
UNIT 40 MEDIA, CONTEXTS, AND WORDS

Structure

- 40.0 Objectives
 - 40.1 Introduction
 - 40.2 Radio Scripting: How Much to Write
 - 40.3 A TV Script: Redundancies that Eat Up Words
 - 40.4 Print: Accuracy and Abstractness
 - 40.5 Barriers to Communication
 - 40.6 Let Us Sum Up
 - 40.7 Key Words
 - 40.8 Some Useful Books and Broadcasts
- Answers

40.0 OBJECTIVES

A careful study of this unit will help you to

- take into account the role that context plays in communication;
- assess the redundancies and uncertainties in each context and choose words, phrases and so on for your message;
- anticipate and remove barriers to your communication; and
- use some of the given barriers to bring about dramatic effects in your radio and TV programmes.

40.1 INTRODUCTION

In the foregoing units (31-39) we discussed what we could write for radio and television, and how. There is in fact not much that we are supposed to write for television. What we can write and read 'in front of everybody' is 'the news', and news alone. Only heads of state and such other dignitaries read speeches on TV. Others who write their talks have to learn them off by heart if they wish to speak exactly as they have written. Or they should be content to speak whatever they can remember of it and 'ad-lib' the rest. Actors in plays must learn their lines, and there are electronic devices for 'teleprompting' when they forget. When such devices are not available, the whole 'sequence' can be shot once more when anything goes wrong.

For Documentaries and Features we can write 'voice-over' commentaries to read unseen 'from behind the pictures'.

Then there are programmes called 'panel discussions', at which you are not supposed to read any written statements. But you could write well considered statements for such discussions, and look at them when someone else is speaking and you are 'off camera', and unseen.

If you are seen 'looking into notes' on television, viewers will form a very poor impression of you, although they don't form such opinions when you do so during a lecture or talk at a meeting. Instead some people may even listen with greater respect to those who look at notes at a meeting,—the notes show that they have come prepared, and therefore, are more reliable. But suppose you look at notes during a casual private conversation. What will your companions think of your behaviour? That will depend very much on the context. Notes at a casual conversation will be regarded as somewhat eccentric unless there is a demand for a piece of accurate information, such as a list of 'superfoods' for instance, or the exact definition of a legal term.

These curious observations point to one of the crucial facts of communication. When

sender has encoded and sent as his intended message, but a great deal more. He interprets the message with its total context.

So we must get an idea of the elements which make up that 'total context' of communication. Practically all the major contexts have been discussed, or at least touched on in the eight Blocks of this course. The diarist's context is intra-personal. Private conversations and letters have an inter-personal context. The group context determines some kinds of discussions, debates, talks and so on. Then there is the organizational context in which people speak and write as employers and employees in governments, industries, etc. And finally come the public, and the mass, contexts. These contexts determine the style of communication. If we don't know what the context is, we find ourselves wondering how to begin speaking or writing, how to go on, and how to conclude our communication,—what words and phrases to choose, and how to put them together. If we ignore the context, we find that our communication breaks down very soon, unless the context is intra-personal, or very intimately inter-personal, that is to say, unless we are talking to ourselves or to very close associates. Now, what is there in these two contexts to prevent the breakdown? What is there or isn't there in any context? Redundancies,—they are the elements that make up communication contexts.

Redundancy is information which arrives after the reduction of uncertainty. When we communicate in English, we send information in English. So *our* redundancies are English words, sentences and so on, which we speak or write after our receiver's uncertainties have been removed. But, after uncertainties have been reduced, there is no need to send any information. Therefore those are words and sentences we need not speak. If we still say these words, we do so because we don't realize that uncertainties have been removed.

Therefore if we assess the redundancies in the context, we can avoid waste of words. And if we assess the opposite of redundancy, that is, the uncertainties, in the context, we can avoid *shortage* of words in our communication, and prevent misunderstanding.

We can divide the redundancies of a context into two groups.

- a) Things that the receiver knows about the sender because of the social or other relationships between the two.
- b) Things that the receiver *assumes* about the sender because of what he knows of the status of the sender.

