

Effective Writing
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Lecture – 01
Introduction to Effective Writing

Good morning and welcome to NPTEL course on Effective Writing, standing before you is Binod Mishra a faculty in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Roorkee. The course designed for you entitled effective writing may make you curious enough as to what effective writing is. The question that many of us come today is, is our writing not effective?.

You also might be thinking as to all sorts of writing that you did in your schools and colleges where they are not effective. My dear friends this is actually not the case, the course has been designed in a way that actually exposes you to different situations where you have to write differently as well as effectively in order to carve a nest for yourself.

Now, you might also be thinking as to what this course offers, this course actually takes into consideration various nuances of writing effectively in numerous ways; so, that your writing can cater to the need. My dear friends whenever you come across writing any piece of writing that you interface, you often start thinking as to how the writer might have written it so effectively.

Imagine, one day while passing by a bus a stand or waiting for your desired train, bus or any vehicle suddenly your eyes fall upon the pile of books on a book stall. And, you start thinking if you could get a book and you go there and take a book also, you start reading the first page of course, it interests you a lot. Now, the question is does the cover of the book interest you or is it the first page of the book interest you or is it the subject that interests you?.

There are numerous questions when you gloss over a few pages you think that this is the book that can actually make you or involve you into a sort of reading. Now, how could it be an effective book? It is an effective book because it is written effectively. Now, you might all be

thinking do you not write effectively, you have already done a lot of writing in your schools and colleges.

But, then as you grow in life you come across different situations not only in your personal lives, but in the professional lives as well where you need to write in order to satisfy your audience, in order to satisfy your crowd, in order to satisfy your readers, your recipients. Now, another question that you might be thinking is there is a magic or is there is a mantra that can make your writing effective.

The course will introduce you to different nuances of course, not to a variety of subjects, but to one thing that can be common in making a subject interesting or a subject effective; it is actually the writer that can make a book a writing effective. Now, do you all want to be writers? Not at all, all of us have a career before us, all of us are struggling to get a sort of vocation, writing of course is a vocation, but not all of us want to become writers. We actually want to succeed in whatever job, whatever workplaces we are in.

Now how to do that? All sorts of writing that you come across my dear friend whether it is driving a car, cooking whether it is riding a bicycle whether it is knowing about some formula whether it is knowing about a difficult subject; all this information are in the repository of written information. Of course these written information comprise books, journals, periodicals and many more. You might all realize that books serve as a storehouse of knowledge.

There are variety of subjects and all these subjects cannot have only one style of writing. The other day when you get bored what do you do, you actually want to relax yourself and then you want to read a book that can have some lighter moments. Say for example, somebody wants to read a novel, somebody wants to read a book of poetry. But, then on other occasions when you want to get some more knowledge, when you want to get a knowledge that can actually help you prosper in your life you turn your attention towards different subjects.

Books not only dispel the darkness, if somebody makes books their friends they can find life to be as interesting as anything. Books also lessen our boredom, books actually create in us

the desire to imitate established writers. Imagine most of you youngsters for whom this course is designed and also for professionals who are writing in one way than other, they might always find when they come across a good book they always want to imitate or copy established writers.

My dear friends, one does not become a writer in a single day. Sometimes while you are reading the plays of Shakespeare or you are reading the novels of Emily Dickinson or reading the poems of John Keats or you are reading some theorems of some scientists or you are reading certain given formulas by some eminent personalities in their own area; you actually identify yourself and you start having a sort of fondness that if you could also write like them. Do you think that they became writers, they became established just in one day?.


Not my dear friends. Now another question that you also might be thinking is, is reading helpful in order to make somebody a writer? Should we do a lot of reading? of course, no one can be a good writer unless and until one reads a lots of books, but then one also has to decide how to read a book, which books are to be read, why to be read and in what way you can imitate them, what can books do to you.

In this regard I am reminded of a famous English essayist named Francis Bacon, who has given a very sound advice in one of his famous essays entitled of studies where he says some books are to be tasted others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested. My dear friends Francis Bacon, a person who not only was a writer, but a philosopher knew the art of writing and how to write precisely and how to write plainly one can really learn from him.

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Repository of Written Information

- ❑ Books
 - ✓ serve as storehouse of knowledge
 - ✓ dispel the darkness and lessen our boredom
 - ✓ create in us the desire to imitate established writers
 - ✓ enable us to identify with characters



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“Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. ” (Francis Bacon)

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Look at the words that he says some books are only to be tasted you cannot devote a lot of time reading all the books. There are some books which you read just to pass your time, there are other books which are to be swallowed say for example, when you are reading some books from the science, when you are reading some books which actually are repository of information which can lead you towards a very coveted career for yourself.

