

LETTER WRITING: The Latest Format

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English, as we all know is a Global Language. The kids we are nurturing today are tomorrow's future, not only in India but abroad as well. To fare well on the academic front and then in their own career, whatever they choose to do in life, it is most essential for them to be fluent speakers. Only then they would be able to steer through very smoothly, wherever they venture to go. School years being foundation years for a child, it is essential to imbibe Spoken English Skills into the students for a firm grounding. Once the students are fluent enough, they can be sure of stepping into a good career. Not only this, they would find themselves confidently handling day to day work. They would easily be able to acquire for themselves high package jobs. It won't be an exaggeration to realise the importance of enhancing Spoken English Skills among students right from school. For, what they learn at school, they never forget.

Spoken English Enhancement Program has been thoughtfully devised to cater to the requirements of kids from Classes 1 to 9. It is an Activity based program wherein the students can feel rejuvenated from monotonous classroom teaching and pick the language with utmost ease.

Enabling the Students for High Package Placements with Global Brands

In the present scenario, our students have a whole plethora of jobs and services open to them, to explore and go ahead with their career dreams. A good placement calls for technical expertise along with good Communication Skills. All focus of the educators being on honing the technical side, Communication Skills remain neglected. While, the fact of the matter is, that a candidate's selection depends as much on Communication Skills as on the degrees acquired through 3 years. During the placement drive, the students have to go through Job Interviews and Group Discussions.

These two skills are equally important as academics. But, even towards the end of their degree course, they remain unprepared with these skills. Most of the students face Job Interviews and go through Group Discussions without preparation. This undermines the ability of the candidate to a great extent. Often, very intelligent students are not able to speak up because they haven't been trained on it. Here, they might lose a good job coming to them.

So, it would not be an exaggeration to say that we need to prepare our students well enough on Communication Skills, primarily, Job Interviews and Group Discussions, before they go for Placement Drives.

Once the students are well equipped with these two skills, they can get optimum out of the Placement Drive.

This is to offer a well planned Module to prepare the students for Placement Drives so that they fare well and get High Package Jobs.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND CAREER PROSPECTS

The present era is witnessing a drastic make-over as far as work-life is concerned all over the globe. There has been massive innovation in every sphere. The world is moving at a fast pace indeed. To catch up with this high-speed, multi-faceted development, we need to build an equally competent workforce, well equipped with technical know-how as well as the means to run it i.e. English Language.

Technical know-how, without adequate knowledge of functional English is just half work done. Good English complements a professional's skills at work. For a perfect work-life, a good command over English language is necessary. If one is able to speak, read and write well, it is much easier to lead a team and grow to higher positions in a very less amount of time.

It is moreover helpful in gathering data and information from the internet and further improving one's work arena. Good Communication Skills help a student get well-placed and come in handy dealing day-to-day matters at the workplace.

The importance of good Communication Skills cannot be undermined. They stand equally important as the technical subjects. Hence, equal amount of effort has to be put in by the students as well as faculty to make the students competent in their field of work wherever they join in future.

CLASSROOM TOOLS FACILITATING LANGUAGE LEARNING

Language Learning can be fun in the classroom rather than being a burdensome task, as seen by most of the students.

Many a time, students are seen feeling lost over how to grasp good Communication Skills that would sail them through Job Interviews and Group Discussions.

They realise that their technical round would be very sound but when it comes to English Language, they would not be able to score well. They do miss very good job opportunities during the Placement Drive.

Here are a few Classroom Tested Methods that can facilitate Language Learning in the classroom.

These Classroom Tested activities are to be practised everyday, taking up one session per day.

I. News Reviews: Dealing with Under-graduate level students, it is necessary to imbibe in them the most important habit of reading Daily Newspaper. They can even carry one to the classroom. Let the students go through the main headlines and then have a Classroom Discussion over the Current Affairs.

Newspaper Discussion can offer a rich experience to the students when it comes to Language Learning. During the discussion, let the students highlight difficult vocabulary and later, all these difficult words can be written on the board and discussed.

