

IDEAS 32

**International Online Teachers Society
Debate
Educational Materials For
Advance and Upper Intermediate
Students**



**International Online Teachers Society
Publishing Committee**



Contents

The 32nd IOTS Essay Contest

Communication I War Of The Words I Kathlyn Barrozo I 2
Communication I The Purpose And Tools Of Communication I Kathlyn Barrozo I 3
Communication I Communication In Today'S Modern World I Kathlyn Barrozo I 4
Communication I Livin' La Vida Loca I Kathlyn Barrozo I 5
Communication I A Glimpse Of Communication I Alex Badion I 6
Communication I Good Communication Skills – Vital To Success I Marian Baltazar I 7
Communication I Why Communication Skills Are Important I Marian Baltazar I 8



WAR OF THE WORDS

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Man uses a number of ways to articulate his thoughts and emotions. Aside from using verbal language, he uses his facial expressions, actuations, body language, verbal and written codes, and other such devices to get his message across. Despite the fact that man has a significant number of ways to get across to other people, he has managed to become literally lost in translation, forever trapped by the often tower-of-Babel proportions of miscommunication and missed communication.

Relatively few of us are able to firmly and surely get our points across because of so many considerations and distractions to the manner by which we communicate. In fact many of us have, in most likelihood, been too bombarded with too much “ambient noise” to ever find communicating worth our time and effort. The clamor for freedom to say what is in the mind is easily overturned by the desire to listen to what is being said by others, or to shut them up and out altogether.

Time was when the male of the species was especially regarded as the more communicatively restrained, but that has perhaps changed much in these modern times of free press and free speech.

A mother often has to hold her own counsel, especially when she does not wish to bother her often-tired husband with the nuances of running a household and providing much-needed discipline to their children. The problem with this kind of approach is the fact that today’s children seem to have an entirely different design, being more exposed to various kinds of media and being more outwardly communicative as they are. Children nowadays tend to speak their minds, leaving little or no room for their elders to use the ways of old in bringing them to heel. I have yet to win an argument, not necessarily political but certainly approaching it, on the home front with my own kids. Ahh, the nuances of being a mother.

On the worldwide web, you see thousands of forums and blogs, inviting followers and readers to share their thoughts about a certain person or whatever trending topic there is for the day. Social networking sites have upped the ante on personal discussions, often serving as the fighting arena in which foes exchange verbal blows, razor-sharp criticisms and rotten eggs in the form of vicious, evil-looking emoticons. Technology, it seems, has served as a fertile breeding ground for bringing verbal tussles out in open social networking pages, notwithstanding the chronological age of the gladiators.

Yes, the world has been freer in allowing communication to prosper. There’s absolutely nothing that can be kept in the rigid confines of pure and simple silence any longer. Communication has ceased to have the mystery and wonder that it used to be endowed with.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What, to you, is the ideal setting for good conversation? Why?
2. What are the various forms of communication that you use in your daily life? What distinguishes one from the other?
3. Do you think people should bring their personal arguments/fights into social networking sites? Why or why not?
4. What are your goals for learning to communicate in English? Have your goals been correctly addressed by the studies you have had?
5. What would you do if freedom of expression and speech were taken away by government? How would you find ways to express yourself nonetheless?



THE PURPOSE AND TOOLS OF COMMUNICATION

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A writer's purpose is to use words to influence the way people view many things in this world. A teacher employs effective communication skills to impart vital knowledge to students. An artist uses various media to transform the world as we know it, with images, depictions, physical interpretations, and what have you. The traffic aide uses hand signals and the shrill tones of a whistle to guide motorists and pedestrians alike. Simply put, we all use various ways of articulating our intentions and thoughts to everybody else.

Even a simple sigh can be an effective, though often ambiguous, way of articulating our thoughts. A sigh can mean anything from boredom (Is there nothing else but?), resignation (Alright, I give up. You win.), to a stern warning (Can't you see my flaring nostrils? Tread carefully!).

Raised eyebrows could mean: doubt (Oh, really?); disdain, especially when accompanied by a grimace or a smirk (And so?); clarification (Say that again?); disbelief, with a scrunching of the eyebrows (You've got to be kidding!). Feel free to mix them up as you please.

I have found that the more innovative ways of using non-verbal language to communicate on Skype, emails and social networking sites are kind of fun—and funny at the same time. There's an exploding emoticon for extreme anger, a gradually-turning-green and vomiting icon for disgust or sickness (perhaps?), and even a bright-red devil icon with the evil grin and the evil horns. Funny, I tell you!

My daughter once showed me various keyboard actions which can be used to create icons on a social networking site. Sending emails has become much more colorful, interesting and expressive with the provision of a selection of icons to suit one's needs. Perfect! Fewer key strokes, more emotion in the message.