Let us look for some instances of the two kinds of redundancies.

Intimate social associates need to say very little to each other to make their meanings clear to each other. Most of the meaning will be already implied in the context, for instance, of home life. A son may wake up in the morning and vaguely mumble, 'my tea', and that's more than enough. His mother knows everything about the tea he drinks, and everything else she wants to know about him. Now suppose the young man is waking up in a hotel room. He must ring room service and someone lifts the receiver, saying 'Room service, sir.'

Guest: 'This is Room 26, I'm Raj Mett. Good morning. Can I have some tea?'

R.S.: 'Did you leave instructions on arrival, sir? This is just for'

Guest: No, I didn't leave any instructions. But I'd like some tea.

R.S.: Of course, sir. Your tea will arrive in a couple of minutes.

Guest: Thank you.

R.S.: Thank *you*, sir.' Is that all?

Guest: Yes, thank you.'

R.S.: Thank you, sir.'

You can see how all the redundancies in the home context have become uncertainties in the hotel room context. All the *thank-you's* and *of-course's* have become necessary to reduce the uncertainties about 'customer satisfaction' on one side, and 'value for money' on the other side.

So if you would like to put in a rough formula, the meanings you will need to encode in a message, in other words, those things you will need to put in English words,—it is, 'Uncertainties minus redundancies is equal to the message to be encoded, that is to say, the things we have to put in words! You need not take the formula very seriously. It is just a way of showing how the concepts of information, uncertainties,

For another instance, let us take a shopping situation. We leave an audiotape recorder switched on during a short shopping conversation. All that the machine catches is

'How much?'
'79 Rupees.'

But if we were *there* at the scene of the conversation, we might see something like *this*, as recorded in our diary.

'A pleasant-looking, well-dressed young lady lifts a small bottle of perfume off a shelf. The sales assistant is waiting on his side of the counter, all attention, eager to serve, but careful not to be obtrusive. The lady holds up the bottle, smiles a friendly smile and asks: 'How much?' The salesman smiles back with his best professional manners, as if to say there was no better job in the world than selling perfumes to customers like her, and says aloud, 'Seventy-nine rupees.'

That is one way of recording that short shopping exchange in a diary. The diarist could also describe the shop, the customer, and the salesman in more detail if details were important for his story.

Now how would you write it in a radio script if this episode were to be a scene in a radio play, or a part of a short story for radio? But first, check your progress.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What more does the receiver interpret than the sender's intended message?

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2) How do uncertainties and redundancies influence what we say in words?

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3) Why does the 'young man' say 'so much more' to get his tea in his hotel room?

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40.2 RADIO SCRIPTING: HOW MUCH TO WRITE

To decide how much we should write in our radio script, we will have to judge the uncertainties which may have to be reduced. Let us put those uncertainties down in the form of questions.

- Where are the two persons? What activities are they engaged in?
- Who are they? What does the lady want? What does the man want?
- Is the lady sincere? Is the man sincere? Are they refined?
- Are they friendly to each other? Is there any antagonism?

These are just some of the uncertainties. They may arise in the minds of the participants in the conversation, or in the minds of the onlooker, the viewer or the listener, or in all the three.

When we have judged the uncertainties, we must find the means of reducing them. How many of them should we reduce by means of words? How many can be dealt with by the sounds of the words, such as the tones, stresses and so on? How many can looks, movements, etc. deal with? What about smiles? What are the uncertainties we need not deal with? (Some of them will be automatically reduced.)

It all appears very complicated when we spell it out like this, but practised writers and speakers ask and answer all these questions in their minds in a few seconds. People who are successful in social life also do so. Now suppose our four-word conversation has to be modified to make sense over the radio,—what shall we write in our script? If it is to be put in a short story, the Narrator will read our description, somewhat like this:

NARRATOR: I was at a 'Medical and General Store'. A lady came in. She was quite well dressed, and rather pleasant-looking, in her late twenties. She walked to where the perfume bottles were on display. A sales assistant quietly walked up and stood on his side of the counter behind her at a reasonable distance. He looked all attention, eager to serve but careful not to disturb her. She lifted a small bottle off the shelf, held it up, and smiling pleasantly asked, 'How much?' He smiled back at her with his best professional smile, and said, 'Seventy nine rupees only.'

