Chapter 3

Formulation of Research Problem with Theoretical Framework

In any research, problem formulation is one of the most important areas in the research process. In order to achieve the research goals, the first and the foremost step is the identification of the problem areas. Identification of research problem needs a logical inquiry into certain questions that indicate gaps in the domain of existing researches and current ideas that are challenging. Formulation of research problem promotes further investigation into the challenging ideas. Having discussed the relevant literature and identified the research gaps and research questions in the previous chapter, the research problem of the study is carefully formulated.

Formulation of research problem involves identifying the area of the study where previous researches have not pursued. In the process of formulating research problem, it is equally important to explore the relevant theories that are needed to support the framework of the research. In the background of the literature review, research gaps and corresponding research questions, it is apt to understand the research problem through the perspective of communication theories. This chapter correlates the applicability of communication theories in the efforts to formulate and further solve the relevant research problems of the study.

Communication is the process of creating, transmitting, receiving and interpreting messages between a source and a receiver. A successful communication process depends upon the capability of the sender to create a message and the receiver to interpret it appropriately. All efforts of making a successful communication are centred on the 'communication message'. It is the message that creates an element of commonality between the source and the receiver (McQuail, 2000). It is through the message that a common understanding of the concept is created between the source and the receiver. When the receiver receives the meaning of the message as intended by the source, then we can say that the communication process is effective.
Creating a message effectively is not just the only way to a successful communication. What matters ultimately is the how the message is being interpreted by its readers. Successful communication is about being able to correctly interpret the message by the receiver. So, an effective communication involves the interplay of the sender and the receiver. When the message is successfully comprehended, a mutual understanding is created between both the parties (sender and the receiver) and this creates the ability to influence each other with the aim of creating further successful outcomes in the communication process.

One of the most important aspects of effective communication is the issue of the comprehensibility of the messages. The concept of readability is an important factor in determining the efficacy of the written messages. In written communication, the way a message is framed to suit its readers is the ultimate way to predict the efficacy of the written material. The concept of readability creeps up in the determination of the success the written material has with its readers. The term ‘readability’ refers to all the elements in a written message that make it attractive, interesting and help the readers easily understand the message (Fielding, 2005). These elements include vocabulary structure, the theme, writing style, and many more. These elements have the ultimate capacity to express the meaning of the message (written text) to its readers with high clarity.

Print media, specifically the newspapers have been the constant source of information provider for people in general. The present study is aimed at addressing the issue of the comprehensibility of the editorials of newspapers by focusing on the structure of the editorials and its readability. In the contemporary society, the daily newspapers provide various updates on public news or comments on public news. In one way or the other, newspapers give an overall view of the society and the surrounding environment. So, it is very essential that the messages depicted in the newspapers should be easily understandable for the public (newspaper readers). In this way newspapers and public life are intertwined constantly.

This chapter incorporates the concept of communication theories, their applicability, importance and the need in understanding and expanding the scope of the
present study. These theoretical backgrounds serve as a guide in solving the research problem of the study. The in-depth study of the newspaper editorial deals with the issues of the structure of the message (editorials), communication goals, generation of the message, knowledge and skills of the communicator (editor), etc. These diverse aspects of ‘communication messages’ are discussed thoroughly by highlighting the rich theoretical foundations for each theme.

1. The ‘Message’ and its Components

The message can be defined as the actual physical product of the source-encoder (Berlo, 1960). In a communication act, the message can take various forms. In oral communication, the speaker is the sender, the speech is the message and the listeners are the receivers. Similarly when we write, the written material is the message. In non-verbal communication, our facial expressions and body gestures are the messages. In a communication process, the message is one of the most important ingredients that act as a connecting link between the sender and the receiver. Through the message, an element of commonness is created between the sender and the receiver and ultimately a mutual understanding develops between them.

The present study is strongly built on the theoretical perspectives of David Berlo’s SMCR model. Berlo (1960) depicted that ‘message’ comprises of three main components:

(i) the message code
(ii) the message content and
(iii) the message treatment.

