

SPEAKING PART 3 - DETAILED DISCUSSION

by Junaid Zafar @ ATC Sadiqabad, PAK - TCA Internationals Sydney, AUS

Family:

Q. 1: Is family important in your country?

Answer: Thank you for this question. Well, people in my country believe that family comes first and they put their family ahead of anything else. They would do anything for the family and I am proud that family bonding in my country is quite strong.

Q. 2: How has the size of the family changed in the last few decades in your country?

Answer: From my experience, I can say that my grandfather had an extended family and people at that time used to live together with close relatives. As far as I have heard, their forefathers also live in a joint family and the number of family members was sometimes more than twenty. However, the trend of living in an extended family has changed remarkably in cities where most of the families are nuclear in nature. The villages in my country still have large families who live together but the number is shrinking day by day.

Q. 3: How do you think the family will change in the future?

Answer: I believe more people will have a nuclear family and the size of the family will be small in the future. People do not like to have more than two children nowadays and who knows they will consider having one baby policy in the distant future. The very norm that a man gets married to a woman and have their own children to form a family is being challenged by the concept of same-sex marriage and this trend will increase in the future.

Q. 4: What role do grandparents play in the family in your country?

Answer: Grandparents in a family are like the pillars of virtue and they play an important role. They maintain a balance for the family by nurturing the old traditions and values and teach how to adhere to the roots. With the increasing number of both working parents, grandparents often look after the children. They often advise the rest of the family time to time regarding family matters as they have more experience and thus their advice often saves us from taking wrong decisions. From this sense, they act like reliable mentors.

Q. 5: Who do you think should be responsible for the care of the elderly, the family or the government?

Answer: I believe the family has the major responsibility to look after their elder family members and support them personally as they did in their youth age. These senior citizens have sacrificed a lot throughout their lives to form a family and then to make them happy. The young members should do everything in their power to accompany their elder members and provide them with their necessities.

Having said that, the government has some responsibilities as well. These elder members were once taxpayers and thus they deserve healthcare, entertainment and other facilities from the state.

Q. 6: Why is the number of joint families decreasing in modern time?

Answer: I believe the city-centric life which is highly competitive and busy has diminished the concept of joint family and created the nuclear family. Besides the urban influence, ever-increasing inflation, our affection towards a materialistic life and less inclination towards the traditions and values have ended up making our own nuclear family.

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Choosing work & Work-Life balance

Q. 1. What kinds of jobs do young people not want to do in your country?

Answer: Well, in my country, we have almost always had a big problem of unemployment among young people, and therefore, there aren't exactly too many jobs that they don't want to do. However, as far as I have found out, jobs like "outside sales", "medical representatives" and other "service-oriented" jobs, that require longer hours of work, are not looked upon very favourably by the young adults in my country. They don't also like "elementary teaching" job because they require a lot of patience (after all, teaching little kids can be really challenging).

Q. 2. Who is best at advising young people about choosing a job: teachers or parents?

Answer: In my humble opinion, teachers are best at advising young people about choosing a job primarily because they are usually the ones who work tirelessly at schools and colleges to unlock the potentials of young adults. Besides, through the continuous interaction with their students in classes, it is the teachers who are better positioned to identify the skills and expertise of the young people and thus being able to guide them to choose careers that are suitable for them.

Q. 3. Is money always the most important thing when choosing a job?

Answer: No, I don't really think that money is "always" ("always" is the keyword here) the most important thing, when choosing a job, primarily because money doesn't always buy "happiness" or the "job satisfaction" no matter how much of it, we really have. Besides, if I am being paid a lot of "money", but what I do as a "job" is not considered to be "important", then the chances are that I won't be able to perform to my full potential despite my best intention. Money is an important thing for us to do a job but I do not believe that it is the most important aspect of a job.

Q. 4. Do you agree that many people nowadays are under pressure to work longer hours and take less holiday?

Answer: Yes, many people are indeed under huge pressure nowadays to work longer hours and enjoy fewer holidays mainly because most of them are struggling to keep up with the soaring living expenses. Then, some people are under pressure to work extra hours also because they are simply being "exploited" by their employers. Then, there is another group of people who are under pressure to work longer hours because they want to meet their additional demand for more comfort and luxuries of lives.

