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COMMUNICATION

Communication, just like food and shelter, is an important means of survival. We only have to look around us to realize that there are various means of communication used for reaching large number of people. We can obtain entertainment, information, knowledge, political updates, latest movie releases and the like from media, books and other people. We exchange information through words, gestures, symbols, tones, music, etc. In this lesson you will learn about communication, its kinds and uses, how communication can be made more effective in our daily life and the impact of mass media on the individual and society.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- describe the components of communication process;
- appreciate how communication can be made more effective;
- learn the significance of non-verbal communication in the Indian context; and
- understand the role and impact of mass media.

14.1 UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is a process of interaction with people and the environment. When we interact with others we use language to transmit information, ideas and attitudes from one person to the other. When you learn that your friend is unwell you ask her about her health and express your anxiety about her well-being. When you go to a shop to buy a shirt the sales person may comment on how a particular color is suiting you. Communication is thus a personal process which occurs between people so as to bring about a change in behavior, and, it allows us to express our thoughts and



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emotions through words and actions. Communication is an important tool for controlling and motivating people by providing information to facilitate decision making.

14.2 ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

The key elements of communication are:

- i. Communication is a two-way process:** It involves a sender and a receiver. When you talk to your father, communication is at the individual level. When a teacher talks to a group of students, communication is at group level.
- ii. There has to be a message:** The information has to be in the form of a message, a directive, an idea, a feeling or an opinion.
- iii. Commonness of understanding:** Communication can occur only when there is commonness of understanding between sender and receiver. The basis of commonness can be culture, language, and environment. Words, phrases, idioms, gestures and proverbs provide common basis for communication.
- iv. Modifying the behavior of other people:** The information transmitted to the receiver brings forth a response in the form of some change in his/her behavior. For example, the moment you hear that fire has broken out in the building, you along with others will run out of the building.
- v. Method of giving information:** Information is provided with the help of words or through gestures, expressions and the like.



INEX QUESTIONS 14.1 AND 14.2

1. Which of the following statements is **not** correct:
 - a. Communication is a continuous process.
 - b. We can communicate through words.
 - c. We cannot communicate through gestures.
 - d. We cannot express through tones and expressions.
 2. Explain the key elements of communication.
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14.3 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

Communication can be broadly divided into two categories. These are:

1. Verbal communication, and
2. Non-verbal communication.

Verbal communication - When words are used as tools of interaction between two or more individuals, it is termed as verbal communication. It can be oral or written. Verbal communication provides us with **meaningful interaction** between people, **information** and **direction**. It is a fundamental requirement for life. Researchers have noted that on an average a person spends 10 to 11 hours every day in verbal communication that is, reading, speaking, writing, or listening. Some common forms of verbal communication are conversations, speeches, letters, newspapers, magazines, telephonic conversations, etc.

Non-verbal Communication – It is interesting to note that non-verbal communication or body language, accounts for more than 70 percent of our communication while words account for just about 10 percent ! Thus non-verbal communication is very important in human interaction. Gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, posture and body orientation, distance are some of the non-verbal ways of communicating. Non-verbal communication helps to

- create impressions beyond the verbal element of communication,
- reinforces what has been said,
- helps to express our emotions and interpersonal attitudes,
- helps to convey power, affection, dominance, respect etc,
- manage and regulate the interaction with others, and
- allows self-presentation.

There are various channels of non-verbal communication. However it is important to note that non-verbal communication is influenced by culture; hence it must be understood with reference to the culture. **Kinesics** or body language deals with physical movement, while **gaze** or eye contact deals with the eyes (fixed gaze or a lot of eye movement).

Proxemics involves the use of social distance between people. It is estimated that following pattern of distance is maintained in different contexts: intimate space (0-18 inches), personal space or informal distance (18 inches -4 feet), social distance or formal distance (4feet – 12 feet), and public space (beyond 12 feet). **Haptics** refers to touch as another channel of communication which is a function of culture. Usually North Americans and North Europeans touch less, but people from Asian Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cultures employ more social touching.

