Unit 1 Communication and Language

This unit will provide a foundation for communication as an essential human endeavor and a useful and diverse academic discipline. It introduces students to a basic communication process. It also deals with relationships between communication and language, and between spoken and written language.

Learning Outcomes: Students who complete Unit 1 will be able to:

- describe the process of communicating messages from sender to receiver
- locate major language families
- explain the origins and evolution of writing
- identify the typology of writing scripts

Key Concepts for Unit 1

- Definition and conceptualization of communication
- Communication process
- Definition and conceptualization of language
- Evolution of language
- Concept of language families
- Origins of writing

► Academic Study of Communication

Traditionally, academic disciplines are divided among several groupings: applied sciences, fine arts, humanities, professional studies, social sciences, behavioral sciences, natural sciences and applied sciences.

Fine arts combine a body of study focusing on both the performing arts (such as oratory, theater, music and dance) and on the visual arts (painting and photography, film, textiles and sculpture).

Humanities collectively is a body of study intended primarily to provide knowledge, intellectual skills, and to give meaning to life – the so-called Liberal Arts. Academic disciplines in the humanities generally include language and literature, poetry, philosophy and religion, history and archeology.

Professional studies include formal preparation for the recognized professions such as law, education and medicine.

Social sciences deal with disciplines such as history, political science, economics and linguistics.

Behavioral sciences emphasize the scientific analysis of human endeavor such as psychology, anthropology and sociology.

Natural sciences include the recognized “hard” sciences such as chemistry, biology and physics as well as mathematics.
Applied sciences deal with occupational and technological training and professional areas such as education, business, computers, criminal justice and so on.

Consider the complexity of communication, which draws on many elements. Its study encompasses various artistic expressions, yet it deals with elements of psychology and persuasion associated with the behavioral sciences. At the same time, communication has applied elements, especially those related to visual and digital technology. Meanwhile, it relates to the humanities by providing a basis for understanding more about the meaning of life, and much of its research base is drawn from the social sciences.

From these perspectives, it seems appropriate to consider the study of communication as having elements of several academic disciplines, which is one reason by both the literature base as well as the structured study of communication so consciously draws on various academic classifications.

**Terms and Concepts in Communication**

Communication has been variously defined from different perspectives:

- Means of conveying information, with a focus on both transmission and reception of messages
- Connection between persons caused by the transmission and understanding of verbal and nonverbal messages
- Process of sharing information and feelings by people through an exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages
- Sharing of meaning through transmission of information
- Creation of shared understanding through interaction of two or more agents

Many definitions of communication see it as a dynamic and transactional process in which people intentionally attempt to present information to and elicit a response from others. Some researchers and scholars, however, reject the notion of intentionality. They observe that communication is essentially a receiver phenomenon; that is, that the intention or even awareness of a message source is less important in the communication transaction than the receiver’s judgment that he or she has, in fact, been communicated with.

Consider an obvious example: An American business executive is meeting with his Arab counterpart to negotiate a business contract. During the meeting, the American crosses his legs and points the soles of his shoes toward the Arab. To the American, such an action carries absolutely no meaning; to the Arab, insult is perceived. The Arab might realize that the American intended no harm, but it would be difficult to completely ignore the cultural gaffe.

**Communication Process**

Communication often is presented as a circular process. A source or sender with a concept in mind encodes a message, transmits it through a channel or medium of communication to a receiver, who then decodes the message and provides feedback, which reverses the encoding/transmission/decoding process.
The **source** is the creator of a thought who has meaning about a concept. This source could be a person, corporation, organization, country, or any other entity that presents a message. The source is sometimes called the message **sender**.

**Encoding** is the process of crafting words, gestures and other linguistic signs that will allow a message source to express his or her thought in some sensible way. The encoding can be verbal or nonverbal; it can be oral, visual or tactile.

**Message** is the term used for the content of communication, the thoughtful meaning encoded by the sources.

The encoded message is transmitted over a **channel**. This is a physical medium that may be natural (such as sound waves and light waves) or technological (such as telephone, radio, internet, and so on). The message channel often is called the **medium** (plural: **media**).

