

Organizational Behaviour- II
Prof. Sangeeta Sahney
Vinod Gupta School of Management
Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur

Lecture - 19
Communication (Cont.,)

Namaskar. We will now continue with our discussion on the topic 'Communication', which is one of the topics in the course on Organizational Behaviour II. So, this is the fourth lecture in this topic; IVth lecture of Week IV. And continuing with the topic, we will be today discussing the Barriers to effective communication. In the first three lectures, we have spoken about Communication, the meaning, the definition, the concept; the importance; the 7 Cs of communication; the process of communication; we have discussed the taxonomy of communication types; we have discussed the principles of communication; we have also discussed in greater length, verbal, non-verbal communication; formal, informal communication and networks; mass communication, public communication; we have also discussed about channel richness, and now we proceed with barriers to effective communication. So, we will begin with our discussion on the Barriers to effective communication.

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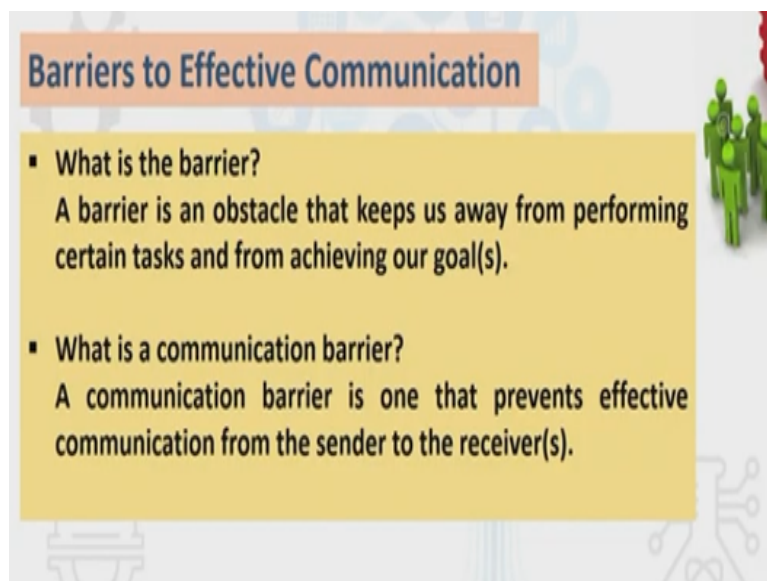
Now, we all know that communication has to be effective. When the sender encodes a message, and the message gets transmitted through a channel, or through a medium, it is transmitted to the receiver, and the receiver must decode it, and have a proper understanding

of the message, proper comprehension of the message. It is only and only then, that communication can be regarded to be effective.

But we also have seen that there could be noise elements, which could be physiological, which could be psychological. There could be problems with the sender, with the receiver, with the channel or the media; there could be problems during encoding or transmission and decoding, and many and all of these actually constitute, you know, what we refer to as the Barriers to effective communication.

Many of the problems associated with encoding, decoding, transmission and so forth, issues associated with senders, receivers and the media or the channel, you know, may actually lead to problems, and these problems actually happen because of barriers to effective communication.

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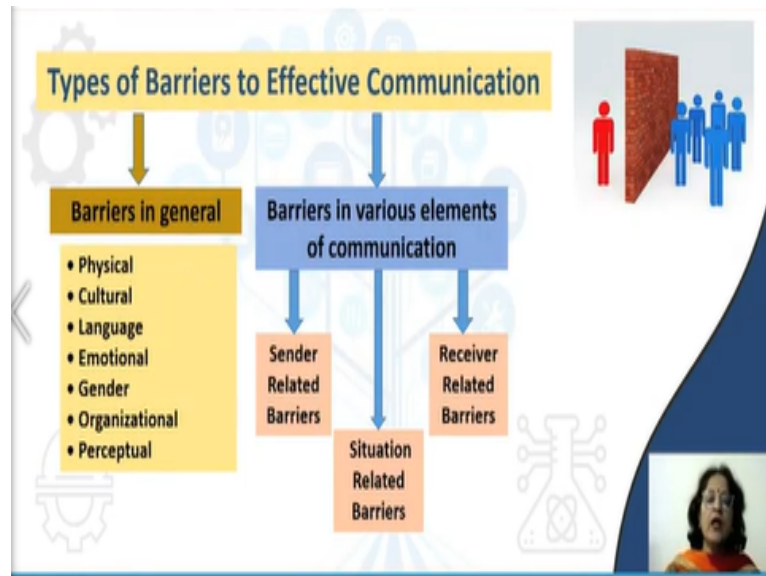


So, let us talk about what a barrier is? Now a barrier is an obstacle that keeps us away from performing certain tasks, and from achieving our goals. Any obstacle that keeps us away from performing our tasks successfully, and from achieving our goals, constitute what we refer to as a barrier. And when we talk of a communication barrier, a communication barrier is one that prevents effective communication from the sender to the receiver.

