

II - Semester



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Directorate of Distance Education

Under Graduate

II - Semester

21B

PART-I: COMMUNICATION SKILLS - II

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INTRODUCTION

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Due to the rapid development in the field of industry and technology, a basic need has been felt for improving skills of communication at all levels of correspondence. Communication skills play an important role in the execution of different types of day-to-day activities of a human being. Communication provides the means for sharing of information and intelligence. Communication can be referred to as a process or mechanism, whose main components include a sender, message, channel, receiver and a response.

Business correspondence is essential for the execution of different types of business activities. Business activities are basically of two types, internal and external. The internal activities of business include giving orders to workers, prescribing methods or procedures, maintaining or improving the morale of the employees and announcing policies and organizational changes. The external activities include selling of goods or services, evaluating the financial conditions of the market and shareholders and creation of a favourable environment for conducting business. Letters, reports, notices and memorandums play an important role in the execution of both internal and external activities of the business.

This book, *Part I: Communication Skills-II*, has been divided into fourteen units. The book has been written in keeping with the self-instructional mode or the SIM format wherein each Unit begins with an Introduction to the topic, followed by an outline of the Objectives. The detailed content is then presented in a simple and organized manner, interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to test the student's understanding of the topics covered. A Summary along with a list of Key Words, set of Self-Assessment Questions and Exercises and Further Readings is provided at the end of each Unit for effective recapitulation.

BLOCK - I

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION SKILLS

*Code and Content of
Communication Skills*

UNIT 1 CODE AND CONTENT OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Content of Communication Skills
- 1.3 Code of Communication Skills
- 1.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 Key Words
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Communicating effectively is the single most important soft skill one must possess today. The main intent is to convey messages to other people clearly and unambiguously. Communication is also about receiving information that other people send. Thus, communication is a two-way process.

In this unit, you will learn about the content and code of communication skills.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the content of communication skills
- Discuss the code of communication skills

1.2 CONTENT OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication skills start with a clear understanding of what to communicate. What do we really want to get across and in how detailed a manner? Are they stray thoughts and ideas or well-organized and sequenced concepts, events,

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achievements, developments and ideas? Are we communicating our own thoughts and feelings or are we encoding and transmitting the message, thoughts, ideas of another party, say that of a chief executive officer (CEO), planning chief, team leader or an employer?

Good communication skills involve conceptual clarity and being well-informed about facts, events, intentions and expectations.

What Is the Objective?

Communication is a goal-oriented process. The objective of any communication is to reach out with a message. Communication skills would also relate to the basic understanding of the purpose of communication. Is it to inform, analyse, reiterate, caution, report or remind? Is it to motivate and win over, influence, inspire and seek response? Information, analysis, persuasion, negotiation, detailing, motivation, counselling and enlisting action and support constitute varied objectives with different implications and hence need different types of communication skills.

Whatever be the nature of communication – writing a memo, drafting a letter or a report, conducting a meeting, giving a speech, making a presentation, participating in a negotiation or a panel discussion, or preparing a graph or a table – the communicator should be clear about the purpose and what he or she wants to achieve.

How to Communicate?

By this, we refer to the numerous methods, types, channels and alternative approaches. Each has its own options and the skill lies in selecting the most appropriate option in any given situation. Will it be oral, written, non-verbal, audio-visual or electronic or a mix of these? Will the communication be through a formal channel? Will it be direct and face-to-face or indirect? Will it be transmitted through letters or telex or fax or telephone or e-mail? What is the time available and what should be the speed of communication? What are the costs associated with the available alternatives and how much can the communication budget accommodate? Is the message pre-planned or extempore? Will a soft copy or a hard copy be provided?

As a present day business communicator, one can choose how to deliver his or her message. Choosing the right delivery channel should be a well-considered decision. Sometimes a written message succeeds whereas an oral message may fail to have the desired effect. On another occasion, it may be more appropriate to talk to the person rather than put the message in writing.

Communication skills call for a thorough understanding of choices available and an evaluation of their relative costs, merits and demerits.

From the Corporate World

Examples of Bad Communication

One comes across numerous instances of bad communication in business. We present below two such examples.

1. **Conveying Important Messages by Email:** In 2006, Radio Shack laid off 400 workers **by email** (without giving any reason) with no notice. Here the mode of communication was poorly chosen. Email is certainly not the appropriate method of communication for conveying layoff or termination of services. Further, it is worth noting that the layoff notice itself was badly written and hard to follow.
2. **Communications Sent in Anger:** Another example of bad communication relates to the one sent in anger. In 2001, the CEO of Cerner Corporation, a medical software company, sent an angry email to the entire team berating the staff members for coming in late and leaving early. Further, in that email, he threatened that he would take revenge on them by taking away their benefits. This email, moreover, was posted on the Internet, resulting in a huge drop in the company's stock prices.

(Source: "Examples of Bad Communication in Business" by Janet B, eHow Contributor www.ehow.com/list_6982556_examples-bad-communication-business.html)

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Whom to Address?

Communication, to be effective, has to be focused, otherwise it gets diluted. The communicator should be clear about the target group or audience and how to reach them. Quite often, they are widely dispersed across different functional, hierarchical and geographical areas. Customers and prospects may be spread across different market segments. Employees may be spread across different units and regions. Our targets may have different motivation levels. Taking into account all the relevant factors, one has to decide how to address—will it be direct or indirect communication, will it be open or confidential, will it be general or personal? Although 'To whomsoever it may concern' type of address has limited use, good communication skills involve making messages which are specifically addressed.

When to Communicate?

QUOTE TO NOTE: *"Stand up to be seen, speak up to be heard, shut up to be appreciated."*

—Words of Wisdom

The sense of timing is also very important in any communication. It has to be on time, at the right moment. It should not be too early or too late. Human memory is short. The notice for a meeting or an announcement about an impending event, therefore, cannot be months or even weeks in advance, and that too without further reminders. Similarly, sharing of information about events, developments and achievements will have to be soon thereafter, for any delay would dilute the

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significance of the communication. The other dimension of communication concerns receptivity, i.e., when to allocate time for communication so that receptivity is ensured. Important meetings should be scheduled in such a way that people are receptive and recognize the seriousness of the agenda. Morning meetings and meetings held at the beginning of the week normally provide adequate time for action.

How Often to Communicate?

For communication to be effective, it is necessary to take into account not only the timing, but also the intensity and frequency. Will a one-time message be adequate, or is it necessary to follow-up thereafter? Should the entire message be conveyed in one shot, or is it more appropriate to make it phased? If so, what should be the phasing? Reminding effectively too calls for skills. Too frequent reminders, without appreciating the underlying factors, would serve little purpose and undermine the person's authority. At the same time, not reminding the members about a scheduled meeting at the right time may adversely impact the presence and participation of the members.

How to Make Effective Use of Communication Technology?

Technology in general, and that relating to communication in particular, is changing fast. The conventional methods of coding, recording and transmitting messages are giving place to new methods. The contours of communication are constantly changing, thereby providing new options to the communicator. With technology enabled services like email, short messaging services, teleconferencing, voice mail, video-conferencing and sophisticated audio-visual services and computer-based aids supplementing the conventional methods, the choice has become much wider. In a separate chapter entitled, 'Technology Powered Communication', we will be noting the multifarious ways in which developments in technology are impacting the process of communication. The ability to make effective use of varied aspects of communication technology thus becomes an essential communication skill.

How to Get Feedback?

Feedback is the final step in any process of communication. It involves carrying back the effect of the communication to its source. Feedback helps to gauge the effectiveness of the communication. Feedback does not come easily. There is considerable skill involved in obtaining feedback. Often people receive the message and act on it, but may not get back to the communicator. Feedback or response is particularly relevant in market surveys and consumer surveys and studies. Good communicating skill involves understanding what makes people respond to questionnaires, get back to the sender and provide the desired feedback.

How to Evaluate Communication?

Communication is a vast and evolving process. The success rate of each method and each process is often varied. On an ongoing basis there is a need to evaluate

the effectiveness of alternative methods and approaches. Based on the feedback, it is necessary to take corrective action. A good communicator will have to develop skills relevant to the evaluation of communication.

Communication skills encompass all the areas cited above and the answers to each one of these questions would be situation specific. While there are some general skills appropriate to the process of communication, there is much learning involved in developing specific skills. General skills relate to the process of communication and the why and what of it. Specific skills, on the other hand, relate to the various methods of communication which are reiterated in the following paragraphs.

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Skills in Oral Communication

Some of the noteworthy skills relevant to oral communication are as follows:

1. Understanding and use of the appropriate language
2. Organizing and sequencing of thoughts effectively
3. Vocabulary and word power
4. Command over illustrations, examples, anecdotes and phrases
5. Proper accent and pronunciation
6. Voice modulation and reach
7. Proper use of the audio and visual aids
8. Listening skills
9. Adherence to time specifications
10. Effective telephonic talks

Each one of these skills is relevant in ensuring the effectiveness of spoken and interactive communication. In a later chapter, these are discussed at length.

Oral communication skills in today's context need to include the ability to make effective presentations. That relates to preparing effective slides and presenting them to the target audience with the help of appropriate presentation aids.

Skills in Written Communication

Effective written communication calls for the following skills:

1. Command over the language
2. Word power and spelling
3. Correct grammar
4. Proper structuring of the written message
5. Correct use of phrases, equivalents and quotations
6. Use of appropriate channels like courier, telex, fax and e-mail

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7. Attention to handwriting, typing, printing and photocopying
8. Simplicity, brevity and clarity

In today's business organisations, people working at various hierarchical levels need to write a variety of letters, reports, speeches, advertising and publicity material, resumes and covering letters, motivational and persuasive memos, office notes, notices, questionnaires, minutes, representations, suggestions, and a host of other bits of writing. All these call for significant writing skills. These aspects are discussed in detail in Chapters 6 and 8.

Non-Verbal Communication

Effective use of non-verbal communication through body language, postures and gestures, attire, appearance, handshake, smile, behaviour and example also needs conscious effort. Some skills relevant in this regard are as follows:

1. Power of observation
2. Awareness about the body movements and other expressions
3. Proper interpretation of the non-verbal message
4. Supplementing body language with oral communication
5. Self-observation and practice

As we have already seen in an earlier chapter, non-verbal communication takes place in an intended as well as unintended manner every time people meet and speak to each other. Learning relevant skills, therefore, is essential.

Skills Appropriate to Other Methods

Other methods of communication, like audio-visual communication and electronic communication have their own specific skill requirements. Audio-visual communication uses slides, transparencies and projectors and the communicator should be well informed about their functioning and use. It is also necessary to ensure that the audio and visual parts synchronize and combine well to convey the message. Proper communication through the electronic media like the television calls for personality-related skills, and computer-related communication involving the internet, e-mail and online transmissions needs a computer-savvy approach and appropriate learning.

Some of the communication skills relevant across all methods of communication are insight into human behaviour, removal of emotional blocks and effective use of personality. It is also necessary to develop rapport building and interpersonal skills. Communication, to be effective, calls for an understanding of and empathizing with people. Establishing a wavelength means understanding the level at which communication should take place. It should not be too high as to constitute 'overhead transmission', and at the same time it should not be too low as to sound 'elementary.'

Methods of Skill Development

Organizations can be broadly divided into three categories, viz., (a) production oriented (b) service oriented and (c) control oriented. Each of these would require some specific skills, apart from the general management skills. Production oriented firms would require largely specific technical skills, quality management skills and coordination skills. Service oriented organizations would call for more of interactive skills, communication skills, and change management skills. Similarly, in control oriented organizations like government departments and regulatory bodies, essential skills would relate typically to audit and the control functions and persuasive and reporting skills. These are, however, broad statements and more in the nature of generalizations. There could be variations, and the management function, in particular, calls for the employee to cope with whatever the business demands. Be that as it may, we need note that essential basic communication skills are a must for every type of organization and all cadres of people in business organizations.

Skills relevant to business organizations are also classified into three other broad groups. They are (a) technical (b) human and (c) conceptual. Technical skills relate to knowledge, proficiency, expertise, speed, accuracy, and the like. These are often specific to the area of operation. These refer to what is called the domain knowledge. Technical skills are a must at workshop and junior management levels. Human skills relate to inter-personal skills and group skills. Human skills are associated with networking and managing relationships. These would include writing, speaking and presentation skills, motivational skills and team building skills. These are relevant across all levels of management. The next set of skills is conceptual skills. Conceptual skills are relatively higher order skills. They include vision building and strategy formulation skills, conflict management skills, problem solving skills and decision making skills. These are particularly essential for people at the senior and top management levels.

The development of communication skills is a continuous process. It comes from adapting a mix of approaches. It results from not only theoretical study and bookish knowledge, but also from observation, practice and real life handling of situations. Confidence comes from practice. A person who has written eight memos is more confident than the one who has written just two. Similarly, a person who has made ten presentations is better than the one who has made just three. Skill development is a process of continuous learning. Learning happens in several ways. They include (a) class room learning (b) distance learning (c) on-line learning (d) case studies and exercises (e) seminars and workshops and (f) on-the-job learning.

Communication is Seldom Perfect

Communication, given its complexities, is seldom perfect. Although people do communicate day in and day out, in families, in relationships, in communities, in business organizations, in market places, et al., by no means is the communication always perfect or even effective. Communication is a process that encompasses

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the message, the sender, the idea and its encoding, transmission, the decoding by the receiver and consequent action and feedback. At every stage, both the parties should take proper care. Quite often, the sender and the receiver of the message take things for granted. That leads to imperfections and misunderstandings. Further, communication takes place through words and words convey different meanings to different persons. Words in English language have different shades of meaning. The meaning the sender perceives may be different from the meaning the receiver understands. Both the parties may not even be aware that there is a difference in understanding. As we have noted earlier, meanings are in people.

In the organizational context, the complexities get more pronounced because of differences in culture, background, literacy levels, word power and expectations. When hundreds of letters are sent, memos are drafted, meetings are held and speeches are made, the fact that meanings are in people, and not only in words is something that should always be uppermost in mind. Every time, there should be adequate awareness of the way the message as conveyed is likely to be interpreted by the receiver. If for any reason the message is understood differently, prompt corrective action should follow.

Check Your Progress

1. What do good communication skills involve?
2. Why is timing important in communication?
3. Which are the three types of communication skills required in an organization?

1.3 CODE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

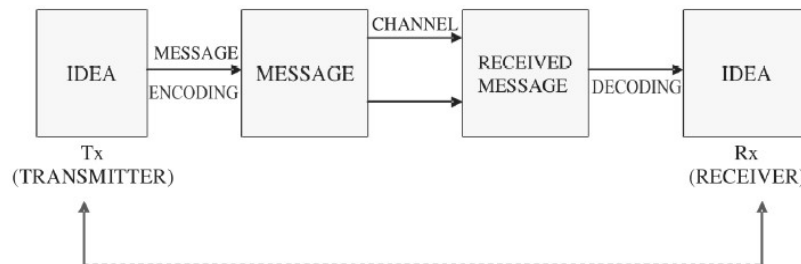
Languages are codes. One can define code as any group of symbols that can be structured in a way that is meaningful to another individual. All languages, including the English language, is a code—it contains element that are organized in a meaningful order. A code has a group of elements (vocabulary) and a set of procedures for combining these elements meaningfully (syntax).

Next is the message content, that is, the message that is chosen by the source to express its purpose. Content, like codes, has both element and structure. When more than one piece of information is to be presented, they should have some order or structure. An individual may sometimes be identified by his characteristic way of structuring messages. This is because the individual communicates in a way that is distinctive to him. He uses a distinctive way or method, which has become his habit by constant use.

The communication theorist Harold D. Laswell developed a theory of communication where he emphasized the behavioural aspects of the sender. His

model of communication had five elements viz. Who says what, through which channel, to whom and with what effect? The model explains how the communication process is coded. We will study more about the process of communication in the next unit.

*Code and Content of
Communication Skills*



Process of Communication

Check Your Progress

4. Who developed the theory of communication pertaining to behavioural aspects?
5. How can one define codes?

1.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Communicating effectively is the single most important soft skill one must possess today. The main intent is to convey messages to other people clearly and unambiguously. Communication is also about receiving information that other people send. Thus, communication is a two-way process.
2. The sense of timing is also very important in any communication. It has to be on time, at the right moment. It should not be too early or too late. Human memory is short. The notice for a meeting or an announcement about an impending event, therefore, cannot be months or even weeks in advance, and that too without further reminders. Similarly, sharing of information about events, developments and achievements will have to be soon thereafter, for any delay would dilute the significance of the communication.
3. Skills relevant to business organizations are classified into three other broad groups. They are (a) technical (b) human and (c) conceptual.
4. The communication theorist Harold D. Laswell developed a theory of communication where he emphasized the behavioural aspects of the sender.
5. One can define code as any group of symbols that can be structured in a way that is meaningful to another individual.

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1.5 SUMMARY

- Communication skills start with a clear understanding of what to communicate. What do we really want to get across and in how detailed a manner? Are they stray thoughts and ideas or well-organized and sequenced concepts, events, achievements, developments and ideas? Are we communicating our own thoughts and feelings or are we encoding and transmitting the message, thoughts, ideas of another party, say that of a chief executive officer (CEO), planning chief, team leader or an employer?
- As a present-day business communicator, one can choose how to deliver his or her message. Choosing the right delivery channel should be a well-considered decision. Sometimes a written message succeeds whereas an oral message may fail to have the desired effect. On another occasion, it may be more appropriate to talk to the person rather than put the message in writing.
- The sense of timing is also very important in any communication. It has to be on time, at the right moment. It should not be too early or too late. Human memory is short. The notice for a meeting or an announcement about an impending event, therefore, cannot be months or even weeks in advance, and that too without further reminders.
- Technology in general, and that relating to communication in particular, is changing fast. The conventional methods of coding, recording and transmitting messages are giving place to new methods. The contours of communication are constantly changing, thereby providing new options to the communicator.
- Effective use of non-verbal communication through body language, postures and gestures, attire, appearance, handshake, smile, behaviour and example also needs conscious effort.
- The development of communication skills is a continuous process. It comes from adapting a mix of approaches. It results from not only theoretical study and bookish knowledge, but also from observation, practice and real life handling of situations.
- Languages are codes. One can define code as any group of symbols that can be structured in a way that is meaningful to another individual. All languages, including the English language, is a code—it contains element that are organized in a meaningful order. A code has a group of elements (vocabulary) and a set of procedures for combining these elements meaningfully (syntax).

1.6 KEY WORDS

- **Communication skills:** These involve conceptual clarity and being well-informed about facts, events, intentions and expectations.
- **Technical skills:** These relate to knowledge, proficiency, expertise, speed, accuracy, and the like. These are often specific to the area of operation.
- **Conceptual skills:** These are relatively higher order skills. They include vision building and strategy formulation skills, conflict management skills, problem solving skills and decision-making skills.
- **Human skills:** These are associated with networking and managing relationships. These would include writing, speaking and presentation skills, motivational skills and team building skills.

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1.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Why is feedback an important part of communication?
2. List the skills required in oral communication.
3. Which are the five elements of communication as per Harold D Laswell's theory?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Identify and explain the various elements of communication skills.
2. Discuss the various methods of skill development for use in organizations.

1.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 STIMULUS AND RESPONSE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

*Stimulus and Response of
Communication Skills*

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Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Process of Communication
 - 2.2.1 Communication Relates to Stimulus and Response
 - 2.2.2 Signs, Signals and Symbols
- 2.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Key Words
- 2.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 2.7 Further Readings

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Communications is fundamental to the existence and survival of humans as well as to an organization. It is a process of creating and sharing ideas, information, views, facts, feelings, etc., among the people to reach a common understanding. Communication is the key to the Directing function of the management.

A manager may be highly qualified and skilled but if he does not possess good communication skills, all his ability becomes irrelevant. A manager must communicate his directions effectively to the subordinates to get the work done from them properly.

All communication is essentially based on stimulus and response. Regular exchange of these results in a conversation and other continuous communication between any two people or within a group of people. In this unit, you will learn about the process of communication and the significance of stimulus and response mechanism within it.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the process of communication in general
- Identify the stimuli and responses in various modes of communication
- Explain the importance of signs and symbols as stimulus in communication

2.2 PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

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Communication is a process that involves certain distinct steps. In its simpler form, it relates to stimulus and response. The stimulus arises from the communicator and the receiver responds. Communication is not complete till the message conveyed by the sender is properly understood by the receiver. Any communication process should necessarily have three elements—sender, receiver and the message.

Every communication has a distinct purpose, which determines the message. The stimulus emanates from the sender, and the receiver comes up with the response. The objective in any business communication, as we have seen earlier, is to elicit the desired response. To be understood, however, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition in the organizational context. When the understanding results in the intended action, the objective of the communication is said to be achieved.

The process of communication in an organization can be illustrated with the help of Figure 2.1. It brings out the following steps involved in the communication process:

- Step 1** Message is initiated.
- Step 2** Sender picks up the idea and encodes it for proper understanding.
- Step 3** The encoded message is then transmitted through the chosen medium or channel.
- Step 4** Receiver receives the message and decodes it.
- Step 5** The decoded message is used or acted upon.
- Step 6** As a final step, feedback on use or action is sent back to the sender.

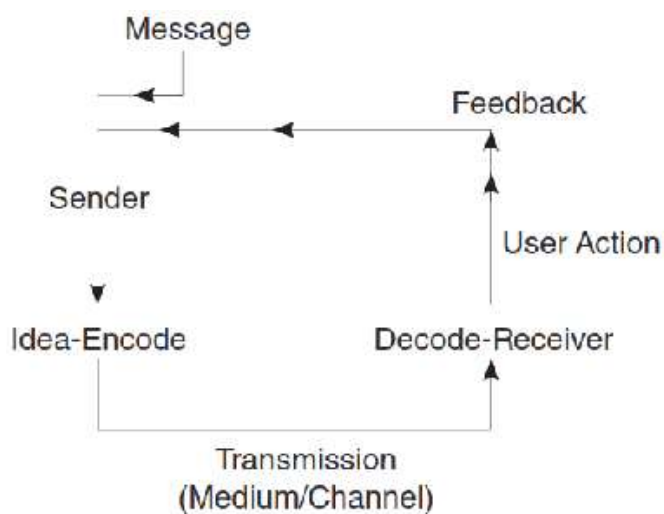


Fig. 2.1 Process of Communication

2.2.1 Communication Relates to Stimulus and Response

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The starting point of any communication is the existence of a message. The process of communication starts with a purpose. There is an underlying idea that has to be put across. This idea is developed into a message. The sender gives shape to the idea he wants to communicate.

The next step, as is evident from the chart, is the encoding of the idea. Encoding ensures that the idea or the message assumes a communicable form. Encoding would involve choosing the right words, expressions, phrases, charts and pictures in order to facilitate complete and clear expression of the idea. In doing so, the sender of the message should keep in mind the ability of the receiver to decode and comprehend the message.

The encoded message is now ready to travel. The journey or transmission is undertaken through a medium or channel. The sender of the message has to select the medium or the communication channel—oral, written, visual, audio-visual, electronic or a combination of any of these. Each of these offers various options. The choice of the medium would be influenced by factors like availability, cost, urgency and reliability.

The transmission is complete when the message reaches the receiver. The message has travelled from the sender to the receiver. Having received the message, it is now up to the receiver to respond as he pleases. If the receiver does not open the mailbox, ignores the letter, declines to take the call, refuses to view the audio-visual film or ignores the e-mail, the message gets lost, and the idea fails to reach its destination.

For the communication process to progress as intended, the receiver, on getting the message, should decode it. Decoding relates to reading, listening, viewing, understanding and interpretation of the message. Proper decoding is again a must for effective communication. It calls for earnestness on the part of the receiver. It depends on one's willingness to respond to the sender's efforts in sending the message. Even when one responds, understanding and interpretation of the message will be influenced by one's knowledge, attitude and perception. Communication is complete and effective only when the receiver correctly comprehends the purpose of the message, uses it and acts upon it as envisaged by the sender.

In the organizational context, in particular, the communication process moves a step further resulting in relevant feedback to the sender. The quality of feedback received from the target indicates the effectiveness of communication.

The process of communication is thus a progressive step-by-step movement. Both the sender and the receiver have a definite role to play in ensuring the success of communication. Their internal background, social status, hierarchical relationships, organizational climate, knowledge, skills and attitudes are among a host of factors that determine the effectiveness of communication. Added to that is

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the efficiency and reliability of the channels of communication chosen in the process. The choice of methods and channels should be such that they are capable of overcoming barriers, if any, to the process of communication.

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Methods of Communication

Communication takes place through various methods and channels. The three main methods of communication are oral or verbal communication, written communication and the non-verbal communication. Oral communication takes place by way of talks, conversation, dialogue, speech, discussion and meetings. Written communication is carried out through letters, circulars, memos, reports, brochures and books. Non-verbal communication takes place through body language. Language constitutes the vehicle on which both oral and written communication travel. Apart from these three main methods of communication, there are others like the visual, audio-visual and electronic. Silence is also accepted as a method of communication. Each of these methods has its own merits, demerits, channels and aids (see Figure 2.2).

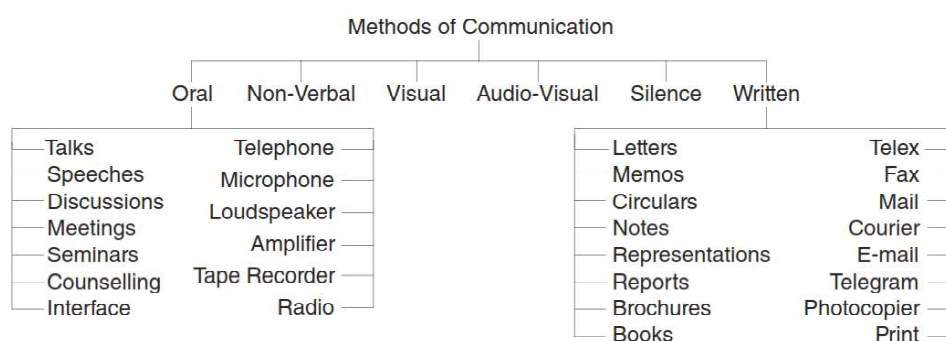


Fig. 2.2 Methods and Channels of Communication

Oral Communication

Oral communication refers to the spoken word. It takes the form of sounds and words. Starting out as a struggle by the early man, oral communication has had a long journey. It has developed across different regions, cultures, countries and continents. The development of numerous languages across the world has empowered oral communication.

Oral communication plays a vital role in everyday life, both for individuals and organizations. It is, indeed, the most commonly used method of communication both at the social level and at the organizational level. Everyone makes copious use of oral communication in their transactions and interactions. For the individual, talking and speaking provide a very dependable means of communication within the family and in social groups. Oral communication is also extensively and gainfully used within organizations and business entities as well.

Oral communication is also referred to as verbal communication. It takes place between individuals with the help of words. Oral communication takes place

in many ways—casual and serious, formal and informal, structured and unstructured. Oral communication encompasses conversation, monologue, dialogue, talk, speech and chat. Some of these are pre-meditated and some are not. Formal speeches are pre-planned and well structured, whereas informal ones are unstructured and often loosely worded.

As already noted, oral communication can be both structured and unstructured. It can also be formal or informal. In other words, oral communication comprises of both small talk and big talk. Small talk is informal and unstructured. You simply talk. Small talk is often casual. On the other hand, big talk is both formal and structured. It is a serious talk with particular concern for its impact and effectiveness. Big talk calls for planning and organizing. Small talk usually refers to conversations, chats, gossiping and the like where the speakers talk without much concern for the consequences. They are casual and often described as friendly chat, idle talk, common gossip, and so on. Figuratively speaking, when we say, “we indulged in small talk before getting down to business”, it means that we did some casual talking before discussing business. Big talk comprises of giving a speech, making a presentation, participating in a meeting, handling a negotiation, counselling, dealing with a crisis, attending an interview, making a sales talk, strengthening customer contact, discussion as a panel member, and a host of other talks which are now an integral part of the business world. Small talk may not always be aimed at achieving anything specific. It, nevertheless, helps in building rapport and paving the way for big talk. Big talk, however, is always goal oriented. Big talk is done with specific objectives. Big talk aims to inform, influence, educate, convince, promote, resolve, motivate, and attain several such objectives. Big talk, to be effective, calls for tremendous skills and persistent efforts. The world of business especially looks for those people who are good at big talk.

Direct person-to-person communication plays a very useful role in any organization, essentially in work situations, where there are employer- employee, superior-subordinate and service provider-customer interactions. Oral communication is a speedy two-way process. The message conveyed through oral communication is instantaneous. The messages can travel back and forth without any loss of time. It is possible for the receiver of the message to respond immediately to the sender making the process highly interactive. The messages between the sender and the receiver can go back and forth, with role reversals taking place, till the objective is achieved.

There are many businesses and groups where spoken word carries considerable weight. There are businesses where, for various reasons, not much is documented or reduced to black and white. The verbal contracts are taken as seriously as the written ones and are faithfully fulfilled. A promise made is a promise kept. Likewise, in organizational situations, oral instructions, appeals and messages are seldom disregarded. Oral communication, besides being interactive, can also be quite persuasive.

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Another noteworthy merit of oral communication is that it can be supplemented and complemented by non-verbal communication for greater impact. When a speaker speaks, the message is conveyed not only through the spoken words, but also by body movements and actions. When a person is talking or speaking or counselling, the warmth or otherwise of the person's feelings is also expressed through the body language. It is, however, worth noting that if this language is not used consciously to reinforce the verbal messages, it may lead to confusion and even contradiction.

Notwithstanding its several merits, oral communication gets constrained by various physical factors. It works well in small groups—at counters, in classrooms, in meetings and conferences, in counselling and persuasive sessions. A major drawback of oral communication is that it cannot be erased. There is a sense of finality concerning the spoken word. Any word uttered by the speaker travels swiftly and reaches the target. Any slip of the tongue can create an embarrassment and an unintended hurt. The moment a wrong or unintended word is delivered, the damage is done. Effective speakers are acutely conscious of this factor. More so, when they make extempore speeches. Recognizing this limitation, while resorting to any form of oral communication, one should learn to make a careful choice of words. Until the fine art of speaking with restraint is developed, it would be desirable to make the speeches and interventions, structured and well thought out rather than spontaneous and extempore. Whenever the oral communication is intended to achieve an important objective, extra care should be taken with the choice of words.

In personal as well as organizational communication, several channels or tools are regularly used. These include the telephone, the cell phone, the microphone, the radio, the amplifier and the loudspeaker. To the extent they are well chosen and well maintained, they facilitate smooth and effective flow of communication. If care is lacking while using them, they may prove to be a hindrance rather than an aid.

Table 2.1 *Merits and Demerits of Oral Communication*

Merits	Demerits
1. It can be readily used.	1. It is not very effective when the target group is spread out.
2. It is instantaneous.	2. It is constrained by language, accent and vocabulary.
3. It can be persuasive.	3. It is also constrained by noise and other physical barriers.
4. It is cost effective.	4. It is not normally recorded or documented.
5. It facilitates effective person-to-person exchange.	5. It does not permit repeated reference.
6. It works very well in small groups.	6. It cannot be erased.
7. It can be supplemented by non-verbal messages.	7. It is often dependent on memory.

Written Communication

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Written communication is another powerful method of communication. History is replete with instances where a piece of writing was involved in events of great significance—in love, war, peace, unions and betrayals. The power of writing is eloquently expressed in the saying ‘the pen is mightier than the sword’. The author of this book is also communicating with the readers through this piece of writing. After experimenting with writing on sand, stone and leaves, man invented paper, pen, books and printing. Newspapers and journals developed as the media of mass communication.

Written communication has come to acquire great significance in the lives of individuals as well as business organizations. It reaches across vast geographic areas and targets readers around the world. The reach of written communication is limited to the literate world. However, with the literacy levels steadily rising across the world, written communication can accomplish much more today than it could in the past. Writing skills and word-power of the communicator come into play in making the written communication forceful and effective.

Written communication is, more often than not, well structured. The words are carefully chosen to suit the message and the context. Be it a letter, a circular, a memo, a brochure or a report, the subject matter is carefully presented keeping in view the receptivity of the reader. This is how it ought to be. Progressive organizations make conscious efforts to ensure that people across the organization acquire well-developed writing skills. It is possible and necessary to collect all relevant facts and figures beforehand so that the communication is properly structured.

Written communication invariably creates a record that can be preserved over time. Letters, memos, contracts, agreements, documents and reports often carry time value and need to be stored and preserved. As a result, it becomes possible to access them for reference or study. Most businesses rely more on records and written documents rather than verbal contracts and oral commitments. Documentation of knowledge and experience facilitates institutionalization of individual wisdom.

Written communication, unlike oral communication, can be erased. The words can be substituted and thoughts can be rearranged before the letter or the piece of writing is finalized and dispatched. In business organizations, people often prepare drafts and revise them till a satisfactory final version emerges, especially when sensitive and important messages are to be conveyed. Moreover, if circumstances so warrant, the letter or circular or report can be stopped in transit at any time before it is read by the target.

Unlike oral communication, written communication takes time to reach the target. In the past, when postal delays were quite common, considerable time elapsed between the dispatch of the written message and its receipt by the target.

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The invention of telephone, telex, fax, e-mail and courier has, however, reduced the time involved in message transmission. Nevertheless, they have to be viewed in terms of availability, reach and cost. Further, compared to oral communication, written communication is less interactive. It may be necessary to resort to repetitions and clarifications so that the intended message is properly understood by the reader.

In written communication too, several tools and aids are regularly used. These include telex, fax, mail, e-mail, courier, telegram, print and photocopier. Care should be taken to ensure that all such aids and gadgets are properly selected and well maintained so that they act as facilitators and not as a hindrance.

Communication Clue

One big difference between verbal communication and written communication is that in any verbal or oral communication, the words you speak are supplemented by your facial expressions, voice modulations, postures and gestures and pauses and punches, whereas in written communication, words alone carry the burden of communication.

Table 2.2 Merits and Demerits of Written Communication

Merits	Demerits
1. It has an extremely wide reach.	1. It takes time to reach its target.
2. It creates a record and is easily documented.	2. It is less interactive.
3. It can be erased and rewritten.	3. It depends on word power.
4. It is amenable to a high level of planning and structuring.	4. It takes more time to get feedback
5. It facilitates repeated reference.	5. It depends on the messenger and the mode of transmission
6. It depends less on memory since facts and figures can be mobilized beforehand.	6. It is constrained by language, handwriting and efficiency of the tools used.

Note: Tables 2.1 and 2.2 are only illustrative. The merits and demerits are not absolute and present a comparative picture to facilitate a broad relative assessment.

Non-Verbal Communication

The third method of communication relates to non-verbal communication, which is neither oral nor written. While oral communication thrives on listening and the written communication thrives on reading, the non-verbal communication thrives on observation. Non-verbal communication may take any of the following forms—body language, gestures, postures, appearance, personal space, codes, signs and signals, facial expressions, timings, examples and personal behaviour.

Non-verbal communication may be conscious or unconscious, deliberate or unintended. It may substitute verbal communication or supplement it. There may also be occasions when the non-verbal communication may be out of line with or even contradict oral communication. When used with full awareness, body language can create the desired impact. At the same time, unintended body movements and expressions may confuse the listener. Non-verbal communication

is extremely relevant during meetings and interactions of a direct or face-to-face nature.

The greatest merit of non-verbal communication is that it has a universal appeal. Unlike both oral and written communication, which depend on a particular language, non-verbal communication can reach across to people of different regions, irrespective of the language they speak. Mother Teresa's language of love and compassion is just one example. In the organizational context, however, non-verbal language can be used effectively as an adjunct to verbal communication.

Visual Communication

Visual communication is effected through pictures, graphs and charts, as well as through signs, signals and symbols. They may be used either independently or as an adjunct to the other methods of communication. It is also useful in reaching out to an illiterate target group. It can be used in addressing groups of people who do not understand the language of the communicator. As the saying goes, 'A picture is worth more than a thousand words'. Pictures, graphs, charts and diagrams often convey the intended message quite effectively. Some examples of visual communication are given in Figure 2.3.



Fig. 2.3 Some Examples of Visual Communication

Similarly, there are pictures to convey 'No swimming', 'Danger zone' and 'Fasten seat belts'. In business communication, pictures, graphs, charts, signs and symbols are frequently used to illustrate, highlight and focus attention. The channels and instruments of visual communication include hoardings, films, transparencies, floppies and projectors.

Audio-Visual Communication

This is an extremely sophisticated method of communication. It involves demonstrations and presentations through various audio-visual aids. Audio-visual communication is an effective blend of both verbal and visual communication. Such communications are, generally speaking, very effective and carry high retention value.

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Audio-visual communications are highly skill oriented. They are preplanned, developed with care and are often delivered at formal and structured sessions. This method of communication is particularly useful in fostering learning and in classroom sessions. Audio-visual communication is gainfully used in training colleges as also in seminars and workshops. The use of multimedia presentations is gaining popularity in the business world. Advertisements on television channels are another example of audio-visual communication.

2.2.2 Signs, Signals and Symbols

Signs, signals and symbols have come to acquire considerable significance in the world of communication. Having evolved over a long period of time, they date back to biblical times and mythological periods. Well before language evolved, pre-historic man had learnt to communicate with the help of signs and signals.

A sign is a mark traced on a surface or an object with a view to indicate a particular meaning. It may be a piece of paper, wood or metal that has writing or a picture on it and which gives out information, instruction or warning. It may also be a gesture, a movement or a sound to convey something specific. Let us look at some examples of sign language:

1. Priests and elders convey their blessings by placing their hands on the heads of people bowing to them. (sign of blessing)
2. A player raises two of his fingers in a V sign after a game. (sign of victory)
3. A teacher puts her finger on her lips in a nursery class. (sign that says, 'keep silent')
4. Disciples and youngsters touch the feet of teachers and elders. (sign of reverence)

Such signs are sometimes group specific and are accepted as a matter of convention. A sign may also relate to a written mark conventionally used to convey a specific meaning. Such signs may be general, as in the case of road and traffic signs or subject-specific signs, specific to a profession or body of knowledge. In mathematics, there are numerous signs specific to arithmetic, algebra and geometry as also in science and medicine. Some examples of signs, both general and specific, are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Some Examples of Signs

40 mph	Speed limit of 40 miles per hour
][	Narrow bridge
+	Addition
/	Division
Σ	Summation
=	Equal to

Apart from the set of signs, which are commonly understood, there is also the sign language. Sign language is a system of communicating, with people who are hearing impaired, by using hand movements rather than spoken words. In other words, it is the language of the speech impaired, just as Braille is the language of visually challenged.

A signal is a sound or a movement that people make to give others information, instruction or warning. A signal is also understood as an indication that something exists or something is about to happen. We are familiar with the use of a danger signal and a green signal. Similarly, there are traffic signals and radio signals.

Some everyday examples of communication with signals are signal to the waiter for a bill, signal that you are turning right and signal that one is thirsty. Signs and signals are often used with very similar meanings. There is, however, a noteworthy difference between the two. A sign is something that we find or see whereas a signal is generally used for something that is done intentionally and suggests that some action be taken in response. Signs and signals may be overt or covert, explicit or in a code language. Awareness and understanding of signs and signals makes communication more meaningful.

A symbol refers to a credo or a manner of representation of ideas. Symbols often use the power of association to convey a specific meaning. A symbol is also understood as a person, an object or an event that represents a more general quality or situation. In modern day business, the use of a logo is also very common. A logo is a printed design or symbol that a company or organization uses as its special sign. Here are some examples of the use of symbols.

Symbol of purity	– White
Symbol of strength or supremacy	– Lion
Symbol of justice	– A balance
Sex symbol	– Marilyn Monroe
Symbol of quality	– ‘ISI’ mark
Status symbol	– Rolls Royce

Symbols are well accepted and widely used in present day business communication. Use of symbols at the right places enhances the effectiveness of communication.

Silence: Silence is also a method of communication. It refers to a state of wordlessness or verbal abstinence. It may express anger or atonement. Self-inflicted silence conveys a powerful message. Silence may also convey a form of punishment. The word ‘excommunication’ refers to a state of deliberate cutting off of communication. There are indeed occasions when by keeping quiet one can ‘say’ a lot. Silence can also be either deliberate or unintentional. Unexpected silence sometimes results in awkward situations. In personal communication as well as business communication, silence has a definite role to play. In dealing with an irate

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customer, an employee would be well advised to observe silence and listen to the customer before reacting. Even the legal system takes cognizance of silence as a method of communication.

Quote To Note: *Well-timed silence has more eloquence than speech.*

— Martin Tupper

We have, in the foregoing paragraphs, studied the salient features of various methods of communication. Each of these methods of communication has its own distinguishing features in terms of speed, reliability, cost, reach as well as overall merits and demerits. In a large organization, communication takes place at various levels. People in large business organizations need to resort to all these methods of communication depending upon the situations. Inasmuch as choices are available, it is necessary to clearly appreciate the relative merits and demerits of these methods in dealing with people and situations in any organization. Good communication is hardly ever accidental. It calls for conscious efforts and the choice of the most appropriate methods and channels, keeping in view the target sections and context.

Check Your Progress

1. What are the essential elements of communication process?
2. How is the encoded message transmitted?
3. Which are the means of oral communication?
4. Which form of communication best affords storage for future?
5. Give an example of communication happening through signs.

2.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Any communication process should necessarily have three elements—sender, receiver and the message.
2. The journey or transmission is undertaken through a medium or channel. The sender of the message has to select the medium or the communication channel—oral, written, visual, audio-visual, electronic or a combination of any of these.
3. Oral communication takes place by way of talks, conversation, dialogue, speech, discussion and meetings.
4. Written communication invariably creates a record that can be preserved over time. Letters, memos, contracts, agreements, documents and reports often carry time value and need to be stored and preserved. As a result, it

becomes possible to access them for reference or study. Most businesses rely more on records and written documents rather than verbal contracts and oral commitments.

5. A common example is that of priests and elders who convey their blessings by placing their hands on the heads of people bowing to them. (sign of blessing)

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2.4 SUMMARY

- Communication is a process that involves certain distinct steps. In its simpler form, it relates to stimulus and response. The stimulus arises from the communicator and the receiver responds. Communication is not complete till the message conveyed by the sender is properly understood by the receiver. Any communication process should necessarily have three elements—sender, receiver and the message.
- The starting point of any communication is the existence of a message. The process of communication starts with a purpose. There is an underlying idea that has to be put across. This idea is developed into a message. The sender gives shape to the idea he wants to communicate.
- Communication takes place through various methods and channels. The three main methods of communication are oral or verbal communication, written communication and the non-verbal communication.
- Oral communication refers to the spoken word. It takes the form of sounds and words. Starting out as a struggle by the early man, oral communication has had a long journey. It has developed across different regions, cultures, countries and continents.
- Written communication is another powerful method of communication. History is replete with instances where a piece of writing was involved in events of great significance—in love, war, peace, unions and betrayals.
- The third method of communication relates to non-verbal communication, which is neither oral nor written. While oral communication thrives on listening and the written communication thrives on reading, the non-verbal communication thrives on observation.
- Visual communication is affected through pictures, graphs and charts, as well as through signs, signals and symbols. They may be used either independently or as an adjunct to the other methods of communication.
- Audio-visual communications are highly skill oriented. They are preplanned, developed with care and are often delivered at formal and structured sessions. This method of communication is particularly useful in fostering learning and in classroom sessions.

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- Sign language is a system of communicating, with people who are hearing impaired, by using hand movements rather than spoken words. A signal is a sound or a movement that people make to give others information, instruction or warning. A signal is also understood as an indication that something exists or something is about to happen.

2.5 KEY WORDS

- **Encoding:** Encoding would involve choosing the right words, expressions, phrases, charts and pictures in order to facilitate complete and clear expression of the idea.
- **Decoding:** Decoding relates to reading, listening, viewing, understanding and interpretation of the message.
- **Oral communication:** Oral communication refers to the spoken word. It takes the form of sounds and words.
- **Non-verbal communication:** Non-verbal communication may take any of the following forms—body language, gestures, postures, appearance, personal space, codes, signs and signals, facial expressions, timings, examples and personal behaviour.
- **Sign:** A sign is a mark traced on a surface or an object with a view to indicate a particular meaning.
- **Signal:** A signal is a sound or a movement that people make to give others information, instruction or warning.

