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Exam code : SENG

Spoken English

SEMESTER IV

BLOCK 1

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

Spoken English in the BA Programmes of KKHSOU is a compulsory course of 100 marks out of which the theoretical component accounts for 80% marks, and the practical component 20% marks. The main objectives of the course is to acquaint the learners with the basic elements that make up English speech, and then to develop in them the necessary skills and techniques of oral communication, telephonic conversation, interviewing etc. through English. Competence in Spoken English is one of the four skills of LSRW to be acquired by anyone who is engaged or aspires to be engaged in a work situation that requires oral communication in English. In this course on Spoken English, we aim to introduce the learner to the basic features of oral communication. As it is known that speech is a form of communication performed orally, the units of this course will help the learners to understand some of the basic issues of conversation in English.

When we talk with someone, we actually make use of certain social norms and rules, which may vary from situation to situation. Our conversation is essentially a speech act that takes place in a particular situation or a setting. Every day, we confront multiple situations that call for interactive conversation or even discussion. Most conversations tend to be in one's mother tongue; but sometimes there are situations where one is also required to speak in English. Therefore, the course is a step towards preparing the learner for such situations when he or she will be required to use English. These situations may be either face-to-face or telephonic mode. When the learner is engaged in face-to-face mode of conversation or in telephonic conversation, he or she must remember that there are certain rules that one has to follow and use effectively.

The units of this course shall also highlight the importance of English grammar– especially functional grammar in conversation. As it is not possible to bring to these units the entire functional grammatical components, we have identified a few key areas of English functional grammar, which we hope, would be of use to the learners in their attempt to use the language of oral communication, notably the question patterns in English, some key tense forms, ellipsis, and of course, phrasal verbs. The entire approach in these units is to enable the learner to see the use of these grammatical forms in the context of dialogues. Each of these dialogues has been suitably designed to approximate the language of natural day-to-day conversation. An attempt is also made to make the leaner aware of the notion of formal and informal words and expressions in speech.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In this Block, we shall concentrate on the Importance of English in our daily life and on how to become a confident speaker of English with the help of the knowledge of some basic aspects of communication, grammatical rules, and the sounds of English. With this focus, the Block consists of a total of eight units, which are as the following:

Unit 1 shall help you to discuss the importance of English in the global context. Besides, this unit shall also help you to indentify the skills one may require for better communication in English.
Unit 2 & 3 shall help to understand the various skills such as-reading, writing, listening and speaking involved in Oral Communication. These units shall also help in understanding the processes of Speech, Non-verbal Communication, and Conversation as a speech event.
Unit 4 & 5 shall briefly deal with some important aspects of grammar in context. We shall start with the idea of grammaticality and appropriateness. Then, we shall move on to discuss grammar in contexts, question patterns in contexts, use of modals in conversation and so on. Therefore, the units shall focus more on 'grammar in contexts' rather than on grammatical rules.
Unit 6 shall deal with the features of Informal and Formal Speech.
Unit 7 & 8 are based on the discussion of the units of Speech Sounds—Vowel and Consonant Sounds. These units shall also focus on the use of word stress and intonation in spoken language, which can produce the intended effect on the listeners. The English speech sounds require much practice on the part of the speaker so that he/she can understand and internalise the basic rules of speech sounds while speaking. The learners belonging to non-English background may find these two units difficult in the absence of practical training on the production of speech sounds in the ODL mode. Therefore, they are advised to at least try to learn the definitions of the various concepts and terms of speech sounds, if not in practice.

While going through a unit, the learner may notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read about some relevant ideas and concepts in "LET US KNOW" along with the text. We have kept "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" questions in each unit. These have been designed to self-check your progress of study. The answers to these questions are given at the end of the unit. We strongly advise that you answer the questions immediately after you finish reading the section in which these questions occur. We have also included a few books in the "FURTHER READING" which will be helpful for your further consultation. The books referred during the preparation of the units have been added at the end of each Course or Block. Despite our attempts to make a unit self-contained, we advise that you should read some of the books referred and certain additional resources for a thorough understanding of the different important aspects of Spoken English.

