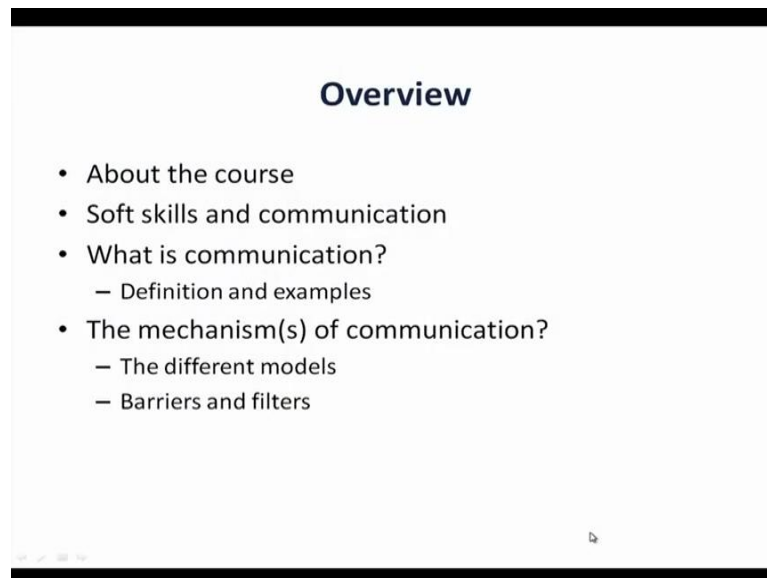


Soft Skills Development
Prof. P. Patnaik
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur

Lecture - 01
Understanding the Communicative Environment I

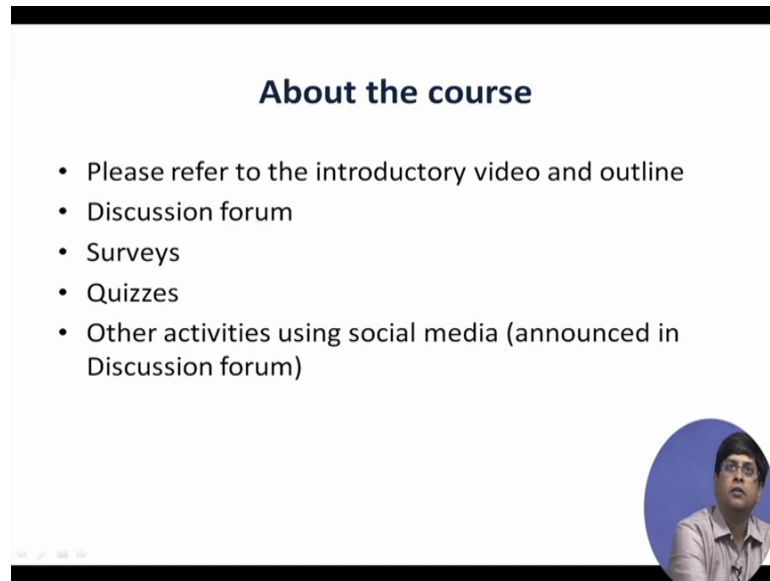
Hello friends, today we are starting with the first talk of our course, Soft Skills Development and which will be focusing on Understanding the Communicative Environment, and reason for that is because this is a very important component of the course.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:46)



I will tell you about that in a few minutes from now, but let us have a look at the overview in the next 30 minutes or so you will be looking at the following areas and I will be explaining the details of this to you.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:04)



About the course

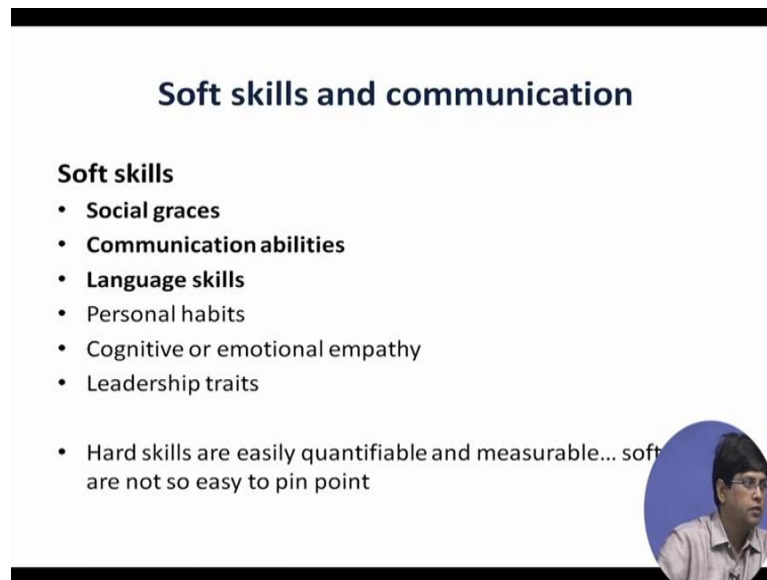
- Please refer to the introductory video and outline
- Discussion forum
- Surveys
- Quizzes
- Other activities using social media (announced in Discussion forum)

