



COMMUNICATION SKILLS

SECOND EDITION

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PREFACE

It has become essential today to acquire basic skills in communication in order to grow and succeed both personally and professionally. Therefore, a student of Engineering cannot afford to ignore the basics of communication. Today, English has become the medium of communication throughout the world and therefore learning English has become all the more important. The present syllabus of the university tries to focus on giving exposure to the English language. Besides teaching basics of grammar, it tries to create students' interest in learning English language through some select short-stories and poems. These pieces will certainly develop students' ability to comprehend the written texts.

The book explains each topic comprehensively and provides a complete view. While writing this book, the students of B.Tech. Ist year have been kept in mind. The book is easy to understand for those with little formal training in English language. It deals with certain fundamental rules of grammar and composition in a student-friendly manner. Cumbersome grammatical and linguistic jargon, which interrupts smooth and quick learning, has been avoided.

The book has been divided into five parts, strictly following the pattern of the university syllabus. The first part deals with the fundamental aspects of **communication** like meaning and importance of communication, media and types of communication, formal and informal channels, barriers to communication, divisions of human communication and methods to improve interpersonal communication and finally qualities of good communication. Many exercises have been given with a view to giving ample practice to the students.

The second part gives a complete view of certain topics of **grammar** such as, passive voice, indirect speech, conditional sentences, modal verbs and linking words. Care has been taken not to go into complexities and make it easily comprehensible to the students.

Part 3 deals with **composition** like C.V. writing, business letter writing, job application writing, paragraph writing and report writing.

Part 4 contains **short-stories** and part 5 deals with **poems** prescribed in the syllabus. Glossary and annotations have been given to help students understand the texts properly. To make contents clear to the students, summary and analysis have also been given. At the end of each chapter expected questions have been given to help the students prepare for the examination.

Model question papers have also been given to familiarise the students with the new pattern and help them in preparing for their exams.

I will consider my labour to be amply rewarded if the book proves to be useful to the students.

Before closing this prefatory note, it is my moral duty to thank all those who have helped me in the preparation of this book.

First of all, I am grateful to my teacher Late (Prof.) B. G. Tandon for his inspiring qualities as a teacher of English.

I want to express my deep sense of gratitude to Prof. Binod Mishra, IIT Roorkee, for his inspiring guidance and constant encouragement.

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MEDIA AND TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

After the discussion of the meaning and importance, and dimensions of communication, it is worthwhile to have a look at the means/media and types of communication. Specially after considering the directions/dimensions of communication we can understand that there may be various occasions requiring different types of communication. All communication cannot be of the same type and cannot flow through the same means. Much depends on who sends a message to whom and for what purpose. It must also be understood that a human being has at his command a number of means of communication.

Media/means of communication are broadly of two types: Verbal and Non-verbal.

Verbal Communication

The word 'verbal' means 'related to words and the use of words'. Human beings are gifted with the use of words that make language. As has been stated previously, the process of communication involves the use of a common set of symbols between the sender and the receiver. Words are the most accurate and powerful sets of symbols. That is why it is observed that all serious or formal communication is in words. The words may be spoken or written. Spoken communication or the communication employing speech is known as oral communication.

Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication has a vast range of media. Mainly they are: Sign Language, Body Language and Para Language.

Note: Both the Verbal and Non-verbal communication have been discussed in detail in the next chapter.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

Every organization has a built-in hierarchical system that can be compared to a pyramid. It can, therefore, be understood that communication normally flows from top to bottom. But it is not always so. Communication in an organization is multidirectional. Given below are the directions in which communications are sent:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| (a) Downward | (c) Horizontal or Lateral |
| (b) Upward | (d) Diagonal or Cross-wise |

Downward Communication

As has been stated above, communication in the first place, flows downwards. That is why, traditionally this direction has been highlighted or emphasised. It is based on the assumption that the people working at higher

levels have the authority to communicate to the people working at lower levels. This direction of communication strengthens the authoritarian structure of the organization. Orders, instructions, policy statements, notices, circulars, job sheets and employee handbooks are the main objectives of downward communication.

Advantages

1. **Obedience to authority:** Most of this type of communication is in the form of orders, instructions, the things to do, and what the authorities of the organization expect of its employees. The people at the lower rung are bound to obey the authorities. Disobedience is always punished by the administration in one way or the other. This makes the employees learn obedience.
2. **Faster:** No one can sit on the orders/instructions of the higher authority for long. These things are supposed to be passed immediately to the concerned people. Thus, this type of communication is much faster and more effective.
3. **Forms a system:** The authorities always try to form an efficient system for their organizations and they continuously work in this direction. Their purpose always is to get plans implemented properly. As most of the communication is directive in nature, meant to be followed by the employees, it helps in establishing an effective and result-oriented system.

