

# Introduction to communication

## UNIT 1

### INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION

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### INTRODUCTION

Communication is the lifeblood of any group or organization. The communication process encompasses men, women and children as individuals and also members of a group, society, community or organization.

One cannot visualize a world where men and women do not communicate. Communication keeps the world going. Communication is relevant not only to human beings, but also to other living beings. It is the most important link that connects all living organisms. Communication takes place not only among people, but also between people and animals and among animals. The dog owner, the horse rider, the ringmaster in the circus and the fortune-teller communicate with their animals and birds.

It is the ability of mankind to communicate across barriers and beyond boundaries that has ushered the progress of mankind. It is the ability of fostering speedy and effective communication around the world that has shrunk the world and made 'globalization' a reality. Communication has had a vital role to play in ensuring that people belonging to a particular country or a cultural or linguistic group interact with and relate to people belonging to other countries or cultural and linguistic groups.

Communication is at once the cause and consequence of a powerful world order. Development of varied and sophisticated means of communication over a period of time has brought human beings across the globe closer and has facilitated speedy and effective transmission of thoughts and ideas. The expanse or reach of communication, therefore, is worldwide and truly encompasses human life in all its facets and endeavours. It galvanizes action among individuals, organizations, societies and the world community at large.

Communication adds meaning to human life. It helps build relationships and fosters love and understanding. It enriches our knowledge of the universe and makes living worthwhile. Imagine life without various tools of communication— newspapers, books, letters, television and mobile telephone—and the expanse and significance of communication becomes crystal clear. Understanding the power of communication is imperative for the success of any human endeavour.

## 1-MEANING OF COMMUNICATION

The process of communication has played a vital role in the evolution of life on earth. Communication made its presence felt right from the time when the first pulsating amoeba came to life. Communication should not be seen as something which involves language and other signs; rather it should be viewed as the transmission of any signal from a source to the destination for the purpose of affecting the state of the destination in some way. In this sense, all physiological processes may also be considered as a type of 'communication'.

Communication is both an art and a science. It may be an inborn quality or a talent as it is when we say 'the gift of the gab'. On the other hand, it is a discipline amenable to systematic study and mastery. It has an element of creativity, as well as an element of precision. It calls for mastering of skills as well as techniques.

Communication is also an interdisciplinary subject. It encompasses literature, sociology, psychology and statistics. For example, when we talk to our friends, we talk about a variety of subjects of interest. With electronic communication gaining popularity, an understanding of technology and the way the gadgets work would also be helpful. All the same, while knowledge of various disciplines comes in handy in improving communication skills, there have been effective communicators even without much formal education.

We have many other types of communications where the signals or the object transferred from source to destination may not be a message prepared in signs and symbols. The terms like telecommunication or transportation have been differentiated from the communication described here in this unit.

Harold Benjamin, a learned Professor of education has described communication as 'a necessary tool of learning and mass communication is prerequisite to mass education'. He further says: 'A public-spirited press is therefore a chief instrument whereby contemporary society orders and changes its ways in the direction of clearly envisioned goals of increased human welfare.' For example, we have news channels that provide news and information twenty-four seven. It is through these channels that a person sitting in the eastern or any other part of the world is able to know what is happening in the western or any other part of the world.

For an easier understanding of the term, communication may be defined in the following manner;

***Communication is the process of sharing or exchange of ideas, information, knowledge, attitude and feeling among two persons or a group of people through certain signs and symbols or passing of information from source to destination.***

Communication has become as essential for the survival as the food or air. People want to learn about each other, they want to know what is happening around them, they want to sit together to discuss and plan their destinies, and they resolve problems and crisis by communicating to each other. The governments and the businesses around the world feel the need to communicate with the citizens or consumers on a day-to-day basis. This significance has made communication a very important area of studies.

The word 'communication' is derived from the Latin word 'communicatio' or 'communicare' that means communicate, discuss, impart or share. It was used prominently in French in late 14th century and later in English. The meaning has not changed but with the growth of knowledge about societies there have been various specific meanings attached to this word.

