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# UNIT I THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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Through this Unit we aim to introduce you to the fundamentals of communication and its processes. The study of the different aspects of communication will help you to understand the dynamics of the communication process and the importance of communication in our daily life. After studying this unit you should be able to:

- Define communication and its meaning
- Explain its importance
- Define the communication process
- Identify essential elements of communication and the role that each of these elements plays in the communication process
- Discuss the seven C's of communication.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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As you know, communication is very essential for the survival of human beings and it has a very important place in our life. In fact, it regulates and shapes all human behaviors. Man's need for communication is as strong and as basic as his need to drink, eat, and sleep. Moreover, in a country like ours, communication plays a vital role in creating people's awareness about policies and programmes of development. It helps in motivating them to be active partners in the nation-building endeavor. Therefore, it is important to have a clear understanding of the concepts of communication. What is communication? How does it work? Why is it important to us? What are the elements in the communication process and how do they transmit and set the communication process in motion? Last but not the least, what are the different types of communication and what are the seven C's of communication? Keeping these questions in mind will not only help you to understand the meaning and process of communication but will also help you to identify tools for effective communication.

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## 1.2 COMMUNICATION AND ITS FUNCTIONS

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### 1.2.1 Communication

Communication is a process that allows an individual to exchange information in several ways such as communicating one's own perceptions, point of view or experiences gained in the process of living. Communication requires that all parties understand a common tone of voice and nonverbal physical actions, such as body language, sign language, paralanguage, touch, eye contact or the use of writing. Person-to-person or one- to -one communication is the exchange of information, ideas, and feelings among people. Communication takes place when you transmit a message from one person to another person or to a group of people. Communication is the process of sending a message through different media, whether verbal or nonverbal, so that a person transmits a thought provoking idea, gesture, action, etc.

Communication happens at many levels, in many different ways for most human beings, as well as for certain machines. Most studies dedicate a portion of attention for communication, so when you talk about communication it is very important to be sure about what are the aspects of communication. Definitions of communication range widely, some recognizing that animals can communicate with each other as well as human beings, and some are narrower, including human beings within the parameters of human interaction. Communication is, therefore, a process of sharing or exchanging of ideas, information, knowledge, attitude or feeling among two or more persons through certain signs and symbols.

Communication is the process of sending a message, through different media whether it be verbal or nonverbal, so long as a person transmits a thought provoking idea, gesture, action, etc.

For a society to exist, certain communication needs must be met. These needs have existed since early times. Primitive tribes had sentinels who scanned the environment and reported dangers. Councils of elders interpreted facts and made decisions. Tribal meetings were used to transmit these decisions to the rest of the group. Other members of the tribe may have been story-tellers and jesters who functioned to entertain the group. As society became larger and more complex, these jobs were taken over by the mass media and this change was an important one. Sometimes,

dysfunctions were also performed by the mass media. Dysfunctions are the consequences that are undesirable from the point of view of the welfare of society.

## 1.2.2 Functions of Communication

The following are the basic functions of communication

### Information

Information as a concept bears a diversity of meanings, from everyday usage to technical settings. Generally speaking, the concept of information is closely related to imparting instruction, knowledge, meaning, mental stimulus, pattern, perception, and representation.

### Persuasion

Persuasion is a form of social influence. It is the process of guiding people towards the adoption of an idea, attitude, or action by rational and symbolic (though not always logical) means. It is the strategy of problem-solving relying on “appeals” rather than strength. Manipulation is taking persuasion to an extreme, where one person or group benefits at the cost of the other. Aristotle said that one of the most important functions of communication is to persuade the other party. Why is it so? Because persuasion helps in reaching decisions or consensus on public policy so that it is possible to control and govern. But it is possible that one may resort to persuasion with an ulterior motive. The receiver must be careful about the source of such persuasion.

