

Effective Communication Strategies on Stage: A Comprehensive Case Study

¹Dhawani Gaur, ²Lajwanti Kishnani

^{1,2} BITS Pilani Dubai Campus, Dubai, UAE

Abstract: With the scaling growth and technological advancements taking over as priorities, the need to adapt an effective method of Communication has come of utmost importance. The ability to communicate effectively isn't bound by a good vocal tone or enriched vocabulary rather it is an amalgamation of a good vocabulary, positive attitude, confidence, good inter-personal skills and listening skills among others. A great speaker isn't born with a set of specific in-built qualities that define him. The aspects that lead to being a good speaker are developed over time, with multitude of toiling and hard work. "Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam once said, "It's not the surroundings that define how good a speaker you are, it is your in-built self-developed mechanism that defines you". In testimony to that many great speakers have had their own success stories that often lead to autobiographies, with the amount of effort they had to put in to gain the finesse they have achieved. Through this paper, we seek to find the possible factors that redefine the standards of Communication and obtain real-time experience on the effects of 'Stage Fright' on various individuals aged 18-20 years.

Keywords: Communication, Attitude, Stage Fright, Skills, Knowledge, Body Language, Humility, Authenticity, Confidence, Fluency.

I. INTRODUCTION

"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."[1] - Peter Drucker

Communication is the process of conveying one's messages or ideas by various means including verbal, written or the subtle language of signs. An effective communication can be established when an individual has proper knowledge of the subject. It is often found that the best communicators also possess an amalgamation of the 'Perfect Attitude' and 'Vital Skills'. According to a 2010 survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), Communication skills are ranked first among a job candidate's 'must have' skills and qualities.

Skills:

As we progress in various phases of our career the category of skills that are censorious to our success changes. **Interpersonal skills** play an important role as progress continues and success becomes more and more dependent on it. These are basically for building an effective working relationship with the outside world. *Jobs such as supervisory, marketing can develop effective relationships with people.*

Communication skills include maintaining eye contact, demonstrate a varied vocabulary, tailor to the audience and present clear & appropriate ideas.

Listening is another important communication skill. As communication is not a one sided process, the individual should have the *mentality to accept* what the person on other side is reciprocating. We should be open to the comments/suggestions and the views of other people. Indulging whole heartedly in the communication process and making it interactive by asking questions gives full assurance to the gathering that we are devoting our full interest to the communication process. The gesture of replying is also vital. It is important to showcase signs that we are paying attention like a slight nod or intermediate remarks/ comments demonstrating our enthusiasm.

There are several barriers in communication skills such as:

- Creating one's own opinion without properly interpreting the context of other's opinions. It is essential to have a proper, elaborate discussion with the people involved, clear out the ambiguities and draw a conclusion in our head.
- It is inappropriate to judge people with what they are trying to say. It might sometimes happen that the person couldn't effectively transcribe what they were intending or in most cases, there are fair chances that we have misinterpreted the message with respect to our own conclusions.
- When another person is making his statement, it is very rude and disrespectful to interrupt them at regular intervals by making corrections in their speech or quipping in our own thoughts on the topic.
- While in the outer world, we tend to interact with various people belonging to different regions, cultures and different verbal tones. It is vital to not mix in these factors with the core essence of what the other person is trying to say. For eg. paying attention to the pronunciation differences rather than the content of the message.
- While communicating with people from the professional world, there is no scope of defensiveness. Being defensive can be very derogatory and the other person/ the gathering might not approve of our conduct.

Attitude:

“People may hear your words, but they feel your attitude.” [2]

– John C. Maxwell

Having the proper attitude will help us in all regards it imparts positive vibes to the person on the other hand.

