

Unit-4

Technical Communication Skills

KAS 401

Interview Skills

An interview is a structured conversation where one participant asks questions and the other provides answers. Interviews are of many kinds - interviews for getting in premier academic institutions, interviews that we read in newspapers or watch in television or internet etc. Some interviews are an oral tool to test the academic and non-academic credentials for employment or entry to an academic institution.

Thus, whatever be the purpose of the interview, the interviewer purports to find out your competence about your subject, your communicative competence, your excellence in fields related to the job, your personality, attitude and aptitude etc. Usually, interviews are taken by a panel of experts and it is essential that one maintains an eye contact with almost all members of the panel.

Participants in an interview

Interview is a kind of dialogue between two or more participants who take turns to speak. Often in interviews, we see that often questions are asked and the interviewee tackles the question with his or her wit. Thus, interview is a tricky communicative practice where the interviewer and interviewee are in a kind of a verbal battle.

The interviewer: The interviewer asks questions, the interviewee just responds intelligently and sometimes humorously. But in most cases it is the role of an interviewer to do some basic research before he/she goes to interview someone. The interviewers also need to prepare a set of questions that they can ask the jobseekers. The non-verbal gestures, postures etc. of the jobseeker are figured out how fit the interviewee is for the particular job.

The interviewee: The interviewer asks questions and the interviewee responds. If the interviewer needs preparation, so does the interviewee. In a job interview the interviewee is often assessed by means of the response to the questions that the panel of the Interview Board asks. It is to be kept in mind here that the objective of job interview is manifold:

- To assess the subject-specific or job-specific knowledge and its application abilities of the job seeker.
- To assess the interviewee's knowledge about things happening around him
- To assess the communication skill of the job-seeker.
- To assess the confidence, aptitude and attitude of the interviewee.
- To assess the personality
- To assess the mental alertness

Preparation for an Interview

Preparing for an interview primarily means taking time to thoughtfully consider goals and qualifications relative to the position and employer. To accomplish this, one should perform research on the company and carefully review the job description to understand why he/she would be a good fit. There are some certain steps to prepare an interview as:

1. **Do enough research on the company:** Researching the company is an important part of preparing for an interview. Review the website for the company you are applying for and make sure to write down facts about the company that would aid you to answer well without getting into an embarrassing situation.
2. **Review the questions the interviewer will ask you:** Here are some common questions you may hear in an interview:
 - Tell me about yourself?
 - Why do you want this job?

Preparation for an Interview

- Why should we hire you?
- What are your strengths?
- What do you know about this company?
- Where do you see yourself after five years?

Hence, one should prepare answers to these common interview questions.

3. Be respectful of the interviewers: Give utmost respect to the panel of interviewers. It is essential to have the etiquette **to wish the people** in the interview board/panel and not to do anything that would make them feel that you are rude or overconfident or a fool.

Preparation for an Interview

4. Dress well: We all know that we should **attire ourselves according to an occasion**. Similar holds true for interviews too. As interview is a formal occasion, therefore you must try to put on attire which is formal and gives a nice impression about you.

5. Subject-specific knowledge: Mostly the questions in an interview are related to your subject of specialization; therefore it is a prerequisite that **you know your subject well** and is able to deliver responses to the questions put forward by the interviewers.

6. Confidence and General Knowledge: Questions which are of general nature to be answered with confidence and it is essential, as interviewers try to figure out if you are aware about things apart from your subject. Your communication should show your **confidence and conviction** in what you speak.

Guidelines for conducting an Interview

An interviewer has to make right decision. Since, a great responsibility lies on his shoulders, his capabilities are of crucial significance. He must be a man of integrity, honesty, confidence and of logical thinking. Below are listed certain guidelines which if followed may lead to significant results:

1. A good interview depends on planning. Interview should be properly patterned and structured as a two-way communication process. The interviewer should have a detailed job description for which he/she is going to interview the candidates. He/she should have the details of the title of the post, duties and responsibilities related to that post, working conditions, stress conditions, economic conditions and other benefits.

Guidelines for conducting an Interview

2. Next thing which an interviewer does is to study carefully the resumes of the candidates who have applied for a job. He will have to judge if the applicant's attainment match to the requirements of the job.
3. Let the interviewer prepare a list of the questions to be asked. Actually different jobs need different skills and abilities. Questions are asked to judge the level of skills that fulfil the requirement of the job.
4. An interviewer should be good commentator. Moreover, he should be a patient listener. He should ask questions in plain language.

