

## Communication Skills and Techniques for Teachers

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### Abstract

Communication is key in the classroom: successful teaching is generally considered to require only 50% knowledge to 50% communication skills. As a result, a teacher should be proficient in all four modes of communication – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – and should know how to utilise this proficiency effectively in a school environment. Being able to do this has been proven to impact the success students achieve in their academic lives, as well as the teacher's own career success. Through this paper following areas such as communication skills definition, types of communication skills, importance of communication skills for teachers, aims of communication skills among teachers, reasons for miscommunication, barriers of communication skills and effective communication strategies have been discussed in detail.

**Key words:** Body language, barriers of communication, Communication skills, verbal, visual.

### INTRODUCTION

Communications is fundamental to the existence and survival of humans as well as to an organization. It is a process of creating and sharing ideas, information, views, facts, feelings, etc. among the people to reach a common understanding. Communication is the key to the Directing function of management.

Communication involves two groups, the sender and the receiver, and each has unique responsibilities to ensure effective communication. If either or both parties fail to fulfil their responsibilities, there will be a communication breakdown. Since communication always involves at least two distinct individuals and these individuals bring their biases into any conversation, the cause of any miscommunication can be on either the sender or the receiver end.



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Understanding the responsibilities of each participant can help us understand the causes of communication failure and how to prevent it.

No matter where you go, you need to be an expert at communicating. The words that you say and how you say it are important, as they can be misinterpreted if said in a different tone. So having good communication skill is very important.

### COMMUNICATION SKILLS: DEFINITION

Communication skill is the ability to convey and share information to others in an efficacious way. It is a very vital skill and used widely in all work sectors. Communication can make or break your relationship at home or work or with your friends. If you have the skill then you can pass out your word across easily and precisely without any confusion. You can communicate with your body, words, gestures, expressions and much more.

### TYPES OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication is basically an act of interaction and sharing emotions and thoughts with others. It is the best way to receive, provide and exchange information, widely used in the business and professional sector. This is the most sought after trait every employer looks for in a candidate during the hiring process. This skill not only helps in the work sector but can be used in almost every phase of life. With proper communication skills, even the biggest issues can be sorted out. The communication skills are basically of 3 types, they are

**1. Verbal Communication:** In this type of communication, the use of words is done. It is a one to one type of interaction or sometimes more than 2.

**2. Non-verbal Communication:** In this type of communication, gestures are used to share information like facial expressions, hand gestures, specifically saying body language. The best part about this type of communication is that it speaks in volumes.

**3. Visual Communication:** This type of communication uses signs, drawing, designs etc to convey and share information with others.

**What does Good Communication Do?** You are confident when you communicate well and know that others have understood what you want.

Good communication leads to high confidence and hence, you perform better at whatever you are doing. If you excel in your communication, you can express yourself better and climb the stairs of success.

It is a known fact that every successful man or woman knows how to communicate in a precise and clear manner. Crisp communication is what everyone is looking for, a way to attract and get your work done.

Effective Communication Techniques to Excel: Have you ever thought, "What would be our condition if we are all alone in this whole world?"

We would surely get bored to death. Even a thought of such kind is scary, but luckily, we all are surrounded by people around us which makes our lives keep going. As humans, we are bound to be social and is the key to make our survival possible and life active.

Now communication is one such important life skills that helps us throughout. The best part is that it is not only limited to any sector but pitches its significance in all parts of life, like personal, professional, business etc.

In fact, a research conducted by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation and Stanford Research Center, has stated that 85% of professional success comes if you possess good developed soft skills and people skills, and only 15% of career success comes from technical knowledge and skills (hard skills). So, the way you interact and behave with others plays a crucial role in your success.

Here are few effective communication techniques that help you become an excellent communicator,

1. Have a proper body language
2. Frame your views
3. Try to understand, not just to listen
4. Get to know your audience before you communicate
5. Ask open-ended questions
6. Always be honest

Hence, it is really important for a teacher in transmitting of education, classroom management and interaction with students in the class. Teacher has to teach the students having different thinking approaches.

Different Forms of Communication that teacher Need to Master: The different forms of communication can be listed as – Listening, reading, speaking and body language.

