language learning. He and **Nik Coupland** (Dept of English, Univ of Wales Inst of Science and Technology, CF1 3XA) conduct research into intergenerational communication about health; they co-authored *Psychosociolinguistics*.

John Shotter (Dept of Psychology, Univ of Nottingham, NG7 2RD) is studying speech forms in which people instruct, warrant or justify; and the social, political and developmental conditions for social life.

UNITED STATES

Arthur P. Bochner (Dept of Comm, Univ of S Florida, Tampa, FL 33620) studies how treatment for serious illness affects family relationships.

Judee Burgoon (Dept of Comm, Univ of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721) is testing her models of expectancy violations and intimacy exchange, and studying nonverbal messages.

Univ of California, Communication Studies Program (Santa Barbara, CA 93106) **John M Wiemann** is directing a nine-country survey of beliefs about talk and silence, is working on a multi-study project on intergenerational communication, and has co-authored *Communicative Competence: A Theoretical Analysis* (Arnold, forthcoming) with **J Bradac**. Bradac examines the consequences of 'powerful' and 'powerless' language styles as a function of perceived communicator intention and situational context.

Rebecca J Cline (Dept of Speech, Univ of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611) researches self-disclosure and gender, and the role of interpersonal communication in adapting to bereavement.

Donald P Cushman (Dept of Comm, 211 Business Admin, State Univ of New York, Albany, NY 12222) with **S King** has written 'An Empirical Test of the Friendship Formation Process in America and Korea' and with **L Cahn** 'Successful Conflict Resolution Strategies in Intimate Environments'.

Univ of Iowa, Dept of Communication Studies (Iowa City, IA 52242) **John Waite Bowers** works on the effects of legitimacy and substantive interdependency of communication in and satisfaction with close voluntary relationships. **Steve Duck** explores everyday communication and patterns of relational communication.

Joshua Meyrowitz (Communication Program, Univ of New Hampshire, Durham NH 03824) has been tailoring role theory to fit studies of social change and media effects in his attempt to meld theories of interpersonal and media communications.

Frank E Millar (Dept of Comm, Univ of Wyoming, Laramie, WY 82071) will investigate the control patterns of marital relationships by integrating measures of trust and intimacy with participants' interpretations of themselves and their relationship.

Gerald Miller (Dept of Comm, Michigan State Univ, E Lansing, MI 48824-1212) studies deceptive communication and the use of compliance-gaining message strategies.

Northwestern Univ, Dept of Comm Studies (School of Speech, 1815 Chicago Ave, Evanston, IL 60201) **Charles R. Berger** is studying the role that plans play in social actions, interaction, and behaviour. **Michael E Roloff** is researching how people negotiate resource exchanges and relational contracts in non-intimate and intimate relationships

Robert Norton (Dept of Theatre and Comm Arts, Memphis State Univ, Memphis, TN 38152) researches health and marital communication, and communicator style.

Miles L. Patterson (Dept of Pychology, Univ of Missouri, 8001 Natural Bridge Rd, St Louis, MO 63121) and **J. Edinger** will publish 'A functional analysis of space in social interaction' in A. Siegman and S. Feldstein (eds.) *Nonverbal Behaviour and Communication*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, in press.

W. Barnett Pearce (Dept of Comm Studies, Univ of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003) studies the forms of communication in dispute mediation, therapy and public discourse.

Sally Planalp (Dept of Speech Comm, 702 S Wright, Univ of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801) is studying relational knowledge, conversation, and the links between them.

Edna L Rogers (Dept of Comm, Cleveland State Univ, OH 44115) is studying verbal interaction patterns in the family and organization.

Alan Sillars (Dept of Interpersonal Comm, Univ of Montana, MN 59812) researches communication, conflict and divorce mediation among married couples.

Univ of S California, Comm Arts and Sciences, Univ Park, Los Angeles, CA 90089-1694. **Michael J Cody** is interested in nonverbal persuasion, emotional reactions to advertisements, and face-to-face social influence and accounting tactics in organizational settings. **Margaret L. McLaughlin** studies the ethical constraints on the uses of information in interpersonal relationships.

Richard Street (Dept of Speech Comm, Texas Tech Univ, Box 4209, Lubbock TX 79409) is examining patterns of verbal and nonverbal behaviours in interviews and in health care.

Univ of Texas, Dept of Speech Comm (Austin, TX 78712-1089) **Mark L Knapp** examines how messages affect relationship definition, e.g. future talk, lying and regrettable messages. **John Daly** studies cognitive processes in conversation, and peoples' expectations for interpersonal relationships.

Karen Tracy (School of Communications and Theater, Temple Univ. Phil, PA 19122) studies language strategies for clarity and face-saving when giving criticism.

Univ of Wisconsin, Ctr for Comm Research (821 Univ Ave, Madison, WI 53706) **Joseph N Cappella** researches sampling strategies for vocal and kinesic behaviours, the regulation of interaction by anxious persons, and childrens' adaptation to an adult's voice and movement. **Mary Anne Fitzpatrick** is completing research on the effect of marital schemata on marital interaction.

WEST GERMANY

Klaus R Scherer (Fachbereich Psychologie, Justus-Liebig-Universitaet Giessen, Otto Behaghel-Strasse 10, D-6300 Giessen) studies the vocal communication of emotion in different cultures and languages, and uses digital speech analysis.

Interpersonal Communication: Additional Bibliography

General Theory

Dance, Frank E. X. (ed.) *Human Communication Theory: Comparative Essays.* New York: Harper & Row, 1982. Contains important articles on rules theory (Barnett et al., and Cushman et al.), the constructivist approach (Delia et al.) and speech theory (Dance).

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Communicators

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Verbal Communication

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Mehrabian, Albert. *Silent Messages: Implicit Communication of Emotions and Attitudes.* 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1981.

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