

Communication Barriers : Notes on Barriers to effective communication | 2020

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Barriers to Effective Communication

UGC NET Study materiel on Communication Topics for NET Exam has been covered entirely based on topics provided in the syllabus. In the 5 Parts series which can be referred using below, the first four parts contain important short study notes useful for your paper 1 preparation while the 5th part contains solved question papers of last almost 12 years MCQ Question.

Please sequentially go through them to understand them in better ways.

Unit-IV Communication(Based on Latest UGC NET Syllabus)

This part of the blog post will cover the important topic of Communication; in the past, this has been seen that 2/3 Question was asked based on “Principle barriers in Communication” & “How to Overcome on them”

Objective

In this part we will cover followings:

- Introduction to Categories of Communication Barriers
- Main Key Point of Different Categories
- Technical Aspects of Communication Barriers
- How to overcome those
- Suggested Readings

Introduction

The information to be communicated should be clear and accurate. If an individual sends the message, and the other one receives it and interprets it in the same way as the sender had intended to express, the process of communication is said to be complete and successful. However, Communication is not always successful. Certain barriers in communication affect the clarity, accuracy and effectiveness of the message.

Several things can prevent the message from reaching the intended recipient or from having the desired effect on the recipient. There may be some fault in the communication system as well.

Types of Communication Barriers

As the barriers to communication influence the major variables in the communication process, they may be categorized on various bases.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

Study Material for UGC NET PAPER 1

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SEMANTIC BARRIERS

Different people assign different meanings to one specific message. This is due to the problems with meaning, significance, and the sending and reception of the meaning and content of the message.

ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS

This type of barrier develops due to the problems with physical distance between members with respect to their functional specialization of tasks, power, authority and status relationship, values held, and ownership of information.

INTERPERSONAL BARRIERS

These barriers also develop in the process of communication. They are based upon the relationships, values held, and attitudes of the

INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS

These are also called psycho-sociological barriers. The problem of this barrier arises due to differences in individual competencies to think

field, and attitudes of the participants in the process of communication.

in individual competencies to think and act, which would include physical ailments or handicaps.

CROSS CULTURAL (GEOGRAPHIC) BARRIERS

Culture is a shared set of values and attributes of a group. The communication barriers are also seen because of time, geographic locations, and the effects of time upon reception of the message and other cross cultural factors.

PHYSICAL BARRIERS/ MEDIA BARRIERS

The effectiveness and accuracy of communication is also affected by the physical barriers like distance, noise or channel and the media used in the process. In this category, problems that confront the media used in the process.

TECHNOLOGICAL BARRIERS

They are barriers which arise due to technological advancements in the field of communication. Technology generates lot of information, which is beyond the capacity of the recipient. Further, the media advancements on account of technological process increase the barriers.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

Main Key Point of barriers to effective communication

The ideas and message have to reach from the transmitter to receive in the same sense. If it does not happen, it is on account of barriers to communication.

Main Key Point of barriers can be explained as follows:

Semantic barriers

This barrier is related to the process of coding and decoding the message. Various types of semantic gaps found in the day-to-day use of people are as follows:

- ***Words having similar pronunciation but multiple meaning:*** Same pronunciation but are having many meanings. *For example sight, site, cite.*

- **Badly expressed message:** Lack of clarity and precision make the message badly expressed. Lack of coherence, awkward sentence structure, jargons etc. are common faults, which lead to such messages.
- **Wrong interpretation:** Whenever one interprets a symbol, his understanding may differ with others.

The Hindi word 'kaka' means uncle in one part of the country but the small boy in another part of the country.

Technical Language: When technical language is used in the communication process, it creates barriers in understanding the message in the same sense and the same spirit. When technical jargons or specialist languages are used in the communication and conversation process, they create tension, confusion and misunderstanding between the sender and the receiver.

New meanings given to ordinary words by computer technology; to people who are not familiar with computers, "mouse" is only an animal, whereas in computer jargon, it is a device.

Organizational Barriers

It may originate in contradictory management policies or too many levels of management or the clash between line and staff operations. The specialized nature of functions or even the special language of those functions may cause it. It may have its source in formal-informal, or grapevine transactions. Following are the organizational barriers in communication:

- **Organization culture and climate:** In every organization, there exists a unique culture and climate. The climate and culture of an organization ultimately influence the freedom, thrust and interaction pattern among people in an organization.
- **Organizational rules and regulations:** The rules and regulations of the organization vary widely from one organization to another. They may be so rigid that they may influence the flow of information in the wrong direction.
- **Status relationships:** The status, power and position relationship acts as the hurdle in the effectiveness of communications. Individuals may not be able to say what they wish to say because of their fear for the position and power of the other party in the communication process. The complex hierarchical structure of the organization like too tall or too much of divisionalisation of the organization may not facilitate the free flow of communication.
- **Lack of cooperation between superior and subordinate:** There may not be proper cooperation between the superior and subordinate for various personal or organizational relationships, which may hold to improper communication in an organization.