News Reviews can be of utmost importance as far as sentence structure is concerned. It also helps build pronunciation and fluency. Loud reading of a News Clipping can inculcate Articulation to a great extent.

II. Debate Discussions: This is another Classroom Tested Language Learning Activity that has proved to be highly beneficial to students in picking language with great ease. Pick a debate topic and divide the class into two teams-For and Against. Let the students storm their opinions on the given topic. Here the teacher's role is that of a spectator. Let the students generate ideas on their own. The only thing to be made sure is that there shouldn't be any blank moments during the Debate Discussion. In case, the students fall short of content, the teacher may complement the discussion with some substantial points. This is an activity which can prove very helpful in building Conversational Skills among students, which come handy in day to day life as well as during the Interviews and GDs. Later on, when they step into work-life, they would be very comfortable handling workplace conversation. This can help them rise to higher profiles and climb the Corporate Ladder fast with utmost ease.

III. Mock Interviews: The mention of the word 'Interview' is spine chilling for most of the students. All of them have to go through it at some point of time. We must be aware of honing their Interview Skills. They cannot be worked upon in a day or a week's span just before the Placement Drive. They have to be developed over a period of one full semester. Here, the faculty is required to prepare a set of important Interview Questions and get it practised, making sure that all the students are able to answer these questions appropriately. This would help the students a great deal in gathering up confidence for the coming Interview Sessions. Moreover, they carry with them and awareness of the forthcoming Placement Drives and also their vision for the future.

IV. Talk Shows: A very lively Language Learning Activity for the students, that is sure to imbibe in them essential Conversational Skills. Take up an interesting topic of relevance. For example, Climate Change can be a very relevant topic for holding a talk show. Have a group of good speakers stand in front of the class and make them participate in the Talk Show. Let them pour in their own views and opinions on the topic according to their own database of knowledge. Such Talk Shows can prove highly beneficial to the participants as well as the classroom audience. Those who watch the participants speaking up definitely get greatly inspired to be the next group of speakers. The activity is highly motivating for the rest of the students.

Acquiring good Communication Skills gets all the more convenient for the students if the faculty chalks out a weekly plan, keeping the demands of the students in mind. The topics of discussion should range from simplest to the complex ones, gradually. It is important to keep a note of all the activities conducted with an Assessment Chart to record the progress of each student. By the end of the Semester, the teacher is sure to find all the students upto the mark as far as Communication Skills are concerned. The batch is sure to do well during the Placement Drive. Not only the Placement Drives, the students would emerge good professionals wherever they go and are sure to become leaders in their own work arena.

ELT and Language Lab

The significance of Good Communication Skills cannot be undermined in the Modern Era. When we prepare the professionals of tomorrow, it becomes all the more important to understand the kind of pedagogy that caters to their requirements. Communication Skills are equally important as their technical subjects. Before they step into Placement Drives, they must be well equipped with good Communication Skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing. English at Undergraduation level should not be taught just as a subject, but a skill to be honed to perfection, so that the students can fare well in their work life.

Language Lab can play a key role in shaping the complete future of our students. Only we should know how to use it optimally. Language Lab should be a platform for each of the students to excel in their Communication Skills and emerge as successful candidates, all ready to take on the world. These candidates when well prepared are sure to hold high profile jobs in future. This is sure to bring glory to themselves as well as the institution where they study. An ideal Language Lab has to have a peaceful conducive ambience with all the necessary equipment to conduct various Languages Development Activities. By the end of the semester, we make sure that all the students have attained appropriate grades in these activities. Even the slow learners should be able to score above average. Then, we are rest assured that the students we are preparing are all set for good Placement. For, Communication Skills count as much as their Academic degrees and certificates.

Language Lab sessions need to be intensive. The faculty needs to be geared up beforehand with all the material ready for the session. According to the number of students in a particular batch, the activities should be thoughtfully framed. It must be ensured that all the students get a chance to participate in each activity. The faculty must keep a written record of each student's progress day by day. It is to be ensured that there shouldn't be any blank moments during the activities. The students have to be trained to generate ideas one after the other.

