**Barriers to Classroom Communication**

**Introduction**

Communication refers to a two way process of sharing feelings, ideas, thoughts, information and opinions as messages with others through proper channel or media. Its accomplishment is acknowledged through the feedback from receivers’ end. Learning in classroom occurs through communication between teachers and students and among students. They communicate in order to achieve the desired learning objectives effectively and efficiently. The quality of learning and instruction in classroom is closely linked with the communication taking place there. As language is a tool and means of communication, it works as a relationship builder among the members of classroom. The effectiveness of classroom communication is dependent upon the factors related to its each and every element such as sender, receiver, message, media, classroom environment and feedback. These factors might be proved responsible for facilitating as well as creating barriers in the classroom. These elements determine the quality of communication. A problem in any element can reduce the effectiveness of communication (Keyton, 2011; Lunenburg, 2010). So, a teacher needs to know about these barriers and its strategies in order to maximize the elements with positive effects and minimize the hindering elements for effective classroom communication which results in fruitful and meaningful learning and teaching.

**Barriers to Classroom Communication**

In any classroom, teachers serve as senders who communicate ideas, information and instruction in a variety of ways through different verbal and non-verbal means. The quality of communication is responsible for generating a positive environment in the classroom. The communication is said to be successful when its purpose is achieved, learning is made easier and faster, opportunities are emerging, students and teachers are connected and the positive perceptions are present. Successful communication follows its principles such as principle of clarity, integrity, attention, consistency, adequacy, timeliness, feedback and proper network (Mangal & Mangal, 2017). By following these principles, classroom communication is created to be effective. It remains effective, if messages are not distorted during the communication process and it serves the purposes for which it was designed. When the desired outcome is not achieved, teachers need to identify the factors acting as obstacles or creating barriers in the process. These barriers distort the message at any stage in the communication process. The identification should be followed by appropriate measures to overcome them. There are several barriers to communication in classroom which are given in the following manner under its broader categories:

* **Physical Barriers:** Classroom is a place of learning where a teacher achieves his/her objectives effectively if interaction with students is done successfully in a physically comforting environment. In classrooms, noise (from different sources), invisibility, inaudibility, environmental and physical discomfort, distractions, lack of arrangement for lighting, seating and acoustics can be considered as the physical barriers to classroom communication. Improper functioning of the media, selected, for communication can also be a barrier. Media become vehicle of sending messages. If it is not selected according to the context and condition of students and purposes of communication, it will affect the clarity and understanding of the message.
* **Language Barriers:** Language is the means of communication or interaction in the classroom. If proper physical environment is provided in the classroom, but teachers’ language use is not at all effective in delivering the message, communication tends to fail here. Teachers’ use of excessive verbalism, verbosity and unclear symbols or graphics and improper body language along with students’ language incompetence, poor receptive abilities, poor listening skill, lack of comprehension, wide gap between the teachers and student’s language, etc. are language barriers to classroom communication related to senders, receivers and the quality of media.
* **Psycho-social Barriers:** The psychological barriers might originate from receiver as well as from senders’ psychological state of mind. Prejudice, disinterest, inattention, emotions, redundancy, day dreaming, confusion, unrewarding experience, feeling of anxiety, poor physical health or illness, lack of motivation, dissatisfaction, poor cognitive abilities, and unfulfilled curiosity are psychological factors that affect classroom communication to the large extent. Imperceptions or selective perception is also barrier to effective communication. It is said to be the foundation of learning, basis of thinking and attitude formation (Jackson, 1968). Our sensory mechanism helps in perception which works as means to learning. Lack of perception abilities lead to ineffective communication. The social barriers are associated with the background of students and teachers including their prior knowledge and understanding, cultural background, socio-economic background, tradition etc. Cultural biases and prejudices serve as barrier to communication. Lack of commonness among teachers and students leads to ineffective communication. Teachers send the messages in an encoded form which need to be decoded by students as receivers. The process smoothly occurs if there lies commonness among both the ends. The greater the degree of commonness existing, the better the communication system will function (Jackson, 1968).

