



## **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN MODERN AND TECHNICAL SCENARIO**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*English as a language, rather as a second language has pervaded and acquired the prestigious status of official language in most of the countries today. Known as the 'Queen's Language' during British reign, English, in the present era has become the language of the common man ;thanks to globalization. Be it any arena, whether professional, technical, medical or business, spoken and written English have become crucial for sustenance as well as one of the major parameters of success. Gone are the days when acquisition of knowledge was considered sufficient to be successful. Today, it has become more important to showcase your abilities; which can be done only through effective communicative skills. In India English is taught more as a subject than as a skill, especially till standard twelve. This practice inhibits their real communicative abilities from coming to the fore.*

*Later on when they go to the colleges for higher studies they face immense difficulties. The diversities in their cultural and educational backgrounds, differences in their traditions, attitudes and perspectives magnifies and multiplies this problem further, creating more pitfalls and obstacles. If effective communication skills open ample gateways for the students at the same time lack of it may even close many doors. Although these skills come naturally to its native speakers, imbibing or developing these skills is quite a tedious and challenging affair for both the teachers and the students where English is a second language. In this paper I have made an attempt to address the challenges faced by the students as well as the teachers in this context and discussed certain measures to overcome these barriers.*

**Key Words:** *Effective communication, Vernaculars, teaching learning*

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Effective communication skills: Importance and Opportunities in the present scenario**

With the phenomenal advancement in technology, accessing and sharing of information has become a common function and communication has assumed more importance than ever. Whether it is an academic institution or business organisation, communicating formal and technical messages is vital for its progress, prosperity, and sustenance. The various oral and



written forms of communication, such as presentations, briefings, meetings, interviews, conversations, seminars, conferences, discussions, instructions, reports, proposals, letters, advertisements, and so on, not only enable people to come together and share their ideas at various workplaces but also enable organisations to progress and prosper. Business communication is evolving at a rapid pace with the introduction of new network based collaborative technologies. These technologies and tools are making real time communication a reality, which can improve employee productivity and deliver tremendous returns for employers. As a result of global competition and restructuring, we are witnessing dramatic changes in work environments. Information is now exchanged via e-mail and voice mail; meetings are conducted through teleconferencing and videoconferencing; business presentations are made with the use of sophisticated presentation software; shopping is offered online; and the customer information is collected and products are promoted using the internet.

Because of the various phenomenal changes in the business environment, recruiters now look for students with good computer-cum-communication skills. To thrive in this new world of work students must be flexible and willing to continually learn new skills that supplements the basic skills they acquire as students. Probably the most important basic skill for all professionals – whether technocrats or managers, in the new environment is the ability to communicate effectively, which means being able to exchange information and ideas effectively in speech and writing. As they climb higher in their career, communication skills become even more important.

### **Challenges faced by teachers/ students in acquiring effective communicative abilities**

In spite of the increasing importance of communication skills, many individuals struggle to communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively in both verbal and written format. This inability makes it nearly impossible for them to compete effectively in the workplace and stands in their way of progress.

As a teacher it becomes my prime duty to help the students imbibe these skills to the best of their ability. Yet despite remaining consistent in my efforts I fail to get hundred percent outputs in my endeavour. Through my twelve years of teaching experience and observation I have found following major challenges which create stumbling blocks in acquisition of smooth and effective communication skills.

I would like to deal with them one by one-

### **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND GRAMMAR**

Some of the known essentials of a language are syntax, grammar and vocabulary which gives language its genuine shape and authenticity. From time immemorial, it has been debated whether grammar is important or not and some unconventional people do not regard

it important at all. But, the fact is, that one of the major reasons behind our poor writing and speaking skills is the weak foundation of grammar. Privileged students, who get conducive environment do not suffer much but those coming from rural areas with Hindi medium background, have to really suffer a lot for no fault of their own. ; once they enter the threshold of the college.

There are several reasons why one might want to improve the understanding of the rules of grammar. To quote William B. Bradshaw,

“Grammar, regardless of the country or the language, is the foundation for communication -- the better the grammar, the clearer the message, the more likelihood of understanding the message's intent and meaning. That is what communication is all about<sup>1</sup> Writing and speaking correctly gives you the appearance of credibility. If you're attempting to build a reputation as an expert in your profession, this is extremely important.

