UNIT 5

COMMUNICATION THEORY

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the communication process
- Identify and analyse the elements of communication models
- Identify the different types of communication
- Understand the different contexts in which communication occurs
- Recognise the various forms of verbal and non-verbal communication
- Compare external and internal communication
- Identify possible barriers to communication
- Understand how non-verbal symbols are used to communicate meanings

1.1 WHAT IS THE COMMUNICATION THEORY?

Communication theory was proposed by S.F. Scudder in the year 1980. It cogently states that **all living beings existing on the planet** communicate although the way of communication is different. These are the examples:

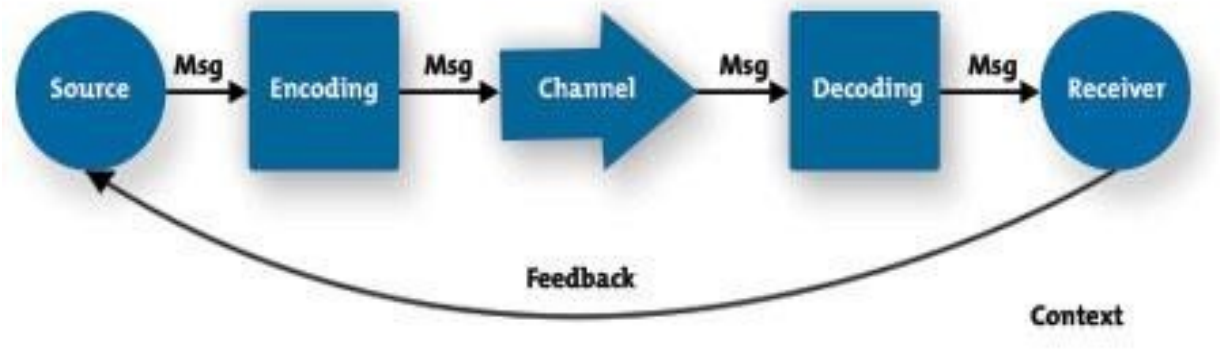
i. Plants communicate their need to be taken of and watered immediately through visible changes in the colour of the leaves, and the falling of leaves and flowers.

ii. Animals communicate by sounds, several movements to indicate that they are hungry or unwell or need medical attention.

iii. A mother would never understand that her child is hungry unless and until the child cries. In this context, crying will be perceived as a form through which the child communicates that he/she is hungry and needs food.

1.1.1. THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

The process of communication can be illustrated as follows:



1.2 COMPONENTS OR ELEMENTS IN THE COMMUNICATION MODEL

Communication is made up of eight major components, which are the objects of study of the Communication Theory. These are interdependent and are considered as basic elements of any communication process. They include:

1. Sender

This is the person who initiates the communication. This person is sometimes referred to as the source, the communicator or the encoder.

2. Encoding

This is an act of making the idea accessible to others, of putting an idea into a code so that it becomes perceptible to the receiver. This can be done into two ways, using a _____ or a _____ .

3. Message

The word 'Message' refers to a concept, information, communication or statement that is sent in an oral/graphic/written/audio/visual/audio-visual form to the recipient.

4. Channel or medium

A message is sent from sender to receiver and feedback is sent from receiver to sender through various means. Examples of mediums commonly used in business and professional communication include the telephone, email and meetings (face to face or virtually).

It is important to note that the choice of **medium** will always depend on a number of factors, including:

- Geographical distance/proximity
- Space
- The nature and complexity of the message
- Feedback requirements
- Time
- Cost

All the above-mentioned factors play a larger role in the theory of communication.

For example, if you were in Saudi Arabia and needed to convey an urgent, but fairly simple message to someone in Pretoria, you would _____ . Justify your answer using your own words.

_____

_____

5. Receiver/audience

The receiver or audience is the destination of the message, the decoder, or the end point of communication. In a more practical sense, it is the person to whom the sender directs the message.

6. Decoding

The receiver or audience interprets in order to understand. In a more traditional sense, the person who receives the message from the communicator tries to convert the same in such a way so that there is complete understanding.