Guidelines for conducting an Interview

5. No irrelevant questions should be asked. One question should be asked at a time. No such questions should be included in the list which are very personal and which embarrass the candidate.
6. Interview should be conducted in adequate setting. For this, a place free from noise, telephone calls, visitors and interruptions should be selected. The interviewer has to evaluate the internal and external environment to identify the strengths and weaknesses.

Objectives of GD

Group Discussion serves several purposes/objectives:

- Collecting data
- Breeding fresh ideas and taking inputs from a particular group
- Perception of common people on a particular topic
- Identify a solution to a specific problem or issue
- Selecting candidates after their written test for hiring in a company
- Selecting candidates for admission in an educational institute

Personality traits exhibited during G.D.

Group discussion is a mode of communication. It may be carried out by more than two persons, arranged for exchange of information or sorting certain problems within an organization. Hence, there can be various purpose to conduct GD. A good member shows his personality traits during Group Discussion. These traits are as follows:

- ❖ **Communication:** The first requirement for a GD is a good oral communication skill. Speaker uses good vocabulary. A good vocabulary is helpful but effective use of it is more useful rather than richness of vocabulary.

Personality traits exhibited during G.D.

- 2. Listening:** It's an important trait which shows a good personality of a person. A person should listen empathetically giving respect to other person's thoughts.
- 3. Arguments:** Logical argument portrays a good personality. The arguments are substantiated by illustrations and evidences. Argumentative element shows our leading personality during GD.
- 4. Observational skill:** These skills make a person a keen observer. Through this trait a person is not only capable to observe other's behaviour but their thought also.
- 5. Participatory skills:** It shows how to participate effectively during GD. Active participation is required to maintain our position. Our knowledge, practice, preparation and our argumentative skills prove our active participation in GD.
- 6. Awareness:** We should be aware of the topic of GD along with the current issues. Awareness makes a person good speaker through proper knowledge and confidence.

Business Communication Competencies

Communication competence refers to how effectively a person conveys a message. The types of business competencies are given below:

1. **The Linguistic competence** deals with grammar. It includes vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and pronunciation. Students have to know rules that govern sentence structure, word-formation, tenses, idioms and phrases with meanings and collocations. In other words, syntax, morphology, semantics, phonology and phonetics are all subjects of interest to the linguistic competence area. Students have to master each one of them to construct grammatically correct sentences.

Types of Business Competence

2.The sociolinguistic competence is concerned with culture and social rules that govern appropriate language use. For instance, this includes knowing in what setting do we need to be more formal, how we express politeness and how we address people, how we treat certain topics, social taboos, and which terms are politically correct. Addressing such areas tells us how to use language and how to respond in a conversation appropriately rather than just grammatically correct. Mastering this competence reveals a more advanced level of language fluency.

3. The Discourse Competence is our knowledge of what patterns of organization and cohesive devices we can use to connect sentences. We organize words, phrases and sentences and produce and comprehend conversations, articles, messages and literature. We can speak, write, read and listen to information of various types. Hence, discourse competence deals with organizing words, phrases and sentences in order to create conversations. The communicator has to follow the language structures to create conversations.

Types of Business Competence

4. The Strategic competence suggests that we can also overcome language gaps and modify messages with regard to audience and purpose. It shows we are fluent and effective.

It is the ability to recognize and repair communication breakdowns before, during or after they occur. For example, the speaker may not know the meaning of the word in the target language. In such situation, he must ensure the correct meaning for appropriate delivery. Likewise, some external factor may hinder the free flow of his communication such as background noise or any such factor. The speaker in such situation should be able to know how to restore communication.

Conference

Conferences are scheduled meetings held for consultation and exchange of information or discussion, which has a certain agenda or motto to serve. In a conference, keynote presentation is used to provide information to all the attendees. Further, it has a number of short break sessions. It can take place at both small and high level, i.e. the people attending the conference can range from 50 to thousand or more. A conference brings those people together who have some shared interest in the topic which is going to be discussed. It is a form of participatory meeting, organized to discuss an issue, find out facts or solve a problem in hand. It usually continues for a few days, where deliberation or exchange of information takes place, on a specific subject or removal of differences takes place.

Conferences are not just academic, they can be held to serve other purposes also, which can be related to business, politics, economy, science, entertainment, sports and so forth, nationally or internationally.

