UNIT - 1 : COMMUNICATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

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1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Define the term communication
- Outline the process of communication
- Name the barriers to communication
- Describe the functions of communication
- Explain the different types of communication

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of the course on Introduction to Mass Communication. In this unit we will introduce you to the basic concept of ‘communication’.

Here we will discuss how the activities of communication take place among human beings. We will also discuss the different stages of communication

process with all its characteristics and aspects. After a thorough study of this unit, you will be able to develop an adequate understanding of the concept of communication this will be your base for understanding the concept of Mass Communication which will be studied in the Unit 2 of this course.

We hope that this unit will open up to you the exciting world of communication in a completely new light. So let us begin our journey into this world by understanding the meaning of the word 'communication' from the point of view of a professional communicator.

1.3 COMMUNICATION

Communication is quite a simple term it transcends each and every walk of human life which actually makes it so important for us. It influences the way we live and has an impact on our day to day life.

This term is derived from the Latin word 'communis' and Greek word 'communicare' both of which imply sharing and mutual understanding. It is something through which we share knowledge, feelings, ideas, information, etc.

In face-to-face communication, it is not merely an exchange of information, but also something more which include passing of gestures, expression, language, tones, etc. All these aspects combined together create a sort of impact on both the partners. It goes on to affect some kind of changes in the behaviour or personality of all those persons involved in the communication process.

1.3.1 Definition

Communication is an all-encompassing activity or process that has far-reaching utility and influence over humanity. In one way, it is the driving force of smankind anywhere in the world.

It is the activity of sharing or exchanging information between two or more persons. It is a basic and universal tool for making others know

about our views, feelings, interests etc. In other words, it implies notifying others (whoever might be interested) about our attitudes, status of our minds, etc.

This happens in two ways. First, we might wish to know the mental status of somebody else. Second, we might be interested in getting across our status of mind to someone who might have some interest in it. Sometimes we start the communication process ourselves to which others respond. And at other times we respond to someone else's queries or communication initiative when he or she might have wanted to know something about us – may be out of personal interest or professional interest.

Here are a few definitions of the term communication which will help you in understanding the subject better:

"Communication is sharing of experiences on the basis of commonness." — Willbur Schram,

"One mind affecting the other." — Claude Shannon,

Communications expert Leagans, way back in 1961, described communication as **"a process by which two or more people exchange ideas, facts, feelings or impression in such ways that each gains a common understanding of meaning, intent and the use of messages."**

In other words, we can say that communication is the 'mother of existence.'

1.3.2 How Communication Takes Place

Though the communication process looks simple enough, yet it has to go through several steps before it reaches the person for whom it is aimed. Let us go into this process for your understanding.

For completing the communication process there is a need of at least one (communication can be done within our own self also) or more persons.

Here, the person who would like to start the proceedings is called the '**Sender'** of messages. And the one or ones who receives what is being said or written is termed as the '**Receiver',** because he or she receives the communication message.

The Sender (for example Mr A) wakes up in the morning in his house and wants his mother to give him a glass of water. He would form a suitable sentence in this regard in his mind and speak to his mother or anybody else in the house. This is the '**Message'.**

His mother or anyone who may have heard this sentence will at first listen to what has been said and then try to understand the meaning of the sentence. Following this, the Receiver of the communication message will simply bring a glass of water to Mr A. Or may be that he or she does not bring the glass of water as the latter may not be free at that time or due to any other factor. Here, in return to Mr A's sentence or message, the Receiver may or may not speak anything but may simply do the job being asked to carry out.

When something is said or communicated to the other person, in reply the Receiver of the messages also goes through the same process. Such as – at first he or she decides what is to be said in reply to the first communication and then formulates a suitable sentence or message to be passed on. This is called **'Feedback'** in communication. It is the response of the receiving parties of a communication process.

Then, we come to the aspect of **'Channel'** which is the carrier of the information or messages which we want the other party to know or receive. There may be many forms of a channel such as language, body language etc.

Here are a few other terms involved with the communication process with which also you should become familiar :

Encoding – It is the process of forming a meaningful sentence or message to inform somebody about something. Say, for example, the writer of this study material wants to inform you all about Mass Communication. He or she prepares a structure about how to do it, then decides what is to be said, forms the exact sentences etc. This is Encoding.

