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BSc Degree

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English –II (Advanced English)**Dr Shreesh Chaudhary****Retired Professor****Department of Humanities and Social Sciences****Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai****Writing to Influence**

Hello, and welcome to another session of writing as part of this advanced course in English. Today, we are going to talk about writing essays or writing generally to influence people. I am not suggesting that you should write in a manner where you seek to influence others even when you express your opinions, ideas, your knowledge upon a particular subject. But quite often it so happens that when we write an essay, particularly when we write on a controversial subject, perhaps we are, perhaps we try to, perhaps we seek to influence people. Is it ethically correct to influence others?

Is it unethical? Is it alright? Actually, it is a very highly delicate ethical question that I might not be able to answer very satisfactorily. But a lot of us believe in what we write, and we want others to believe in what right or what we say in that sense, it is not unethical. In that sense, it is all right for us to seek to influence other's opinion.

The question here in this session today is, not whether we should write to influence others or we should stay neutral; the question here is what kind of language do those us who seek to influence others, who write for others and who want others to think, decide, and believe as they do. So, today in this session, we will look at the language of essays, documents, maybe an overall overview of languages maybe, not a full view of the issues involved, but let us look at language of writing for influencing others. Next.

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Influencing



What is influencing others? When everyone believes that you are right, when everyone does what you do, when everyone wants to do what you do even when they cannot. That is when you have influenced people. Look at this, these birds flying in a formation. Maybe, all the white birds are influenced by the one in black.

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finally
how many,
recent weeks,
numerous,
several,
a strong preference,
continuing to rise




Next. How do these people, what kinds of words do these people have? Say for instance, they very frequently use words that I have been telling you about, words indicating and questioning quantity; finally, how many or recent weeks, how recent? Yesterday, last week or

later or minimum numbers? This indicates a small number, but how small? several, higher than the minimum perhaps, a strong preference.

What do you mean? Can we quantify strong? Does it go well with preference? Continuing to rise, where was it and how much it rose to? So, without giving these specific particulars, when you read a document which seeks to influence you, you will come across expressions of this kind in those documents when this would write differently. Look at the next.

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- In an Auto survey last week, 78.1% of the total 350 respondents showed preference towards personal car or two-wheeler. Cabs were preferred by 8.7% while only 7.2% voted for buses or metro. The remaining voted for autos.
 - Another survey included over 400 middle and high-income groups in Delhi and surrounding NCR cities. The analysis showed that preference for car ownership and usage will increase in the short run.



Say, for example, this is the language of one or two survey reports, where we have seen how people seek to influence. In an auto survey last week, 78.1 percent of the total 350 respondents showed preference towards personal car or two-wheelers. In any particular city the number of people who own cars today it even in India is about 40 percent. So, if you are in a city like Hyderabad, where 40 percent people own cars, then the number of car owners there could easily be about in 24, 25 lakh people or even more. In Delhi, it may be much higher; in Bombay and Calcutta, it may be still higher.

But, when that is not the case, when you have only very few respondents, and you want to say you want to influence opinions, then maybe you mention those absolute numbers in this case 350, but you try to influence them by citing percentages. Maybe you mentioned the number once, or you do not do even that, and when you say you say 8.7 percent or 78 percent. 78 percent otherwise sounds great, but 78 percent of 350 might not be more than 250 or 8.7 percent might not be more than 24, 25 people; 7 might be under 25 people.

So, rather than say small fractions or small numbers many people particularly advertising agencies, particularly those who are in propaganda, rhetoric, politics; those who are in the business of influencing mass opinion huge expressions of this kind. Where absolute number might or might not be there once; but otherwise, percentages, otherwise numbers, words that would influence people are used very frequently.

What do you mean by the remaining voted for autos, 7.2 percent, 8.7 percent? So, added to 78 percent come to about 93, so how much remains? But if you otherwise say the remaining voted for auto-rickshaws or sorry auto vehicles, then it looks like, somewhere for public transport, but the remaining people which may be in hundreds of thousands supported the use of private transport, that may not be the case. But these are the ways; these are the tools of language that people use to influence others into thinking, as these people think themselves.

