Definition of Language Barriers

Communication becomes difficult in situations where people don't understand each others' language. The inability to communicate using a language is known as language barrier to communication.

Difference in Language

Difference in language is the most obvious barrier to communication as two people speaking two different languages cannot communicate with each other. For example, an American goes to China. The person does not understand Chinese and most people in China do not understand English. So, when the person speaks, the communication is worthless as the other Chinese person doesn’t understand it.

Regional Accents, Dialects and Pidgin

The accents and dialect of people belonging to different places differs even if their language is same. Though the languages are technically the same in people using different dialects and accents, the meanings, implications and interpretations of words are different, which may lead to various kinds of conflicts. For example, If a Scottish farmer talks to a person from London, they do not understand most of the words the other says even though they both speak English. The word ham and bacon can be used interchangeably in Scotland but they are different in England.

Similarly, pidgin is the simplified language used between people who do not speak common language. The implications of words and phrases can create misunderstandings. For example, the abbreviation “LOL” used in chat language used to mean Lots of Love before, which changed to Laugh Out Loud. If a person says LOL, the second person can interpret the meaning in any way they want or from their understanding. People use both the abbreviations according to the context and need.

No Clear Speech

People who speak soft or in a small voice cannot be understood. The sender might be saying something whereas the receiver might understand something else. Though speaking common language, people might have difficulty understanding the meaning of the message and the feedbacks. This might also be a cause of obstacle in communication.

Use of Jargons and Slang

Jargons are the technical words used in communication. It might be different according to different professions, specialty and technical field of a person. For example, technical words used by doctors and lawyers are extremely different. If they start talking, both of them will not get what the other is talking about. Some jargons like adjournment (jargon used by lawyers and police used for delaying a trial for defendant), BP (medical jargon for Blood pressure), etc. are only used by people in similar profession which might be a cause for language barrier.

Similarly, the use of slang also makes communication ineffective. For example, the use of word “grass” to describe marijuana can act as a barrier for the people who do not know the slang meaning.

Word Choice

The choice of word used in describing anything must be considered before communicating. The words used by a particular person to show their agreement on something can be taken as sarcasm which is negative in nature. Words with two meanings, homonyms, homographs, homophones should always be avoided as it doesn’t send the proper meaning and can be interpreted in any way. So, the message will not be sent as intended which acts as a type of language barrier in communication.

These are some of the most common causes of language barriers in communication. There are many other causes too like language disabilities, noise, distance or use of metaphors or similes which can be included in other barriers like physiological and physical. Some language barriers can be overcome with practice or other ways like translation, interpreter, language classes, visual methods, etc. whereas some barriers act as problems in a person's whole life. These barriers must not be present to make the communication effective.