Q. 5. What is the impact on society of people having a poor work-life balance?

Answer: The impact of people, having a poor work-life balance, on society is multi-dimensional. In a society, where people are either working too much or sitting idle for too long, there won't be enough people to take responsibility in order to carry forward the nation to its full potentials. Working too much would without enough opportunity to relax with families and friends, the people in a society would go through mental depression which, in turn, would result in inefficiency and lesser productivity at works. On the other hands, if people in a society are "sitting idle" for too long, the entire society would be negatively affected by crimes and other anti-social activities.

Q. 6. Could you recommend some effective strategies for governments and employers to ensure people have a good work-life balance?

Answer: Governments and employers can do several things to ensure a good work-life balance for the employees. First, employers can offer "flexibility" with work schedules, whenever possible, so that the employees can have little time to spend with their families and friends in between the work hours. Employers can also allow some "unpaid time off" (not getting paid for the off days) so that their staffs can attend some fun and family events. As for the governments, they can create awareness among people by using different media outlets in order to highlight the benefits of a good work-life balance. Governments can also arrange for an "annual award" option for the companies/employers who actively work to promote "work-life" balance among their employees.

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Sports and competition

Q. 1: Why are some sports fans so passionate?

Answer: I believe some people love sports than other forms of entertainment and competition and they always follow their favourite sports on TV. 'Watching and playing sports' is their favourite leisure activity while many of those passionate fans once were players themselves and played the game in their youth. Growing up, they see their family, friends, and city go wild when a goal is scored or a game is won. So, it's natural to follow other's enthusiasm and cheer for their local teams. Such attachment often increases their love for sports. In my country, many youths are ardent fans of football and they have their favourite teams. When their favourite team plays, they take every opportunity to support them and sometimes go to the stadium to show their support. Sportsmen are often idolized by youths and they love to follow their favourite sportsmen as enthusiastic followers.

Q. 2: Is there any violence at sporting events in your country?

Answer: Generally speaking, such violence is very rare in my country. However, a dispute among fans is quite common and most of the time they are verbal than physical. They often take social networking platforms and blogs to criticise their rivals. I can, however, recall a very unfortunate event that took place probably three or four years ago when the fans of two competing teams got agitated and three people died due to this incident while several others were critically injured. The security of the stadium has been revamped to address such unexpected events and hopefully, it wouldn't happen again.

Q. 3. Should athletes be better role models?

Answer: I believe most fans start adoring an athlete or a sportsman due to the spectacular performance he or she shows. Thus, football magicians like Cristiano Ronaldo or Lionel Messi have several million fans and many of them started idolising them without knowing them personally. However, when these youths start following their favourite sportsmen or athletes, they sometimes follow them blindly. Thus, considering the impact, famous sports personality should always try to lead exemplary lives as thousands of others mimic them. They are also famous and the media is always watching them. Any bad conduct can bring controversy to their fame and they should try to become better role models for youths as it is a social and moral responsibility for any celebrity.

Q. 4. What benefits do international sporting events bring?

Answer: International sporting events bring nations together and eliminate the tension and hostility among them. Such an event is highly popular and can be a great reason for people to enjoy the competition in the stadium. Thus such competitions foster tourism and help local businesses to flourish. Such prestigious events sometimes encourage young children all around the world to take some sort of sports. This is good for spreading the essence of sports globally and I think sports have economic, political and cultural impacts on society.

Q. 5. Is it important for a country to win lots of medals?

Answer: I believe every country wants to win as many trophies as possible since it represents how great a nation is in sports and athleticism. Being at the top of the medallist is often considered a great achievement but I personally believe that it is not absolutely necessary. Participating in international sporting events like the Olympic is often inspiring for many small nations. A few medals could be often satisfying and inspiring for them. The most important thing in an international sporting competition is being able to perform and enjoy it, not the number of medals won. When athletes and sportsmen from all around the world gather at a common platform, they not only represent their own country but also the whole humanity and this is important for maintaining global peace and harmony.

Q. 6. The money professional sportsmen earn is significantly higher than that the earning of other professionals. Is it justified?

Answer: I think a very few fortunate sports celebrities earn a hefty amount of money while most others do not. Considering the training, dedication, challenge and sacrifice that are part of their lives, the earning, in my opinion, is justified. We have to keep in mind that their career is short spanned and they earn because they perform really well. The payment to those celebrities is high because people buy tickets when they perform and different companies that earn millions of dollars each day want them as brand ambassadors. Since these payments are legit and transparent, I do not see any problem if they earn a lot.