You find that those books, the formulas, the reactions, the chemical equations and many more; they have to be swallowed and there are some few to be chewed and digested. Especially, when you are reading a book of literature, when you are reading a book of philosophy, when you are reading a book say for example, of thermodynamics and all you will find that unless and until you have chewed them entirely and digested them, it is no use reading that book.

Some books are to be read only in parts, when you as a growing person; growing in whatever field you are you find it whether you are writing a piece of paper or an article for a journal or some essay, you will find you also require some sorts of references and for that you consult some books. Of course they are to be referred, but then there are some books which can be read only in parts.

There are others to be read, but not curiously; I mean books which you simply read just to pass your time. You read them no doubt, but you do not read them as curiously as you read a book of your own subject. And, some few to be read wholly and with diligence and attention. For example, if you are walking in a field where an expertise knowledge is required naturally you start searching for those books which you have to read wholly and also with the diligence and kind attention my dear friends.

Thus, for all sorts of writing and because I say the course is entitled effective writing; in order to write effectively in whatever area you are you actually have to come across the repository of written information. Now, what is happening today and what is actually the need of floating this course called effective writing? As I posed the question in the beginning do we not write effectively?.

No my dear friends we write of course, but then there is actually a little bit of writing you will find that in a global age of today, in a digital age of today; when you have plenty of resources at your disposal, you actually do not get much time to read. You do not also get much time to think and that is what results in too less of writing, scant writing. So, what happens is there is a lot of distractions, most of the time the youngsters are found busy with their laptops, with their mobile phones, with their walkie talkie and many more.

And, all that results in creating a sort of aversion towards writing, I do at times remember when I give an assignment to some of my students; I can see, I can read the reactions on their face. They are actually too much averse to writing. Now, the question is simply you want to be a writer? You want to follow an established writer, but then how can it be possible my

dear friends unless and until you are distracted, unless and until you have an interest towards writing.

You actually as I quote a line from a very eminent poet who says you are, but willing to owned, but afraid to strike. You actually want to become a reader, you actually want to become a writer, but then you are afraid to start. And, then you are simply thinking, you are dreaming to be a writer; how can a man become a writer or write efficiently unless and until he has the patience to read, he has the patience to write? Some day or the other you have to start in order to write.

Many of us who think that they too could write, they do not come out of their sinus, come out of their hesitation and do not write. And, that is why they are not able to write effectively when situation demands such a thing from them. You and those many of you now a days you will find that youngsters are very much influenced by one of the famous writers of today J K Rowling.

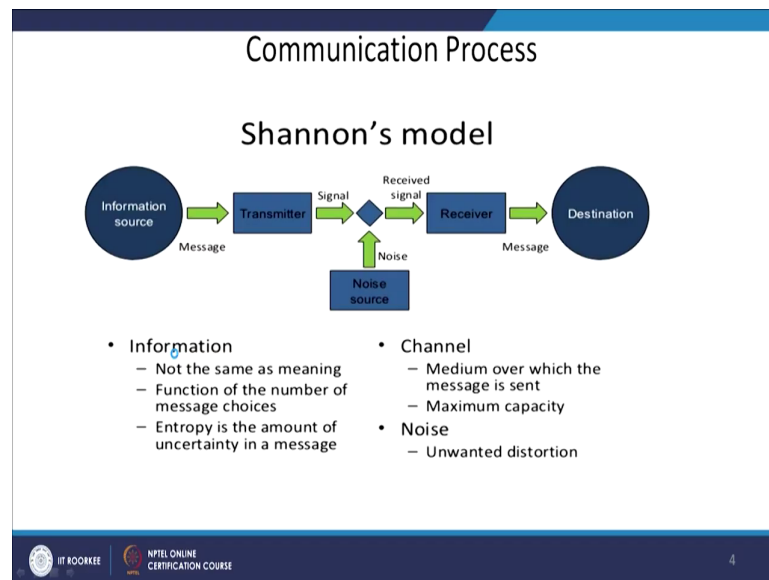
J K Rowling's Harry Potter is playing on the minds of the youngsters, but then they simply praise a lot and when they try to imitate, what they want is they actually are hankering after instant praise and acceptability. My dear friends acceptability cannot come just in one day, it actually requires days, months, years and all the established writers that you come across or you read and you get enlightened are those who have burned a lot of midnight oils and who have spent reading throughout the nights and writing.

