**Introduction to Mass Communication**

**The Word “Communication” Defined**

“Communication,” which is etymologically related to both “communion” and “community,” comes from the Latin communicare, which means “to make common” or “to share.

**Scholarly Definitions**

1. Communication is the process or act of transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver, through a channel and with the interference of noise – DeVito
2. The process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another -- Keyton
3. The transmission of information, ideas, attitudes, or emotions from one person or group to another or others primarily through symbols – Theodorson
4. There is communication wherever one system or source influences another, by manipulation of alternative symbols transmitted over the channel -- Osgood
5. Communication is a social interaction through messages -- Gerber
6. Communication is transfer of information from one person to another, whether or not it elicits confidence. But the information transferred must be understandable to the receiver -- G.G. Brown.
7. Communication is the intercourse by words, letters or messages -- Fred G. Meyer.
8. Communication is the operation, which (re-)produces social systems, it is the central last element for the retention of society -- Niklas Luhmann
9. Communication is a systemic process in which individuals interact with and through symbols to create and interpret meanings -- Julia Wood
10. Communication as the process of sharing ideas, feelings, thoughts and messages with others – Ojomo
11. Communication as a transactional process of sharing meaning with others -- Rothwell
12. Communication involves the giving and receiving of information, signals or messages by talk, gestures and writing -- Kemoni

The exact meaning of the word communicate is ‘to share or to participate‘. The dictionaries say that communication is the transmission of a message or information by speaking or writing. Another dictionary declares that communication is giving or exchanging information, signals, messages by talk or gestures or writing. Yet another definition says that communication is social intercourse. Communication is all this and much more. A good definition should not only give the precise meaning but also throw light on the scope of the word / expression.

Communication is giving, receiving or exchanging ideas, information, signals or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups to persuade, to seek information, to give information or to express emotions.

This broad definition includes body-language, skills of speaking and writing. It outlines the objectives of communication. It emphasizes listening as an important aspect of communication.

**The elements of communication**

Communication is a two-way process that results in a shared meaning or common understanding between the sender and the receiver. An understanding of how communication works can help us to understand and improve our communication.

The basic communication model consists of five elements of communication: the sender, the receiver, the message, the channel and feedback.

1. Sender

The sender plays the specific role of initiating communication. To communicate effectively, the sender must use effective verbal as well as nonverbal techniques. Speaking or writing clearly, organizing your points to make them easy to follow and understand, maintaining eye contact, using proper grammar and giving accurate information are all essential in the effectiveness of your message. You will lose your audience if it becomes aware of obvious oversights on your part. The sender should have some understanding of who the receiver is in order to modify the message to make it more relevant.

1. Receiver

The receiver means the party to whom the sender transmits the message. A receiver can be one person or an entire audience of people. In the basic communication model, the receiver, is directly across from the speaker. The receiver can also communicate verbally and nonverbally. The best way to receive a message is to listen carefully, sitting up straight and making eye contact. Don’t get distracted or try to do something else while you're listening. Nodding and smiling as you listen to the sender speak demonstrate that you understand the message.

1. Message

The message may be the most crucial element of effective communication. A message can come in many different forms, such as an oral presentation, a written document, an advertisement or just a comment. In the basic communication model, the way from one point to another represents the sender's message traveling to the receiver. The message isn't necessarily what the sender intends it to be. Rather, the message is what the receiver perceives the message to be. As a result, the sender must not only compose the message carefully, but also evaluate the ways in which the message can be interpreted.

1. Channel

The message travels from one point to another via a channel of communication. The channel sits between the sender and receiver. Many channels, or types, of communication exist, from the spoken word to radio, television, an Internet site or something written, like a book, letter or magazine. Every channel of communication has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, one disadvantage of the written word, on a computer screen or in a book, is that the receiver cannot evaluate the tone of the message. For this reason, effective communicators word written communications clearly so they don't rely on a specific tone of voice to convey the message accurately. The advantages of television as a channel for communication include its expansive reach to a wide audience and the sender's ability to further manipulate the message using editing and special effects.

1. Feedback

The last element of effective communication, feedback, describes the receiver's response or reaction to the sender's message. The receiver can transmit feedback through asking questions, making comments or just supporting the message that was delivered. Feedback helps the sender to determine how the receiver interpreted the message and how it can be improved.

**Types of Communication**

1. **Verbal**

Verbal communication entails the use of words in delivering the intended message. The two major forms of verbal communication include written and oral communication.

* **Written communication** includes traditional pen and paper letters and documents, typed electronic documents, e-mails, text chats, SMS and anything else conveyed through written symbols such as language. This type of communication is indispensable for formal business communications and issuing legal instructions.

