



THE ART OF EFFECTIVE WRITING: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

Dr. ANJANEYULU GANGULA^{*1}, Dr. P. ELIAH²

¹Professor of English & Dean- Student Affairs, Vardhaman College of Engineering, Hyderabad,

²Professor of English, JNTU, Academic Adviser, Academic and Planning Section, Hyderabad



Dr. ANJANEYULU GANGULA

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ABSTRACT

Writing is the most difficult and challenging skill or task. This paper is focusing on the ways and methods of writing and problems are being faced by the students and writers. Students do not know the fundamental rules of professional writing. Clear thinking and clear writing go together. Writing involves words, sentences and paragraphs. Words are the fundamental units of human communication. Writers attain pleasing diction not by memorizing dictionaries but by wide reading, careful attention to words and love and respect for words. Choosing the right word is more crucial in writing than in speech. The right word in the right place is the rule. The right word is the appropriate word in a given context. Appropriateness could be grammatical, geographic, temporal and stylistic. In the present scenario people are not properly concentrating on the ways of developing writing skills. One's success is absolutely relying on one's professional writing.

Key words: Effective writing, types of writing, methods of writing, approaches

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In the cut-throat competition and tension prevailing in the modern times, a fair grasp and knowledge of soft skills particularly communication skills, are of paramount importance. Thus the most important soft skill in which one needs practice is communication consisting of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Effective communication results in the development of one's personality. After all, personality is to a man what perfume is to a flower. One among the communication skills, the most difficult and challenging communication skill is writing.

One can write well only when

- (i) The topic is interesting
- (ii) The topic has relevance to life, and
- (iii) Thinking and writing go together

In fact, clear thinking results in clear writing.

However, any writing involves words, since they are the building blocks of writing. Hence, it is in the fitness of things that the mechanics of using words be considered initially along with the structures of sentences. The essential characteristics of good sentences are clarity, emphasis and variety. Clarity is the universal requirement. If the reader does not understand what the writer intends to convey, the sentence is a failure. Similarly, emphasis and variety are relative matters. Whatever one writes must be clear, but it is not necessary to emphasize every single word that one uses. At the same time, not much value lies in variety just for the sake of variety. All this means that proper emphasis and variety depend on the context in which anything is written. Context includes the subject matter, the reader, the type of writing and the purpose of writing. Different contexts demand different arrangements of words or different structures of

sentences. For example, the following sentences may be analyzed:

Poisonous smokes kill birds. Some smokes come from automobiles. These automobile smokes have killed sparrows. This was done along the highway.

All these ideas can easily be combined into a simple sentence:

Automobile smokes have killed the sparrows along the highway.

If "smokes" is the subject, the sentence must be written as follows:

Smokes from automobiles have killed the sparrows along the highway.

Instead, if the sparrows constitute the subject, the sentence must be as follows:

The sparrows along the highway have been killed by automobile smokes.

If the focus is on a particular area, then the sentence must be written as follows:

Along the highway the sparrows have been killed by automobile smokes.

However, to stress the point that only automobile smokes have killed the sparrows, the sentence must be written as follows:

It was the automobile smokes that killed the sparrows along the highway.

Now there is clarity in all these sentences. The order has been changed to effect different kinds of emphasis to suit different contexts. These sentences illustrate the importance of position in a sentence.

Sentences are made up of phrases and clauses that are grammatically related. Sentences are classified according to the number and types of clauses contained in those sentences. The four basic types of sentences are:

- (i) Simple sentences,
- (ii) Compound sentences,
- (iii) Complex sentences, and
- (iv) Compound-Complex sentences

Simple sentences constitute one independent clause. The independent clause may have a compound subject or a compound predicate.

For example,

Simple Sentence without a dependent clause:

Virat kohli scored a century

Simple Sentence with Compound subject:

Virat kohli and Dhavan scored centuries

Simple Sentence with Compound Subject and Compound Predicate:

Virat kohli and Dhavan scored centuries and broke records.

Compound Sentences consist of two or more independent clauses and no dependent clauses.

For example,

Abhishek joined the college and her sister joined the school.

Complex sentences consist of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. The dependent clause may precede or follow the independent clauses.

For example,

After the rain stopped, he started for home.

Padmavathy went home because her father was ill.

Compound-Complex sentences consist of at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.

For example,

The train arrived, and as soon as Tom came out of the compartment, I received him.

Before she started for the college, it started raining and so she stayed at home.

Sentences are also classified according to their function and purpose. The usual classifications are:

- (i) Declarative sentences,
- (ii) Interrogative sentences,
- (iii) Imperative sentences, and
- (iv) Exclamatory sentences.

Each of these sentence types has a typical word order.

(i) **Declarative sentences** make a statement of fact or opinion. Normally, the word order is: Subject+ Verb Phrase + Object or Complement.

For example,

Babloo has done the home work.

Rajyam always walks fast.

Sometimes, the word order of a declarative sentence is inverted for the sake of emphasis. Its word order is Complement+ Subject+ Verb.

For example,

A singer she is and a singer she will always be.

A declarative sentence can also begin with an adverb followed by the verb and then the subject.

