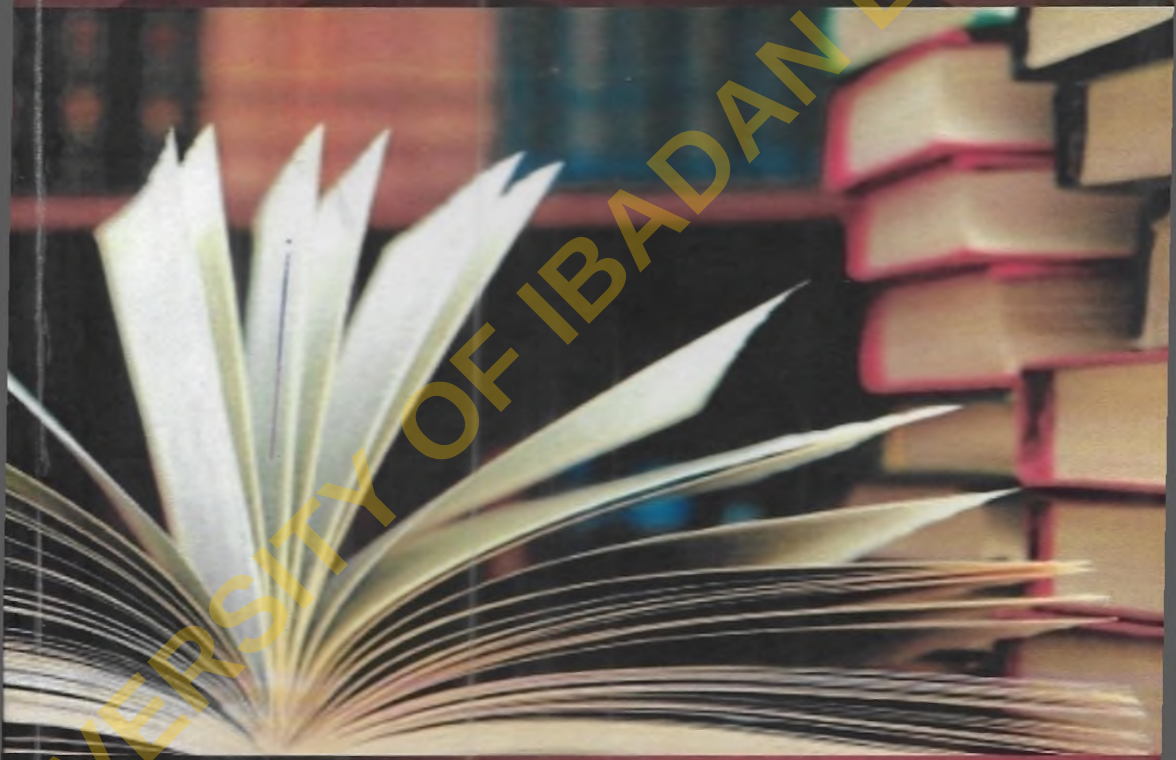
THEORIES AND METHODOLOGIES IN THE HUMANITIES



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Edited By

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OVERVIEW OF THEORY AND RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE ARTS

A. Ojebode, O.A. Oladapo, O.J. Oyedele, L.A. Adegoke and O. Elegbe

Introduction

The breadth of theories and research methods in communication studies is wide, a fact which reflects the breadth and interdisciplinarity of the field itself. Yet, it is important that a student of communication studies has at least a good grasp of these theories and methods and a deep and thorough knowledge of those in his or her specialisation. At the outset, therefore, we want to state that it is impossible to cover all there is about communication theories and research methods in a single textbook, not to talk of a chapter. What we have been able to do is to offer a scant overview of the major theories and methods in the field.

The chapter is divided into four parts: Introduction, Objectives, Content, and Summary.

Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

(1) Identify the major theories in the broad field of communication and language arts studies
(2) Identify the major research designs and methods in communication and language arts studies.
(3) Explain the process of driving your research questions with theories.

Content

Section One: Areas of Specialisation and Theories

The areas of specialisation in the Department of Communication and Language Arts are Advertising and Marketing Communication; Public Relations; Print and Broadcast Journalism (including Media Studies); Indigenous Communication; Interpersonal

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Communication; Receptive and Expressive Communication (speaking/speech communication, writing, listening and reading); Applied Communication (including organisational/business communication); Book Development and Publishing. There are, however, research works, as one might expect, that cross several of these specialisations.

