## Contents

### Module 1: Basic communication principles

1.1 The importance of effective communication ........................................................... 1  
1.2 The communication process ...................................................................................... 2  
1.3 A communication model ............................................................................................ 3  
1.4 Categories of communication .................................................................................... 6  
1.5 Personal factors that affect communication ........................................................... 10  
1.6 Verbal vs non-verbal communication .................................................................... 11  
1.7 Visual semiology ....................................................................................................... 13  
1.8 Acoustic semiology ................................................................................................... 18  
1.9 Communicating by means of touch ........................................................................ 20  
1.10 Cultural relativity of non-verbal communication ................................................. 21  
1.11 Non-verbal communication that supports / conflicts with verbal communication ........................................................ 23  
1.12 Phatic communication .............................................................................................. 24  
1.13 Listening skills ......................................................................................................... 25

### Module 2: Interpersonal relationships and social interaction

2.1 A healthy self-image ................................................................................................. 27  
2.2 Improving your self-image ...................................................................................... 32  
2.3 Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs ...................................................................... 34  
2.4 Reference groups in interpersonal relationships .................................................. 36  
2.5 Barriers .................................................................................................................. 37  
2.6 Gatekeeping ............................................................................................................. 40

### Module 3: Interviewing

3.1 Definition .................................................................................................................... 43  
3.2 The interview as a communication process ........................................................... 43  
3.3 General interviewing categories ............................................................................. 45  
3.4 Employment interviews ........................................................................................... 48  
3.5 Typical interview questions ..................................................................................... 51  
3.6 Hints to the applicant ............................................................................................... 54

### Module 4: The mass media and advertising

4.1 The main forms of mass media ............................................................................... 59  
4.2 The communication process employed by the mass media .................................. 61  
4.3 Functions of the mass media .................................................................................. 62  
4.4 Language employed by the mass media ................................................................ 63  
4.5 Manipulative reporting ............................................................................................ 68
## Module 5: Meeting procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Types of meetings</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Control of meetings</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>The organisation’s constitution</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>The main office bearers</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Notices, agendas and minutes</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Module 6: Language usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Concise writing in business</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Subjective and objective language usage</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Direct / active vs indirect / passive</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Extension and reduction of core notes</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Précis writing</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Graphics</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Module 7: Concise business communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Telephone messages</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Faxes</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Telegrams, emails and sms</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Memoranda</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Formal invitations</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Forms and questionnaires</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Module 8: Business letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Business correspondence</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Enquiries and answers</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Complaints and adjustments</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>Invitations to guest speakers</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Letters to the editor</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>Employment letters</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>Letters of goodwill</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Module 9: Advertising correspondence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Classified advertisements</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>Display advertisements</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>Notices</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Module 10: Reports
10.1 Investigative reports ................................................................. 177
10.2 Incident / accident reports ......................................................... 180
10.3 Progress reports .......................................................................... 183
10.4 Feedback reports ........................................................................ 185
10.5 Reports in memo format ............................................................. 187

Module 11: Evaluating and editing material
11.1 Style and language ...................................................................... 189
11.2 Layout and design ........................................................................ 200
11.3 Content and choice of words ...................................................... 205
11.4 Auditive and audiovisual material .............................................. 206
11.5 Reference works ......................................................................... 206

Module 12: Oral communication
12.1 Aspects of telephone technique .................................................. 209
12.2 Developing listening skills ......................................................... 217
12.3 Small groups and meetings ......................................................... 220
12.4 Interviewing ................................................................................ 222
12.5 Presentation communication ...................................................... 222

Acknowledgements .......................................................................... 224
Glossary ........................................................................................... 225
Index ............................................................................................... 227
# 1. Basic communication principles

## OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>1.1 Importance</th>
<th>1.2 Process</th>
<th>1.3 Model</th>
<th>1.4 Categories</th>
<th>1.5–1.11 Verbal/non-verbal</th>
<th>1.12 Phatic</th>
<th>1.13 Listening skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## 1.1 The importance of effective communication

Communication is about delivering or receiving any kind of information. This information can be in the form of words that are spoken, written messages, hand signals, a person’s facial expression, pictures, televised images, etc.

What, then, is effective communication? It is simply this: other people understand exactly what you mean when you tell them something, and you understand what they mean. There’s no misunderstanding. None of the hearers will interpret the speaker’s words differently; there will be no confusion or mix-ups.

### Why is effective communication so important in the world of work?

In every workplace there’s a constant flow of information, correspondence, messages, instructions, announcements, explanations and discussions going on. The aim of all of this activity is to get the job done effectively. Every employee has a part to play in reaching the objectives of the employer or organisation. If there are no misinterpretations about what is expected, everyone can do their work properly.

### Words & phrases

**We convey** information or a message.

Information can be **transmitted** electronically, using electronic technology.

**Data** is information in the form of facts and/or statistics.

### Advantages of effective communication

There are many advantages of good, clear and properly understood communication in the workplace. For example:

- Everyone will know what the company or organisation considers most important, such as its vision, mission statement and values. They can all work towards achieving these goals.
- Employees will know what to do, how to do it, and by when.
- It will be easier to evaluate the company’s products, services and performance.
• People will understand better what they did right and what they did wrong.
• There won’t be different sets of “facts” about work-related matters.
• There will be fewer rumours that are based on misunderstanding.
• Staff morale and satisfaction can be kept high.
• Time will not be wasted on trying to explain things over and over.
• Resources, such as money and supplies, will not be wasted on redoing tasks that have been carried out poorly.
• Money won’t be wasted on unnecessary purchases or ineffective advertising.
• Meetings will have greater meaning and value.
• Decisions will be made on the basis of good information.
• Employees will understand the reasons for a decision.
• Discussions will be more meaningful, as everyone will be able to express precisely what they think, feel, want to know, etc.
• Different opinions or disagreements can be handled in a mature manner, and so help to prevent conflict.
• Negotiations will be easier, because both parties will be able to express their needs better.
• The staff will have a more professional approach to their work.
• The dealings of the business or company will be more professional, which will create a good impression among its business partners, clients and the public.

Is the communication effective or ineffective?

In your small groups, decide what is happening in the pictures and how good communication could have prevented the scenarios, or how it could still save the situation. What would you say to these colleagues of yours?