In the world we live in today, virtually everything is taken as a symbol of something. Flowers have a special language all their own, with different colors and varieties to signify meaning as well as non-meaning. Where a red rose says "I love you", a white rose means honor and reverence and a pink one means plain admiration or just joyfulness. Unique as they are, black roses, bred in laboratories, are considered death and dark side varieties and are dreaded to be received.

It seems that verbal language alone is not enough to communicate our thoughts and feelings, so we have created thoroughly unique but at the same time ambiguous ways to attain our communication objectives. Still, we must never neglect what is essential to the tools we have at our disposal: they must effectively communicate, and if needed, be easily integrated into one another to allow the easy exchange of communication between us. Otherwise, they are just plain tools serving no real purpose.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Are there times when you feel like not saying anything at all? When are those times?
2. Aside from speaking, how else do you handle your communication needs? What makes each manner different from the other?
3. What do you do when someone refuses to listen to you? Do you think this has proven an effective strategy? Why or why not?
4. Is there a certain age when learning a language is no longer possible? Why do you think so?
5. If you were uncertain about a certain message you received but you didn't feel comfortable enough to ask about the other person's meaning, would you still try to clarify? When would you not clarify the meaning and why?



COMMUNICATION IN TODAY'S MODERN WORLD

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Communication has been carried out in today's world in more ways than were otherwise available to our ancestors. We have indeed gone further than just the plain smoke signals and drum beating that those who came before us used. And with a host of communication devices at our disposal, the whole process has become as seamless as it has been effortless. The wonders of technology, indeed, will never cease to amaze.

I have constantly been in a state of awe as to how the cellular phone has evolved from a large chunk of rectangular device that you could use as a weapon of manual defense, to something tinier than the human hand. Time was when ownership of a mobile phone was a status symbol, only available to those who held highly-responsible positions so they could be within reach at any time of the day. Text messaging was just offered by a single network carrier, and only postpaid accounts were available to consumers. Now, even preschoolers own the latest gadgets available to them—or to their parents' buying power. Subscriber identity module (SIM) cards can be changed as often as one wants, with other people either owning more than one mobile phone to accommodate two carriers or just one mobile phone with dual SIM capacity, or maybe two or three even—I don't know. The mobile devices of today have gone a long, long way from just ordinary communication devices to devices that show tremendous wealth and power. Wow!

My trusty mobile phone was just handed down to me by my youngest sibling, who also handed it down to him by my younger sister. It does not have the trappings of today's powerful devices. The mobile phone's camera is something I don't even use personally; only my children use the camera function. It stores a limited number of songs. I have never found it necessary to change to a better endowed device. I only use it to call people and send text messages when I have to. All right, all right, there's the budgetary consideration, too. Maybe, if I were filthy rich with disposable income, I would purchase something with more functions and applications. However, that's just one huge MAYBE.

Today's communication devices allow us to stay within calling, texting, video calling or emailing distance of each other. The first two capabilities, all mobile phones have. All four capabilities have already been carried by a number of cellular phone models. In my case, I send emails the old-fashioned way with the personal computer (definitely not through smoke signals!).

If only life were as uncomplicated as the ease of sending messages and communicating thru mobile phones. Maybe, some genius could come up with a mobile phone that would solve all of life's problems. Any takers?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What type of mobile phone do you own? What made you decide to get that device?
2. In your opinion, what are the most important functions of a communication device? Are the devices of the modern world enough to address all our communication requirements?
3. Talk about the very first mobile phone you ever owned. Be able to talk about how and why you got it. What made you decide to replace it?
4. If you had the financial ability to buy any communication device available on the market, what would that device be? Why do you want it?
5. What is communication, in your own definition? Is it adequately provided by today's technology? Why or why not?



LIVIN' LA VIDA LOCA

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With the huge number of communication devices we have at our disposal, it seems that we will always have ways to communicate effectively. Unfortunately, the conveniences provided in today's modern world still seem to be deficient in many respects—or perhaps it is we ourselves who are sorely lacking, in many respects.

Today's era of state-of-the-art technology continues to expand further, but has unfortunately not solved majority of the world's problems. Communications technology has gone a long way from the unassuming cellular phones of old to their more powerful and capable counterparts of today. Various applications such as Blue tooth and other newer ones continue to be maximized by mobile communications carriers throughout the planet. The arms race has been overshadowed by the technology race, and there seems to be no let-up in sight.

This has both been an advantage and a disadvantage, in more ways than one.

With the advances in modern communication, personal communication has become more effective, enabling us to become more productive. Coordination of random tasks has become much easier, thereby improving business interaction at a more real-time and thorough level. Broadcast technology has enabled the exchange of information to be carried out much, much faster and in a timelier manner, too.