7. Feedback

It is the receiver's reaction. This is the process of ensuring that the receiver has received the message and understood in the same sense as the sender meant it.

8. Context

Context is considered as a very significant component as it decides the given communication process and fixes all the above said seven components. It refers to the background, situation or the environment in which communication is taking place.

1.3 CONTEXTS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication occurs in a context – a set of circumstances or a situation. Communication may occur between two friends, among classmates, or between a lecturer and students in an auditorium or in a lecture hall. The number of participants involved affects the kind of communication that takes place, the codes used and medium or media selected. While the number of participants varies, the intention to achieve shared meaning is common to all.

The contexts of communication are: ***(Refer to page 9 of the Communication Handbook for a detailed explanation of these contexts)***

1.3.1 Intrapersonal communication

1.3.2 Interpersonal communication

1.3.3 Small group communication

1.3.4 Public communication

1.3.5 Mass communication

1.3.6 Organisational communication

1.3.7 Intercultural communication

1.4 TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

There are two types of communication which can be observed between a group of people. Let us delve deeper into the following types:

1. Verbal communication

Verbal communication refers to the utilisation of words to express ourselves. It is an inclusion of both spoken and written communication.

2. Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal Language refers to communication which takes place without words, but which carries meaning.

1. Between verbal and non-verbal types of communication, which one is considered more quick and precise? _____ Justify your answer using your own understanding.

_____

_____

1.5 METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

There are two methods of communication, and they are internal as well as external communication.

1.5.1 Internal Communication

This refers to communication between members of the same organisation at various levels of the organisation. This type of communication takes place across all levels and organisational units of an organisation.

Examples are:

- ✓ Communication between management and staff
- ✓ Communication between management and students
- ✓ Communication between lecturers and students
- ✓ Among staff
- ✓ Among students

1.5.1.1 Internal communication methods

TYPES	EXAMPLES
Oral	Meetings, lectures and phone calls
Written	Notice boards and e-mails
Non-Verbal	Appearance and tone of voice

Let us look further into some examples of Oral and Written Communication in Internal Communication.

1. Oral communication: Phone Call

Telephone etiquette

Telephone etiquette refers to a set of rules that apply when people make calls to others or when they are receiving a phone call.

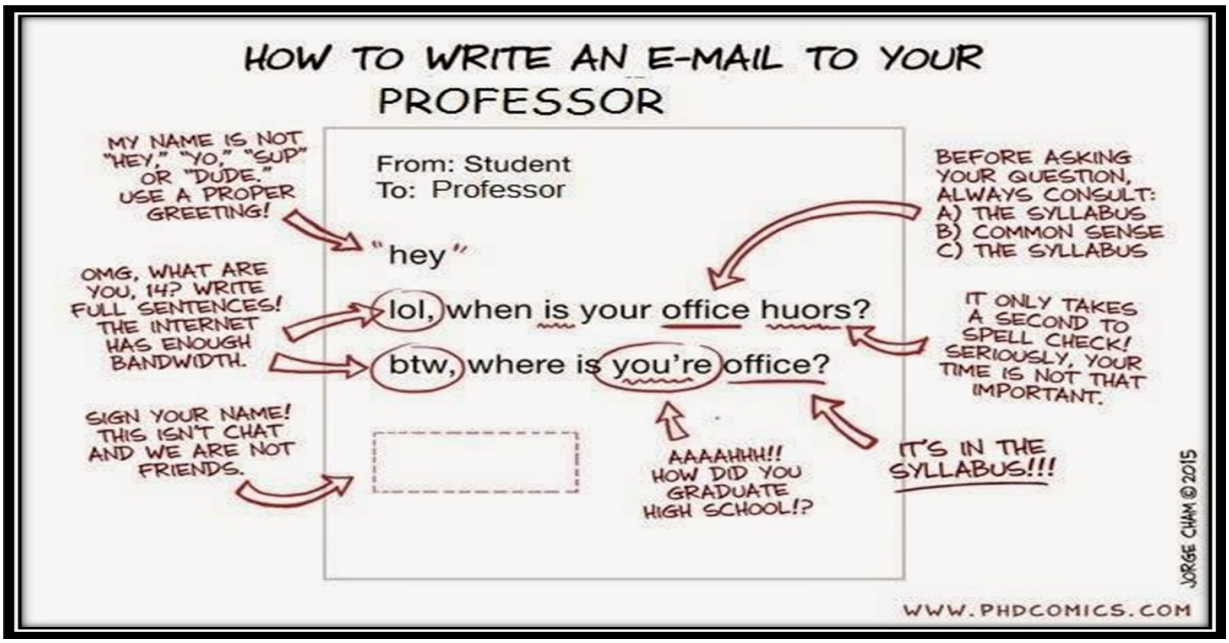
From time to time you might need to make a call. It can be to a lecturer, a tutor, a mentor or NSFAS personnel. You will also receive calls and when you do, you need to display and adhere to these telephone etiquette tips at all times:

- ✓ Always identify yourself when you make or receive a call.

- ✓ Address an unfamiliar caller properly.
- ✓ Never call any person at odd hours like early morning or late nights as the person will definitely be sleeping and will not be interested in talking to you.
- ✓ Use a normal tone – neither too soft nor too loud.
- ✓ Speak clearly – neither too fast nor too slow. Always speak each and every word clearly. The person on the other end cannot see your expressions so remember your tone should be apt to express your feelings in the correct form.
- ✓ If you are eating and it is a formal phone call, it does not sound good.
- ✓ If you dialled the wrong number, kindly apologise.
- ✓ End the call with a pleasantry.

2. Written communication: E-mail (Electronic Mail)

Below is an example of **WHAT NOT TO DO** when writing an email to your lecturer.



Follow these tips when writing an e-mail:

- Create a **neutral email address.** Do not use any funny names or nicknames. Those may be funny among your peers but using nicknames as your email address will not help create a good impression to the recipients of the email.
- Next, **think about your subject line**. Use a short and accurate subject line. This should grab your reader's attention and summarise the content of the message.

  For example, if you want to query your marks, avoid using an over-simplistic subject line like "Marks."
- Use **proper salutation** when addressing the recipient of the email.
- Keep your **sentences short and to the point**. The body of your email should be direct and informative. And, make sure that they are focused by writing a different one for each topic you want to discuss. This will make it easier for your recipients to organise their responses.
- Your emails should reflect your professionalism. So, **avoid using informal language, slang and jargon** . And only use emoticons with people you know well.
- Unlike face-to-face conversations, it can be difficult to judge someone's tone from an email. So, think about how your email reads before you hit "send." If you think that there is potential for your feelings or intent to be misunderstood, **rephrase your message so that it is clearer**.
- Your email should have a **signature** which may include your name, title (job title), contact details and the name of the organisation you are from.
- End with a **closing** to show that you are at the end of the email.
- Finally, take a moment to **review your email for grammar or spelling mistakes**, and double-check that it contains all the **key information**.

Is electronic mail considered formal or informal in nature? Justify your answer.

_____

_____

_____

What is the difference between **cc** and **bcc** when sending an e-mail?

Trenton Junior Basketball Team - Message (HTML)

To... Dr.Johnson@example.com

Cc...

Subject: Trenton Junior Basketball Team

Dear Dr. Johnson,

I am a member of the Trenton Junior Basketball Team. I am writing on the behalf of my teammates to request that you and the Trenton Extracurricular Activity Association consider providing new uniforms for the team. Our team has worked very hard over the years to win championships and bring positive attention to the community. We believe that we have earned this privilege, but more importantly we feel it is important to represent Trenton in the best manner.

The current uniforms are very old, dingy and unattractive. As a result, our team spirit and confidence has been lowered when we compete against other teams. It is our hope that our performance will not be affected as well.

We hope that you will honor our request for new uniforms at this time. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Michael Sean Harris

1.5.2 External communication

What is external communication?