Exercise 1.1

1. Work on your own. Look at the list of advantages of effective communication. Which of these remind you of an experience you have had (at home, school or work) of poor communication?
2. Reread the list of advantages. Which points remind you of a person who communicates well?
3. Draw a “cloud” of keywords from the list of advantages. Use any colours.
4. Close your book and try to recall from memory at least seven advantages of effective communication. Write down the keywords on a piece of paper to keep track of your thoughts.

1.2 The communication process

When people simply speak their mind to no one in particular, no real communication is taking place. Also, if someone is listening to them, but does not understand what they are saying, there is no real
communication. Moreover, if someone hears and understands the message, but does not get the chance to respond to it, there is still no two-way communication. Good communication, therefore, has certain elements. If these are lacking, the communication is ineffective, the message is “lost” or distorted, or the communication process “breaks down”.

---

**Words & phrases**

Facts are distorted when they are altered, twisted or misrepresented.

A process consists of a series of actions that take place in a definite manner to achieve a certain goal.

---

**A definition of communication**

Here is a simple definition of the communication process. We say more about each part of it in the section below, and then close with a more formal definition.

A sender conveys a message to a receiver, who interprets it and then responds to it.

**Elements of communication**

What is the recipe for effective communication? All the elements of the process, as defined above, need to be present:

- **The sender:** This is the person who initiates, or starts, the communication. The sender, or addressor, expresses something that he or she wants to communicate to others. The way the sender does this can be verbal (using words that can be heard or read) or non-verbal (not spoken or written down, but seen or felt, like hand signals or touch). The sender, therefore, encodes the message into various symbols or signs.
- **The message:** The data or information can be an announcement, instruction, explanation, apology, correction, sales figures, training, words of praise, etc.
- **The receiver:** This is the person who receives the message and has to interpret it. The receiver, or addressee, decodes the message in order to understand it. He or she now decides whether to act on the message; for example, what to do with the information received.
- **The response:** The addressee responds to the message in a certain way and this leads to feedback. For example, the person may carry out an instruction; compile a report; or smile and say “thank you” for the compliment. Feedback can also mean more directly that addressees confirm that they have understood the communication, say what they think about it, or ask a question. Feedback should always be encouraged. Even those people in the highest positions in life will benefit from feedback.

We can, therefore, define the process thus:

A sender (addressor or encoder) conveys a verbal and/or non-verbal message to a receiver (addressee or decoder), who interprets (responds to) it and acts (gives feedback) on the words, symbols, images or non-verbal signals used to convey the message.

---

**1.3 A communication model**

In this context, a model is ... not Naomi Campbell or Linda Evangelista, sorry! A model here is rather a representation of something in order to show its shape, or structure, or how it works. And for one of the classic models of communication, we meet a man born in Moscow in 1896.

**A graphical model of the process**

Roman Osipovich Jakobson was a Russian linguist who moved to the United States in 1949 to work at Harvard University. He was also interested in the communication sciences, and in 1960 he designed a model showing the six elements or functions of a typical communication process. It was based on an existing graphical model by a German linguist. You will recognise the basic elements from the definition of the communication process given above.
A message can be quoted or taken out of context, which means that without the surrounding words, or without an understanding of the event, social situation or environment, the meaning is now unclear or deceptive.

- **The context:** Obviously, the message applies to a certain context, e.g. instructions about sick leave or overtime payment. When a message is repeated or passed on without knowledge of its context, it may be misinterpreted or confusing. Also, even if only a few lines of the original message are omitted, it may create a different impression to what the sender intended.

- **The channel:** This is the physical way in which the message is conveyed. In what language is the message transmitted? What medium is used – is the message on paper, in an email, on a television screen, over the radio, in an sms, on a webpage, on a billboard, etc.?

- **The code:** This has to do with the type of language, symbols or graphics used. Is the message a strict instruction using short sentences in bold print, or is it an informative article, a friendly letter, a sad poem, a funny cartoon, etc.? The sender encodes the message in a certain form, whereas the receiver decodes it; that is, gives meaning to the message as he or she understands it.

Surrounding all of this is something called “noise”. This refers to absolutely anything that may interfere with the reception of the message, such as:

- **external noise,** e.g. actual, audible noise; distracting movements or sounds; the smell of something burning; print that is too light; poor visibility in the room;
- **internal noise,** e.g. being physically tired; thinking about other things; being over-emotional, scared, judgmental or angry;
- **semantic noise,** e.g. grammar mistakes; a poorly prepared speech; ignoring cultural differences; using offensive words.

James in the photo above is making some noise of his own. He keeps on saying “uh-huh”, “yeh” and “OK” while listening to a client. Do you think it is affecting their communication?
The communication process in real life

Here are some addressors and addressees we find in real-life situations:

- Artist – audience
- Doctor – patient
- Radio broadcaster – listener
- Parent – child
- Designer – consumer
- Writer – reader
- Film producer – viewer
- Politician – public
- Manager – employee
- Shop owner – client
- Television broadcaster – viewer

In his model, Jakobson indicated that each element in the communication process performs a certain function, but that one element may dominate the others. Let us take the example of a manager who needs a file in a hurry, and look at some of the different ways in which he can communicate this. In each case, a certain function will predominate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Function in the communication process</th>
<th>An example where this function predominates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>How does the message refer to the context in which it is conveyed? [referential: refers]</td>
<td>I urgently need a staff file for a board meeting that starts in five minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sender (addressor)</td>
<td>How does the tone of voice, etc. reveal the sender’s emotions? [emotive: expresses emotions]</td>
<td>My dear, please get me this file NOW!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>How does the message call attention to itself? [e.g. informative: informs]</td>
<td>Rebecca, I’m in a hurry and I must have this file now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiver (addressee)</td>
<td>How does the message influence the addressee? [conative: impulse, effort, action]</td>
<td>Please stop what you are doing and help me find this file fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>What relationship is created by the message? [phatic: social interaction]</td>
<td>I am so glad you know where all the files are because I need one now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>What type of code is used, e.g. an instruction or a request? [metalingual: the type or genre]</td>
<td>Rebecca, take off those earphones and help me find this file!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

--- Exercise 1.2 ---

1. Choose any three sets of addressors and addressees (e.g. Artist – audience) and draw Jakobson’s communication model for each of them. Fill in all six blocks of the model, e.g. what you think the message is, the context, channel and code.

2. Roman Jakobson said: “Meaning resides in the total act of communication.” Write a paragraph explaining what you think he meant by this.