A circular inset photo in the bottom right corner shows a man with glasses and a light-colored shirt, looking slightly to the side.

But more important than that, before we begin the course, there are few things about the course; that I will ask you to listen to very carefully. The first point is please refer to the discussion forum again and again, because that is where the various activities, the quizzes, the surveys, the interactions will be taking place and the vital links for those will be also provided. There in our course, surveys will play very important role and it is expected that, you will be taking some of the surveys. And they have a certain amount of weight age in terms of marks along with your quiz questions, weekly quiz questions, and then you have quizzes of course. And we will have as I promised a number of other social media activities and this we will be announcing in the discussion forum from time to time.

And when it comes to the various other aspects of the course, please refer to the introductory video and also the written course components, which have been already provided in order to identify what we are going to do periodically each week.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:19)



Soft skills and communication

Soft skills

- **Social graces**
- **Communication abilities**
- **Language skills**
- Personal habits
- Cognitive or emotional empathy
- Leadership traits

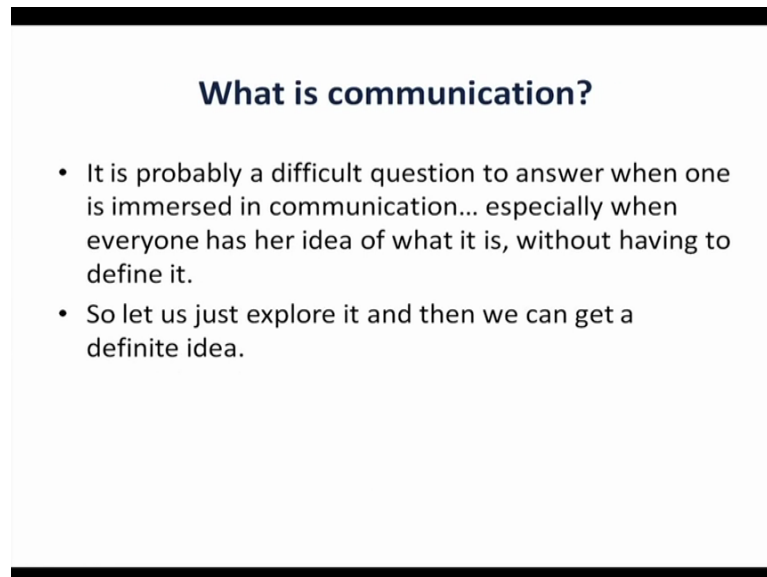
• Hard skills are easily quantifiable and measurable... soft skills are not so easy to pin point

But as I told you right at the beginning, the first week our focus is going to be on communication, the same is going to happen in the second and the third week as well. In fact, focusing on some of the aspects which have been highlighted right here in this power point is something, which is going to be very important for the first few weeks of the course. Now let me share quickly with you, the relationship between soft skills and communication. In some sense, soft skills can be considered as a super set and communication a sub set of that set. And as you can see, if we go for a quick definition of what soft skills are, you look at social graces, which means etiquette; the way you interact with people and the various kinds of emotional and cognitive traits that you display this constitute social graces. Communication abilities referred to, your abilities to communicate through various channels like verbal, nonverbal, visual, and auditory we shall discuss that in a detail, way at a later point of time, language, skills do not need much explanation.

But the other things; obviously, are a part of soft skills, but as I have highlighted over here. These are some of the important soft skills which relate to communication and we are going to do that in a first couple of weeks, in a very detailed way. Now if you want to define soft skills as, supposed to hard skills; soft skills are difficult to measure, difficult to quantify because they refer to qualitative traits, your personality, your remote sense, the way you display them and all that whereas, hard skills are measurable. For instance, how good you are as a computer programmer or let us say how good mechanical

engineer you are or how good are you at editing something. Now these are skills, which are easy to measure and quantify. So, having differentiated between the two and highlighted the significance of communication in the context of soft skills.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:23)



What is communication?

