

the speed of movement and come in the way of communication. Sometimes they distort the message and lead to communication breakdown. They cause misunderstanding, confusion and conflict.

When a message is incomplete, inaccurate or liable to be misunderstood, a breakdown creates in the process of communication. It leads to decline in productivity and strained relationships. This is miscommunication. It can also occur due to difference in perception or word confusion. Generally, the breakdown occurs due to lapse on the part of the sender or the receiver. If the attitude of the sender, while encoding the message, is casual and non-serious, s/he may not organize and compose the information correctly. Similar is the case with the receiver. Other than the sender and the receiver, medium is equally important. If the medium does not suit the purpose or occasion, it may lead to miscommunication.

Miscommunication is the state when the receiver fails to understand the intended meaning of the message. The message is not recorded properly by the receiver which leads to misunderstanding. The misunderstanding can arise anywhere, such as at work, in school or college, on playground, in the bus or train, at home, or so. It is possible because of poor word selection or not recognizing the receiver. In fact, the success of communication depends how the receiver interprets the message, but the situations or conditions can also make the communication difficult, complex and frustrating. Some of the causes of miscommunication are as under:

5.1 Noise

The unwanted interference that hampers free flow of communication and comes between the sender and the receiver is referred to as 'noise'. It can be internal as well as external. It can be divided into following categories:

5.1.1 Physical Noise

The noise that is external to both the speaker and the listener and disrupts or interferes with the physical transmission of the sound signals made by the speaker is termed as Physical Noise. It can occur at any point in the process of communication. For example, faulty telephone line creates problem in listening the message and can create confusion. Adverse weather conditions can also create problem in listening the message. Similarly, technical problem in the public address system can distort the sound signal and affect the communication.

5.1.2 Physiological Noise

Physiological noise is created by the barrier(s) associated with the speaker or the listener. It includes the barriers related to the speaker's problem with articulation, mumbling, speed of speaking (whether too fast or too slow), or speaking without pause. It can also occur due to hearing problem of the listener(s).

5.1.3 Psychological Noise

Psychological state of the speaker or the listener can affect the meaning of a message. Any kind of psychological or emotional disturbance can hinder the flow of communication. The noise that interferes with mental state of either the speaker or the listener is known as Psychological Noise. It can occur in following ways:

- (a) **Emotions:** Emotional state of the speaker or the listener can create psychological noise. Feeling of sadness, fear, anger, anxiety or jubilation can influence the reception and receptivity to the ideas of the other. If the receiver is in a fit of anger or in a bad mood, s/he may not be able to derive exact meaning of the communicated message. Extreme emotions or depression can also affect the effectiveness of communication.
- (b) **Premature evaluation:** Sometimes the listener forms her/his opinion before receiving the complete message. This judgement, based on incomplete information, is likely to be wrong. Such premature evaluation prevents effective communication and acts as psychological noise.
- (c) **Inattention:** It is essential for a listener to pay proper attention to the message. If the listener is occupied with some other work, unwilling or unable to listen, s/he may receive partial message. S/he may not be able to understand intended meaning of the message, and may derive wrong meaning. Thus, inattention acts as psychological noise.
- (d) **Lack of interest:** Receiver's interest is essential for effective communication. If the receiver is interested in the communication or the subject matter is of her/his interest, s/he will pay proper attention and receive the information enthusiastically. But if the receiver is not interested or the subject matter is not of her/his interest, s/he will not pay due attention. In this way, lack of interest acts as psychological noise.
- (e) **Poor retention:** Retention is extremely important during interaction. The speaker needs to memorise the facts to present before the listener(s). But if s/he forgets the matter, the message will be incomplete. It is related to psychological noise.

5.1.4 Semantic Noise

Semantics is related to the meaning of a word, phrase or sentence in language. Verbal communication takes place through words, and words have different meanings in different contexts. Similarly, the pronunciation of a word also makes the difference. Different people pronounce the same word in different ways. Sometimes the listener derives another meaning of the word which creates confusion and misunderstanding. This is known as Semantic Noise. It creates when the sender and the receiver have different meanings of a message. Mainly, it is caused by the sender. It occurs when the sender uses technical language which the receiver fails to understand. It occurs in following ways:

- (a) **Incorrect pronunciation:** Some words are written in one way and spoken in other. This difference leads to another meaning of the word which causes confusion and misunderstanding. The incorrect pronunciation of the word by the speaker acts as semantic noise.
- (b) **Jargons:** Sometimes technical personnel use jargons to convey a message. If the listener belongs to some other field, s/he may have different definition of the terminology, which acts as semantic noise.
- (c) **Faulty translation:** Most of us are multilingual. We use different languages while dealing with different people. Sometimes we need to translate the message into another language which needs high level of linguistic proficiency. Faulty translation or approximate understanding of words can lead to confusion and misunderstanding. Sometimes the speaker does not make analysis of the audience before the delivery. This state is termed as semantic noise.
- (d) **Information overload:** Transmission of excessive information refers to 'information overload'. Too much information confuses the receiver and leads to errors. The receiver fails to understand, analyse and act upon the information that is beyond his/her mental capacity. It results in the delay in action or leads to inaction. This is a flaw on the speaker's part and acts as semantic noise.
- (e) **Inappropriate language:** Language is the medium of expression. It facilitates communication. But sometimes it acts as a barrier. Limited vocabulary or poorly chosen words can lead to wrong meaning. Moreover, words have different meanings in different contexts. Selection of words that do not suit the occasion or context is called semantic noise.