♦ Teachers need to have the patience and focus to listen and register what their peers are saying.

♦ Teachers need to develop the reading habit to stay up-to-date and improve their vocabulary.

♦ Teachers need to have good speaking skills that will help them to present your ideas in an effective and efficient way.

♦ Teachers need to show good body language and hide their nervousness and show their confidence.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR TEACHERS

When you join a pre-school, it is the teacher who helps you in expressing yourself in front of the class and hence, your first step towards communicating with others. It is important that the teachers have good communication skills so that their students can follow in their footsteps and become good orators. This is a specialized field and a lot of importance is given when a teacher is hired.

Communication skills are a new subject in schools and professional colleges. It is these teachers who help the student communicate effectively.

### 1. Teachers need to teach individual or in groups:

A teacher needs to have good listening skills to know where his or her student stands and what is that he or she needs to focus on.

While explaining a topic to a student a teacher needs to be clear and precise. You cannot jumble up the topic, confusing your students as well as yourself making it difficult for the student to grasp what you are saying. You need to adapt the style of the individual student so that you can ensure that every student's weak area is addressed.

A skilled communicator teacher can turn a boring subject into an interesting one by their good presentation skills.

2. Teachers need to be caring in their communication: A good teacher will always show compassion and care towards their students with words or body language. They work with the students to ensure they excel in whatever they do and continuously encourage them to do better.

They get to know the students personally by making sure that they address them by their names. They understand their fear and confusion and are there to counsel them if needed. They celebrate the success of their students in their own way to let them know that they are proud of them!

3. Teachers need to communicate to the parents in a sensitive and effective way: An important part of a

teacher's job is to ensure that they have communicated the progress of their kin in writing as well as in meeting.

A parent would always like to hear the truth, but how a teacher says it means a lot. A positive feedback to the parents give them the confidence, to do better but at the same time a negative feedback has to be shared.

The way you share your negative feed is where a teacher's communication skill gets tested. A complaint should be shared with the respective parent appropriately, on time and should be precise.

4. Interacting with colleagues and supervisors is the key: Teaching a class is not an individual effort. You need to discuss and find out the best possible ways to teach a topic in an effective way.

A school always encourages the teachers to sit together and devise an appropriate teaching technique by sharing ideas. As a teacher, you need to be aware of the changes in the educational system and attend or conduct seminars to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

You need to listen, read, discuss and come up with excellent teaching techniques to ensure that your school does well.

## **AIMS OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS AMONG TEACHERS**

### **Professional Growth**

Fundamental to teacher and student success is the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with students, parents and colleagues. Teachers must have good communication skills to help their students achieve academic success. Teachers also need good communication skills to further their careers in education. Without good communication skills, teachers disable the learning process as well as their own career mobility.

### **Recruitment**

During the interview process, teachers who have good communication skills can demonstrate what makes them suited to the job. A candidate who cannot clearly express ideas or relate her professional work and experiences may fail the first test. Teachers seeking employment in school districts and other educational institutions need to communicate effectively throughout the recruitment process.

### **Student Comprehension**

Above all, teachers must have the ability to communicate their subject-matter expertise to facilitate classroom learning and participation. Students depend on their teachers to provide them with instruction, guidance and feedback throughout the

learning process. When a teacher fails to communicate effectively with students, their comprehension level drops, and they eventually lose grasp of the subject matter. As time goes on, students' academic progress may suffer from not receiving the proper support in fundamental subjects.

### **Labor Matters**

Many teachers are subject to the conditions of a collective-bargaining agreement, wherein the teachers' union negotiates their wages, benefits and working conditions with the school administration team. Teachers without good communication skills find it difficult to express what they want in terms of a labor contract. The consequences of poor communication throughout the negotiation process can result in misunderstandings and conflict concerning employment issues.

### **Parental Support**

The ability to communicate well is especially important for teachers in their interaction with parents. Teachers who want a student to excel often seek the support of parents to instil good study habits at home. When teachers cannot communicate effectively with parents, they can't explain a student's needs in a way parents understand. Moreover, if a parent recognizes the teacher's inability to communicate effectively, the parent might wonder if that teacher competently leads the class.

