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***COURSE***

***COMMUNICATION SKILL***

**BOOK REVIEW: ENGLISH LANGUAGE: COMMUNICATION SKILLS BY URMILA RAI**

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***INTRODUCTION-***

For decades now, human communication has been strengthened by contribution from many disciplines. Definitions, descriptions of the process, and analyses of the elements of communication have been developed by many scholars. Can human being stay without interacting with nature (environment and fellow human)? Probably no. Communication then, become very vital element in human society. Entering into a good organization requires excellent communication skills. It is the tool in which mankind exercise influence on one another, convey or bring about changes in the attitudes and views of our associates, motivate them and establish and maintain relations with them. It is factual and right to say that communication is central to everything we do; being school, family, community, organization and any place that we live and act. Our success or failure, our achievement of our aspirations hang on esffective communication. Communication is the cement or mortar that binds or holds organization together.

There are and were many books on communication skills but the student saw it wise to choose: ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION SKILLS, authored by Urmila Rai. Reading cover to cover, word to word, paragraph to paragraph would bring meaningful transformation in the student. In fact, the book is refined. This is why students of AIU unique – the process of studies, guided by qualified personnel makes one become great as he or she realizes his or her vision. Many treasures are imbedded in the Urmila’s book. For instance, right from the beginning of this book, attributes of communication are given, a component one cannot leave in oblivion when treating communication skills.

Urmila gives four attributes or qualities that helps us to improve our competence and skills in communication. These are: Communication is unintentional as well as intentional, communication is a dynamic process, communication is systematic and communication is both interaction and transaction.

The first and second points[[1]](#footnote-1) tells us that we do not always convey or tell exactly what we want to; the targeted receiver may receive less or more than what we intended to convey. Our message may be thwarted in one way or the other. A casual observer may receive information which we did not intend for him or her. Our non-verbal behavior conveys something about us; what we speak or write is always accompanied by non-verbal behavior. Communication, thus, takes place even when we do not plan it. Again, when we say communication is dynamic, we are right in saying that because it keeps on evolving. Right from the beginning, this paper made it clear that there has been some changes in communication skills. This suggest that communication is an ongoing process and not a static activity. The notion of process involves a time dimension; which means that the features, roots, and consequences of an act of communication are subject to change while the communication act takes place. One cannot deny the fact that an important element in communication is the concept of “change.” Anytime people consciously engage in the act of communication, they bring to bear their previous experience, feelings, thoughts, attitudes which have become formed by other communication events.

The third and Fourth components of communication adds aroma to communication. Every component of the process affect the other. The source, environment, goal, medium, nature of the message, receiver, the feedback, and others affect one another. If the audience is inattentive, the source is not able to covey effectively. In the same way, if a wrong medium is chosen, a particular message may fail to have the intended result. Communication, in short, flows in a systematic way. Communication is both interactive and transaction in the sense that, in communication, there should be a source (sender/communicator) and a receiver who may exchange ideas and information and influence each other during the process of communication.

With the above, this paper aims at looking at communication skills in details through the help of Urmaila Rai’s book: English language Communication Skills. This paper will take the format of looking at the Process of communication, verbal and non-verbal communication, some barriers to communication, spoken and written English and concludes the paper with a form of recommendation to Ghanaian education on the non-verbal communication.

***Process of Communication***

For one to make a good analysis about communication and its activity, the process and the elements involved in the process must be examined. According to Urmaila, there are seven factors or elements that make up the process of communication:

* Sender/Source
* Receiver
* Goal
* Message
* Medium
* Feedback
* Context

Because of the complexity of each, it is good we look at each in a brief summary.