2.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. List the general steps of a communication process.
2. Name the various methods used for communication.
3. List the merits and demerits of written communication.
4. How does silence serve as a method of communication?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the stimulus and response mechanism in communication with examples.
2. Analyse the effectiveness of oral communication.
3. Highlight the importance of non-verbal communication in daily life. Substantiate your answer with the help of examples.

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BLOCK - II

SPEAKING SKILLS

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UNIT 3 EFFECTIVE SPEAKING GUIDELINES

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- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Essentials for Effective Communication
- 3.3 Ten Commandments of Good Speaking
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3.0 INTRODUCTION

Effective communication sounds like it should be instinctive. But mostly, when we try to communicate with others, something goes wrong. We say one thing, the other person hears something else, and misunderstandings, frustration, and conflicts follow. This can cause problems in your home, school and work. For many of us, communicating more clearly and effectively requires learning some important skills. Whether you are trying to improve communication with your spouse, kids, boss, or coworkers, learning these skills can deepen your connections with others, build greater trust and respect, and improve teamwork, problem solving, and your overall social and emotional health.

In this unit, you will learn about the essentials for effective communication and the ten commandments of good speaking.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Identify the essentials for effective communication
- Explain the ten commandments of good speaking

3.2 ESSENTIALS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication calls for coordinated effort. Good communication like any other high-quality output is very much the result of hard work. Good communication does not occur accidentally. It calls for proper planning, understanding of human behavior, choice of physical facilities and mechanical or electronic devices and the organizational context. It is necessary to understand the essentials of good communication and work towards achieving them.

Be Clear About the Purpose

The first essential for effective communication is to be clear about the purpose of communication. Every communication has an objective. It is a means to an end. One should be clear about what one wants to achieve through the process of communication. The objective of any communication is not just to receive or convey a message. The communicator has to ensure that the message reaches the receiver. Any message that is not backed by a clear and well-developed idea becomes purposeless communication entailing wastage of time and effort. The urge to communicate should be preceded by clarity of purpose. Ask yourself what you want to achieve or accomplish by the communication: is it to impart information, express concern, enlist support, express displeasure or imbibe skills? The objective may not be one but a combination of these purposes.

Understand the Process of Communication

Another essential for effective communication is the need to understand how the process of communication works, i.e., the principles and tools of communication. To appreciate the various steps involved in communication in terms of encoding, decoding, transmission, comprehension and feedback, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the mode, channels, types, instruments, methods and barriers relating to communication and the factors affecting it. Good communicators, like good artists, use their tools effectively.

Be Clear About Your Target Audience

The intended message cannot bring about the desired result unless it reaches the right person or group of persons. The message should address the target group. For communication to be effective, it should be properly focused. Be it a letter, a speech, a film or a presentation, make sure the receiver is connected with or is relevant to the purpose of communication. Quite often, communication loses its effectiveness because it reaches an unintended audience. Good ideas and messages reaching the wrong persons will end up as an exercise in futility. The next essential step is to develop good communication skills. Effective communication presupposes the ability to communicate under varied circumstances. The skills of communication

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that need mastering are reading, writing, listening, speaking, body language and presentation. One must be clear about the merits and demerits of various types of communication and which of them is to be used under a given set of circumstances. Each of them is a different skill and requires a conscious effort to develop it.

Be Well Informed

Communication quite often relates to providing information. The initiator of the communication should, therefore, be well informed about the message he wants to pass on. The initiator should also have the right perspective about the message and be in a position to appreciate the context in which the message is being communicated. Limited information or limited understanding by the sender naturally limits the sender's ability to communicate. This happens in an organizational context when the sender of the message is doing so based on incomplete information. People receiving the message often have their expectations about it and the person giving the message should take cognizance of it.

Plan Your Communication

In order to be effective, any communication is to be well planned. The message to be conveyed, the words to be chosen, the action to be sought, the feedback to be obtained, are all the areas that need to be carefully considered. These aspects will have to be evolved properly before deciding on the right choices. While some routine messages can be communicated without advance planning, all important communication in organizations/ businesses need organized effort. Inadequate planning can, and often does, result in ineffective communication. Good planning should take note of the target audience and pay attention to their attitudes and expectations, as well as timings.

Be Positive in Approach

Yet another requirement for effective communication is a positive approach and the right mental attitude. The communicator should have faith in the process. He should develop confidence through learning and practice. He should take responsibility for making the communication work. The communicator should learn to overcome barriers and look for positive signals. She should not bring in her own bias. He/she should recognize the power of communication and strive to achieve results through the process. She should not underestimate the reader or listener and develop the skill of dealing with every receiver of communication with respect and understanding. A positive approach begets a positive outcome and contributes to the success of the communication process.

Avoid Extreme Feelings

Extreme and strong feelings are not conducive to effective communication. Anger, depression and frustration adversely impact the thought process and thereby distort what is intended to be conveyed or what needs to be conveyed. A disturbed mind

brings out disturbed thoughts and thus distorts communication. While addressing important communications, and reacting to provocative remarks, it is essential to wait till the mind regains its balance and the severity of feelings subsides. It is absolutely essential to realize that quite often the process of communication is irreversible. A word spoken or a letter written in a fit of anger can do considerable damage. This is particularly true in work situations, market places, organizations and business. Restraint pays.

Be Sincere

Effective communication demands a certain degree of honesty and sincerity on the part of the parties involved in the communication. It is necessary that the messages are given sincerely and truthfully. There should not be a deliberate attempt to mislead or manipulate the recipient of the message. If the receiver of the message loses faith in the communicator, the process of communication suffers in terms of credibility. Effective communication therefore presupposes sincerity and humility.

Communication Clue

It is well recognized that magic words like, "Please", "Thank You", and "I am sorry" can do wonders in communication. Using them in our everyday written and spoken communication underlines sincerity.

Be Consistent

Communication is mostly a regular process rather than a one-time affair. In personal dealings, in organizational settings and business places, communication takes place almost all the time. The parties involved in the communication quite often are the same. When communication takes place on a regular basis, it is necessary to be consistent. It is necessary not to contradict oneself. There may be scope for modification or correction, but not for contradiction. Further, when different methods of communication are used in conveying a particular message, contradictions have to be consciously avoided. The spoken message should be in tandem with the body language. Non-verbal communication should supplement oral messages.

Appreciate the Time Factor

In any communication, especially in business communication, time is of prime importance. Speed and timeliness contribute significantly to the effectiveness of communication. In today's world, the value of time is well recognized. Organizations and businesses set goals which have to be achieved within a given time frame. Tasks have to be completed before the allotted deadlines. All communications concerning such goals and tasks will have to appreciate the time factor. Quite often the message that is delayed is wasted. Therein lies the significance of the choice of the channel of communication. The channels selected should be such that the message is delivered well in time.

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There is another dimension to the time factor in communication. The process of communication should take just the right time. Long speeches that stretch well beyond the allotted time, lengthy written communication and unusually long films and documents not only test the patience of the listener/reader/viewer, but also tend to lose their force and get diluted in the process. Communication should be in measured doses, since an overdose of even useful and relevant communication may be received without enthusiasm. The time the receiver of the communication allocates for the purpose has to be borne in mind to ensure effective communication. This factor is particularly relevant in today's context of communication overload.

Use Proper Modes and Channels

We have already discussed the various modes, channels and types of communication. The method or type of communication to be used will vary from situation to situation. Effectiveness of the communication will depend on the choice of methods and instruments. There are times when written communication cannot convey as forcefully as oral communication. There are occasions when a telephone call would be more appropriate than a letter. There may be messages which are important enough to be conveyed through fax rather than by regular mail. Similarly, some messages can go by ordinary mail, some by telex and some others by fax or even e-mail. Make the right choice and repeat the message, when essential. The choice of the wrong channel may delay or dilute the message and hamper its effectiveness.

Be Cost Conscious

The process of communication quite often entails costs. There are direct and indirect costs involved in sending messages. These costs vary depending upon the method of communication and the means of transmission. Since communication in an organization is ongoing, such costs can add up to a substantial amount. The results achieved by the communicator should justify the costs incurred in the process. If not, there is no effectiveness in such communication. Organizations should, therefore, make conscious efforts to make their communication systems not only efficient, but also cost effective through proper evaluation of available options.

Obtain Feedback

Feedback is another important component of the process of communication. The person communicating the message calls for feedback to reassure himself that the message has reached the target as envisaged.

Feedback provides valuable information relating to the time factor, quality of the message, understanding of the receiver and the action initiated. Such feedback helps in evaluating the efficacy and reliability of the types, methods and channels of communication used. Feedback helps in understanding the mistakes committed in encoding and decoding the message and losses in transmission. Mistakes, if any, can be dealt with by undertaking effective corrective measures.

Wit and Humour

Is That Feedback?

Mother: Are you talking back to me?

Son: Well, that's kind of how communication works. Isn't it?

(Source: Stray humour. Author unknown)

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Avoid Communication Overload

To be effective, communication should always be in measured doses. The communicator should take care not to overdo or overstretch the communication. Communication is essentially a participative process, and if not within reasonable limits, the efficacy will suffer. Imagine receiving a 30-page newspaper every day, or sitting through a non-stop 4-hour speech by a single speaker, or participating in a technical workshop from morning till late in the evening. Whatever be the merit in terms of context, the response is more than likely to follow the principle of diminishing returns. Effective communicators learn to limit their communication in line with receptivity and avoid excesses.

In the foregoing paragraphs, we have made an attempt to list out the essentials for effective communication. Since communication is essentially a two-way process, both the giver and the receiver of the message will have to conform to well-defined principles and norms. The spirit of communication is as important as the modalities. When we talk about leadership qualities and other people-related dimensions in the organizational context, it is the role model type of communication that is being emphasized. Unless one practices what one preaches, words become hollow and communication loses its shine. Effective communication strives to preempt any misunderstanding and accomplish complete and clear understanding.

3.3 TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOOD SPEAKING

There are some well accepted essentials for good speaking. While we have covered some of them under the principles of effective speech, we can add some more and present them as the ten commandments of good speaking. Any speaker keen on mastering the art of speaking would do well to meticulously follow the following ten commandments.

1. **Personality and Demeanour:** We have already discussed the importance of non-verbal aspects of oral communication. Even before the speaker opens her mouth to speak, the listeners start their appraisal. Audiences tend to size up the speaker from the speaker's appearance, attire and posture. The attire should convey the right message. Casual appearance in an otherwise formal occasion should be avoided. Any speaker creates a visual impact, positive or negative through eye contact, facial expression, posture, gestures, mannerisms and behaviour. Good speakers cultivate their personality and

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demeanour consciously so as to make a positive impact. Demeanour refers to bearing, conduct and appearance. It relates to one's behaviour towards others. The speaker's demeanour should appeal to the audience. Eyes can be highly expressive. Confident speakers know how to make and sustain eye contact with their audience. Avoiding eye contact may be interpreted by the audience as lack of confidence. Further, eyes can also convey feelings and supplement the verbal message.

Face being the index of mind, facial expressions also communicate the speaker's feelings and intensity. A relaxed and friendly expression helps the speaker connect easily with the audience. And any good speaker must learn to smile. It creates a positive impact. It breaks resistance, if any. Postures and gestures also create an impact on the audience. Posture relates to how one carries one's body. An erect posture conveys confidence and alertness. A sloppy posture or a bent posture conveys casualness. Gesture refers to any significant movement of limb or body. Gesture also includes gesticulation. Speakers can make deliberate gestures by moving their body, face, head or arms as an expression of feeling. Postures and gestures are used by effective speakers to convey enthusiasm, conviction and intensity. Used effectively, they make the speeches and presentations lively, interesting and appealing.

Mannerisms and behaviour can also create positive or negative impact. Mannerisms cover individual characteristics and body movements. Avoidable body movements and characteristics such as picking the nose, scratching the ear, feeling the face and such other distractions by the speaker do not go well with audience. Behaviour has to do with the speaker's response to any stimulus. Good speakers know how to keep their poise and not get agitated or disturbed.

2. **Audience Connect:** Any speech or presentation is for the audience. Like the reader in written communication, it is the listener or a group of listeners that constitutes the very purpose of the communication. Ultimately, the speech is good or bad depending upon how the audience receives it. Good speakers spare no efforts in learning about their audience. Good speeches are those where the speakers attain the wavelength of their audience. Every speaker, to be effective, should connect with his audience. We have already discussed the importance of audience analysis earlier in this chapter. Such an analysis helps in preparing the speech so as to connect with the audience. If need be, speakers also make it a point to reach the venue in advance and build up a rapport with the audience. Some informal interaction will help the speaker in understanding their expectations.

When we refer to connecting with the audience, it is not through the content alone. Contents of the speech should of course be audience relevant. Apart from that, the delivery of the speech should also be audience friendly. The choice of words, the transmission rate, illustrations and stories, amplification

of points, use of jargon and the level of interaction would be such as to ensure a proper connect with the audience. Good speakers make improvisations or make modifications to their original plan if they find that they have not assessed the audience properly. Good speakers adapt to their audience expectations.

Good speakers are those who earn the attention of the audience from the very beginning and earn the trust and admiration of the listeners through their speeches. Attention of the listeners, it should be noted, does not come about automatically. The speaker should not presume that every group of listeners will necessarily listen with due attention. Today's listeners often ask, 'what is in it for me?' or 'what do I gain from listening to you?'. Speakers should keep this in mind and answer this often unarticulated question. Speakers should note that listeners' attention is indeed a hard won reward. Audience connect can happen with effective use of vocal, verbal and visual play during the delivery of the speech.

3. **Speech Preparation:** Good speakers take pains to prepare their speeches in advance. The time spent on preparation would depend upon the familiarity of the topic, nature of audience and length of speech. Good speeches are the result of hard work and meticulous preparation. Even the best of speakers prepare their speeches, although not as elaborately as a beginner. Elsewhere in the exhibit 'The long and short of it', we have noted how President Woodrow Wilson needed two weeks for preparation when he had to speak for ten minutes.

Much advance preparation is needed if one has to make a brief yet memorable speech. Good preparation means that 'the speaker must have his thoughts arranged to form a logically integrated thought process.' Always remember the words of wisdom—the better the preparation, the greater the level of confidence and lesser the nervousness. Preparation may also mean keeping some short notes, jotting down key points, figures and quotations and carrying with you to the podium. Even the best of speakers keep some notes in front of them while speaking. They act as aide memoires.

Quite often, although the subject is the same, the audience may be vastly different. A classroom talk on 'Leadership Qualities' to a new batch of manager trainees will be very different from a speech on the same subject to a group of CEOs attending a refresher program in a business school. The explanations given, quotes and analogies mentioned, empirical studies and factual details discussed and such other relevant aspects would vary significantly, both in terms of preparation and delivery.

We have already noted how good speakers add spice to their delivery and make every effort to keep the audience hooked. Keeping in view the nature of speech, kind of audience and time allotted, while preparing the speech, the speaker could gainfully use the following.

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- Anecdotes and personal experiences.
- Humorous quotes and statements that make the listeners chuckle or smile.
- Relevant quotes from people who matter.
- Rhetorical questions.
- Essential repetitions and summing up.
- Interesting statistics and illustrations.
- Visuals such as charts, graphs and pictures.
- Pauses, eye contacts, silence and audience involvement.
- Voice modulations, speed variations and body language messages.
- Expert opinions and testimonials from specialists.
- Latin, Sanskrit and such other language expressions.

When we refer to business related speeches and presentations, the speaker will be dealing with a wide variety of audiences. No two groups of audience are identical. Again, the expectations of the same group may vary from time to time. That is why it is essential that speaker pitches his or her speech to the specific audience. Are they young or old, male or female, generalists or specialists, homogeneous or heterogeneous, small or big, well informed or otherwise, friendly or hostile? Similarly, are you the only speaker or one of many, are you speaking first or last or in the middle, in the forenoon session or the afternoon session? Would it be better to warm up with the audience and take a friendly approach or better to be formal and keep a distance? All this matters in making your audience connect.

Communication Clue

It is said that broadly speaking, your audience are of three kinds—friendly and interested audience, apathetic and indifferent audience, and aggressive and hostile audience. Your job is easy if you are addressing the first category—warm up and be friendly. If you are addressing the second kind of audience, try to get them interested in what you want to convey—be sincere and persuasive. Your job becomes extremely challenging when you are dealing with the third kind. It will need all your skill and tactfulness to reach out to them—be patient and resourceful. As they say, ‘different strokes for different folks.’

4. **Art of Speaking:** As observed by the Alcuin of York, ‘The art of speaking is made up of five things: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery.’ Each of these five ingredients is equally important. Invention relates to ideas, creativity and innovativeness. It relates to originality of ideas and conceptual clarity. Regular speakers and experts may speak on the same subject to ten different audiences. Every time they know how to vary the speech and bring in creativity and innovativeness suiting the audience. Similarly, a speaker may be called upon to speak on a subject that is perceived by the audience

to be drab and boring. Accomplished speakers know how to make even uninteresting subjects interesting and worthy of attention. Arrangement refers to sequencing and order of presentation. It means avoiding going back and forth and speaking in a rambling manner. Style refers to the stamp of individuality. It refers to a copious supply of words and using them with judgement. It means developing a natural and confident manner of speaking that creates a favourable impression on the listeners. Memory is important especially when the speaker is not consulting any notes. Extempore or impromptu speakers depend much on their memory. While making long speeches, aide memoires or brief notes help in covering all the points in a well-organized manner. The fifth ingredient of the art of speaking consists of delivery. It relates to the actual manner of speaking, which we will be covering in some detail in the following paragraphs.

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Communication Clue

According to a communications maxim, in any good speech, you have to do three things—tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them.

5. **Voice Modulation:** Voice modulation determines the vocal impact created by a speaker. Good speakers are well aware of the need for voice modulation. They know how to vary the pitch and intensity of the voice. They also know how to modulate the tone, quality and pace of the voice to suit the content and the force of the message. The tone will be harsh or soft depending upon the situation. The pitch may be high or low. The quality of the voice may be controlled or uncontrolled. The pace may be rapid or slow. The intensity or force will again vary depending upon the message being delivered. All the five features of voice, viz., tone, pitch, quality, pace and force can be varied to create the desired impact. Dull, monotonous voices put off the audience, even when the subject is otherwise interesting. Effective voice modulation helps speakers gain and retain audience attention. Voice modulation makes a big difference to the impact a speaker makes on the listeners. Experts on communication note that even if you have something worth saying, if you express it in a tone or manner that is a turn-off, it guarantees that no one will listen.
6. **Pauses and Punches:** Pauses and punches are to oral communication what full stops and commas are to written communication. Good speakers know how to use pauses and punches for greater effect. Pauses at the right places help in assessing the audience receptivity. Good speakers also use such pauses to review what they have already covered and collect their thoughts about what remains to be covered. While short or brief pauses are acceptable to the audience, unduly long ones detract continuity and focus. Speakers use short pauses to confirm that the audience has understood the message covered so far and may mention how they propose to proceed

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from that point. Similarly, punches along with appropriate body language facilitate emphasis and reiteration. As Swami Chinmayananda noted, 'From the platform, when he is delivering, he must be able to punch the ideas into the understanding of the listener.'

QUOTE TO NOTE: *What the heart thinks, the mind speaks.*

—A Proverb

7. **Listener Participation:** Good speeches and presentations necessarily have to be a participative activity. If the speaker goes on speaking, unmindful of audience participation, very little is achieved. Unless the listener pays attention, actively listens and fully comprehends what the speaker is conveying, no speech or presentation can be termed effective. Good speakers, therefore, are keen on ensuring listener participation. They make every effort to keep the audience attentive and engaged. This is done by establishing eye contact, modulating the voice, making gestures, moving around and involving the audience by asking questions. Illustrations, stories and rhetorical questions keep the audience attentive and engaged. The speakers should use every opportunity to elicit responses from the listeners. Questions such as, 'Are you with me so far?' or 'Shall we proceed further?' or 'Do you have any questions?' provide opportunities to the listeners to respond.

8. **Summarizing and Conclusion:** Effective speakers make it a point to summarize and skilfully re-emphasize the key points at appropriate intervals. Like the emphasis at the end of a paragraph in written communication, in oral communication capturing the essence of the message at frequent intervals ensures clarity of speech.

Good speakers draw attention to 'what we have learnt or noted so far'. At the end of the speech, they conclude by reiterating the essence or high points of their message for clarity. They stress on the important areas and make sure that the message is well received. Closing or conclusion is the last opportunity the speaker has to reach out to the audience. The closing should be strong and the speech should end on a firm note. That leaves a lasting impression.

9. **Great Delivery:** Delivery relates to the manner in which the message is actually communicated. It is how the speaker says what he or she has to say. Great speakers attach particular attention to various aspects of speech delivery. They practice their delivery and plan their talk. Whatever be the keenness of the audience and the force of the topic, they bring in body language, play with words, use pauses and punches and elicit better receptivity from the audience. They keep the atmosphere lively and charged up. Their tone reflects enthusiasm and confidence. Good speakers learn to make their speeches animated and exciting. Listeners enjoy every minute of the speech when there is great delivery. Just as routine or ordinary topics are made interesting by great delivery, very interesting topics are made dull and monotonous by bad delivery. Speaking without giving due attention to

various aspects of delivery and ignoring audience response makes any speech tedious and lacklustre. There are speakers who are interesting no matter what the subject is. Similarly, there are speakers who are boring no matter what the topic is. Delivery makes all the difference.

When we talk of great delivery, another point worth emphasizing is correct pronunciation. Poor pronunciation can undermine an otherwise great delivery. That is why, we have discussed at length the various aspects relating to pronunciation later in this chapter, and also in the Appendix.

QUOTE TO NOTE: *There is something besides the mere words in a talk that counts. It is the flavour with which they are delivered. It is not so much just what you say as how you say it. Put your heart into your talks.*

—Dale Carnegie

10. **Positive Approach:** Any good communication, be it oral or written, calls for a positive approach. A positive approach in oral communication includes many characteristics. It means speaking without hurting. It means not underestimating the listeners. It means keeping your cool and not getting provoked by anything the listener says or does. Speaking with a positive approach means being considerate, warm and showing friendliness. Good speakers weigh their words and avoid anything that is hurtful and demeaning. They do not make fun of the listeners and shun sarcasm. Sarcasm cuts people and alienates them forever. One wrong word uttered can certainly spoil the otherwise well-delivered speech. Any derogatory references to caste, creed, community, religion or colour and sexist remarks should be scrupulously avoided. Wise cracks or remarks at the expense of somebody else do not always go well with the audience. Good speakers show humility and admit their mistakes and shortcomings, if any. They apologize when they are late or say the wrong things and show their respect to the listeners. They use the right kind of wit and humour. They listen while others speak. They smile and establish rapport with their audience. They do not ever consider the audience to be their adversaries or dim-witted or ignorant persons. Positive speakers do not show arrogance or a know-all kind of attitude. They know that just as they are speakers on this occasion, they would be listeners or a part of the audience on other occasions. They treat their audience with dignity and respect.

Check Your Progress

1. Why is focus on target group important in communication?
2. Why should one avoid extreme feelings in communication?
3. State the uses of feedback.
4. What is demeanour?
5. Why is the listener's participation important in communication?

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3.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. For communication to be effective, it should be properly focused. Be it a letter, a speech, a film or a presentation, make sure the receiver is connected with or is relevant to the purpose of communication. Quite often, communication loses its effectiveness because it reaches an unintended audience. Good ideas and messages reaching the wrong persons will end up as an exercise in futility.
2. Extreme and strong feelings are not conducive to effective communication. Anger, depression and frustration adversely impact the thought process and thereby distort what is intended to be conveyed or what needs to be conveyed. A disturbed mind brings out disturbed thoughts and thus distorts communication.
3. Feedback provides valuable information relating to the time factor, quality of the message, understanding of the receiver and the action initiated. Such feedback helps in evaluating the efficacy and reliability of the types, methods and channels of communication used.
4. Demeanour refers to bearing, conduct and appearance. It relates to one's behaviour towards others. The speaker's demeanour should appeal to the audience.
5. Unless the listener pays attention, actively listens and fully comprehends what the speaker is conveying, no speech or presentation can be termed effective. Good speakers, therefore, are keen on ensuring listener participation. They make every effort to keep the audience attentive and engaged. This is done by establishing eye contact, modulating the voice, making gestures, moving around and involving the audience by asking questions.

3.5 SUMMARY

- Effective communication calls for coordinated effort. Good communication like any other high-quality output is very much the result of hard work. Good communication does not occur accidentally. It calls for proper planning, understanding of human behavior, choice of physical facilities and mechanical or electronic devices and the organizational context.
- An essential for effective communication is the need to understand how the process of communication works, i.e., the principles and tools of communication. To appreciate the various steps involved in communication in terms of encoding, decoding, transmission, comprehension and feedback, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the mode, channels, types,

instruments, methods and barriers relating to communication and the factors affecting it.

*Effective Speaking
Guidelines*

- The process of communication should take just the right time. Long speeches that stretch well beyond the allotted time, lengthy written communication and unusually long films and documents not only test the patience of the listener/reader/viewer, but also tend to lose their force and get diluted in the process.
- Effectiveness of the communication will depend on the choice of methods and instruments. There are times when written communication cannot convey as forcefully as oral communication. There are occasions when a telephone call would be more appropriate than a letter.
- Even before the speaker opens her mouth to speak, the listeners start their appraisal. Audiences tend to size up the speaker from the speaker's appearance, attire and posture. The attire should convey the right message. Casual appearance in an otherwise formal occasion should be avoided.
- Contents of the speech should of course be audience relevant. Apart from that, the delivery of the speech should also be audience friendly. The choice of words, the transmission rate, illustrations and stories, amplification of points, use of jargon and the level of interaction would be such as to ensure a proper connect with the audience.
- No two groups of audience are identical. Again, the expectations of the same group may vary from time to time. That is why it is essential that speaker pitches his or her speech to the specific audience. Are they young or old, male or female, generalists or specialists, homogeneous or heterogeneous, small or big, well informed or otherwise, friendly or hostile?
- Accomplished speakers know how to make even uninteresting subjects interesting and worthy of attention. Arrangement refers to sequencing and order of presentation. It means avoiding going back and forth and speaking in a rambling manner. Style refers to the stamp of individuality.
- Voice modulation makes a big difference to the impact a speaker makes on the listeners. Experts on communication note that even if you have something worth saying, if you express it in a tone or manner that is a turn-off, it guarantees that no one will listen.
- The speakers should use every opportunity to elicit responses from the listeners. Questions such as, 'Are you with me so far?' or 'Shall we proceed further?' or 'Do you have any questions?' provide opportunities to the listeners to respond.
- Good speakers learn to make their speeches animated and exciting. Listeners enjoy every minute of the speech when there is great delivery. Just as routine or ordinary topics are made interesting by great delivery, very interesting topics are made dull and monotonous by bad delivery.

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- Any derogatory references to caste, creed, community, religion or colour and sexist remarks should be scrupulously avoided. Wise cracks or remarks at the expense of somebody else do not always go well with the audience. Good speakers show humility and admit their mistakes and shortcomings, if any.

3.6 KEY WORDS

- **Arrangement:** Arrangement refers to sequencing and order of presentation. It means avoiding going back and forth and speaking in a rambling manner.
- **Style:** Style refers to the stamp of individuality. It refers to a copious supply of words and using them with judgement.
- **Voice modulation:** It is an inflection of the tone or pitch of the voice, specifically the use of stress or pitch to convey meaning

3.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on importance of planning in communication.
2. Do you think that time factor is indispensable in communication? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Highlight briefly the importance of consistency in communication.

Long Answer Questions

1. How does the selection of modes and channel of communication impact its effectiveness? Explain with examples.
2. Discuss the ten commandments of good speaking with real-life examples.

3.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 PRONUNCIATION IN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Correct Pronunciation
- 4.3 Oral Fluency Development
- 4.4 Teaching Pronunciation
 - 4.4.1 Factors Affecting Teaching-learning of Pronunciation
- 4.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 4.5 Summary
- 4.6 Key Words
- 4.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 4.8 Further Readings

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is the most important and difficult problem that non-native English speakers have to face when studying English. Improper pronunciation can lead to negative impression, misunderstanding and ineffective communication.

In this unit, you will learn about the importance of pronunciation in communication skills, including oral fluency development and teaching pronunciation.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain correct pronunciation
- Discuss oral fluency development
- Analyse the significance of teaching pronunciation

4.2 CORRECT PRONUNCIATION

Along with grammar and vocabulary, correct pronunciation is a *sine qua non* for mastering the art of speaking. Pronunciation relates to how the words are spoken or uttered. Like bad grammar, incorrect pronunciation too undermines the speaker. Yet, it is difficult to define correct pronunciation. There is no standard definition of correct pronunciation in English. The experts agree that correct pronunciation is the one in current usage and that spoken by a large majority of educated people.

The pronunciation is considered good if it is understood by the audience and the flow of message is smooth. The pronunciation is bad if it is careless,

conspicuous or attracts undue attention, and the message is not properly understood. The pronunciation is bad if the audience makes fun of it. Nevertheless, by closely following the speeches of highly accomplished speakers and by looking up the dictionary while in doubt, we can learn to pronounce correctly. Although English dictionaries describe how to pronounce words, it is not that easy to comprehend. Moreover, in usage, there is no precise and only one correct pronunciation for every English word, and often speakers may make some variations. For example, either, minutes, schedule, garage, finesse, semi, anti, stir and rationale.

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Why is Correct English Pronunciation so Difficult?

English pronunciation is known to be more difficult when compared to many other languages. Here are five reasons why it is so.

1. English pronunciation is not exactly as per the spelling. Some letters may be silent or superfluous. For example, pious, foreign, questionnaire, maestro, subtle, and honour.
2. English is a rich language that has borrowed words from several other languages of the world—Greek, Latin, French, Sanskrit and many more. Such words are often pronounced as they are in their original languages. For example, faux pas, sachet, champagne, opera, and mandir.
3. There is no connect between the sounds, spellings and pronunciation. The same rules do not apply uniformly. There is no clear logic or set of predictable rules guiding pronunciation. For example, rendezvous, queue, chauffeur, colonel, chaos, and charisma. Similarly, the following words have same spellings, but different meanings and different pronunciations like resume (to restart or continue), resume (biodata or C.V.); front (facing or first), front (false appearance or cover-up); beat (to defeat or patrol), beat (past tense of beat), etc.
4. Correct English pronunciation changes from country to country, place to place. Pronunciation of same words may be different in India, England and America. For example, data, correct, advertise, laugh, schedule, tier, process and fast.
5. Pronunciation of particular words and letters often varies depending upon where it is placed. In some positions, the word is stressed and in other positions it may not be. Let us look at the following examples:
 - (i) It was pitch dark. (Here, pitch is stressed)
It was a dark pitch. (Here, the pitch is not stressed)
 - (ii) I saw a big bird. (Here, big is stressed)
I like to work on case studies, big or small. (Here, big is not stressed)
 - (iii) My answer is a firm no. (Here, no is stressed)
Yes or no makes no difference. (Here, no is not stressed)

- (iv) Also, notice how the pronunciation varies for a given set of letters in different words. For example, 'ine' in genuine, masculine and inertia; 'ch' in cheat, machine and technology; 've' in suave, narrative and veracity.

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4.3 ORAL FLUENCY DEVELOPMENT

Oral fluency is a must for making good speeches and presentations. Mastery over the language and command over words distinguish an accomplished speaker from a mediocre one. A good speaker cannot stand before an audience and start groping for the right word. At the same time, if a speaker fails to marshal the right words, the speech falters and becomes mundane. Oral fluency development means having an abundant supply of words and being in a position to choose the most appropriate word in every given context. Fluency means having full command over the language. Fluency refers to the ability to speak effortlessly and with ease. Fluency means speaking with grace and in a flowing style.

As we have noted earlier, the world of words is vast, growing and fascinating. Building up superior word power is a lifelong endeavour. English language constantly adopts new words. Very recently the millionth word entered the English lexicon. New words come into being and gain currency. Old words fall into disuse and yield place to more contemporary words. Good speakers and effective presenters make conscious and continuing efforts to add to their word power. Good speakers learn the art of weaving vibrant words into forceful sentences. They bring alive the power of English language. They do this by being on the lookout for and assimilating new words from varied sources—dictionary, thesaurus, newspapers, books, reports and listening to accomplished speakers. But then, it is a long and progressive journey.

4.4 TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

There are two approaches to teaching of pronunciation:

- Context free situation
- Context embedded situation

1. Context free situation

There have been a variety of techniques suggested to help the students master the correct pronunciation of the target language.

- **Imitation** (some may call it modeling) is believed to play a significant role in learning the English sound system.
- **Explanation** of the distinction between sounds

- **Use of simple face diagram** in which the various “organs of speech” are shown. Using pictures, drawings, objects, etc., the teacher attempts to teach the place and manner of articulation of difficult sounds.
- **Contrastive analysis of phonological elements** of the students’ native language (L1) and English (L2).
- **Mimicry-memorization** techniques, the student repeats a word, a phrase, and/or a short sentence several times in order that the sound segment(s) of the word, phrase, or sentence become memorized and established in his/her mind.

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2. Context embedded situation

This method focuses on the use of different situations related to real life or to the students’ experience. One is to tell the students a brief story in which the teacher can insert difficult sounds in the form of minimal pairs.

However some criterions need to be observed for contextualization of minimal pairs. They are as follows (as suggested by Bowen, 1972, p.92):

- Meaningful
- Picturable
- Balanced
- If possible, relevant to the experience and/or interest of the students

For instance a short passage conveying a certain situation in which words such as WISE-RISE, MIND-KIND, HATE-FATE, and so on are used.

4.4.1 Factors Affecting Teaching-learning of Pronunciation

The mother tongue / L1

There are research findings indicating that the distinctive features of the sound system of the mother tongue has considerable impact on the acquisition of English pronunciation. This is the reason behind the distinct accent of individuals hailing from different parts of the world. However, there are cases where the individual is able to overcome this ‘accent’. Hence, whether this factor impacts the acquisition of the pronunciation is debatable and differs with individual cases.

Age of the learner

On surface, it appears that the young child is a better language learner as compared to an adult. There are sufficient studies to prove this fact, however, contradictory findings have been revealed by researches stating that the adults have exquisite abilities of analyzing distinctive features of sounds unlike young children.

There are studies on ‘sensitive window’ hypothesis highlighting the initial years of child development as being the most productive and fertile phase for language acquisition. If this was the case, all learners should be able to master the

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second language given similar conditions of learning, but it seldom happens. Thus, we cannot rely on this fact blindly.

Degree of exposure/ input rich environment

Invariably, the quality of exposure to the target language should result in better acquisition of pronunciation. But, then why is it that people living in the target language country sometimes fail to acquire the native like proficiency in the target language? This conveys the significance of input rich environment in the immediate environment of the individual. If the individual lives in a country with native speakers of the language, but the family environment uses the mother tongue of the individual, it results in an acquisition poor environment.

Phonetic sense

There are studies supporting the significance of this factor in the process of second language acquisition. Language learners differ on account of their phonetic sense. Those who have an advanced phonetic sense, acquisition process will be relatively smooth for them. However, this is not a key determinant factor, as there are cases pointing towards learners with high phonetic sense but poor language proficiency.

Attitude towards the target language and target language community and Identity with the culture of target language community

It is said that one man can force a horse to move to the source of water but hundred men cannot force it to drink water. Similarly a language learner who carries a negative attitude towards the target language, believes that that learning the target language is a belittling experience, he will never be successful. Similarly, if a learner understands the culture, values and traditions of the target language community, he will be in a better position to acquire the new language. Thus, it is important for the language teacher to orient the learners to the target language community, its culture, values, and traditions.

Motivation and conscience for good pronunciation

Learning a second language is not an easy process, it is a challenging process, motivated learners are able to achieve the goals, whereas the not so motivated often give up in between. It is the task of a teacher to ensure that the learners stay motivated throughout.

Also, unless and until, the learner gets involved in the process, the teacher will find it difficult to manage the teaching-learning process. It is the responsibility of the teacher to conscious of the use of the target language by the learners, aim for accuracy and encourage learners to develop this conscience within themselves, so that they keep asking others and themselves if their pronunciation is good/ bad.

Thus, we may conclude that of all the factors mentioned above the last one is the most important one and in control of the teacher.

Goals of pronunciation

English as a Second Language Learners in India look up to achieving a proficiency level which will help them in performing their job / higher education with fair communication with others (native and non-native speakers of the language). They generally aspire for an 'intelligible' English pronunciation.

However, there are learners who aspire to acquire native like pronunciation as they have to live with the native speakers / for their own self esteem.

Thus, the teacher needs to ascertain beforehand what level of proficiency is the individual learner aspiring? Accordingly, the objectives, method and material must be prepared by the teacher.

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Check Your Progress

1. What is good and bad pronunciation?
2. Give any one reason why English pronunciation is more difficult than other languages.
3. What does oral fluency development entail?
4. How does context embedded situation help in teaching pronunciation?

4.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The pronunciation is considered good if it is understood by the audience and the flow of message is smooth. The pronunciation is bad if it is careless, conspicuous or attracts undue attention, and the message is not properly understood.
2. One of the reasons is that English pronunciation is not exactly as per the spelling. Some letters may be silent or superfluous. For example, pious, foreign, questionnaire, maestro, subtle, and honour.
3. Oral fluency development means having an abundant supply of words and being in a position to choose the most appropriate word in every given context.
4. This method focuses on the use of different situations related to real life or to the students' experience. One is to tell the students a brief story in which the teacher can insert difficult sounds in the form of minimal pairs.

4.6 SUMMARY

- Along with grammar and vocabulary, correct pronunciation is a *sine qua non* for mastering the art of speaking. Pronunciation relates to how the

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words are spoken or uttered. Like bad grammar, incorrect pronunciation too undermines the speaker.

- Along with grammar and vocabulary, correct pronunciation is a sine qua non for mastering the art of speaking. Pronunciation relates to how the words are spoken or uttered. Like bad grammar, incorrect pronunciation too undermines the speaker.
- English pronunciation is known to be more difficult when compared to many other languages.
- Oral fluency is a must for making good speeches and presentations. Mastery over the language and command over words distinguish an accomplished speaker from a mediocre one. A good speaker cannot stand before an audience and start groping for the right word.
- Building up superior word power is a lifelong endeavour. English language constantly adopts new words. Very recently the millionth word entered the English lexicon. New words come into being and gain currency. Old words fall into disuse and yield place to more contemporary words.
- There have been a variety of techniques suggested to help the students master the correct pronunciation of the target language.
- There are two approaches to teaching of Pronunciation: Context free situation and Context embedded situation.
- There are research findings indicating that the distinctive features of the sound system of the mother tongue has considerable impact on the acquisition of English pronunciation.
- There are studies on ‘sensitive window’ hypothesis highlighting the initial years of child development as being the most productive and fertile phase for language acquisition.
- If the individual lives in a country with native speakers of the language, but the family environment uses the mother tongue of the individual, it results in an acquisition poor environment.

4.7 KEY WORDS

- **Pronunciation:** It relates to how the words are spoken or uttered.
- **Oral fluency development:** It means having an abundant supply of words and being in a position to choose the most appropriate word in every given context.
- **Fluency:** It refers to the ability to speak effortlessly and with ease.

4.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. When is a person considered to be orally fluent?
2. Write a short note on word power.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Elaborate on the significance of correct pronunciation in communication skills. Why is correct English pronunciation more difficult than other languages?
2. Explain the two approaches used for teaching pronunciation with examples.

4.9 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5 PHONETICS IN COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Vowels and Consonants
 - 5.2.1 Consonant Clusters
- 5.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 5.4 Summary
- 5.5 Key Words
- 5.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 5.7 Further Readings

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Phonetics is a part of the English language which helps us to understand sounds of various alphabets. How an alphabet should sound is taught to us with the help of phonetics.

How a word should sound depends on our tongue movements, vocal cords, lip movements and even our breath.

For example, to pronounce the alphabet 'B' both our upper and lower lip must touch each other, to pronounce the alphabet 'G', our tongue touches our upper palate. For the correct sound of "O" both our lips should make a complete circle.

In this unit, you will learn about vowels, consonants and consonant cluster.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the difference between vowels and consonants
- Identify the use of consonant clusters

5.2 VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

Speech sounds are classified as vowels and consonants. Bloomfield defines a vowel as 'modifications of the voice-sound that involve no closure, friction or contact of the tongue or lips'. According to Daniel Jones, a vowel is 'a voiced sound in forming which the air issues in a continuous stream through the pharynx

and mouth, there being no obstruction and no narrowing such as would cause audible friction.' Thus, when a vowel sound is produced, the active articulator is raised towards the passive articulator in such a manner that there is a sufficient gap between the two for air to escape through the mouth without friction. For example, while speaking the word 'art', air escapes freely and continuously without any friction while pronouncing the first sound /a:/.

From the above definitions of a vowel, it can be concluded that the characteristic qualities of vowels depend on the shape of the open passage above the larynx which forms a resonance chamber modifying the quality of the sounds produced by the vibration of the vocal chords. Different shapes of the passage modify the quality in different ways, producing distinct vowel sounds. The chief organs concerned in modifying the shape of the passage are the tongue and the lips. Vowels are classified for linguistic purposes according to the position of the tongue. The tongue may be kept low in the mouth or raised in varying degrees in the front towards the hard palate or in the back towards the soft palate. These positions produce what are called open and closed vowels, with dependent variants, half open and half close. Different degrees of openness and closeness also depend on the extent of the opening between the upper and lower jaws. Open vowels may also be distinguished as front or back depending on the part of the tongue that is highest, but the latitude of variation when the tongue is low in the mouth is more restricted. The tongue may also produce central or neutral vowels, which are neither distinctively back nor front if it is raised centrally in the mouth. The lip features which distinguish vowel qualities may vary independently of the position and height of the tongue, though obviously the more open vowel positions give less scope for lip spreading and for strong lip rounding, because the jaw and mouth are wide open.

In phonetics, a vowel is a sound in spoken language, like English ah! or oh!, which is pronounced with an open vocal tract so that there is no build-up of air pressure at any point above the glottis. This contrasts with consonants, like English sh! where there is a constriction or closure at some point along with the vocal tract. A vowel is also thought of to be syllabic: an equivalent open but non-syllabic sound is known as semi-vowel.

In all languages, vowels form the nucleus or peak of syllables, whereas consonants make the onset and (in languages that have them) coda.

Without reference to any particular language, eight vowel sounds, articulated at fixed positions of the tongue and lips, four front and four back, have been recorded as cardinal vowels and transcribed as [i], [e], [a], [o], [u].

There are twelve pure vowels in English and eight vowel glides or diphthongs. There is an argument between the phonetic definition of 'vowel' (a sound made with no constriction in the vocal tract) and the phonological definition (a sound that makes the peak of a syllable). The approximants [j] and [w] describe this conflict: both are made without any constriction in the vocal tract (so phonetically they

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seem to be vowel-like), but they occur on the edge of syllables, like at the beginning of the English words 'yet' and 'wet' (that suggests that phonologically they are consonants). The American linguist Kenneth Pike suggested the terms 'vocoid' for a phonetic vowel and 'vowel' for a phonological vowel, so by using this terminology, [j] and [w] are classified as vocoids but not as vowels.

The word vowel comes from the Latin word *vocalis*, which means 'speaking', as in most languages words and so speech is not possible without vowels. In English, the word vowel is basically used to describe both vowel sounds and the written symbols that describe them.

Description of vowels

The phonetics of English is given in detail in books like Daniel Jones' *Outline of English Phonetics*, Gibson's *Introduction to the Pronunciation of English* and Ward's *Phonetics of English*.