**Noise** is the term referring to anything that distorts the encoded message. Noise can take several forms.

- **Mechanical noise** (also called **channel noise**) is associated with the vehicle of mediated communication. Examples of mechanical noise: smudged ink on a printed page, static in a short-wave radio station, graininess in television reception.
- **Semantic noise** is an impediment in the communication process because of ineffective use of language. Examples of semantic noise: slurred speaking, jargon, accent, words with varying connotations, inaccuracies in translation, inappropriate use of profanity.
- **Environmental noise** (or **external noise**) is an impediment that interrupts the receiver’s ability to properly hear a message. Examples of environmental noise: crowd chatter, blaring radio while studying.
- **Internal noise** refers to the inability of the receiver to focus on the message. Examples of internal noise: being too tired to concentrate, too hungry to pay attention.

The **receiver** is the person or persons who get the message from the sender. Receivers may be intentional (that is, the person whom the sender intended to receive the message) or unintentional (people who unexpectedly receive the message).

**Decoding** is the reverse process of encoding. In decoding, the receiver takes the words, gestures and other linguistic signs and interprets them to recreate the original thought. The effectiveness of the process rests on how closely the encoding and decoding reflect each other. The practical difficulty of communication is that rarely does the encoding perfectly anticipate the decoding, nor does the decoding perfectly reflect the encoding. So the question is: How close are the encoding and decoding.

**Receiver response** refers to everything the receiver thinks and does after decoding the received message. Silence and doing nothing is one type of response, as is consideration, evaluation, and action. The action itself may be either consistent with or opposed to the response desired by the message sender.

**Feedback** is the receiver’s public response to the decoded message, communicated back to the sender. This is the final step in the circular communication process, though in essence it is a separate communication action which the same components (sender, encoding channel, and so on) as the original communication.
Communication is a social interaction that takes place within a relationship between sender and receiver. This relationship is called the **context**. Though not a specific part of the communication act, context (whether physical, social or cultural) is important to the entire communication process.

**Origin and Evolution of Language**

- **Language** is defined as a systematic means of communication of ideas, facts and feelings via sounds, gestures, signs or symbols.
- **Writing** is a pattern of letters or symbols imprinted on a surface to represent sounds, words or images and thus to record a language. In a more global way, writing is defined as a system of markings that represent an utterance or sound for the purpose of transferring the meaning carried by that sound from one person to another.
- **Proto-writing** is the term for the earliest human writing and drawings, dating from the Ice Age

Human beings are the only species with advanced communication abilities. These have developed primarily as vocal languages, based in part on physical attributes. Some scientists speculate that biological changes in the vocal tract occurred as part of the transition of early humans to a standing position, so perhaps language began about 3 million years ago as humans began to stand upright. Others speculate that language was part of the relatively sudden expansion of human brain size about 1.5 million years ago.

Communication also can be gesture-based, such as those finger, hand, arm and body movements used in sign language. However, there is no known society that relied on gestures instead of vocalization.

For centuries, the existence of many different and mutually unintelligible languages was taken for granted. Cultural and religious stories explained their existence in various ways, but the fact remained that each was different, usually vastly different from all the rest.

The careful scientific study of languages began in the early 19th century, generally focusing on a comparative history of Indo-European languages and concerned with finding a common root to the various languages. In the early 20th century, the focus changed to include other language families.

**Linguistics** (the study of languages) began as a recognized discipline in the 19th century. The Linguistic Society of Paris was founded in 1866. More recently, the Evolution of Language Conference held its first meeting in 1996 (5th meeting, 2004, Leipzig), convening linguists, computer scientists, anthropologists, paleoanthropologists, ethnologists, geneticists, neuroscientists, and others.

