



Facets And Challenges Of Effective Communication

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ABSTRACT

Modern English sometimes described as the first global lingua franca, is the dominant language or in some instances even the required international language of communications, science, information technology, business, seafaring, aviation, entertainment, radio and diplomacy. Its spread beyond the British Isles began with the growth of the British Empire and by the late 19th century its reach was truly global. English is the language most often studied as a foreign language in the European Union, by 89% of school children, ahead of French at 32%, while the perception of the usefulness of Foreign languages amongst Europeans is 68% in favour of English ahead of 25% for French. One impact of the growth of English is the reduction of native linguistic diversity in many parts of the world. Communication is a process including the sharing of information and mutual understanding among persons at same or different levels. At every stage of the communication process, however, there are barriers, which hinder or dilute the flow of communication. Miscommunication can originate at three levels: at the level of the transmitter, of the medium or of the receiver. In technical parlance, anything that obstructs free flow of communication is called 'noise' or 'barrier' to communication.

Introduction

Human language is unique in comparison to other forms of communication, such as those used by animals, because it allows humans to produce an infinite set of utterances from a finite set of elements and because the symbols and grammatical rules of any particular language are largely arbitrary, so that the system can only be acquired through social interaction. The known systems of communication used by animals on the other hand can only express a finite number of utterances that are mostly genetically transmitted. Human language is also unique in that it's a complex structure has evolved to serve a much wider range of functions than any other kinds of communication system.

Yet another definition sees language as a system of communication that enables humans to cooperate. This definition stresses the social functions of language and the fact that humans use it to express themselves and to manipulate objects in their environment. This view of language is associated with the study of language in a functional or pragmatic framework, as well as in socio-linguistic and linguistic anthropology. In the philosophy of language these views are often associate with Wittgensteins later works and with ordinary language philosophers such as G.E.Moore, Paul Grice, John Searle and J.L.Austin

English as a Language

English is a West Germanic Language that arose in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of England and spread into what was to become south-east Scotland under the influence of the Anglian medieval kingdom of Nothumbria. Following the economic, political, military, scientific, cultural and colonial influence of Great Britain and the United Kingdom from the 18th Century, via the British Empire, and of the United States since the mid-20th Century, it has been widely dispersed around the world, become the leading language of international discourse, and has acquired use as lingua franca in many regions. It is widely learned as a second language and used as an official language of the European Union and many Commonwealth Countries, as well as in many world organizations. It is the third most natively spoken language in the world after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. It is the most widely spoken language across the world.

English as an Official Language

Because English is so widely spoken, it has often been referred to as a 'world language', the lingua franca of the modern era and while it is not an official language in most countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a foreign language. Some linguists believe that it is no longer the exclusive cultural property of 'native English speakers', but is rather a language that is absorbing aspects of cultures worldwide as it continues to grow. It is, by international treaty, the official language for aerial and maritime communications. English is an official language of the United Nations and many other International organizations, including the International Olympic Committee.

English is the language most often studied as a foreign language in the European Union, by 89% of school children, ahead of French at 32%, while the perception of the usefulness of Foreign languages amongst Europeans is 68% in favour of English ahead of 25% for French. Among some non-English speaking European Union Countries, a large percentage of the adult population can converse in English – particular: 85% in Sweden, 83% in Denmark, 79% in Netherlands, 66% in Luxembourg and 50% in Finland, Slovenia, Austria, Belgium and Germany. Books, magazines and newspapers written in English are available in many countries around the world, and English is the most commonly used language in the sciences with Science Citation Index reporting as early as 1997 that 95% of its articles were written in English, even though only half of them came from authors in English-speaking countries.

This increasing use of the English language globally has had a large impact on many other languages leading to language shift and even language death, and to claims of linguistic imperialism. English itself is now open to language shift as multiple regional varieties feed back into the language as a whole.

Communication in English

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Following British colonisation from the 16th to 19th centuries, it became the dominant language in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The growing economic and cultural influence of the US and its status as a global superpower since World War II has significantly accelerated the language's spread across the planet. English replaced German as the dominant language of science. Nobel Prize laureates during the second half of the 20th century (compare the Evolution of Nobel Prizes by country). English equalled and may have surpassed French as the dominant language of diplomacy during the last half of the 19th Century.

A working knowledge of English has become a requirement in a number of fields, occupations and professions such as medicine and computing; as a consequence, over a billion people speak English to at least a basic level. It is one of six official languages of the United Nations.

One impact of the growth of English is the reduction of native linguistic diversity in many parts of the world. Its influence continues to play an important role in language attrition. Conversely, the natural internal varieties of English along with creoles and pidgins have the potential to produce new distinct languages from English over time.