## **2-FEATURES AND SCOPE OF COMMUNICATION**

Communication is one of the basic need and pre-requisite for human existence. Communication is used in the human societies mainly to share information and knowledge and to entertain the people to make their lives better. In this sense, communication is an all pervasive and a very important process in the society. The features and scope of communication can be understood from its function which is discussed in this section.

### **Information**

Information is an integral part of human existence. Human beings have a brain and five sensory perceptions that they use to collect and process information. The life in societies became easier as people started sharing more and more information with each other. If in a city somebody wants to buy something or eat something in hotels, it is necessary to know the location and types of stores or restaurants that he/she wants to go. There are many ways of getting such information—one could ask somebody about it or one could look for such information in the city guide. Similarly, in order to save oneself from various diseases it becomes vital to get information about the diseases and the precautions one must take. Young people interested in making a career in any field need to collect information about various opportunities available to them.

The difference between information and news lies in their particularity and generality. News is a piece of information which relates to more people because it is general in nature, whereas information is what different people need for different purposes. What one is looking at a given time may be in the form of news or information depending upon what kind of information it is. It can also be said that news is information that does not remain relevant for long time but information in its pure form has a considerably long life. It should also be noted that while information has only relative importance, news is important to a majority of the people. For example, a tip-off for a robbery or crime may be important to a police officer, but the same piece of information may not have the same relevance to a common man. Similarly, an information about stocks is important to a person dealing in stocks, but it may not seem important to a child.

## **Entertainment**

There is a proverb that says, 'All work and no play make Jack a dull boy.' The wisdom behind this proverb is that relaxation and entertainment in everyone's life is as important as work. If we look at the activities we do to entertain ourselves, we would find that in almost all activities there is some kind of communication involved.

In the earlier days if the communities depended on dance and songs, the present day societies have many more ways of relaxing and entertainment. There is a wide range of books on spirituality, travel, geography, history and many more subjects that are read by people not as a serious discipline but as books that tell you about your surroundings in an interesting manner. There are magazines and newspapers having lots of interesting topics. There are museum and exhibitions of painting, sculpture and photography. Cinema starting from the era of silent movies has become a very good source of distraction. Musical concerts and dance and drama performances to are good source of relaxation.

Various games and sports are available to people where they can entertain themselves as active participant or mere spectators. Some people think that games are physical activities and apart from talking to each other there is no communication. However, the famous theorist of semiotics, Roland Barthes has tried to show in his Mythologies that people go to see bull fight, wrestling and other games as these activities behave like text, which communicates with us in the form of catharsis. Research has proved that in the ancient times, when language had not been developed, the early man entertained his counterparts by indulging in mime-silent acting. This is a form of non-verbal communication.

## **Persuasion**

Communication is seen as an activity that takes place between two or more persons. People communicate with each other for information, negotiations and persuasion. Every individual has different types of needs and in most of the situations people need to persuade the other person in some way so that he/she does what is asked for. If children use non-verbal communication to persuade, then the matured individuals use speech or text to persuade one or many individuals to listen to and accept what has been addressed to them. Communication as persuasion is used in the families, groups and in public life in different ways for various purposes. Our social system is such that the family runs according to the persuasive instructions of the senior members. In family, apart from many other instances of persuasion, the parents or children persuade each other to agree with their decisions. The deadlocks in industrial disputes are resolved with the help of negotiations between the owners and the workers. The strike by the workers itself is an act of communication to persuade the owners to meet their demands. The whole of educational system itself could be seen as a long process of persuasion where the societies with the help of the knowledge available in many areas persuade its younger generations to adapt to the particular behaviour.

Advertising as a form of mass communication is one of the best examples of the art of persuasion. The market depends on advertising to persuade its

consumers to sell the products even if there is no requirement felt of such products in the society. Political parties too indulge in the act of persuasion for reaping the benefits in elections. The political persuasion is normally known as propaganda.

