

Communication Barriers among Engineering Graduates in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract - Ineffective communication has been found to be the major cause for problems, conflicts and low productivity. There could not be and cannot be a comprehensive list of barriers to communication of people as there are different reasons for different people that act as barriers. This paper attempted to study the barriers to communication among Engineering students who belonged to Net generations as the knowledge of the barriers would be useful to organizations to apply them when these Net generation graduates join organizations. The study was conducted among six hundred engineering students of Anna University in Tamilnadu. The paper discusses the seven barriers to communication among engineering students as identified by the respondents of this study. The seven barriers are: 1) Fear of making mistakes, 2) Language, 3) Speaking to teachers, 4) Lack of trust, 5) Past mistakes, 6) Lack of listening and 7) Interest in cell phone. These barriers to communication among engineering graduates are presented and discussed in the order of preference. Fear of failure is identified by the respondents as number one barrier to communication.

Keywords: Communication, barriers, language, listening

I.INTRODUCTION

Most of the interpersonal and performance problems in institutions, organizations, and societies are due to lack of effective communication. Communication can be defined as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another (Keyton, 2011). The word communication is derived from the Latin word, communis, which means common. So, there must be a common understanding among the people who communicate. Communication is essentially important for engineering graduates as a study indicated that recruiters rated communication skills as the most important characteristic of an ideal job candidate (Yate, 2009).

II.OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To identify the barriers to communication among final year Engineering graduates of Anna University in Tamil Nadu.

III.NEED OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted as no study to identify the barriers to communication among engineering college students in Tamil Nadu has been conducted so far. The rationale behind choosing final year students of Engineering Colleges was that they studied 'Communication' during their sixth semester. As a result they are familiar with the process of communication, importance of it, barriers to effective communication and the areas of application of it. Their contribution would add value to the study.

IV.METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Descriptive

Sampling Design: Purposive Sampling

Sample size: 600. The respondents were final year engineering students who belonged to Anna University and who studied the course 'Principles of Management'.

Data collection method: Questionnaire

Data Analysis: Simple Percentage

Forced Choice rating scale was employed to measure the barriers to communication. "Forced choice enables respondents to rank objectives related to one another, among the alternatives provided. This is easier for the respondents particularly if the number of choices to be ranked is limited in number" (Sekaran,Uma, 2004). A pilot study was conducted among thirty final year students of engineering colleges to identify the barriers to communication among them. They were given a list of ten barriers, Table I, and told to: 1) Include to the list any other barrier that interfered with their communication and 2) Put the ten barriers in the order of priority. There was no addition to the already mentioned barriers as they were comprehensive. The respondents of the pilot study expressed their difficulty in ranking the ten items as they were too many to be understood, assessed and analyzed. So the top seven barriers identified by the respondents of the pilot study, Table II, were chosen for the study.

TABLE I BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

S.No	Barriers to Communication
1	Lack of listening
2	Speaking to teachers
3	Fear of making mistakes
4	Interest in cell phone
5	Language
6	Past mistakes
7	Lack of trust

TABLE II BARRIERS IN THE ORDER OF PRIORITY

S.No	Barriers to Communication
1	Fear of making mistakes
2	Language
3	Family brought up
4	Speaking to teachers
5	Lack of listening
6	Interest in cell phone
7	Lack of interest
8	Past mistakes
9	Lack of trust
10	Inhibition

The list of seven barriers was given to six hundred respondents and they were told to rank them in the order of preference by assigning 1 for the most important barrier and 7 for the least important barrier. The findings of the study are presented in the discussion.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from the six hundred students were analyzed to identify the barriers to their communication. Table III presents the number of responses for each of the seven barriers to communication as per the priority assigned by them. They are:

TABLE III NUMBER OF RESPONSES FOR EACH OF THE SEVEN BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

S.No	Barriers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
1	Fear of making mistakes	221	109	97	31	70	51	21	600
2	Language	97	162	91	48	79	42	81	600
3	Speaking to teachers	59	91	143	88	79	79	61	600
4	Lack of trust	61	70	89	170	91	62	57	600
5	Past mistakes	71	60	75	119	155	78	42	600
6	Lack of listening	61	81	69	79	50	182	78	600
7	Interest in cell phone	30	27	36	65	76	106	260	600
		600	600	600	600	600	600	600	

It is found, as in Table III, that ‘Fear of making mistakes’ was the number one barrier to communication as responded by 221 respondents, ‘Language’ is found to be the second barrier as responded by 162 respondents, ‘Speaking to teachers’ is found to be the third barrier as 143 respondents preferred that, ‘Lack of trust’ was found to be the fourth barrier according 170 respondents, ‘Past mistakes’ were found to be the fifth barrier with 155 respondents, the sixth barrier was ‘Lack of listening’ according to 182 respondents and 260 respondents expressed that ‘Interest in cell phone’ was seventh barrier to communication.

A. Fear of making mistakes

“Emotion” according to Sameena and Aparna, (2014), “plays a vital role in communication, most of the times it causes a barrier to effective communication. An individual passes through any of the emotional touch during communication. The major factors in communication barriers were hesitation, fear, nervousness, shyness, suspicion, mistrust, prejudice and all that hampers the communication process.” This study is in line with their finding as 36.83% of the respondents, as in Table 1.4, expressed that ‘Fear of making mistakes’ was the number one barrier in their communication. 18.17% of them rated

'Fear of making mistakes' as the second barrier, 16.17% of them rated 'Fear of making mistakes' as the third barrier, 5.17% of them rated 'Fear of making mistakes' as the fourth barrier, 11.67% of them rated 'Fear of making mistakes' as

the fifth barrier, 8.50% of them rated 'Fear of making mistakes' as the sixth barrier and 3.50% of them rated 'Fear of making mistakes' as the seventh barrier.

