

## **Class Notes**

### **Unit I**

#### **What is Communication?**

The word 'communication' has been taken from Latin word 'communicare' which means to impart, to share: sharing ideas, facts, and information and so on. The information can be a lot of different things depending on the context. The information can flow with the help of words, gestures, drawings, paintings, songs, music. The means can be: speeches, emails, blogs, forums, text messages, voice messages, poems, essays, books, newspapers, ads, articles, and practically anything you can speak through, write on or draw on. Communication requires a sender, a message, and an intended recipient. The sender and the receiver can be people, animals or devices.

#### **Types of Communication Based on Communication Channels**

Based on the channels used for communicating, the process of communication can be broadly classified as verbal communication and non-verbal communication.

##### **Verbal Communication**

Verbal communication is further divided into written and oral communication:

**The oral communication** refers to the spoken words in the communication process. Oral communication can either be face-to-face communication or a conversation over the phone or on the voice chat over the Internet. Spoken conversations or dialogs are influenced by voice modulation, pitch, volume and even the speed and clarity of speaking.

**Written communication** can be either via snail mail, or email. The effectiveness of written communication depends on the style of writing, vocabulary used, grammar, clarity and precision of language.

##### **Nonverbal Communication**

Non-verbal communication includes the overall body language of the person who is speaking, which will include the body posture, the hand gestures and overall body movements. The facial expressions also play a major role while communicating since the expressions on a person's face say a lot about his/her mood. On the other hand, gestures like a handshake, a smile or a hug can independently convey emotions. Non-verbal communication can also be in the form of pictorial representations, signboards, or even photographs, sketches and paintings.

#### **Types of Communication Based on Style and Purpose**

Based on the style of communication, there can be two broad categories of communication, which are formal and informal communication that have their own set of characteristic features.

### **Formal Communication**

Formal communication includes all the instances where communication has to occur in a set formal format. Typically this can include all sorts of business communication or corporate communication like official conferences, meetings, written memos corporate letters etc. Formal communication can also occur between two strangers when they meet for the first time. Hence formal communication is straightforward, official always precise and has a stringent tone to it.

### **Informal Communication**

Informal communication includes instances of free unrestrained communication between people who share a casual rapport with each other. It does not have any rigid rules and guidelines. Informal conversations need not necessarily have boundaries of time, place or even subjects for that matter since we all know that friendly chats with our loved ones can simply go on and on.

### **The ABCs of Technical Writing – 4 Features Technical Writers Need to Know**

Writing a technical report is often a real challenge for many technical professionals. There are certain features of technical writing that are essential. They can be called as the ABCS (i.e. accuracy, brevity, clarity, and simplicity) and 7C's of Technical Writing.

**Accuracy:** Accurate reporting of the findings; accurate presentation of the facts; accurate representation of the findings, in accordance with the methods one have used. One should make sure to clearly indicate where one has expressed an opinion, rather than a certain outcome of the investigation. As far as possible, give specific information rather than generalizations.

**Brevity:** 'Brevity is the soul of wit' Try to keep the document as short as possible – time-poor readers will appreciate that. Consider placing background and supporting information into an appendix, footnote or endnote reference. As much as possible, keep sentences short (15 to 20 words work well for most readers), with only one idea expressed in each sentence.

**Clarity:** Clarity is the mantra that does miracles in technical writing. It saves time and checks further confusion or controversy. Use familiar vocabulary and constructions (make sure to think about who will read the report and be prepared to explain potentially unfamiliar words, perhaps as a glossary, footnote or endnote). Be consistent with terminology, abbreviations and presentation of figures, tables, illustrations, etc. Consider using tables, figures, graphs, illustrations to demonstrate point of view... as 'they' say, a picture saves a thousand words. Remember that jargon (specialized terms used in the field) excludes those who are unfamiliar with those words. Be precise and one can use bullet or numbered points to express complex ideas (if the discipline or organization allows).

**Simplicity:** This is about expressing thoughts with simplicity, not simplifying work. Remember one wants to show the reader the value of one's work, not what a good writer one is. The content is more important than extravagant writing. Verbosity hinders readers' understanding. Make sure to think about the logical progression of the report. Plan the structure of the document so that to lead the readers to the conclusion.

