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TEACHING THE CONCEPT AND NATURE OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION: A MODEL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Technical communication is professional communication .It records the communicative requisites of any profession. Simplicity, clarity and conciseness are the passwords of technical communication. Objectivity is the stand behind its nature. The present paper is a general discussion on Technical Communication and offers a tested model on introducing the concept and nature of technical communication successfully.

Key Words: *Technical Communication, Professional Communications, Communication, Technical Writing , General Writing.*

INTRODUCTION

Technical communication is an applied branch in English Language Teaching. It is a finished blend of language, management and behavioral skills. The beginning of formal technical communication can be traced back with the beginning of industrial revolution in Europe. Although we can find many evidences of Technical Communication in the essays of Francis Bacon, and later on in the documents of the Royal Society of England. By virtue of its suppleness, exactitude, and ease English language is a good fit for the technical written communication . Technical communication is professional communication .It records the communicative requisites of any profession. In this context , the statement of Robert A. Day stand valid, he observes , "If English is now the international universal language... it means that scientists must use English with precision...it simply is no longer possible to do science

except in English... Scientists (and perhaps scholars in all fields) should learn to use English simply. Short and Simple words in short, straight forward sentences usually convey meaning more clearly. (*Scientific English* 2-3).

The nature of Technical Communication is different from that of General Communication. General Communication," deals primarily with feelings, emotions, opinion and persuasion. The other(technical communication) emphasizes the dispassionate, factual recording of scientific investigation" (*Scientific English* 1). This way, as I have mentioned already , professional language is scientific and technical language. In technical communication , we are always precise and clear. The selection of words, phrases and clauses and sentences is logical and scientific. The paragraphs stand well-organized , with no scope for stylistic change. In technical communication ,ornamental expressions , exaggerated, roundabout, antiquated language and baroque style stand no rationale. Malapropism, circumlocution and complexity in style is completely avoided here. Literary modishness and laboriousness are, therefore, quite inconsistent in technical communication H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler offer certain tips for professional and technical written communication in English.

(i) Prefer the familiar word to the for-fetched.
(ii) Prefer the concrete word to the abstract.
(iii) Prefer the simple word to the circum location.
(iv) Prefer the short word to the long.
(v) Prefer the Saxon word to the Romance. (*The King's English* 17)

The major differences between Technical and General Communication (writing) are given as below:

1. Technical writing pertains to professions but general writing relates to society in general. One mirrors the business, trade, industry, technology, and science, while the other mirrors life as a whole.
2. Technical writing instructs, informs, and persuades while general writing amuses, inspires, and educates.
3. Technical writing, broadly speaking, has occupational interest and profit motive whereas general writing is actuated mostly by general good, reformatiory zeal, and cultural upliftment.
4. The diction of technical writing is simple, presice, plain, to the point and effective but that of general writing may be verbose, poetic, elegant, circumlocutory, sententious, pompous and extravagant.

5. A pre-requisite to sound technical writing is diligent factual research for perfection while general writing is chiefly creative and innate quality or the gift of God.
6. Technical writing is concerned with drafting of documents – reports, notices, letters, official papers, and scientific research. On the other hand general writing is revealed in literary *genres*, journals, daily newspapers, and books on various subjects.
7. The scope of technical writing is limited to the particular business while general writing is wider and touches every walk of life.
8. The style and laws of technical writing being scientific are largely universal and of everlasting values, whereas most of general writing relates to a particular *milieu* and the style carries the stamp of their personality of those responsible for shaping it.
9. Technical writing is rlational, logical, and objective while general writing is very likely to be emotional, sentimental, subjective, supertluous and rhetorical.
10. Technical writing is essentially in plain prose while the general writing may also be poetic. (Functional Skills, 186-187)

Technical writing is the bedrock of professional communication, and in the current global scenario its scope and span is increasing. In the words of R. S. N. Pillai and Bhagavati, "In this age of globalization communication is of paramount importance. Not only multinational companies but small companies too have business interest embracing the whole trade. Intensive research is being carried out to develop newer and more efficient, communication skills, satellites, radios, transmitters, visual cassettes, computers etc. are all actively contributing to the communication revolution." (*Commercial Correspondence* ,3).

The present paper offers a proposition for teaching the concept and nature of Technical Communication. It is a kind of an authentic lecture plan on the subject:

Teaching the concept and nature of Technical Communication: A Model

Learning Objectives:

After the discussion, the learners shall be able to;

1. Understand the Fundamentals of Communication, with a crystal clear conceptualization of the following:
    i. Technical Communication: features: Distinction between General and Technical communication;

ii. Language as a tool of communication
iii. Levels of communication: Interpersonal, Organizational, Mass communications; The flow of Communication: Downward, Upward, Lateral or Horizontal communication (Peer group)
iv. Importance of technical communication; Barriers to Communication.