An ancient forerunner in the study of language was **Panini**, an Indian teacher who lived around 5000 BCE and who developed a systematic study of Sanskrit, identifying rules and patterns later discovered by Western linguists. Several scholars are considered pioneers in the modern field of linguistics:

- **Ferdinand de Saussure**, a Swiss linguist who developed an understanding of semiotics
- **Franz Boaz**, a German immigrant to America who focused on the relationship between anthropology and linguistics
- **El-Said Badawi**, an Arab linguist who proposed a theory of interrelated language levels.
One of the practical aspects of applied linguists is the investigation of the origins of various groups of people. Much use has been made of linguistic analysis in tracing the migration of ancient people. For example, the area of modern-day Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan is seen as the original home of the Indo-European family of languages. Through archeology, anthropology and linguistics, scholars can trace the evolution of a complicated language family that today embraces English, the Romance languages descended from Latin, the various Slavic languages, Kurdish and Indian.

A book called *The Zuni Enigma*, presents an interesting investigation into the evolution of language. American anthropologist Nancy Yaw Davis has used linguist analysis as well as physical evidence to build a case that the Zuni Indians in Southwestern United States are descendents of two different waves of immigration from Japan, one in the 12th Century, one earlier. Her analysis reveals many similar words and language patterns unique to both languages, leading her to conclude that the Zuni language has drawn heavily on the Japanese.

► Language Families and Branches

The search for a common ancestral languages turned toward a classification of language families that developed independently. It is easy to observe, even during the course of a single human lifetime, that languages change. New words are developed, new meanings are given, existing words are retired, accents evolve. Even new grammatical uses appear.

Language historians observe that entire languages virtually disappear, such as the demise of Latin, which at one time was the prevalent language throughout most of Europe. Ancient Persian, the language of another empire, evolved into modern-day Farsi, Pashto, Dari and Kurdish. Additionally, languages have separated into various dialects, which are essentially different versions of the same language, with differing vocabulary, grammar and pronunciations. Dialects often reflect regional and social or class variations. For example, the Arabic spoken in Iraq and Morocco (two dialects within the same language) differs significantly, as does the Spanish used in Spain and Mexico.

By some measures, the state of languages is at risk. In 2003, it was estimated that there were more than 6,800 languages in the world, 90 percent of which were spoken by fewer than 100,000 people; about 357 have fewer than 50 speakers. Industrial progress, from deforestation of rural areas to the increasing use of media of mass communication such as the Internet and movies, is leading to the continuing death of marginal languages. In North America, an estimated 52 of 176 languages have become extinct, along with 31 of the 235 languages of Australia.

Yet amid the demise of some languages, linguistic variety thrives. India alone has nearly 400 different languages in daily use. Papua New Guinea has 700; Uganda 400. Meanwhile, some languages excel in use. About 885 million people speak Mandarin Chinese (and all Chinese dialects account for about 1.1 billion speakers). Between 350 and 400 million people speak English as a native language. About 332 million people speak Spanish, 225 million Arabic, 190 million Bengali, 182 million Hindi and an additional 104 the related Urdu language, 170 million Portuguese and Russian each, and 125 million Japanese.

Linguists currently identify 16 different families of languages (groupings of linguistically related languages). Most families have several subgroups or branches, which themselves may contain several different languages. It should be noted that categorization among languages and dialects often is made as much along historical and cultural lines as it is based on actual linguistic criteria. For example, it is often noted that German and Dutch, regarded as two languages, differ no more from
each other than do Moroccan and Saudi Arabic, though the latter are usually regarded as two dialects of the same language.

**Indo-European family** includes about 150 languages spoken by 3 billion people in Europe, Western Asia, Australia and North America.

