Communication Barriers

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Definition / meaning

"Anything that prevents the smooth dissemination (sending) or comprehension (receiving) of a message, either at the sender's end or at the receiver's end, is a barrier to communication"

Shalini Varma, 2015

Outcome of barriers

- Personal and professional negative outcomes
- *Personal*
- break in relationships,
- drop in self-confidence,
- withdraw in shell
- *Professional*
- low-self esteem leading to drop in productivity
- Disruptions and delays in achieving targets
- Higher project costs thus decline in profitability
- Cancellation of orders
- Drop in goodwill of a firm

Factors causing barriers

I. Intra-personal communication barriers

- Factors present within a person – problem while receiving and sending messages

- Person in closed and conservative environment – cannot express well

- Person discriminated against since childhood or at workplace – will be judgmental or selective perception
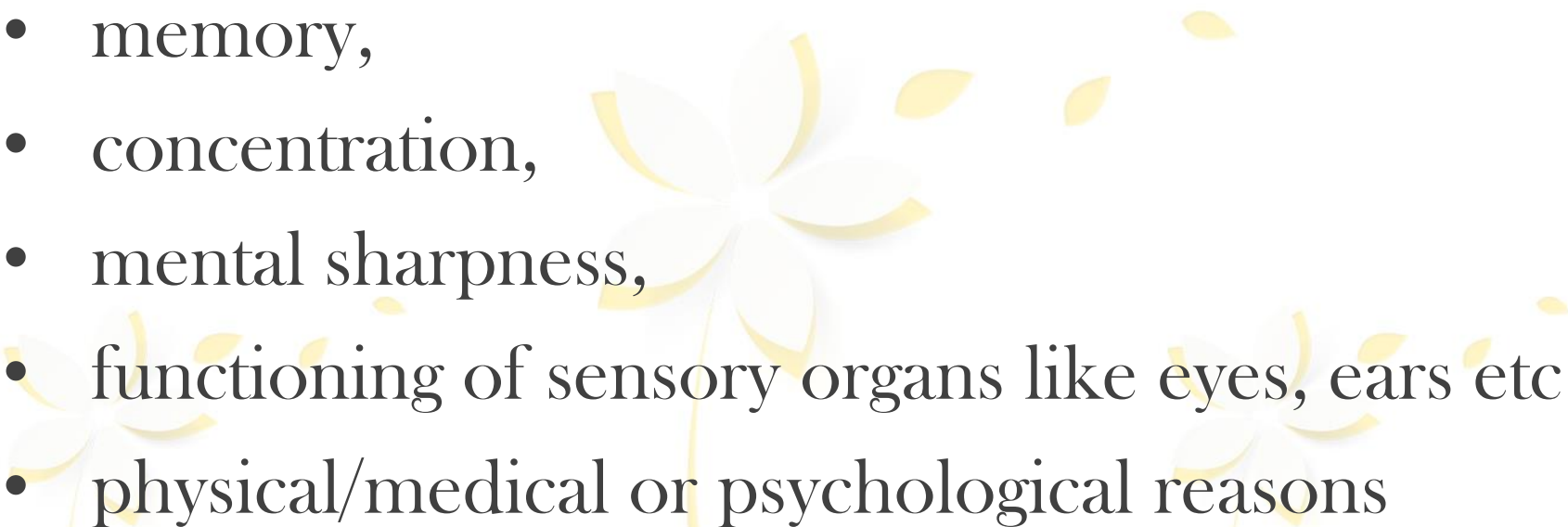
Categories of intra-personal

Five categories

1. Physiological
2. Psychological
3. Perceptual
4. Attitudinal
5. Emotional

1. Physiological barriers

- Physical limitations -
- memory,
- concentration,
- mental sharpness,
- functioning of sensory organs like eyes, ears etc
- physical/medical or psychological reasons

2. Psychological barriers

1. **False assumptions** – assuming the receiver understood

2. **Over confidence and apathy** – *Overconfidence - pansophist* –I –know-everything – unwilling to learn – blocks ideas – *Apathy* – not showing interest or emotions – may leave out key information

3. **Fear and defensiveness** – fear may break communication – sender will mumble – receiver's mind may block info due to fear – *Defensiveness* – may not allow other to speak – cause melodrama – cause more misunderstanding

3. Perceptual barriers

- What messages we select or screen out
- Perceptions create mental blocks
- See world and issues from own perception – don't consider other's view
- Hear or interpret message as we want them to – seek favorable – ignoring unfavorable
- E.g. Ideas getting ignored at workplace
- Teacher no liking your "out-of-the-box" thinking – ignoring – you learn to keep quiet in class

4. Attitudinal barriers

- Reflects from attitude built over a period of time due to socio-economic or cultural bringing up

- If message matches with belief - accepted, if not rejected

- Causes:

1. Egocentrism – 'My opinion/ideas more valuable' – creativity of juniors may be missed out by senior

2. Judgmental attitude – message that judges others without use of facts – makes the receiver angry or defensive

3. Resistance to change – change means hardwork.

5. Emotional Barriers

- Emotional state determines ability to communicate
- Stress – people don't understand when under stress
- Sender – perplexed, nervous, worried, excited, afraid – won't organize message well
- Receiver – won't understand well
- E.g. a person with high EI will take the warning of a supervisor seriously and act on it.
- A person with low EI may disagree, argue, or ignore the warning – thus get into trouble.

