# **UNIT – 5**

# **Modern forms of Communication**

The technological advances of the past few decades have made it possible to transmit printed messages, pictures and even live performances to all comers of the world with speed.

With a single touch, you can send communications to a number of destinations. Not only large business houses but even medium and small ones use them in their day-to-day working. Among such means are fax, internet/email and videoconferencing.

**1-Internet and e-mail:**

Internet is an international computer network that links computers from sectors such as government agencies, business houses, educational institutions and individuals. It receives information, stores it and allows it to be read on satisfying certain conditions.

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) allow one to create the e-mail ID free, hoping to recover the cost through the ads to which the user is exposed during the use of email. A typical email address reads **abcdef@xyz.com**. Some other ISPs are bsnl, yahoo, hotmail, and Gmail.

**Note the use of only lower case (small) alphabets email in IDs.**

Every time the user wants to send messages or check the incoming mail, he can reach his ID by typing a password which makes the mail account private. However, once you have submitted to the mechanism of email you do not know who might read this “private” information far away. As such email does not guarantee 100% secrecy.

**Advantages:**

(a) Email is by far the cheapest and fastest means of sending printed information (verbal as well as non-verbal). At one click of the button, hundreds of pages of information can be sent to hundreds of email addresses worldwide (to be noted by receivers upon checking the incoming mail or inbox).

(b) No paper is required. Messages can be created directly on the computer, and added on from different computer files, CDs, floppies, etc.

(c) This facility is now available in many regional languages of India.

(d) It is informal and allows the sender to remain anonymous (since he can use any name as his email ID. For instance J.K. Singh can use udankhatola as his email name).

(e) Organizations and publishing houses take cognizance of messages coming via email. Newspapers and magazines print letters that come via email.

(f) As long as you carry your password with you, you can open your email account on any computer in the world which has this facility. You remain unencumbered even with a mobile handset. You can just enter an internet cafe, pay the rent and use the email. Email is extraordinarily portable.

(g) You can have an address book in your email account, record the incoming mails, and edit them and so on.

(h) When you reply to an email message, the sender’s message is automatically sent back to him for ready reference.

(i) As human need and imagination guide, more innovations are possible.

(j) Email can enable an ongoing electronic conference. People across the world can “meet” on internet and confer on a topic of common interest.

(k) The receiver need not respond at once as on the telephone but can take his time. Emailing helps to avoid a direct interface.

(l) In an organisation, a subordinate may quickly and directly reach a superior on email. Email makes an organisation more democratic (as individuals have more chance of being heard by the proper person even if he is several levels higher).

**Disadvantage:**

(i) Email, because of the potential anonymity, remains an informal channel of communication.

(ii) Excess use and flooding of unwanted messages (especially from advertisers) is a major drawback of this system. Unless one takes care to block unwanted ads, one finds one’s inbox full of offers which maybe doubtful and insincere. Wading through chunks of email is one of the biggest problems for those who depend on email for their communication needs.

(iii) One may not be private while using the computer for emailing. To that extent the secrecy is lost.

(iv) In case the receiver is unable to open his email account as soon as a message is received, the message cannot work for him.

**Guidelines for the use of email:**

**Email is a new and peculiar means of communication, bringing in its own conventions:**

(1) Your email message may be read by more persons than intended. So you have to take care.

(2) At email message must have all the elements of good composition such as brevity, clarity, courtesy.

(3) You may use the spell-check mechanism of the computer to ensure correct spelling.

(4) The email format on the computer provides for sending and mentioning cc (carbon copy) and subject line. These may be written for the receiver’s convenience.

(5) If a single email contains messages for various sections of an organisation, they may be separated at the composing stage.

(6) You should not use all capitals in writing a message as this looks awkward and rude.

(7) When responding to a message, only the essential part of it may be quoted and the rest deleted.

(8) You may create the message in a different programme (such as WordPad or notepad) and transfer it to your email.

(9) If you proofread on the computer screen, be extra careful.