That is one way to begin a short story for radio with our shopping scene. Now suppose we have to write a radio play that starts with it, and don't want a Narrator. How would we put all that information across to the audience, under those conditions?

One way to do it is to find the Narrator's wife and invite her to join him as a character in our play. He can start the dialogue. After the introductory music we hear footsteps on a road.

He : 'Medical and General Store!' This shop should do for this evening's shopping for us,—don't you think, Nina?... Nina!

Nina : Yes, Shankar? Did you say something?

Shankar : Now! Weren't you thinking something! I was asking you, 'shall we go into the General and Medical Store here? This is the shop.'

Nina : Yes, dear why not? Come.

(SFX: FOUR FOOTSTEPS RECEDING AND THEN COMING UP)

Shankar : So here we are. Now what do you want to buy. Let's hurry up.

(SFX: GENERAL SHOPPING: BLA BLA)

Nina : Look at that lady, Shankar. Very well dressed, isn't she?

Shankar : Yes, perhaps, if you say so. But she's quite pleasant looking, don't you think? And look at her! She's walking straight to the perfumes' shelf!

Nina : And look at that sales assistant. He has quietly moved over to her. He didn't come to us so eagerly. He's all attention, waiting for her word.

Shankar : He knows we can look after ourselves and didn't want to disturb us. And he doesn't want to disturb her either. He is standing as far away from her, as he was from us. He knows how to attend on and not to disturb his customers.

The Lady : How much is this bottle of perfume, please?

Sales Assistant: That one in your hand, madam? It's only seventy-nine rupees.

What happens next is left to your imagination. We have no time to continue the play right now. Our immediate task is to find out how many uncertainties the script above has reduced. It is not supposed to remove them all. A number of them will be left for the sound effects, the voice qualities of the speakers, and their speech tunes, accents, sentence rhythms, etc. to deal with.

Now that we have treated the story to prepare it for (the written medium), a radio short story, and a radio play, it remains for us to find out how much speech it takes to put it in a TV episode. How much of the communication can we hand over to the camera?

Now check your progress through this section.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What is the consequence of the decision to do without the Narrator in scripting the play?

2) What do we gain by getting rid of the Narrator?

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3) What do we lose by getting rid of him?

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4) Find something the Narrator says, but the husband-and-wife leave unsaid in the 'play-scene'.

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40.3 A TV SCRIPT: REDUNDANCIES THAT EAT UP WORDS

The main difference we are looking for between face-to-face communication and mass communication is this,—face-to-face communication is 'interactive.' There is continuous activity between the sender and the receiver. In other words, both are senders and receivers. In mass communication, on the other hand, there is no interaction. The sender is active, but the receiver is passive. This does not mean that reading, listening, and viewing are passive occupations. It means that readers, listeners, and viewers cannot immediately communicate back. This 'communication back', or communication in response, is called *feedback*. Feedback is immediate in face-to-face communication, but in mass communication it is usually delayed.

The casual conversationist, therefore, can go on improving his performance, in the light of feedback. He can reduce one uncertainty at a time, making sure that they are uncertainties: The mass communicator has to *guess* all the uncertainties at the very beginning.

When the casual conversationist improves his performance, he need not improve his *English* (or whatever his language). He can improve his smiles, or nods, or his general bearing. Words make up only 7 or 8 per cent of your message in daily conversation. The rest comes from your 'body language', so say experts in that silent tongue! Of course, the 8 per cent that words say is the vital 8 per cent. But still, it is small as a percentage.

Now you can guess what the heading on this section says. Television brings back into mass communication body language, which neither print nor radio was able to bring to it. And body language eats up all the words that come pouring out of radio, or print, and fills the screen with its contented smiles.

Look what TV does to the radio episode of the lady, the perfume and the sales assistant.