Decoding – It is the opposite of the process of encoding. It is the process of understanding of the message by the receiver of the message. What you are trying to do right now while reading the study material is decoding.

Significantly enough, the word **'Noise'** is used here with a different meaning. In communication studies, it refers to various types of disturbances that the communication process has to face many a time.

These disturbances may even cause distortions in a smooth flow of the communication process as they may hamper the proper understanding of the messages or information being exchanged between the communicators.

1.3.2 Barriers to Communication

Barriers to the process of communication imply those conditions under which the smooth flow of the process is disturbed in varying levels. This may render the process ineffective, thereby causing misunderstandings among the participants. This happens due to several factors including differences in the mental capacity of the persons engaged in the process, disturbances in the communication channel or carrier which include distortions and difficulties arising out of technical problems like the one we have already referred to earlier,

static or cosmic disturbances like thunderstorms, rains, affecting the sound reception quality while listening to radio or TV programmes etc., environmental noise like sound of traffic, loud music etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – A

1. What is communication?

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2. What are the elements of communication?

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3. Define the terms:
   a. Sender
   b. Receiver
   c. Message
   d. Channel
   e. Feedback
   f. Encoding
   g. Decoding

1.4 FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION

At different times different scholars have forwarded different opinions regarding the functions of communication. In 1948, Harold Lasswell named three functions of communication:

1. Surveillance of the environment.
2. Correlation of the parts of the society in response to its environment.
3. Transmission of cultural heritage.

In 1960, Wright added to this a fourth function, entertainment. In 1987, Dennis McQuail added to this another function, i.e., the mobilization function of the media. He, then, in his book 'Mass Communication Theory' summarized the functions of communication. The set of communication functions defined by McQuail is widely accepted as the basic functions of communication. They are as follows:

Information

- Providing information about events and conditions in the society and the world.
- Indicating relations of power.
- Facilitating innovation, adaptation and progress.

Correlation

- Explaining, interpreting and commenting on the meaning of events and information.
- Providing support for established authority and norms.
- Socializing
- Co-ordinating separate activities.
- Consensus building.
- Setting orders of priority and signaling relative status.

Continuity

- Expressing the dominant culture and recognizing sub-cultures and new cultural developments.
- Forging and maintaining commonality of values.

Entertainment

- Providing amusement, diversion, the means of relaxation.

Mobilization

- Campaigning for social objectives in the sphere of politics, war, economic development, work and sometimes religion.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - B

1. What are the functions of communication according to Lasswell?

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2. What are the functions of communication according to McQuail?

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3. Who introduced the 'entertainment' function of communication?

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1.5 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

We can classify the communication system into several types, depending upon various factors like physical and linguistic expressions, number of participants, medium or tool or vehicles of transmission used, objectives to be achieved etc. We will discuss about all of them with examples for your better understanding of the system.

Types of communication based on the number of persons involved:

Intrapersonal Communication: When we communicate within ourselves it is called Intrapersonal Communication. In simple terms, we exchange information or messages within ourselves in our own mind. For example, Intrapersonal Communication takes place when we think of something in our mind, try to remember something etc. It is important that as in this system we communicate with ourselves only, the feedback or responses to the process is instant or the most immediate.

Again, in addition to the moments when we exclusively communicate with ourselves, even each and every instance of communication with others - whether with one person or a few persons – is preceded by at least one small instance of an Intrapersonal Communication.

Interpersonal Communication: This is the term applied to that type of communication when we communicate with one or more persons. Say, when we are talking with a few friends or family members sitting somewhat in a close manner. Here, the response or feedback is slightly delayed compared to the Intrapersonal one. The reason is that when we say something or show a certain gesture to the other person he or she will at first 'decode' what we have said, then 'encode' a specific response and only after that, will send across the response. The entire process takes a few seconds or may be a few minutes depending upon various circumstances.

It is basically a face-to-face communication usually in very close quarters, with almost equal scope for all the parties involved for participating in the communication process.

We normally practise this type of communication for a major portion of our lives.