All the three components are properly constructed with the help of ‘elements’ and ‘structures’. Elements are the units used in composing the message and the way we put these elements together in some meaningful way is termed as its structure. Within each component, we find elements and structures. There are both elements and structure of the code, elements and structure of the content, and elements and structure of the treatment. Hence, according to Berlo (1960, p. 169), “messages are expressions of ideas (content), expressed in a particular way (treatment), through the use of a code”.
The meaning of the message is embedded within its message code, content and treatment. In encoding a message, the encoder (sender) needs to take into account all the above ingredients carefully and construct the message accordingly in order to convey the meaning of the message as intended by the sender. Once the content is decided, the encoder needs to select which elements of the code, content and treatment would be used and what method of structuring these elements would be applied to it. This will help in increasing the fidelity of the meaning of the message accurately.

The message code denotes any group of symbols that can be structured in a meaningful way (ibid). In all communication processes, language act as codes and sounds, letters, words, gestures, etc. as the elements. These elements are arranged in certain meaningful order and are structured appropriately. In written communication, alphabets, letters, words and punctuation marks are the elements and it is structured appropriately by forming sentences, paragraphs, heading and segregating the write up into an introduction, body and conclusion. In other artistic communication forms, music, dancing, and painting are depicted as codes. Musical notes, body movements and gestures in dancing and painting vocabulary are in fact the elements which are structured effectively to develop utmost meaning.

Message content can be defined as all the material in the content that is used by the sender to express his purpose of communication (ibid). The information contained in our speech and written material depicts the content of the message. It reveals the theme and subject matter of the information. Classroom lectures, story plot of a film, the ideas contained in a letter are examples of content in communication processes. Content, like code, has both elements and structure. The ideas and information which constitutes the elements have to be structured and presented in some order. These sets of information have to be arranged in a sequential way, one after another so that the receiver receives the intended meaning of the message.

The treatment of a message can be defined as the decisions which the communication source makes in selecting and arranging both codes and content (ibid). It refers to the ways in which the source chooses to encode his message by selecting certain
elements of code and content such as languages, words and various forms of expression and presenting them with a specific style. In written communication, the decisions made by the source in highlighting the most important ideas within the text, the selection of particular words in the heading, the arrangement of ideas into specific paragraphs on the basis of importance and the selection of varying type sizes to depict the varying importance of information in the text are various ways of giving treatment to a message. It is in fact the source's style of packaging and presentation of the message to accomplish the purpose of communication.

1.1 Defining ‘Message’ in the Present Study

According to Berlo (1960), all messages are content filled, which delineates the purpose of the message. The structure of the given message can be called or seen as the code and the overall tone of the message acts as the treatment. The ‘message’ as defined by David Berlo, in regard to the present study is the newspaper editorial. The code, content and treatment are operationally defined in the study in view of David Berlo’s message structure. The writing style based on the language structure of the newspaper editorial depicts the code in the entire study. Content is the information that relates to the subject theme of the message (editorial). The way the message is presented in view of its tone is the treatment of the newspaper editorial.

In the present study, the code depicts structure of the encoded message (newspaper editorial) based on the style of writing. This takes into consideration the language in use – the words, sentences and the presentation of ideas by using these factors. By tying words together into sentences, people create propositions, which are complex symbols that present a picture of something (Littlejohn, 2001). The writing style depicts the author's way of expressing his/her point of view to its readers based on the goal or purpose of writing (for example, to describe, interpret or persuade) by using specific features in the writing such as linguistic factors, organizing figures of thought by adding examples, presenting facts and figures, etc. On a holistic view, code in the study broadly refers to the type of newspaper editorial categorised on the basis of its writing style.
Content in the present study depicts the overall information matter of the message based on the subject theme. All communication messages cater to certain subject theme. Subject theme refers to the subject matter contained in the newspaper editorial such as political, science & technology, business & economy, crime/police/law & order, entertainment theme, etc. Hence, newspaper editorials can be written in regard to various subject themes such as politics, business and economy, crime, sports, entertainment, etc. based on the importance and need for discussion on the public forum in the current scenario. In presenting the theme, the editor presents the viewpoints reflecting, analysing, supporting, criticizing or suggesting on the particular subject theme which is of current interest to its readers. On a holistic view, content in the study broadly refers to the type of newspaper editorial categorised on the basis of its subject theme.