- It is probably a difficult question to answer when one is immersed in communication... especially when everyone has her idea of what it is, without having to define it.
- So let us just explore it and then we can get a definite idea.

Now let us begin, with the fundamental question what is communication? Now there is certain questions which are very easy to answer, in one sense and very difficult to answer in another sense, for instance: if I ask you question, like what is life, then it is probably very easy to answer in a certain sense, you will have a wide range of definitions, but then again because of that it is very difficult to answer.

So, instead of trying to identify what exactly communication is, let us try to explore it and look at some of its components and probably will get a better idea and agreed for what communication basically means.


(Refer Slide Time: 05:04)

Overt and covert

- Can you think of a situation when one doesn't communicate anything?

- Sleeping!

- Dead!



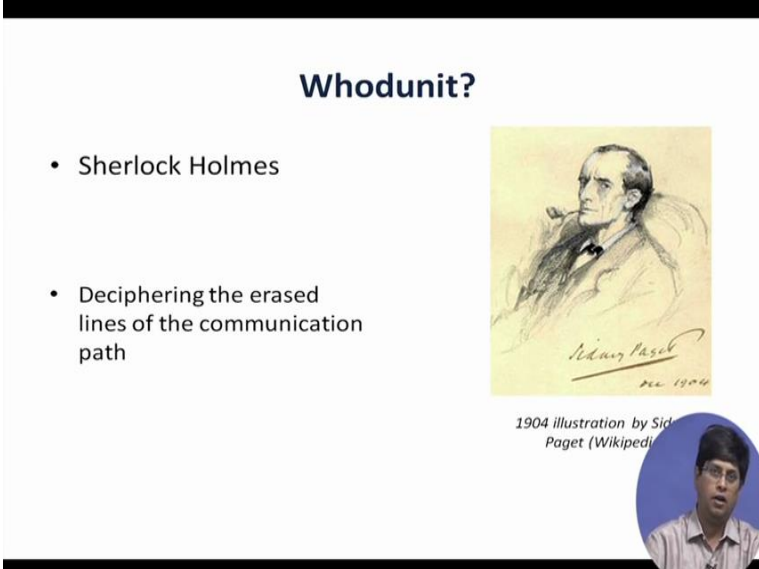
The first point I would like to point present or indicate is, you must differentiate between communication; where somebody intends to communicate as of first to communication where somebody does not intend to communicate and this is going to be very significant as we move on to certain aspects of nonverbal communication, body language because these get linked to telling lies, telling truth and we would hopefully have some very enjoyable games related to that as we proceed to this course.

But, covert is explicit, covert is something which you do not want to communicate, but none the less you manage to communicate, somebody feels angry, does not want to show it, but it gets reflected on his face. Now that in a certain way would be covert communication. The way we want to understand it in this particular context, Covert communication, can also mean communicating secretly with somebody that is also possibility; where you are communicating explicitly with the group of people, but secretly with another category of people, but that is not our focus over here. Here, a Unintentional communication is something, which is considered very significant because in day to day social behavior very often we communicate things we do not want to do not intend to or we are misunderstood or we miscommunicate and hence this we consider very significant aspect of communication.

Sleeping, now the next point is that can you think of a situation, where somebody is not communicating anything and the thing which immediately comes to our mind is that,

somebody is sleeping, but the very fact that somebody manages to communicate that, she is sleeping means that communication still works over here. Then you might argue that well what about death. Somebody is dead, we can always say that at least we are able to identify that this person is dead. The person who is sleeping might be dreaming. So, in some sense although he is not communicating with us, he is in some sort of a communication with herself or himself. In case of death, the person is no longer in a position to communicate with us, but at least we get to know about his state of affairs. So, his body or his lack of life and the static body does manage to communicate something to us. So, again that is very significant and we need to be aware of it.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:34)



Whodunit?

