

COMMUNICATION –AN INTEGRATED SKILL SKILLS APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Mere subject knowledge in the field of engineering is not going to be a guarantee for an engineering graduate to get a job or excel at the workplace. Engineering students need to enhance their communication skills in order to cope with increasingly tough competition in the job market. Engineering students need to be able to communicate clearly in order to get placed in a reputed company. Today communication is the important facet of life. Be It Interview or dealing with project leader or working out a solution with a team or writing a report getting across the point effectively is what matters. Effective communication centers round the usage of words, speed of delivery of words, pitch, modulation and body language. Using the right tools to communicate the right messages at the right time can salvage crisis and motivate people to work towards success.

Key Words : : *Communication Skills, Listening Skills, Speaking Skills, Reading Skills, Writing Skills.*

Introduction:

The Concept of Communication:

Communication skills simply do not refer to the way in which we communicate with another person .It encompasses many other things ; the way in which we respond to the person we are speaking, body gestures including the facial expressions, pitch and tone of our voice and a lot of other things.

The term “communication “is easy to understand, because it is a natural phenomenon; but it is difficult to define as a concept due to multifarious interpretations made by several authors. For a common man, “communication“is an exchange of information or ideas. Technically, it is a process of transmitting ideas, information’s and feelings through a channel to another person or group of persons and receiving feedback from the transferee.

Definitions of Communication:

1. Dictionary defines *It is as transmission of message or information from one person to another.*
2. According to Keith Davis, *Communications transfer of information and understanding from one person to other.*
3. *Communication is the process by which information is transmitted between individuals and / or organizations so that an understanding response results.*

Peter Little (communication in Business)

Thus communication is sharing or exchange of ideas or information between two or more persons through a system of channel.

The word “communication” in the singular form is different from the plural. “Communications”. When we attempt to define communication, we are looking at a dynamic and evolving subject. It is no surprise, therefore, that communication, over the years, has seen numerous dimensions.

The following definitions bring out different facets of communication and together facilitate an understanding of the expanse of the concept.

Communication is the broad field of human interchange of facts and opinions. - -- Redfield.
This definition emphasizes the fact that communication has to do with interchange of facts and opinions or social or commercial intercourse, as we have already seen.

Communication encompasses all forms of expression which serves the purpose of mutual understanding. ---Rvesz

This definition highlights the all-encompassing nature of communication and the fact that it has a purpose to achieve.

Communication is the transmission of ideas, emotions and skills through the use of symbols and graphs. It is the act or process of transformation that is usually called communication.

- Berelso And Steiner

In this definition, the emphasis is on the wide range of messages conveyed, the variety of channels used and the process of transformation.

Communication is the process by which we understand others and in turn Endeavour to be understood by them. It is dynamic, constantly changing and shifting in response to the total situation. --- Anderson.

This statement clearly brings out the fact that communication is essentially a dynamic process.

Communication is the process that links discontinuous parts of the world to one another. ---- Rusech.

Here, the focus is on the fact that communication has global reach.

Communication is the means by which power is exerted.--- Schacter.

This brings out the dominant role played by communication in empowering people in their individual and organizational endeavours.

Communication maintains and animates life. It creates a common pool of ideas, strengthens the feelings of togetherness through exchange of messages and translates thought into action.---UNESCO—Many voices One World.

This definition underlines what communication strives to Achieve, especially through information sharing, relationship building and action orientation.

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, conversations, 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 one 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.

Types of Communication:

Apart from the different methods and channels of communication, one can also look at various types of communication. Communication can be categorized into different types depending upon the level at which it takes place, the direction it takes or by its very nature. Some of the commonly referred to types of communication are:

1. Personal and Business communication.
2. Internal and External communication.

3. Upward and downward communication
4. Formal and informal communication.
5. Mass communication.
6. Global communication
7. Lateral communication
8. Interactive communication
9. Social communication
10. Grapevine.

Barriers to Communication:

1. Poor Expression.
2. Faulty Transmissions.
3. Indifference and Lack of Interest.
4. Noise.
5. Physical Factors.

The single biggest problems in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.----
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

English And Communication Skills

Language is an expression of human activity. English language has become popular and routine in day to day official communication and in routine life also. In fact 1.1 billion people of India speak and communicate in more than a thousand languages and the fine line separating dialects from real languages is sometimes indistinguishable. Before Independence, English was a foreign language. With the advent of globalization, English has become a global language. Hence it appears to be best bet as a link language. In fact, it still remains a strong communicative language. In India , where the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and Information Technology(IT) boom has led to a demand for trained English language speakers and LEARNED workers, particularly, the youth should understand the accents, characters and cultural differences. People who want to learn the language have to expose themselves constantly to English, read, listen, write and grab every opportunity to speak.

