

# NON-VERBAL FEEDBACK AND COMMUNICATION



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Published in India by Prowess Publishing,  
YRK Towers, Thadikara Swamy Koil St, Alandur, Chennai,  
Tamil Nadu 600016

ISBN 13: 978-93-89097-41-2  
ePUB ISBN: 978-1-5457-4709-4  
Mobi ISBN: 978-1-5457-4710-0

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication

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# CHAPTER 1

## Communication

Communication is a tool which is essential for all living organisms to survive, sustain and grow. It helps to transform an illiterate to be literate and powerless to a powerful one. In the present century, communication acts as a base of all activities. Activities may be personal, national or international; in every situation no one can ignore the role of communication. Either directly or indirectly all human beings have been involving in the different communication process.

All the individuals, government or private organizations or any global units are connected with one another by different forms of communication. These communications are intrapersonal, interpersonal, group or mass communication. Knowingly or unknowingly all are taking the advantage of communication. All sorts of communication create an ocean of information, where everyone grows up, gains knowledge. All kinds of information act as oxygen to survive in the ocean of communication.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, human beings have seen the effects of communication tools like the telephone, radio and television, film, printing machine, computer, Internet etc. When government or decision maker understand the wide impact of communication and modern tools, they like to keep eyes over different communication activities. Different research agencies and academic scholars started serious research and analyzing communication practices. This led to the origin of a separate discipline of communication.

With technological advancements, the way of communication is changing quickly and this change also reflects in government, politics, corporate management, family relation and our working habits etc. The process of technological advancement will not be going to stop in near future. If this trend continues, the mode of communication will transform into the next level in the

coming century.

Effects of any new technologies are unpredictable. For example, during the end of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century paperless office was a distant dream for most of the people. Now the word-processing software has transformed the labour of writing in a way that was never anticipated by computer developers Miller, C. R. (1996). Every day new portable communication devices and application software are adding new possibilities in the field of communication.

## **Brief Evolution of Communication**

When someone looks at the communication perspective of human civilization, one will find how constantly it is changing. With the development of the brain, human beings have learnt to utilize new tools for their survival. Though the use of sound, sign and symbols to convey a message were helpful, the aspirations of the human mind could never be satisfied with some these immature non-verbal expressions for all kinds of communication. “Bandura’s Social Learning Theory posits that people learn from one another, via observation, imitation, and modelling.” (Bandura, 2016)

For communication, people copy sound and symbols from nature. Bow-wow theory of language says, ‘language began when our ancestors started imitating the natural sounds around them.’ (Juneja, 2018) They codified most of the sounds created through vocal code. These sounds became the basic ingredient for human communication. As per linguistics, it is defined as a Phoneme. ‘A phoneme means a ‘Unit of sound’—this is the smallest or finest sound in a speech that people can hear.’ (Track, 2013:VII). Later linguists codified and named them (Ex-A to Z) to each phoneme, which are now commonly known alphabets. Then these Phonemes are organized into a specific pattern to form words, which represents a specific activity (Ex-rain) or things (Ex-Apple) of nature. Then primitive human mind rearranged them to speak in the form of a sentence.

When people start using words and sentences in day-to-day conversation, it was the most sophisticated tool in the hand of the human being during that period. At that time those who were able to become masters in oral communication he could be the master of their community or nation. Writers and speakers were getting a higher position in society. As per Ethnologue website around 7,097 languages are spoken in the world.

Oral communication is spontaneous and can be used in interpersonal and group communication. Oral messages are volatile in nature if one is unable to memorise them then they could not be recovered. Therefore people preserve the ancient knowledge and glorious events in the form of a story or song. This information passes from one person to another then one generation to another. But there is always a risk of distortion of information. People give the artistic touch to the communication to make it more entertaining along with informative. People are easily able to remember information when it is presented in different art forms. To preserve information for a long period of time man uses the other art forms like painting and writing. Archaeologists identified a number of prehistoric drawings and pictures of animals and people in cave paintings.

Peoples started using clay stamps to put some message or information of identification. There are numbers of remarkable seals identified from ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro.

For example “The discoveries of a large number of terracotta figurines of an almost nude female has suggested the idea of a village mother goddess. With them are associated terracotta figurines of pregnant women with children that shows a birth scene.” (Dani & Thapar, 1996) The Indus Valley Civilization also known as the Harappan Civilization lasted from 3300 to 1300 BCE.

People start using stone, the metal plate or clay tablet to preserve the glories and difficulties of that time.