This refers to communication that takes place between the organisation and the outside world.

1.5.2.1. External communication methods

TYPES	EXAMPLES
Oral	Interviews, TV, radio adverts and press releases
Written	Posters, newspaper adverts, billboards, and websites
Non-Verbal	Appearance

Let us look at interviews as one of the examples of Oral Communication in External Communication.

1. Oral communication: Interviews

In the current job market, you need to your act together, or you will not stand a chance against the competition. Be prepared to the best of your ability. There is no way to predict what an interview holds, but by following these important rules you will feel less anxious and will be ready to positively present yourself. Check yourself on these basic points before you go on that all-important interview:

- ✓ Make good first impressions.
- ✓ Do your research.
- ✓ Anticipate interview questions and practise answering them. You can have a mock interview with a friend.
- ✓ Reread the job description. You may want to print it out and begin underlining specific skills the employer is looking for. Think about examples from your past and current work (even voluntary work experience) that align with these requirements.

- ✓ Be punctual.
- ✓ Be calm.
- ✓ Show enthusiasm and authenticity.
- ✓ Listen carefully, think before you speak.
- ✓ Answer the question asked.
- ✓ Answer all the questions with confidence.
- ✓ Dress appropriately.
- ✓ Ask insightful questions.
- ✓ Brush up on what certain body language conveys. Be aware of what you are communicating through your posture, gestures, eyes, etc. – and make sure it is good.
- ✓ Be polite and courteous.

1.6. COMMUNICATION BARRIERS (Refer to page 13 of the Communication Handbook)

What is a communication barrier?

A communication barrier is anything that hinders or causes a disturbance to communication. Poor communication can be caused by one of the following categories:

1. Language barriers
2. Perceptual barriers
   - Cultural background
   - Past experience
   - Selection
   - Needs
   - Education

3. Physical barriers

4. Physiological barriers

5. Psychological barriers

1.7 NON-VERBAL LANGUAGE

What is non-verbal language?

Non-verbal Language refers to communication which takes place **WITHOUT words**, but which carries **MEANING**. In a more practical sense, it is communication through other means other than language.

1.7.1. Distinction between visual and acoustic semiology

Visual semiology:

It is defined as communication by means of anything that needs to be seen by the receiver in order to be understood. Examples are body movements, facial expressions or appearance.

Acoustic semiology:

It is defined as communication by means of anything that needs to be heard by the receiver in order to be understood. Examples are pitch, pause or volume.

Between verbal and non-verbal communication, which one constitutes the largest part of our communication time? Justify your answer.

_____

_____

_____

Examples:

_____

_____

1.7.2. DIFFERENT TYPES OF NON-VERBAL LANGUAGE

There are many types of non-verbal language. They will be discussed in detail in the section below.

1. KINESICS

The word kinesics comes from the root word *kinesis*, which means "movement," and refers to the study of hand, arm, body and face movements. This section will outline the use of gestures, head movements and posture, eye contact, and facial expressions as nonverbal communication.

Types of kinesics

- ✓ Gestures
- ✓ Posture
- ✓ Head movement
- ✓ Facial expressions
- ✓ Eye contact

Provide some examples of how eye contact plays a role in your communication throughout the day.

_____

_____

2.PROXEMICS

Proxemics refers to the SPACE between speakers which is observed during any communication. How close or how far you stand from someone is often culturally influenced. For example, it might be considered rude to stand too close to someone in one place but not another. It might be very common to touch someone's arm or

shoulder while talking in one place, but this could be considered rude in other places. In one country, you might greet someone with a kiss on the cheek, and in other places this might be considered too intimate.

There are four types of proxemic zones which people use to communicate (on a face-to-face basis). These include:

1. Intimate zone

- This is the closest space into which we allow others where we feel comfortable enough.
- We reserve this space for the people who are **emotionally** closest to us. This is the space you are in with a romantic partner, for example.

2. Personal zone

- This zone is reserved for friends, family and close acquaintances.
- In the classroom this space exists between classmates who know each other well.

