**Introduction to Mass Communication**

**Introduction**

It is impossible not to communicate. Everybody communicates, everything communicates. Communication is not a process limited to human beings only. All creatures on the earth, from worms to humans, are communicating each other for their better existence. It is a universal phenomenon.

Communication is a process which includes transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, knowledge by using symbols, words, gestures, and visuals and so on. Thus, the act of communication is referred to as ‘transmission’.

**Meaning of Communication**

The word communication was originated from the Latin word ‘communis’ which means ‘common’. Communion, community, communism, commonality, communalism etc. are some related words having the same linguistic roots.

**Definitions**

1. Communication is the exchange of meanings between individuals through a common system of symbols. (I.A.Richards).

2. The transmission of information, ideas attitudes, or emotion from one person or group to another or others primarily through symbols. (Theodorson and Theordorson)

3. Communication is the transmission and interchange of facts, ideas, feeling or course of action. (Leland Brown)

4. Communication is a social interaction through messages ( Grabner, 1967)

5. The interchange of thoughts or information to bring about mutual understanding and confidence or good human relation. (American society of Training Directors).

6. ‘One mind affecting another’ (Claude Shannon)

7. ‘The mechanism through which human relations exist and develop’ (Wilbur Schramm)

8. ‘Transmission of stimuli’ (Colin Cherry)

9. Communication is the sum of all the things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding. (Louis Allen)

10. Communication refers to the act by one or more persons, of sending and receiving messages distorted by noise, within a context, with some effect and with some opportunity for feedback (Joseph A.Devito)

**The definitions given here indicate the following facts:**

* A world without communication is unthinkable
* Communication is a complex process  Communication is essential for human relationships and progress
* Human mind, body and physical conditions are vital components of communication
* A common symbol system is essential for communication

**Importance of Communication**

The basic foundation of human society is communication and it takes place at different levels – within oneself, between individuals, between individual and a group, between groups, between countries and so on. Similarly, we use verbal and non-verbal forms of messages for communication. Communication is essential for development of the society. We attain cultural, social and economic prosperity by sharing out experiences.

Personal enjoyment is communication based. Just think of a person kept in isolation without any chance for communication with his friends and relatives. It is really a punishment, a prison life. Communication helps us interact with our surroundings, thus create positive relationships, share love, build up friendship and depend each other to enjoy life. Can you imagine a world without media? Not at all. The basic mission of mass media is to create ties in human society sharing news. In modern world, media have some more roles to play. Media defines our political system, form public opinion, support public demands and set agenda of our social life. In short, no social activity, be it marketing, business, education, politics, media profession…, is possible without communication.

**Functions of Communication**

Considering the essentiality of communication, scholars enumerated the following functions of it.

a) Education: To transfer knowledge for the progress of the society (Example: class room communication)

b) Information: To find and explainsome thing new (Example: News media)

c) Expression of emotions (Example: crying, smiling etc)

d) Entertainment: To help pass time and enjoy life (Example: drama, song etc.)

**Elements of Communication**

Let us analyse Joseph A Devito’s definition that ‘communication refers to the act by one or more persons, of sending and receiving messages distorted by noise, within a context, with some effect and with some opportunity for feedback’ to find out the essential elements of communication.

**According to his definition, communication has the following elements:**

a) Sender

b) Message

c) Channel

d) Receiver

e) Noise

f) Feedback

Discussion on each of these elements with examples will give us more insight into the entire process of communication.

**Sender**

Sender is the idea generating component in communication process. In human communication, sender may be a person or persons who create or formulate the message to be sent to the receiver. Being the primary source of the message, sender is also termed as source. In mass media, for example, news reporter is the sender or source as he/she constructs the message (news story). In a musical performance, the singer is the sender as his message is enjoyed by the audience.

**The source/sender has three functions:**

a) To decide what is to be communicated

b) Encoding (Put the idea in such a way that the receiver understands it)

c) Transmitting the message to the receiver

**Message**

The message is any verbal or non-verbal method that produces meaning in the mind of the receiver. Simply, it is the meaning transferred from sender’s mind to receiver’s mind. This happens mainly in two ways: verbal and non-verbal methods.