Seating Arrangement

Seeing to the significance of Language Lab, we should also be thoughtful of the seating arrangement. The class has to be divided into two groups-one group attends the Software Lab and another Language Lab. Inside the Language Lab, it is essential to have oval arrangement to facilitate activities like GDs.

Equipment

A well planned Language Lab ought to have the following equipment by all means

- Smart Board
- LCD Screen
- OHP

Smart Boards can be highly beneficial for vocabulary building. Synonyms, antonyms, prepositions, conjunction, punctuation and various other Grammar Concepts can be taught very well with the help of Smart Boards.

LCD is a must have in a Language Lab. It can be very well used to provide visuals for generating ideas during a group discussion.

OHP can be used by the students for Presentations.

Activities

- Group Discussions

GDs play a decisive role during a Placement Drive. It is the most crucial part of students' lives. Utmost care is to be taken while preparing the students for GDs. Here the faculty has to do a bit of preparation beforehand. Pick some good relevant GD topics and gather all the essential data and statistics related to the topic. Visuals can prove to be very effective to initiate and generate the discussion. For example, a GD on Climate Change can be a highly informative one with adequate data and statistics regarding climate change over past few years. Some appropriate visuals on Environmental Pollution, Glacial Meltdown and Global Warming can be very effective in generating a GD. After the GD is over, the students should be given handouts bearing all the relevant data and statistics related to the topic discussed in GD.

- Presentations

Presentations are very important these days in Corporates. Before our students step into the corporate world, they ought to be well equipped with Presentation Skills to do well in everyday work-life. In order to hone Presentation Skills, it is essential to give them enough opportunity to practise and excel. The topic for presentation should be announced there and then. A span of 10 minutes should be given to prepare the slides. Another 5 minutes to be given for preparation before they come on the stage. They must be made aware of the right method of preparing

slides-visuals,data and very less of writing.And of course the right training in Body Language, clarity and intonation.The audience should grade each of the presenters and review as well.A round of applause for the good ones can work wonders.

- **Mock Interviews**

Language Lab is just the right place to make our students adept at Job Interview Skills.Interview Questionnaire can be mounted on the LCD Screen and the students can be prepared to answer each of the questions appropriately.The teacher must guide them about the body language,posture and the right method of putting the answers across to the panel.Once the students are prepared well, they can be put through a Mock Interview by a panel of students from amongst themselves.

- **Public Speaking**

Yes,we are preparing Company Heads for tomorrow.So,it is essential to get them prepared in Public Speaking.Only good public speakers can be good leaders.They can chair Meetings.Seminars and Conferences.While we prepare them on Speaking Skills,we are imbuing in them an air about themselves that they are sure to carry with them all through.The visions that we show them today are the foundations for their future.Moreover, practice in Public Speaking can help them go through the extempore round during the Placement Drives.

A little planned effort on our part can carve the future of all of our students.The only thing to be remembered is how to make the most of the resources available to us and how can we optimally use them to the benefit of our students.Not a very difficult task to accomplish.All the above mentioned activities are successfully Classroom Tested.

LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH NEWSPAPER

English, being the Global Language, is of utmost importance in every sphere.All high profile jobs call for good Communication Skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing.The aspirants, most of the time lay all stress on technical expertise. But along with technical expertise, it is also essential to acquire good Communication Skills. For grown-up students,the most effective method of acquiring a good language is English Newspaper Reading. Newspapers are an enriched source of language,laying forth the formal style of language for everyone to learn. They can be optimally used in a language classroom. Right use of one newspaper everyday in the classroom is enough to upgrade the communication skills of students at undergraduate level, preparing them for a good career ahead.

The students have to be asked to carry an English newspaper recommended by the faculty. Some of the ways how newspaper can be used in the classroom are:

1. **Skimming:**At the onset,the students must be asked to skim through a news clip within a stipulated amount of time.Let them skim through the same news story. Thereafter,one or two students can be asked to narrate the story in their words.This would help develop fluency and sentence structure.Later all the students can be asked to write the news clipping in their own words. This would be an excellent task to improve their language,wherein they work upon their sentence structure, vocabulary and spelling.