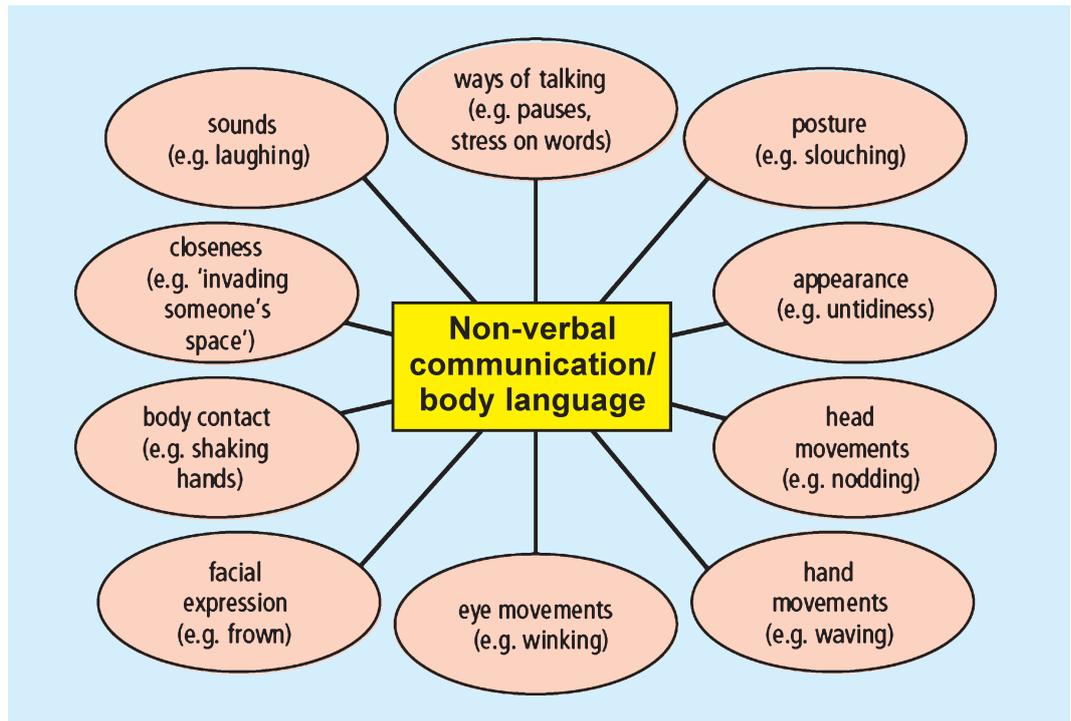


Fig. 14.2: Non verbal communication

Did You Know?

Eye contact:

- Direct eye contact indicates confidence.
- Looking downwards shows respect, listening carefully, or guilty.
- Single raised eyebrow indicates doubting.
- Both raised eye brows indicates admiration.

Posture:

- Standing erect, but not rigid, and leaning slightly forward indicates that one is approachable, receptive and friendly.
- Facing each other – indicates interpersonal closeness.

Facial Expression

- Smile is a powerful cue that indicates happiness, friendliness, warmth, liking and affiliation.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.3

Fill in the blanks:

1. Reading, speaking, writing, or listening are examples of _____.
2. Gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, posture and body orientation, distance are _____ ways of communicating.
3. The four basic channels of non-verbal communication are, _____, _____, _____, _____.
4. Haptics refers to _____ and is a function of culture.



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Activity 1

Communication Game: Active Listening

Active listening is an important aspect of communication. Play this game to learn some tips about active listening, understand your own communication style, be an active listener, and give appropriate feedback.

1. Make a group of 4-6 people. Assign a number to each person.
2. Each person writes a sentence on a slip of paper.
3. Let person number 1 pick up any slip and read the sentence.
4. Person number 1 should now whisper the sentence to person number 2 and so on till the message reaches back to person number 1. Now person number 1 reads out aloud the sentence written on the slip of paper.
5. Please note: Is the message (sentence) exactly the same? Has it changed? What are the changes?

This activity shows that verbal communication can change and distant the message gets distorted by the time it reaches the last person. This is because every person has his or her own style of communication, different thought processes and ways of interpreting a message.

14.4 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

You have learnt how verbal and non-verbal communication play an important role in our daily life. It becomes essential that we communicate effectively to others for progress in academics, professional domains as well as to improve our interpersonal



relationships. At times we are misunderstood partially or even completely. In both cases the purpose of communication is defeated. So let us look at some of the points we need to keep in mind so that our communication is made effective.