So, writing my dear friend is not one day affair whether we talk about writing or any other form of communication because all of you know that writing is one of the most complex areas of communication skill. So, it is better, it is rather pertinent and in the fitness of things if we can understand what actually is a communication process.

Because, writing being one of the prime ingredients of communication skills unless and until you know how communication process takes place, it will become very difficult to start your

journey towards writing. Of course, I do not want all of you to become writers because if all of you become writers, who will become the readers my dear friend.

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So, let us have a look at Shannon's model of communication where because when we write we actually have a desire to be understood. We actually have a sort of oneness that our writing gets across. How can our writing get across? How can our message be heard, be listened? My dear friend when you want to write something, you actually are a sender, you are going to create a sort of message. So, if we go to the communication process, the first thing in the communication process is that as a writer you are a sender, you want to send a message.

Now, how should the sender send the message? The sender will first think about to whom he is going to send the message, who will be the recipient of the message, who will be the recipient of the content. Who will be the recipient of the idea, who will be recipient of the

information that you want to pass on. And, once you know about your recipient or your reader or say for that matter your audience, you actually start thinking how the message or the content has to be framed.

So, when you start thinking about the framing of the message naturally the language comes into picture. So, when you talk about writing, it is not simply about the sender, but also developing of the content. And, the development of the content or the formulation or the ideation of the message takes place once you know the background of your recipient or reader. And, once you know your readers background or your recipients background then you decide what should be the channel.

Of course, in spoken communication you have a variety of channels, in written also you have a variety of channels or the medium that I should say. You may want to write a letter, you may want to send an email, you may also want to send a message, you may want to write an essay. In all these situations you have a desired audience before you.

Now, when you have created the message or formulated the message you will find that your message has to get across. And how can your message get across? You decide the medium and when you decide the medium and send it, you are actually waiting for the response and the observation of the response is the feedback. Imagine in olden days when we used to send our letters, we used to wait for days or sometimes for weeks to get the response.

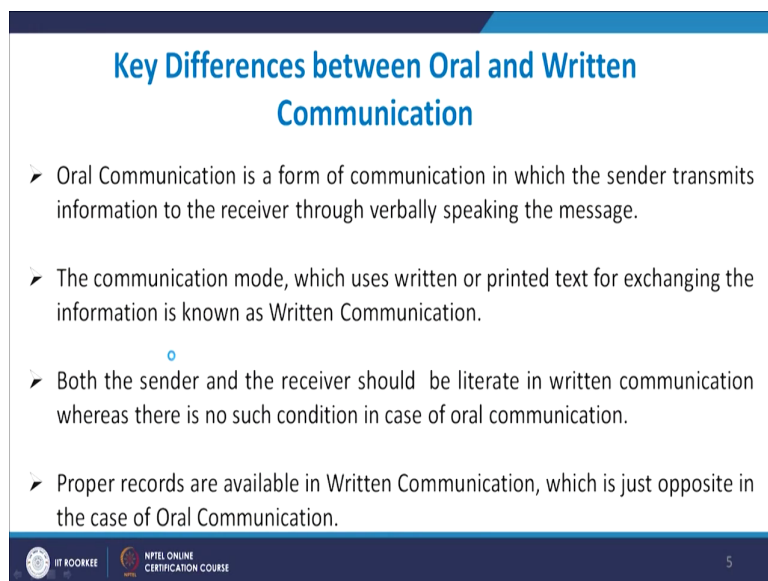
Nowadays, it has become quite possible, thanks to technology because nowadays we have the facility that when you write an email, you will find that the response will come either in an hour or in a day or whatsoever. Depending upon the facility, the ease of the reader, ease of the recipient and also the background of the recipient. So, but it so, happens that when you write as a sender, when you actually frame the message as a sender you have a desired meaning within you.

In order that the desired meaning is received well by the audience you actually have to think about how you are framing the message. What sort of words you are going to choose, what sort of sentence length because all that it matters in written communication is the language

part. Language plays a very vital role in communication my dear friends. So, when you are acquainted with the communication process perhaps your task of writing efficiently will become clearer.



Now, the question is; is it time to know the differences between the written and the oral communication? Of course, all of us I mean as human beings we have the facility you know the facility of speaking. We actually have a natural ability of speaking everyone, majority of us have the ability to speak. Of course, in speaking also there are some people who are more effective, but most of us can express; so, we have the facility. So, it is time we understand the key differences between oral and written communication.