Says N.E.Renton,” Incorrect grammar and poor pronunciation can offend the ear, while incorrect spelling and poor presentation can offend the eye.”<sup>2</sup>

## PROBLEMS FACED BY THE STUDENTS IN LEARNING GRAMMAR

Learners of L2 often find problems in the following areas of grammar;

- English has a relatively large number of tense–aspect–mood forms with some quite subtle differences, such as the difference between the simple past "She wrote" and the present perfect "She has written .In general one fails to apply 3rd person present singular -s to verbs, as in 'he sing' not 'he sings'.
- Learners of English tend to find it difficult to manipulate the various ways in which English uses auxiliary verbs. These include negation (e.g. *Ravi has not been writing.*), inversion with the subject to form a question (e.g. *Has Ravi been writing?*), short answers (e.g. *Yes, he has.*) and tag questions (*has he*)
- English has several modal auxiliary verbs, which each have a number of uses. These verbs convey a special sense or mood such as obligation, necessity, ability, probability, possibility etc.

All these modal verbs or "modals" take the first form of the verb after them. These modals do not have past or future inflection, i.e. they do not have past or future tense.

For example, the opposite of "Ram must be here at 6" (obligation) is usually "Ram does not have to be here at 6" (lack of obligation, choice chocolate" (deduction). This complexity takes considerable work for most English language learners to master.

- Phrasal verbs (also known as multiple-word verbs) in English can cause difficulties for many learners because of their syntactic pattern and because they often have several meanings. There are also a number of phrasal verb differences between American and British English.
- As with many other languages, the correct use of prepositions in the English language is difficult to learn, and it can turn out to be quite a frustrating learning

experience for L1 learners. For example, the prepositions "on" (rely on, fall on), "of" (think of, because of, in the vicinity of), and "at" (turn at, meet at, start at) are used in so many different ways and contexts, it is very difficult to remember the exact meaning for each one.

### **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SPOKEN AND WRITTEN ENGLISH**

As with most languages, written language tends to use a more formal register than spoken language.

**Spelling and pronunciation:** Probably the biggest difficulty for non-native speakers, since the relation between English spelling and pronunciation does not follow the alphabetic principle consistently. Because of the many changes in pronunciation which have occurred since a written standard developed, the retention of many historical idiosyncrasies in spelling, and the large influx of foreign words (mainly from Norman French, Classical Latin and Greek) with different and overlapping spelling patterns, English spelling and pronunciation are difficult even for native speakers to master.. The spelling and pronunciation system causes problems in both directions: a learner may know a word by sound but be unable to write it correctly (or indeed find it in a dictionary) or they may see a word written but not know how to pronounce it.

### **INAPPROPRIATE METHODS FOR TEACHING GRAMMAR**

Grammar in India is taught primarily using two methods. Well, in one extreme we have those language courses that teach grammar almost exclusively, as if preparing the students to be grammarians of the second language rather than users. In the other extreme we have those “communicative” courses in which the only thing that is done is to talk about something or to read an article and comment on it. In my experience, both scenarios may seem good for very specific purposes but I personally feel both are inappropriate for most language learners. For starters, by itself, a good command of the grammar of a language does not imply that the person is able to communicate effectively, as we usually see with students who have only been exposed to an all-grammar-oriented approach sometimes for many years. Many could recite the grammar by heart but if asked to express basic information, they would hesitate too much and browse through all the grammar rules in their heads before making an utterance, or simply dry up.

Secondly, just talking in class without anything else done in order to learn from the actual conversation is not good enough either. It may be helpful of course, but up to a certain point. This approach may be more useful for very advanced students who just need to brush up their second language, but for those in need of building up the foundations of a new language it is certainly too vague and flux, without any consistency.

Unfortunately, there is no shortcut to learning English grammar. While there are many spelling and grammar check software programs available, a computer can't fully grasp the intricacies of the English language.