UNIT 1: IMPORTANCE OF SPOKEN ENGLISH

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Learning Objectives

1.2 Introduction

1.3 Knowing the Importance of English

1.4 Knowing the Skills of Better Communication

1.5 Let us Sum up

1.6 Further Reading

1.7 Model Questions

1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain the role of English in the 21st century
- state the importance of Spoken English in day-to-day conversation
- learn the skills of better communication through English
- use English to express yourself in different practical situations

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of this compulsory course on Spoken English. In this unit, we shall try to learn the importance of English both as an International language and as the language of communication in the present day situations. In this unit, we shall also try to learn the skills of better communication through the English language. By the time you finish reading the unit, you will have learnt that English, as a language, is very important in the context of the 21st century, and that the skills necessary for becoming a better speaker shall have to be earned if you want to speak English well. You will also do well if you read some of the books on Spoken English mentioned in Further Reading.

1.3 KNOWING THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH

It is important to note that among all the existing languages of the world, English has the widest reach. In nearly all countries of the world,

English has become the lingua franca in many fields which include business, politics, science and technology, advertising, media, entertainment and so on. Besides, English is the working language of many international organizations like UN, NATO and the European Union. English is also the official language of Indian states like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Nagaland. In the 21st century technology dominated world, English is the most-used language of the internet industry, as well as of all websites. This background shall help you to understand the importance of English, as for many people learning the English language is a gateway to a broader range of information as well as opportunities. The following are some of the points that clearly explain the importance of English in the present day world.

- English is the most commonly spoken language across the world.
- Knowing English increases the chances of getting a good job.
- English is the official language of more than 50 countries in the world.
- Around 400 million people of the world speak English as the first language.
- English is the language of the media industry. If you speak English, you will not need to rely on translations and subtitles anymore to enjoy your favourite books, songs, films and TV shows.
- English is also the language of the Internet. Most of the websites that we visit regularly are written in English.
- English is easy to learn compared to other languages.



LET US KNOW

- By learning English, you will also learn about other cultures. The language will make you grow as a person more than learning the values, habits and way of life in a culture that is different from yours.
- You may visit the British Council website to learn more about Spoken English. You will note that BC has introduced speaking skills course in all its Teaching Centres–Chennai, Kolkata, and New Delhi. These English courses are available at a range of

levels and are designed to develop the speaking, listening, and pronunciation skills of the learners for more effective communication in social, study-related and professional situations. Try to have a look at these courses in the web, as they will develop your confidence in using English through various conversation activities, public speaking, extempore, interview skills, and group discussions.

1.4 KNOWING THE SKILLS OF BETTER COMMUNICATION

To communicate in English, you will need some skills, with which you can become a good English speaker. The following are some of the skills for better communication as explained in the book *Better Speaking: A Guide To Improving Your Spoken English* published by BBC.

1. Becoming a Confident Speaker

Confidence, which means belief in yourself and your abilities, is a very important aspect in learning to speak any language. Generally, many learners like you worry that you will make mistakes while speaking English, and that the people listening to you will not understand anything. However, 'spoken' English is often different from 'written' English. For example, take the case of an interview in TV. If the same interview is written down, we can see that many of the sentences are not grammatically correct, and that the speaker repeats some words to give him/her time to think about what he/she is saying. He also uses *'fillers'* like 'er…', 'eh…' 'hm…' etc. which are not words but 'noises'–to give himself/herself more time to think while speaking. Although the grammar in such extracts is not always correct, we can understand the message easily. Here lies the importance of confidence in the speaker. If a message is delivered by the speaker confidently, the listener will never worry about any mistake committed during the production of the message. To build confidence while speaking in English, one must do the following:

- **Practise Frequently:** The more you speak, the easier it becomes. Try to think of the people you can talk to in English, or places in your town/school/college/university where English is spoken. The only thing you will need is to put yourself in a position where you have to speak. For this, you can also join a group of friends, a club, or conversation class.
- **Relax and think about the message:** Becoming nervous is quite common if you only focus on the grammatical rules when you speak. You should remember that what you want to say is usually more important than how you say it. Therefore, you must relax while talking about something. Speaking becomes easy when you have something to say, and you are enjoying the conversation.
- **Rehearse what you want to say:** Everyone does not have good speaking skills. If you are actually nervous, try to practise saying what you want to say to yourself for a number of times. Planning and rehearsal shall make you more confident while speaking.



