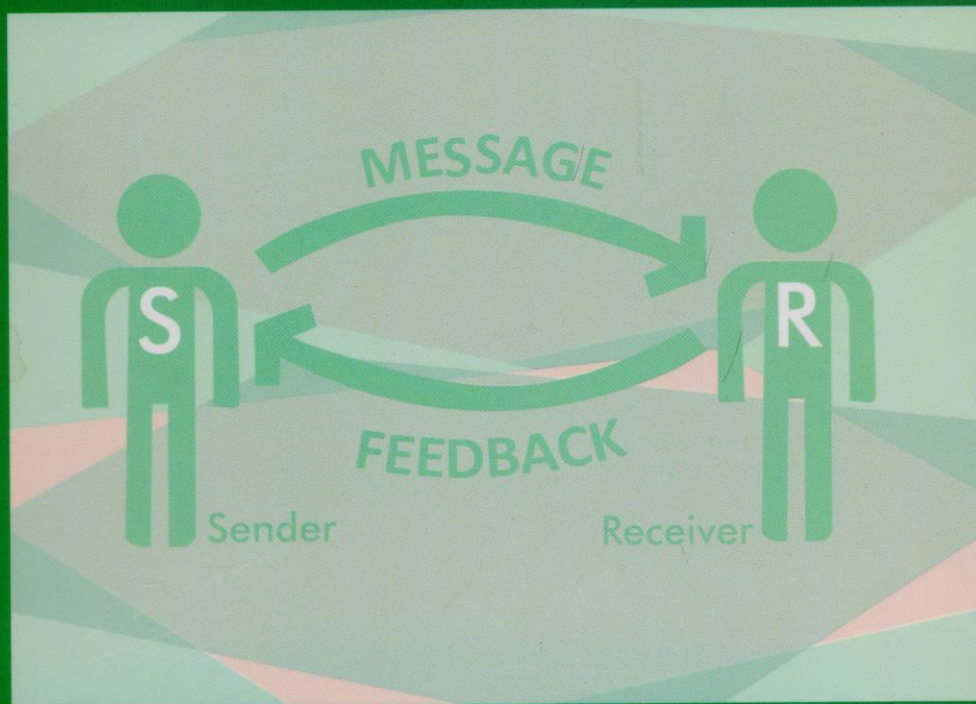


# **DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNICATION FOR TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**



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## Chapter 4

### RUDIMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

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#### Introduction

The art and act of sending information from one person to another is referred to as communication. It is an act of conveying meaningful information from an encoder to the decoder. A slogan reads: "No communication, No society." Hence, the society depends largely on communication to enhance both human and capital development. Communication is the means through which people get access to information in the society. Is there anything that makes humans unique among other creatures other than language?

Language, on one hand, is the vehicle of thought and communication. It provides the wheel through which ideas are transported from one person to another or from one generation to another. Speech and writing provide the channels through which thoughts are communicated. Writing therefore, is the graphic representation of the appropriate codes so selected by a writer. Hence, the task of writing is elaborative in the sense that the writer has to follow the structural rules of writing.

Written communication involves any type of sending or receiving information that makes use of written linguistic codes. Communicating through writing is very important in the present information age. Written communication uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free. Communication, therefore, involves both transferring a message and ensuring that the message is received and fully understood by the receiver.

From the time past, communication has remained the bedrock of existence. Societies live in peace and harmony through communication. One could, however, dream of an imaginary world where everything is still and dormant but such simply ends there. The reality is that proper

communication has ensured greater understanding among people, societies, organisations and so on. Our thoughts and ideas become our perception and this often times dovetails into reality that we often represent in graphic symbols.

Lube (1983) sees communication as “a process by which information is passed between individuals or organisations by means of previously agreed symbols.” This explains why there will be failure in communication when parties involved do not understand one another or share the same code. Roger and Shoe-mater (1971) view communication as “the process by which messages are transferred from a source to a receiver”. Little (1984) opines that communication is “the way we transmit our thoughts and feelings to other people by speaking or writing, and receive other peoples’ thoughts and feelings, either by listening or by reading.” Writing here emphasizes the interconnectivity and the interrelatedness of the language skills, i.e., (speaking, listening, writing and reading).