3. List the function of each element of the communication process.
1.4 Categories of communication

“Inter” means between, or among. On the Internet, for example, computers all over the world are linked in a network and information can be sent among them. “Intra” means on the inside, or within. You may have heard of a company that has its own Intranet, which is its private computer network for communicating with its managers and employees.

The prefixes “inter-” and “intra-” are also used to describe the two main categories of communication, namely interpersonal and intrapersonal communication. You’ve guessed it – the first category is about communication between or among people, while the second category relates to the communication a person carries on within him or herself.

Intrapersonal vs interpersonal communication

Intrapersonal communication is the most personal, basic form of communication. It occurs within individuals when they think something over in their mind; talk to themselves; write down their thoughts or plans; read out loud to themselves; or sit and daydream. They do so in response to information that comes from the outside, and which they perceive (are aware of) with their senses – they hear, see, feel, touch and/or taste something – and then they respond inwardly to that experience.

We may talk to ourselves inwardly or out loud to help us concentrate on something; to understand something better; or to recall facts. We can organise our thoughts and encourage ourselves with our inner speech – unfortunately, we can also break ourselves down with our inner speech.

The intrapersonal communication taking place within us has a powerful effect on our subconscious, our way of thinking, our self-concept and, ultimately, our quality of life. For example, how we behave and perform, and even how we dress, is based on what we believe about ourselves. We may strengthen any perception (view or opinion) about ourselves, whether true or false, with our inner comments and conversation.
Interpersonal communication occurs among people, whether between two or more individuals, within a particular group or among different groups. It also includes mass communication.

- **Typical interpersonal communication situations**

Interpersonal communication can be:

- **One-on-one** (e.g. chatting to a friend; speaking to your mother on the phone; consulting a doctor; a manager instructing a secretary; having an interview).
  - The communication is usually direct, more personal and gets an immediate response (feedback).

- **Within a small group** (e.g. three or more students work together on a maths problem; a committee discusses an issue; a dietician speaks to a weekly support group for dieters in her area).
  - The communication is still personal, as individuals can interact within the small group, but there may be a slight “distance” (physically and socially) between the members of the group.

- **Within a large group** (e.g. a factory owner addresses the staff; parents of school-children attend a meeting; a franchisor communicates with the franchisees of that group of franchises).
  - The communication is less personal, as it is directed to the group as a whole and not so much to individual persons. The role of the addressor is more formal and feedback from the addressees is also on a more formal level. The physical proximity (closeness) is reduced even more.

- **Among groups** (e.g. a workshop is held with different interest groups from society; several trade unions decide on joint action; different choirs in a region draw up a plan of action for a combined concert).
  - The communication is mainly about the needs of each group as a whole, and tends to be more formally structured.

- **The direction of communication**

Interestingly, in each of the typical interpersonal situations, the communication has a certain direction or flow. It can be downward, upward, horizontal, diagonal or diverse (“along the grapevine”). The first two are vertical and usually more formal by nature.

- **Downward**: Top-down communication is made from a higher to a lower level, e.g. an announcement by a company’s board of directors to the management, or an email from an employer to the staff. This type of communication is faster and more formal, but it is also more open to misunderstanding.

- **Upward**: Bottom-up communication is made from a lower to a higher level, e.g. an office worker informs the supervisor of her complaint, or a team member reports to the team leader on progress made with a project. This type of communication usually has a beneficial outcome.

- **Horizontal** (lateral/sideways): The communication takes place among people who are peers (“equals”), e.g. among managers at a management meeting or among the members of a marketing team. Meaningful two-way communication is easier in this setting. From time to time, an employer or a manager may decide to meet his or her staff “at their level” in order to improve the communication between them.

- **Diagonal** (across): The communication is between a higher level in one department and a lower level in another, e.g. between a project leader in the design section and a data typist in the computer room. This type of communication can create conflict if the supervisor at the lower level is bypassed.

---

1 By “higher level” and “lower level” are meant higher and lower levels of authority in an organisation; it does not in any way comment on an individual’s personal value.
• **Diverse:** Grapevine communication goes in all directions, irrespective of the levels of authority. It can be negative (gossip, rumours, uncertainty) or positive (excitement, enthusiasm). The news spreads informally and rapidly, but may be based on incomplete or partly false information.

**Let office gossip stop with you.**

### Defining mass communication

A mass of people is a very large number of people, such as the inhabitants of a city or country. It is the largest form of interpersonal communication, but also the most impersonal, in that the addressor does not personally know or interact with the addressees.

The addressor, such as an advertiser, a politician or a movie director, may know a lot about his or her audience generally (e.g. that they are mostly housewives, students or senior citizens), but he or she will know or deal with very few of them personally. That is why the addressor will try to make the message as personal as possible, to let the addressees feel that the message is meant for them personally and is speaking to them directly.

**Mass communication** is communication that is aimed at reaching large sections of the population (or large, scattered audiences) at the same time, using mass media, such as radio, television, film, print and electronic media. The communication can also be oral, meaning it is spoken verbally, such as when a speaker addresses a mass rally over a microphone, or a Skype conference is held by members of a company who are sitting in different locations.

Mass communication differs from other forms of communication in several ways, as shown in the table on the next page.

---

**Words & phrases**

**Print media** include newspapers, magazines, books, posters, brochures and leaflets.

**Electronic media** rely on electronic technology to transmit the message, and include broadcasting (radio, television, satellite), faxes, CDs, DVDs, cellphones, electronic display boards, audio-conferencing; the Internet (webpages, emails, digital files, podcasts, chatrooms, blogs, tweets, RSS streaming, MP3s), e-book readers (Kindle, Kobo, etc.).