**Verbal** message means written or oral messages. They are composed of words. Example: A newspaper report or a lecture by a teacher.

**Non-verbal** messages are those communicated through our behaviour, movements, actions, clothes, style of conversation, pitch of the sound etc.

What is fundamental in message construction is the agreement between sender and receiver in the code used for it. If the receiver cannot identify the language or meaning of the message, the communication will be defective.

**Channel**

The channel means medium by which sender transmits the message to the receiver. Our five senses such hearing, touching, smelling , tasting , seeing are basic natural channels of human communication. Communication can be classified on the basis of five basic natural channels.

They are:

**Tactile communication:** Communication by touch or taste

**Olfactory communication:** communication by smell

**Audio communication:** Communication through sound waves

**Visual communication:** Communication through visual elements or properties.

We use any technically developed medium (like television, newspaper, books etc) with the help of one or more of these five senses. Similarly, sender uses one or more channels to maximize the communication effect. For example – multi-media class room where teacher uses projector, blackboard, lecture, gestures etc. simultaneously.

**Receiver**

Idea receiving end in communication process is called receiver. A person or thing may be at the receiving end. The receiver’s role is as important as a sender’s role. As in the case of a sender, receiver has also three roles to play:

**a) To receive the message**

**b) To decode the message**

Decoding is the process of extracting a message from a code and interprets it. For this, sender and receiver should have knowledge about the code (for example: language) used in communication.

c) To respond to the message through feedback

Receivers may be audience watching movies, persons listening to music, students hearing a lecture or a computer getting e-mail from a remote server. Communication fails or remains faulty when message is rejected or misinterpreted by the receiver.

**Feedback**

Information or message that is fed back to the source is called feedback. If you get clapping for your singing, clapping is the feedback. Questions raised by students in a class room for more information is another example for feedback.

Feedback originated either from the sources’ own message is called **self feedback.** Example: When you talk to somebody, you hear yourself and evaluate your tone, pitch etc.

Another type of feedback is that originated from the receiver. It may be in the form of questions, applauses, puzzled look etc.

Feedback may be negative or positive, immediate or delayed. Receiver’s indication to the sender that the message was not received well is called **negative feedback**. Eg. Looks of indifference, rejection or boredom may be considered as negative feedback.

Receiver’s favourable responses like acceptance, applauses etc are **positive feedback.**

Feedback at the time of the communication itself or just after it **is immediate feedback**. Eg. Applauses a singer gets during the performance.

Receiver’s response relatively much after the communication is **delayed feedback.** Eg. Letters to the Editor.

**Noise**

Noise or communication barrier is anything that distorts message. Noise may originate in any of the components of communication like source, message, channel, context, receiver etc. Noise is present when there is difference between the message sent and received. Communication is not possible without noise, but its effects may be reduced through various methods such as using good grammar, clear voice, simple language, quality signal etc.

Noise is of different types depending on the nature and reasons of the distortion.

**They are:**

**Psychological noise:** Any communication error due to the psychological reasons. Eg. A fearful audience can’t enjoy the musical programme. Depression, stress etc

**Linguistic noise :** Language related problems in communication. Eg. Poor grammar, complex sentence structure, rare vocabulary etc.

**Contextual noise:** If communication takes place in inappropriate time or place, message is not conveyed well. Eg. Wishing compliments during a funeral function. Or An outdoor meeting at noon in a hot summer.

**Channel noise :** Medium related communication barrier. Eg. Poor signal affecting picture clarity of television.

**Physical noise:** Vehicles noise, work tools, classroom disturbance

**Physiological noise:** tiredness, feeling of hunger, body discomfort

Message

(Encodes)

Transmission

(Signals)

Recipient

(Decodes)

Receiver

(Meaning)

Sender

(Ideas)

Feedback

**Communication Process (Diagram)**

**Characteristics of Communication**

1. **Involves two person**

Communication involves at least two persons:

a) Sender: who has a message to communicate?

b) Receiver: who gets the message and convert it into thoughts.

**2. Message**

A message is an information, idea, thought or feelings that are transmitted to the receiver. It drives communication, without it there will be no communication. For communication to be successful, receiver should first of all, understand the message. For this, sender should speak in a language that is known to the receiver.