Treatment in the present study depicts the final presentation of the message based on the tone of the message. The tone of the editorial refers to the writer’s attitude, feeling or mood presented or evident through his/her writing. All forms of editorial reflect in one way or the other, the writer’s tone in various shades such as argumentative, satirical, appreciation, disappointment, etc. Here, the writer may use various elements such as words, phrases and even punctuation marks in the editorial write-up to reflect his/her mood in the writing. Inculcating specific tones in the newspaper editorials enhance the intensity of the meaning of the message on its readers. The reflection of emotions in the editorials also induces the level of interest among its readers. On a holistic view, treatment in the study broadly refers to the type of newspaper editorial categorised on the basis of its tone of presentation.

David Berlo’s description of message in his SMCR model describes the holistic structure of communication message. Applying Berlo’s concept of ‘message’, the present study too, discusses the holistic structure of newspaper editorials and tries to analyse the three main components of code, content and treatment embedded within each editorial. Coupled with the three components, the concept of elements and proper structuring of the elements to appropriately feature the code, content and treatment in each newspaper editorial are deeply discussed in the present study. Such an in-depth analysis of the
newspaper editorials help in predicting the comprehensibility and suitability of the editorials among its readers.

Newspaper editorials reflect the opinion of the newspaper. So, it is of utmost importance to make the public message clearly and easily comprehensible to its readers. Textual readability, as a matter of fact, is one of the most important concerns that predicts the efficacy of the concerned written message. Knowing the readability level of the editorials determines the level of ease or difficulty in understanding the editorials by the readers. The concept of textual readability can be incorporated to analyse how comprehensible the code, content and treatment of the newspaper editorials are. The effect of different editorial content in regard to its comprehensibility is truly a matter of how much readable the concerned text is for the readers.

2. Interpretation and Dimensions of Meaning

In a communication act, understanding the message and its meaning is an important concern. “The concept of meaning is central to communication” (Berlo, 1960, p. 169). The main aim of communication is to assign meanings to messages and make sure that the intended meaning is interpreted properly by the receiver. So, in the process of producing a message, writers need to encode it properly by choosing a proper language, symbols and elements and arrange it in a systemic way. When the message is decoded by the receiver, he/she tries to translate the codes (symbols) into some meaningful form by using his/her mental capabilities. In the process of translating encoded messages into meaningful way, the receiver ends up forming a meaning out of the message and this is how the message is being interpreted.

Interpretation, by definition, is an active, disciplined process of the mind and a creative act for searching possible meanings (Littlejohn, 2001). The present study involves the concept of analysing messages (newspaper editorials) in-depth by segregating the message into its three components – code, content and treatment. This provides one way of studying the process of encoding within the newspaper editorials. For example, the study analyses how the concept of words, sentences and paragraphs, which are operationally considered as elements contribute in the formulation of code,
content and treatment carrying specific ideas. It also distinguishes code, content and treatment within each and every editorial. This, in fact highlights, how meanings are assigned to newspaper editorials.

The most central element in the discussion of meanings is the concept of language. In any communication process, senders and receivers use language to express and elicit meaning (Berlo, 1960). Language includes a set of significant symbols structurally arranged in a meaningful way. “Man gradually created language in order to express his meanings to himself and others, to get other people to have the same meanings, and to make responses that increased his ability to affect” (p. 173). Hence, the concept of meaning is imbibed in the definition of language. We use language in two ways, first in encoding our intended message and secondly in decoding and interpreting messages. This is how meanings are generated in communication. Especially for a public message, it is very necessary to choose appropriate language and its symbols in encoding the message so that the received meaning of the message is similar to the one intended by the communicator. Language and how it is used are particularly powerful in determining meanings and influencing action (Littlejohn, 2001).