Before we learn about effective communication let us understand some difficulties that **hinder effective communication**. Very often a **message is distorted**, for example, some people may change facts and say things to please their boss. People also are **selective** in terms of their **perception**, what they see and hear is based upon their needs, motivation, experience, and personal characteristics. While decoding a message people may project their interests and expectations. People have a **limited capacity** to process incoming information, when the information is too much **information overload** takes place. Then people tend to select, ignore, pass over or forget information. Further, when we are **emotional**, such as sad, angry, or very excited, then we are likely to miss out some information. Finally, words mean differently to different people. **Language usage** is influenced by age, gender and the cultural background.

14.5 FEATURES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Certain features of effective communication are:

- i) **Common frame of reference** – The sender and the receiver should interact at a common level of understanding. When a mother speaks to her child she uses words which are present in the child's vocabulary e.g. a scolding tone, if the child has been naughty or a concerned tone when the child is unwell. But while speaking to her sister she will use different words, phrases and tones depending upon the context. Thus a common level of understanding is essential for effective communication.
- ii) **Mutual interest** – Contents of the communication must be of mutual interest to the sender and receiver. For a farmer how the Stock Market operates is of no interest as his concern is about the quality of seeds and manure or the effect of climate changes on the crops.
- iii) **Common Language** – Language is the strongest means of verbal communication. A common language ensures effective communication. Because it ensures minimum misunderstanding of words, phrases, idioms and proverbs.
- iv) **Common environment** – People from similar backgrounds understand the message without much problem. Thus common nationality, economic status, culture, social interests, age group and professions are some examples. Can you make a list of the other common issues? You must have noted how it is easier to talk to people from your own religious group, class or town.



Given below are tips on how verbal communication can be made more effective:

- Improve language by reading and listening;
- Work on voice modulation, tone and pronunciation;
- Think and then speak;
- Do not speak fast or too loudly;
- Learn about culturally sensitive words, signs and contexts for different cultures.

In order to improve your body language, please remember to:

- Keep the appropriate distance, particularly with reference to culture, gender and authority figures.
- Touch only if required, or necessary.
- Maintain eye contact in an interview situation, and be sensitive if such a communication is frowned upon by a culture.
- Look presentable and confident.

Verbal and non-verbal communication together provide a powerful medium of communication. If used properly and carefully, effective communication can convey the message immediately. Advertisers make use of effective communication to make people buy certain products. Have you noticed how advertisements make use of well known personalities, visual images, spoken and written words and music so as to influence us to make us want to buy a particular, car, soap, motorcycle or dress? Can you recall some of the well known jingles 'Thanda Matlab Coca Cola', Daag Ache Hai, Dhundhate rah jaoge'. Can you recall any more such phrases?

Communication is a process of sharing meaning with each other in the world. However the meaning attached to nonverbal communication differs from one culture to another. It is said that spoken language is about 7 to 35 % of our communication. The majority of our communication is through nonverbal means. Thus when verbal language seems to be unclear we search for nonverbal cues to provide us with more information.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.3 AND 14.5

1. State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':
 1. Majority of our communication is through the non-verbal channels.
 2. People have an unlimited capacity to receive and process information.
 3. Language usage is influenced by age, gender and cultural background.



4. Contents of the communication must be of mutual interest to the sender and receiver.
 5. Effective communication can be achieved by talking fast.
2. Describe the main the features of effective communication.

14.6 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN INDIAN CONTEXT

It is important to understand the nature of non-verbal communication of any culture, particularly as it is used in everyday life. Some non-verbal cues are common to all cultures and they send the same message. Non-verbal communication gives us information about our relationships with others, with regard to liking, status, age, gender and it is appropriate for conveying our emotions also. In the Indian context certain non-verbal cues are distinct.

Let us understand about **body language and movement**, or Kinesis. In the Indian setting, couples are not expected to show affectionate or intimate gestures towards each other, particularly if they are in a public place or in the presence of the family. Holding of hands or even looking at one's husband is frowned upon. Indians, like any other culture, have distinct gestures and hand movements. In India, when you slide one hand over your wrist, it indicates the use of a traditional Hindu woman's bracelet called a bangle. If this is done to a man, it questions his manhood and provokes him to a fight.

Handshakes are common, but more so between men or between women. Handshake between a man and woman are generally avoided. In cities like Delhi and Mumbai handshakes between men and women in the corporate world is quite common. Hence the context will determine the appropriate non-verbal communication.

