

Chapter No 5. BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION:Communication is one of our basic needs. We require to communicate with many people for personal and professional purpose. But while communicating we may face many hurdles or problems. Sometimes the message is not passed properly or gets lost. There are chances of misunderstanding between the sender or the receiver. Sometimes language used in the communication is not understood properly. This results into Communication breakdown or communication failure. There are many reasons behind the problems in the communication process. Let's study the Communication Barriers in detail.

Definition of the Barrier to Communication: 'Any obstacle or problem in the process of Communication which hinders/obstructs the process of Communication is called Barrier.'

Barriers are part of process of Communication. Whenever we are communicating we encode and decode. We use various channels for passing messages. At any level or at any moment or stage there can be problems in communication process. Sometimes the sender may not use proper language that the receiver will understand. Receiver may not be able to Decode properly. There can be lot of noise in the surrounding which can disturb us. It rarely happens that barriers do not arise in the communication process. Many times barriers arise in the minds of the sender and receiver. The intended messages are not sent to the receivers .

Types of Barriers: We face many barriers while communicating. These barriers can create obstacles in the communication process. These barriers are classified into the following types.

1.Physical or Environmental Barriers: The Barriers in the surrounding or in the environment are the physical barriers.

2.Language/Semantic or Linguistic Barriers: Barriers arising due to the different language or differences in language can create problems in communication. Semantic Barriers means the problems arising because of the different meanings of the words.

3.Psychological Barriers: Barriers or problems arising due to the stress or psychological problems are psychological barriers. It is difficult to accept and overcome these barriers.

4.Socio-Cultural Barriers: Due to differences in social status or cultural barriers many times we face differences in communication. These are socio-cultural barriers.

Question:What is the meaning of Physical Barrier/Environmental Barriers ?Give examples of Physical Barriers.

1.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.
- Wrong Selection of Medium : Medium means the objects used in communication eg. Emails, Mobile Phones or Telephones etc. The correct medium is necessary. The improper use of some machines such as Emails can delay the messages.
 - High Temperature and Humidity: Excess Temperature or heat or cold Temperature create difficulties in communication

Many times human physical defects such as stammering ,bad hearing, failure of communication channels and bad handwriting also create misunderstanding in learning the message.

Q.What is the meaning of Language or Semantic Barrier?

2.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.

Question:What is the meaning of Psychological Barrier?**3.Psychological Barriers:**

Psyche means mind. Psychological barriers arise in the minds. Human mind is very complex thing to understand. We face many times some conflicts due to situations or surrounding events. So these barriers are bound to arise. But the real problem is that people do not accept that these barriers exist in their minds. Due to status, old age and ego problems many times psychological barriers are created. These are difficult to overcome. Because people do not accept that they face barriers or they lack proper understanding to face the world. The following are situations or examples of psychological barriers.

1. Ego: 'I' Attitude means I am great feeling can create barrier in mind. Ego barriers create conflict in human relations.
2. Prejudice: bias [wrong opinion] about people on the basis of community, caste, religions or on personal basis is very negative for communication. Prejudice can hamper the communication.
3. Emotions and feelings : Emotional Disturbances of the sender or receiver can distort [change] the communication .
4. Halo Effect: like or dislike about a person can create halo or horn effect. This can affect communication.
5. Self Image: Positive or Negative image about self is the way of looking at the world. Negative self-image can destroy or hamper communication . Such people always think negatively and do not look at the things or events properly.
6. Filtering in Messages: Messages are filtered [changed] intentionally. We always try to defend ourselves or protect ourselves during some problems so that many times messages are changed by the inferiors
7. Closed Mind : Most of the time our minds are closed or not able to learn new things. With old age or change in attitude this problem is observed. This is also a very barrier in communication.
8. Status : Status create barriers in the employees . Higher or lower status create obstacles in thinking or mixing with people. People keep distance while communicating due to status barriers.
9. Perceptions :The way we look at the world or attitude determines our Communication strategy. Wrong or negative perceptions can create difficulty in communication . People who have negative perceptions or think negatively look at every thing or event negatively.
10. Poor Retention : ability to retain the message or remember is important. But if it is poor then communication becomes difficult.
11. Interest and Attitudes : Interests and Attitudes of people determines communication strategy. Lack of interest or wrong attitude can lead improper communication.
12. Day-Dreaming: Many students have habits of dreaming or thinking about something else when some lecture is going on or talk is going on. This obstructs the communication and messages are not reached properly.

Question:What is the meaning of the Socio-cultural Barriers?

4.Socio-Cultural Barriers:

Culture is way of life, values or principles .Cultural differences between people can create barriers . Different religious practices are followed around the world. Due to many time differences in the culture can create misunderstanding in communication. Due to globalization and liberalized policies in business, people around the world are travelling and working in multinational corporates or companies. This led to mixing or intermingling between people But 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. The following are examples or socio-cultural barriers.

- 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.
- Food preparation method or serving methods are not the same. There are certain expected norms of eating food in meeting .These are called dining etiquettes.
 - Body Language[Non Verbal Behavior] methods around the world are not same. There can be misunderstandings because of this.
 - Proximity[Concept of Space]differs from culture to culture. In some culture close distance between people is not approved. In some culture close distance is accepted.
 - Value system is not same across the cultures. Values or good behavior or ethical principles guide in our life. But the methods of these value system is not same around the world.
 - **How to overcome the Barriers?**
- Physical Barriers: By overcoming defects in communication system ,by controlling noise ,physical distance Physical Barriers can be overcome to some extent. Though we can't overcome some physical barriers such as time , distance or defects in machine, we can control Physical barriers to some extent. Efforts are required by all people to overcome physical barriers.
- Language Barrier: Lot of efforts are required to overcome Language Barriers. There should be respect for any language before learning new language. It requires many efforts

to learn foreign language. So learning the correct pronunciation and accent and improving vocabulary [word power]we can master a language. We have to improve listening skills and then only language can be understood properly.

- Psychological Barriers: It is true that psychological barriers are difficult to overcome or solve. There must be acceptance of ones mistakes or limitations. This will led to understanding of human life. People do not accept their faults or limitations. This leads to many problems. We have to be humble and respectful towards other people. Many times the sender and the receiver are not in proper frame of mind. So this creates problems in Communication. Misunderstanding, lack of interests, mental and physical disturbance can cause problems because of that. Efforts should be taken by superiors and all reporting people to overcome the problems.
- Socio –Cultural Barriers: These Barriers can be overcome by proper study of other cultures . It is very much essential to learn new cultural values and observing people and accepting their cultures .We have to develop open mindedness in this regard. We have to understand the mannerisms of other people.