If the areas of specialisations are numerous, theories that frame communication research are even more so. Communication studies parade a wide array of pure communication theories as well as applied theories of sister disciplines. Areas of specialisation that bestride other disciplines apply theories from these other disciplines in addition to, and sometimes even as substitutes for, communication theories. For instance, in communication theories, media economists apply theories from Economics and management; marketing communication researchers apply theories from Psychology; media law scholars borrow theoretical disquisitions from Law; even media effects researchers have borrowed as many theories from Psychology as they have applied pure communication theories. An important piece of advice for postgraduate students in "cross-border" specialisations is always to remember that they are supposed to be conducting a communication research and to ensure therefore that the theories applied lead them to tell a communication story, right from their background to the study to the final conclusions.

Our predominant concern here is with those theories that are known to be purely communication theories. A communication theory is a set of hypothetical statements that seeks to explain, predict, describe and, in some cases, even prescribe how (some of the) different components of communication (should) interact. These components are sender, message, channel, medium, noise, context, receiver, effect and feedback.

Part 1: Interpersonal and Group Communication Theories

Researchers in interpersonal communication, group or behaviour change communication have a pool of communication theories, chief of which are the following:

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(1) ***Blumler's symbolic interactionism:*** This states that people act towards one another or toward things on the basis of the meanings they assign to those people or things; that meaning arises out of the social interaction that people have with one another, and that a person's interpretation of symbols is affected by his or her own thought processes (Griffin 2012).

(2) ***Burgoon's Expectancy Violations Theory:*** Communicators process the values, contexts, type of relationship and characteristics of others in order to predict what they might do, and then place positive or negative value on unexpected behaviour regardless of who does it (Griffin 2012).

(3) ***Buller and Burgoon's Interpersonal Deception Theory:*** Griffin (2012) lists 18 propositions of this theory. In summary, the theory suggests that deception succeeds because of our persistent expectation that people will tell the truth. This is known as *truth bias* which is linked with interactivity and familiarity: "people who know and like each other are particularly resistant to doubting each other's words" (Griffin 2012:102) despite 'leakages'. (Ojebode 2012; Littlejohn and Foss 2011:153).

(4) ***Delia's Constructivism:*** This theory suggests that each person carries templates, called 'constructs' which work like stencils which he or she fits over reality to bring order to his/her perceptions of reality. To make sense of the world, humans operate what looks like a binary or bipolar dimensions which (simplistically) leads to categorising people as good-bad, honest-crooked. This slightly complex theory has a long list of conditions under which the core theoretical assumptions may or may not hold (Griffin 2003).

(5) ***Altman and Taylor's Social Penetration Theory:*** The degree to which individuals are allowed into the personal world of the other is known as 'penetration.' Each person

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is made up of layers. The outermost layer is the peripheral and impersonal layer which is easier to penetrate than private, inner layers. Self-disclosure, a strictly communication venture, is the means by which others are let into our world and is reciprocal. Often, penetration is rapid at the start of a relationship but tends to slow down as time goes on. De-penetration, that is, gradual withdrawal is possible when a relationship goes sour. Path to intimacy is often difficult to accurately describe (Griffin 2003; Littlejohn and Foss 2011).

(6) ***Berger's Uncertainty Reduction Theory:*** Charles Berger and his team suggest that when two individuals first meet, they are uncertain about each other and are concerned about reducing the gulf of uncertainty between them and increasing predictability. Some of the testable propositions of the theory include these—as verbal communication increases, uncertainty between interactants likely reduces; as non-verbal affiliative expressiveness increases, uncertainty likely reduces; high levels of uncertainty causes high information-seeking activities and vice versa; high levels of uncertainty in a relationship causes decrease in intimacy (the antidote to this is self-disclosure); high levels of uncertainty produce high levels of reciprocity (and vice versa) (Berger 1997).

(7) ***Watzlawick's Interactional View:*** This theory is more of a school of thought on interpersonal communication than a theory prompted by the need to provide a heuristic prop for researchers. Even with that, it has many interesting propositions. This variant of systems theory holds that humans cannot communicate; that communication is both content and relationship; that the nature of relationship depends on how parties in communication punctuates their communication sequence; and that all communication is either symmetrical or complementary (Griffin 2012).

