



ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS OR TRADE COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

English is used by businessmen and tradesmen in writing and in the speech lavishly. They speak English with national variety. The knowledge of English to businessmen of the modern times is needed for receptive competence. A businessman has to have a wider use of e-mail, video-conferencing and internet. Meeting in the cyberspace has become common for them. Oral or written communication in English for business or trade has become a creative process. Businessmen or tradesmen have to take a serious note of changes in the position of consumer and the global reach of commercial activity with the command of English and spontaneity in expression. Electronic communication, e-mail, web-conference, teleconference, fax telephone or mobile conversation, editing the message and daily correspondence need to have knowledge of both the skills in English – speaking and writing. For the businessmen of the 21st century. Perception through reading and listening English by them is to be essentially thought upon.

Key Words : *Communication, message, correspondence, perception and text*

In India, English serves as the means of interpersonal communication between speaker of different indigenous languages. English is used by businessmen in writing and in the speech lavishly. While communicating through English, businessmen or tradesmen ignore pronunciation differences. They speak with national variety. The variety in pronunciation does not constitute a major obstacle. They turn into each other's system.

To learn English or any language,

“Prior knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, phonology, syntax and discourse structure to access words and combine them into phrases, clauses and longer units of text is essential”. 1

The same principles are applicable to the learning of English for business, for which, abilities like listening, speaking, reading and writing skill are to be mastered. The knowledge of English to businessman of the modern times is needed for receptive competence.

Communication is the establishment of commonness, or sharing of information, attitudes, ideas and understanding with the receivers of our messages. It is the process of transmitting and receiving verbal and nonverbal messages that produce a response. In a way, human communication is the dynamic process of creating meaning between two or more people. Each communication has threefold aim :

- (1) Understanding the message
- (2) Getting a constructive response
- (3) Development and maintenance of good relationship.

A businessman in the business may be the writer of letter, the first speaker in a conversation, or the first person who initiates the communication process by a gesture and a receiver may be a listener, the reader, or the observer in the communication process. Language is used as a type of code. The code is transmitted using one or more of the following channels :

- (1) Verbal communication, using words. Non-verbal communication through smile, frown, handshake or a pat on a back.
- (2) Written communication through memos, letters, reports and e-mails.
- (3) Oral communication through face to face meetings and telephone or mobile conversation.

A businessman has to have a wider use of e-mail, video-conferencing and internet. Meeting in the cyberspace has become common.

The writing process in any business aim at providing information. Notices pasted on the notice board, manuals provided with equipment and machinery, leaflet provided with medicines are some examples of written form. In the persuasive writing, the writer intends to influence the reader or customer in a particular way. Advertisements, promotional materials are persuasive writings.

Writing effective business messages through English is a skill as well as a science. Poorly written messages, letters and applications can damage personal image, and can negatively effect relations with clients, customers and colleagues. Written text consists of three phases :

- (1) Outlining
- (2) Constructing
- (3) Editing

Many times, task such as writing a proposal or report have to be handled by a group rather than an individual. It is called a collaborative writing task.

The writer, to make a business correspondence in English needs to consider four factors related to the message :

- (1) Purpose
- (2) Reader's needs
- (3) Central idea
- (4) Appropriate channel or medium for the message.

Selection of proper language, paraphrasing, opening and closing are to be given prime thought at the time of construction. While editing the message in a business correspondence in English, friendly tone is to be followed.

“Writing is a mode of communicating a message for a purpose. Writing reveals one's ability to think clearly and to use language effectively”. 2

Messages are misunderstood and then there is a confusion and counter productivity. A message is successful only when both the sender and the receiver perceive it in the same way. There is a communication breakdown if the thoughts and ideas are not conveyed properly.

Business or trade cannot be conducted without communication. And today, in business, good skill in communication in order to be a successful businessman is necessary. For business in modern times, the language English has become a universal medium. Oral or written communication in English for business has been a creative process. Today, we have to take a serious note of changes in the position of consumer and the global reach of commercial activity.

