



Department of English
PSNA College of Engineering and Technology, Dindigul-624622
Tamilnadu, India

***NEW VISTAS IN ELT:
EMPOWERING ENGINEERS FOR EMPLOYMENT***

**Selected Papers Presented in the Seminar Held on
17th And 18th April 2015**

Editors

Dr. Joseph Thomas, Ph.D.
G. Vijay, M.A., M.Phil.
Mrs. Shabnam Niher, M.A., M.Phil.

**Get the Winning Edge by 'Toning and Tuning' of
Your English Language Use**

V. Vidya, Ph.D. Scholar

Abstract

The changing business scenario in India and abroad demands the use of language which would reveal the writers' attitude and the consciousness of the person to whom the documents are

Editors: Dr. Joseph Thomas, Ph.D. G. Vijay, M.A., M.Phil. and Shabnam Niher, M.A., M.Phil.

New Vistas in ELT: Empowering Engineers for Employment

V. Vidya, Ph.D. Scholar

Get the Winning Edge by 'Toning and Tuning' of Your English Language Use

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

addressed to. So, the communicative ability of the engineering students using appropriate 'tone' and 'point of view' in business documents should be enhanced. An attempt is made in this paper to identify the components of 'tone' and 'point of view' and applying them in meaningful communicative contexts through tasks. Toning and tuning of language according to the tone and tune of the audience and customers, becomes spontaneous and natural by following Maslow's sequence of needs and ADAM's method. Suggestions and sample activities are dealt with in this paper which can be developed intensively, using creativity and special efforts, by the trainer to equip his/her students.

Key words: Tone, Point of view, Maslow's sequence of needs, ADAM's method, Inference, Euphemism, Communicative Ability

Introduction

Accounting is the program that has the highest percentage of students attending college, after graduation.

The Auto Mechanics program had 100% placement by April 15.

The Computer Assisted drafting seniors had the highest average entry-level hourly wage this year.

Which of these three sentences would be the most convincing to learners? All three are; all of these are considered persuasive statements. They can convince three different types of incoming students to consider, or even register for these programs.

The student who is more attracted to a business program may be more likely to investigate accounting. This course often becomes a spring board to a business career or leads to further education. A student needing a career immediately after graduation may be more interested in Auto Mechanism than other trade programs. The person motivated by money will surely look into Computer Assisted Drafting instead of programs with lower pay. Of course, there are many more factors to consider when choosing a program, but these statements plant a seed – they appeal to a specific need.

Work Culture of Engineers

The changing business scenario in India and abroad demands the use of language which would reveal the writers' attitude and the consciousness of whom the documents are addressed to. So, the communicative ability of the engineering students using appropriate 'tone' and 'point of view' in business documents should be enhanced. An attempt is made in this paper to identify the components of 'tone' and 'point of view' and apply them in meaningful communicative contexts through tasks.

After completing their courses, the Engineering graduates will find placement in different positions such as sales manager, production engineer, area sales manager, quality control engineer, purchase manager, and so on. Thus, they play different roles in different situations. Sometimes, the company, at its discretion, can transfer an engineer holding a position to some other position. For instance, the production manager can be transferred as area sales engineer. Hence, an engineer is expected to perform different roles in a company.

As an engineer holding a position in a company, one has to be conscious of his position, the addressee's position and the situation in which he writes a business document. He would be able to achieve the goal of writing business documents only if he uses appropriate 'tone' and 'point of view'. The purpose of teaching English would be served only when students of Engineering learn to use suitable 'tone' and 'point of view' in business documents. There is an urgent need to enhance the functional efficiency of Under Graduate students in Business Documents Writing with special reference to 'tone' and 'point of view'.

‘Tone’ and ‘Point of View’

‘Tone’ and ‘point of view’ are abstract and are embedded in language. A careful study of the business documents reveal that they get concretized through the use of appropriate words, structure, cohesive devices, sequence, and so on. The engineering students’ career needs inclusive expression of scientific and technological facts in precise and clear terms. Further, writing effective

business documents in English, using suitable 'tone' and 'point of view' is also the responsibility of the engineering professionals. Naturally, the students need adequate training in this area to be successful engineers in the future.

English Language Teaching, in the last two decades, has made a significant contribution both to content and methodology of English Teaching. The need-based syllabus design focuses on specific areas of language. For example, EAP (English for Academic Purpose) and ESP (English for Specific Purpose) concentrate on specific structures (usage) relating to expression of facts. But, the knowledge of English language equips the Engineering students not only in the expression of facts, process, cause-effect, purpose-function, etc., but also in business, especially in business letter writing. Adequate training in this area would enable the Engineering students respond to all business communications much better than before in their professional careers.

