

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

- ‘Any obstacle or problem in the process of Communication which hinders/obstructs the process of Communication is called Barrier.’
- **Sender barrier.** A new administrator with an innovative idea fails to speak up at a meeting, chaired by the superintendent, for fear of criticism.
- **Encoding barrier.** A Spanish-speaking staff member cannot get an English speaking administrator to understand a grievance about working conditions.
- **Medium barrier.** A very upset staff member sends an emotionally charged letter to the leader instead of transmitting her feelings face-to-face.
- **Decoding barrier.** If a message reaches a reader who is not interested in the message, the reader may read the message hurriedly or listen to carelessly.
- **Receiver barrier.** An administrator who is preoccupied with the preparation of the annual budget asks a staff member to repeat a statement, because she was not listening attentively to the conversation.
- **Feedback barrier.** During a meeting, the failure of administrators to ask any questions causes the superintendent to wonder if any real understanding has taken place.

- **Physical Barriers:** Many barriers arise in the surroundings or our environment. These barriers create problems or confusion in communication.
- **Noise:** Traffic Noise or noise of machines in factory create disturbances in communication. Noise pollution is biggest contributor or environment pollution in India.
- **Time and Distance :**Physical distances between people can create major problems in communication. Time zones around the world are not same. Due to differences in timings between countries we have to adjust with the time difference of that country.
- **Defects in Communication Systems:** Many times the instruments or machines used in communication such as Telephones, Fax or Computer can develop problems. The network of Internet can fail or the Mike or Microphone used in the programmes can create loud noise.
- **Due to excess rains or natural calamity** it becomes difficult to use the instruments properly. The failure of Electronic power also results into communication loss or messages are not sent properly.

Language Barriers

- Barriers arising due to differences in languages, words meaning or pronunciation can create confusion among the people. Linguistic means related to the language. Semantic means the meaning of the words. Following are some of the examples of language barriers.
- Different Languages or lack of Common Language can create obstacles in Communication. A person who does not understand the native language or even foreign language cannot communicate well. This becomes very difficult situation.
- Multiplicity of words: words can have different meanings. Word power is gift to human beings but at the same times multiple meaning or spellings of the words can create the problems in communication.
- Words with similar pronunciation but different meaning [Homophones]also create problems in communication. E.g. Except-accept, fair-fare, council-counsel, principal-principle[etc].
- Jargon words[Technical words] used by professionals such as Engineers/Doctors or any other professionals. Many times, jargon words are used unintentionally. But common people or those who do not understand the meaning of these words face problems.
- By-passed Instructions: Means many times short cuts are used while passing the messages. Eg. A Manager ordered the newly appointed secretary to go and burn the C.D. She literally burned it . He meant to copy the C.D.

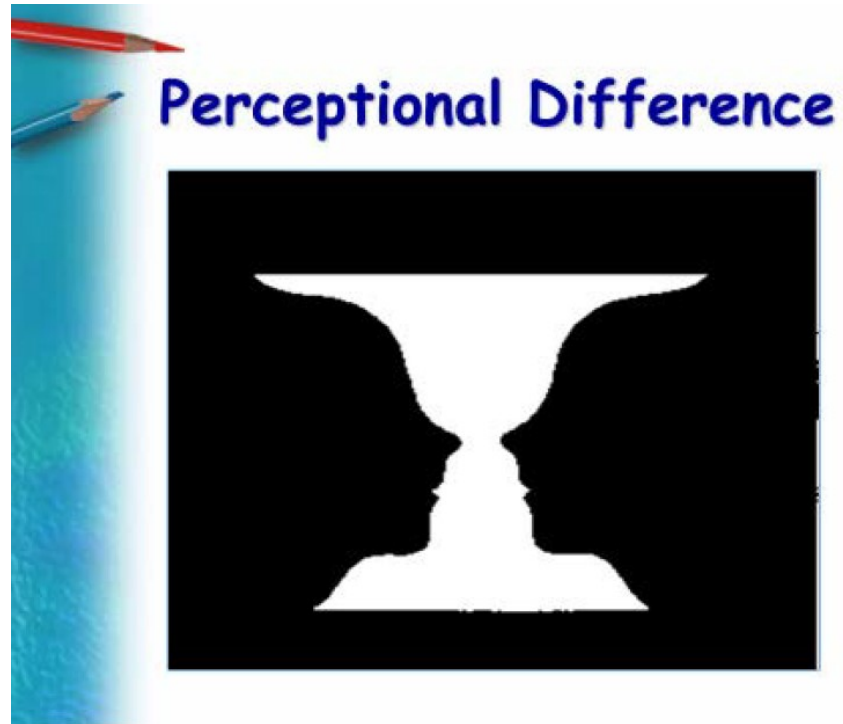
Filtering

- The fewer people involved in the transmission of a message, the greater the chance that it will be received as the sender intended. In business, however, messages may be summarized by a manager and relayed through an administrative assistant who has clarified or edited the message. Messages exposed to many filters should be repeated in various ways to make sure they were understood as the sender intended.