A cursory peep at the definitions above brings to the fore certain key words such as the passing of information from one person to another via various media, the source, the receiver, the message, etc. This information must be encoded in a linguistic and non linguistic shared knowledge of the interlocutors for mutual intelligibility whether it is verbal or non-verbal forms of communication. Again, it is the possibility of communication that led to the possibility of human society. Without communication, a society will not exist. Communication is the bedrock of the society. It is the unique thing that took man out from his cave-dwelling habit to the establishment of the society.

In the words of Unoh (1987, p.35), communication “is the process of mutual sharing of information, ideas, thoughts and emotions between a source and a receiver for mutual understanding”. Therefore, communication can be seen as the essential means through which people get access to information. However, written communication does not just end at giving information; it goes beyond that. It has to do with giving, receiving and understanding of information, i.e. a process of feedback. This is when communication is said to be **COMPLETE**. For instance, if an individual gives out information that is not understood by the receiver, it means communication has not taken place. Communication is complete when the persons, people or organisations

for whom the information is meant (i.e., the target audience), understand the information and react to it (a situation of a feed back to the message).

This chapter focuses on what communication is, and the essential rubrics. It also addresses types of communication particularly the written aspect and the elements of communication through which the society thrives and human beings co-exist.

## Types of communication

There are two major types of communication, namely:

- (a) Spoken or verbal communication
- (b) Non-verbal communication

### Verbal communication

Verbal communication entails talking using the spoken words, such as talking face-to-face, on a telephone, television or other media. It is the linguistic form of communication (language). This, however, manifests in two ways which are writing and speech.

*Writing*: it is the passing of information with the use of graphic symbols which developed in the 13th century. It is a medium of communication that entails the written word. For examples: letters, emails, books, magazines, the internet (with different social media such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and manuals are forms of written communication. Other written forms of communication that communicate messages could also be classified as visualizations such as charts, maps, graphs, logos and so on.

Writing is the graphic representation of the speech sounds in a meaningful way. “It is the process of codifying one’s thought such that another person is able to share one’s experience.” (Adedimeji, 2013, p.112). Through writing, we interact, transact, commune, procreate and do a lot more as communication unfolds. For instance, in today’s business world, a good writing, particularly, a well-scripted mission statement could not only sell or spread the tentacles of the business but bring more sales and expand the empire.

Writing is a continuous exercise. We write to communicate,

seek, impart, inform, etc. Writing has no time bounds. Articles, books, etc. written many years ago are still cited in the current writings. This does not stop the flow of currency in the present day writings. There is a triadic relation that ensues in written communication; that is, message originates from the encoder, deciphered by the decoder and the feedback ascertains whether a message is complete or not. Writing is an onerous task that people overtly or covertly engage in. Though we talk more than we write as speaking is spontaneous, yet the written communication has no doubt provided a medium through which thoughts and ideas are expressed among the parties involved. It has also served as a repository of knowledge in that all written communication is documented in whatever form. There are three elements of written communication and these are the structure (the way the content is laid out), the style (the way it is written) and the content (what the writer is conveying).

*Speech:* this has to do with the passing of information with the use of sounds (phonemes). It involves the vocal organs coming together to form speech.

### Non-verbal communication

This entails other forms of communication besides language. They are usually referred to as paralinguistic forms of communication. These include: facial expression, gesture, smoke, traffic lights, gong (as in traditional settings), etc. It covers all other forms of communication besides language.

### Levels of communication

*Intra-Personal Communication:* - This is what one says within oneself. The inner thoughts and impressions of oneself as memories interact with external stimuli, e.g. the decoration of a room painting on a wall, art works and the likes. This enables an individual to create a silent discourse.

*Inter-personal Communication:* - This is a form of communication which occurs between two or more people, between groups, superior to subordinates, parents to children, lecturer to students, extension agents to farmers, etc.