So, because of the barrier, effective communication is not possible; either there could be problems with encoding or with the media or with the decoding, and the receiver is unable to comprehend the message in a manner which the sender intended it to be. So, he does not have

a proper understanding of the message, and so communication becomes ineffective. And so, any and every obstacle that keeps us away from effective communication is a communication barrier.

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Now there are different types of barriers to effective communication. We can actually classify them as barriers in general, or we could classify them as barriers in the various elements of the communication process. So, barriers in general could be physical barriers, cultural barriers, language barriers, emotional barriers, gender barriers, organizational barriers, perceptual barriers.

And when we talk of the same barriers as present in the sender or the receiver or the channel or the situation, we can classify them as sender related barriers or situation related barriers and receiver related barriers. So, we can see that they are not actually totally mutually exclusive. A lot of barriers which are there under the general head, will actually also be there in the elements, under the elements.

So, these two categories are not mutually exclusive. I repeat, if you have physical or cultural or language or emotional or gender or organizational related barriers in general, they could also be in some way be there either with the sender or with the receiver or in the situation. And so, although we classify them as two distinct heads as barriers in general and barriers in the various elements, we see that there could be overlap between them.

So, now let us understand what each of these barriers is. We will first be discussing barriers in general, and then we will be discussing the barriers in various elements of communication.

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Physical Barriers

- Physical barriers relate to disturbances in the external environment, or the surrounding environment.
- A physical barrier is an environmental distraction.

Causes of physical barriers are:

- Huge distance between the sender and receiver, and disturbances in the channel.
- Defective media selection can also act as a physical barrier.

The slide includes an illustration of two people standing on opposite sides of a tall, grey wall, symbolizing a physical barrier. A small video inset in the bottom right corner shows a woman with dark hair and glasses speaking.

So, first let us start with physical barriers. Now physical barriers relate to disturbances in the external environment or in the surrounding environment. And a physical barrier actually is something which is an environmental distraction. There are a number of causes for physical barriers like for example, huge distance between the sender and the receiver or the receivers, disturbances in the media or in the medium or in the channel. Defective media selection can also be a physical barrier. If you remember in the previous class, I spoke about channel richness, and we said that different media or channels, they differ in their ability, you know, with respect to transmission of messages, and accordingly we can classify them as lean medium or strong medium, and the sender has to choose the channel very carefully keeping in mind a lot of things.

So, we spoke about that in the previous lecture, and in case the sender chooses an inappropriate media or a channel, in other words, if you know, if he chooses a media or a medium, that is not appropriate in a particular situation or for a particular condition, it can actually lead to a physical barrier. So, defective media selection can also act as a physical barrier.

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Cultural Barriers

- The manner in which people think and perceive a message is largely affected by culture.
- Words, signs and symbols, and the context may mean different to people of different cultures.
- Causes of cultural barriers are:
 - Diversity across cultures: Values and beliefs, Language, Religion and caste, Customs and traditions etc.
 - Language and pronunciation, Semantics and word connotations, Tone differences etc.