**3: Two Way process**

One person is sending the message and other is receiving and also giving the feed back. For example in a class room, teacher is sending the message (Lecture) and class is receiving it. Also they can simultaneously ask question to the teacher face to face.

**4. Verbal and Non-verbal**

Communication can be done verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication refers to written or spoken language or words. Non-verbal communication means facial expression, gestures, body movements, expressions etc. verbal and non-verbal communication can be happen individually or simultaneously depending on the situation.

**5. Formal and Informal**

Formal communication follows established channels while Informal communication does not follow the official channels. Formal communication respect and follows established hierarchy, informal communication allows any individual to convey information to anybody freely without having to bother about the hierarchy.

**6. Upward, Downward and Horizontal**

Upward communication starts from the lower level and is transmitted to the upper level of the organization.

Downward communication is opposite to upward communication

Horizontal communication occurs at the same level.

**Classification of Communication**

**Communication**

Intra-Personal

Inter-Personal

Group Communication

Mass Communication

**Non-Verbal**

**Verbal**

**On the Basis of Level**

**On the Basis of Methods**

**Verbal Communication**

All the messages said or written in words make part of the verbal communication. This way, all that appears as text in books, magazines and newspapers is part of verbal communication. One can guess the size of an industry in the area of mass communication based on verbal communication.

Likewise, all the words heard on radio, television, telephone or any other public address system are also part of verbal communication. Again, the industry and technology based on verbal communication is enormous in size and value as well.

The effectiveness of the verbal communication depends on the tone of the speaker, clarity of speech, volume, speed, body language and the quality of words used in the conversation. In the case of the verbal communication, the feedback is immediate since there are a simultaneous transmission and receipt of the message by the sender and receiver respectively.

The sender must keep his speech tone high and clearly audible to all and must design the subject matter keeping the target audience in mind. The sender should always cross check with the receiver to ensure that the message is understood in absolutely the same way as it was intended. Such communication is more prone to errors as sometimes the words are not sufficient to express the feelings and emotions of a person.

**Advantages of Oral Communication**

1. It is a learnable and improvable human activity.

2. It is a more accurate reflection of thought and attitude of the speaker.

3. It creates and sustains warm, interpersonal relationships.

4. It combines sight and sound, thus enabling participants to benefit from both verbal and non-verbal stimulus.

5. It can satisfy man’s needs and desires (wants) more quickly than writing or gestures.

6. It allows for instantaneous exchange of ideas, information, opinions, feelings and attitudes.

7. It enables participants to seek immediate clarification whenever in doubt of the meaning being negotiated.

8. It provides for instantaneous feedback, thereby making it possible for the participants to assess the success, or failure, of their communication efforts and so decide whether or not to modify their needs of communication interaction.

**Disadvantages of Oral Communication**

1. It lacks permanence.

2. It does not allow participants’ thought to crystalise, thus resulting in imprecise communication and even outright errors which could be avoided in written communication.

3. There is possibility of distortion of meaning.

4. It can easily be denied.

5. It has little weight as contractual evidence.

6. It is usually not admissible in evidence in the law court.

**Advantages of Written Communication**

1. It provides opportunities for record keeping.

2. It is amenable to conveying complex messages, information, and ideals as well as explaining difficult process.

3. It can be reproduced through various reprographic processes and dispatched to widely scattered receivers.

4. It provides avenues through which oral transaction can be clarified, analysed and confirmed.

5. It provides a basis for contractual agreements.

6. It reduces the chance of distortion.

**Disadvantages of Written Communication**

(1)It may require a laborious effort to produce.

(2)It lacks the warmth of interpersonal relationships.

(3)It may be expensive especially when it requires being dispatched to scattered receivers.

(4)It delays feedback.

(5)It makes it difficult for the sender to modify his message once it is composed and dispatched.

(6)It multiplies errors, particularly with the advances in the technology of message dissemination through computer networks, fax, e-mail etc.

(7)It requires a good level of literacy on the part of the receiver.

**Non-verbal Communication**

Nonverbal communication refers to gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, eye contact (or lack thereof), body language, posture, and other ways people can communicate without using language.

