

English Communication Skills

By: Kshyama Sagar Meher

This reference book can be useful for
BBA, MBA, B.Com, BMS, M.Com, BCA, MCA
and many more courses for Various Universities



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Sample Preview of The Chapter

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ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS



The Process of Communication

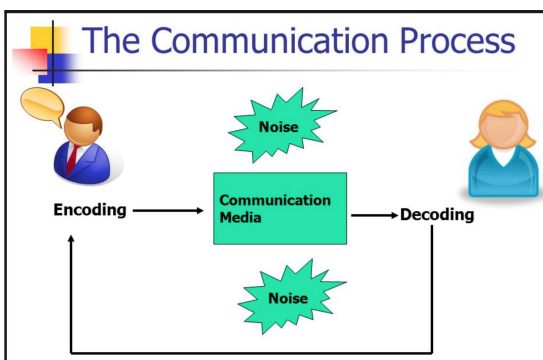
INTRODUCTION

Communication means ‘to exchange (thoughts) or make known (information or feelings) by speech, writing or other means; to transmit’. Communication involves not just words, but all our senses. It may be face-to-face dialogue involving facial expression, tone, body language, ability to listen with patience; all contribute to the conveying messages and information between people. For example, the written word in books and magazines, e-mails or texts can convey more than just the writing. It can inspire, elevate and encourage. It can also confuse and exasperate. The meaning of the written word, as Lynne Truss says, can be changed just by rearranging the punctuation. For example, ‘a woman, without her man, is nothing’ and ‘a woman: without her, man is nothing’ have different meanings. Sharing of ideas and thoughts serves various purposes. Thus, communication is very valuable.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

The figure below shows a simple model of the communication process:



Elements of Communication

The elements of communication are:

(i) Communication needs at least two persons:

(a) The addresser, and (b) The addressee.

(ii) Topic: It involves a topic or the contents of the message.

(iii) Channel: It is the medium through which the message travels. Examples include letter, telephone and e-mail.

(iv) Code: It is the language of the message. Examples include English, French and Hindi.

(v) Message Form: It is the selection of particular grammar and lexical choices of the message.

(vi) Setting: It means the social and physical setting.

The Role of the Decoder

The role of addressee or receiver of the message is an active. Language has the potential for meaning and the decoder makes a meaning on the basis of his knowledge and the context of communication which includes the knowledge of the subject, topic, addresser-addressee relationship, knowledge of the code or the language used and the physical and social context.

Take the example of a message: “Mr. Panda will not come”. There is no difficulty in understanding the literal meaning of this sentence. But we do not know what the speaker wants to say. We can understand this message only if we know the context – the addresser, the addressee, when, where and in what context. Suppose the addresser is the teacher of a school; and the addressee is the principal; and Mr. Panda is also a teacher in the school. The teacher utters these words after getting a WhatsApp message on his phone and informs the principal. So, we will understand the meaning of the sentence after knowing the context. The communication involves the use of a language. The

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decoder or the addressee has to understand the language to getting the meaning of the message.

Macro Functions of Communication

The following are the macro functions of communication:

- (i) **Emotive Function:** It communicates the inner feelings, states and emotions. E.g. Oh no! It may be the sender is disgust or angry at somebody.
- (ii) **Directive Function:** It seeks to influence the behaviour of others. E.g. Bring that, please. Here the sender may be asking the addressee to bring something.
- (iii) **Phatic Function:** The intention of this is to open the channel or checking that it is working. E.g. Hello, is it Ms. Smita? Or Do you hear me, Mrs. Agrawal?
- (iv) **Poetic Function:** The aim is to send a message of awareness or about an issue. E.g. A poem written by a poet.
- (v) **Referential Function:** The sender gives references about certain things to the receiver.
- (vi) **Metalinguistic Function:** It focuses on the code in the message. E.g. 'the use of both will or shall is correct in modern usage.'
- (vii) **Contextual Function:** The intention is to develop a context. E.g. Right! Let's start the class today.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

There are various barriers that hinder communication process. Some of them are given below:

- (a) **Code:** The language may be the obstruction. The addressee/receiver may not know the language in which the addresser/sender has sent the message.
- (b) **Vocabulary:** The receiver may not know the term/technical language sent by the sender. For example, a person who is not familiar with the vocabulary of the stock market may not understand the equity or share.
- (c) **Concept:** If the sender uses a subject specific concept, the receiver may not be understood that. For example, a black hole is simple language, yet many do not understand it.
- (d) **Background Knowledge and Shared Assumptions:** An Indian in India may not what is a Victorian style mansion if he has not seen or lived in England.
- (e) **Pronunciation, Intonation, Accent and Stress in Spoken Language:** Sometimes the