---

*See if you can find suitable icons for at least 12 forms of mass communication among these media icons (e.g. book, CD, email, leaflet, movie, music, newspaper, radio, satellite, social network, speech, telephone, television, the Internet).*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Mass communication</th>
<th>Other forms of interpersonal communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>The contexts of the different audiences (e.g. television viewers) may differ.</td>
<td>The contexts are more similar, such as a group of employees or a sports team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>There may be much “noise” going on in each audience, e.g. a radio broadcast is on while the members of the different households are each doing their own thing.</td>
<td>“Noise” can be kept to a minimum, e.g. people at a meeting are expected to pay attention to the speaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sender (addressor)</td>
<td>The sender does not address the receivers directly, but through a communication medium, such as a DVD, website or TV advertisement.</td>
<td>The receivers can be addressed directly, e.g. over the intercom system at work, at a staff meeting or via email.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
<td>(The message can be formal or informal; personal or impersonal; long or short; prepared or spontaneous; verbal and/or non-verbal.)</td>
<td>It is possible for a sender to know all, or most of, the members of his or her audience personally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiver (addressee)</td>
<td>The sender does not know all the addressees personally, although he or she may know a lot about them generally, e.g. what they like to eat or where they prefer to shop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>The addressor cannot be sure that all the intended audiences have received the message, e.g. many of them could have been watching another TV channel.</td>
<td>The addressor can be more sure that the message has reached the addressees, as the groups are smaller and better known to him or her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The message will have to be repeated over and over, at different times and in different ways.</td>
<td>There is less need to repeat the message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Generally, the message won’t be able to demand anything; rather, by giving people information it will try to persuade them to respond.</td>
<td>The addressor can give an instruction to be obeyed, ask a question to be answered or make a request for something to be done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>The addressor has to wait and see if addressees respond. Some may only respond at a later stage (e.g. order an advertised product) or not at all (e.g. participate in an online survey). Or too many may respond at the same time.</td>
<td>The addressor can get immediate feedback, e.g. by asking: “Can you all hear me?”, “Please raise your hands if you need more paper”, or “Let us decide here and now when we will meet again.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The sender will have to guess a lot about the feedback, as he or she cannot see or hear all the receivers’ immediate response. Only some will phone in or send an sms.</td>
<td>The sender is able to pick up the mood of the receivers (e.g. see the frowns or smiles on their faces) and can respond to it directly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors that influence effective mass communication

Mass communication that is effective will reach the intended goals of the addressee. For example, promoters will sell more of their advertised product; politicians will persuade people to vote for them; preachers will convince people to lead better lives; and propagandists will spread their views to more people. Mass communication always aims at spreading a message very widely to the most people possible, and always hopes to achieve a certain response through it. The communication will, however, not always have the same effect, for example when:

- Different audiences have greatly differing values, needs or expectations.
- The addressees are not impressed by the message or do not “connect” with it.
- They don’t understand the message.
- The audiences are suspicious of the addressee’s intentions.
- The quality of the medium is poor (e.g. an unprofessionally produced radio programme).
- The quality of the message is poor (e.g. it is offensive or is clearly not based on facts).
- The timing of the message is wrong (e.g. selling heaters in summer).
- Not all the addressees have access to the mass medium used (e.g. they do not usually buy that magazine or don’t surf the Internet).
- The audience may like the message but they cannot do anything about it (e.g. the product is out of their price range or they don’t really need it).

Exercise 1.3

1. What are the main forms of interpersonal communication?
2. Write a paragraph showing the difference in definition between intrapersonal and interpersonal communication.
3. (i) Which type of interpersonal communication is involved in the following situations? (ii) Which direction or flow of communication do you think will ensure effective communication in each case?
   (a) A new office assistant discusses her filing problems with a colleague.
   (b) A trade union spokesperson notifies members of an important decision via sms.
   (c) The chief executive officer (CEO) of a company agrees to meet with all the managers in the board room.

4. There is limited opportunity for feedback from the recipients (receivers) of mass communication. In what ways can an addressee find out whether the communication has been effective?

1.5 Personal factors that affect communication

By now you will have realised that the effectiveness of a communicated message is not guaranteed. We have spoken about the role that “noise” (all kinds of distractions) can play. It is clear that the type of communication (one-on-one, etc.) has an effect, as well as the direction or flow of communication. Also, certain factors influence the outcome of especially mass communication. We now consider more factors relating to addressors themselves.

Sometimes an addressee will have more than enough time to think about the message. He or she can plan it, rewrite it and/or practise it. In other situations, the person may have to communicate with the addressees directly and “off the cuff”, without preparing beforehand. In any event, certain personal things about the
addressor will either contribute to the communication or harm or distort it. Think about it, if you are the addressor:

- **Personality:** Do you tend to be domineering (bossy) or cooperative; respected or disliked; fair or unfair; reasonable or impractical; compassionate or disinterested; constructive or critical; meticulous (careful with details) or sloppy; prideful or humble? All this will affect how the addressees respond to your message.

- **Frame of reference:** Are there language and cultural differences among your listeners? Do they understand the reason for the communication? Is the overall picture clear to all? Do the clients or employees understand the terminology you are using?

- **Reasoning:** How do you convey your ideas? You should share your views, but not force them on others. Beware of giving too many or too few facts; using difficult concepts or philosophising (using abstract thinking). Never play on people’s fears, try to lay the blame elsewhere, conceal part of the truth or lie about something.

- **Emotions:** Do you handle your emotions or do they handle you? Try not to be angry, tired, overemotional, irritated, etc. when communicating and don’t take things personally. Take the other party’s attitude and emotions into account, but don’t let them cause you to act unprofessionally. Control your temper (and your facial expressions!) in all situations; this immediately makes you the stronger person in the encounter. Think before you speak or respond.

--- Exercise 1.4 ---

1. Discuss with a fellow student which of the different personal factors discussed here apply to the addressees as well.

2. For self-reflection: Which personality keywords describe you best as you are now? How would you like to be known in the work situation?

3. In your small group, role-play giving feedback to your co-workers who had to carry out your orders, but they really messed up. Take turns to practise how you can do it so that they feel corrected fairly, disciplined constructively and empowered enthusiastically.

---

Siphiso does not like attending staff meetings. He feels they could be much shorter and to the point, as he is a busy man. When asked for his input, he tends to speak in a bored tone of voice and can scarcely conceal his irritation. He wonders why no one seems wildly enthusiastic about his suggestions, which are actually very clever.

---

### 1.6 Verbal vs non-verbal communication

We have said that interpersonal communication is about communication between people, within a group and among different groups or societies. The flow of communication also has a certain direction, for example, top-down or bottom-up. There is a further distinction to be made, as is discussed below.

Think about it, all communication – even intrapersonal communication – takes place either verbally or non-verbally. If the mode (medium) of the communication is verbal, it means the message is spoken, written or broadcast in words that can be seen and/or heard. If the mode or medium is non-verbal, the message not is conveyed in spoken words or writing, but is seen, heard or felt in other ways.