Effective communication occurs only if the meanings intended by the communicator (sender) are assigned to the messages received by the receiver (Smith and Smith, 1971). In the process of comprehending the message within written material, it is necessary that readers must use their cognitive and linguistic abilities while processing text that has a specific structure and organization (Flood, 1984). A cognitive approach considers readability as the result of an interaction between the text and the reader; the understanding comes from the interaction between words that are written and how they trigger readers’ knowledge (Kintsch and van Dijk, 1978). So the meaning, itself is embedded in the words and its linguistic characteristics.

A readable text, apart from easy comprehension enables the reader to remember the meaning of the text easily (Huckin, 1983). So readability is also associated with the ease of recall. An easy-to-read-text provides the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly. This means that a highly readable text motivates readers to continue reading.
Consequently, apart from being likely to be read at all, a highly readable writing is more easily understood and remembered (Miller and Kintsch, 1980). So this makes a point to note that apart from having the capacity to generate authentic meaning, a readable text serves as a lifelong source for knowledge accumulation.

In a readable text, the sequencing of ideas makes sense, and the language used to present those ideas makes the nature of them and their relationships apparent to the target audience (McKeown et al., 1992). This gives insights as to how Berlo (1960) stresses the importance of the role of elements and structures in shaping the three components of the message – code, content and treatment. A readable writing is the one that successfully provides the intended meaning to its reader. In other words, a text can be considered as a readable one when the sender's (writer's) intended meaning is quickly and easily comprehended by the intended receiver (reader) fulfilling both their motives for writing and reading the message under normal reading conditions such as existing reading skills, knowledge, motivation, time constraints, etc. (Huckin, 1983).

Though meanings are personal and embedded within people's experiences (Berlo, 1960; Osgood, 1969; Littlejohn, 2001), messages can also have shared meanings within social groups and communities in the public sphere. This is how public messages such as newspaper editorials are meant to be. Since newspaper editorials strive to serve the public by informing, explaining and making people aware about certain public issues, the meanings attached to it should also be comprehensible by its readers with a common understanding of the concept. As was felt by Dilthey (1972), people need to understand the social world in terms of the community in which human actors live and work. So, editors need to understand all aspects of human life in order to present their ideas before the public. This is how meanings are framed as a result of the factors in the physical world around the communicator.

Through newspaper editorials, writers tend to elicit meaning – to emphasize certain meanings to its readers. Notwithstanding the fact that there are at least three dimensions of meaning – denotative, structural and the connotative, we must be precise in choosing linguistic terms in encoding to denote the same meaning of our message to
our readers also (Berlo, 1960). In constructing the written messages, writers need to sequence their words and appropriately arrange their sentences so that their structure reflects the meanings for the relationships among the elements denoted by the words (ibid). On a holistic approach, textual meanings can have varying degrees of denotative, structural and connotative forms, but this may often be associated to increase the interest of the message among its readers.

According to interpretative theorist Ricoeur (1976), the meaning of a text is derived from the whole contextual, not from the composition of individual elements. “In the analysis of a text, an interpreter might look for recurring words and phrases, narrative themes, and theme variations” (Littlejohn, 2001, p. 189). In interpreting a newspaper editorial, individual words and sentences are put together and carefully examined to find patterns of meaning. The terms code, content and treatment embedded in the newspaper editorial are not separate concepts. They are in fact, composite and compact in the sense that they form a whole pattern of meaning for the editorial.

In Ricoeur’s version of *Text Hermeneutics* (1976), one goes through two processes, firstly breaking down a text into its parts and looking for patterns, then stepping back and judging subjectively the meaning of the whole. In analysing the in-depth structure of newspaper editorials, the editorials are first segregated into its specific code, content and treatment to study its specific structural pattern. However, these three components are embedded together to form a specific meaning of a single editorial text. This holistic meaning defines the purpose and goal of the concerned editorial. While determining the overall readability, each editorial is subjectively judged on the basis of the combined parameters of code, content and treatment.