**Strategies to Overcome Barriers to Communication**

Communication is not only used by teachers for imparting content knowledge, but also for classroom management and other informal interactions. It is important for generating students’ attention, interest, motivation and active involvement in teaching learning process. Overcoming these barriers of communication in classroom implies considerable amount of strategies, to be adopted and implemented by teachers. The strategies for overcoming these barriers are given in the following ways:

* **To overcome physical barrier**
  + A teacher should adjust the classroom environment by arranging proper system of lighting and acoustics, etc.,
  + Make appropriate seating arrangement,
  + Select properly the channels or media according to the quality of message and purpose of communication,
  + Ensure audibility and visibility in classroom,
  + Minimize the visual and aural distractions, and
  + Provide environmental comfort.
* **To overcome language barriers**
  + A teacher should assess his/her own communication skills and knowledge of the content.
  + A teacher needs to know about each student’s communication including their reading and writing characteristics and language receptive abilities. According to Johnson (1997), the teachers must understand the nature of language and dialect difference and must be able to reach the child’s level of understanding (Pal, et al, 2016).
  + Use judicious mix of verbal and non-verbal means as enhancers of communication.
  + Promote active listening.
  + Use simple language and less verbalism for explanation.
  + Explain and use graphics symbols.
  + Employ different methods and strategies and tactics of communication.
  + Use audio-visual resources and multimedia effectively.
  + Take feedback measures as frequently as possible.
* **To overcome psycho-social barriers** 
  + A teacher should make learners attentive and motivated for learning. During the class, teachers should create situations that stimulate students to take part actively in the teaching-learning process.
  + Use interesting audio-visual materials. To generate students’ interest in the topic, a teacher should use technology to support communication. There are varieties of students in a single classroom, so variety of media use will surely enhance the effectiveness of communication. If a teacher uses multi media for teaching and learning, he/she can avoid verbalism in classroom. “Ideally, learners should have available combinations of audio-visual experiences. Such a usage of available materials helps to establish a more common background of experiences among the learners” (Jackson, 1968),
  + Select and modify content material and make it relevant according to the needs, interest and socio-economic background of learners and present it in new and innovative manner. Their prior knowledge must be kept into consideration.
  + Use various teaching skills during teaching learning processes.
  + Use feedback processes.
  + Reduce mutual conflict and tension.
  + Create fear-free environment where students feel free to interact with their teachers and with each other.
  + Provide opportunities for active participation of students in teaching learning process.
  + Psychological barriers can be removed through teaching strategies such as group discussion, role play, small group activities, etc.
  + Provide assistance and facilitate learning.

**Conclusion**

The concluding remark from the analysis of the discussed points is that effectiveness of classroom teaching and learning mostly depends upon the quality and quantity of communication, taking place through different media or channels. Effective communication is fundamental element of good learning. This communication gets hindered by physical, psycho-social, and language barriers linked to one or more elements of communication cycle. A teacher needs to identify barriers in his/her classroom and should try to implement different strategies to overcome the identified barriers. “The key person controlling classroom communication is the teacher. Only by wise and correct use of a variety of audio-visual materials and techniques can the teacher hope to overcome barriers to communication” (Jackson, 1968). These barriers distort the quality of the messages sent and received. So, every effort should be made to reduce their impact on communication process. Successful communication in classroom is achieved through minimization and elimination of barriers to the highest level.

**Objectives**

The main objectives of this module are to acquaint the students about:

* the definition of communication;
* the concept of classroom communication:
* identifying different barriers to classroom communication; and
* analyzing strategies to overcome barriers to classroom communication.