### Debate and Discussion

Debate or debating is a formal method of interactive argument. Debate is a broader form of argument since it includes persuasion which appeals to the emotional responses of an audience which enable people to discuss and decide on differences, within a framework defining how they will interact. Deliberative bodies such as parliaments, legislative assemblies, and meetings of all sorts engage in debates. The outcome of a debate may be decided by audience vote, by judges, or by some combination of the two. Formal debates between candidates for elected office, such as the leaders’ debates and the U.S. presidential election debates are common in democracies. It is through debate and discussion in media that the public can clarify different viewpoints on issues of public interest and arrive at a general agreement on matters that concern all. It is important for them to find out the reasons for such debates and discussions. Critical appraisal of debates and discussions benefit the users.

### Instruction

An instruction is a form of communicated information that is both command and explanation for how an action, behavior, method, or task is to be begun, completed, conducted, or executed. One of the major functions of communication is to instruct, educate and socialize the members of the society. All these functions start early in life, at home or in school and continue till one completes the full cycle of life. Communication provides a fund of knowledge, expertise and skills that enable people to operate as effective members of society. It also creates awareness, gives direction and opportunity to people so that they actively participate in public life.

### Entertainment

Entertainment is an activity designed to give pleasure or relaxation to an audience. The audience may participate in the entertainment passively as in watching opera

or a movie, or actively as in games. Human beings must be entertained to break the monotony of routine and divert their attention from the troubles and tensions of daily life. The diversion should not be taken as a negative element. Such diversion has a positive role in our life: it revitalizes our personality and even educates us. You must have watched some Charlie Chaplin or Laurel and Hardy movies. They entertain and at the same time comment on life. We can learn a lot about life from these comedies. Communication provides boundless entertainment to people through pictures, films, music, drama, dance, art, literature, comedy, sports, games etc.

### **Cultural Promotion**

Communication is a major source for cultural preservation and promotion. It helps individuals to pursue and satisfy their creative urge. Communication provides opportunity for culture to be preserved and promoted. It stimulates individuals to pursue and fulfill their creative urges.

### **Integration**

Communication is a great source for disseminating knowledge and information, which further helps in social integration. Communication is a great integrating tool. Through a fund of knowledge or information, individuals, groups or cultures come to know one another, understand and appreciate each other's ways of life and thereby develop tolerance towards one another.

#### **Check Your Progress 1**

- Note:** a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.  
b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) What do you understand by communication?

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ii) List the various functions of communication.

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## **1.3 ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION**

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Communication is a dynamic process, ongoing and ever changing, which involves five major elements. The five elements are: the **message**, the **sender**, the **transmission medium**, the **receiver** and **feedback**.

### 1.3.1 The Message

A message in its most general meaning is the most fundamental object of communication. It is something which provides information. Therefore, its meaning is dependent upon the context in which it is used. The term may apply to both the information and its form.

A message can be transferred through spoken and written mediums, such as radio programmes, films, paintings, posters, photographs etc. However, a message is not only transferred information, but also involves the emotions that give the words meaning. Words alone do not establish the full meaning of the message. Non verbal communications may give clues that the receiver can use to interpret verbal messages.

### 1.3.2 The Communicator

The Communicator is the source of communication, which begins the communication process by transmitting information to the receiver. Encoding the message, whether written or oral, is a process that requires four separate steps. The first step is to formulate the message, putting thoughts into words. The second step consists of passing the message through many psychological or internal communication barriers. Psychological barriers stem from the sender's existing knowledge, beliefs, biases and feelings. The message, once filtered through these psychological barriers, is encoded for transmission. The encoding process ranges from simply stringing words together, to actually putting the message into some form of code. Transmitting the message, whether in oral or written form, might appear to be the last step in the sender's process, but a good communicator immediately becomes the receiver and prepares to accept feedback for verification of the message delivery.

