

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE SKILLS: AN OVERVIEW

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Introduction

Language, the major means of human communication, exerts a lot of influence on our lives such that it has been confirmed that we cannot live without “languaging” (He, 2003). The affinity between man and language is so intrinsic that we can talk of “manguage” to describe this association with which man and language grow, change, shift, live and die (Adedimeji, 2005a). It is a world of words we live in and the words are used to communicate. Besides, that the world has shrunk to a global village is hinged on the amount of information available to us which engenders the age of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Based on the centrality of language in human affairs, such that our civilisation depends on it, it is hard to imagine a world devoid of language or any form of communication. The impracticability of such a situation is glaring. The world would not have attained its current level of development without communication and no one would be able to read and understand this text. As a matter of fact, this essay would not have been written or produced if we lack the ability or intelligence to properly commune.

Language is the pedigree of nations and its chief function is communication. Communication builds bridges and fills gaps. Through it, message is successfully expressed, transmitted or relayed from one individual to another; without it, human existence would take a tedious turn. The need to study and understand language and communication, its skills and processes cannot be overemphasised because our humanity significantly depends on our communicative ability in

language. Without communication, a very vital aspect of our life, life is totally meaningless and living is a burden.

Although communications has been studied, more or less since antiquity, it has become an especially important in the twentieth century. This development has been described as a “revolutionary discovery” largely caused by the rise of communication technologies such as radio, television, telephone, satellites, and computer networking, along with industrialisation, big businesses and global politics. Clearly, communication has assumed immense importance in our time and one can only ignore it to one’s peril (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005). According to Birk and Birk (cited in Adedimeji, 2013), mere words can make or prevent wars, create understanding or inflame prejudice, form constitutions or destroy them, sell shady or superior products or ideas, justify man’s worst actions or express his highest ideals.

For effective communication to occur, there must be communicative competence in language skills between two or more individuals in which a message is delivered and received. Language skills are basically four types and they all inter-related. *Reading* is part of information gathering and critical evaluation, *listening* is part of observation, and *speaking* and *writing* often depend on observation, interpretation of quantitative data as well as critical evaluation of information. Listening and speaking are primary skills while reading and writing are secondary skills. “While listening and reading are receptively used, being the skills by which one interprets life and receives knowledge and information, speaking and writing are productive skills by which one expresses oneself and produces information for various functions (Adedimeji, Alabi & Abdullahi- Idiagbon, 2013)

The aim of this chapter is to analyse these four aspects of communication skills and provide an insight into how effective communication can take place using the skills. In addition to the four mentioned communication skills, a fifth skill which is seldom mentioned would also be examined. *Reasoning* has been deemed as communication skill because none of reading, writing, speaking and learning can take place without any it. Berlo (1960) identifies reasoning along with the previous four skills of language. Reasoning skills help to mediate among the conventional four skills. According to Akinyemi (1991, p.4), “the ability of an individual to encode and decode enables him/her to reason”. He noted that:

- a. Encoding = Speaking + Writing skills
- b. Decoding = Listening + Reading skills
- c. (a) + (b) = Reasoning.

It goes without saying that no one can be reasonable without the mastery of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