However, with the great advances in modern communications technology, we have found it less necessary to make our interactions much more personal, in a human kind of way. Consider how we find it within our means to send a text message or send an email to someone oceans away, but find it a great bother to have an interesting chat with a next door neighbor. Or how we send group text messages to a huge number of people to maximize unlimited text offers, but find it beyond our time to share family conversations over dinner. Lucky are those who are able to participate in personal discussions and are able to listen to others in rapt attention at face-to-face interactions. There are still many who are lucky enough to indulge in such simpler pleasures, but their numbers continue to dwindle.

Ironic as it may seem, modern communications technology has led us closer to each other, but has alienated us from one another. We find it easy to send out text messages of love or greetings to each other, but often find ourselves out of time to actually hug each other after an exhausting day of communicating at the office. Our children are showered with the best conveniences that money can buy, but are often made to feel that they are better off spending time with their friends than staying at home to watch TV with the family.

The world is not perfect, and we definitely aren't, either. But let us not forget the simple things that really matter, such as personal communication in a more human approach.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you think that today's generation is more blessed to enjoy more conveniences in modern communications technology? Why or why not?
2. In your opinion, how have the advances in modern communications technology helped the world?
3. What, to you, is the greatest communication tool of today? Why?
4. What still needs to be done in modern communications technology? Be specific, if needed.
5. If you could invent a modern communications device, who or what would your target market be? Elaborate on your answer.



A GLIMPSE OF COMMUNICATION

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Communication is the art and technique of using words effectively to impart information or ideas. This concerns the transmission of ideas or information by various or different means - media, print, broadcast, and the like. In a communication process, there are two important people involved – the sender and the receiver. How do they play their roles depend on how effective they are to carry their own tasks. How do senders deliver the information well? How do receivers accept the ideas well? These questions are mutually implied as far as communication is concerned. Do you believe that a good sender can convey intact information to the receiver? The question is how. According to Jim Rohn, effective communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you feel about what you know. When do we consider a kind of communication is effective? Communication is easily transmitted normally. But the process is not as easy as it seems. There are many underlying factors to consider before it is received by a particular person or any concerned citizen. How does it happen? Simply, the ideas flow smoothly, correctly and accurately.

When a person sends information, he must make it sure to be intact or accurate. That is what we aim for. However, email, instant messaging, and cell phones give us fabulous communication ability, but because we live and work in our own little worlds, that communication is totally disorganized, according to Marilyn vos Savant. The discrepancy matters about how the process is done. Misunderstanding arises usually as well as misinterpretation. It means some information is not complete or difficult to understand. The utmost advantage of this kind of communication is the time. It really saves time. In a minute or two, you can send the information right away. In other words, just a few clicks away and voila. In a verbal communication, it has its own pros and cons. This is a face to face communication. Through speaking, we try to eliminate the misunderstandings, the misinterpretations, but sometimes it is really hard to do. Just as we assume, that our messages are clearly received, so we expect that way because something is important to us or it is important to others. Only an honest experience could prove this to be true. Speaking can be looked at in two major areas: interpersonal and public speaking. Since the majority of speaking is an interpersonal process, to communicate effectively, we must not simply clean up our language, but learn to relate to people. In interpersonal speaking, etiquette is very important. To be an effective communicator, one must speak in a manner that won't offend to the receiver. The relay of information is not distorted. It must be vividly complete.

In a nonverbal communication, it describes the process of conveying meaning in the form of non-word messages. Research shows that the majority of our communication is non verbal, also known as body language. Our gestures, body language or postures, facial expressions and eye contacts, object communications such as clothing, hairstyles, architecture, symbols info graphics, and tone of voice is the totality of this kind of communication. In an article of a nonverbal communication, it emphasized about speech. It also contains nonverbal elements known as paralanguage. These include voice lesson quality, emotion and speaking style as well as prosodic features such as rhythm, intonation and stress. Likewise, written texts include nonverbal elements such as handwriting style, spatial arrangement of words and the use of emoticons to convey emotional expressions in pictorial form. Looking at the differences of these kinds of communication is a great advantage to classify which one would be appropriate to communicate with other people. We should not forget that, there is no perfect communication process. It is how we use the tool of sending the information to another line. And it is always a mutual interaction between the sender and the receiver to achieve better reception. Try to glimpse the way and how you send and receive ideas and information.

Questions for discussion:

- 1..Define communication. Use your own words/ideas.
2. What are the barriers of communication?
3. Why is communication a mutual process?
4. How do we identify a good sender and a good receiver?
5. Differentiate verbal and nonverbal communication.



GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS – VITAL TO SUCCESS

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It is inevitable in our life that we need to deal with people and in doing so, we need to have good communication skills for us to have a good working relationship and for that matter, it proves to be vital to every individual's success.... Nevertheless, good communication is equally important to your family and friends too. Each and every one should be able to express their ideas and thoughts to be able to relate to others how they feel and think. Then, we could say that it is not only a key to success in our life but it also holds true in our work and relationships. Without effective communication we can be misguided or misunderstood, a message can turn into an error, a frustration or even a disaster if it is misinterpreted or if we have conveyed a poor delivery of our thoughts.