#### **7C's of Technical Communication:**

**Completeness, Conciseness, Correctness, Concreteness, Clarity, Courteous and Consideration** are the 7C's of communication.

### **Technical Writing vs. General Writing**

General writing, such as writing your thoughts and opinions about a social issue, is totally different from another style of writing called technical writing. One should not confuse between the two styles as they serve very different purposes and are also meant for vastly different audiences. Though the basics remain the same (both need to engage the reader and must be free from spelling mistakes and grammatical errors), technical writing is considered a little more difficult than general writing as it needs to provide information in a clear cut manner that the reader is able to assimilate and understand.

General writing is more about arousing the interest of the reader whereas technical writing has the sole objective of making the reader understand a topic in an interesting manner. Technical writing has general guidelines to follow and it has to be clear and concise. It has to be in first person and avoid passive voice.

In brief:

<b>General Writing</b>	<b>Technical Writing</b>
Subjective	Objective
Usually informal approach	Almost formal
Common vocabulary	Technical vocabulary e.g. jargon
No set pattern of communication	Follows a set of pattern
Use of extravagant words	Simple but effective
Not for a specific audience	For specific audience
General content	Technical content

### **Reading and Comprehension**

#### **READING COMPREHENSION**

Apple banana blue walk tree happy sing. Surely you were able to read each of the words in that sentence and understand what they meant independently. An apple is a fruit that is usually round and red, green or yellow. A banana is another fruit that is yellow. Blue is a colour...and so on and so forth. However, when you look at the sentence as a whole, does it make sense? Probably not.

This nonsense sentence demonstrates the difference between being able to read words and comprehend text. As practiced readers we may take this distinction for granted since the acts of reading and comprehension occur almost simultaneously for us. For developing readers this relationship is not as apparent, but is essential for them to become strong, capable readers.

### **What exactly *IS* reading comprehension?**

Simply put, reading comprehension is the act of understanding what you are reading. While the definition can be simply stated the act is not simple to teach, learn or practice. Reading comprehension is an intentional, active, interactive process that occurs before, during and after a person reads a particular piece of writing.

Reading comprehension is one of the pillars of the act of reading. When a person reads a text he engages in a complex array of cognitive processes. He is simultaneously using his awareness and understanding of phonemes (individual sound “pieces” in language), phonics (connection between letters and sounds and the relationship between sounds, letters and words) and ability to comprehend or construct meaning from the text. This last component of the act of reading is reading comprehension. It cannot occur independent of the other two elements of the process. At the same time, it is the most difficult and most important of the three.

There are two elements that make up the process of reading comprehension: **vocabulary knowledge** and **text comprehension**. In order to understand a text the reader must be able to comprehend the vocabulary used in the piece of writing. If the individual words don’t make the sense then the overall story will not either. Children can draw on their prior knowledge of vocabulary, but they also need to continually be taught new words. The best vocabulary instruction occurs at the point of need. Parents and teachers should pre-teach new words that a child will encounter in a text or aid her in understanding unfamiliar words as she comes upon them in the writing. In addition to being able to understand each distinct word in a text, the child also has to be able to put them together to develop an overall conception of what it is trying to say. This is text comprehension. Text comprehension is much more complex and varied than vocabulary knowledge. Readers use many different text comprehension strategies to develop reading comprehension. These include monitoring for understanding, answering and generating questions, summarizing and being aware of and using a text’s structure to aid comprehension.

### **How does reading comprehension develop?**

As you can see, reading comprehension is incredibly complex and multifaceted. Because of this, readers do not develop the ability to comprehend texts quickly, easily or independently. Reading comprehension strategies must be taught over an extended period of time by parents and teachers who have knowledge and experience using them. It might seem that once a child learns to read in the elementary grades he is able to tackle any future text that comes his way. This is not true. Reading comprehension strategies must be refined, practiced and reinforced continually throughout life. Even in the middle grades and high school, parents and teachers need to continue to help their children develop reading comprehension strategies. As their reading materials become more diverse and challenging, children need to learn new tools for comprehending these texts. Content area materials such as textbooks and newspaper, magazine and journal articles pose different reading comprehension challenges for young people and thus require different comprehension strategies. The development of reading comprehension is a lifelong process that changes based on the depth and breadth of texts the person is reading.