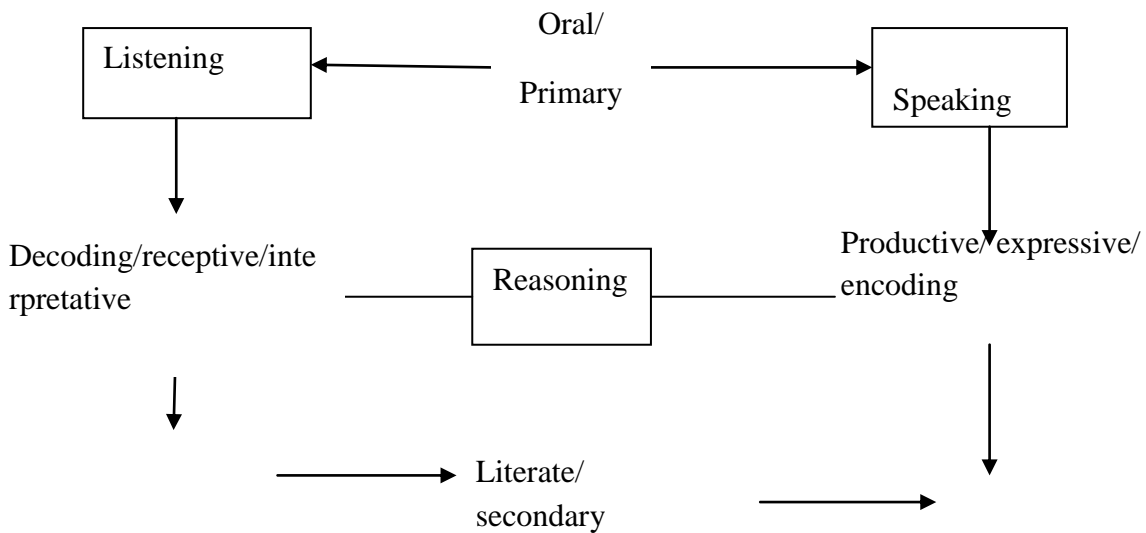


Fig. 1: The interconnection of communication skills

The purpose of communication

The purpose of communication is to get your message across to others clearly and unambiguously. Doing this involves both the sender of the message and the receiver, and it's a process that can be fraught with error, with messages often misinterpreted by the recipient. When this is not detected, it can cause tremendous confusion, wasted efforts and missed opportunities. In fact, communication is only successful when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information as a result of communication.

Thomas Hobbes in his *The Leviathan* published in 1651 identifies four uses or functions of language. They include “to register thought, to pass information across to others by counseling or by teaching, to interact with one another so that we may have the mutual help of one another and to please and delight ourselves and others” (p. 463). In other words, there are four main purposes of communication basically:

- i. *To inquire*: This involves obtaining information in various ways, for instance, by asking questions or through formulating questionnaires.
- ii. *To inform*: This entails the dissemination of information using different channels of communication.
- iii. *To persuade*: This aims to influence people and bring them round to your way of thinking.
- iv. *To develop goodwill*: This involves maintaining and forming cordial and harmonious relationships with the people you are communicating with.

Generally, people communicate to educate others, share information, maintain relationships, attain ends (both positive and negative such as persuade, dissuade, convince, deceive, cajole, etc.)

Acquiring listening skills

Listening means hearing with comprehension (Azikwe, 1998). When you are listening, how long can you listen before your attention wanders? Does attention differ with subject? How do you keep attention when the information is important to you? How much of what you listen to are you able to retain? What techniques do you use to recall the main points of a speech or a television presentation?

Listening means hearing with comprehension, thus there is a difference between hearing and listening. Listening entails not only the perception of sounds but also the ability to understand and evaluate what we hear (Lubega, 1989). Every day, we hear different sounds, from the honk of cars, to loud chatters in classroom, all of which is mostly hearing. In the process of hearing, if whatever is being heard can be processed into constructive information and then understood, we can successfully say we have listened. If on the other hand, while watching a television programme or in a classroom, though physically present, our minds sojourn into another realm or there is a plain lack of interest in what the speaker is saying or inability to grasp the information being passed on, here we can conclude that listening is not taking place. Hence, listening is a conscious process that consists of receiving, focusing, deciphering, accepting and storing (Abubakar, 2013). It is a significant component of our daily activities.

Studies show that the average listener recalls only a little more than half of what the speaker says, so listening is quite a difficult skill. The problem in listening is peculiar unlike in other

components of language. For instance, a speaker can correct his mistakes or hesitate to think before continuing his speech; a writer is at ease to proof-read and rewrite a piece or make necessary corrections, and a reader can reduce his speed, employ a different reading method, and he can stop to think over an idea or word he has come across. In the case of a listener, he is at the mercy of the speaker, which is his speed, voice, enunciation and the rest. Often the listener cannot tell the speaker to wait and allow him to comprehend before the speaker continues or something of the sort (Azikiwe, 1998).