Group Communication: In this type, the number of participants increase to about five / six to maybe 10 / 12 for which it is called a Group Communication. It is expected that the people communicating amongst themselves in a group may have some common relationship – for example – close friends, classmates, family members, employees in an office etc. It is usually seen that in contrast to Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Communication types, here the scope of equal participation in the communication process by all the members of the group may not be so simple.

Here the responses or feedback may be further delayed and some members of the group may not at all take part in the activity due to various factors.

Large and Small Group Communication: Some of the communication experts have opined that this mode of communication (Group Communication) can be further sub-divided into Large Group and Small Group Communication depending upon the number of participants in the process. However, there is no hard and fast rule regarding the fixed number of participants to identify groups in these categories.

Public Communication: This specific type of communication involves a large number of receivers of messages or audiences, with just one or a few senders of messages, normally at a public place. As the number of receivers is large enough, mechanical devices like microphones, amplifiers, sound systems need to be used for communicating with the audiences. For example - big public meetings, political rallies etc. where several hundreds or thousands of people gather for listening to the speaker or the sender of messages.

An experienced person can understand the physical or non verbal signals or feedback from the receivers here instantly and thereby decide how to conduct further communication.

Then there is the important type of communication called **Mass Communication** which we will discuss in detail in the next Unit.

Types of communication based on physical and linguistic expressions:

Verbal Communication: This term means expressing ourselves, our feelings, attitudes etc. by using spoken and written language. Language is a code of symbols which is created after a scientific permutation and combination of alphabets and words for adding a certain meaning to the messages as one desires the receivers to understand. This is called encoding about which we have mentioned earlier. Similarly, the receivers on their part also try to draw out the meaning of the words and messages by decoding the words and sentences of the messages. So we can see that this process follows the same pattern that a normal communication process follows - like encoding – decoding etc.

Non-verbal Communication: In contrast to the above system, Non-verbal Communication means communicating by using various means and signs other than verbal language. Despite the simple enough definitions of both the types of communication, their meanings have far greater impact upon the people than we can actually think of. It is important to point out that Non-verbal Communication is much more expressive and meaningful than verbal language. The different tools or means of communication or expression in Non-verbal Communication include - our facial expressions, body gestures, postures, our overall behaviour, dress code, way of doing things, our voice modulation while delivering messages etc. everything. Each of these traits actually reflect something or the other about our overall personality which is a communication in itself and that is why its scope is much more wider than Verbal Communication.

But we should not see the different types of communication in isolation. It will always be a better idea to understand and think of the communication process as a whole. This is because the communication process will be far more effective and meaningful if both these types can be combined judiciously for making a greater impact upon the receivers of those communication messages.

Yes, it is true that both of them can be completed in themselves in their individual spheres. But the objectives will be much more effective if both of them can be combined to produce a better effect.

All of you must be familiar with the ‘silent movies’ of Charlie Chaplin and also a famous feature film ‘Pushpak’ made in South India in which famous actor Kamal Hassan performed a role that did not have any dialogues. Both the films have been very popular. Have you ever thought how the people could enjoy these films if they did not have any spoken words?

And in many cases, even without saying a single word, a simple gesture of ours can convey the desired meaning to the receivers. When a person close to us is in grief or in a foul mood a simple touch of our hands can work as a soothing balm at that time.

The best way to communicate is to combine both Verbal and Non-verbal Communication to support each other. Our physical expressions contribute a lot to the effort of making the communication process effective, appealing and successful. In the face to face interactions, and also even when we are talking with someone without being seen personally, then also non verbal gestures affect our verbal expressions to a large extent.

For example, even when we are talking with someone over the telephone or listening to programmes, the understandability as well as effects of the messages depend a lot on the voice modulation or the style of dialogue delivery. Based upon the speed, accuracy, pitch etc. the seriousness and desired meaning of the messages can be understood and drawn out by the intended receivers.

It is important to note that as body gesture and language play an important role in communication, a person communicates something even if he or she chooses to remain silent. Also, many a time Non-verbal Communication can be completed in itself while the same can't be said of Verbal Communication. Besides, it seems that Non-verbal Communication enjoys more space than Verbal Communication in our life.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – C

1. What are the different types of communication depending on the no. of participants?

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2. Compare Verbal and Non-verbal Communication.