Communication forms that predominantly use written communication include handbooks, brochures, contracts, memos, press releases, formal business proposals, and the like. The effectiveness of written communication depends on the writing style, grammar, vocabulary, and clarity.

* **Oral Communication** is the other form of verbal communication is the spoken word, either face-to-face or through phone, voice chat, video conferencing or any other medium. Various forms of informal communications such as the grapevine or informal rumor mill, and formal communications such as lectures, conferences are forms of oral communication. Oral communication finds use in discussions and causal and informal conversations. The effectiveness of oral conversations depends on the clarity of speech, voice modulation, pitch, volume, speed, and even non-verbal communications such as body language and visual cues.

Verbal communication makes the process of conveying thoughts easier and faster, and it remains the most successful form of communication. Yet, this makes up only seven percent of all human communication!

### Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication entails communicating by sending and receiving wordless messages. These messages usually reinforce verbal communication, but they can also convey thoughts and feelings on their own.

**Physical nonverbal communication,** or body language, includes facial expressions, eye contact, body posture, gestures such as a wave, pointed finger and the like, overall body movements, tone of voice, touch, and others.

Facial expressions are the most common among all nonverbal communication. For instance, a smile or a frown conveys distinct emotions hard to express through verbal communication. Research estimates that body language, including facial expressions, account for 55 percent of all communication.

**Body Language**

It is interesting to note that a vast majority of us communicate several messages without using speech quite often. In fact, one theory on the origin of language is called the ―Gesture theory‖, which tries to establish that speech originated from gestures. Someone has aptly said that communication oozes out through one‘s finger tips. Though this may appear to be an exaggerated statement, it is truth. Do we not nod our heads to show approval or shake our heads to indicate disapproval? When you are offered a cup of coffee you not only say: ‘No, Thank you‘, but, also shake your head or cross your hands. When someone attempts to touch you for a penny, you indicate your denial through words as well as shaking your palm. When someone is in difficulty, he wrings (twists) his hands in frustration. The study of body movements is also known as Kinesis. Body language is so important that a description of it has entered our spoken language. You say that someone blinked to mean that he was confused, someone was bleary eyed to mean that he was not focusing and someone kept his fingers crossed to mean that he was eagerly anticipating and so on and so forth. Our language itself has several such expressions recognizing body language. Communication experts point out that only a small percentage of communication is verbal whereas a large percentage is through body language. The following features of one‘s bearing or demeanor (way of behaving) is part and parcel of communication.

**Important features of Body Language**

* Posture

The way a person stands or sits is his posture. It is good to adopt a flexible erect posture rather than a stiff or slouching posture. An erect posture reveals confidence and poise. Drooping shoulders, sagging in the seat, etc., reveal a feeling of depression and lack of interest.

* Head motion

In oral communication, the movement of the head plays an important role. No one is expected to keep on shaking his head, but appropriate nods and shakes of the head enhance the level of communication.

* Facial Expression

Face is the index of the mind. We say, ‗she put on a long face‘ to mean that she was not in the best of her moods. However much one tries, his hidden feeling of anger, fear, confusion, uncertainty, enthusiasm and joy will get revealed by the facial expression. Sometimes, the words that you utter may be contradicted by your facial expression. A teacher might ask the student if he understood the idea, but he should not wait for an answer. A lack-lustre bewildered facial expression would reveal that the student has not grasped anything.

* Eye Contact

In an oral communication context, the speaker and listener should not only face each other but also maintain correct eye contact. If someone avoids direct eye contact, he is suspected to be sly or cunning. In eastern countries, subordinates or younger people may avoid direct eye contact out of respect or deference, but it will be misunderstood in an international context. The Tamil poet Subramanya Bharathi has praised upright bearing and straight eye contact.

* Gestures

Movement of hands and fingers enhance communication. But, gestures are culture specific. A clenched fist may mean emphasis for an American but disrespect for an Indian. A thumbs up sign, a movement of the index finger communicate messages effectively. Continuous gestures should be avoided. Non-verbal communication in short, adds, subtracts and amends our message. In an oral communication context, all the above features of body language play an important role. If you expect to communicate in a relaxed atmosphere, you have to kill and destroy the stiffness with appropriate components of body language. Though gestures are culture specific some of them have become universal cutting across cultural boundaries. They have become emblematic. I iach sign is almost an ―emblem‖ for a particular message. A ―V‖ sign with index linger and central finger stands for victory. A thumbs up sign stands for hitchhiking. A wave of the arm is for a ‗hello‘ or a good-bye. Emblems directly stand for a verbal message. Certain gestures are illustrators for they illustrate a point. An arm can be used to draw a circle. The index finger shown with a little shake stands to emphasise a point as an illustrator.