Video	Audio
1 LS Front view, 'MEDICAL AND GENERAL STORE' ZOOM IN ON NAME BOARD	(MUSIC)
2 Tilt TO INSIDE VIEW OF STORE	
3 CUT TO LADY BY PERFUME SHELF	
4 PAN TO SALES ASSISTANT AT REASONABLE DISTANCE MCU: SALES ASSISTANT ALL ATTENTION	

5 CUT LADY'S HAND,
WITH PERFUME
BOTTLE HELD UP

6 MCU LADY SMILING & SPEAKING Lady: How much?

7 MCU: SALES ASSISTANT
SMILING PROFESSIONAL
SMILE, SPEAKING.

Sales Assistant: Only seventy-nine rupees.

That is one way of putting that episode in a TV script. The series of shots in the video column, 'the video sequence' as it is sometimes called, does not take so much time to view as it would seem to when we look at the script, with all the empty space on the right hand side. Each shot may take only a few seconds. And of course, the producer may change them, as he thinks fit, when he visualizes the scene. There is no rule that a writer should use all the notations, such as CU, MCU, LS, and CUT, PAN, and TILT. You can just describe what you would like to see on the screen, in plain English. And you need not even divide the page into two columns. You can just write out the audio and video one after another on the page. But write the video in first, and then the audio. The notations however, save space, and give your script a professional look. They are only shorthand forms of what, you would say in plain English. For instance, instead of saying, 'Please show the Sales Assistant, chest and face,' you could just put down, 'MCU: Sales Assistant.'

The script has been given here in two columns because that is how TV scripts are usually written, and secondly, it shows you how much of the speech has been cut from the radio script in order to change it into a TV script. We have dismissed the Narrator in the radio short-story. So have we sent away the two shoppers who came in earlier in the radio play to talk about the lady and the Sales Assistant. They had to do all the talking just to keep the audience informed about the lady-and-the-sales-assistant's whereabouts and movements! And just because we have brought them into our radio play, we may end up giving them more important parts to play in our story. But they have not come into the TV episode, so the story it starts may take an entirely different turn!

Now, what about the speeches of the lady and the sales assistant in the TV episode? Why should they say merely, 'How much?' and 'Only seventy-nine rupees?' Why shouldn't the lady say, 'How much is this, please?' And why shouldn't the sales assistant answer, 'It's only seventy-nine rupees, madam?'

They certainly can add those words. And we do hear those words in sales exchanges in real life. But the point is that the words are redundant when smiles and looks can convey friendliness silently and no one will notice anything wrong. But the redundancies make us doubly sure of mutual friendliness. So 'please' should stay. Still, there are several languages which do without 'please', and 'madam'. English demands it, except from ladies!

The words may be more helpful in radio, though TV can use looks and voice in addition to words to convey information and reduce uncertainties about friendliness. Radio, however, has only the voice to support the words. So the added redundancy of 'please', and 'madam' help. Now turn to the lady's question and the sales assistant's answer in the radio script once again. The lady tells us what she is talking about. She asks, 'How much is this bottle of perfume, please?' She need not do this on TV. The viewer can see the bottle.

And the sales assistant, —what does he say in reply? He asks her to confirm what she is talking about. 'The one in your hand, madam,' he asks. Why? There is a good reason why he does so. He must give the audience time to make themselves alert to receive the easily 'missable' piece of information he is going to send out. For figures are notoriously easy to miss on radio. And, besides, the audience should also know *where* the bottle is, and the lady has not said it, although the two other shoppers *may* have spoken about it.

We have seen radio can add the redundancies of speech characteristics (rhythm) to the information conveyed by words to reduce the receiver's uncertainties. TV has a whole lot of visual information that it can send, so that it can not only add to the

Since television *can* cut words down to the minimum, teachers who give course in TV script writing go on telling students to use no words unless they absolutely must, unless they find they have no choice other than words. These teachers many sound rather unreasonable when we compare television with real life. TV looks like real life, and in real life people do use a lot of words *in addition to* their 'body language'. So why shouldn't we do so on television? We should not do so because we prepare and present TV programmes, while real life is most of the time unprepared, unrehearsed. It is useful to train ourselves in word economy as much as it is to discipline ourselves in real economy. But what is the *good* of minimizing words? This is seldom made clear. The point is this: words say nothing to those who have not learned their meanings. Images tell their own meanings, they are *images* or analogues as we said earlier. Images have immediate impact on our thinking, feeling, and *will*. Therefore their effect is that the descriptive, instructional, and motivational bits of information they send are much more likely to reduce the receiver's uncertainties. The receiver, in other words, will respond to images with understanding, sympathy, and willingness to act as we ask him to.