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Historic Place

Q. 1: How do people in your country feel about protecting historic buildings?

Answer: I believe people from my country would want to protect and preserve important historic buildings except maybe a few who put business ahead of their morality and rational thinking. We had our moments when people spontaneously protested the plan to demolish such sites in the past. Due to a huge public backlash and outcry, the authority had been forced to abandon their plan to build multi-storied commercial buildings by smashing the old buildings that have historical significance. Thus, citizens in my country are sensitive about protecting anything that has historical importance.

Q. 2: Do you think an area can benefit from having an interesting historic place locally? In what way?

Answer: Definitely an area with an interesting historic place can reap the benefits from different perspectives. First, such a place would attract a huge number of tourists and help grow different local businesses. Besides, such areas are strategically important for the local government and it can bring more development projects to the area. The government takes extra measures to protect such areas from natural disasters and thus get more attention. On top of that, the flourishing tourism of the area spreads the local custom and tradition to other parts of the country. Thus, the development of such a region occurs faster than other areas.

Q. 3. What do you think will happen to historic places or buildings in the future? Why?

Answer: That is hard to tell and all would depend on the future generation. If they feel that such locations and buildings are worth preserving, the authority would take steps to protect them. Otherwise, many of them, which are less internationally known, would disappear and would be converted to ultramodern commercial buildings. Prominent sites, on the other hand, would be preserved as they will attract many international tourists. Some of them will be debilitated due to the lack of maintenance and a few new ones would emerge as historic places and buildings in the distant future. The main reason some of the historic places and building will disappear is that they are less popular and can't sell tickets to tourists. So the authority or the owner would like to convert them for business purpose. The urbanisation, pollution and the need for more buildings for the increasing population are threats to such historic sites.

Q. 4: How were you taught history when you were at school?

Answer: Our teachers mainly taught us history from the textbooks and we were lucky to have a few amazing teachers who explained how history is important to understand the future. They often explained important events and characters from history and told us how these events and powerful men have shaped future events. We were required to study history books and watch documentaries made on real historical facts and those were not included in our syllabus. Thus we were able to learn more about history. Our school authority took us to different museums and historic sites, generally two to three times a year, and those excursions were our chances to explore more and witness the artefacts from the past. I can recall one particular occasion when we were taken to a war museum and we learned how wars that we hate so much had such profound impacts on our human society.

Q. 5: Are there other ways people can learn about history, apart from at school? How?

Answer: I believe reading about history and researching them online is the best way to learn more about it. What we learn about history in our school is just the beginning. To truly explore the past, we need to read a lot of books and the book choices should be based on the interests of the readers. The Internet is an amazing tool that can help us learn about our past and the interactive videos found on different websites are truly helpful. It offers us to dive deeper into history. Finally, travelling is an excellent way to learn about the world we live in and how this world was shaped by different civilisations. Someone who travels extensively learns about history faster and witness history instead of assuming them.

Q. 6: Do you think history will still be a school subject in the future? Why?

Answer: I believe history is not merely a collection of past events, stories of civilisations and powerful characters. It is rather a way to look at the future. Thus, the importance of history in the future will increase and more students would be interested to learn about it than today. We are yet to comprehend the full potential of history and it is still frowned upon as a subject for weaker students. But in the future, we will realise how important it is for people to learn it for a prosperous future. So, I do not see any reasons history will disappear from the school syllabus.

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Online Reviews & Customer service

Q. 1: What kinds of things do people write online reviews about in your country?

Answer: Online review is a rather widespread thing in my country these days since buying and selling all sorts of things online is becoming popular. But, generally speaking, people in my country like to make online reviews, mostly on things like what they eat at a restaurant, and what kinds of clothing or fashionable items they buy online. Many a time, these days, we also see online reviews on the many grocery items that we buy on a regular basis. So, it is pretty much all kinds of things – things that are sold both online and offline - on which people leave their online reviews.

Q. 2: Why do some people write online reviews?

Answer: Well, some people like to write online reviews, or it could be offline reviews as well, primarily because they want to communicate certain messages to the online community about the products or services that they buy online. Besides, as humans, we all feel that we should make our voices and opinions heard on any kinds of things which, we think, are important to us. And, since the online review is such a hassle-free way of making our voices and opinions heard among the others, we like to use these online review platforms whenever it fits our needs.