For example,

Up went the umpire's finger

(ii) **Interrogative sentences** ask questions.

There are two types of interrogative sentences, namely those with a 'WH' word and yes-no answer type of questions. *WH*

questions normally begin with a *WH* word followed by the verb. *Yes-No* answer type

questions usually begin with an auxiliary verb followed by the subject. For example,

WH: Why is he so serious?

Where is the psycho now?

Who is your uncle?

Yes-No : Aren't you Mr. Anand ?

Is she the Principal?

Is your pen missing?

(iii) **Imperative Sentences** make a request or a command.

The subject 'you' is implied. The sentence begins with the verb. Occasionally the subject is expressed.

For example,

Bring my book tomorrow.

Someone, please help me.

(iv) **Exclamatory Sentences** usually express an attitude or a strong emotion. They frequently begin with 'what' or 'how' and have an inverted word order.

For example,

How beautiful Tajmahal is!

What a painting it is!

All sentences may be either affirmative or negative. An affirmative sentence makes an assertion, while a negative sentence denies the assertion by means of a negative word, such as, not, no, nor, never.

For example,

Affirmative: The doors are closed.

Negative: The doors are not closed

Sometimes sentence fragments or incomplete sentences are used in speech, especially as answers to questions or as afterthoughts to statements.

For example,

"Where were you at seven in the evening yesterday?"

"In the Office."

However, in writing, sentence fragments are normally not acceptable except in writing dialogues to imitate speech.

Most of the sentence fragments consist of the following:

(i) Dependent clauses,

(ii) Unfinished clauses

(iii) Detached predicates

(iv) Modifying phrases, and

(v) Explanatory phrases

These fragments belong to the preceding sentences. The incorrect fragments can be corrected by changing the punctuation and the capitalization.

Sentence fragments consisting of dependent clauses must be joined to the preceding sentence.

For example,

(i) *Romans were known for their military arts. Which they used to conquer other nations.* (Incorrect)

Romans were known for their military arts, which, they used, to conquer other nations.

(Correct)

(ii) *He does not want to help his brother. At least until he mends his ways.*

(Incorrect)

He does not want to help his brother at least until he mends his ways.

Sentence fragments consisting of incomplete clauses often occur in sentences with lengthy modifiers, in which case, the main clause is left incomplete.

For example,

(i) *Whenever Clinton had to answer the telephone, which was equipped with more buttons and red lights than the cockpit of an aero plane.*

(This fragment contains two dependent clauses and no independent clause, so it is incomplete).

Since the front tyre of the car in which he was driving to the office burst forcing him to abscond from duty.

(Incorrect)

Since the front tyre of the car in which he was driving to the office burst, he was forced to abscond from duty.

(Correct)

Sentence fragments consisting of a detached compound predicate can be corrected by attaching the second part of the predicate to the

sentence in which its subject appears. For example,

(i) *He went to the market to buy vegetables. And returned home without them.*

(Incorrect)

He went to the market to buy vegetables and returned home without them.

(Correct)

(ii) *Tom can play cricket. But never won a match.*

(Incorrect)

Tom can play cricket but never won a match.

(Correct)

Sentence fragments consisting of modifying phrases include prepositional phrases, appositives, participle phrases, and infinitive phrases. These phrases must be attached to the preceding sentence, or the phrase must be rewritten to make a complete sentence.

For example,

(i) **Prepositional phrase:**

The chief guest came. Before the arrival of the chairman

(Incorrect)

The chief guest came before the arrival of the chairman

(Correct)

(ii) **Appositive:**

They live in Visakhapatnam. Formerly called Vizag.

(Incorrect)

They live in Visakhapatnam, formerly called Vizag.

(Correct)

(i) **Infinitive Phrase:**

He saw the examination results in the newspaper and was excited. To find his number in the first division.

(Incorrect)

He saw the examination results in the newspaper and was excited to find his number in the first division.

(Correct)

Sentence fragments consisting of explanatory phrases beginning with, such as, for example, namely, and so on, can be corrected by incorporating the fragments into the preceding sentences.

For example,

(a) *Daylight robbers are breaking into houses for costly things. Such as, gold, silver and cash.*
(Incorrect)

Daylight robbers are breaking into houses for costly things, such as, gold, silver and cash.
(Correct)

Sentence fragments are sometimes used for stylistic effect, as follows:

He lost everything in the lottery. *Everything.*

Nothing remained. *Nothing*

These are deliberate fragments. Sometimes sentences are started with a coordinating conjunction, 'And'. It is not a serious error but the sentence looks choppy. Therefore, it is better not to begin a sentence with a coordinating conjunction.

For example,

(a) *DevAnand is in second class. And Peter is in first class. But the eldest brother is in eighth class.*
(Choppy)

DevAnand is in second class and Peter is in first class, but the eldest brother is ninth class.
(Acceptable)

Another item that one must turn one's attention to is the shifted constructions. They are unnecessary changes in grammatical features, such as, tense, voice, person, number and mood. Of course, some shifts are necessary in writing. For example, when a past action is contrasted with a present action, the tense of the verb must be shifted accordingly. Errors occur only when the shift is unnecessary or illogical. The tense of the verb should not be shifted unless a shift in the time is indicated. For example,

(i) He asked her how is she and she told him that I am well.