But this picture of the almighty image has another side. Very often, images may mean anything or nothing without the support of spoken words. For instance, how would you put *this* on TV as an episode?

"The young liftman in a city office who threw a passenger out of his lift the other morning and was fined for the offence was undoubtedly in the wrong. It was a question of 'Please'. The complainant entering the lift said, 'Top'. The liftman demanded, 'Top, please,' and this concession being refused, he not only declined to comply with the instruction, but hurled the passenger out of the lift. This of course was carrying a comment on manners too far. Discourtesy is not a legal offence, and it does not excuse assault and battery.' (On saying 'please' by A.G. Gardiner, from 'Mary Farrow's', Y.M. Dent & Sons, London)

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) What is the main difference mentioned in this section between face-to-face and mass (mediated) communication?

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- 2) What is the advantage of cutting words down to the minimum?

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- 3) Which aspects of the liftman's story 'demand' words on TV?

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40.4 PRINT: ACCURACY AND ABSTRACTNESS

In this section we take no more than a quick look at the nature of printed messages as distinguished from those of TV/radio.

We shall deal with just one important distinction between these two electronic media, and the medium of print. Many of the visual signals and vocal signs that go with words on radio and TV are analogues as we have been saying. They resemble, or suggest what they stand for, and the receiver can decode them 'automatically' without having to learn the codes. A loud shout of a particular kind will be understood to be 'angry' and so will a fierce look for instance. But print gets no support from any of these analogues. The only information it can add to silent words is a still picture, which reveals no more than one frozen moment. The pictures do not move, as the words move on.

most unlike any tree in the world. From this state of print signals follow two consequences.

The receiver, that is, the reader, must first learn the precise meaning of each word, deliberately, before he can understand it, that is to say, decode the information it carries.

The writer, the 'sender' of printed messages has to depend almost entirely on these artificially learned signs called words to carry his message. So he has to use more words than either the radio broadcaster or the TV broadcaster. Therefore his receiver, the reader, must master more words than the radio listener or the TV viewer has to. If the writer wants redundancies to support his words, he has to look for them in other words and phrases, which means, the reader has to learn how to decode those other words as well.

But there is one thought the writer can take comfort from. His printed words make up the 'total' communication context, or situation. There are no looks, behaviours, or speech tones to contradict what the printed words say. So if a reader does not understand a message the first time, he can read it again, and again, and again. These repeated attempts to decode make a kind of redundancy that print can depend on and broadcasts cannot normally expect. This makes print the only medium for abstract ideas. It is also the medium of accuracy, precision, clarity in meaning. Now what would our story look like in print. Here is a version.

"A pleasant-looking, well-dressed lady in her late twenties walked into the Medical and General Store. She looked around for a few moments, and walked to the shelves where the perfumes and other cosmetics were on display. A sales assistant quietly moved towards her and took his position at a reasonable distance behind her on his side of the counter. He was all attention, eager to please, but careful not to be obtrusive. The lady lifted a small cylindrical bottle of perfume off a shelf, held it up, and with a pleasant smile, asked what its price was. The sales assistant smiled back at her, and, with his best professional manners, replied that the price of that bottle was only seventy-nine rupees."

That passage gives us some simple examples of abstract ideas. One of them is the past tense. 'Pastness' is abstract. There is no way to show in images that an event is past. The idea demands digital signs, which words are, whether spoken or written. Another abstraction is 'price'. Its more concrete form is 'how much?' You can examine the passage for more examples of abstract ideas. And find some for accuracy (or clarity) as well.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Why is the 'how much' of the TV script changed to 'the price' in the passage for print?

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- 2) What is the point made about the past tense in this section?

