

STRATEGIES TO HONE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF BUDDING ENTREPRENEURS

M. Sumathy Rajakumar*

***Abstract:** This paper focuses on the need to recognize the importance of communicative competence in the universal language, English, for budding entrepreneurs. Undoubtedly the professional success of an entrepreneur largely depends on the communication skills. Conventional Management curriculum is strongly focused on the development of the conceptual knowledge and skills of the students. However, in recent years, employers have increasingly acknowledged that this traditional preparation of management students is inadequate, as graduates lack the wide range of written and spoken communication skills required to survive in the field. A paradigm shift in teaching methodology is required. Even at the tertiary level, the skill to communicate effectively in English can be honed. Besides grammar, the budding entrepreneurs need to be familiar with the phonetic symbols. This paper further highlights certain simple strategies to improve the English communication skills of budding entrepreneurs.*

***Key Words:** communicative competence, budding entrepreneurs, paradigm shift*

INTRODUCTION

English language has almost been universally acknowledged as the medium of communication—lingua franca. It is currently the primary language used on the World Wide Web, both in the educational and business arenas. English has, therefore, attained the status of World Language. As a consequence of the convergence of various ethnic communities, the need for communication among the people of various nationalities and ethnic backgrounds has become indispensable. Ability to communicate in English plays a vital role in the global business arena, in which economists emphasize that English proficiency, is a form of human capital in the workplace (McManus, 1985). English is introduced as a subject in the elementary school curriculum, aiming to provide a natural and enjoyable language learning environment. Ironically, even students studying in English medium are not competent to communicate in English when they come to the tertiary level of learning. What goes wrong? Where does the crux of problem lie?

* Assistant Professor, Jeppiaar Engineering College, Chennai & Research Scholar, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

It has been estimated that out of the roughly 6 billion people that are living in the world, about 350 million speak English. When we look at the importance of English for International Business, we must look at more than just the number of people who speak it: we must also look at what the language is used for. Earlier, the English language used to be taught through literature— the field of philosophers, poets, thinkers and writers of imaginative mind. Hence it remained confined to a selected literary caliber of people and its usage came into practice under their dictation only for the people of similar taste. The common mass couldn't be benefited of its dynamics. The trite phraseology, hyperbolic representation, clichés and lofty diction used to be either difficult for the comprehension of a common man or there were no such popular instruments as available today which could transmit them to the masses. The greatest contribution of Business Studies, besides usefulness of the subject is that, it has helped the English language spread very fast. Of course Business Management is one of the leading choices of degree as it offers an excellent academic training with good career prospects. If we observe, we will find that contribution of Business Studies in spreading the English language around the globe (partially through Business Communicative Skills) has been more, and more rapid, than any other discipline has ever made in past. Even teaching of ELT itself has not helped as much in the wide acceptability of the English language as Business Studies. Around the 1970s, the teaching of Business Studies started in India and it became so popular around the 1980s that the departments of Arts and Social Sciences began to close down, at many places. Today, no other subject is as widely offered as the Business Management.

Honing communication skills for the future entrepreneurs is mandatory to facilitate communication in business. Success in business is often centered on one single important word – communication; and most often it happens in English. The world is round; the economic migrants of the past decades have become permanent expat communities. Asians, especially, continue to migrate to the United States or to Europe for jobs and sometimes to live there permanently. For them, English is the common medium of instruction. Even for those involved in business from their native countries, if they want to promote their business to a larger market, they need to understand the trends and the cultures of those markets. This is often best done through the common passport that is English language. Work requires communication. People communicate to plan products and services and motivate workers. Communication in the business world is a service rather than something tangible. Communication skills serve the purpose to gain the skills to analyze, write, persuade and manage i.e. to have the skill to meet an organizational need. And at the same time, it is helpful to meet the psychological needs of the consumers also. If we wish to be successful in International business, learning English is incredibly important. In many places such as Asia, Africa, and South America, the ability to communicate in English determines the standard of living.

In order to get ahead in the chosen field, we need to make ourselves completely understood by the people we work with. There will be emails, telephone conversations,

and they are all important and costly. Knowing good English will help us to express ourselves explicitly and clearly. Communication is an alleyway through which all the information or knowledge passes. It is an inevitable means of imparting knowledge, tackling situation and managing chores. Even signs and symbols of Mathematics and Physics yield to language for explanation. The better the language, the worthier the explanation, and effectiveness achieved. Weak language begets unsound knowledge. Incorrect language leads to imperfection in education. Indecent language doesn't win hearts. Improper use of words or structure creates chaos and aggravates the problem instead of solving it. An Austrian-British Philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein says, 'The limits of language are the limits of knowledge.'

Communication is an important factor in Management Studies. An entrepreneur has to understand his employees' psychology, culture, aptitude and even the community they belong to. The audience of the business communication includes people both inside and outside the organization. It means that the entrepreneur has to be aware of culture and convention of the place he is working at, the people he is dealing with as well as the rules and the laws of the land.

The interest of the consumer is evoked through creativity; so creativity in communication always pays. The manager therefore needs to be creative as well. Thinking creatively often means shedding off conventional paradigms for which certain forms of style and diction are needed. Information, especially in writing, must be accurate i.e. writing must not overstate, understate or distort the reality that is being represented. Besides, writing must be tailored to meet the needs, the interests and the capabilities of its expected readers or listeners. In Communication, the purpose is more to inform than to impress.

Scientific attitude in communication is attained with impersonality, objectivity and exclusion of emotion. Such a view leads to an exclusive style of communication in which these qualities are easily maintained and it is not surprising that writings mostly done in third person passive voice are normally more scientific. Management basically consists of four components: planning, organizing, leading and controlling. In all the four areas, the role of language is very significant.