Whether you should do so, whether you need not do so is a very tricky question. It is absolutely philosophy in its most critical form, ethics. That is what you to decide. As far as I am concerned, I draw your attention to the language of documents, language of speeches used in influencing others.

Look at another. Another survey included over 400 middle- and high-income groups. In an earlier survey, you did not say 350 respondents of what kind; but because you had a larger percentage there in support of what you want so you said 78 percent of the total preferred personal cars. But here perhaps, that is not the case, so you have just tried to fill in the vacuum to influence others by looking at the constitution of a sample of respondents.

Earlier you did not look at the sample of respondents in the social profile of the sample of respondents, but here you do. What are you trying to say? That some of your respondents come from middle and high income groups in a city like Delhi, and in surrounding areas national capital region such as Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Noida, Gurgaon and that sort of thing.

So, these things become the tools of propaganda, tools of influencing people. You soon forget that only 400 people were interviewed or 400 people were surveyed, what you remember is so many cities, Delhi, Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Noida, Mathura, Rohtak, neighbouring cities in the national capital region.

And then you come to conclusions like the analysis showed that preference for car ownership and usage will increase in the short run. Look at the words, in number of tentative words, the analysis showed that preference. It does not say that those who survey, the respondents chose

or bought, they say the respondents might like to have, very tentative, for car ownership and uses.

What are you trying to say? If you own a car, you are also will use it. But maybe, perhaps, maybe you have a car and you never use it. So, here is a case where you have a car and you use it. Then it says, it will increase in the short run. What do you mean by short run? How long, three months, two months, ten weeks, twelve weeks? So, critical use of vague words as keywords also influences our opinion. I am not saying India is the worst country in the world, but every time we say we are the best, we are seeking to influence others rather than letting them reach their own conclusions. Next.

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The same thing is being done by this graph or chart in a little less. Here also absolute numbers are not given. To that extent, it is guilty of propaganda or guilty of seeking to influence others; otherwise, it is okay. But remarkably, you can see numbers are not given 78 of how many 8.7 percent of how many, 6 percent of how many and 7.2 percent of how many use or will use these methods of transport. Next.

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- Another survey stated that 62% respondents/ had said they would avoid cab-hailing firms. This survey had a sample size of 3,000 and covered categories including shopping habits, purchase habits, travel, social activities, investments, social responsibilities during this pandemic.



Another survey cited that 62 percent respondents; 62 percent of how many? Should you not first say that another survey had about 300 or 3,000 respondents with whom we checked for the factors? So, if you ask yourself these questions, if you keep that antenna, that filter in your mind, then every time you come across the propagandist writing, you will understand the propaganda part of it in no time; it is so easy.

Look at some examples here. Another survey stated that 62 percent, why not number had said, so, later perhaps somewhere it says the survey had a sample size of 3,000 respondents, and it covered categories, it covered, it had more elaborate questions. It had questions like: how often do you go shopping? Then, what do you, how do you buy? Generally, do you do window shopping before deciding, or you make up your mind even before you leave? And you look at things out there and you buy?

Travel, social activities, investments, social responsibilities, etc., have also been checked in this survey. So, what are this survey trying to tell you? That we are look, we are more objective than the earlier ones. Earlier ones, it did not give you number, or did not give you percentages; it gives you both. Then earlier numbers did not explain other parameters, it explains other parameters. So naturally, this survey is better than the other, but look at the reasons behind people stating it. The reason is, they are seeking to influence the reader. Next.

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- several factors,
- Preference
- may fall
- 36% respondents who do not own any vehicle, around 28% said they may want to buy one near future. Yet, 73% respondents have preferred....if it meets high quality standards.

Words like 78 percent people preferred or 30 percent people preferred. 30 percent of how many? If it is 30 percent of the global population, then you have great business go ahead. But if you have 30 percent of the population of Maldives, then please work on the image of your brand. Similarly, with other numbers, please check and then you have expressions like yet 73 percent respondents have preferred, if it meets high standards, high quality standards, what do you mean by high quality standards?

