

ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION: WORDS IN LANGUAGE MINT MIRACLE

Language holds sway over anything. Nothing fosters as much cooperation in our daily life as language does. We are immersed in the sea of words. We love. We fight. We deal. We behave. We misbehave. We meet. We part. We read. We write--we owe to language and the words in it. Words, words and words! What is important for our purposes here is that all this co-ordination for the functioning of society is of necessity achieved by language or else it is not achieved at all. Language is an alleyway through which all the information or knowledge passes. It's a means, 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 confusion and aggravates the problem instead of solving it. True is Austrian -British Philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein who says, 'the limits of language are the limits of knowledge.'¹ He further said, 'what can be thought clearly, can also be said clearly.' Let me add here: what can't be said clearly, may not be thought clearly. Good language gives right direction to our thinking process.

According to statistics, one in five of the world's population speaks English, notwithstanding their different perceptions, connotations, values and their cultural properties. It is currently the primary language used on the World Wide Web, both in the political 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.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TODAY FROM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

If we observe, we will find that contribution of Business Studies in spreading English language around the globe (partially through Business Communicative Skills) has been more and rapid than any other discipline has ever made in past. Even teaching of English language itself has not helped as much in the wide acceptability of English

¹Ludwig Wittgenstein, Language of philosophy

language as Business Studies alone has made today. Around the 1970s, teaching of Business Studies started in India and it became so popular around the 1980s that departments of Arts and Social Sciences began to close down, at many places. Today no other subject is as widely offered as Business Management. Gone are the days of History, Geography and Literature. I do admit and intensely believe that every discipline has its importance and I'm in favor of Literature teaching to be made compulsory in universities. But there is no denying of the fact that Management is a subject which is based more on practicability, utility and action than any other subject. As the genesis of the subject implies utility, its most common medium (English) is not of lesser importance and any gesture of undermining it is unfounded. Earlier, English language used to be taught through literature- the field of philosophers, poets, thinkers and writers of imaginative mind. Hence it remained confined to selected literary caliber 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, epigrammatical expression, hyperbolic representation, clichés and lofty diction used to be either difficult for common men's comprehension or there were no such popular vehicles 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 English language spread very fast.

With a view to incorporating effectiveness in communication in the business world, the need was felt to evaluate language with a specific purpose. Keeping the above disadvantages in view, a college course, Communication has therefore, been introduced, the prime purpose thereof is to facilitate language for communicable purposes—reporting, messaging, talking and informing. Work requires communication. People communicate to plan products and services and motivate workers. Communication in Business world is a service rather than something tangible. Communication purpose is 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 organized to meet the psychological needs of the readers also. Psychology is an important factor in Management. A manager has to understand his employees' psychology, their culture, aptitude and even the community they belong to. The audiences of business communication include people both inside and outside the organization. It means the Manager 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. Keeping everyone pleased and unhurt is the job of the Manager. The interest of the audience 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 is attained with impersonality, exclusion of emotion and objectivity. Such a view leads to a exclusive style of writing in which these qualities are easily maintained

and it is not surprising that writing mostly done in third person passive voice are normally more scientific.

COMPONENTS OF MANAGEMENT AND ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

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.' What we feel, and what we believe hardly matters. How do we do and how do we say is the concern of many. True is Mintzberg in his observation that managers are not reflective thinkers for they are 'engaged in a large number of varied, unpatented and short duration activities. There is little time for reflective thinking because managers encounter constant interruption.²' Under Mintzberg managerial roles, come specific categories of managerial behavior which can be grouped under three primary headings--- interpersonal relationships, transformation of information, and decision making. The efficiency of the manager is gauged in his effectiveness. A manager is not required to be a scholar; he needs to be effective. And this is his efficiency. So the term management refers to the process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently, through and with other people.

In above two of the three areas communication role is predominant. To a larger extent a Manager's efficiency and effectiveness depends on his language nuance, 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 marches in the streets; stir the harshest of enemies 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. It's 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 those people. Performing this activity is the leading component of management. When managers motivate employees, direct the activities of others, select the most effective communication channel, or resolve conflict among members, they are leading.

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 Managers' acumen, his ability, his communicative skill. Mits calls it 'straightening of ideas.'³ One thing notable about words is, the way it is used and the way it is taken when spoken by others largely shapes the beliefs, prejudices, ideals and aspiration.

2 Fundamentals of Management, Stephen P. Robbins, David A. DeCenzo p 36

3 Language in Thought and Action, S. I Hayakawa page 11

They constitute the moral and intellectual atmosphere in which the person lives--- in short, his semantic environment. Hence language, thought and behavior are inseparable. They are complementary to one another. If one is weak, the other is ought to be weak as in the case of lungs, heart and tongue. A glib tongue normally keeps a credulous heart and a composed heart is normally a meticulously careful tongue. Manager is a master communicator.

To be concerned with the relation between language and reality (Management is a reality), between words and what they stand for in the speakers' or listeners' thoughts and emotions, is to approach the study of language as both an intellectual and a moral discipline. 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 orientation and semantic presentation pay.

Management is a challenge---challenge in respect to language. Report and informative areas of language—language of extensional world— the words listened, acquired and practiced are made highly enriched today for decency, manner and etiquette. 'Toilet' we call, 'restroom', 'white-meat' is another euphemism for 'chicken'. It is thought inelegant to speak of 'going to bed', so 'to retire' is a better substitution. For the dead person we say, 'passed away' or 'departed.' In Business Studies too we have several such compact terms which cover much meaning. 'Downsizing' is used when an organization lays off its employees for some reason; 'Pyramid organization' is the organization where decision-making authority lies in or near-top management; 'synergy effect' is the output of team members which is more than the output given by members individually. Words give the verbal images of things and situations. To this Alfred Korzybski⁴ in 'Science and Sanity' calls 'map.' With the help of 'map' (words and language) we come to know about the 'territory' (things or situation). As the map, so the image of the territory—if the map is well drawn, the information about the territory will be clear. Literature is therefore 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 information --- affective. Literature is a world where we learn to have information as if coming from the 'territory' itself, not from mere 'map'.

