

# 13 BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

**Smt.S.SAILAJA JHANSI**  
Associate Professor in English  
SC Women's College  
Kothagudem-507 101

## Abstract:

Communication is a process beginning with a sender who encodes the message and passes it through some channel to the receiver who decodes the message. Communication is fruitful if and only the messages sent by the sender is interpreted with same meaning by the receiver. Though some people are excellent communicators, the receiver may understand it wrongly. There are certain things that disrupt the flow of communication. In such a situation, communication suffers a breakdown. Something that interferes with the flow of communication or prevents the smooth passage of a message can be called communication breakdown or barrier.

To avoid the situations where the meaning of a message gets distorted in the communication process, first of all we have to 1) identify the cause 2) find the solution 3) Apply the best solution and 4) follow through. If we follow these four steps, we can learn to become good communicators. Good communication means conveying the message well without creating any noise or barrier to the receiver. The most practical way or approach to get rid of communication barriers is to communicate more and more and at different levels.

One way of reducing the effects of these barriers is to check continuously during the communication process what the message really is. There are many actions that we can take to surpass the barriers.

Communication barriers can also exist due to difference in the ideologies or the presence of conflicts. It is essential that we identify our communication barriers and work towards rectifying it. The most practical way or approach to get rid of communication barriers is to communicate more and more and at different levels.

## Full Paper

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

-George Bernard Shah

Communication is a process beginning with a sender who encodes the message and passes it through some channel to the receiver who decodes the message. Communication is fruitful if and only the messages sent by the sender is interpreted with same meaning by the receiver. Though some people are excellent communicators, the receiver may understand it wrongly. There are certain things that disrupt the flow of communication. In such a situation, communication suffers a breakdown. Something that interferes with the flow of communication or prevents the smooth passage of a message can be called communication breakdown or barrier.

To avoid the situations where the meaning of a message gets distorted in the communication process, first of all we have to 1) identify the cause 2) find the solution 3) Apply the best solution and 4) follow through. If we follow these four steps, we can learn to become good communicators. Good communication means conveying the message well without creating any noise or barrier to the receiver. The most practical way or approach to get rid of communication barriers is to communicate more and more and at different levels.

There are several barriers that affect the flow of communication in an organization. These barriers interrupt the flow of communication from the sender to the receiver, thus making communication ineffective. It is essential for managers to overcome these barriers. The main barriers of communication are summarized below:

### **Attitudinal Barriers**

These barriers come out as a result of problems with staff in an organization. These may be brought about for example, by such factors as poor management, lack of consultation with employees, personality conflicts which can result in people delaying or refusing to communicate, the personal attitudes of individual employees which may be due to lack of motivation or dissatisfaction at work, brought about by insufficient training to enable them to carry out particular tasks, or just resistance to change due to entrenched attitudes and ideas.

### **Perceptual Barriers**

The most common problem faced these days is that of the difference in opinion between two people. The varied perceptions of every individual give rise to a need for effective communication. Perception means the act or faculty of perceiving, seeing, understanding or noticing. It is the way one experiences one's universe. No two persons see alike or experience the universe in the same way. Each person's perceptual processes are unique. This is so because of prejudices, past experience, status, moods, roles and cultural influences. These perceptual differences cause mis-communication. The best way to overcome this barrier is to step back and take a wider perspective of the issues.

### **Emotional Barriers**

Emotions are an integral part of our being, whether in business or personal life. By sharpening self-awareness, intuition and empathy, emotions can help in developing an environment highly conducive to good communication. An emotional individual may not be able to communicate well. If someone is angry, hostile, resentful, joyful, or fearful, that person may be too occupied with emotions to receive the intended message. If we don't like someone, for example, you may have trouble "hearing" them. These hesitations and feeling of annoyance act as barrier. We know emotional involvement is there in communication. But excessive emotion may cause a barrier to communication. We can transcend this barrier by trying to control our emotion and using emotions only for making them as tools for conveying our messages.

### **Language Barriers**

Language that describes what we would want to express and communicate to others, may at times, serve as a barrier to them. In today's global scenario, the greatest compliment we can pay to another person is by speaking and effectively communicating to them in their local language. We need to understand that the native language of employees can be different from anyone else's. Sometimes in our conversation we use several words, which have the same pronunciation but are having many meanings. The words may be homophones and thus there may arise difficulty in getting to the right nerve of the problem. Sometimes lack of clarity and precision make the messages badly expressed. Lack of coherence, awkward sentence structures, jargons etc., are common faults, which lead to such messages.