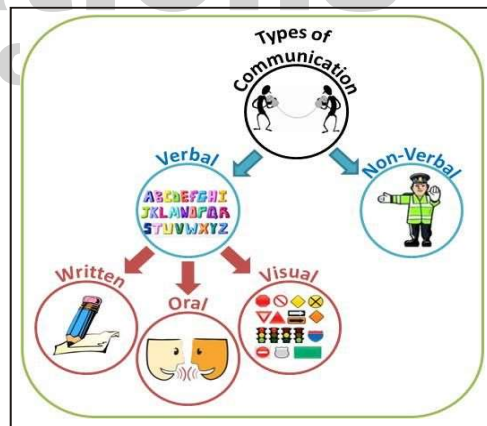
receiver may not understand the pronunciation, intonation, accent and stress of the speaker. For example, an Indian may find it difficult to understand what an American is speaking.

- (f) **Culture Specific Communication:** If the sender of the message sends a message that is specific to his culture and if the receiver is ignorant about that the communication between the two may causes misunderstanding.
- (g) **Physical Environment:** Noise and other disturbances or physical distance between the sender and the receiver of the message can obstruct communication.
- (h) **Affective Factors:** These are factors like attitude, motivation, anxiety, fear, beliefs, values, lack of mutual trust, lack of time or pressure of work, lack of attention and personal rivalries can adversely affect communication.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

Communication may be categorized into several types on basis of:

- (i) **Expression:** Written, oral and gestural
- (ii) **Flow:** Internal (Vertical and Horizontal) and external
- (iii) **Relationship:** Formal and informal.



Various Media of Expression (Written, Oral and Gestural)

Various media, like writing, speech, gestures and actions are used in communication. Speech is primary and writing secondary. Speech came first and the writing system was developed later. Several of the tribal languages do not have any script and they are available only in spoken form.

Actions and gestures are used by deaf and dumb people use to communicate with each other—this is also a type of communication and known as sign language. The visually challenged read and write using Braille.

At the workplace, writing or via email is the most popular form of communication. Letters, circulars, reports, manuals, house journals, magazines, office memorandums, newsletters, brochures and bulletins are used in office for communication. Speech is also used for communication. Face-to-face interaction, telephone conversations, lectures and talks, meetings and discussions are some important forms of speech communication.

Gestural communication means expression through body language. Parents use this means of communication with their children if they are naughty in the presence of guests and it is often used in workplace situations as well in similar circumstances or when verbal communication is impossible. Pictures, charts and diagrams are also used either on their own or in combination with written or oral communication for greater effect and better understanding. Business houses also use them in their illustrated catalogues and brochures to promote their products and brands.

Downward, Upward and Horizontal Communication

On the basis of flow, communication can be categorised as downward, upward and horizontal communication. Downward communication flows from higher to lower levels of authority. Example of a downward communication is the communication between a superior and a subordinate. When communication flows from a subordinate or subordinates to a higher authority, we call this upward communication. Downward and upward communications are vertical communication. Communication between officers working at the same level of management is called horizontal or lateral communication. For example, communication between manager (Production) and Manager (Marketing) involves exchange of ideas, information, opinions or seeking clarifications between personnel of the same rank. This is a horizontal or lateral communication.

Formal and Informal Communication

Formal communication is the communication made through the chain of command. It involves the transmission of official message in the formal organization structure. Such communication is planned and established by management and shows the hierarchical relationships and these generally are in

writing e.g. orders, decisions and instructions. Informal communication does not flow through the official channels of communication. It involves the spontaneous expression and is usually made orally. Hence, it may be incomplete or incorrect information. The words formal and informal are used to show change in form and language of communication according to change in relationship between the addresser and the addressee and the context of situation. For example, while talking to brother at home is a formal communication. If the brother is the boss in office, the office communication will be a formal type.

WRITTEN VS. ORAL COMMUNICATION

Both spoken and written languages are used for communication. They have the same functions, but their form and manner of use differ. For example, oral communication makes use of sounds, while written communication uses symbols. In oral communication, the speaker has voice quality effects, facial expressions, postural and gestural systems. In written communication, the sender has typographical variety to use. The receiver of the message is present in case of oral communication, but in written communication, the writer writes for an absent reader who may also be far away in space and time.