There are different types of listening;

1. *Appreciative listening*: Here, the aim is to seek information which provides a type of pleasure to the listener. It could be listening to an entertainer or a favorite speaker or a song. Here the listener has built some sort of attachment to the speaker.
2. *Critical listening*: This happens when the listener evaluates the message and builds an opinion, makes judgment, decides if it is logical, agree or disagree with whatever is being said. This form of listening requires significant real-time cognitive effort as the listener analyses what is being said, relating it to existing knowledge and rules, while simultaneously listening to the ongoing words from the speaker.
3. *Discriminative listening*: This occurs when the listener is able to identify and distinguish inferences or emotions through the speaker's change in voice tone, their use of pause, etc. Some people are extremely sensitive in this way while others are less able to pick up these subtle cues. Here, the listener may recognise and pinpoint a specific engine fault, a familiar laugh from a crowded theatre or a child's cry in a

noisy playground. The ability for discriminative listening may be affected by hearing impairment.

4. *Empathetic listening*: This has to do a lot with feelings; the emphasis is on understanding the speaker's feelings and non-verbal behavior. This requires excellent discrimination and close attention to nuances and emotional signals. When a listener is being truly empathetic, he feels the same way as the speaker.
5. *Comprehensive listening*: Also called informative listening, this adds a visual component to descriptive listening. It focuses on understanding the speaker's words as well as body movement, facial expressions and vocal quality.

Based on the above listed types of listening, there can be different depths of listening.

1. *False listening*: Usually, the listeners here give a false sense of paying attention by hearing but not listening to what is being said. They may show physical/non-verbal movement to acknowledge what is being said, but it is all pretence.
2. *Initial listening*: Listeners are at first listening, but stop when they want to interject, waiting for a chance to voice out their own opinions.
3. *Selective listening*: This happens when listeners choose to hear what they decide they want to hear and ignore all the rest that is being said.
4. *Partial listening*: Here, listeners sincerely begin by listening, but then trail off unintentionally. The listeners wander off and then return. This happens to many of us, and it can be problematic in the sense that when we switch attention to the

speaker, he or she may have moved on and we may not find it easy to join the conversation.

5. *Full listening*: Here, listeners give what is being said their full attention, trying to understand as much as they can from it. In the end, listeners would have understood the message fully. This type of listening requires a lot of concentration.
6. *Deep listening*: Listeners understand beyond what is being said. In deep listening, you listen attentively to what is said, understand the emotions, watch the body language, detect needs and goals, identify preferences and biases, perceive beliefs and values, and so on. Deep listening is employed by psychologists to better understand their patients.

Relying on the categorization of Buttery and Anderson (1980), Abubakar (2013) considers levels of listening as marginal, appreciative, attentive and analytic. Marginal listening is partial listening, which applies to issues that are of no interest or significance to the listener. Appreciative listening involves the interest of the listener in processing the information being received and acknowledging or appreciating its value. Attentive listening occurs when “your attention becomes absolute and you seem to be oblivious of other activities around you except that which is connected with sounds” (Abubakar, 2013, p.159). The highest level of listening is the analytical listening in which the message is evaluated to determine its quality or lack of it. At this level, “each part of the message is weighted against the other and you encode (through note taking, use of symbols, abbreviations, etc.) to enable you separate facts from fictions, points from details etc. for easy recall” (ibid).

Lubega (1987) suggest points to help improve concentration skills. These are:

- i. *Listen with concentration:* His advice to listeners is to try as hard as they can to follow what the speaker is saying. Concentration can be hard and the mind can wander off a few times, but one should be quick to return their concentration to what is being said.
- ii. *Listen to acquire information and evaluate:* While the speaker is talking, assessing what is being said would help keep concentration in place, also irrelevant or important facts from what is being said would either be discarded or appreciated.
- iii. *Listen for faulty reasoning:* He points out that for one to be a good listener, one must learn to evaluate or spot out faults from what is being said; he says this helps to LISTEN TO rather than HEAR what is being said.
- iv. *Listen with the right attitude:* A biased mindset easily corrupts whatever learning that is supposed to take place, so one should open one's mind so as to grab whatever is being said.
- v. *Listen for the main point and distinguish them from supporting points:* He argues that a good listener does not necessarily take in everything that is being said, but they know how to distinguish between the main information, supporting ideas and jokes. A good listener will keep the major and minor points apart.
- vi. *Listen for emotive language:* As speakers often employ emotive language to drive home specific ideas, good listeners should be able to isolate these areas and not let such language shape their judgment.