### **Cultural Barriers**

The world is made up of diverse cultures. A cultural barrier arises when two individuals in an organization belong to different religions, states or countries. It affects communication between people from different departments in the organization and different backgrounds. The world is made up of diverse cultures. If every individual in an organization takes personal responsibility to make sure he works in complete effectiveness with his or her co-worker, no matter how many barriers come in the way, a responsible employee will always know how to overcome them. Even words, colors and symbols have different meanings in different cultures. This needs to be understood by the people. For example: in England, an

invitation at 8.00 pm would see most guests arriving at about 8.15 pm; in Germany, people give top priority to time sense; in Greece, 9.00 to 9.30 might be the norm; in India even later.

## Physical Distractions

Physical distractions are the physical things that get in the way of communication. It causes a lot of noise, often literally: insufficiently insulated rooms with car noises filtering through, poor lighting, extreme climatic conditions, uncomfortable seats, a typewriter clattering away in a nearby office etc are the causes of communication barriers in organizations. Noise is a physical distraction simply because it is hard to concentrate on a conversation if hearing is difficult.

To overcome these barriers, pre-emptive measures should be taken. We should be careful when creating messages, both oral and written. Try to know about the factors responsible for noise formation, and try to eliminate them.

## Listening barriers

Poor listening is one of the most common reasons for creating hiatus in the communication process. Many a time, there is lack of attention on the listener's part. It is a well-known fact that very few of us have good listening skills. Some examples of listening barriers are interrupting the speaker, not maintaining eye contact with the speaker, rushing the speaker to complete what he/she has to say, making the speaker feel as though he/she is wasting the listener's time, being distracted by something that is not part of the ongoing communication, getting ahead of the speaker and completing his/her thoughts, ignoring the speaker's requests, topping the speaker's story with one's own set of examples, forgetting what is being discussed, asking too many questions, for the sake of probing

## Interpersonal Barriers

This form of communication takes place between two people. When one person communicates with another using words or symbols, it is called interpersonal communication. The success of this form of communication depends on the familiarity of knowledge, background and experience of the individuals involved. Interpersonal barriers occur due to inappropriate transaction of words between two or more people. Interpersonal barriers creep in as a result of inefficiency communication skills and negative aspect nurturing in the climate. If there are two people involved in communication, the traits that distinguish them as individuals can be the root cause of a communication problem. The most common reasons for interpersonal barriers are:

- Limited vocabulary
- Incongruity of verbal and nonverbal messages
- Emotional outbursts
- Communication selectivity
- Cultural variations
- Poor listening skills
- Noise in the channel.

If we try to overcome the above barriers, good interpersonal relations can be built.

## Lack of Feedback

Feedback is the mirror of communication. It mirrors what the sender has sent. Without feedback communication is one-way. Feedback happens in a variety of ways. Asking a person to repeat what has been said, eg., repeat instructions, is a very direct way of getting feedback. Feedback may be as subtle as a stare, a puzzle look, a nod, or failure to ask any questions, after complicated instructions have been given. Both sender and receiver can play an active role in using feedback to make communication truly two-way.

Feedback should be helpful rather than hurtful. Prompt feedback is more effective than feedback saved up until the right moment. Feedback should deal in specifics rather than generalities.

## Gender Barriers

There are distinct differences between the speech patterns in a man and those in a woman. A survey report said that woman speaks between 22,000 and 25,000 words a day whereas a man speaks between 7,000 and 10,000. In childhood, girls speak earlier than boys and at the age of three, have a vocabulary twice that of boys.

It is said that the reason for this lies in the wiring of a man's and woman's brains. When a man talks, his speech is located in the left side of the brain but in no specific area. When a woman talks, the speech is located in both hemispheres and in two specific locations.

## Information Overload

One of the major problems faced by organizations today is the availability of huge amounts of data which the receiver is unable to handle effectively. This is known as information overload. The usual results of information overload are fatigue, disinterest, and boredom. If you receive a message with too much information, you may tend to put up a barrier because the amount of information is coming so fast that you may have difficulty comfortably interpreting that information. If you are selling an item with twenty-five terrific features, pick two or three important features to emphasize instead of overwhelming your receiver (ho-hum) with an information avalanche.

To reduce information overload in an organization, screening of information is mandatory. Messages should be sent to those who are likely to benefit from the information. Major points should be highlighted, leaving out all irrelevant details. This kind of screening will be appreciated by all and can reduce the problem of information overload to a great extent.