Interpersonal Barriers

The effectiveness of Communication depends a lot on the interpersonal relationship between two people. If and when the sender and receiver are at the same economic, educational and status level and also have a good rapport with each other, there is hardly any barrier arising in communication. But, in case of a difference at any level, there is a greater chance of Miscommunication. The most common example for this in an organization is the Barriers relating to Superior and Subordinate.

The subordinate must follow the order of the superior, carry out all work efficiently, and provide full information related to any matter, which arises in the organization or any work. Moreover, the superior should have full confidence in himself and the subordinate.

1. **Lack of proper channel:** There may be complexity in the organizational structure, which may influence proper and effective communication from the subordinate. They may not feel free to communicate because of the pressure of position power and authority.
2. **No interest to communicate:** There may not be any interest on the part of subordinates to have a dialogue, discussion and interaction with their superiors, which affect the communication process adversely.
3. **Lack of cooperation:** lack of cooperation and mutual understanding also leads to the hiding of certain information between the superior and subordinates in the organization.
4. **Lack of trust:** There may be a lack of trust and coordination between the superior and the subordinate, which may lead to infective communication.
5. **The poor relationship between superior and subordinate:** A good relationship must develop between superiors and subordinates frequently and freely. They must interact to improve the upward and downward communication system. The superior must listen to the subordinates' suggestion, their problems, and must have faith in them. In the absence of all this, it may so happen that what the superior speaks, the subordinate may not understand it.
6. **Fear of penalty:** If subordinate feels that because of free expression and upward communication he will face some type of penalty, there is a possibility that he may not provide a full or correct message to the superior.

Individual / Psycho-sociological Barriers:

Individual or Psycho-sociological barriers are the prime barriers in interpersonal communication. People have different styles of communication. People also have personal feelings, desires, fears, hopes, likes, dislikes, attitudes, views and opinions. The meaning assigned to a message depends upon the emotional or psychological status of both the parties involved in the process of communication.

1. **Style:** Style, how a person communicates, involves many elements, though style overlaps with several of the other factors in the analysis, it adds its distinct flavour.

2. **Selective perception:** The receiver may make a world of his own around himself. He projects his interest and expectations as he decodes messages. He may only take that much piece of information, which may suit his world of thinking. As a result, the person acquires incomplete and inappropriate information, which influence the communication process. Having a poor self-concept or self-understanding, or a poor understanding of others can cause perceptual distortions.
3. **Halo effect:** People do not listen carefully because of impressions based on earlier encounters. Even one of the parties having a halo effect will disrupt the flow of communication.
4. **Status relationship:** There maybe status and power relationship, which may hinder the communication process and affect the effectiveness of communication. Status effects also hinder communication is as much as people occupying higher positions in the organization tend to “tell a lot to subordinates but not to listen, effective communication is not possible.
5. **Poor attention and Retention:** About half of the information, if not properly retained, is lost. The sender may suffer from each problem. It also said that about 30% of the information is lost in each oral transmission. Human memory may not always retain what it is told. This causes communication breakdown and necessitates the repetition of the message using several channels
6. **Inattention:** The preoccupied mind of the receiver and the reluctant non-listening is one of the major psychologies barriers. It is because of it that people do not react to ideas/messages received in communication.
7. **Undue importance of written words:** The undue importance given to the written words may lead to loss of information. The successive information is not accurate and right. Written communication often tells what is to be done but not why it should be done. It takes the persuasive quality.
8. **Defensiveness:** If one feels threatened by a message, one becomes defensive and responds in such ways that reduce the understanding. Such defensive behaviour prevents understanding.
9. **Closed Mind:** Limited intellectual background, limited reading and narrow interests can cause a person’s mind to be narrow. This limits the ability to take in new ideas. People with closed minds do not take in any new information or suggestions to change.
10. **State of Health:** Physical condition can affect the efficiency in all communication skills. In the case of the poor health condition, the communicating ability is reduced as the mind is not alert and perception is low.
11. **Filtering:** Filtering is the process of reducing the details or aspects of a message. Each person who receives the message reduces it according to his or her understanding of the situation. In this process, much of the important information may be lost or misinterpreted and the sender will fail to convey what he wants to convey.

Cross-Cultural/ Geographic Barriers:

Culture is a shared set of values and attributes of a group; it is the total of the ways of living built up by a group and transmitted from one generation to another. Culture is so much a part of an individual's manner of talking, behaving and thinking, that communication style and competence are influenced by it.