Mastering speaking skills

Speaking is directly connected to listening. While listening is only complete when the listener understands what is being heard, a good speaker has to be able to communicate his thoughts successfully to the listener.

Speaking is a verbal mode of expression, it involves the use of sounds that must be heard and understood. Speaking, therefore, involves the use of the organs of speech. It also involves the articulation of speech sounds by means of these organs. Speaking must be meaningful and intelligible. Speaking is a purposeful means of communicating feelings.

In order to communicate ideas and feelings successfully to others, so that what is said is understood, a speaker must cultivate the skill of effective speaking. Poor speech distracts the listener's attention from what is being said to how it is being said. A good speaker is not expected to copy or pretend to speak in false accent, a good speaker speaks in a natural way.

Importance of speech

Obanya (1982) has adduced reasons why speaking skill has been placed at the pedestal of language. The reasons are:

- i. Speech is the natural way every normal child show that they understand their environment
- ii. Writing is a representation of spoken word. This means that speech makes writing easy.
- iii. While every language has a spoken form, some languages do not have written forms, thus showing the supremacy of the speaking skills.

- iv. A greater part of everyday activities involve speech, even more than any other communication skill.

How to acquire clear fluent speech

To speak well requires elocutionary perfection. It involves the skill to express one's point of view clearly and convincingly to the hearer. Successful communication of one's ideas, therefore, rest on one's self-confidence and communicative competence.

There are four aspects to good, clear, fluent speech. These are:

- i. Delivery
- ii. Voice production
- iii. Articulation
- iv. Enunciation

1. *Delivery*: Delivery is the actual sending out of the message. It deals with how the flow of speech is sent out to the listener and how it is controlled and modified. Good delivery has five aspects: phrasing, pace, stress and rhythm, intonation, and general attitude of the speaker.
2. *Voice Production*: This deals with the action of the organs responsible for the production of the speech sounds. Talking involves many activities a speaker is not aware of, like inhaling air, pushing out at a regulated rate and modifying it to form the sounds of the language being spoken.

3. *Articulation:* Speaking from the articulation point is a physical activity which is a result of precise movement and manipulation of the muscles that have to do with speech – the speech organs. Each speech sound requires its unique muscular movement. So, careless articulation results in bad speech, either because the sounds produced are indistinct or are not the expected ones. Each language has its own inventory of sounds, although quite a number of sounds can be common to many languages. When speaking a particular language, it is important to use the sounds of that language and not to introduce strange sounds.

4. *Enunciation:* This has to do with the distinctiveness of the speaker's utterances. Although in a good speech, each sound is not produced individually, nor is each word, the sound should be pronounced clearly and joined together properly. If the listeners have difficulties in understanding and the speaker is asked to repeat, then the speaker's enunciation is faulty. To acquire distinct articulation, a speaker must fully use of his lip and tongue movement and pronounce all the sounds distinctly.

Improving reading skills

Reading is the conscious effort of extracting information from written words. The level of consciousness may vary in individuals, but without any concentration, the reader might as well just be staring. Like other forms of communication, information has to be passed across. Reading can be said to operate on two levels; the first level where words are recognized, grouped and interpreted. On the second level, the words which have been recognized call from the reader's

storehouse of meanings and experience certain shared ideas. The writer through his text, creates a world has the responsibility of selling his ideas to the reader.

Good and effective reading is not cheap. For a reader to read, process and understand a text, he must pay the price and certain factors have to be in place. DeBoer, Kaufers & Miller (1951: 163-164) points out thus:

Good reading calls for physical and mental health, sound vision and hearing, a wide experience background, a wide experience background, adequate language development, a strong interest in and a purpose for reading, familiarity with symbols, and skill in dealing with various type of printed matter. When these factors are present in sufficient degree, we say the learner is 'ready to read'. Reading readiness is essential not only in the initial stages but in all stages of human development. To read any passage of print successfully, a reader must be 'ready', i.e. the various factors that have been mentioned must be present. It is the whole child who reads, not just the eyes of the mind'. (pp.163-164).