## **Why is reading comprehension so important?**

Without comprehension, reading is nothing more than tracking symbols on a page with your eyes and sounding them out. Imagine being handed a story written in Egyptian hieroglyphics with no understanding of their meaning. You may appreciate the words aesthetically and even be able to draw some small bits of meaning from the page, but you are not truly reading the story. The words on the page have no meaning. They are simply symbols. People read for many reasons but understanding is always a part of their purpose. Reading comprehension is important because without it reading doesn't provide the reader with any information.

Beyond this, reading comprehension is essential to life. Much has been written about the importance of functional literacy. In order to survive and thrive in today's world individuals must be able to comprehend basic texts such as bills, housing agreements (leases, purchase contracts), directions on packaging and transportation documents (bus and train schedules, maps, travel directions). Reading comprehension is a critical component of functional literacy. Think of the potentially dire effects of not being able to comprehend dosage directions on a bottle of medicine or warnings on a container of dangerous chemicals. With the ability to comprehend what they read, people are able not only to live safely and productively, but also to continue to develop socially, emotionally and intellectually

Reading Comprehension is the ability to easily and efficiently read text for meaning. It is the last step of the reading process taught to children, after they've learned phonics, fluency, and vocabulary.

Five levels of reading comprehension can be taught to children.

1. Lexical Comprehension
2. Literal Comprehension
3. Interpretive Comprehension
4. Applied Comprehension
5. Affective Comprehension

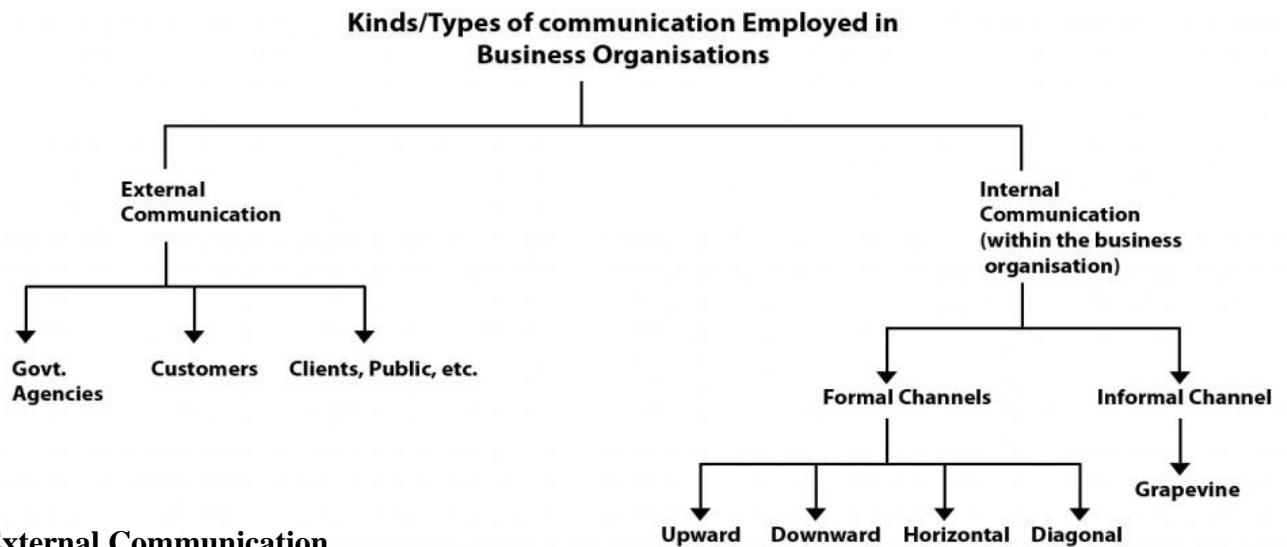
To really understand these different levels, let's take a familiar text and see how different types of questions probe different understandings of the same story.

The fairy tale Cinderella tells the story of a young girl, whose evil stepmother won't let her go to the ball. Cinderella's fairy godmother, however, magically whisks her off for the night and Cinderella eventually marries her Prince Charming.