- Sherlock Holmes
- Deciphering the erased lines of the communication path

1904 illustration by Sidney Paget (Wikipedia)

The slide features a title 'Whodunit?' in bold blue text. Below the title is a list of two bullet points: 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Deciphering the erased lines of the communication path'. To the right of the list is a yellow-toned illustration of Sherlock Holmes, a man with a long, thin mustache and a pipe in his mouth, wearing a brown coat and a bow tie. The illustration is signed 'Sidney Paget' and dated 'Dec. 1904'. In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a small circular inset image of a man with glasses and a light-colored shirt, looking towards the camera.

Now, one of the interesting things when we are talking about covert communication or communication where we do not intend to is the example of. Let us say detective stories, as in case of stories of Sherlock Holmes. You see a part of the evidence, a part of the communication is presented, but somewhere you find that the lines have been erased. So, the detective's job is to kind of put the erased line in place, to complete the erased line so that the communication process is complete at the end of the story you find the detective very often explaining whether it is Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot explaining, how he has been able to identify the missing link.

So, you find that even in when we are looking at the context of fun or exciting, adventures other than day to day life, we find that communication whether implicit or

explicit is something with which we play around and it is very important. Especially covert communication because there is always a challenge to find out something, when people do not want to communicate to you, now that is a very interesting aspect to communication and we will discuss some of it as we proceed.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:50)



What communicates?

- Body
- Action/non-action
- Words/silence
- Dress
- Environment
- Images and things
- What else?...

Now, what communicates, what is it that communicates, the body communicates, actions, non actions, the lack of action we talked about a dead body they communicate, words communicate, silence also communicates. Somebody is angry does not speak silence also communicates, dress communicates, the environment, the various things that are around they communicate, images and things communicate, music communicates, you can. In fact, sit down to make a list of various things that communicate and you would be surprised to; probably find that, there is hardly anything which does not communicate. If you look around yourself right now, you will find probably that everything that is there manages to provide some information to you and in that sense every object or lack of object infer that matter has the potential of communicating within a particular context.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:49)

But communication is not simple!

- Multiple channels of communication
- Ambiguity
 - Snow in my shoe
 - Abandoned
 - Sparrow's nest
 - (Haiku, Jack Kerouac. Source: Wikipedia)
- Interpretation

And these are things which we will discuss as significant. Because by now probably you have already realized that, Communication is not simple communication, is complex and we will just touch upon some of this complexities and related to soft skills and why they are significant in the context of soft skills?

Now, to begin with where we talked about multiple channels of communication, I talked about channels of communication, without defining it little earlier, what they mean. Basically is that, Communication can take place in various ways let us say that. The body can be considered as a channel for communication, your voice, your speech, your text, in a similar way .Let us say that, your facial expressions, if you are looking at the electrical medium, somebody typing; that can be considered as a channel of communication. So, when we are looking at the channels of communication that can be many. Sometimes they can be in union, they can be compatible.

Some other times they can act in a way which is contradictory to one another. Let us say that, you are smiling, but you are not happy. So, there are two channels and if you are saying words which are harsh, but you are smiling or you are saying things which are polite, but you look angry. So, there are two channels and they are in conflict with one another. So, as I told you little earlier are you communication can be difficult ambiguity. Ambiguity is something where communication is not very clear. Now if you are looking

at this particular software known as Haiku Japanese form by Jack Kerouac, you find that the lines are difficult to understand.


Snow in my shoe, abandoned sparrows nest. Now let us unless you contextualize it unless you understand what. Let us say a Haiku supposed to do the meaning of the poem is ambiguous, one of the possible ways you can interpret the poem is, by saying something like this that, when one looks at the snow which is in the shoe right, now it looks like abandoned sparrows nest. So, there is a metaphor, there is certain striking resemblance between the two; that has been discovered by the poet and depicted there. Now that is how Haiku is actually supposed to express, a moment's realization, a moment's deep realization or surprised realization or wonderful realization, but unless we get the context unless we know this background we are in a position not to make sense out of it.