(8) ***Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory:*** Cognitive dissonance is that discomfiting feeling a person has when confronted with information that does not fit the opinions

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he or she has, or when a person finds himself or herself doing things that do not fit with what he or she knows. As a response, individuals have to change his/her behaviour or belief. Most humans try to avoid cognitive dissonance and they do this in a number of ways especially through selective exposure (avoiding information that can cause dissonance) and selective attention (Severin and Tankard 1997; Griffin 2012).

These foregoing theories are by no means an exhaustive assemblage of interpersonal and group communication theories. There are many more, including elaboration likelihood model; social judgement theory; relational dialectics and adaptive structuration theory which is also applied in studying group communication.

Part 2: Behaviour Change Communication Theories

Behaviour change or behaviour modification is a sub-discipline of development communication. It is concerned with the questions of why people change or do not as a result of communication. Some of these theories are discussed here:

(1) ***Everett Roger's Diffusion of Innovations Theory:*** This behaviour change theory seeks to answer these questions: How do new ideas or practices spread? Why are some practices adopted even when they are of no apparent value and others rejected even when they hold great promises? Explaining the stages which humans go through while considering a new practice (innovation), the theory relies on the assumptions that a combination of mass and interpersonal media is needed for presenting the new idea to the potential adopter; the interpersonal media are the more effective in most adoption processes. The much-studied theory, developed by Everett Rogers and others, also discusses the conditions under which people reject new practices and the categories of adopters there are in any given community (Baran and Davies 2012).

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(2) ***Social Marketing Theory:*** This theory proposes that human beings will accept a new idea or change an old one if the communicator adopts marketing communication principles with due observance of the philosophy of exchange, a continued marketing research, marketing mix (the P's) and a positioning strategy (Smith 2001; Ojebode 2006).

(3) ***Bekker's Health Belief Model (HBM):*** Many health communication research have been framed by the propositions of this theory or model which suggests that reasonable persons will take actions to prevent illness or health risks if they perceive that they are vulnerable to the stated condition; the condition is severe; the recommended information or action can effectively prevent the condition; and the benefits of performing the promoted behaviour far outweigh the cost. These factors and the intervening variables combine to indirectly influence or determine the decision to perform protective health behaviours. Therefore, health behaviour change messages must be designed and disseminated with these conditions and intervening variables set in perspectives (Bekker 1974).

(4) ***Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA):*** The theory suggests that three important variables—attitude, intention and behaviour—are important to a change in behaviour. The major proposition of the theory is that behaviour is not by accident and that positive attitude leads to positive intention which leads to positive behaviour (Ajzen 1991). Communication messages that target these three variables will likely produce a change in behaviour.

(5) ***Bandura's Social Learning and Social Cognition Theories:*** Cognition, environment and psychology are the prime determinants of an individual's behaviour. Modelling and imitation affect individual conduct significantly. A major way, therefore, to change behaviour

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is to provide the right model for the individual to imitate. Behaviour change communication is about providing that model to people and watching their conduct change (Bandura 1986).

(6) ***Ball-Rokeach's Communication Infrastructure Theory (CIT):*** Roughly summarised, this theory "distinguishes local communities [or groups] in terms of whether they have communication resources that can be activated to construct community, thereby enabling collective action for common purpose" (Kim and Ball-Rokeach 2006:174). Studies employing CIT suggests that civic engagement and community participation is greater where the communication infrastructure is rich. Richness encompasses the questions of what communication infrastructure is available [variety and nature] and who uses them and how often. Infrastructure here encompasses much more than amenities.

(7) Persuasion theory, focuses on psychological characteristics that affect a person's perception of and response to messages, including knowledge and skills; attitudes towards behavioural and social issues; predispositions or preferences; beliefs and concerns about the behaviour and its consequences; and attitudes towards the source of the message (McGuire 1973; Petty and Cacioppo 1981).