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- 3) Can analogue signs stand for negation? Give your reasons?

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40.5 BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

John Parry, in his '*Psychology of Human Communication*' mentions seven barriers. These barriers have to be removed before we can communicate successfully, and they have to be removed by means of communication, mostly by the use of language. So

- 1) *Channel capacity may be limited.* If too much water is pumped into a narrow pipe, half the water will 'flow over' if possible, or, the pipe will burst. Modern 'entrance tests' to various professional courses test the candidates' channel capacity, (reception speed). Here is a question for instance (not from an entrance exam). 'Does a doctor, doctor a doctor the way the doctored doctor wants to be doctored or does the doctor doing the doctoring doctor the other doctor his own way?' Answer this question at once. Now most people cannot process the meaning of the question as fast as you can ask it if you have learned it off by heart. They will be irritated if the question is seriously asked.
- 2) *Distraction or noise.* If someone dies and you say 'I'm sorry he has kicked the bucket', or 'He has joined the majority', you have yourself to thank if your messenger goes round and says the person has actually kicked a bucket improperly, or he has joined the majority group in an organization! The two phrases are supposed to be idiomatic among some people, but they create coding noises or ambiguities. Better state the sad fact in sadly clear, plain words.
- 3) *The unstated assumptions:* The sender and the receiver have some assumptions about each other as well as about the topic of communication. These assumptions are usually taken for granted, if the sender and the receiver are peers. And quite often they regard each other as peers, unless the sender is a teacher. Very often, therefore, their unstated assumptions lead to confusion. Here is an amusing instance.

Two girls were classmates in a primary school. They left the primary school at the end of the stage and got admission to two separate schools for their secondary course. They met as usual in the evening after returning from school. One girl asked the other, 'Have you got English in your school?' 'Yes, we have,' the other girl answered. At once the first girl shot out, 'When does Gopal's mother cook food?' But the second girl had no idea who Gopal and his mother were! The assumption here was that English was something in a book, as Geography was, and no one who learned it could be ignorant of Gopal. Unstated assumptions in politics and married life have led to serious breakdowns in communication. What we have to do is to be alert and get the assumptions stated before things go wrong.

- 4) *Incompatible schemata.* Schema is a term used in some branches of psychology. A schema, in brief is a 'mental predisposition', which helps us to deal with new experiences. If two persons have schemas which disagree with each other, they find it difficult to understand each other's messages. For instance, a milkman who has been brought up to his believe it is harmful to his cow if he doesn't add water to milk before selling it, and a health official, who 'books' him as a dishonest practitioner of adulteration have two incompatible schemas. Now, what will you tell them to get them to understand each other's point of view?
- 5) *Unconscious mechanisms* that block reception. Those who have secrets to keep will not believe in telepathy, whatever the evidence. Those who are desperate to get at secrets will hope there is telepathy, whatever the evidence against it. There are several other situations like this, which you can use in radio and TV plays. The point is that the prejudices are unconscious, or almost unconscious.
- 6) *Confused presentation.* You must have seen several instances of this, e.g. 'Love is blind. The lover sees what no one else can see. Love is the perfection of joy. The lover is willing to suffer to the very end.' How do you make sense of that? What idea of love can you get when you put these statements together?
- 7) *The absence of a medium:* This is what creates all the communication barriers between the specialist and the layman. They have no common language. The specialist speaks jargon. The layman is thoroughly mystified. So there evolved in English, the language of 'popular' science and other branches of knowledge. This is the language which those who are practising communication skills in English ought to cultivate, and train themselves to use.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) What is 'the unstated assumption'? What makes it a 'barrier'?
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- 2) Find an instance of breakdown in communication brought about by the limitation of the receiver's channel capacity.