Now, poems in general are ambiguous because you can interpret it in different ways. For instance, I interpret it in a particular way now, but there is always a possibility that you would interpret in a different way, in your own way of way to do that with poems and that brings us to the third thing which we are talking about interpretation. What does exactly interpretation mean in the communicative context? Interpretation is, making sense and when we make sense of things or messages within communicative context then number of other things play significant role in determining, how we understand the message that is interpretation.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:06)

Interpretation

- The six blind men and the elephant
 - It is like a tree
 - It is like a snake
 - It is like a wall
 - It is hard and pointed
 - It is like a saucer
 - It is like a roof



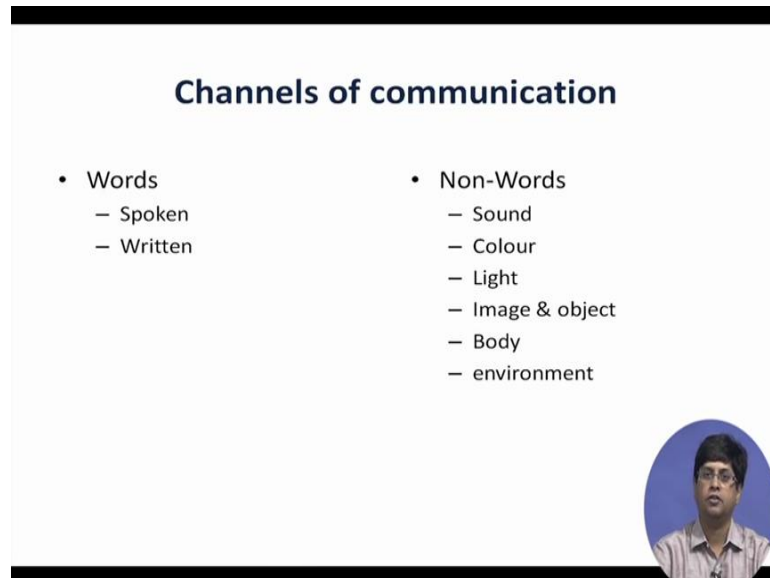
We will talk about interpretation a little later and here we give an example of that. In the China tradition, In the Indian tradition, we have a very well known story of a six blind men, who wanted to discover or to define experience, what an elephant was like. Obviously, they touch different parts of the elephant and came up with different answers to what it was like. So, their definitions varied. Somebody said it is like a tree, somebody else like a snake or a wall depending on which part of the body, they touched or hard and pointed. Somebody touching the tusks or like a saucer, touching the ears or like the roof touching, the belly of the elephant. So, you see that this is interpretation.

Now very often, although it is it is an exaggerated example, very often when you are looking at any object; in any context any message, in any context, unless it is very definite, that may be more than one possible interpretations and the interpretations will also vary from context to context. The same object when let say put in one context, would give raise to one way of looking at it in a different context, it would look different. For example, a glass in light and the same glass in darkness or semi darkness are presented; presenting two different visuals of the same things. So, the interpretation the experience of the two visuals should be very different.

So, interpretation is going to play very significant role. Especially in the socio cultural context, when we have transactions with people, when we interact with people, when we

have group, dynamics coming in to play, assessing, guessing, what somebody means. So, this is a key term which will come again and again as we proceed.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:55)

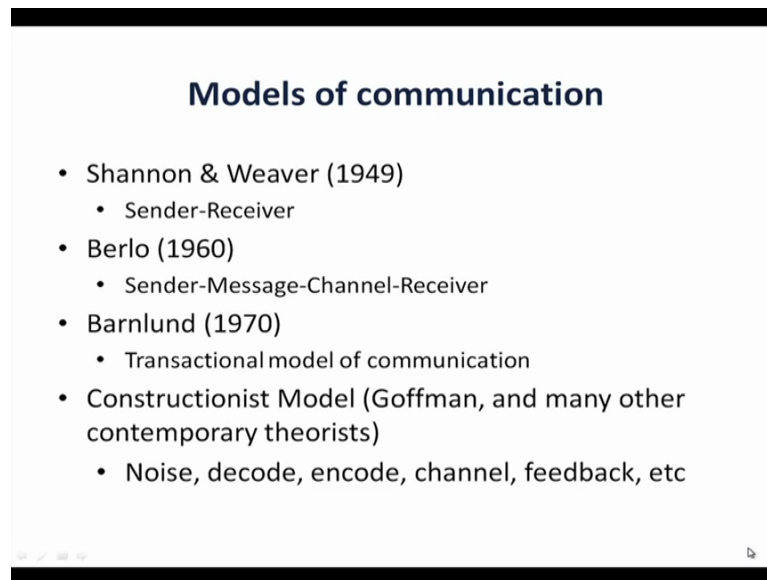


Channels of communication

- Words
 - Spoken
 - Written
- Non-Words
 - Sound
 - Colour
 - Light
 - Image & object
 - Body
 - environment

We have already talked about channels of communications. Here are illustrations of the channels that, I was talking about words could be spoken, written, non words could also be channels like sound, colors, light, images and objects body environment. Even digital signals these or the way that fiber optic line which is communicating this or the wireless which is communicating anything, through which a message can get communicated is to be considered a channel. So, if I am using sign language for Deaf and Dumb people that also happen to be a channel of communication. So, anything if I am using a painting then that becomes a channel of communication all this can be defined as channels of communication.