Limitations

1. **Distortion/Dilution:** Quite often the communication originating at the highest level gets distorted or diluted on the way to the lower levels. Sometimes the messages may get lost. It has to be ensured that the receiver fully understands the instructions coming from above. This requires an efficient feedback system.
2. **Delay:** Another drawback of downward communication is that often it becomes time-consuming. The more the levels, the greater the chances of delay. That is why sometimes managers choose to send their messages directly to the person concerned.
3. **Filtering:** Sometimes managers may withhold some valuable information from the employees. In such a situation the employees become frustrated, confused and powerless. This may spoil the employer-employee relationship.
4. **Too much or too less information:** Some superiors talk too much while others talk too little. When a manager transmits too much information to his subordinates, he may create confusion or may leak confidential information. A manager may withhold some information thinking that it is not necessary for subordinates to know all the details. Such under-communication may create apprehension among employees.

Upward Communication

The function of upward communication is to send information, suggestions, complaints and grievances of the lower level workers to the authorities above.

It is, therefore, more participative in nature. It was not encouraged in the past, but modern managers encourage upward communication. This is a direct result of increasing democratisation.

Advantages

Upward communication plays a vital role in the successful functioning of an organization in the following ways:

1. **Feedback:** Upward communication provides valuable feedback to managers. With the help of this feedback they can judge whether the subordinates have understood and followed the orders and instructions issued to them. Managers also receive useful information relating to the attitude of employees towards the company and its policies.
2. **Release of tension:** Upward communication provides the employees an outlet to vent their pent-up emotions and grievances. When managers patiently and sympathetically listen to the problems and complaints of employees, the employees feel happy and satisfied.

3. **Suggestions:** Managers can get constructive suggestions and innovative ideas through upward communication. When these suggestions are implemented and rewarded, employees get a feeling of participation increased.
4. **Mutual cooperation:** Upward communication helps to create greater harmony and mutual understanding between management and employees.
5. **Change:** When employees communicate freely with their employers they do not resist new ideas as their attitudes become positive. They not only accept new schemes readily but even work hard to make them successful.

Limitations

1. **Psychological:** Certain problems, primarily of psychological nature, may come up in upward communication.
2. **Hierarchical:** Many managers do not like to be 'told' by their juniors. They may not be patient enough to listen to them or may even suppress the message sent to them from below. In such a situation the employees may feel let-down.

Lateral or Horizontal Communication

This type of communication can be seen taking place between persons operating at the same level or working under the same executive. Functional managers operating at the same level, in different departments, through their communication, present a good example of lateral communication. The main use of this dimension of communication is to maintain coordination and review the activities assigned to various subordinates. Occasions for lateral communication arise during committee meetings or conferences in which all members of the group mostly peers or equals interact.

Advantages

- (a) It helps to create mutual understanding and trust between people and departments.
- (b) It facilitates cooperation and coordination between different departments of the organization.
- (c) It helps in settling interdepartmental and intradepartmental differences without the intervention of the management.
- (d) It makes it possible to solve problems at lower levels.
- (e) It is generally very effective because there are no status barriers. However, it may degenerate into gossip and rumours. There is need to avoid such time-wasting and counter-productive activities.

Limitations

There are barriers to horizontal communication also. As each individual holds equal rank, none may take initiative to talk or write to others. This may create gap between colleagues. Some managers do not want their subordinates to communicate among themselves frequently on the fear that they may become too friendly and pose a threat to their authority. There is need to shed ego and communicate freely. Every employee should develop the habit of mutual consultations with his peers.

Diagonal or Crosswise Communication

Diagonal or crosswise communication takes place when people working at the same level interact with those working at a higher or lower level of organizational hierarchy and across the boundaries of their reporting relationships.

Advantages

1. **Coordination:** This crosswise communication serves the important purpose of coordination; through informal meetings, formal conferences, lunch hour meetings, general notices etc.
2. **Practicable:** As we know not all communication takes place strictly on the lines of organizational hierarchy, i.e., downwards or upwards.

3. **Morale boosting:** By providing opportunities to lower level workers to interact with managers in informal meetings it gives them morale boost and further commitment to the organization. More and more organizations are now encouraging crosswise communication.

Limitations

1. **Fear of infringement:** The superior may feel it as an infringement that his subordinate has been given undue importance and that he has been bypassed.
2. **Resistance to compliance:** The superior may not implement the suggestion as he has not been consulted.
3. **Anarchy:** The lack of accepted procedures may lead to internal anarchy and external animosity.

Questions

1. Write a note on the media of communication.
2. Why is downward communication regarded so important? What are its limitations?
3. Write a short note on the importance of upward communication.
4. What do you understand by lateral communication? Discuss its advantages and limitations.
5. What do you understand by diagonal or crosswise communication? Discuss its advantages and limitations.
6. How do we communicate non-verbally?
7. What is downward communication? Discuss its advantages and disadvantages.
8. What is 'distortion' in communication?
9. How does delay affect communication?
10. What is 'filtering'?
11. What is lateral communication? How is it helpful to an organization?