Some of the significant differences between cultures are:

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- National Character/ Basic Personality.
- Language
- Values and norms of behaviour
- Social relationships
- Concepts of time
- Concepts of space
- Nonverbal communication
- Perception

Words, colours and symbols have different meanings in different cultures. For example:

- *In England, an invitation for dinner 8 pm would see most guests arriving at about 8.15; in Germany punctuality is king; in Greece, 9 to 9.30 might be the norm; in India even later- if at all.*
- *In most parts of the world nodding your head means agreement, shaking your head means no-except in some parts of India, where the reverse is true.*
- *When the Japanese say "Yes", they mean, "Yes, I am listening". The Americans may take it to mean, "Yes, I agree".*
- *Wearing white colour on marriage may be forbidden in some cultures, whereas, in other cultures, the main wedding dress is white.*

Physical Barriers/ Channel and Media Barriers

Physical distractions cause a lot of noise, often literally: insufficiently insulated rooms with car noises filtering through, poor lighting, and such things as frequent movement of bodies postures, with a pen in the hand, even the arrival of coffee at a critical stage on the communication process are the causes of communication barriers in organizations. Constant telephone interruptions are one of the commonest physical distractions. These obstacles prevent a message from reaching the intended recipient.

The following obstacles are considered under this category:

Noise: Noise is any disturbance which occurs in the transmission process. In face to face conversation without a microphone, the air may be disturbed by noise in the environment such as traffic, factory work, a typewriter clattering away in a nearby office and people talking, and so on. Wider connotation of noise includes many other factors that are likely to hinder communication. Sometimes, the inner chatting going on in the mind of the listener, which distracts the message received, is also termed as Noise.

Environment: Interferences may also arise from external transceivers, number of links in the chain and circumstantial factors:

The same sort of differentiation in circumstances counts for the channels within each of the levels and in broader terms for the oral, written, and non-verbal communication.

For example, a speech delivered before a small dinner gathering will be different from the same speech delivered before an auditorium full of people. Everyone is markedly different while sitting to watch a cricket match rather than a legal hearing. Still another circumstantial feature a listener who has to stand because the seats are all taken is generally not the same as he or she would be if seated comfortably

Defects in the Medium: Defects in the devices used for transmitting communication are external and usually not in the control of the sender or receiver. The telephone, the postal system, the courier service or even the electronic media may fail or break down.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS IN COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

A few technical aspects in communication barriers are **briefly narrated by Murphy's Law on communication:** Following are the basics in this law on communication:

- **Communication usually fails.** Except by chance, it succeeds. On account of various barriers, the possibility of success in the flow of communication is rare.
- **If the message can be understood,** in different ways, it will be understood in just the way that does the most harm. People receive message in their way. In most of the cases, the most harmful side of communication is considered.
- It refers to the sender manipulating information so that the receiver will see it as more favourable. In organizations, the information is condensed and synthesized. Objective information does not reach to the authority. The more the vertical levels in the organization's hierarchy, the more opportunities there are for filtering.
- **Meta communication.** In a communication apart from the message, there is a Meta message. Meta message exists in the people's minds because of their actions such as being hard to contact. It is the most important thing in seat word language.

Noise in the communication process. Noise can enter the communication process because of situational factors. It is one of the factors influencing the communication process. Noise is mostly related to mechanical distractions. A few

noise distractions are as follows: (i) Human sounds, (ii) Traffic, (iii) Telephone instruments (iv) Channel defects (v) Birds (vi) Trees (vii) Fans (viii) Chalk writing (ix) Use of Duster (x) Projector and (xi) Nasal Voice

OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS IN COMMUNICATION

Constant effort is required to overcome the barriers which unconsciously creep up in the process of Communication. Barriers can be overcome if sufficient effort is put into the communication process and it is desired that communication be effective and efficient.

One way of reducing the effects of these barriers is to check continuously during the communication process what the message is. The actions to be taken by the Sender, Receiver and together with the two of them, to achieve this are listed below:

Sender: The sender should be clear about the following Ws and H:

WHO	To whom should the message go?
WHY	Why should I communicate? What are the motives?
WHAT	Decide what to communicate. Be clear about what one needs to communicate.
WHEN	The best time for optimum reception is chosen.
HOW	Use a language, which the receiver will understand and which is unambiguous.
WHERE	Choose a location which will not interfere with the reception, understanding and acceptance of the message: Privately? Home or away? In a group? At work or outside?

Receiver: The receiver can be aware of the following, to overcome the barriers:

- Be fully attentive to the sender.
- Listen actively to the message being sent.
- Ask for clarification and repetition wherever necessary.
- Keep checking the receipt of information with sender.

Both: Receiver and Sender can make the Communication Flawless if they:

- Realize that misunderstandings are bound to occur, and be alert for all cues to this effect.
- Listen, listen, listen, and listen again.
- Share opinions, feelings and perceptions generated by the message.