It may be noted that the date and time of transmitting the message and the sender’s email ID are automatically conveyed on email. Still it is customary to write your email address in the body of the email message.

Email ID is given in the body of the message especially when you invite a response at a different ID. If there is a time lag between composing a message and sending it, for whatever reason, then the date of composing may be written.

**2- Videoconferencing and Teleconferencing:**

This mode of communication begins in teleconferencing. A number of telephones are simultaneously connected to one another. Teleconferencing is a facility enabling people in different parts of the world to have an audio meeting (as opposed to dialogue), saving on transit time and hotel stay. It helps in thrashing out a variety of opinions on a subject to reach a faster conclusion.

A further advance in this technology is computer teleconferencing. The participants can react to the messages and inputs for the others’ knowledge. They may not even be present simultaneously for the computer teleconference but add their contribution at their convenience.

Videoconferencing, however, is the closest it gets to seeing and hearing one another without being present together. The technologies used in a videoconference are: monitor screen, camera, microphone, codec (compressor-decompress or), equipment control pad at each location, and internet connectivity. With the passage of time, this is becoming more popular and easier to use. You often see it in TV interviews.

You often see it in TV interviews. For a videoconference, the participants get into a special room at their respective locations, equipped with the gadgetry. They can see, hear, speak to others and show exhibits without physical presence together.

The entire proceedings can be recorded on video tapes. As someone has jocularly put it, except for the snacks and coffee, everything else is transmissible in a videoconference. At present, the privilege of the richer business houses, videoconferences are set to gain wider popularity.

Video classrooms are another possibility in this field, where an expert faculty member may teach a number of classes in a number of towns simultaneously and answer the participants’ queries.

### **3- Fax:**

Just as the conventional telephone carries voice, a fax or facsimile machine carries printed messages (words and pictures in photocopy form) from the sender instrument to the receiver instrument.

The sender of a fax message prepares the copy on a sheet (generally no larger than A4 size) which can be fed into the fax machine. He dials the destination number, gets the fax tone and feeds the message into the machine.

The printed message is converted into electronic signals as the paper rolls through the fax machine. This message is received in the same form at the other end on the paper roll that is attached to the machine.

**Fax machines may have these additional features:**

**(A) Remote activation:**

The owner may use a remote control device to operate the machine.

**Despite power failure:**

(B) The fax machine may be made to function even during a power failure.

**(C) Memory:**

The message sent may be retained in the memory of the machine. At the receiving end, in the absence of paper, the message may be recorded in the machine for developing a printout afterwards.

**(D) Answering machine:**

At the receiving end, there need not be an operator to receive incoming messages. They are automatically received.

#### **Advantages:**

(A) Fax enables an accurate transmission of a document including pictures and handwriting. Colour faxes are also a possibility.

(B) Fax can be sent through a computer, in which case it is restricted to the messages created on the computer.

(C) A fax message can be confirmed on telephone to ensure its authenticity.

(D) Faxes are admissible as proof in the court. In this respect they are superior to email.

(E) With repeat dialling facility, a busy number can be reached as soon as it becomes free.

#### **Disadvantages:**

(a) It is expensive compared to email and post.

(b) Sometimes the reception is blurred due to channel defects or mechanical failure at either end.

(c) At the sender’s or the receiver’s end, the document to wrong people may be exposed. Hence it is often difficult to maintain secrecy in sending and receiving a fax message.

(d) At the receiving end, the message is printed at the receiver’s cost. In case unwanted messages pour in, the receiver has to bear the cost.

# **International Communication**

International communication (also referred to as the study of global communication or transnational communication) is the communication practice that occurs across international borders. The need for international communication was due to the increasing effects and influences of globalization. As a field of study, international communication is a branch of communication studies, concerned with the scope of “government-to-government”, “business-to-business”, and “people-to-people” interactions at a global level. Currently, international communication is being taught at colleges across the United States. Due to the increasingly globalized market, employees who possess the ability to effectively communicate across cultures are in high demand. International communication “encompasses political, economic, social, cultural and military concerns”.