Editors, while writing editorials select certain words and sentences to express their ideas, choose certain themes to highlight their public importance and invoke interest among its readers, criticize, appreciate and mock with their viewpoints with a motive to highlight the ‘inherent meanings’. These are certain techniques used in the process of generating and encoding meanings while writing editorials. The concept of readability inculcated in the study takes into consideration the comprehensibility of the words and
sentences used in the editorials. These smaller units of linguistic structure or elements contribute to the construction of meanings on a holistic view. So, along with the analysis of the message structure, the study finds huge importance in analysing the linguistic structure of the newspaper editorials so as to depict the suitability of the editorials among its readers.

3. Message Production – Determinants and Process

Communication is an information-based activity. The centre of all communication activity is the message. One of the most important factors that determine the efficacy of communication process is centred on the ‘message’. The overall efforts of the communicator in planning a communication action, selection of message, generation of ideas and designing the message help a lot in the generation of efficient message. The language used in the construction of message assumes special importance here, as language gives life and reality to concepts and ideas. So, the concept of meaning is very much embedded in the language used in communication. Meanings are socially constructed and coated with feelings and emotions with the help of communicator’s interaction with the various elements of the language.

In order to produce effective communication, planning of generating and transmitting a message is the foremost step. Editors, do require a lot of planning before writing editorials and passing it on to its readers. In planning a communication act, communicators need to organize their knowledge and use it accordingly in the generation of message. John Greene (1984), in his Action Assembly theory states that message producers should possess both content knowledge and procedural knowledge (Littlejohn, 2001). First of all, communicators should ‘know about things’ and further ‘know about how to do things’. Greene gives more emphasis on procedural knowledge because ultimately what matters in producing an effective message is ‘knowing how to do and present things properly’.

According to Kintsch’s (1998) Construction-Integration theory, text comprehension consists of two stages. The construction stage is the first stage where the reader progressively starts constructing the meaning of the message in the memory
system. Textual elements such as words and phrases are formed as mental images in the mind by associating it with certain meaning. The integration stage is the second stage where the reader tries to go deeper in order to analyse the overall text until a satisfied and a stable interpretation emerges. This whole process of constructing and integrating the meaning of the message depict the underlying process of text comprehension. The first stage encounters with the surface features, that is the words and other linguistic factors and the second stage deals with the presentation of ideas and mental organization of textual concepts and meanings.

In the presentation of messages through newspaper editorials, editors should have both content knowledge and procedural knowledge and ways to organize both the types of knowledge. Content knowledge consists of the ideas and concepts of the issue and procedural knowledge consists of the proper know-how of linguistic structures of written language and its implementation. The message code, content and treatment should be structured properly with the help of various interconnected elements. The editorial text should confine to easy linguistic structures to make it readable enough for a large number of readers. Hence, the art of producing a readable text itself is one of the procedural knowledge that should be taken care of.

Berger (1997) clearly talks about planning communication behaviour in generating messages. “Because communication is so important in achieving goals, planning messages is a critical concern” (Littlejohn, 2001, p. 102). For newspaper editorials, it is ultimately the social goals that communicators (editors) seek for. Through the newspaper editorials, newspapers aim to influence the public (readers) in a variety of ways. Our planning of the message also involves certain degree of ‘knowledge’. Berger refers these to two categories of knowledge – specific domain knowledge (information about the topic) and general domain knowledge (information about how to communicate). So, one aspect of planning public messages such as editorials is to have an in-depth knowledge about the issues and the art of using languages to persuade and motivate people.
In preparing public messages, selection of proper messages is also another criterion to persuade and influence people. Two important concepts to be taken into consideration here are strategy selection and goal pursuit (Wilson, 2002) in the process of message selection. Strategy selection deals with the issue of what types of messages are available to communicators and the processes involve in selecting strategies while goal pursuit concentrates on how people actively create or design messages based on their goals (Littlejohn, 2001). Both these processes are actively involved in the process of generating editorial messages for the public. These are the active ingredients for the acts of persuasion on the public. Influencing public involves the tactic of appealing the public through attractively planned messages.