---

**Words & phrases**

- **Your attitude** is a particular feeling or opinion that influences how you behave.
- **Your personality** is the type of person you generally are, and it can be seen in the way you typically behave, speak, think and feel.
Types of verbal communication

Spoken (oral) and written messages also include broadcast messages (audio, televised or technological) and reach addressees either directly or indirectly. Some examples are given in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Direct verbal communication</th>
<th>Indirect verbal communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Oral</td>
<td>Holding a face-to-face conversation</td>
<td>Having a telephone conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking at a small staff meeting</td>
<td>Addressing an audience in a hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching a class</td>
<td>Showing a training video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Written</td>
<td>A personal letter, an email or sms</td>
<td>Mass mailings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minutes of a staff meeting</td>
<td>A newspaper report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A leaflet in your post box</td>
<td>A poster with an advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A comment posted on your blog</td>
<td>A banner advert on a website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Broadcast</td>
<td>A radio programme</td>
<td>Satellite transmission of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Skype or video conference</td>
<td>A television programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An interactive website that requires your details</td>
<td>An impersonal survey form on a website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words & phrases

Oral means “relating to the mouth”, such as an oral examination (a spoken test) or an oral agreement.

Audio means “relating to sound”, such as an audio signal; audiovisual material involves both sight and sound.

____ Exercise 1.5 ____

1. Which examples in the table above can be used in mass communication?
2. Looking at the table, where would you fill in the following?
   (a) An automatic voicemail on a company’s answering machine
   (b) The same letter that is sent to different clients
   (c) A company’s promotional DVD
   (d) An e-book on marketing.

Types of non-verbal communication

Any communication that does not use spoken words, written symbols or sign language can be classified as non-verbal communication. This type of communication often “speaks louder than words”.

The main categories are visual (what you see), acoustic (what you hear apart from the spoken words) and tactile (what you touch or feel). The next three sections deal with these categories.
1.7 Visual semiology

Visual semiology is the study of visual symbols and signs, and how they are used and interpreted in communication. *Visual communication* is all communication that relies on sight (vision) and visual aids or technology, and includes the subcategories below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of visual non-verbal communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facial expressions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gestures, hand signals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body language and posture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body movements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical action</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proxemics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colour</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typography (fonts; layout)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Packaging and presentation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manufactured signals and signs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pictures</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which two facial expressions do you expect to see on Harry’s face when you tell him that:

(a) You can’t find his file. (b) He is being moved to another section. (c) He was seen flirting with the secretary. (d) He is getting a salary increase. (e) He has done a good job on the research project. (f) He will have to work overtime. (g) He must chair the seminar.
We now look at some of the subcategories of visual communication in more detail.

**Kinesics**

Kinesics studies how bodily motion (facial expressions, gestures, posture, movement and physical action) is used to communicate non-verbally.

Some physical responses are involuntary (spontaneous, unintentional), like blushing with embarrassment, or the eyes widening in surprise. Others are voluntary (deliberately made), such as pointing a warning finger at someone, or shrugging the shoulders to express ignorance.

*Words & phrases*

**Posture**, which is the way people hold their body, says a lot about their self-image or emotions.

A person who *slouches* stands or sits in a lazy, floppy way.

A gesture is usually made with the head or hand, but sometimes also with the arm or foot.

When someone *motions* to you, they make a signal to you with their hand or head.

**Proxemics**

Proxemics is the study of the amount of physical space individuals place between them and other people, and the effect this has on communication. The space people need between them and others is based on their personality, socialisation and culture. Problems may arise when a person disrespects or violates the intimate and personal space of another.

The four main territorial zones are as follows:

- **Intimate** (up to about half a metre), for whispering in someone’s ear, embracing, kissing, tickling, pinching or touching. All of these – apart from a few ways of touching – are inappropriate in a work setting and may constitute sexual harassment.

- **Personal** (from about 0.5 m to 1 m), for family and close friends or people at a meeting or seminar, in a queue or on a bus or an aeroplane.

- **Social** (from 1 m to about 3.5 m), for colleagues, supervisors, business associates and acquaintances (people whom you know, but not well enough to call them friends).

- **Public** (from about 3.5 m to 7.5+ m), for strangers, a speaker on a platform or a VIP (very important person).

In the work situation you will enter people’s personal space by walking past them in the passage, discussing something in a file with them, or using the elevator together. This is where a person’s body heat and odours (smells) become obvious.

Your personal hygiene should, therefore, be faultless throughout the day – you need fresh breath (floss your teeth and eat a peppermint when necessary). Your body odour should be fresh and pleasant and your hair washed. Your deodorant, perfume or aftershave should not be too strong; your clothes, underwear and socks should be freshly washed and your shoes should not be smelly. These things tend to communicate a lot about you.

--- Exercise 1.6 ---

Act out these situations with a fellow student in class:

1. Apologise politely when you accidentally brush against someone while you (i) stand next to them; or (ii) walk past them.

2. Don’t hold a person’s hand too long when greeting them, but also don’t let go so quickly that they feel you don’t really want to touch them.

3. Hold the door open for someone who is behind you and (i) motion politely to them to enter before you; or (ii) say “After you, please”; or (iii) go in first and hold the door open for the person entering the room after you.
Graphic representations

These include photographs, illustrations, sketches, architectural plans, maps, grids, graphic designs, film, animation, icons in software or on a website, emoticons in an email (e.g. 😊 😎 😊), information graphics (e.g. charts and timelines) and graphs.

Graphs, in particular, come in all shapes, sizes and colours, and even in 3-D (three-dimensional) style. The main types are line graphs, bar charts, pie charts and pictograms. All of these depict data and, therefore, communicate information visually. The data can be interpreted from the graphs and analysed.

Graphs generally show one set of data on the vertical axis and another related set of data on the horizontal axis.

Dot graphs

In the dot graph above, the price of an item is shown on the vertical axis, and the label says the amounts are in rands. The graph makes provision for the amounts of R10, R20 and R30. The number of items sold is shown on the horizontal axis, with the three zeroes in brackets in the label telling us that the amounts are in thousands. You can read from the graph that 10 000 items were sold at R30 each, 20 000 were sold at R20 each, while the most items (30 000) were sold at R10 each.

Is this graph effective?
1. In this case, the dots cannot be joined into a line graph, because if we did that, we would be able to read off other information from the graph that is not true in this case, for example that 25 000 items were sold at R15 each.
2. The intervals must not be too wide or too narrow. For example, this graph would be fine if there were really only three prices for the items, and not some values in between, such as R22.50 or R19.30. It won’t be easy to read such values from the graph.
3. The graph does not say for which time period the sales figures are. This information should be given in a suitable heading, such as “The number of tubs of yoghurt sold by Company ABC from January–March 2012”.