Efficient communication networks played crucial roles in establishing ancient imperial authority and international trade. The extent of empire could be used as an ‘indication of the efficiency of communication’. Ancient empires such as Rome, Persia and China, all utilized writing in collecting information and dispersing, creating enormous postal and dispatch systems. As early as in fifteenth century, news had been disseminated trans-nationally in Europe. ‘The wheat traders of Venice, the silver traders of Antwerp, the merchants of Nuremberg and their trading partners shared economic newsletters and created common values and beliefs in the rights of capital.’

The Second World War was a catalyst for international communication. Analytical tools for communications research are used to mobilize domestic public support for war, to understand enemy propaganda, and to develop psychological warfare techniques to influence the morale and opinions of allies and enemies. The Rockefeller Foundation convened and funded a communications seminar every month from 1939 to 1940 years at the New York headquarters. The initial purpose was to bring together leading scholars interested in communication to provide theoretical guidance for future communication studies, including Lasswell and Lazarsfeld. When the United States entered the war at the end of 1941, with the outbreak of the European economic crisis, communication research became an important factor in discussing government policies.

**Communication Technology development**

Media development can be said to be independent media created by private interventions during the transition period through international intervention.

**International communication development**

In the 1980s and 1990s, with the establishment and development of fiberoptic cables, satellites and the Internet, and the gradual proliferation are eroding space and time barriers and increasing speed, and reducing the cost of transmitting various information. This trend has pushed international communication to globalization.

**Four key interrelated approaches to international communication**

* Idealistic-humanistic
* Proselytization
* Economic
* The political

One of the most obvious manifestations of international communication are world news, when the media of one country cover news from abroad. But, apart from journalism, international communication also occurs in other areas (culture, technology, sciences) and the nature of the “information” that is circulated can be classified in a wide variety of categories, such as cultural (music, films, sports, TV shows from one country to another), scientific (research papers published abroad, scientific exchange or cooperation), and intelligence (diplomacy reports, international espionage, etc.).

Typically the study of international communication includes a deep attention to the circulation of news among different countries (and the resulting imbalances, from which came the concept of news flow), the power of media organizations (such as conglomerates and news agencies), issues such as cultural imperialism and media imperialism, and the political role that international cooperation can have in enhancing the media industry (and society as a whole) in a given region, such as proposed by development communication or communication for development.

### **Cross Cultural Communication**

**Cross-cultural communication** has become strategically important to companies due to the growth of global business, technology, and the Internet. Understanding cross-cultural communication is important for any company that has a diverse workforce or plans on conducting global business. This type of communication involves an understanding of how people from different cultures speak, communicate, and perceive the world around them.

Cross-cultural communication in an organization deals with understanding different business customs, beliefs and communication strategies. Language differences, high-context vs. low-context cultures, nonverbal differences, and power distance are major factors that can affect cross-cultural communication.

Let’s take a look at how cross-cultural differences can cause potential issues within an organization. Jack is a manager at a New Mexico-based retail conglomerate. He has flown to Japan to discuss a potential partnership with a local Japanese company. His business contact, Yamato, is his counterpart within the Japanese company. Jack has never been to Japan before, and he’s not familiar with their cultural norms. Let’s look at some of the ways that a lack of cultural understanding can create a barrier for business success by examining how Jack handles his meeting with Yamato.

## **Diversity Issues of Communication**

## **High- vs. Low-Context Culture**

The concept of **high- and low-context culture** relates to how an employee’s thoughts, opinions, feelings, and upbringing affect how they act within a given culture. North America and Western Europe are generally considered to have **low-context cultures**. This means that businesses in these places have direct, individualistic employees who tend to base decisions on facts. This type of businessperson wants specifics noted in contracts and may have issues with trust.

