**Communication and Presentation Skills**

**2nd Semester**

**Mid-Term Exam (Spring 2020)**

(Time Allowed: 03 Hours)

(Total Marks: 30)

**Note***: Late responses shall be returned with zero marks. The answers to all the questions should be brief and to the point. Since, you all have learned how to communicate effectively, marks shall be deducted for any irrelevant information and unnecessarily long answers:*

**Q. No.1:** At some point in life, everyone of you has been communicating with another person with in his family and friends or with the school and university administration; draw the communication process illustrating how your communication took place and what steps were involved therein? (Hint: Refer to the communication process that you have already studied).

Also specify, what Non-Verbal communication was used as a part of your communication process and why? ***(08 Marks)***

**Q. No.2:** **Appendix A** is an excerpt from an article explaining various barriers to effective communication. Go through it in detail and answer the following questions. ***(08 Marks)***

1. You, being the student of DCSE, needs to communicate with the department administration or your teachers for various reasons/ issues. Identify the types of barriers (at least 03) that you have faced while holding such communications? Support your answers with logic.
2. What steps can be taken to overcome these barriers? (ONLY pertinent to the barriers already specified in your answers against the above question).

**Q. No.3:** The loss incurred by poor communication is not easily identifiable, however, the loss is real and very much there, in terms of performance inefficiency, reduced productivity and lost business opportunities. The following case studies reveal that how poor communications can have real world costs and consequences. You are required to examine each case and determine the following; ***(14 Marks)***

1. **Rhetorically**, define the **situation**: Who is communicating to whom and why? what is the communication about and how is it taking place? What was the goal of the communication in each case?
2. In each case study, identify the **communication error** (poor analysis of the task or audience? Using inappropriate style or language? Inefficient organization of information or poor formatting of the reports? Any Other?)
3. Identify and explain the **costs/losses** incurred by this problem?
4. Analyze the situation and identify **possible solutions** or strategies that would have prevented these problems?

**CASE 1: THE UNACCEPTED AND OVERLY DETAILED PROPOSAL:**

**Zain Electric Company** put all their resources together and worked relentlessly to develop a state of the art Current Regulator. The regulator was designed as such, that it reduced the electric power consumption in Steel Fabrication Plants by 30%. Despite having a fierce competition, Zain Electric knew that their product was more reliable, efficient and has a lower production cost than that of the competitor’s products.

Since, Zain was eager to capture the market, he himself, hastily put together a 150 page proposal. The proposal was sent to the three major Steel Manufacturers with a recommendation to get the newly designed regulators at their production facilities.

The first 100 pages were dedicated to the technical design, mathematical theory and engineering and fabrication details of the regulators. The next 35 pages were about the new production line Zain was planning to set up that will eventually increase the production capacity. Engulfed and buried in the appendix were the test results that compared the performance of Zain’s regulators with the present models. Lastly, a **poorly** drawn graph reflected the actual dollar savings that the replacement of regulators shall generate.

Despite all the efforts and having one of the best products, Zain Electric did not get the contracts and the company filed for bankruptcy five months later.

**CASE 2: THE PERPLEXED USER INSTRUCTION MANUAL:**

**Samra Tech (Pvt.) Ltd.** are one of the pioneers in the field of office automation. They were famous for developing and designing high end **user friendly** software products and databases for industries and businesses. After the company decided to diversify and enter into the market of the word processors, the software developers at Samra Tech maintained their reputation and designed an efficient, versatile and powerful Word Processing application. Based on the quality of the product, the team was confident enough that their application will outperform all the competitors in the market.

To ensure the accurate documentation of the application, the most senior managers at Samra Tech were designated with the task of writing an instruction manual. They put in all their efforts and the resultant manual was an extensive, precise and an accurate description of every minute detail in relevance to the operations of the application.

As soon as the company started to market the new application, their helplines and emails got flooded with the help cries of their customers. The users were so confused by the massive operational manual, that they could not even figure out as how to get started. This was followed by the review of several IT journals who termed the application as “very complicated” and “hard to learn”. As a result, the sales of the application plummeted, despite having a very impressive start.