2. **Scanning:** Newspapers can be aptly used for vocabulary building.Give the synonyms of the word used in a particular news clipping and ask them to scan the clipping for the required word. This way about 10 new words can be learned by the students everyday.Use of highlighter is a must for this activity.

3. **Oral Comprehension:** Newspapers can be very well utilised for oral comprehension. Let a student stand and read one newspaper clip to the whole class. The class must listen attentively.Then the teacher asks some questions from the clip.Here many students are given a chance to speak up the answers. This activity can prove very helpful for improving their sentence structure, listening skills and comprehending ability. Here they learn to frame quick answers promptly.

4. **Written Comprehension:** This is another effective way of teaching writing skills to the students through newspaper.Let the students go through a news clipping.While the students read the newspaper,the teacher writes some questions on the board.The students are made to write the answers to the given questions. Answers must be well framed in their own language. The students are supposed to write original answers using their own sentence structure.This activity is very good for enhancing writing skills,sentence structure and vocabulary.

5. **Vocabulary Building:** Take up any news clipping and ask the students to highlight the difficult words. These words can be discussed in the class along with usage.Usage must be explained with appropriate context.Even

synonyms and antonyms to the difficult words can be discussed. About 25 words can be taken up per session. This activity is excellent for improvement of colloquial vocabulary.

6. News Reviews: Let the class go through a news clip. The clip is then discussed, giving free opportunity to the students to speak up and give their opinions about the news clipping just discussed. This is an excellent activity to encourage the students to speak up something of relevance. It can help the students during the Group Discussions as well. After each session of thorough discussion, the students are going to come up much enlightened about current affairs and much more confident to face the world.

7. Debate Discussions: There are always some topics in the newspaper which can be debated. The news clipping dealing with such a topic should be first discussed. Then the class should be divided into For and Against. Now a lively debate discussion can be held in the classroom. This activity is a good spoken English enhancer. Moreover, the students come out lively and spirited during such activities. This is one of the most engrossing activities for enhancing language skills.

8. Loud Reading : Good Communication Skills also call for articulation. In order to make the students articulate, first let them read some passages aloud. Let them hone their Spoken English as far as fluency, clarity and intonation are concerned. Once they gather confidence that they are good readers, they can be good speakers too.

9. Writing Own News Clipping: In order to bring some enthusiasm into the classroom, ask the students to go creative and draft their own news clip. This would help the faculty to assess their writing skills along with the sentence structure and vocabulary. In this activity, only the theme is to be announced. Let the students invent their own headlines and further develop a full write up based on the headline. The teacher must make sure that each of them gets a chance to read the clip out to the whole class. This would be a great morale booster to those who can write well and inspiration to those who wish to improve.

10. Framing an Advertisement: Let the class go through some good advertisements in the newspaper. Now announce some good themes to build an advertisement. Ask the students to focus on language rather than illustrations. The word limit should be specified. Here again, ask the students to read their advertisements aloud. It must be remembered to keep encouraging them by grading their write ups.

These few Classroom Tested Activities can go a long way, training our students to improve their Communication Skills in all the four ways: listening, speaking, reading and writing so that they come up to the mark by the time they have to face Job Interviews and Group Discussions and even at the workplace where they have to get into constant communication with each other all the time.

TEACHING THE DYNAMICS OF PRESENTATION

Presentation forms an essential part of the current work scenario. Working with an organization, you might be asked to give oral presentations quite often. These presentations could be in the form of in-house presentations where you are required to present in front of your authorities and colleagues or they might be in the form of sales presentations when you conduct a presentation to promote the sale of your company's product. This presentation could be conducted in another organization or institution. Another instance could be occasions where some delegates visit your organization and you are supposed to brief them about your company profile or product.