### **Democracy and Persuasion:**

The importance of communication in a democratic state is even more important. This is primarily because in a democracy, decisions cannot be taken without them being discussed in the Parliament by the elected representatives of the people. Those who wish to be elected have to make speeches to communicate their plans for the country. They have to persuade people to vote for them. Even the shouting of slogans and catchy phrases that undermine their opponents are a form of communication. In countries such as the United States of America, presidential debates have been known to tilt opinions in a candidate's favour. The communication via newspapers, TV channels, etc., is also used to communicate the electoral results, election campaigning, scams, etc. that take place in the country.

### **Cultural Promotion**

Communication in a society has always been used for the preservation and continuation of culture. In fact if we look at the language, it is primary and the most important of all media. The oldest thoughts and documentations of social livings have been conserved through the means of language. We realise that it has been so closely related to the culture that it literally becomes the mark of identity for individuals in society. Apart from the human expression in the form of visuals like painting and sculpture and the other non-verbal forms, language is the most potent form of cultural expression and preservation. The affinity of language with culture is so strong that after independence the Indian state reorganized its provinces on the basis of linguistic identities. However, it does not mean that languages are the sole representatives of culture. As we have said earlier there are many other forms of expression that help in communicating cultures.

The sociologist and anthropologists generally refer to the definition of culture given by the British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor who defines culture as 'the universal human capacity to classify and encode their experiences symbolically, and communicate symbolically encoded experiences socially'. In the anthropological sense, culture also comprises political and economic organization, the law machinery, conflict resolution, consumption patterns, material culture, infrastructure, technology, ethnicity, gender relations, socialization, childrearing, myth, symbols, etiquette, worldview, religion, music, games, food, nutrition, values, sports, recreation and festivals.

## Transmission of Knowledge

The human societies would not have developed as they have today if the communication skills of human beings would not have been supported initially by language in the form of speech and later in the form of writing. In the oral societies, the knowledge of the world around us was transferred through speech and various methods were innovated for the same. The use of verse and that of formulae came handy as there were possibilities of losing or misinterpreting the content. Writing was the next innovation that allowed us to transfer knowledge from one generation to other and from one place to other without any loss of meaning. The books in the form of manuscripts were preserved in the churches and ashrams for the benefit of mankind.

The invention of printing press allowed the spread of knowledge and allowed many more individuals to contribute in the process of acquiring and disseminating knowledge. We have reached a stage today where we do not need the written word to record the knowledge. We have also found that various aspects of knowledge cannot be very aptly recorded by the written words. Hence, the technologies of audio and video recordings have also been used to conserve and propagate knowledge. The role of National Geographic, Discovery Channel and History Channel in the dissemination of knowledge is well known.

## Integration

Communication, verbal or non-verbal, in human beings and animal kingdom is primarily for integration. The term itself suggests that as it is made up of two units a Greek verb 'unicare' meaning 'to unite' and a prefix 'con' meaning 'with'. So with various means of communication human beings and animals try to unite with each other or relate to each other.

The history of human society is the history of human efforts to learn about the external world and share it with their fellow beings. In this process, they have learnt to develop their society from a smaller level of organization to a bigger one. The debate about whether we are one with nature or we are different has been there in all societies. In India, the philosophies of 'adwait' (monism) and 'dwait' (dualism) are similar to those in West about dualism and monism. The human beings have always desired to be in unison with the external world and that desire itself has been defined as Yoga by Swami Vivekananda.

Societies all over the world have moved away from inter-personal to mass communication not for any other purpose but for integrating individuals in a cohesive manner with the social order they have created. Communication

plays a major role in modern societies for this purpose. Institutions like education and media are heavily dependent upon communication whereas parliament, judiciary and various other institutions designed to keep the society united also need to communicate in order to function properly.

