

# THEORY OF COMMUNICATION

## Introduction:

Within the framework of a social set-up, human beings interact with each other through communication. So 'communication' has been termed as the fundamental social process. Any discipline or field of study that deals with human society and human behaviour is necessarily concerned with this process.

The sub-system of education functions within a broader system - that of society. To understand human behaviour for effective teaching and learning, it is necessary to understand the processes of human communication.

Education is also a process of communication between the individual and society, communicating desirable social standards and human knowledge from the latter to the former over a period of time.

The earlier meaning of communication (derived from the Latin word 'communicare'-means 'to make common') has undergone many changes, which have made its meaning broader and more complicated. For example, Theodorson and Theodorson (1969) stated that communication as a process of transformation of information ideas, attitudes or emotions from one person or group to another or others primarily through symbols. Schramm, (1971) conceived of communication as a process of transferring feelings, motivations, ideas and knowledge from one mind to another, in a way in which the receiver was seen as a passive agent.

But the latter concept of the audience as passive listeners appears to be baseless, since as some of them may well refuse to accept what is forced on them. And it is actually only the message and not the idea or thought that passes from the sender to the receiver. At times the message may result in change of behaviour in the receiver which was not intended by the sender. However, the meaning that we want to derive from this definition is that communication is a process of conveying and imparting ideas and knowledge whereby there is a transfer of messages as well as ideas from one mind to the other(s) with the help of signs (through sight) and sounds (through hearing).

Another set of definitions stresses the influence of a system and/or mind on the destination and/or another mind. This influence is carried out by manipulating

the alternative signals that are transmitted through the channel. The sender is free to use any signal which she thinks would influence the receiver. These signals not only cover speech - written and oral - but also pictures, music, theatre, and almost all human behaviour. For example, in a theatre show, the characters/artists manipulate various signals (e.g. speech, postures, gestures, etc.) to both entertain and influence the minds of the audience. In a broader sense, communication is the procedure by means of which one mechanism affects another mechanism. The stress here is on influence rather than a transfer. The human relationship approach views communication as the mechanism through which human relations exist and develop.

Schramm (1971), a noted communication theorist, views it differently saying "it is the sharing of an orientation towards a set of informational signs".

Information refers not only to facts/news or whatever is taught in the classroom, but also any content that reduces uncertainty or the number of alternative possibilities in a situation". It includes 'facts, opinions, guidance, persuasion and even emotion communicated through 'silent language'. This communication is based on a relationship between at least two bodies - humans, animals or even machines - that are 'in tune' with each other. This relationship may not be a face-to-face one. For example, in the case of mass media there is no direct contact between the two agents of communication.

- According to OED – Communication is the imparting, conveying or exchanging of ideas and knowledge whether by speech, writing or sign.
- According to Columbia Encyclopedia– Communication is the transfer of thoughts and messages. The basic forms of communication are by sign (sight) and sound (hearing).
- According to Berelson and Steiner – "Communication–the transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills etc. by the use of symbols–words, pictures, figures, graphs etc. It is the act or process of transmission that is usually called communication. "
- According to Anderson – "Communication is the process by which we understand others and in turn trying to be understood by them." It refers understanding is the basic feature of communication.
- According to Hobel – "Communication is the verbal interchange of thought and idea."
- According to Gode – "It is a process that makes common to two or several, what was the monopoly of one or some."

## **Types of communication**

The experience of communicating can be divided into four categories based on the number of people involved in this act, viz., intra-personal, interpersonal, group, and mass communication.

### **1. Intra-personal communication**

This refers to a process when one communicates with one's own self. Such communication is within the self and to the self, e.g., thinking, working out a problem, writing diaries, etc. (Holmberg, 1981).

### **2. Inter-personal communication**

This is the communication that takes place when at least two people interact, whether face-to-face, e.g., an interview, talking to friends in a cafe, or otherwise, as with a telephone conversation etc. In this case, emphasis is laid on speech as well as on non-verbal forms of communication.

### **3. Group communication**

By group communication we mean communication within and between groups of people. The groups may be small, such as a family, or large, as in the case of a committee meeting.

Characteristics of the Group • Common motive • Differential effects of the interaction on individual group members •

Hierarchical status systems i.e. some type of the leader- follower relationship develop. • Standardisation of terms, norms and value i.e. because of the shared goals, certain normative behaviour are established which members are expected to follow. Group

communication may be formal or informal. Informal

communication network ignores the formal channel of network.