Psychological barriers

- Emotions: Emotions are among the most common psychological barriers to communication. The emotion may be connected to the communication received or it may be present in the sender's or receiver's mind, even before the communication takes place. In both cases, it acts as a barrier. Emotions can be positive, like happiness and joy, or negative, like fear, anger, mistrust etc. Both positive and negative emotions act as barriers, if they are not kept in check.
- Prejudice: A prejudice is an opinion held by a person for which there is no rational basis or valid reason. It can be against something or someone, or in favour of it, but it becomes a barrier to a meaningful communication. Prejudices are based on ignorance and lack of information, e.g., prejudices about certain communities or groups of people.
- Halo effect: Sometimes our reactions to people are not balanced or objective; they are of an extreme nature. Either we like a person so much that we can find no shortcomings in her/him, or we dislike someone so much that we can see nothing good in her/him. In both cases, we commit errors of judgment and fail to understand the person.
- Attitude Barriers: Certain people like to be left alone. They are the introverts or just people who are not very social. Others like to be social or sometimes extra clingy! Both these cases could become a barrier to communication. Some people have attitude issues, like huge ego and inconsiderate behaviours.

- Perception Barriers: Different people perceive the same things differently. This is a fact which we must consider during the communication process. Knowledge of the perception levels of the audience is crucial to effective communication. All the messages or communicate must be easy and clear. There shouldn't be any room for a diversified interpretational set.



- **Closed Mind:** A closed mind is one which refuses to accept an idea or opinion on a subject, because it is different from his idea. Such persons form their opinion on a subject, and then refuse to listen to anyone who has something different to say about it. A closed mind may be the result of some past experience or just habit. It is very difficult to remove this psychological barrier.
- **Communication Apprehension** or social anxiety. These people experience undue tension and anxiety in oral communication, written communication, or both. They may find it extremely difficult to talk with others face-to-face or may become extremely anxious when they have to use the phone, relying on memos or e-mails when a phone call would be faster and more appropriate.

Physiological Barriers

- Certain disorders or diseases or other limitations could also prevent effective communication between the various channels of an organization. The shrillness of voice, dyslexia, etc are some examples of physiological barriers to effective communication. However, these are not crucial because they can easily be compensated and removed.

Cross-cultural barriers

- Due to differences in language, religious practices, dressing styles, food habits many times people get confused and are not able to understand each other properly. This led to communication failure.
- *Concept of Time* : The time is not perceived similarly across the cultures. In Western culture Time is important. In Asian culture Time is taken leisurely. The concept of punctuality differs in cultures.
- *Assumptions about social strata or caste system*. Caste system is observed in India. But in every culture some kind of differences in the society in the form of religion, community differences or sects or class division is observed. We should not always assume someone superior or inferior because of caste or class system.
- *Etiquettes and Mannerisms*: In every society or cultures different types of mannerisms are observed. This includes rule of behaviors or how to follow certain code of conduct . Different forms of address and salutation or different methods of dressing [formal or informal wearing] are observed. This can be confusing sometimes.

- *barriers caused by semantics.* Words mean different things to different people, particularly people from different national cultures. Some words don't translate between cultures. The Finnish word *sisu* means something akin to "guts" or "dogged persistence" but is essentially untranslatable into English.
- *barriers caused by word connotations.* Words imply different things in different languages. For ex. Negotiations between U.S. and Japanese executives can be difficult because the Japanese word *hai* translates as "yes," but its connotation is "Yes, I'm listening" rather than "Yes, I agree."
- *differences in tolerance for conflict and methods for resolving conflicts.* Individuals from individualist cultures tend to be more comfortable with direct conflicts and will make the source of their disagreements overt. Collectivists are more likely to acknowledge conflict only implicitly and avoid emotionally charged disputes.