Concept of Communication

The term communication is derived from the Latin word 'Communicare' which refers to sharing, contributing, informing, popularizing and spreading. Communication can be expressed as a process in which individuals (two or more) share their views, suggestions, evidences, thoughts and feelings. The individuals involved in this process are known as sender and receiver.

Communication is a process including the sharing of information and mutual understanding among persons at same or different levels. Management of an organization uses communication in assigning and controlling the employees' work. Communication offers help to the workers in achieving their individual goals by making them aware of the internal as well as external events which are also beneficial for the organization. It motivates and correlates the individual and group performance with a view to attain the organizational objectives. Communication is crucial in order to provide a worthwhile interaction among people to begin, carry-out, achieve or to averse some particular situations.

Hence, communication can be understood as an exchange of views, ideas or information by gaining knowledge and assurance in order to maintain cordial industrial relations. It leads towards the harmony of common goal, interest, and actions in an organization.

According to **Newman and Summer**: "Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons."

According to **Keith Davis**: "Communication is a process of passing information and understanding from one person to another."

According to the **American Management Association**: “Communication is any behaviour that results in an exchange of meaning.”

According to **Peter Little**: “Communication is the process by which information is transmitted between individuals and /or organizations so that an understanding response results.

Nature of Communication: Nature of communication is as follows

- 1) **Inevitable:** Communication is a social and psychological activity. If a person is facilitated with all physical comforts, but is not allowed to read, write, speak or listen he will become mentally weak and incapable of performing any task. Hence, communication is very important.
- 2) **Continuous Process:** Communication is an ongoing process and not an art or time-based event. It includes various events and actions that are interconnected and dependent on each other.
- 3) **Two-way Traffic:** Communication is said to be incomplete unless the receiver is able to understand the message. So, it can be said that feedback is very essential for effective communication. Thereafter, communication is a two-way traffic instead of one-way traffic.
- 4) **Short-lived process:** It is said to be a short-lived process, because as soon the receiver receives the message and understands it in the right context, the communication process is completed.
- 5) **Universal Phenomenon:** Communication takes place everywhere. Not only human beings but birds, animals, etc., also communicate. Hence, it is termed as a widespread phenomenon.
- 6) **Contextual:** Communication always takes place in a particular context. Similar words may lead to different meanings if spoken in different contexts. Therefore meaning may change according to the context.
- 7) **Needs Proper Understanding:** For proper understanding of the message, the message should be clearly and briefly expressed in words, as the media for communication are many but the main objective is proper understanding of the message by the receiver.
- 8) **Leads to the Achievement of Organizational Objectives:** Effective communication leads to achievement of the organizational objectives by creating a sense of objectivity in the organization.
- 9) **Eliminates Misunderstanding:** Misunderstandings occur when there is a failure to understand or interpret words or actions correctly. Communication removes misunderstanding among people and lead to friendship among them.

Challenges

As communication is as old as time itself, and the ability of mankind to communicate across barriers and beyond boundaries has progressed with remarkable speed, still the use of language for communication is not free from ignorance. As English proverb says