This is the process of transmitting the information you want to communicate into a form that can be sent and correctly decoded at the other end. Your success in encoding depends partly on your ability to convey information clearly and simply, but also on your ability to anticipate and eliminate sources of confusion (for example, cultural issues, mistaken assumptions and missing information). A key part of this is to know your audience. Failure to understand whom you are communicating with, will result in delivering messages that are misunderstood. For example, an illiterate can not understand a written message but can comprehend it well if explained.

A good communicator needs good communication skills. But what is meant by "communication skills"? The purpose of communication is to get the message across to others clearly and unambiguously. Doing this involves effort from both the sender of the message and the receiver. And it's a process that can be fraught with error, with messages often misinterpreted by the recipient. When this isn't detected, it can cause tremendous confusion, wasted effort and missed opportunity.

In fact, communication is successful only when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information as a result of the communication. By successfully getting your message across, you convey your thoughts and ideas effectively. When not successful, the thoughts and ideas that you send do not necessarily reflect your own, causing a communication breakdown and creating roadblocks that stand in the way of your goals – both personal and professional.

### 1.3.3 Transmission Medium (Channel)

The transmission medium is the pathway by which the message flows. It is the vehicle that carries the message from the sender to the receiver and back.

Messages are conveyed through various channels, such as verbal, written or electronic. Verbal would include face- to -face meetings, telephone conversations and videoconferencing. Written, include letters, emails, memos and reports. Different channels have different strengths and weaknesses. For example, it's not particularly effective to give a long list of directions verbally, while you'll quickly cause problems if you criticize someone strongly by email.

### 1.3.4 The Receiver

Just as successful encoding is a skill, so is successful decoding (involving, for example, taking the time to read a message carefully, or listening actively to it). Hence it is the interpretation of the message by the receiver. Just as confusion can arise from errors in encoding, it can also arise from decoding errors. This is particularly the case if the decoder does not have enough knowledge to understand the message.

The receiver is the element in the communication process that interprets the meaning of the message. Only when the receiver has understood the message, can true communication take place. The receiver also goes through an internal set of processes related to incoming messages. Upon obtaining the message, the receiver decodes it through assimilation and interpretation. The receiving process is made up of the following steps: **receive, decode, filter, and interpret**. Receiving takes place when the receiver first perceives the message, either by sight or hearing. During this process, the receiver filters the information through his/her own psychological barriers such as existing knowledge, attitude, beliefs, biases and perceptions. These barriers affect how well the message is understood, accepted and decoded. To decode a message effectively, the sender and receiver must be communicating in the same language. Language, in this sense, is not limited to formal language types (i.e., English, Spanish, etc.), but also includes the influences of technical knowledge, field of experience and critical items called Operational definitions. The words in the message must mean the same thing to the receiver and sender or there will be miscommunication. Also there are other interruptions that can creep in at any point of the communication process and make it ineffective. Environment is one major cause that interferes with message receptions: like noises from the roadside, constant chattering of individuals outside the communication act, blaring loudspeaker, faulty transmission, etc. Noise can occur in other forms also, poor handwriting, heavy accent or soft speech, communication in a poorly lit room etc. In fact, these are barriers to effective communication. For smooth and effective communication, it is necessary to eliminate or reduce noise as far as possible.

### 1.3.5 Feedback

Perhaps the greatest cause of ineffective communication is failure of the sender to request feedback from the receiver. Feedback is the element of communication which confirms that the message has been received and understood. It completes the sender's process by verifying that the meaning has not changed. In most written forms of communication, some reply is required. It may range from specific action to a simple receipt. Oral communication via electronic means usually requires only a verbal repeat of the message followed by "roger", "understand", or "aye-aye". In face-to-face oral communications, feedback can be more complex. One way to get feedback from face-to-face communication is to solicit questions from your receiver, or each person to whom your message applies.

### Check Your Progress 2

- Note:** a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.  
b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

i) What steps does a communicator follow to transmit information?

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ii) What steps are involved in the receiving of a message?