Certain gestures made unconsciously will reveal the mental state of the speaker. Anger, fear, nervousness etc., are often revealed by fidgeting, shifting of legs etc., Twisting the shirt button or cuff-links, rubbing the neck-tie, scratching the cheek, nose, stroking the chin are some of the innumerable unconsciously acquired gestures. If overdone, they may degenerate to the level of mannerisms. One has to avoid the habit of over-gesturing in oral communication.

Body language can be studied elaborately under kinesis which makes a scientific and analytic study of the subject. Oral communication takes place in face to face or one to one situation or when a speaker addresses an audience. The audience may be small as in a group discussion or large in the case of some business meetings. In all these situations, body language plays an important role.

* Paralanguage

In oral communication situations paralanguage plays an important role while speaking or listening. The speaker or listener makes use of sounds like ‘Hmm’, ‘ha‘, or clicks his tongue or chuckles. These sounds, though do not have a semantic value (meaning), are in fact important prompters in maintaining an unbroken communication chain. They are effective tools of listening. Empathetic listening (ability to imagine and share another person‘s feelings, etc.) is characterised by the use of para-language. Our speech is affected by the volume of our voice, the speed of articulation and such sounds made by clicking of our tongue, chuckling, etc. We come across people whose voices quiver when excited. Some others raise the decibel level of their voice. These are people who shriek or shout when provoked. All these lead to an evaluation of the personality of the communicator.

* Voice and Tone

It is possible to communicate an unpleasant information pleasantly or good news badly. When you tell someone, ‘you have done a great job‘, it is your statement and the tone together show the receiver whether you are complimenting him or ridiculing him. A complimentary tone is distinctly different from a sarcastic tone.

* Space

In oral communication situations, the space between the speaker and the listener is important. Americans consider that a person who comes very close to him while speaking, say, less than two feet is invading into his privacy. Only in intimate and personal situations can people move closer than a foot and a half. To us, who are used to overcrowded public transport system, the American practice of maintaining space in the elevator will be rather surprising whereas to him our invasion of his personal space revolting.

* Silence

In oral communication situations, silence plays an important role. People quite often talk about ―eloquent silence‖. Yes, silence can send communication signals. Silence in a particular situation may mean acceptance, agreement and in certain others indifference, apathy or even anger.

* Listening – a Proactive Skill

In oral communication situations, listening plays an important role. Listening is different from hearing. One can hear all noises and sounds and yet could be a poor listener. Listening is hearing attentively and responding appropriately. Only a good listener can became a good speaker. Attentiveness begins with the posture a listener adopts while he is listening. If a person inclines towards the speaker, it means that the speaker is not clear either in the message or in his articulation. If the listener tilts his head backwards, it shows that he is indifferent. A Good listener is proactive. He is, as they usually say, ―all ears‖. He responds appropriately using paralanguage. He says, Hmm—yeah—yes—come on now and then. He asks questions and verifies facts. A listener‘s role in an oral communication situation is as important as a speaker‘s role.

Listening in communication has several beneficial results. Good listening leads to getting useful and updated information. Good listening creates a better understanding and rapport between the speaker and listener. Good listening leads to better decisions. Good listening provides the best feed back to the speaker.

**Levels of Communication**

* **Intra-personal Communication**

Intra-personal Communication — is the kind of communication that occurs within us. It involves thoughts, feelings, and the way we look at ourselves.

Because intra-personal communication is centered in the self, you are the only sender-receiver. The message is made up of your thoughts and feelings. The channel is your brain, which processes what you are thinking and feeling. There is feedback in the sense that you talk to yourself, or discard certain ideas and replace them with others.

Even though you are not directly communicating with others in intra-personal communication, the people and the experiences you have had determine how you “talk” to yourself. For example, if you had a good day, you are likely to look at your-self in a positive way. If a teacher was disappointed with your work, or if you had a fight with a fellow student, you are likely to focus more on your depression or anger. You can never look at yourself without being influenced by the relationships you have with others.

* **Interpersonal Communication**

Interpersonal communication occurs when we communicate on a one-to-one basis— usually in an informal, unstructured setting. This kind of communication occurs mostly between two people, though it may include more than two.