The social world is flooded with diverse range of information and issues every day. One of the most difficult stages of message production is the selection of issues to be presented in newspaper editorials. Editors perform strategy selection by considering the most important and contemporary issue of the society as the editorial content. Dissemination of such issues to the public are considered utmost important and urgent as people need to form public opinion about such issues in the social world. At the same time, editors perform goal pursuit by inculcating certain techniques in the writing such as making the written material readable, interesting, appealing and above all enlivening it with human emotions. In pursuing for goal pursuit, the ultimate factor is the construction of the written messages by using proper linguistic characteristics – both the syntactic and semantic elements.

Barbara O'Keefe (1988) outlines the thought processes behind generating messages through the term message design logic. According to her, "people think differently about communication and messages, and they employ different logics in deciding what to say to another person in a given situation" (Littlejohn, 2001, p. 111). Depending on the goals of the communication message, communicators have to design the message in specific forms. Editorials as communication messages should be designed keeping in view that it is based on rules that everyone is supposed to know. Here, communicators (editors) ought to have a working knowledge of the written linguistic structures. Moreover, aspects of readable writing should be incorporated to make the
4. Media Message as a Tool to Shape Public Life

The mass media through its various forms like the print media, electronic media, films and the new media is wholly responsible for disseminating messages to a large number of people whose magnitude and diversity is unimaginably wide. Media's role came to be highlighted prominently when the society became extensively huge and multifaceted. In the contemporary media scenario, public messages such as newspaper editorials are highly regarded as important messages for the public. Editors in the process of writing their editorials perform high level of gatekeeping in selecting certain issues for presenting in the editorials. Editorials can easily serve as a source of information and education that will shape the daily choices in peoples' life.

Mass media have the extensive power to make people sense their social world. In Public Opinion, Lippmann (1922) highlighted that the media became one of the most important tools for public opinion formation among people in the society. He pointed out the opinion that media is responsible for forming pictures in peoples' head on the basis of the filtered information presented to the people by the media. According to Lippmann (1922), since the world, people deal with is politically “out of reach, out of sight, out of mind” (Lippmann, 1922, p. 18), people start forming mental images of complex, distant and unseen events as pictures inside their heads by analysing media messages. For the public, the mass media serves as a channel to encourage people to think about certain issues. It shapes the thinking, and the perception of things in the social world, thereby making people form certain opinions in their minds.

Through newspaper editorials, media tries to project certain issues, explain and highlight their viewpoints to the public. Through their public messages, media arouses the ability of the average people to sense their social world and help them in forming opinions about the issue. This way of opinion formation helps people make rational decisions about their actions. Newspaper editorials have the ability to interpret and
influence the public and hence, they have utmost power to mould the opinion of the society. Since Lippmann (1922) predicted that the world people deal with politically is “out of reach, out of sight, out of mind”, people started relying on the media to explore the world and form mental images of events they do not experience and attach emotions to those images. Editorials, through their diverse theme and tone cater its readers (public) to functionally perceive certain emotions to interpret the world.

The importance of media message in societal communication was also felt largely by Harold Lasswell in his *Propaganda theory* (1934). According to him, media messages can be used as a tool of propaganda to typically influence people in slow and subtle ways. In one way or the other, newspaper editorials, which depict the opinion of the newspaper, could also be used as a tool of propaganda to influence the public (readers). Communicators (editors) strategically select certain issues and accordingly toned it as editorials to create ideas and images in the mind of the public. Editorials do not merely inform but influence and mould the public mind too. These media messages slowly prepare people to accept radically different ideas and actions (Baran & Davis, 1999). Editorials help people to make decisions and take a stand on important contemporary issues of the society.