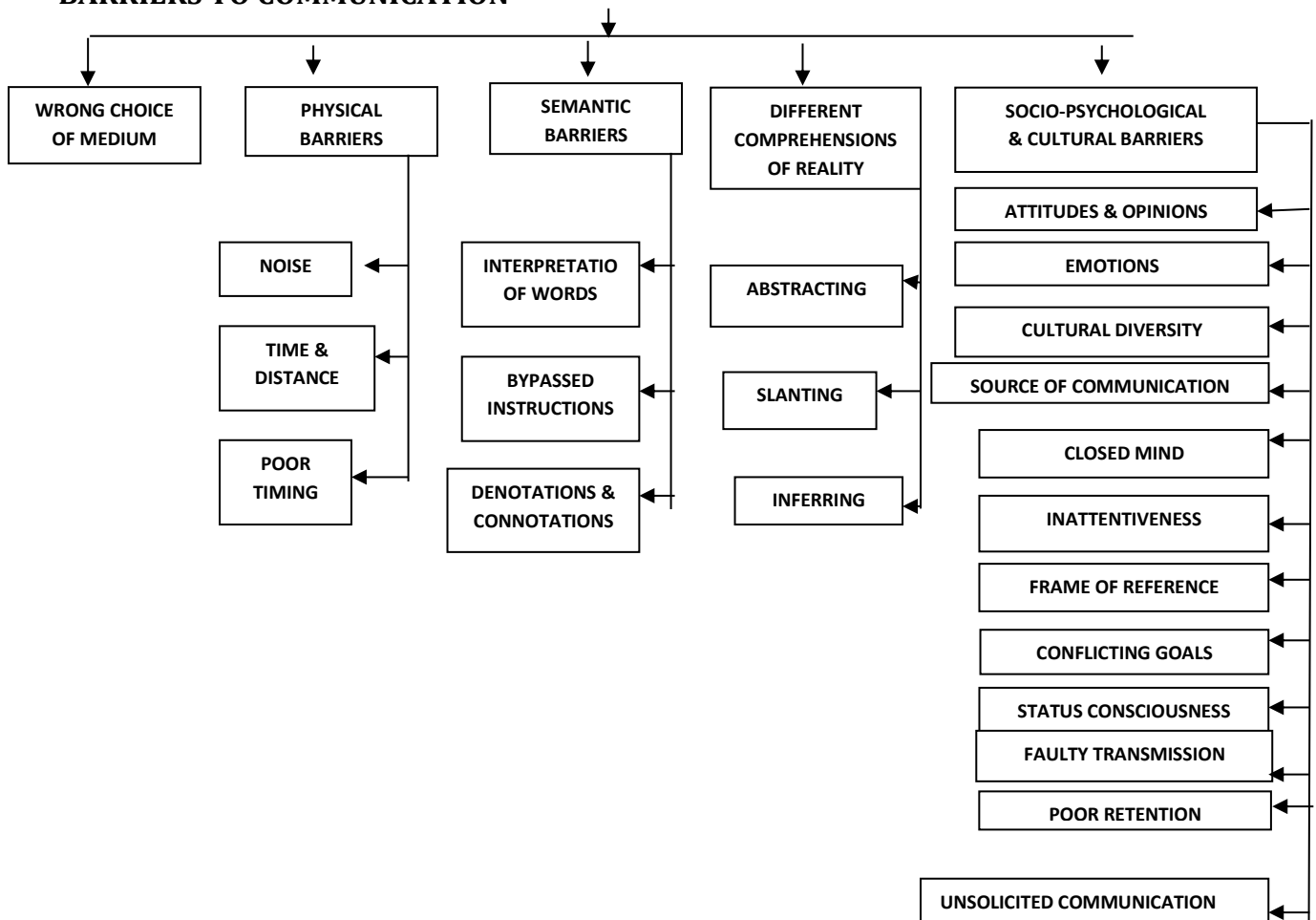
“The path of true love never runs smooth”, the same hold good with communications. Its path is mined with external and internal obstacles which hinder effective communication.

Murphy’s Laws of Communication says:

- Communication usually fails –except by chance.
- If any message can be understood in many ways, it will usually be understood in the way that can cause the most harm.

At every stage of the communication process, however, there are barriers, which hinder or dilute the flow of communication. In the past, a major barrier to communication may have been the distance separating one business location from another, but in the modern world of the internet and satellite communication, there are still many other barriers which get in problems relating to smooth working and human relations exist today in the enterprise because of these barriers. They generate confusion and misunderstanding in the organization creating delays and distortions of the information. Due to such disturbances, organizations face severe problems

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION



Business communication is especially more prone to misunderstanding because the message in complex, conditions are difficult and psychological and social differences

often separate the sender and receiver. Miscommunication can originate at three levels: at the level of the transmitter, of the medium or of the receiver. In technical parlance, anything that obstructs free flow of communication is called 'noise' or 'barrier' to communication.

1. Wrong Choice of Medium: Whenever we communicate something, we have a variety of media to choose from – oral, written, visual, audio-visual, computer-based etc. All these media have their relative merits and limitations. While properly chosen medium can add to the effectiveness of communication, an unsuitable medium may act as a barrier to it. So, each communication must be transmitted through an appropriate medium.

2. Physical Barriers:

- a) **Noise:** Noise is quite often a barrier to communication. In factories, oral communication is rendered difficult by the loud noise of machines. Electronic noise like blaring often interferes in communication by telephone or loudspeaker system. However, noise is also used to refer to all kinds of physical interference like illegible handwriting, smudged copies of duplicated typescript, poor telephone connections etc.
- b) **Time and Distance:** Sometimes mechanical breakdowns of telephone along with computer technology render these facilities ineffective. In such cases, the distance between the transmitter and the receiver becomes a mighty barrier. Some factories run in shifts. There is a kind of communication gap between persons working in different shifts. Faulty seating arrangement in the room can also become a barrier to effective communication.
- c) **Poor Timing:** Sending a communication at a wrong moment considerably reduces its effectiveness. In particular, if a communication is sent close to a deadline, it evokes resentment and fails to deliver the message.

