UNIT 1

Basics of Communication

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the words of any layman the word "communication" can be defined as 'the exchange of ideas, information through accepted code i.e. signs, symbol or common language.' The existence of society is due to communication only. From the early morning greeting to the late night greeting, people knowingly or unknowingly indulge their salves into communication. Reading a newspaper having a cup of tea in the hand you talk on any news printed, or fighting with your brother to drive the car to the job, or nodding your head to your infant, all are the best examples of communication. In the most common words communication is merely **the exchange of our ideas to the second person/s.**

Way back in the history the primitive men used sign language to communicate. Gradually people started to use common code to communicate. Today, human civilization is at the zenith of development, and part of this development is the revolution in communication. Today, communication has changed a lot and because of that it has changed our life-style as well as way of seeing the world. Today, we, humans, communicate with the person, who is thousands of miles away from us, not only that but we can also see them without any trouble. The development has taken us to see the world in a very different way, at the same time; it has proved the importance of various levels of clear and concise communication. The reality is that human civilization would not have been possible, if humans were not capable to communicate with each other. Like other animals, we might have been living a primitive life, without such an advance communicative tools and codes.

At this juncture of our career, it is very important for us to develop good communication skills to develop bright future. Communication

is something that we require everyday and everywhere. Good communication skills help us to make our relationships stronger and happier. It becomes very important to understand various aspects involved in the process of communication in order to understand communication properly and to put in practice effectively. This chapter deals with these various aspects of the communication, both from the scientific and technological perspectives and socio-cultural dimensions. The First section below will discuss and evaluate the definition and cycle of communication. Second section discusses the kinesics. Third section discusses the paralinguistic features of communication. Fourth section will elaborate on the notion of Proxemics and its importance in communication. Fifth section will explain the Chronemics in communication. The last and sixth section will provide the general conclusions to the discussion.

1.1 DEFINITION AND PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

The term 'Communication' comes from Latin *communicare*, i.e. 'to share'. The Latin root of the word *communication* suggests "making something common" (Holly 1989: 117).

> *"Communication in the intercourse by words, letters or messages, inter course of thoughts or opinion."*   **- Fried G Meyer**

> *"Communication is the sum of things that one person does when he wants to create an understanding in the mind of other. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic & continuous process of telling, listening & understanding."*   **- Louis A Allen**

The face-to-face communication of the messages is the most prevalent and normal type of communication. We, now-a-days, share our views, ideas, knowledge, emotions, and information through written records, mobile communication, E-mail, etc. These are all possible types of communications through which we can express ourselves, and talk with others without any difficulty.

The first model describing the process of communication is first introduced by two mathematicians Shannon and Weaver in their famous work *The Mathematics of Communication*, the model today is known as Communication cycle. It is given in the diagram below:
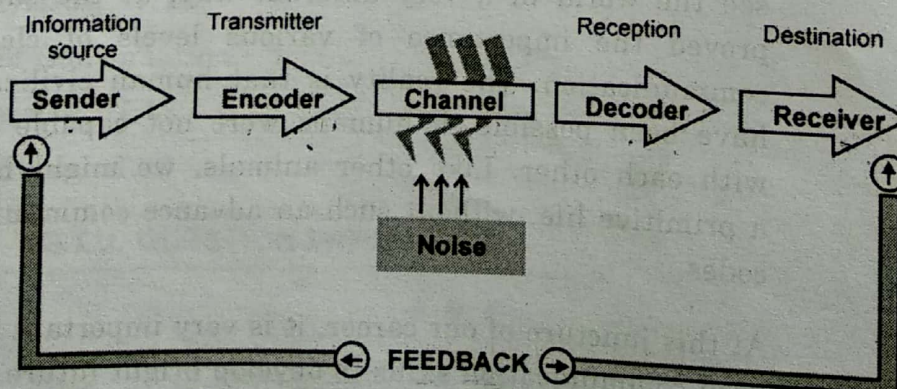

Fig. 1.1 Shanon-Weaver's Model of Communication

The process of communication starts at the information source, the sender encodes a message. Encoding a message means putting one's thought in Linguistic form. The message through a proper channel reaches to the receiver, which is the destination of the message. Receiver decodes the message and provides the feedback. In this process of communication, noise is the hurdle in communication, which may create a miscommunication or makes communication impossible. With feedback, the process gets over, and with a new ideation, a new message, a new cycle of communication begins.

With the span of time updated models of cycle of communication have come. Below given one is in the vogue now.
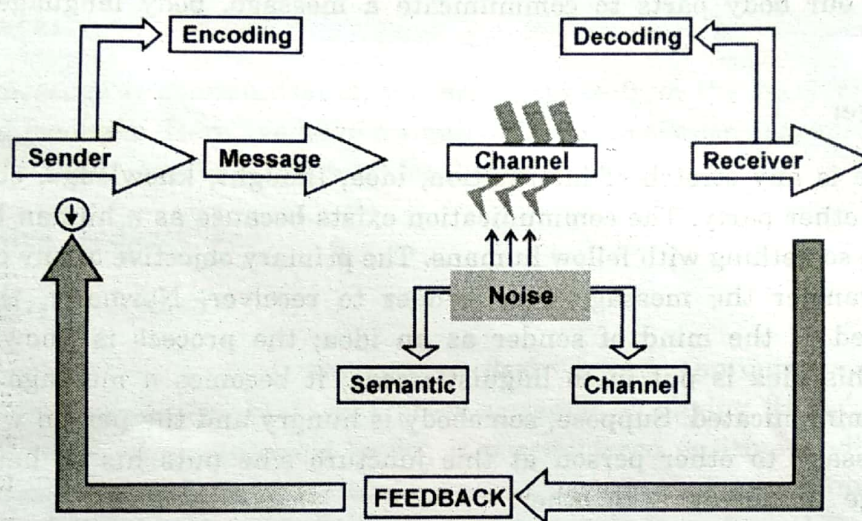