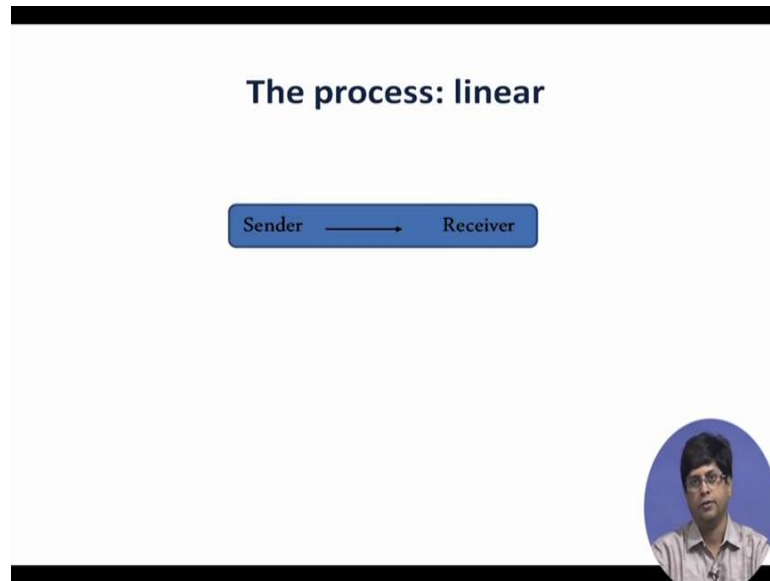
(Refer Slide Time: 15:44)



Now, I know that it might look a little imposing, but you see that for pretty long time people have been trying to create models of communication. So, we will not going to the details of this models, but a quick look would suffice. The first the basic most (Refer Time: 16:04) is where you recognize that in any kind of a communication: that is a sender and a receiver, but that is not good enough, you must have a message. So, and a channel a medium through which this message is to be communicated. If you are talking about let say telephone, then wires.

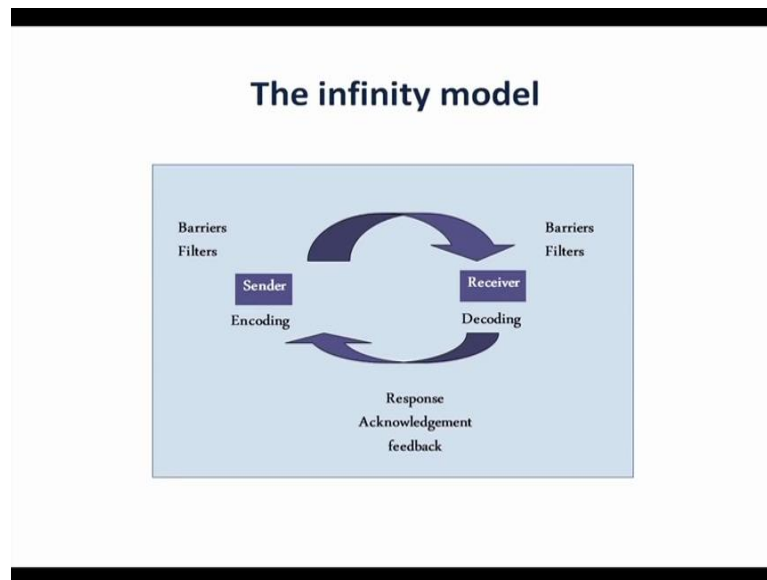
If you are talking about two people talking to one another then sound of their voices that is the channel and whatever the article it is the message and then we move on to transactional models. Where the interaction it is not just one way going from one direction to the other, but it is a process where two people are interacting. So, there is a way and that way communication, that comes in and more recently. We have constructionist model, Goffman many other theorist, including linguists, talk about noise decoding, encoding, channel feedback and we will look at some of these issues in moment from now.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:57)