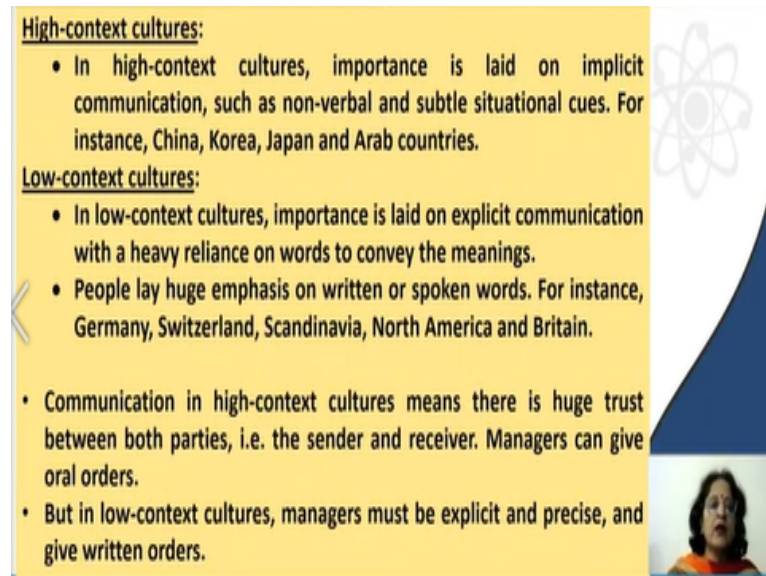
The slide features a green header with the title 'Cultural Barriers'. The main content is on a yellow background. To the right, there is an illustration of two figures on opposite sides of a tall, thin wall, with one figure shouting into a megaphone. In the bottom right corner, there is a small video inset showing a woman speaking. The background of the slide has faint icons of a gear, a lightbulb, and a person.

Now second is, cultural barriers. Now the manner in which people think, the manner in which they encode a message, the manner in which, you know, they decode or receive a message or perceive a message, is largely affected by culture. We as individuals are hugely impacted by culture. In fact, cultural factors are one of the most profound; they have a deep impact on us as individuals.

So, cultural factors have a huge role to play in our day-to-day lives, whether it is with respect to our values, beliefs, ideas, thoughts, the way we behave, the way we react, our customs traditions, language etc. - all of this is actually, you know, depends on culture. So, the manner in which people think and perceive a message is also largely affected by culture. We have different components of culture - values, beliefs, customs, traditions, language, myths, artefacts and a large number of others, which as cultural elements affect us in our day-to-day lives, and they affect our thinking and cognitive processes. So, the manner in which people think and perceive a message is largely influenced by culture. Words signs, symbols and the context, may mean different to different people in different cultures. So, while we communicate, there could be cultural barriers, particularly if we are communicating with somebody who is from a different culture or a different subculture. And the causes of cultural barriers could be one, diversity across cultures in terms of values, beliefs, language, religion, caste, customs, traditions - all of which will have an impact on how we perceive things, and how we how we even comprehend a message. So, this is one of the cultural barriers.

The other is with respect to language and pronunciation, semantics and word connotation, tone differences - all of these could also act as barriers. So, this is what constitutes cultural barriers.

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High-context cultures:

- In high-context cultures, importance is laid on implicit communication, such as non-verbal and subtle situational cues. For instance, China, Korea, Japan and Arab countries.

Low-context cultures:

- In low-context cultures, importance is laid on explicit communication with a heavy reliance on words to convey the meanings.
- People lay huge emphasis on written or spoken words. For instance, Germany, Switzerland, Scandinavia, North America and Britain.

• Communication in high-context cultures means there is huge trust between both parties, i.e. the sender and receiver. Managers can give oral orders.

• But in low-context cultures, managers must be explicit and precise, and give written orders.

Now, as I said, people across different cultures behave very differently, you know. Their values, their beliefs, their opinions and customs, traditions, language - everything is very, very different. And people get affected by the cultures in which they exist or even the subcultures. Now, you know, as multinational companies, it becomes very, very important that companies are highly culturally sensitive to their employees in the host country, or in their own country as well and to countries wherever the multinationals operate. And so, multinational organizations have to be very, very careful about the cultural components; about the cultural elements, about the language about the beliefs; about the values; about the customs, traditions of people whom they are serving in different countries. And so, they must understand cultures very well. Now, you know, multinationals when they operate in other countries, they have to be careful not only with the customers whom they want to deal with, but also with their own employees, and in organizations, multilateral organizations, it is very, very important that the management is very culturally sensitive to its employees. And this has huge implications even when people communicate with each other. Like for example in high-context cultures, where a lot of emphasis is laid on, you know, the context or the environment, importance is laid on implicit communication, like non-verbal communication and very subtle situational cues like, countries like China, Korea, Japan and the Arabian countries. On the other hand, in low-context cultures, not much emphasis is paid on the situation or the environment, and on other situational cues, but it is more to do with explicit

communication, with a heavy emphasis on words that must be used to convey meanings. So, people play a huge huge emphasis on written or spoken words, particularly written, you know, whether it is countries like North America or the UK or the Scandinavian countries or Switzerland or Germany and so forth. So, communication in high-context cultures means, there is huge trust between both parties and so, you know, people can rely on non-verbal cues and subtle situational cues. And so, because there is huge trust between the sender and the receiver or the receivers, you know, non-verbal communication is accepted and given importance, managers can just give oral orders. But in low-context cultures, where a huge emphasis is laid on explicit communication, and there is heavy reliance on words and on sentences - in those cases, managers must be very explicit and very precise, and must give written orders.