- **Front vowels:** There are four front vowels in English. A front vowel is a type of vowel sound used in some spoken languages. The defining characteristic of a front vowel is that the tongue is positioned as far in front as possible in the mouth without creating a constriction that would be classified as a consonant. Front vowels are sometimes also called bright vowels as they are perceived as sounding brighter than the back vowels.
 - o /i/: It is a short, front, unrounded vowel just above the half-close position. It can occur initially as in it /it/, medially as in bit /bit/ and finally as in city /siti/.
 - o /i:/: It is a long, front, close unrounded vowel which can occur initially as in yield /i:ld/, medially as in wheat /wi:t/ and finally as in sea /si:/.
 - o /e/: It is a short, front, unrounded vowel between half-close and half-open. It occurs initially as in elephant /elifnt/ and medially as in met /met/.
 - o //: It is a front, unrounded vowel just below the half-open position. It occurs initially as in ant /nt/ and medially as in man /mn/.
- **Back vowels:** A back vowel is a type of vowel sound used in some spoken languages. The defining characteristic of a back vowel is that the tongue is positioned as far back as possible in the mouth without creating a constriction that would be classified as a consonant. Back vowels are sometimes also called dark vowels as they are perceived as sounding darker than the front vowels. There are five back vowels in English:
 - o /a/: It is a back, open, unrounded vowel, which occurs in all the three positions. For example, initially in art /a:t/, medially in part /pa:t/ and finally in papa /ppa:/.
 - o /o/: It is a short, back, rounded vowel just above the open position. It occurs initially as in on /n/, and medially as in cot /kt/.

- o /o/: It is a long, back rounded vowel between half-open and half-close. It occurs in the initial position as in ought /t/, medial position as in bought /bt/ and finally as in law /l/.
- o /u/: It is a short, back, rounded vowel, a little centralized and just above the half-close position. It does not occur initially but medially in put /put/ and finally as in to /tu/.
- o /u:/: It is a back, long, close rounded vowel. It occurs initially as in ooze /u:z/, medially in booze /bu:z/ and finally in too /tu:/.
- **Central vowels:** A central vowel is a type of vowel sound used in some spoken languages. The defining characteristic of a central vowel is that the tongue is positioned halfway between a front vowel and a back vowel. There are three central vowels in English:
 - o /u/: It is a central, unrounded vowel just above the open position. It occurs initially as in utter //, and medially in butter //.
 - o /o/: It is a central, unrounded vowel just below half-open. It occurs in all the three positions – initially in upon //, medially in forget // and finally in tailor //.
 - o /e/: It is a central, unrounded vowel between half-close and half-open positions. It occurs in all the three positions – initially in earthly //, medially in bird // and finally in river //.

When a vowel comes finally in a word, it is much longer than when it occurs initially. Similarly, if it occurs after a voiced sound, it will be longer. For example, as in bee /bi:/, bead /bi:d/, beat /bi:t/. Vowels may also be characterized by what in linguistic terms is called retroflexion or the slight upward turning of the tip of the tongue towards the centre of the hard palate. Retroflexion is one of the characteristics of the American accent. It also occurs in some dialects of British English in the pronunciation of words spelt with an 'r' after a vowel (as in hard, word, etc.). It is also possible to make all kinds of vowel sounds with nasalization, that is, with the soft palate lowered and with the air passing partly through the nasal cavity and nostrils as well as through the mouth.

Diphthongs

A diphthong or vowel glide is a combination of two short vowels. Generally, English vowels are characterized by lip-spreading in case of front vowels and lip-rounding in back vowels. In the pronunciation of long vowels, a relatively constant articulatory position is maintained but a temporary equivalent articulation may be made by moving from one vowel position to another through the intervening positions. In such a situation, it is necessary for the glide to take place within the same syllable. When the diphthong is lengthened, the first element is lengthened and the second element is very short. Therefore, the phenomenon is called falling diphthong.

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- /ei/: It is the result of a glide from a front, unrounded vowel just below the half-close position to one just above half-close. It occurs initially in ate /eit/, medially in race /reis/ and finally in day /dei/.
- /ai/: It is a glide from a front, open, unrounded vowel to a centralized front, unrounded vowel just above half-close. It occurs initially in ice /ais/, medially in bite /bait/ and finally in bye /bai/.
- /o/: This is a glide from a back, unrounded vowel between open and half-open to a centralized, front, unrounded vowel just above the half-close position. In the beginning, the lips are rounded but as the glide moves towards RP /i/, the lips are unrounded. It occurs in all the three positions – initially in oil //, medially in boil // and finally in boy //.
- /or/ou/: It is a glide from a central, unrounded vowel between half-close and half-open to a centralized, back, rounded vowel just above the half-close position. Initially, it occurs in own /oun/, medially in boat /bout/ and finally in go /gou/.
- /u/: The glide begins at the back, open unrounded position and moves in the direction of RP /u/. It occurs initially in out //, medially in shout // and finally in how //.
- /e/: It is a glide from a centralized, front, unrounded vowel just above half-close to a central, unrounded vowel between half-close and half-open positions. It occurs initially in ear //, medially in fierce // and finally in fear //.
- /a/: This is a glide from a front, half-open, unrounded vowel to a central, unrounded vowel between half-close and half-open positions. It occurs initially in aeroplane //, medially in careful // and finally in fair //.
- /o/: It is glide from a centralized, back, rounded vowel just above half-close to a central, unrounded vowel between half-close and half-open. It can occur medially as in touring //, and finally in tour //.

Types of diphthongs

- **Falling and rising:** Falling (or descending) diphthongs start with a vowel quality of higher prominence (higher pitch or volume) and end in a semivowel with less prominence, like [aj] in eye, while rising (or ascending) diphthongs begin with a less prominent semivowel and end with a more prominent full vowel, similar to the [ja] in yard. (Note that ‘falling’ and ‘rising’ in this context do not refer to vowel height; the terms ‘opening’ and ‘closing’ are used instead. The less prominent component in the diphthong may also be transcribed as an approximant, thus [aj] in eye and [ja] in yard. However, when the diphthong is analysed as a single phoneme, both elements are often transcribed with vowel letters (/aj/, /ja/). Note also that semivowels and approximants are not equivalent in all treatments, and in the English and

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Italian languages, among others, many phoneticians do not consider rising combinations to be diphthongs, but rather sequences of approximant and vowel. There are many languages (such as Romanian) that contrast one or more rising diphthongs with similar sequences of a glide and a vowel in their phonetic inventory (see semivowel for examples).

- **Closing, opening, and centring:** In closing diphthongs, the second element is closer than the first (e.g. [ai]); in opening diphthongs, the second element is more open (e.g. [ia]). Closing diphthongs tend to be falling ([ai/]), and opening diphthongs are generally rising ([i/a]), as open vowels are more sonorous and therefore tend to be more prominent. However, exceptions to this rule are not rare in the world's languages. In Finnish, for instance, the opening diphthongs /ie// and /uo// are true falling diphthongs, since they begin louder and with higher pitch and fall in prominence during the diphthong.

Another rare type of diphthong that is neither opening nor closing is height-harmonic diphthong. This diphthong has both elements at the same vowel height. These were particularly characteristic of Old English, which had diphthongs such as /æQ//, /eo//.

A centering diphthong is one that begins with a more peripheral vowel and ends with a more central one, such as [jY/], [[Y/], and [ŠY/] in Received Pronunciation or [iY/] and [uY/] in Irish. Many centering diphthongs are also opening diphthongs ([iY/], [uY/]).

Diphthongs may contrast in how far they open or close. For example, Samoan contrasts low-to-mid with low-to-high diphthongs:

'ai ["ai/] 'probably'

'ae ["ae/] 'but'

'auro ["au/~o] 'gold'

ao [ao/] 'a cloud'

- **Length:** Languages differ in the length of diphthongs, measured in terms of morae. In languages with phonemically short and long vowels, diphthongs typically behave like long vowels, and are pronounced with a similar length. In languages with only one phonemic length for pure vowels, however, diphthongs may behave like pure vowels. For example, in Iceland, both monophthongs and diphthongs are pronounced long before single consonants and short before most consonant clusters.

Some languages contrast short and long diphthongs. In some languages, such as Old English, these behave like short and long vowels, occupying one and two morae, respectively. In other languages, however, such as Ancient Greek, they occupy two and three morae, respectively, with the first element rather than the diphthong as a whole behaving as a short or long vowel. Languages that contrast three quantities in diphthongs are

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extremely rare, but not unheard of; Northern Sami is known to contrast long, short and 'finally stressed' diphthongs, the last of which are distinguished by a long second element.

A **consonant** is defined as a speech sound that is produced when the air passage is obstructed, or the flow of air is stopped as a result of narrowing or a complete closure of the air passage. For example, while pronouncing the word 'pool' our lips try to stop air from passing through when the sound /p/ is produced. In the production of consonants, the voice or breath is partially hindered by the tongue, teeth, lips, or the other organs of speech. Thus, the production of the consonant sounds involves the action of some speech organ. Consonants include the following:

- All sounds which are not voiced
- All sounds in the production of which the air has an impeded passage through the mouth
- All sounds in the production of which the air does not pass through the mouth
- All sounds in which there is audible friction

Articulatory phonetics is, perhaps, the oldest and the best approach for the study of consonants. It believes that the characteristics of speech sounds are determined by their modes of formation. They may accordingly be described and classified by stating the position and action of the various speech organs.

Any description of the manner of forming consonants must be based on the following particulars:

- The place or places of articulation
- The state of the air passage at the place (or places) of articulation
- The position of the soft palate

Place of articulation

The following are the chief places of articulation:

- **Bilabial:** The two lips are the primary articulators. The initial sounds in the word **pat**, **bat**, **mat** and **what** are bilabials. For example, /p/, /m/, /w/.
- **Labio-dental:** The lower lip articulates with the upper teeth. Here, active articulator is lower lip and passive articulator is upper teeth. For example, /f/, /v/.
- **Dental:** The tip of the tongue articulates against the upper teeth. Here, active articulator is tip of the tongue and passive articulator is the upper teeth. For example, //.
- **Alveolar:** In the production of these sounds the tongue touches or is brought near the alveolar ridge and here active articulator is the blade of the tongue

and passive articulator is the teeth ridge. Tip or blade of the tongue articulates against the alveolar ridge (the rough bony ridge immediately behind the upper teeth). For example, /t/, /d/.

- **Alveo-palatal/ Post alveolar:** Behind the alveolar ridge the roof of the mouth rises sharply and here active articulator is the tip of the tongue and passive articulator is the rare part of the alveolar ridge. For example, English 'r' as in red.
 - **Palato-alveolar:** Palato-Alveolar sounds are produced by two simultaneous articulators, which are as follows:
 - o The blade of the tongue an active articulator against the teeth ridge a passive articulator
 - o The front of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate
 - **Palatal:** Sounds produced with the tongue near the hard palate and the active articulator is the front of the tongue and passive articulator is hard palate. For example, /j/
 - **Velar:** Sounds produced near the soft area of the roof of the mouth and here active articulator is the back of the tongue and passive articulator is soft palate. /k/, /g/, //
 - **Glottal:** The vocal folds are used as the primary articulators. Moreover, glottis plays a vital role in the production of this sound. For example, /h/
- The position of the speech organs can be studied from Figure 5.1.

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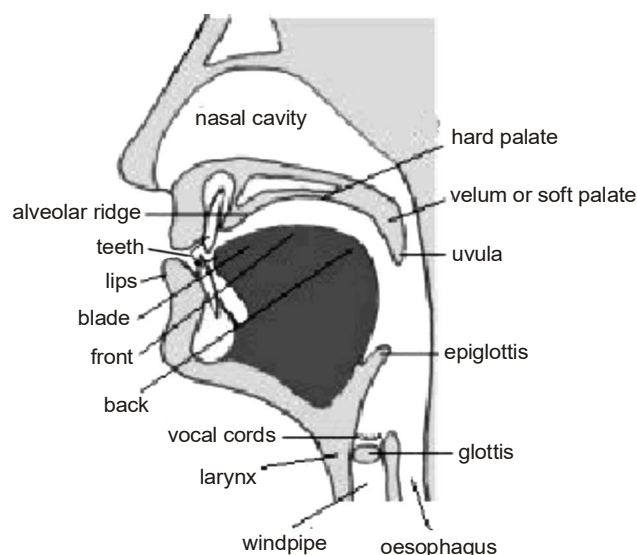


Fig. 5.1 Position of the Speech Organs

Manner of articulation

The obstruction made by the organs may be total, intermittent or partial, or may merely constitute a narrowing sufficient to cause friction. Sibilants can be

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differentiated from each other fricatives by the tongue's shape and by the airflow that is directed over the teeth. Fricatives at coronal places of articulation can be sibilant or non-sibilant; although sibilants are more common.

Taps and flaps are identical to brief stops. However, their articulation and behaviour is different enough to be thought of in a separate manner, rather than just in the length form.

Trills include the vibration of one of the speech organs. As trilling is a different parameter from stricture, the two might be combined. Increasing the stricture of a basic trill leads to a trilled fricative. Trilled affricates are quite well known.

Nasal airflow might be added as an independent parameter towards any speech sound. It is quite commonly found in nasal stops and nasal vowels. You can also find nasal fricatives, nasal taps as well as nasal approximants. When a sound is not nasal, it is termed oral. An oral stop is generally called a plosive, whereas a nasal stop is basically just termed as nasal.

Laterality is the release of airflow at the tongue's side. It can be combined together with other manners, leading to the following:

- Lateral approximants
- Lateral flaps
- Lateral fricatives and affricates

The chief types of articulation are as follows:

- **Complete closure**

- o **Plosive:** The air passage is completely closed for a considerable time and the air is compressed and on release issues suddenly making an explosive sound. If the consonant is voiced, then the voicing is the only sound that is heard during the occlusion; but if it is voiceless, then the plosive will be completely silent. What you hear as a /p/ or /k/ is the effect that the *onset* of the occlusion has on the preceding vowel, as well as the release burst and its effect on the following vowel. The shape and position of the tongue (the *place* of articulation) describes the resonant cavity which gives different plosives their characteristic sounds. All languages have plosives. For example, /p/, /b/, /k/, /g/
- o **Affricates:** There is a complete closure at some point in the mouth behind which the air pressure builds up. It begins just like a plosive, but this releases into a fricative instead having a separate release of its own. The English letters 'ch' and 'j' represent affricates. They are quite common around the world, though less common than fricatives. On sudden release, the friction is audible though it is much slower when compared with that of a plosive. For example, //, //
- o **Nasal:** A nasal sound is produced when there is a complete closure at some point in the mouth but the air escapes through the nose as the soft

palate is lowered. They are vowel-like in the sense that they do not issue forth with a noise. The shape and positioning of the tongue determines the resonant cavity, which gives different nasal stops different characteristic sounds. Some examples of nasal sounds in English include /m, n/. Nearly all languages have nasal sounds, the only exceptions being in the area of Puget Sound and a single language on Bougainville Island.

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- **Intermittent closure**

- o **Trill or roll:** The active articulator strikes several times against the passive articulator. The structure involved is often known as intermittent stricture. In it the articulator (usually the tip of the tongue) is held firmly in one place, and the airstream causes it to vibrate. The double 'r' of Spanish 'perro' is a trill. Trills and flaps, where there are one or more brief occlusions, form a class of consonants called rhotics. For example, Scottish 'r' where the tongue tip trills against the alveolar ridge.
- o **Flap:** A single tap made by the active articulator (tongue tip) against the passive articulator (teeth ridge). For example, English 'r'. It also occurs in American English when the word butter is pronounced as 'budder'. Often called a tap, is a momentary closure of the oral cavity. The 'tt' of 'utter' and the 'dd' of 'udder' are pronounced as a flap in North American and Australian English. A lot of linguists differentiate *taps* from *flaps*, but there is no consensus on what the difference could be. No language is based on such differences. There are also lateral flaps.

- **Partial closure**

- o **Lateral:** At some point in the mouth, a partial but firm closure is made. At the same time, the air stream is allowed to escape on one or both sides of the contact. These sounds are also frictionless and therefore, vowel-like. Usually, shortened to lateral, is a type of approximant pronounced with the side of the tongue. English /l/ is a lateral. Together with the *rhotics*, which have similar behaviour in many languages, this forms a class of consonant called liquid. For example, /l/

- **Narrowing**

- o **Fricative:** A fricative is formed by narrowing the air passage to such an extent that the air on escaping produces an audible friction. Sometimes called spirant, where there is continuous frication (turbulent and noisy airflow) at the place of articulation. Examples include English /f, s/ (voiceless), /v, z/ (voiced), etc. Most languages have fricatives, though many have only a /s/. However, the indigenous Australian languages are almost completely devoid of fricatives of any kind. For example, /f/, /v/

- **Narrowing without friction**

- o **Semi-vowel:** A semi-vowel is a voiced gliding sound formed when the speech organs first produce a weakly articulated vowel of comparatively

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small inherent sonority and then change to another sound of equal or greater prominence. For example, /j/, /w/

A use of the word semivowel, generally called a glide, is a type of approximant, pronounced like a vowel but with the tongue closer to the roof of the mouth, so that there is slight turbulence. In English, /w/ is the semivowel equivalent of the vowel /u/, and /j/ (spelled 'y') is the semivowel equivalent of the vowel /i/ in its usage. Other descriptions use semivowel for vowel-like sounds, which are not syllabic, but do not have the increased stricture of approximants. These are seen as elements in diphthongs. The word can also be used for covering both the concepts.

Two classes of consonants can be identified according to their modes of articulation:

- **Oral sounds:** The soft palate or velum can be raised to block the passage into the nose. When this is done, the air from the lungs can pass through the mouth only. Sounds produced in this manner are called oral sounds.
- **Nasal sounds:** Nasal sounds are produced when the soft palate is lowered and the passage in the mouth is closed so that the air from the lungs can pass through the nose only. For example, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/.

The state of the vocal chords also determines the type of consonant. When the vocal chords are held loosely together, the pressure of the air coming from the lungs makes them vibrate, that is, they open and close regularly many times a second. Sounds produced in this manner are called voiced sounds. Voiceless sounds are those in the production of which there is no vibration. For every voiceless sound there is a corresponding voiced sound, i.e., one articulated in the same place and manner, only the voice being substituted for breath and vice versa. A point to be noted is that voiced consonants are usually pronounced with less force of exhalation than unvoiced consonants.

5.2.1 Consonant Clusters

When a group of two or three consonants occur together in a word without any vowel between them, it is called a consonant cluster. Sometimes it is also called a consonant blend. Each letter in the group is pronounced individually. For example, words like school and strange. Consonant clusters may occur initially, medially and finally in words. For example, /t/ as in shrink, /sk/ in school, /spr/ as in spring, /lk/ as in milk, /kts/ as in acts and /ksts/ as in texts. The longest possible initial cluster in English is of three consonants as in split, sphere and the longest possible final cluster is of five consonants as in angsts. Linguists have put forward the argument that the term consonant cluster should be applied only if it occurs within one syllable but some others have argued that the definition is more useful when it is not bound by the limitations of a syllable boundary.

Many languages do not permit consonant clusters at all. Maori and Pirahã, for instance, do not permit any two consecutive consonants in a word. Japanese is almost as strict, but it allows clusters of consonant plus /j/ as in Tokyo, the name of Japan's capital city. Across a syllable boundary, it also allows a cluster of a nasal consonant plus another consonant, as in *Honshû* [honUuɕ] (the name of the largest island) and *tempura* [tempu}a] (a traditional dish). A great many of the languages of the world are more restrictive than English in terms of consonant clusters; almost every Malayo-Polynesian language forbids consonant clusters entirely. Tahitian, Samoan and Hawaiian are this entire sort. Standard Arabic does not permit initial consonant clusters, or more than two consecutive consonants in other positions; neither do most other Semitic languages, although Modern Israeli Hebrew permits them (e.g. *pkak* 'cap'; *dlat* 'pumpkin'). Khmer, as do most Mon-Khmer languages permits only initial consonant clusters with up to three consonants in a row per syllable. Finnish has initial consonant clusters natively only on South-Western dialects and on foreign loans, and only clusters of three inside the word are allowed. Most spoken languages and dialects, however, are more permissive. In Burmese, consonant clusters of only up to three consonants (the initial and two medials—two written forms of /-j-/ , /-w-/) at the initial onset are allowed in writing and only two (the initial and one medial) are pronounced. These clusters are restricted to certain letters. Some Burmese dialects allow for clusters of up to four consonants (with the addition of the /-l-/ medial), which can combine with the above-mentioned medials.

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Check Your Progress

1. How does Daniel Jones define a vowel?
2. How are vowels classified?
3. What is a front vowel?
4. What is a consonant cluster?

5.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. According to Daniel Jones, a vowel is 'a voiced sound in forming which the air issues in a continuous stream through the pharynx and mouth, there being no obstruction and no narrowing such as would cause audible friction.'
2. Vowels are classified for linguistic purposes according to the position of the tongue. The tongue may be kept low in the mouth or raised in varying degrees in the front towards the hard palate or in the back towards the soft palate.
3. A front vowel is a type of vowel sound used in some spoken languages. The defining characteristic of a front vowel is that the tongue is positioned as far

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in front as possible in the mouth without creating a constriction that would be classified as a consonant. There are four front vowels in English.

4. When a group of two or three consonants occur together in a word without any vowel between them, it is called a consonant cluster. Sometimes it is also called a consonant blend.

5.4 SUMMARY

- Speech sounds are classified as vowels and consonants. Bloomfield defines a vowel as ‘modifications of the voice-sound that involve no closure, friction or contact of the tongue or lips’.
- The chief organs concerned in modifying the shape of the passage are the tongue and the lips. Vowels are classified for linguistic purposes according to the position of the tongue.
- In phonetics, a vowel is a sound in spoken language, like English ah! or oh!, which is pronounced with an open vocal tract so that there is no build-up of air pressure at any point above the glottis. This contrasts with consonants, like English sh! where there is a constriction or closure at some point along with the vocal tract.
- The word vowel comes from the Latin word *vocalis*, which means ‘speaking’, as in most languages words and so speech is not possible without vowels. In English, the word vowel is basically used to describe both vowel sounds and the written symbols that describe them.
- When a vowel comes finally in a word, it is much longer than when it occurs initially. Similarly, if it occurs after a voiced sound, it will be longer.
- A diphthong or vowel glide is a combination of two short vowels. Generally, English vowels are characterized by lip-spreading in case of front vowels and lip-rounding in back vowels.
- A consonant is defined as a speech sound that is produced when the air passage is obstructed, or the flow of air is stopped as a result of narrowing or a complete closure of the air passage. For example, while pronouncing the word ‘pool’ our lips try to stop air from passing through when the sound /p/ is produced.
- The obstruction made by the organs may be total, intermittent or partial, or may merely constitute a narrowing sufficient to cause friction. Sibilants can be differentiated from each other fricatives by the tongue’s shape and by the airflow that is directed over the teeth. Fricatives at coronal places of articulation can be sibilant or non-sibilant; although sibilants are more common.

- The state of the vocal chords also determines the type of consonant. When the vocal chords are held loosely together, the pressure of the air coming from the lungs makes them vibrate, that is, they open and close regularly many times a second. Sounds produced in this manner are called voiced sounds.
- When a group of two or three consonants occur together in a word without any vowel between them, it is called a consonant cluster. Sometimes it is also called a consonant blend. Each letter in the group is pronounced individually. For example, words like school and strange.

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5.5 KEY WORDS

- **Vowel:** It refers to modifications of the voice-sound that involve no closure, friction or contact of the tongue or lips.
- **Retroflexion:** It is the slight upward turning of the tip of the tongue towards the centre of the hard palate.
- **Diphthong:** A diphthong or vowel glide is a combination of two short vowels.
- **Consonant:** A consonant is defined as a speech sound that is produced when the air passage is obstructed, or the flow of air is stopped as a result of narrowing or a complete closure of the air passage.
- **Fricative:** A fricative is formed by narrowing the air passage to such an extent that the air on escaping produces an audible friction.
- **Consonant cluster:** When a group of two or three consonants occur together in a word without any vowel between them, it is called a consonant cluster.

5.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are vowels?
2. What is a consonant and how is it used?
3. Write a short note on consonant cluster.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Prepare a detailed description of the various types of vowels with examples.
2. Elaborate on the types and uses of diphthongs.
3. Which are the chief places of articulation of consonants? Explain.
4. How are consonants articulated. Discuss the mechanisms and types.

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5.7 FURTHER READINGS

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BLOCK - III

LANGUAGE SKILLS

*A Self Assessment
of Communicating
Soft Skills*

UNIT 6 A SELF ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATING SOFT SKILLS

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Structure

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 Importance of Soft Skills
 - 6.2.1 Range and Variety of Soft Skills
- 6.3 Personal and Inter-Personal Skills
- 6.4 Developing Soft Skills
- 6.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 6.6 Summary
- 6.7 Key Words
- 6.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 6.9 Further Readings

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to soft skills. To put it briefly, soft skills refer to personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people. Soft skills extremely vital role in communication in business environment. This unit will discuss the importance of soft skills and how to develop them. The unit will also discuss personal and inter-personal skills.

6.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the importance and variety of soft skills
- Differentiate between personal and inter-personal skills
- Describe the development of soft skills

6.2 IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS

The importance of soft skills in the world of business today can hardly be over-emphasised. Since businesses exist for the benefit of people and people constitute

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the core asset of most business organisations, soft skills assume great significance. Soft skills are essentially skills of a qualitative nature that deal with people-related interaction. Soft skills are different from domain knowledge or subject-related expertise. Soft skills should necessarily supplement domain knowledge relevant to every business.

Soft skills are considered to be extremely valuable across corporates and businesses. Unlike the knowledge of specific subjects and expertise in functional domains, soft skills are of value irrespective of the functional area and nature of business. Soft skills relate to the behavioural skills and the ability to get along. Unlike subject or domain knowledge, these skills are not all learnt out of textbooks. While reading standard books may be helpful, soft skills are really picked up more from observation, participation, right exposure and on-the-job learning.

Soft skills are becoming increasingly significant in a variety of businesses today. Soft skills are as important as hard skills, and under certain circumstances become more valuable in business situations. Soft skills are not job specific, like the subject knowledge, and hence are broadly applicable across job titles and sectors. There is a growing realisation in the business and corporate circles that although hard skills are a necessary condition for the employee performance, they are by no means a sufficient condition. Businesses are increasingly looking for people who are not only skilled in terms of technical and subject-related knowledge, but also soft skills including communication skills and other people and interactive skills.

Work place demands are focussing more and more on people with a mix of hard skills and soft skills. People may have very good subject knowledge and very many academic degrees and certificates. They may have sound theoretical background and adequate conceptual clarity. But these by themselves are of not much use unless they are supplemented by a host of relevant people related skills like team work and relationship building, positive attitude, flexibility, self-confidence, time management and relevant communication skills.

6.2.1 Range and Variety of Soft Skills

Soft skills are of large variety and are inclusive in nature. In a sense, all those skills which fall outside the hard skills category could be listed under soft skills. Soft skills include a host of personal attributes that count in business. Soft skills include broad categories such as personal skills, interactive skills, effective communication skills, social skills and self-awareness. Several skills which are grouped under managerial skills such as team building skills, motivational skills, time management skills and inter-personal skills can also be grouped under soft skills. The broad spectrum of skills, abilities, attributes and traits that together constitute soft skills are listed below.

1. Key Communication Skills—presentation skills, writing skills, listening skills, reading skills and negotiation skills.

2. Personal and Inter-Personal Skills.
3. Teamwork and Motivational Skills.
4. Time Management and Problem Solving Skills.
5. Leadership and Critical Thinking Skills.
6. Positive Attitude and Flexibility.
7. Adaptability and Dependability.
8. Emotional Intelligence and Self Awareness.
9. Initiative and Self Confidence.
10. Integrity and Trustworthiness.
11. Risk Taking Ability.
12. Commitment and Willingness to Learn.
13. Empathy and Sense of Humour.
14. General and Organisational Awareness.
15. Social Grace.

People need to have an array of soft skills to survive and thrive in the rough-and-tumble work place of today. One can add several more traits such as optimism, self-control and self-management, conscientiousness, likeability and friendliness. In short, all those traits and attributes that contribute to an individual's success in the organisational context merit inclusion under soft skills. Some of the basic soft skills have to be acquired even to become job ready and some more will be developed on the job. As people climb up the corporate ladder, their mastery over a host of soft skills is put to test. As the Stanford Research International study brought out, at the chief executive level, people skills become far more valuable than mere technical knowledge.

Check Your Progress

1. What do soft skills relate to?
2. What type of attributes merit inclusion under soft skills?

6.3 PERSONAL AND INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS

Soft skills and management skills have a lot in common. Obviously, managers in business organisations need necessarily develop a variety of soft skills to become effective. Management, in its quintessential sense, is concerned with productivity, efficiency and effectiveness. It refers to how well you do whatever you do. Management is described as the act or skill of dealing with people or situations in a successful way. Management is concerned with the productive and efficient use

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of resources. Such being the case, soft skills in fact get entwined with the management skills.

As Mythili Kesavasamy, Associate Professor, Asian School of Business, Thiruvananthapuram noted in her Business Line Club lecture (reported in Business Line, 20.12.2008), ‘Soft Skills are among the most essential competencies in any aspiring manager’s skill set. Yet, they are the hardest to acquire and the most difficult to practise unless they become habits. Soft Skills include communication, time management, assertiveness, personal grooming, good telephone skills, business etiquette, team work, conflict resolution and even professional ethics.’

Talking about management skills, there are essentially eight types of skills which managers in business organisations would have to develop. These are:

1. Personal Skills
2. Inter-Personal Skills
3. Group Skills
4. Key Communication Skills
5. Planning and Time Management Skills
6. Decision Making Skills
7. Project Management Skills
8. Leadership Skills

As we can see, most of these are also grouped under soft skills. In other words, good managers should be proficient in soft skills. We have already discussed earlier in this book various facets of key communication skills in detail. Some other soft skills not covered at length earlier are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Personal Skills

Personal skills, as the name suggests, are skills specific to the person as an individual. These skills help the employee or manager deal with himself, or herself, before dealing with others. Personal skills help the managers manage or deal with the situations in a mature and competent manner. These skills are developed by people more from self-study, introspection and awareness, rather than through reading books and attending class room programmes. Personal skills and communication skills constitute a good foundation for building inter-personal and group skills. In Transactional Analysis, which is a subject that helps understand human personality, there is a very desirable state known as “I am OK – You are OK”. This constitutes a positive approach and a sense of maturity in dealing with people and situations. Personal skills involve, among others, cultivating this positive approach. Other relevant skills would include developing self-awareness, managing personal stress and solving problems analytically and creatively.

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Personal skills, as we have noted, can be of wide variety. Cultivating them in a conscious manner enables the individual to function effectively as an employee, a manager or a useful member of the business organisation. Trustworthiness, flexibility, adaptability, self-confidence, professionalism, good work ethic, risk-taking attitude, positive approach, and a host of such relevant skills or traits add to a person's worth as an useful asset of a business organisation. Another set of worth-noting skills relates to the willingness and ability to learn as one grows up and assumes new responsibilities in business, as well as energy and enthusiasm at the work place.

Computer related awareness and ability to use a variety of gadgets also count for a lot as soft skills. Most of the organisations today work in a computerised and networked environment. People will be required to work on computers and laptops, and also use various gadgets such as i pads, smart phones, printers, photocopiers, etc. Anyone adept at these or those who are quick to learn these useful everyday technological and technical devices certainly enhance their job-readiness. While specific software and hardware skills and knowledge of computer languages, etc. can be counted as hard skills, general computer awareness and adaptability to a technological environment are crucial soft skills in today's business.

Inter-Personal Skills

Inter-personal skills are distinct from personal skills. Personal skills relate to matters of the self. Inter-personal skills relate to dealing with others. Inter-personal skills are connected with relationships between people. Inter-personal relationships in an organisational context relate to building and maintaining relationships, gaining power and influence, managing conflicts, and the like. In reality, personal skills and inter-personal skills complement each other.

Personal skills and inter-personal skills are closely associated with intra-personal communication and inter-personal communication. The word intra means inside or within. Intra-personal communication means communication with the self. One cannot really communicate effectively with the outside world unless one masters the art of communicating with oneself. Inter-personal skills are relevant to both employees and managers. The larger and more heterogeneous the group with which the manager deals, the greater would be the need for varied inter-personal skills.

Businesses and organisations thrive on relationships. Modern corporates are described as networked organisations. Employees and managers who are proficient in dealing with various types of people effectively are always in demand. Inter-personal relations are particularly relevant for those working in service industries where personal interactions are extensive. Employees with good inter-personal skills can rise quickly in the organisational hierarchy and become effective leaders.

Inter-personal skills in business relate to relation-building, supportive communication, fostering a motivating environment, gaining power and influence,

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and successfully managing inter-personal conflict. Inter-active communication and inter-personal skills are closely linked to each other. Interactive communication relates to effective communication through the interactive forums.

Interactive forums of business communication include meetings, conferences, seminars, workshops, symposia and group discussions. These facilitate two-way active deliberations and participative exchanges. They involve exchange of ideas by participants in groups. Like their counterparts in the Western world, Indian managers and executives too, in most organisations, spend a large part of their working day in meetings, conferences and other interactive forums.

6.4 DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS

Since soft skills have become so crucial in the world of business, we shall now discuss the approach to the development of these soft skills. Let us start by understanding the meaning of skill.

A skill refers to a specific or particular ability. A skill also refers to the ability to do something well. When we say technical skill, we refer to the ability to apply the relevant technical knowledge in a given situation. When we refer to the marketing skill, we refer to the ability to understand markets and apply relevant marketing techniques. Soft skills, as we have noted, are of a wide variety. The skill or ability may take many forms – aptitude, competence, expertise, experience, mastery, talent, flair, proficiency, and so on. A skilful manager would be someone who has the ability or special training or proficiency to take up and accomplish his or her tasks with the desired results.

Managements in business organisations have to deal with new situations every day. Change, it is said, is the biggest constant. The issues, problems, competitive demands, and work-related pressures and challenges that confront the employees and managers in business are constantly changing. The operating environments are dynamic and evolving. That means, the range of business skills needed has to be viewed in this dynamic and fast changing context. The wisdom and practices of yesterday may not necessarily work well today.

New types of soft skills are assuming relevance. While the basic and time-tested skills would continue to be broadly relevant, new approaches, refinements and new skill sets have to be developed to cope with emerging situations. And of course, not all such skills can be learnt and mastered from the text books and in the class room lecture sessions. Every day work situations provide tremendous scope for managerial innovations and new initiatives and practices. Learning should be an on-going exercise. As Alvin Toffler, author of the best-selling book, *Future Shock*, aptly articulates, the illiterate of the future will be the one who cannot unlearn and relearn. That is why soft skills development becomes more challenging.

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Today's worker is tomorrow's manager and tomorrow's manager is day after tomorrow's executive. That explains the need for cultivating a wide range of managerial skills. And, the good thing is that managerial skills of various types can be acquired and mastered. This makes skill development a desirable and an achievable goal for every prospective and current employee. There are so many skills and there is so much to learn under each skill that no matter how much you already know, there is always something more to learn, know, apply and practice.

Skill development does not happen overnight. It is a long-drawn process. There are no short cuts to acquire managerial soft skills. It is a long journey marked by new step by step accomplishments. That is why, at the senior and top management levels, and even at the level of CEOs, there are seminars, conferences and group discussions. At these higher levels, skill development takes place through self-study, exchange of ideas, and sharing experiences.

In skill development, the goal post keeps moving. The operating environment changes so fast that what we learnt yesterday may not be applicable today. That is why soft skill development calls for a mix of approaches. It comprises of different types of efforts. These include learning through study of books and literature, carrying out practical exercises, analysing case studies, learning by observation, sharing experiences, and very importantly, through actual exposure to real life experiences. Theoretical learning is just one step and is a necessary but not sufficient condition for mastering skills. Qualifications are essential but as one goes up the managerial and corporate ladder, exposure and experience are more sought after than theoretical knowledge.

We shall conclude with a very apt quote from Peggy Klaus, author of "The Hard Truth About Soft Skills". She notes, "Mastering soft skills takes persistence. It requires that you be mindful about yourself and your career. Mastering these practical and tactical skills doesn't magically happen overnight. It requires hard work, but the payoff can be tremendous."

Check Your Progress

3. What are personal skills?
4. What is technical skill?

6.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Soft skills relate to the behavioural skills and the ability to get along. Unlike subject or domain knowledge, these skills are not all learnt out of textbooks.
2. All those traits and attributes that contribute to an individual's success in the organisational context merit inclusion under soft skills.

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3. Personal skills, as the name suggests, are skills specific to the person as an individual. These skills help the employee or manager deal with himself, or herself, before dealing with others.
4. When we say technical skill, we refer to the ability to apply the relevant technical knowledge in a given situation.

6.6 SUMMARY

- The importance of soft skills in the world of business today can hardly be over-emphasised.
- Since businesses exist for the benefit of people and people constitute the core asset of most business organisations, soft skills assume great significance.
- Soft skills are considered to be extremely valuable across corporates and businesses. Unlike the knowledge of specific subjects and expertise in functional domains, soft skills are of value irrespective of the functional area and nature of business.
- Soft skills are of large variety and are inclusive in nature. In a sense, all those skills which fall outside the hard skills category could be listed under soft skills.
- Soft skills and management skills have a lot in common. Obviously, managers in business organisations need necessarily develop a variety of soft skills to become effective.
- Personal skills can be of wide variety. Cultivating them in a conscious manner enables the individual to function effectively as an employee, a manager or a useful member of the business organisation.
- Inter-personal skills are distinct from personal skills. Personal skills relate to matters of the self. Inter-personal skills relate to dealing with others. Inter-personal skills are connected with relationships between people.
- A skill refers to a specific or particular ability. A skill also refers to the ability to do something well. When we say technical skill, we refer to the ability to apply the relevant technical knowledge in a given situation.
- Skill development does not happen overnight. It is a long-drawn process. There are no short cuts to acquire managerial soft skills.

6.7 KEY WORDS

- **Professionalism:** It means the combination of all the qualities that are connected with trained and skilled people.
- **Adaptability:** It means the quality of being able to adjust to new conditions.

- **Inter-personal conflict:** The type of conflict that occurs when a person or group of people frustrates or interferes with another person's efforts at achieving a goal.

6.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the different types of soft skills?
2. What is the difference between personal skills and inter-personal skills?

Long-Answer Questions

1. How can soft skills be developed?
2. Describe the various skills that a manager in a business organization needs to develop.

6.9 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 7 LANGUAGE SKILLS

NOTES

Structure

- 7.0 Introduction
- 7.1 Objectives
- 7.2 Language and its Significance
 - 7.2.1 Ability
 - 7.2.2 Skills Selected Need
- 7.3 Learner Centre Activities
- 7.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 7.5 Summary
- 7.6 Key Words
- 7.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 7.8 Further Readings

7.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will discuss language skills. We are all born with the ability to learn language. Young children spend most of the first two years of their lives learning the basics of the languages spoken around them. This is an interesting process through which learning takes place without us knowing it. English is the universal language of business. To have the ability to speak with clarity and coherently is of utmost importance in business communication. The unit will examine the significance of communication in detail.

7.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the significance of language
- Describe the activities that can be undertaken by learners to improve language skills

7.2 LANGUAGE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Language can be described as a vehicle of thought. It is a method of expression. It is a vocabulary with its usage being prevalent in one or more regions or countries. Spoken as well as written communication takes place through a language. Languages are of different kinds: spoken language, written language, body language, code language, sign language, Braille or language of the visually challenged and the more recent ones being machine language and computer language. Many

languages have a long history. The Greek, the Romans, the Egyptians, the Chinese and the Indians are among those whose languages are centuries old.

The number of languages used in verbal communication is extremely large. It is said that the six billion people of this world speak about 6000 languages. Although this is true of the spoken languages, the number of written languages is much lower, with one estimate placing it at not more than 500. Further, within a language, there are sub-languages or dialects. A dialect is a form of speech peculiar to a district, class or group of people. It is a subordinate variety of language with a distinguishable vocabulary, pronunciation or idioms.

Languages are also known for their features. There is a mother tongue, there is a regional language, an official language, a national language and a global language. Some languages are perceived to be easy. Some others are difficult to learn. Greek and Sanskrit are considered to be languages of the gods. French is described as a romantic language. Sometimes there is one script common to several languages. There are languages that are alive and growing and there are those that are becoming extinct. Greek and Latin, which were so popular several centuries ago, are in limited use today. Languages that absorb and adopt new words continue to grow. Greek and Latin are described as dead languages because they failed to absorb new words and lost their appeal. In contrast, the English language has immense appeal because it regularly takes in new words that are popularly used in other languages. Allah, bazaar, guru, bungalow, divan, durbar are some of the Hindi/Urdu words that have made their way into English dictionaries.

Most languages are region specific. The vocabulary and structure of a language are often dependent on history and environmental factors. There are more or less words depending upon what the environment offers. A language spoken in a desert will have more words that describe camels and deserts. A heavy snowfall region will have many words that describe the snow. Since languages are often region specific, link languages have evolved to facilitate inter-regional and cross-cultural communication. Apart from the spoken language, there are designated official languages to facilitate the flow of communication in government and administration. Many countries have only one official language. Countries like India, Canada and Switzerland have more than one.

When a language is not a native language but one adopted from outside, it acquires mixed characteristics. The widely used English language has variations from country to country. The Indian way of speaking becomes Indian English and the American way of speaking becomes American English. They stand apart from the original English which is also referred to as the Queen's English and is associated with England. Those who want to communicate effectively and reach out to other sections of people will have to familiarize themselves with the expressions peculiar to those types of languages. There are also other kinds of differences within a language, like the formal and the informal, language of the rich and the poor, the old and the young.

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Each profession or subject will have a language with its own idioms, phrases, expressions and nuances. An expression or a particular word in one language may mean something very different in another language.

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Idioms, Phrases and Slangs

Idioms, phrases and slangs are an integral part of a language. English language has a fair share of these and an effective business communicator should be informed about these. Idioms are described as a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of individual words. For example, “to sail in the same boat” means to be in the same difficult situation. Likewise, “birds of the same feather” means people who are alike. Idioms are of different varieties and are used widely in business communication. The proper use of idioms makes the written or spoken text more impactful.

Phrases, likewise, are a group of words which have a particular meaning when used together. In fact, the word “phrase” is used to denote various types of expressions. Writers and speakers, over a period of time, develop their own favourite phrases and tend to use them often. Examples are “be that as it may”, “sooner rather than later”, “in a manner of speaking”, “all said and done”, etc. Phrases are so common that we keep referring to memorable phrase, catch phrase, etc. A particular way in which words and phrases are arranged when saying or writing something is called phraseology.

Words or phrases in common use that are generally considered in some or all aspects to be outside of Standard English are called slang. Slang consists of words and phrases that are either entirely peculiar to or used in some special context by some class or profession. Slang may also refer to abusive language. Slangs also vary depending upon cultures, although the language is the same. That way, we refer to British Slang, American Slang, Australian Slang, etc. It relates to the use of casual and inappropriate words. The use of slang diminishes the dignity of the language and should be avoided in formal business communication.

Spoken languages are often highly accommodative. Sometimes, people who have not mastered a particular language still attempt to communicate through a mixed language. This language is referred to as pidgin. Pidgin is a simplified form of a language, especially English, Portuguese or Dutch, where a limited number of words are used together with words from a local language. In other words, it is used for communication between speakers of different languages. There can be pidgin English, pidgin Portuguese and pidgin Hindi. The words and forms used here are simple and spoken by a person who does not speak the language well, or when the person is talking to someone who does not know the language, e.g. a Kannadiga, a Tamilian and a Bengali communicating with each other in pidgin Hindi. Pidgin is a language that people develop out of necessity. As noted, it develops when people who do not speak a particular language are required to communicate in order to live or work together.

The most important component of a language is vocabulary or word power. Since the expressions take place through words, vocabulary refers to all the words that a person knows or uses. Most of the popular languages possess a well-developed vocabulary. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, for example, gives around 80,000 references covering British English as well as American English. It also lists out a core vocabulary of 3,000 English words. Active vocabulary covers words that a person not only understands but also uses. Passive vocabulary, on the other hand, relates to the words which a person understands. To make an effective use of words while speaking and writing, the power to bring the right words into play assumes particular relevance.

The world of words is wonderful and fascinating. Old and new, big and small, easy and difficult, every language has an abundant range of words. As the saying goes, it pays to enrich one's vocabulary or word power. Reading enables a person to increase word power. Such reading should be a conscious effort, with the intent to pick up new words, nuances or shades of meaning and the context in which it is used. Periodical or ongoing efforts to enrich vocabulary facilitate the communicator in developing his own distinctive and appealing style of writing and speaking. Any person who builds up an abundant source of active vocabulary will not be at a loss for words and, will therefore, be a forceful and impressive speaker. Great speakers master the skill of using the right words at the right time. Equally important, they refrain from using words that may cause hurt or have a scope for misunderstanding.

