LESSON 5



BARRIERS IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION/   
 COMMUNICATION FALLOFF

Outline:

Semantic Barrier

o Denotation

o Connotation

Physical Barriers

Psychological Barriers

o Emotional Barriers

o Perception Barriers   
  Abstracting

 Inferring

Barriers Involving Values, Attitudes etc. Sender’s Credibility

People in the world are not exactly alike. Cultures or countries are not the same. These differences, however, can cause problems in conveying your meanings. Each person’s mind is different from others. As a result, message sender’s meanings and the receiver’s response are affected by many factors, such as the following:

a. Semantic barriers(Convention of Meaning)

b. Physical Barrier

c. Psychological barriers   
 Emotional barriers

Perceptual barriers

d. Barriers involving values attitudes etc.

i) Semantic Barrier (Convention of Meaning)

A basic principle of communication is that the symbols the sender uses to communicate messages   
must have the same meaning in both the sender’s and receiver’s minds. You can never be sure   
that the message in your mind will be clearly sent to your receiver. The world is full with errors,   
as a result of differences in semantic (meaning) understanding. A symbol is a sign for something   
that exits in reality. Thus your name is really a symbol or a word which represents you. Only   
through common experience we learn, in a connection made between the symbol and the word   
attached to you and the person you are in reality. Anyone with less common experience will not   
easily relate the symbol (your name) with you. Besides, there are problems in convention of   
meaning, so you must make yourself familiar with different types of meaning.

Denotation

A denotation is usually the dictionary definition of a word. Denotative meanings name objects, people or events without indicating positive or negative qualities. Such words as car, desk, book, house, and water convey denotative meanings. The receiver has a similar understanding of the thing in which the word is used.

Connotation

A connotation is an implication of a word or a suggestion separate from the usual definition.   
Some words have connotative meanings, that is, qualitative judgment and personal reactions. The   
word man is denotative, father, prophet, brother are connotative. Some words have positive

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connotations in some contexts and negative meanings in others. For example, slim girl and slim   
chances.



ii) Physical Barriers

The communication does not consist of words alone. Another set of barriers is caused by your   
own physical appearance, your audience, or the context of the document or the presentation. Your   
ideas, however good and skillfully imparted, are at the mercy of various potential physical   
barriers.

For Writing:

There is a whole barrage of possible physical blocks, jammed or jagged margins, fingerprints or   
smudges, unclear photocopies, unreadable word processor printout, water and coffee or tea spots   
etc.

For Speaking:

Mumbling, not enunciating, speaking too quickly, noises become of hissing ventilation, blowing   
air conditioning, ringing telephones, slamming doors etc. are different aspects of physical   
barriers.

iii) Psychological Barriers

In this changing world, everyone has his own concept of reality. Also, human beings’ sensory perceptions - touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste are limited, and each person’s mental filter is unique. In our daily interaction with others, we make various abstractions, inferences and evaluations of the world around us.

Emotional Barriers

One possible psychological block is emotional; you may be emotionally blocked when you are   
announcing a new policy that whether you may become popular or unpopular. Similarly, you may   
have emotional barrier while making your first presentation or writing someone you dislike.

Perception Barriers

The perceptual problem is that people think differently so as a result their perception of reality is   
different. The material world provides a special reality to each individual. As human being’s   
sensory perceptions—touch, sight hearing, smell, taste\_\_\_ are similar, and each person’s mental   
filter is unique. We make various abstractions, inferences and evaluations of the world around us.

Abstracting

Selecting some details and omitting others is a process called abstracting. On many occasions   
abstracting is necessary. Differences in abstracting take place not only when persons describe   
events but also when they describe people and objects. However, you should be cautious about   
“slanted” statements.

Slanting is unfair in factual reporting. When presenting some particular facts, you include your own biased ideas into it, you make slanting statement. Try not to let personal preferences affect your factual reporting of information.

Inferring

Conclusions made by reasoning from evidence are called inferences. We make assumptions and draw conclusions even though we are not able to verify the evidence immediately. Some inferences are both necessary and desirable; others are risky, even dangerous.

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Necessary Inferences

When we reach a foreign country, we are sure that we will be treated politely. When we post a letter, we infer that it will reach its destination. When we base our inferences on direct observation or on reasonable evidence, they are likely to be quite dependable. Conclusion we make about things we have not observed directly can often be untrue.

As an intelligent communicator, we must realize that inferences may be incorrect or unreliable and anticipate the risks before acting on them. Be careful to distinguish clearly among verifiable facts, and mere guess work.

Barriers Involving Values, Attitudes

Both personality and attitude are complex cognitive process. The difference is that personality   
usually is thought of as the whole person whereas attitude may be the part of personality. The   
term attitude describes people and explains their behavior. More precisely an attitude can be   
defined as a persistent tendency to feel and behave in a particular way towards some object. For   
example: Naeem does not like night shift, so his attitude is negative towards his work assignment.

A receiver’s attitude towards a message can determine whether it is accepted or rejected. The   
effectiveness is also influenced by the values, attitudes, and opinions of the communicators. The   
people react favorably when they receive agreeable message. Receivers’ views of the information   
will affect their responses. This response could be what the sender desires or just the opposite.   
Occasionally people react according to their attitudes toward a situation rather than to the facts.

Closed Mind

Some people hold rigid views on certain subjects. They maintain their rigid views regardless of the circumstances. Such a closed minded person is very difficult to communicate to.

Sender’s Credibility

Credibility of the sender is important in getting a favorable reaction. Often people react more according to their attitude towards the source of information than to the information itself. An effective communication builds credibility by writing and speaking in a fair and just manner and by considering receiver’s point of view. Other circumstances, such as environmental stresses, personal problems, and sensitivity affect attitudes, opinions and responses.

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