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Key Differences between Oral and Written Communication

- Oral Communication is a form of communication in which the sender transmits information to the receiver through verbally speaking the message.
- The communication mode, which uses written or printed text for exchanging the information is known as Written Communication.
- Both the sender and the receiver should be literate in written communication whereas there is no such condition in case of oral communication.
- Proper records are available in Written Communication, which is just opposite in the case of Oral Communication.

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Now, oral communication or the spoken form of communication as you all know is one such communication in which the sender transmits the information or the content of the receiver

through verbally speaking. You speak of course, the quality of speaking matters somebody may speak in a low voice, somebody may speak at a rational pace, but somebody may speak very fast.

Of course, whether it is written or oral communication there are several impediments which can harm the communication process. But, in written communication you will find, it is actually a mode of communication where you use a printed text or written material in order to exchange the information. And, both the sender and the receiver when we are talking about the written communication they actually have to be literate.

So, spoken communication has a facility that even if a person is not that literate or qualified enough, he can understand the words unless and until you are using difficult words. So, is the problem even when you are addressing a literate person in written communication and imagine if you use a word which is very difficult. What will happen? Will the recipient be able to understand or interpret the message? Not at all my dear friends.

So, but then there is your facility and why I say facility because when you are writing something, when you are going for a written communication; this written communication in the times to come will become a sort of record. There is no flexibility. Because, as I have been saying a writer writes in absence, in absence means a writer is present even in his absence. When you read a book, imagine you are reading a book.



So, what you think is you are reading no doubt, but do you see the writer? No, the writer is somewhere else and if you come across something which is difficult, you cannot seek explanation from the writer. Am I right? Yes, because there is no scope of flexibility in written communication, that is why written communication is more arduous, it is more difficult, it is more challenging.

And, I want all of you, I want all my readers, listeners that they should be able to after doing this course, they should be able to write effectively. So, that their recipients, their readers or their receivers may not feel any difficulty in order to analyze a message.

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Contd.

- Oral Communication is faster than Written Communication.
- The words once uttered cannot be reversed in the case of Oral Communication.
- Editing of the original message is possible in Written Communication.
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- Chances of misinterpretation of the message is possible in Oral Communication but not in Written Communication.
- In oral communication, instant feedback is received from the recipient which is not possible in Written Communication.

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As regards fastness oral communication is of course, faster know, face to face communication is always, written communication is delayed. But, as I said thanks to digital technology written communication has also become faster my dear friends. But, remember one impediment that the written communication has is that once you write a word, the word once written you have the facility you can edit.

But, in spoken what happens? You cannot edit that, now a days there are several facilities, but then when you say something to somebody you have already conveyed your message and the words that you have used. But, when you write something you have actually the facility of editing; you can delete, you can substitute, you can edit, you can change the language.

You can change the tone that is why written communication is more difficult, more challenging that is why written communication allows you and I always say speaking is a

spontaneous process, but writing is a deliberate process. When you write you decide to write, is not it and when you decide to write you actually start writing with a purpose; you have a purpose. Why are you writing, is not it? So, when you think why are you writing and to whom are you writing, naturally you will have a control over words.

You will have a sort of consideration, keeping into consideration the readers or the recipients or the listeners or the audiences background. But, in oral communication even though we get instant feedback; there is no such chance that you can revise what you have already said. So, in oral communication instant feedback is received from the recipient which is not possible.

You know every process whether it is written or oral it has got its advantage and disadvantage as well. But, since as I said earlier that when we write because writing is a deliberate process my dear friend. And, this course that has been designed, has been designed with a hope that as individuals who are actually trying to create a niche, carve a niche who are actually trying to make a career they actually have to be exposed to different sorts of writing.