40.6 LET US SUM UP

- 1) In this unit we dealt with the following points, to assess uncertainties and redundancies, and then choose our words. In the process of communication the receiver responds to or interprets the message *with its total context*.
- 2) That is to say, the receiver interprets the information encoded in our message, along with the redundancies supplied by the context. The context consists mainly of redundancies, which are points already known to the receiver from the sender-receiver relationship, and from his assumptions about the sender.
- 3) If we take these redundancies into account, they will help us in economizing words as well as in suitably choosing and using words, phrases and expressions. This is because redundancies in a closely familiar context may become uncertainties in unfamiliar contexts, and the uncertainties are the elements which demand the use of words.
- 4) When we put the same 'episode' in a diary, a radio script or a short story, a radio script for an episode in a play, a TV script, and a printed passage, we find that the radio play demands the longest 'stream' of words, and the TV medium 'eats up' all the words.
- 5) TV uses the maximum of 'analogue' signs, and print the minimum of them. Analogue signs communicate with greater certainty, but digital signs are necessary for abstract ideas, such as the 'pastness' of an event.
- 6) The seven barriers to communication identified by John Parry may help us in finding themes, etc. for radio and TV skits and so on.

40.7 KEY WORDS

Feedback: A refrigerator switches itself on and off automatically by means of a feedback system. The motor goes on working until the refrigeration chamber is cold enough. Then the 'cold' contracts the mechanism in the thermostat that switches the machine off. Then the chamber starts warming up until the warmth expands the switching mechanism, and the machine switches itself on. That is to say, the machine behaves as if it gets information of the results of its own activity and then changes it. When the result of an activity is *fed back* to the source of that activity, it is known as feedback.

In human communication, suppose a sender sends a message, the receiver gets it, and then he says in response that he has got it. Then the responding message acts as feedback because it informs the communicator about the results of his own activity so that the activity can be suitably modified.

Assess: To assess is to decide or fix the amount (of money to be paid as tax, etc.) or judge the value (of property, etc.). In this unit, however, 'assess' is used in a

metaphorical sense. What we need to assess in a communication context are the values of uncertainties and redundancies. And our purpose of assessment is to decide what we need to encode in words and phrases for our message. The concepts of uncertainty, redundancy, information, bit, seme, and so on will, it is hoped, help us develop a keen awareness of the need to be precise in our study of words and meanings.

40.8 SOME USEFUL BOOKS

The Psychology of Human Communication, by John Parry.

Video material: *BBC Video World*: Available from BBC Video World Subscription Services, P.O. Box 177, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England.

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The receiver interprets the whole context in addition to the message the sender has encoded and sent.
- 2) The words we say in our communication will depend on the uncertainties we think the receiver is left with after the redundancies are taken into account. 'Uncertainties-redundancies-the information needed in words'!
- 3) Information items which are redundancies to the young man's mother are uncertainties to the 'Room Service' of the hotel

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Instead of having one person less, we have one person more in the 'radio play'.
- 2) The play sounds more natural and is more dramatic. It is natural for a shopping couple to talk about another shopper. It is not natural for a Narrator to go on with a commentary about a shopper.
- 3) We lose in economy of words, we lose time. Dialogues take longer to tell stories than narration.
- 4) The Narrator tells us the lady moved a bottle off the shelf. The couple leave this out.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) In face-to-face communication, feedback is immediate. In mass communication it is delayed
- 2) Our message has a far better chance of being understood if it is mostly encoded in images, or in other words, analogue signs.
- 3) The word 'please' has to be in words. The trial of the man before the fining has surely to be in words.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) 'How much' could be ambiguous. It *might* be weight, rather than price. 'The price' is clear in this context. Print demands precision.
- 2) It will be extremely difficult to communicate that something is past without the use of digital signs, which words are.
- 3) They cannot. Analogues are images or resemblances. Nothing can be an image of anything that *is not*.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) If a communicator regards anything as 'understood', that is an unstated assumption: he does not put it in his statement which is sent to the receiver. If it is

in fact an assumption that is not known to the receiver, the receiver fails to understand the message as intended. Then the assumption becomes a communication barrier. An Indian guest told an European hostess he did not eat beef. The hostess served him mutton, which was cooked along with the beef in the same vessel, for he hadn't told her *why* he did not eat beef. He thought everybody knew, and left the assumption unstated.

- 2) Average American undergraduates understood only fifteen minutes' content out of an average one-hour-long college lecture,—so says a research report of some time ago.

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