(Incorrect)

He asked her how she was and she told him that she was well.

(Correct)

The voice should not be shifted from active to passive and from passive to active in the middle of a sentence. For example,

(i) After she washed the clothes, they were pressed.

(Incorrect)

After she washed the clothes, she pressed them.

(Correct)

The person and number should not be changed unnecessarily.

For example,

The boy stole his neighbor's pen for which the teacher punished them. (Incorrect) The boy stole his neighbor's pen for which the teacher punished the boy.

(Correct)

There should be no shift from one mood to another in the middle of a sentence.

For example,

(i) First listen to the question, and then you should answer. (shift from imperative mood to indicative mood)

First listen to the question and then give your answer.

(Correct)

Mixed constructions result from a phrase, clause or sentence with one type of construction and then changing to another type without completing the first construction. For instance, direct and indirect questions should not be mixed.

For example,

The boy's father promised that I will get you a new pen.

(Incorrect)

The boy's father promised that he would get him a new pen.

(Correct)

The boy's father promised, "I will get you a pen".

(Correct)

Similarly, direct and indirect questions should not be mixed.

For example,

(i) I wonder do cats and dogs live together?

(Incorrect)

I wonder if cats and dogs live together

(Correct)

(ii) She wonders can he help her?

(Incorrect)

She wonders if he can help her.

(Correct)

Adverbial phrases or clauses should not be used as subjects or complements. Problems arise from improperly using when, why, where or how to

introduce a complement after the present infinitive "to be".

For example,

(i) By drenching in the rain was how I got a bad cold.

(Incorrect)

I was drenched in the rain, so I got a bad cold.

(Correct)

Having been drenched in the rain, I got a bad cold.

(Correct)

Because I was drenched in the rain, I got a bad cold

(Correct)

Sometimes the object is used as the subject of a sentence. The error occurs as the object is the real topic and the focus of the writer's attention.

For example,

Patients who suffer from arthritic pains, doctors advise them not to run.

(Incorrect)

Doctors advise patients who suffer from arthritic pains not to run.

(Correct)

Independent clauses should not be used as the subject of a sentence. This error can be corrected by changing the independent clause to a noun phrase; or turning the independent clause into a dependent clause and the predicate into an independent clause; or completely rewriting the sentence.

For example,

(i) His words sounded sincere were what prompted me to believe him.

(Incorrect)

His sincere words prompted me to believe him.

(Correct)

Because his words sounded sincere, I was prompted to believe him.

(Correct)

It was his sincere words that prompted me to believe him.

(Correct)

Sometimes sentences with linking verbs, especially the verb "to be" are like equations. The subject is on the left side of the verb and the complement is on the right side of the verb with the verb in the middle. It must be noted that the subject and the

complement are logically and grammatically equivalent.

For example,

(i) *To err is humanly.*

(Incorrect)

To err is human.

(Correct)

(ii) *All that glitters is not golden.*

(Incorrect)

All that glitters is not gold.

(Correct)

Sentences are held together by **parallelism** which means using the same grammatical structure for all items that have the same function. Parallelism adds emphasis, and provides a smooth, rhythmic flow to writing. It helps both the writer and the reader organize the thoughts being expressed. Parallelism takes fewer words to express ideas if they are grammatically parallel. It makes sentences symmetrical. It also facilitates easy understanding and helps remember the sentences as well as ideas. It is for this reason that famous proverbs and quotations are in parallel form.

For example,

All is well that ends well

Man proposes, God disposes

Waste not, want not

I came, I saw, I conquered

Sometimes grammatical problems result in faulty or false parallelism. Faulty parallelism occurs when the second or successive items do not fit into the pattern established by the first item. What is required is that all the related ideas must be put into the same grammatical form.

For example,

(i) *India is thickly populated but there are not enough people in Australia (Faulty). India is thickly populated but Australia is under populated.*

(Correct)

False parallelism occurs when ideas that are not parallel in grammatical function or meaning, are put into parallel or seemingly parallel form. In such a case the sentence must be rewritten in order to avoid the parallelism. It is an error to equate a subordinate clause with a main clause.

For example,

The children spent the whole day playing all sorts of games and singing songs, and which delighted the parents and teachers. (False Parallelism)

The children spent the whole day playing all sorts of games and singing songs, which delighted the parents and teachers.

(Correct)

Similarly, false parallelism of using the same word in two or more different ways must be eliminated.

For example,

The minister will come by Monday by ten O' Clock in the evening by Visakha Express.

(False Parallelism)

The minister will come on Monday at ten O' Clock in the morning by Visakha Express

(Correct)

Mixing words with different levels of generality or with unrelated meanings must be eliminated.

For example,

The Christmas star is available in orange, green, blue and bright colours

(False parallelism)

The Christmas star is available in orange, green, blue and other bright colours

(Correct)

Parallel structure are sometimes identified and clarified by the repetition of words common to all the parallel elements. The writer may repeat or omit the common word. If a preposition is repeated before one item in a series, it must be repeated before all items in the series.