1. **Senses**

Part of human communication involving other than written or spoken words is referred to as non verbal communication. It involves human senses – sight, taste, touch, hearing and smelling.

As a matter of fact about 90 per cent communication among human beings takes place through their senses and the rest by the use of words as languages.

1. **Symbols, signs**

Emblems, gestures, symbols and signs make more vivid and strong communication as compared to words which are often difficult to decipher.

For instance making a victory sign by politicians, army generals, sportspersons and leaders in general at the time of defeating enemy is easily understood even by the illiterate. If the same feeling is expressed in words, many may not come even close to understanding what it is.

The traffic signals, red-cross mark and the symbol of dove are but few illustrations to make people around understand what a message stands far.

Differences between Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Hybels and Weaver II (2001) identify eight important ways in which verbal and non-verbal communications differ:

**Environment**

In contrast to verbal communication, non-verbal communication can take place when you are not around for people to form an impression of you directly e.g. the room you live in, poster on your walls, where you eat, etc.

**Continuity**

Verbal communication begins and ends with words, non-verbal continues.

**Channel**

Non-verbal communication often uses more than one channel- can combine sound and sight.

**Feedback**

Non-verbal communication gives a lot of feedback.

**Control**

While you can control verbal communication, you do not always have control over non-verbal communication especially emotional responses.

**Structure**

Non-verbal communication does not follow a planned sequence because much of it occurs unconsciously. Unlike verbal communication which has a grammar that determines how you build your sentences, nonverbal communication lacks formal structure.

**Acquisition**

Many verbal communication rules are taught in formal environment. Much of non-verbal is not taught; you pick them up imitating others.

**On the basis of Level**

**Intra-personal Communication**

It is the most basic form of communication. It occurs when an individual sends and receive message internally. We spent most of our time thinking and our thought process is nothing but intra personal communication where one person sending message and the same person receive them. Because intrapersonal communication is centered in the self, you are the sender and the receiver. The message is made up of your thoughts and feelings and the channel is your brain, which processes what you are thinking and feeling. There is also feedback because you talk to yourself, you discard certain ideals and replace them with others.

**Interpersonal Communication**

Interpersonal communication is the process of sending and receiving message between two persons. Interpersonal communication could be verbal or non verbal. This is universal form of communication between two people. It is an ideal and effective communication because one can easily get immediate feedback.

To better understand the concept of interpersonal communication, one needs to compare it to other forms of communication. In so doing, one would examine how many people are involved, how physically close they are to one another, how many sensory channels are used, and the feedback provided. Interpersonal communication differs from other forms of communication in that there are few participants involved, the interactants are in close physical proximity to each other, there are many sensory channels used, and feedback is immediate.

Interpersonal communication also called **dyadic communication**.

**Group communication**

Communication between two or more than two people are described as group communication. Group communication is an extension of interpersonal communication where more than two individuals are involved in exchange of ideas, skills and interest.

This form of communication occurs among a small number of people for the purpose of solving a problem. The group must be small enough so that each member has a chance to interact with all the other members.

The communication process in group communication is more complex than in interpersonal communication because the group members are made up of several sender-receivers. As a result, there are more chances for confusion. Messages are also more structured in small groups because the group is meeting for a specific purpose.

**Mass Communication**

Mass communication is the process of delivering ideas, information and attitudes to the sizeable and diversified audience. This is done by using various media vehicles like newspaper, radio, television, magazines, internet and social media networks. It addressed to masses, to an extremely large audience.

Mass Communication represents the creation and sending of a homogeneous message to a large heterogeneous audience through the media.

Stanley Baran defines Mass Communication as the process of creating shared meaning between the mass media and their audience. Also, John Bittner defines Mass Communication as messages communicated through a mass medium to a large number of people.

Mass Communication can also be defined as a device by which a group of people working together transmits information to a large heterogeneous and anonymous audience simultaneously. It is a process by which information originates from the source to the receiver, having been thoroughly filtered and transmitted through a channel (Sambe 2005:29).