Interpersonal communication uses all the elements of the communication process. In a conversation between friends, for example, each brings his or her back ground and experience to the conversation. Outing the conversation each functions as a sender - receiver. Their message consists of both verbal and non-verbal symbols. The channels they use the most are sight and sound. Because interpersonal communication is between two (or a few) people, it offers the greatest opportunity for feedback. Psychological noise is likely to be minimal because each person can see whether the other is distracted. The persons involved in the conversation have many chances to check that the message is being perceived correctly. Interpersonal communication usually takes place in informal and comfortable settings.

* **Small-Group Communication**

Small - group communication occurs when a small number of people meet to solve a problem. The group must be small enough so that each member in the group has a chance to interact with all of the other members.

Because small groups are made up of several senders-receivers, the communication process is more complicated than in interpersonal communication. With so many more people sending messages, there are more chances for confusion. Messages are also more structured in small groups use the same channels as interpersonal communication, however, and there is also a good deal of opportunity for feedback. In view of their problem - solving nature, small groups usually meet in a more formal setting than people involved in interpersonal communication.

* **Public Communication**

In public communication the sender-receiver (the speaker) sends a message (the speech) to an audience. The speaker usually delivers a highly structured message, using the same channels as in interpersonal and small-group communication. In public communication, however, the channels are more exaggerated than in interpersonal communication. The voice is louder and the gestures are more expansive because the audience is bigger. The speaker might also use additional visual channels such as slides, flip charts, and so on. Generally, the opportunity for verbal feedback in public communication is limited. The audience members may have a chance to ask questions at the end of the speech, but usually they are not free to address the speaker as he or she is talking. However, they can send nonverbal feedback. If they like what the speaker is saying, they may interrupt the speech with applause. If they like what the speaker is saying, they may interrupt the speech with applause. If they dislike it, they may move around a lot of simply stop paying attention. In most public communication the setting is formal.

**Importance of Communication**

Communication is important for all beings that lead community life and form relationship. For human beings communication is as essential as food, shelter and dignity. While animal kingdom uses low level symbols for communication, human beings have unique capacity to use language.

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. How can we share experience without better communication? 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 explain something new (Example: News media)

c) Cultural promotion : To help foster social values and pass them from generation to generation (Example: Festivals, parties, celebrations)

d) Social contact: To help make enjoyable companionship (Example: Friendship, clubs, organizations etc.)

e) Integration: To create harmonious relationships among various social groups (Example: Political parties, conferences, meetings etc.)

f) Stimulation: To create interest and develop positive thinking /behavior(Example: Advertisements)

g) Counseling: To alleviate anxiety and lead to better ways (Example: guidance, consolation etc.) h) Expression of emotions (Example: crying, smiling etc)

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

j) Control function: To get someone to behave in an appropriate way (Example: management, censorship etc)

**Barriers to Effective Communication**

The barriers to communication and the ways and means of overcoming them to achieve effective communication.

1. Barriers to communication result in undesirable reaction and unfavorable response.

2. The communication exercise fails because the feedback is absent or falls short of expectation

3. Barriers to communication are caused by environmental, physical, semantic, attitudinal and varying perceptions of reality.

1. **Process Barriers**

Every step in the communication process is necessary for effective and good communication.. Blocked steps become barriers. Consider the following situations:

• Sender barrier. A new administrator with an innovative idea fails to speak up at a meeting, chaired by the superintendent, for fear of criticism.

 • Encoding barrier. A Spanish-speaking staff member cannot get an Englishspeaking administrator to understand a grievance about working conditions.

 • Medium barrier. A very upset staff member sends an emotionally charged letter to the leader instead of transmitting her feelings face-to-face.

 • Decoding barrier. An older principal is not sure what a young department head means when he refers to a teacher as "spaced out."

 • Receiver barrier. A school administrator who is preoccupied with the preparation of the annual budget asks a staff member to repeat a statement, because she was not listening attentively to the conversation.

 • Feedback barrier. During a meeting, the failure of school administrators to ask any questions causes the superintendent to wonder if any real understanding has taken place.

Because communication is a complex, give-and-take process, breakdowns anywhere in the cycle can block the transfer of understanding.

1. **Physical Barriers**

 Any number of physical distractions can interfere with the effectiveness of communication, including a telephone call, drop-in visitors, distances between people, walls, and static on the radio. People often take physical barriers for granted, but sometimes they can be removed. For example, an inconveniently positioned wall can be removed. Interruptions such as telephone calls and drop-in visitors can be removed by issuing instructions to a secretary. An appropriate choice of media can overcome distance barriers between people.