Intention and feeling in the fast life of commercialization today is normally not bothered about. What is taken into account is how we do or how we say. So 'how' sometimes matters more than 'what'. An entrepreneur needs to be an adept in Interpersonal relationships, transformation of information, and decision making. The efficiency of the manager is gauged by his effectiveness in communication. A manager is not required to be a scholar; he needs to be a communicator; and this reflects his efficiency. As we already know that the term management refers to the process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently, through and with other people.

To a larger extent, a Manager's efficiency and effectiveness depend on his communication skills, dynamics and semantics – abilities. He has to persuade and control and transmit information, foster social cohesion and sometimes give artistic

presentation. Words have the power of starting march-past in the streets; stir the harshest of workers and to move them to work. But words alone are not sufficient. The way they are used under the situation counts a lot and effectiveness measured. Rules and laws and statutes can only prepare a framework of functioning; they can't move a heart to abide by them. Its language which alone can mint a miracle and how a manager has used it tells about his communicative skill. We know that every organization contains people. And it is part of a manager's job to direct and co-ordinate with those people. Performing this activity is the leading component of management. Through the most effective communication channel, managers motivate employees, select or resolve conflicts among members, thereby lead an organization effectively.

As grammar alone is not language, so are not words. A word is a symbol; Grammar is a rule. What makes language worth effective, are the ideas used through words in proper situation – with understanding its nuance, dynamics and semantics. Here is required a managers' acumen, his ability, his communicative skill. One thing notable about words is, the way it is used and the way it is taken when spoken by others. It largely shapes the beliefs, prejudices, ideals and aspirations. Semantic orientation in management therefore is a necessity. Today, there is awareness in Management, perhaps to an unprecedented degree, of the important role that communication skills and semantic presentation pay.

Management is a challenge – challenge in respect to language. Literature is a territory while language is map. The language used in management is like the information passed on the basis of 'map' not territory. But those who have experienced the 'territory' rather than only 'maps,' are likely to give fresh, accurate, and more vibrant in formations.

Objectivity in Manager's language and temperament will lead to the good functioning of the organization – effacing of personality from the communication saves Management from many problems. But thorough objectivity is difficult to achieve. Language of Management should not be allowed to limit it to a scientific monograph. It may be allowed to extend to phonetic basis – rhyme, alliteration, assonance and subtleties of rhythm. Again, ornamentation in Management English is of course ostentatiously insignificant and irrelevantly verbose but sometimes use of simile and metaphor, paradox and synecdoche, litotes and onomatopoeia add up to its effectiveness, notwithstanding ornamentation. Managers need to create an atmosphere while motivating the working hands. Everything is not reported; something is expressed also. It is here that we have to resort to the devices used in literature.

In the present Indian educational scenario, students start to learn English as one of their optional medium of instruction in school. Due to the pressure of getting enrolled in Professional colleges, most of the students' learning experience is far from being natural and enjoyable. Accordingly, the average English proficiency among students is quite low when it comes to communicative use. One of the basic reasons for this is the way we are initially exposed to the English language. When we learn our mother

tongue as a kid, we start with listening and observing then speaking and reading and finally writing. Whereas, when it comes to learning English language, we reverse the order.

In most of the Indian Schools of Management Studies, students with poor communication skills enroll. It is not apt to dampen the spirit of those students. Even at the tertiary level, with systematic approach, the communication skills of the budding entrepreneurs can be honed. In the first place, a lot of exposure to Standard English language can be given to the budding entrepreneurs. A number of videos in English can be shown to them. They must be encouraged to explain the concepts in their own words. Also, they must be given opportunities to express themselves. A situational question with a crisis can be posed to them and their responses can be elicited. For every performance, positive feedback can be given to help them develop constructively. This will facilitate speaking in English comfortably and effectively. Instead of giving undue importance to learn grammar, students must be made to familiarize themselves with the phonetic symbols. They must be encouraged to look up independently the correct pronunciation of words that are difficult to pronounce. English pronunciation dictionary must be made available to the budding entrepreneurs.

Role plays and group discussion tasks can be assigned to students and their performance can be Video recorded. The budding entrepreneurs must be made to view their own performance on the screen. This will immensely boost up their confidence level. Basically the syllabi of Indian universities target more on strengthening the conceptual knowledge, than on honing the communication skills. Consequently, a teacher in a management class aims at preparing a student to face the examination alone rather than to improve his communication skills. The factor of ultimate importance in real life is taken for granted. With the current language teaching practices, the task of enhancing the communication skills of the budding entrepreneurs to ease the globalization of the system does not seem to be implemented successfully. In order to improve the situation, first and foremost, we need to reconsider the exam focus. There is an urgent need to reconsider the aim and the focus of examinations in universities, to create more culturally oriented and interactive language activities, and to allocate more time and resources to better address various needs in language teaching and learning strategies at the tertiary level.

References

- Dang Tin Tan. (2010), Learner autonomy in EFL studies in Vietnam: A discussion from socio cultural perspective. *English Language Teaching*.
- Stevens, B. (2005), What communication skills do employers want? Silicon Valley recruiters respond. *Journal of Employment Counseling*.
- Sullivan, P. (2000), Playfulness as mediation in communicative language teaching in a Vietnamese classroom. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Socio-cultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Tran Thi Tuyet. (2013a), Is the learning approach of students from the Confucian heritage culture problematic? *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*.
- McManus, Walter S. (1985), Labor Market Assimilation of Immigrants: The Importance of English Language Skills. *Contemporary Policy Issues*.
- Medgyes, P. (1994), *The non-native teacher*, London: Macmillan Publisher.