Reading appears to be a simple enough task, but often, readers encounter great difficulty, and sometimes frustration, with the reading exercise. According to Christian Nuttal, 'The fact that the meaning is in the text is no guarantee that the reader will get it out'.

Comprehension, the skill of extracting meaning from print, is central to reading. Obah (1981) discusses comprehension in three stages. First, we comprehend at the *literal* or *factual level* – comprehending the words and sentences on the page. Second, we comprehend at the *inferential level* – comprehending relationships and ideas implied rather than explicitly stated. We do this

by considering the associations that words convey, and writer's 'tone of voice' as shown in his choice of words, and the writer's ideas. Thirdly, some types of writing require that we comprehend at the *conjectural level*- using the writer's ideas as a basis for projecting new ideas. This may demand that we continue where the writer left off, exploring possibilities left open by the discussion, examining problems inherent in the argument and setting the ideas gained from the reading into some perspective with our already acquired frame of ideas.

Types of Reading

1. *Skimming*: This is a type of reading provides understanding of the text without needing to read word for word. The reader basically seeks out the main point in the text by reading selected portions and finding important ideas expressed in the text.
2. *Scanning*: In this case, the reader only aims to find specific information in the text. The reader tends to search the text indiscriminately for the precise information being sought after.
3. *Light reading*: This is a more relaxed, slow and comfortable reading technique. The reader is generally in no hurry to access the main ideas of the text, and optimum concentration is not required for this type of reading.
4. *Reading to study*: The goal here is to get proper understanding of what the text is about. The method involves five simple steps, which are:

Survey- Skim through to gain an understanding.

Question- Devise questions you hope the text would answer.

Read- This has to be done in a slow and careful manner.

Recall- From memory, write down the main points made by the chapter.

Review- Revisit your question and compare these to your recall and establish how well the text has answered them; fill in any gap by further reading and note taking.

5. *Speed reading*: This, as the name suggests, is reading fast in order to quickly obtain the required information.

Duke & Pearson (2002) discusses the qualities of good readers in the following light:

- i. Good readers are active.
- ii. From the outset they have clear goals in mind for their reading. They constantly evaluate whether the text, and their reading of it is meeting their goal.
- iii. Good readers typically look over the text before they read, noting such things as the structure of the text and the text sections that might be most relevant to their reading goals.
- iv. As they read, good readers frequently make predictions about what is to come.
- v. They read selectively, continually making decisions about their reading- what to read carefully, what to read quickly, what not to read, what to re-read, and so on.
- vi. Good readers construct, revise, and question the meanings they make as they read.
- vii. Good readers try to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts in the text, and they deal with inconsistencies or gaps as needed.
- viii. They draw from, compare and integrate their prior knowledge with materials in the text.

- ix. They think about the authors of the text, their style, their beliefs, intentions, historical milieu and so on.
- x. They monitor their understanding of the text, making adjustments in their reading as necessary.
- xi. They evaluate the text's quality and value, and react to the text in a range of ways, both intellectually and emotionally.
- xii. Good readers read different kinds of text differently.
- xiii. When reading narrative, good readers attend closely to the setting and characters.
- xiv. When reading expository text, these readers frequently construct and revise summaries of what they have read.
- xv. For good readers, text processing occurs not only during 'reading' as we have traditionally defined it but also during short breaks taking during reading, even after the 'reading' itself has commenced, even after the 'reading' has ceased.
- xvi. Comprehension is a consuming, continuous, and complex activity, but one that, for good readers, is both satisfying and productive.