7.2.1 Ability

For the language to be effective, an important prerequisite is abundant vocabulary or word power. Words are the very essence of written communication. Words translate thoughts and carry the message through to the reader. They lay emphasis as and when required. Since words have the potential to make or mar the language of the business communicator, this aspect has been dealt with in some detail in the following paragraphs.

English has emerged to be the predominant global language. In this interconnected world, it is the language that people across countries strive to learn. Proficiency in writing and speaking English provides a distinct advantage to people in business. On the other hand, lack of fluency and command over this language is undoubtedly a disadvantage. Businesses today, as we have seen earlier, are no longer regional or national in character. People have to deal with people across regions and cultures. Good English is a must for good business. Mastering English is becoming more and more challenging because the language is not static, but keeps growing. The staggering wealth of English words is ever-expanding, mainly on account of the open arms with which it welcomes and adapts words from other languages.

The world of words, as we have noted earlier, is wonderful and fascinating. English language has an enormous stock of words. With new words being added

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constantly, the stock of usable English words keeps growing. The Global Language Monitor based in Austin, Texas estimated that as on 1, January 2014, the number of words in English was 10,25,109.8. The official website of the Oxford English Dictionary, however, tells us that the second edition of this 20-volume dictionary contains full entries for 1,71,476 words in current use, and 47,156 obsolete words.

Even if we accept the lower count, there is an abundant choice of words for the speaker or writer. This vast and growing reservoir of words offers, at once, both an opportunity and a challenge to the communicator. It is an opportunity because there is a tremendous choice of words available to the person. It is a challenge no doubt, for the building up of word power calls for a systematic and ongoing effort, using familiar words and learning new words. One can easily spend one's lifetime learning new words, understanding their shades of meaning and effectively using all the words available.

Words make the letter. A good letter writer should choose the words with care. To do so, one must necessarily build enormous word power. Every person keen on becoming an effective communicator should delve deeply into words and their meanings. Most of the words have many shades of meaning. The appropriate word or set of words depend on the context, tone and gravity of the message and also on the relationship with the person to whom it is addressed.

Much as one would like, it is not always possible to readily recall the exact word. As a result, one may often find oneself groping for the right word. Any person keen on building word power and using the most appropriate word in every piece of write up must take recourse to a standard English dictionary and also *Roget's Thesaurus*. Until a writer gets a fine command over English words, and even thereafter when a reconfirmation is required on the shades of meanings a word conveys, constant reference to these two sources would be immensely helpful. It is worth emphasizing that the author of this book has made umpteen references to these sources while writing this book. To make it clearer, let us take a look at a few words and try to understand all that they convey.

Take, for example, the word 'communication'. *Roget's Thesaurus* refers to the following shades of meaning:

Joining, Transfer, Intercourse, Information, Messages, Oral communication, Conversation, Epistle, Passageway, Giving, Social intercourse.

Each one of them is in turn elaborated under different sections with nouns, verbs, adjectives and exclamations associated with the word. One of the meanings of communication listed above is information. In turn, the word 'information' covers the following:

Enlightenment, Light, Acquaintance, Familiarization, Instruction, Intelligence, Knowledge, The know, The dope, The goods, The swoop (all slang), Communication report, Word, Statement, Mention, Notice, Notification, Intimation, Sidelight, Inside information, The low-down,

Tip-off, Point, Pointer, Hint, Indication, Suggestion, Suspicion, Inkling, Glimmer, Cue, Clue, Scent, Telltale, Implication, Allusion, Insinuation, Innuendo, Gentle hint, Broad hint and many more.

Let us take another word, 'satisfaction'. The thesaurus again refers to the following shades of meaning:

Adequacy, Satiety, Reparation, Fulfillment, Duel, Payment, Pleasure, Content, Reprisal, Atonement.

Out of these, let us take a look at the word 'content'.

Again, this word could mean the following:

Content, Contentment, Contentedness, Satisfiedness, Satisfaction, Ease, Peace of mind, Happiness, Complacency, Bovinity, Self-satisfaction, Self-contentedness, Satisfactoriness, Sufficiency, Adequacy, Acceptability, Admissibility, Tolerability, Agreeability, Fulfilment, Tranquillity and many more.

Since vocabulary building is of immense value to a communicator, we are giving below some more examples of words and their meanings.

Take for example, the word 'piece'. It essentially means a small amount. There is a range of words to talk about this aspect. The communicator or writer should be in a position to choose the right word to go with the substance being talked about. The range of words relevant here are:

Piece, Bit, Chunk, Lump, Fragment, Speck, Drop, Pinch, Portion.

Similarly, when you want to say someone is fat, you have to choose the word most appropriate from the following range:

Fat, Overweight, Large, Heavy, Big, Plump, Chubby, Stocky, Stout, Obese.

Apart from knowing the word, it would also be desirable to know the various words belonging to that word family. Some examples of this are: Rely, Reliable, Reliability, Reliance.

Perceive, Perception, Perceptive, Perceptible.

There are also words whose meanings are close to each other. One should be clear about the fine difference that exists to be in a position to choose the right word. Some examples of such words are:

Condition, State; Classic, Classical; Altogether, All together.

All the above examples and many more such helpful suggestions are highlighted in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. The point to be noted here is that words in the English language have multifarious connotations and uses. There are words which convey the same meaning but each one perhaps has a context where it fits in perfectly.

Similarly, there are many words belonging to the same word family. A good writer must build up his word power in such a way that words of all kinds are on top in memory, or as an alternative, the writer has ready access to sources like the thesaurus. In the absence of a proper supply of words, the smooth flow of writing

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gets obstructed. Groping every time for the most appropriate word or even just a sufficient word causes frustration.

In letter writing or any other written communication, it is very essential that words are not frequently repeated. Repetition tends to irritate the reader. If you come across a particular word repeated again and again in a sentence and the sentences that follow in the same paragraph, the reader is likely to get a poor impression of the writing.

To be able to avoid repetition, the writer should have a good stock of equivalent words or synonyms. Synonyms are words identical and co-extensive in sense and usage with another of the same language.

Ivor Brown, in his introduction to the third edition of *Roget's Thesaurus*, has beautifully summed up the significance of word power and its effective use for any good writer. He says, 'Words as well as ideas are the raw material and that he requires in good supply. But words can be the decoration as well as the tools of good writing. This does not mean that they should be splashed around recklessly: a good artist with the riches of his paint box at hand does not use them in a lavish or slapdash way. The artist considers, selects and blends tints to get both strength and delicacy in the finished picture. So it is with words. To have a copious supply and to use it with judgement is an excellent foundation for good writing and for the possession of what is called style.'

7.2.2 Skills Selected Need

Language is absolutely central to learning: without it, one cannot make sense or communicate one's understanding of a subject. In order to become an expert communicator, one needs to have knowledge of four useful language skills. Listening and reading are the receptive skills because learners do not need to produce language, they receive and understand it. These skills are sometimes known as passive skills. The productive skills are speaking and writing because learners are applying these skills in a need to produce language. They are also known as active skills.

- **Listening:** Listening is a receptive language skill which people usually find the most difficult. This often is because they feel under unnecessary pressure to understand every word. The listener has to get oriented to the listening portion and be all ears. The listener is also required to be attentive. These skills can be improved by focusing on making the learner listen to the sounds of that particular language. This would help them with the right pronunciation of words.
- **Speaking:** Language is a tool for communication. We communicate with others, to express our ideas, and to know others' ideas as well. We must take into account that the level of language input (listening) must be higher than the level of language production. This skill could be improved by understanding para-linguistic attributes such as voice quality, volume and

tone, voice modulation, articulation, pronunciation etc. This could also be further enhanced with the help of debates and discussions.

- **Reading:** Reading is a learning skill. It helps you improve all parts of a language – vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and writing. It helps to develop language intuition in the corrected form. They help the students grasp the content and draw conclusions. The students should also make it a point to familiarize themselves with the jargons and new words by making reading a habit be it reading newspapers, articles, books, and so on.
- **Writing:** Writing provides a learner with physical evidence of his achievements and he can measure his improvement. It helps to consolidate their grasp of vocabulary and structure, and complements the other language skills.

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Check Your Progress

1. What is the estimate of the number of written languages in the world?
2. What is the most important component of a language?
3. Why is listening a difficult skill?

7.3 LEARNER CENTRE ACTIVITIES

This section will present before you a plethora of activities compiled from various sources to improve language skill of learners:

- Combining vocabulary with reading and writing activities, providing the students with different lexical information about the words under study
- By showing actual objects and showing models this is a very useful technique to teach vocabulary to the beginners, as it gives real experience and sense to the learners. The words like pen, chalk, table, chair, football, flowers, tomato, etc. can be taught in the classroom.
- **Real objects or models of real objects:** These are very effective and meaningful in showing meanings but in handling of real objects, a teacher must be practical and should not be superfluous. It is neither possible nor necessary to bring all the things in the classroom. Therefore, some words are to be taught by showing models. They are easily available in the market. They are inexpensive too. Hence, teacher should make frequent use of such models to teach vocabulary. For example, the words like tiger, brain, elephant, airplane, etc. can be shown to the learner.
- **Using demonstrations and showing pictures:** Teacher can perform some words. It can be fun and frolic. It makes the class student-centred. Teacher can act and learners try to imitate it. For example, the words like jump, smile, cry, nap, sleep, and dance can be demonstrated.

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- **Miming works well with younger students:** You can mime out emotions and everyday activities to teach new words. This method can be practiced at ease. It can win the favour of the students as learners like dramatizations and can easily learn through them. Many situations can be dramatized or demonstrated. This works well with young students or students studying a foreign language to help introduce them to new concepts. After explaining new vocabulary, you can then ask the students to perform the actions.
- **Charts, pictures and maps:** These can be used to develop students' understanding of a particular concept or word. There are some good picture dictionaries available in the market. Teacher should make use of such dictionaries. For instance, using a picture of a 'fish', words related to the fish, such as gills, eyes, backbone, cold-blooded, water, big, small etc. can be taught. Zebrowska (1975:452) rightly says, 'Learners remember better the material that has been presented by means of visual aids'. Some words work well with pictures, particularly nouns. This can also be a good way to introduce blocks of related words, which is often utilized in foreign language classes, such as nouns and verbs related to the classroom or the house.
- **Pictures:** Pictures can also be used in printable worksheets and flashcards, where pictures are matched to the word they represent.
- **Teaching vocabulary in context:** Words taught in isolation are generally not retained. In addition, in order to grasp the full meaning of a word or phrase, students must be aware of the linguistic environment in which the word or phrase appears. Setting a good context which is interesting, plausible, vivid and has relevance to the lives of the learners, is an essential prerequisite for vocabulary teaching as it helps in both engaging the attention of the learners and naturally generating the target vocabulary. Maintaining the context and making sure the language surrounding the context is easy to comprehend, the teacher should start eliciting the target vocabulary. Therefore, in selection of vocabulary, the teacher must be sure that the words or phrases chosen can be immediately incorporated into the students' linguistic range. Stahl (2005) stated, "Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world."
- **Etymology:** Every word has its origin and its story of how it gets its current meanings. Because of its physical and meaningful origin, the etymology of a word is often found much easier to be comprehended than the bare linguistic symbol and its present semantic meanings. So, whenever we teach an English word that is completely strange, we can ask students to look it up in a dictionary or other reference books, and or surf on the internet to find its origin. The interesting stories behind a word's birth can be a very good reminder for students to remember the particular word. Thus, learning the etymology of a word will certainly promote students' comprehension of new words.

- **By drawing pictures:** It is an easy and quick technique of introducing vocabulary to the learners. For students, drawing can be a fun medium to explain vocabulary. It is not necessary that teacher must be an expert in drawing pictures accurately. He can draw rough sketches to make an idea clear. Basic sketches will often work well. You can even have students do their own drawings, which further reinforces their understanding of the vocabulary.
- **Comparative words and prepositions** can be made clear by simple sketches. Pictures of many types and colours can be used successfully to show the meaning of words and sentence.
- **Drawings** can be used to explain the meaning of things, actions, qualities, and relations.
- **Associated vocabulary:** If one topic consists of number of words, it is easy to teach these entire words altogether. For example, it is easier to teach words like orange, banana, grapes, lemon, pineapple, mango, and watermelon together in the context of 'fruits' than to teach any one of these words in isolation. Examples of lexical fields: Parts of the Face as: (a) parts of the face- forehead, brow, temples, nose, nostrils, bridge/tip of the nose, septum, mouth, lips, eyes, eyebrows, eyelids, eyelashes, chin, cheeks, jaw, and jowls.
- Using morphological analysis of words Morphology is the study of words in different terms, showing how words are broken down into smaller units, and how such units are recognized. That is to say, by using the analysis of morphemes of words, we can find out the meaning of words, even some of unfamiliar English words. It is estimated that there are over 600,000 English words concerned with the roots and affixes. But the roots and affixes are limited in numbers and simple in meaning. And the most commonly used roots and affixes are only 600-800 in number. By using the analysis of roots, affixes, and word structure, we can teach thousands of English words. For example: "hand/handle/handful/handicap/handsome/ beforehand...".
- **Dictionary:** It is an important tool in the teaching and learning of vocabulary. Teacher should encourage students to search words in dictionaries. Therefore, the habit of its use should be inculcated right from the beginning. Gonzalez (1999) found that dictionary work was laborious but necessary, and that ESL college students need to be taught practical use of the dictionary. Exploring dictionary entries can be one important and effective component of understanding a word deeply. The entries can also help students determine the precise meaning of a word Allen (1983:82) perceives, 'Dictionaries are passport to independence and see them as one of the student - centered learning activities'. The following are some current recommended English - English dictionaries:
 - o Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary,

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- o Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English,
- o Cambridge International Dictionary of English,
- o Oxford Picture Dictionary.

- **Collocation:** It's a widely accepted idea that collocations are very important part of knowledge and they are essential to non-native speakers of English in order to speak or write fluently. Nattinger (1980) in Carter and MacCarthy (1988), "It teaches students expectations about which sorts of words go with which ones. Students will not go about reconstructing the language each time they want to say something" The term collocation generally refers to the way in which two or more words are typically used together. For example, we talk about heavy rain but not heavy sun, or we say that we make or come to a decision, but we don't do a decision. So, heavy rain and make a decision are often referred to as collocations and we say that heavy collocates with rain. Collocations include: [1] Verb + Noun (e.g. break a code, lift a blockade) [2] Verb + Adverb (e.g. affect deeply, appreciate sincerely) [3] Noun + Verb (e.g. water freezes, clock ticks) [4] Adjective + Noun (e.g. strong tea, best wishes) [5] Adverb + Adjective (e.g. deeply absorbed, closely related)
- **Synonyms:** A synonym may be used to help the student to understand the different shades of meaning, if the synonym is better known than the word being taught. Synonyms help to enrich a student's vocabulary bank and provide alternative words instantly. These can be effective since they build on words and phrases that students already recognize. Use caution that you do imply that all the words have exactly the same meaning, since different words often are used for different connotations or to imply different meanings. The same procedure can be used to elicit synonyms. The teacher needs to highlight the fact that "true" synonyms are relatively rare and the answers will often be "near" synonyms. The students could make crosswords, word snakes or other puzzles for each other using these synonyms.
- **Play way:** method students were asked to bring daily five new words which were not familiar to them from the text-book. At the end of each session they were asked to tell the word, its spelling and its meaning in English. They were banned to see the notebook where these words were written. If they were not able to give the correct word its spelling and meaning, they were asked to bring new ten words next day. Such an exercise was fruitful for the learner.
- **Antonyms:** The students were asked to make lists of opposite words. Two groups were made; one group gave one word while the other group asked to give an opposite word to it. For example, sharp/blunt, rude/polite, flexible/rigid, generous/mean etc. One group gave word 'sharp' and the other group gave opposite word for it as 'blunt'. Marks were written on the board. They found it very interesting and memorized more words in

order to win the contest. Thus, by play way method they can learn new words.

- **Words often confused:** The long list of often-confused words was made in the class and students were asked to use them in sentences from the brackets. Teacher should provide the meaning of such words, if necessary. For examples: adopt: adapt, beside: besides, principal: principle etc.
- **Homonyms / Homophones:** These are words of the same language that are pronounced alike even if they differ in spelling, meaning, or origin, such as “pair” and “pear”. Homophones may also be spelled alike, as in “bear” (the animal) and “bear” (to carry). But this list consists only of homophones that are not spelled alike. ant/aunt eye/I ate/eight fare/fair bear/bare sea/see son/sun stationary/stationery steal/steel threw/through throne/thrown be/bee blew/blue by/buy beach/beeceh cell/sell cent/scent/sent census/senses cereal/serial die/dye
- **Word Map:** Students work in small groups to learn connections among words by brainstorming and organizing words according to a map that they design or a blank one that is provided by the teacher. An example might be a key-concept word in the centre of the page with rays connecting related words. For example, when asked to give words they thought of when they heard the word “faithfulness”, low-intermediate ESL students generated sixteen words or phrases: cat, friend, family, reliance, trust, dishonest, unfaithfulness, believe in friendships, bonds, obey, dog, friendly, sexual unfaithful, gossiping, marriage, love.
- **Thesaurus:** A kind of dictionary where the words of similar meanings, or synonyms / antonyms are arranged in similar groups. The main purpose of such reference works is to help the user “to find the word, or words, by which [an] idea may be most fitly and aptly expressed” – to quote Peter Mark Roget, architect of the best known thesaurus in the English language. Unlike a dictionary, thesaurus does not provide meanings or definitions of the words searched.
- **Teaching idioms:** An idiom is a phrase or expression in which the entire meaning is different from the usual meanings of the individual words within it. Idioms are fun to work with because they are part of everyday vocabulary. Students enjoy working with figurative meanings. They also enjoy finding out about the origins of idiomatic expressions, some of which are very old. Point out to students that idioms are often used in writing or speech to make expression more colourful and that some of the most colourful English idioms make use of animals or animal comparisons.
- **Phrasal verbs:** Teachers should include phrasal verbs in their classroom language as much as possible – and draw attention to these from time to time. There are many phrasal verbs in the English language and they are used in normal, everybody speech and writing. Phrasal verbs mean words

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consisting of a verb and a particle (preposition or adverb). The meaning of a phrasal verb is different from the meaning of each word if it was considered separately. Common classroom expressions incorporating phrasal verbs are: sit down, put your hand up, turn your papers over, write this down, cover the page up, look it up, hurry up and calm down!

- **Crossword puzzle:** Crossword puzzles offer an entertaining way of reviewing vocabulary. Students can do the puzzles in class in pairs, as a race with other students, or at home as homework.
- The teacher can also design a “**Word Puzzle**,” which is also called a “Word Cross”, asking the students to cooperate in groups to find and circle the words that the puzzle contains. The teacher might also place several versions of the word in the puzzle, with only one of them being the correct spelling. The students must circle only the word with the correct spelling.
- **Word formation:** Teacher should encourage students to enrich and expand their vocabulary. There are different ways to expand the vocabulary of the students. By studying the morphology, we know that it not only concerns with the morphemes of words, but also the word-formation. In English classes, teachers should help students to get to know the processes of word-formation.
- **Morphological rules:** These reveal the relations between words and provide the means in formation of new words. That is to say, these rules determine how morphemes are combined to form words. Nowadays, teachers in colleges have paid much more attention to the teaching of the morphological rules of English word formation in their classes. But still we have a lot of work to do. The expansion of vocabulary in modern English depends chiefly on word-formation. According to Pyles and Algeo (1982), words produced through affixation constitute 30% to 40% of the total number of new words; compounding yields 28% to 30% of all the new words; words that come from shortening including clipping and acronym, amounting to 8% to 10%, together with 1% to 5% of words born out of blending and other means. So by analyzing the processes of English word formation, we can infer word-meanings and learn more new English words.
- **Reading the word:** Reading words aloud is also very beneficial. It makes a learner familiar with the word and also improves pronunciations of the learners. Sound can be an easy way to illustrate words that describe sounds, such as whistle, scratching, and tinkling. You can make the sounds yourself, or bring in tapes or CDs for students to listen to and write down the words that they hear. The situation can be made easy and interesting, if the teacher of English selects the vocabulary, grades the vocabulary and uses different techniques in the classroom. Teachers should focus on vocabulary, as it is the most essential aspect in any language and means of communication. We

cannot express our feelings without words. Wallace (1982) states, 'Not being able to find the word you need to express yourself is the most frustrating experience in speaking another language' (p.9). Series, scales, systems. The meaning of words such as the months of the year, the days of the week, the parts of the day, seasons of the year, ordinal numbers, cardinal numbers, etc. that form part of well-known series can be made clear by placing them in their natural order in the series. If you have several gradable words to introduce at the same, you can introduce them together on a scale. For instance, you can use frequency, such as always-often-occasionally or emotions in this way, with cheerful-happy-joyous-ecstatic.

- **Role play:** Role-play is to create the presence of a real life situation in the classroom. It is important in the classroom communication because it gives students an opportunity to practice communicatively in different social contexts and in different social roles. The language applied in this activity is varied according to the student's status, attitudes, mood, and different situations. Blachowicz, et al., (2006) speaks, "Teachers can introduce some of the words which provide both definitional and contextual information about the words to be learned by making up a dialogue for students so that students can understand a further meaning and usage of the words."
- **Use video to produce target vocabulary:** Select a video segment that contains a series of actions or visual detail. Provide the learners with a list of target vocabulary words and ask them to construct a paragraph that incorporates as many of the words as possible. This activity is best done after the learners have seen the video. As they learn how to use more vocabulary properly, you will see an improvement in their writing and speaking. Teacher can also show a short film without sound and asking pupils to discuss what dialogue they would expect to hear. Showing a scene from a film without sound and asking pupils to use the facial expression to determine emotion.

Corder (1973:223) rightly observes, 'The more words one knows, the easier it is to 'learn' new words, because one has more associative link available'. There is no sure fire remedy or method to enhance vocabulary in a day or two.

A student's vocabulary bank can be enriched on a gradual basis and one should always show keen interest and enthusiasm in finding, learning and understanding new words. Teaching vocabulary through incidental, intentional, and independent approaches requires teachers to plan a wide variety of activities and exercises.

Richards said, "When vocabulary items are being taught to pupils, teachers need to consider how to teach these words to pupils based on the levels of ages, educational background and field of interest. The teacher also ought to recognize such sociolinguistic variables in which the words will be used."

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Check Your Progress

4. What is a thesaurus?
5. What do morphological rules reveal?

7.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. It is estimated that the number of written languages in the world is not more than 500.
2. The most important component of a language is vocabulary or word power.
3. Listening is a receptive language skill which people usually find the most difficult. This difficulty arises because they feel unnecessary pressure to understand every word. The listener has to get oriented to the listening portion and be all ears. The listener is also required to be attentive. These skills can be improved by focusing on making the learner listen to the sounds of that particular language.
4. A thesaurus is a kind of dictionary where the words of similar meanings, or synonyms / antonyms are arranged in similar groups.
5. Morphological rules reveal the relations between words and provide the means in formation of new words.

7.5 SUMMARY

- Language can be described as a vehicle of thought. It is a method of expression. It is a vocabulary with its usage being prevalent in one or more regions or countries.
- Languages are also known for their features. There is a mother tongue, there is a regional language, an official language, a national language and a global language.
- When a language is not a native language but one adopted from outside, it acquires mixed characteristics. The widely used English language has variations from country to country.
- Idioms, phrases and slangs are an integral part of a language. English language has a fair share of these and an effective business communicator should be informed about these.

- English has emerged to be the predominant global language. In this inter-connected world, it is the language that people across countries strive to learn.
- Language is absolutely central to learning: without it, one cannot make sense or communicate one's understanding of a subject.
- In order to become an expert communicator, one needs to have knowledge of four useful language skills. Listening and reading are the receptive skills because learners do not need to produce language, they receive and understand it. The productive skills are speaking and writing because learners are applying these skills in a need to produce language.
- Charts, pictures and maps can be used to develop students' understanding of a particular concept or word.
- A dictionary is an important tool in the teaching and learning of vocabulary. Teacher should encourage students to search words in dictionaries.
- Teacher should encourage students to enrich and expand their vocabulary. There are different ways to expand the vocabulary of the students.
- Reading words aloud is also very beneficial. It makes a learner familiar with the word and also improves pronunciations of the learners.
- Role-play is to create the presence of a real life situation in the classroom. It is important in the classroom communication because it gives students an opportunity to practice communicatively in different social contexts and in different social roles.

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7.6 KEY WORDS

- **Etymology:** It is the study of the history of words, their origins, and how their form and meaning have changed over time.
- **Phrasal verbs:** It refers to an idiomatic phrase consisting of a verb and another element, typically either an adverb, as in break down, or a preposition, for example see to, or a combination of both, such as look down on.
- **Idiom:** It refers to a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words.
- **Antonyms:** It refers to a word opposite in meaning to another.
- **Role play:** It means to act out or perform the part of a person or character, for example as a technique in training or psychotherapy.

7.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on idioms, phrases and slangs.
2. What is vocabulary?
3. What are synonyms? Give examples.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the significance of language.
2. Describe the skills needed to become an expert communicator.
3. Explain some of the activities that can be undertaken to improve language skills of learners.

7.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 8 LISTENING SKILLS

Structure

- 8.0 Introduction
- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 Importance of Listening
- 8.3 Process of Listening
- 8.4 Types of Listening
- 8.5 Interview Skills
- 8.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 8.7 Summary
- 8.8 Key Words
- 8.9 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 8.10 Further Readings

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8.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will discuss one of the most important aspects of communication, that is, listening. The process of communication is a two-way process, with a sender and a listener. No communication is complete until the message is received by the listener. Effective listening means analysing sounds, organizing them into recognizable patterns, interpreting the patterns and understanding the message by inferring the meaning. Listening should not be confused with hearing. Hearing is a physiological process which involves receiving the sound waves by the eardrum and transferring them to the brain. Listening is more than hearing. It involves the process of interpretation and inference.

8.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the meaning and importance of listening
- Describe the process of listening
- Explain the various skills needed for an interview

8.2 IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

As stated in the introduction, communication is essentially a two-way process. It is a process that involves at least two parties—the sender and the receiver or the speaker and the listener. The purpose of any communication is not achieved till the receiver receives the message which the sender puts across. There is often an expectation that the receiver will not only receive the message, but also interpret it,

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understand it, use it and provide the requisite feedback about having received the message and acted on it. It is essential to note that sender and receiver are not always fixed permanent positions. One is a sender or a receiver for a particular piece of communication or message transmission. However, communication is by and large an interactive process and the roles are seldom fixed. A receiver becomes the sender and the sender becomes the receiver. Good communication, therefore, calls for listening skills. A good speaker must necessarily be a good listener.

In an interactive communication, listening accounts for about 50 per cent of verbal communication. Both the parties keep changing their roles so that objectives of the communication are achieved in full, as intended. If it is an organized speech or lecture, listening should be full-time. That is why it is said that good listening is as much hard work as good speaking. While good listening leads to proper understanding, poor listening can lead to misunderstanding and incomplete understanding.

Are you a good listener? The importance of listening skills in business and work places is often under-estimated. Yet, the fact remains that at work places, on an everyday basis, you will have to listen to other people constantly: to your customers, your superiors, your subordinates and your associates. Good listening creates a positive environment and motivates the communicator. In order to be a good listener, it is necessary to appreciate the listening process and master the listening skills.

Listening attentively and completely is much more than a casual hearing. An attentive listener is the one who hears not just the words the speaker utters, but also the feelings and intent of the speaker. As Jiddu Krishnamurthy notes, an active listener is one who listens to the whole of what is being conveyed, not just part of it. Listening is a comprehensive act that takes place at different levels.

Ronald Adler and Jeanne Elmhurst, the authors of the book, *Communicating at Work* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 2005) note that listening takes place at four different levels as mentioned below:

1. Listening for Content
2. Listening for Feelings
3. Listening for Intent
4. Listening for Context

Therefore, listening is a comprehensive exercise where the keen and intent listener tries to listen not just to the content, but also to the feelings as well as intent and concerns of the speaker. Moreover, a good listener is always conscious of the context in which the speaker speaks and makes every effort to interpret the words and the content of the message within the overall context in which the speaker speaks out. Picking up words and interpreting them out of context is obviously bad listening.

8.3 PROCESS OF LISTENING

More than an act, listening is a process. It is a lot more than hearing. It starts with hearing but goes beyond. In other words, hearing is a necessary but not sufficient condition for listening. Listening involves hearing with attention. Listening is a process that calls for concentration. Hearing refers to the perception of sound with the ear. Hearing is a physical act. One hears a noise, whether one wants to or not. If hearing is impaired, a hearing aid is used. Hearing aids amplify the sound. Listening is more comprehensive than hearing. Listening is done not only with the ear, but also with the other sense organs. While listening, one should also be observant. In other words, listening has to do with the ears, as well as with the eyes and the mind. Hearing is physical, while listening is intellectual, involving both the body and the mind.

Listening is to be understood as the total process that involves hearing with attention, being observant and making interpretations. Good communication is essentially an interactive process.

Listening calls for participation and involvement. It is quite often a dialogue rather than a monologue. It is necessary for the listener to be interested and also show or make it abundantly clear that one is interested in knowing what the other person has to say. Good listeners put the speaker at ease. Indifferent and inattentive listeners, on the other hand, disturb the speaker and make it that much more difficult for him or her to reach out with the message. The listener can and should help the speaker in establishing a wavelength through which communication traverses smoothly.

The listening process can be understood best by looking at various words which are associated with listening. These are hearing, decoding, sensing, understanding, comprehending, filtering, absorbing, assimilating, empathizing, remembering and responding. Each one of these plays a role in making listening complete and effective. There is also another set of words which can be associated with the listening process. These are attentiveness, focus, willingness, patience, attitude and concentration. The process of listening, to be effective, should encompass all these. The process of listening involves the following:

1. Hearing
2. Decoding
3. Comprehending
4. Remembering
5. Responding

Together, these components ensure that the listening part of the communication process becomes meaningful and effective.

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NOTES**Hearing**

This is the first essential step in listening. It relates to the sensory perception of sound. The communicator expects the receiver to 'lend his or her ears'. There should be a certain attentiveness or concentration in receiving verbal messages. Hearing relates to receiving the words sent out by the speaker for further processing by the listener.

Decoding

The next step relates to decoding. This involves sensing and filtering of the verbal messages. Hearing the words apart, other sensory perceptions come into play. Decoding takes place as a conscious exercise. Listening also involves filtering, whereby the message received is classified as wanted or unwanted, useful or otherwise. That which is considered useless or unwanted is discarded. This filtering process is subjective in nature and a person chooses to retain only that which makes sense to him. Sense of appeal and sense of judgment come into play during sensing and filtering the message. The message is thereafter sent to the next process.

Comprehending

The next level of listening consists of comprehending or understanding. The filtered message assumes a meaning. This activity can also be described as absorbing, grasping or assimilating. The listener has now understood what the speaker has tried to convey. The message received has been heard, sensed, filtered and interpreted. In doing so, the listener has brought into play the listener's own knowledge, experience, perception and cognitive power. The listener has used not only the body, but also the intellect in grasping the meaning of the message. The verbal message apart, the non-verbal communication has also been studied and noted.

Remembering

This is another important facet of listening. Messages received are meant, quite often, not just for immediate consideration and action, but also for future use. In fact, very often, although the absorption takes place in the present, its use may take place sometime in the future. Memorizing the message, therefore, assumes significance. Remembering relates to a process whereby the assimilated message is stored in memory to facilitate future recall.

Responding

Response of the listener may take place at the end of the verbal communication or even earlier. When it is intended to provide feedback to the communicator, response occurs towards the end. If however, there is a need to seek clarification or a need to empathize with the speaker, it may take place earlier. This may take the form of prodding, prompting or reassuring that the message is being well received.

Check Your Progress

1. When is the purpose of communication achieved?
2. List the various steps involved in the process of listening.

NOTES**8.4 TYPES OF LISTENING**

All listening is not of the same intensity. Good listening is that which passes all the five steps mentioned above with positive results. Depending upon the extent to which listening becomes effective, it can be classified into three types. They are passive listening, selective listening and active listening.

Passive Listening

Passive listening refers to inert or indifferent listening. There is no conscious effort to receive and absorb the message. Quite often, passive listening stops at hearing and there is no effort to further process the message. The listener is physically present but is not participating actively in the process of communication. Listening in this instance is insufficient. The message is not absorbed and the passive listener will not be in a position to remember and recall the message at a future date. Passive listening takes place when the listener or receiver is constrained by various physiological and psychological factors. It may be fatigue, ill health, disregard for the speaker or lack of interest in the subject. It also occurs when the speaker fails to meet the receiver's wavelength. Passive listening leads to misunderstanding on the part of the communicator who would be under the impression that the receiver has grasped the message as intended.

Selective Listening

Another type of listening that is quite common is selective listening. Listening is done partially or selectively. People listen to only that which they want to listen to. Under this type of listening, the receiver keeps tuning in and out. Attention is not focused. The listener lets the mind wander and the message is not thoroughly processed. Selective listening takes place when the receiver is not in a position to concentrate, or considers the speaker to be not so well informed on certain matters, or the receiver considers himself to be better informed than the communicator or such other reason which hinders active listening.

Active Listening

Active listening is the most desirable type of listening. In this case, the listener makes conscious efforts to listen attentively, decode the message and absorb it through a participative process. The receiver of the messages shows regard for the speaker, concentrates on what is being conveyed, motivates and prompts the

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speaker, shows empathy and makes it easy for the speaker to meaningfully deliver the message. When we talk of listening skills, what is meant is the ability to listen effectively. When one listens actively, one not only comprehends the message, but is also in a position to remember and recall the same as and when required.

8.5 INTERVIEW SKILLS

Given the significance of performing at one's best at the interview, the preparation has to start well in advance and should cover many areas. The knowledge-related and subject-specific inputs apart, success in the interview calls for a positive orientation, high level of self-confidence, active listening, effective communication, pleasing disposition, noticeable interpersonal skills and the right temperament. In the following paragraphs, we look at the various aspects that need keen attention prior to, during and after the interview.

Do Your Homework: Preparation for the interview starts with good homework. Try to learn as much as you can about the organization. What is its line of business, track record, strengths and weaknesses, hierarchical structure, values and future plans? Then find out the details about the job on offer—number of vacancies, place of posting, remuneration package, work culture, job description and attributes sought and so on.

Make sure that the job on offer is what you are looking for, or at least what you will settle for. You should ask yourself the following questions. Are you qualified? Do you possess the skills required to take up the job on offer? Are you confident that you will measure up to the expectations of the company? Suitability for the job is very essential. In essence, the interview panel would be looking for candidates who match the job profile. Make sure that you collect the relevant details about the organization and the job on offer and that it fits your aspirations. If yes, start your preparation in right earnest. If not, do not waste your time and the interviewers' time. When the job on offer matches your expectations, seize every opportunity to provide the most important information about yourself and clearly show your enthusiasm and inclination.

Anticipate Questions: After learning the basic facts about the organization and the job, get ready to face the interviewers' questions. Put yourself in their shoes and try to anticipate questions. Questions will be of different types. They may be general or specific. They may be fact-related or opinion-related. They may be personal or professional. They may be knowledge oriented or attitude oriented. They may be primary or first time questions or follow-up questions. They may be hypothetical or leading questions. They may be easy or tough. They could even be tricky and provocative. The questions may cover the details you have mentioned in your application and resume. Think of all the likely questions and the right way of answering them. It would be a good idea to write down answers to questions you anticipate and expect to answer.

Broadly speaking, interview related questions fall into certain major categories as below:

1. Education and Academic Study
2. Work Experience
3. Job Knowledge and Skills
4. Self-Assessment
5. Personality and Temperament
6. Organizations or Employers
7. General Knowledge and Awareness.

Some typical questions are as follows:

1. What would you like to say about yourself? Describe yourself.
2. Why do you consider yourself suitable for this job?
3. Why are you leaving your present job?
4. Why have you changed so many jobs?
5. What kind of a career are you seeking?
6. What will you do if you get a better offer?
7. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
8. Which are your noteworthy failures? What lessons have you learnt from those failures?
9. Are you prepared to work in any place?
10. Given your qualifications and experience, should you not be looking for a higher level position?
11. Why are you not seeking a job in line with the subjects you have studied?
12. In which extra-curricular activities have you excelled?
13. Describe your greatest accomplishment in college.
14. What significant contribution have you made in your previous jobs?
15. Why should we prefer you over somebody who has more experience?
16. Tell us three good reasons as to why we should hire you.
17. This job calls for high levels of initiative and hard work. Can you measure up?
18. How good are you in working under pressure? Can you handle stress?
19. How tech savvy are you? Are you comfortable working in a computerized environment?
20. How well can you work as a member of a team? Tell us how you have demonstrated your team working abilities.

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21. What are your career goals? Where do you see yourself in the next 5 or 10 years?
22. Why have you been without a job for so long?
23. Are you willing to work if we offer you a different/ lower level position?
24. What kind of books do you read, music you like and what is your favourite pastime?
25. What do you know about our organization?
26. Who are your role models? Why?

These are just some examples. Depending on the type of organization and nature and level of position you are seeking, the questions can get more penetrating. There could be questions based on your answers. The questions would normally cover your (1) academic qualifications, (2) work experience, (3) extra-curricular activities, (4) personal contribution, (5) subject knowledge, (6) general business awareness, (7) management concepts, (8) health and fitness (9) likes, dislikes and biases and (10) ability to cope with higher responsibilities and stress.

Remember, while it is helpful to anticipate the probable questions and prepare the answers, it is prudent to be in readiness to face unanticipated questions.

Don't Get Worked Up: It is very necessary that the candidate keeps his/her cool when getting ready to face the interview. While some legitimate concerns are perhaps unavoidable considering what is at stake, getting unduly worked up should be consciously avoided. This is true of all important interviews, be they job interviews, promotion interviews or assignment selection interviews. Too much of tension and edginess starts showing up and gives a wrong message to the interviewer. The candidate should not get unduly worried about the type of preparations made by other competitors. Similarly, the candidate should not get tensed up about areas which have not been covered during the preparation. If you are composed and in control of yourself, you will think of the right reply. Try to be at ease with yourself. It helps you become more attentive, listen well and organize your thoughts better as you face the panel.

Reach on Time: Reach well in time for the interview. This is an obvious, yet very essential requirement. It gives you sufficient time to find the exact venue, get used to the ambience and be comfortable. Arriving late for the interview may lead to guilt feelings and put you at a disadvantage, besides creating an unfavourable impression on the interviewer. If the place of interview is in a city/area with which you are not very familiar, make sure to either visit the place earlier or start sufficiently early. Reaching late and entering the hall sweating profusely gives you a bad start.

Physical Appearance: Any interview is much more than a question-and-answer session. For the candidate, it is actually the challenge of marketing oneself. Given this reality, the overall impression a candidate makes on the interview panel assumes significance. The candidate makes the first impression on presentation of oneself. It is axiomatic that attire oft proclaims a man/woman, especially in a serious

appointment like an interview. It is very necessary, therefore, that the candidate dresses well for the occasion. It may be a suit, a tie, a full sleeve shirt and other accessories that make the candidate look smart. Being well dressed for the interview gives the message that one is keen on creating the right impression. After reaching the venue, the candidate should look at the mirror and make sure that he or she is presentable. Although what dress is appropriate for the particular interview may depend on the nature of the organization, category of the post, the climate and such other factors, it is very essential that the appearance is not casual.

There is one more reason why a candidate should dress well for the interview. That is on account of the level of confidence it generates for the candidate. Imagine an interview for a senior post where most of the other candidates are in a suit and you are in your slacks. May be if you are really smart, you may still do well, but then it all depends on how the interviewer interprets it. It is important to be self-confident. It is always desirable to avoid the feeling that you are likely to be at a disadvantage for being under-dressed for the occasion. If you are not comfortable and at ease with a suit or a tie, get used to it by practising it well in advance. At the same time, if somebody is better dressed than you, let it not deter you from making your best effort. How you feel about yourself is what matters. Feed your self-confidence.

Communication Clue

While facing job interviews, it is not just the questions that worry people, but also what to wear and how to present themselves. The first thing to note here is to be presentable. The attire and appearance should clearly convey that the candidate is serious about the job. Avoid flashy colours and go for a professional looking attire. Try to look confident and be comfortable in your dress. Make sure you have a good posture as you face the interview. If you are not sure about what to wear and how you should be dressed for the interview, better be overdressed. Women in particular should note this and wear comfortably heeled footwear and dresses that are not too short. When in doubt, better be overdressed than be under dressed. For both men and women, this conveys that you are a professional and are serious about your job. And, remember the saying, “you are never fully dressed until you wear a smile”. Smile if you can. If not, at least be natural. Consciously avoid looking grim and tense.

Appropriate Body Language: Looks apart, there are several dimensions to body language. The candidate for the interview should be conscious of them. Right posture, alert look, firm handshake, not looking nervous, confident and clear voice and appropriate eye contact help create the right impression. Slouching, drooping, sitting with a hunchback, fidgeting, blinking and shaking the legs create a negative impression. When you are facing an interviewer, avoid negative body language and distracting gestures. Scratching your head, pursing your lips, staring at your palms, examining your nails, picking your nose, and rolling your tongue are all best avoided. More than anything else, it is important to wear a smile. A smile projects as well as reinforces confidence.

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Build a Rapport: Try to build a rapport with the interviewer or the members of the interview panel. This can be done by looking confident, smiling, greeting and a firm handshake. This should be done not just with the chairman of the interview panel, but with the other members as well. Establish eye contact with and reply to the person who has asked you a question. Be conscious of your mannerisms. Refrain from making statements such as ‘You have got me wrong’, ‘You have not understood me’, ‘What you are saying is not correct’, ‘It is impertinent’ and the like. Don’t look either grim or casual. Do not interrupt them when they are speaking to each other.

Understand the Question: Make sure that you have understood the question. This is possible when you are attentive. Active listening is very essential. Let the interviewer complete the question. Do not be in a hurry. Do not interrupt. If you do not interrupt, there is a possibility that the interviewer will give you some hints of what he/she is driving at. However, after the question has been put forth, if you are not clear about it, feel free to seek a clarification. In doing so, be polite. State what you have understood and seek a confirmation. For example, ‘Sir, as I understand, you want me to...’.

Reply Earnestly: Organize your thoughts quickly and give earnest replies. State whatever you know with confidence. Give correct facts and figures. Avoid mixing up figures. State clearly the lakhs, millions, the crores, the dollars or any other statistics unambiguously. Bring out not only your knowledge or depth of understanding of the subject, but also your attitude and concerns. As far as possible, use positive words. Use bright, sharp and appropriate words relevant to the discipline or profession. Be assertive, but avoid extreme positions. There are some questions in which it is possible to hold different views, which means that a very rigid, ‘anything else is incorrect’ type of statement is to be refrained from. Keep balance. Make your reply as brief or as long as the interviewer expects. For this, take the clue from the way the question is worded. When questions are tricky, take your time in organizing your thoughts.

Confidentiality: There are occasions when working in an organization, the employee comes into the possession of confidential information. Such information – whether it is product related, process related, performance related or client related – should not be leaked out to outsiders, especially competitors, for it harms the interest of the organization. Most companies ask their employees to sign a confidentiality agreement. Even otherwise, when an employee works for any organization, there is always an implicit promise of confidentiality. This promise of confidentiality, whether explicit or implicit, should not be breached. That means, in answering the interview questions, the interviewee should protect the interest of the current/previous employer and refrain from disclosing such confidential information. All ethically minded interviewers/ organizations do appreciate that and do not expect the interviewee to disclose any information that is organization-specific and confidential in nature. That apart, there would be a natural presumption that an employee who cannot keep things confidential for his current or previous

employer is unlikely to do so about the future employers too. The candidate's credibility or trustworthiness takes a beating. The trick, therefore, lies in answering questions in a manner that reflects the candidate's experience and accomplishments without leaking out confidential matters or offending the interviewers.

Be Sincere, Truthful and Well Mannered: Answer what you know for sure with confidence. State when you are in doubt. Don't ever tell a blatant lie, hoping that it will go undetected. Admit that you don't know the answer, if that is the position. If you know part of the answer, state that in clear terms and if you are guessing the rest, state so. The interviewer accepts that you know some and do not know some, but no interviewer will accept deliberate lies. Credibility is important. Some interviewers will even encourage you to make false statements so that you talk yourself into a trap. Be sincere and truthful.