Formal communication follows certain structures. For example If a group work together and there are sufficient channel of

communication for each member of the group to communicate with any other we represent it as committee structure. Star

structure where the flow of information centralizes on one member

of the group Circle Structure-Where the flow of information is not

centralized and each member of the group can communicate with

each of the other members.

### **4. Mass communication**

In this case the communication is received by or used by large numbers of people, e.g., an open-air concert for a thousand people, radio and postal systems, etc. Characteristics of the Group • Common motive • Differential effects of the interaction on individual group members • Hierarchical status systems i.e. some type of the leader- follower relationship develop. • Standardisation of terms, norms and value i.e. because of the shared goals, certain normative behaviour are established which members are expected to follow. Group communication may be formal or informal. Informal communication network ignores the formal channel of network. Formal communication follows certain structures.

### **Purposes of communication**

Every type of communication has a purpose behind it. Such purposes are related to certain needs, and they may be conscious or unconscious. In face-to-face communication, for example, the verbal forms of communication reveal conscious purposes, and the non-verbal forms express unconscious purposes. Communication may be intentional or unintentional. It is unintentional when, for example, Mr. A's words hurt Mr. B though the former did not intend to hurt the latter.

Some of the purposes of communication are to

- give, get or exchange information
- use communication to form or to maintain relationships
- persuade others to think in the way that one does, or to act in the way one wants
- gain, maintain or exert power over others
- make decisions about what we think and do
- express our ideas and ourselves to others
- and make sense of the world and our experience of it.

### **VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

Verbal Communication refers to the use of words.

It has a grammatical structure. • There is great difference in the skill of individuals at using languages. • It is concerned with the process of social

interaction itself. • It can be used to convey information to others. • It is used to influence the behaviour of others.

## **NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

Communication by facial expression, by tone of voice, eye movements, by touch etc. comes under the category of non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication is usually used to communicate feelings, likings and preferences. Non-verbal communication is categorized into seven types.

### **A. Para linguistics**

It is a kind of complementary language and also refer as paralinguage. Paralinguage refers to the non-verbal elements of communication used to modify meaning and convey emotion. Paralinguage may be expressed consciously or unconsciously. It includes the pause, stress, volume and intonation of speech. The study of paralinguage is known as Para linguistics. Pause: provides punctuation (instead of saying 'full stop' as when dictating). Stress: is the emphasis given to a specific syllable or word in speech. Stress is of two types: word stress and sentence stress. Word Stress: Take the word Rainbow for example. It has two syllables: 'Rain' and 'bow'. The stress is placed on 'Rain'. Similarly, given below are some examples. The stressed syllables are written in capital letters. Examples: Paper:Paper, Station : STAtion, Tiger: Tiger .Sentence Stress: Sentence stress is the way of highlighting the important words in a sentence. Examples: KNOCK the BELL, TOUCH the SKY. Intonation: Intonation is the variation of our pitch, when we speak. It occurs when the voice changes in pitch and tone while speaking. We make errors while speaking.

### **B. Kinesics**

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary Kinesics is "a systematic study of the relationship between nonlinguistic body motions (such as blushes, shrugs, or eye movement) and communication". Anthropologists began to take serious interest in nonverbal communication through gestures, postures, and facial expressions in the 1940s. It is believed, however, that the publication of Ray Birdwhistell's 1952 book Introduction to Kinesics marked the beginning of formal research into what we know familiarly as "body language."

There are several different categories of body movement, these include:

**Emblems** Gestures that serve the same function as a word are called emblems. For example, the signals that mean 'OK', 'Come here!' Emblems are used intentionally. They have verbal equivalents. Sometimes used emblems are recognized at global level, at the other end some emblems are interpreted in their cultural context.

**Illustrators** Gestures which accompany words to illustrate a verbal message are known as illustrators. The common circular hand movement accompanies the phrase 'over and over again', or nodding the head in a particular direction when saying 'over there'. They act as 'reinforcers', i.e. they reward and encourage what has gone before, and can be used to make another talk more. Nodding of head plays an important role in controlling the synchronizing of speech.