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## 1.4 KINDS OF COMMUNICATION

### 1.4.1 Intrapersonal Communication

Every time an individual does something or speaks, he hears it first within himself. Therefore, intrapersonal communication is language used or thought which is internal to the communicator. Intrapersonal communication is the active internal involvement of the individual in the symbolic processing of messages. The individual becomes his or her own sender and receiver, providing feedback to himself or herself in an ongoing internal process.

Although successful communication is generally defined as being between two or more individuals, issues concerning the useful nature of communicating with oneself and problems concerning communication with non-sentient entities such as computers have made some argue that this definition is too narrow.

### 1.4.2 Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is defined by communication scholars in numerous ways, though most definitions, involve participants who are interdependent on one another or have a shared history. Communication channels are the medium chosen to convey the message from sender to receiver. Communication channels can be categorized into two main categories: Direct and Indirect channels of communication.

Another way of defining interpersonal communication is to compare it to different forms of communication. In doing so, you would examine how many people are involved, how physically close they are to one another, how many sensory channels are used and the feedback provided. Interpersonal communication differs from other forms of communication in that there are few participants involved, the interactants are in close physical proximity to each other, there are many sensory channels used and the feedback is immediate. An important point to note about the contextual definition is that it does not take into account the relationship between the interactants.

### **1.4.3 Group Communication**

Group Communication examines the most effective ways of communicating and interacting within social and work groups as it provides an opportunity for direct interaction among the members of the group which helps in bringing about changes in attitude and beliefs, and offers a clear understanding. Group communication occurs among three or more persons. The degree of interaction and intimacy depends on the size of the group. The larger the group the lesser the personal intimacy and lesser is the possibility of exchange.

Communication is an important cornerstone of all groups and often the variable, which determines their success or failure. Effective communication builds trust and mutual respect and facilitates learning. Although communication is frequently thought of in terms of written or oral dialogue, actions are also important forms of communication and indicate commitment to stated agreements. Three general categories have been identified as critical to successful group communication:

Commitment - Members' integrity and leadership qualities

Communication- discussion, listening and facilitation

Organization - setting ground rules for communication, decision—making

### **1.4.4 Mass Communication**

Mass communication is the term used to describe the various means by which individuals and entities relay information to large segments of the population all at once through mass media. It is usually understood to relate to newspaper and magazine publishing, radio, television and film, as they are used both for disseminating news and for advertising.

The term 'mass' denotes great volume, range or extent (of people or production) and reception of messages. It suggests that the recipients of media products constitute a vast sea of passive, undifferentiated individuals. This is an image associated with some earlier critiques of 'mass culture' and mass society which generally assumed that the development of mass communication has had a largely negative impact on modern social life, creating a kind of bland and homogeneous culture which entertains individuals without challenging them. However, with the advancement in Media Technology, people are no longer receiving gratification without questioning the grounds on which it is based. Instead, people are engaging themselves more with media products such as computers, cell phones and internet. These have gradually become vital tools for communication in a society today.



**Check Your Progress 3**

- Note:** a) Space given below the question is for writing your answer.  
 b) Check your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

- 1) Write two impacts of each of the following type of communication:
- Intrapersonal : a) .....  
 b) .....
- Interpersonal : a) .....  
 b) .....
- Group : a) .....  
 b) .....
- Mass : a) .....  
 b) .....

**1.5 THE SEVEN C’S OF COMMUNICATION**

So far we have discussed the functions, elements and kinds of communication. Now we shall be discussing the most important part of communication, which is designing communication – the most complex but most interesting part of the subject. Designing communication is a complex process. It begins at a high level, with good questions and good listening, and ends in constructing a presentation, document, system or user’s experience.

Here are the seven C’s, in order:

**1.5.1 Content**

This is the best possible measure of communication effectiveness. What do you want your audience to walk away with and remember? Once you have defined your prime question, set out to answer it. What information is required? Do you have the answer already, or do you need to search it out? The content determines the audience. Hence, the message must have the meaning for the receiver and it must be compatible with his/her value system.