3. Semantic Barriers:

- a) **Interpretation of Words:** Most of the communication is carried on through words, whether spoken or written. But words are capable of communicating a variety of meanings. It is quite possible that the receiver of a message does not assign the same meaning to a word as the transmitter has intended. This may lead to miscommunication.
- b) **Bypassed instructions:** Bypassing is said to have occurred if the sender and the receiver of a message attributes different meanings to the same word or use different words for the same meaning.
- c) **Denotations and Connotations:** Words have two types of meanings: denotative and connotative. The literal meaning of a word is called its denotative meaning. It just informs and names objects without indicating any positive or negative qualities. Words like table, book, and accounts are denotative. In contrast connotative

meanings arouse qualitative judgments and personal reactions. Honest, competent, cheap, sincere etc are connotative words.

4. **Different Comprehensions of Reality:** The reality of an object, an event, or a person is different to different people. Reality is not a fixed concept; it is complex, infinite and continually changing. Besides, each human being has limited sensory perceptions and a unique mental filter. No two person perceive reality in identical manners. On account of different abstractions, inferences, and evaluations, they comprehend reality in different ways. This may sometimes lead to miscommunication.
 - a) **Abstracting:** Abstract may be defined as the process of focusing attention on some details and omitting others. In numerous cases, abstracting is both necessary and desirable, for it may save us valuable time, space and money. But abstracting poses a grave barrier to communication, for details which look pertinent to one reporter may look insignificant or trivial to another.
 - b) **Slanting:** Slanting is giving a particular bias or slant to the reality. In slanting, we are aware of the existence of other aspects, but we deliberately select a few a make them representative of the whole. Unfortunately, the aspects that we select are usually unfavorable.
 - c) **Inferring:** What we directly see, hear, feel, taste, smell or can immediately verify and confirm constitutes a fact. The statements that go beyond facts and the conclusions based on facts are called inferences.

5. **Socio-psychological Barriers & Cultural Barriers:**

- a) **Attitudes and Opinions:** Personal attitudes and opinions often act as barriers to effective communication. If information agrees with our opinions and attitudes, we tend to receive it favorably. Anything contrary automatically turns us off.
- b) **Emotions:** Emotional states of mind play an important role in the act of communication. If the sender is perplexed, worried, excited, afraid, nervous, his thinking will be blurred and he will not be able to organize his message properly.
- c) **Cultural diversity:** Cultural differences often prove to be powerful communication barriers. What constitutes perfectly decent etiquette in one country may be offensive in another. Certain gestures acceptable in one religion could be immoral in another. Unfamiliarity with other cultures may sometimes land one in an embarrassing situation.
- d) **Closed mind:** A person with a closed mind is very difficult to communicate with. He has deeply ingrained prejudices and he is not prepared to reconsider his opinions.
- e) **Frame of reference:** Each individual has a unique frame of reference determined by their cultural inheritance, birth and experience, upbringing, education, general awareness, etc. Our response to any communication is colored by our frame of reference.
- f) **Status -consciousness:** Status -consciousness proves to be a serious barrier in face-to-face communication. The subordinate feels jittery and nervous, fidgets about

where he is standing, falters in his speech and fails in communicating what exactly what he wanted to say. The officer, on the other hand, reveals impatience and starts giving comments or advice before he has fully heard his subordinate. Consequently, there is a total failure of communication.

- g) **The source of communication:** If the receiver has a suspicion about or prejudice against the source of communication, there is likely to be a barrier to communication. People often tend to react more according to their attitude to the source of facts than to the facts themselves.
- h) **Inattentiveness:** People often become inattentive while receiving a message, in particular, if the message contains a new idea. The adult human mind usually resists change, for change makes things uncertain. It also threatens security and stability. So the moment a new idea is presented to people, they unconsciously become inattentive.
- i) **Conflicting goals:** If the receiver's goal are in conflict with the sender's they are not likely to respond objectively to a communication.
- j) **Faulty transmission:** A message is never communicated from one person to another in its entirety. This is true in particular oral messages. In the process of interpretation, simplification and translation, a part of the message gets lost or distorted.
- k) **Poor retention:** Poor retention of communication also acts as a barrier. Studies show that employees retain only about 50% of the information communicated to them. Poor retention may lead to imperfect responses, which may further hamper the communication process.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS: Different communication barriers can be checked or overcome by means of different strategies. There cannot be a single solution to overcome them.

- Choose the right medium; send the message at an appropriate time.
- Use words that generate positivity.
- Adapt your message to the receiver's frame or reference
- See how you would respond if you were to receive the message you are going to send. Reframe it if you feel it might offend.
- Convey your message in a positive and courteous tone.
- Seek feedback and offer clarification if needed.

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