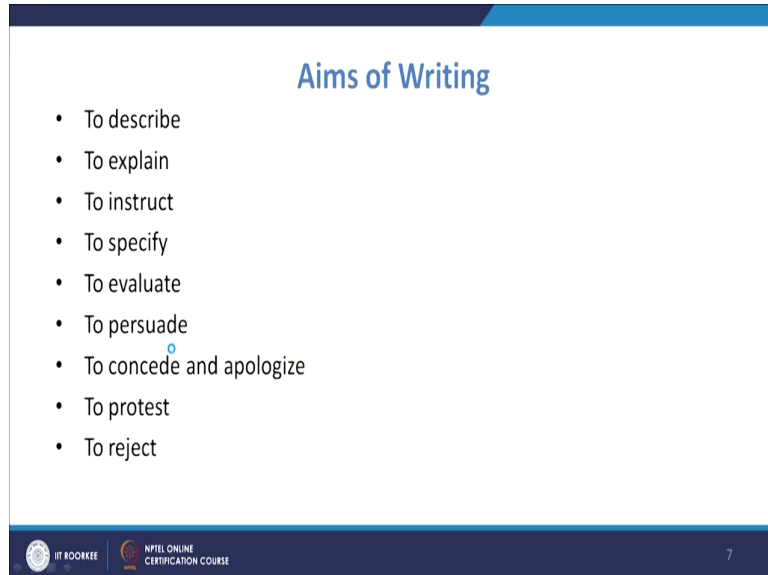
Now, in the workplace do you think the way you speak and the way you write are the same thing? No, they are different because when you speak, you speak also informally isn't it, but when you write at the workplace you have to write formally. It would be better if we can understand what are the aims of writing; so, that it can be extra cautious when it comes to the task of writing. Because, unless and until we have a purpose set in our mind we cannot write meaningfully, we cannot write effectively.

Effective writing is one where the receiver, where the person at the other hand does not have any problem in understanding or analyzing the content or the message. So, there can be various aims of writing at the workplace depending upon the situations, circumstances, organizations that you are working in. You will find we can categorize these aims of writing as it can be at times written to describe.

Imagine you have got a role in an organization where at times you have to describe something, describing about an object, describing about an instrument. You suppose you are an engineer and then an engineer has to do a lot of tasks. You are an entrepreneur again you

have a lot of tasks before you, you are actually a teacher you again have several ways that you can write and you can instruct; again at times you have to send some guidelines.

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The slide is titled "Aims of Writing" in a blue font. It contains a bulleted list of ten aims of writing. The slide has a dark blue header and footer. The footer contains the IIT Kharagpur logo, the text "IIT KHARAGPUR", the NPTEL logo, the text "NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE", and the number "7".

- To describe
- To explain
- To instruct
- To specify
- To evaluate
- To persuade
- To concede and apologize
- To protest
- To reject

So, the aims of writing are to describe, to explain; something went wrong and you are an expert in that field. So, what would you do? You will actually explain how it went wrong, how it can be corrected. How you can find a solution to it and then on many occasions you will find that you have to instruct. Suppose you are a manager and you have got a sort of responsibility as to get a target fulfilled in such and such within such and such period.

So, what will you do? You will instruct and there are many people, all these people have different roles, all these people have different responsibilities; you actually need to instruct them. Unless and until the instructions are clear my dear friend they cannot do well, you remember when you go to appear at the examination on the question paper itself is written

instructions know. Why instructions? Instructions as how to respond to these questions likewise in organizations in several institutions you also at times have to send them certain instructions.

And, in order to fulfill the desired aim you have to send them instructions and written instructions. Sometimes you have to specify, I mean there are tasks, numerous tasks before you. You as the manager, you as the CEO, you as the main person at a lofty position have to specify certain norms. And, there are also times when you have to evaluate and there are chances of evaluation. Evaluation of a certain task which has been done by a group, by an individual, by a team.

Now, when you evaluate what do you do? Do you not write? You write, you actually write and you want to tell people that this process that you have given, this report that you have submitted, this recommendation that you have given does not appear. Now, how to write that? Actually, when you are evaluating you actually are a listening also and sometimes or the other you have a task to persuade.

Suppose, you want to launch a new product in the market, your company wants to launch a new product in the market. And, they have actually given you the task of writing a sales letter or writing a brochure or creating a say a sort of guidelines. So, what do you do? You actually start writing in such a manner that you can persuade, you know all individuals can be persuaded, persuade ability is an art.

But, there are also occasions because as I said that if you are a working professional or you are going to work in organizations, you have got different assignments and for different assignments you have to write differently. To concede and apologize sometimes something went, wrong something went wrong because of somebody's lapse, because of your lapse because of some misunderstanding.

So, again you are going to write in such a manner that not only are you going to apologize, but you are also going to concede. Sometimes you do not agree with somebody's statement, you do not agree with somebody's proposal. In that case you also have to protest, but my dear

friends whatever you want to say, it has actually to be clothed in language and language actually the use of language is a very challenging task.

Thus, in the first lecture we have talked about the aims of writing prior to understanding what writing is and how many of us want to be writers, but we do not start. I hope the first lecture has created in you a desire to write. Since, time is at our disposal and we have many more lectures to deliver, I think we will have to stop here. And, then in the second lecture we shall be talking about how writing is an art and how we can make it effective to our own advantage and to everyone's delight and not to anyone's sorrow.

Thank you very much.