Part 3: Theories of Mass Communication (Media Effects)

Certainly the most controversial and therefore, the most studied, aspects of media studies is media effects. Effects studies, that studies dealing with the precise understanding of how media influence people and society have been framed by tens of theories and in turn generated tons of publications. Effects theories are in three categories: powerful, moderate, minimal effects theories. Powerful effects theories depict a helpless audience being powerfully controlled by the media [for instance, the old and discredited hypodermic needle or bullet theory, media dependency theory]; moderate effects theories suggest that the media are only

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moderately powerful and that their influence is moderated by a number of personal, social, cultural and other variables [for instance, agenda setting, knowledge gap hypothesis; diffusion of innovations; spiral of silence]; minimal effects theories suggest that the media have little or no power and that the ultimate control is in the hands of the audience [for instance, cultural determinism]. Following are brief discussions of the major propositions of the major effects theories.

(1) ***Hypodermic Needle or Bullet Theory:*** This was not really a theory but a general description of unfounded allegations that the media had on people an influence that was like that of a bullet or a hypodermic needle. It was not based on any guided research or disquisition but on fears following Hitler's successful mediated propaganda during WWII. This theory has been discredited and rejected in favour of more nuanced theoretical explanations (Severin and Tankard 1997).

(2) ***Noelle-Neumann's Spiral of Silence:*** This theory suggests that the media do indeed have powerful effects on people but that the effects have been studied or observed from an unproductive perspective. The theorist proposes that the media powerfully influence public opinion through ubiquity, cumulation and consonance. People who are not in agreement with the general public opinion promoted by the media often find themselves in ever-growing silence in order not to be seen as socially non-conforming (Severin and Tankard 1997).

(3) ***Gerbner's Cultivation Theory:*** The process of applying this theory is known as cultivation analysis. The theory holds that the media influence the audience's world views, teaching them common views, roles and values. Heavy television viewers have been shown to possess a world view that is pretty much like the one promoted in the content of television programmes (Severin and Tankard 1997; Reber and Chang 2000).

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(4) ***Elihu Katz's Uses and Gratifications Theory:*** The thrust of this theory is that the media have no power over audiences' attitudes and beliefs; what counts is what the audiences do with the media rather than what the media do to do the audiences. Therefore, the audiences are active participants in media communication, using the media and their messages to gratify/satisfy their own needs and purposes. They consume media messages based on the satisfaction they derive; they make choices about when, how often and how long they will engage the media (Severin and Tankard 1997).

(5) ***Tichenor et al's Knowledge-gap Hypothesis:*** This hypothesis is premised on existing beliefs that information is a social capital (power) and that there is social stratification in every society. Based on this hypothesis, in a social system, the gap between high and low status people is increased when information is suddenly infused into the setting. When this occurs, audiences with high socio-economic status acquire this power (information) faster than those within the low socio-economic category. This results in deprivation of knowledge, which is relatively a deprivation of power (Severin and Tankard 1997).

(6) ***McCombs and Shaw's Agenda Setting Theory:*** This media studies/mass communication theory seeks to establish an important relationship between what the media report and the importance that audiences attach to public issues. The major proposition of agenda-setting theory is that the media "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (Cohen 1963:73). In other words, the media suggest, even determine what people should talk about, that is the subject, but do not dictate what they should think about that subject. It is held that when the media hammers on an

issue repeatedly and by giving it prominence, the public begins to talk about that same issue and policymakers end up making it a policy issue. In other words, the media agenda becomes the public agenda and that in turn becomes the policy agenda (Baran and Davies 2012). Agenda setting is also connected with status conferral and in some cases, status 'mis-conferral' (Ojebode 2006).

(7) ***Framing Theory:*** This is an offshoot of agenda-setting theory which suggests through the way mass media frame/ shape/contextualise images of reality in their construction and presentation of news and features, they (mass media) have a strong influence on the perception of the public and policy agenda. The spoken, written, seen, unspoken and unacknowledged frames that the mass media use to represent people, organisations, events, groups, societies and phenomena go a long way in influencing how audiences view these objects involved in the news. Framing is both a theory and a media studies research method (Entman 1993).

(8) ***McLuhan's Media Determinism:*** This is the communication version of Marx's economic determinism. This theory holds that it is the modes of communication in the electronic age that is ultimately shaping human culture and even existence. The proponent of this powerful effects theory suggests that 'the medium is the message', and that every new form of communication is an extension of some human faculty (Griffin 2012).

