

OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN COMMUNICATION

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Annotation: This article explores the causes of language barriers on effective communication. It discusses the challenges and misunderstandings that can arise when individuals do not share a common language, and ways in which these barriers can be overcome.

Keywords: Language barrier, communication, misunderstanding, strategy, to overcome, cross-linguistic, obstacle, difficulty.

Language plays a very important role in human lives. It is a tool of communication providing abstract as well as concrete content. It is closely linked to ethnicity and identity, as people who share a language also often share a common culture and history. Many immigrants struggle to learn the language of their new country, creating barriers to connecting with native individuals and other immigrant communities. Being able to communicate in the majority language has been found to improve intergroup relationships, while the inability to do so leads to exclusion from key conversations and contributes to social isolation.

A language barrier is a difficulty or obstacle that arises when people who speak different languages are unable to effectively communicate with each other due to their language differences. This can lead to misunderstandings, confusion, and challenges in conveying ideas, emotions, and information across linguistic boundaries. Language barriers can exist in various settings such as work, social interactions, and everyday life, and can impair effective communication and relationship-building. There are a few factors in occurring barriers in language. One of them is that when using a foreign language, speech is often slower, less fluent, and less rich in content. Individuals may experience considerable frustration with themselves for not being able to express themselves adequately, and with others for not understanding them. This feeling of frustration can lead to anxiety, which further compounds the problem. In addition, listeners may fail to perceive simplified speech as a speech strategy for bridging the language barrier and may instead perceive it as a reflection of the individual's intellectual abilities. Consequently, listeners may develop a negative attitude towards the speaker. The process of decoding information in a foreign language can lead to lowered comprehension and miscomprehension, even when decoding is performed successfully. As a result, it is unsurprising that speakers and listeners involved in

foreign language interactions express a preference for using their native language. In addition to language barriers, accents and dialects can also affect verbal communication. Accents are variations in producing words that are shared by a large community of speakers, while dialects are variations in vocabulary, grammar, and word usage. Both native and non-native speakers of a language can use accents and dialects, and this can hinder effective communication. Accents and dialects can influence how a message is perceived, and individuals may stereotype or discriminate against those who use variations of a language different from their own. Accents or dialects can also cause a disruption in the flow of a conversation. An individual who is not familiar with an accent or dialect may need to devote extra cognitive effort to understand what is being said, which can increase the likelihood of a comprehension error. The use of technology in the form of language translation and interpretation applications can help bridge some language barriers. In the modern world, such applications are easily accessible and can translate spoken words in real-time. Although these applications can be helpful and minimize the language barrier, they are not foolproof. Oftentimes, the translated message may not make sense, and important cultural nuances and context may be lost in translation. Therefore, it is crucial for speakers to be aware of the limitations of such technology, especially in important or life-altering situations. In addition, reviewing and improving the accuracy of the translated message after the initial interpretation is beneficial. The presence of language barriers between health professionals and patients can lead to some communication challenges, particularly in asking and responding to direct or personal questions during history taking, or when clarifications are needed about the patient's symptoms. Moreover, our study subjects mentioned misunderstandings or confusion about the nature of communication, body language interpretation, care-related issues, and constraints on linguistic data, as being among the obstacles to effective communication. However, the majority of studies documented that the main problems resulting from language barriers are failure to understand clinical explanations, an inadequate understanding of providers' recommendations, knowledge transfer, and a lack of information exchange between them.

Communication in medical settings is a point of interest that has been widely researched, especially considering its importance in correct diagnosis and treatment. It is essential that health professionals turn to adequate information sources, recognize linguistic and cultural diversity, and use the tools available to ensure that the right to healthcare in appropriate conditions, without any communication limitations, is met with no obstacles. The aim of this study was to understand how language barriers hinder patient-provider effective communication and get the perspective of health professionals and patients regarding the strategies used to overcome this obstacle within the National Health System in Portugal. Interpreters have the power to

accurately transmit the meaning and tone of voice of the speaker to the listener and vice versa. When in doubt, professional interpreters commonly use the clarification technique to ask the speaker for more context in order to better understand the intended message. This is especially important when dealing with a culture-specific message. Professional interpreters prepare in advance, study glossaries, and familiarize themselves with commonly used terms in various professional fields. They continuously work on improving their craft and are trained in specific interpreting modes, such as consecutive or simultaneous interpreting. On the other hand, when communication is performed through ad hoc or untrained interpreters, it is vital to use simple language, short sentences, and to avoid jargon and slang. The speaker should also periodically check for understanding to make sure the message is being accurately conveyed. Lastly, and this should be obvious, interpreting must be performed by professionals. Just as health care professionals have specialized training and experience in their particular area of expertise, professional medical interpreters have specialized training and experience. "Dual role" interpreters—who occupy a role that is multiple and often conflicted, fraught with both emotional and intellectual bias—are not considered to be the best option for either patients or providers. It is very important that a professional interpreter helps the patient to express the oppressive feelings so that you can work on the problem without linguistic barriers. Such cultural and linguistic sensitivity is definitely lacking in interpretation. Medical interpretation is the practice of facilitating communication between a healthcare provider and their limited English proficient patient by the use of an interpreter. In healthcare settings, a failure to communicate can have fatal consequences, and the solution does not rely on untrained or well-intentioned bilingual individuals. There are laws and standards (including those for medical interpretation) that are clearly designed to ensure that given the immediate and crucial concerns about access and patient safety, the legal system is uniquely suited to remedy this injustice. The use of interpreters in health care can obviate the possibility of personal harm through misunderstanding arising from the language barrier; it is a remedial step that is within the power of both individual providers and the health-care system. Some volunteer interpreters are fluent in more than one language, often including medical terms. But they frequently do not have current knowledge about medical diagnosis and treatment. Consequently, it is vital that clinic medical providers be alerted that such volunteers are not professional interpreters. Instead, they are asked to interpret only when no professional interpreters are present. Additionally, volunteers should be informed that they are not to provide any sort of counseling about the medical concerns being discussed, advice or explanation about the diagnosis, prognosis or any medical information. They need to be reminded they should not be offering directions about medications that the patient fails to understand or are unable to carry out. All of this contributes to protect the

confidentiality and dignity of the patient by ensuring that only the information the patient needs is shared. They must know to be alert if disrespect or bias is perceived from the health care provider. All families are expected to be treated respectfully and with empathy. It should be made clear that the use of a volunteer interpreter is a stop-gap measure to be used when no professional supplier of interpreting services is present.

In conclusion, overcoming language barriers in communication is essential for fostering understanding and collaboration in diverse settings. By acknowledging the potential for positive transfer, individuals can leverage their existing linguistic skills and cultural competencies to bridge communication gaps effectively. Embracing techniques such as active listening, non-verbal communication, and language-learning strategies can empower individuals and organizations to navigate multicultural interactions with confidence and empathy. Ultimately, by valuing linguistic diversity and actively seeking ways to overcome language barriers, we can create more inclusive and harmonious environments where communication thrives.

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