## **Instruction**

As has been discussed earlier, communication is the most important part of the whole educational process. The knowledge and training in the schools, colleges and institutes cannot be imparted without communication. Communication is required even in training people in our day-to-day life. Learning how to drive a car or how to make a particular type of food like chicken curry, bread, etc., cannot be done without communication.

## **Debate and Discussion**

Communication also allows people and communities to enter into discussions and debates that are so necessary for development, integration and harmony. It all started with oral interpersonal communication and has extended to written communication. Debate and discussion are really very important for a lively and informed democracy. The transmission of messages is the necessary tool or means of such communication to fulfil the above-mentioned objectives.

Debates and discussion are not new to human societies. In fact, all the present treasure of knowledge is a result of long debate and dialogue between various ancient scholars in India, Europe and elsewhere.

### **3-IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION**

Sociologists describe human beings as social animals. As members of society, they have to constantly interact with their fellow beings. They have feelings, emotions, likes and dislikes—all of which they have to convey. In other words, whatever the environment in which they are placed, they have to build links and establish relationships. The need for communication arises from their desire to express themselves in a meaningful manner. As stated earlier, communication is the modus operandi of social intercourse. As a member of the family, a social group and as part of a work-team, they need to communicate with others.

Just as they are social beings, human beings are also emotional beings. Human beings have the urge to convey feelings, ideas and thoughts. They have certain thoughts and emotions. Human heart generates feelings. Further, just as human beings are social beings, and emotional beings, they are equally importantly, rational beings. They are endowed with the faculty of thinking. They have intelligence and brainpower. The human mind is a very potent force. There is always a constant urge to give expression to what the mind generates. In order to give a meaningful expression to thoughts, ideas, reasoning, creativity and intelligence, human beings resort to communication.

The need for communication arises from the need to emote, to interact, and to express one's ideas and thoughts and the need to relate and connect. The need or the desire to communicate, however, varies from person to person, depending on time and context. There are times and occasions when a person is extremely communicative. There are also times and occasions when he or she prefers to remain silent. Be that as it may, most of our waking hours are spent in communication. Such communication may take place in several ways—listening, speaking, reading and writing.

It is a well-known fact that we spend a major part of our waking hours in communicating. In the past, researchers have noted that we spend about 45 per cent of the time in listening, about 30 per cent in speaking, about 15 per cent in reading and about 10 per cent in writing. This was in the past when the communication technology was in its nascent stage. But the subsequent developments in communication technology leading to the emergence of Internet, email, SMS, Instant Messaging, video-conferencing, e-books, etc. have added a new dimension to the simple acts of reading, writing, speaking and listening. All the same, communication in its myriad forms continues to be the major pre occupation of men, women and children.

Evolution of Communication



The art of communication is as old as mankind itself. It is, in fact, older than the written word or even the spoken word. Human beings learnt to communicate much before they learnt to speak, read or write. That is why communication is not unique to human beings. Communication encompasses Expanse and Scope of Communication all living beings and pervades the animal world as well. Birds and animals also communicate. The sounds they make carry meaning. The chirping of the birds, the roaring of the lions, the hissing of the snakes and the whining of the dogs are often meant to be expressive.

Much before they learnt to speak, human beings had learnt to express themselves through sounds, gestures and actions. If we observe closely, we can notice that we continue to use these methods to communicate even to this day. It is not that those who cannot speak, read or write cannot communicate. A visually challenged person or an illiterate person, resorts to oral and non-verbal communication; while a person with a speech or hearing disability resorts to gesticulations and lip reading.