Fig. 1.2 Cycle of Communication

There are certain inherent parts of the communication process in the above mentioned model of communication. In order to understand this model well, we need to understand these aspects involved in communication. We will see them one by one with the help of an examination :

[1] Sender :

Sender is the one who has some ideas in his/her mind which s/he wants to share with the other/s. However, to do so he has to convert his ideas into message, this process is called encoding. When the idea gets converted into the message sender sends the message. We prefer to use the term sender and not the speaker because many types of messages are conveyed non-verbally. They are not spoken. Saying "no" by nodding one's head is also a message, it is not spoken but the message is conveyed. If someone is angry, we get the message of it through his/her body language, it is not necessarily spoken. Sender initiates the communication consciously or unconsciously. S/he has an idea in his/her mind, which is known as ideation. This idea needs to be put in the code through which the message needed to be conveyed. Thus, the sender's message is the central to the communication cycle.

[2] Encoding:

The idea which the sender has in his mind has to be converted into common language or code so that the other person can understand, interpret and respond to it. Code is any language, image, figure, fonts, colour, etc., which we have used to communicate our intended message. Sender selects a conventionally accepted code to encode his/her ideation; once the idea is encoded it becomes the message. Normally, we prefer a language which is familiar to both the sender and receiver. Spoken English language is the code through which teacher teaches in the classroom. Written English is a code in which this book is written. When we use our body parts to communicate a message, body language becomes the code.

[3] Message:

Message is any stretch of information, idea, thought, knowledge, etc. intended to send to other party. The communication exists because as a human being we want to share something with fellow humans. The primary objective of any communication is to transfer the message from sender to receiver. Normally, the message is generated in the mind of sender as an idea; the process is known as ideation. When this idea is put in to linguistic code, it becomes a message which needed to be communicated. Suppose, somebody is hungry and the person wants to convey the message to other person at this juncture s/he puts his or her thought into language to convey it to other.

[4] Channel:

Channel is any entity, any medium through which the message is being transmitted. In the spoken language, the channel is air which transfers the message. In written language, the channel is the script and the entity on which the script is written or carved. The gestures and body language are transmitted through light, because of the light only we can see the other individual. Channels make the communication of the message possible. Without any channel, message cannot be conveyed in the void.

[5] Receiver:

The receiver is the second end of the communication cycle; s/he is the one who receives the message. Without a receiver the cycle will remain incomplete and thus communication will not take place. The receiver could be an individual or a group of individuals. This role is dynamic, the receiver can shift the role to sender and at that time the original sender will become receiver. Receiver, like sender, is also an essential component of the communication.

[6] Decoding:

Decoding is the process related with the same individual message. Decoding means to understand the shared message by the sender. The message is encoded by the sender and decoded by the receiver. If any of these processes are not completed or not well-planned, then the communication will break down. The process of encoding is related with the sender of the message and the process of decoding is connected to the receiver. Encoding literally means to put an idea into a linguistic code i.e. into a language. This code could be any language that is common to both the sender and receiver.

[7] Feedback:

When message is communicated, we get response from the receiver; this response is called feedback. Here, we have a small difference between response and feedback. Basically there are two types of feedbacks available:

1. Positive feedback and

2. Negative feedback

When, as an interlocutor, we receive desired and appropriate response, it is considered positive feedback. If I greet someone by saying 'Hello', and the other party replies with a smile and 'hello', it is considered positive feedback and hence it is a response. On the other hand, negative feedback is receiving inappropriate response. Say for example, in my greetings of 'Hello', the other person doesn't reply anything either verbally or non-verbally. Hence there is no response. This is also a feedback. By the feedback, we will come to know how to navigate the communication further. If I don't get reply of my greetings, that may mean that the other person hasn't heard me or doesn't know the code that I am using, or other person doesn't want to talk to me. All these are negative feedbacks and they create the communication gap. In order to bridge the communication gap, the original sender has to send the message again and probably in a simpler form.

[8] Noise:

Simply put, noise is anything that causes disturbance in the communication process. Shannon and Weaver list two basic types of errors:

1. Semantic noise (noise related with code / communicative symbols)

2. Engineering noise or Channel Noise(related with transmission accuracy)

In various books these noises are named differently, for example 'Engineering noise' is normally referred to as 'Noise of Channel'. Again Semantic noise is also a misnomer; it should have been 'Linguistic Noise', i.e. noise related with the code

used in communication. For example, the interlocutors do not share the common code is a semantic noise. Ambiguous sentences and words are also included in semantic noise. Let us see an example:

"He killed a man with a gun."

The above statement has two possible and valid interpretations.

1. He killed a man using gun. The gun is an instrument of killing here.

2. He killed a man who had gun. Here, the man who has been killed had the gun, it was not an instrument of act of killing.

This kind of ambiguity is considered semantic noise. Similarly, words with multilingual meanings are also responsible for the misinterpretations of the message. For example, words like 'Bank' (a financial institute) and 'Bank' (bank of the river).

The second type of noise is called 'noise of channel'; any disturbance in the channel is called noise here. Network problems while talking on telephone is a channel noise. While teaching in the classroom, some voices coming from outside is also called channel noise. If I speak something, but the other person is deaf and mute, even in such case the communication breaks down, which is gain categorized as a channel noise. If the print on the page is not decipherable then it is also considered the channel noise.