1. **Semantic Barriers**

 The words we choose, how we use them, and the meaning we attach to them cause many communication barriers. The problem is semantic, or the meaning of the words we use. The same word may mean different things to different people. Words and phrases such as efficiency, increased productivity, management prerogatives, and just cause may mean one thing to a school administrator, and something entirely different to a staff member. Technology also plays a part in semantic barriers to communication. Today's complex school systems are highly specialized. Schools have staff and technical experts developing and using specialized terminology—jargon that only other similar staff and technical experts can understand. And if people don't understand the words, they cannot understand the message.

1. **Psychosocial Barriers**

 Three important concepts are associated with psychological and social barriers: fields of experience, filtering, and psychological distance. Fields of experience include people's backgrounds, perceptions, values, biases, needs, and expectations. Senders can encode and receivers decode messages only in the context of their fields of experience. When the sender's field of experience overlaps very little with the receiver's, communication becomes difficult. Filtering means that more often than not we see and hear what we are emotionally tuned in to see and hear. Filtering is caused by our own needs and interests, which guide our listening.

Psychosocial barriers often involve a psychological distance between people that is similar to actual physical distance. For example, the school administrator talks down to a staff member, who resents this attitude, and this resentment separates them, thereby blocking opportunity for effective communication. Successful communication by school administrators is the essence of a productive school organization. Several communication theorists like Abrell, Auer, Larson, Shettleworth, Weiss have focused on the major areas where failures in communication most frequently occur.

The following are the major areas where communication breakdowns most frequently occur in schools:

• Sincerity. Nearly all communication theorists assert that sincerity is the foundation on which all true communication rests. Without sincerity—honesty, straightforwardness, and authenticity—all attempts at communication are destined to fail.

• Empathy. Research shows that lack of empathy is one of the major obstacles to effective communication. Empathy is the ability to put one's self into another's shoes. The empathetic person is able to see the world through the eyes of the other person.

• Self-perception. How we see ourselves affects our ability to communicate effectively. A healthy but realistic self-perception is a necessary ingredient in communicating with others.

• Role perception. Unless people know what their role is, the importance of their role, and what is expected of them, they will not know what to communicate, when to communicate, or to whom to communicate.

• Efforts to distort the message. Pitfalls in communication often occur in our efforts—both consciously and unconsciously—to distort messages.

• Images. Another obstacle to successful communication is the sender's image of the receiver and vice versa. For example, on the one hand, school administrators are sometimes viewed as not too well informed about teaching, seen as out of touch with the classroom, and looked on as paper shufflers. On the other hand, some school administrators view teachers as lazy, inconsiderate of administrative problems, and unrealistic about the strengths and weaknesses of their students. Such views lead to a "we-they" attitude.

• Vehicle for message. The vehicle by which we choose to send messages is important in successful communication. In most cases, the vehicle to be used is defined by the situation.

• Ability to communicate. Some of the ways we communicate raise barriers by inhibiting discussion or causing others to feel inferior, angry, hostile, dependent, compliant, or subservient.

• Listening ability. Frequently, people fail to appreciate the importance of listening, do not care enough to become actively involved with what others are saying, and are not sufficiently motivated to develop the skills necessary to acquire the art of listening.

• Culture. Our cultural heritage, biases, and prejudices often serve as barriers to communication. The fact that we are African-American or white, young or old, male or female have all proved to be obstacles in communicating effectively.

• Tradition. Past practice in a school helps determine how, when, and what we send and receive. For example, a school administrator who has an authoritative style may find that his staff will not share information readily. If a new administrator with a collaborative style replaces the authoritarian one, the new administrator may find that it takes a while for his colleagues to speak out on important issues.

• Conditioning. The manner in which communication is conditioned by the environment influences the accuracy of messages sent and received. If we work for administrators who set a climate in which we are encouraged to share information, we soon become conditioned to communicate accordingly.

• Noise. A major barrier to communication is what communication experts call noise. Noise consists of the external factors in the channels and the internal perceptions and experiences within the source and the receiver that affect communication.

• Feedback. Faculty and staff tell their leaders that they want feedback. However, feedback improperly given can impede communication rather than improve it. Administrators and followers both need more training in how to use feedback more productively.

**Four key points of communication**

1. If you want to convince others with a message, convince them that you are a good person and that you know what you are talking about.

2. Use words that your audience will easily understand and remember.

3. Speak direct, in a conversational way for a better communication.

4. Move away from egocentrism

 The most important in effective communication is to know the following:

• WHO you are communicating with (it's of great importance to know your audience, who they are, of what age they are, what they already know, how many people will receive your message, etc.)

• WHAT you are communicating – the communication should be adequate to the subject.

• WHY - what the goal of your communicate is, what you want to achieve.

• WHEN you will communicate the issue.

• HOW you will communicate the issue – think about the method you will choose.

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