Organizational Barriers

- The factors related to organizational structure, rules and regulations authority relationships, etc. may sometimes act as barriers to effective communication.
- In an organization with a highly centralized pattern, people may not be encouraged to have free communication.
- Also, rigid rules and regulations and cumbersome procedures may also become a hurdle to communication.

Overcoming Barriers

- **Physical barriers.** The use of loudspeakers and microphones can remove the barriers of noise and distance in crowded places like railway stations.
- Traffic signals and non-verbal gestures of the traffic policeman remove physical barriers on the roads. Technological advancement has helped in reducing the communication gap arising due to time and distance
- **Language or Semantic Barriers** can be overcome if the sender and the receiver choose a language which both of them understand very well.
- Help from a translator or an interpreter also helps in overcoming the language barrier.
- Exposure to the target language and training oneself in the acquisition of skills of the given language too help in overcoming the language barrier.
- Language barriers can be avoided by careful study and accurate use of language. Clarity should be the main objective when using language. Jargon should be avoided.

- **Psychological barriers:** can be avoided or reduced by adopting a flexible and open-minded attitude.
- Training oneself to listen to different views , exposing oneself to different environments help in broadening one's outlook and cultivating tolerance to multiple views.
- Teaching oneself to listen with empathy helps in making oneself more open to others' perceptions.
- While dealing with psychological or cross-cultural barriers the sender should make it a point to—
 - (i) use language that is politically neutral and correct.
 - (ii) present views in simple and objective manner
 - (iii) focus on the objective of communication

Sender's Responsibilities

- **Sender needs to clarify their ideas before communicating.** The more systematically administrators analyze the problem or idea to be communicated, the clearer it becomes. This is the first step toward effective communication. Many communications fail because of inadequate planning. Good planning must consider the goals, attitudes, and needs of those who will receive the communication and those who will be affected by it.
- **Sender needs to examine the true purpose of each communication.** Before sender communicate, they must ask themselves what they really want to accomplish with their message—obtain information, initiate action, or change another person's attitude? Sender should not try to accomplish too much with each communication. The sharper the focus of their message, the greater its chances of success.
- **Sender needs to consider the total physical and human setting..** Many other factors influence the overall impact of a communication, and administrators must be sensitive to the total setting in which they communicate: the circumstances under which an announcement or decision is made; the physical setting—whether the communication is made in private or otherwise; the social climate that pervades work relationships within the school or department and sets the tone of its communications; custom and practice—the degree to which the communication conforms to, or departs from, the expectations of the audience.

Receiver's Responsibilities

- **Stop talking.** You cannot listen if you are talking. For example, Polonius in Hamlet said: "Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice."
- **Put the talker at ease.** Help a person feel free to talk. This is often called a permissive environment.
- **Show a talker that you want to listen.** Look and act interested. Do not read your mail while someone talks. Listen to understand rather than to oppose.
- **Remove distractions.** Don't doodle, tap, or shuffle papers. Will it be quieter if you shut the door?
- **Empathize with talkers.** Try to help yourself see the other person's point of view.
- **Be patient.** Allow plenty of time. Do not interrupt a talker. Don't start for the door or walk away.
- **Hold your temper.** An angry person takes the wrong meaning from words.
- **Go easy on argument and criticism.** These put people on the defensive, and they may clam up or become angry. Do not argue: Even if you win, you lose.
- **Ask questions.** This encourages a talker and shows that you are listening. It helps to develop points further.
- **Stop talking.** This is first and last, because all other guides depend on it. You cannot do an effective listening job while you are talking.

Active Listening

- Active listening is a term popularized by the work of Carl Rogers and Richard Farson (n.d.) and advocated by counselors and therapists.
- The concept recognizes that a sender's message contains both verbal and nonverbal content as well as a feeling component. The receiver should be aware of both components in order to comprehend the total meaning of the message.

1. **Listen for message content.** The receiver must try to hear exactly what the sender is saying in the message.

2. **Listen for feelings.** The receiver must try to identify how the sender feels in terms of the message content. This can be done by asking: "What is he trying to say?"

3. **Respond to feelings.** The receiver must let the sender know that her feelings, as well as the message content are recognized.

4. **Note all cues, verbal and nonverbal.** The receiver must be sensitive to the nonverbal messages as well as the verbal ones. If the receiver identifies mixed messages, he may ask for clarification.

5. **Rephrase the sender's message.** The receiver may restate or paraphrase the verbal and nonverbal messages as feedback to the sender. The receiver can do this by allowing the sender to respond with further information.