Cuneiform was “the earliest writing we know of dates back to around 3,000 B.C.E. and was probably invented by the Sumerians, living in major cities with centralized economies in what is now southern Iraq.” (Khanacademy) Cuneiform tablets represent the administrator’s works, temple institutions, recording the allocation of different works. “The name ‘cuneiform’ means ‘wedge-shaped’ and comes from the Latin *cuneus* (wedge). It is based on the appearance of the strokes, which were made by pressing a reed stylus into clay.” (Sumerian) The complete cuneiform system constitutes with more than 600 signs. Then the history of communication never stopped. Human brain searches new, advance, durable, faster and easier mode of communication. To send documented information quickly from one place to another place they experimented with so many lightweight materials like leaf & bark of plant and animal leather. “In north India, birch-sheets or *bhurjapatra* were used as paper over the centuries. But in the south, including Karnataka, the use of palm leaves was widely prevalent as writing material” (Kamat) Palm leaf manuscript is the oldest

medium of writing in India. Palm leaf writings found in South Asian countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodi.

It was not so clear when peoples of Indian subcontinent start use of palm-leaf. “However, the palm-leaf was definitely in use much earlier than this since it is mentioned as a writing material in several literary works and its visual representation can be seen in several sculptures and monuments.” (Nair, 2015) In other parts of the earth, Egyptians started using papyrus plant to produce the paper to write. “The ancient Egyptians used the stem of the papyrus plant to make sails, cloth, mats, cords, and, above all, paper. Paper made from papyrus was the chief writing material in ancient Egypt, was adopted by the Greeks and was used extensively in the Roman Empire.” (Britannica, 2013)

Due to the needs and human effort, human communication stretch forms non-verbal communication to oral, written, printing, radio, TV to high-speed internet mode of communication respectively. In the current century, one can find all the primitive form of communication like oral and non-verbal communication along with the new advance mode of communication like digital communication and hybrid interrelated communication. With the passing of time clay tablet may be replaced by new advance digitalised printing technology but the idea of preserving, informing and sharing of information is also hidden in this advance technology same as clay tablet. Now we have more advanced digital communication tool like satellite communication, web communication, Television, Radio and smartphone but human civilization never forgot the primitive mode of communication. Communication like non-verbal communication, oral communication, group communication is widely practising in these modern days.

Now human beings are trying to develop a harmonic synthesis between modern communication technologies along with century-old communication practices. For example, one can do interpersonal oral communication with another person who may be staying at another part of the globe. This is possible with the help of advanced communication technologies like mobile phone or video conference. So it is essential to understand a different perspective of primitive communication modes like oral communication, group communication and non-verbal communication. Now, most of the human activities are guided or supported by oral group communication.

In all types of communication, it is essential for the communicator to understand the impact of communication. Along with this he/she should know to what

extent the objective of communication is fulfilled. Therefore so many studies are conducted to understand the impact of different types of communication. Different scholars irrespective of their discipline put their effort to unfold various facts on the process of communication, elements of communication and many more. In the discipline of communication feedback is a very important topic to study for its crucial role in the communication process. It is important because it helps the communicator to understand to what extent the objective of communication is fulfilled. It guides communicator to develop a future communication plan. Therefore so many kinds of literature are available on feedback and its uses and importance in communication.

## **Communication**

One can say communication is a process of exchanging verbal and non-verbal messages. The message can be any form of an idea, opinion or information. The main components of the communication process are the sender, message, channel, noise, receiver and feedback. Sender/Encoder is the person who sends the message. The message is a key idea that the sender wants to communicate. Medium is a means used to exchange/transmit the message. Recipient/Decoder is a person for whom the message is intended/aimed/targeted. Feedback is the main component of the communication process as it permits the sender to analyze the efficacy of the message. It helps the sender in confirming the correct interpretation of the message by the decoder. (Juneja)

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, communication plays a central role in all social activities. People are also giving more importance to concepts like participatory communication, feedback in the process of communication. One of the important communication scholars *Wilbur Schramm* has given importance to feedback in the circular model. Feedback is a message generated by a receiver for sender after receiving sender's message. Feedback helps to determine the level of acceptance, understanding and impact of the message on the receiver or audience.

The term communication may have different meaning and definition, but the central idea is a process of increased commonness among participant, on the basis of exchanging information. For the communication five basic elements: source, message, channel, receiver and effect of message are essential. Lasswell's model of communication explain an act of communication by defining these question: "Who says what, with what purpose, to whom, in what situation, by what means, with what effect." (Narula, 2011:5) Then in 1949



Shannon and Weaver introduced the concept of noise in the communication process.