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## **THE FLOW OF COMMUNICATION**

An organization shares information with people both internally and externally, to succeed in business. Today decision making is not only in the hands of top officials, rather today everybody depends on teamwork. In a business context, all communication can be divided into two categories namely, External Communication and Internal Communication.



### External Communication

When any organization communicates with Governmental agencies, organizations, customers, clients and public it is called external communication.

### Internal Communication

To function in a team-based organization, it is necessary that information must travel down, up and across an organization. Managers and co-workers have to exchange the information and ideas to one another. This flow of communication can be of four types:

#### 1. Upward Communication

This is the flow of messages from the lower levels of the organisation to the upper levels. It most typically consists of information. Managers need to perform their jobs, such as feedback concerning the status of lower-level operations, which could include reports of production output or information about any problems. The upward flow of information is critical for managers, who must use this information to make important work-related decisions. Upward communication can also involve complaints and suggestions for improvement from lower-level workers and is significant because it gives subordinates some input into the functioning of the organisation.

**Advantages:** There are certain benefits of upward communication, such as the fact that tasks are more likely to get done in an efficient and free flowing manner. Concerning upward communication, colleagues will have to report to their supervisors and then their supervisors will have to report to the management above them and so on. It allows everyone involved in the workplace to understand the structure of the company and how work gets done in that situation. It helps people to understand that they are on the same page.

**Disadvantages:** The main disadvantage of this communication method is the idea that there could be misplacement of hierarchy. In this way colleagues send messages to the management above them, which has its benefits, however it may detract from the authority

of the management, team that resides on top of the business. They are the ones that make the final decisions and an increase of upward communication could thwart that slightly.

## **2. Downward Communication**

This consists of messages sent from superiors to subordinates. Most commonly they are:

1. Instructions or directions concerning job-performance
2. Information about organisational procedures and policies
3. Feedback to the subordinates concerning job performance
4. Information to assist in the co-ordination of tasks.

**Advantages:** The main benefit of downward communication is the way in which the main goals of company can be distributed throughout the business. This method of communication allows the higher management staff to allocate the appropriate work to their colleagues to ensure smooth running of the company. This will set the standard for the rest of the group and it also ensures that workers know what is expected of them.

**Disadvantages:** The main drawback of this method of communication is the fact that improvements in terms of the way of processing of the company cannot be made from the lower levels of staff. With management simply informing those beneath them of what needs to be done, colleagues may not get to impose any suggestions.

## **3. Horizontal or Lateral Flow**

Communication in an organization also flows from one department to another. It helps the employees of same ranking to share information and coordinate any task. The free communication among the members of same ranking of an organization is essential for effective functioning of the business. This process is termed as Horizontal or lateral Communication.

## **4. Diagonal or multi-directional Communication**

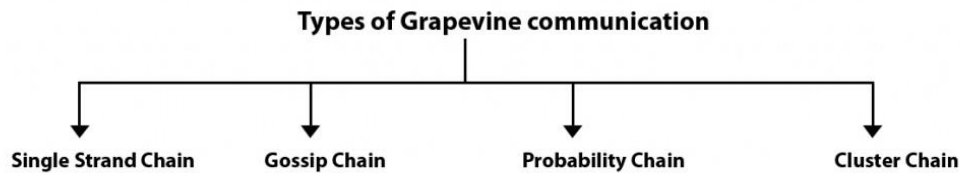
Diagonal communication means the use of upward, downward and horizontal communication. It is a healthy practice not to depend on any one mode. Diagonal communication leads to better feedback at all levels. It promotes understanding, motivates employees and gives a sense of belonging and involvement to all people at all levels. But such communication should not be allowed to degenerate to a meaningless criss-cross communication which will lead to chaos and confusion. All modes have to be maintained at the appropriate and optimum level.

## **Grapevine**

Large organizations, where there are a large number of people working closely, generate certain informal or unofficial channels of communication. These channels exist with or without official patronage. Even if they are officially and secretly patronised, they are not authentic. This type of communication is generally called “Grapevine” communication. Grapevine communication is an

informal, unofficial, horizontal channel of communication because generally peer groups participate in it.