Whatever might be the kind of presentation, what is required by the presenter is the right knowledge of the essential requisites that would go into the making of the presentation effective and worthwhile. Moreover a good presentation would definitely get a good return to the organization.

Essentials of a good Oral Presentation

- Good communication skills :

It goes without saying that a presenter should possess extremely good communication skills. He should have the correct knowledge of sentence structure and grammar patterns.

Besides, he should have the right knowledge of pronunciation, intonation, stress etc. Some major requisites of good communication skills are :

- a. Sentence Structure: Correct sentence structure means the right pattern in terms of subject, verb and object. It also denotes the correct use of grammatical structures. One should be aware of the appropriate use of

the articles, pronouns, preposition, conjunctions etc. Tense should be used correctly. Each sentence spoken must be absolutely well framed.

b. **Pronunciation:** A presenter must have the right knowledge of pronunciation. Poor pronunciation can leave a bad impression on the audience. It would spoil not only the image of the presenter but also the organization for hiring such people. In case of any confusion regarding the pronunciation one must clarify the doubts. Any kinds of doubts regarding pronunciation can be cleared either by Google search or referring to the Pronunciation dictionary by Daniel Jones.

c. **Vocabulary:** Use of appropriate and effective vocabulary goes a long way in making a presentation interesting and worthwhile. One must be aware of each and every word spoken in a presentation. The kind of vocabulary used not only reflects the image of the speaker but also the organization. Vocabulary must be positive and enthusiastic. One should put in deliberate effort to put in some exotic vocabulary in the presentation. This adds quality to the spoken content.

d. **Fluency:** It is very essential for a presenter to be highly fluent. Fluency should not be confused with the speed of speaking. Fluency encompasses continuity of thought and expression. One must have a clear mindset about what to speak. Stumbling in between or fumbling with words in the middle of a presentation is detrimental to its effectiveness. There should be a continuous smooth flow of thoughts that the presenter wishes to put facts into.

e. **Intonation:** One must not speak in monotone. One must be aware of the right kind of voice modulation required to express different words. Tone should be varied according to the spoken subject matter constantly. Right intonation can turn a presentation into a lovely one while a presentation made in monotone can turn it monotonous.

- **Outlining the presentation :**

A presenter must always spend a considerable amount of time outlining the presentation. He should exactly know how much and what has to be spoken. The whole content should be categorized into the following parts:

a. **Catchy Start:**

Well begun is half done !Yes, it is very rightly said and it goes equally well in the case of a presentation. A presentation should always be given an enthusiastic start. It should set the audience feel motivated to listen to the upcoming presentation. ‘Icebreakers’ play a very helpful role in giving a great start to a presentation. These icebreakers are very much required to begin the presentation so that all the people who have gathered together to attend the presentation develop a sort of belonging to the presenter, the others in the audience and feel a part of it . So before starting a presentation, a warming up session is a must to give it a catchy start. Icebreakers can be used in the form of

- Anecdotes
- Jokes
- Riddles
- Quotations
- Stories
- Brain teasers
- Informal interaction

After the icebreaker, the presenter must gradually come down to the actual content.

b. **Main subject matter:**

The contents of the main subject matter should be wisely chalked out beforehand. The presenter must be aware of:

WHEN to start the PowerPoint presentation.

WHEN to change the slides

WHAT to be explained with each slide.

WHERE to give a break

WHERE to hold oral questionnaire session.

WHERE to ask for queries.

One must be absolutely sure of the content to be spoken during the whole presentation. All facts and figures should be double checked before coming for the presentation. If any data or statistics have to be incorporated into the presentation, they must be taken from reliable sources.

c. Conclusion: A presentation should be concluded with the summarizing of the main points taken up during the main presentation. While bringing it down to a close one must be making a conscious effort to bond well with the audience so that it remains a memorable experience for the audience and can result in a desirable action. How the presenter has been behaving throughout and how he expresses his interest in the audience can greatly determine the success of a presentation in terms of goals accomplished. A well wound-up presentation would encourage the audience to do the needful spontaneously.