With the computer age today and as modern technology takes a toll place in our progress and advancement, having good communication skills have become highly and increasingly important. Communication is a two-way process and it can only be successful if both the sender and the receiver understand the same information and talk the same language. It can even be said and proven true that communication can be considered the backbone of leadership. In fact, the world's greatest leaders can be identified with their effective methods of communication.

We know pretty well that being in a leadership position requires a person to possess effective communication skills. Leaders manage, instruct and direct their team members by means of communicating with them.

If you are able to master good communication, then you will notice the impact that it does to your life. It will take us to the road of improvement until we ultimately perfect and achieve excellence to our communication skills. It will enable you to be advanced in certain areas where others who are less assertive may not succeed. As a matter of fact, it is a must for good leaders to be good communicators. The success of a leader depends a lot upon his interpersonal skills. A good leader should have that connection with whom he interacts to be able to communicate and he is able to accomplish a lot more. Actually, he should be a "people's person because if he fails to communicate effectively with people, then it follows that he cannot be an effective leader.

Good communications proves to be vital in anyone's career. It is the ability to develop a keen external awareness that separates the good communicator from just one of those who muddle with their interactions with others. Good communicators possess that uncanny ability to be able to adapt their messaging to the said environment without even missing a beat. As the saying goes by Paul J. Meyer, "Communication-the human connection-is the key to personal and career success." Therefore, you would agree with me that these and a lot more reasons will put emphasis on the importance of having good communicating skills which proves to be vital to attain success.

Questions for discussion:

1. Do you believe that we need good communication skills for us to be able to communicate effectively with others? Justify your answer.
2. Have you created that great impact in your life by trying to acquire a good communication skill? How?
3. Do you think that good communication skills are vital to a person's success? Why?
4. Will good communication skills make you a better person? Explain your answer.
5. Will good communication skill open the door for advancement in your life? Why or why not?



WHY COMMUNICATION SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT

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Many individuals continue to struggle because of their inability to communicate effectively with others and this is the sole reason why communication skills are important. Since we live in a very diverse world, it is relatively important for us to ...know about appropriate and helpful interpersonal skills. We need to convey our thoughts and ideas to people around us, at home, at work or in any place that we set our foot on. We need to establish rapport with them and in order to do so; we need to have communication skills. Definitely, a person has to express whatever he thinks or feels in a concise manner but whether we like it or not, an individual can only master the ability to express oneself when we are bent on doing so or if we put our heart on it.

As the saying goes, "Practice makes perfect", then we should bear in mind that great communication skills take practice. Yes, our ability to express ourselves doesn't just come in a year's time or so. It will come and grow almost daily as long as you apply yourself in improving communication skills. In whatever profession or field that we are in at the moment, we benefit a lot if we communicate well. Let us take for instance those who are in the medical profession, specifically the doctors. They can make a mistake in conveying an idea to his peers or if they give out bad or wrong signals non-verbally or communicate lack of confidence to the patients, then all those treatments and medicines would be trivial.

Most often than not, we take the most important things in our life for granted. Then we gradually realize its importance, only to find out that it is too late. The worst thing of all is when we come into the realization that the connection cease to exist. This was made possible just because of a communication gap that you were not able to iron out right away. Then, it can sometimes lead to a break up or divorce, or simply just an uncomfortable relationship. This experience will make you cognizant of the fact that the most important thing in life is your relationship. Yes, good communication skills in relationships are important, simply because if you do not have anyone to share your happiness with, even if you have lots of money, it will be inconsequential. It also helps the relationship to develop along good lines thereby avoiding arguments and insults.

The importance of communication skills cannot be underestimated because it is necessary in all walks of life. Lack of this would mean a negative impact on the personal as well as the professional life of a person. It is equally important too in the business sector, especially when we look at job advertisements. Chances are in all the jobs posted, the requirements for the candidates that they are looking for should have good communication skills. Without effective communication skills, a person will also find it hard to climb the corporate ladder. That is, promotions will only be made available to those who can communicate effectively at all levels. Given all these implicit importance in good communication skills in both the personal and corporate aspects, one cannot miss the fact that if anyone wants to make progress in their life, it is very important to develop this skill.

Questions for discussion:

1. Do you think that having communication skills will make a difference in your life? Explain your answer.
2. Can you say that progress is tantamount to having communication skills? Justify your answer.
3. Can communication skills serve as an edge to you? How?
4. Can you maintain a good relationship if you have good communication skills? How would you do it?
5. Are you willing to do anything to be adept in acquiring a good communication skill? How will you prove it?



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