Social factors in non-verbal communication – Indians have high power-distance index, which indicates that cultural factors, such as hierarchy, authority, and age (elders), play a definitive role in communications. Interpersonal relations, position of authority, age and gender determine the distance to be maintained between two people. People superior in status can directly look at a person from a lower status, but a person of lower status usually stands with eyes down cast (as a mark of respect), and stands at a reasonable distance from the superior person. For example, employer-employee, father-son, daughter-in-law and an elder person of the husband's family. Women generally do not maintain eye contact with men from their husband's family. Often women from a conservative, traditional background cover their head with a veil.

Indians value their personal space, usually one and a half to two meters is the norm. Yet there is little physical distance with family and close friends. Public affection, holding hands, hugging, amongst family and close friends is quite common. Also

after visiting family or friends, while leaving a group each member is expected to be bid good bye individually. Indian youngsters usually bend and touch the feet of older persons to greet them or while taking leave of them.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.6

1. Explain the role of culture in non-verbal communication in the Indian context.

14.7 ROLE AND IMPACT OF MEDIA

Media is the technological means of sending information, ideas and opinions to a large audience. We live in a society where information and communication help us to progress ahead in various fields of life, like work, health care, entertainment, education, travel and personal relationships. We wake up every day to check the news on TV, newspaper or the Internet. We are exposed to advertisements which influence us as to what we buy from the market. Children and teenagers are heavily influenced by media information regarding fashion, ideal body type, ideal image of beauty, urban lifestyles etc.

Positive influences - Media has an important role to play; it both **educates** and enriches our lives. It provides educational information and improves academic performance. It **collects and distributes information** and news (religious, political, social, entertainment, and environmental) to the public. Media can be used for helping a beneficial cause, such as promoting literacy or providing information about the benefits of medical progress (vaccination, polio, health care for the child and mother, or AIDS). It **transmits social and cultural values**. Media plays a significant role in informing the public about the **government policies**, dealings and latest programmes. It allows the public to address its problems and **maintain democracy** in the country. Media helps to mobilize people and brings about social integration. Mass media contact has been possible with the use of newspapers, radio, television news channels, and the Internet.

Negative influences - Media can also have negative effects both on the individual and society. India is well known for its diverse population in terms of faith, religion and language. Media can be misused by spreading **wrong information and news**, often leading to **violence, prejudice and hatred** among communities. Inciting communal violence and praising acts of violence must be avoided. Spread of **rumors and propaganda** is an organized way of spreading **false information**. Often media does not respect the **privacy of the individual** and publishes private and confidential material about ordinary and well-known personalities. The use of media to circulate **vulgar and obscene material** is of concern to all, for the young and the adult.





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It must be realized that media serves important functions in society. Therefore it must fulfill certain **responsibilities and obligations**. The media must maintain **ethical standards** whereby it provides **objective, balanced and accurate** information to the masses. It should avoid inciting the masses towards crime, violence and hatred. **Community building** and **national integration** must be one of its objectives. In fact the media should reflect the **pluralistic nature** of India and provide a voice to all members of the nation.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Communication is a process of interaction with people and the environment.
- Communication is a two-way process with a message to bring about a change in behavior, with commonness of understanding and a method of sending the message.
- Verbal communication provides us with meaningful interaction between people, by providing information and direction, through words, spoken or written.
- Non-verbal communication involves the use of gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, posture and body orientation, and maintaining distance.
- Features of effective communication include a common frame of reference, mutual interest, common language and common environment.
- Indian context has its unique forms of non-verbal communication.
- Communication through media has positive and negative influence on human behavior.



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. With the help of relevant examples define communication. Discuss the five elements of communication.
2. Discuss how verbal and non-verbal communication play an important role in our daily life.
3. Explain the different features of effective communication.
4. With the help of relevant examples discuss the unique patterns of non-verbal communication in the Indian context.
5. Discuss the role and impact of media on society.



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

14.1 and 14.2

1. a. True
b. True
c. False
d. False
2. Refer to section 14.1

14.3

- a. Verbal communication
- b. Non-verbal communication,
- c. Kinesis, gaze, proxemics, haptics
- d. Touch

14.4 and 14.5

1. 1. True
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. False
2. Refer to section 14.5

14.6

1. Refer to section 14.6

Hints for Terminal Questions

1. Refer to sections 14.1 and 14.2
2. Refer to sections 14.3
3. Refer to section 14.4
4. Refer to section 14.6
5. Refer to section 14.7