- Indo-Iranian branch (including Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Pashto, Kurdish, and the Romanyi language of the Gypsies)
- Italic branch (classical Latin, and modern Romance languages such as Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian and Romanian)
- Germanic branch (English; North Germanic including Swedish and Icelandic; and German as well as its variants, such as Dutch, Frisian, Luxembourggeois, Yiddish, and Pennsylvania Dutch spoken by the Amish in North America)
- Celtic branch (Irish, Welsh, Breton, Gaelic)
- Baltic branch (Latvian, Lithuanian, extinct Prussian)
- Slavic branches (South Slavic including Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian and Bulgarian; East Slavic including Russian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian; West Slavic including Polish, Czech and Slovak)
- Albanian branch
- Hellenic branch (modern Greek and ancient dialects such as Mycenaean, Doric and Ionic)
- Armenian branch

**Altaic family** includes 60 languages spoken by about 250,000,000 people, mainly in Central Asia.

- Turkic branches (Southern Turkic including Turkish, Azerbaijani, Kazakh; Northern Turkic including Siberian; Eastern Turkic including Uzbek)
- Mongolic branches (Mongolian, Buriat, Kalmyk)
- Tungusic branches (Even and Evenki in Siberia, Manchu in Manchuria)
- Note: Some linguists suggest that Korean, Japanese, Ryukyuan may be part of the Altaic family.

**Uralic family** includes 20 languages spoken by about 20,000,000 people in Northern and Eastern Europe and Northwestern Asia.

- Finno-Ugric branch (Finnish, Hungarian, Estonian)
- Samoyedia branch (Siberia)

**Afro-Asiatic family** includes about 240 languages spoken by roughly 250,000,000 people today in Northern and Eastern Africa and in the Middle East.

- East Semitic branch (extinct Akkadian)
- West Semitic branches (Arabic including Maltese; ancient Aramaic; Canaanite including Hebrew and ancient Phoenician)
- Ethiopian Semitic branch (Amhatic in Ethiopia, Tigrinya and Tigré in Eritrea, extinct Ge’ez now used liturgically in Ethiopia)
- Egyptian branch (ancient Egyptian, liturgical Coptic)
- Berber branch (Rif-Berber in Morocco; Kabyle and Tamazight in Algeria; Tamashek in Mali and Niger).
- Kushitic branch (Oromo and Sidamo in Ethiopia, Somali, Afar, Badawi)
- Chadic branch, Hausa

**Niger-Congo family** is probably the largest language family with about 1,400 known languages and thousands more dialects.
- Bantu branch (Swahili through East Africa, Lingala in Congo, Luganda in Uganda)
- West-Atlantic branch (Wolof in Senegal; Fula across the Sahel)
- Mande branch (Bambara in Mali; Jula in Burkino Faso; Kpelle in Liberia; Menda in Sierre Leone)
- Yoroba branch in Nigeria
- Kwa branch in Ghana

**Nilo-Saharan family** include about 115 languages spoken by 27 million people in the Southern-Saharan parts of Africa.
- Nubian
- Saharan
- Fur

**Khoisan family** (sometimes called Click languages) is the smallest of the four language families in Africa. It is spoken in the Kalahari area of Southwestern Africa.
- Northern Khoisan (San)
- Central Khoisan (Khue)
- Southern Khoisan

**Caucasian family** includes 38 languages spoken by about 5 million people in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe.
- South Caucasian branch (Georgian, Mingrelian, Svan)
- North Caucasian branch (Abkhaz, Abaza, Kabardian, Ubykh, Avar, Chechen)

**Dravidian family** includes 75 languages spoken by about 200,000,000 people in Southern India and Sri Lanka.
- Tamil branch
- Kannada branch
- Malayalam branch
- Brahu branch

**Sino-Tibetan family** includes about 300 languages spoken by more than 1 billion people in Central and Eastern Asia.
- Sinitic branch (Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese Chinese)
- Tibeto-Burman branch (Tsang and regional dialects associated with Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim; and Burmese)
- Note: Some linguists include the Na-Dené languages in North America (Athabaskan, Apachean, Navajo, Tlingit) in this family, though this is a controversial hypothesis unsupported by many other linguists.