For example,

He has sent the invitations to his brothers, sisters, to friends, to relative and well-wishers.

(Incorrect)

He has sent the invitations to his brothers, to his sisters, to his friends, to his relatives and to his well-wishers.

(Correct)

He has sent the invitations to his brothers, sisters, friends, relatives and well-wishers.

(Correct)

In this connection, the way to find right words for effective writing may be explored. Words are the beginning of language. Words, in fact, are the fundamental units of human communication. Man interprets and conveys his experience to others in

words. The words people use tell their audience a great deal about their education, attitudes, way of thinking, sensitivity and even age. People respond differently to different words, primarily because of the meanings they associate with those words. Writers attain pleasing diction, not by memorizing dictionaries, but by wide reading, careful attention to words, and love and respect for words.

Whether one speaks or writes, one uses words to convey one's message. But choosing the right words is more crucial in writing than in speech. When one speaks to a live audience, one can use gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice to clarify one's meaning. But when one writes, one must use words more carefully than in speech. The

choice of words depends on the context. The right word at one time or place may not be the right word at another time or place. Therefore the definition of a right word depends on the medium, the topic, the level of formality, the audience, and the time and the place.

The right word is the appropriate word or the word suitable for the occasion. There are various types of appropriateness, namely,

- (i) grammatical appropriateness
- (ii) geographic appropriateness
- (ii) temporal appropriateness, and
- (iii) stylistic appropriateness.

What is grammatically acceptable in speech is not always acceptable in writing. For example,

(i) *It seemed like the rain would never stop.*
(Incorrect)

It seemed as if the rain would never stop.
(Correct)

In writing 'like' is not accepted as a conjunction.

(ii) *He has a car smaller than his friend.*
(Incorrect)

He has a car smaller than his friend's.
(Correct)

Writing is geographically appropriate when the writer uses words or expressions for his native audience. For example,

(i) *I never use the lift in our building.*
(British)

I never use the elevator in our building
(American)

(ii) *Smugglers must be put in jail.*
(British)

Smugglers must be put in gaol
(American)

Temporal appropriateness is using words appropriate both to the time at which one is writing and to the time about which one is writing. To ensure temporal appropriateness, archaisms, obsolete words and anachronisms must be avoided. Archaisms are words or constructions no longer in general use. They are found only in old texts, religious works and poetry.

For example,

Thou, thy, thine, forsooth and doth, and doeth

Obsolete words are the ones that have gone out of use, such as gnarl, meaning growl.

Anachronisms are the words or expressions which place persons, events, objects or customs out of their proper time.

For example.

Shakespeare played cricket in his spare time.

The error is, there was no cricket in Shakespeare's time.

Stylistic appropriateness involves sentence structure as well as diction. It means writing in a manner that is suitable for both the subject matter and the audience. There are many terms that refer to various aspects of stylistic appropriateness. Some of them overlap, some others are often misunderstood, while some have more than one meaning.

1. **IDIOM:**

Idiom has many slightly different meanings. In one use, idiom means the language of a particular area or group of people. It does not follow the regular patterns of the language. The meanings of the different words in the idiom do not compose the meaning of the whole idiom. For example, the idiom, give someone a hand, does not mean that a person removes his hand and gives it away to someone. Good writing is always idiomatic.

2. **SLANG:**

Slang is the most casual type of vocabulary. A coined word or phrase with an extended meaning is 'Slang'. For example, "on the rocks" with the meaning, "moving toward an unhappy ending" is a Slang. Once the words "vegetable" and "medicine"

were slangs. Slang adds vividness to writing, but it has a short life. Slang sometimes refers to the words in particular occupations. For example, in computer science, the slangs used are, crash, kill, loop and widow.

3. FORMAL ENGLISH:

Formal English is the language of scholarly and technical writing found in academic journals, textbooks, research papers and so on. It is dignified, precise, serious and objective. It is a stylistic label, not a value judgment. There can be bad and good formal English. In Formal English, personal pronouns, I, me, you, we, us and one are avoided. Contracted forms, such as 'It's nice' are avoided. Colloquial terms are also avoided. Instead, precise and conservative words and expressions are used. Learned quotations are used. Long sentences with parallelism are used, Slang expressions are out of place in Formal English.

4. INFORMAL ENGLISH:

Informal English is more casual and subjective than Formal English. It is the language of magazine articles, newspaper editorials, essays, well-written personal letters and so on.

5. COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH:

Colloquial English is natural Conversational English, the everyday speech. It is not substandard or disreputable in any way. It is the language of speech, not of writing. Many of the words used in speech are not suitable in writing. Examples are, I mean, kind of, sort of, you know, guy and so on.

The three levels of Formal English, Informal English and Colloquial English form a continuum. There is no sharp dividing line between formal and informal English and between informal and colloquial English. The vocabularies of all the three levels overlap. Most of the words used are appropriate for all the three levels.