Both oral and written communications have advantages and disadvantages.

Being face-to-face with the receiver, in oral communication the speaker can monitor and go as per his reactions. Accordingly, he can plan his next message and fit it in the overall pattern of what he wishes to say. He must keep on talking during the period allotted to him; he must decide when to take his turn, how to interrupt his interlocutor, how to hand over the turn—in fact he must be in command of all the speaking skills. He can observe his interlocutor and change what he is saying. Oral communication is faster, more economical and more effective than written communication. Doubts and misunderstandings can be cleared on the spot as immediate response is available. There are variations in spoken language and in the way it is delivered. These could be due to geographical or social and cultural differences. There may be dialectical differences, differences in accent and the use of paralinguistic features and body language. Speech is less organized than written language. There may be incomplete sentences or simply sequences of phrases. Thus, oral communication may easily create misunderstandings. Oral communication is less reliable because it is not available in future if not recorded. It is also affected by

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the attitudes and personality, self-interest, beliefs, values and prejudices of the sender and the receiver and the time and circumstances of the communication. Oral communication is also not suitable for lengthy messages to be communicated to audience who are widely scattered in terms of distance.

The written communication also has advantages and disadvantages. Since the writer is writing for an absent reader, he may look over, reflect and edit what he has already written, with no fear of being interrupted by his interlocutor; he can take his own time in using a particular word, even looking it up in the dictionary, reorder what he has written and even change his mind about what he has to say. He is under no pressure to keep on writing; he can even destroy what he has written and throw it into the dustbin without fear of offending the reader. But the writer has disadvantages too: he has no access to immediate feedback and simply has to imagine the reader's reactions. This non-reciprocal nature of written communication makes it more difficult to learn. Written communication ensures the transmission of information in a uniform manner and there is little risk of unauthorized alteration in the message. Since it is put in black and white, it provides a permanent record for future reference. Written communication tends to be complete, precise and unambiguous. The message can be repeated at regular intervals and lengthy messages can be sent to widely scattered readers. But written communication is time-consuming, expensive and rigid and it becomes difficult to maintain secrecy. At the workplace, face-to-face and telephone communications are generally confirmed in writing by post or e-mail, particularly when the communication is with the world outside.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERACTIONS

According to Brown & Yule (1983), the major functions of language can be categorized as transactional and interactional. Transactional means transfer of information. Interactional means expressing social relations and personal attitudes.

Examples:

1. (a)

A: There's no information about the incident.
(Transactional)

B: OK.

(b)

A: How are you? (Interactional)

B: Fine, thank you.

The use of language in business transactions performs both of these functions. In business transac-

tions, language is used for different types of face-to-face interactions:

(i) Language is used in conversation for making social contact, conducting various functions like introducing oneself and others, providing and seeking information, making inquiries, giving orders, providing the company's profile, reporting conversations, describing people, places and processes, making relationships, asking people to do things, providing help, taking help, apologizing, describing, arguing a point, motivating, explaining a situation, comparing two products, negotiating business deals, asking for and giving advice. (ii) Taking part in discussions, (iii) Attending and undertaking meetings and interviews, (iv) Giving lectures (v) Demonstrating products, (vi) Talking about where you work, describing operations and works, talking of office working conditions, consulting and reporting to superiors, asking for and giving advice, discussing problems at work. Most of these are transactional and some are interactional.

Conversation

We spend a large part of our lives engaging in conversation and for most of us conversation is among our most significant and engrossing activities. Researchers from various academic disciplines have looked at conversation as an object of inquiry and come up with fascinating findings. Psychologists and linguists have made observations about conversation.

The term conversation is used somewhat ambiguously in current literature. It is used sometimes to refer to any spoken encounter or interaction and sometimes, more restrictedly, total occurring when a small number of participants come together and settle into what they perceive to be a few moments cut off from instrumental tasks.

The activities which are directly governed by norms for the use of speech are called speech events. As speech events, conversations can be contrasted with other types of speech events, like lectures, interviews, discussions, meetings and debates.

CHARACTERISTICS AND CONVENTIONS OF CONVERSATION

The Co-operative and Politeness Principle

In conversation, people share common principles of conversation that lead them to interpret each other's utterances as contributing to the conversation.

An assumption is that if we ask a question to someone, whatever the receiver say will somehow be interpreted as constituting an answer to the question.