Part 4: Theories of Mass Communication (Normative Theories)

Normative theories of the press describe how the press 'behaves' under certain types of political regimes – actually one of them 'prescribes' how the press should 'behave'. Originally there were four theories of the press (as propounded by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in 1956 – See Folarin 1998; Severin and Tankard 1997)

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but two more later were added (McQuail 1983). We sum up the key tenets of these six theories here. It is important to note that these theories were propounded with the print media in mind, which explains why they were called theories of the press. Now they are applied to both print and electronic media.

(1) ***Authoritarian Theory:*** The press in authoritarian regimes were expected to service the state, respect the state's absolute power and seek to promote the policies of the state. They are forbidden from criticising the state or the machinery of power. This was the situation in 16th- and 17th- century England.

(2) ***Libertarian Theory:*** The main role of the media should be to discover the truth and to check the government in power. This was the dominant nature of the media in the United States. Though defamation and obscenity are forbidden, it is not the role of the government to control the media but the role of the free market of ideas.

(3) ***Social Responsibility Theory:*** In every society, the role of the media is to raise issues to the plane of discussion; it should reflect the opinions of the various constituents of the society; and really provide a marketplace of opinions. The media should not be just free but also responsible; yet the control of the media should not be in the hands of the government but by professional ethics, consumer action and community opinions.

(4) ***Soviet-Totalitarian Theory:*** This is a variant of the authoritarian press and it suggests that the role of the media is to contribute to the continuation and sustenance of the dictatorship of the Soviet socialist party (when it existed). It may criticise the party but not as an outsider but as insider, and only when the party's tactics (not objectives) are not 'Soviet' enough. The media in this regime is state-owned and state-controlled.

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(5) ***Democratic Participant Theory:*** This theory insists that the current media set up is incapable of promoting democracy because it is too elitist and too subservient to the political system. The media system should therefore be decentralised and "small media" should replace large conglomerates.

(6) ***Development Media Theory:*** Development goals should be the foremost concern of the media – not freedom or professionalism. The government has the right to tamper with press freedom in the interest of development (Folarin 1998).

In the final analysis, one might say there are just two theories of the press: free press theory and shackled press theory. Each of the foregoing six theories belong to either of these two classes. Another point worth making is the need to assess the heuristic values of these theories: What really do they have to offer as drivers of research questions for empirical analysis? 'Much' is the answer. Many researchers have compared the freedom of the press under supposedly autocratic regimes with that of the press under democratic regimes and come up with findings that support or confute the key assumptions of these theories.

Part 5: Public Relations and Marketing Communication Theories

Public Relations is a core professional field and the preoccupation of PR researchers has not been with theory testing or theory building. Where they have adopted theories, they have tended to adopt any of the relevant (mass) communication theories. Wilcox's (2001) book on PR discuss as theories of communication/public relations the two-step flow theory, uses and gratifications theory, cognitive dissonance theory, framing and diffusion of innovations. Each of these have been applied to study the influence of PR messages on audience, the use of PR messages by audience and the patterns of spread of PR messages among given audience segments.

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Another commonly employed theory or model is the AIDA (Attention- Interest- Desire- Action) Model whose basic proposition is that every consumer will resist the offer to buy until their attention is got through persuasion. Therefore, every good advertising message must be designed to grab consumers' attention, sustain their interest, prompt a desire to buy and ensure actual purchase of the products. The hierarchy of effects is built on stages or steps of inter-linked or connected effects that eventually graduate into a desired effect- purchase of goods and services.

Part 6: Speech Communication Theories

Aristotle's *The Rhetoric* is the key foundation of most speech theories and studies. Aristotle states that persuasion is based on three key appeals: logical (logos) appeals; ethical (ethos) appeal and emotional (ethos) appeal. Researchers have studied extensively, among other things, the relative power of these elements in evoking audience compliance (Griffin 2012).

Most speech communication studies adopt some of the theories of communication discussed earlier. For instance, the concepts of homophily and heterophily (the more a speaker 'resembles' the listener, the easier it is for her to persuade the listener, and the converse of this) have been employed to predict the success or failure of persuasion. These actually form the background to the theory of dramatism propounded by Edmund Burke (Griffin 2012).