So, you see in how culture actually has an impact on how people would communicate. And this communication here in the context of multinational companies, you know, communication especially in the case of multinational organizations becomes even more important because multinational organizations have to deal with people of different cultures, either, their customers are from different cultures and they deal with customers across the world in different countries with different cultures, or it is their employees who are diverse with respect to culture; there is huge diversity in the workforce; whether the multinationals are hiring people in their own country, or whether they are hiring people in countries where they operate, you know, in the host country - so, there is huge amount of diversity in the organization with respect to the workforce. And so, companies have to be very very culturally sensitive, and this is where, you know, huge care has to be taken that cultural barriers are avoided at all costs.

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➤ Language Barriers

- When the sender and the receiver are unable to converse in a language known by both, it is a language barrier.
- Causes of language barriers are:
 - Regional disparities.
 - Multi-languages.
 - Differences in understanding and interpretation.

The slide features a green header with the title, a yellow text box with the main content, and a line drawing of two people in conversation. A small video inset in the bottom right corner shows a woman with glasses speaking.

The next is language barriers. Now along with culture, what we talk of is language. So, when the sender and the receiver are unable to converse in a language which is known to both of them, it is a language barrier. What happens in this case is, that the sender is encoding in a language, or through words and signs and symbols, which the receiver is unaware of, or which the receiver is not familiar with, and so the receiver is not able to decode the message, and so this is a language barrier. Now causes of language barriers of course can be, you know, multi-languages especially in the case of multinational organizations, or it could be regional disparities, or there could be differences in understanding and interpretation. So, these are all causes of language barriers and it is very very essential that the sender keeps in mind that whenever he is encoding a message it should be such that it is in a language which the receiver is familiar with.

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➤ Emotional Barriers

- Emotional barriers may inhibit our ability to converse in an effective manner.
- Causes of emotional barriers are:
 - Mistrust between the sender and receiver.
 - Fear/insecurity to communicate.
 - Stress in both the receiver and the sender.
 - Depression.

The slide features a green header with the title, a yellow text box with the main content, and an illustration of a group of people in business attire. A small video inset in the bottom right corner shows the same woman from the previous slide speaking.

The next is emotional barriers. Now, emotional barriers may also inhibit our ability to converse in an effective manner. In a previous session, I spoke about the fact that, you know, while encoding is happening, or while decoding is happening, the sender or the receiver may not be in a positive mood state, or may not be in a good mood state, may not be very, you know, emotionally happy. They may be disturbed, they maybe, you know, preoccupied with something, or they may be, worrying about something and so forth. So, in those cases encoding and decoding may not always be correct. So, the same thing here, you know, whenever the sender or the receiver, are experiencing some kind of negative mood states or negative emotional states, it would inhibit their ability to converse in an effective manner.

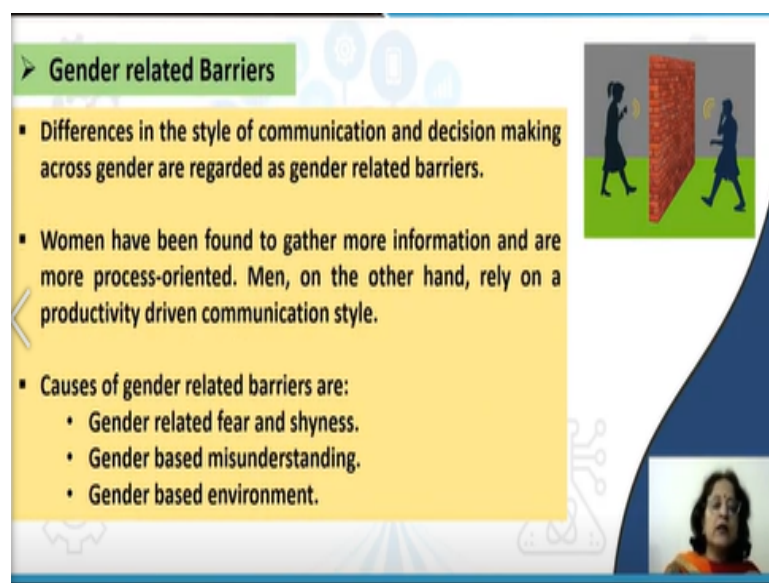
And the causes of emotional barriers also goes further in terms of the sender and the receiver being fearful of each other, mistrusting each other; you know, there may be some kind of an insecurity to communicate, or the sender and the receiver may be under stress, and that is why they are not able to communicate in a proper manner; they may be suffering depression.

