

Communication barriers



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People communicate everyday whether they realized it or not. It is done voluntarily or non-voluntarily as one still communicates in one way or another. Communication is the sending or transmitting of information to another person via two ways, verbal and non-verbal or as defined by Papa M. J. 2008, a process of creating shared meaning through the use of signs and symbols. When a speaker speaks, a message is transmitted to the listener via a channel. The message then reaches the listener and gives back a response called feedback. For example, a man tells a child that he is grounded, the man, speaker, is transmitting message, that he is grounded to the child, listener and the child shows a frowning face as a feedback, an upset behaviour. However in reality, messages transmitted don't pass through smoothly to the listener. The interference distorts and prevents messages from transmitting through properly and may cause misinterpretation of message. Interference in communications known as communication barriers is defined as any factor that interferes with the success of the communication process (Krizan et al 2005). Communication barriers exist due to much interference in communication such as culture, religion, personalities, and perceptions. In this essay, briefing on general causes of communication barriers will be done and the opinions to the statement of “ Awareness and understanding barrier to communication enables communicators to ensure minimal interference with the message”

One of the most common communication barriers would be the difference in culture. Culture is defined as a set of learned patterns of thought and behaviour shared and passes down by a group of people and is ever changing and dynamic. (Suderman J 2007) Culture differs in every races,

states and countries. Many countries such as the eastern countries and some western countries have rich cultural values and are still commonly practiced. Eastern culture practices such as in the Chinese culture are the superstition of the colour red. The Chinese are very auspicious towards the colour red as it has almost the similar pronunciation as 'ong' which meant prosperity. Western cultures practices such as the Australian people are more contact oriented and are people who would hug and kiss when greeting another. However, there are eastern and western cultures that have different meaning for the same belief. The Chinese people love the number 13 which has almost the same pronunciation as 'Yatt Saang' meaning once birth which shows the birth of a new life however the Americans have triskaidekaphobia, which is the fear of the number 13 (Medicine. net) as the number 13 is considered unlucky since " on the day of Friday the 13th after the final Crusade, the pope had sent out men to capture and burn alive the last 13 Templar knights in order to put an end to the Crusades". (Wikipedia)

Although awareness of communication barriers is there, it isn't acknowledged by people to the extent that they understand that different people with different culture, personality, perceptive and mentality make up the world and because they do not accept each other's culture with an open mind, hence forth, much of misunderstandings happen often. Some people refuse to accept or even try to understand other people's culture. This may be due to the believe that their culture is the more superior and the right one. This ideology is known as ethnocentrism which is defined by West R. et al 2006 as the process of judging another culture using the standard of your own culture. Ethnocentrism was practiced widely amongst the Japanese

people during the World War II. Japanese ethnocentrism is also known as Japan centism which is the ethnocentric belief that Japan is, or should be, at the centre of the world. (New World Encyclopedia n. d.)

This could also be due to individual barrier as a result of an individual's perceptual and personal discomfort. Even when two persons have experienced the same event their mental perception may/may not be identical which acts as a barrier. (Ezine Articles n. d.) One person view doesn't necessarily fit the other person's view. Another reason is the perception distortion done by the stereotyping view of the community towards daily aspects which leads to another mislead assumptions. One of the infamous stereotyping done is the stereotyping of Muslims. Due to some recent terrorism done by some Muslims around the world, the world stereotypes that all Muslim people are violent and extremist. It is a very unfair perception that has been forced on to these people as Islam is the religion of peace and love. " The entertainment industries, especially the film-makers in Hollywood, with very few exceptions, have shown deep bias presenting Arabs or Muslims of the Third World countries as uncouth, uncivilized rogues. Thus, ridicule is added to an already blur and dismal perception of Islam in the west." (Ahmad M. n. d.)

Even so, it does not mean that awareness of communication barriers doesn't help people to understand each other at all. When there is an understanding that a person has a different sense of cultural understanding and that we are different, similarities can be looked out for as all in all, we are still humans and similarities are bound to be there. An example of such similarities can be the universal understanding of nonverbal communication such as yes or no,

frowning or smiling and so forth. Nonverbal communication is the messages expressed by non-linguistic means. (Adler R. B. et al 2004) Communications through non-verbal ways are used more often than realized. An example cited by Andersen & Andersen et al. 1982 in Knapp et al 2002 called the Classroom Behaviour where teachers are to consider student's nonverbal actions such as; “ 1. The frantic hand-waver who is sure he or she has the right answer 2. The student who is sure he or she doesn't know the answer and tries to avoid eye contact...”

As a conclusion, awareness of communication barriers does not necessarily minimize the interference of message because majority of the world community are still in the view point of a stereotype. To minimize the inference, one must be open minded and listen! It is the importance of listening and having an open mind that helps to accept and interpret a message well. “ It requires a strong person to be a good listener, able to be patient and confident enough to suspend judgement and yet not sacrifice one's capacity to analyse and reply,” (Molvin & Molvin 2007). Having an open mind is to accept the facts as they are and not question or criticize the facts.

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