**Austro-Asiatic family** includes 150 languages spoken by about 65 million people throughout Southeast Asia.
- Mon-Khmer branch (Cambodian, Vietnamese)
- Munda branch

**Austronesian family** includes a recorded 1,244 separate languages spoken through the islands of Southeastern Asia and the Pacific.
- Western branch (Malay, Tagalog, Javanese, Sumatran)
- Eastern branch (Polynesian subgroup including Hawaiian, Maori, Samoan, Tahitian and Tongan; Micronesian subgroup)

**Australian Aboriginal family** includes more than 250 languages, about 20 which are strong and/or are being revived.
- Pama-Nyungan
- Extinct Tasmanian

**Papuan family** includes more than 700 tribal languages spoken on islands in the Western pacific that are unrelated to the Austronesian and Australian Aboriginal families.

**Eskimo-Aleutian family** is a family of languages spoken in the extreme North of the Western Hemisphere, though some linguists see this as part of the Sino-Tibetan family.
- Aleut branch
- Yu’pik branch
- Inuit branch
- Greenlandic branch

**Amerindian or Native American family** includes about 500,000 people who speak about 175 languages in North America and another 25 million speakers of about 650 languages in South America. Many linguists (particularly specialists in American Indian languages) see this rather as a series of unrelated families.
- Salishan branch (Salish, Klallam, Nootka in the Pacific Northwest)
- Siouan branch (Sioux, Muskegean, Choctaw, Seminole in the United States and Canada)
- Iroquoian branch (Tuscarora, Seneca, Mohawk, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Blackfoot, Cree, Algonkian in the Central and Northeastern United States)
- Uto-Aztecan branch (Shoshone, Comanche, Ute, Hopi, Nahuatl, O’odham in the American Southwest)
- Mayan
- Chibchan branch in Panama and Colombia
- Awarakan branch in the Amazon region
- Tucanoan branch in Northwestern South America
- Tupi-Guarini branch (with 70 languages including Guarini, Tupi-Antigo)
- Quechumaran branch (Aymara, ancient Quechua of the Inca empire)

Unclassified languages including Burushaski in Pakistan, Nahali in Central India, Basque in Northern Spain, Ainu spoken by the aboriginal Japanese on Hokkaido, and the Rongorongo chant language of Easter Island.

Linguists also deal with new languages. **Pidgin** is the term for a new language that develops when people of different language backgrounds need to communicate, creating a common working language blended both in structure and vocabulary. Examples are Nigerian Pidgin and Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea.

When children begin learning a pidgin as their first language, thus making it a mother tongue of a community, the language is called a **creole**. Examples of creoles are Patwa (Jamaican creole) and Guyanese Creole. Some linguists consider Ebonics as a creole; other see it as merely a dialect used by some urban African Americans in the United States. Additionally, some linguists see Spanglish (a mix of Spanish and English used in the United States) as a pidgin currently evolving into a creole.

► Writing and Civilization

Language is thought to have begun between 100,000 and 200,000 years ago.

It once was thought that all language evolved from Mesopotamia, but linguistic historians now believe that language families evolved distinctly. Current thinking is that writing developed independently in several different places – Mesopotamia in Southwestern Asia, Northeastern Asia in present-day China, and Central or Mesoamerica, and perhaps the Indus Valley of present-day Pakistan and India.

Language is basic to the interaction of people in society, but language does not necessarily produce writing. Thousands of languages – some long extinct, some only recently discovered by the outside world – have existed without ever being written down. Examples are the Andean culture of the Incas and the Cahokian culture of the Mississippi Valley in North America. Thus writing is said to be an extension of language, though it is not a necessary marker of civilization.

Though not an essential ingredient, writing nevertheless is closely linked with culture and civilization. It becomes necessary when society moves from the functional independence of farmers and nomads, hunters and gatherers, to an urban society in which various people work together interdependently. Writing is necessary to administer and organize such a society, where accounting and education become important. This is called the **theory of accountancy**.

Language, in the form of speech, is absorbed within a culture. It is attained through imitation, through trial and error, and through conscious teaching and learning.

Writing, on the other hand, is acquired only through systematic teaching and learning. Thus writing is a human product, though it is not known if it was a conscious invention, an accidental discovery,
or a gradual evolution. Its antecedents are in the proto-writing of the Ice Age, cave drawings dating to about 25,000 BCE. Later examples include the pictograms of the Amerindians.