- **Body language** is a crucial part of attitude which affects communication in many ways.
- **Tone:** While speaking, an individual should keep a moderate tone until and unless a stringent tone is necessary. There should also be warm modulations in our voice because an undulating, monotonous tone might not interest the listeners.
- **Facial Expression:** It is important to maintain a calm and composed expression. An ideal speaker is one who doesn't show signs of nervousness and stage fright through his expressions.
- **Posture:** Our posture reflects our attitude. It is one primary tool which people use to interpret the character. Therefore, it is imperative to maintain the right posture while speaking. A slacking posture gives a wrong impression of our true self.
- **Appearance:** Neat, clean, sophisticated, sartorial, fresh and vibrant looks offer advantage to the communicator. Appearance plays a major role in a Communication Process. Unless you showcase that you have the capability to perform, the outer world won't get to know your true mettle.
- **Eye-Contact** is another important aspect of Body Language. By maintaining proper eye contact, we show our interest and willingness to participate in the discussion.
- **Gesture:** We should maintain a kind and polite behaviour towards other people. Yawning, looking somewhere else, changing the topic- these are some gestures that cast a negative impact of our attitude and personality.

Knowledge:

"Today, Knowledge has power. It controls our access to opportunity and advancements in life"

Having the proper knowledge in communication is synonymous to a tree with strong roots for growth. Growth and Knowledge are parallel roads. As we progress towards the success ladder, it is vital to inculcate the willingness to learn and adapt from the surroundings. Learning and gathering knowledge is not restricted to books. It has been famously said that, "More than books, we learn from our surroundings".

- Gaining expertise in communication techniques is important. We should have adequate knowledge of the speaking techniques. Writing is also an art. In written communication, having knowledge of the writing procedure, the scheme of words to be used for people in various cadre is crucial.
- While preparing for a topic, we should invest the required amount of time to gather accurate information. It is always better to have facts rather than a bundle of information without any substance and factuality. Possessing the correct information also increases our confidence as we know about the validity of what we're speaking.

- A successful communicator is one who is well aware of his strengths and weakness. This plays a key role in Oral Communication. Knowing about where we can falter and where we can showcase our inner talents will be very helpful in establishing a successful communication.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The technological way of addressing information to people all around the universe is 'Communication'. To redefine various terms in communication expert views are considered as extensively knowledgeable. They have vast amount of knowledge in their area of study. Many a time they are called for an advice on their topic of research and study.

Dr. Albert Mehrabian's study on 'Effectualness of Communication' notifies that an effective communication should be a perfect amalgamation of 55% non- verbal, 38%- tone of voice, 7%- verbal characteristics. There are three levels of communication: Physical, Intellectual, and Emotional.

"First impression is the Last impression".

Dr. Albert Mehrabian believes the same. In many seminars and workshops that have shaped the communication skills of millions, he never fails to ascertain the importance of creating a 'good' first impression. So according to Dr. Mehrabian, you never get a second chance to create first impression and this first impression totally depends on how effective your communication skills are. Addressing the question of how to create a memorable and everlasting first impression, Dr. Mehrabian talks about 3 important keys for a successful communication:

A) Confidence is an important key. Relating to his initial days in this career, he thrusts that a confident and elegant speaker can win over the hearts and minds of people even without having significant matter.

B) Through Knowledge of the topic, and

C) Correct Body Language. Imagine yourself listening to a speaker who is looking up, and is standing in a bent manner without proper eye contact. Will you want to initiate further talks with the person? That is the vitality of Body Language and attitude in communication, be it an everyday routine or for leadership purposes.

"Winners don't do different things, they do things differently" [3] -

-Shiv Khera.

According to the self help and motivator Shiv Khera, being specific is the only solution to avoid misconception. Attitude plays an important role in communication, as in understanding, confidence, patience, convictions etc. The only demarcation between confidence and arrogance is the reflection of humility in one's communication. Attitude reflects our personality. Display of positive personality should be enthusiastic, decisive, courageous, sincere, pleasant, friendly and warm.

Leaders are also affected by the way they communicate. The power of speech creates an emotional bridge which is one of the most imperative quality which every successful leader should possess. Leaders should have the capability to ingrain people's hope for better tomorrow.

Authenticity, Humility and Optimism:

Quality of communication emphasises upon three major parts i.e. authenticity, humility, and optimism. Speech should be presented in such a manner that it captivates the audience. Grasps their attention in such a way that they are forced to reciprocate. Verbal communication is all about our knowledge about the topic. We should focus on the methods for rooting our thoughts and ideas in the audience even if they are not accepting it.

Humility: There can be NO successful leader without touches of selflessness and humane behaviour. A successful communicator shouldn't engross themselves in acts of selfishness and attitude. They should portray selflessness in every aspect. It leaves an everlasting impression.

