

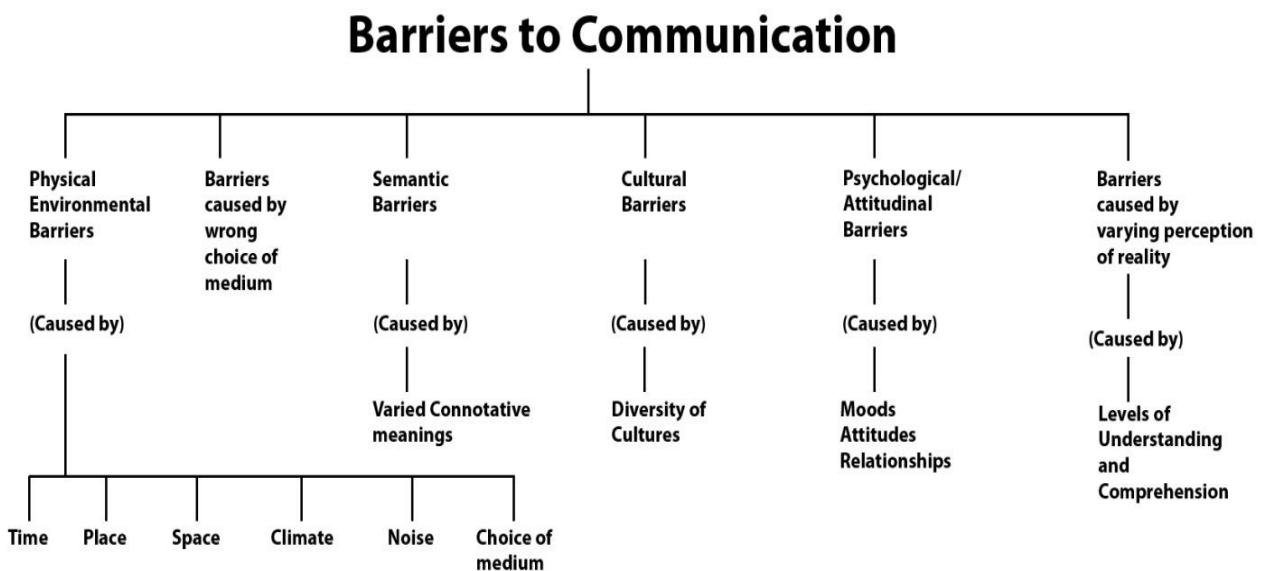
## Chapter 3- Barriers to effective communication

### 3.1 Barriers to Communication:

There are various problems and difficulties in the process of communication which often result in the occurrence of the barriers to communication. Communication barriers are interferences or obstacles which affects not only the transmission of idea or information but also the understanding and acceptance of it. It has an effect on entirely preventing communication, filtering part of it, or giving it an incorrect meaning. The three main causes for the barriers in communication are due to:

1. The deficiencies of the sender
2. The deficiencies of the listener
3. Inappropriate means of communication

The various barriers to the process of communication are given as follows.



### 3.2 Types of Barriers:

There are various problems and difficulties in the process of communication which often result in the occurrence of the barriers to communication. Communication barriers are interferences or obstacles which affects not only the transmission of idea or information but also the understanding and acceptance of it. It has a effect on entirely preventing communication, filtering part of it, or giving it an incorrect meaning. Barriers to communication can be classified as follows on the basis of the stage of the communication process during which the problem arise:

- a) Sender oriented barriers, which include lack of planning, lack of clarity about the purpose of communication, improper choice of words resulting in a badly encoded message, difference in perception, wrong choice of channel, etc.
- b) Receiver oriented barriers like poor listening, lack of interest, difference in perception, biased attitude, etc.
- c) Channel oriented barriers such as noise, wrong selection of medium, technical defects, etc.

The various barriers to the process of communication are given as follows.

- I. Physical or environmental barriers**
- II. Physiological barriers**
- III. Semantic or language barriers**
- IV. Personal barriers**
- V. Emotional**
- VI. Socio- psychological**
- VII. Cultural barriers**
- VIII. Organizational barriers**

**I Physical or environmental barriers:** These are environmental factors which limit the sending and receiving of messages. Often the term Noise is used as a blanket term to refer to this kind. They include distance, noise, breakdown of communication media, faulty mechanical equipments, etc.

- i. Noise: It is the first major barrier to communication. Communication gets disturbed by noise that occurs at the transmission level. For example, the noise of traffic around a school obstructs the flow of information between a student and a teacher. Similarly poor signal while talking over cell phone or using public address system or watching TV also disrupts communication. Bad weather conditions may also sometimes cause barrier to communication.

ii. Time and distance: These may also obstruct the smooth flow of information. For example time difference between two different countries may affect communication between two people. Another example will be two people working in two different shifts may face problems in communicating effectively. Improper seating arrangement in a class also may act as a barrier to the process of communication.

iii. Wrong choice of medium: This can cause a barrier to communication if the sender uses the wrong channel for the transmission of the message which is improper for the audience. For example, if an expert uses a power point presentation for the uneducated factory workers then they will be unable to understand it.

iv. Surroundings: Adverse or extreme weather conditions like, too hot or too cold, their surroundings do have a direct effect on the effectiveness of communication. As environment causes a psychological effect like, too hot weather will cause restlessness and humidity, whereas too cold weather makes a person feel lazy to communicate.

v. Inadequacy of message design/Poorly expressed message: No matter how clear the idea in the mind of the sender, it may still get affected by use of poorly chosen words, long sentences, complex words, poor organization of ideas, use of jargon

## **II Physiological or Biological barriers:**

Physiological barriers are related to a person's health and fitness. These may arise due to disabilities that may affect the physical capability of the sender or the receiver. Proper functioning of the vocal chords, hands, fingers, eyes is necessary for effective communication. For example:

- Speaking can adversely be affected by stammering, fumbling, utterance of improper sounds due to defective vocal organ.
- Listening can be ineffective as a result of defective hearing
- Writing can be failed due to hand injury, numbness, etc.
- Reading can be affected due to poor eyesight.