Q. 3: Do you think that online reviews are good for both shoppers and companies?

Answer: Yes, I have no doubt in my mind that online reviews are good for both shoppers and companies alike. Talking from the point of view of shoppers, online reviews allow them to either encourage or warn their fellow shoppers about what to buy and what not to buy online. Now, as for the companies, such online reviews allow the companies to adjust their business strategies and policies according to the wishes and demands of their current and prospective customers – a business practice which, in turn, can help these companies boost their sales and revenue.

Q. 4: What do you think it might be like to work in a customer service job?

Answer: Well, from what I have seen or experienced so far, all I can say is that the customer service job is a rather challenging profession since it involves continuous talking or engagement with people – people who have all kinds of different views, ideas, tastes, preferences, culture, backgrounds and lifestyles. And that's exactly why one has to be really upbeat and resourceful if he/she wants to deal with these different kinds of people smoothly. Otherwise, these types of jobs can be very tiring, if not annoying and frustrating, most of the time, instead of actually being rewarding.

Q. 5: Do you agree that customers are more likely to complain nowadays?

Answer: I don't think that the scenario of customer complaint nowadays is much different than what it actually used to be in the past except, of course, these days, it is easier to complain than what it used to be before. Besides, it is only natural that the more types of products and services we use (*meaning more of our money, resources, time and efforts are being used*), the greater the possibility of more and more complaints. So, again, speaking logically, I don't think that people nowadays are likely to complain more, it is just that the number of products and customers are higher these days and so it seems that more customers are complaining today.

Q. 6: How important is it for companies to take all customer complaints seriously?

Answer: I have read somewhere that the principle, on which, a business should conduct its business is that "the customers are always right" (*even when it's actually the customers' fault*). So, from that point of view, it is absolutely necessary that companies take the customers' complaints rather seriously if they really want to gain the trust and confidence of their customers. Besides, customer complaints can also sometimes help the companies to improve their products and services in order to have a competitive edge over their competitors.

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Films/ Cinema

Q. 1: Do you think the cinema has increased or decreased in popularity in recent years?

Answer: That's a bit complex issue as the answer might seem paradoxical. Well, I heartily believe that more people enjoy movies today than ever before but most of them do not go to a movie theatre to enjoy a movie. Thus the cinema halls have lost their glorious days, especially in my country, but an increasing number of people make time to watch movies either on TVs or on their computers. Gone are the days when my parents used to take me to a movie theatre and that was once in a while. These days we enjoy more than 3-4 movies a week but do not go to a cinema hall at all. I believe the popularity of international movies, low-quality local movies and amenities to get great movie-viewing experience at home are the reasons for this shifting trend.

Q. 2: In your opinion, will this trend continue in the future?

Answer: Unless radical changes are brought to the cinema halls and restrictions are imposed on the way we stream and watch the latest movies at home, the trend will continue in the future. Movie theatres would lose their attractions further and technology would assist us to watch movies on demand at home. However, some people will still go to the cinema with friends and family to enjoy a movie on a day out.

Q. 3: What are the advantages and disadvantages of making films of real-life events?

Answer: Among the advantages, I assume, those movies have a ready-made plot, the storylines are already popular and the producer can think of characters easily. Such movies often win awards considering their historical values and are positively taken by the audience and critics.

However, there are some drawbacks in making such movies based on real-life events. First and foremost, people and critics scrutinise such movies more thoroughly and they are often subject to controversy. Secondly, the story is already known to people and the movie has to promise something more than its storyline. Furthermore, making such movies require a huge sum of money and they often end up poorly in the box office.

Q. 4: How important do you think it is for a filmmaker to remain true to the original story?

Answer: I believe true facts from history should be intact in a movie and every filmmaker should adhere to the truth as much as possible while making a movie based on a real-life event or a prominent historical figure. Otherwise, the film would end up receiving resentments and negative criticism from ordinary viewers as well as from movie critics.

Sometimes, a filmmaker needs to add some surprises and twists to make such a movie more appealing but they can always do so by not distorting the main facts. We should keep in mind that children who watch such movies often take them as evidence of real events from history. So such movies should not misrepresent history and invite controversy.