**Regulators** Gestures which give feedback when conversing are called regulators. Examples- Short sounds such as 'uh-huh' head nods and expressions of interest or boredom. It shows the level of interest or agreement in conversation. It is a feedback and makes the conversation smooth. Regulators may vary in different cultural contexts.

**Adaptors** It satisfies some physical need. Most of the time adaptive behavior accompanies anxiety and nervousness feelings. It is usually unintentional and perceived negatively. Scratching, biting fingernails or one's lips are example of adaptive behaviours etc.

### **C. Haptic**

According to Culbertson, Schorr and Okamura (2018) it is difficult to imagine life without haptics, in part because it is such a natural and integral part of our lives. Without haptics, we would have great difficulty grasping and manipulating objects, be unable to determine many material or surface properties, and miss feeling the warmth of a loved one's hand. Thus, many of the applications of artificial haptics address scenarios where the sense of touch is lost or greatly diminished compared with the experience of a healthy person in the real world. "Your first experience with haptics is probably your phone vibrating in your pocket". Haptics refers to the use of touch to communicate i.e., shaking hands, holding hands, patting etc. It can convey a clearer and direct message than dozen of words put together.

## **D. Proxemics**

Proxemics is the study of how space is used in human interactions. The word “Proxemics” is coined by Dr. Edward T.Hall. He coined this word to describe the theories and observation about zones of territory and how we use them. He states that we do not know how much space is essential for any person, but what is significant is what happens any person when this space or territory is threatened or invaded. The need for personal space and the resistance to its invasion by others is so strong in an individual that even in a crowd each member will demand a given amount of space. Another aspect of Proxemics refers to the use of interpersonal space . Anthropologist Edward T. Hall defines four distance zones maintained by healthy, adult, middleclass Americans.

## **E. Physical Appearance**

Magnenat-Thalmann, Kalra & Pandzic (1995) describes that physical appearance is concerned with the forms of decoration, such as clothes and other adornment, that are entirely under the control of the wearer. It also concerns aspects partly controlled by the person in question, such as physique, hair and skin. Many of these elements provide information on the personality, status, group membership and interpersonal attitude of the sender.

## **F. Chronemics**

How time is considered is sometimes a message in itself, a form of non-verbal communication called Chronemics. According to Moore (2010) chronemics is the study of the role of time in communication. It is one of several subcategories of the study of nonverbal communication. Chronemics can be defined as “the interrelated observations and theories of man’s use of time as a specialized elaboration of culture” - the way in which one perceives and values time, structures time, and reacts to time frames communication. Across cultures, time perception plays a large role in the nonverbal communication process. Time perceptions include punctuality, willingness to wait, and interactions. The use of time can affect lifestyle, daily agendas, speed of speech, movements, and how long people are willing to listen. Time can be used as an indicator of status. For example, in most companies the boss can interrupt progress to hold an impromptu meeting in the middle of the work day, yet the average worker would have to make an

appointment to see the boss. The way in which different cultures perceive time can influence communication as well.

### **Functions of Non-verbal Communication**

The three functions of non-verbal communication are: -

A. Communicates interpersonal attitudes and emotion- When the verbal and non-verbal messages were in conflict, the verbal contents were virtually disregarded. In human social behaviour, Non-verbal channel is used for negotiating interpersonal attitudes, while the verbal channel is used primarily for conveying information.

B. Supporting verbal communication- A few linguistic recognize that NVC plays a more extensive part- 'we speak with our vocal organ, but we converse with our whole body'.

i. Completing the meaning of utterances: In addition to the vocal signals of timing, pitch and stress, gestural signals also add to meaning by illustrating, pointing, displaying structure etc. There is a linkage between gesture and speech. ii. Controlling synchronizing: When two or more people are conversing they must take it in turns to speak, and usually achieve a fairly smooth pattern of synchronizing. This is done by the use of non-verbal signals such as shifts of gaze, head-nods and grunts. iii. Obtaining feedback: When a person is speaking he needs feedback on how the others are responding, so that he can modify his remarks accordingly. He needs to know whether his listeners understand, believe him, surprised or bored, agree or disagree, pleased or annoyed. It is obtained from careful study of the other's face, especially his eyebrows and mouth.

C. Replacing speech- When speech is impossible, gesture language develops. This happens in noisy factories etc. It has been suggested by some psychiatrists that the symptoms of certain mental patients are a kind of NVC used when speech has failed-in pursuit of attention or love.