

# 1.5 Forms of Communication

## Aim

- To make the students aware of the different types and categories of communication both in Africa and the modern world.
- To learn alternative ways of communicating through low-cost visual media.
- To appreciate African traditional visual media art.

## Materials Required

- Paper and Pen

### Procedure

Divide the students into groups and ask them to make a list of the different types of communication.

### Input

#### Traditional Forms of Communication

1. Theatre
2. Folk Musical Groups
3. Traditional dance and Music
4. Drama
5. Folk Music
6. Dramatic Performances
7. Mask and puppet performances
8. Tales
9. Proverbs
10. Riddles

#### Modern Forms of Communication

There are many types of communication. A categorization of the types may be made on the basis of:

- The senses used
- The media employed
- The number of receivers in the communication process
- The content, attitude of the sender and feedback received

#### I. According to Bodily Senses:

- Communication by sight - Visual Communication e.g. through typographic, graphic, informational, cartoons, still pictures, moving pictures, television, computer and the world wide web images.
- Communication by hearing - Aural Communication e.g. telephone.
- Communication by smell - Olfactory Communication. Olfactory communication is defined as the process whereby a chemical signal is generated by a presumptive sender and transmitted (generally through the air) to a presumptive receiver who by means of adequate receptors can identify, integrate and respond (either behaviourally or physiologically) to the signal. E.g. male lycosids may employ olfactory orientation to detect and locate females at a distance.
- Communication by touch - Tactile Communication
- Communication by taste - For example, this is how our brain communicates the different tastes that we put in our mouth as either sour, sweet, salty etc.
- Multi-sensory communication which involves a combination of different senses.

#### II. According to the Media Used:

- a) The Body - it is the primary medium of communication. All other media are but extensions of the body. Communication through the body is commonly called "body language". Whenever we talk to or come across someone, either an acquaintance or an unknown person, we communicate with the person through numerous gestures. These gestures reflect our mental state of how we are feeling or observing things. We can communicate through the body in the following ways:
  - Stillness, silence, e.g. being present at a funeral
  - Physical (non-intentional) gestures, e.g. a yawn, a sneeze, a blink of the eyelid.
- b) Symbolic communication: Most essential to symbolic language is the spoken and written language. Through oral pronunciation and written alphabet we convey

specific meanings recognized only by those who share similar symbols. Culture is the result of a sharing of symbols by a people over a period of time.

- Verbal Communication: - Spoken language/communication  
- Written language/communication
  - Non-verbal symbols/communication e.g. signs, lines, colours, shapes, posters, gestures, facial expressions.
- c) Audiovisual Communication: Communication is effected through the combination of visuals as well as aural means. Much of our communication is audiovisual e.g., when we argue, we combine gestures and words to give added emphasis and impact.
- d) Folk Media: This is a term used to describe the unsophisticated cultural expressions of people. These expressions can be of a classical and timeless nature such as traditional theatre, masks and puppet performance, tales, proverbs, riddles and songs. In ministry, keep in mind that these are a cultural and endogenous response to different community needs for information, education, social protest and entertainment. These systems are used to solve the contradiction between the need for change (development) of a rural community and the need to preserve its cultural values. After all, these values ensure that the changes are acceptable by all social groups of the community. On the other hand, all communication processes based on media which are not created and managed by the rural community themselves like radio, video and television are not perceived as traditional and are considered external to the rural community. There is a need therefore to translate the message of God into traditional folk media in order to make it understandable and acceptable.
- e) Electronic Communication: These forms of communication are made possible due to the advances in electronic technology. We thus have examples such as: the phone, fax, radio, TV and computers that depend on the science of electronics.
- f) Today, electronic communication has reached new heights with satellite communication. It has made communication possible between great distances as between nations. Some day soon, all computers will be connected in a global communication network. We will be able to communicate with others worldwide. Being linked in a computer network will allow us to access information from a multitude of sources. The internet, a worldwide computer network is only the start of this communication revolution. In addition to the internet, other forms of electronic communication include pagers, cellular phones and electronic mail. These electronic devices offer expanded possibilities for communicating with others.

### III. According to the Number of Receivers being Communicated to:

- a) Intra-personal communication: A communication that takes place within a person
- b) Interpersonal communication: Communication between two persons. For instance during a father-son discussion.
- c) Group communication: between one person and a group and vice versa - as what happens in a classroom or between two or three groups as in a football game where the two teams interact with each other while the spectators applaud.
- d) Mass communication occurs when the media used are so powerful that the message is able to reach millions of receivers scattered in different parts of the nation or the world at approximately the same time. Examples of mass media communication are TV, radio, CD and audio cassettes and advertising.

### IV. According to Content, Attitude of the Sender and Feedback Received:

- a) Authoritarian communication: a type of communication that is one-way - from sender to receiver without a chance for the receiver to express his own opinion e.g. between a king and his subject.
- b) Patriarchal communication: a type of communication that is condescending - that respects the receiver provided the receiver does not challenge the sender's privileged position because of age, status, experience, etc.
- c) Manipulative communication: a type of communication that subtly or overtly persuades the receiver to accept the sender's message or point of view and this acceptance is primarily to the advantage of the sender.
- d) Educational communication: a type of communication that is instructive and benefits the receiver.
- e) Participatory communication: a type of communication that stimulates the receiver to give active and independent feedback.

## Review

1. Traditional Forms of Communication include: Theatre, Folk Musical Groups, Traditional dance and Music, Drama, Folk Music, Dramatic Performances, Mask and Puppet performances, Tales, Proverbs and Riddles.
2. Modern Forms of Communication are categorised on the basis of: The senses, used, media employed, number of receivers in the communication process and the content and attitude of the sender and feedback received.

## Reflection

1. Recall an incident when the word of God hit home for you. How was it communicated? Was it through your vernacular language, through a story or a song? In what ways can we adapt the word of God to make it understandable



to the African both modern and traditional? Does the African community fully embrace the word of God or are there areas that still need evangelisation through perhaps adapting Bible stories to fit the African context?

## Relevant Skills

1. Study the communication method(s) of:
  - \* An insect
  - \* A traditional Maasai man or any other traditional man from your community
  - \* A modern-age man
2. What is the difference in communication between the traditional man and the modern man?
3. What are the communication needs of the modern man as compared to the traditional man?

## Resources

BOSCOM-INDIA, 2000. 'SHEPHERDS' FOR AN INFORMATION AGE. Matunga: Tej Prasarini,

## References

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