**III Semantic barriers/ Language Barriers:** The term 'semantic' refers to the systematic study of meaning of the words. Semantic barriers are barriers related to language. They cause obstructions in the process of receiving or understanding of the message during the process of encoding or decoding ideas and words. The most common semantic barriers are listed below:

- i. Misinterpretation of words: Different people mean different meaning while using the same word.
- ii. Use of technical language: It is often found that technical people use technical language, which is related to their profession which is known as jargon. For eg: A manager handed over an important document to a new assistant and told him to burn it( here burn means copy in another computer.) But the new assistant took a different meaning to the word burn and literally burn it with a match stick. Doctors, lawyers, etc. uses a language which a layman cannot understand that, due to lack of knowledge of that language.
- iii. Vocabulary deficiency of both the sender and the receiver may cause semantic barrier to communication.
- iv. Multiple meaning of the words in different context: Different words are used in different ways as per the need/ message. For instance consider the word, 'out' in following sentences:
  - Get out of here
  - Something is out of order in my car
  - The truth got out at last
  - He really stands out in his class.
  - The workers are going out on strike

Thus the word 'out' conveys a different meaning when used in different situations and thus miscommunication occurs.

- iv. Connotative meaning: It differs dramatically from denotative meaning. Eg: depart, go, leave, get out, etc

#### **IV Personal barriers:**

Differences in personal and psychological makeup of individuals may create barrier between people. They arise from judgments, emotions and social values of people. The following are some of the most common personal barriers.

- i. Attitudes and opinions: Assumptions and negative feelings about the receiver, such as hostility may have an effect on the message. In a typical superior subordinate relationship, a subordinator may or may not ask questions, may even withhold information due to fear. Some supervisors may not be open to suggestions and feedback as they presume that their subordinates are not capable of advising them. This creates indifference between them and subordinates do not feel motivated. Attitude thus becomes a barrier to communication.
- ii. Lack of self confidence: Lack of self confidence either on the part of the sender or the receiver while communicating may be a barrier to it.

## **V. Emotional Barriers:**

Emotional barriers are associated with sentiments and emotions.

- i. Blocked mind: Blocked mind considers only limited information and ignores or rejects additional information. An individual who has a blocked mind is rigid and dogmatic. He resists all contradictory communication and pays deaf ear to new ideas.
- ii. Bias and prejudice: If closed minded people are asked for reasons for rejecting a message, they may reveal prejudices. They react with anger and give a sharp rebuff who tries to argue with them. This acts as a barrier in communication.
- iii. Emotions: One's state of mind plays an important role in act of communication. If the sender is worried, excited, afraid, nervous, then he will not be able to organize his message properly. Similarly if the receiver is not in a proper state of mind, he may misinterpret the message.

## **VI Socio-psychological barriers:**

They are similar to perceptual barriers

- i. Selective perception: This means that the receiver selectively see and hear based on their needs, motivations, experience and expectations. In communication, this tendency means that they hear what they want to hear and ignore other relevant information
- ii. Status consciousness: Differences in status and power between the sender and the receiver may constitute another barrier. The subordinate feels very jittery, nervous in front of the supervisor and the supervisors may be reluctant to pass complete information.
- iii. Prejudices: People who are not open to discussions, new ideas, viewpoints and have a closed mind may be a great barrier to communication.
- iv. Halo Effect: Sometimes the listener may be too much in awe of or completely distrust a speaker. When there is a lack of sufficient trust, confidence and faith between the communicating parties, selective listening takes place. In these situations several types of 'noise' enter the communication process. Similarly things like distrust, threat, fear are vital barriers to effective communication.
- v. Physical appearance: Receiver may not like the sender's physical appearance, voice, pronunciation, accent, use of grammar or mannerism. This may cause the receiver to discard the content. Communicator's mood also influences his capacity to communicate, for eg: he may be tired, sleepy, bored, etc.

## **VII Cultural Barriers:**

Culture shapes the way we think and behave. Each group categorized on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, etc. has its own distinctive culture. Cultural differences often cause communication differences. It arises when individuals in one

social group have developed different norms, values, or behaviors to individuals associated with another group. The same category of word, phrases, symbols, actions colors mean different things to different cultures. For eg: In western countries black color is associated with mourning, while in the far east white is the color of mourning. In U.S people love to be called by their first name, while in Britain, people are addressed by their last name.

#### **VIII Organisational barriers:**

- i. Complex organizational structure: A complex org structure has long communication channels which subjects to breakdown of communication.
- ii. Too many levels in the organization: As the message has to pass through many levels, there are chances of distortion, delays or total failure of the message.
- iii. Time and timeliness: time pressures can be a serious obstacle as messages are hastily and inadequately communicated by managers.