We are made aware this simple truth, the process of communication involves decisions and activities by the two persons involved, the sender and the receiver. The base, sender or source initiates the process of communication. He/she has to be clear about his/her motive behind the communication and about the target audience of such communication. Is like a book, the intention must be clear and the audience to must be targeted. We communicate because we want to make someone do something or think or act in a certain way, that is, to influence the person. Your message will always have positive or negative influence on the receiver. It is the sender who chooses a suitable medium[[2]](#footnote-2) by which such a message is communicated. The Receiver becomes aware that a message has arrived when he or she perceives it with his or her senses. He or she then attend to the message by decoding or interpreting it. Decoding or interpreting a message is a complex activity; it involves using knowledge of the signs, drawing upon previous knowledge of the subject matter, capacity to comprehend, attitudes and values in order to draw meaning out of it.[[3]](#footnote-3)

***Verbal and non-verbal Communication***

The term *verbal* is collectively used to mean *oral* but in communication skills, *verbal* means by using words and language which includes both written or oral. Most of our communication is done by using language; we speak and write whenever we have to convey information, ideas, to discuss, to inspire, to send a signal, to reprimand, to complain, to appreciate and so on. There are format for verbal communication. The environment and audience may determine the format you may use; either formal or casual. The effectiveness of verbal communication depends on a person’s skill in the use of language. Speaking requires practice because that will boost your confidence level. It is easier to deliver a prepared speech than to participate in a group discussion. It takes time to build up confidence to speak naturally or extemporaneously and in response to another speaker in a dialogue. The irony of life is that people who at times write well are unable to speak well because of jumpiness.

***Reading Skills***: A large amount of reading demands discipline and time. Reading skills can be developed by practice. Be a lover to journals, house magazines, reports, minutes, newspapers, books and magazines. Not everything in what you are reading needs equal attention. Difficult subjects need careful study reading. Some need only skimming. Speed-reading must be silent. The skill of silent reading is different from the skill of reading aloud. Silent reading could be rapid because it is not limited by physical movement of the mouth and throat. The use of the eye (eye movement) is very important and needs to be trained properly for fast reading. The eye only see only during short pauses of fixation linked by quick and sightless movements. At each fixation pause, few characters; for fast readers, 10-16 characters could be picked. To be a fast reader and dealing with eye movement, concentration is key. To have an overview of what you are about to read and as such, to wet your appetite for it, do the following as a practice:

* Look at the heading, the sub-headings, summary, table of contents to have a general sense of the content and the train of thought and your assumptions.
* Have a clear purpose for reading such material. If for exams, follow instructions whether you are to summarize or whatever.
* Keep your mouth shut so to avoid mouthing what you read.
* Watch your throat; try not to move any muscles of the mouth or throat while reading.
* Take in familiar words at a glance. Practice will help you increase your eye span and enable you to take in more characters at a time.
* Make sure your progress not retrogress; that is, make a constant effort not to let the eye regress or go back a few words instead of moving forward.

***None-Verbal Communication***: It includes all things in communication to convey meaning but words and language. Example, pictures, body language, maps, charts, graphs, diagrams, voice qualities in speech[[4]](#footnote-4) and others. Non-verbal communication can be independent of verbal communication but verbal communication always accompanied by non-verbal communication. Among the Akan people of Ghana, in their traditional settings, symbols, drums, pictures and other ornaments speak volumes than words. Typical example is their dancing which is accompanied by drumming. Messages of danger, pain and bitterness, battle, dominion and other meaningful meanings could be decoded from them.

***Uses Of Non-verbal Methods***

One’s ability to understand non-verbal methods and aspects of communication helps a person to improve oral and written presentation by using the methods and by gaining control over body language. Non-verbal methods have instant effect because they are catchy, it takes less time to see a painting, the talking of a drum than to read and understand words and sentences. Moreover, visual non-verbal methods aid verbal communication. Example: maps, charts and graphs are necessary for conveying information or plans related to geography and science. Response to visuals and plain sounds is more powerful than to language. A cry of agony arouses stronger response than a sad story (note, this is commonly seen in Ghana; if not mistaken, all the tribes in Ghana, this could be found.) Why would you think that TV news is more interesting than listening into the news on radio? It is so easy to convey message to illiterate than scholars. For example, a container of poison may have a skull and a cross-bones as a warning, illiterate drivers manage with the non-verbal traffic signals and all these flow so well and easily.