Poor reading habits

There are a few habits that are quite common which endangers proper and effective reading. The consequences of defective reading is usually difficulty in recalling, inability to comprehend, slow pace of reading, stress on reading organs etc. The poor reading habits are discussed below:

- i. *Head movement:* This is a common mistake many readers make. moving the head from right to left while reading lines from a text stresses the reader. Concentration eventually becomes low and the speed of reading is slow. The only muscles that should be moving are those of the eyes.
 - ii. *Pointing to words:* Using an object, pen, pencil or ruler, to trace the lines of the text is just as bad as moving the head. The muscles of the eyes function effectively in tracing the text.
 - iii. *Vocalization:* The reader reads out the texts as they read it, either out, loud or in a murmur. This slows down the reading and eventually makes the reader tired and bored.
 - iv. *Sub-vocalization:* This is when the reader reads their text with a voice. Unlike vocalization, the voice is only in the reader's mind. The problem is that the reader concentrates more on the sound of the words rather than the text, as he spends energy on identifying and pronouncing the words.
 - v. *Regression:* This often results from fatigue and/or lack of concentration. The reader keeps re-reading words and sentences to understand them.
 - vi. *Small recognition span:* This refers to the number of words that a reader can focus on at a time. Usually, poor readers have small recognition span, they can only focus on a few words at a time.
 - vii. *Rhythmic eye movement:* The eye is expected to move in a particular rhythm, not roaming the page randomly.

Cultivating writing skills

Writing is arguably the most technical of the communication skills, and to most, it may be the most difficult to learn. Interestingly, all other communications skills must have been learnt before one can delve into the complex world of writing. The quality of one's ability to reason, organize and process information determines how good the writing would be. A good writing is clear, has proper grammar, punctuation and spelling, and passes across a message.

A writer needs imagination in conceiving an idea that will be exciting. The writer also needs imagination in expressing this idea to the target audience to accomplish this intended communicative intention. Since what the writer produces is a slice of his personality, the writer needs to give just the appropriate intellectual and emotional investment to the writing for effective communication to occur. Doing so can sometimes be boundlessly agonizing. However, a writer is usually extremely excited when he sees that his new writing is roundly applauded by the readers. This warm reception obliterates the agony that attended the fashioning of the new writing.

A good writer must know his reader so as to ensure a functional communicative interaction with them by using a suitable style and language. The entire message must be presented in such a way that the reader will not be alienated.

Generally, people write to inform, recommend, motivate, prompt or play a part in debate and persuade, impress, record, instruct and reinforce or build on existing situations and beliefs (Adedimeji 2013). Obanya (1981) outlines the reasons for writing as:

- i. to persuade a reader to do something;

- ii. to argue in favor of something;
- iii. to express feelings and emotions; and
- iv. to describe something, could be a person, place, object, experience etc.

Each of the purposes would require a different approach to writing, and to communicate successfully through writing, the writer has to be able to adapt his writing to his purpose.

Writing is an interaction among the writer, the reader, the occasion and its purpose. It is a process made of the three stages of pre-writing, writing and post writing. It is also a product which manifests in a poem, play, text, novel, book etc.

Whether as an interaction, a process or product, no writing can be achieved without POWER. To be a powerful writer, five things are involved. According to Adedimeji (2013, p. 112), “there is POWER in language and effective communication. The POWER of writing consists of five stages contained in the word POWER as an acronym. These are Planning, Organisation, Writing, Editing and Revision”.

There are many forms of writing, but five forms stand out:

Narrative: The writer gives an account based on an experience, either a personal story or something he witnessed. It usually is written in the past tense.

Descriptive: The writer describes something. This could be an object, a person etc. This type of writing is written in present tense.

Imaginative: The writer gives a fictional account of a situation. Creative language is usually used in imaginative writing.

Argumentative or Persuasive: The writer aims to share or sell a point and view and tries to defend it in a bid to convince the audience to agree with him/her.

Expository: The writer introduces or sheds light on a particular topic, thereby educating his/her audience on the topic of discussion.

The Process of writing

There are three processes of writing. These are discussed as follows:

Pre-writing: This involves asking the writer answering two fundamental questions, the purpose of the writing and the audience who would be reading the writing. Understanding the purpose of the writing would enable the writer to make his writing serve a specific function. Besides, understanding who the writing is for would enable the writer present his text in the best way in which the audience would understand.