The presenter must close his presentation very assumingly with an interesting one-liner or a quotation that wraps up the whole thing effectively. He must then thank the audience for patient listening and for contributing their bit to make the presentation worthwhile. He must leave behind his contact details, in case any of the audience would like to interact with him in future.

Feedback form must be distributed well in time.

- Knowing the Audience:

It is very important for the presenter to know the following facts about the audience he or she is going to address.

- Language background
- Rural/urban/global
- Technical knowledge level
- Age groups
- Academic level

A pre-knowledge of these parameters would help in preparing the presentation material well and adequately. The content would match the understanding level of the audience and this would result in good participation and retention thereby bringing desirable results to the presenter and the organizations. In case of any disparity between the level of the receiver and the sender, there would be communication gap leading to undesirable result. Moreover, a presentation prepared for well qualified intellectuals would call for a lot of accuracy and proficiency unlike a presentation to be given in front of a rural lot. One would need to put in specialized vocabulary when speaking to a technically proficient gathering while general vocabulary would be enough if the presentation is to be given to a gathering of laymen. When a presentation is meant for a team of international delegates, it would call for utmost sophistication in language and equipment.

Thus, it becomes mandatory to know your audience beforehand.

- Right Body Language: A presenter needs to be not only a good speaker but must also have enough knowledge of the kind of body language to be used during a presentation. The study of body language is termed as 'Kinesics'. It is a wide term that takes into account a lot of components which are as follows :

a. Eye Contact : Proper eye contact with each member of the audience is very important to be maintained throughout the presentation. It not only affirms the interest of the speaker in his audience but also shows his high confidence level. His eyes must have an assuring expression with a lot of positivity. During the presentation, he should be looking into the eyes of the members constantly. Members sitting at the rear must be given attention at par with those sitting in the front rows.

b. Facial Expression: A presenter needs to be pleasant throughout right from the beginning to the end of the presentation. He shouldn't have a weary expression even if he is tired. He needs to wear a subtle smile all the way. The reason being his facial expression is going to be instrumental in making the presentation a memorable experience for everyone. Even in the face of anything unpleasant during the show, he should maintain his calm and serenity. He should be a friendly face to his audience.

c. Gestures: While speaking we tend to move our hands frequently, shrug our shoulders and slant our neck often. All these constitute gestures. Presenter's gestures should be subtle and sophisticated. Unnecessary jerks in the neck, shrugging to excuse negativity and swift hand movements are not desirable in a presentation. Shoulder and neck movements must be soft and positive. Hand movements should again be soft and must come out naturally. They should not seem imposed and artificial.

d. Posture: The way we stand and walk during the presentation constitutes our posture. One must stand with body weight on both the feet, not leaning on one foot. Stooping down shows lack of energy and leaning

backwards is a mark of disinterest. The right way to stand is upright and tall. While walking, one must again mind the posture. Walking with the head hung down or sideways is not desirable. One must walk with chin up and eyes looking straight. Hands should never go into your pockets while in a presentation.

- **Physical Appearances:** A presenter needs to be dressed and groomed up well when moving on for a presentation. Grooming up well includes an appropriate hairdo, neat hands with nails clipped off. Dress code should be official in not too bright colors. Too many accessories cause distraction during the presentation, so, both boys and girls must wear minimum possible accessories to the presentation. And, of course, the footwear needs to be formal too, going well with the outfit.

- **Using audio-visual aids:**

Audio visual aids play a major role in making a presentation effective and interesting. The most frequently used audio-visual aids are:

- Power point Presentation
- OHP Slides
- Flip Charts
- White /Black boards

Among all these, PowerPoint presentation is the most frequently and effectively used. It has several advantages over the other audio visual aids. They are multi-coloured with an option for interesting illustrations. They are easy to operate and can use any material from the worldwide web.

OHP Slides, on the other hand would be more useful in case of an urgency of making instant slides. They don't have the advantages of internet download.

Flip charts and white-black boards are low cost aids which can be easily made available anywhere, especially in the areas that are not quite technically advanced.