

Humor

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## English Is Spoken Here

(Reprint from an old issue)

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Just because you may be fluent in English doesn't mean folks will understand half the things you say at their places of business. Plain English seems to be in particularly short supply when it comes to business. For instance, on my recent visit to India, a couple of my checks bounced because I didn't write 'only' in front of the amount to be paid. So, I rushed to the nearest CITI Bank branch and asked the banker why were my checks not honored? "You didn't write a complete sentence. That's why," replied Dave Ramsey. "But I don't have to write a sentence, I have to only mention the amount and denomination." "It doesn't tell

me how much you want to pay to the payee," he replied.

"Yes, it does, here is the amount," I pointed to the amount on the check"

"But this doesn't tell me where you want to stop. Therefore, it is important to end your sentence with 'only.'"

"OK. I'll print 'only' after the amount, but don't call it a sentence," I said to him in frustration, "and how come your name is Dave Ramsey? "

"You may call me Devangna Ramaswaminathan, if you like," he said with a grin.

Of course, these idiosyncrasies are not limited to the Indian businesses only. It could get worse in the United States where one has to remember the exact semantics and idiom to convey the meaning. I once checked into a hotel and asked where the exercise room was. The receptionist gave me a blank look. She simply could not comprehend what I asked. Frustrated, I performed a few pushups making a fool of myself in front of other guests.

"I see, you mean the fitness room!" She exclaimed.

I find ordering food at drive-through windows of fast-food chains even more challenging. The problem is that every chain calls the same item by a different name. A good example will be smoothies, shakes, Slurpee, slush, etc. So, here I go again. After I finished ordering my food at the drive-through window, the attendant asked me. "Will that be all?"

"Well, I'd like to order a drink." "Pardon us! We don't have drinks, sir," she replied.

"Come on who are you kidding? I can see them on your menu." I made my point.

"Will that be all," she wanted to wrap up the conversation. "

Didn't I say that I wanted to order a drink?"

"And didn't I tell you SIR that we don't serve drinks in our establishment? Will that be all?" She seemed irritated.

"How about those pictures of coke and coffee that you are displaying on the board?" I tried to remind her.

"So, you want a beverage. What kind?" She asked.

"I'd like a mango shake." "We don't have mango shakes," she replied.

"You have it. I just ordered it last week. Maybe, you call it Slurpee" I was irritated.

"No sir, we don't sell Slurpee either. Will that be all?"

"OK! Let me come inside the store." I was not ready to give up. As I walked inside, I pointed her to the picture of the drinks.

"So, you mean a mango smoothie. Will that be all?" she replied calmly. Finally, I got my order.

Dealing with waiters in formal restaurants is not a piece of cake either. The other day, after finishing my meal, I asked for the bill. The waiter looked clueless at first then he called the manager to talk to me.

"Sir, we don't bill our customers," said the manager to me. "

So, do you serve free meals?" I interrupted him.

"That's not correct either. You'll have to pay here and now," the manager replied.

"I understand. That's why I asked for the bill,"

The manager turned to the waiter and asked, "Didn't this gentleman ask for the check?"

"No sir, he wanted to be billed," replied the waiter. Somehow, the matter was resolved.

I come across these obstacles every day in my life. The worst one was last week when my General Manager took me for lunch and told me, "We have decided to leverage internal efficiencies by enlisting external resources, thus driving a reduction in operating costs, thereby enhancing shareholder value."

Translation: 'Your job is eliminated.' Bye for now