

**SPECIAL FEATURE**

# Writing: An endangered skill

Are writing skills still so important in the digital age? You may have already guessed my answer, but I reiterate, “yes”!

The ability to think clearly, and write well, could carry one a great distance in the past, and while our social landscape and professional settings have changed, for better or for worse, it still can.

In the last one decade, the way we communicate with each other has undergone a revolution of sorts. What we write as sentences have become shorter; individual words are shorter, and abbreviated still. We now prefer to use ‘emojis’ to reveal our emotions rather than old-school ‘words’ that express feelings.

The sentences that we tweet often lack punctuation, although they do not need to; our text messages hardly follow any grammar rules, and that is our sad reality. Clarity is often missing in the emails we write. And amidst all the linguistic faux pas that we adults commit throughout the day, we expect our children to speak properly, and write correct English and Bengali in the nicest of handwritings!

Our expectations burden children to the point of creating a strong disinterest in developing language skills, and is ultimately hampering the way they handle school, and the way they manoeuvre through their golden days of childhood along with their peers.

Whether we are talking about the



preschool cohort or young adults, language skills are now at peril. While the young can be relieved of any responsibility for their lacking, we cannot expect to go scot-free.

As days pass by, we are communicating more through gadgets, and children are simply mimicking what they see. Alarming, they are more comfortable speaking to a group via WhatsApp than they are in addressing a crowd.



Children learn from what they observe, and specially so in their early childhood. In today’s world when most families are two income households, raising children is becoming a difficult issue. Most parents leave their children under the supervision of domestic workers, or the elderly of the family. Even if the mother is a home maker, they all prefer to make best use of technology in order to keep the children busy.

While minimal use of technology is attributed to greater ability to develop language and other associated skills, using this tool every time the child throws a tantrum is perhaps not the best solution.

Research shows that children take more time in developing language skills if they are not spoken to. This means ‘baby talk’ is more important that we think it is. Television shows like Sesame Street have been proven to be beneficial to children’s learning processes, but only when shown in



the company of adults. Children viewing TV or YouTube videos unattended often fail to grasp the message aired.

Once in school, children already swamped with too much TV, YouTube especially when accessed via cellular phones, face unprecedented problems. Some children find it difficult to even hold pencils in their hands. Others show an inability to devote their attention towards activities, even if they seem like having fun doing it.

In reality, whatever the youngsters face

at school at a very early stage, is whatever we are facing at the workplace, even though we did not grow through the technological boom. Our use of gadgets was limited in the past, but exposure to them even in a later stage has contributed to much problems.

In all likelihood, there is still no reason to press the panic button. All hope is not lost, neither for our children, nor for us. Technology has always been a boon for mankind and when used with an intent to reap the best of it, it does show prospect. It is when used beyond the limit that problems arise.

As mature adults, we should cut the time we spend online and motivate ourselves to devote it to family. Our children deserve better, and we do too.

— LS Desk

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