## Psychological Barriers

Psychological barriers may be caused by a number of reasons. For example when one assumes or takes things for granted while communicating. In that case one is likely to be misinterpreted or misunderstood. This wrong thinking and assumption may cause barrier in communication. Sometimes one suffers from the opinion that their ideas and views are the ultimate one and they refuse to accept others' views. In such cases one can never communicate successfully. Fear and negative tendencies also create barriers. If one suffers from fear and awe then one cannot communicate freely with the person whom one fears. Hence to overcome this barrier we need to build up a situation that will provide one with the opportunity to communicate freely and successfully.

In an individual there may be some negative feelings against another. While communicating to that person he gets influenced by his negative feeling. As a consequence he cannot communicate with that person successfully. Getting rid of all kinds of negative tendencies is the only way of successfully communicating with a person.

## Organizational Barriers

Communication barriers are not limited to an individual or two people. It exists in the organizations also. Business firm is a place that consists of different types of people. People in an organization are not in the same level in terms of their knowledge, skills, attitudes, thoughts and goals. Driving these different sets of people into a common goal is too difficult. Organizational barriers stem from organizational attributes such as too many transfer stations, Negative tendencies, Information overload, fear of superiors, use of inappropriate media etc... If every individual in an organization takes personal responsibility to make sure he works in complete effectiveness with his or her co-worker, no matter how many barriers come in the way, a responsible employee will always know how to overcome them.

The only way one can improve effective organizational communication is by changing one's thoughts and feelings with one's colleague. In this way, we don't just break down communication barriers, but also build relationships that work successfully for long.

## Overcoming the Barriers in Communication

One way of reducing the effects of these barriers is to check continuously during the communication process what the message really is. The actions we can take to achieve this are listed below:

- Realize that misunderstandings are bound to occur, and be alert for all cues to this effect
- Test one understands of the message.
- Share opinions, feelings and perceptions generated by the message.
- Have a positive attitude about communication. Defensiveness interferes with communication.
- Work at improving communication skills. It takes knowledge and work.
- Foster strong relationship in order to avoid misunderstanding and accept each other's viewpoints.
- Avoid technical jargon and use the language commonly understood by the people.
- Maintain proper co-ordination with superiors or subordinates.
- Receive right feedback so that the receiver and sender identify and correct the misunderstandings leading to higher quality of reception and acceptance.
- Minimize semantic problem and use simple language.
- Look for accuracy and clarity in the message to avoid ambiguity.
- Use proper communication channel to send the message.
- Reduce information overload by proper division of labor among the persons to prevent delay in information transfer.
- Sensitize people with the organizational philosophy. It should be properly communicated to its employees so that they give proper attention to their day-to-day communication.
- Include communication as a skill to be evaluated along with all the other skills in each person's job description.
- Make communication goal oriented. Relational goals come first and pave the way for other goals.
- Accept the reality of miscommunication. The best communicators fail to have perfect communication. They accept miscommunication and work to minimize its negative impacts.

Communication barriers can also exist due to difference in the ideologies or the presence of conflicts. It is essential that we identify our communication barriers and work towards rectifying it. The most practical way or approach to get rid of communication barriers is to communicate more and more and at different levels.

### REFERENCES:

- 1 .Leena Sen, Communication Skills, ( Prentice – Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi, 2004)
- 2 Pearce C.Glenn,. Business Communication: Principles and Applications, (1988.second edition:USA)
- 3.Paul Davies/Eric Pearse. Success in English Teaching, (Oxford University Press, 2000)
- 4.H.C.Gupta & S.G.Telang, Business Communication, (Wisdom Publications, 2009)
5. Tony Lynch, Communication in the Language Classroom, (Oxford University Press, 2000)
6. Hughes, G.S.,A Handbook of Classroom English, (Oxford University Press, 1981)
7. Sangeeta Sharma/Binod Mishra, Communication Skills for Engineers and Scientists, (PHI Learning, Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, 2009)
8. Andrea J.Rutherford, Basic Communication Skills for Technology, (Pearson Education, New Delhi, 2008)
9. Raymond V Lesikar/Marie E Flatley/Kathryn Rentz/Neerja Pande, Business Communication (Tata McGraw Hill, New Delhi, 2009)



10. Meenakshi Raman and Sangeeta Sharma, Technical Communication, Principles and Practices, ( OUP 2009)
11. Linde, C., "The Quantitative Study of Communicative Success." Language in Society, Summer 1988.
12. Philip G. Clampit, Communication for Managerial Effectiveness, Sage Publication, 2004.
13. Gerson & Gerson, Workplace Communication Process and Product, Prentice Hall, 2007.