One of the very important, you know, reasons which I have cited here which could lead to emotional barriers is the fear and insecurity to communicate.

Very often people in organizations do not like to communicate with each other, because they are fearful of communication; they are insecure about it, and they fear each other. There is lack of trust, and because of that they are not very open and transparent with communicating with each other. And so, this is something which needs to be taken care off. As I said in an earlier class, in order to build a healthy climate in the organization, a climate of cooperation, climate of, you know, trust and openness, it is very important that communication is open and transparent. And so, managers must ensure that they there is an environment, where people share information with each other. They do not fear, you know, sharing of information; they are open and transparent of sharing information, teaching others, grooming others, and so that the organization can grow, and the individuals also personally can grow into assuming bigger and better roles in the organization. So, it is very, very important that managers handhold their subordinates, and subordinates also, as peers, as colleagues help each other so that, you know, there is more of cooperation, more of coordination, better learning can happen, grooming can happen, and both the individual as well as the organization can grow.

So, you know, whether it is superiors or managers, they should not be fearful of sharing information, and they should not be insecure about it. Very often, it is seen that people in the higher levels of the management are fearful that if they share whatever they know, they may actually lose their position or their power over the subordinates, and if they share their knowledge, skills and abilities with their juniors, or with their subordinates, the subordinates may turn out to be better workers, which could be a threat to the position of the superior. So, a superior would not like to share information, and his knowledge, skills and abilities, for this fear, because of this fear of supersession. So, this is something which should be avoided at all costs.

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The slide is titled "Gender related Barriers" and contains the following text:

- Differences in the style of communication and decision making across gender are regarded as gender related barriers.
- Women have been found to gather more information and are more process-oriented. Men, on the other hand, rely on a productivity driven communication style.
- Causes of gender related barriers are:
 - Gender related fear and shyness.
 - Gender based misunderstanding.
 - Gender based environment.

The slide also features an illustration of two silhouetted figures standing on either side of a tall brick wall, symbolizing a barrier. In the bottom right corner, there is a small video inset showing a woman speaking.

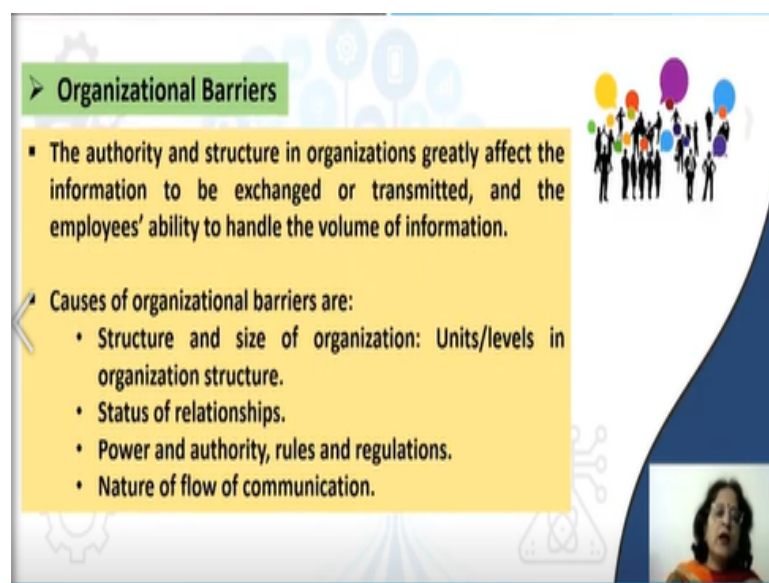
There could also be gender related barriers. Differences in the style of communication and decision making, you know, with respect to gender, are regarded as gender related barriers. Women have been found to gather more information, and they are more process oriented. Men on the other hand, rely on the productivity driven communication style. So, differences in the style of communication and decision making across gender, are regarded as gender related barriers.