3. Social zone

- This zone is used in all business and professional transactions.
- The communication that occurs in this zone is a formal communication. A student going to a lecturer for consultation is an example of communication that occurs in the social zone.

4. Public zone

- This zone is applicable when an audience is addressed by one speaker, for example, a lecturer giving a lecture.
- It also applies to all public functions where there are many people.

2. PARALINGUISTICS (PARA-LANGUAGE)

Paralinguistics is the study of vocal signals beyond the basic verbal message or speech. It is also known as *vocalics*. Communication is not only about what is being

said, but also how it is being said. In other words, here we are interested in the VOICE and HOW we say something, rather than WHAT we say.

TYPES OF VOCAL QUALITIES (that carry non-verbal information to the listener or audience)

Volume:

- How **loudly or softly** we speak influences the listener – too loud sounds like fighting or shouting, too soft and it sounds unsure and apologetic.

Pitch:

- How **high or how low** the pitch of the voice is, will influence the listener's attention. A person speaking at a high pitch sounds nervous, anxious, overly excited or hysterical, while the lower the voice is pitched, the more in control, calm, concerned and confident.

Inflection:

- This refers to the **rise and fall** of the voice. Speaking without inflection is droning on a monotonous note, with no interesting variation.
- This will bore the audience immediately and they will stop listening.

Pace:

- The pace of a speech refers to **the speed** with which the speaker conveys the message.
- Speaking too fast will convey stress or nervousness and the audience will not be able to follow the line of thinking.
- Speaking too slowly will bore the audience and their minds will start to wander.

Resonance:

- This refers to the **quality** of the voice and the speaker's ability to project his voice to the furthest listener.
- Preachers, teachers, politicians, actors all need this skill to successfully convey their messages to each listener.

Pauses:

- These are moments of silence in every conversation.
- They give the audience a clue as to what is important and needs to be remembered.

Accent:

- Pronunciation of words can differ because of the region or cultural difference of the speaker.

One of the key functions of vocalics is to add emphasis to our verbal messages to influence the meaning. Provide a meaning for each of the following statements based on which word is emphasized: "*She* is my friend." "She is *my* friend." "She is my *friend*."

_____

_____

_____

3. CHRONEMICS

Chronemics is the study of the role and use of time in non-verbal communication. Time perceptions include punctuality, willingness to wait and interactions. The use of time can affect lifestyles, daily agendas, speed of speech and how long people are willing to listen.

1. Getting integrated: Many people do not think of time as an important part of our non-verbal communication. Provide an example of how chronemics sends non-verbal messages in academic settings, professional settings, and personal settings.

4. HAPTICS

Communicating through touch is another important non-verbal behaviour. There has been a substantial amount of research on the importance of touch in infancy and early childhood.

Touch can be used to communicate affection, familiarity, sympathy, and other emotions.

Gender differences also play a role in how people utilise touch to communicate meaning. Women tend to use touch to convey care, concern, and nurturance. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to use touch to assert power or control over others.

5. APPEARANCE

Our choice of colour, clothing, hairstyles, body structure and other factors affecting appearance are also considered a means of non-verbal communication. Research on colour psychology has demonstrated that different colours can evoke different moods.

Just think of all the subtle judgments you quickly make about someone based on his or her appearance.

Culture is an important influence on how appearances are judged. While thinness tends to be valued in Western cultures, some African cultures relate full-figured bodies to better health, wealth, and social status.

6. PHYSIOLOGY

This category includes changes in body physiology like an increase in sweat or blinking rapidly.

1.8. PROBLEMS with non-verbal communication

1.8.1 Non-verbal language is very **CULTURE SPECIFIC**.

- What is regarded acceptable in one culture, might be unacceptable in another culture.
- It is also possible for me to totally misinterpret a person's intention purely because I have no knowledge or experience of that culture.

1.8.2 Non-verbal language can be **AMBIGUOUS;** sending out conflicting or misunderstood messages.

- Non-verbal communication should always be seen in **CONTEXT** of the whole situation and not entirely on its own.