Impress the interviewer with your good manners. That is very important. Especially so when you are just out of the college and are facing your first job interview. Good manners counts a lot in dealing with colleagues, superiors, customers and other business associates. Manners make a man or woman look pleasant.

Do Not Offend the Interviewer: As an interviewee one should conduct oneself in such a way that the interviewer is not, for any reason, offended. Argumentation should be avoided. Be assertive without being offensive. If you disagree with the interviewer, or if you hold a diametrically opposite point of view, bring it out as your experience or understanding. Never ever unnecessarily correct the interviewer's observations or challenge statements. Remember, you are not keen on winning the argument if it means losing the interview.

If you want to create the right impression, do not interrupt your interviewer. Wait till he finishes talking, even if he has interrupted you. You create a good impression by being a good listener. A good listener allows the other person to finish what he or she starts telling. You stop talking when the interviewer starts to speak even when you are not finished.

Do Not Brag: Do state your achievements, contributions and strong points, as and when called for, but keep it in perspective. Avoid loud mouthing and pompous or boastful statements. Braggarts, or those who blow their own trumpets, do not find favour with the interviewers. Do not overstate your achievements. Gracefully accept your shortcomings and weaknesses. State the efforts you are making to overcome them, if there is an opportunity. Give due credit to the teamwork, favourable circumstances and such other factors that helped you perform well. Honest self-assessment always carries a favourable impression. At the same time, don't miss the right opportunity to mention your high points.

Avoid Long Pauses: Take your time to organize your thoughts and give your replies. When you are asked a question, you are not expected to reply immediately. A small pause as you mentally formulate your reply, in fact, results in well thought out answers. When you take some time to collect your thoughts, the

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interviewer appreciates your earnestness. All the same, avoid long pauses. Long pauses lead to communication breakdown and result in an awkward situation. Keep the conversation going. Sometimes the panel members will offer hints and tips which will be of help in collecting your thoughts. Make the best use of such gestures. Know when and how to keep the conversation going from your side. For example, there are some open-ended questions where the answer should be much more than a yes or a no.

Open-Ended Questions

- Do you think you are suitable for this job?
- Are you good at team work?
- You do not have the experience for this job.
- You have changed your jobs frequently.
- Women are less likely to take up such jobs.

Obviously, in all such cases, the interviewer will be looking for some positive and logical back-up statements rather than just a mere affirmation.

Grab Opportunities: Interviewers generally follow a set pattern. They start with the candidate's academic and professional background before coming to job-specific and knowledge assessment questions. Quite often, the questions get progressively tougher. Every candidate is very likely to get a mix of easy and tough questions. The candidate should grab the opportunity and make it a point to score more on the easy questions. Among the panel members too, some ask general questions while some others persevere and ask probing questions. The candidate should be alert enough to take advantage of the opportunities as and when they show up. There may be breaks in between on account of tea breaks, telephone calls and consultations among the panel members. The candidate can make gainful use of such breaks to review earlier replies and especially what was missed out. The candidate may elaborate on the earlier replies and make such additional points as are to his or her advantage when the interview resumes. An alert candidate makes it a point to grab any such opportunity.

As an interviewee, it is your responsibility to clearly bring out how your academic background, job related knowledge and skills, and expertise and experience can add value to the organization. Seize every little opportunity to make it easy for the interviewer to appreciate your suitability and enthusiasm. Just because something is already mentioned in your resume, do not presume that the interviewer has read that. On your part, highlight your strengths and capabilities with reference to the job requirements and interviewer expectations.

Use Wit and Humour: Interviews need not necessarily be very serious affairs. Interviewers are normally required to conduct interviews of numerous candidates in a time-bound manner. This results in certain tedium or wariness for

the interview panel, especially towards the end. A candidate who, even while answering the questions well, uses wit and humour naturally scores high in the interview. In doing so, however, proper discretion is called for. A candidate should avoid telling irrelevant jokes and anecdotes, and maintain decorum and seriousness associated with an interview process. Humorous anecdotes associated with great personalities like Mark Twain or Bernard Shaw which are appropriate for the occasion may, however, add some lighter moments. Similarly, if opportune, the interviewee may also mention some relevant quotes of famous personalities to lighten the atmosphere and show his or her wit and presence of mind. Remember, however, that this is not a must. Don't spoil your chances by using a bad joke or stale humour.

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Check Your Progress

3. What is passive listening?
4. What does preparation of an interview start with?
5. Why is it important not to brag during an interview?

8.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The purpose of communication is fully achieved when the receiver comprehends the message conveyed by the sender.
2. The process of listening involves the following steps:
 - i. Hearing
 - ii. Decoding
 - iii. Comprehending
 - iv. Remembering
 - v. Responding
3. Passive listening refers to inert or indifferent listening. There is no conscious effort to receive and absorb the message. Quite often, passive listening stops at hearing and there is no effort to further process the message.
4. Preparation for the interview starts with good homework.
5. Do state your achievements, contributions and strong points, as and when called for, but keep it in perspective. Avoid loud mouthing and pompous or boastful statements. Braggarts, or those who blow their own trumpets, do not find favour with the interviewers.

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8.7 SUMMARY

- Communication is essentially a two-way process. It is a process that involves at least two parties—the sender and the receiver or the speaker and the listener.
- The purpose of any communication is not achieved till the receiver receives the message which the sender puts across.
- In an interactive communication, listening accounts for about 50 per cent of verbal communication.
- The listening process can be understood best by looking at various words which are associated with listening. These are hearing, decoding, sensing, understanding, comprehending, filtering, absorbing, assimilating, empathizing, remembering and responding.
- Passive listening refers to inert or indifferent listening. There is no conscious effort to receive and absorb the message
- Active listening is the most desirable type of listening. In this case, the listener makes conscious efforts to listen attentively, decode the message and absorb it through a participative process.
- Broadly speaking, interview related questions fall into certain major categories as below:
 1. Education and Academic Study
 2. Work Experience
 3. Job Knowledge and Skills
 4. Self-Assessment
 5. Personality and Temperament
 6. Organizations or Employers
 7. General Knowledge and Awareness
- Interviews need not necessarily be very serious affairs. Interviewers are normally required to conduct interviews of numerous candidates in a time-bound manner. This results in certain tedium or wariness for the interview panel, especially towards the end.

8.8 KEY WORDS

- **Non-verbal communication:** It is the non-linguistic transmission of information through visual, auditory and tactile channels.
- **Braggarts:** It means someone who proudly talks a lot about himself or herself and his or her achievements or possessions.

- **Wit:** It means a natural aptitude for using words and ideas in a quick and inventive way to create humour.
- **Rapport:** It refers to a close and harmonious relationship in which the people or groups concerned understand each other's feelings or ideas and communicate well.

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8.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the four levels of listening?
2. What is passive listening?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Examine the process of listening.
2. Discuss the different skills required during interview.

8.10 FURTHER READINGS

- Madhukar, R.K. 2005. *Business Communication*. Noida: Vikas Publishing House.
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UNIT 9 CONVERSATION SKILLS

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Structure

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Objectives
- 9.2 Introduction to Conversation Skills
- 9.3 Conversation Skills: Modes
- 9.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 9.5 Summary
- 9.6 Key Words
- 9.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 9.8 Further Readings

9.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt about listening skills. Here, the discussion will turn towards conversation skills. Conversation refers to interactive communication between two or more individuals. The development of conversational skills and etiquette is a vital part of socialization. The development of conversational skills in a new language is a frequent focus of language teaching and learning. The unit will introduce you to conversation skills. It will then go on to discuss conversation modes.

9.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the rules or maxims of conversations
- Describe the different modes of conversation

9.2 INTRODUCTION TO CONVERSATION SKILLS

Conversations involve personal interactions between two or more people about something of interest. In other words, conversation is simply talking to someone else, usually informally. Keeping a conversation going is something of an art, and one which many seem to lack. However, there are certain rules that can be followed to develop conversational skills.

The Rules of Conversation

- **Conversation is a Two-Way Street:** The first and most important rule of conversation is that it is a dialogue, not a monologue. One must try to achieve a balance between talking and listening in any conversation.

- **Be Friendly and Polite:** Smiling, and being nice, takes an individual a long way in conversational terms. It is rather obvious to state that everyone would rather chat to someone friendly and pleasant.
- **Respond to What They are Saying:** To properly respond to a person requires meaningful listening, one cannot just switch off, and think about what one is going to say next.
- **Use Signalling to Help the Other Person:** When a conversation is flowing well, it moves naturally from one person to the other. However, if one or both are finding it more of a struggle to 'chat', it is useful to employ 'signals' to show the other person that it is their turn to talk.

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9.3 CONVERSATION SKILLS: MODES

There are basically four modes of conversation. These are debate, dialogue, discourse and diatribe.

1. Debate is a competitive, two-way conversation. The goal is to win an argument or convince someone, such as the other participant or third-party observers.
2. Dialogue is a cooperative, two-way conversation. The goal is for participants to exchange information and build relationships with one another.
3. Discourse is a cooperative, one-way conversation. The goal to deliver information from the speaker/writer to the listeners/readers.
4. Diatribe is a competitive, one-way conversation. The goal is to express emotions, browbeat those that disagree with you, and/or inspires those that share the same perspective.

In the following lines, we will focus our attention on dialogues.

Most often our means of communication as we communicate with others is dialogue. Dialogue can be simply defined as an oral communication when two or more people take turns to put forward their points of view, along with non-verbal cues, to often reach a conclusion. Think about a classroom situation when the teacher enters the class and starts a topic with few general questions for the students. Students respond to the question and then the teacher sums up the discussion along with his or her point of view. It is an example of a dialogue. Or you are going for an interview and there you are asked questions on your subject, on general topics, on your strengths, your career plan, etc. It is a dialogue between you and the panellists in the interview board. Or as you finish your classes, your friend and you are discussing about going for a movie, it is also an example of a dialogue. Or suppose the President of a nation has visited India and is engaging with some bilateral treaties with the Indian counterpart, then it can only be possible through dialogue. Thus, dialogues can be of various kinds depending on the context. But what is significant in a dialogue is that each party that enters into the field of

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communication in a dialogue has the space and time to put forward his or her point of view. In that sense, dialogues are democratic in nature, where individuals get chance to have their say unlike a monologue where the single person takes over the talking because of his or her privileged position and others are mere receptors of the communication.

The most important facet of a dialogue is taking turns—that is, the speaker is not always a speaker; but speaks for a while and then allows the other person to come up with his or her ideas, queries and responses. Dialogue is a democratic means to come to a conclusion. These days we see that a lot of emphasis is also put forward by different institutions and companies to initiate dialogues with their customers/prospective customers as it is beneficial for a company or an institution to do so.

Grice's Cooperative Principle

In this context, it is to be remembered that when a dialogue is taking place, it is usually on a topic or an idea and not disconnected remarks. If you visit a marketplace where each individual is speaking to another, the conversations of all the people are not a dialogue. Thus, when we talk about dialogue, it essentially signifies that there are certain codes which are followed, as suggested by Grice. Grice writes, 'Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, of cooperative efforts, and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction.' According to Grice, when the speakers or participants are getting involved in a particular conversation, then there has to be a direction of the whole conversation. Therefore, whenever a conversation is happening, we have to always respect certain rules pertaining to it to make it a successful one. It is termed by Grice as the Cooperative Principle, in which he proposed four Maxims or rules of conversation. Acting in accordance with these Maxims will, according to Grice, yield results consistent with the Cooperative Principle. The Maxims are:

- Maxim of Quantity
- Maxim of Quality
- Maxim of Relevance
- Maxim of Manner

By Maxim of Quantity what Grice meant was the information that we provide in the process of a conversation. According to Grice, we should neither provide nor contribute more information than what is needed for the current conversation, nor should we provide less information than what is needed for a successful conversation. By Maxim of Quality, he meant that ethical part of the conversation where we should neither talk about what we believe to be false nor should we talk

about something if we lack adequate evidence. In other words, we should always base our statements on evidence and should not talk about something just because we think it can be like that. The Maxim of Relevance refers to the fact that when we are conversing, we should keep in mind that we should never talk about something that is not a part of the conversation. In other words, we should be relevant and to the point so that the conversation becomes a meaningful one. By Maxim of Manner, Grice meant that we should avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity and be brief and orderly, that is we should be short, systematic and simple in our expressions so that the other person in the conversation understands the topic being talked about directly and has no problem in comprehending whatever the speaker is saying.

Grice's four maxims are commonsensical things. Most of the times, when we are conversing, we keep all these four factors in mind. And when we do not do so, we usually are not able to converse or the conversation ends in a misunderstanding among the participants. Let us take an example to illustrate how the four maxim works in a conversation.

We are assuming that two friends, Sachin and Saurav, are meeting after a long time, and we are trying to form two set of dialogues which can happen between them; first, where they are following the four maxims, and second when they are not following it.

Sachin and Saurav following the four Maxims:

Sachin: Hi, what's up? Where were you for so many days?

Saurav: Hello, I was in Mumbai. What about you. How are you doing?

Sachin: I am doing well and presently working in a call centre in Gurgaon, and what about you?

Saurav: I was working in an Ad Agency in Mumbai. I left the job there and am searching for a job here.

Sachin: Ok. Take my Number-9800000000. Be in contact. I am in a hurry now. Have to go. Do drop in to my place over the weekend.

Saurav: Surely, I will. See you then. Take care.

Sachin: Take care, bye.

Saurav: Bye.

Sachin and Saurav Not following the four Maxims:

Sachin: Hi, what's up? Where were you so many days?

Saurav: Hi. I was not in Delhi.

Sachin: How are you doing?

Saurav: Do you know any Ad Agency here?

Sachin: No. why?

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Saurav: Forget it.

Sachin: Let's go and have a coffee?

Saurav: Where are you staying?

Sachin: (Feeling disgusted) Nearby. I am in a hurry. See you. Bye.

Saurav: Bye.

In the first case, Sachin and Saurav, though they have met after a long time, kept the four maxims of conversation in mind while speaking. They provided the exact information while talking; neither more than what is necessary, nor less. They neither said anything false nor anything irrelevant. In the second case, their conversation was lacking the four maxims and therefore it ended in a cold way even when they met after a long time. In the second case, Sachin was trying his best to get the conversation going in a particular direction, but Saurav's manner of speaking bored him with the whole conversation, that he left it and went without ever having the intention to meet this person anymore. In the first case, we do see that the conversation was well struck with the four Maxims, hence they decide to meet again over the weekend.

Thus, even if we presume that Grice's four Maxims are simple and common ideas, it is very important for any conversation to strike a successful note.

Tips for Dialogue Writing

Dialogue writing is a craft which can be learnt very easily. One needs to be a close observer of human relationships as well as have a good command over the language to write good dialogues. But basic level dialogue writing is all about following certain codes of writing and keeping in mind Grice's Cooperative Principle. While writing dialogues, the following things should be kept in mind:

- Dialogues are mostly very short. So keep in mind to write short sentences. It should be similar to the way you speak.
- Dialogues have to have three distinct parts—Welcoming, main conversation and good bye. Keep that in mind while writing dialogues.
- Dialogues should be conversational in tone. Therefore, one should follow the oral communication characteristics. While writing dialogues keep in mind that you are speaking the written words and not writing.
- Always remember the context in which the dialogue is happening. The context of the dialogue matters as two people conversing in a formal atmosphere would converse in a very different way than in a casual meeting. So the setting would decide what kind of a conversation it would be. It is better to write in brief the setting of the dialogue before writing the conversation.

- Whenever we speak, the non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions, body movements, space between the people, eye contact, tone and pitch of our speech, should be kept in mind. The way to emphasize on non-verbal cues in dialogue writing is to put the non-verbal cues in brackets or parenthesis so that the reader knows with what intention the speaker had said it.

For example, let's again go through the earlier dialogue between Saurav and Sachin with all features of dialogue writing.

(Sachin and Saurav, who are old friends, but have not been in touch with each other for a long time, have accidentally met on a road while both of them are in a hurry).

Sachin (surprised): Hi, what's up? Where were you for so many days?

Saurav (extending his right hand for handshake): Hello, I was in Mumbai. What about you. How are you doing? (Both of them shake hands)

Sachin (in a cordial tone): I am doing well and presently working in a call centre in Gurgaon, and what about you?

Saurav: I was working in an Ad Agency in Mumbai. I left my job there and am searching for a job here.

Sachin (in an inviting tone): Ok. Take my Number-9800000000. Be in contact. I am in a hurry now. Have to go. Do drop in to my place over the weekend.

Saurav (Happily): Surely, I will. See you then. Take care.

Sachin: Take care, bye.

Saurav: Bye.

Greeting is the act of welcoming or saluting someone on meeting them. A greeting is usually the first verbal communication you make with the person you meet. It could very well set the tone of the ensuing conversation. Some people are very particular about being greeted properly. Older generation find it very disappointing when the younger generation does not aptly show them the respect that they feel they deserve. Similarly, people holding a high position in the society or workplace feel that their subordinates do need to greet them properly in order to reinforce the respect of the office that they hold.

What is a Response?

Response, in this case, is the answer to a greeting. When someone greets you, it becomes your obligation to return the wishes. If it is rude to not greet a person aptly, then it would be ruder to not give a proper response to a greeting.

The importance of greetings in daily life can hardly be overstated. Learning how to greet is important as it helps us to understand how to function in a society, establish and maintain personal relationships.

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Table 9.1 Top 25 Greetings and their Expected Responses**NOTES**

Greeting	Expected Response
Good morning	Good Morning to you too
Good evening	Good evening
Good afternoon	Good afternoon
Good day	Good day to you too
Good night	Good night and sweet dreams
Hello	Hello
Hi	Hi there
How do you do?	Fine, thank you
How are you doing?	Fine and how are you doing?
How is everything?	Fine and How is everything at your end?
How's everything going?	Great and what about you?
What's up (man/dude/bro/their name)?	Pretty good (man dude/bro/their name)
Good to see you.	Same here.
How are things (with you)?	Very well, thanks
How's it going?	Fine, thanks.
How's life been treating you?	Not bad. How about you?
What's cracking?	Nothing much
It has been a long time	Indeed, it has been a long time
It's been too long	Yes, it's been too long
What have you been up to all these years?	I've been hanging in there
It's always a pleasure to see	The pleasure is all mine
Long time no see	Yes, No see long time
Where have you been hiding?	That's what I've been wondering about you
It's been ages (since I've seen you)	Yes, I have missed you
How've you been?	I have been well, thanks

Stages in Greeting and Responding To a Greeting

Stage 1: Decide—Decide whether you really wish to greet or respond to the greeting of the person or not. Rather than giving him/her a half unwelcome greeting, it is advisable to ignore him/her completely as if you have not seen or noticed him/her. Ideally, such a situation should not arise.

Stage 2: Content—Be sure of what you are going to say to the person. Do not mix two different greetings or responses. It will cause unneeded pauses or stammering in extreme cases.

Stage 3: Delivery—Deliver your greeting or response as per what you had decided before. If you fail to do so, then you shall not only appear to

be dumb in front of the person but also may lose confidence in greeting or responding to a greeting in future.

Stage 4: Response—You should expect a response to your greeting from the other person. Wait for 5-6 seconds for the person acknowledge your greeting or respond to it.

Stage 5: Conclusion—After you have received an acknowledgement from the other person, you may move on to your path or strike a conversation with the person if you so wish.

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Rules To Be Followed While Greeting or Responding To a Greeting

The following rules should be followed while responding to a greeting:

- Approach the person confidently with a genuine smile on your face. A smile is a universal language and understood everywhere. The smile should be broad but not too much. A wry smile or a smirk may actually communicate a negative message such as a scoff, scorn or rebuke.
- Maintain a proper eye contact for at least 5-6 seconds with the person but do not continue to do so for long because this may make him/her conscious. Your eyes should focus on the area of his/her face between his eyes and tip of the nose. Most people are not able to make a proper eye contact. This is an unwanted psychological handicap. One can get over it by practice.
- With a complete stranger, maintain a distance of at least 60 inches. The proximity can decrease with the increase in the closeness of your relationship with him/her. You can be at a distance of 40 inches from a close acquaintance.
- In case you are shaking hands with the person, then ensure that your handshake is firm, straight and confident. A limp handshake or a handshake that is too tight are most unwelcome and thus, avoidable.
- With due respect to the noise pollution around you, your voice should be audible to the person but not too loud. Please avoid talking loudly in a crowded situation. If possible go to the person and greet him.

Importance of Greetings and Responses

We need to understand that when we greet people or respond to their greetings, we are actually wishing for their well-being and hope that they will have a good time. For instance, if you meet a person who responds to your 'good morning,' with a line such as, 'Who said it was good?', the response, if taken seriously, besides being rude, is very hurting. We are not categorizing the morning as 'good', rather we are simply wishing that it should be a good morning.

Meeting People and Introducing Yourself

What would you do when you meet someone for the first time? We usually greet the other person properly as per the demands of good etiquettes.

After greeting the person we tend to introduce ourselves.

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What is an Introduction?

An introduction is a formal presentation of one person to another, in which each is told the other person's name and other relevant details.

Why do you need to be good at introductions?

In an introduction, the person you are giving the introduction to, expects you to be honest, knowledgeable and confident. If you show dishonesty, ignorance or lack of confidence then you shall lose credibility that will be very hard to earn back. As the saying goes— 'First impression is the last impression.'

What details should be known to you about the person you are introducing?

The details that should be known are as follows:

Name, age, address, contact number, e-mail id, religion, caste, height, weight, qualifications, experience, family background, conveyance, languages known, marital status, number of dependants.

Precautions

Let us study some of the precautions one needs to take in an introduction.

- **Be properly dressed:** There is an old saying, 'Clothes maketh a man'. The person you are introducing yourself to or introducing someone else to should see you and the person you are introducing, properly dressed. Your attire should make a good impression on the person. This will make him/her more receptive towards you and the person you are introducing. A simple attire with limited accessories like ear-rings, bracelets, can make a better impression than an overtly high fashioned and loud coloured clothing. Make sure that your clothes are clean free from any types of cuts torn parts.
- **Physical ailments and deformities:** At the initial stage of the introduction, do not refer to your or the person's (whom you are introducing) deformities or ailments even indirectly. Many people do not find it acceptable if you start with a statement like –'You must be Mr Hardy. Sir, I've heard a lot about you and your rise to success despite your blindness.' This is not a compliment. It is rude and unacceptable. Many people who are physically challenged, want to lead a normal life and not be reminded of their deficiency. Similarly do not start by –'Madam, I know that he is looking a bit dull today because of the cold he has caught but he is quite well qualified otherwise.' Ailments and physical deformities should only be discussed with a physician or Doctor.
- **Avoid untidy habits:** During an introduction, do not engage in untidy habits such as picking your nose, tapping your feet, scratching your hair, rubbing your face. They may appear nauseating and repulsive. Identify such bad habits and try to get rid of them as soon as possible.

- **Keep cool, do not freeze:** We find this advice on top of jam bottles— to keep the jam bottle in a cool place like a refrigerator but not to freeze it in the freezer. The same holds true in case of an introduction. You need to look reserved and confident but if you overdo it then you may appear to be snobbish and rude. One would like to be introduced to or by a gregarious yet respectable person. So, this balance needs to be maintained.
- **Mind your language:** Use of foul language and abusive words are unacceptable in decent society. They should be avoided despite the knowledge that the person to whom you are introducing yourself to is known to use such a language or is comfortable with it.
- **Open mindedness:** To a great degree, have an open mind for the person you are taking introduction from. Beware if you have been advised from reliable sources regarding the harmful qualities of the person but courtesy demands that you give the person a chance to prove your sources right or wrong.

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Check Your Progress

1. What is the first and most important rule of a conversation?
2. What is the goal of discourse?
3. What is a greeting?

9.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The first and most important rule of conversation is that it is a dialogue, not a monologue. One must try to achieve a balance between talking and listening in any conversation.
2. Discourse is a cooperative, one-way conversation. The goal is to deliver information from the speaker/writer to the listeners/readers.
3. Greeting is the act of welcoming or saluting someone on meeting them. A greeting is usually the first verbal communication you make with the person you meet.

9.5 SUMMARY

- Conversations involve personal interactions between two or more people about something of interest.
- There are basically four modes of conversation. These are debate, dialogue, discourse and diatribe.

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- Most often our means of communication as we communicate with others is dialogue.
- Dialogue can be simply defined as an oral communication when two or more people take turns to put forward their points of view, along with non-verbal cues, to often reach a conclusion.
- According to Grice, when the speakers or participants are getting involved in a particular conversation, then there has to be a direction of the whole conversation.
- Whenever a conversation is happening, we have to always respect certain rules pertaining to it to make it a successful one. It is termed by Grice as the Cooperative Principle, in which he proposed four Maxims or rules of conversation.
- The Maxims are:
 - o Maxim of Quantity
 - o Maxim of Quality
 - o Maxim of Relevance
 - o Maxim of Manner
- Dialogue writing is a craft which can be learnt very easily. One needs to be a close observer of human relationships as well as have a good command over the language to write good dialogues.
- The importance of greetings in daily life can hardly be overstated. Learning how to greet is important as it helps us to understand how to function in a society, establish and maintain personal relationships.
- An introduction is a formal presentation of one person to another, in which each is told the other person's name and other relevant details.
- To a great degree, have an open mind for the person you are taking introduction from.

9.6 KEY WORDS

- **Diatribes:** It is a forceful and bitter verbal attack against someone or something.
- **Dialogue:** It means a conversation between two or more people as a feature of a book, play, or film.
- **Debate:** It means a serious discussion of a subject in which many people take part.

9.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the rules of a conversation?
2. What is a diatribe?
3. Mention the precautions to be taken in an introduction?

Long-Answer Questions

1. What is the importance of greetings?
2. Examine the four maxims of conversation.

NOTES

9.8 FURTHER READINGS

- Madhukar, R.K. 2005. *Business Communication*. Noida: Vikas Publishing House.
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UNIT 10 PRESENTATION SKILLS

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Structure

- 10.0 Introduction
 - 10.1 Objectives
 - 10.2 What is Business Presentation?
 - 10.3 Principles of Presentation
 - 10.4 Preparing and Planning Presentations
 - 10.4.1 Steps for Preparing Effective Presentations
 - 10.4.2 Handling Questions
 - 10.4.3 Delivery of Presentation
 - 10.5 Personal Aspects of Presenting
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 - 10.5.2 Appearance and Bodily Movements
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10.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be introduced to business presentations. Presentations are a commonly used tool of communication in business. The unit will focus on presentation skills. It will help you examine the various techniques to master the tool of presentation so that communication is most effective.

10.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Examine business presentations as an important aspect of business communication
 - List out the principles which serve as guidelines while making and delivering presentations
 - Discuss the various stages of preparing a business presentation
 - Explain the importance of visual aids to support presentations
-

10.2 WHAT IS BUSINESS PRESENTATION?

To start with, it is important to understand that presentations can be both oral and written. But in this unit we shall restrict ourselves to oral presentations. In this

context, a presentation may be defined as a technique of formal communication that involves speaking in front of a group of people or presenting a topic in public. Whenever you are asked to appear in front of one or more people for the purpose of explaining, educating, convincing or simply conveying information to them, you are, in fact, being asked to conduct a presentation.

Preparing an oral presentation is similar to writing a formal report but with a few differences.

- Oral presentations involve more interaction with the audience.
- Oral presentations can be supported with non-verbal cues to increase meaning and understanding.
- Oral presentations give you an opportunity to adjust your technique, that is, the content and delivery of the message can be modified as you go along to create better impact on the audience.
- Since oral presentations involve listening and humans have a limited time span of attention, there is a need to use techniques to prevent the audience from losing interest.

Presentations can be made in classrooms, seminars, meetings, conferences or to simply a group of persons on some scheduled topic. The presentation is now emerging as a popular means of interactive communication with an objective of presenting relevant information to the interested target audience.

10.3 PRINCIPLES OF PRESENTATION

A good presentation requires a good mix of communication skills, confidence, subject knowledge and interpersonal skills on the part of the presenter. One has to consider not only the verbal aspect of communication but also the non-verbal aspect. There are certain points to be borne while making and delivering presentations. These have been listed out below:

1. Related to preparing for the presentation
 - (i) Prepare for a presentation.
 - (ii) Know your audience and adapt the contents of your presentation to suit them.
 - (iii) Begin with an attention catcher.
 - (iv) Limit your presentation to two–three main points.
 - (v) Be at the venue in advance and familiarize yourself with the lighting, seating, switches, and so on.
 - (vi) Anticipate questions and be ready to respond to probable questions.
 - (vii) Familiarize them with what is going to be presented at the start of the presentation, and then after the presentation, conduct a recap of what was presented.

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- (viii) In longer presentations, include summaries of main points as you go along.
- (ix) Use appropriate visual aids.
 - For small informal groups, use flipcharts, boards or transparencies.
 - For larger groups, use slides or films.
- (x) Limit each visual aid to three or four lines or five or six points. Use short phrases. Use large readable type face.
- (xi) Make sure that you know how to use the electronic gadgets and that they work.
- (xii) Keep alternative arrangement ready in case the visual aid does not work.
- (xiii) While preparing the presentation, take care of the six cardinal questions:

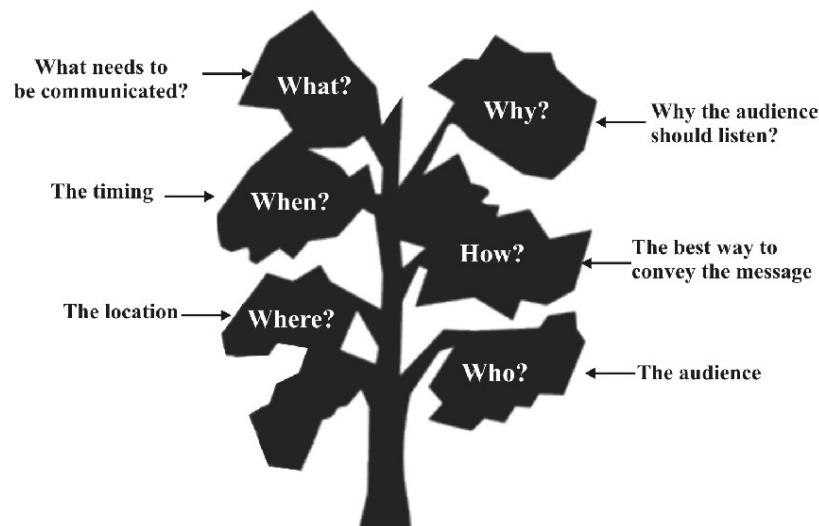


Fig. 10.1 Six Cardinal Questions while Preparing a Presentation

2. Related to delivery of the presentation
 - (i) Be clear and organized.
 - (ii) Establish rapport with your audience early on.
 - (iii) Establish eye contact.
 - (iv) Do not go too fast.
 - (v) Make sure everyone can hear.
 - (vi) Be natural. Do not put on an accent. Avoid excessive mannerisms.
 - (vii) Maintain a straight posture.
 - (viii) Stick to the time.

- (ix) Know your talk well enough to be flexible to skip certain parts or expand others depending on the circumstances.
- (x) Focus on the audience and the topic.
- (xi) Maintain control of your feelings even if you are criticised.
- (xii) Do not end abruptly. Last impressions are as important as the first ones.
- (xiii) Encourage questions
 - Allow questions during the presentation if the group is small
 - Tackle the questions at the end if the group is large and hostile
- (xiv) Do not get side-tracked by questions, that is, stick to the theme of the presentation.

NOTES**Check Your Progress**

1. Define a presentation.
2. Mention two non-verbal aspects important for a good presentation.

10.4 PREPARING AND PLANNING PRESENTATIONS

Let us now discuss the steps for preparing effective presentations.

10.4.1 Steps for Preparing Effective Presentations

Good preparation is the key to a good presentation. Whatever be the kind of presentation, it essentially involves the following stages:

- (i) Pre-preparatory stage
- (ii) Advance analysis
 - Know the objective.
 - Know and analyse your audience.
- (iii) Preparatory stage
 - Select the main ideas.
 - Obtain the information.
 - Select information, organize material and write the draft.
 - Support with visual aids.
 - Rehearse the presentation.

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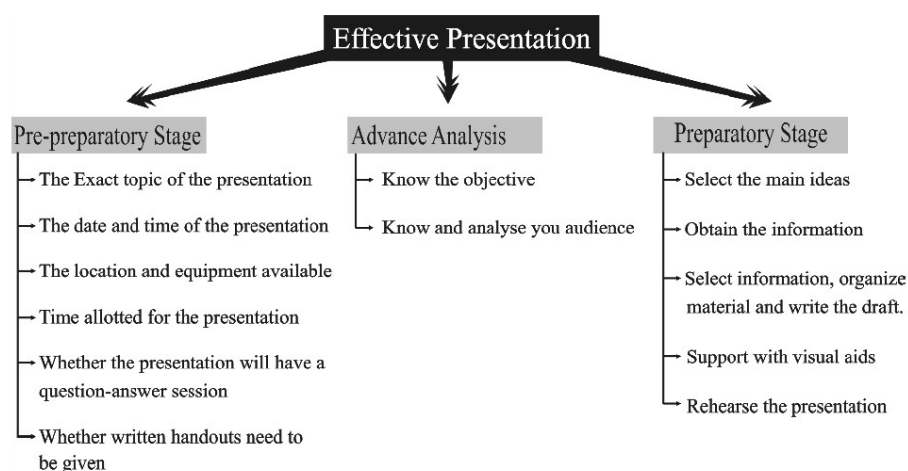


Fig. 10.2 Steps for Preparing Effective Presentations

Pre-preparatory stage

Before beginning with the actual preparation of the presentation it is important to check the following:

- The exact topic of the presentation
- The date and time of the presentation
- The location and equipment available
- Time allotted for the presentation
- Whether the presentation will have a question–answer session
- Whether written handouts need to be given

Advance analysis

Advance analysis involves obtaining in advance knowledge of the objective of the presentation and information about the audience so as to prepare the presentation accordingly.

Know the objective

Broadly speaking, the objective of a presentation is to provide information or instructions, to motivate, to persuade to entertain or a combination of the above. Whatever be the objective, it is essential that you know what you want to have achieved by the end of your presentation. This will help in planning the presentation. For example, if the objective is to try and motivate or entertain the audience, the presenter will do most of the talking. On the other hand, the level of interaction may be much more if the purpose is to persuade the audience for something.

Know and analyse your audience

It is important to know as much as possible about the audience whom you are going to address because what you will speak must be adapted according to the

requirement of the audience. You will need to have information about the size of the group, the age range, who the audience is, what are the interests and goal of the members of the audience, the knowledge level and other similar information. The style and content of the presentation can be geared based on the above information.

For example, if the group is small you can interact more with the audience as compared to when the group is larger. If the members of the group are from the same technical background, you can use scientific terms and jargon familiar to them in your presentation. The more information you have about your audience, the better the rapport that you will be able to build with them.

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Checklist for Audience Analysis

A. Audience Size and Composition

1. Estimate how many people will attend.
2. Consider whether they have some political, religious, professional, or other affiliations in common.
3. Analyse the mix of men and women, age ranges, socio-economic and ethnic groups, occupation and geographic regions represented.

B. Probable Audience Reaction

1. Analyse why the audience members are attending the speech or presentation.
2. Determine the general attitude audience towards the topic.
 - (a) Decide whether the audience is very interested, moderately interested or unconcerned
 - (b) Review how the audience has reacted to similar issues in the past.
 - (c) Determine which facets of the subject are most likely to appeal to the audience.
 - (d) Decide whether portions of your message will create problems for any members of the audience.
3. Analyse the mood the people will be in when you speak to them—whether they are tired from listening to other presentations like yours or fresh because your presentation comes early in the agenda, interested in hearing a unique presentation, restless from sitting too long in one position and needing a minute to stretch.
4. Figure out which sort of back up information will most impress the audience—technical data, statistical comparisons, cost figures, historical information, generalisations, demonstrations, samples, and so on.
5. Predict audience response
 - (a) List ways that the audience will benefit from your message.
 - (b) Formulate an idea of the most desirable audience reaction and the best possible result.
 - (c) Anticipate possible objections or questions.
 - (d) Analyse the worst thing that might happen and how you might respond.

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C. Level of audience understanding

1. Determine whether the audience already knows something about the subject and whether the audience is familiar with your vocabulary:
 - (a) Analyse whether everybody has about the same amount of knowledge.
 - (b) Consider whether the audience is familiar with your vocabulary.
2. Understand whether everybody is equally capable of understanding the message.
3. Decide what background information the audience will need to understand the subject.
4. Think about the mix of general concepts and specific details you will need to explain.
5. Consider whether the subject involves routine recurring information or an unfamiliar topic.

D. Audience relationship with the speaker

1. Analyse how the audience usually reacts to speakers.
2. Determine whether the audience is likely to be friendly, open-minded or hostile towards your purpose in making the speech or presentation.
3. Decide how the audience is likely to respond to you.
 - (a) Analyse what the audience expects from you.
 - (b) Think about your past interactions with the audience.
 - (c) Consider your relative status.
 - (d) Consider whether the audience has any biases that might work against you.
 - (e) Take into account the audience's probable attitude towards the organization you represent.
4. Decide which aspects of your background are most likely to build credibility

Source: Courtland L. Bovee and John V. Thill, *Business Communication Today*, 4th Edition, p. 594, Prentice Hall.

Preparatory stage

Preparation is the key to an effective presentation. Preparation involves the following:

Select the main ideas

You can begin by focusing on the core ideas, that is, the main ideas that you want to convey to the audience. After this, you can collect additional information to support these core ideas

Obtain information

The next step is to obtain all the information you can about the core ideas listed out earlier. Many times, your research may compel you may have to modify your core ideas. Sources of information can include printed information in books,

magazines, journals, newspapers catalogues, reports, office files, and so on, verbal information from people who know about the subject, graphical information and electronic information from the internet, library database, and so on.

Select information, organize material and write the draft

Many times you may not need to keep all the information you have collected. Check the information for obsolescence, accuracy, relevance, completeness and legal acceptability. Based on the above criteria, you can select the suitable information and discard the rest of it.

Material can be sorted on the basis of the following:

- Need to know
- Nice to know

Sorting on the basis of need to know refers to sifting for the key points which are very important and cannot be left out. Sorting on the basis of what is nice to know refers to culling out material like interesting titbits which can be used depending on the availability of time.

The next step is to orderly arrange the selected information. One can start by forming an initial outline followed by writing the first draft. This draft can then be modified and polished to obtain the final presentation. A good presentation has three parts:

- Introduction
- Main content/Body
- Conclusion and Summary

The introduction is where you tell the audience what is going to be presented; the body of the presentation consists of the actual presentation; and the conclusion and summary is where you sum up the presentation.

Introduction: You need to have an important opening line to catch the attention of your audience. You can also begin by introducing yourself if that has not been done before. The introduction should state your purpose, that is, why you are giving the talk followed by your agenda which gives the audience an idea of the major points you will cover.



Fig. 10.3 Introduction

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Main Content/Body: This is the heart of your presentation. In the body of the presentation, explain the Who, What, When, Where, Why and How of your presentation. However, one has to keep in mind the time limitation. Generally, most presentations are limited to two or three main points. Include supporting evidence for the main points of the presentation. To maintain the attention of the audience, include only useful, relevant and interesting supporting evidence. Use clear simple language which the audience can understand.

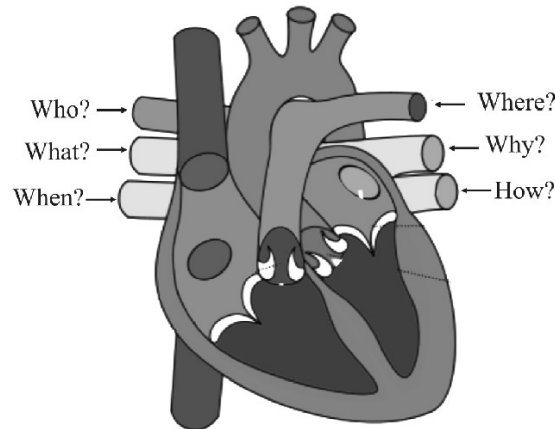


Fig. 10.4 The 'Heart' of Your Presentation

Conclusion and summary: Summarize the points at the end of the presentation to reorient the audience towards the central theme. Many times certain conclusions or inferences drawn from the data presented may also have to be included.



Fig. 10.5 Closing Your Presentation

The closing is as important as the beginning. It is the last impression which the audience carries with them.

Support with visual aids

Visual aids are used to supplement oral presentations. They serve a two-fold purpose. Firstly, they serve as a tool for the presenter to help him remember all the

points of the presentation especially in case of lengthy presentations. Secondly they help the audience to better comprehend and assimilate what is being said. Research shows that audience remembers only 10 per cent of a purely oral presentation and this percentage increases to 50 per cent when the presentation is supported with visual aids. In addition to the above, visuals also break the monotony of only listening to the speaker's voice. If properly designed and used they can highly enhance a presentation.

Choosing a visual aid to suit the presentation is extremely important. Some visual aids have been discussed below:

- (i) **Flip Charts:** These are inexpensive quick visual aids which are suitable for small groups. A flip chart can be prepared during the presentation or before the presentation. It is a useful method to compile audience comments or questions. However, they may not be suitable for a large audience and they also require considerable use of graphical talent. Some of the points to be kept in mind while using flip charts are:

- Restrict an idea or a sketch to one page.
- Words you write should be large enough to be seen by people.
- Write in block letters.
- Use colour to differentiate or emphasize sections.
- Do not write more than ten lines on a page.



Fig. 10.6 Flip Chart

- (ii) **Overhead Transparencies:** These are inexpensive, can be produced quickly and are suitable for an audience ranging from 20–50 persons. An overhead projector is required to project these transparencies on the screen. Some points to be kept in mind while developing overhead transparencies are-

- Do not put too much of information on the transparency.
- Use bold letters while typing.
- Set the OHP on a table lower than the surrounding tables or platform so as not to obstruct the view.

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- Use laser printers to prepare good quality transparencies.

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Fig. 10.7 Overhead Projector

- (iii) **Posters:** These are pre-prepared visual aids. They are available on a variety of topics and contain photographs, diagrams, graphs, and so on. They are suitable for a small audience. Transporting posters can be difficult. Many a time they contain too much of information which is difficult for a large audience to see.

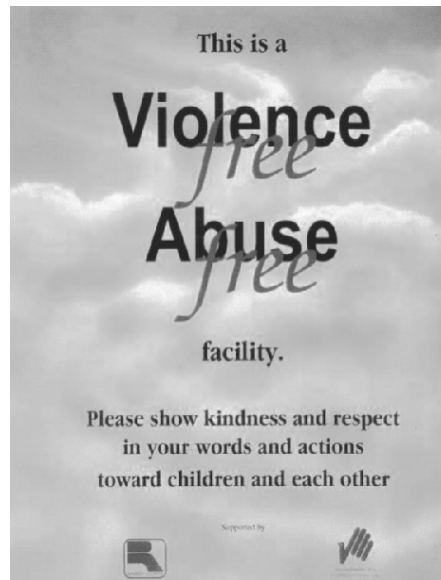


Fig. 10.8 Poster

- (iv) **PowerPoint presentations:** This is the most popular form of visual aids. An LCD projector is required for the projection of PowerPoint slides on the screen.



Fig. 10.9 PowerPoint Presentation

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Rehearse the presentation

At least three rehearsals are recommended of the presentation before the actual delivery. Rehearsals serve a two-fold objective—first, you become comfortable with your material and second, you can identify the areas requiring revision and modify your presentation accordingly.

While rehearsing, imagine the audience in front of you. Stand and deliver your talk aloud. Stop at the allotted time. Then cut and revise the presentation accordingly until you can deliver it within the time limit. Remember to take into consideration the question-answer session.

10.4.2 Handling Questions

Questions from the audience are generally taken up by the presenter at the end of the presentation. However, there may be occasions when speakers prefer the audience to ask questions as he moves through his presentation.

Whatever be the case, the key to handling questions effectively is preparation. One needs to spend time trying to anticipate the questions that might arise and preparing the answers accordingly.