6. COLLEGE WRITING:

In general, most college writing ranges between high informal and low formal English. Colloquialisms are used only sparingly in college English. Slang must be avoided. However, it may be used for the person to whom it is suitable. Careless inconsistency of diction, that is, mixing words that belong to extreme ends of stylistic spectrum, must be avoided. For example, the word, "sibling" is a

technical term. But "brother" and "sister" can be used at all levels.

The *denotation* of a word is what it refers to, its direct, literary and dictionary meaning. The *connotation* of a word is its emotional meaning and the associations of the word. Improper denotations result from confusion of similar words called malapropisms.

Euphemism is a word or phrase with pleasant or neutral connotations. It is used to avoid a word with distasteful connotations. Euphemism often reflects the society's fears and feelings of guilt. The three subjects about which euphemisms have developed are death, bodily functions and malfunctions and social problems. The euphemism for "die" is "pass away" for "corpse or dead body", the euphemism is "mortal remains; for "constipation", "irregularity"; the euphemism for "old people" is "senior citizens". Euphemisms must be avoided in college writing.

"Doublespeak" is a kind of euphemism that is used to cover up one's own faults and to deceive others. Euphemisms are normally used to avoid offending others. For example, for the word "toilet" some people are using the term "bathroom". Close to doublespeak is slanting or slanted writing. It is the conscious use throughout a piece of writing of words with particularly favorable or unfavorable connotations. One may praise or denounce a person overly according to one's point of view. Of course, absolute objectivity in writing is impossible. But deliberate slanting is irresponsible. Any reader may reject the slanted writing. Material things that can be experienced with the senses, for example, the mango fruit.

Abstract words refer to qualities or conditions rather than to specific objects; for example, goodness. General words refer to entire groups or classes; for example, ministers. Specific words refer to explicit, particular, and limited examples of a group or class, for example, my uncle.

Overuse of abstract and general words causes vagueness in diction. Therefore one must select concrete words and examples. However, effective writing employs both abstract and concrete words, and both general and specific words. Good or effective writing requires all

varieties of words, namely, abstract, concrete, general and specific words for different denotations and connotations.

To avoid vagueness and bring about clarity, one must write economically. One must avoid repetition and verbosity using only the number of words required. Further, complicated words must be replaced by simple words. Repetitive expressions are deadwood.

For example,

In my humble opinion, I think we must switch over to solar energy. (Repetitive)

I think we must switch over to solar energy. (Clear)

The use of expletives, "there" and "it", is a source of deadwood.

For example,

There are many applicants for the posts of teachers (Deadwood)

Many people have applied for the posts of teachers (Clear)

It is necessary that we should be economical. (Deadwood)

We should be economical (Clear)

The use of abstract and general omnibus words makes the meaning vague. These words can be nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. For example, aspect, case, character, fact, kind, manner, matter, problem, quality, situation, sort, thing and type. These words are not specific.

For example,

She is basically an artist. (Abstract)

She is an artist. (Specific)

Another variety of deadwood is circumlocution. It involves the use of big words, long phrases and roundabout expressions instead of simple, common and short words.

For example,

It came to the notice of the police that one of the prisoners had escaped.

(Circumlocutory)

The police learned that a prisoner had escaped. (Simple)

Yet another variety of deadwood is **tautology** which involves repetition.

For example,

Free gift, repeat again, return back, revert back and money purse.

The greatest enemies of freshness of diction are Clichés, vogue words, nonce words, fine writing and overuse of particular words and phrases.

Clichés are worn-out, overused and automatic phrases or expressions, such as,

Silver lining, truth is stranger than fiction, avoid like the plague, sell like hot cakes, spread like wildfire, down but not out, slow and steady, nip in the bud, few and far between, sigh of relief, walks of life, bite the dust, proud privilege, cakewalk, in hot water, to tell you the truth, better late than never, easier said than done, hotter than hell, broad daylight, fatal flaw, vicious circle, tragic end, rank and file, hustle and bustle, honest toil, fond memories, as a matter of fact, believe it or not, first and foremost, in a nutshell, in the final analysis, it goes without saying, last but not least, needless to say, to all intents and purposes.

All these are automatic phrases because if the first word of these phrases is uttered, the entire phrase comes to mind. These stale phrases must be avoided in good and effective writing.

Another type of words that must be avoided in good and effective writing are nonce words or neologisms. They are made up on the spur of the moment. Mostly these terms are awkward inventions. When an accepted word is already in use, there is no point in inventing a new expression for its. The expressions, publicization (for publicity), lubricize (for lubricate), tightish (for tight), oldish (for old), depromotion (for demotion) and whitish (for white), must be avoided. Nonce words or neologisms are formed by adding the suffixes, -size, -ish, -ment, -tion, -y and -able to other words.

Fine or flowery writing also must be avoided. This type of writing involves use of unnecessary descriptive adjectives and adverbs, foreign words, artificial poetic expressions and rhetorical devices. It is not good writing but affected writing which must be avoided.

Similarly, overuse of words and phrases must be avoided. Instead of repeating the same word or phrase a number of times in a sentence or passage, its synonyms or pronouns must be used to break the boredom. In case a word does not have

good synonyms, the same word may be repeated. Sometimes repetition serves as an effective rhetorical purpose.