Note thus, both parties separately as well as together have to work to remove the barriers and achieve the communication effectiveness. For example, a manager tries to get things done through other people. The management of people can be called leadership, and all of us have our preferred leadership styles, which affect how we communicate with others, especially our staff.

Measures to Overcome Barriers in Communication

Following are some of the additional measures to overcome the barriers to communication:

1. **Fostering good relationship:** Strong relationships must be fostered between the employer and the employee to avoid misunderstanding and accept each other's viewpoints to remove the barriers and to facilitate proper communication in the organization.
2. **Purposeful and well-focused Communication:** Communication should be purposeful and directed to an individual. At the end of the Communication, the receiver should not be left to feel that communication had been meaningless or useless.
3. **Coordination between superiors and subordinates:** In case the superior thinks on one line, which is different from the subordinate and vice versa, it will affect the effectiveness of communication. Therefore, there should be good and proper coordination and cooperation between the superior and subordinate for effective communication.
4. **Avoid technical language:** The specialized language should be avoided. There should be all efforts to use the language commonly understood by the receiver and sender of the message. There should be the least use of technical jargons in the communication process.
5. **Feedback:** The selective perception of the receiver should be minimized through proper feedback. The drawback of selective perception should be explained to minimize the barriers.
6. **Accuracy:** There should be accuracy in the message to be transmitted between parties to the communication to improve its effectiveness.
7. **The clarity in the message:** The message to be transferred should be clear, practical accurate and without any ambiguity.
8. **Communication of organizational philosophy:** Efforts have to be made in a planned way to sensitize people with organizational philosophy. It should be properly communicated to its employees so that they give proper attention to their day to day communication.

9. **Flat organizational structure:** The organization should have a clear cut and simple organizational structure. The tall hierarchical structure should be removed, and it should be changed to a flat structure to avoid excessive control of information. Wrong information to be transferred to anyone in the organization will prove detrimental. Proper redesign of organizational structure will reduce the status gap. The status effect can occur when one person is considerably higher in the hierarchy than another.
10. **Division of labour:** There should be proper division of labour between the persons to reduce information overload and prevent delay in information transfer.
11. **Organization policies:** The organization should formulate its policies in such a way that it will give full advantage to all members of the organization. It should be flexible and easy to implement. While the organization's goal must be clear, everyone must know about his position, his right in organizational communication. The network has to be fully developed so that no such type of barriers exists. Moreover, there should be consistency when message is passed from sender to receiver. One should not introduce his view in the message. It must be clear and understood by everyone easily. Timeline in the message should be there. If it is not passed in time, such message will be of no use.
12. **Minimize semantic problem:** People use either the same word in different ways or different words in the same way. One will be surprised to know that there are 15 different meanings of the word 'charge' in the English language. They also occur when people use jargons or professional shorthand which they expect others to understand, or language which is outside the other's vocabulary.
13. **Proper communication channels:** If one wants immediate action from the receiver, there is no need to send a lengthy discussion report. One would probably pick up the telephone or go to his office to tell him what to do. Remember also that one picture is worth a thousand words, and in this age of computer graphics, the information can be produced more quickly in this way too.
14. **Right feedback:** Although one -way communication is quicker, two -way communication is more accurate. In complex situations, it helps both the sender and receiver to measure their understanding and improves their joint commitment to the task. It enables both parties to identify and correct misunderstanding leading to a higher quality of reception and acceptance.

To communicate effectively, we need to overcome all the barriers and own skills to improve the existing communication abilities

Lets Summarize This :

- The Communication Barriers are the negative forces that may affect the effectiveness of communication by acting upon any or all of the basic elements of the communication process and sender/receiver/channel.

- The barriers to communication can be categorized as follows:
 - **Semantic Barriers:** Arising out of different meanings assigned to the same words by different people or difference in interpretation
 - **Organizational Barriers:** Arising out of Organizational Policies, Culture, Climate, Rules, etc
 - **Interpersonal Barriers:** Arising due to the relationship between the sender and receiver, especially between Superior and subordinate
 - **Psycho sociological/ Individual Barriers:** Arising due to personal characteristics of the sender and receiver and factors like filtering, style, state of health, etc.
 - **Cross-Cultural Barriers:** Arising due to difference in Cultural Values and Beliefs of sender and receiver. They may be on account of difference in Language, National Character, Time, etc.
 - **Physical barriers:** Barriers of Distance, Defects of Medium, Environment, Noise, etc.
 - **Technological barriers:** Arising due to Technological advancements.
- To overcome barriers, the Sender should be aware, as to Whom, Why, Where, What message is to be transmitted and How is it to be transmitted. The Receiver should listen to the message attentively.
- There are various Measures to Overcome the Barriers to Communication, like removing Semantic difficulties, giving proper feedback, removing organizational bottlenecks, and so on.