Christine Simons and Belinda N. Stables in their book *Effective Communication for Managers* have given a mnemonic—**TRACT**—for handling questions:

T – Thank the person for asking the question by saying something like ‘Thank you for asking the question, it is a good point.....’.

R – Repeat the question for three reasons:

- To make sure everyone has heard the question

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- To make sure you have understood what the question means
- To give yourself time to answer the question

A – Answer the question if you can. Do not bluff. If you do not know the answer, admit it.

C – Check that you have provided a satisfactory answer for your questioner.

T – Thank them again for the question. ‘Thank you for raising that point. It was most helpful.....’.

Some more points that need to be kept in mind while answering questions are:

- (i) Keep your answers short.
- (ii) Do not allow one or two persons to monopolize the question–answer period. Try and give a chance to as many people as possible to ask their questions.
- (iii) Do not focus only on the questioner while answering the question. If you do so, the rest of the audience may lose interest.
- (iv) Do not humiliate or put down the questioner.
- (v) Break long complicated questions into parts that you can answer simply.

10.4.3 Delivery of Presentation

There are a number of delivery methods to choose from. It is important to decide upon the delivery method best suited depending on the objectives, content and audience. The various delivery methods are:

- (i) Memorizing
- (ii) Reading
- (iii) Speaking from notes
- (iv) Impromptu delivery



Speaking from Notes

Impromptu Delivery

Fig. 10.10 Delivery of Presentation

Memorizing

This method is best avoided unless you are a trained actor. It is a difficult method especially if the presentation is a long one. One is likely to forget points. Memorizing a presentation has the risk of the speaker forgetting the precise words and then groping for words in front of the audience. This decreases the credibility of the speaker. Moreover, a memorized speech is likely to sound monotonous and stiff.

Reading

This method is suitable for a technical or complex presentation. Presentation of the financial budget in the Parliament is one such example. It should be remembered that if one is going to read the presentation it is important to practise enough so as to intermittently maintain eye contact with the audience

Speaking from notes

This is the best way to deliver a presentation. It is easy and effective. This involves making a presentation with the help of outline notes, cards and visual aids. Reference to notes, cards and visual aids ensures that one does not forget anything. It is flexible and can be altered to suit the audience. It allows for eye contact and interaction with the audience.

Impromptu delivery

One must avoid speaking without preparation unless one is a seasoned orator and has spoken many times on the same topic. Sometimes impromptu speeches are unavoidable. In such circumstances, give yourself a couple of minutes to structure your presentation and what you are going to say. Jotting down a few points can be useful.

10.5 PERSONAL ASPECTS OF PRESENTING

Personal aspects of a presenter can be classified into voice, posture, movement, gestures facial expressions and attire. Along with verbal communication, these personal aspects have a bearing on the communication process between the presenter and the audience. A lot is conveyed through personal cues and they can be used to enhance the communication.

10.5.1 Use of Voice

One of your important personal aspects is your voice. It is a part of yourself that adds the human element to your words. Varying pitch, rate and volume make your presentation more interesting and add life to it

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Pitch

Pitch is the highness or the lowness of your voice. While speaking, your pitch should be varied. The lack of pitch variation may result in monotone. A monotonous voice may bore the audience and they may gradually lose interest.

Rate

The rate of speech is the number of words you speak per minute. The rate of speech varies from individual to individual. Research indicates that it lies between 80 and 160 words per minute for public speakers and from 80–250 words per minute for casual conversations. Variation in rate is better than speaking at the same speed. The pause is an important element of the rate of speech. A pause can be used to put emphasis on certain parts of the delivery. Pause also helps you to collect your thoughts.

Very slow delivery rate with lots of pauses results in a dull and boring presentation. On the other hand, if the speaker is speaking very fast it may result in loss of clarity and understanding.

Volume

Volume, that is, the intensity of your voice is another characteristic of your voice that leaves a considerable impact on the audience. You must adapt your voice level to the size of the audience and room. In case amplification is being used, care should be taken not to speak too loudly into the microphone. Another technique used by presenters is emphasizing on certain words by using a louder volume.

Vocal quality

This is something about your voice that distinguishes it from others. For example, some people have a husky voice, some have a vibrant voice, some have a masculine voice, and so on. Your physiological makeup, that is, your vocal chords, tongue, mouth, lips, teeth sinuses, palate, and so on, affect the voice quality. Sometimes if the quality of voice is needs to be improved, it may be helpful to consult a speech therapist.

Pronunciation

Be sure you have the correct pronunciation of words. Regional influences may be there in pronunciations but it is important to minimize them. Some experts advocate listening to educated and cultured people and consulting a dictionary as ways of improving pronunciation.

10.5.2 Appearance and Bodily Movements

Presentation Skills

Another important personal aspect, which has a bearing on the effectiveness of the presentation, is the body language and the appearance of the presenter. Posture, gestures, facial expressions, movement and the appearance/attire of the presenter can add or take away a great deal from the presentation.

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Fig. 10.11 Negative Body Language

Posture

It refers to how you stand or sit. Your posture gives non-verbal cues about you as a communicator. An erect straight posture reflects confidence and complete control. Avoid adopting a casual posture. It reflects an attitude of carelessness. Most business presentations are formal and your posture needs to reflect that.

Gestures

Gestures complement your verbal presentation. Gestures are the movement of hands, arms, head and shoulders. Gestures may be classified as emphatic gestures, descriptive gestures, locative gestures and transitional gestures. *Emphatic gestures* are used to emphasize or lay stress on a word that is important in your message. For example, making a fist and bringing it strongly down on the palm of your hand. *Descriptive gestures* are used to provide a visualization effect for your verbal message. For example, if you are talking of something big you can open your arms wide. *Locative gestures* indicate the direction that is being referred to in the oral presentation. For example, pointing a finger towards something. *Transitional gestures* may be used to list out or enumerate things; for example, counting on your fingers to enumerate, say, the three types of negotiation approaches.

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Fig. 10.12 *Emphatic Gesture*



Fig. 10.13 *Transitional Gesture*

Some points to be kept in mind while gesturing are the following:

- (i) Be natural in your gesturing.
- (ii) Do not overdo or overuse the gestures. They can be annoying or distracting.
- (iii) Gestures should be in consonance with what is being said.
- (iv) Avoid using the same gestures repetitively. Use a variety of gestures.
- (v) Avoid putting your hands in the pockets.
- (vi) Practise your presentation with the gestures you will be using.

Facial Expressions

Facial movements include the movement of your face, eyes and facial muscles. An expressive face is more appealing to the audience than a non-expressive one. It is important to have a pleasant look on your face. Your facial expressions should reflect your interest and enthusiasm in the presentation.

Eye contact with the audience is an important element of your non-verbal language. Do not speak to the wall behind the audience or to your own notes. Maintain eye contact with as many people in the audience as possible. Eyes can convey your sincerity. They are the mirror to your thoughts and emotions. Maintaining eye contact makes the audience feel involved. However, avoid maintaining eye contact with one person for too long.

Movement

Movement is essential for breaking the psychological barrier between you and the audience. It also adds some life to the presentation. Avoid standing at one spot for too long. On the other hand, too much of movement can also have a negative impact. Avoid pacing from one side to another too much during the presentation. The audience may get distracted.

It may be useful to move a few steps towards the audience when you want to emphasize on certain points. Another suggested technique is to walk down the stage and go into the audience. This has a considerable impact on the audience. It

helps the audience connect with you and also arouses their interest in the presentation.

Researchers have identified three positions between which a presenter can shuffle during a presentation. These are the *home position* where the presenter spends most of his time, the *visual position* which the presenter occupies to review the visuals and the *high impact position* which is used sparingly to emphasize certain points in the presentation.

Attire and Appearance

The first thing people notice about you is your appearance and attire. The first impression about you is already formed the moment your audience sees you. Thus, your appearance and what you are wearing gains importance. Your appearance should reflect professionalism, so you must be smartly dressed. Professionalism in dressing creates a positive impact.

Some points to be kept in mind while choosing your attire and dressing up are:

- (i) It is better to be formally dressed than informally dressed so choose a formal business attire.
- (ii) Your clothes should be clean and neatly pressed. Ill-fitting clothes should be avoided.
- (iii) Footwear should match your clothes and be well polished.
- (iv) Your hair should be well kept and combed.
- (v) Keep jewellery and makeup to the minimum.



Fig. 10.14 Types of Attire

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Check Your Progress

3. What are the guidelines for making effective presentation?
4. List the points to be considered while handling questions from the audience.
5. Mention the important aspects with relevance to the attire and appearance of the presenter.

10.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. A Preparing may be defined as a technique of formal communication that involves speaking in front of a group of people or presenting a topic in public.
2. Two non-verbal aspects that are important for a good presentation are the following:
 - (i) Use of good visual aids
 - (ii) A good seating arrangement
3. The guidelines for making effective presentations are the following:
 - (i) Prepare for the presentation.
 - (ii) Know your audience and adapt the contents of your presentation to suit them.
 - (iii) Begin with an attention catcher.
 - (iv) Limit your presentation to 2–3 main points.
 - (v) Be at the venue in advance and familiarize yourself with the lighting, seating, switches, and so on.
 - (vi) Anticipate questions and be ready to respond to probable questions.
 - (vii) Familiarize them with what is going to be presented at the start of the presentation, and then after the presentation, conduct a recap of what was presented. In longer presentations include summaries of main points as you go along.
 - (viii) Use appropriate visual aids
 - For small informal groups use flipcharts, boards or transparencies
 - For larger groups use slides or films

- (ix) Limit each visual aid to three or four lines or five or six points. Use short phrases. Use large readable type
 - (x) Make sure that you know how to use the electronic gadgets and that they work
 - (xi) Keep alternative arrangement ready in case the visual aid does not work
 - (xii) While preparing the presentation take care of the six cardinal questions—What, Why, When, How, Where and Who.
4. Some points that need to be kept in mind while handling questions from the audience are the following:
- (i) Keep your answers short.
 - (ii) Do not allow one or two persons to monopolize the question-answer period. Try and give a chance to as many people as possible to ask their questions.
 - (iii) Do not focus only on the questioner while answering the question. If you do so, the rest of the audience may lose interest.
 - (iv) Do not humiliate or put down the questioner
 - (v) Break long complicated questions into parts that you can answer simply.
5. The important aspects to be considered with reference to the attire and appearance of the presenter are the following:
- (i) It is better to be formally dressed than informally dressed; so choose a formal business attire.
 - (ii) Your clothes should be clean and neatly pressed. Ill-fitting clothes should be avoided.
 - (iii) Footwear should match your clothes and be well polished.
 - (iv) Your hair should be well kept and combed.
 - (v) Keep jewellery and makeup to the minimum.

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10.7 SUMMARY

- A presentation may be defined as a technique of formal communication that involves speaking in front of a group of people or presenting a topic in public.

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- Presentations can be made in classrooms, seminars, meetings, conferences or to simply a group of persons on some scheduled topic.
- A good presentation requires a good mix of communication skills, confidence, subject knowledge and interpersonal skills on the part of the presenter.
- Good preparation is the key to a good presentation. Whatever be the kind of presentation, it essentially involves the following stages:
 - (i) Pre-preparatory stage
 - (ii) Advance analysis
 - Know the objective.
 - Know and analyse your audience.
 - (iii) Preparatory stage
 - Select the main ideas.
 - Obtain the information.
 - Select information, organize material and write the draft.
 - Support with visual aids.
 - Rehearse the presentation.
- Advance analysis involves obtaining in advance knowledge of the objective of the presentation and information about the audience so as to prepare the presentation accordingly.
- Visual aids are used to supplement oral presentations. They serve a two-fold purpose.
- Firstly, they serve as a tool for the presenter to help him remember all the points of the presentation especially in case of lengthy presentations. Secondly they help the audience to better comprehend and assimilate what is being said.
- Personal aspects of a presenter can be classified into voice, posture, movement, gestures facial expressions and attire.
- Facial movements include the movement of your face, eyes and facial muscles. An expressive face is more appealing to the audience than a non-expressive one. It is important to have a pleasant look on your face.
- It is better to be formally dressed than informally dressed so choose a formal business attire.

10.8 KEY WORDS

- **Seminars:** It means a conference or other meeting for discussion or training.
- **Visual aids:** They are items of illustrative matter, such as a film, slide, or model, designed to supplement written or spoken information so that it can be understood more easily.
- **Pitch:** It refers to the quality of a sound governed by the rate of vibrations producing it; the degree of highness or lowness of a tone.
- **Posture:** It means the position in which someone holds their body when standing or sitting.

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10.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are business presentations?
2. Write a short note on the importance of non-verbal ways of enhancing the effectiveness of presentations.
3. List out any five techniques you can use to make effective presentations.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the various stages involved in the process of making presentations.
2. Explain the principles of effective business presentations.
3. Describe the various elements related to voice and their importance in relation to business presentations.

10.10 FURTHER READINGS

- Madhukar, R.K. 2005. *Business Communication*. Noida: Vikas Publishing House.
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BLOCK - IV

WRITING SKILLS

*Overview of Written
Communication*

UNIT 11 OVERVIEW OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

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Structure

- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Objectives
- 11.2 Written Communication
- 11.3 Principles of Effective Writing
- 11.4 Effective Sentences and Paragraphs
- 11.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 11.6 Summary
- 11.7 Key Words
- 11.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 11.9 Further Readings

11.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the concept of written communication. Written communication is the most important and the most effective of any mode of communication in business. It involves any type of message that makes use of the written word. There are various modes of written communication, which we will discuss in the subsequent units. Here, we will examine the advantages of written communication, the principles of effective writing, as well as how to write effective sentences.

11.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the advantages of written communication over oral communication
- Examine the principles of effective writing
- Prepare a note on writing effective paragraphs and sentences

11.2 WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Written communication is essential in every business. Writing is a creative activity. While oral communication is based on spontaneous reactions, written

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communication is more carefully thought out and the information gathered is processed logically. It involves a certain time factor. The writer can take his own time in formulating the message. Then it takes some time to reach the receiver. The receiver then takes his time in understanding and interpreting the message and responding to it. Written communication has fewer cycles than face-to-face communication, that is, in comparison to oral communication, the messages are sent to and fro between the sender and the receiver for a fewer number of times.

Advantages of Written Communication

Written communication has the following advantages over oral communication:

- (i) Written communication has an extremely wide reach.
- (ii) Written communication can be well-organized so as to convey the precise message.
- (iii) Written communication creates records. Maintenance of proper records, letters and reports build up the legal defences of the organization.
- (iv) Written communication promotes uniformity in policy and procedure.
- (v) It can be exactly reproduced or repeated.
- (vi) It can be targeted to reach specific individuals/sections.
- (vii) Written communication can be prepared at a time when the communicator is best prepared to do so.

11.3 PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE WRITING

Written messages can be broken down into the following parts:

- Words
- Sentences
- Paragraphs

Words are the fundamental unit of writing. Words combine to make sentences and sentences are arranged logically to form paragraphs. In addition to this, paragraphs combine to set the overall tone of the message. Writing principles apply to these four elements of the written message.

The following are the principles of effective writing:

1. **Clarity of writing:** For the written message to be clear and understandable to the reader, both clarity of thought and clarity of expression are required on the part of the writer. By being clear about the purpose of the message and knowing exactly what needs to be conveyed to the reader, one can obtain clarity of thought. The writer needs to arrange his thoughts logically before writing them down.

In order to achieve clarity of expression, the message needs to be well-expressed, because if encoding is faulty the message may be misinterpreted. Clarity of expression can be achieved by the following means

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- (i) *Use simple words:* Short and simple words are easily understood and are less likely to be misused. Of course, variety in vocabulary makes the writing impressive but too many long words in a sentence should be avoided. They distract the reader and do more harm than good. It is a myth that the bigger the words, the greater is the intellect of the writer. One needs to remember that writing is to express rather than to impress.

Some short substitutes of words which can be used in place of their longer counterparts so as to enhance clarity are as follows:

Word	Substitute Word
Visualise	See
Recapitulate	Review
Endeavour	Try
Facilitate	help

- (ii) *Use familiar words:* Use words which are familiar to you as a writer and are also likely to be familiar to the reader. For this, you need to possess a good vocabulary to enable you to select the words most appropriate for the reader. Unfamiliar words unnecessarily confuse the reader and he may, ultimately, get disinterested.

Consider this example taken from the book *Contemporary Business Communication* by Scot Ober.

‘The hexad worked with élan so as to redact their report and e-login their guilt.’

This sentence is difficult to understand because it contains a number of words which are unfamiliar to the average reader. Replacing the sentence with the following sentence will definitely make it more clear and understandable.

‘The six people vigorously edited the report so as to conceal their guilt.’

- (iii) *Use short sentences:* To enhance the clarity of writing, use short sentences. Long sentences can be confusing and many a time, they may be misinterpreted. If the sentence is of more than thirty words, break it up.
- (iv) *Use concrete expressions and not vague expressions:* While writing, choose words that have definite and specific meaning. If the words chosen are ambiguous the reader is likely to act based on his own interpretation, which may be different from what the writer intended.

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For example, consider the sentence:

‘The goods are being dispatched soon’.

Here the word ‘soon’ is vague and can mean different time spans for different people. It would be worthwhile revising this sentence to:

‘The goods are being dispatched by 12th July.’

- (v) *Avoid unnecessary use of jargon*: Jargon refers to technical vocabulary used by members to communicate within a specialized group. It is alright to use jargon to communicate within the same specialist group as the words will be familiar to the members and will, hence, be understood by all of them. However, if the reader is from a different field, he is likely to either misunderstand the word or not understand it at all. For example the word ‘virus’ has different meanings for a doctor and a computer specialist. Therefore, it is better to avoid the use of jargon especially for communicating outside ones specialized group.

- (vi) *Avoid ambiguity in framing sentences*: A message is ambiguous if it means more than one thing. Avoid using ambiguous sentences in your message as this may confuse the reader. For example, from the sentence,

‘Please send me two copies of the books, “Who moved my Cheese” and

“Emotional Intelligence at Workplace”,

It is not clear as to what action is expected from the reader. It can mean one copy each of the two books or two copies each of the two books. This sort of ambiguity has to be avoided. It is important to clearly specify the message so that it has the desired impact.

Faulty punctuation is another cause of ambiguity. The complete meaning of a sentence may change if it is punctuated in a different manner as is clear from the following example.

The new assistant said, ‘The manager is very hard working’.

‘The new assistant’, said the manager, ‘is very hard working’.

- 2. **Completeness**: In business communication, completeness of facts is absolutely necessary. This is more so with written communication where immediate feedback is generally not possible. Incomplete information may either result in an incorrect decision or in time being wasted in the follow-up correspondence to complete the gaps in the information. While answering a letter, make sure that you have answered all the questions. While giving some information, check for the five Ws for ensuring completeness, that is, tell the reader the who, what, where, when and why of the information.

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3. **Accuracy:** The accuracy of the message depends on what is said and how it is said. Thus, the message has to be accurate both in terms of truthful presentation of the contents, that is, the facts and figures mentioned in the message and in terms of the timeliness of the message, that is, the message should be conveyed at the appropriate time. The credibility of the written message depends on its accuracy.

For example, consider this sentence taken from a message—‘On Monday, 18 January, the advisory board took the decision to hold the re-examination’. If the reader checks and finds that 18 January was a Sunday and not a Monday, the credibility of the message is reduced and the rest of the message also comes into suspicion as regards its accuracy.

Check and recheck the message for accuracy of the facts and figures, especially where important decisions have to be taken based on the document containing the information.

4. **Appropriate tone and language:** It is not only the accuracy of the contents but the tone in which they are expressed which take away or add meaning to the message. Tone refers to the feelings created by words used to communicate a message. Just as the tone of voice is important in oral communication, the tone of the written communication affects the reader. The selection of the appropriate tone depends on the relationship between the reader and the writer and their relative status in the organization. These factors determine the level of formality of the message. Depending on the level of formality between the writer and the reader, the tone of the message can be informal, semi-formal or strictly formal. The language that involves the selection of words should also be appropriate. Some of the issues to be considered are:

- (i) *Avoid clichés and slang:* Clichés are overused phrases that become boring through overuse. They take away the originality and freshness of the message. Avoid these to present your message from sounding stereotyped and mechanical.

Slang is an informal word or phrase which is not a part of the standard language and is often used by a specific category of individuals. For example ‘Hip’ is the slang for stylish, ‘Pie eyed’ is the slang for drunk.

Use of slang reflects a high degree of informality and should be avoided in written business communication.

- (ii) *Use non-discriminatory language:* Avoid the use of sexist language, that is, words and phrases which show a gender bias. This involves replacing words such as ‘chairman’ with ‘chairperson’, using ‘Sir/Mam’ in the salutation if you are not sure of the person you are addressing. Do not assume that the addressee is a male. With an increasing number of women forming a part of the workforce, this is a common error that is committed. Similarly, a sentence of the kind

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‘The manager should try to convince his customers’ can be replaced by ‘The manager should try to convince the customers’.

Do not use words which lower the dignity of women. Refer to women and men in the same way. Consider the sentence, Mr Ravi Sharma, the lawyer, and Ms Rita Ahuja, the lady doctor, were present for the meeting. Here ‘doctor’ should replace the word ‘lady doctor’.

Writing should also be free from bias based on factors such as race, religion, disability, and so on. Our writing should reflect sensitivity and should not offend others.

The following are examples of the use of masculine pronouns for both sexes and their gender-neutral substitutes.

Gender biased use of pronoun: When a new employee joins the organization, he undergoes an orientation programme of 15 days.

Gender-neutral substitute: A new employee who joins the organization undergoes an orientation programme of 15 days.

Gender biased use of pronoun- When a customer asks for a replacement during the guarantee period, he has to be provided one.

Gender neutral substitute – A customer who asks for a replacement during the guarantee period has to be provided one.

Examples of Words Derived from Masculine Gender and their Gender Neutral Substitutes

Gender biased words	Gender neutral substitutes
Chairman	Chairperson
Businessman	Business executive
Man-made	Manufactured
Workman	Worker
Best man for the job	Best person for the job
Salesman	Salesperson

- (iii) *Avoid negative words:* Some words have a negative connotation associated with them. Avoid using such words. Instead, replace them with substitutes that sound positive.

Some words that reflect negativity are unpleasant like disagree, damage and complaint. Some examples of how negative sounding words can be replaced by words that sound positive are as follows:

Negative – We will not be able to dispatch the goods till 12th July.

Positive – We will be able to dispatch the goods by 12th July.

Negative – Complaint department

Positive – Customer Service Department

Negative – Our product is very cheap as compared to others in the same category.

Positive – Our product is economical as compared to others in the same category.

Negative – I cannot attend the seminar.

Positive – I wish it were possible for me to attend the seminar.

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5. **Courtesy:** Incorporate courtesy in your writing. Apologize sincerely for an omission and thank generously for a favour. Do not be rude or harsh. Timely response to correspondence also reflects courtesy. Follow the golden rule of not replying to any communication when you are angry or upset. A tone of courtesy and sincerity enhances the effectiveness of the message by making it more acceptable to the reader.

Avoid offensive statements even though they may be the truth. Even though such statements may be stating the obvious, they result in humiliating the reader. Such statements best avoided. Consider the examples

Discourteous statement—‘Do not allow your careless attitude to ruin the project.’

Courteous substitute—‘Be careful while handling the project as it is very crucial.’

Discourteous statement—‘You have sent the request to the wrong department. We do not handle queries related to domestic electricity supply.’

Courteous substitute – ‘We have forwarded your query to the domestic electricity supply department as we deal with the commercial supply of electricity.’

In addition to this, courtesy can be achieved by the following techniques:

- (i) *Personalizing the message:* This refers to singling out the reader, that is, address the message directly to the reader rather than generating a common message for a number of readers. Personalized messages tend to make the reader feel important. However, many times this may not be possible; but wherever possible, write directly to one reader to increase the acceptability of the message.
- (ii) *Adopting the You attitude:* Adopting a You attitude helps in adding a sense of goodwill to the message. It holds the interest of the reader and is a recommended style especially for persuasive writing. The following are some examples which illustrate how the I/We attitude can be substituted with the You attitude to improve the effectiveness of communication.

I/ We Attitude Phrase	You Attitude Substitute
(i) We have received the requested documents	(ii) Thank you for the requested documents.
(ii) We have four different schemes in our customers can invest	(ii) You have a choice of four different which schemes to invest in

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6. **Brevity.** Being brief and to the point also contributes to making the writing effective. Brevity in writing saves the reader's time, and is clearer and more interesting. Being brief means conveying only what is relevant and leaving out what is irrelevant or words which are unnecessary. However, brevity at the cost of clarity is not desirable. The following are some of the techniques to achieve brevity in your writing.

- (i) *Avoid wordiness:* Avoid using 4–5 words where one or two words can be used without loss of meaning. The following are examples of how a phrase can be substituted with a single word without loss of meaning.

Wordy Phrase	Shorter Substitute
Along the lines of	Like
In very few cases	Seldom
For the purpose of	For
With a view	To
On the occasion of	On
In the event that	If
In spite of the fact	Although
In the mean time	Meanwhile
At the present time	Now
For the reason that	Because
In the near future	Soon

- (ii) *Avoid surplus words:* To achieve brevity eliminate words that add nothing further to the meaning of the sentence. Examples of sentences containing surplus words and their shorter version are given below

— The *boys who were dismissed* were asked to leave the college campus.

The *dismissed boys* were asked to leave the college campus.

— *There are* six poems *that* need to be memorized.

Six poems need to be memorized.

— The houses *that were* damaged by fire were reconstructed.

The houses damaged by fire were reconstructed.

- (iii) *Avoid using redundant words:* Redundancy means duplication of ideas through the use of different words that mean the same thing. Avoid redundancy, as it serves no logical purpose.

Examples of redundant words include

Assemble together

Longer in length

Repeat again

True fact

Return it back

Past history

Basic fundamental

Free gift

- (iv) Brevity can also be achieved by
- avoiding the overuse of passive voice
 - dropping out ‘which’ and ‘that’ clauses wherever possible

Example— I need a shirt that is blue in colour.

I need a blue shirt.

I received an invitation that was of formal type.

I received a formal invitation.

7. **Appropriate emphasis:** In a message there are some items that are more important than others and these need to be emphasized to get the desired effect of writing. There are certain techniques which can be used to give proper emphasis to the selected parts of the message. These techniques include:

- (i) *Using position for emphasis:* The major emphasis positions are the beginning and the closing of each sentence, paragraph or the message. Place words, sentences or paragraphs at these positions if you want to emphasize them. Other parts of the message that do not need emphasis can be placed between these positions.
- (ii) *Using space for emphasis:* It is natural that the more you say about something, the more likely it is to draw attention. Thus repeating certain points which require emphasis or elaborating them in detail is a useful technique for emphasizing important parts of the message.
- (iii) *Using mechanics for emphasis:* Using bold letters, italicized letters, capital letters, underlining, using a different colour or a different font are some of the ways in which a particular part of writing can be emphasized to readily catch the attention of the reader.

8. **Unity and Coherence:** The message consists of information in the form of words, sentences and paragraphs that need to be logically arranged to give a unified and coherent effect. There is a slight difference between a paragraph that is unified and a paragraph that is coherent.

A unified paragraph gives information directly relevant to the topic and presents it logically. A way of achieving unity in a paragraph is to give the sentence that contains the subject of the paragraph as the opening sentence. This helps the writer to focus on the topic of the paragraph while writing the message.

A message is said to be coherent when each sentence is smoothly linked to the succeeding sentence. Various techniques are known to impart coherence to the message, that is, to bind together the information that

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is presented so as to convey the big picture to the reader. These include the use of transitional words and pronouns, repetition of key words and using parallelism in structure.

- (i) *Using transitional words:* Transitional words tell the reader the thought connection between sentences and the relationship between sentences. Some commonly used transitional expressions are: in addition, moreover, besides, also in contrast, although, but, however, as a result, in the same way, likewise, thus, therefore, for example, in conclusion, to summarize, meanwhile, and so on.
- (ii) *Using pronouns:* As pronouns refer to words that have been previously used, they help in connecting ideas and words they relate to. The use of pronouns like this, that, these, those, he, they, and so on, help in relating ideas in different sentences.
- (iii) *Repeating key words:* By repeating key words from one sentence to the next one can provide a link between two sentences. Avoid needless repetition but use purposeful repetition to achieve coherence in the message.
- (iv) *Using parallelism in structure:* Sentences need to have a parallel structure, which means using a similar grammatical structure for similar ideas, that is, matching adjectives with adjectives, nouns with nouns, infinitives with infinitives, and so on. Parallel sentence structure enhances coherence.

Examples

- ✗ — The player is physically tough and a consistent player.
- ✓ — The player is physically tough and consistent
- ✗ — The management consultant will look into issues related to
 - Training and development
 - How to reduce turnover
 - Managing conflict
- ✓ — The management consultant will look into issues related to
 - Training and development
 - Turnover reduction
 - Conflict management

11.4 EFFECTIVE SENTENCES AND PARAGRAPHS

A paragraph is a group of sentences covering or describing a central idea. Good writers take care to organize their paragraphs sequentially and ensure that each paragraph is well structured. Paragraphs can be long and short depending on the central idea that needs to be conveyed. The length of the paragraph depends

upon the details that the writer wants to cover in that paragraph. Every paragraph essentially consists of topic sentences and supporting sentences.

A topic sentence is the key sentence of the paragraph. Good business writers usually start the paragraph with a topic sentence. It describes the key thought that is elaborated and substantiated in the following support sentences. Although some writers use the key sentences in the middle of the paragraph, opening the paragraph with a topic sentence makes the writing much more effective. When you start a paragraph with a topic sentence, the reader knows exactly what will be dealt with in the subsequent sentences.

Some examples of a topic sentence introducing the central theme of the paragraph to the reader are given below:

- The bank achieved significantly higher profits during the year.
- The company suffered a severe setback during the quarter.
- Communication is a process that involves six different steps.
- Sport plays an important role in character building.
- While preparing a resume, it is important to know what a good resume can achieve.

Each of the sentences above introduces a key message or thought that should be elaborated by supporting sentences. Depending upon the nature of the reader and what details the writer wants to share, the topic sentence is developed into a full paragraph with the help of supporting sentences. Towards the end of the paragraph, the central thought is often reiterated or summarized for greater impact. A support sentence, as noted already, elaborates, substantiates and takes forward the central theme. By its very definition, a support sentence does not bring a new idea or thought that is not in alignment with the topic sentence. The beauty of the paragraph gets enhanced when every support sentence adds clarity and further dimension to the key thought expressed in the beginning.

A good paragraph should also necessarily consist of unity and coherence. A paragraph has unity when every sentence in the paragraph revolves around a particular idea or thought. Unity ensures that there is no unrelated sentence or idea in the paragraph. Similarly, coherence brings in logic or consistency of thoughts. Ideas are developed in a logical order within the paragraph. Good writers learn to make their paragraph convincing and interesting. Such paragraphs are neither too long nor too short. When you are writing a letter, it is desirable to keep each paragraph somewhat short. If you are writing a report or a lengthy article or text message, you may keep paragraphs relatively long. If you are giving instructions through a memo or a circular letter, it is better to keep the paragraphs short. The grasp or absorption of the idea is easier in short paragraphs. If paragraphs extend beyond a page, reading gets tedious. Take care of your paragraphs and your writing becomes effective. To sum up, a paragraph is a section of a piece of writing of variable length, starting on a fresh, often indented, line and dealing with a distinct

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point or idea. Make sure that every paragraph of yours starts with an indent or an appropriate margin.

Good writers develop logical paragraphs. Logical paragraphs are those which move from idea to idea in an organized manner. While each paragraph itself is self-contained in terms of a specific idea, the sequencing of paragraphs is such that the message is presented step by step. Developing paragraphs logically and sequentially calls for advance planning. The writer should be clear in his or her mind about the entire message and in what order it should be presented. Whether it is a letter or a memorandum or a report or a brochure or any such piece of writing, the writer should mentally organize the entire message before breaking it into appropriate paragraphs. Each paragraph should be such that one idea stands out. As we have noted already, unity, coherence and well thought out sequentially developed topics will lead to the development of logical paragraphs. Keeping them short will help in engaging the reader. Talking about the length of the paragraphs, while no hard and fast rule can be laid down, about 8-10 sentences on an average (per paragraph) would help in making the writing reader friendly, and about 10–15 words per sentence would enhance readability.

Embellishment relates to making the paragraphs neat and appealing. This is done by inserting the design elements into the paragraphs. Such design elements include headings and sub headings, spacing, use of bullets and, very importantly, use of graphics like charts and graphs. These elements make for lighter reading and bring down the tedium aspect. Bullets can be used to highlight the sequence of actions or to list out items or to bring out key points. Similarly, graphics can replace the sentences and lengthy statements using numbers and words. Readers can get the message more clearly with one glance at the charts, instead of reading several lengthy sentences.

There can be no meaningful writing without a sentence. Words by themselves cannot convey much until they are put together in the form of a sentence. A sentence is defined as a sequence of words forming a meaningful grammatical structure that can stand alone as a complete utterance. In written English, a sentence usually begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, question mark or exclamation mark. Sentences can make or mar your writing. Put life and meaning into your sentences and they convey the message you wish to convey. Sentences are of many kinds—long or short, topic or support sentences and simple or compound. Each of them has a relevance and its own place in effective writing.

Like we have discussed in respect of paragraphs, sentences too can be long or short. It is possible to write very long sentences. In fact, in written English literature, there are examples of sentences that stretch up to 300 words. There are many examples in company manuals and reports where sentences run up to 40–50 or even more words. Long and winding sentences that are loaded with ideas, one after the other, certainly hamper readability. The reader has to make extra

efforts to grasp the message. The sentence has to be read again and again (repeatedly to make sense). Research studies have clearly shown that reader's comprehension or understanding drops as the sentences get longer. The comprehension level of a reader is much higher with about 15 words than when the sentence has 25 or more words.

Readability is the process by which writing and speech are judged for their level of acceptance. Readability suffers when the sentences stretch beyond an acceptable length. This acceptable length depends upon the nature of writing and the target readers. If you are addressing someone who is already well informed about the subject and whose reading and comprehension abilities are fairly high, somewhat longer sentences should be acceptable. If you are giving instructions or introducing the subject or writing to someone whose reading and comprehension abilities are not high, it is better to keep your sentences simple and short. Generally speaking, short sentences are those with about 10–15 words. While short sentences are desirable, they may not always be appropriate in conveying the message. A good writer needs to make the sentences longer depending upon the content and context. We cannot prescribe a standard uniform length for writing under all circumstances. Any such strait jacket approach would certainly restrain the writer's effectiveness. There is no need to ensure a uniform length for all your sentences. Make it short. Make it long. Make it meaningful and interesting. More importantly, make your sentences reader friendly.

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Check Your Progress

1. How are paragraphs formed?
2. What does the accuracy of the message depend upon?
3. What is tone?
4. What is the key sentence of the paragraph?

11.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Words combine to make sentences and sentences are arranged logically to form paragraphs.
2. The accuracy of the message depends on what is said and how it is said.
3. Tone refers to the feelings created by words used to communicate a message.
4. A topic sentence is the key sentence of the paragraph. Good business writers usually start the paragraph with a topic sentence.

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11.6 SUMMARY

- Written communication is essential in every business. Writing is a creative activity. While oral communication is based on spontaneous reactions, written communication is more carefully thought out and the information gathered is processed logically.
- Written messages can be broken down into the following parts:
 - o Words
 - o Sentences
 - o Paragraphs
- Words are the fundamental unit of writing. Words combine to make sentences and sentences are arranged logically to form paragraphs. In addition to this, paragraphs combine to set the overall tone of the message.
- For the written message to be clear and understandable to the reader, both clarity of thought and clarity of expression are required on the part of the writer.
- The message has to be accurate both in terms of truthful presentation of the contents, that is, the facts and figures mentioned in the message and in terms of the timeliness of the message, that is, the message should be conveyed at the appropriate time.
- It is not only the accuracy of the contents but the tone in which they are expressed which take away or add meaning to the message.
- The message consists of information in the form of words, sentences and paragraphs that need to be logically arranged to give a unified and coherent effect.
- A paragraph is a group of sentences covering or describing a central idea. Good writers take care to organize their paragraphs sequentially and ensure that each paragraph is well structured.
- Logical paragraphs are those which move from idea to idea in an organized manner. While each paragraph itself is self-contained in terms of a specific idea, the sequencing of paragraphs is such that the message is presented step by step.
- Readability is the process by which writing and speech are judged for their level of acceptance. Readability suffers when the sentences stretch beyond an acceptable length.

11.7 KEY WORDS

- **Brevity:** It means concise and exact use of words in writing or speech.
- **Clichés:** It means a phrase or opinion that is overused and betrays a lack of original thought.

- **Ambiguous:** It means something that is open to more than one interpretation; not having one obvious meaning.
- **Embellishment:** In this context, it relates to making the paragraphs neat and appealing.

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11.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the difference between written communication and oral communication?
2. In business communication, why is completeness of facts absolutely necessary?
3. How can one bring about unity and coherence in the message?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the advantages of written communication over oral communication?
2. Examine the principles of effective writing.
3. How one can write effective sentences and paragraphs? Give examples.

11.9 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 12 TECHNICAL WRITING

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Structure

- 12.0 Introduction
- 12.1 Objectives
- 12.2 Introduction to Technical Writing
 - 12.2.1 Purpose of Technical Writing
 - 12.2.2 Characteristics of Technical Writing
 - 12.2.3 Types of Technical Documents
 - 12.2.4 The Technical Writing Process
- 12.3 Creative Writing
- 12.4 Editing
 - 12.4.1 Publishing
- 12.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 12.6 Summary
- 12.7 Key Words
- 12.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 12.9 Further Readings

12.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you were introduced to written communication. Here, we will discuss the process of technical writing, its purpose and characteristics. Technical writing is a type of writing where the author is writing about a particular subject that requires direction, instruction, or explanation. Technical writing has a very different purpose and different characteristics than other writing styles such as creative writing, academic writing or business writing. The unit will also discuss creative writing, editing and publishing in the subsequent sections.

12.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the purpose and characteristics of technical writing
- Explain the technical writing process
- Examine the essentials of creative writing
- Describe the various types of editing

12.2 INTRODUCTION TO TECHNICAL WRITING

Technical writing is the kind of practical writing that people do as a part of their jobs. Technical writing is an inherent part of written communication in all organizations and is important for the organizations to maintain themselves.

12.2.1 Purpose of Technical Writing

According to Killingsworth, technical writing has three basic purposes:

1. To inform
2. To instruct
3. To persuade

In order to carry out various activities in the workplace, people need to receive and supply information. Technical writing is also used to give instructions. Written instructions may involve directions for using equipment or for performing duties. Technical writing is used to persuade the readers to follow a particular course of action. For example, a technical report may be used to persuade a reader to select a particular site for setting up a new plant.

12.2.2 Characteristics of Technical Writing

Technical writing has the following four characteristics:

1. Technical writing is aimed at a specific audience. Technical writers generate documents keeping the audience characteristics and requirements in mind.
2. Technical writing is framed in simple objective language with terminology that the audience understands. Unnecessary elaboration of feelings or emotional interpretation of the subject are avoided.
3. Good technical writing is well structured, thus enabling the reader to easily assimilate the information.
4. Technical writing is generally with the use of visuals like graphs, tables and drawings. These enhance the effectiveness of the written document.

12.2.3 Types of Technical Documents

Though the basics of technical writing remain the same, there are many types of technical documents that can be generated to suit different purposes and different audiences. Various types of technical documents include:

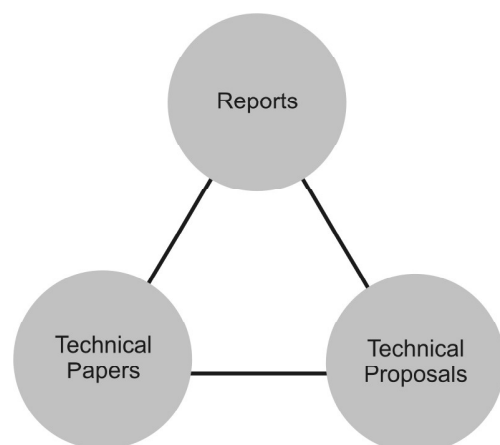


Fig 12.1 Technical Documents

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12.2.4 The Technical Writing Process

In their book, *Technical Report Writing Today*, D.G. Riordan and S.E. Pauley have given an overview of the technical writing process. According to them, the goal of the writing process is to generate a clear effective document for an audience. Experienced writers achieve this goal by performing three types of activities:

- Pre-writing: Planning
- Writing: Drafting and Revising
- Post Writing: Finishing

Planning involves collecting all relevant information about the communication situation and working out a tentative plan to create the document. Drafting is selecting and organizing all the information to be presented in the document. Finally, finishing involves editing the document and getting it into a presentable shape.

Planning

Planning is the basis of any activity and the same is true for technical writing. The more you plan the better will be the final document.

Some of the issues to be kept in mind while planning the document are:

- (i) *Audience*: You need to know the following about your audience:
 - Who is the audience who will be reading the document?
 - Will it be an individual or a group?
 - How much does the audience know about the topic?
 - How important is the topic to the audience?
- (ii) *Goal of the writing process*: This involves knowing the answer to the following questions:
 - What is the theme of the document?
 - What is the purpose of the document?
- (iii) *Constraints*: Constraints are social and physical factors that affect both the ability to write the document and the reader's ability to respond to it. This involves having sufficient information regarding the following:
 - The format to be followed
 - The number of pages in the final document
 - Time given for preparing the material
- (iv) *Gist of the document*: You need to plan the central topic and the major sub-themes on which the document will be based. Develop an outline of the document by deciding the various sections and their sequence. Also decide on the kind of visual aids that will be used like tables, pie charts, bar graphs, maps, and so on.

Planning Checklist

Source: D.G. Riordan and S.E. Pauley, *Technical Report Writing Today, 5th Edition*. Delhi: AITBS Publishers and Distributors, 1996, pp 28–30.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is my audience?
 - (a) Who will read this document?
 - (b) How much do they know about the topic?
 - (c) Why do they need the document?
 - (d) What will they do with it or because of it?
 - (e) Will other people read this document? What do they need to know?
- What is my goal in this writing situation?
 - (a) What basic message do I want to tell my audience?
 - (b) Why do I need to convey that message?
- What social constraints affect this situation?
 - (a) What expectations exist for this kind of document's appearance or structure?
 - (b) What is the reader's personal history with the topic? Who knows more? Who less?
 - (c) Who has authority to issue this kind of document?
- What physical constraints affect this situation?
 - (a) Time?
 - (b) Length?
 - (c) Money?
 - (d) Production method?
 - (e) Distribution?
 - (f) Place of use?
- What are the basic facts?
 - (a) What do I already know?
 - (b) Where can I read more?
 - (c) With whom can I discuss the matter further?
 - (d) Where can I observe actions that will reveal facts?
- What is an effective strategy?
 - (a) Develop a central metaphor?
 - (b) Use definition followed by example and analogy?
 - (c) Use an organizational principle (such as top to bottom).
- What is an effective outline?
 - (a) Is there a standard outline?
 - (b) Does it have specified sections?
 - (c) What is the usual sequence of sections?
 - (d) What is the usual content of the sections?

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- What is the outline, if no standard outline exists?
- Create an outline based on the results of brainstorming, treeing or rapidly writing a draft.
- What is the proper tone?
- What formats and visual aids should I use?
 - (a) Select margins, heads and fonts.
 - (b) Write a style sheet.
 - (c) Choose visual aids that clarify essential information.
- What is my production schedule?
 - (a) How much time do I have?
 - (b) How will I produce the document?
 - (c) Which tasks will I finish first?
 - (d) How long will it take to complete each task?

Drafting and Revising

Once the planning stage is over, the actual writing begins. This step of the writing process takes considerable time. Write the first draft of the document based on the complete information collected during the planning stage. Let ideas flow smoothly and write them down. Do not worry about the correctness, style or format. Some writers, rather than writing the document in a pre-determined sequence, prefer to write important sections and subsections first and then combine them with the other sections.

After having produced the first draft of your report leave it aside for some time as this enables you to give a fresh look to the document (this may not be possible if the finished document is to be provided urgently). Revise the document for the following:

Content: Make sure that all the relevant information has been included. It should be presented in a logical sequence which the reader should be able to comprehend.