Pre-writing activities include:

- i. Global: Brainstorming on topic, analysis of points, definition, conceiving of a good answer;
- ii. Content-Related: Gathering and noting key points, reading, researching, conducting interviews, holding discussions;
- iii. Order-Related: Organizing, classifying, outlining and integrating information, facts and ideas; and
- iv. Language-Related: Determining essay type and style, knowing register and suitable language for audience and occasion.

Writing: This involves writing out the first draft having gotten enough background information.

Re-writing: After writing the first draft, the writer goes back to edit and re-write, while infusing new ideas and generally improving on the text.

In revising the draft and re-drafting, the writer tries to find out what has been said effectively.

The following questions often help at this juncture:

- i. Have I missed out any important points of information?
- ii. Does my vocabulary need to be made stronger at any point?
- iii. Are there some sentences which do not say much or which are repetitions that should be dropped?
- iv. Do I need to re-arrange the paragraphs?
- v. Are the links clear and do they guide the reader through the writing?

Editing: This involves applying last touches, making the main point clear, grammar and spell-checking. It is also important to check through to make sure the reader would easily understand what has been written.

Characteristics of effective writing

Meanwhile, you would not be able to write effectively without meeting certain conditions. The qualities or characteristics of effective writing are as follows:

Economy: This is the management of words in such a way that each word works and unnecessary words are avoided.

Simplicity: This has to do with the choice of words by avoiding grandiose and pompous expressions. It was reported that a man called the police to complain that a magnificent inferno was incinerating his gargantuan domicile. Before the police could figure out he was alerting them of a fire outbreak at his house, the house had been completely razed.

Clarity: This concerns writing straight and direct to the point. It has to do with avoiding ambiguity, vagueness, redundancy, long windy expressions. The clearer a writing is, the easier it achieves its goal of communication.

Correctness: this deals with the rightness of the information provided and the grammar of writing. The rule is that “no effort should be spared in ensuring that correct information is provided in correct language” (Adedimeji, 2013, p.124)

Reasoning skills

Reasoning is the use of cognition to form conclusions, inferences or judgment. It is through reasoning that information is gathered, organized, tested and validated for application in everyday use. In other words, it is the process of receiving stimuli or information through different sources/senses and processing the information received to arrive at rational/valid/correct conclusion.

When 17th century French philosopher Rene Descartes, coined the expression, ‘I think therefore I am’ he managed to neatly sum up the fact that the ability to reason has always been fundamental to our notion of human nature. It follows then that how well we can reason is likely to be an

indicator of our intelligence as it encompasses both processes- extracting information from previous knowledge and using it to resolve new problems as they arise.

In communication, the participants are interested in themselves to share some point of view. As a speaker or writer for instance, listeners and readers will positively respond if you are perceived to be honest, friendly, poised, confident, sincere, well informed about the topic, interested and energetic about your idea, good natured and genuinely concerned for their welfare. (Winterowd & Murray,1985, p.597). An attempt to create or “fake” these qualities would be clear to the perceptive audience who reason that you are insincere or untrustworthy.

There are three types of logical reasoning. These are induction, deduction and abduction. Induction is the kind of reasoning by which you examine a number of particulars or specific instances and arrive at a conclusion on the basis. “Deduction is reasoning from stated propositions or promises to a conclusion” (Adedimeji, 2005, p.125). Abduction, on the other hand is similar to induction as it presumes that the most plausible conclusion is the correct one.

In clearer terms, deductive reasoning derives from philosophy and mathematics and it is the most common form of reasoning. It is a method of applying a general rule (major premise) from which conclusions are drawn, if you are given a bunch of keys to open a door and you try to open it through each of the keys without success, you conclude that the right key is not there or that the key is bad. Another example is thus:

Major premise: All politicians are liars

Minor premise: The so-called man of God is a politician

Conclusions: The so-called man of God is a liar

The correctness of a conclusion derives from the truthfulness of the premises.