Now, the causes of gender related barriers could be, you know, fear and shyness; you know, amongst people when they deal with people of the other gender; when they deal with the other gender, or it could be gender based misunderstanding, or it could be gender based environment. Certain, you know, cultures are very male-oriented cultures; certain cultures are very female-oriented and female-dominated cultures.

So, this kind of an environment, you know, this kind of a male-dominated or a female-dominated environment in the organization, can also be a deterrent to effective communication, where it is either the males who dominate or it is the females who dominate, and so there could be a problem with respect to communication that happens between members of different genders.

So, gender related fear, and gender related shyness, gender based environment, gender based misunderstanding - can all be causes of gender related barriers.

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The slide features a green header with the title 'Organizational Barriers'. Below it, a yellow box contains a bullet point: 'The authority and structure in organizations greatly affect the information to be exchanged or transmitted, and the employees' ability to handle the volume of information.' Underneath, a section titled 'Causes of organizational barriers are:' lists four items: 'Structure and size of organization: Units/levels in organization structure.', 'Status of relationships.', 'Power and authority, rules and regulations.', and 'Nature of flow of communication.' The slide also includes an illustration of a group of people holding balloons and a small video inset of a woman in the bottom right corner.

Now another barrier to effective communication is organizational barriers. Now the authority and structure in organizations greatly affect the information that is to be shared or transmitted and, you know, it also affects the ability of the employees to handle the volume of information. As I said in another class, there are formal channels of communication; there are informal channels of communication.

The formal channels of communication clearly define the paths of flow of information in the organization, and the authority and structure in organizations actually affects the flow of information across these prescribed flows. So, often this authority and structure in organizations acts as an organization barrier; it affects the information to be shared and transmitted as well as the ability of the employees to be able to handle that kind of an information.

So, the causes of organizational barriers to communication can be the structure and size of the organization, you know, in terms of the different units or different levels in the organization structure; status of relationships between the superiors and the subordinates and between peers and colleagues; power and authority relationships; rules and regulations - rules and regulations pertaining to what can be shared and what cannot be shared; and the nature of flow of communication, in terms of formal or informal communication and the different networks.

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The slide features a green header with the title 'Perceptual Barriers'. Below the title, a yellow box contains a paragraph and a list of causes. The paragraph states: 'People have different values, beliefs, opinions, educational qualifications, experiences, etc., and there exist huge cultural disparities. These differences lead to varied perceptions which hamper effective communication.' The list of causes includes: 'Differences in beliefs, values, opinions and responses.', 'Difference in perception about the environment and the context.', and 'Differences in the level of understanding.' The slide also includes a 3D illustration of two figures, one red and one white, and a small video inset in the bottom right corner showing a woman speaking.

Then we also have perceptual barriers. So, people - we all belong to different backgrounds; we, you know, we are different with respect to age, gender, socio-economic backgrounds; social and cultural differences also exist between us; we have different educational backgrounds, literacy levels; we belong to different cultures and all of this has an impact on how we perceive things.


So, people have different values, beliefs, opinions, educational qualifications, experiences, and there exist huge cultural disparities which lead to varied perceptions and it hampers effective communication. So, this constitutes what we refer to as perceptual barriers, because people will perceive things differently. Causes of perceptual barriers are differences in values, in beliefs, in opinions, in responses; differences in perception about the environment and the context and differences in the level of understanding.

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➤ **Sender Related Barriers**

Common barriers pertaining to the sender are-

- Sender's lack of knowledge, skills and abilities with respect to work.
- Sender's non-credibility; Credibility is a function of expertise and trustworthiness.
- Sender's inability to communicate: Improper diction, and language.
- Sender's fears and insecurities.
 - ✓ Lack of interest in information sharing
 - ✓ Filtering and purposeful manipulation of information
- Negative attitude towards the receiver.
- Lack of knowledge or insufficient knowledge about the receiver.
- Inappropriate selection of the channel.