**1.5.2 Context**

The context must be clear and should not contradict the message. It must provide for participation and play back what’s going on. Do you understand the situation? Is there a dead elephant in the middle of the room that you are not aware of? Ask good questions. You’ll need a clear goal before you begin to design any communication.

**1.5.3 Channels**

Only the established channels of communication should be used — channels that the receiver uses and respects—creating new ones is difficult. Different channels have different effects and serve effectively in different stages of the diffusion process.

### 1.5.4 Clarity

This is one of the hardest parts of the process and most often neglected. People's attention will quickly drift — they expect you to get to the point. Learn to edit. The message must be put in simple terms. Words must mean the same thing to the receiver as they do to the sender. Complex issues must be compressed into theme slogans that have simplicity and clarity. The farther a message has to travel, the simpler it should be.

### 1.5.5 Composition

Now it's time to design the way you will tell your story. Think in terms of both written and visual composition. When writing, who are your main characters? How will you set up the scene? What are the goals and conflicts that will develop? How will the story reach a resolution? In visual terms, where will the reader begin? How will you lead the eye around the page? In all your compositional thinking, how will you engage your audience? How will you keep them engaged? Writing down, forces you to think it through. Communication must break down into basic "building blocks" of content. Formulate the information into clusters and groups. What patterns emerge? How can you make the information more modular? Given your goal, what is the most fundamental unit of information? You can use index cards to break down information into modules.

### 1.5.6 Contrast

What are the differences that matter? Use contrast to highlight them: Big vs. little; rough vs. smooth; black vs. white. When making any point, ask, "in comparison with what?" Contrast is a trigger to the brain that says "pay attention!"

### 1.5.7 Consistency

Unless you are highlighting differences, keep things like color, fonts, spacing and type sizes consistent to avoid distracting people. Research shows that any extraneous information will detract from people's ability to assimilate and learn. Communication is an unending process. It requires repetition to achieve penetration. The story must be consistent.

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## 1.6 LET US SUM UP

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We have spoken about the concept of communication, the way it works and the various elements of the communication process. Now we have very clearly understood the meaning, the functions and various kinds of communication in which human beings are engaged. We can now very easily understand the impact of mass media, i.e. electronic media, television channels, films and print media for mass communication. Let's sum up every thing in brief.

Communication is a process that allows an individual to exchange information by several ways. Effective communication requires more than just transmitting a message. The message must be clear, accurate and above all, understood by the receiver.

Communication is a dynamic process, ongoing and ever changing, which involves five major elements. The five elements are the message, the sender, the transmission medium, the receiver and feedback.

Designing communication is a complex process. It begins at a high level, with good questions and good listening; and ends in constructing a presentation, document, system or user experience.

Communication requires at least three elements. The source may be an individual speaking, or gesturing, etc., or a communication organization like the newspaper, movie, etc. The message is something which can be interpreted meaningfully by somebody else. The destination may be a person who is listening, or reading, or watching, or it may be a group of people who are listening to a lecture, or watching a movie.

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## 1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) Communication is a process of sending a message, through different media. It is a process that allows an individual to exchange information in several ways.
- ii) To inform, persuade, debate/discuss, instruct, entertain, promote culture and integration.

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) A communicator is the source of communication. S/He formulates the message after passing it through psychological or internal communication barriers, encodes it and finally transmits it.
- ii) The receiving process consists of four steps: receive, decode, filter and interpret.

### Check Your Progress 3

Intrapersonal : a) clarity of thoughts

b) streamlining of thoughts

Interpersonal : a) exchange of information between two people

b) flow of information; immediate feedback.

Group : a) flow of information to a group of people

b) interaction with greater number of people

Mass : a) use of technology

b) dissemination of information on a large scale.