Optimism: What would the World be without touches of Optimism coming from Great personalities? No matter what the situation is, an effective communicator should never fail to maintain positive vibes. It makes the gathering feel good & cheerful and also acts as a booster to our confidence and self-satisfaction levels.

But as experts say, no matter what, never forget to be cheerful. That can be the best impression ever.

III. METHODOLOGY

Why Stage Fright was chosen?

Stage Fright is a common phenomenon among the youth. It occurs due to lack of preparation, lack of the 'proper' attitude and lack of confidence. Self-expectation, Fear of failure, an inner pressure to outperform others and a desire to create an everlasting impression amongst the crowd. In Universities, there are various people from different parts of the World, some carry workloads of confidence while others come from reserved communities thus making Stage Fright and apprehensions very common in scenarios where one has to address a huge gathering or present a paper in front of distinguished people.

THE SURVEY:

To gain an insight on the Statistics of Stage Fright in BITS Pilani, Dubai Campus, a survey (Appendix I) containing 9 questions was circulated to around 40 students of in the aged between 18 to 20, different disciplines and varied levels of English Speaking Exposure and Confidence. The 9 questions addressed all plausible forms of Stage Fright. How well people tackle them, whether they have experienced any major losses due to Nervousness. They were organized and structured in such a way that every person can relate to and give honest answers. There were no cases of hurting one's personal sentiments. The questions were informative and the answers provided were enough to arrive at a well-structured result.

The survey aimed at:

- Addressing the most common issue of Communication, i.e. - Stage Fright.
- Determine the general profile and confidence levels of the various groups of students in the college.
- To look at possible solutions on 'Redefining Skills, Attitude and Knowledge in Communication'.
- Collect data about how different students tackle their inner apprehensions and fears.

After combining the results of the survey, we hope to provide a wider view of various Stage Frights and Communication Aberrations that occur in different classes of youth.

IV. RESULT

A survey was conducted among the students in their 1st year of degree of BITS Pilani Dubai Campus. Around 40 responses were obtained and they were effectively analyzed using the software SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Sciences).

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7	PREVENTI...	Numeric	8	2		{1.00, FOLL...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
8	IMPACTS	Numeric	8	2		{1.00, YES}...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
9	BAD EXPE...	Numeric	8	2		{1.00, YES}...	None	8	Right	Nominal	Input
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Fig 1. Stage Fright Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
SEX	42	1.00	2.00	1.2381	.06652	.43108	.186
MOTHER.TONGUE	42	1.00	10.00	3.3810	.42696	2.76699	7.656
FLUENCY	42	1.00	4.00	1.8810	.11407	.73923	.546
FACTORS	42	1.00	5.00	3.0000	.18666	1.20972	1.463
AREA	42	1.00	4.00	2.2381	.13973	.90553	.820
EFFECTS	42	1.00	5.00	2.0952	.21503	1.39353	1.942
PREVENTION.MEASURES	42	1.00	4.00	1.6667	.17926	1.16172	1.350
IMPACTS	42	1.00	2.00	1.8095	.06133	.39744	.158
BAD.EXPERIENCE	42	1.00	2.00	1.4286	.07729	.50087	.251
Valid N (listwise)	42						

Fig2. Descriptive Statistics

Possible Reasons for Stage Fright:

Around 60% of the crowd said that they experienced Stage Fright due to the fear of people's judgements. 28% of the people surveyed said that 'Anxiety' was the main reason they experienced fear during any public oratory elocution. Remaining 11% stated 'Lack of Confidence' and 'Expectations of the Society' as the prime reason why they experience Stage Fright.