Seminar

The seminar can be described as a formal academic instruction session organized by an academic institution for the students or by a professional organization, to educate and guide the participants on a specific topic, or a series of different topics of a subject. There is no limit on the number of people attending the seminar, as it greatly depends on the level in which the seminar is conducted. If it is organized at a high level, the number of participants will also be high, and vice versa.

The seminar aims at bringing together all the people to whom delivery of guidance or information is a must and a long lecture is given by one or more subject matter experts in the concerned discipline, who are guest speakers. The speaker usually presents and discusses the topic by way of videos, slideshows or other interactive tools. It is followed by a dialogue i.e. question-answer session between the participants and experts, which encourages critical thinking and new ideas.

Hence, a **seminar** implies an academic gathering of people, wherein the attendees are provided information, guidance or training with respect to the specific field of study. There are one or two presenters in the seminar who are subject matter experts.

Key Differences between Conference and Seminar

Conference

- A conference refers to a large formal gathering of several members to talk about a specific topic or subject of common interest.
- It's consultative.
- It's objective is to get an opinion or solution for an issue.
- It has limited participation of audience.
- It lasts for few days.
- It's not necessarily academic in nature.

Seminar

- A seminar is an instructional event, wherein one or more experts communicate some information, through lecture or general discussion.
- It's interactive.
- It's objective is to educate, discuss and guide.
- It has active participation of audience.
- It lasts for one hour or more.
- It's purely academic in nature.

Seminar/Conference Presentation skills

Presenting at a conference or seminar is a core part of scientific communication for any researcher or academic person. The pre-requisite is to find a legitimate conference opportunity and planning for conference attendance. There are various area to keep in focus, such as:

1. **Focus on preparing presentation:** Similar to writing a research paper or report, sufficient understanding or research of primary and secondary sources to obtain accurate information is needed to present a topic convincingly.
 - The **introduction** should be longer than a written paper.
 - **Repetition** is vital in order to make the audience hear relevant information several times.
 - Slightly **informal language** should be used.
 - A **catchy title** helps in attracting the audience.
 - The **abstract** to be submitted must include the issues, thesis and conclusion with findings.

Seminar/Conference Presentation skills

2. Focus on revising the presentation matter: Speaker must ensure the answers of the following questions -

- Is the topic clearly stated?
- Is the purpose clearly stated?
- Are the main ideas/arguments supported with evidence?
- Are all material relevant to the topic?
- Is the level of technicality suited to the audience?
- How do you reply to audience's questions?

3. Focus on PPT Slides: The slides function as a roadmap helping the presenter and the audience to follow the main idea. Slides should be kept simple and neat keeping in focus the given tips:

Seminar/Conference Presentation skills

- ★ Focus on one idea at a time, and give ideas on separate slides
- ★ Do not write paragraphs, use bullet points with minimum words and phrases
- ★ Capture the attention of the audience through the slides
- ★ Follow **question-experiment-result** format to present the research work
- ★ Paint a big picture by focusing on the relevance of the research through the summary slide at the end
- ★ Use visual aids as graphs, animations, videos, pictures to enhance the effectiveness.
- ★ The design basics of PPT slides are:
 - a) The written material should be in the form of keywords and bullet points to be taken as an aid for presentation.

Seminar/Conference Presentation skills

b) The visuals should be such as read and understood in 5 seconds. The font size should be 18-20, style should be easy to read.

c) Do not change the slides very quickly.

4. Focus on the Presenter himself: A presenter is not much different from a performer. He should be careful on the following points:

- Body Language and appearance
- Proper pace and voice modulation
- Knowing the audience and their reactions
- Pointing the laser correctly and handling the slide-change skilfully
- Time management and practising
- Encouraging audience participation and discussion

Seminar/Conference Presentation skills

Organising Content: most presentations are organized in a common or predictable pattern: **Introduction** - **main body** - **conclusion**.

Introduction: It should capture audience interest in the topic giving them the outline of the presentation.

Main Body: The effective way is to number the ideas. Each new idea should be supported with evidences or data. Each important idea should be presented several times in different ways. Linking of ideas is very important. Arrange them in logical order: **chronological; cause & effect; problem-solution; comparison etc.** Do not make the information too dense to understand.

Conclusion: It sums up the presentation and should reinforce the central idea. It is important to have a strong conclusion to enable the audience getting the gist of the content. Do not finish abruptly rather end up with the phrases: to conclude, to sum up , at the end, etc.

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