According to Lasswell (1934), communicators, while framing their message need to develop strategies in which new ideas and images are carefully introduced and cultivated. For this purpose, what Lasswell refers to as *master symbols* need to be created in order to associate specific emotions with these symbols. These so called symbols are extensively used in creating content in newspaper editorials to stimulate thinking and action among its readers (public). This explains how editorials are able to arouse strong emotions among its readers and stimulate large scale thinking and action. Editorials written in persuasive style try to influence the readers with a motive. Political editorials stress on the need for propagating political ideologies surrounding the governance. Editorials toned with satire, praise or melancholy try to induce certain emotions in the issue being communicated to the public.
The Agenda-Setting theory (1972) of Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw puts forth the ability of the media to influence the significance of events in the public’s mind. It says that the media do not necessarily tell the masses ‘what to think’, but they are quite successful at telling us ‘what to think about’ (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1988; Baran & Davis, 1999; McQuail, 2000; Littlejohn, 2001; Watson, 2003). The media messages prepared by journalists set the agenda for the audience’s perception of events in the society and mentally order and organize their own world on the basis of such perceptions. Especially through newspaper editorials, which have a high interpretative power, the media persons try to influence the minds of the public by making the printed messages highly appealing to the masses (readers).

Newspapers highlight important issues of the society according to priority and present it to the public through the newspaper editorials. Such issues act as an agenda and influence the public to form public opinion in deciding the main issues happening in the society. On the basis of the importance placed for each news item by the media, the audience also regards the same importance and priority for specific news item. In short, the agenda of the media became the agenda of the public. This clearly shows how media influence the public in forming certain opinion in their minds. This was what Lippmann (1922) predicted earlier when he gave the opinion that the media acts as a bridge between what is happening in the world outside and the pictures formed inside our head.

In selecting certain themes, displaying them in specific writing style and perfecting them with appropriate tones, editors through their editorials try to shape social reality. This gives an impact on the reader’s mind – the ability to effect cognitive change among individuals, to structure their thinking, which of course, is labelled as agenda-setting function of mass media (Shaw & McCombs, 1972). Editorials encourage people to think and try to bring structural changes in their mind, arousing people to form public opinion subsequently. As part of the agenda-setting function of mass media, editors also focus on certain parts of the issue presented in the editorials that are extremely important. These points may be highlighted at the end with a certain tone or may be repeatedly focused in almost all paragraphs. This gives an idea on its readers to attach importance in certain areas within the issue itself.
The role and significance of newspaper editorials can be elaborately discussed by analysing the concept of second level agenda setting. McCombs et al. (1998) discussed about a second level agenda-setting by expanding the concept of agenda setting and linking it with the concept of Framing theory (as cited in McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). Conventional agenda setting focused on the fact that media tells us “what to think about” whereas through the second level agenda setting, media now tells us “how to think about” (Littlejohn, 2001). Editorials through their diverse ways of presentation tell us how to think about certain issues by focusing on varying degrees of importance on certain issues. They may openly criticize or encourage the existing system and persuade and influence their readers to take certain decisions and act accordingly. At the same time, they may also help people by providing certain solutions to difficult issues.

On the part of the editors, writing editorials involves certain levels of efficacy. Effective rounds of gatekeeping are done to select the most important issues in the social environment. While framing the editorials, linguistic considerations, structuring of ideas and packaging the ideas into specific and appropriate tone (positive, negative or neutral) need to be taken into consideration. Moreover, owing to the importance of such agendas in public life, it is highly essential that the written material is also easily understandable by its readers. Agenda setting itself is a comprehensive strategy. The act of preparing readable and attractive messages is a way to influence and shape agendas on the minds of the public.

On the basis of these theoretical frameworks, the present study tries to analyse the in-depth structure of newspaper editorials (media messages) and issues of its suitability among its readers (public). Newspaper editorials find a lot of importance for people and the society. They have the ability to influence and shape public opinion. In order to make newspaper editorials most effective, the written piece should be easily readable by its readers. The textual characteristics of the newspaper are the most important factors that decide the readability of a certain printed text. Only when the messages are shaped properly, it can stimulate people to think and act upon.

This chapter explored the relevant communication theories that are needed in understanding the research problems and the framework of the present study. The
theories provided a deeper understanding of the existing research gaps and research questions of the study and logical ways of overcoming the research problems. After discussing the objectives of the study and the relevant theories at length, the issues and concerns of the present study are identified. In the next chapter, a detailed logical framework for investigating the problems and concerns of the present study will be presented with the help of an appropriate research design.