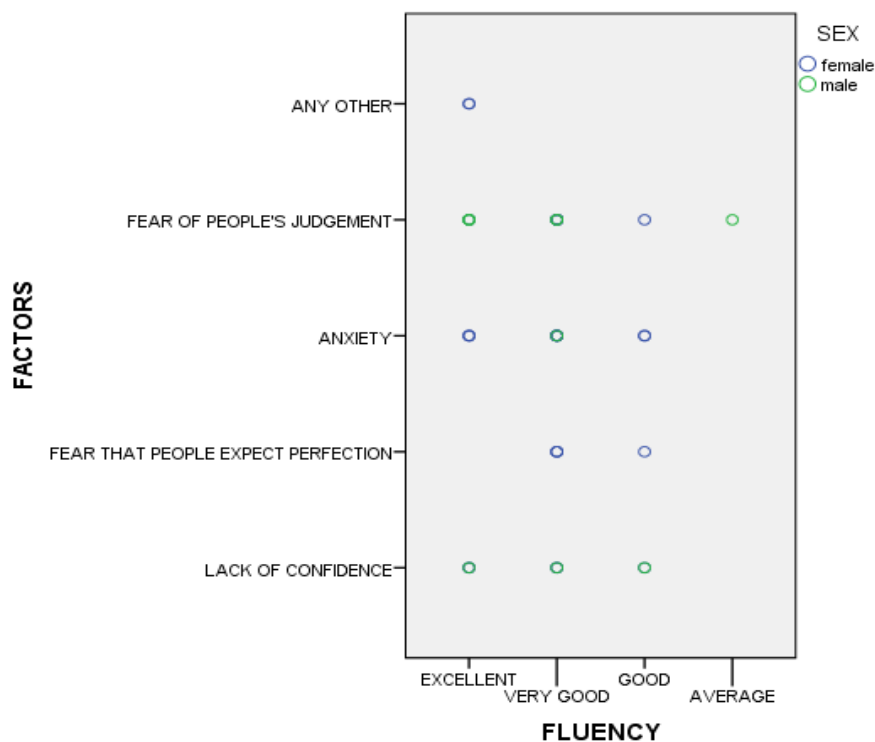


Fig 3.Scatter/Dot representation

Areas where Stage Fright is experienced:

50% of the surveyed population said that they fear performing in front of the camera. 20% ascertained that 'In-University' events were the main areas they faltered. They said that they were comfortable talking to strangers in the outside world but not in the competitions. Remaining 20% said that they were at ease with College Friends and facing College Events but aren't comfortable in interacting with the outside world.

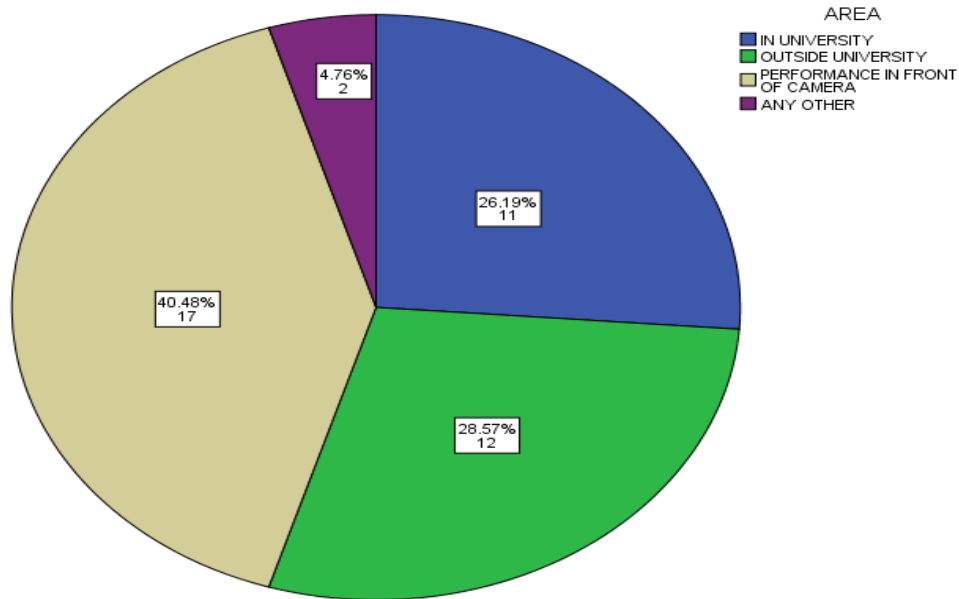


Fig 4. Pie Chart depicting areas of stage fright

Experiences while Stage Fright incurs:

The trends stated that around 65% of the surveyed population experienced ‘Pounding Heart’ while they experience Stage Fright. Other 30% said that ‘Shaky Hands’ and ‘Dry Mouth’ were common experiences.