To be successful, a person requires an integrated set of communication skills. These skills comprise, writing skills, speech skills, listening skills, nonverbal skills. One should have communication skills, while reading, writing, listening, speaking, conversation with various groups of people, government officials, bankers, family members etc.

Listening Skills:

Listening skills are one of the important parts of communication processes. Here are some of the characteristics of a good listener.

1. You must have patience.
2. Openness and desire to understand.
3. Concentration, intelligence and maintain eye contact.
4. Resist distractions and encourage speaker.
5. Summarize to clarify.
6. Have empathy.
7. Take time to listen.
8. Look attentive.
9. Don't interrupt.
10. Show interest.
11. Listening and expression is given paramount importance in team work and building better inter-personal relations at the work place.
12. Team aspirations can be met only proper listening. This gives a chance to think of better ideas both at individual and team levels.

There are several ways of listening which come into play in different situations and serve different roles at the work place. These are: Passive, Informative, Evaluative, Appreciative, Emphatic and Therapeutic.

Factors that hamper listening:

1. Detest the speaker.
2. Lack of interest in the subject.
3. External distractions.
4. Presumptions.
5. Inappropriate inferences.
6. Ineffective communication skills (of the speaker).
7. Self-induced distraction

How To Improve Listening Skills:

One should improve listening by concentration, patience and interest in the subject. Maintain eye contact and do not allow anything to distract you. Also pay attention to the body language, facial expression, tone of voice, and gestures of the speaker. It will give right perspective of the message. Try to make discussion interactive and lively. Do not ignore an important point.

Listening is an art that can be mastered by practice. So practice listening and improve your communication skills and in turn your team relations. If we listen to others, we can also learn so many new things in a short span of time. A good listener is a real learner. By listening to others, one can get to know a wide variety of views, ideas and thoughts.

Speaking Skills:

The importance of art of the speaking is now more keenly felt than ever before. Whether one is an Executive, An Engineer, A Doctor, A Lawyer, Software Professional, a public relations practitioner, a journalist, an accountant or a politician, he cannot be successful without knowing how to speak. A good speaker is a good listener too. Knowledge, confidence and delivery are the basic elements of an effective speech and that requires training. One has to develop self-confidence and try to remove fear of psychosis slowly. The following points to be known in mind before you speak.

1. Think before you speak.
2. Know your message.
3. Know something about the audience.
4. Get the points quickly. Then, it is easier for the listener to remember what you said.
5. Plan and prepare in advance what you want to say and what you want to approach.
6. Use easy language and use simple words.
7. Give importance to the subject and Voice should be sweet.
8. Modulate your tones as per the topic.
9. Illustrate with examples.
10. Stick to the time schedule.
11. Have the facts and respond well to questions.

Reading Skills:

Reading is skills by itself, which requires aspirants to make simple changes in their approach to master the talent. For a better grip over communication and language skills, a student should give sufficient time to reading every day. This should be done on a daily basis so that the memory gets refreshed with the knowledge. This is why reading occupies a prime place in the skills set of a person. The youth are advised to bear the following tips while reading.

1. Read inspirational or motivational books.
2. Subscribe to newspaper, newsletters, and periodicals journals of interest to update your knowledge.
3. Read the life history of great leaders, scientists, academicians, technocrats etc.
4. Underline the important points, note down the difficult words, and consult the dictionary.

5. Habituate concentration improve vocabulary.
6. By reading book, one can improve his way of expression.
7. Books are temples of knowledge.
8. Books motivate the young mind and activate to read the subject, language and also enhance reading habits.
9. Books play a vital role in the mental development of youth.
10. The great ideas will definitely help the readers in later life.

So read, mark, learn and inwardly digest what is there in the books.

Writing Skills:

Writing in other words, is above all for communication for conveying ideas and feelings from one mind to another mind. The hall marks of good writing are the hall marks of good communication.

1. Accuracy, appropriateness, to your audience, avoiding of ambiguity.
2. Brevity or conciseness, brightness or buoyancy.
3. Correctness, clarity, consistency, concreteness.
4. Early morning works well for many.
5. Plan to write three to five notes minimum daily.
6. Shorter sentence pack more power. They are also easier to read and understand.
7. Should be clear, brief content, contextually, important points to be covered.
8. Use sweet words, simple language, be legible, be clear and be concise and readable.
9. Write and rewrite until you are able to capture the idea in one sentence.