5.2 Culture

Culture is the behavioral feature of a particular group. It includes social beliefs, values and customs of the group. Every group has its own characteristics, such as speech, writing style, language, festivals, cuisines, etc. These differences often lead to miscommunication. Some of them are as under:

- (a) **Inter-cultural Differences:** There are diverse cultures in different regions. Each culture follows its own customs, traditions, beliefs, values and languages. People need to move from one place to other for work or so. They need language for communication, but words have different meanings in different cultures. The same category of words, signs, signals, symbols, gestures and actions mean differently to the people belonging to different regions or cultural backgrounds. These cultural differences lead to communication failure or miscommunication.
- (b) **Religion:** There are different religions all over the world. Each religion follows its own values, traditions and codes. They impose certain restrictions on dress,

food and social behaviour. They practice a particular language which creates problems before the persons who do not know the language. It results in communication failure or miscommunication.

- (c) **Ethnocentrism:** The word ethno is related to 'ethnic group'. Ethnocentrism is the state when the members of one ethnic group consider themselves superior to the members of the other group and think that they should be given preference or precedence over the other. This perception can be based on race, color, caste, religion, education, social or economic class. It leads to rigidity and acts as a hindrance in the acceptance of other culture. Such views create bad environment and hinder the flow of communication.

5.3 Rules and Regulations

Formal communication needs to follow certain formalities. For example, every organization prescribes some guidelines for its employees and they have to abide by the rules and regulations. The rules restrict the communication of certain messages and sometimes the employee(s) does not communicate certain messages because of these rules. Sometimes these rules and regulations affect the flow of communication. The message passes from one employee to the other and reaches to the final recipient after few transactions. It causes delay in communication. Sometimes the content is lost and the final recipient receives incomplete information. As a result, the meaning of the message gets change. It generally happens in case of oral communication. This state leads to miscommunication.

5.4 Mechanical Failure

Mechanical equipments play an important role in the communication of messages. In case of large audience, or long distance between the speaker and the listener(s), some mechanical equipment is required to communicate a message. Some kind of defect in the equipment, or power breakdown can lead to communication failure. Moreover, the wrong choice of equipment can also lead to miscommunication.

Strategies for Effective Communication

The above description clearly defines the reasons of communication failure or miscommunication. We have also understood the importance of effective communication. But one needs to learn certain practices to make the communication effective. In this respect, Francis J Bergin has advocated seven C's to make oral and written communication effective. They are as under:

1. Completeness

The message should be complete in all respects. It should provide complete information to the receiver. The message should be planned, organized and structured. All the necessary

details should be incorporated in the message. For example, if an extra class is planned by the teacher, the message should contain- date, day, and time of the class along with the room number in which the class will be held. The five 'W' questions (What, Why, When, Where, and Who) should be checked for. For example, while announcing a meeting, it should be clearly specified: When and where the meeting will be held, why it is being held, what will be discussed at the meeting, and who are to attend the meeting. Incomplete messages create doubt in receiver's mind, cause misunderstanding and delay action.

2. Conciseness

Brevity is an essential requirement for effective communication. It saves time of both the sender and the receiver. The message should be concise. Irrelevant information should not be incorporated in the message. Beating around the bush should be avoided. Inclusion of more words does not lead to clarity, rather they obscure the meaning. The words should be chosen in such a manner that they are not out of context. Excessive information can sway the receiver into either a wrong direction, or cause inaction. The message should be brief and concise, but not at the cost of completeness. Quantum of information should be just right, neither too much nor too less.

3. Clarity

Clarity plays an important role in all types of messages. Clarity implies the clarity of thoughts as well as expression. The sender should be clear in mind what s/he wants to communicate. S/he should be clear about the receiver, purpose, mode and time of communication. S/he should communicate the idea in clear and simple words.

Clarity of expression requires encoding of the message and choice of appropriate words. Words having double meaning should be avoided. The words must mean the same to the receiver as they do to the communicator. Accurate and familiar words, with proper intonation, stresses and pauses should be used to ensure clarity in oral communication.

4. Correctness

The term correctness denotes 'correct language, grammar, accurate facts and figures'. The message should be correct in all respects. The communicator should check for the accuracy of facts, language and grammar before its transmission. The message should be error free to the maximum possible extent. Sometimes grammatical mistake(s) spoil the message and the communicator loses credibility. The communicator should make sure that the message is accurate and authentic. S/he should not transmit the message unless s/he is convinced of its accuracy and authenticity. Incorrect information can lose receiver's trust, communicator's reputation, and spoil relations.

5. Concreteness

Concrete means 'capable of being perceived by the senses'. Concrete messages are specific, particular, definite, clear and vivid. The communicator should prefer specific expressions

and avoid vague and abstract expressions. Specific messages are interpreted by the receiver in the same way as intended by the sender. Concrete expressions also create visual images that are easy to register.

6. Consideration

Consideration means 'keeping the receiver in mind'. The message should be prepared according to the need and interest of the receiver. The sender should look at receiver's socio-psychological background, previous knowledge, emotions, sentiments and need. The golden rule "First understand then be understood" should be followed. The sender should place him/herself in the receiver's position, understand his/her need, and prepare the message accordingly. The sender should treat the receiver with empathy. The focus should be on 'you' rather than 'I'. It makes receiver's inclusion in the communication. For example, when we write a letter, it would be better to write, 'You will be glad to know ...' rather than 'I am happy to inform ...'.

7. Courtesy

Courtesy means 'graceful politeness' or 'friendly and helpful behavior'. Politeness makes a message more acceptable. Polite manners facilitate communication. The communicator should behave politely with the receiver(s). S/he should avoid the use of offensive words that can hurt the receiver. The communicator should also be a patient listener. S/he should patiently listen to the doubts and questions of the receiver(s) and answer all the questions politely without being rude.