Line graphs

In the line graph above, the number of units (in millions) is shown on the vertical axis and the months of the year on the horizontal axis. We can see from the graph that sales dropped in February, but rose sharply in March, after which they dropped again slightly in April.

Is this graph effective?
1. The intervals on each axis must be the same width apart. However, the interval widths used on the two axes need not be the same. This graph is, therefore, correct.
2. We cannot read off smaller values (e.g. 1 725 000) from the vertical axis. In that case it will be helpful to write the exact value of each dot just above that dot.
3. We cannot read off smaller values (e.g., 16 February) from the horizontal axis. This is not a problem if such information can be found elsewhere in the bookkeeping system.

**Bar graphs**

Bar charts or bar graphs also have vertical and horizontal axes. The information in the previous two graphs can be represented in this way as well.

![Figure 1.4: A bar graph](image)

The height of the bar shows how many items were sold. Just like the three dots in Figure 1.2, the bars do not touch, because they represent three separate categories of prices, namely R10, R20 and R30.

![Figure 1.5: A histogram](image)

Just like the line graph joined the three dots in Figure 1.3, the bars in this graph touch for the same reason. The data for January ends on 31 January and continues on 1 February, etc. There are no gaps, presuming the units were sold every day of the week. A bar graph of which the bars touch is called a histogram.

**Multiple data graphs**

We could add the data of more items or units to a graph in order to compare the sets of data. A legend on the side or at the bottom of the graph is used to identify the different sets of data. For example:

![Figure 1.6: A multiple data graph](image)

This line graph shows how Unit B’s sales dropped from the previous year. The marketing team planned a promotion to get rid of all the remaining stock. It was a success and the units sold well for two months. The pace of the sales dropped in March, but on 1 April the depot was happy to announce that they had despatched (sent out) the very last unit. The sales pattern of Unit A almost matched that of Unit B, as some customers who responded to the marketing messages and promotions of Unit B decided to buy Unit A instead.

Is this graph effective?

As long as the same kinds of things are shown together, a combined graph can be very effective. In a bar graph, for example, the other set of data can be shown as another bar in another colour. A graph should, however, never become so cluttered that it creates confusion instead of representing information clearly.

**Pie charts**

Pie charts or pie graphs look like an apple pie that has been cut up into slices. You need to work with percentages to plan a pie chart properly. The thickness of the “slice” tells one half of the story (the data
that would have been on one axis of a line or bar graph). The legend and colouring tell the other half of the story (the data that would have appeared on the other axis of a line or bar graph). Compare the graph below with Figure 1.4 on page 16.

![Pie chart](image)

**Figure 1.7: A pie chart**

- **Pictograms**
  A pictogram uses symbols or any small pictures to represent data. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sales of units (million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Symbol" /> <img src="image" alt="Symbol" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Symbol" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Symbol" /> <img src="image" alt="Symbol" /> <img src="image" alt="Symbol" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Symbol" /> <img src="image" alt="Symbol" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.8: A pictogram**

These graphs work well if we want to have a simple, overall view of the data. Smaller values (such as three-quarters of the dot or another small picture) would be difficult to represent accurately.

- **Colour coding**
  Colour is often used to communicate information – on maps, traffic lights, road signs, public signs, wiring instructions, cardboard boxes, etc.

Colours are seen to convey meaning. Red, for example, can signify “on” (as opposed to “off”), “stop”, “danger”, “fragile”, “hot temperature”, “fire escape”, “occupied” (a red strip on a door lock showing that the door has been closed from the inside), “live recording” (the red light outside a broadcasting studio), “fasten your seatbelt”, “low fuel”, “explosion”, “energy”, “blood”, “fire”, “passion” or “love”. It depends on the context and the person’s culture.

The use of colour coding also depends on a country’s regulations. A good example is the use of colour to identify the three different wires inside an electrical extension cord or the cord of an electrical appliance, such as a kettle or an iron. These wires must be screwed into the wall plug in the correct order, otherwise the cord will be very unsafe for use.

![Wiring diagram](image)

**Figure 1.9: The interior of an electrical plug**

In South Africa, the prescribed colours are as follows. Note also the different colours used in some other countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Live (active)</th>
<th>Earth (ground)</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA, the EU and Australia</td>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>Green and yellow</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA and Canada</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>White or silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Brown or red</td>
<td>Green and yellow</td>
<td>Light blue or black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 1.7

1. Find a variety of examples of line and bar graphs in old newspapers, finance magazines or on the Internet. See if you understand the relationship between the data on the two sets of axes.

2. Write down the moods or emotions you associate with each of these colours:
   (a) yellow; (b) light blue; (c) dark green
   (d) dark blue; (e) pink; (f) orange.

1.8 Acoustic semiology

Imagine you are watching a movie with your eyes closed. Can you hear from the actor’s tone of voice whether he is really surprised or just being sarcastic? Can you hear from the music when danger is approaching? What effect does the sound of trickling water or an ambulance siren have on you?

Like the story told in the movie, our verbal communication is also accompanied by things beyond language. Paralinguistics relates to paralanguage, which means “beyond language”; that is, the non-word components of speech communication.

Acoustic semiology is the study of these paralinguistic, non-word aspects (such as tone, tempo, rhythm and accent) that can be heard, as well as sounds other than speech, and how these are used and interpreted in communication.

Let us look at some of these paralinguistic aspects.

- **Tone**

  Tone refers to the intensity (strength) and pitch (highness or lowness) of a person’s voice, as well as the mood (attitude or atmosphere) that his or her voice conveys.

  Compare the unspoken meaning of these questions with their different pitches: “Where are you?” ending the question on a low pitch, and “You are where?” ending the question on a high pitch.

- **Tempo**

  Tempo means the pace or speed at which someone talks. Many people talk too fast; a few talk too slowly. Both ways are bad for good communication (a lot like driving too fast or too slowly on a freeway is bad for safe driving).

---

**Words & phrases**

An **audible** sound is one that can be heard with the ears (hearing).

Acoustics is the branch of science (physics) that deals with the properties of sound.