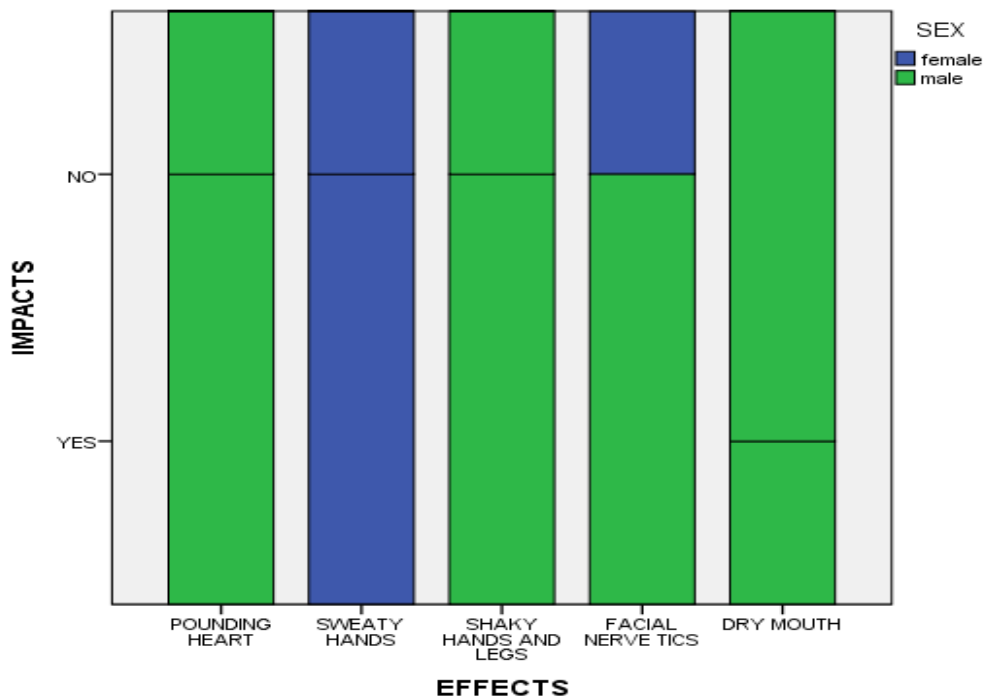
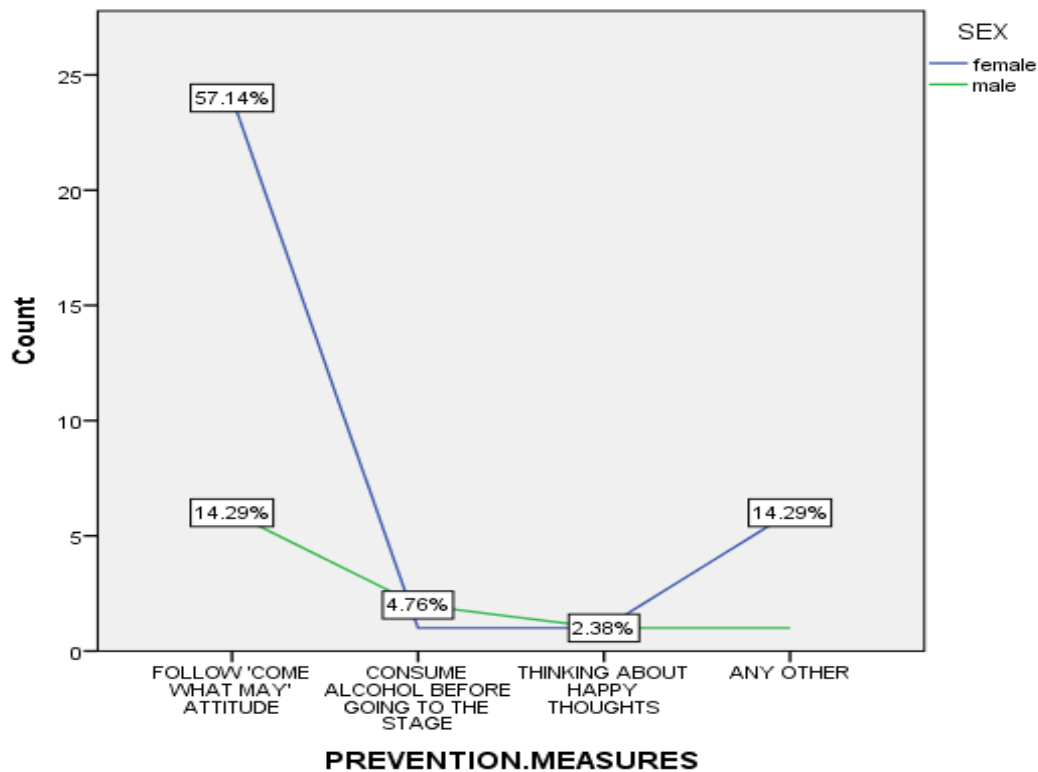