Style: Review the complete document from the point of view of style of writing. The style of writing should be consistent and impressive.

Accuracy: The information presented should be correct in terms of content and mechanics.

Finishing the document

This is the final stage. This involves editing the document and producing it. Editing means changing the text till it is consistent and accurate. The document needs to be put into a format which is consistent and visually appealing. Major headings and minor headings need to be differentiated. For this, different styles, fonts, sizes, and so on, can be used. Some documents have to be presented in a standard format which is provided by the concerned organization/authority.

Proofreading involves checking the document for spelling, punctuation, basic grammar, format of page and accuracy of facts. A well-proofread document is free from errors and provides credibility to the document. The document is then produced on the desired stationery.

Check Your Progress

1. What is the purpose of technical writing?
2. In the technical writing process, what does planning involve?

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12.3 CREATIVE WRITING

We come across all sorts of examples of creative writing starting from our experience in school as well as in our professional life. These days a lot of importance is given to project based learning where students are made aware about the importance of presentation and clear communication at an early age at school. At college, business communication is embedded in different courses wherein students are made aware of the practical use of their learning. This serves many purposes – the students have clarity about their field of study or specialization, they are able to promote their course to others, they become aware of the opportunities available to them during and after the completion of their course. Sharing this knowledge with the students at different stages is not just about sharing advantages and disadvantages in black and white but requires the ability of the writer to get across the audience for whom the text is intended. Getting across somebody means the ability to communicate the message in a way, which the reader can relate to, which ignites the interest of the reader to learn further, and it encourages them to read further. It involves thinking outside the box, stepping outside the existing norms to explain any given point of view or to present the facts in the form of a story with sufficient examples and parallels to explain the content to the reader. But have you ever wondered why so much importance is given to presentation of the content these days? Because it is not a requirement, but more of a necessity these days.

Necessity of Creative Writing

Creative writing is required in all walks of life be it in school or higher studies, at the work place or at the market place. If you pay attention to the written content you come across from morning till evening be it inside your house when you sit and have your breakfast with a newspaper in hand to when you step out and walk on the road, look at all the text you can read on your way, you will realize that creativity is delivered to you in different forms. It is indeed a part and parcel of our day to day life. To sum up creative writing is required:

- To communicate
- To entertain

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- To sell a product
- To create awareness
- To grab your attention
- To bring up artistic expression
- To stimulate new ideas and imagination
- To clarify the thought process
- To search for identity
- To read and write

These days creative writing is offered as a full time course at few universities across the globe. Few other courses may include creative writing as a part of their curriculum such as mass media and communication, but what is important is that this should not be seen like just any other subject. A proper environment of learning, practicing, discussion, feedback and assessment process should be in place so as to hone the skills for creative writing.

You may have come across student publications in schools from children and also newsletters in work places. They are good platforms for one to express and communicate to a larger group. While at one hand for a student writing in a school publication gives a sense of pride and achievement to him/her, on the other hand it also gives an opportunity to do an extra bit of revision, proofreading, etc. which they otherwise might be not like to do.

Importance of Creative Writing

Creative writing is the foundation stone of innovation and ideas which goes on to prove the famous saying. 'It was impossible until someone did it'.

Creative writing is an important skill as it develops the individual's powers of expression, empathy and critical thinking. While some may be of the idea that the skill of creative writing is needed only for the ones in the liberal arts field, well that may be untrue because to communicate effectively it is important in all aspects of life be it in the business or the non-business world.

Many people, especially in the business world, appreciate information shared with them in a concise way as much as they would appreciate a well worded creatively written newsletter. Be it internal memos, emails or any other form of corporate communication, it will be appreciated more when it is tailored to their requirement.

On a very individual level, creative writing is used to explore and magnify writing skills that you never knew you had and the process of writing itself makes you a "balanced" human being. While some education systems tend to work more towards developing the left side of the brain with numbers and logic and neglect the right side which leans more towards the creativity and emotions. This discrimination creates an imbalance and hence creative writing is important.

When students pursuing higher education take creative writing as a subject, it inculcates so many emotions and creative aspects in them and not just builds their creative writing skills. It produces historians, researchers, critical thinkers, commentators, problem solvers and communicators. It helps us to analyze human nature so intimately. For a better reception to one's creative writing it is important to be original, authentic and relatable.

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Tips to Develop, Improve and Excel in Creative Writing

Most writers who intend to do creative writing will take off with the work the moment they think they have a pen and a paper. While they are of the idea that they are born geniuses at work and hence need no preparation. However they would have no idea as to what they would be writing upon. This approach plagues most of the writers today who would start abruptly and would soon be worn out.

Planning and Getting started: If you are planning to start with an assignment, which is short term but still demands high on creative index then it requires planning. First and foremost we have to think about the reader and what would it take to keep them interested.

- (a) For example if you are writing for an exam , an essay that would be read by the teacher and evaluated, you have to bear in mind that if you write the same routine stuff then there are chances that you would be marked averagely . For you to stand out you have to write something different which awakens the teacher because she is going to read multiple pieces of writing. If the style is different and the language is simple, the plot is catchy and the message is clear chances are that you would be marked better than the rest of the usual crowd.
- (b) Since the teachers would also be pressed for time, they would also be impressed with short, clear, precise, and well written pieces of rich content.
 - **Create time for reading and writing:** As a young budding creative writer, we need to develop a habit of reading literary works; to develop a taste for literature and creative writing. Nothing can better feed creativity than reading books. We need not be selective about the genre. But at the same time we should read books that drive our imagination, and make us think about life and people.
 - **Gather experiences:** If we get stuck in the monotony of our lives and the routines that come along with it free then we fail to gather experiences. The more risks we take, newer experiences we create, the more we will have to write about.
 - **Interacting with people:** While it may seem difficult to interact with varied walks to life, it's advisable to have a versatile group of people in our lives that will introduce us to various aspects in our life and hone our writing skills as a whole.

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- **Watch movies:** Nowadays with the onset of the digital age, movies have a lot of impact on our lives and they are easily accessible as well. We should be able to choose those with good vocabulary and dialogues with high quality dramatic content.
- **Live with it:** No matter how good you are at writing, you will not be able to connect with the audience until and unless we are able to relate with it. Live with each character you create.

Tips for Quality Creative Writing

Usage of language and the styles of writing are ever changing and hence good creative writing not merely a matter of talent. We also need to learn good creative writing skills. This could be achieved either by proactive apprentice or by organized learning institutions.

The selective quality of good creative writing or the lack of it to express whether one is in the field of journalism advertising or any corporate position makes one a good or a bad communicator. Since the requirement and the toning required for each position is unique, any trained communicator or writing even if one is trained, has to undergo training in a unique way. Thus industries like publishing, journalism, creative communication, advertising requires special skills and orientation. Hence it becomes necessary to take them through a special training.

Good creative writing gives a lot of rewards as a person and as a professional. However you need to take care of certain things. For example in creative fiction writing:

- **Long paragraph and rich details:** Short paragraphs are easier to read and understand but a skilled writer used long and detailed picturisation.

Over the weekend the vultures got into the presidential palace by pecking through the screens on the balcony windows and the flapping of their wings stirred up the stagnant time inside, and at dawn on Monday the city awoke out of its lethargy of centuries with the warm, soft breeze of a great man dead and rotting grandeur. Only then did we dare go in without attacking the crumbling walls of reinforced stone, as the more resolute had wished, and without using oxbows to knock the main door off its hinges, as others had proposed, because all that was needed was for someone to give a push and the great armoured doors that had resisted the lombards of William Dampier during the building's heroic days gave way.

Abridged from Nobel laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez' *Autumn of the Patriarch*

- **Breaking the punctuation rule:** At times you can break the punctuation rule and still be a good writer.

- **Poetic Justice:** At times you may not understand the language and the meaning that you are reading or writing. But you should learn to enjoy the beauty of the language.

Self-Evaluation of Creative Writing

Many a times you need not have someone else to tell you how good your current piece of work is or how it could have been better. There are many pointers along the journey of your creative writing which will show them their improvements. Often writers have a feeling that they are not good enough. This is especially self-discouraging as they fail to see the merits and the strengths in their own words. But the point is they have conquered them again and again.

Here are some pointers that can reassure that you are a good writer or you are on a definite path of improvement.

1. **Positive peer review:** If you come across any peer and friends who have been impressed with your writing and have congratulated on your piece of creative writing you can rest assured that you are on the path of progress. This can also be sought by showing a piece of work to your fellow writers and seek an opinion. It could be a risky proposition but this can be one of surest way to seek impartial feedback.
2. **Look back and compare:** Whether you are a poet, composer, blogger or a prose writer, from time to time you need to compare your old work with the newer ones to see how you have written in the past and how you are writing today. You may not see that there is a paradigm change but you can always compare to check for improvements in the overall structure of your work or basic things like sentence construction.
3. **Better grasp of basics:** One of the surest signs of improvement is that if you have improved grammar spelling and punctuation which are an important part of a good piece of writing. You need not always be formally instructed about the usage but if you approach them with an intuitive manner, that it will be enough. Most writers concentrate on the creative bit while the editors with their sharp eyes look for the grammar spelling and punctuation.
4. **Police yourself for sloppy work:** We are smart at finding faults at others and tend to overlook our own badly written pieces of work. Any time you get a chance to critically evaluate your own bit of work, do not hold back and wear the editor's hat. You will find that you can be your own critique and see for improvements yourself.
5. **Your guest post is published:** Here is a big one. We all read the web blogs and tend to comment and write critically. If you follow a big and a famous blog and you in your natural instincts, post some comment as a guest and this guest post gets published, consider that your writing skills have improved so much so that it is being

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acknowledged by others. Famous blogs just don't take comments from anyone and publish them. It takes some finesse to be published.

6. **Shortlisted in a competition:** They say – you can't win, or get shortlisted – if you don't enter. There are plenty of writing competitions from major national ones to focused writers competitions. Many magazines call for monthly entries at various levels. You might not win – in the first few attempts but even if you reach the shortlist, forget worrying about how tough the competition is, or how good other writers are, you put your best piece forward.
7. **Get paid:** None of the professional would hire you as a writer or pay off your piece of work if your piece is not worth it and you are not confident about it. You need not always make a living from your creative writing; you can also be a freelance who can make some extra income from which will be a revalidation that you are a good writer.

Distinguishing: Good from Ordinary

As a reader of literature or fiction, one does not look for a great writing style; he or she is looking for a great story. Well, that does not mean that making an extra effort to meticulously check for grammar, diction, and syntax should ever be regarded redundant.

What differentiates the amateur from professional writing is that professional writers go that extra mile by conceiving, planning, and drafting, writing, rewriting, editing, proofreading and so on.

Here is an example of how the author is describing the interior settings of a church.

".....It had hat shelves and coat racks along both sides. There were double doors leading into the sanctuary, which was plain but neat. There was a carpeted main aisle that ran from the doors to the altar. There were neat rows of oak pews on both sides of the aisle. Secondary aisles ran along both sides of the church between the pews and the windows. On the raised platform in front, there was an altar, a lectern, and behind that were two rows of chairs for the choir. There was a fairly new piano on the left side of the platform..."

Taken from ***Gotcha! A Murder in Warrensburg*** by Wayne Hancock

<http://bit.ly/2kfzi8T>

This is a piece of ordinary writing because of the simple reason because the larger picture for the reader is not kept in mind while writing the piece but just the words written are in focus.

This excerpt contains ten clauses, eight of which have has or have for the main verb. There have been lot of word repetitions and the sentence opening like "... it had hat shelves." is abrupt. I do not say that such paragraphs once in a while in the whole book will spoil the entire mood of the reader but this can lead to the

writer being underrated. Since the word choice is imaginative and passages just contain words and nothing to connect the scenes in the book.

This is one just concrete example. There could be many instances which differences a great piece from ordinary.

In a drama, dialogues are the blood and characters are brought to life and depending on the scene readers can be in tears. In prose, the words, the perspective, the characters, and how closely the story is knitted. So as a writer of fiction or nonfiction, your focus should not only be on your subject but also on the reader.

Here are some common pitfalls that you can avoid to take yourself away from the ordinary.

1. **Repetition:** Repetition of words, sounds, letter combinations and word forms can lead to disinterest and permanent rejection from the readers.
2. **Direct dialogue:** Sometimes in a creative piece of work where you want to portray the characters through dialogue.
It is a good idea that you can avoid direct questions and answers in a straight forward manner. This is the biggest distraction for the reader. Rather it is sometimes a good idea to be subtle, indirect and deliberate antagonism between characters. But only sometimes and in perspective
3. **Uninterrupted dialogue:** Stories succeed because they are a mix of action, dialogue, exposition, conflict and so on. When any element takes over or is stretched then this is noticed by readers and becomes a drag.
4. **Usage of flowery language:** Usage of adverbs, adjectives and lofty words in place of simple language where it is not required is not advised. This does not appeal to the readers today.
5. **Avoiding fillers:** If the story or the plot is simple and straight forward, it has been noticed that the writers tend to use a lot of fillers. Simple and straight if we want to differentiate the good from the ordinary then we will have to put the dialogue to work. Avoid the fillers and go for the substance with purposeful talk.
6. **Words that don't fit the era:** Many contemporary writers in modern day times are able to churn quality literature because they have used a modern style of writing which the readers are used to hearing and reading. Also the choice of words has to be relevant rather than archaic.
7. **Freedom to characters:** A good writer would let the characters be as they are supposed to be and not curb for the want of political correctness. The characters should have the freedom to express whatever it is.

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8. **Dialogue with a subtext:** A good writer will always understand that importance of dialogues with an underling meaning. If it is all surface then the charm of the creative writing is lost and readers will quickly get bored.
9. **Preaching political /religious beliefs:** One of the surest ways to limit the readers and ensure that they don't come back is when you start making the characters your mouthpiece of the political and the religious beliefs that you carry. That could be done through the dialogues that we use and the setting that can be done with our piece of writing. You will have readers who may agree with your theories but then you will have a hard time convincing your unbiased genuine readers. This is similar to the spiritual gurus preaching their pet theories. You definitely want the readers to experience that you are teaching or preaching.

While the above was more focused to fictional writing, some of them are also applicable to non-fiction writing as well. However here are some caveats that can help us producing some great nonfiction work.

1. **Spontaneity:** While this could be a great plus for fiction writing, it is not so welcome in non-fiction writing. Non-fiction requires lot of research and planning and hence it is a good idea to be well-planned and calculated.
2. **Lack of purpose:** Many a times writers start with a great focused target, while on the way they lose sight of the original purpose. This is an easy pitfall. Writers in genres of journalism and memoirs should try and write to the point and not let the plot go haywire. Things like the plot, the points that the writer is trying to convince the readers should be kept in mind. Each portion of the writing should be well planned so that readers don't lose interest while reading it. For example, while planning an autobiography it is important to plan each chapter and do justice to the chronological layout of the events.
3. **Unconvincing statement and poor arguments:** Lot of non-fiction research work and essays are all flat because of the simple fact that they present loosely bound statements and unconvincing arguments. Such a piece is bound to be less appreciated by the readers, especially, when all such statements should be backed by knowledge, research and validity. It is better to be conservative in the claims that present poor arguments which can be outrightly rejected by the readers.
4. **Lifeless writing:** Though the genre is non-fiction, even a straight forward email or a well-researched essay can be lifeless if this is not well worded and lifeless.

5. **Illogical confusing and non-existent transitions:** Be it a book, chapter, article from a magazine, blogpost, or an email, nothing is more confusing for the readers if the ideas are that aren't clearly explained. That is why editing is important to bring about a considerable quality in the writing so that readers are not left confused and don't jump the ship.

Above all, every writer needs to discover his or her niche while attempting to succeed because the generalist writers' arena is flooded with freelance writers, bloggers and content creators. One needs to discover their own specialty and expertise that they have that sets him or her apart from other writers. Knowing ones strengths and weaknesses can also help decide what work to take and what to avoid. By this they would do a great service to the readers. It is also important that they realize this because they have to play an important role in opinion building.

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12.4 EDITING

Editing plays an integral part in the art of creation of any media product. We unknowingly and informally work through the process of editing on numerous occasions, sometimes consciously, at other times not. For instance, when a four-year old composes his first poem and jangles along repeatedly and rhythmically fine tuning his 'sun-bun-fun' and checking them for rhyming words, he is editing; as the young recruit rehearses a zillionth time, his facial expressions, before being confronted by his superior for uninformed absence from work, he is editing; when a young receptionist practices voice modulation and greetings protocol over and over again, trying to meet perfection she is editing; and so is the old professor, recalculating all the figures and going over the numerous formulae before submitting his crucial paper on trigonometric sciences for that eminent journal.

Sometimes, editing is more formally engaged for, by say, an author who has just drafted a book; or a creative producer who is about to invest money in a new musical on TV. Articles written for magazines, journals and newspapers generally require editorial inputs to ensure a consistent format and style. Corporate clients regularly engage freelance writers to rewrite and better phrase their content relating to marketing flyers, brochures and other paraphernalia.

Thus, when the process of correction is consciously undertaken by an author on self, it is defined as *self-editing*; but when he decides to outsource his work to external experts it comes under the umbrella of *professional editing*.

Editing may be categorized variedly based on the author's requirement, the structure of the passage and its design:

- I. **Content editing:** This may further be divided into developmental/project editing or substantive/structural editing based on the nature of work to be done.

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- *Developmental editing*, also known as project editing, is done when an author engages an editor right from the inception of an idea to develop a manuscript or draft from the initial stages about the concept. The editor is also required to make appropriate suggestions about its content, presentation and body, sometimes using tools like research and analysis to make the contents more impressive, crisp and authentic.
- *Structural or substantive editing* is done when an author seeks the help of an editor to better his already existing manuscript or passage. The aim is to improve clarity and the flow of thoughts by rephrasing or reorganizing a few lines or paragraphs, adding some more text, correcting typos and rectifying other general mistakes.

II. Copy editing: Also called line, mechanical or stylistic editing; it is primarily done by an editor when he simply checks any passage for grammar, punctuation and text style. Here an editor systematically reviews the text for appropriate word usage and voice of text, re-checks tabulated information and references, and gauges the contents against defined formats, grammatical rules, spellings and syntax errors.

III. Proof editing: This is simply a process where an editor checks a piece of writing for typographic errors, spelling mistakes, and minor inconsistencies. Here, the editor makes no stylistic changes at all.

Need and Purpose of Editing

A detailed study of the growth of newspapers and periodicals will enable us to understand the need and perspective of editing better. During the past two hundred years, the advent of technology has revolutionized the composing and printing processes. Earlier, all the publications depended on hand-composing. Metal types were used. There were limited fonts. As people began accepting this mode of receiving and reading information, the flat-bed printing machines were replaced by high-speed rotary units enabling newspapers to publish large number of copies with an hour or so. It enabled newspapers to have large circulation. Thus, by the middle of the 20th century, the popularity of newspapers had grown exponentially, and people banked on them for national, international and regional news. Soon, the newspaper became an inseparable part and routine in the daily lives of the masses and classes alike.

With the growth in technology, rising number of copies and printing costs, it became mandatory for newspapers to factor their high costs of production through advertisements. With the arrival of television and radio channels, competition became tougher. Soon, the thick and dense news contents gave way to crisper, sharper, more precise articles to accommodate the revenue spinning advertisements. It was a relationship of convenience where the advertiser got the reach for his products, and the newspaper publisher or broadcaster the much wanted revenue.

But everyone soon realized that to attract lucrative ad revenues they couldn't let their circulation figures drop and only good linguistic and classy content could ensure circulation and TRP's. Thus, the art of editing came into being where the job of the editor became to roll out interesting, enriching and informative content in the confines of defined space and word counts, within a stipulated amount of time, maintaining the style, structure, standard and image of the said publication or channel.

12.4.1 Publishing

Essentially, publishing refers to the business or profession of the commercial production and issuance of literature, information, musical scores or sometimes recordings, or art. Traditionally, publishing meant the distribution of printed works such as books and newspapers. However, with technological advancements like the Internet, the scope of publishing has expanded to include electronic resources such as the electronic versions of books and periodicals, as well as micropublishing, websites, blogs, video game publishers, and the like. Publishing encompasses the following stages of development: acquisition, copy editing, production, printing (and its electronic equivalents), marketing and distribution.

Check Your Progress

3. What is the importance of creative writing?
4. Why do writers need to discover their niches?
5. What is publishing?

12.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. According to Killingsworth, technical writing has three basic purposes:
 - To inform
 - To instruct
 - To persuade
2. In the technical writing process, planning involves collecting all relevant information about the communication situation and working out a tentative plan to create the document.
3. Creative writing is an important skill as it develops the individual's powers of expression, empathy and critical thinking. While some may be of the idea that the skill of creative writing is needed only for the ones in the liberal arts field, well that may be untrue because to communicate effectively it is important in all aspects of life be it in the business or the non-business world.

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4. Every writer needs to discover his or her niche while attempting to succeed because the generalist writers' arena is flooded with freelance writers, bloggers and content creators. One needs to discover their own specialty and expertise that they have that sets him or her apart from other writers. Knowing ones strengths and weaknesses can also help decide what work to take and what to avoid. By this they would do a great service to the readers. It is also important that they realize this because they have to play an important role in opinion building.
5. Publishing refers to the business or profession of the commercial production and issuance of literature, information, musical scores or sometimes recordings, or art.

12.6 SUMMARY

- Technical writing is the kind of practical writing that people do as a part of their jobs.
- Technical writing is an inherent part of written communication in all organizations and is important for the organizations to maintain themselves.
- Technical writing is aimed at a specific audience. Technical writers generate documents keeping the audience characteristics and requirements in mind.
- The goal of the writing process is to generate a clear effective document for an audience. Experienced writers achieve this goal by performing three types of activities:
 - o Pre-writing: Planning
 - o Writing: Drafting and Revising
 - o Post Writing: Finishing
- Once the planning stage is over, the actual writing begins. This step of the writing process takes considerable time.
- Proofreading involves checking the document for spelling, punctuation, basic grammar, format of page and accuracy of facts.
- Creative writing is the art of written expression which conveys ideas and thoughts in an imaginative way.
- Creative writing knows no boundaries like the white canvas and depending on thoughts and intellect of the writer and his or her scope of imagination, anything and everything is possible in the world of creative writing.
- Different forms of creative writing is being churned out these days through various sources, written by different people who may be professionals,

amateurs, bloggers or maybe freelancers who use their literary and creative juices to mould the words and language in such a way that it leaves an impact on the minds of the reader by offering them something of their interest.

- Creative writing involves thinking outside the box, stepping outside the existing norms to explain any given point of view or to present the facts in the form of a story with sufficient examples and parallels to explain the content to the reader.
- Creative writing is required in all walks of life be it in school or higher studies, at the work place or at the market place.
- A proper environment of learning, practicing, discussion, feedback and assessment process should be in place so as to hone the skills for creative writing.
- Many people, especially in the business world, appreciate information shared with them in a concise way as much as they would appreciate a well worded creatively written newsletter.
- Usage of language and the styles of writing are ever changing and hence good creative writing is not merely a matter of talent. We also need to learn good creative writing skills. This could be achieved either by proactive apprentice or by organized learning institutions.
- What differentiates the amateur from professional writing is that professional writers go that extra mile by conceiving, planning, and drafting, writing, rewriting, editing, proofreading and so on.
- Editing plays an integral part in the art of creation of any media product. We unknowingly and informally work through the process of editing on numerous occasions, sometimes consciously, at other times not.

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12.7 KEY WORDS

- **Feedback:** It refers to information about reactions to a product, a person's performance of a task, etc. which is used as a basis for improvement.
- **Freelance:** It means a person who works as a writer, designer, performer, or the like, selling work or services by the hour, day, job, etc., rather than working on a regular salary basis for one employer.
- **Proofreading:** It refers to the act of finding and correcting mistakes in copies of printed text before the final copies are printed.
- **Creative writing:** It refers to writing, typically fiction or poetry, which displays imagination or invention (often contrasted with academic or journalistic writing).

12.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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Short-Answer Questions

1. List the characteristics of technical writing.
2. Write a short-note on publishing.
3. What is creative writing?
4. How can one distinguish a good piece of writing from an ordinary one?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the technical writing process.
2. What is editing? Discuss its various types.
3. Discuss self-evaluation of creative writing.
4. 'It was impossible until someone did it.' Explain the statement with reference to creative writing.

12.9 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 13 INTERNAL CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

*Internal Corporate
Communication*

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Structure

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Effective Business Writing
- 13.3 Letters
- 13.4 Proposals
- 13.5 Resume
- 13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 13.7 Summary
- 13.8 Key Words
- 13.9 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 13.10 Further Readings

13.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt about technical and creative writing. In this unit, you will discuss different internal communication methods. In a business, internal communications as a whole must be understood to see how businesses create a culture that sustains their business. The different modes of internal communication include letters and proposals. We will discuss both business letters and proposals in the unit. The unit will also discuss resumes. It will begin with a general discussion on business writing.

13.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the various styles of a business letter
- Explain the types and characteristics of a proposal
- Describe the essentials of an effective resume

13.2 EFFECTIVE BUSINESS WRITING

Business writing requires one to adapt and select words carefully. It also requires clear sentence construction, organization, appropriate tone and writing for the desired effect. Adaptation means using words that the reader of the message is likely to understand. Also remember that proper sentence construction and an appropriate tone can increase the effect of your message. While writing the first

draft of the message, one should concentrate on the content. The subsequent drafts should focus on the style of writing and the mechanics, that is, the spelling, punctuation, abbreviations, and so on.

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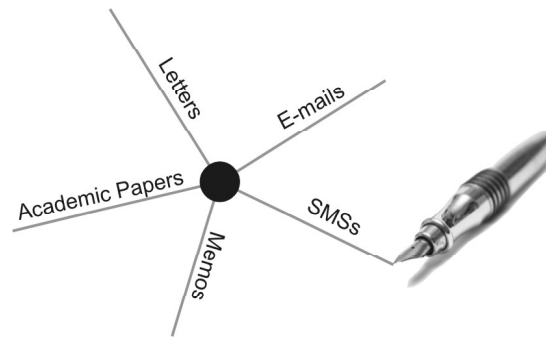


Fig. 13.1 Types of Business Writing

We generally write to express our thoughts, feelings, share ideas, inform people, and give instructions or perhaps to influence and persuade people. Further, there are different ways in which we write or what we call ‘styles’ of writing. Different people have different styles of writing and they adapt their style of writing to the kind of writing that must be done. Different styles are adopted for academic papers, business letters, e-mails, theses, SMS, CVs, and so on.

Purpose of Writing

For writing effectively, it is important to identify the purpose of the communication. Identifying the purpose of writing serves as a yardstick for evaluating the effectiveness of the communication. What actually judges the effectiveness of the writing is the extent to which it has been successful in achieving its goal. In business situations, we can broadly classify the purpose of written communication into two categories:

- (i) To inform
- (ii) To persuade

Writing to inform

Writing to inform is called expository writing because it expounds ideas and facts. When the primary purpose of the written communication is to give and explain information, it is called expository or informative writing. Informative writing gives information related to the subject concerned. It does not give opinions but states facts. The information has to be logically arranged and conveyed objectively with no bias. Business reports, technical reports, fact sheets, schedule progress reports, and so on, are examples of informative writing.

Checklist for Informative Writing			
	Questions	Yes	No
1.	Does it focus on the subject under discussion?		
2.	Does it primarily inform rather than persuade the reader?		
3.	Does it offer complete and exact information?		
4.	Can the information be ascertained?		
5.	Does it present information logically and clearly?		
6.	Does it make good reading?		

NOTES**Writing to persuade**

Writing to persuade is called argumentative or persuasive writing. When the writer aims at convincing the reader about any issue, it is called persuasive writing. It expresses opinions. Opinions expressed may be backed up by facts to increase the credibility of the message.

Unlike informative writing where the focus is on the subject matter under discussion, in persuasive writing the focus is on the reader. It aims to influence and consequently change the thinking of the reader. Advertorials, essays, editorials, letters to the editor, sales letters, advertisements, and so on, are examples of persuasive writing.

In their book, *Business Communication: Cases, Concepts and Applications*, P.D. Chaturvedi and Mukesh Chaturvedi have provided a checklist in the form of questions to be answered in the affirmative to determine if any piece of writing is either effective informative writing or effective persuasive writing.

Checklist for Persuasive Writing			
	Questions	Yes	No
1.	Does it focus on the reader?		
2.	Does it basically seek to convince rather than inform?		
3.	Does it support its viewpoint by valid reasoning rather than by giving information?		
4.	Does it clearly follow a logical arrangement of thought and reasoning?		
5.	Does it finally evoke the intended response from the reader?		

Writing Style

Writing style refers to the way in which the information is expressed and not the substance. It is related to the choice of words and their arrangement into sentences, paragraphs and the complete message. The effectiveness of the message and the overall tone of the message largely depend on the style. Effective writing not only needs to be error-free but should also have style.

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Some of the characteristics of an effective writing style include the following:

- (i) Use of short simple words
- (ii) Varied vocabulary
- (iii) Crisp, concise and clear writing
- (iv) Use of positive language
- (v) Logical flow of ideas in paragraphs
- (vi) Optimum paragraph length, that is, paragraphs which are neither too long nor too short.
- (vii) Use of a variety of sentence types
- (viii) Reflecting courtesy

Writing style is about the mechanics of writing. Mechanics are elements of writing that are of relevance when the message is in written form. Mechanics of writing include spelling, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, and so on.

Check Your Progress

1. What is the purpose of written communication?
2. What does writing style refer to?

13.3 LETTERS

A letter is a permanent and tangible record of a business relationship. It is generally written for enquiry, give information, give instruction, or to persuade the recipient towards the desired action. A well written business letter can achieve much for a business. It can act as an effective sales person, create goodwill, strengthen the relationship with customer and act as a source of reliable, useful information.

Because of its importance it is a must that business letters be effectively written and maintain conformity to certain standards. A badly written letter reflects poorly on the organisation and is a cause of embarrassment to the managers. Some of the deficiencies that a badly written letter may have are summarised below and need to be avoided.

Indicators of a Badly Written Letter

The indicators of a badly written letter are:

- Lack of clarity
- Poor use of words and expressions
- Incorrect spellings and grammatical errors
- Too short or very lengthy

- Too many ideas concentrated in a single letter
- Factually incorrect
- Not suited to the readers' wavelength
- Too much of jargon and technical words
- Lacking in aesthetic sense
- Absence of personal touch
- Offensive in nature
- Lacking in courtesy
- Absence of relevant information
- Use of poor quality ink, paper etc.

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Standard parts of a business letter

A business letter consists of the following essential parts:

- (i) Heading
- (ii) Inside name and address
- (iii) Opening salutation
- (iv) Subject
- (v) Body of the letter
- (vi) Complimentary close
- (vii) Signature
- (viii) Enclosures

- (i) *Heading*: Business letters are written on letter-heads that show the name and address of the organisation, its telephone and fax numbers; the Internet and e-mail addresses along with the logo of the company. At the foot of the page the address of the 'registered office' and a registration number might appear.

Only the first page of any letter on letter-head stationary, with subsequent pages on blank pages. The heading also consists of—

- **Reference**—This could be a file number. It indicates the company's reference or the recipient's if this is a continuing correspondence.
- **Date**—This is the date of writing the letter. There are two ways of putting down the date. The English style (25th April 2007) and the American style (April 25, 2007)

- (ii) *Name and address of the recipient*: The name and address of the recipient as it will appear on the envelope is also mentioned in the letter. This ensures that the letter reaches the correct person even if the envelope gets damaged. The name includes the title of the person (Mr, Ms, Dr.).

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- (iii) *Opening Salutation*: Salutation is a way of addressing the addressee. The words generally depend upon the relation of the writer with the addressee.

‘Dear Sir’ or ‘Dear Madam’ is a little old-fashioned and organisations now prefer to use a more personal approach though ‘Dear Sir’ or ‘Dear Madam’ is still used in very formal correspondence.

- (iv) *Subject line*: This is often omitted, but its inclusion means the reader can quickly see what the letter is about. Subject heading is prefixed with the word Subject: or Sub or Ref: and underlined to make it more prominent.

Example

Subject: Request for quotation

Ref: Our letter No Pur/134/ 07 Re: Delay in receipt of goods

- (v) *Main body of the letter*: This part contains the actual message/ content of the letter. This part consists of several paragraphs. Always leave a line space between paragraphs. The first paragraph is the introductory which may include a reference to a previous correspondence or a telephonic conversation etc. The middle paragraphs constitute the main body and deal with the subject matter. The last paragraph is the concluding paragraph and states the expectation of some action.

- (vi) *Complimentary close*: It is a polite, formal way to end a letter. Standard forms are *Yours faithfully* or *Yours sincerely*. The complimentary close must match the salutation.

Dear Sir or Dear Madam matches with *Yours faithfully*

Dear Mr Smith matches with *Yours sincerely*

- (vii) *Signature space*: Leave space for the writer to sign the letter, usually about 5 blank line spaces. The signature is written in handwriting below the complimentary close. The name and designation of the person signing the letter – writer’s name and job title are printed below signature for clarity.

- (viii) *Enclosures*: In case any documents are being sent with the letter, it is indicated on the left hand bottom corner of the letter. It is abbreviated as ‘Encls’ or ‘Encl’ and after the abbreviation are given the number of enclosures.

Layout of a business letter

These days there is a tendency to adopt a friendly informal style. However, one should follow an established type or form to avoid inconvenience, confusion and wastage of time. The company’s in-house style includes rules on the layout of its business letters. A proper layout also gives the letter a formal look.

For most business letters single line spacing is used as this gives the letter a compact look. In case the letter is very short one may need to use double spacing. There are various styles of layouts available for business letters. In different forms there are different systems of indentation followed. The various styles include

- (i) Fully indented style (ii) Semi indented style
- (iii) Fully blocked style (iv) Modified blocked style

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Fully indented style

This style has become old fashioned and is being fast replaced by other styles. Each paragraph appears prominently in this type of layout. This style is at times found cumbersome because of its numerous indentations. It has the following characteristics

- (i) The name, address and paragraphs of the body are five spaces indented.
- (ii) The letter is typed in single line spacing.
- (iii) The subject heading is two line spacing below the salutation which is three line spacing below the inside name and address.
- (iv) The paragraphs are separated by double line spacing.
- (v) The complimentary close begins at the centre of the typing line and the typed signature and designation follow ten spaces and five spaces as is determined depending on the length of the two.
- (vi) The inside address is offset to give the letter a balance.

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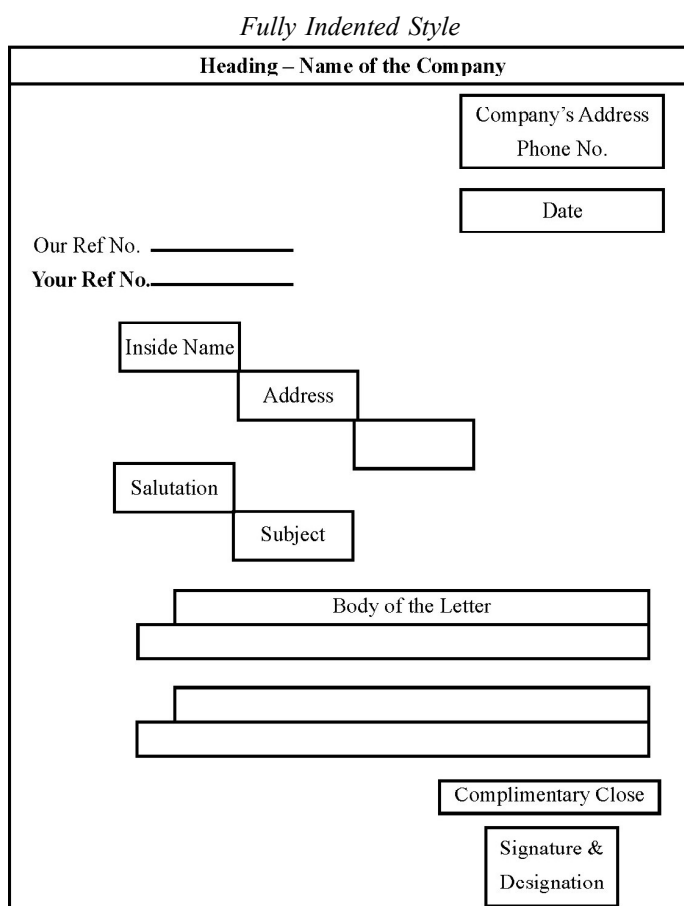


Fig 13.2 *Fully Indented Style*

Semi-indented style

This is a modified version of the fully indented style. It has the following characteristics:

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- (i) The inside name and address does not have any indentation and is in a block form.
- (ii) The complimentary close and designation are typed evenly across the centre of the typed line. However sometimes they are placed on the right hand side.
- (iii) This style provides a neat and compact look because of the block form of name and address.

Semi Indented Style

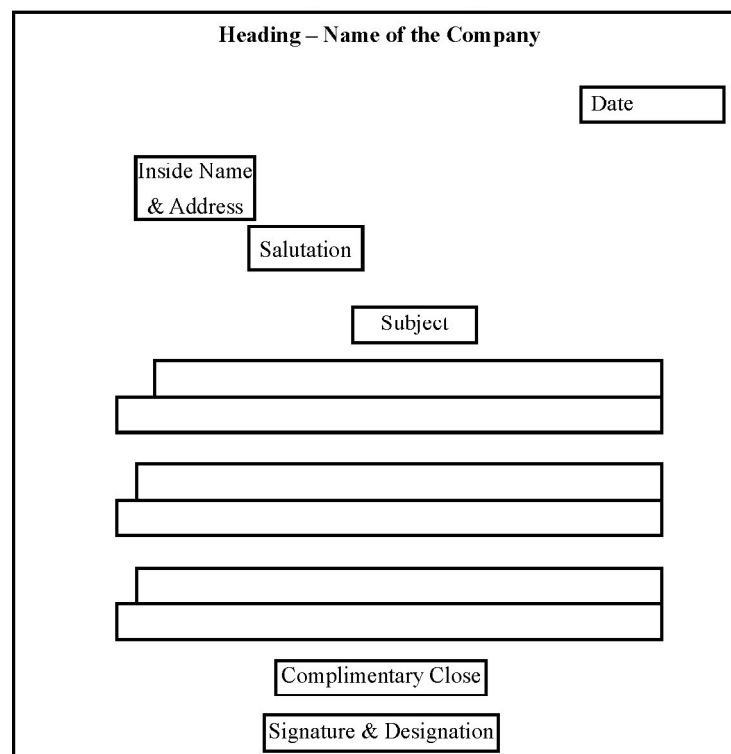


Fig 13.3 *Semi Indented Style*

Fully blocked style

This is a modern style and is most commonly used. Earlier the 'indented' format was used for business letters, but as a result of word processing, the 'fully blocked'

format is the most commonly used one now, as it saves time setting up tabs and indents and the letters look more neat and tidy. It has the following characteristics:

- (i) All typed entries including date, inside name and address, subject line paragraph, complimentary close, signatures begin at the left-hand margin, form a vertical line down the page.
- (ii) There is a complete absence of punctuation marks from the date, salutation, the complimentary close and the end line of the inside name and address.
- (iii) In some letters, the date and complimentary close are placed towards the right margin so as to give the letter a more balanced appearance. This style is known as semi-blocked style.

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Fully Blocked Style

Name of the Company	
Date Inside Name & Address Salutation Subject Body of the Letter Complimentary Close Signature Designation	Address & Phone No.

Fig 13.4 *Fully Blocked Style*

Modified blocked style

This style is similar to the fully blocked style. The difference in this style is that the date, subject heading and the complimentary close signature are placed like semi

indented style. There is a treble line spacing between paragraphs to differentiate between paragraphs as paragraphs do not have indentation.

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Modified Blocked Style

Name & Address of the Company	
Ref. No.	Date
Inside Name & Address	
Satutation	
Subject	
Complimentary Close	
Signature	
Designation	

Fig 13.5 *Modified Blocked Style*

Form letters

When a number of identical letters are to be sent to many individuals or organisations on a regular basis, form letters may be used. These letters are printed and blank spaces are left for filling in the name, date, address and sometimes some other minor details. These type of letters are generally used for acknowledgement of orders, thank you letters, debt collection, etc.

Use of form letters saves time and even a clerk can deal with this kind of correspondence. However these letters lack personal touch and flexibility.

Guidelines for writing effective business letters

Following are some guidelines for writing business letters:

- (i) Business letters, as all other types of correspondence, should follow the structure of a beginning, a middle and an end.
- (ii) The first paragraph would be the introduction and should state the reason for the correspondence.
- (iii) The middle should add detail to the information in the introduction.
- (iv) The ending is the conclusion and should state clearly what action one hopes or expects the recipient to take.

- (v) Words should be effectively used so as to appeal to the level and sensibilities of the recipient.
- (vi) Keep to the point.
- (vii) Be brief without being curt.
- (viii) Always be polite.
- (ix) Try to use short active words rather than long abstract passive ones.
- (x) Use short simple sentences rather than long rambling ones.
- (xi) Use non-sexist language as business people are both males and females—for example, sales force or salespeople.
For examples: *Supervisors should inform staff of their duties* is gender neutral and better than *-Each supervisor should inform his staff of his duties.*
- (xii) Using the alternate forms-s/he, he/she can look awkward if used too often.
- (xiii) Check spelling and punctuation.
- (xiv) Use the 'You attitude' rather than the 'We attitude'
- (xv) Don't use officious, clichés or pompous language as they are now become obsolete, example-*We beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter* can simply be written as *Thank you for your letter.*

Correspondence with Banks

Correspondence with banks is an indispensable part of correspondence for any organization. A lot of correspondence takes place between companies and their banks. Banks finance not only new companies but also are a source of funding for expansion programmes of existing companies. Transfer of money to suppliers, receipt of payment from customers or any other financial transaction is done through the company's bankers.

Most of the correspondence with banks is of routine nature like opening of an account, request for a cheque book, availing overdraft facility, request for stop payment, etc. Form letters are available in most banks for correspondence of routine nature though these form letters are not always used. Letters serving other purposes also need to be written to the bank. Correspondence with banks follows the same principles as those of other business letters. These include:

- (i) **Clarity:** To make sure that your letter elicits the desired response the letter needs to be clear and understandable to the reader.
- (ii) **Completeness:** As in case of other business correspondence, in correspondence with banks also, completeness of facts is absolutely necessary. Remember to give your account details and other related facts and figures in each of your letters. Incomplete information may either result in an incorrect decision or in time being wasted in follow up correspondence to complete the gaps in the information.

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- (iii) *Correctness*: Letters to the bank involve financial details and therefore it is important to doubly ensure accuracy of figures. An incorrect account number or an additional zero may result in a wrong transaction leading to unnecessary hassles and wasted time and effort.
- (iv) *Brevity*: Being brief and to the point also contributes to making the writing effective. Being brief means conveying only what is relevant and leaving out what is irrelevant or words which are unnecessary. However brevity at the cost of clarity is not desirable.
- (v) *Courtesy*: Incorporate courtesy in your writing. Apologise sincerely for an omission and thank generously for a favour. Do not be rude or harsh. Timely response to correspondence also reflects courtesy. Follow the golden rule of not replying to any communication when you are angry or upset. A tone of courtesy and sincerity enhances the effectiveness of the message by making it more acceptable to the reader.
- (vi) *Confidentiality*: In addition to the principles applicable to other business correspondence, with banks need to maintain confidentiality of the customer. Correspondence with banks needs to be confidential because financial details of the company are involved.

Sample of correspondence with banks

(i) Request for opening of bank account

The Manager
ICICI Bank
Lawrence Road
Amritsar

Dear Sir/ Madam

Subject: Opening of current account

We are desirous of opening a new current account in your bank in the name of our company 'XYZ Engineering Works Pvt Ltd., Ghaziabad'. The following documents as required for opening of account are forwarded along with the application form enclosed with this letter:

1. Certificate of Registrar of Companies granting permission to the company to commence business.
2. Letter of introduction by Mr BR Sharma , an account holder with your bank.
3. Certified copy of the proposal of the Board of Directors to open a Current Account duly signed by the Chairman.

We are sending ₹ 15000/- in cash through Mr Amit Chopra , as the initial amount to be deposited in the account. We would be grateful if you could kindly open the account in

the name of the company.