The development of writing brought with it several social changes. Three results associated with writing were elitism, imperialism and the spread of knowledge.

- **Elitism.** Writing created a division within a society. When all communication was spoken, everybody had the same access to communication. When it became written, people who were illiterate (“unlettered”) were left behind. This meant that some people within a society had access to more information than others did. It also meant that literate people had a greater access to power and influence, even wealth.

- **Imperialism.** Writing did not directly build empires, but it made their creation easier. Through writing, trade and commerce could be regulated; alliances could be negotiated; rules could be promulgated – all far easier than was possible in preliterate societies.

- **Spread of knowledge.** Additionally, knowledge itself could be preserved and enhanced. Archeologists have found ancient libraries of clay tablets in Sumerian city of Nippur and in the Assyrian capital of Nineveh (present-day Iraq). Papyrus libraries existed in classical Egypt, Greece and Rome. The Greeks established the Great Library at Alexandria that housed half a million scrolls, attracting scholars from throughout the empire until it was attacked by Julius Caesar and later devastated by a series of fires until, by about 300 AD, it was destroyed. Libraries written on leather scrolls have been found near the Dead Sea. In China, libraries were tools of scholars and nobility. During the medieval era, libraries flourished in Constantinople until the invasions by first the Europeans and later the Turks. Christian monasteries in Europe and Western Asia became both libraries and publishers where monks hand-copied manuscripts. Universities sprang up in India, Northern Africa and Europe as the new repositories for books and the learning associated with them.

The Chinese invented paper in 105 AD and about the same time also invented block printing. The art of papermaking reached Baghdad about 800 AD, Egypt by 900 and Europe by 1100, making book copying more cost-effective.

Movable type had been invented in China about 1045, but because Chinese writing used thousands of different characters, it was impractical. It was the independent invention of the movable-type press for the Roman alphabet – by Johannes Gutenberg in the mid-1400s in Germany – that propelled the spread of books and the knowledge they contained.

Meanwhile Islamic craftsmen produced books that were elegantly decorated with stylized designs around beautiful writing called calligraphy and often bound in gold and leather.

► **Origins of Writing**

The earliest writing forms are based on the **glyph**, the generic name for a system of sign writing based on visual representation of objects; it uses abstract forms based on a picture of the images they are meant to represent. About 8000 BCE, the Sumerians of ancient Mesopotamia (Syria, Iraq and Iran) wrote clay counters, and about 3,500 BCE they began using cuneiform to facilitate financial transactions. Cuneiform is thus the earliest known writing system.
A different type of writing developed in Egypt in the form of a *hieroglyph* by 3100 BCE (literally “divine inscription”).

Another more useful system of *phonetic writing* developed later, in which letter symbols were used to represent sounds rather than the whole images of sign writing. About 1000 BCE, the Phoenicians or Canaanites who traded and traveled throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, Northern Africa and the Arabian peninsula developed what has become known as the mother of modern writing, begetting both Arabic and Western scripts. Along with other Semitic nomadic tribes in Central and Southwestern Asia, the Phoenicians used a phonetic writing based on *abjads*.

With the eventual expansion of Islam, abjad script was extended throughout much of Northern Africa and Southwestern Asia. A different adaptation of the Phoenician abjad occurred in the Indus Valley of modern-day Pakistan and India, producing early forms of what eventually became the *abugida* Sanskrit script. Buddhist missionaries later carried the script throughout Southeastern Asia.

By 750 BCE, the Hellenic world of Crete and the Mediterranean had adapted the Phoenician abjad script. Because Indo-European languages were less predictable in terms of vocalization, the Greeks (and subsequently the Romans and resulting cultures) developed an *alphabet* that guided pronunciation of both consonants and vowels. Eventually, Catholic Christian missionaries carried the Roman alphabet throughout Northern and Western Europe, while Orthodox Christian missionaries spread the Cyrillic alphabet in Eastern Europe.