Section Two: Aspects of Research in Communication and Language Arts

This section of the chapter highlights the commonly adopted research methods in Communication and Language Arts. Some of the methods could be adopted in studies that focus on human subjects while others in those that focus on non-human subjects, notably content-based studies. Some of the methods can function in both contexts. On the one hand, studies that focus on human subjects are those that collect evidence/data directly from individuals or groups or accessed data in secondary form. On the other hand, studies that focus on non-human subject are those that focus on media and communication contents, contexts and artefacts. The methods are rooted within the qualitative and quantitative research designs or the interpretive and descriptive research designs.

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Research Designs

Research design in Communication and Language Arts refers to the pathway between problem conceptualisation and the answers to the problem or the questions that the problem gives rise to. In discussing one's study, it is important to state the name of the design (descriptive, causal, ex post facto, experimental, Small-N or Large-N case study), the broad research question and the blueprint for tackling that central as well as the secondary research questions.

Designs could be descriptive or interpretive/analytical and qualitative or quantitative. The descriptive or interpretive/ analytical research designs are epistemologically defined—that is, they are defined based on what is considered valid knowledge. Descriptive research presents the research subject as it exists. As Kothari (2004) puts it, the main characteristic of this method is that the researcher has no control over the variables; he can only report what has happened or what is happening. The descriptive research design is rooted in the objective tradition in which the research is separate from the research process and is not expected to influence any of the decisions that are made therein.

Interpretive research design on the other hand employs a critical argumentative approach toward its subject and depends on extensive critical reflection. In interpretive or analytical research, the researcher depends on facts or information already available and analyzes them to make a critical evaluation of the material (Kothari 2014). Griffin (2011) describes it as a linguistic work of assigning meaning or value to communicative texts. In interpretive research, it is assumed that multiple meanings or truths are possible. The researcher is also seen as a part of the research process. Meaning in interpretive research is not an objective invention of the researcher but rather a construction of reality. Griffin (2011) identifies some attribute of interpretive theories which also serve as the functions of interpretive research. Key functions among them are: understanding of people, clarification of values, aesthetic appeal, community of agreement, and reform of society.

The qualitative and quantitative research designs are defined based on the nature of the data. Quantitative research design is that

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which employs measurable data to define reality. It is defined by quantification and relies heavily on statistical analysis. Primarily, quantitative research design employs large sample to study a phenomenon with a view to generalising the findings over an entire population. On the other hand, qualitative research design is that which employs non-numerical data. Kothari (2004) notes that qualitative research is especially important in the behavioural sciences where the aim is to discover the underlying motives of human behaviour. He adds that through qualitative research the various factors which motivate people to behave in a particular manner or which make people like or dislike a particular thing could be analysed.

Another way of classifying research designs in communication studies is to look at the overall purpose of the study. This classification gives the following kinds of design:

(1) ***Descriptive Research Design:*** As already explained, a descriptive study purposes to describe a situation or phenomenon. The aim is not to explain why something exists but to determine if it exists, how much of it exists and possibly what is its pattern of existence. Survey research method is a method most often adopted in descriptive studies. Frame studies and content analysis can also be descriptive.

(2) ***Experimental Designs:*** We talk of experimental designs as well as "experiment" as a method. Experimental design covers specific sub-design issues such as one-shot, one-group experimental design (which may be pre-test-post-test or post-test only); two- (control-experimental) group design; Solomon Four group design. Experiment as a method is taken up later in this chapter. Most studies of media effects including television violence studies have employed experimental designs.

(3) ***Ex post facto Design:*** This is quasi-experimental design that picks a dependent variable (an outcome, a consequence) and studies it backwards trying to understand what the independent variable (the cause) is likely to be.

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For instance, it may take voting decisions and work backwards to see if media consumption pattern, or a number of other factors or a combination of factors was responsible for the voting decisions made by citizens.

(4) ***Case Study Designs:*** The expression 'case study' has been so loosely applied that it has almost lost its meaning. We use the expression to refer to an in-depth, often multi-method study of a phenomenon or object first and foremost for the purpose of thoroughly understanding it. Case study designs can be exploratory or causal, large-N or small-N; longitudinal in comparison; spatial in comparison or dynamic in comparison. Data for case studies can come from interview, archival materials, existing secondary data, observation and other sources. Case study is really a way of thinking about research, a design or blueprint rather than a method.