### **Career**

Teachers with poor communication skills limit their career options. Good communication skills are essential for practically all subjects. However, some academic areas may depend more on the teacher's ability to communicate than others. For example, a teacher whose communication skills need work is probably not the ideal instructor for a public-speaking course.

## **REASONS FOR MISCOMMUNICATION**

### **Assuming Knowledge**

What may be obvious to you may not be obvious to your audience. Skipping over key details because they are obvious to you can leave your audience bewildered and frustrated. It is often difficult to know what knowledge an audience or individual brings into a conversation, so it is incumbent on the speaker to give a thorough explanation while looking for clues of confusion in the audience. In addition, being able to fully understand and address questions is vital. Listening to the question and understanding where the confusion lies is an important skill that many people do not possess.

### Unclear Language

Using language that is not appropriate to the subject or audience is another problem. Reliance on technical jargon could confuse your audience. In addition, vague or imprecise language can leave your audience with an incomplete understanding or a misunderstanding of what you are communicating. Getting the right balance between the technical language necessary to convey the message and using vocabulary that is comprehensible and stimulating to your audience is the key.

### Non-Receptiveness

As a receiver of a message, it is important to be receptive to the message — to understand what the speaker is trying to communicate. This can be complicated by personal biases or boredom. If we disagree with what is being communicated, it is sometimes difficult to listen with an open mind. If a subject is not interesting, it is easy to tune the speaker out and miss out on key components of the message. Active listening, either taking notes if in an audience or repeating and paraphrasing if in a conversation, can help to increase our receptiveness to a message.

### Excessive Ego

Sometimes in a conversation, it becomes more important to be right than to understand what the other person is saying. Instead of listening to the other person's points, we spend the time they are speaking thinking about what our response is going to be. When a conversation degenerates into an argument, it is easy to fall into using this tactic. Instead of understanding the other person's ideas, we are fully concentrated on how best to impose ours on them. The ability to divorce your ego from an argument and listen to the other person is a difficult but vital skill to effective communication.

## BARRIERS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Teachers have an increasingly difficult job trying to communicate effectively to classrooms that are growing in size and may contain students who come from varied backgrounds. Some common barriers to effective communication in the classroom are listening barriers, perception barriers, oral barriers and cultural barriers. Learning to recognize and overcome these barriers is essential in effective classroom communication.

### Listening Barriers

Effective listening is one of the most important factors in classroom communication. Take the time to listen to what the other person is saying. When someone is speaking, you should not be thinking of your next response. Negative emotions may occur when certain words or body language is used. A teacher must also

take care to keep emotional reactions to a minimum and focus on what the speaker is saying. Outside noise such as telephones, email or construction noise can sometimes make listening difficult. This outside noise should be minimized in the classroom.

### Perception Barriers

Perception may be a barrier to effective communication in the classroom. Different people may receive and hear the same message but interpret it differently. Paying attention to detail is also important. Important aspects can be missed by not covering a subject in depth. A teacher should also learn to focus on both positive and negative aspects of a conversation. By having a distorted focus, a teacher may only focus on the negative aspects of a conversation.

### Oral Barriers

Communication barriers in the classroom may exist if oral communication is not clear. Communication only occurs when the listener hears and understands your message in the way you meant for it to be received. Some problems in oral communications include using words with ambiguous meanings. The teacher must make sure the students clearly understand the meanings of words. Another problem in oral communications is using generalizations and stereotypes. Classroom communication should be specific to the topic and without bias. A teacher must also take caution not to make a premature conclusion before she has all the facts about a topic or situation. Finally, a teacher must overcome any lack of self-confidence and deliver the message with assertiveness and clarity.

### Cultural Barriers

Cultural differences can be a barrier to effective communications in the classroom. It is possible for both a teacher and a student to have predisposed ideas about behavior based on what the other person's culture is. Messages are often misunderstood if they are delivered in a way that is unfamiliar to the student's culture. It is important to dispel assumptions or biases based on cultural differences in a classroom.

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines communication as the act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviours to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., to others.

