

**J. V. Vilanilam.** *More Effective Communication: A Manual for Professionals.* New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2000. 238 pages. Paperback. Indian Rs 175.00.

The book under review—“More Effective Communication: A Manual for Professionals”, is a good effort by J. V. Vilanilam and is a useful addition to the modern literature on communication skills.

J. V. Vilanilam’s book is for professionals who need to make their communication more effective, and is written in a simple and easily understandable style. The reader finds some very useful ways to improve his/her English for written/oral communication. The reader can gain an insight into communication skills step by step with the help of examples, diagrams, photographs, in-boxes exercises, etc. The appendices also contain useful material about some words commonly confused and identify their correct usage.

The book is divided into seven chapters and four appendices. Chapter One highlights the importance of communication in the present era and explains the role of communication and the importance of languages in the management of organisations.

Chapter Two is about usage and rhetoric. The author emphasises the appropriate selection of words, and classification of languages and writing. He explains such concepts as semantics, diction, jargon, cliches, punctuation, paragraphing, etc., and differentiates between professional writing and literary writing, abstract and concrete words, and denotative and connotative meanings. Vilanilam advises the readers to use concrete, strong, and positive words, to use grammatically correct sentences, and to create short paragraphs. He warns the professionals that the inappropriate use of words/phrases can put the sender and the receiver at different wavelengths and thus easily create a misunderstanding.

Chapters 3 and 4 are about written communication. Chapter 3 discusses reports, memos, agenda, telephonic messages, and minutes writing. The author explains various types of communication and categories of reports, and describes the steps to be followed and the contents to be included in the writing of a report.

Chapter 4 focuses on external correspondence. Vilanilam suggests that while initiating external correspondence, some of its important aspects like the purpose of the letter, the audience, the subject matter, etc., must be thoroughly examined. The author discusses the types, the salient features, and the composition of the letters in detail. He is of the opinion that qualities like clarity, conciseness, accuracy, emphasis, and completeness must be taken care of while writing any letter.

Chapter 5 is about oral communication, and public speaking and group dynamics are discussed in detail. He believes that integrity, voice, volume, pitch, speed of delivery, quality, enunciation and punctuation, accent, diction, and non-verbal communication (body language) are the requirements for good public speaking. He advises that while making an oral presentation, one must maintain eye

contact with the audience and have self-confidence, not draw attention to one's own drawbacks.

In Chapter 6 the author discusses audio-visual and multimedia presentations. He discusses the use of various audio/video equipment and media—like microforms (microfilms, microfiche, and micro-cards), videodiscs, etc.—and setting up media centres in the organisations. The chapter also explains the concept of multimedia systems.

Chapter 7 highlights the significance of information technology in professional communication. The author discusses the use of various telecommunication devices and the Internet. He examines technological advancement in the form of e-commerce in detail, and also management information systems and automation. He also mentions the consequences of using Information Technology (IT).

The appendices are also useful. The author lists some commonly confused words and gives their correct usage; some frequently misspelt words, some difficult words and expressions and their simpler equivalence. But the final appendix gives a list of words and phrases that could very well have been omitted.

The book is not without its own errors. On page 189, microfiche has been spelled as "mircrofiche", and the same word has been spelled differently at different places, e.g., "misspelled" on page 63 and "misspelt" on page 224. Identification of root, prefix, suffix, syllable, etc., plays an important role in having a grip on correct spellings as well as pronunciation. These basic concepts have not been explained in the book. The author has discussed some rules for spelling. But there exist some problems/deficiencies in these rules. The author has placed some words among exceptions in the first rule, although explanation for some words can be given. For example, words like *heir*, *foreign*. Then 'ei' sounds like 'a'; therefore, 'i' follows 'e' as in words like *eight*, etc. The author says: "double the final consonant when accent is on the syllable to which the suffix is added" (page 64). The fact is that it can not be doubled unless a second condition is also met, i.e., the suffix begins with a vowel. Moreover, the exception he has given under this rule can not be termed an exceptions as the second part of the rule given by the author himself (...the accent is on the syllable to which the suffix is added) explains the violation of the rule in the case of words like *reference*, *softened*, etc., where the accent is on the first syllable.

Similar problems exist in the other rules explained by the author. The author has also placed words like "movement" and "requirement" among exceptions to the rule. The fact is that he has not explained the rules in full. The rule is that when a root ends with "e" and the suffix begins with a consonant, then 'e' will not be dropped. Incompleteness of rules can mislead the readers and easily cause confusion.

The book spells out the ways on how to transform simple nouns to plurals but does not tell how to make plurals from possessive nouns. While discussing the procedures of making plurals from nouns, it says "... 'y' is changed to 'i' and 'es' is

added instead of 's' to form plurals". But the fact is that in certain cases that does not happen, as in the case of alloys, guys, fairways, etc. Basically, there are some definite rules to explain these violations which have not been explained by the book. The rule is that if 'y' follows any vowel, then 's' instead of 'es' will be added to the word to make a plural.

Here it may be noted that words like "who", "which", "whom", "whose", etc., are often incorrectly used by professionals. The book does not provide guidance in this area. Moreover, the rules of punctuation have also not been explained by the author in full. The book does not cover topics like infinitives, participles, gerunds, classification of verbs, and dangling verbal phrases. And it does not say anything about another important area like editing rules.

No doubt the author has tried to incorporate the innovations in the area of communication technology like the Internet, e-mail, fax etc., but it does not cover the emerging areas like effective communication management in marketing, role of communication in action research, and communication effectiveness in community development (and the development of overall democratic culture). Another limitation of the book is that it does not discuss modern writing styles. At some places, the book uses an old writing style. For instance, in the example given under the "Signature Section" (page 147), the author has put the section on the right side of the page, while in the new style it is placed on the left side of the page.

It is true, though, that in inter-office memorandums, the name of the addressee is placed first followed by the name of the originator. The author is of the opinion that the date is placed after the subject. But the general practice is that it is placed before the subject.

The author has rightly explained the ways and means to make public speeches more effective, but little emphasis is given to two very important elements of public communication: harmonisation/compatibility and thought provocation. Moreover, in certain gatherings/meetings, another element that gains greater importance is the effective participation of the participants. Further, the book says very little on communication distortion. Despite all these limitations, however, it is still a valuable guide and a manual for professionals who need to make their communication more effective.

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