**High-context cultures** are the opposite in that trust is the most important part of business dealings. There are areas in the Middle East, Asia and Africa that can be considered high context. Organizations that have high-context cultures are collectivist and focus on interpersonal relationships. Individuals from high-context cultures might be interested in getting to know the person they are conducting business with in order to get a gut feeling on decision making. They may also be more concerned about business teams and group success rather than individual achievement.

Jack and Yamato ran into some difficulties during their business negotiations. Jack spoke quickly and profusely because he wanted to seal the deal as soon as possible. However, Yamato wanted to get to know Jack, and he felt that Jack spoke too much. Yamato also felt that Jack was only concerned with completing the deal for his own self-interest and was not concerned with the overall good of the company. Jack’s nonverbal cues did not help the negotiations either.

### **Nonverbal Differences**

Gestures and eye contact are two areas of **nonverbal communication** that are utilized differently across cultures. Companies must train employees in the correct way to handle nonverbal communication as to not offend other cultures. For example, American workers tend to wave their hand and use a finger to point when giving nonverbal direction. Extreme gesturing is considered rude in some cultures. While pointing may be considered appropriate in some contexts in the United States, Yamato would never use a finger to point towards another person because that gesture is considered rude in Japan. Instead, he might gesture with an open hand, with his palm facing up, toward the person.

# **Writing and Presenting in international situations**

For native English speakers, making a presentation overseas or to an international audience presents some special cross-cultural challenges. Taking the dos and don’ts below into account will ensure that your message is communicated effectively, without embarrassing, insulting, or offending the diverse members of your audience.

### **WHAT TO DO**

1. **Speak Clearly**

This means enunciating clearly so that people can hear and understand each word you are saying. Don’t mumble, slur your speech, or speak super fast when addressing a crowd whose native language is not English.

1. **Speak Slowly**

Help your listeners by slowing down. Give them time to catch your words and digest the meaning. Use verbal and non-verbal clues to gauge whether you are being understood. If people ask you to repeat what you have said, look puzzled, or respond inappropriately, most likely they have not understood you. Repeat your idea slowly in the same or different words. If all else fails, write it down.

1. **Triangulate your main ideas**

This technique involves expressing the same idea three times in slightly different ways. It gives your listeners three chances to catch what you are saying. For example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Speaker’s Words | Listener’s Thoughts |
| “I believe he’s the right man for the job…” | Yes… |
| “He has all the necessary qualifications…” | Right… |
| “He is the best candidate of all till now…” | I understand, it’s as I thought… |

1. **Use meaningful tempo and intonation**

By changing the tone of your voice, varying the tempo, and placing stress on areas you would like to emphasize, you provide added clues to help your listener grasp your message.

1. **Provide signposts along the way**

Signposts prepare your listeners in advance by informing them about the planned direction of your discussion or presentation, as well as any changes along the way. For example:

“Today I’ll be speaking about three areas: the market for our products in Canada, our new marketing strategy, and the timeline for implementation of this project.”

“Now that we’ve completed this section, let’s turn our attention to…”

1. **Use verification loops**

In inter-cultural communication, especially, it is valuable to keep checking whether your listeners are following along with your argument. This can be done by asking:

* “Do you have any questions?”
* “Is everything clear till now?”
* “Would you like me to elaborate?”

In this way, listeners have the opportunity to clarify confusion or misunderstanding at an earlier stage.

1. **Say numbers and dates slowly**

Numbers are often expressed in different ways in different parts of the world, so exercise special care when saying numbers, which are such a critical part of doing business. These include phone numbers, prices, quotations, dates, flight numbers, exchange rates, zip codes, addresses, and so on. For example:

* $1500 can be expressed as fifteen hundred or one thousand five hundred.
* 16 can sound like sixty so you should repeat, “That’s sixteen – one six.” (The same is true for all “teen” numbers.)
* December 20th can sound like December 28th.
* In India, the terms lakh(representing 100,000) and crore (10,000,000) are used and must be clarified.
1. **Write down unfamiliar names or technical terms**

Unfamiliar or unknown names and terms are best shown written down on a slide or handout. Repeated use of a term that others don’t know or cannot understand is annoying and thoughtless.