## **Feedback**

As communication deals with communality and participation, another element that is feedback should be included in the communication model. The Source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, effect and noise can be considered as the six important elements in the communication process. “A communication process is said to have feedback when the receiver of the message has given his response to the sender’s message.” (Narula, 2011:5) Feedback is a reverse message given by receiver to the sender. This feedback is important for both the sender and receiver. “The audience would like to express their point of view or thoughts in response to stimulation from the source, or the audience may like to have clarification of certain point put forth by source; or the source itself may encourage the audience to provide feedback with its communication strategies so as to improve or modify the ensuring communication strategies.” (Rayudu, 2010:206) Feedback may be both verbal and non-verbal. Non-verbal feedback includes smiles, sighs, shaking head, body movement, red eyes etc. “Feedback can be immediate or delayed. In interpersonal communication, the receiver of the message conveys, that he has received through smiling or frowning. When we write letters or broadcast on the radio, the feedback becomes delay as the message is conveyed little slowly.” (Narula, 2011:12) Feedback can be of various types like simple or complex. “Feedback can be simple through a nod of the head, conveying a brief yes or no, or it can be complex as a lengthy written response. Feedback involves circling back of information to a control device to adjust behaviour.” (Patil, 2013)

One can find various explanations of the importance of feedback in communication in various books and research articles. Feedback is always related to the impact, effects of the communication process and informs about success and failure of communication. Feedback is the most essential talk of the town of today and also in future in the communication world. The feedback mechanism can solve many problems as it is the only and certain way for the communicator to judge the effect and direction for future communication. We can say feedback is the arch stone of every communication monument. Oral communication is one of the most primitive types of communication practices. Its importance reviled by various scholars and intellectuals. Natural, spontaneous and unconscious features of non-verbal response will attract anyone to know

more about it. By keeping in mind the significance of feedback a research was conducted to understand nature feedback in oral communication. Which was discussed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter. In oral communication, there is a possibility to detect the understanding or acceptance level of the message by the receiver from instant non-verbal feedback. To identify the link between the non-verbal feedback and level of understanding this study was conducted.

## **Importance of Communication**

One may or may not know the professional definition or meaning of communication but everyone taking the advantages of communication. This show how important communication is.

In his book *S. Steinberg* introduces communication as a part of our daily life at all level and in all professions. “..How prime minister issues a communication to the press,...riot caused by “breakdown in communication”,...Engineer use “line of communication” for national road,...doctor talk about “communicable disease”, priests communicate at holy communion,...Archaeology describe...Communication with the past and some use communication in association with mass media like radio, television, newspaper.” (Steinberg, 1995:12)

In the book “Perspective of communication and communication and Communicative Competence” Dr. M. V. Rodriques in the chapter “*The meaning and the process of communication*” gives importance to three priceless possession of mankind. They are human ability to think, innate capacity to communicate, competence to acquire and use the arbitrary symbol system of language. The influential value of all the above three factors pronounces the importance of communication in the human civilisation.

Dr. M.V. Rodriques says that “communication permits us to use and reuse the experience of others in present as well as in future.” (Rodriques, 2000:11). Otherwise, civilisation could not be developed to this extent. An inexperienced person can take the advantages of an experienced person by utilizing others experience in his own practical life. Similarly, a researcher collects the experience of other people and draws a conclusion based on others experience. That conclusion or a theory becomes a tool to reach a new height by another inexperienced person. All this is possible only due to communication among one another. “Communication is the means by which people relate to one another.” (Rodriques, 2000:11) Human relations are built and strengthened by

communication. Probably to make their reader realize the importance of communication *Roland and Russell* at beginning of own book *Communication Goals and Approaches* remind the bitter feeling of a child while no one speaks to it for some time. 'We all know intuitively that communication and the company of others is one of the most basic human needs and that lack of contact is among the cruellest punishments a person can suffer'. (*Roland, Russell, 2000:11*) We all have experience of loneliness when we unable to communicate. Loneliness may lead to serious psychological problem or disorder.