Conversation Skills.

Conversation is an informal talk involving a small group of people or only two on a particular subject or selected topics. The aim of this skill is to help you to become a good conversationalist.

Conversation should be like a tennis match, each person having his turn to give and receive. The true art of conversation is talking and listening. Good conversation requires delicacy and tact, give and take.

1. Allow your conversation partner to speak.
2. Respect the other person's point of view.
3. Concentrate on the conversation. Only hearing rather than listening will cause you to miss vital information.

4. Find out what your listener wants. To gain the most from any conversation, focus on your listener. Ask questions and listen to the responses.
5. Define terminology so there is less chance of misunderstanding.
6. Speaker and listener should maintain cordial and friendly atmosphere.
7. Clarify each other any misunderstandings and solve the problems by accepting amicable solution.

Group Discussions:

The facilitator frames different kinds of topics and the deliberation process is thrown open to the whole group of students, students are required to exchange ideas and opinions amongst group members on a specific and familiar topic (Alex, K, 2010). Students are to be trained to articulate different types of situation through adequate discussion till they reach a satisfactory level. To ensure, mock group discussions are conducted among the engineering graduates to make them effective and efficient.

Role Plays:

The objective of role-plays is to help students practice certain language functions and learn speaking skills.

According to Crook all and Oxford (1990), there is little consensus on the terms used in the role playing and simulation literature. A few of the terms often used interchangeable are simulation, games, role play, simulation-game and role play simulation and role playing game. A role playing game is an activity or a language game in which the participants or students of a situation and enact the play in front of an audience.

Features of a good role-play:

- 1, A good role-play is based on a familiar situation.
2. The situation should pose a conflict.
3. The group of characters does not exceed 2-3 members.
4. It takes 4-7 minutes.
5. It gives extensive speaking practice to the participants.
6. It is based on real world contexts and allows students to speak naturally.
7. It is interesting and enjoyable.
8. It develops the participant's creativity. It fosters their critical thinking skills.
9. It develops interpersonal skills.
10. It breaks monotony and makes other students participate.

Students Problems In Communication (Individuals):

1. Some students write well, but they are not able to express themselves orally.
2. Some speak fluently, but cannot write without grammatical errors.
3. Some are comfortable speaking among themselves in a small group, but are not comfortable facing the audience.
4. Some having problems with their body language and use inappropriate with others, some find it difficult to maintain eye contact.
5. Some are always misunderstood.

STUDENTS PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATION (in Group Communication).

1. Limited vocabulary.
2. Inaccurate grammar.
3. Lack of fluency.
4. Imperfect pronunciation.
5. Lack of active listening.
6. Fear of speaking in public.
7. Fear of expressing certain views.
8. Lack of confidence.
9. Lack of group skills.
10. Fear of making mistakes.
11. Lack of exposure and practice.

Steps For Developing Communication And Language Skills:

1. While interacting with someone give importance to the message.
2. Don't be pre-occupied with grammatical accuracy.
3. Once you become fluent you should try to improve grammar
4. Accept yourself as you are.
5. Practice is very important. Whenever you get an opportunity to speak in front of others make use of it . Face the audience boldly.
6. Keep a good dictionary with you as your companion.
7. Read news papers, read stories, articles, news-items, watch news on T.V., Radio, Develop your listening skills.
8. Mingle with others freely; it helps you to develop interpersonal and group skills.
9. Cultivate habit of reading books. By reading books, you can improve and develop creativity.
10. Selection of right books, good books to read is the key factor to success.
11. Motivate the young minds and activate to learn subject and language.
12. The great ideas will definitely help the reader in his later life. So read, Mark, learn and inwardly digest what is there in the books.
13. Books are temples of knowledge. Visit the Library regularly at fixed hour.

14. Now-a-days. Knowledge is open for all in so many forms. You need to acquire desired knowledge from vast sources available.

Conclusion:

There is no life without communication and communication flows like a river. Every communicator must know the significance of language which is essential for effective communication. Unless and until one should master the communication skills, he/ she cannot get employability in the Information Technology, I.T. enabled Services, M. N .C s, public sector and private sector industries etc. Everyone should revise the language habits from time to time, in accordance with changing life pattern and customs. As mentioned earlier, language is an expression of human activity and because human activity is constantly changing, language also changes along with it.

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