

## Lecture no.3

### Objectives in Technical writing

#### Clarity

The most important criteria for effective technical writing is clarity. If the audience responds to a memo, letter, report, or manual with, “Huh?” what has the writer accomplished? If the correspondence is not clearly understood, the reader will either call the writer for further clarification, or just ignore the information. In either case, the writer’s time is wasted; the reader’s time is wasted; the message is lost. Clarity, however, is not just a time concern. Think of it from this perspective: your company has written an installation manual for a product. The manual, unfortunately, is not clear. When the reader fails to understand the content, three negatives images can occur:

**BAD**—The equipment is damaged. This requires the owner to ship the equipment back. The company will replace the equipment, costs accrue, and public relations have been frayed.

**WORSE**—The owner is hurt, leading to pain, anxiety, doctor’s bills, and bad public relations.

**EVEN WORSE**—The company is sued. The company loses money, the writer of the manual loses a job, and public relations are severed.

**FIVE “W” answers make writing more efficient in every angle.**

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#### Conciseness

The clarity of ideas with appropriate expressions of writing makes terms concise. The accurate use of vocabulary, grammatical terms and sentence formation beautifully concise the rough stuff. There are some useful steps in conciseness which are:

#### Replace Vague Words with Specific Ones

Vague or abstract words tend to conceal your meaning. On the other hand, specific words precisely and shortly convey your meaning.

Example:

- Vague: The Acme Corporation is developing a new consumer device that allows users to communicate vocally in real time.
- Specific: The Acme Corporation is developing a new cell phone.

## **Avoid Overusing Expletives at the Beginning of Sentences**

Expletives are phrases of the form it + be-verb or there + be-verb.

Example #1:

- Wordy: It is the governor who signs or vetoes bills.
- Concise: The governor signs or vetoes bills.

Example #2:

- Wordy: There are four rules that should be observed.
- Concise: Four rules should be observed.

## **Avoid Overusing Noun Forms of Verbs**

Use verbs when possible rather than noun forms known as **nominalizations**.

Example:

- Wordy: The function of this department is the collection of accounts.
- Concise: This department collects accounts.

## **Eliminate Unnecessary Words**

Unnecessary words can come in many forms like excessive detail, repetitive words, or redundant words.

### **Excessive Detail**

- Before: I received and read the email you sent yesterday about the report you're writing for the project. I agree it needs a thorough, close edit from someone familiar with your audience.
- After: I received your email about the project report and agree it needs an expert edit.

### **Repetitive words**

- Before: The engineer considered the second monitor an unneeded luxury.
- After: The engineer considered the second monitor a luxury.

### **Redundant words**

- Before: The test revealed conduction activity that was peculiar in nature.
- After: The test revealed peculiar conduction activity.

## **Replace Multiple Negatives with Affirmatives**

Affirmatives, instead, convey concise meaning that needs no interpretation.

- Before: Your audience will not appreciate the details that lack relevance.
- After: Your audience will appreciate relevant details.

## **Accuracy**

It is another important goal in technical writing. If your message contains many spelling mistakes or grammar mistakes, the readers will think that you are unprofessional or lazy. To ensure accurate writing, you can use some proofreading tips like let someone else read your writing, use technology to catch errors, read it out loud or use dictionary when needed.

Accuracy refers to truthfulness and the variety of a given statement. It basically refers to ‘getting the facts straight’. For Example it is inaccurate to say that an NFL football field is 50 yards when it is in fact 100 yards.

Cultivate accuracy in you writing. Accuracy , which is the careful conforming to truth or fact, has three main aspects:

- Document Accuracy
- Technical Accuracy
- Stylistics Accuracy

## **Document Accuracy**

It refers to the proper coverage of your topics in appropriate detail. Often an accurate document needs to focus clearly on a problem. This type of accuracy is basically enlighten the need to express problem straight forwardly with the help of preliminary outlines. These writing tools help you focus your writing effort by reducing your data in a way that solves a theoretical or practical problem.

## **Technical Accuracy**

The Effective document in science and technology must be grounded in a technically accurate understanding and representation of the subject. Technical accuracy depends on the writer's conceptual mastery of the subject and its vocabulary, as well as on his or her ability to analyse and shape data with a minimum of distortion. In science and technology, enormous creative energy is given to mastering this technical aspect of subject development.

## **Stylistics Accuracy**

It concerns with the careful use of language to express meaning. For the development of stylistics terms in writing, it is necessary to read the elements of style and rhyming of different writing contexts. As per the situational accordance, these elements utilize in drafting, revising, editing and proofreading. Stylistic accuracy is also a matter of using word precisely.

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## **Cohesion and Coherence**

The terms cohesion and coherence are related to making the sense of language in the text/discourse analysis. Cohesion and coherence have significant role in the interpretation of message, and in the negotiation of meaning in the discourse. A good academic writing requires a good combination of cohesive ties and coherent features in the text.

### **Cohesion**

Cohesion, like other semantic relations such as synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, is the relationship of meaning of one item with another item/s in the text or discourse. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) view that cohesion is expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary in the text. It is therefore, there can be two types of cohesion: grammatical cohesion, and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion is the cohesive tie that is expressed through the grammatical system of a language such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction.

Followings are the illustrative examples that show the cohesive tie.