Persuasive Language

Toning and tuning of language is everywhere. It constantly bombards us through advertising on billboards and television, in newspapers and magazines. Politicians campaign to win votes. Pizza parlors put flyers in mail boxes and coupons on doors to get people to try their delivery. Teachers convince students to use safety equipment; parents urge kids to clean their rooms. All these demands are expressed through sweet toned and tuned words. On the job, persuasion is used every day. The co-worker who wants to trade days off, uses persuasion. Personnel departments use pay incentives for better attendance. The boss wants the best job done and uses persuasion to accomplish this purpose. Each of these situations shows the use of persuasion. Persuasion, then, is the effort to influence attitudes or behaviour. Persuasion may also result either in a direct action, or it may not succeed. But, the person who persuades makes a push, and that push may cause change.

Writing messages, news, letters and ads which are free from grammatical errors is just not enough in today's business scenario to push written or oral messages towards desired direct

actions or at least give a push that may cause changes. So, toning and tuning of language is in the air everywhere, in every field, in every walk of life.

To give a warming up session to the students, especially to make them learn the importance of toning and tuning their language, an exercise similar to that given below can be assigned as a starter to the main course of refining their language:

FINDING EVERYDAY PERSUASION

Think about the events of the last 48 hours. When did you find yourself being persuaded? Make a list of all these persuasive attempts and explain how the persuasion was done.

PERSUASION EXAMPLE

MEANS OF PERSUASION

Waking up

Alarm clock.

Paying car installment

Collection letter in the mail.

Buy a new suit

Job interview scheduled.

Emotional Touch

The author's credibility, reasoning and appeal to emotions are the keys to successful toning and tuning to reach the winning edge. Showing some knowledge of the subject will cause a favourable reaction. Displaying how to perform a task will also encourage success. An effective presentation also shows competence. Cheap stationery, typing errors and misspellings do not impress. These ethics need to be incorporated in the minds of the students while teaching technical English language which would contribute much towards refining their language while writing, as well as speaking.

The person who persuades with appropriate words and style is more likely to gain credibility if he or she shows care and concern about the subject. Therefore, the tone and tune of language needs to be focused on the subject, as people are always more willing to accept a change when they feel that their own interests are being served. For example, X's friend Y has highly praised the user-friendly software she just bought. She is more likely to influence X's purchase of the same software than the salesperson at House of Rom. Y genuinely likes the software. The salesperson is more likely to emphasize the product and X's need for it. The commission won't be emphasized at all. That way, the salesperson is more likely to make the sale. Therefore, persuasion directly stands on the support of interplay of effectively toned and tuned words in the process of communication.

Personal Impression

Just toning and tuning of language is not sufficient to make the cut. Tuning and toning of one's character and personal impression is to be paid due attention. This is more so, because many people assume that what they see is what they get. Most credibility is built through the overall personal impression that an individual creates. Therefore, engineering students, being no exceptions, should be trained and tuned to maintain high standards of moral conduct, avoiding unethical behaviour as gross exaggeration, lying, misrepresenting the truth, and so on. This can be inculcated by making the students read real life experiences of great and successful personalities and find out the tuning and toning factors responsible for their success and popularity. Moreover, students need to be taught to determine and analyze their audience/customers to give the best personal impression. The toning and tuning of language has direct association with the audience's / customers' needs. So, the students need to be tuned to identify the needs of their audience / customers according to Maslow's sequence of needs, namely physical needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem needs and psychological needs. Once they get trained to acknowledge these needs, the selection of words and styles for presentation becomes easier. This can be done through classroom activities such as the one given below:

IDENTIFYING THE AUDIENCE'S NEEDS

The following persuasive arguments refer to job situations. The arguments' appeals are based on Maslow's sequence of needs. For each argument, identify the need or needs.

- You are moving to our new store, along with 80% of our present employees. You'll still be able to socialize and eat lunch with your friends. Please, make the move.

Take this new job. The perks are terrific. The employer provides wellness benefits: annual physical, exercise equipment reimbursement, and payment for health club membership.