Quantitative Research Methods

Media and communication researchers do employ a number of quantitative research methods. The most commonly used are survey, content analysis and experiment. Each of them is discussed in the subsequent sub-sections. What is common to the quantitative research methods is their reliance on numerical data and statistical analysis.

Survey

Survey method is widely used in media and communication research that focuses on human subject. It is a research method that uses findings from a representative sample to make assertions about the whole population. It is a quantitative research method which utilises the questionnaire as instrument of data collection. The questionnaire contains items that are derived directly from the research questions that guide the study. Survey data are statistically analysed because of the large amount of data that are generated. Sophisticated data analysis packages that are available allow for testing variance, correlation and other types of relationships among survey data.

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Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research method that is used for analysing media and communication contents. Contents of radio and television programmes, books, newspapers and magazines, brochures, gazettes, websites, blogs, wikis and social media, and many more can constitute the subject of a research. In such research, the researcher may be interested in examining what the contents are all about and compare them with other texts. The researcher may also proceed to make inferences about the implications of such contents. Content analysis provides a researcher with the instrumentalities for doing all those. The researcher determines for the research a unit of analysis which is the exact thing that is to be counted. This could be a whole newspaper or a news story in a newspaper. It could also be a TV programme or a scene of the programme. Unit of analysis makes quantification of contents possible. The researcher also either design from the concepts being studied content categories [the specific things being examined in each unit of analysis] or adopt standardised content categories from relevant previous research. The findings of a content analysis study are usually statistically presented.

In addition to content analysis, other methods are also adopted in the department for studying media and communication contents. Most of them, however, are qualitative. Among those methods are qualitative content analysis, critical discourse analysis and all its variations, rhetorical criticism and semiotic analysis. Qualitative content analysis differs from quantitative content analysis mainly because it does not reduce media and communication contents to numerical data; it employs different analysis tools to present the data as text instead of figures. Critical discourse analysis explores power relations as manifest in communication and media contents. Rhetorical criticism considers the appeals that are present in the message (media and communication contents) which enable it to achieve its purpose and vice versa. Semiotic analysis examines the relationship between signs and significations.

Experiment

Although experimental method is a key research method in the field of natural science, it is also used in media and communication

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research to establish causality. Many scholars in the media effects subfield have used the experimental method to study subjects such as effects of media violence. Media and communication researchers use either laboratory or field experiments to study effects of communication. Laboratory experiments take place in a controlled condition where it is possible to manipulate some variables. In field experiment, such manipulation is not possible. However, both have similar focus which is to establish causality.

Qualitative Research Methods

A number of qualitative research methods are also used in media and communication research. Chief among these are ethnography and interpretive interviews. Communication researchers collect qualitative data through focus group discussion (FGD), interviews and observation. Each of the methods is discussed in the subsequent sub-sections.

Ethnography

Ethnography of communication is defined as the study of communication in its widest cultural and social context, including rules of language, norms of appropriate language use in particular settings, and evaluations given by members of a culture to various speech styles. A researcher using ethnography of communication as a method utilises a combination of data gathering tools that will enable him to fully understand the goal of the ethnography. Observation and immersion in the life of the group being studied are the hallmarks of ethnography. Ethnography of communication can be carried out among people, groups in different communities. The method is also becoming common among digital media researchers who have adopted it to study online communities. For ethnographers, observation and interviews are methods of data collection.

Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is otherwise known as group interview. It is a method of gathering qualitative data in media and communication studies to elicit useful information from a group of respondents. Although there is no general agreement on the size of

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a focus group, it must be big enough to produce an amount of quality information needed to fully understand what is being studied from the perspective of the individuals who have firsthand experience of it. A well organised FGD simulates the characteristics of everyday discussion among people who have shared experiences. It is devoid of all forms of formality as the researcher or whoever facilitates the discussion must not exert any form of influence on the respondents and the discussion. FGD provides useful data through the responses of the respondents and also through their observed behaviours. While some researchers treat FGD as a method of gathering qualitative data, others hold it to be a research method on its own. Also, while FGD may be used as an independent research method, it is often used to complement the strength of other research methods.