Samra Tech soon realized the problem and eventually put out a new precise and clearly written training manual that was comparatively very easy to understand. The new manual step by step led the users through various introductory exercises and enabled them to find the commands more quickly. However, the re-writing of the manual and re-marketing of the application cost Samra Tech PKR 35 Million and a year’s lead in the word processing market. It also caused the company to lose its reputation of producing simple and easy to use business and industrial applications.

**APPENDIX – A:**

**BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION**

Although the basic communication model of sender-message-receiver is straight forward, communication itself is not. Because, there are natural and man-made factors that hinder the process of effective communication.

These barriers to effective communication are called noise, and noise may take several forms. Noise may be caused by a technical problem such as bad telephone connection, by a poor selection of medium, or by the receiver's misinterpretation of the message. Noise might be caused by the sender's poor speaking or writing skills, or the receiver's poor listening or reading skills, or simply too many competing sounds in the work place. In addition, noise can occur anywhere in the communication process.

Research shows that there are fundamental barriers to effective interpersonal communication:

* *Physical (external or Mechanical) barriers,*
* *Semantic barriers*
* *Difference in Perception barriers*
* *Socio-psychological barriers*
* *Inappropriate medium barriers*

1. **Physical (also known as external or mechanical) Barriers:**

Physical or mechanical barriers such as defective hearing aid, loud competing noises, or a great distance between sender and receiver etc. may block communication between/among sender and receiver: Basically, there are two types of physical or external barriers:

1. **Defects in the channel:** refer to the barriers beyond the control of the parties engaged in communication. For example, breakdown in the system of telephones, telegraph, e-mail, postal, and noise of other interfering machines.
2. **Defects in the Organization and Communication System:** occur especially if the message is made to pass through many channels or chains of command as there will be loss of information because of the editing and judging included in between. Besides, information overload, inappropriate time of communication, distance between sender and receiver, an assistant's blocking access to a manager or lack of access to files and so forth also limit the exchange of information.
3. **Semantic Barriers**

Semantic barriers refer to communication problems caused by language. Using different languages are not the only reason, semantic barriers can also be caused by difference in the interpretation of words, use of technical terms (jargon), slang, and dialects that usually attribute to them.

A receiver may interpret the words used by the sender differently from the way they were intended, causing semantic by passing. Comedians rely on semantic by passing to create humor, however, in the workplace; semantic barriers can be expensive and frustrating. For example, poorly written contracts that are open to different interpretations could cost organizations millions of dollars. That is one reason for why companies spend a great deal of money on legal advice. Bypassing can also lead to unnecessary friction between a supervisor and employees, resulting in lower productivity and morale.

1. **Difference in the Perception barriers**

People who have had different experiences or who come from different cultural, social, or educational backgrounds tend to view things differently. Some of the reasons for such difference in perception or understanding include:

1. **Abstracting:** is a process of focusing attention on some details and omitting others. Such problem is caused when people consider that getting all the pieces of information may not be sometimes important.
2. **Inference:** is a statement that goes beyond fact. People infer based on their experience. An employee who grew up in a rich family may view a small pay raise differently than the employee who grew up in a family that had to struggle to survive. An accountant may view a sales incentive program differently than the sales manager or the human resources director. The accountant, because of his/her technical education, may view the incentive program purely from the cost side of the ledger. The sales manager's perspective will reflect his/her need to meet sales quotas. The human recourses director may focus on the morale of the sales force.
3. **Hasty Generalization (slanting):** occurs when selecting few aspects of reality and making them the representative of the whole. It always depend on the attitude of a person.
4. **Difference in Age:** refers to the difference in perception and experience among people due to their difference in age. For example, it makes sense to separate older employees from younger employees when introducing a new pension program through employee meetings. The older group will be more interested and have questions, while the younger group may get bored.
5. **Faulty representation of facts:** is the presentation of facts in a faulty or a wrong way that causes confusion and misunderstanding in communication.
6. **Socio-psychological Barriers**

Due to certain social as well as psychological reasons people may face a problem in their attempt to communicate effectively. Some these reasons are:

1. **Source creditability:** refers to the trust, confidence, and faith that receivers have in the words and actions of the sender. If the source is once identified by the society as untrustworthy, the receiver’s mind to the messages will tell him/her that they are coming from an unfaithful source.
2. **Value Judgment:** is caused by assigning an overall worth or value to a message prior to receiving the entire message due to past experience with sender and anticipated meaning of the message.
3. **Closed Mind:** limited intellectual background, limited reading and narrow interests cause a person's mind to be narrow. This limits his/her understanding of human nature and makes him/her incapable of receiving communication with sympathy.
4. **State of Health:** if one's health is not at its best, it is better not to be engaged in communication tasks. The person may not have enough energy and good psychological make-up to follow what is going on and his/her perception may be reduced.
5. **Poor communication skills:** lack of skill in writing and speaking obviously prevents the sender from encoding his/her ideas properly so as to get across his/her audience. Faulty skills of reading and listening in the case of the receiver may create some communication problems.
6. **Emotionality:** if people are emotional, they tend to be irrational. So, we must try to suppress our emotions. Emotional reactions like anger, love hate, fear, etc. can influence how we understand other's messages, and how others perceive our own messages.
7. **Defensiveness:** is the major psychological barrier to effective communication. Individuals become defensive when excessive questioning or criticism or the perception of either threatens their self-image. When people become defensive, they become poor communicators. They are more interested in protecting their self-image than listening to what is being said. Defensiveness is most prevalent in psychological climates in which a lot of judgmental, critical, or superior behavior is exhibited. Although employees want to learn how to improve their performance, they recoil from being judged or criticized as people. The comment, "That is a dumb idea," will, no doubt, evoke a defensive reaction from the receiver. On the other hand, "could you explain your idea more fully?" will help clarify communication.
8. **Status consciousness (Status Black):** the job title the sender holds and the kind of privileges and office he/she has could affect the communication. This is a major problem in upward communication. A superior may develop the attitude that he/she knows everything. He/she may not be willing to listen to any ideas, no matter how much bright they are, given from his/her subordinates. At the same, subordinates may fell frightened or shy to tell their ideas to their bosses. consciousness of one's status affects the two-way flow of communication. It gives rise to personal barriers caused by the superior-subordinate relationship. A two-way vertical channel is present in every organization, yet few subordinates choose to communicate with their superiors. Similarly, superiors may be unwilling to directly listen or write to their subordinates. They would seldom accept if they were wrong. Though, organizations are culturally changing and adopting flat structures, the psychological distance between the superior and the subordinates persists.
9. **Self-image**: we do not tend to accept anything that goes against our self-image or attitude to ourselves that we have cultivated over the years. For instance, the accountant who thinks of him/herself as an efficient worker may find it difficult to accept his/her inefficiency when his/her superiors want to help him/her.
10. **Self-centered Attitudes:** we tend to hear or see everything in light of our own opinions. We agree with those ideas that compliment ours while disagreeing with those that do not go with ours. A good example for such barriers are the regular religious arguments we get involved into.
11. **Filtering:** refers to the manipulation of information so that the receiver perceives the information as positive or negative. It is an attempt to filter out negative information and pass the positive one or vice versa.
12. **Group identification:** we want ourselves to be identified as a group. Thus, whatever idea works against our group it may get rejected, although we may understand the reason behind it. For example, a strike may be understood as harmful to the government and country; however, the worker will go with it so as to get identified as a part of the labour union.

**5. Inappropriate Medium or Channel Barriers**

The types of medium and channels used in a given communication have their advantages and disadvantages. In a business setting, one selects a certain communication medium and channel over the other on the basis of factors as the availability of feedback, the need for documentation, the cost involved, the chain of command, the number of receivers, and the backgrounds of the receivers. Such a communication may end up facing a great problem.

Broadly speaking, some of the barriers can be attributed to the sender and the receiver.

**Barriers Attributed to the Sender**

* + Lack of planning
  + Vagueness about the purpose of communication
  + Objectives to be achieved
  + Choice of wrong language
  + Unshared and Unclarified assumptions
  + Different perception of reality
  + Wrong choice of the channel.

**Barriers Attributed to the Receiver**

* Poor listening
* Inattention
* Mistrust
* Lack of interest
* Premature evaluation
* Semantic difficulties
* Biasness
* Different perception of reality
* Lack of trust
* Attitudinal clash with the sender
* Not in a fit physical state

A common barrier for the sender and the receiver can be created by the absence of a **common frame of reference** affecting the smooth interpretation of thoughts, feelings, and attitudes from the sender to the receiver in a specific social situation.

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