

Communication: A Vital Tool for Transmitting Information

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Abstract

Communication is important in a sense that it helps in connecting people to encode or decode any information, news, ideas, feelings or opinions. But effective communication is one in which we stay focused and avoid distractions, misunderstandings and conflicts. Sometimes negative signals and inconsistency in language can create problems in the process of communication. However, giving less importance to talking and more to listening can definitely enhance an individual's effective communication.

Hence, communication is a purposeful process of expressing, receiving and understanding messages containing factual information, feelings, ideas and needs by two or more individuals through common symbols. It is essential for the students to gain effective communication skills in order to enhance their academic performance and would be of immense help in the job market.

There is a common notion that one's ability to speak good English is a proof of competence and this is a belief held not only in India but in the world as a whole. Speakers' performance and competence entail a lot of excellent skills, intonation, the use of idiomatic expressions and many more. This means no matter how capable an individual may be in his or her profession, it is the use of good communication skills that highlights this strength.

This paper tries to frame a mechanism on the basis of which an individual can enhance his or her communication skills.

Keywords: Communication, Aims, Objectives, Types, Elements, Channels,

INTRODUCTION

Communication may be defined as an exchange of ideas, thoughts, information, feelings, etc. It involves two or more participants in a given context. It is also a process by which we cultivate relationships and share knowledge. Webster defines the term communication as "an act or instance of transmitting knowledge and also a process by which information is exchanged between the individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behaviours". It is also considered a medium of transmitting information and to describe communication ability through cognitive, social and linguistic abilities.

Classroom communication is the best technique for students to improve their communicative skills. It can be developed through a regular exposure to situated learning experiences. Classroom communication involves two levels: interpersonal communication behaviours and instructional communication behaviours. The interpersonal behaviours include nonverbal immediacy, communication apprehension and willingness to communicate; whereas instructional communication behaviours primarily focus on the

concept of clarity and immediacy behaviours. Interpersonal communication is basically a process by which one person stimulates meaning in the mind of another person through verbal and nonverbal messages. This type of communication involves critical elements namely assertiveness, responsiveness and versatility.

It is also believed that a fair and honest understanding of communication can be enhanced through behavioural and cognitive approaches. The behavioural approach helps an individual to know one's visible response to the internal processing of what was just said or observed. The cognitive approach helps to know the thought process behind one's perception, memory and reasoning of what was just heard or said. In the light of above discussion we can say that communication means a talk between two or more people. It is a form of interaction that occurs in oral or written communication. It is the kind of speech that happens informally, symmetrically, and for the purpose of establishing and maintaining social ties. Communication is the social interaction and always demands specific rules to sustain. The primary focus of communication is to describe common social situations in which speakers and listeners accept one another in terms of ideas and opinions and also to understand its social purpose. If proper principles and norms are not followed in oral communication, the conversation cannot be maintained in a positive way and may also cause to deteriorate.

It is not impractical to learn different ways of starting an effective communication. The initiative in communication depends on the kind of topic, person, time and situation. The most impressive and effective technique in communication is to initiate, respond, sustain, and follow up.

We can begin a communication by greeting, by asking a question, or making a statement. For instance we are at the Wave Mall Jammu and want to buy a new T-shirt from Yougal Sons shopping Centre:

Raheem: I am looking for a nice T-shirt to go with my sky blue jeans.
(Initiate)

Shop Assistant: Please take a look at this black and white T-shirt.
(Respond)

Raheem: I have two black and white T-shirts already.
(Sustain)

Shop Assistant: Let me show you a few other colours.
(Follow up)

It is very important in a communication to know when to stop talking and start listening. A perfect communication is one in which both the listener and the speaker alternate their roles. The topic of communication must have a mutual acceptance as it helps in sustaining the talk. It would be better if the communication is about a topic of interest like weather, current affairs, etc. The closing of the communication should also be impressive and situation based. We can use certain phrases for conclusion like bye, goodbye, see you then, catch up with you later, etc.

Language is the most commonly used and effective medium of self-expression in all spheres of human life – personal, social and professional. Some commonly used strategies for effective communication are:

- Meeting people, exchanging greetings and taking leave
- Introduction
- Introducing people to others
- Giving personal information
- Talking about people and places
- Getting people's attention and interrupting

- Giving instructions and seeking clarifications
- Making requests and responding to requests
- Asking for directions and giving directions
- Thanking someone and responding to thanks
- Inviting and Accepting and Refusing an Invitation
- Apologizing and responding to an apology
- Congratulating and responding to congratulations
- Paying compliments, showing appreciation, offering encouragement and responding to them
- Asking for, giving and refusing permission

Types of Communication

There are two types of Communication:

- A. Formal Communication; and
- B. Informal Communication.

A. Formal Communication

A formal communication is one that has been initiated with an appropriate use of grammar and phrases relevant to the situation. The use of formal communication can be observed in debates, where men of authority are engaged on a specific topic. This type of communication is characterized by long and complicated sentences and also relies on choice and accuracy of words. The most important function of formal communication is to show the speaker’s understanding of the language and professional skills in oral communication. The use of this type of communication is primarily found in academic and business activities.