Interview

Interview is a pervasive method of qualitative research adopted in media and communication studies. It is a one-on-one method in which an interviewer administers a set of question to a respondent (an interviewee). Interview could be structured in which the interviewee chooses response to a question from the list of options provided by the interviewee. It could also be unstructured in which the interviewee is given absolute freedom to provide response to the questions asked from his own wealth of experience. The interview method is adopted when the experiences or perspectives of certain individuals are crucial to understanding the object of a research. Whether structured or unstructured, an interview is not an unguided chat. The ultimate guide of an interview is the research objective. An interview guide is used to help the interviewee to keep within topics that are relevant to the research objectives.

There are many types of interview but the two that are commonly used by researchers in the field of media and communication studies are in-depth interview (IDI) and key personality interview (KPI). In simple terms, an in-depth interview is that which explores the personal views and experiences of certain people because those are significant to the research. In other words, individuals are recruited into in-depth interview because of who they are. On the other hand, individuals are

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selected in key personality interview primarily because of the significance of their position to fully understanding the research object. In other words, individuals are recruited into key personality interview because of their official capacity—possession of certain pieces of information that could only be provided on the basis of their position. Generally, interview in this field of research is used as a full research method and not just as a data collection tool.

Observation

Observation is another method that is used in media and communication research. It involves the researcher objectively watching and recording certain communication occurrences as they take place. Observation is by nature a qualitative method but often at the level of analysis it becomes quantitative method in which value is assigned to communicative acts being observed (Du Plooy 2009). Observation data could be in form of a story that captures the observed in real time. Observation note is presented in simple present tense to retain the freshness of what is observed. If observation becomes quantified, however, the researcher is guided by an observation schedule which details the specific acts the researcher is observing and provides measurement for quantification. The observer may be a member of the group or process being observed (Participant observer) or an outsider who also participates in the process or activities being observed (Observer participant). The observer may make the purpose of the research known to those being observed in order to have their consent (overt observer) or keep the whole observation process a mystery (covert observer).

Instruments of Data Collection

In media and communication research, researchers are open to an array of data collection methods. These methods are presented alongside their corresponding research methods in table 3.1.

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Table 3.1: Data Collection Methods in each Tradition

Quantitative Research Methods	**Data Collection Instruments**
Survey	Questionnaire
*Content analysis	Content categories and coding guide
Experiments	Experiment guide, voice/video recording devices etc.
Qualitative Research Methods	**Data Collection Instruments**
*Observation	Observation schedule/guide, observation notes
Ethnography of communication	Field notes; field guide
Focus group discussion (FGD)	FGD guide
In-depth interview and Key personality interview	Interview guide

Note: *The asterisked items have a variant which belongs to another research design.*

Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis for quantitative research in media and communication aligns with those of the social sciences. Depending on the focus of the research, media and communication researchers adopt frequency distribution, percentages, standard deviation, cross-tabulation, ANOVA, regression analysis, chi Square, and many other methods that enable the researcher to derive statistical relationship between or among variables.

Qualitative research data analysis methods that media and communication researchers adopt also vary. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) explain three of those methods: *pattern-matching strategy, explanation building and time-series analysis*. In the *pattern-matching strategy,* an empirically based pattern is compared with one or more predicted patterns. In the analytic strategy of *explanation building,* the researcher tries to construct an explanation about the case by making statements about the cause or causes of the phenomenon under study. In *time-series analysis,* the investigator tries to compare a series of data points to some theoretic trend that was predicted before the research or to some alternative trend. Other methods include *thematic analysis* where a researcher presents an exhaustive, analytic description of the phenomenon under study, and *hermeneutical analysis* in which the researcher, relying on cultural, situational and historical location,

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interprets the language of participants, their emotions and perceptions of their experiences, relative to the context in which they occur (Daymon and Holloway 2011). Other forms of textual analysis used in humanities research are also commonly used by media and communication researchers.

Summary

Research in communication is an interaction between theory and methodology. Yet, it is impossible to list all the theories in communication or to fully exhaust all the methodological creativity that is possible. What is most important is for a researcher to be able to drive his or her work with the theory that provides the best heuristic values in the case of theory-testing or theory-driven research. There are studies that do not lend themselves easily to existing theories. In that case, the researcher is expected to thoroughly review literature and use that to drive his or her research questions. Since the researcher, at the end of such a study, generates his/her own explanation of the phenomenon being investigated (that is, his/her own theory), such a study is called theory-generating or grounded theory study.

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