Now, we come to the barriers, you know, pertaining to the elements of the communication process, and we will speak about the sender related barriers, the situation related barriers, and the receiver related barriers. Now, common barriers pertaining to the sender are, the sender knowledge, skills, abilities with respect to his work; his credibility. Now the source's credibility or the sender's credibility is a function of expertise and trustworthiness. Later of course, credibility began to be defined as something which also pertains to similarity, likeness, physical appearance and so forth. But initially it was also always believed that credibility of a source is a function of expertise and trustworthiness. So, whenever people have, you know, hold expertise in certain areas or subjects, or in certain domains, and when they are regarded to be trustworthy, the impact that they create on the receiver is much more, and so whatever they communicate, you know, has a deeper meaning and a deeper impact on the receiver. The receiver believes what the sender says because the sender is credible, because the source is credible, and so the sender's credibility is also an important, you know, factor which affects the effectiveness of communication. And so, one barrier which pertains to the sender is the sender's credibility. So, if the sender is not credible or not regarded to be credible, then it could act as a barrier. So, the common barrier pertaining to the sender could be, his knowledge, skills and abilities; it could be with respect to his credibility, his ability to communicate.

Now another barrier pertaining to the sender is his ability to communicate - whether he can communicate well; whether he is good with the language; whether is a good with grammar. So, improper diction and language problems can also act as barriers with respect to the sender.

Sender's fears and insecurities is also a barrier to effective communication. As, said a little while ago, very often a sender is fearful or insecure to share information, and his fears and insecurity, would lead to a lack of interest in sharing information.

So, he may also filter information, manipulate information, and this could also act as a barrier. So, instead of sharing information fully, he may hide something, or he may manipulate it, and this could act as a barrier to effective communication. Negative attitude towards the receiver, lack of trust, and, you know, fearful, being fearful of the receiver, can also act as a barrier to effective communication. Lack of knowledge or insufficient knowledge about the receiver, and his receiver's background can also act as a deterrent because if the sender is not aware about the receiver's background, then he will not be able to encode the message keeping the receiver's background in mind and in that case, the decoding will be in will be faulty. And of course, another barrier with respect to the sender is when the sender chooses an inappropriate channel, an appropriate channel for communication. The inappropriate selection of a channel can also be a barrier.

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Situation Related Barriers

Common barriers pertaining to the situation are-

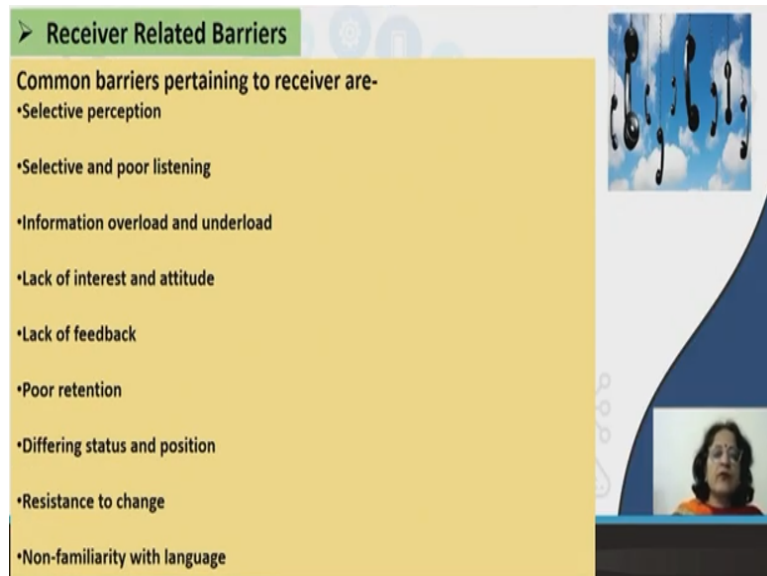
- Cultural barriers
- Organizational structure barriers
- Mechanical failures
- Noise
- Distance
- Information overload and underload
- Time pressures

The slide also features a silhouette of two people sitting on chairs, and a small video inset of a woman speaking.

Coming to situation related barriers. So, common barriers pertaining to the situation are cultural barriers, organizational structure barriers, mechanical failures, especially communication is happening through electronic means, noise. I spoke about noise which could be both physical as well as psychological. So, both physical and psychological noise can act as a deterrent to effective communication. Distance between the sender and the receiver, it is also a barrier. Sometimes the distance is huge and so by the time, the message is transmitted, it may become weak or it may lose its strength. Both information underload and

overload can also be barriers to effective communication. And time constraints are also seen as an important barrier to effective communication.