Toning and tuning work best when the writer uses language to affect emotions. The words chosen can create a persuasive effect. At the same time, words that make a person feel uncomfortable and cold must be carefully avoided. This knowledge of carefully choosing and avoiding certain words can be easily and effectively imparted to students through simple exercises as given below:

Compare the advertisements given below and note down the appeals they make:

After considerable research and expense, our company has developed a great broccoli treat

BROCSKINS

You won't be able to keep enough BROCSKINS in the cupboard! Our new broccoli treats have a potato chip flavor that kids love. But parents love BROCSKINS treats for their low sodium and high vitamin C content.

Selection of words and styles corresponds to the area of conflict in the audience/customers. So, the students should be made aware of different types of conflicts – pseudo conflicts, content conflicts, values conflicts, ego conflicts, etc. Once the students become aware of different types of conflicts, they need to be taught to use appropriate assertive, persuasive and negotiating words and sentences. This can be done through simple group activities such as the ones given below:

In the following situation, there is conflict. In small groups, discuss the disagreement. Then write the reason for the conflict. Using the guidelines for managing conflict, how could you resolve the differences?

The engine is pinging in your five-year-old, low-mileage car. You just replaced the transmission and the tires, and the body is in good shape. The mechanic tells you that you need a rebuilt engine. You feel you should sell the car, but you can't afford a new one.

Tuning and toning of language to motivate the audience / customers becomes spontaneous and easy if it is appropriately connected with the ADAM Approach in which A stands for “Attract Attention”, D for “Create Desire”, A for “Appeal to Needs” and M for “Move to Action”. This ADAM method is used in all advertisements and an initiation towards this method can be done by making the students listen/watch different commercials in the Communication Lab and asking them to fill up the questionnaires consisting of some of the following questions:

- What is the product or service being advertised?
- What first attracts your ATTENTION? Explain.
- What need (DESIRE) is the commercial trying to fulfill? Explain
- How does the Commercial APPEAL to the unsatisfied needs?

The ADAM method motivates the audience to use the product, creating a great impact on their minds. But, when the message is organized to produce specific results, persuasion is more

likely to take place. Evidence can best prove the proposition. The statements of evidence do not have to be facts, but they should support the goal. Evidence can appear to be logical and not be a fact. It would then be what is known as an inference. An inference seems natural and obvious, but it can be a prediction or a guess based on facts. Therefore, careful and meticulous choice of words while providing evidences, giving opinions, providing facts and drawing inferences should be done. Misusing and misplacing of words in sentences can mislead customers to entertain wrong manipulations. Therefore, engineers of today should not only speak / write English which is free from grammatical errors, but use a language which is properly toned, tuned, skimmed and scanned meticulously. The young engineering students can be equipped with this skill by exposing them to simple activities in the Communication Lab such as the ones given below:

DETERMINING FACTS, OPINION AND INFERENCE

Identify each of the following statements as facts, opinion or inference:

- Luke is the fastest runner in our school.
- He can beat South's runner easily.
- It is a terrific day to go fishing.
- The bass have been biting at the bait.

Choosing apt words, specific piling of the facts, figures and charts can possibly bombard audience/customers with evidence enough to change. But, the “mine better than yours” comparisons by itself will not work always with audience/customers opposed to the persuasions, who always tend to stick on to their views, again upholding the slogan - “mine better than yours”. In such circumstances, an engineer must not just learn to choose words, but also train himself to be specific and accurate. Toning and tuning to be specific and accurate can be acquired if examples such as the ones given below are projected:

Editors: Dr. Joseph Thomas, Ph.D. G. Vijay, M.A., M.Phil. and Shabnam Niher, M.A., M.Phil.
New Vistas in ELT: Empowering Engineers for Employment
V. Vidya, Ph.D. Scholar
Get the Winning Edge by 'Toning and Tuning' of Your English Language Use
Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

A flyer for an office store supply reads:

Our store is outstanding in serving your office supply needs.

This ad does not really inform the uninformed. To sell it – say it:

Our store is outstanding in serving your office supply needs.

More locations.

More salespeople.

More complete catalogue.

More delivery trucks and more products in stock.

Apart from selecting the right words, the students should be trained to be always positive and use motivating language. For instance, words –“Send your payment no later than Monday.”- might project a stern, threatening and solemn tone, which can be made motivating, effective and assertive through words such as –“Send the payment by Monday.”