## **Meaning of the Word "Communication"**

Communication is the backbone of any social activity. It helps to understand the different phenomena of this world. Let's try to understand the communication in the eyes of linguistic. "Communication comes from the Latin word "*communico*" which means sharing and not just sending messages." (*Narula, 1994:1*). Communication word is drawn from "*communis*" (Latin derivation) which means common. (*Aggarwal, Gupta, Mittal, 2002:3*) "Meaning of "communication" is derived from the Latin word "*communis*" which means common." (*Rayudu, 2010:2*). So based on these literally meaning one can say communication is always related to sharing of information and development of common understanding among sender and receiver. "Communication is a process of sending and receiving information. It is a vehicle through which we develop, maintain and improve human relationships." (*Aggarwal, Gupta, Mittal, 2002:3*) It helps to send and receive the message. The national communication system of UNESCO defines "communication is part of the very fabric of society. It takes place at all level between peoples and between institutions, from peoples back to government and through many channels both interpersonal and mediated." (*Aggarwal, Gupta, Mittal, 2002:3*)

Communication can be called as a discipline of both science and arts. "Art functions by communication of a symbol, meant to convey information and/or evoke an emotional response." (*Kovac, Weisberg, 2011:184*) Art is something people do as all people do communication. As an art communication is an expression of our thoughts, emotions, and desires, it is personal, it shares the experience. Communication is also a science. "The Science of communication provides a body of principles which can guide the managers to find solutions to the specific problems and objective evaluation of result. Like any art, communication is also creative" (*Rayudu, 2010:6*). The social scientist is studying communication in a systematic way to gain knowledge and to give

explanations about the communication activities.

To understand the meaning of communication some notable definitions on communication is focused here. So many scholars put their own effort to explain or to define communication. Though all the scholars are talking about the same communication their definitions are not similar. Instead of universally accepted single definition on communication one may find different types of definitions on communication. This is because these scholars are from different disciplines and they also define communication from different perspectives and in different time periods of human civilisation.

As per the book '*Introduction to Communication Course Book 1: The Basics*' there may be so many different definitions of communication but the Author S. Steinberg gives priority to three important types of definitions to understand what communication is. They are such as technical definition, process definition and transaction definition.

### **Technical Definition**

The technical definition defines "Communication as simply sending and receiving message or the transmission of messages from one person to another." (Steinberg, 1995:12) The technical definition explains the mechanical or technical process of transmission of the message from one person to other. The famous Shannon-Weaver's communication model on the transmission of a message by telephone line can be called the technical model of communication. This model technically explains the process of communication. Some scholars also criticise the technical model because of its limited explanation about some social aspects of communication. Steinberg says that this technical definition explains a lot about communication and describes few aspects like how communications are used, why communications happen, what are the impacts and needs of communication. So for the complete understanding about communication one needs more explanations on communication.

### **Process Definition**

Communication can be viewed in the perspective of its process means how it works and takes place. As per the process definition 'considering communication as a process means that it is a sequence of events, dynamic, non-ending and ever-changing' (Steinberg, 1995:12-13).

Communication cannot be static information or message should be exchanged or flow. 'Communication can be defined as a complex process of exchanging meaningful messages.' (Steinberg, 1995:12–13) as per 'S. Steinberg'.

## **Transactional Definition**

Communication can be defined as a transactional process of exchanging message and negotiating to establish and maintain a relationship. This definition stresses the transaction of a message between participants (sender and receiver). It also describes the development of mutual responsibility on the consequence of communication and the meaning of the message is negotiated through the exchange of the message. The transactional definition explains about dynamic nature of communication. It is devoted to the two-way mode of communication. This definition reminds the importance of feedback in communication. So feedback is an important aspect in the transaction of information or message in communication.

Now let's observe some different definitions of communication from some other books. "The term communication may have different meaning and definition, but the central idea is of a process of increased commonality or sharing between the participant, on the basis of sending and receiving message." (Mc Quail, 2012:552) Communication develops commonness among the participants. "In nutshell Communication can be described as an act of transmission of ideas, thought, belief, knowledge and opinion, etc. The purpose of communication is to establish commonness to communicate effectively, the sender's words symbols must mean the same thing to the receiver that may do to the sender." (Aggarwal, Gupta, Mittal, 2002:4).

"Dr. Marayan Rodriques" in his book "*Prospective of communication and communicative Competence*" provides a list of definitions which are given by different scholars on the different perspective. These are as follows:-

- "Communication is the process of transmitting feelings, attitudes, facts, beliefs and ideas between living beings." —Birvenu (1987)
- "Communication is any means by which thought is transferred from one person to another" —Chappell and Read (1979)
- "Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons" —Newman and Summer (1977)
- "Communication processes for conducting the attention of another person for the purpose of replicating memories." —Cartier and Harwood (1977)

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