In inductive reasoning, specific conclusions are generalized to become the norm or general conclusions. This reasoning is risky as the conclusion can be rendered false or invalid with instances that are not part of the general observation. Statements like “proverbs are true”, “women are evil”, “the Hausa are courageous”, “the Igbo’s love money”, “the Yoruba are cowards” are based on inductive reasoning, the major fallacy of which is hasty generalization. This type of reasoning is used in physics and philology. In inductive reasoning, attention is paid to argument, a logical presentation of ideas, where a population (the whole class of events, objects, or persons is studied) and a generalization (the conclusion) is reached.

Moreover, in abduction reasoning, earlier mentioned, the most plausible conclusion is adopted as valid; it is similar to inductive reasoning as the conclusion is based on probabilities.

Major premise: There are many oranges in the bowl

Minor premise: There is an orange with me

Conclusion: I took this orange from the bowl

Logical reasoning is good but it is important that it also endangers logical fallacies, which are chiefly errors of induction and abduction. Logical fallacies that are encountered in communication include hasty generalization (a conclusion based on a few instances or instances that are not typical), oversimplification (a cause of effect fallacy/induction which attributes a single cause to what could have complex causes), *post hoc ergo propter hoc argument* (seeing a cause-effect relationship in what could have only been accidental), faulty analogy (if two things are similar in some ways, they are similar in other ways), *non sequitur* (i.e it does not follow or

jumping to a conclusion not warranted by premises), ignoring the question (diverting attention from the main issue or deliberately shifting the argument to another ground- as we have in *augmentum ad hominem*- attack on the person, instead of addressing the message) etc. (Adedimeji, 2005). Other blocks to logical thinking and proper reasoning are cultural conditioning, resistance to change, unconcretised abstractions, emotive language and blockbuster (Kyle, 1977).

The importance of reasoning becomes obvious and paramount to communication because if an individual cannot articulate coherently, it becomes impossible to effectively communicate in any of its forms.

There are four categories of basic reasoning skills.

- i. Storage skills
- ii. Retrieval skills
- iii. Matching skills
- iv. Execution skills

Storage and retrieval skills enable the thinker to transfer to and from long-term memory. The learner does something on purpose to focus on the information being studied or to relate it to information at hand or to relate it to information already in long term memory. An example of commonly used storage and retrieval technique is visual imagery mediation where the communicator purposely develops a visual (auditory, kinesic or emotional) representation for the information to be remembered. Mnemonic strategies are also examples of storage and retrieval skills.

Matching skills enable a learner to determine how incoming information is similar to, or different from, information already stored in long-term memory. Execution Skills are executive in the sense that they coordinate a set of other skills in order to help learners build new cognitive structures or drastically restructure old ones.

Psychologists generally agree that there are four basic reasoning skills that are important to everyday living: spatial reasoning, logical reasoning, numerical reasoning and verbal reasoning. These skills develop from childhood and continue to grow in varying degrees as one gets older. People with good spatial reasoning skills, such as artist and engineer for example can easily visualize and mentally manipulate objects, while others like computer analysts and scientists are strong in numerical and lawyers, writers, journalist especially resort to logical reasoning. Verbal reasoning, which is the ability to understand and analyze written or spoken information, is an most important skill for most jobs. It is the most important skill to communication as it is basically responsible for information processing.

Verbal reasoning is most important to communication as it is basically responsible for information processing.

Conclusion

Communication is life and language is the most important human endowment, the basis of human uniqueness. To navigate the stormy waters of life successfully, especially in these modern times, good language and communication skills are required. This is so because communication permeates all aspects of life and every stratum of human endeavour. From politics to medicine, from law to science, from education to technology and from every conceivable human activity to even our relationship with the metaphysical world, without the ability to communicate

effectively, human civilization essentially hangs on the balance. Good communication involves the mastery of listening, speaking, reading, writing and reasoning skills through which one is able to take charge of one's space of life.

This chapter has provided a general overview of language and communication skills with specific emphasis on the patterns and dimensions of the skills, including the strategies of mastering some of them. The overarching thesis of the chapter is the projection of communication skills as the basis of human achievement, the foundation of civilization and a requirement that foregrounds success in several arrears of life, including various courses offered in institutions of higher learning.

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