

## ESP: Ambit of Language in different culture

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### ABSTRACT

*We believe that language helps us not only in passing and receiving information but also in thinking critically and rationally. This paper reveals that all human beings have the ability to learn language but if they are not taught, they will not learn. Language is both species specific and species uniform. It means that language can be learnt and used by human beings only and all human beings are capable of learning it. This paper aims in opening vistas of ESP especially for different cultures which corroborates that the progress of civilization is mainly due to language.*

**Key Words:** *language Sensitivity, Cross Culturalism, Politically Correct Language*

Language is the most remarkable invention of man. It enables him to express his ideas clearly. Man can communicate even without using a language. A little baby cries when he is hungry, here communication is taking place without language. But man needs language to express his views because he has a vast number of finer ideas in impetus mind to express than any other living being. It is an important aid for socialization for it spreads brotherhood round the globe. People of different castes and creed can share their views with one another by the means of using common language. If civilization has progressed, it is mainly due to language. Language helps us not only in passing and receiving information but also in thinking critically and rationally. The most convenient definition of language is of R.H. Robins:

A language is a symbol system based on pure or arbitrary convention, infinitely extendable and modifiable to the changing needs and conditions of the speakers or writers.

The above facts refer to these facts of language.

- a) Language is a means of communication.
- b) It is a system.
- c) Its conventions are arbitrary in nature.
- d) It is basically human.

Any language can change the human behavior and human behavior also changes the communication. As we all know that most of the people respond positively to a message which meets their particular desires at the same time or we can say that our needs decide our response to any message. When our needs determine the language, the language becomes sensitive. One should know what to say because language can make us behave in different ways and this is only the reason of sensitivity.

There is no logical relationship between a word and its meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure used the terms Signifier and Signified. The term signifier means the sound or group of sounds that refer to some idea. The term signified means the idea or concept the signifier refers to. For example, the signifier cat refers to the concept of cat. A cat may be real or artificial but it will be a cat if it corresponds to the concept of cat. A cup whether it is made of china clay, gold, silver, glass or wood will always be called a cup. The concept is important, not the material. The fact is that the relationship between a word and its meaning is based on convention. All organisms live in groups. A group is co-operated by a communicative system for its existence. In order that an organism should participate in the communicative system of its group, the conventions of that system have to be built in some way.

Many things we inherit from our parents and other ancestors like physical features and voice. This inheritance is genetic. But when in society we learn things, this is cultural. The genetic inheritance is called genetic transmission. All human beings have the ability to learn language but if they are not taught, they will not learn. Language is both **species specific** and **species uniform**. It means that language can be learnt and used by human beings only and all human beings are capable of learning it.

The other aspect of cultural transmission is that we learn only that language which is taught to us. If a child of *Hindi* speaking parents is adopted by English parents in England and never comes in contact with *Hindi*, he will speak English only. If a child is not exposed to any language till the age of twelve, he will not speak a language at all; the faculty of learning language becomes inactive at the age of twelve. This fact has been proved by the discovery of Ramu, the wolf boy, who was stolen by wolves at a very early age and was not exposed to any language. All efforts to teach him language in Lucknow Zoo proved futile. It also explodes the myth of Tarzan, the jungle hero, that he could speak like a white man, though he was reared in forests completely isolated from human society. In fact the Tarzan novels were written with the colonizers point of view that the white people were born rulers and leaders.

Culture is a particular society at a particular time and place which develops the understanding of acceptable actions and beliefs. It can also be analysed by the way we live, which determine the values that sustain throughout the life. Cultural variation creates a gap between sender and receiver of different cultures. We can take the example of an incident held between Shilpa Shetty and Richard Gere which created a lot of misunderstanding.

Before the boom of information technology, very few people needed to communicate across the oceans. Their experience and exposure to the world helped them to overcome semantic gap caused due to cross-cultural communication. However, youngsters, inexperienced technocrats, managers have to interact with people of different countries. They try to deal with people from a particular country by studying its culture and history.

Westerns are driven by Universalism. Universalism tries to define and apply the good and right things everywhere and always. Due to this approach they try to impose their logic, values and systems on the rest of the world. They always insist to follow the procedure in all dimensions. They do not depend upon the beliefs; however, they use the science to draw the inferences and conclusions. M. M. Monipally in his book *Business Communication Strategies* said,

Their predictions are based on analysis of the well documented past and well- studied present.

These basic differences create a gap in communication with westerners. We can overcome these problems by keeping below given facts in mind:

- Get ready for logical & rational arguments
- One should not follow 'get down to business' attitude as rude
- Be consistent while treating any case
- Try to encompass all organizational needs
- There should be a sequence of time and priority in the message
- Make sure that your actions support communication

Although we can never completely overcome the cultural barriers but we can improve our communication by studying culture in advance. One should always learn about history, religion, politics, customs and the practical aspects of the life. Some observations are given below:

- In Spain, the strokes of handshake should be at least for five to seven times; pulling away too soon may be a sign of rejection.

- Gift of liquor is avoided in Arab countries.
- In England, one should never stick Pens or other objects in the front of the suit/shirt pocket because doing so is considered awkward.
- In Africa, one should devote plenty of time with the person S/he is dealing with because Africans distrust the person who are in hurry.
- In Arab countries, one should never turn down food or drink because they assume it an insult.
- Try to be aware of unintentional meanings that may be read into other aspects. One should always clarify the true intention by repetition and examples.
- One should always make sure that both agree on what has been said and decided.
- One should always communicate in clear, brief, accurate, short and simple language.

**Political correctness** (abbreviated to **PC**) denotes the way in which we behave in our social and institutional life. It deals with the language and thoughts in specialized, gender, cultural, civilizing, sexual point of reference, certain other religions, beliefs or ideologies, disability, and age-related contexts.

This term was adopted as a derogatory term i.e expressing disapproval, by the political right in the 1990s, in the context of the Culture Wars. This term has taken shape regularly in the lexicon of the conservative social and political challenges against curriculum expansion and progressive teaching methods in US high schools and universities. The converse term "politically incorrect" came into use as an implicit term of self-praise, indicating that the person is not afraid to ignore constraints associated with political correctness.

Examples of language commonly referred to as "politically correct" include:

- Intellectually disabled in place of "Retarded" and other terms
- Physically Challenged in place of Handicap.
- African American in place of "Black," "Negro" and other terms
- Native American (United States) in place of Indian
- Firefighter in place of fireman
- Terms relating to lack of various common human abilities, such as 'visually impaired' or 'hearing impaired' in place of 'blind' or 'deaf'