Sometimes, plain language may not be the best choice if the words sound offensive to the audience. However, students should be trained not to fall into the trap of using euphemisms. Euphemisms are “good sounding words that substitute for unpleasant or awkward subjects. Going to “the little girls’ room”, substitutes the word “toilet”. An euphemism for dying is “passing away”. An “outplacement centre” provides job-seeking assistance for employees who are laid off. Such words, though sweet and stylish, may tend to mislead or confuse people. In such situations, writing directly is more advisable than using a polite euphemism. Therefore, students can be saved from making euphemistic statements, both while speaking and writing, if they are trained to use a language that is to the point, without being crude. The exercises given below can empower young engineers to be polite and direct, assertive without a threatening tone, motivating without confusing and persuasive without misleading:

SAVINGS TO BE HAD!

WALK, DON'T RIDE.

SAVE THE EARTH—SAVE HEALTH – SAVE\$\$\$.

Enhancement of tone and tune in writing business letters, especially collection letters is an area in which young to-be engineers need to have good command and mastery. The students should be well trained in beginning their business letters with a general comment to promote goodwill. For instance, a collection letter commencing with a general comment:

I hope that you are enjoying your new Sounder component stereo system. If you have any questions about the system, please either contact me or your local Sounders store.

It can propagate ripples of goodwill rather than the words given below:

I am really trying to control my anger over your not paying our account. You owe Bethany Bathtubs \$302.14. We want it now! The account is two months overdue. We have also sent you two letters. You haven't responded. It's very irritating. Did you forget to send your payment?

Statement of the problem in the letter with the following words:

Your account requires a \$ 40 monthly payment, due on the 20th. Sounders has not yet received your June payment.

It makes a reasonable and a firm appeal rather than the style and tone followed as given below:

You probably have the check in the mail. Why haven't you sent the \$302.14? Are you trying to cheat us? Well, Bethany Bathtubs won't stand this. We have no use for a seven-foot custom-made red bathtub, but we'll jerk it out of your house if don't pay.

Firmness in appeal without harassing the customers can be extended through the well tuned and toned sentences as given here:

Editors: Dr. Joseph Thomas, Ph.D. G. Vijay, M.A., M.Phil. and Shabnam Niher, M.A., M.Phil.
New Vistas in ELT: Empowering Engineers for Employment

V. Vidya, Ph.D. Scholar

Get the Winning Edge by 'Toning and Tuning' of Your English Language Use

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 15:7 July 2015

I trust that you will contact your local Sounders store immediately. Penalties add to the cost of your payment.

Instead of embarrassing statements like:

You said you liked it. Well, if you do like the tub, or even if you don't, pay this immediately.

Letters well begun with catchy headlines can have an enchanting effect on the customers. Strong opening paragraphs blended with unusual and creative ideas can allure the customers. Eye catching claims to solve problems such as:

ACES is your ticket to the Honor Roll!!

ACES is your passport to high SAT and ACT scores!

ACES is the way to make your parents smile!

ACES is the key to the future!

It can have great and positive impact on the readers/customers. In the example quoted above, the repetition of the name of the company is the best way to advertise. Closing the letter with an attention-getting statement mixed with confidence and positive attitude can render a positive and everlasting impact on the readers. For instance, a closing paragraph such as:

Just call 1-880-GET-ACES today to sign up for a free 30-day trial offer or fill out the enclosed card. But HURRY – the offer is limited to the first few callers only.

It guarantees a galactic and positive impact on the readers. The impact of a catchy closing caption or statement such as – Today is your ACES day!!! – can stamp an invaluable impression.

Therefore choosing the best method to persuade is important. Audiences reading or listening to the persuasion with questions in mind can be motivated by using the ADAM method effectively. Therefore, young, soon-to-be engineers should be frequently given opportunities in the lab sessions to practically adapt and adopt this method to real life day-to-day conversations, so that its blending is allowed to acquire naturalistic and realistic touch in speech/written forms.

Works Cited

Mathes J.C., and Dwight W. Stevenson. "Teaching Technical and Professional Communication" (Workshop Notes). Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, 1984.

Bolles, Richard Nelson. *What Color Is Your Parachute?* Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1989.

West, Richard. "Seven-Step Electronic Report Design." Report prepared for Industrial Electronic Classes, Diamond Oaks C.D.C., Cincinnati, Oh., 1984.

Macauley, David. *The Way Things Work*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988.

Parham, A. Christine. *Psychology: Studying the Behavior of People*. Cincinnati: South-Western Publishing Co., 1988.

V. Vidya, Ph.D. Scholar
Research Scholar
Department of English
Alagappa Government Arts College
Karaikudi 630 003
Tamilnadu
India
vidyarameshbharath@gmail.com