Sometimes figures of speech are used to lend freshness and vividness to writing. The most familiar figures of speech are metaphors and similes. They compare two unlike things that have something in common. The difference between the two is in their grammar. Whereas a simile makes an explicit comparison by means of such words as "like", "as" or "as if", a metaphor makes an implicit comparison or identification. Both these figures of speech can be seen in proverbs and proverbial expressions.

For example,

My mouth waters at the thought of the ambrosial mango. (Metaphor)

The mouth-watering mango is sweet like ambrosia (Simile)

Care must be taken to avoid mixed metaphors which contain different and incompatible comparisons in one construction.

For example,

Her face bloomed in the flight of joy.

Flowers bloom and birds fly. The metaphors are incompatible.

Similarly, strained similes and metaphors must be avoided in good writing. Metaphors and similes must be used for freshness and vividness. However they should

not be misused or overused. Irony is another useful figure of speech in effective writing. Though it is intended for speech, it can be used in writing as well. Irony is saying one thing and meaning something else.

For example,

You can score a century because you are only seventy years old. One of the dangers of employing irony is its tendency to become sarcastic. Whereas irony is restrained, good-natured, light-hearted and gentle, sarcasm is personal, sneering and vicious. In Williams Shakespeare's historical play, Julius Caesar, Mark Antony's dig at Brutus is well-known:

Brutus is an honorable man.

While the tone of voice reveals irony in speech, in writing only the words reveal the speaker's intentions.

One of the vices of the present day writing is using abstract nouns instead of verbs to indicate action.

For example.

His retirement is due next week.

(Incorrect)

He retires next week.

(Correct)

He is retiring next week.

(Correct)

After all, verbs are action words. They are the living heart of a sentence.

Next, exaggerated or hyperbolic expressions must be avoided in good and effective English. Some of these expressions are:

A thousand apologies

A terrific effort

Immeasurable damage

Awfully busy

Dreadfully sorry

Disastrous results

Times without number

Terribly inconvenient

Sky only is the limit

The English language is rich and vivid enough to say all that is needed to be said. While some foreign words and phrases have established themselves in technical vocabulary, others have no special merit. For example, the phrases such as, per cent, bona fide, en route, and ex officio, have established themselves. But the phrases, such as, inter alia, per annum, pemensem, protem, status quo ante, pro rata and magnum opus, have no special merit, so they may be avoided.

Similarly, business jargon, that is, long-winded, pompous, obscure and verbose expressions may be avoided in good and effective English. Some of them are as follows:

Heretofore

Thereto

Therein

Herewith

Thereof

Hereunder

Your valued favour

Your good self

At your earliest convenience

We beg to say
Thanking you in anticipation
Assuring you of our best attention at all times
We are in receipt of
We beg to acknowledge receipt of
Do the needful

When the ambiguous, complicated, cumbersome and hyperbolic words and expressions in addition to cliché and jargon are avoided and in their place simple, homely, short, concrete and straight-forward words and expressions are used, the English language will be clear and effective. Then there will be real communication between the speaker and the listener, and between the writer and the reader.

A writer of any text must adopt a tone and a point of view. Tone is the attitude the writer expresses towards his subject, his reader and even himself. It determines the emotional and intellectual effect of one's writing on one's reader. Tone may be formal or informal, tragic or comic, angry or cheerful, kind or cruel, and personal or impersonal. It can be bitter, hopeless, ironic or sympathetic. In other words tone reflects the entire range of human emotions. Choice of words is an important aspect of tone.

On the other hand, point of view is the position from which one sees one's subject as one writes. Point of view is revealed by the words selected and the facts included or excluded in the text. A text may be subjective conveying the writer's impressions or opinions. Or, it may be objective containing factual information. However, excess of tone should be avoided, whatever be the subject. A pompous tone bores the reader; a flippant tone annoys the reader; and, an excessively sentimental tone embarrasses the reader. Therefore tone must be determined by the reader as intended by the writer. For instance, the description of a skit by the students of a class may be humorous, the letter to a friend may be intimate and the explanation to an official may be serious or dignified in tone.

If words make sentences, sentences make paragraphs. A common definition of paragraph is a group of related sentences developing one idea. There are no absolute rules governing the length of a paragraph. Sometimes only one-sentence

paragraph is needed to make a transition between sections of a paper or to add dramatic emphasis. Sometimes a full-length page is necessary for a complex and seemingly endless argument. A typical paragraph contains one hundred to two hundred words, or from three to ten sentences. Newspapers are not a model. Their paragraphs depend on typographical appearances.

In spite of differences in content, organization and length, all good paragraphs have unity, completeness and coherence. Unity means that the paragraph has a single focus. Completeness means that the subject of the paragraph is adequately developed so that there is no room for vague impression and unanswered questions. Coherence means that all the sentences in the paragraph are related to one another.