Following words or phrases are prominently used in formal communication:

Greetings	Good morning, Good afternoon, good evening, Hello, How do you do? Nice to meet you, etc.
Responses to Greetings	How are you doing? I hope everything is fine with you. How do you do? Pleased to meet you.
Making suggestions	would you please..... Could you like.....
Seeking clarification	I have a question for you..... Can you tell me what is meant by.....
Giving an opinion	The way I see it..... If it were up to me..... It is fairly certain that.....
Showing approval Or excitement	That is wonderful..... That is terrible..... Quite impressive.....
Extending an apology	I am sorry.....

Leave taking	I am sorry for the inconvenience caused. My sincere apologies. Good bye, Good night, have a nice time. See you again soon.
Expressing gratitude	Thank you/ you are welcome.
Responding to a request	“Do you mind if I smoke?” Not at all.
Acknowledging an Introduction	Please/Nice Happy to meet you.

B. Informal Communication

Informal communication is personal, social, and a carefree conversation. It creates a sense of closeness and genuineness. Informal communication usually makes others feel comfortable because it always stresses upon the use of simpler, shorter words and sentences. It does not care much of grammatical structures especially talking to friends or intimate persons. The use of vocabulary depends on the kind of interaction.

<u>Informal word</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Cuz	because
Chill	relax
Gonna	going to
Hold on	wait
Gotta	need to
Yea/Yeah	yes
Nah	no
I dunno	I don't know
My bad	admitting guilt
Besties	best friend
Guy/guya	You all/all of you/you
I'm outta here	I need to leave now

The following words or phrases are commonly used in informal communication:

Greetings	Hi/How is it going? How are ya? How ya doing?
Responses to Greetings	Not bad/Not much How `bout you?
Seeking clarification	Excuse me..... Can you tell me..... Please clarify.....
Showing approval Or excitement	Cool!/ Awesome!/ Sweet! Oh, my God that's great!
Extending an apology	Oops! I am sorry about that.....

Giving an opinion

I am sorry/ I apologize.

I think/ I suppose/

I honestly feel that.....

Leave taking

Bye! /see ya! /

Catch you later/

See you guys.

Good night! Sleep tight!

Aims and Objectives of Communication**Following are the aims and objectives of Communication:**

- To exchange the information and share knowledge.
- To focus on speaking and listening with grammatical correctness and clarity of speech.
- To gain better understanding of the level of effectiveness of the communicative skills.
- To maintain a balance between fluency and accuracy.
- To gain confidence in speaking and conversational abilities.
- To correctly receive messages and sharpen receptive skills.
- To enhance productive skills like speaking and writing.
- To give an opportunity to participants/speakers/listeners to convey their emotions, thoughts, dreams and hopes through talking or writing.
- To share one's feelings with others in order to live a balanced life.
- To reveal, exchange and evaluate the concepts and ideas in order to influence, make benefits and achievements.
- To understand why an individual thinks in that way when he/she expresses his/her thoughts.
- To know whether an individual respects the opinions, thoughts and ideas of others or not.
- To know whether listeners/speakers appreciate each other or not.
- To encourage for the effective use of gestures and facial expressions while talking.
- To establish eye-contact and satisfying listeners with concrete examples.
- To motivate listeners/participants for patient listening.
- To develop the ability to initiate and sustain conversation.
- To inspire and encourage speakers/listeners so that they may be able to activate their knowledge in different communicative situations.
- To maintain the pace of speech and minimize the use of slang, idioms, fixed phrases, collocations, etc.
- To encourage speakers for spontaneous communication.
- To encourage non-native speakers not to feel embarrassment or show their inability in adjusting to native speakers' speech.
- To encourage non-native speakers of English to communicate with native speakers so that they can adjust themselves in an English speaking environment.
- To enhance speaker's ability to express his/her opinions, thoughts and ideas in a simple and lucid way.
- To prepare speakers/listeners/participants for interactive and mentally satisfying conversations in order to make them relaxed and satisfied.
- To pay attention to non-verbal communication skills in a conversation.

- To encourage participants/speakers/listeners to acquire a sufficient amount of vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation and intonation for effective and purposeful communication.

1. Elements of Communication

It is believed that the elements of communication are required for a complete form of communication at any stage. Their main function is to simplify the whole action of an event and clarify different stages of communication. The main elements of communication are as under:

C. Source/Sender

Source/sender has a key role in any information processing system and is considered as one of the basic concepts of communication. It is mainly considered as an object which transmits the information or encodes a message. Its main function is to generate a message data that a person wishes to communicate to others with confidence and authority.

2. Objective/Goal

Objective/Goal refers to the purpose of communication and the set aims to be accomplished in any communicative situation. Communication has been considered as the most important and powerful tool to inspire and energise people to achieve things that they would otherwise think impossible. The objective/goal of communication may be to sharpen our communication skills in order to communicate effectively with grammatical correctness and appropriate exchange of ideas. The following questions **should always be kept in mind while participating in any type of communication:**

- A. What is the goal of my communication?
- B. What can I learn from them?
- C. What is the most important point that should be given more importance and stress in my communication?
- D. Am I properly focusing on the audience?
- E. Do I recognize the perspective of my audience?