Apparently independent of what was happening in Southwestern Asia and Europe, writing emerged in China by 1200 BCE, first using a *logosyllabary* system of characters. This system was later incorporated into Japan by 500 AD and into Korea, but the Japanese also added *syllabaries* or two different types (one for native words, the other for foreign words). The Koreans, meanwhile, used a *featural script* that visually imitate the vocal elements of the words.

Additionally, another independent writing system is known to have existed in Central America by 600 BCE. The Mayans were using a form of logosyllabaric writing similar in concept to the Sumerians, though with some phonetic dimensions.

Despite the presumption that some writing developed independently, the history of writing also shows significant adoption and adaptation. Examples of borrowed script include the Greek modification of the Phoenician script, Roman use of Etruscan script, and the Japanese use of Chinese characters. Today, some elements in Eastern Asia are borrowing the Roman alphabet for the Pinyin alphabet in China and Romaji written language in Japan, just as this alphabet earlier was adopted by the Maltese to write their Arabic-related language. Turkey officially abandoned the Arabic script in 1928 and substituted the Roman alphabet.

In other instances, the concept of writing evolved differently. One of the newest recognized forms of writing is the Cherokee syllabary, devised in the 1820s to record a Native American language. Meanwhile, even newer forms of writing are found in shorthand scripts used for speedwriting. Additionally, hieroglyphs are making a comeback today in the form of computer icons and travel-related symbols such as those used globally for snack bars and restrooms.
Typology of Writing Scripts

- **Logosyllabary** – writing system in which each character stands for a sound. Contemporary logosyllabaries include Chinese characters, along with about 20 other examples throughout history, such as the Egyptian and Mayan hieroglyphs and the Sumerian cuneiforms.

- **Syllabary** – writing system in which each character stands for a syllable. There are about 18 types of syllabaries, include Japanese katakana and hiragana.

- **Abjad** – writing system used in Semitic-style script, in which each character stands for a consonant. About 30 abjads are currently used, most notably Arabic and Hebrew.

- **Alphabet** – writing system in which each character stands for either a consonant or a vowel, thus being more versatile than syllabaries or abjads. This versatility makes alphabets useful for new words and different languages. There are about 42 different alphabets, including the Roman (also called Latin or Western) and the Cyrillic.

- **Abugida** (also called alphasyllabary) – writing system used in Sanskrit-script in which each character standards for a consonant and vowel combination. Currently about 50 different abugidas are used.

- **Featural script** – writing system used in Korean script in which the shape of characters correlate to phonetic features. Hangul, invented in 1443 by a king of Korea and still used today, is an example of this script, which also includes the imaginary Tengwar script invented by J.R.R. Tolkien for his fictional Lord of the Rings languages.
APPENDIX TO UNIT 1

► Relevant Web Sites
excellent.com.utk.edu/JMCE – *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* periodical
www.ethnologue.com – Ethnologue, Internet database of world languages
www.exploratorium.edu/exploring/language – *Exploratorium Magazine*, special edition on origin and development of languages
www.linguistlist.org – The Linguist List, Eastern Michigan University and Wayne State University

► Relevant Books

► Unit Quiz
Give an example of semantic noise.
Give an example of environmental noise.
Define proto-writing.
Identify the language family of modern Arabic.
Identify an extinct alphabet.
Identify an extant alphabet.
Identify a pidgin.

► Freewrite and Discussion
Explain the relationship between encoding and decoding.
Discuss the relationship between language and writing.
Explain the difference between an abjad and an alphabet.
Discuss the relationship between a language and a dialect.
Discuss how life would be different if writing had never been invented and people remained in a society based solely on oral communication. What would the effect be on knowledge, power and wealth?
Discuss the social significance of Johannes Gutenberg’s invention.
Discuss the significance of “House of Wisdom” and “House of Translation” of Islamic civilization in spreading knowledge.

► Exercises
Ask students to draw a “family tree” for both the Afro-Asiatic language families and the Indo-European language families.
Have students write an essay in which they explain the origins and evolution of writing.
Have students write an essay about the Arabic pronunciation system incorporated to keep the recitation of Quran similar throughout the world.