Though communication is of different types, proper usage of it plays an important role. Also, communication skills are a little more polished version of the communication concept.

To become a professional, you need to be well versed with good communication skills and also in other

skills too. Now if you are the one struggling hard to communicate properly, then here are few effective communication strategies that you need to follow.

### **Create a safe learning environment with supportive relationships**

It has been proven that supportive relationships between students and teachers have a positive impact on class engagement, participation, and the students' achievements. It has even been suggested that these supportive relationships may negate the tendency for low-income students to have poorer school outcomes (see O'Connor and McCartney, 2007).

This is because, when students feel supported, they are more comfortable expressing their own thoughts and ideas in class discussions, attempting challenges, and asking when they need help. Higher levels of engagement and participation then lead to better developed knowledge and greater achievement.

A supportive learning environment is built using communication: teachers should get to know their students well, and show them that they are safe from judgement or humiliation in their classroom. It is a good idea to learn students' names early in the year, and use them often. Have an open-door policy for students to come and talk to you about any issues, and be empathic and caring when teachers interact with them at all times: don't tell them off for not understanding and don't ridicule their thoughts and ideas.

Additionally, teachers should recognise that some students don't feel comfortable talking in front of the class. If teachers do ask them to participate, he/she could use scaffolding (such as sentence starters) to make them feel safer doing so. However, forced participation is usually unnecessary: it is likely that quieter students have excellent listening skills, and are learning just as much, despite not sharing their own thoughts.

### **More teamwork**

Teamwork and group discussions contribute to making the classroom a more comfortable environment. By working in small groups, students are able to share their ideas more easily, and improve their own communication skills. These activities also give them a good opportunity to ask his teacher questions and get feedback on their work, leading to effective communication between them, better understanding of the lesson, and academic benefits.

The teacher could also try to improve his communication skills through teamwork with his colleagues. Planning more lessons together, sharing ideas, and problem-solving together will develop the way that the teacher interact.

### **Body language**

Communication is not only verbal, but also non-verbal: teachers should ensure that the signals they are giving out through their body language are positive, confident, and engaging.

For example, making eye contact with students when they are talking to them shows that they are being supportive and attentive. Making eye contact is also important when they are presenting to the whole class – it motivates everyone to pay attention, which helps them to learn, as well as making them feel involved. In order to make more eye contact, they may have to learn their lesson content more thoroughly in advance, so that they don't have to look away to read their notes.

As they teach, they should use gestures to emphasise their words. This increases the interactivity of the lesson, making it more visually interesting and hence, more memorable. Keep their arms open – do not fold them – and use smiles, nods, and thumbs up to encourage students when they participate. Moving around the classroom while they teach can help to remove the barrier between them and their students, and give them less opportunity to zone out or get distracted.

Body language is also important when dealing with negative behaviour. To avoid being confrontational, ensure that teacher don't stand directly above or in front of a student, point, or invade their personal space. It may be effective to get down to their level and talk quietly about their behaviour, or speak to them outside the classroom, to avoid drawing too much attention. Remember that students' behaviour is also a form of communication, and think about what it is telling them.

### **Active listening**

The 'listening' component of communication should not be overlooked – over 60% of all misunderstandings result from poor listening (Caruso, *et al.*, 2017).

Practising good listening in the classroom can benefit them in two ways. Firstly, they will be a model for their students, who will improve their own listening skills, and thus retain lessons better. Secondly, by using **active listening**, they can correct misunderstandings and extend learning, resulting in a better education for their students.

Active listening involves listening carefully to what their students say, checking that they have understood them correctly (for example, repeating back to them what you think they have said), building on their ideas, and challenging or questioning them. It is the best approach to use to foster understanding in the classroom, and is an excellent example of effective communication.

## Feedback

Feedback is also an important component of communication in the classroom. There have been many studies focusing on feedback in recent years. It has been shown that **positive feedback** (i.e. praise) builds students' confidence – making them more likely to believe that they can succeed – and helps to create a supportive environment and increase academic success.

They can also use positive feedback to modify students' behaviour: for example, praising a student for having their hand up is likely to cause the students around them to stop 'shouting out' and copy this behaviour, in order to be praised themselves (Howell *et al.*, 2014).