II. Inter-personal barriers

1. Sender-centric communication barriers

1. **Lack of interest** – talking about topic with less or no clarity – no interest
2. **Lack of preparation** – result – incorrect audience analysis, lack of information,
3. **Over-qualification or under-qualification** – too much details or superficial information – Ph.D teaching 1st graders – **PG** qualified teaching Ph.D students
4. **Time deficit** – lack of time to prepare or disseminate information - barrier

5. Lack of language competency

1. **Grammar** – male client as 'she' (semantic errors)

2. **Etymology** – too difficult or technical for the receiver

3. **Syntactical** – incorrect sentence construction –
    'Let's eat Grandpa'. or 'Let's eat, Grandpa'

    'To the movies we are going' or 'We are going to the movies'

4. **Non-verbal** – "I have deep regard for you, sir. I genuinely apologize for the late submission of the sales report" – chewing gum with hands in the pocket – conflict between verbal and non-verbal

5. **Delivery mode** – too fast or too slow oral delivery – or illegible writing – not use language to suit audience

Source: https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/14-worst-typos-ever

II. Inter-personal barriers, contd...

6. <u>Inappropriate audience analysis</u> – their age, gender, educational qualifications, level of maturity job functions.

7. <u>Lack of emotional intelligence</u> – 'A manager trying to console his subordinate over the death of his only son in a car accident – "Don't worry, every loss opens doors for a new opportunities"

8. <u>Lack of social intelligence</u> – Verbal fluency and conversations skills, knowledge of social roles and rules, effective listening skills, understand what makes other people tick, good management skills

II. Inter-personal barriers, contd...

09. <u>Lack of cross-cultural intelligence</u> – knowing your own and culture of others, respecting the difference. Barriers when – being ethno-centric – judging everyone as per your own customs and behaviours

10. <u>Lack of credibility or reputation</u> – no trust on person and communication – no or limited communication

11. <u>Lack of respect towards receiver of the message –</u> mutual respect

12. Incorrect selection of communication channel – personal message (face-to-face), long instructions (written)

- Decision about appropriate media - as per

- Time (*printed letter for longer time*)

- Type of message (*confidential or otherwise – telep hone or face-to-face*)

- Cost (*sending 400 page written printed report or e mailing it*)

- Intended audience (*workers – speech or verbal me eting, executives – ppt*)

II. Inter-personal barriers, contd...

2. Receiver-centric communication barriers

1. <u>Poor listening</u> –low or no interest
2. <u>Paucity of relevant information</u> – related to the topic
3. <u>Inattentiveness</u> – internal or external distractions
4. <u>Time deficit</u> – not devoting enough time to listen

2. Receiver-centric communication barriers

5. Lack of language competency

1. *Interpretation of words* – may not assign same meaning as sender – *assayed or essayed*

2. *Denotations and connotations* – clearly denotes a thing without adding any negative or positive quality like *table.* Words with favourable and non-favourable connotation – *cheap, poor.* Some words are verb and noun – *file, scroll.* These cause confusion

6. Information overload –reduced concentration – low ability to understand and retain – key information goes missing

7. Overconfidence or under confidence – may assume that he/she has understood and may take the details lightly. Flip side – may fear asking for clarification

3. Environmental barriers

Types

1. <u>Physical barriers</u> – too cold/hot office, noise, new technology, smelly env., dark, not ventilated, inappropriate or inadequate seating arrangement, poor lighting

2. <u>Technological barriers</u> – technical glitches, text messages (do emoticons help?)

Other barriers

1. <u>**Organizational barriers**</u> – inefficient information system, lack of supervision or training, role ambiguity, no chain of command,
   1. Status consciousness – boss and subordinate – one feel s superior and other - inferior
   2. Too many transfer stations
2. <u>**Chronomatic barriers**</u> – time taken – different time zones,
3. <u>**Gender barriers**</u> – socio-cultural barriers among men and women
4. <u>**Cultural barriers**</u> – people of different religions, caste may not mingle and communicate

Solutions

- Gain knowledge about background of audience – culture, education level, etc
- Select words carefully – as per language skills
- Explain unfamiliar words
- Be non-judgmental – don't generalize, don't draw inferences
- Don't assume
- Avoid too many transfer stations
- Do not communicate when emotionally disturbed
- Appropriate non-verbal cues