*Mass Communication:* Mass media or mass communication can be explained as the transfer of messages through a mass medium to a large but diversified audience at the same time. In other words, it is a means in terms of which a large number of people can be reached at a time. Examples of mass media include: radio, television, and print media (newspapers, magazines, bulletins, posters, bill boards, cartoons, etc). They are means of information dissemination to varieties of audience as all these incorporate written communication.

### Elements of Communication:

The following are some of the elements of communication process:

Stimulus  
Source  
Message  
Medium/channel  
Receiver  
Feedback  
Noise

*Stimulus:* This communication process begins with what triggers off an exchange in a person. It is a biological stimulus that develops into an exchange of thought. An idea is borne for a person to start an encounter. This idea then translates into a message which is then transmitted through some communication medium to the receiver.

*Source:* This is also referred to as the encoder, sender, speaker, transmitter, author, initiator and so on. The encoder reacts to the stimulus and begins the exchange by selecting the codes/symbols s/he believes the receiver of the message will understand. Abstract thoughts are transferred through spoken words or a written form.

*The Message:* This is core for all forms of communication. This refers to

the ideas, feelings, thoughts, intentions, etc. which the encoder sends to the receiver. In as much as there are thoughts for people to express, then there will be the need to send messages. It is expected that the conveyer of any message needs to have a proper plan of what is to be sent or written, selects appropriate codes for encoding the message and presents the message lucidly. Another factor that is very important is the environment in which the message is being transmitted as environment hinders the free flow of communication sometimes.

**Medium/Channel:** The appropriate medium needs to be chosen to ensure effective transmission of the message. Medium and channel can be used interchangeably. The media types include oral (that is, the spoken form of a language which is transmitted via radio, television, telephone, face-to-face interaction and so on), written (which include letter, report, paper prints, written discourse, etc.) and non verbal (for example, painting, drawing, carving, mime, artistic ornaments, etc.).

**The Decoder:** This is the receiver of the message. When a message is received, the receiver needs to decode and understand the message in different ways. The decoder receives the message and decides whether or not he is ready to participate in the communication exchange. Every message has a target audience and once the person is not there, the message gets stuck and communication fails as this results in communication barrier. A decoder needs to be in the right mood to receive a message. He needs to prepare to listen attentively or read comprehensively (written) so as to be able to respond effectively. This explains the symbiotic relationship between the encoder and the decoder in communication.

**Feedback:** It is a reaction to the message and this is a continuous process. This could either be positive or negative depending on the level of comprehension of the message and the effect it had on the receiver. The receiver of a message provides a feedback on how they have understood the messages through both verbal and non-verbal reactions. Feedback is the only way to ensure whether the message has been understood as intended; it allows any confusion to be corrected. It ensures whether communication has taken place or not.

**Noise:** This is the totality of auditory sounds, barriers, interference, impediments, or hindrances which affect the flow of communication, especially in the spoken communication. Noise could be physical (e.g. radio sets, market in full session, loud conversation, sounds from moving vehicles and other forms of sound that affect and reduce the amount of information that is communicated); psychological (e.g. poor mental attitude such as depression, fatigue, stress and other emotional disabilities); linguistic (this manifests in three ways: semantic, which may occur as a result of wrong choice of words or the use of words of unfamiliar meaning; grammatical- results from construction of faulty sentence, misapplication of rules of language or misuse of punctuation marks and phonological feature which occur as a result of poor communication resulting from mother tongue interference or affectations).

## Conclusion

The need to communicate effectively in this scientific age and transfer meaningful messages is on the increase. For instance, writers write to express their feelings about a particular phenomenon as expressed in the print media and most of the social media. Written communication allows for expression of ideas and thoughts from one person to another. Communicators should ensure that the content of communication is properly edited and revisited since some messages do not have to be delivered on the spur of the moment. Written communication especially provides a permanent record of the messages that have been sent or received and can be saved in a retrieval device for later study.

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