**Glossary**

1. **Communication:** Communication refers to a two way process of sharing feelings, ideas, thoughts, information and opinions with others through proper channel.
2. **Etymological meaning of Communication**: Etymologically communication came from a Latin root word ‘Communis’, meaning ‘common’. Hence, it stands for an act of sharing commonness or common understanding and experiences with others.
3. **Components of Communication**: Components of communication are senders (encoder), receivers (decoder), messages (signals), media or channel and feedback.
4. **Classroom Communication:** “In a classroom, the meaning of communication is related to the messages and counter-messages, which constitute the teaching-learning process which involves initiation, reception and response that serve as feedback” (Jose, 2016).
5. **Factors Affecting Classroom Communication:** The effectiveness of classroom communication is dependent upon the factors related to its elements such as sender, receiver, message, media, classroom environment and feedback.
6. **Principles of Communication:** The principles of communication are principle of clarity, integrity, attention, consistency, adequacy, timeliness, feedback and proper network.
7. **Physical Barriers to Communication:** In classrooms, noise (from different sources), invisibility, inaudibility, environmental and physical discomfort, distractions, lack of arrangement for lighting, seating and acoustics can be considered as the physical barriers to classroom communication.
8. **Language Barriers to Communication:** Teachers’ use of excessive verbalism, verbosity and unclear symbols/graphics, improper body language along with students’ language incompetence, poor receptive abilities, poor listening skill, lack of comprehension, wide gap between the teachers and student’s language, etc. are language barriers to classroom communication.
9. **Psychological Barriers:** Prejudice, disinterest, inattention, emotions, redundancy, day dreaming, confusion, unrewarding experience, feeling of anxiety, poor physical health or illness, lack of motivation, dissatisfaction, poor cognitive abilities, and unfulfilled curiosity are psychological factors that affect classroom communication to the large extent.
10. **Social Barriers:** The social barriers are associated with the background of students and teachers including their prior knowledge and understanding, cultural background, socio-economic background, tradition etc. Cultural biases and prejudices serve as barrier to communication.

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

1. **What is meant by Communication?**

**Ans:** Communication refers to a two way process of sharing feelings, ideas, thoughts, information and opinions with others through proper channel.

1. **Describe the concept of classroom communication.**

**Ans:** “In a classroom, the meaning of communication is related to the messages and counter-messages, which constitute the teaching-learning process which involves initiation, reception and response that serve as feedback” (Jose, 2016). Learning in classroom occurs through communication between teachers and students and among students themselves. They communicate in order to achieve the desired learning objectives effectively and efficiently.

1. **What are the principles of communication?**

**Ans:** The principles of communication are principle of clarity, integrity, attention, consistency, adequacy, timeliness, feedback and proper network.

1. **Explain the physical barriers to classroom communication.**

**Ans:** In a classrooms, noise, invisibility of symbols, inaudibility of sound, environmental and physical discomfort, distractions, lack of proper arrangement for lighting, seating and acoustics are considered as the physical barriers to classroom communication.

1. **How do media become barriers to classroom communication?**

**Ans:** Media become vehicle of sending messages. If it is not selected according to the context and condition of students and purposes of communication, it will affect the clarity and understanding of the message.

1. **What are the language barriers to classroom communication?**

**Ans:** Teachers’ excessive use of verbalism and unclear symbols or graphics and improper body language along with students’ language incompetence, poor receptive abilities, poor listening skill, lack of comprehension, wide gap between the teachers and student’s language, etc. are language barriers to classroom communication related to senders, receivers and the quality of media.

1. **What psychological factors are responsible for creating barrier in classroom communication?**

**Ans:** The psychological barriers might originate from receiver as well as from senders’ psychological state of mind. Prejudice, disinterest, inattention, emotions, redundancy, day dreaming, confusion, unrewarding experience, feeling of anxiety, lack of motivation, dissatisfaction, poor cognitive abilities, and unfulfilled curiosity are psychological factors that affect classroom communication to the large extent.

1. **Elucidate social barriers to classroom communication.**

**Ans:** The social barriers are associated with the background of students and teachers including their prior knowledge and understanding, cultural background, socio-economic background, tradition etc. Cultural biases and prejudices also serve as barrier to communication.

1. **What strategies should be adopted for overcoming the physical barriers to classroom communication?**

**Ans:** A teacher should adjust the classroom environment by arranging proper system of lighting and acoustics, appropriate seating arrangement, selection of channels or media according to the quality of message and purpose of communication, audibility and visibility of materials and contents in classroom, minimizing the visual and aural distractions, and providing environmental comfort.

1. **How should a teacher overcome language barriers to communication in his/her classroom?**

**Ans:** A teacher should assess his/her own communication skills and knowledge of the content and should know about student’s communication including their reading and writing characteristics and language receptive abilities. To overcome barriers, teacher should use judicious mix of verbal and non-verbal means as enhancers of communication, promote active listening, use simple language and less verbalism for explanation, explain and use graphics symbols, employ different methods and strategies and tactics of communication, use audio-visual resources and multimedia effectively, and take feedback measures as frequently as possible.

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