**Features of Mass Communication**

Mass Communication is distinguished from other kinds of communication by a number of features or characteristics. They are:

1. Mass Medium

2. Presence of Gatekeepers

3. Delayed Feedback

4. Limited Sensory Channels

5. Impersonal Vs Personal Communication

**1. Mass Medium**

For a medium to be regarded as mass in communication it must have acquired fifty million adopters (Kaye & Medoff 2005). Radio, Television, internet etc are examples of media which are regarded as mass media because they can reach out to no fewer than fifty million audience at a time. In mass communication, messages reach far beyond the immediate proximity of the sender and could even get to the uttermost part of the world.

1. **Presence of Gatekeepers**

In mass communication, sent messages do not reach the audience in raw form. Messages are usually ‘treated’. The implication of this is that there is usually no guarantee that what the message receivers get is exactly the message sent by the source.

In mass media organizations, the gatekeepers are usually the reporters, sub-editors, editors, producers, writers, etc. The concept of gatekeeper was first coined by Kurt Lewin who describes gatekeepers as individuals or groups of persons who govern the travels of news items in the communication channels.

Gatekeepers could also be defined as any person or formally organized group directly involved in relaying or transferring information from one individual to another through a mass medium. A gatekeeper can be a film producer who cuts a scene from the original script, a network censor who deletes a scene from a prime – time show, a director who determines what segment of film to use in a documentary, a newspaper executive who determines the topic for an editorial, or any other individual in the processing or control of messages disseminated through mass media (Bittner 1989:12).

In actual sense, a gatekeeper does three major functions:

1. Limiting the information through editing before dissemination.
2. Expanding the amount of information by injecting additional views or angles.
3. Reorganizing or reinterpreting the information gathered before disseminating it.

**3. Delayed Feedback**

Unlike in interpersonal communication where reply/feedback is made almost instantly, the feedback in mass communication is always delayed, say for a day, week or month. Burgoon et al 1978 cited in Folarin 1994 says “Feedback is often limited, delayed and indirect”. Mass Communicators are usually subject to additional feedback in form of criticism in other media, such as a television critic writing a column in a newspaper (Baran 2004:7). In other words, feedback in mass communication is not instant. It is mostly through letters to the editor or telephone calls or personal calls on the media.

Stanley Baran coined the term ‘delayed inferential feedback’ when he said that television executives do not usually wait for feedbacks on what they must do not to improve programming but only infer using the rating measured by the number of viewers.

1. **Limited Sensory Channels**

This feature has to do with the fact that mass medium limits the number of sensory channels upon which audience can draw. In other words, mass communication only enables one to use his or her sense of sight and hearing since one can only see the visual picture and hear the voice of the speaker on the broadcast station. This is unlike in a face- to- face communication where the audience can shake hands or hug the politicians and as such, have no limitation to the sensory channels.

1. **Impersonal and Personal Communication**

Unlike in face – to – face communication where communication is personal, participants in mass communication are usually strangers and, hence messages are more impersonal.

**Components of Mass Communication**

The concept “mass” in mass communication is defined as large, heterogeneous, assorted and anonymous audience.

a) large

b) heterogeneous

c) assorted

d) anonymous

**a). Large**

Large means we can’t exactly count the number of the members of audience. It is relatively large but it doesn’t mean that the audience includes all people.

This presupposes the fact that messages that undergo mass communication process must be directed to very many people, like the ones sent through mass media of radio, TV, newspapers etc.

**b). Heterogeneous**

By heterogeneous, we mean mass communication messages cannot be segregated. It cannot be directed towards certain people without others hearing it. Every human being, irrespective of age, creed, sex, wealth and affluence get the messages at the same time. Biblically speaking, mass communication message is not a respecter of any man. It does not have regard for positions, and class. It is for all.

**c). Assorted**

Assorted means the audience of mass media is not necessarily limited to a particular geographical sector. They may be scattered everywhere. For example, a newspaper may have a reader in every nook and corner of the world.

**d). anonymous**

anonymous means we can’t specifically identify a reader or a viewer of a newspaper or a tv program with his certain characteristics. Today he may be reader of a particular newspaper or a viewer of a particular show. Tomorrow, he may change his media habit. Anybody at any time maybe a member of mass media audience.