Fig 5. Histogram showing Impacts due to effects of stage fright

Viable Solutions to conquer Stage Fright:

‘Follow what may come’ attitude was the response recorded by 70% of the people surveyed. They said that before taking it up on the stage, they decided to face whatever comes and then performed. Other 25% said that they gave lots of self motivation talks to themselves to feel better.



VI. CONCLUSION

“Effective Communication is 20% what you know and 80% what you feel you know”

In this paper, we descriptively discussed on elaborate methods to redefine skills, knowledge and attitude in Communication. A Communication Process will be coined as ‘effective’ when the interpretation of the sender and receiver is same on any given topic.

Skills:

Interpersonal Skills, Conveying Skills and Listening Skills are three chief attributes that can shape one’s way of conversing, be it written or oral. The ability to convey one’s thoughts and desires is a prime element. Without it, a communication is termed as ‘incomplete’ and ‘ineffective’. A person cannot be coined as an ‘Effective Communicator’ unless and until they have good listening skills, irrespective of how flawless their Speaking Skills are. Inappropriate judging of people, unnecessary interruption and rude glares are barriers to developing good interpersonal skills and must not be exercised.

Attitude:

We elaborately discussed that ‘Body Language’ determines our Attitude. One needs to be focused, determined, undeterred by any harsh outer world experiences to develop confidence and in turn, develop positive attitude. Neat Appearance and a straight, alert posture along with proper eye contact also help in a proper built of one’s personality and attitude.

Knowledge and Communication:

Knowledge and Growth are like parallel roads, each determining and complementing each other. Along with adequate, affluent methods of Communication, having proper knowledge on the topic of discussion takes the standards of communication to altogether another level. Awareness on one’s own weaknesses also helps oneself to plod through a discussion or speech smoothly without any hassles. To get real-time expertise and answers on what University students think about ‘Stage Fright’ which is possibly the major setback that occurs within people of various age groups, primarily students as lack of knowledge of Proper Communication tactics and skills.

The results obtained are summarized below-

Possible Reasons for Stage Fright:

Fear of People's judgements is the major reason of occurrence of Stage Fright. When a speaker is on stage, the gathered crowd develops judgements and spreads them which leads to a puddle of insecurities inside an individual. Anxiety or Nervousness is due lack of preparation or confidence. It also leads to Stage Fright, with the speaker tending to stammer or forget lines in the middle.

Areas where Stage Fright is experienced:

Performing in front of Camera is the most predominant area where Students reported to have experienced Stage Fright. This can not only occur while delivering a speech but also while acting, elocutions and any other form of expressing thoughts and ideas verbally or emotionally. Others termed that 'In-University' competitions also affect their Stage Presence majorly. They stated that University consists of people they know and performing in front of them, with high expectations leading to mistakes and implications.

Experiences while Stage Fright incurs:

Pounding Heart was the most reported Experience while Stage Fright takes over their self-confidence. They proclaimed that they lose control of their speech tactics, their preparation goes futile and a pounding heart. Dry Mouth, Sweaty hands and shaky hands are other common experiences while Stage Fright.

Viable Solutions to conquer Stage Fright:

Conquering Stage Fright is one major challenge and majority of the crowd surveyed polled on the 'Follow what may come' attitude. They decided to develop the carefree attitude and leave the rest to whatever unfolds. Self-Motivation techniques also help significantly in reducing Nervousness and other related impacts.

Thus, Redefining Skills, Attitude and Knowledge in Communication is important as it defines one's personality as a whole.

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