### **Types of Grapevine Communication**



Grapevine communication is of four different types. It can seep from individual to individual in a strictly linear fashion. Information takes time to spread in this fashion. It is called Single Strand Chain. In some situations, an individual goes around communicating the message / information he thinks he has obtained. This is called Gossip Chain. The listeners are selected group only. In some other situation, an individual passes an information without any restriction to all those with whom he comes into contact. This is called Probability Chain and the information / message passed on may be interesting but not important. In yet another situation, one person communicates to a few chosen associates who in turn communicate the same to yet another group. This is called Cluster Chain

### **Advantages of Grapevine Communication**

Grapevine communication brings about a strong bond among peer groups. It develops because of the involvement of the persons connected with an organization. It gives mental satisfaction to the participants and gradually reduces emotional outbursts and reactions. It keeps the employees anticipating and acts as a buffer against Shockwaves. It is fast and can supplement formal channels. It provides informal feedback on the changes contemplated by the Management.

### **Disadvantages of Grapevine Communication**

Grapevine is definitely dangerous to the health of an organization if allowed to grow without monitoring. Grapevine channel distorts or exaggerates the content of a message. It has the potential to spread unnecessary gossip. It may result in character assassination and personal vilification of individuals. It may provoke sudden unwanted and unexpected reactions from emotionally unstable people.

Grapevine channels can moderate but not eliminate. A transparent administration policy, employee-friendly attitude, fruitful peer group meetings, inter-action sessions, parties and outings where all those connected with the organisation participate are some of the strategies to monitor grapevine and use it to the advantage of the organization. Business houses and industries adopt one or several of these strategies to keep grapevine under reasonable control so that it does not degenerate into a rumour and promote unwanted gossip sessions among the employees.

### **Importance of Technical Writing in the Engineering Field**



Nicholas D. Sylvester in his book Engineering Education has given data under the title “Engineering Education Must Improve the Communication Skills of its Graduates.” From the data, it is observed;

“75 percent of engineering undergraduates take jobs in industry, where at least 25 percent of an engineer’s time is spent in the reporting process. As the engineer moves up the managerial ladder, this time can increase to as much as 80 percent.”

On the lack of communication skills, Nicholas observes;

The engineers who cannot communicate – cannot spell, cannot make a sketch, have difficulty in all phases of communication with others. Students of today need more ability than ever and a key need is to increase the ability to communicate both in speech and graphics.

Communication tasks are important to success in the technical professions and constitute a relatively large part of a job. The technical professionals should have clear organization in writing and logical reasoning. They should write clear and concise sentences. They should follow the standard conventions of grammar, punctuation, and other mechanics.

Technical communication serves a number of purposes in engineering and other technical fields:

- It is a way of facilitating communication about projects and ideas throughout the industry,
- It is important in documenting discoveries, designs, products, and methodologies,
- It helps convey information about the field to non-technical people and external agencies for the purposes of support, administration and funding,
- It contributes to usability of designs, and
- It provides information for end users so they can understand and enjoy the resulting products and processes.

And finally, the following report summarizes the importance of communication very well:

Most jobs involve some degree of writing. According to the National Commission on Writing, 67% of salaried employees in large American companies and professional state employees have some writing responsibility. Half of responding companies reported that they take writing into consideration when hiring professional employees, and 91% always take writing into account when hiring (for any position, not just professional-level ones).

**TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION:** Constant practice and rigorous implementation of these ideas will help one to become a good communicator.

- Create an open communication environment.
- Always keep the receiver in mind
- Avoid having too many transfer stations
- Do not communicate when one is emotionally disturbed
- Be aware of the diversity in culture, language etc
- Use appropriate non-verbal cues
- Select the most suitable medium
- Analyse the feedback

## Reading Comprehension:

Reading comprehension is the ability to process text, understand its meaning, and to integrate with what the reader already knows.