Q. 5: Should films and television be censored or should we be free to choose what we see?

Answer: I believe some sort of censorship is required in the TV and film industry so that we can enjoy movies and watch TV programmes without embarrassments and getting offended. For instance, if I start watching a movie with my parents and the film has too many sensual and violent scenes, we would feel embarrassed. Since movies have a major impact on the viewers' mind, we should not allow too much violence, hatred and offensive scenes to be shown. However, I also believe that creative artists should be allowed to express their feelings and thoughts through these media. Hence, too much tight censorship, that we see in some countries, is not desirable as well. We, as adults, might often choose what we want to watch but we should always monitor what our youngsters are watching for their own good.

Q. 6: How do you think censorship laws will change in the next 20 years?

Answer: Well, that's a tough question to answer, but I will nevertheless try! In my opinion, after two decades or so, some first world countries, where censorship laws are too much flexible, would find themselves amending laws to make it more a bit rigid. While an opposite approach would be taken in developing countries to give more freedom to creative artists. All countries, in my opinion, will try to make a balance in censorship laws to make it more friendly and helpful to the viewers.

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Travel and transport

Q. 1: How easy is it to travel around your country?

Answer: We have a good number of public transportations including bullet trains, modern buses and aeroplanes and I would say someone can travel in my country very easily. Major cities in my country have airports and it makes commuters' life hassle-free. Since we have eight-lane highways and they are maintained periodically, someone can drive his/her own car to commute from one area to another smoothly. Besides, metro rails are convenient for city-dwellers to commute to and from their offices and citizens can take long-route trains to visit other districts and they are comparatively cheaper.

Q. 2: Which method of travel do you consider the safest? Why?

Answer: Despite some common misconceptions, I believe airways are the safest means of transportation. We have frequent national and international flights and the service is really excellent. Aviation accidents are deadly and claim the lives of many, and such accidents often make headlines which gives an impression that air travel is nocuous. However, if we compare air casualties with that of road accidents, we can easily learn that air travel is the safest. Flying is the most secure way to get around in my country as flights are well-organised and the air traffic is controlled more efficiently by trained professionals.

Q. 3: Has travel become safer in recent years than that was in the past?

Answer: Some people would say that accidents and casualties are higher in modern time than in the past. But I believe that travelling in recent years has significantly improved and offers more convenience to commuters. We see more accidents these days because they all are being reported in the news unlike the past when we could hear about only major accidents. In recent days, we have more strict traffic rules, acute safety measures including biometric checking, and modern transportations which are built considering safety in mind. Rigid airport rules make terrorist attacks almost impossible.

A typical train station in my country has more than 15 train schedules and they carry thousands of passengers each day. Such a station used to have only three to four trains a day. If we consider the number of vehicles and commuters with that of the past, we would get a real picture of road safety, which I believe has advanced in recent days.

Q. 4: What are the pros and cons of low-cost air travel?

Answer: The major benefit of cheap air travel is that many people can afford to visit more places around the world and thus foster the tourism industry. More frequent travels by ordinary people make them tolerable to other cultures and it maintains global peace.

Among the demerits, increasing flights are responsible for air pollution. Cheap air travel attracts more passengers and thus they indirectly contribute to air pollution. Moreover, low-cost air tickets do not ensure desirable comfort and amenities which people often regret. Food and drinks in such a journey are unreasonably expensive and it often includes hidden fees and charges.

Q. 5: How do you think people will travel in the future?

Answer: That's an interesting question and I will be both realistic and imaginative to answer this. I believe people will prefer to take aeroplanes and speedy trains in the near future to travel to long-distance and flights will be cheaper to attract more passengers. Cars would be our constant companion and we would rely on our automobiles more than ever to travel within the city.

After 30 or 40 years, our cars would be able to fly short-distance and even run on the river, much like a science-fiction vehicle. After 50 years or so, we will have flying cars that will take us to our offices and the software instead of human will drive those cars. After a century later, we will have personal pods of SkyTran carrier that would use the airways rather than moving on a road. After a few centuries later, who knows, we might even teleport straight to our destination from our home!