3. Message

A message is a kind of information that can be conveyed by words either in speech, signals or writing. It may include a verbal or non-verbal content. The main sources of a verbal message are: e-mails, mobile text messages, phone calls, written or spoken words, etc. Non-verbal messages include body-movement, gestures, and eye-contact.

Therefore, communication is the process of sending and receiving messages and an effective communication is one in which the messages are properly conveyed and the listeners/participants are encouraged to respond or act upon.

4. Dispatch

Dispatch means the manner in which we send messages. It can be a phone call, an e-mail, a mobile text message, sending a letter by post or courier, etc.

5. Time-place factor

This element of communication is an important one as it gives us an idea to shape our communication properly keeping in view the appropriateness of time and place. If a communication is not systematically initiated, it can lessen the interest of the audience. Therefore, an effective communication is one that is prepared or maintained according to time and place.

6. Medium

Medium is another important element of communication. Communication Media help in delivering and receiving messages or information. This medium is divided into two categories: analog and digital.

Analog medium consists of television, radio, telephone, etc. whereas digital medium consists of telegraphy, computer networking, computer mediated communication, etc.

7. Reception

Reception is considered as a key element in communication. It makes communication effective and proper because it simply focuses on the arrival of the messages. It helps listeners to interpret the meaning of a message and respond accordingly. Therefore, reception refers to the way in which people make sense of the messages that they encounter. It helps readers/viewers/listeners to actively participate in communication.

8. Receiver

Communication involves the exchange of thoughts, ideas or emotions between two or more people. Receiver means the person who is going to answer a message. It can be received through a phone call, a mobile text-message, an e-mail, by a postal delivery, etc. Messages can be verbal or non-verbal, but the main task of a receiver is to decode the sender's message so that others can easily understand its meaning.

9. Understanding

The act of understanding is another important element of communication. It helps an individual to remain cognizant of different strategies of communication and respond according to their nature. A person should know the purpose of a message and its content in order to make an effective and purposeful communication.

10. Feedback/Response

Ultimately the receiver reacts or responds to the communication sent by the sender. The response could be based on clear interpretation of the symbols sent or it could be based on misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the symbols sent. Whatever the response of a receiver to a sender is, it is called feedback. Some feedback is non-verbal — smiles, sighs, nods and so on.

An effective communication occurs when information and mutual understanding pass between the sender and receiver. It is possible only if we focus on the responses of the other persons and change the ways of communication accordingly until the desired outcome is obtained. Therefore, feedback and response are essential for effective communication. A successful message is always judged by the appropriateness of the receiver's reaction that has been desired by the sender.

Channels of Communication

Communication channels are basically the methods and techniques used to send messages. They help an individual to convey message/signal from the source to the destination. Following are the main channels of communication:

A. Face to Face Interaction

Face to face interaction is an important channel of communication as it helps an individual to adjust the tone of his/her voice and use more exciting language in order to capture the attention of the audience.

B. Internet

The use of internet has revolutionized the system of communication. It connects people from all walks of life and makes communication easier and faster. The latest technological developments with internet facility help people to develop relationships among the distant acquaintances and remain in touch in each other's lives.

C. Social Media

Social media certainly effects how we engage with one another across all venues and ages. Paul Booth in

his book ‘Communication Studies’ defines the concept of social media in communication as “There has been a shift in the way we communicate; rather than face-to-face interaction, we’re tending to prefer mediated communication,” he says. “We’d rather e-mail than meet; we’d rather text than talk on the phone.”

D. Telephone

Telephone is considered as one of the most powerful channels of communication. It has an enormous use or advantage in solving tricky or unfavourable situations. It helps two or more users to conduct a conversation when they are at distant places and unable to make personal contacts.

E. Email

Email is another important channel and the most widely used tool for communication. It is considered a reliable source of communication in modern information technology. It can be used for various purposes like keeping in touch with your friends/teachers/instructors, requesting someone for some information, applying for jobs or scholarships, etc.

F. Postal Mail

It is also a channel of communication but people generally avoid it as it takes much time to reach the desired destination.

G. Reports

A report can be a detailed account of an opinion, decision or statement. It can be forwarded to other persons by post or through an email in order to make an effective communication.

H. Meetings

A meeting is a formal or informal assembly of individuals where they can exchange their ideas, thoughts or opinions. It is also an effective channel of communication in a sense that its deliberations can be recorded or written for future references.

I. Memos

It is a short form of memorandum and is used for a brief written message from one person to another. It is also one of the channels of communication.

J. Notices

A notice is a warning or intimation of something. We usually read notices of marriage or death in newspapers. Hence, it can also be a channel of communication.

K. Announcements

An announcement is a statement made formally and publically in order to inform important events or happenings. Therefore, an announcement is also a channel of communication because it is considered as an act of making known publically.

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