So, this is a very simple example of the process of communication. Where we have a sender and we have a receiver, but you see that you can always reverse the process. The receiver can become the sender and the sender can become the receiver. In this way, you see that a linear mode becomes a transactional mode of communication. Because if I am speaking to you and then you are responding to me, then it no longer is a linear process of communication. For instance, today now you are listening to my talk, this is in some sense, a linear communication. Because I am the sender of the message and you are the receiver of the message. I am the speaker and you are the listener. But the moment we have a discussion, then it becomes non-linear because you are responding to the various things I have done. I am trying to respond to your queries and it becomes non-linear mode of communicating.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:52)



The infinite model kind of capture this and this humorously has certain implications. You see that, if we start looking at why people started to communicate? Then we find that people started communicating, to make things easier, to make life easier. Communication is a process of cooperating. In many instances, that is the initial reason why we communicate to make things happen; if I am not able to do something somebody else does it for me. We collaborate and for doing all this things for a society to be built up for a civilization, to be built up communication becomes essential.

But in the process if we look carefully, we find that at no point of time has communication come down or diminished. The more we communicate, the more there is the need to communicate. I remember a time almost 20 years back or 18 years back, when I joined the I.I.T system, when I used to write a letters, post cards, drop a post cards two post cards a day to may be my parents to some of my friends now we have a situation where on an average we at least receive 50 to 25 to 50 emails a day and respond at least ten to fifteen of them and we have SMS we have telephone. So, if we are looking at the amount of communication we are doing in twenty years it has realty grown.

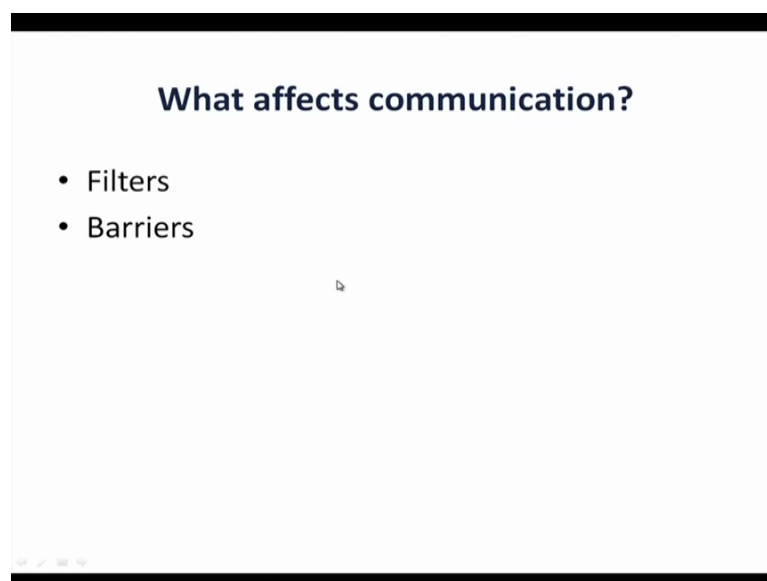
So, if you are looking at communication to simplify things that actually worked, but that kind of illustrates the infinite model that is being displayed on the screen. So, when the infinite model; what we are looking at, is a sender and a receiver, but as we have already discussed, the receiver becomes the sender and unless somebody dies unless for some

reason the communication network breaks down this process is an infinite process it goes on endlessly.

What are barriers? Barriers are things, which stop communication. Let us say, that I am talking to you and the signals are weak or I am talking to you the internet connection is not there, that is the barrier to communication. Encoding takes place in various ways at a very basic level. The language that I am using is a language, which lets say somebody who is from a rural set up in Odessa or West Bengal may not understand. So, he does not manage to decode this language. So, at a very simple level I am encoding in the English language and you are decoding in the English language, but if somebody does not know the language than the person is not able to decode it, that also is a barrier not being able to decode.