Management does not encourage, more or less, judgmental and subjective language where as in literature language used is profusely subjective. The issue is worth pondering. Subjectivity is though itself greatness; it reveals complete state of a mind's milieu which is dangerous from managerial point of view. A Manager need not let his complete mind, his opinion known to others. He is a policy maker; he is to execute it. His exclusion of emotion and objectivity are to be maintained. This is what S. I. Hayakawa in his book, 'Language in Thought and Action' calls snarl and purr-words. If, for example, a Manager says, ' what I hate, I hate very ,very much and what I like, I like very, very much.' This way of expression smacks of his dogmatic bent of mind,

4 Quoted by S. I Hayakawa in ' language in Thought and Action,' page 20

unyielding. It blocks the way to further argument. It halts from changing opinion, once already formed; version, already made. It makes Manager's opinion abysmally manifest about the employees or the things—negative or positive--- done is done and it may not be undone while the reality demands of flexibility in opinion or version. This is the temperament of Management. 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. Sometimes, it is implied. S. I. Hayakawa⁵ calls this process of selecting details, 'slanting', which 'gives no explicit judgments, but it differs from reporting in that it deliberately or inadvertently makes certain judgments inescapable.'

When objectivity in Management English is talked about, it means scientific attitude. Once Albert Einstein wrote "when a man is talking about scientific objects, the little word 'I' should play no part in his expositions."⁶ What is true about science is also true about Management English—objectivity is scientific attitude. For example, see this sentence: I/ we got surprising results from the three tests I/ we made. This sentence is in Active voice. Here there is emphasis on 'I' which reflects the pronoun. But if we say instead: surprising results were given by three tests. There is no reflection of the subject—I, we. This is scientific attitude. Another example: Discussion at the meeting of the Board of Directors clearly revealed the weakness of plan X. Plan Y was adopted. The second sentence is passive voice. It is short and brief and there is no revelation of any pronoun or subject. Again, scientific attitude is not only achieved by use or avoidance of a particular pronoun, it is achieved also through certain qualities: honesty, care in handling of facts, dignity and restraint in manner. Precision should also be employed.

Greater success has been enjoyed this year than last 'in case of' the engineer department. It is better to substitute, 'by' for 'in case of.' This is more précised.

Another sentence:

This problem is 'in the nature of one' encountered years ago.

If we replace, 'in nature of one' with 'like,' we will feel better effectiveness.

Another sentence:

The recorder has been installed 'for the purpose of' providing a constant check of volume changes.

There is no need of using the phrase, 'for the purpose of'. 'To' may serve better. This type of error is called wordism. And the nature of Business English demands of precision.

A few examples are below for better understanding;

5 P 29

6 Albert Einstein , *Essays in science* (New York: The philosophical Library, 1934, p.113

- 'In many cases' may be changed to 'often'.
- 'In all cases,' may be changed to 'always.'
- 'In connection with' should be changed to 'about'
- 'With the object of' should better be changed to 'to'
- 'On the part of,' should be changed to 'by'.
- 'At the present time' should be changed to 'now'
- 'Red in color' is wordism because 'red' is itself a color.

LITERATURE VS LANGUAGE

Affective language is the cherished vehicle of literature--- the means for transmitting feelings and expressing them. Expression of feelings is an anathema to Management English. It is supposed to be extraneous act. But we can mould language to affective language for persuasion, for evoking others' feelings, for awakening moral scruples instead of tempering it with own feelings. 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. Literature is the most exact expression of feelings, while science is the most exact kind of reporting. Management on the other hand is a fine blend of reporting like that of in science, and calculation like that of in Accounts. But we can make it more effective through the application of some devices available in literature. Management is the most practicably dynamic field where reflection, rigidity and dogma don't have any room; inflexibility is anathema to Management. It is not so that a manager believes in sayings like, 'if situation compels, call father even to a donkey,' but as he is a realist, he is not compelled to close any door, whatsoever it may be, and treads the path which leads him to profit and prosperity. He does not desist from borrowing. In other words we can say, cooperation from any corner is most welcome in Management. Borrowing and lending is a co-operative act. And the philosophy behind globalization is the philosophy of co-operation—borrowing and lending.

Management's disinterestedness in literature or anything abstruse like literature is very common. The indifference of Management to literature or philosophy is because of the attitude developed in the way of functioning. Idealism or anything like it doesn't suit to Management's framework, but the fact is that in global world we can't cut away anything from anything. People who think that Management and literature are in necessary conflict do so because they habitually think in opposites of black and white, true and false, good and evil. Management can't move an inch without language and language is the daughter of Literature. So how can Management keep literature at bay?

Management is the most popular form of studies as democracy is the most acceptable form of government. It may not be allowed to remain Commerce alone for it is both an Arts and a Science also. As the common medium of Management is English, it should be allowed to grow unhindered to its full effervescence. We should not avoid literature, at least its semantics, its phonetics, its nuance.

English language should be learnt inter-culturally in an effective manner. Besides learning good communication skills, we will also have to fight against bad English— against vagueness and lack of precision, against pretentious diction and stilted phraseology’ against the prevalent practice of using unnecessary adjectives and against stale words or phrases which block our thinking, for accumulation of stale words or phrases as George Orwell says ‘chokes the learners like tea leaves blocking a sink.’⁷

7 George Orwel, Politics and the English Language page 151