2. Use the patterns of technical communication in the professional settings in life.

Step 1

Rite-de passage

The teacher will deliver a short lecture on the concept nature and feature of communication with special reference to technical communication.

Introducing Communication:

Communication is sharing out ideas and message .In a way , communication is a 'process, not an event.' It is a process, because an authentic communication passes through a channel where there is a sender, a receiver, a message and a medium. The acceptance of the message is gauged and understood by taking feedback during the process of communication at the end. There are five cardinal aspects of communication, as:

- Sender: Sender is a person who begins the message. In a way he/she is the encoder of the message.
- Receiver: A receiver is a person for whom the message is sent. The receiver becomes the decoder of the message
- Message: A message is that verbal and nonverbal component of language which is sent to the receiver from the sender with a purpose to conveying the content or idea.
- Medium: It is a channel through which the message is conveyed. It is both oral and written. Radio, television, face to face talk, conference, seminar, lecture, talking on telephone etc. come under the category of oral communication. Print media, written texts in different forms like books, magazines news papers, brochures, pamphlets ,letters, email, text messages etc. come under the category of written communication.
- Feedback: The feedback is an essential part of communication. By feedback the sender comes to know whether the communication has been done successfully or not. Besides adopting formal and informal devices of taking feedback, various non-verbal responses while interaction also give the feedback.

In the process of Communication encoding and decoding govern the message. We can explain these as:

- Encoding: When the sender /initiator of the communication process formulates his /her message into spoken or written form, it becomes encoding.
- Decoding: In the process of communication decoding stands for translating the message of the sender by the receiver. The decoding takes place in the mind where language works to explain the new symbol or text with the help of the prior formulated images and codes.

A brief note on Technical Communication:

Technical Communication is business communication, and it is different from general communication. In general perception we see that technical communication is the communication found in technical or scientific settings, but in the true sense of the term is a communication which is based on simplicity, clarity and coherence. The communication is tailored according to the comprehension level of the receiver. Thus we can say that:

- Technical Communication is professional communication.
- Communication is a process ,not an event
- Sender, Receiver, Message, Medium, and Feedback are the major aspects of communication.
- Encoding and decoding make the process of communication.
- There are different levels of communication, like Interpersonal, Organizational, Mass communication etc.
- Communication flows in different patterns like Downward, Upward, Lateral of Horizontal (Peer group)
- In the flow of communication, there are many barriers as well .The main barriers to Communication are-linguistic, psychological and physical.

Step 2

The teacher can organize a Group Discussion on the importance of communication in professional life. It will ease out the learning curve , and add to the interests of the students.
We know that communication is process not an event, the process of teaching lerning should go beyond the limits of the classroom.

Step 3

Application of Knowledge

The knowledge gained in the formal setting gets cemented once it is applied in the real life situation. With this purpose the teacher can give the following projects to the students. After the given time , the class may meet again for the discussion of the project .The peer review of the projects and seasoned inputs from the teacher are required.

1. Visit any communication setting like a seminar, conference, etc. and write a report on various aspects of technical communication in it.
2. Discuss the barriers to communication with your friends, and find out whether they have faced any. Collecting the data, prepare a detailed report/write the case studies separately.

Step 4

Testing and Evaluation

Once the learners are familiar with the concept of communication and technical communication , the teacher should give some questions to the learners for testing the understanding of the subject. A list of question is given. Learned teachers may select from it or frame their own questions on the subject.

1. What are the fundamentals of Communication?
2. 'Communication is a process, not an event'. Discuss.
3. Discuss the features of communication.
4. Write a note on the distinction between General and Technical communication.
5. How does Language become a tool of communication? Discuss with example.
6. Discuss various levels of communication.
7. Discuss the Interpersonal and Organizational communication.
8. Write an essay on Mass communication.
9. Discuss the flow of Communication with special reference to Downward, Upward, Lateral of Horizontal (Peer group) communication.
10. What is the importance of technical communication in our professional life?
11. Write a note on the Barriers to Communication.
12. What are the major barriers to communication, and how can we overcome the?
13. Write a case-study where the message was mis-communicated due to linguistic barrier.
14. Write a case study depicting psychological barrier.
15. Write a case study depicting physical barrier.

CONCLUSION :

In the current scenario , the studies in Technical Communication are upcoming. It is a kind of market oriented study , and marks good sync with industry and academia .
I am sure that the course in technical communication imparted in the above mentioned way can bring better outcomes.

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