Encoding and decoding also takes place at a digital level because you are able to get the signal digital signals and they create an analogy image for you, where you can see? So, that second encoding and decoding responses acknowledgments feedback, this is the entire process of transaction that we were talking about and filters is something, which is very significant and I would like to highlight that in a moment because a little earlier we talked about interpretations and filters are things, which help us with interpretations rather the way that we construct meanings. The way we understand things depend to a great extent on what are known as filters.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:11)



So, things which affect communication, which disrupt or modify communication have to be understood as filters and barriers.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:23)

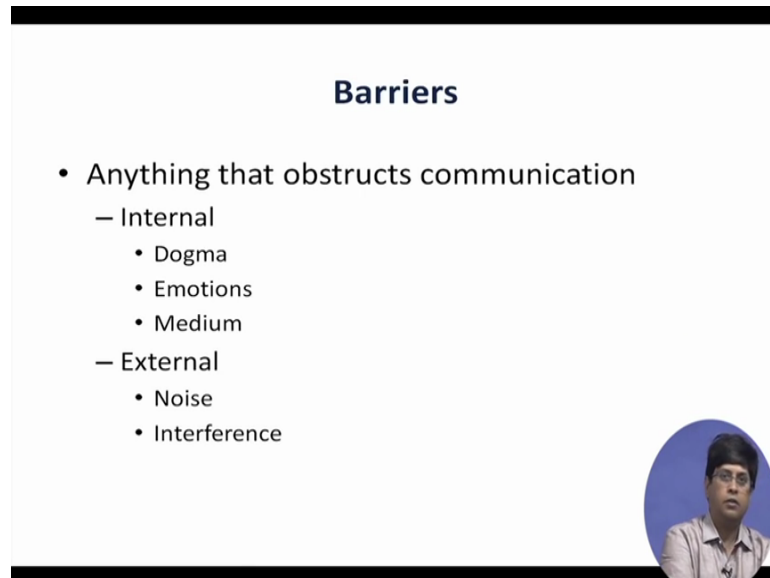
The slide is titled "Filters" in bold black text. Below the title, it says "Interpretation depends on the filters used." followed by a bulleted list of factors: Knowledge, Status, Culture, Emotions, Context, Gender, and Age, etc. To the right of the list is a red plastic bottle of Coca-Cola with the word "COKE" written in black capital letters to its left. In the bottom right corner of the slide, there is a small circular inset image of a man with glasses and a light-colored shirt.

And filters can be of any of these things like knowledge, status, culture, emotions, context gender and age all this can act as filters. Let us take an illustration. This what coke can be interpreted, when you are filtering it through these seven or eight things in different ways like, it can be understood knowledge about, where coke is made, what does it consist of and what are the chemical components, coke whether I mean your social status is affected by your drinking coke culture, in which cultures, youth cultures may be, young, kids cultures coke is encouraged. There are certain cultures where coke is probably not encouraged, emotions, coke excite kids may not excite elderly people, context you are feeling thirsty or it is hot you want coke gender you might be influence to drink something else, depending on whether you are a man or a woman age many aged people do not feel like having it.

So, you see that, the same object the same stimuli. In this case, which happens to be in the same stimulus, which happens to be, in this case the word coke and the image of coke can elicit a different kinds of responses; and the various components that we have outlined in the left hand side are where you are going to be very significant in the genetic context of soft skills as well, because they play very influential role in how you are

perceived, whether you have perceived positively and negatively, how you perform when it comes to being good at soft skills and not.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:06)



Barriers

- Anything that obstructs communication
 - Internal
 - Dogma
 - Emotions
 - Medium
 - External
 - Noise
 - Interference

Now, talking about barriers, I have already said with you what barriers are. Let us say that, you start off with a assumption that you do not have anything to learn about soft skills, now this is a kind of a bias, If you have this kind of a bias then you would not be interested in listening, to this talk would switch it off so it is acts as a barrier. When we talking about emotions, you are disturbed or you are extremely happy or not focused, you may not feel like listening to anything. So, that acts as a barrier medium as I told you this medium may not be break down at any particular point of time. External things about the language is a hurdle, you do not know the language that can create a problem noise interference we have already illustrated.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:52)

Summary of key points

- Communication is a key dimension of soft skills
- Communication involves agents, interpretation and channels of communication
- It also includes sender, receiver, filters and barriers, encoding and decoding, as well as a context

Now, at the end of this brief introduction, we would look at the summary of key points because they are going to help us for each of the talks that; I am going to give you will have a brief summary of key point that you can always quick look at to juggle, your memories and it is important to realize that communication or an introduction to communication does not end here because there are different categories of communication, different ways that we communicate, channels of communication which we have not elaborately discussed until this point of time.

So, we shall be looking at those issues in the talks, to follow and the talk that is supposed to follow is again about communication, because as I told you it is very relevant in the context of soft skills and I would like to illustrate some of the relevant points related to that.

Thank you.