- Reading comprehension is the ability to read a text, process it and understand its meaning
- It is the way of understanding what is being read

Three levels of reading:

1. Literal
2. Interpretative
3. Applied

Process of reading:

1. Reading between the lines
2. Reading beyond the lines
3. Reading the lines

Reading strategies to improve comprehension skills:

- Improve your vocabulary
- Create questions about the text you are reading
- Use context clues
- Look for the main idea
- Write a summary of what you read
- Break up the reading into smaller sections
- Do not memorize
- Do not read the passage first
- Do not think that the correct option will come from outside the passage

- Central Idea:

The main idea is the “big point” or the most important idea that the writer is communicating to the reader

- Often the reader can find the main idea just by looking at the title
- For example, a passage titled:  
“Why Students Should Have Less Homework” will include reasons for that idea
- It is like the heart of the text or a paragraph
- It is the controlling idea
- All the other supporting details in the text or within a paragraph should tell us more about the main idea

Critical Reading:

- Critical reading is a more ACTIVE way of reading
- It is a deeper and more complex engagement with a text
- Critical reading is a process of analyzing, interpreting and, sometimes, evaluating

- When we read critically, we use our critical thinking skills to QUESTION both the text and our own reading of it
- Tone: The attitude that an author takes toward the audience, the subject, or the character
- Conveyed through the author's words and detail

## **What to do as a critical reader:**

### **Prepare to become a part of the writer's audience**

- Learn about the author, anticipated audience and read instructions and notes

### **Prepare to read with an open mind**

- Give the writer a chance to develop ideas and then reflect thoughtfully and objectively on the text

### **Consider title**

- The title will provide clues to the writer's attitude, goals, views and approaches

### **Read slowly**

### **Use the dictionary and other appropriate reference works**

### **Make notes**

- Underline, highlight and jot the main ideas, the thesis and author's viewpoints to support the theory

### **Keep a reading journal.**

- Record your responses and thoughts in a more permanent place

## **How to become a critical reader:**

- Consider the title
- Think about what you already know about the topic. What else do you need to know?
- Look at how the text is structured: subdivisions, chapters, acts etc.? Skim the opening sentence of each paragraph. Any hint?
- Read carefully, marking or highlighting confusing parts. (dictionary?)
- Identify key issues or arguments along with important terms and interesting ideas.
- You may take notes in margins or in reading journal.
- Question the sources: personal experience, research, imagination etc.
- What question would you like to ask the author?
- Think about the work as a whole: what is it saying?
- Did you get what you expected?

## **Critical Reading Vs Critical Thinking**

- Critical reading is a technique for discovering information and ideas within a text and critical thinking is a technique for evaluating information and ideas, for deciding what to accept and believe
- Critical Reading and Critical Thinking work together
- First you read critically and then think critically

### **General critique guidelines**

Although you are not an expert writer, still you can identify the primary strengths and weaknesses. The followings are areas to be considered:

- **Content:** consider the topic and the way it has been developed (Appropriateness, interest, clarity of arguments, scope, amount, evidence etc. )
- **Organization:** how the topic is introduced and concluded. Is there thesis statement, does the body develop, is it organized, and does the conclusion restate the thesis.
- **Style:** Is the style (humorous, serious, reflective, reflective, satirical etc. ) appropriate?
- Is there sufficient creativity?
- Is the word choice interesting?
- **Correctness:** Check for grammar, punctuation and form. Feel free to mark an error. You can put an "X" when a sentence seems wrong to you
- **Critical Review**
- Does a direct thesis convey both the subject and the reviewer's value judgment?
- Does the review provide a summary or description to help you experience the film, music, event, etc.? Note places where the author provides too much or too little detail
- Does the essay clearly identify relevant criteria for evaluation? Are they appropriate, believable and consistent?
- Are any important features of the reviewed subject omitted?
- Logos (logic, content): Does the essay provide sufficient, relevant and interesting details and do examples sufficiently inform and entertain?
- Ethos (author): Does the author's judgment seem accurate and convincing?
- Pathos (emotional appeals): Does the author responsibly and effectively utilize emotional appeal to the audience?

Does the author include adequate reference to the opposition and respond to that opposition appropriately?

### **Process of Critical Reading**

- **Critical reading: the process**
- **Step 1: Pre Read**-Do not start reading right away, look at the title, material, headings and subheadings
- **Step 2: Read**-After pre reading you will have some idea of the passage, start reading with full attention, find out purpose, ideas context
- **Step 3: Annotate**-After reading this is the time to take notes
- **Step 4: Questions**-Write down the questions that you may have in the margins

- **Step 5: Review and Summarise**-review and summarize the text
- **Step 6: Reflect**-Spend some time thinking about the text
- **Step 7: Evaluate** -Evaluate the text