### Examples of acoustic non-verbal communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human sounds</th>
<th>Humming; whistling; sighing; gasping; an embarrassed cough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspects of human speech</td>
<td>Intonation; tone; timbre; tempo; rhythm; accent; hesitation noises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounds from the environment</td>
<td>Squealing brakes; a jet passing over; birdsong; running water; rattling windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposefully manufactured sounds</td>
<td>Siren; hooter; whistle; drum; alarm; vuvuzela; machine beeps or clicks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>A dreamy waltz; a triumphant march</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>Pauses in speech; a long silence before a person answers you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Rhythm**

Rhythm is about the flow or “sound pattern” of a person’s speech, with stressed and unstressed words. (This is one of the differences between your voice and an automated voice on a machine, or the text-to-speech software on a computer.)

Nearly everybody’s attention wandered during Peter’s discussion of the company guidelines. He spoke for a long time in the same monotonous, boring tone, without varying his pitch, rhythm or tempo. He felt the staff members were passive and unenthusiastic. Even his loyal secretary, Sindi, looked as if she was about to fall asleep at any moment.

**Intonation**

This means the rise and fall of a person’s voice while speaking, or the “melodic pattern” of a person’s voice or of a language. Intonation can also change meaning. For example, try saying the words “I think so” in surprise; then repeat them sarcastically, then angrily or doubtfully.

**Accent**

Among other things, this means the stress placed on a word or a part (syllable) of a word. Read these sentences aloud while stressing the underlined words. Note how the emphasis changes:

- I am asking you not to do it.
- I am asking you not to do it.
- I am asking you not to do it.
- I am asking you not to do it.

**Filler sounds**

These are the “meaningless” sounds or words inserted in a sentence or between sentences. People tend to do it when they can’t find the right word to say; or have to think before completing their sentence; or simply out of bad habit. For example, some people repeat “um”, “like” and “you know” when speaking. It can be especially irritating to radio listeners! Filler sounds tend to imply that the speakers’ thoughts are not organised; they are thinking hard how to say something in the right way; or that they do not know what to say.

**Music**

You already know what effect music can create in a movie, at a wedding or a funeral, in a street procession (e.g. a whistle or a brass band), at a ceremony (e.g. a roll of drums, a trumpet blast), and so on. Music is also used to communicate messages in the workplace. For example, it may be soothing and peaceful in order to make the customers relax and spend more time looking around (e.g. in a bookstore); or it can be lively and upbeat to create a certain impression and vibe (e.g. in a jeans shop).

Music can also improve workers’ moods and stimulate their brains. On the downside, it can distract them from the task at hand or drive them crazy (as opera would most of us ...). Some office workers work best with no background music, while others may prefer soft orchestral or instrumental music. In any case, employees like to choose the music that they have to listen to at work, and it is best not to have the radio or music playing all day long.

Also, clients who have to listen to poor-quality music or product announcements over the phone while their call is on hold may become irritated.

Allowing the receptionist to use her iPod at work is not such a good idea ...
Silence

If there is silence during your communication, you shouldn’t jump to conclusions too soon. Ask whether your colleagues have understood what you have said; whether they agree; whether they would like to suggest something else, etc. Watch your tone of voice as you do so.

Silence may communicate …

| respect (e.g. allowing someone to finish speaking) | disrespect (e.g. not replying when asked something) |
| wisdom (e.g. weighing up your words before speaking) | ignorance (e.g. not knowing what to say) |
| thinking something over | not listening at all |
| approval | disagreement; resentment |
| self-control | stubbornness |
| surprise | shock |
| sympathy | embarrassment; fear |

Your moments of silence in a conversation help the other person to think and to say what they think. It also “tells” them that you value their opinion; that you do not know it all; and that you are not in love with your own voice and views.

Exercise 1.8

1. Read the paragraph directly above out loud with: (a) a high-pitched voice; (b) a medium pitch; (c) a very slow tempo; (d) a normal tempo; (e) an unnatural rhythm; (f) a pleasant intonation; (g) accents in the wrong places; (h) emphasis in the right places; (i) a repeating filler sound.
2. Now read it in a very exaggerated way; and then normally.

1.9 Communicating by means of touch

Tacesics is about communicating through touch. It is part of our human nature to touch and to want to be touched. Intimate forms of touching are, however, completely taboo (forbidden) in the workplace, such as whispering closely in someone’s ear; embracing, kissing, tickling or pinching them; playing with their hair, tugging at their clothes, fastening their buttons or readjusting their tie.

The following personal gestures are allowed in (Western) work situations among people who know each other rather well:

- A hand placed briefly on a colleague’s shoulder, or squeezing their shoulder briefly and lightly, to sympathise with their great loss or disappointment
- A gentle pat on the upper back to congratulate a colleague with an achievement of which they are very proud
- A light tap on the shoulder to make someone turn around and face you

Rather refrain totally from touching your superiors; they may be offended. And none of these gestures are appropriate in a work setting if the other person suspects that you are attracted to them physically!

Juliet senses that Carl is attracted to her and it makes her feel very uncomfortable, as he is not her type. She is therefore hypersensitive to his tone of voice and to how close he stands to her. She avoids working overtime or taking the elevator, just in case they’ll be in it alone and he may say something she doesn’t want to hear.

Exercise 1.9

1. Find out what is meant by sexual harassment in the workplace.
2. What is your employer or future employer’s company policy on sexual harassment?
3. What advice would you give to Juliet in the case study above?
1.10 Cultural relativity of non-verbal communication

Abel, Ben, Cindy and Dozi are watching an elephant in the bush flapping its ears. Abel, who is feeling the heat of the day, says the animal is cooling itself by creating a slight breeze with its ears. Ben notices small flies in the air and says the elephant is simply trying to keep these away. Cindy remembers reading how male elephants spread out their ears in the mating season to intimidate their rivals. By now Dozi has become very nervous and shouts: “Run! The thing is aggressive and is going to attack us!”

All four of these interpretations can be true of elephants, but without knowing more details, we cannot be sure which one applies in this case. In the same way, the meanings attached to non-verbal forms of human communication are relative and not fixed. They are not universal and may be interpreted differently by different individuals and in different cultures, environments and situations.

Words & phrases

If something is relative, it is true to a certain extent when judged or compared with other things.

If something is universal, it applies to everybody, everywhere.

For a Western male, for example, a high-pitched female voice may convey emotionality, nervousness or hysteria, while a very low-pitched voice may convey seduction. In some parts of the East, however, a high-pitched female voice is seen to be feminine and attractive.

This is also the problem with the clichéd (pronounce: kli-sháyd) matter of body language. Many people think they are able to deduce a person’s state of mind, character or personality from the way he or she sits, stands, smiles or waves ... and frankly, they are often wrong.

