

## Key Terms and Concepts in ELT

### Accuracy and Appropriacy / Appropriateness

P.N. Ramani



Accuracy, which is usually measured in terms of grammatical accuracy, refers to how far a learner's use of the second (or foreign) language conforms to the rules of the target language, i.e. the language that is being learnt. We might also consider aspects of word choice and pronunciation under the term 'accuracy'. For example, utterances like "*After the shower he laid down on the bed*" (instead of "lay down") and "*The dog beat him*" ('bit' pronounced as 'beat') will be considered inaccurate. Once the rules of a language are clearly set out, as in a standard grammar book, it becomes easy to test a learner's language use for accuracy. Accuracy is, therefore, often used as a firm measure of a learner's progress in learning the language.

Drills and grammar exercises, often at the sentence level, are traditionally recommended classroom activities because they focus on language accuracy, be it grammar or pronunciation. Another concept related to these classroom practices is the notion of 'error' and methods of 'error correction'. It is worth mentioning here that the type and amount of error correction attempted by a teacher is influenced by the teacher's attitude towards errors. This, in turn, is guided by the teacher's views on language and language learning. We may have to deal with the notion of 'error' and possible ways of error correction separately in another piece.

What are the standards or norms for measuring a learner's accuracy in using the target language? Obviously, the norms will vary according to the mode, context, and purpose of language use. For learners of English as a first language, native-speaker standards might apply; for learners of English as a second language, we might expect a somewhat near-native proficiency level – we may not expect native-speaker standards to be met. Further, it will not be fair or realistic to apply native-speaker standards in respect of learners of English as an international language.

Accuracy can also vary depending on aspects of the task set or attempted. For instance, if a second language learner were given more time to plan his speaking task, his task performance could be more accurate. Given more time to practise and rehearse his speech, he might correct at least some of his pronunciation errors. Likewise, if the learner were allowed some time to go over his piece of writing, he might correct some of the mistakes and improve his composition. Furthermore, some types of errors may not be critical, while some others might affect what is called the 'intelligibility' of the piece of communication.

Sociolinguists would argue that using a language appropriately is equally, if not more, important than using it accurately. That is, the language use of learners of

English should not only to be accurate but also appropriate. The language used must be appropriate to the context of use (i.e., the context of time, place, social situation and culture). For example, it would be inappropriate for a student to write in a leave letter, “My tummy is upset, so give me leave for a day.” It would be equally inappropriate for one of the married partners to say to the other, “Excuse me, my dear. Would it be too much of an

inconvenience to you if I were to plead with you to make me a cup of tea?”

The notion of ‘accuracy’ is often contrasted with that of ‘fluency’, but that will be discussed later in another article.

### Reference

Leech, G. & J. Svartvik. 2013. *A Communicative Grammar of English* (3rd Edition). Harlow: Longman.

## National Workshop on Enhancing Professional Communication Skills

A 2-day workshop on Enhancing Professional Communication Skills was conducted by ELT@I Thoothukudi Chapter in association with ELT@I BESIG on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2018 at Annammal College of Education for Women, Thoothukudi.

The workshop was attended by ESL teachers and research scholars. The inaugural address was given by entrepreneur Rtn.Mr.B.Ponsingh, Managing Director of Annai Gas Service. He emphasised on the multi-faceted business skills needed to excel in the competitive business world. The convener of this workshop Dr.A.Joycilin Shermila introduced the resource persons Mrs. Lalitha Murthy, Consultant – Business English, Bangalore and Brig R S Murthy, Accredited Management Trainer on Soft Skills, Bangalore.

The first day morning session was initiated by Mrs. Lalitha Murthy who spoke on language skills, Business English and also about professional communication skills.

The next session on “Soft Skills and Business Etiquettes” was by Brig R S Murthy. The focus of the session was on the various etiquettes to be followed in business meetings and in business telephonic calls. It was interactive with various role plays and mock meetings. The second session of the day was by Mrs. Lalitha Murthy on “Business Writing” with special reference to email writing.

On the second day, the workshop began with the session on “Presentation Skills.” The final session was headed by Mrs. Lalitha Murthy on “Designing A Business English Course.” The valedictory function marked the end of the workshop with the valedictory address given by the convener of the workshop Dr A.Joycilin Shermila.

The hospitality of the convener Dr A.Joycilin Shermila along with the support of the Management made the workshop a successful and cherishable one in the minds of all participants.

**N.Jothi, PhD Scholar,  
VOC College, Thoothukudi**