### **LACK OF GOOD TEACHERS /TRAINERS**



At the moment, it is the duty of teachers to cater to the practical needs of the learners, to make them competent enough to interact with one another and remove the fear from the minds of the students by providing them moral support more as a facilitator than a traditional type of instructor. The students particularly from vernacular languages who take admission in higher education courses should be trained properly in four skills of English through Reading club, Dialogue chains, Role Play, Book Review, Group Discussion etc which. may be very helpful in improving their communication skill and nurture confidence in them. But there lies a dearth of such good teachers who can actually imbibe these skills in the students.

The teachers of English are either not trained properly or they are the teachers of other subjects Though there are institutes like CIEFL, RIEs and ,ELTCs to train teachers of English, they are hardly enough for the large demands of the Indian teacher population.

### **VERNACULAR/REGIONAL LANGUAGES POSE A BARRIER**

English contains a number of sounds and sound distinctions not present in some other languages. Speakers of languages without these sounds may have problems both with hearing and with pronouncing them.”Each language has its own system. Therefore while learning a language we have to resist the pull of our mother tongue.”<sup>3</sup>(Ranjan, Bhanu)

Most of the Indian students are exposed to their mother tongues. They do not get adequate opportunities either to listen to or speak in English. They listen to English only in the ‘English Language class. The teaching of the other subjects is mostly in their regional languages as the medium of instruction is in their vernacular languages. It is only in the cities and urban areas that we find English medium schools.

### **INEFFECTIVE TEACHING/ LEARNING MATERIAL**

Many teaching/ learning materials like — good textbooks, workbooks, and handbooks for teachers, TV, radio, charts or other useful visual material — are essential for effective teaching. Unfortunately many teachers and students are not provided with these materials. Hence, sometimes the teaching and learning becomes more imaginative than practical.

### **STUDENTS LACK INTEREST AND ZEAL TOWARDS IMBIBING THESE SKILLS**

Most of the students lack interest in cultivating these skills. The poverty and the insecure sociological conditions also force them to neglect the language. In addition, learning a foreign language is not an easy task and the much needed exposure and practice are not available to achieve fluency in the use of the language

### **FAULTY EXAMINATION SYSTEM**

“It is a bitter fact that teaching of English in India is still to a great extent, examination-oriented only.”<sup>4</sup> (Gupta, Shweta ) And, generally, the methodology of teaching relies heavily on the evaluation pattern, though it should be happening the other way. Our examinations of





English encourage the students for rote memory because many times the questions are based on summarizing either a poem or a narration. The language skills are not tested to any appreciable degree. Speech skills are totally neglected. Teachers also find it very difficult to motivate the students in the class because the students always aim at memorizing the notes from low-standard guides and reproducing them in the examination.

## MEASURES FOR MAKING TEACHING AND LEARNING OF L2 EFFECTIVE

With all the problems, discussed above, it is evident that the standard of English in our country is deplorably low. This problem cannot be solved by individual efforts. It is a matter of collective consciousness and efforts; efforts of the government, parents, teachers and the students. And on personal basis every teacher and student should try to achieve the following things:

- First and foremost, teachers need to know precisely what they are trying to prepare their students for.
- Again, our primary goal as second language teachers must be to create users of the language, not linguists! To begin with, it should be noted that whatever we present our students with should follow a progression from the very general meaning to the very specific pattern or structure we want them to learn.
- “Provide them with ample opportunities to practice what they have learned in REAL or REALISTIC communicative situations”<sup>5</sup> (Foppoli Julio) Create situations so that they can make lots of mistakes and encourage them to improve on them by reminding them of what they have studied. "experiencing" the language, so they are able to understand the whole picture better. Role plays, paraphrasing, summarizing stories and the like, are great ways to put the "grammar rules" into action without them even realizing they are using them mean it's the ability to use the language not learn its labels that is of more concern.

## CONCLUSION

A lot of responsibility is thrown on the shoulders of the teachers to make their classes interesting and learning of English fruitful. They have to gear up to meet the demands of the situation and successfully perform their duties. It also explains the need for a teacher to be resourceful and knowledgeable to meet the grave situation and promote better standards of achievement.

In conclusion, I reiterate It is high time, we teachers should improvise our teaching techniques and make teaching learning process more interactive, communicative and meaningful for the students and equip them with these skills in such a way that they are able to meet the challenges of the professional world with ease.



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