“The geographical spread of English is unique among the languages of the world, not only in our time but through history”. 3

Writing and speaking differ from reading and listening. Writing is addressed to readers and speaking to listeners. Writing allows time for planning and editing of production while speaking is often planned and requires

‘outline’ or ‘real-line’ processing. Effective writing does not come by chance. It does not just happen. It

requires a set of skills to write simply, clearly, accurately and briefly. 4

Speaking is an important area of activity in business for interpersonal purposes. For a businessman, there is need for speaking in virtually all situations. To speak English, a businessman requires the language knowledge involved in bottom-up process for speech production, which include appropriate vocabulary, features of pronunciation and grammatical patterns conveying meaning.

“The English language students can broaden the range of their study by keeping up to date with contemporary debate, by observing the spoken and written English around them, and by drawing on personal experience”. 5

In a two way process of communication, information is passed between senders and receivers. Perception is a receiver’s understanding of the information that has been sent. He has the role of good listener to be played. He has to listen to the content very closely. The process of perception is of vital importance in the business communication. The process of perception, perceptual errors and how to improve perception accuracy are the factors to be essentially thought upon in the perception. The perception is a three phase process of selecting, organizing and interpreting information. Each person possesses a unique sense of perception and two persons may perceive the same event in two different ways. That depends on their limitations of experiences. Perception accuracy of a businessman can be improved by open-mindedness, imagination and sincerity.

Written communication gives the writer a chance to plan and control the written text like letters, reports, memos and proposals. The command on English language and spontaneity in expression are required even in the electronic communication. Electronic communication provides speed and the ability to overcome time-zone barriers. E-mail, web-conference and teleconference and fax are some of the electronic communication forms.

In business, for writing English better use of friendly tone is suggested. While drafting a letter one has to watch the use of humour and avoid obvious flattery, preaching or begging. The written text should be presented in the reader’s point of view. The attention should be called to the bright side of things. Focus should be on the opportunities and not on mistakes or problems. The ideas should be supported with facts, avoiding exaggeration.....very politely, tactfully and in a restrained manner. Because it is even through written material or correspondence that the image of the company is projected. For instance, instead of saying : “Our company is proud to announce a new schedule of Low-cost flights to South-east Asia”, better say: “For your cost saving and convenience we are glad to introduce a new schedule of

low cost flights to Hawaii”. Instead of writing: “With reference to your application, I hereby give my permission for you to attend the two-day workshops”, better write : “You will be pleased to know that your request to attend the two-day workshop has been approved”. Instead of saying : “So that we may bring out customer records up to date and eliminate the expenses of duplicate mailings, we are asking you to complete the enclosed card,” better say or write : “Please, complete the enclosed card. This will help us to update your information and serve you better.”

The sequencing of writing any message or information should be according to the purpose of the text and the writer should note the nature of the reader or the customer. So, the written material or the correspondence is to be for the reader or customer and not for the writer. And so, while editing the written text, the tone, interest level, clarity and readability are to be checked.

The writer in the correspondence through English should use strong words such as verb, nouns and specific terms. Better avoid clichés and overused words. The correspondence is to be made through familiar words and the vocabulary of the reader. For example, instead of using the word “procrastinate” better use “delay”. Instead of using the word “advise” better use “inform or tell”.

Better use non-sexist or gender-neutral language and also avoid changing verbs into nouns and adjectives. Even reference to disabilities, race and age should be avoided. Better use short and sweet sentence instead of using long sentence and passive voice. For example avoid writing : “Customers are informed that the seminar schedule has been changed from the last year, and the fee payment dates will be revised accordingly”. Better write the same sentence in this way : “Dear customers, please note the changes in the seminar schedule. Date for the fees payment have also been changed”.

To ensure that the content is delivered effectively, proof reading is a must, grammar and spell-checkers in the word-processing software are to be used as useful tools. But it should be kept in mind that good writers never rely on these tools entirely. Great care is to be taken in sequencing and arranging the content of the text : for example, opening and closing of the text, development of the body of the text, and sequencing of information or details in the body of the text like : Direct Requests, Routine, Good News and Goodwill messages.

In the routine requests like : placing orders, requesting routine information and action, requests for claims and adjustments, routine credit requests and asking for references while selecting candidates for jobs care is to be taken that a tactful tone is needed in the business in English. It is vitally important not to repeat any part of the negative information in the close of the letter-writing.

It is very obvious that each writing situation is unique and, therefore, rules and convention of writing in any form in business do not help always. The success of writing in English for any business depends on the writers' understanding and the judicious analysis of readers or customers. The formats and conventions are to be applied with necessary modification to the varying situation.

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