TABLE IV PREFERENCES OF THE RESPONDENTS IN PERCENTAGE FORM.

S.No	Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	%
1	Fear of making mistakes	36.83	18.17	16.17	5.17	11.67	8.50	3.50	100
2	Language	16.17	27.00	15.17	8.00	13.17	7.00	13.50	100
3	Speaking to teachers	9.83	15.17	23.83	14.67	13.17	13.17	10.17	100
4	Lack of trust	10.17	11.67	14.83	28.33	15.17	10.33	9.50	100
5	Past mistakes	11.83	10.00	12.50	19.83	25.83	13.00	7.00	100
6	Lack of listening	10.17	13.50	11.50	13.17	8.33	30.33	13.00	100
7	Interest in cell phone	5.00	4.50	6.00	10.83	12.67	17.67	43.33	100
	%	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	

B.Language

In a report by the Institute of Medicine, language barriers were ranked among the top three barriers (Millman, 1993). This study is also in line with that finding as 27.00% of the respondents, as in Table 1.4, expressed that 'Language' was the number two barrier in their communication. 16.17% of them rated 'Language' as the first barrier, 15.17% of them rated 'Language' as the third barrier, 8.00% of them rated 'Language' as the fourth barrier, 13.17% of them rated 'Language' as the fifth barrier, 7% of them rated 'Language' as the sixth barrier and 13.50% of them rated 'Language' as the seventh barrier.

C.Speaking to teachers

Another obstacle to successful communication is the sender's image of the receiver and vice versa (Lunenburg, 2010). When the students look at the teachers as authority figures, they become anxious and avoid communicating with them. 23.83% of the respondents, as in Table 1.4, expressed that 'Speaking to teachers' was the number three barrier in their communication. 9.83% of them rated 'Speaking to teachers' as the first barrier, 15.17% of them rated 'Speaking to teachers' as the second barrier, 14.67% of them rated 'Speaking to teachers' as the fourth barrier, 13.17% of them rated 'Speaking to teachers' as the fifth barrier, 13.17% of them rated 'Speaking to teachers' as the sixth barrier and 10.17% of them rated 'Speaking to teachers' as the seventh barrier.

D.Lack of Trust

"Emotion" according to Sameena and Aparna, (2014), "plays a vital role in communication, most of the times it causes a barrier to effective communication. An individual passes through any of the emotional touch during communication. The major factors in communication barriers were hesitation, fear, nervousness, shyness, suspicion, mistrust, prejudice and all that hampers the communication process." This study is in line with their finding 28.33% of the respondents, as in Table 1.4,

expressed that 'Lack of trust' was the number four barrier in their communication. 10.17% of them rated 'Lack of trust' as the first barrier, 11.67% of them rated 'Lack of trust' as the second barrier, 14.83% of them rated 'Lack of trust' as the third barrier, 15.17% of them rated 'Lack of trust' as the fifth barrier, 10.33% of them rated 'Lack of trust' as the sixth barrier and 9.50% of them rated 'Lack of trust' as the seventh barrier.

E.Past Mistakes

It can be embarrassing to make mistakes with communication. For example, if you send an email without checking it, and later realize that it contained an error, you can end up looking sloppy and unprofessional (mindtools.com). This experience makes one hesitate while communicating to that person. Similar barrier occurs in oral communication as one's past mistakes keep interfering in one's communication. 25.83% of the respondents, as in Table 1.4, expressed that 'Past mistakes' was the number five barrier in their communication. 11.83% of them rated 'Past mistakes' as the first barrier, 10.00% of them rated 'Past mistakes' as the second barrier, 12.50% of them rated 'Past mistakes' as the third barrier, 19.83% of them rated 'Past mistakes' as the fourth barrier, 13.00% of them rated 'Past mistakes' as the sixth barrier and 7% of them rated 'Past mistakes' as the seventh barrier.

F.Lack of listening

Active listening is a term popularized by the work of Carl Rogers and Richard Farson (n.d.) and advocated by counselors and therapists. Their works established that not being attentive while listening to others acts as a barrier to effective communication. This study found that 30.33% of the respondents, as in Table 1.4, expressed that 'Lack of listening' was the number six barrier in their communication. 10.17% of them rated 'Lack of listening' as the first barrier, 13.50% of them rated 'Lack of listening' as the second barrier, 11.50% of them rated 'Lack of listening' as the third barrier, 13.17% of them rated 'Lack of listening' as the fourth barrier, 8.33% of them rated 'Lack of

listening' as the fifth barrier and 13% of them rated 'Lack of listening' as the seventh barrier.

G. Interest in cell phone

Physical distractions are the physical things that get in the way of communication. Examples of such things include the telephone, a pick-up truck door, a desk, an uncomfortable meeting place, and noise (Bernard L. Erven, 2009). 43.33% of the respondents, as in Table 1.4, expressed that 'Interest in cell phone' was the number seven barrier in their communication. 5% of them rated 'Interest in cell phone' as the first barrier, 4.50% of them rated 'Interest in cell phone' as the second barrier, 6% of them rated 'Interest in cell phone' as the third barrier, 10.83% of them rated 'Interest in cell phone' as the fourth barrier, 12.67% of them rated 'Interest in cell phone' as the fifth barrier and 17.17% of them rated 'Interest in cell phone' as the seventh barrier.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study identified the seven barriers to communication among engineering graduates. These engineering graduates are future employees. Some of them may join companies immediately after their graduation and some of them may join after their post graduation. Fear of failure is the number one barrier and Interest in cell phone is the number seven barrier for them according to the study. When they become employees their fear of failure and speaking to superiors may be more and those may have direct influence on their performance. So, the superiors and the organizations can take lead from this study and implement a few practices to remove barriers to their communication.

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