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1.6 LET US SUM UP

1. Communication is the mutually understandable activity of exchanging information with one's own self or with fellow human beings, using different methods.
2. A person communicates with his or her own self for a major part of the time. Even when one is communicating with someone, prior to everything being said, he communicates with his own self to decide what to say, how to say, whether to carry on the process or not etc.
3. It is an endless process starting with the conceiving of lives in our mothers' wombs and continuing on and on.
4. The process essentially involves these elements or components – a sender, a receiver, a channel or vehicle for movement of the messages or information, feedback – the responses to the communication, noise or disturbances which mean interferences from technical or human problems resulting in misunderstanding or inadequate understanding of the meaning of the messages creating a wastage of the communication efforts.
5. The barriers of communication can be found in the forms of disparity of intellectual levels of the participants in the process; natural barriers - thunderstorms, rains, winds; technical fault in the transmitters or transmitting lines, lack of a common ground of mutually understandable platform or language, messages with ambiguous meanings etc.
6. To be successful, communication must possess these qualities – credibility, context, content, continuity, consistency, channel and clarity,
7. It is a human phenomenon that under normal circumstances we would like to expose ourselves only to those aspects and things in life with which we are familiar and feel comfortable with,
8. Similarly, we would also like to perceive something only with those aspects with which we feel comfortable and are familiar,
9. We actually communicate something even by not responding to the senders' messages,
10. There are different types of communication depending on the number of participants, the physical and linguistic expressions, medium or tool or vehicles of transmission used, objectives to be achieved etc.



1.7 FURTHER READINGS

- **Handbook of Journalism and Mass Communication** — *VB Agarwal & VS Gupta, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi*
- **Mass Communication in India** — *KJ Kumar, Jaico Books, Mumbai*
- **Understanding Human Communication** — *Ronald B Adler & George Rodman, Harcourt Brace College publishers*
- **Mass Communication in India**, *JV Vilanilam, Sage Publications, New Delhi*
- **Mass Communication, Theory and Practice**, *Uma Narula, Harchand Publication, New Delhi*



1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS A

1) Communication is the activity of sharing or exchanging information between two or more persons. It is a basic and universal tool for making others known to our views, feelings, interests etc.

2) The different elements of communication are – sender, receiver, channel, message and feedback.

3) a. Sender: Sender is the person who initiates the communication process. He is the one who sends a message to the receiver

b. Receiver: Receiver is the person at whom the sender directs the message and who receives the message sent by the sender.

c. Message: Message is the information that the sender conveys to the receiver. It may be in the verbal or non-verbal form or could be a combination of both.

d. Channel: It is the vehicle which carries the information from the sender to the receiver or both. It can be made of a variety of materials.

In oral communication it consists of air, in written communication of paper or other writing materials.

e. Feedback: It is the response of the receiver to the message sent by the sender.

f. Encoding: It is the process of forming a meaningful sentence or message to inform somebody about something.

g. Decoding: It is the opposite of the process of encoding. It is the process of understanding of the message by the receiver of the message.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS B

1) The functions of communication according to Lasswell are:
   a. Surveillance of the environment.
   b. Correlation of the parts of the society in response to its environment.
   c. Transmission of cultural heritage.

2) The functions of communication according to McQuail are:
   a. Information
   b. Correlation
   c. Continuity
   d. Entertainment
   e. Mobilization

3) Wright

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS C

1) The types of communication depending on the number of participants are – Intrapersonal Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Group Communication, Public Communication, Mass Communication.

2) Comparison between Verbal and Non-verbal Communication:

	Verbal Communication	Non-verbal Communication
1	It is carried out with the help of spoken words	It is carried out without the help of spoken words
2	Share of this in the total amount of communication in a human being's life is comparatively smaller	Its share is far bigger than the other
3	Its expression power is somewhat limited	This one is much more expressive than Verbal Communication
4	Without the support of Non-verbal Communication, Verbal Communication is not very effective	Non-verbal communication can be very expressive even without the support of Verbal Communication or spoken words,



1.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1) Describe the process of communication and explain why it is important in the lives of human beings.
2) What do you understand by the term barriers to the communication process? Write with suitable examples.
3) Make a table showing different types of communication giving examples of each of them.
4) What are the advantages and disadvantages of Verbal and Non-verbal Communication. Give relevant examples.

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