Say a person touches his eye area – is he thinking? Is he trying hard to remember something, or has he just remembered it? Does he have a headache? Are his eyes sore from late night reading? Is he feeling shaky after having had strong coffee but no breakfast? Is he sad, tired or worried? and so on. As we cannot read someone’s mind we shouldn’t decide what is going on based on the views of so-called “body language experts”.

That said, however, we should be sensitive to signals that are commonly interpreted in a certain way. For example, a smile is usually a sign of friendliness, happiness or pleasure everywhere. (So, it is risky to smile in sympathy when the CEO says his mother-in-law died the previous night.) And, if a person in any country slams a door we can guess more or less correctly that she is either upset or angry, or in an awful hurry. (Or it could be that the door’s autoclose-hinge just gave in.)

Eye contact, touch, facial expressions and other non-verbal cues frequently mean different things in different contexts and cultures, and you should therefore observe a lot and try to steer the middle road. The extract on the next page shows something of the “minefield” of customs and etiquette in the workplace.

Clothing and appearance are strong indicators of non-verbal communication, but can also be relative and culture bound.
Handshake: Wait for your Chinese client to initiate a handshake; wait for a female Indian client to shake your hand first, as men in India often do not shake a woman’s hand out of respect. Also wait for an Italian or Russian woman to initiate a handshake. Middle-Eastern men usually do not shake hands with women.

Bow: A nod or slight bow is a polite form of greeting in Japan, China and India. Return the gesture. When introduced to a Korean client, bow slightly at the waist and then extend your hand, if it is a male person. Korean women do not usually shake hands.

Eye contact: Maintained eye contact shows that you are trustworthy, sincere and honest (e.g. in Italy, Korea, China and Saudi Arabia). In Saudi Arabia, much importance is given to non-verbal cues, such as eye contact, tone of voice, body language and use of silence for reflecting on what someone has said.

Signs: Avoid making signs. The OK sign that is formed by making a circle with the thumb and index finger is acceptable in South African, American and British cultures. In Russia it is considered rude; in Brazil in South America it is vulgar; and in Saudi Arabia it’s an insult meaning “the evil eye”.

More advice on gestures that should serve you well in most cultures is the following:
• Don’t point with your index finger; rather use your whole hand to point to something.
• To gesture to someone to come to you, don’t use your index finger. Extend your right hand with your palm down (e.g. in China and Brazil) or your palm up (e.g. in Taiwan) and curl all four fingers towards your body.
• Always use your right hand or both hands to receive or give something, never your left hand.
• Don’t use your hands to illustrate what you are saying. (You can relax on this point with Italian, Russian and Brazilian clients, as they will use their hands expressively and show a lot of emotion. They will also watch your gestures and facial expressions.)
• Don’t use dramatic or comic facial expressions.
• Talking or laughing loudly is often considered impolite (e.g. in Korea).
• Never point your feet or the soles of your feet at a person.
• Knock politely before entering an office and close the door behind you (e.g. in Italy). Close it again when you leave.
• Don’t yawn, stretch or scratch in public.

Source: Management Practice NQF Level 3 Student’s Book, by A. Thorne (Troupant/Macmillan).

Even colours are interpreted differently. Compare your culture’s use of colour with these examples from China:
• Avoid wearing brightly coloured business clothing.
• Never use plain white, dark blue or black gift wrap, as these are the colours of mourning.
• Red and gold are good colours for wrapping gifts.
• Red is symbolic for joy and celebration, but a pen with red ink is not a good gift, as writing in red ink symbolises that ties (relations) are being cut off.
• Yellow is symbolic of good luck, the earth and neutrality.
• If your English business card has a Chinese translation at the back, that side should preferably be printed in gold ink, as it is seen to be a fortunate colour.

Exercise 1.10

Read up about the cultural practices, preferences and taboos in other countries (e.g. google “etiquette”, “protocol” or “customs”, followed by the country’s name). Always do this before meeting a client or an associate from another country.
1.11 Non-verbal communication that supports / conflicts with verbal communication

By now you will appreciate that when an addressee says one thing, but his or her facial expression, posture or gestures imply the opposite, the addressees will be confused. They may think: What is going on here? Is this person telling the truth? Is he or she being sarcastic? Can I trust him or her? What is he or she not telling me? What’s the catch?

—— Exercise 1.11 ——

1. Complete the table in pencil, filling in any appropriate **verbal** examples you can think of.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>Conflicting examples</th>
<th>Supporting examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facial expressions</td>
<td>Frowning while saying that you agree with what the person said</td>
<td>Raising your eyebrows while …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestures or hand signals</td>
<td>Giving a happy wave as you shout: “Stop, stop!”</td>
<td>Pointing a finger while …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body language or posture</td>
<td>Hanging your head while saying you are not disappointed</td>
<td>Holding your head up while …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body movements</td>
<td>Tapping your fingers although you say you are not in a hurry</td>
<td>Walking gracefully and quietly when …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proxemics</td>
<td>Standing at someone’s shoulder while saying that you won’t check up on them</td>
<td>Keeping a respectful distance between you and your employer while …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colours</td>
<td>Wearing a colourful, holiday hat at serious negotiations</td>
<td>Wearing a neat … to a business meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typography (fonts; layout)</td>
<td>Typing the company guidelines all in capital letters</td>
<td>Using a font that is clear and easy to read for the …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packaging and presentation</td>
<td>Wrapping an expensive gift for the boss in cheap paper</td>
<td>Using good quality paper for printing the …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufactured signals and signs</td>
<td>Using a poorly designed logo for a smart company</td>
<td>Designing neat public signs for the …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures</td>
<td>Displaying at work a photo of yourself in a bathing costume</td>
<td>Using an appropriate graph to …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspects of human speech</td>
<td>Rattling off facts without giving people a chance to absorb them</td>
<td>Speaking in a pleasant, professional tone when …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Playing restless, loud music in an elegant, classy restaurant</td>
<td>Playing … music in an upmarket shopping centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>Keeping quiet when someone has asked you a question</td>
<td>Keeping quiet when you could have … because …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch</td>
<td>Playfully slapping an employee on the lower back to greet her</td>
<td>Giving a firm yet not crushing handshake when …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Say in each case in the middle column how the credibility (reliability) of the communication is affected negatively by the conflicting non-verbal and verbal messages.