IIT ROORKEE

NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

EFFECTIVE WRITING

Lecture 06: Notions of Correctness and Appropriateness, Part II

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Appropriateness

- Meaning is confined not only to words but to their use in context.
- Sentences can be grammatically correct but semantically ambiguous.
- Language used to deceive, oppress or coerce is inappropriate.
- Appropriate use of language is appropriate.
- **Improper referents**

Glancing overboard, the water gave me a feeling of embarrassment.

Walking late into the night, my knees got twisted.

Choice of Words

- Use specific words in stead of general words.

General	**Specific**
Furniture	chair/table
Cutlery	a carving knife
An industrial worker	a welder/plumber

- Proper study methods will *induce* good grades in college.
- Students do not seem more interested in the *line of sports*.
- Don’t judge before knowing his *angle.*
- The most common fault among children is the *disability* to amuse themselves.

Use Words with Caution

- Words such as run, get, take, hard, read, stand have more than one meaning.
- Avoid the use of unnecessary words.
- Avoid repeating the same word.
- Avoid repeating words with the same meaning.
- Avoid pleonasm, circumlocutions and puffers.

Who is in the run? He ran into a debt.

Have you taken up the project? We are ready for the take off.

Hard times are over.

Inappropriate Usage

- The college selects its students on the basis of their demonstrated ability to accomplish high-level academic work , their personal and social maturity, and their potentiality *for getting a lot out of it.*

Revd. The college selects its students on the basis of their demonstrated ability to accomplish high-level academic work , their personal and social maturity, and their potentiality *for further intellectual and social growth and development.*

- He told me what to do and I *accomplished the operation.*

Contd.

- The importance and significance of writing lies in being concise without any change in content.
- I am glad that when I completed one course successfully that they requested me to float one more.
- The reason that you come across several troubles in your life is because you are honest.
- Mr. Kumar was greatly and excessively influenced by the humility of his new colleague.

Contd.

- He leaned down and untied the laces, slipped off first one shoe and then the other. And he worked his feet comfortably in the hot dry dust until little spurts of it came up between his toes, and until the skin on his feet tightened with dryness.

  (John Steinback, The Grapes of Wrath)

- He removed his shoes and walked more comfortably bare feet.

The Right Word

"The difference between the almost right word and the right word is … the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."

—Mark Twain

Sentence Structure

- **Arrange words in a sentence so that the meaning is not blocked.**

There is a restaurant at the end of the market which is famous for its delicacies.

Driving along the canal road, a leopard could be seen sitting silently near the fence.

An effective writer should remember to not split his infinitives.

- **Place important words in the important positions to emphasize .**

Effective writing, I think, should be learnt right from our school days.

According to me, the best way to master writing is to practice it everyday.

Ambiguity

- Something having two or more meaning.
- Many words mean one thing in one context and may mean another in a different context.

Thou still unravished bride of quietness
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time. (John Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*)

While on a tour of Copenhagen, Kumar's cell phone was stolen.

Sources of Ambiguity

Christopher Turk and John Kirkman mentions five sources of ambiguity:

- Relative words : back and front, high and low, top and bottom, left and right.
- Words with double meaning: Replace, refit, reconnect, rerun.
- Unusual words: familiar words used unusually, such as use of break, take etc.
- Grammatical ambiguity: passive constructions, problems of structure
- Ellipsis : omission of some parts of the sentences

Some Examples

- Check undercarriage locking pin. If bent, replace.
- Check that unit to total *reflux. (condensation of vapours)*
- *Apply punched cards to be listed to the hopper of the punched card reader.*
- *Take only the amount that is needed.*
- *Two or three wires can now be seen to be stemmimg from the inside a wider tube.*

Ambiguous Grammar and Ellipsis

- Avoid using complicated structure

Set variable speed floating control to damp the fast movement of the damper and provide a safety margin for the stability of the air conditioning control system at positions of the controlled elements where the system amplification is greater than at the positions at which the proportional band setting has been made.

The sentences in a paragraph need to cohere to facilitate meaning to be understood.

Put the tea leaves on the stove , boil it. Serve it to the brim.

To appreciate a poem, it must be read aloud.

Write to be Heard/Read

When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, 'I am going to produce a work of art.' I write it because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing."

—George Orwell

Thank You