- (i) Wow, how beautiful flower vessel! How much does it cost? [reference]
- (ii) You are going to attend the party? If so, what about these agenda?  
[substitution]
- (iii) We can buy those apples if we need to (buy those apples). [ellipsis]
- (iv) He passed the exam. However, he did not obtain A plus. [conjunction]

Lexical cohesion, on the other hand, is ‘the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary’ (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p 274). Lexical cohesion can be realized in reiteration (using the same, or semantically related vocabulary such as repetition, synonym superordinate, general word) and in collocation (co-occurrence of lexical items). Followings are the examples showing

- (i) Reiteration: I have a puppy. The puppy is black. [Repetition]
- (ii) I have a puppy. The pup is black. [Synonym]
- (iii) I have a puppy. The animal is black. [Superordinate]
- (iv) I have a puppy. The baby dog is black. [General word]

**Collocation:** With their hammer-nail relation, the boys won the match.

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## Coherence

A text is formed not only with the structured string of words, but also with the contextual occurrence of the sentences. Coherence, generally, is the contextual appearance of the utterances in the text. More specifically, it is the contextual fitness of in the text that contributes in understanding the meaning of the message.

According to Taboada (2004), “Coherence is the hanging together of the text with relation to its context of situation or culture”.

Yule (2008) views, “Coherence is everything fitting together well, and it is not something that exists in words or structures, but something that exists in people”. Coherence is the result of the interpretation of the meaning of the text, and it depends on the relation between the audience and the text.

(Tanskanen, 2006). It is therefore, the coherence of a text can be perceived only if the receiver’s background knowledge is sufficient enough to interpret the linkage of messages in the discourse.

The examples below show the coherent, and non-coherent texts:

- (i) A text with coherence: A: Did you bring the car?  
B: Yes, I brought it yesterday.
- (ii) A text with no coherence: A: Where did you go last week?  
B: That sounds good. My brother paints it.

## **Organisation**

There are seven different patterns that are commonly used to organize documents: Formal style, informal style, comparison, partitioning, segmenting, cause/effect, and problem/solution. Which organizational pattern is used will depend on the type of document that is being composed; however, the goal of effective organizing is to make the document easier to use, and several organizational patterns are often used in a single document.

Proficiency in technical writing is required of the student or professional engineer throughout his or her career. Technical writing that communicates well depends upon good organization at every level, from the details of grammar to the broad outline of structural headings and a title. Some aspects of organization in technical writing are readily prescribed by rules. Others, involving organization at a higher level, are not. This Technical Note first considers some hindrances to clearly written communication that are often overlooked in the literature. Concerned with the logical flow of ideas and with presentational form, the problems are illustrated by two examples of poor practice and suggestions for remedial action. The subject of the structural outline is then discussed and illustrated by the same examples. The emphasis of the note is that organization in technical writing is vital if the writer is to communicate his or her intended meaning and achieve the required outcome.

### **Formal style**

Formal style is simply grouping facts together based on their common attributes. Formal style requires that each fact can only be present in one grouping, and each grouping must follow the same principle. For example, to classify three animals, each animal should only fit into one group. A tiger, wolf, and zebra could be grouped into categories such as feline, canine, and equine. Each grouping follows the same principle of grouping the animals according to their biological family. A faulty classification would be feline, canine, and mammal because feline and canine are biological families and mammal refers to a biological class. Still further, each species can be broken up into subgroups and divisions like in cattle, Herefords and Jerseys are both cattle, but one is a beef animal and the other is a dairy animal.

### **Informal Style**

Informal style can help you create a reader-centered communication when you need to organize information about a large number of items but find it impossible or undesirable to classify them according to the kind of objective characteristic. Informal style differs from formal one because the groupings need not follow a consistent principle of classification; however, like formal classification, each fact should still only fit into one grouping. For example, a tiger, wolf, and zebra could be classified into canines and African mammals. The groupings do not follow a consistent principle, but each animal can only be grouped into one category. Informal style is a valid organizational pattern and can be very useful to readers when properly used.

## **Elaborate in Partitions**

Partitioning refers to describing an object. If a document must be written about a bicycle, a writer may divide the description into the smaller parts of the bicycle. A writer may first describe the braking system, then the gear system, then the frame, seat, and tires. By dividing the document into smaller parts, information becomes easier to locate and the document becomes more useful to the reader.

1. Choose a principle of classification suited to your readers and purpose.
2. Use only one basis for partitioning at a time.
3. Arrange the parts of your description in a way your readers will find useful.
4. When describing each part, provide details that your readers will find useful.
5. Include graphics if they will help your readers understand and use your information about the object.

## **Cause effects**

## **Segmental**

## **Problem/solution**

## **Comparison**

## **Ethics**

Ethics are important in everything, including communication. A document can explain its purpose well, address its audience correctly, and look very appealing. But an unethical document puts the reader at a disadvantage, not allowing him/her to make the best decision. Good ethical communication includes the following:

- **Legality** – The laws and regulations of the profession are followed.

- **Honesty** – Truthful and accurate communication are provided to the best of ability. Permission is obtained before using another's work. Work is not done outside the job scope of the client or employer.
- **Confidentiality** – Business-sensitive information is disclosed only at the consent of the client or employer or when legally required.
- **Quality** – Realistic agreements are made with clients and employers. Obligations are strived to be fulfilled in a timely and responsible manner.
- **Fairness** – Business interest of clients and employers are served as long as they are in line with the public good. Any conflict of interest is disclosed to the concerned, and their approval must be obtained before proceeding.
- **Professionalism** – Technical communication is improved through integrity and excellence in performing each task taken. Others in the profession are assisted through mentoring, networking, and instruction. There are also conferences and courses for improvement.