1. **Double and triple check time arrangements**

Confirm any arrangements related to time or dates. One possible approach is to pretend you’ve forgotten, flip through your papers and say, “So we’re meeting at / on …” and see what the other person has to say.

1. **Be careful using English words from other languages**

Remember that English is a mongrel language and has adopted words from other languages. Beware that sometimes these adopted words have different meanings or shades of meaning in other languages.

1. **Be sincere**

By showing genuine sincerity and interest in building a good relationship, a positive atmosphere is created which makes it easier to do business. When both sides assume such goodwill, many potential hurdles can be overcome.

1. **Keep a sense of humor**

Even with the best of intentions, cultural mistakes may be made from both sides. The best advice is to be relaxed, keep a sense of humor and appreciate the cooperative efforts being made by all sides.

### **WHAT NOT TO DO**

1. **Avoid Slang**

Unless the listeners have lived in your country for a long time, avoid slang. Also be aware that slang changes and the listener may not know the current meaning.

When a recently graduated Canadian student went to teach English in Japan, she learned this the hard way. During her class, one of the students told a particularly amusing anecdote, which the teacher enjoyed very much. Unfortunately, the teacher expressed her enthusiasm by laughing and exclaiming, “Shuuuut uuuuup!” in the lilting tone of voice, characteristic of some North Americans when they hear something they like. The student shifted in his chair, looked awkward and said no more. Later in the same lesson, when the student made another interesting observation, the teacher responded enthusiastically once again by saying, “Gettttt ouuuuut!”, at which the poor young student, red-faced and confused, packed up his belongings, got up and walked out the door, never to return. Slang can be disastrous.

1. **Avoid contractions**

Contractions may blur the sound of words and make it more difficult to understand you. In some cases, they can lead to direct confusion – as when someone says ‘can’ or ‘can’t’ too quickly. In this case it is better to use ‘can’ and ‘cannot’.

1. **Avoid idioms**

Using idioms is one of the most common ways of crippling communication with non-native English speakers. These expressions and colloquialisms confuse and confound; avoid them in the interest of greater clarity. Just imagine how these expressions sound to the uninitiated:

* to see red
* to strike out
* to call in sick
* To be in the black
* to jump the gun
* to blow one’s top
* To do lunch
* to give the cold shoulder
* to have a soft corner
1. **Avoid double-negatives**

This convoluted way of speaking, which may be followed by native speakers, is very hard on non-natives. Spare them the trouble by speaking more directly. For example, instead of saying “I’m not saying it’s impossible…”, just say “ It’s possible…”

1. **Avoid understatement**

This style of speaking is culturally sensitive and may be misunderstood in intercultural situations. For example, if you state that you’re an okay graphic designer, when in fact you’re very talented, you might be taken at your word.

1. **Avoid sarcasm and irony**

This is another area in which backstage cultural information is required to interpret the message. Don’t make sarcastic comments about yourself or others. Get your message across in more direct terms.

1. **Don’t use curse words**

Especially when used outside one’s own culture, curse words often signal disrespect and may damage business relationships. The best policy is to avoid all language that could be offensive.

1. **Be careful about humor**

Humor is one of the most culturally sensitive forms of communication and doesn’t usually work well in cross-cultural situations. The jokes that you consider funny may be viewed as crude or rude by others. In addition, humor is based on an in-depth understanding of a cultural mindset.

1. **Don’t speak loudly**

Speak at normal volume. Your foreign listeners are not hard of hearing or deaf. This is not the issue.

1. **Don’t assume anything!**

This includes: don’t assume the person doesn’t speak English well and don’t assume the person doesn’t know your native language. Many people have studied and traveled widely today and have lived in many different countries. Don’t be caught in an embarrassing situation because of incorrect assumptions.