The art of communication has evolved over the years. It goes back in time to the biblical era, mythological times and even to the prehistoric period. People learnt to express themselves even before they evolved fully into their present form. From sounds, grunts, actions, signs, gestures and gesticulations to the spoken word and thereafter to the world of reading, writing and modern and sophisticated methods of communication, it has been a long yet fascinating and rewarding journey through time. As they progressed on this fascinating journey, human beings learnt to interpret sounds, understand actions and use signs and gesticulations. Messages were conveyed through sounds, cries and drumbeats. The spoken word added a new dimension to the world of learning. Sages and saints of yore learnt to pass on sacred verses and holy texts through word of mouth. Thereafter, human beings learnt to use symbols and pictures to convey messages. Early writings were on stones and leaves. As human beings progressed, communication evolved further. The invention of printing, as we all know, revolutionized the process of communication. In terms of its reach, the written word signified a quantum leap. Side by side, various inventions made possible the recording of the spoken word and its transmission, irrespective of time and distance. Gradually, the emergence of new media added new dimensions to the world of communication. Advancements in technology further enabled storage and retrieval of oral and written records in an effective, time-saving and cost-efficient manner.

The objectives and functions of communication are inter-related. Communication could have many objectives depending upon the group and context. Communication within the family, in a classroom, in a theatre, in a church, in a war field, in a seminar and in the boardroom has different objectives. The objectives are defined depending upon the group and the purpose to be achieved. Each of these groups has a different set of goals and objectives.

Communication aims at sub-serving those goals. In each of these groups, the dominant objectives of communication would be to inform, connect, educate, entertain, motivate, provoke, integrate, reassure and persuade, as the case may be. Communication is thus the means to an end. Communication is

largely goal oriented and the objective of any personal communication would depend upon the person or the group one is addressing and the purpose or object one has in mind.

### **Key Point**

Communication Skills Are Critical in Business The world around us is dynamic and fast changing. Business organizations, therefore, have to deal with new situations every day. The issues, problems, competitive demands, as well as the pressures and challenges that confront people in business are ever-changing. The operating environments in the workplaces are dynamic and evolving. People need to constantly reach out to others and get across their messages clearly and precisely in order to get results. This means the role of and need for communication skills in today's workplaces have to be viewed in a dynamic and fast-changing context. The skills and practices of yesterday may not necessarily work well today. Old methods become obsolete and new skills become relevant. While the basic time-tested skills and practices would continue to be broadly relevant, new approaches, refinements and skill sets have to be developed and adapted in order to cope with the emerging situations. This means effectiveness in communication cannot be taken for granted. Effective communication demands conscious efforts and a variety of skill sets. Learning and implementation should progress side by side on an on-going basis. Theoretical knowledge and basic time-tested practices have to be supplemented with new and modern tools and skills. Old methods of communication have to be supplemented by the modern technology-enabled methods and systems of communication. Communication affects every type of business and all levels of people. Communication failures result in ineffective messages, lack of results, and may even damage business relationships. This makes the role of communication skills critical or one of decisive importance. And, that is why, today's organizations and workplaces need, more than ever before, effective communicators.

### **Communication Clue**

Business organizations value good communicators. Communication brings people together and keeps them at work. Moreover, purposeful communication helps achieve organizational goals. Effective communication skills are, therefore, the need of the hour.

For instance, let us now look at the objectives of communication in business organizations. It is a process common to every business, whatever be its primary function. Business organizations exist for the purpose of meeting specific needs of the community in which they operate. Every business organization sets its goals and objectives in relation to the specific need it aims to fulfil. Every organization uses resources, including human resources to function effectively, and also targets specific clients and markets. Businesses are often associations of people coming together for specific purposes. It has people within and it also addresses people outside the organization. The activities of any organization require both people within and people outside to act, interact, reach, share, exchange and get across to each other so that specific objectives are accomplished in an effective manner. The word 'business' connotes a commercial motive. As distinct from a charitable or religious organization, any business organization is driven by a profit

motive. This implies that the organization would like to ensure that its objectives are achieved with the optimum utilization of resources like time, money and effort. The communication system that is put in place within the organization should, therefore, address and meet these objectives.

Since business organizations are multi-disciplinary in nature, communication encompasses wide areas and is inter-disciplinary in approach. Large organizations are described as networks of interdependent relationships. The objectives, activities and inter-relationships of a business organization necessitate communication to subserve its many diverse objectives. In this section, you will learn some of the objectives communication fulfills in business organizations.