Q. 6: Should the government in a country focus more on rail transports or road transports? Why?

Answer: I believe the decision should be made based on the geological condition, existing infrastructure, population and economic condition of the country. For instance, if a country has mostly hilly tracks and rivers, developing rail tracks is both challenging and expensive. For such countries, connecting highways and road transports are more practical and cost-effective. Moreover, if the country does not have enough rail tracks already, it should focus on developing and enhancing roads rather than rails. Finally, countries with higher population should consider developing their railroads as it can carry a great number of people at a time. Whether to invest in road or rail transportation, thus, should be made based on a number of factors rather than a single one.

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Universities

Q. 1: Is higher education too expensive in your country?

Answer: Universities in my country, that are run by the government, offer higher education for free. The cost to pursue higher education in such a university is much cheaper than that of private universities. However, the number of students seeking to enrol in post-graduation courses is much higher than the actual number of seats offered by the state-run universities and colleges. As a result, many students mostly from affluent families, get admitted to private universities and pay a hefty tuition fee.

Q. 2: Should all students pay for their university education? Why?

Answer: I do not think that the university cost should be paid solely by the students and their guardians. Since the government allocate budget for the education sector and a major portion of it goes for higher education and research facilities, state-run universities must offer free education. On top of that, the government has a responsibility to spend the taxpayers' money in social welfare and free or cheap education should be a top priority.

Q. 3: What advantages do universities bring to society? Is it the same in your country?

Answer: Universities are the lighthouse of society and they produce Enlightened citizens who lead the country. Universities not only educate the youth and prepare them for their future but also carry-on important research works that benefit the society as well as the country. For instance, many inventions and medicines that we are familiar with were actually the results of university projects and research. Thus, universities serve both the society and the country in numerous ways that have a direct correlation with the overall development of a nation. I am proud to say that universities in my country also play the same role.

Q. 4: Which is more important, research or teaching? Why?

Answer: I think that's a tough question to answer. However, my personal opinion is that both are required. While proper teaching ensures that young students are getting the education, they need to prepare themselves for future, research works, on the other hand, help solve practical problems and contribute to the advancement of the country. I also feel that more students, along with the teachers, should be involved in research works in our universities.

Q. 5: How should students spend their summer vacations? How do/did you spend it?

Answer: I personally feel that long vacations should be spent wisely. Since students have more than two months during their summer vacations, they should plan prior to the vacation to make the best out of it. They can travel for one to two weeks, get involved in some sort of paid job to gain some practical experience, enrol in skill development courses, study the subjects they find challenging and can do some voluntary works for the community they live in.

I usually plan well-ahead of the vacation and so far I have travelled extensively, done some part-time jobs, read many books, visited my grandparents and taken three skill development courses including a language course during my summer vacations in my college. Next year I am planning to visit Italy for a couple of weeks and take a graphic designing course.

Q. 6: What are the advantages of private universities than public universities?

Answer: From my personal experience I can say private universities are more disciplined and update their curriculum frequently to make the course more useful to the students. The study environment in a private university is often better as the authority does not allow politics or such activities there. Many private universities have better labs and research facilities which is an added advantage. Since they finish the course within the speculated timeframe, they help students avoid session jam and start their career early. Harvard, Yale, Stanford, MIT are a few of the world-renowned private universities which have maintained an excellent academic environment and research works and show how some private universities could indeed be better than many public universities.

Reading Books

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Q. 1: Do you generally read a lot of books or do you prefer watching TV? Why?

Answer: I prefer reading books over enjoying random programmes on television. However, that does not mean that I hate watching TV. I just feel that reading is a far better habit than watching TV. Every book gives us the opportunity to learn something new and the time spent on reading a book is more constructive. I can't say the same for the TV. We often watch TV to kill our time and end up surfing through channels rather than watching something meaningful.

Q. 2: What kind of books are considered good reads in your opinion?

Answer: I believe books that are suitable for a reader's age and do not contain any hate speech or offensive materials are a good choice. Generally speaking, if a book can grab readers' interest, makes them think, or helps them learn something new then it is a good read. For me, a captivating story and character development in it are always key indicators for a good read. However, I often enjoy books simply because they are educative and are based on real events.

Q. 3: Do you think that people read nowadays as they did in the past?

Answer: I believe we always had readers in our society and we still have who enjoys reading books more than any other activity. However, the way people read in the past has changed. We now have digital devices to read books and the Internet to download and read any book we like. These days the young generation seems more interested in technology than books but as I have said, we still have a good number of readers who use the technology to read books of their favourite writers. Online platforms also enable us to express ourselves about a writer and his/her books more openly.