So, this is how using vague words using. giving impression of presenting big things when you are actually presenting small things or giving the impression that you are presenting small things, when you are presenting big things, convinces you that this piece of writing is a propaganda piece of writing, seeking to influence, and no problem I can also write in this same manner.

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ACTIVITY



1. Analyse the following report carefully and make a list of words and expressions that seek to influence the reader's opinion.
2. Write an essay on the following:
 - Should there be a censor certification for films? There are opinions both for and against. What are these opinions? what do you prefer? Why? In about 200 words write an essay on this topic.



Do some analysis, do some work. As I said, as I have been saying, languages are best learned by doing rather than by only listening or watching. So, we are going to give you a report. Now analyze the following report carefully and make a list of words and expressions like we did, that seek to influence the reader's opinion, just highlight them or why or you can, I will say and, and you can also find time to write an essay on the following topic. Namely, should there be a censor certification for films?

And there are opinions, both sides for and against. But what are these opinions, in your essay you can include those points, and then what do you prefer as an individual as a citizen, that is also important. Why? if you can cite some reasons that will be marvelous. So, in about 200 words, write an essay on this topic.

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There is despair and anger on the roads of large metros in India. Even though the strike by hundreds of thousands of drivers of app-based cab service providers Ola and Uber was called off by February end, the frustration and sense of betrayal persists. This is likely to continue as these drivers are faced with political and economic forces much beyond their imagination. They are owners of capital (their vehicles). And yet, the embrace of global capital, which they hoped would help them leapfrog over class inequalities, has landed them in a trap.



App-based taxi services are a clever use of the modern smartphone coupled with blazing fast mobile internet access. Their success, world over, is generally attributed to providing a better service in comparison to old-style taxi services. This perception is true, but also leaves out the crucial role played by the neoliberal political economy. The defining markers of the latter are first, an utter reluctance by the state to regulate the sphere of emerging social relations, and second, the push towards a debt-based economy to keep the game of finance capital rolling.



Here is identify. Next.

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Model Answer - Q2



Films are a form of entertainment that both draw from reality and seek to deviate from it. They are essentially art, and have the power to inspire. Films in India have always undergone a process of censor certification and there are many arguments both for and against this practice.

On the one hand, the prerogative claimed by artists to depict reality with the aim of highlighting certain aspects through exaggeration is one that is claimed by artists worldwide. Numerous directors have refused to modify or remove scenes from their films in order for their movies to pass the censor certification process; they argue that the same is not done for other works of art. Moreover, censorship and democracy do not go hand-in-hand. If people have full and unquestioned freedom to cast their vote for the party of their choice, to marry and spend their lives with a person of their choice, to choose their careers and their jobs, then the idea that the content they consume



On the other hand, the certification board usually demands the removal of certain scenes that are considered objectionable, an act that is vocally challenged by the current generation. The certification process takes into consideration the overwhelming reaction of the public in response to certain films, judges the tensions in civil society with regards to the films content, and in some cases, subscribes to an out-dated and hypocritical notion of morality in order to deny or award certification rating for certain films.



While it is understood that censorship has little place in a democracy, it is also noted that certification ratings are necessary for the purpose of determining age-appropriate content. While censor certification for adults watching movies is an idea that requires a speedy death, certification ratings are necessary to allow parents, guardians, and caregivers to determine the kinds of content their children and wards are exposed to while under their care and until such a time as they are



Thank you!



The point is, language is at the heart of all enterprise that mankind has done. But do you know why you are using language? What is it you want to achieve? Do you know how to use that language? So, these two things have been the focus of this lesson today. What do we use language to seek to influence others, and how do we use this language?

If you do so deliberately, no problem, but if you do so, involuntarily, without realizing you influence others rather than present all facts before them and let them think themselves, you have been guilty of that. So maybe, this lesson will help you overcome some of those biases.

Thank you very much. Have a good day.