**Some Barriers To Communication**

Are communication always successful? Certainly not. Several things can prevent the message from reaching the intended recipient or have the message thwarted. Barriers of communication can be divided into broad groups: Physical Barriers, Semantic and language barriers, cross-cultural barriers and others. Physical Barriers could be obstacles that prevent a message from reaching the targeted receiver which may be beyond the control of such a person. Like the two sided coin, some could be controlled and others could not. For instance: defects in the medium,[[5]](#footnote-5) noise in the environment,[[6]](#footnote-6) semantic and language barrier,[[7]](#footnote-7)and others could be worked at and removed from communication skills.

***Overcoming Barricades***

Constant structural effort is needed to overcome the obstacles which are intuitively built up by different people in our society. In service training could be organized by those in authority to help people to overcome various barriers. Semantic and language barriers can be overcome only by being chary with the use of language, and by using words which have clear meaning, simple and try and use pictorial aid whenever possible. Personal discipline can help remove personal barriers. In dealing with people with different cultural background, one should avoid assumptions of similarity that he or she is not sure of. Always feel and be in the shoes of others so as not to take them for granted or look down upon them.

***Spoken and Written Communication***

Oral and written communication are both forms of verbal communication. Oral communication requires that both the parties should be present and attentive to each other at the same time. This requires certain skills of both. Here, body language; that is both verbal and non-verbal communication are taken into consideration. Parties should be able to make immediate response without delay. In the absence of one, written communication are employed as a medium of communication. Long and complex messages are best conveyed in writing. Written communication is slower in preparation, in conveyance and reception. To draft it, type, dispatch, and reach its destination, it is always time consuming. For purpose of future record and documentation, written communication are preferably used. Written communication in many cases are accurate and precise.

***Conclusion***

Having gone through Urmila Rai’s book, much knowledge and awareness to communication skills have been gained. This paper is fully convinced that communication skills is very essential when it comes to building a successful career; in much the same way, communication skills play a key role in one’s private life too. This paper see communication skills as a set of activities that ultimately make a quality public performance. It helps people to understand people better; it helps us overcome diversities, build trust and respect, create the avenue for sharing creative ideas and solving problems. Communication as a course helps and recommended by this paper to go into details, the least iota or every bit of the course into consideration. This is because it is a course which will help students to overcome their timorousness, bad reading habit, lack of confidence into becoming good people.

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1. Communication is unintentional as well as intentional & communication is a dynamic [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Here, this paper means mail, e-mail, letter, telephone, face-to-face talk… [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Receiver’s functions complete one cycle of the process of communication: first, attending to the received message, which include listening, reading or observing. Second, decoding the received message is a key function of the receiver. Third, he or she needs to interpret the received message. Fourth, there should be a feedback or a response from the receiver. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A non-verbal aspects of the spoken word are known as paralanguage. It includes the qualities of the voice, the way we use our voice, as well as the sounds we make without uttering words. Voice has characteristics like tone, volume, and pitch. Tone is the quality of the voice. Volume is the loudness or softness, which can be consciously adjusted to the number of persons in the audience and the distance between the speaker and the listeners. Example: sounds like Ouch! Mmmm! Eeeeii! Huh! And others are used to convey various ideas or emotions. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Any device used in transmitting messages. Eg: telephone, the postal system, the courier service, electronic media. When they fail, message may be delayed or distorted or even lost. A partial failure of mechanical equipment is more harmful than a total failure because message may be distorted or carried as incomplete. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Noise is any disturbance which occurs in the transmission process. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Semantic means pertaining to or arising from the different meanings of words or other symbols. Language is our powerful tool of communication and yet it is a tricky tool that needs skill in handling. Some words could have double meaning which could thwart the message. All ambiguity should be out in communication for clarity of words and meaning. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)