Q. 4: Do you regard famous writers as good role models?

Answer: If we consider famous writers in general, they are better role models for us than many politicians, celebrities and athletes. However, we should follow them through their writings, their contribution to society and their good deeds, not the few who set bad examples in their personal life. Writers have always inspired us and they still do in numerous ways. So if we consider famous writers as our role models, we will have more to gain than to lose.

Q. 5: If a movie is based on a book, would you prefer to read the book or to watch the film? Why?

Answer: I would not mind both reading the book and watching the movie. However, my personal experience has taught me that books are better than movies in most of the cases. To many, watching a movie is more exciting, and interesting visual effects of the film make it more appealing. However, books can touch a reader more profoundly than the movie. While movies can bring whole worlds to life before our eyes, make characters into living, books ignite our imagination and take us to a world unknown to us and the journey allows us to feel every experience of the characters, thus leaving a lasting impression in our memory. So, I might skip watching a few good films based on books but would not want to miss those books.

Q. 6: How our reading habit changes as we grow up? Why does it happen?

Answer: As we grow up, we tend to read more and the reading habit is solely based on our interests than academic requirements. In our childhood, we are so innocent and thus a fairy tale can take us to a wonderful mythical world. We want to be like the hero or heroine who has magical powers to destroy the evil. This is however not the case when we grow up as our mind gets maturity and it requires more practical ingredients to be challenged and entertained. Thus, in our adulthood, we want to be like a real-life hero who has no mysterious power but has sheer willpower and determination to face the challenges and change the world or at least change people around him. Our perspective to view the world around us changes as we grow up and so does our book choice.

SPEAKING PART 3 - DETAILED DISCUSSION

by Junaid Zafar @ ATC Sadiqabad, PAK - TCA Internationals Sydney, AUS

Media & News

Q. 1: How do most people get their news in your country?

Answer: Thank you very much for this question. Most adults in my country rely on newspapers and television channels for news. However, a good number of office-goers also visit online news portals to find out the news updates and recent events. Young people heavily rely on online newspapers and their preferred social networking platform to get such news.

Q. 2: How do you think people will get their news in the future?

Answer: I think technology will change the way we will get and share news in the future. Most people will rely on their handheld devices, that are connected to the Internet, as the primary source of news and information. Traditional newspapers and news channels, on the other hand, will become less popular in the future because of the time lag between when something happens and when readers get the chance to read or view them. Since mobile devices can offer instant updates, they will be a powerful way of getting news updates. Listening to the preferred type of news by using small devices attached to our ears would become more popular and the type of news we would like to listen to shall be determined by our activities and interests.

Q. 3: Do you believe everything you read in the newspapers?

Answer: No, I do not believe everything newspapers publish for the public. That's why I read newspapers that are mainstream and have strong authority and authenticity. Thus, I avoid reading most of the fabricated and fake news which are usually published in less authoritative and unreliable newspapers. I am also wary of politically biased and source less news articles that my friends or their friends share on Facebook and Twitter. Sometimes the process of gathering news is done hastily and irresponsibly, which results in unreliable information even in the mainstream newspapers. In such cases, I try to verify the news from other reliable sources. In fact, the forged and made-up news is all around us and without being watchful and experienced, we can't recognise lies hidden in plain sight.

Q. 4: How has TV changed people's lives?

Answer: If I am asked what is the single most influential invention that has changed people's lifestyle, my answer would be 'the television'. Television is a mandatory home appliance in all households in my country. It is a source of education, information, and entertainment for many. People watch TV to get news, weather updates, learn about foreign cultures, relax and even plan their next day based on information gained from the TV. They watch TV in the morning, evening and even before going to bed. TV programmes entertain them, keep them together in the drawing-room and eliminate many elders' loneliness. TV stars have shaped fashion, TV advertisements have changed people's purchasing habits and quiz shows have made many young become more inquisitive. Personally, I believe that television helps to bring families and communities together.

However, this device has its dark side as well. State TV channels are often the tool for political propaganda, and people who watch TV too much often suffer from dangerous diseases like diabetes and obesity.