Mr Anuj Adhikari, the Managing Director of our company, is authorized to operate this account. His specimen signatures are appended below.

You are requested to send us the chequebook, passbook and pay in slip book to enable us to operate the account.

We are looking forward to a fruitful association with your bank.

With regards

Yours sincerely,

Enclosures: Four

(ii) Form letter for request for 'Stop Payment' of cheque

ICICI Bank

Branch.....

Date

Account Number.....

Name.....

Address.....

I/ We request you to stop payment of the cheque details of which are as follows

Cheque number.....

Dated.....

Amount

In favour of

Reason why payment has been stopped.....

Signature.....

(iii) Request for account statement

The Manager

ICICI Bank

Lawrence Road

Amritsar

Dear Sir/ Madam

Subject : Request for current account statement

We hold a Current Account in the name of our company 'XYZ Engineering Works Pvt Ltd., Ghaziabad' in your bank. Our account number is C 987345123 . The account statement for the quarter January – March 2007 has not been received by us.

We would be grateful if you could send us the Current Account statement for the afore mentioned period i.e. 1st January – 31st March 2007, at the earliest to enable us to reconcile the bank balance.

With regards

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(iv) Request for overdraft facility

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The Manager
ICICI Bank
Lawrence Road
Amritsar

Dear Sir/ Madam

Subject : Request for over draft facility

We hold a Current Account in the name of our company 'XYZ Engineering Works Pvt Ltd., Ghaziabad' in your bank. Our account number is C 987345123.

Our business has been growing at a steady rate since its establishment in January 2004. The turnover has doubled since establishment and the profits are growing steadily. In the coming festival season we expect a further rise in our turnover and our new manufacturing unit is also expected to start production in the coming month. On account of a tight money market our usual suppliers have expressed their inability to grant us credit for a period of more than a month.

Under the above-mentioned circumstances, we would be grateful if you could grant us an overdraft of ₹ 1,00,000 which would be sufficient for us to finance a part of our stock of raw material. We require this amount for a period of two months by the end of which we will be able to deposit the amount in our account.

We wish to draw your attention to the operation of our current account with your bank. We have been regularly maintaining a fair balance and bills and other obligations are met promptly. We are also enclosing audited copies of the Trading and Profit and Loss Account and Balance Sheet for your information.

A prompt reply will enable us to send orders to our suppliers so as to obtain the raw material on time.

Thanking you
With regards

Yours sincerely

Check Your Progress

Check Your Progress

3. What are the various styles of a business letter?
4. Which business letter style has become old fashioned and is being fast replaced by other styles?

13.4 PROPOSALS

A proposal is a written document to persuade the reader for a suggested plan of action. For example, a proposal may aim to obtain a grant from the government to carry out a survey on communication practices in organizations.

Some of the characteristics of proposals include:

- (i) Proposals are persuasive documents as these try to convince the reader of the suitability of a particular course of action.
- (ii) Proposals are generally written for an external audience though in some cases they may be made for internal purposes, by one department for another or from an individual to the management.
- (iii) These may be solicited or unsolicited.
- (iv) They vary in length from a couple of pages to several pages.
- (v) Proposals may be made by individuals or organizations for both individuals and organizations.

Types of Proposals

Proposals may be solicited or unsolicited. *Solicited proposals* are invited, that is, the awarding organization calls for proposals from interested individuals/parties. The awarding organization lays down the requirements that the proposal should contain. In many cases, a standard format is provided for the parties to submit their proposals. Government agencies routinely ask for proposals from potential suppliers.

Unsolicited proposals are also called prospecting proposals. They are more detailed and should catch the receiver's attention. They require more background information and should be persuasive so as to convince the reader of the suitability of the proposal.

In addition to the above, proposals may be typically research proposals which include details of the plan of the research, need and objectives of the research and the budget of the research.

Format/Contents of a Proposal

The proposal may be in the format of a letter (mostly in the case of proposals being sent within organizations), or a form proposal (in which the form is supplied by the organization calling for proposals) or in a detailed report form.

The following are the topics under which information may be provided while writing a proposal. Depending on the complexity and the length of the proposal, these eight topics can be combined or further subdivided to suit the needs.

- (i) *Objective statement*: The opening statement should present the purpose/objective of the proposal, that is, what the presenter is

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proposing to do. It should be linked to the need of the receiver to gain acceptability. The problem/objective should be stated clearly. In the case of solicited proposals, it is important to link the objective statement with the topic for which proposals are invited. In the case of unsolicited proposals, the objective should be of interest to the organization where the proposal is being submitted and it should also catch the reader's attention. This can be effectively done by summarizing the benefits of the proposal.

- (ii) *Background*: Provide the reader with background information of the problem. This helps the reader to better understand the problem and see it in the right perspective. For example, a proposal of a research organization to a company for carrying out a survey on consumer behaviour may be backed by information related to declining sales due to changing consumer needs.
- (iii) *Need*: Need for what is being proposed is an offshoot of the background information. Based on the background information, the need is established so that the reader is clearly able to understand its advantages.
- (iv) *Procedure/Discussion of the plan*: This is where you provide the details regarding how you will go about achieving the objectives listed out earlier. Give a step-by-step description of your plan of action, proposed schedule of the activities and an estimated budget. This is the heart of the proposal and needs to be written carefully, concisely and logically.
- (v) *Qualifications*: Give the qualifications and experience of the persons who would be involved in the proposed project. This is given with a view to providing evidence of their ability to handle the project. Details of previous experiences of the organization/individuals in handling similar projects, the availability of facilities, equipment, expertise, and so on, provide credibility to the proposal.
- (vi) *Request for approval*: To conclude the proposal you may briefly summarize it in a couple of lines followed by a direct request for approval. This may not appear as a separate heading but may take the form of a few lines at the end.
- (vii) *Appendix*: Any supporting information relevant to your proposal may be included as an appendix towards the end of the proposal.

Guidelines for Writing a Proposal

Scot Ober has compiled some of the points to be kept in mind while writing a proposal. These are as follows:

- Give ample, credible evidence for all statements.
- Do not exaggerate.

- Provide examples, expert testimony and specific facts and figures to support your statements.
- Use simple, straightforward and direct language preferring simple sentences and active voice.
- Stress reader benefits. Remember that you are asking for something, usually a commitment of money; let the reader know what he or she will get in return.

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13.5 RESUME

A person's resume is probably the first and the most important employment related document. The right resume has the potential to open doors of opportunity. Every person looking for professional success should know how to make it work. A resume is what a candidate sends along with the job application letter. A resume usually accompanies the covering letter and presents all relevant details about the candidate. A resume is also referred to as bio data or curriculum vitae (CV). A resume or a CV is a short account of one's career and qualifications typically prepared by an applicant for a position. A resume is also understood as a personal datasheet that presents the academic qualifications, job-related experience, skills and strong points of a person seeking a job.

What a Good Resume Achieves: While preparing a resume, it is important to know what a good resume can achieve. A good resume helps project the person in proper light. It makes the first right impression on the employer. A good resume helps bring out the basic strengths of the individual in terms of academic achievements, job-related skills, attitude and aptitude and other relevant details in order to hold the attention of the receiver/ employer. A good, neatly prepared and a strong resume reinforces the candidate's confidence. It helps the candidate put his or her best foot forward. A good resume vies for attention and gets noticed. A good resume makes an impression even at a cursory glance. The demand and supply position in the job market being what it is, any application letter or resume competes with numerous others and only those prepared with care and elegance succeed in kindling the interest of the prospective employer. Above all, a good resume helps you get an interview call and move closer to getting the job you are seeking.

Essentials of a Good Resume

We have seen how crucial it is to have a good resume that gets noticed and takes the candidate closer to an interview call. Let us now look at various essentials to be kept in mind while preparing a good resume.

First and foremost, a resume will have to stand out in terms of its neatness. The presentation of details in the resume will have to be in an organized and orderly manner. Unless your handwriting is exceptionally good, it is desirable to get the

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resume neatly typed. Smudging, overwriting, uneven lines, ill thought out font variations and unwarranted folding will have to be eschewed. Use a good paper, pen, envelope and a superior format. Take care to do a neat job and avoid careless mistakes. A resume presents an outline and is not a detailed record. Therefore, instead of using lengthy sentences, it would be desirable to use short phrases.

Remember, your resume has to create a favourable impression. It is the first opportunity you have to impress your prospective employer. The second essential for a good resume is adequacy or completeness. The resume should cover all relevant details about the candidate which the employer will be looking for and yet it should not be loaded with too many details. The recipient will most probably be looking at hundreds or even thousands of resumes and the candidate should try to make it easy to the reader by making it brief and focused. The desirable length of a resume would perhaps vary depending on the qualifications and experience of the candidate and the nature of the post applied for. Freshers and just out-of-the-university candidates may not have much to cover, as compared to those who have had varied exposure and experience over several years. In any case, the recipient would be comfortable with a resume that does not exceed about two to four neatly typed pages. Shorter the resume, greater the chance of its being noticed and read.

In preparing a resume, a candidate is well advised to mercilessly leave out trivial or insignificant details about achievements. The resume writer has to resist the temptation to go overboard by packing the resume with too many details. Those who are just out of college may not have much to state in terms of experience and therefore will have to make a pitch in terms of their potential and employability.

Another requirement towards ensuring a good resume is accuracy of facts and figures. All details furnished in the resume should contain correct and updated information about the candidate. Care has to be taken to mention correct dates and years, names of the institutions, organizations and designation. Equally important, spelling mistakes have to be carefully avoided. Whether it is the designation of the person or the name of the organization, correctness has to be ensured.

Re-check your resume and covering letter for any grammatical and spelling errors. Also, make sure that the dates and years are accurate. Make sure that the resume is updated to cover the latest developments. Honesty and sincerity are very important ingredients of any good resume. Be truthful about your qualifications and achievements. Do not lie. Take care to project your natural self, the real you. Do not make tall claims or overstate your strengths. Any seasoned HR functionary, who keeps going through numerous resumes regularly, can easily detect an insincere and dishonest presentation of false facts and figures.

Any good resume should clearly bring out the strong points of the candidate. For doing so, the applicant should learn to look at the resume from the employer's standpoint. When a job is advertised, the employer is trying to fill up a specific vacancy or position. The position carries a certain job profile with its underlying

needs. Every employer looks at the resume and tries to assess it in terms of meeting certain specific needs. The candidate's strength lies in highlighting one's own qualification, experience, skills and attitude such that it appeals to the prospective employer. Considering what the job demands, the candidate should endeavour to suggest how the candidate is equipped to add value to the job. Obviously, no employer would be keen on just offering you or anybody a job. At the same time, every employer would be keen on getting the right candidate or ensuring the right fit for the vacant post. Are you Mr Right or Ms Right? If so, try to highlight it in your resume.

Finally, make sure that the resume is appealing and distinctive. Do not use a standard pattern. Make it stand out in a crowd. Be imaginative, in terms of letterhead, presentation style, statement of objectives or understanding of employer needs. Fine-tune the presentation keeping in view the nature of the organization and the job expectations. The manner of presentation will vary depending on whether it is a public sector undertaking or a multinational company, whether it is a marketing job or an accounts job and whether it is an academic job or an administrative post. In fine-tuning your resume, use keywords that go well with the job description. Use language specific to the industry or functional responsibility. At the same time, give your resume a personal touch. Take your time and make it a thorough job. Make sure that all the vital contact information such as name, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address are furnished prominently on the top right-hand corner of the covering letter/resume. Gather and present all relevant details in a clear, correct, honest and visually appealing manner. There are indeed many ways in which resumes can be presented by job seekers. The candidate has to use discretion in selecting the details to be covered and the headings to be used. In deciding the length of the resume, sequencing of data, choice of headings and emphasis on strengths and achievements, the candidate should be guided by (1) what the advertiser specifies, (2) nature and level of the position, (3) degree of competition and (4) the level of qualification and experience of the candidate. If the occasion demands a one-page bio data rather than a detailed resume, the candidate should take care to condense the resume and present the most significant details within one page. On the other hand, where the application is for a senior position or where it calls for a relatively high level of academic or research achievements, the resume needs to cover the details in a more elaborate manner. Similarly, when the candidate is fresh out of the university or without much job experience, academic achievements and other relevant features will have to be duly highlighted.

While Updating Don't Just Add, Better Re-Write: As you add new experiences, qualifications and accomplishments, your resume has to be necessarily updated. When things change, you cannot do with the outdated resume. Constantly update your resume with new additions. In doing so, however, do not take the easy way and make hand written additions and alterations. This shows carelessness and makes your resume shabby and half-hearted. Don't ever give the impression

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of being lazy, clumsy and lacking in enthusiasm. Take care to reorganize and redo your resume. You should submit a new print which looks fresh, neat and professional. The impression it creates is worth the extra effort you put in. As already noted, resumes should be customized depending upon the job requirements. For that purpose, the job applicant should emphasize those facts and accomplishments which are particularly relevant for the particular job.

As one moves up the career ladder and gains varied exposure and experience, one would have acquired substantial values which have to be imaginatively packaged in the resume. Whichever format or style the candidate uses, it should clearly bring out the strong points. While bringing out the academic qualifications, all significant achievements, such as ranks, scores and grades as well as merit scholarships, if any, will have to be properly highlighted. On the other hand, if the grades or scores are not very impressive, the candidate should underplay them without resorting to conspicuous omissions.

Types of resumes

Resumes are prepared in different formats. Broadly speaking, they may be chronological or functional, or a combination of these two. Chronological resumes present the details in a historical order, in a timeline. They follow a linear approach. Traditionally, they would proceed in a progressive manner starting with the early history or beginnings and move on to the current position. The more common approach, however, is the reverse chronological resume, where you start with the latest or present position and move backwards. A chronological resume is desirable when the person has progressed gradually over a period of time. Functional resumes do not follow any timeline approach and instead focus on skills and responsibilities. A functional resume is also referred to as a skill-based resume. Functional resumes are useful when several skills have been acquired or several positions held within a short period of time. The combination resume follows a mixed approach highlighting skills and experiences and also providing work experience during different periods. Depending upon the length of experience, career advancements, academic study, skills, achievements and responsibilities, the type of resume should be decided.

The headings or captions under which details are furnished could be many and varied. While some of them covering personal details and academic qualifications would be common to most of the resumes, the other headings may or may not be relevant, depending upon the age and experience of the candidate and the nature and responsibilities of the post.

Make a List of All Items: Before you start writing your resume, it would be a good idea to put together all relevant aspects about yourself. Start from the beginning and move up to your latest position. The list you draw up should cover:

- (a) Academic achievements including the schools and colleges attended
- (b) Areas of study and specialization

- (c) Marks scored, grades achieved and distinctions, if any
- (d) Extra-curricular activities and sports
- (e) Computer skills
- (f) Languages known
- (g) Hobbies and special interests
- (h) Special studies and courses taken
- (i) Employment details and work experience
- (j) Career related contributions and achievements
- (k) Core competencies
- (l) Skills and expertise acquired
- (m) Technical competencies
- (n) Professional education
- (o) Professional accreditations, licenses and certificates
- (p) Memberships and affiliations
- (q) Seminars and workshops attended
- (r) Awards and honours
- (s) Publications, papers and research
- (t) Consultancy and speaking assignments
- (u) Prominent training programs and institutions
- (v) Hobbies and interests
- (w) Personal details and contact address
- (x) Community service and
- (y) References.

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Career related contributions and achievements would find expression in the resumes as follows:

1. Have brought new high value/ corporate customers
2. Have introduced several cost-cutting measures
3. Have contributed to improvements in productivity and operational efficiency
4. Have developed a product development team
5. Have contributed research papers to prominent journals
6. Have trained several batches of new recruits.
7. Have led a team of software developers

This attempt at drawing up an exhaustive list ensures that nothing of importance is left out. Of course, the number of items to be included from this list for each candidate would vary depending upon the level of experience, professional

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standing and breadth of accomplishments. This wealth of information would certainly help in picking up relevant items and customizing the resume keeping in view the job description. Further, a comprehensive list prepared and kept ready would also be helpful in preparing application forms and also while preparing for the interview. This list acts as a worksheet. In preparing the final resume, however, the communicator should pick up only relevant details, rearrange the order and priorities, convert facts into accomplishments/ substance statements and highlight the most important ones.

Whether Personal Details? A word of caution in this context about personal details is essential. Although in the Indian context, the resumes provide personal details such as age, date of birth, marital status, etc. in some countries abroad such details are to be avoided. For example, if the resume is meant to be used in applying to a position in the USA, such details have to be omitted. Essential facts such as email address, mailing address and contact numbers, and other professionally relevant details should be included in the resume. It is also worth noting that in the U.S, even during the interviews, the interviewers refrain from asking questions about age, marital status, religion, etc.

A suggested list of captions or headings appropriate for resumes in general is given below:

1. Personal details
2. Academic qualifications
3. Academic distinctions
4. Work experience
5. Areas of specialization
6. Career-related achievements
7. Seminars and workshops
8. Papers and publications
9. Membership of boards and committees
10. Guest faculty
11. Consultancy
12. Computer/Technical skills
13. Languages known
14. Marital status
15. Hobbies and interests
16. References

In the above paragraphs, we have looked at the various captions or headings under which relevant details have to be covered in the resumes. In the following pages, we will be presenting illustrations on how relevant details may be presented under each one of the above captions.

Personal details Personal details to be covered in the Resume/Bio Data include the name, age, date of birth, nationality, present position, residential address and contact details (Exhibit 14.4).

Academic qualifications Academic qualifications may be mentioned either in the chronological order or from the latest backwards. Similarly, the grades and percentages may or may not be stated. Different illustrations are given in Exhibit 14.5.

Academic distinctions This is an optional caption, in the sense that only those candidates who have something significant to highlight by way of academic distinctions may use this heading. Medals won, merit scholarships conferred and other such achievements may be highlighted (Exhibit 14.6).

Work experience Any prospective employer would keenly study details under this caption. The resume writer should take extra care in presenting the details of work experience in an effective manner.

Work experience would normally cover the following details.

- Period of Work
- Functional Designation
- Duties and Responsibilities
- Present Position
- Career Highlights or Previous Positions

Areas of specialization Quite often, people specialize in specific areas or even geographical markets. The resumes should clearly bring out related strengths, especially when the post applied for demands specialization. Given below are two examples:

1. Specific functional areas
 - (a) Labour law
 - (b) Investment banking
 - (c) Economic journalism
2. Specific industries
 - (a) Ceramic industry
 - (b) Mutual funds
 - (c) Auto components
3. Specific regions
 - (a) South-East Asian markets
 - (b) South India
 - (c) Eastern Region

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4. Specialized training
 - (a) Advanced Training in Commodity Futures
 - (b) Advanced Program on Asian Financial Markets

DOs and DON'Ts of Resume Writing

Dos

1. Make your resume stand out. Clearly bring out your strong points.
2. Your resume creates your first impression. Make it neat, error-free and professional.
3. Keep your resume short. Should not normally exceed 2-3 pages.
4. Make a comprehensive list of your qualifications, experience, competencies, skills, etc. before writing your resume.
5. Choose headings that reflect your strength and match the employer needs.
6. Make your resume factually accurate and up-to-date.
7. Choose the right format and keep your font professional and appealing.
8. Re-check your resume for grammatical errors and inconsistencies.

Don'ts

1. Do not boast or exaggerate. Never insert lies.
2. Don't use big and pompous words. Use key words used in the profession.
3. Don't use lengthy sentences. Use catchy phrases.
4. Don't give the contact numbers or a mailing address on which you cannot be reached.
5. Don't use words, fonts, colours and styles which make the resume gaudy and unprofessional.
6. While updating don't just squeeze in additions. Rewrite and reprint.
7. Don't make critical comments on your previous job/superiors.
8. Don't highlight achievements which you cannot substantiate.

Testimonials

Testimonials refer to letters of appreciation or letters of recommendation. A testimonial is a letter of evidence or open acknowledgement of a person's character and abilities, normally issued by a superior or executive under whom the candidate has worked. Unlike a reference, which is in response to the specific request by a prospective employer, a testimonial is not specifically addressed. It is a character reference or an expression of appreciation issued by the authority to the candidate. It is presented in the format of a certificate or statement rather than a letter. Testimonials are also issued by teachers in favour of their students. Testimonials

are issued when the student is leaving the college or is applying for admission elsewhere. Similarly, the superior or reporting authority may issue the testimonials to the employee, on request, to enable the employee to seek employment elsewhere. Like certificates, testimonials are used by candidates while seeking admission/job positions.

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Check Your Progress

5. What is a proposal?
6. What is a testimonial?

13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The purpose of written communication into two categories:
 - (i) To inform
 - (ii) To persuade
2. Writing style refers to the way in which the information is expressed and not the substance.
3. The various styles of a business letter are:
 - (i) Fully indented style
 - (ii) Semi indented style
 - (iii) Fully blocked style
 - (iv) Modified blocked style
4. The fully indented style has become old fashioned and is being fast replaced by other styles.
5. A proposal is a written document to persuade the reader for a suggested plan of action.
6. Testimonials refer to letters of appreciation or letters of recommendation. A testimonial is a letter of evidence or open acknowledgement of a person's character and abilities, normally issued by a superior or executive under whom the candidate has worked.

13.7 SUMMARY

- Business writing requires one to adapt and select words carefully. It also requires clear sentence construction, organization, appropriate tone and writing for the desired effect.

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- For writing effectively, it is important to identify the purpose of the communication. Identifying the purpose of writing serves as a yardstick for evaluating the effectiveness of the communication.
- Writing to inform is called expository writing because it expounds ideas and facts.
- The effectiveness of the message and the overall tone of the message largely depend on the style. Effective writing not only needs to be error-free but should also have style.
- A letter is a permanent and tangible record of a business relationship. It is generally written for enquiry, give information, give instruction, or to persuade the recipient towards the desired action.
- A business letter consists of the following essential parts:
 - (i) Heading
 - (ii) Inside name and address
 - (iii) Opening salutation
 - (iv) Subject
 - (v) Body of the letter
 - (vi) Complimentary close
 - (vii) Signature
 - (viii) Enclosures
- For most business letters single line spacing is used as this gives the letter a compact look. In case the letter is very short one may need to use double spacing.
- Correspondence with banks is an indispensable part of correspondence for any organization. A lot of correspondence takes place between companies and their banks.
- Proposals are persuasive documents as these try to convince the reader of the suitability of a particular course of action.
- The proposal may be in the format of a letter (mostly in the case of proposals being sent within organizations), or a form proposal (in which the form is supplied by the organization calling for proposals) or in a detailed report form.
- A person's resume is probably the first and the most important employment related document. The right resume has the potential to open doors of opportunity. Every person looking for professional success should know how to make it work.

- A resume is what a candidate sends along with the job application letter.
- Unlike a reference, which is in response to the specific request by a prospective employer, a testimonial is not specifically addressed.

*Internal Corporate
Communication*

13.8 KEY WORDS

- **Layout:** It means the way in which the parts of something are arranged or laid out.
- **Proposal:** It means a plan or suggestion, especially a formal or written one, put forward for consideration by others.
- **Resume:** It means a short written description of an individual's education, qualifications, and previous jobs which he or she sends to an employer when they are trying to get a job.
- **Clarity:** It means the quality of being coherent and intelligible.

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13.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on correspondence with banks.
2. What are the essential parts of a business letter?
3. Briefly state the use of testimonials.
4. Mention the essentials of a good resume.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the purpose of writing.
2. What is writing style? Discuss the characteristics of an effective writing style.
3. Describe the format, characteristics and types of proposals.
4. Examine the various styles of a business letter.

13.10 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 14 EXTERNAL CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

External Corporate
Communication

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Structure

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Objectives
- 14.2 Press Release
 - 14.2.1 Newsletters
- 14.3 Interviewing Skills
- 14.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 14.5 Summary
- 14.6 Key Words
- 14.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 14.8 Further Readings

14.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you learnt about internal corporate communication. In this unit, the discussion will turn towards external communication. A business communicates externally with clients, customers and vendors. The unit will discuss press releases and newsletters. A press release is an official statement issued to newspapers giving information on a particular matter, while a newsletter is a bulletin issued periodically to the members of a society or other organization. The final section of the unit will discuss interviewing skills.

14.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss press releases and its advantages
- Describe the guidelines for conducting effective interviews

14.2 PRESS RELEASE

Press releases relate to the announcement of important messages or developments concerning themselves that organizations wish to convey to the public at large, through the press and other media. It could be announcement of an event, performance, new product or service or any such newsworthy item of interest to the customers and the public. The means of communication an organization adopts for conveying messages may be direct and specific or general. Direct messages include personal letters, e-mail, direct mailing of brochures and reports and telephone messages.

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However, when the message to be conveyed is of general interest to a large section of the community spread across different target groups, recourse to press release becomes essential. Press releases for any business organization would cover various happenings and business-related information which the public would be interested in knowing, and which the business organization wishes to share with the public. Press releases would generally include financial results, product launches, performance highlights, new branches and offices, changes in management, benefits to the customers and shareholders, community-oriented initiatives, tie-ups and joint ventures, cessation of business, awards and achievements, ratings and rankings, research findings, meetings and conferences. Press releases, it should be noted, in the present day scenario relate to media releases and cover not only print media but also electronic and internet media.

Press releases as a means of communication have certain distinct advantages. The main advantage is that press releases cover a vast section of the print and electronic media, such as newspaper, magazines and journals, radio and television, cable network and also web sites. This can be in English, Hindi or regional language and can be either regional or national, or even global in coverage. Through press releases it is thus possible to carry the message across to very large sections of people, both literate and illiterate, and widely dispersed. Although conventionally referred to as press releases, they are by no means restricted to the press but are also sent to electronic and other media.

A very significant advantage favouring press releases is the cost factor. There is no charge for press releases, and as and when the media carries the message, the organization gets free publicity. Although the reach is as wide as that of an advertisement, organizations which do not have the benefit of an advertisement budget, focus on this medium of reaching out to the public. Since the press releases are carried free of charge, organizations will have to take care in drafting press releases to match the expectations of the media.

The disadvantage of press releases as a medium of communication, however, is that the choice of carrying the message either partially, fully, in a modified form or not at all, rests with the press and the media. Most often, prominent newspapers and journals ignore press releases except when they perceive them to be of particular interest to the readers. In such a case they may carry the news quite prominently and may even publish the photograph of the event that may accompany the release. The response by the electronic media too would be identical.

In order to ensure that press releases elicit some response from the press and other media, some general guidelines are to be followed. These are discussed in the following paragraphs. While following these guidelines may not necessarily ensure coverage, there is every possibility that those press releases that do not follow these guidelines are summarily rejected.

Press releases, to be effective, should be brief and focussed. For any newspaper or journal, print space translates into pecuniary or financial cost.

As an advertisement, the same message would have yielded revenue. Similarly, the time spent on radio or TV would have earned a certain revenue, had it been paid for. Press releases will have to take cognizance of this and the drafting should be such as to convey the message with minimum text. However, sometimes some sections of the press or media may consider the message to be of interest and may be keen to cover all the relevant details. For example, performance details relating to agriculture and rural development may be of interest to a regional newspaper, whereas a national-level financial paper may not attach much significance to it. Each paper has its focus areas depending on its target readers, and any press release would be considered against that backdrop. Under such circumstances, it would be desirable to cover the highlights in a page or so and enclose the details as an annexure to enable the press and media to pick and choose as they deem fit. It is also important to note that press releases are duly authenticated by the appropriate authority, in the absence of which the press may tend to ignore the release.

Since the editorial and reporting staff are generally hard-pressed for time, the language of the press release should be in tune with the language used by them for reporting events. This provides a distinct advantage, and to that extent the chances of the message being carried would improve. If the reporting style and language are very different, the reporting or editing staff will have to spend some time in redrafting the message to suit their requirements. The business writer should, therefore, make every effort to draft the press release in a manner that can be readily adapted to the newspaper columns.

Press releases should have a clear heading or caption which focuses on the essence of the message or event. If the caption is good enough, there is every possibility of the press using it since it makes a forceful impact, as intended. On the contrary, if the newspaper has to coin the heading, what they choose may be appropriate according to them, but may or may not convey the most important aspect of the press release. In other words, the press release becomes very effective when the heading, as well as the message, is carried in full, as provided by the communicating authority or agency. Every effort should be made in achieving it.

Since there is always a paucity of space, the message should be so drafted as to cover more important aspects within the first one or two paragraphs of the release. Very often, there is not enough space, or perceived need, for carrying the entire text, in which case the newspaper will pick and choose the paragraphs or sentences. The press release should be drafted keeping in view this possibility.

Press release, to be effective, should be translated into various languages and the translated versions should be given to the language press or media. Giving them the English text and expecting them to translate it into the language of the medium would lead to dilution or even omission. Providing a translated version shows respect for the vernacular or regional press and the chances of coverage would certainly be better. Further, quite often translation is not done

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properly. If it is a mere transliteration without application of mind and concern for the idioms and phrases peculiar to that language, the punch would be missing. Ensuring that a properly translated press release is made available in time calls for advance planning.

It is extremely important to keep in view the timing of the press release. Newspapers do not generally carry news items which are stale. The press release should be made soon after the event or as soon as the development takes place. Similarly, the press release should be sent simultaneously covering all newspapers, journals and media, so that all of them consider reporting the news. If it reaches a section of the press or media a day later, by which time another section of the press has already published the news, there is every likelihood of it being ignored by the press which received it late. Hence press releases should be sent, as far as possible, in time to catch the day's edition. Since the day's edition gets ready by late evening or so and the planning has to be done much earlier, the press release should reach newspapers and other media before evening. It would be advisable to check the timings with the press and adhere to it.

Given the importance of press releases and the possibility of damage done due to misreporting, every care should be taken in ensuring the correctness of facts, figures, names and details. Wherever photographs of the events are furnished, the names of the persons should be clearly indicated. In a sense, this requires specialized handling and therefore organizations designate press relations officers to liaise with the press and media on a regular basis. Organizations also avail of the services of advertising agencies in making effective press releases.

Put Punch into Your Captions

Headlines or captions are extremely important in advertising and press releases. Not everyone who sees the advertisement or press release reads it fully. Most of them often read the caption and skip the body and contents of the message. That is why it is very essential that your headline says as much as it can about your message. David Ogilvy, the guru of advertising, said, "on the average, five times as many people read the headline as read the body copy. When you have written your head line, you have spent 80 cents out of your dollar."

Given below are some examples of eye-catching and crisp headlines:

1. "Excel Banking Corporation Ltd. will be opening 200 more branches during the year ending March 2010." Instead, make it "Excel Bank to add 200 new branches."
2. "Prime Technologies Corporation Ltd. has increased its profit for the June 2009 quarter from '10 crore to '14 crore." Instead, make it "Prime Technologies' Q1 Profits Up 40%".
3. "Lovely Sales Corporation Ltd. has recorded very significant growth in its business volumes during the year." Instead, make it "Lovely Sales records robust business growth."

These are just some examples. A good business communicator can indeed think of very expressive and punchy captions for advertisements and press releases. Using minimum words, the headings should draw attention to the essence of the message in the text. However, the text that follows should give all relevant details and justify the attention drawn by the caption.

Use Crisp Language and Current Words

The language used in a media release should be crisp and business-like. Make sure that proper editing is done. The recipient will have neither the time nor the inclination to edit your writing. In the process, your message may be either ignored or may receive scant coverage. In fact, recognizing the importance of this, many organizations, have their own publicity or public relations departments with experienced staff who can prepare media releases using a media-friendly approach. For example:

“Our car prices have been slashed with effect from...”

“Our company is on a recruitment drive.”

“Both top line and bottom line figures have recorded a significant increase.”

“The depressed market environment notwithstanding, our exports recorded a significant increase during the quarter.”

As David Ogilvy said with reference to advertising, “Every word in the copy must count.”

Give Relevant Details

The press release should contain adequate details about the event or development so as to put the message in perspective. For example: Don’t just say, “The bank’s branches will be increased to 3,000 by March 2010.”

Give relevant details and be more specific and say, “The bank will be adding 200 branches during the current financial year taking the total number of branches to 3,000. Out of this, as many as 150 will be in major metros and Tier II cities of India.”

But remember, the choice of details is yours. While you should highlight the positives, you may avoid too many details if the performance is poor or not worth mentioning.

Mention Figures Properly

Take care while mentioning figures. Mention clearly rupees, lakhs, millions and crores. Figures by themselves do not convey much. For example: “The company recorded a sales turnover of ‘350 crore during the year.”

While those who know the company well may make some sense, most others may not make out much. Instead, your press release should say: “The

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company achieved a turnover of ₹350 crore during the year, as against a turnover of ₹280 crore during the previous year, recording a growth of 25 per cent.”

Further, when the media release is addressed to the international press or media, the figures should be mentioned appropriately in dollars, millions or relevant currencies.

Ensure Friendly Follow-up

The media have their own priorities. Not every one of them may carry the press release the next day or in the same days channel coverage. It is not that the newspapers are waiting for every press release that comes from every business organization. In fact, it is the other way round. Media receives press releases in such large numbers that invariably they have to select some and reject many. Some they may keep aside for coverage at a later date. It is under such circumstances that some kind of a polite reminder and request from the PR department helps. The media may be persuaded to carry the news item on one of the subsequent editions or bulletins. Relationships and gentle persuasion do help.

14.2.1 Newsletters

This is the age of information. Every business always has so much to share with its stakeholders, prospects and public. New products launched, new initiatives taken, results achieved, benefits passed on and developments in the industry, are all areas of interest to the target group of any business. With the movement towards corporate governance, every business organization strives to ensure greater transparency and openness in its dealings with the cross-section of the society. An important vehicle or medium through which a business communicates with its customers, associates and public is the newsletter. Newsletters are published by business organizations, banks, mutual funds, trade organizations, industry associations and business houses on a periodical basis. Such newsletters may be weekly, fortnightly, monthly or quarterly or any such periodicity which the businesses decide. These newsletters are sent free of charge and cover mostly events, initiatives, facts and figures, relating to the business firm, industry, economy and the larger universe. The objective is to inform, educate, gain attention and maintain relationships. Well-designed, periodically published and appropriately circulated newsletters ensure effective and result-oriented communication. A streak of journalistic talent is very essential for making the newsletter reader friendly.

Newsletters are no longer confined to the printed letters. The advent of Internet has made it possible to reach out to new sections through the email. E-newsletters or electronic newsletters are becoming increasingly popular as they are cost-effective and speedier.

14.3 INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Hitherto we have looked at the process of interview largely from the interviewee's perspective. Let us now move to the other side of the table and look at the interview process from the interviewer's perspective. Over a period of time, the job-seeking interviewee gets a job, gains experience and moves up the career ladder. The person then becomes a manager, an executive, a faculty member, an HR functionary or a subject matter specialist, and gets an opportunity to be a part of the interview panel and conduct interviews. Moving up further in the hierarchy, on attaining a senior level position, he or she gets designated as the chairperson of the interview committee. Conducting any interview efficaciously is a valuable skill for any career-oriented person. Likewise, people who are good at interviewing are also frequently called upon to serve as members of the interview panel. The following guidelines may be kept in view while conducting an interview.

Be Well Informed: The interviewer should be well informed about the organization, the nature of the post, the number of vacancies, the number of candidates being interviewed and other such relevant information that is so essential for making the interview worthwhile. In particular, the interviewer should be quite clear about the job requirements and traits that are very essential for carrying out the duties and responsibilities associated with the post. The interviewer should also have a fair idea about the job market and the demand-supply position.

Homework Helps: By homework, what is meant in this context is the preparatory reading concerning the assignment. It would mean reading the advertisement calling for applications in order to know the relevant details. It would mean knowing what kind of screening has already taken place before sending interview call letters to the candidates. It would also mean taking a quick look at the resume or bio data of the candidates being interviewed.

Understand Your Role: If you are the only interviewer, the role is well defined. If you are a member of the interview panel or the interview committee, then it is essential to know what your specific role is. Are you the chairperson or a member of the committee, legal expert, economist, IT expert, etc.? If you are a subject specialist, your questions will be confined, by and large, to your area of specialization. The chairperson and other members will normally expect you to ask questions that will bring out conceptual clarity, depth of understanding and technical competence of the candidates. If you are the head of the department where the candidate on selection will be posted, you will have to particularly assess the candidate's suitability to meet the specific job requirements.

As the chairperson of the interview panel, however, you have the overall responsibility of ensuring that the interviews are time bound and result oriented. You have to coordinate the efforts of the other members on the panel. You have to do the balancing in such a way that every candidate gets to answer an appropriate

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mix of questions. You have to take the initiative and be in command of the situation. You will have to talk to the other members of the panel beforehand and arrive at a consensus, as regards the modalities of conducting the interview. You will have to greet the candidates as they come in and help them settle down. You will have to pass the baton to the other members. You will have to moderate the interview by intervening as and when desirable.

At the end, it is the chairperson who conveys to the candidate that the interview has concluded. After the interview, the chairperson of the committee consults with colleagues and draws up the final list of candidates based on the interview performance. The chairperson takes the responsibility of conducting the interviews and finalizing the results thereof.

Put Them at Ease: The interviewer has to put the candidate at ease before shooting off questions. The candidates can be asked some preliminary personal questions that will help them settle down and establish a wavelength with the interviewer/interview panel. If need be, refer to the resume and seek details and clarifications. Any interview is an interactive process and can progress well when both the parties are comfortable with each other.

Test Knowledge, Not Ignorance: The interviewers should focus on testing the knowledge of the candidate and not the level of ignorance. The knowledge level of any person can only be limited. In any interview, it is possible to ask questions that leave the candidate baffled and demoralized. Questions must, however, be asked with a view to bring out the expanse of understanding and depth of knowledge relevant to the job on offer. At the same time, too many unrelated questions, especially when the candidate pleads ignorance, are best avoided. One good way of testing the knowledge is to make the questions progressively tougher. Start with the easier ones and move on to the searching questions.

Supply of Questions: Interviews comprise questions aimed at bringing forth the knowledge, understanding, aptitude, preparedness, attitude and suitability of the candidates. In order to facilitate asking relevant questions, the interviewer also should be equipped adequately. A mental note should be made, or if need be a written list, of questions that would be appropriate for the interview. This exercise will be of help in many ways. First, the interviewer will have an adequate supply of questions which can be put to the candidates till the end without resorting to repeat questions. Second, the interviewer will be in a position to have a vast expanse covering all important areas germane to the specific interview. More importantly, as the questions are pooled together in advance, the interviewer also thinks up the correct answers, which makes the evaluation easy. After all, if 30 candidates have to be interviewed for about 15-20 minutes each, there has to be a ready supply of a fairly large number of relevant questions available on tap.

Listening Skills: Like it is for the interviewee, for the interviewer too, good listening skills are relevant. The interviewer will be facing a host of candidates

during the course of the day. These candidates may come from different economic and social backgrounds, geographical regions and language groups. They may have varied accent, pronunciation and speaking style. They may or may not be well organized and articulate. The interviewer, therefore, will have to be quite focused to comprehend what the candidates are stating and prompt them as and when required. By active listening, the interviewer contributes to the success of this interactive process.

Follow a Process of Elimination: In respect of most of the interviews, the number of candidates appearing for the interview is quite large in relation to the jobs available. In order to do justice to the interview process, the interviewer will have to choose the most suitable candidates; this is also termed as the final selection zone of candidates. In other words, the interviewer will have to consciously eliminate all those candidates falling short of the qualifying zone. When the candidates are many and the number of posts limited, the final selection can be a very challenging task. Limiting this final number by eliminating the non-qualifiers would be of great help.

Finalize the Performance Rating Matrix Beforehand: After every interview, there is an evaluation. This evaluation has to be done taking into account all the relevant parameters. The selection or performance rating matrix should be clearly defined before the interview commences. In doing so, due consultations should take place among the interview panel members themselves, as also between the interviewers and the organization/department for which recruitment is taking place. In the ultimate analysis, selection is a matching process. The job profile and the candidate profile should agree with each other. Mismatches should be avoided. In order to achieve this, the interview evaluation sheet has to be finalized in advance, clearly stating the parameters and their relative weightages. All parameters may or may not carry equal marks. Both would vary depending upon whether it is an entry-level job or a senior position, customer-oriented job or a file-pushing job or a technical job or a managerial job. Relevant attributes and requirements would be evaluated.

Performance rating parameters would generally include the following:

1. Academic qualification
2. Knowledge
3. Personality
4. Experience
5. Publications
6. Age and fitness
7. Family background
8. Motivation
9. Emotional strength

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10. Attitude
11. Communication skills
12. Teamwork
13. Computer literacy
14. General knowledge

It should also be kept in mind that quite often interview performance is only one of the criteria and not the sole criterion for the selection. Interview evaluation sheet, therefore, should contain only those parameters which can be evaluated through the interview. Other details would constitute background information to the interviewers.

Conduct with Dignity: Interviewers generally have the responsibility of ensuring that the interviews are conducted in a purposeful and orderly manner. Inordinate delays, whimsical questions, questions that get too personal or which carry sexist bias, statements which denigrate candidates, impertinent jokes, temperamental outbursts and other such undesirable indulgences have to be strictly avoided. The candidates often look upon members of the interview panel with respect and admiration and hence they have to live up to that image. Interrupting the other colleague, argumentation, boastful statements and the airing of unconnected personal views should also be eschewed while conducting the interview. On the positive side, every effort must be made to ensure that the interviews are a pleasant experience for both the parties.

The Ultimate Test: Interviewers should be conscious of the fact that any interview carries with it an onerous responsibility. It has implications on the future of the organization as well as on the aspirations of the candidates. Also, the organization concerned is reposing faith in the interview panel in making an objective and merit- based recommendation. The interview process has to measure up in terms of justice and fair play. The candidates appearing for the interview should perceive it to be fair, objective and unbiased. The ultimate test for any interviewer is an affirmative answer to the question, 'Do the best of the candidates make it?'

In sum, any job interview is a sensitive and interactive goal-oriented communication process. The organization concerned as well as the interviewers on the one hand, and interviewees on the other, have to put in their earnest efforts to make the process fair and effective.

Check Your Progress

1. What do press releases relate to?
2. Who publishes newsletters?
3. What responsibility does the chairperson of the interview panel have?

14.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Press releases relate to the announcement of important messages or developments concerning themselves that organizations wish to convey to the public at large, through the press and other media.
2. Newsletters are published by business organizations, banks, mutual funds, trade organizations, industry associations and business houses on a periodical basis.
3. The chairperson of the interview panel has the overall responsibility of ensuring that the interviews are time bound and result oriented.

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14.5 SUMMARY

- Press releases relate to the announcement of important messages or developments concerning themselves that organizations wish to convey to the public at large, through the press and other media. It could be announcement of an event, performance, new product or service or any such newsworthy item of interest to the customers and the public.
- The means of communication an organization adopts for conveying messages may be direct and specific or general. Direct messages include personal letters, e-mail, direct mailing of brochures and reports and telephone messages.
- Press releases, it should be noted, in the present day scenario relate to media releases and cover not only print media but also electronic and internet media.
- It is extremely important to keep in view the timing of the press release. The press release should be made soon after the event or as soon as the development takes place.
- Headlines or captions are extremely important in advertising and press releases. Not everyone who sees the advertisement or press release reads it fully.
- Newsletters are sent free of charge and cover mostly events, initiatives, facts and figures, relating to the business firm, industry, economy and the larger universe.
- The objective of newsletters is to inform, educate, gain attention and maintain relationships. Well- designed, periodically published and appropriately circulated newsletters ensure effective and result-oriented communication.
- Conducting any interview efficaciously is a valuable skill for any career-oriented person. Likewise, people who are good at interviewing are also frequently called upon to serve as members of the interview panel.

- After every interview, there is an evaluation. This evaluation has to be done taking into account all the relevant parameters.

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14.6 KEY WORDS

- **Bulletins:** It refers to a regular newsletter or report issued by an organization.
- **Stakeholders:** It refers to persons with an interest or concern in something, especially a business.
- **Corporate governance:** It is the system of rules, practices and processes by which a firm is directed and controlled. It involves balancing the interests of a company's many stakeholders, such as shareholders, management, customers, suppliers, financiers, government and the community.

14.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What are press releases? How can press releases be made effective?
2. Write a short note on newsletters.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of press releases.
2. Examine the guidelines for conducting effective interviews.

14.8 FURTHER READINGS

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Under Graduate 21B

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