Unity is oneness. All elements combine to form a single whole. A unified paragraph is internally consistent and has a single focus. In a well-unified paragraph every sentence contributes to the focus by exemplifying it, explaining it, or expanding it. Care must be taken to evolve a comprehensive topic sentence that can summarize an entire paragraph. Every other sentence must be tied to the tether of the topic sentence. Since all the sentences evolve from the topic sentence, one may call it the mother sentence. The purpose of the topic sentence is to help the readers know the main idea of the paragraph. But it is not necessary to tell the reader what the writer is going to do next. Signposts must be avoided. Normally the topic sentence is used at the beginning of a paragraph. Some times the topic sentence may also come at the end of a paragraph. A paragraph may not have a topic sentence at all. The topic sentence may come both at the beginning and at the end in different sentence constructions.

The purpose of a topic sentence is to enable the reader to know what the main point of a paragraph is. The topic is also an aid to unity. In addition to unity of ideas within a paragraph, and the use of topic sentences as an aid to unity, grammatical unity and unity of diction are also important. Grammatical unity is achieved by

- (i) Correct agreement
- (ii) Consistency of tenses
- (iii) Proper placement of modifiers, and

(iv) Appropriate use of coordination and subordination.

Unity of diction means that the words are compatible with the subject matter and the purpose of the paragraph. For example, slang has no place in the description of a laboratory experiment. Similarly, fairy tale diction is not suitable for historical narration. Thus what adds to unity in one context, may detract from it in another context. In addition to a topic sentence and unity, a paragraph must have completeness. It means that the topic of a paragraph is adequately developed by details, explanations, definitions, evidence and so on so that the reader is not left with only an ambiguous idea of what the writer intends to present. The amount of development necessary for any given paragraph will vary according to the topic, the audience and the purpose of the paper of which the paragraph is a part.

There are many possible methods for developing a paragraph. The most important types of paragraph development are development by:

- (i) Detail
- (ii) Comparison and contrast
- (iii) Analogy
- (iv) Process
- (v) Classification and partition
- (vi) Cause and effect
- (vii) Definition and
- (viii) Mixed development

In development by detail, the paragraph begins with a topic sentence or a general statement and then expanded by specific details, illustrations or examples.

In development by comparison and contrast, two things are handled point by point either in one paragraph or in alternate paragraphs. In development by classification and partition, both the items are interlinked. Development by definition may include positive examples or negative examples, analogies and comparisons and contrasts.

Development may be divided into two categories, namely, types of development and sequences of development. Sequences of development are not independent since every type of development follows some kind of sequence. Some sequences, such as, general to particular, may be used for any

type of development. Some sequences are limited. For example, a special sequence does not fit into a paragraph whose basic type of development is cause and effect. The most important sequences of development are:

- (i) General to particular
- (ii) Particular to general
- (iii) Climatic
- (iv) Chronological ,and
- (v) Spatial

A general to particular sequence is the most common type of sequence in non-fiction writing. A general statement, usually the topic sentence, introduces the paragraph and is followed by specific details that expand, explain or illustrate the topic sentence. This sequence is easy to readers.

A particular to general sequence begins with a series of particular details and ends with a general statement which is the topic sentence. This is a difficult variety of sequences for readers. In a climatic sequence, the most intense or highest point of interest is reserved for the final sentence. This sentence may or may not be the topic sentence. In a chronological sequence events happen or are presented in the order in which they occur in time. In a story, for instance, events of several years are narrated in a chronological sequence. This type of sequence may be used not only for the narration of events but also for development by process. A spatial sequence is used in descriptions of various types. It starts at a particular point and then moves logically in some direction.

Whatever the type of development or sequence of development, there must be coherence in a paragraph. Coherence is connection and consistency. A coherent paragraph is one in which all the sentences are logically and grammatically related. This relationship of ideas or thoughts enables the reader to follow the writer's sequence of ideas or thoughts step by step. A paragraph may have unity and completeness, but it will fail as a paragraph if it lacks coherence. All the sentences must go together like children of the same mother. Care must be taken to put ideas in proper order and to avoid irrelevant details. In addition to logical presentation, a number of specific devices help achieve transition. Transitional words must be

appropriate for the kind of relationship indicated in paragraph. Possible types of relationships and some of the transitional words are:

Time : Afterwards, before, meanwhile, in the meantime, later, until, soon, and during.

Place : here, there, elsewhere, beyond, opposite, behind and in the background

Result :consequently, hence, therefore, accordingly, as a result, thus and so.

Comparison : likewise, similarly, also, too, and in like manner.

Contrast : however, yet, nevertheless, but and on the other hand.

Example or Illustration: for example, for instance, that is, such as, and specifically.

Addition: Furthermore, and, next, besides, first, second, in addition, also and moreover.

Conclusion: in conclusion, to conclude, and finally.

Summary: to sum up, in other words, in brief, in a nutshell, and in short.

Concession: although ,of course, admittedly, true, and granted that

Emphasis: in particular, most important, indeed, chiefly and note that.

These transitional conjunctions and adverbs should not be used at the beginning of every sentence. Unnecessary transitional words and phrases must be eliminated or some of them may be included in the sentences.

For example,

"Your ideas sound logical. However, I have my own reservations," may be written as,

"Your ideas sound logical. I, however, have my own reservations," recommended.