Q. 5: What do you think of children watching TV?

Answer: I think if children watch educative, entertaining and creative TV programmes then they can learn from it. However, their parents should monitor what their children watch on TV and for how long. Watching TV is beneficial for children in some ways as it helps them relax and become inquisitive. On top of that, some TV programs provide useful academic knowledge to children. But, if children watch TV all day long, it can harm them both physically and psychologically. Such children lose their interests in outdoor activities and become addicted to TV and video games.

Q. 6: How has social media changed the way we get and share the news?

Answer: social media is an excellent tool that connects people and let us share updates, news and information with the people we care. It has made it possible not only to read the news but also to raise our voice and concern. Thus, it has made a common platform for ordinary citizens to express themselves and their opinions about the world. Getting and sharing interesting news is easier than ever before.

However, people's tendency to share news without verifying authenticity has also made it chaotic. For instance, half of the news found on such social media is either fake or fabricated.

SPEAKING PART 3 - DETAILED DISCUSSION

by Junaid Zafar @ ATC Sadiqabad, PAK - TCA Internationals Sydney, AUS

Internet

Q. 1: Do most people have a computer at home in your country? What do most people use it for?

Answer: Well, to answer this question, I should first mention that the ownership of computers is almost ten times higher in cities than that of villages in my country. Thus, most of the families living in a city own at least a computer except for poor people while almost one in twelve families in rural areas have a computer or a laptop.

The activities on a computer vary based on the users' age group. For instance, children like to watch cartoons, draw pictures and play games on a computer while teenagers mostly use the Internet on a computer or laptop to use their favourite social networking websites, find information to complete their school assignments and for entertainment purposes. Adults often use a computer to connect to the internet, check emails, learn new software, create presentations, do online shopping and listen to their favourite music.

Q. 2: Do you think all the information on the internet is true?

Answer: I believe without an authentic source and credible publisher; we should be wary of information we see or find online. The Internet is an astonishing source of information but the fake news and fabricated information are all around there. Thus, I would not believe everything I see online except they are from an authoritative source. For instance, if I find a piece of information on a website like www.bbc.com, from the official government website or from a prominent and mainstream online newspaper, I would believe it. However, any news found on a social networking website like Facebook, or from a dubious website should always be verified before believing it to be true.

Q. 3: How can people find reliable information on the internet?

Answer: People have to rely on credible websites with many years of reputation, mainstream online newspapers that are famous, government websites and fact-finding sources to get authentic information. Anything found on social networking platforms should always be verified before sharing as these are often targeted by spammers and fake news producers.

Google Scholar is an excellent place to find academic papers which are real and to be sure if an image is fake or real someone can take advantages of Google image search feature. The popular encyclopaedia offers real information and they could be trusted. Another excellent way to filter away the bogus news is to look for the author and publisher's credentials. Lastly, people should use their common sense. If an offer is too good to be true or if a story has so many unbelievable facts, people should check further to find out more about it.

Q. 4: How has the internet changed the way we live?

Answer: Honestly speaking, the Internet has revolutionised the way we live. Many of us can't believe how the people in the pre-internet era managed to do all their works at home or at the office! The Internet allows us to work more proficiently at home, work more productively at the office and let us communicate with anyone from the far distance of the world. We make video calls to be in touch with our loved ones, do online shopping, participate in meeting in another city and even drive our cars with the help of the Internet. With this technology, we have amazing access to information and they are just a few mouse clicks away. These days we even do banking online and the need to travel to long distance for ordinary tasks are no longer required. Thus, the present era with the spectacular power and blessings of the Internet is truly remarkable.

However, there is a downside to this fabulous technology. Our overreliance on the internet has made us home-centric and we prefer to stay at home rather than going outside and socialising. This is detrimental for our social and personal life that we often fail to realise.

Q. 5: How has the internet changed the way we work?

Answer: The Internet has dramatically changed the way we work as well. A large number of people work from home nowadays and the Internet has created thousands of jobs for the new generation and this has been possible due to the widespread acceptance of this technology. The Internet allows us to save a huge amount of data and they are easily accessible at a later date. We use emails, video conferencing, project management software and blogs and these are essentials for an office these days. Without the Internet, we would still have to keep track of every calculation with the help of papers and pens and the mistakes would have been more frequent. Employees in most modern offices have computers to help them finish a task and learn new things.