However, positive feedback can be detrimental to learning if it is used without being deserved, or too frequently (Cannella, 1986). Phrases such as 'good job' or 'beautiful' may not motivate students, because they do not understand what they are specifically being praised for, while over-praising can cause children to lack interest in situations where they are not being praised (e.g. Howell *et al.*, 2014). As a result, teachers should give specific, deserved positive feedback – use the student's name, explicitly state what they are doing right, and thank them enthusiastically.

**Negative feedback** is used more often in the classroom than positive feedback, and many researchers have argued that this should not be the case. While negative feedback can help students to improve – for example, by changing their behaviour, or trying harder at a task (Conroy *et al.*, 2014) – it does also contribute to conflictual relationships with students (e.g. Allen *et al.*, 2013). It has also been suggested that it can cause lower levels of academic success (e.g. Wu *et al.*, 2010).

These disadvantages are compounded by the fact that the negative feedback is not always successful – students tend to continue the behaviour despite negative feedback around 20% of the time – and it tends to decrease students' motivation and interest in a task (e.g. Spilt *et al.*, 2016). Other consequences include decreased self-worth, which impacts children's academic success (e.g. Harter, 2012).

As such, teachers should ensure that they use negative feedback only sparingly; for general classroom management, using positive feedback to illustrate the behaviour that they want to see is much more effective. In situations where they do have to use negative feedback, they should explicitly address the behaviour they want to stop, give an explanation why (e.g. 'don't do that. I don't think it is safe'), allow the student to think about morality (e.g. 'are you doing the right thing?'), or use a simple form of 'no' (e.g. 'no', 'mm mm'). These techniques increase the effectiveness of

negative feedback, and decrease any detrimental impact that it might have.

Finally, teachers should give students the opportunity to give them feedback on their lessons or teaching styles. This shows that teachers value their opinion, increases communication between them, and helps them to improve their teaching and their students' learning.

## Sense of humour

The use of humour in the classroom has been found to increase learning, self-motivation, and positive relationships between students and teachers (see Segrist and Hupp, 2015). It allows the teachers establish a rapport with their class, and keep them interested in the lesson.

For example, teacher might tell jokes or funny anecdotes, give light-hearted personal examples, or laugh at students' own jokes. However, teacher should ensure that they don't use negative humour – where they demean or embarrass students – or humour that is either irrelevant to the lesson, disturbing, violent, sexual, or forced. Only continue to use humour that has received a positive response from the class (such as laughing).

## Technical skills

Using up-to-date teaching aids such as computers, videos, and online resources is another way to keep students engaged and reinforce their understanding. It can also increase the effectiveness of teachers communication with students with different learning styles, who may benefit more from online resources than more old-fashioned ones. Try to work some of these aids into their lessons on a regular basis.

## Be clear

Good communication – and good teaching – is about understanding and being understood. For this reason, teacher should always be clear and unambiguous, and adapt the words to their audience. Think about this while writing lesson plans (ensure that you break complex ideas down into simple, logical parts for his audience to understand), but also while he interacts with the children after presenting the lesson. For example, the teacher may wish to check that his teaching was clear by asking his students questions, or requesting summaries of the lesson in their own words.

When he asks his students questions, use appropriate scaffolding to ensure that they understand exactly what he is asking. If he teaches in a primary school, his students' language abilities won't yet be fully developed. Closed questions (eliciting yes/no



responses), forced alternatives (such as 'is he angry or happy?'), and sentence starters (e.g. 'a noun is...') are most effective for communicating with younger children. For older children, open-ended questions (such as 'how do you think...' or 'tell me about...') allow them to extend their thinking and develop their problem-solving skills.

## CONCLUSION

It is very transparent that communication skills are an important requirement of all the professions especially teaching which strengthen productivity of teaching learning process. So, the importance of effective communication skills in the classroom should not be underestimated – it can have an impact on his students' academic progress, feelings of self-worth, perceptions of school, and his own career. Using communication strategies like the ones we have detailed above could allow him /her to become a more successful teacher who better meets his/her students' needs.

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