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➤ Receiver Related Barriers

Common barriers pertaining to receiver are-

- Selective perception
- Selective and poor listening
- Information overload and underload
- Lack of interest and attitude
- Lack of feedback
- Poor retention
- Differing status and position
- Resistance to change
- Non-familiarity with language

Then we come to receiver related barriers. Talking about common barriers pertaining to the receiver, it could be selective perception on the part of the receiver. Now as I said in one of my earlier lectures, that when the receiver receives a message, he decodes it, and when he is decoding it, he may be preoccupied, or he may be busy with something, or he may have been inattentive; he was hearing the message but not listening. And so, because he did not listen to the message properly, he would not be able to decode it, or will not be able to extract meaning out of it, and there could be perceptual distortions and errors because of selective perception. So, receiver related barriers, one, is with respect to selective perception and selective and poor listening. Both information overload and under load again are barriers to effective communication.

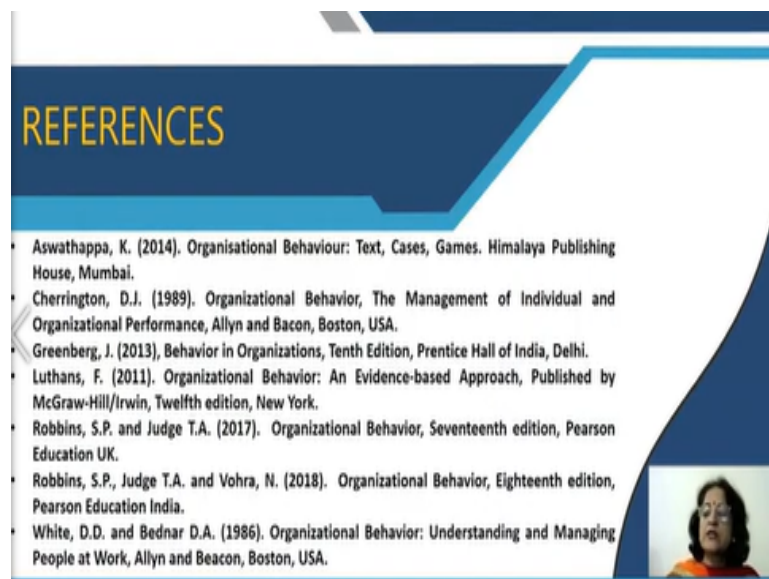
Lack of interest and attitude in the receiver because of which he did not pay attention to the message is again a barrier pertaining to the receiver. Receiver, not good providing feedback, to the sender can also be a barrier to effective communication. Whenever the receiver receives a message he should decode it, and then revert with the feedback; revert to the sender with feedback, but when he does not do that, you know, again the lack of feedback could be a barrier to effective communication because the sender would not be sure whether the receiver has understood the message in a manner which the sender wants it to be. Poor retention and memory also, especially in the case of oral communication. Wherever communication is oral, and if the message is long, and if the receiver suffers a poor memory,

he will not be able to retain the entire message. So, this also can be a barrier to effective communication.

Language is an important deterrent. If the message is encoded in a language with the receiver is unaware of, or is not familiar with, the receiver may not be able to understand the message, and so there is going to be a problem in communication. Different status between the sender and the receiver in terms of authority relationships also can be a deterrent.

Because very often these, authority relationships also get related to ego issues between the receiver and the sender. So, there could be problems with respect to ego, with respect to power status, and so this could be a barrier, which can be a receiver related barrier. And finally, several times, you know, receivers, you know, demonstrate resistance to change. They do not want to change and so whatever message is coming to them from the sender, the receiver tries to counter it. He tries to, you know, argue in it, or negate it, or does not like to believe in it, or does not like to follow the instructions and so forth. So, this resistance to change can also act as a barrier to effective communication.

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So, with this I come to an end of our lecture on Barriers to effective communication. These are the references.

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CONCLUSION

This brings us to an end of the fourth lecture on the topic "Communication".

We shall continue with the topic in the next lecture.

And here, we conclude the fourth lecture on the topic 'Communication'. We will continue with the topic in the next lecture. Thank you.