Transition is important for coherence, but an entire paragraph should not be devoted to transition, especially in short papers. In long papers, transitional paragraphs should contain only one or two sentences. In dialogues or conversations, each direct quotation requires a paragraph, so it must be indented.

Grammar, punctuation, words, sentence construction and other items are ultimately useful as they contribute to a whole, in an essay or a paper. This is the basic unit of writing courses. Whether a topic is given or chosen, the writer has many options

with respect to type of development, details to be included and conclusions to be reached. One should choose a topic out of the areas of one's own experiences. The topic chosen must be interesting, entertaining and informative. As a general rule very broad or highly abstract topics must be avoided. After choosing the topic, one must narrow down its scope so that one may write only one's specific ideas. Now the problem is, how to approach the topic. Traditionally, there are four types of approach to a topic.

They are:

- (i) exposition
- (ii) argument and persuasion
- (iii) description, and
- (iv) narration

The purpose of exposition is to explain something. Exposition answers questions, such as, what is it? What does it do? Why is it important? These questions help the reader understand something that he did not understand before.

The purpose of argument and persuasion is to persuade the reader by a logical reasoning process to accept the writer's point of view.

The purpose of description is to convey a sensory impression, especially a visual impression. Exposition explains what a thing is. Description tells the reader what it looks like, feels like and sounds like.

The purpose of narration is to tell a story, real or imaginary. Narration is concerned with events and actions, usually in the past. It answers the question "What happened".

The four rhetorical types of approach, namely, exposition, argument and persuasion, description and narration, are not completely independent of one another. Most papers contain elements of two or more types of approach. In argument and persuasion there can be an element of exposition, and similarly, in description there can be an element of narration. However, a paper must have a primary approach.

Sometimes papers fail because they lack a clear thesis. The main point or the central idea is the thesis of a paper. A thesis statement sums up in one sentence what a writer wants to convey to the readers. A good thesis statement helps the writer

focus his thoughts about the topic before he starts writing. This helps the writer stick to his thesis as he writes. He must narrow the topic and decide on the rhetorical type to be used in formulating a thesis. A good thesis statement indicates the main point and avoids vague generalities. It must be specific, unified, and not self-evident. However, the thesis statement should not be dramatic or shocking.

After selecting a topic and deciding on the thesis statement and the rhetorical type, the writer must ponder over his topic and gather and develop sufficient material. Now he must start organizing the paper. He must eliminate digressions and the material that is clearly irrelevant or unnecessary. If the writer can make an outline, it will greatly help him in preparing a rough draft of his paper.

The essential part of a paper is the middle. However, the beginning and the end of a paper are important because these are emphatic positions. The ending strongly influences the reader's final impression of the paper.

The purpose of the beginning paragraph is to launch the subject in such a way as to set the tone for what will follow and to attract the reader's interest. A paper can begin in different ways:

- I. with a quotation
- II. with a concessive statement
- III. with an interesting fact or statistic
- IV. with a short anecdote or narrative
- V. with a question or several questions
- VI. with a paradox
- VII. with a relevant background material
- VIII. with a statement of a long-term effect or effects without immediately stating the cause
- IX. with an analogy
- X. with a definition of a term that is important to the topic of the paper.

Certain ways of introducing a paper do not attract the readers. They are;

- I. Paraphrasing the title of the paper and telling the reader what will follow next.
- II. Sweeping generalities or platitudes
- III. apologizing for incompetence or lack of knowledge of the writer

The purpose of a concluding paragraph is to strengthen the message conveyed by the whole paper and to leave the reader with a feeling of completion. Not every paper requires a separate concluding paragraph. This is especially true of short papers where the reader can easily remember everything that the writer has said. Similarly, short narrative and descriptive papers need no concluding paragraph. Concluding paragraphs are more likely to be necessary in expository, argumentative and persuasive papers, but even in these papers a strong final sentence can often replace a separate paragraph. If the paper is organized climactically, no further concluding paragraph is necessary. However, if a concluding paragraph is necessary, the following common problems must be avoided:

- I. If summarizing is necessary at the end of a long or complex paper, the writer should not say, "Now I will summarize my arguments", or "I have just shown that..."
- II. The writer should not apologize for his poor performance or lack of knowledge in the subject.
- III. Concessions should not be mentioned at the end of the paper, but only at the beginning.
- IV. After the final sentence, there should be no series of dots.
- V. New ideas unrelated to the thesis should be avoided.
- VI. The points forgotten by the writer should not be mentioned in the last paragraph.

While writing the first draft of the paper, the most important thing is to get ideas into words and the words on to paper. Some writers do some revising as they write, but this is not enough. No first draft is perfect. Errors and inconsistencies are unavoidable. Therefore every writer must revise his work. It may be noted that the first draft of a paper is for the writer, while the revision is for the reader. After the writer has completed his work, the editor in the writer must take over and make the paper fool-proof and readable for the public. The writer must methodically check, point by point, all aspects of the paper relating to content, organization, sentences, diction, grammar, mechanics, euphony and the title. When so much of care has been taken

in writing a paper, the paper will evolve into an architectural beauty and a smiling Mona Lisa. Such a writing is not only an effective communication skill but also a soft skill.

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