ACTIVITY

Imagine you are joining a new office/class. How would you introduce yourself? What would you tell other people in the group about yourself? What would you like to know about them? Practise introducing yourself and asking questions to others. If you have a friend who is learning English, or you are in a circle of like-minded friends, you could play this as a game. Everyone may choose a new identity–a new name, job, hobbies etc. Now introduce yourselves and find out about each other.

2. Fluency vs Accuracy

As an English speaker, you will also need to understand the difference between Fluency and Accuracy. Speaking English *fluently* has been a goal for many learners of the English language. ***Fluency*** means being able to communicate your ideas without having to stop, pause, and

thinking too much about what you are saying. However, speaking ***accurately*** means that you speak without errors of grammar and vocabulary. However, if you have a very strong focus on accuracy—means getting the grammar and vocabulary correct all the time–you may find that you worry more about making mistakes. This can make you shy about speaking in English and, as a result, your spoken *fluency* might not improve. This means that, although you know English well, you might not be able to take part in a conversation. On the other hand, you may be someone who really likes to talk, and you are willing to try out the language even though you make mistakes. This can help make you sound very fluent. Look at the following points for developing fluency.

- **Identify your learning style:** You should try to understand what kind of a learner you are. Think about the situations in which you have used English and how you felt about making mistakes. The first step towards improving your spoken English is recognising what is easy for you–and then working on what is difficult.
- **Focus on one area at a time:** When you speak English, do you notice any mistake, which you make quite often? Making mistakes with tenses is quite common among the Indian students. Alternatively, you may also find yourself being slow–as if you are always searching for words and correct grammar? Next time, as you speak with your friends, try to work on the problem you have noticed. If it is fluency, try to focus on making sure your friend understands what you have said, not on avoiding mistakes.
- **Vary your practice:** If you are a member in a Community of learners, make sure you vary the types of activities you do so that you can practise both in fluency and in accuracy. Discussions are good fluency activities.



ACTIVITY

Take your mobile phone and voice record a conversation with a friend. Don't worry, no-one else is going to hear it. Two or three minutes of recording is all you need. When you have finished, listen to yourselves again. Can you identify any error? How fluent did you sound? Practise it regularly. The more you record yourselves, the more confident and natural sounding you will become.

3. Finding the Right Word

Finding the exact word for the idea you want to express is important for becoming a fluent and confident speaker. It is not unusual for the learners of English to feel that they do not know enough English words. Even the teachers like us also know how important vocabulary is when learning a language. The following points may help you in this regard,

- **Explain what you mean:** Don't worry if you cannot find the exact word you are searching for. Instead, try to explain what you mean. This is known as ***paraphrasing*** and is an important skill. You can give a short definition–for example, if you forget the word 'envelope', you might say 'the thing you put a letter in before you post it'. Or for 'elephant' you could say 'a big, grey, fat animal with large ears.
- **Start your sentence again:** If you simply stop when you reach a word you do not know, the person who is listening to you will just stop listening. Remember that what you are saying is important to you and to them. To give yourself more time to think, go back to the beginning of your sentence and start again. It is not unusual to hear some people saying 'What was I saying?' before repeating what they have said.
- **Ask for help:** Working together with the person who is listening will make life easier for you. If you get stuck and really cannot think of the word you need, why not ask the person who is listening for help? You could say 'I can't think of the word I need'. Together, you and

your listener might be able to find the words for the idea you want to express.

4. Learning Language in Chunks

When you listen to some one speaking say in a TV interview or in Radio, there are probably phrases or groups of words that you hear together all the time. For example, when announcers begin talking about a programme, which is about to start, they usually say 'Coming up next is…' In this situation, 'coming up next' is a ***chunk*** of language–a phrase or group of words, which you hear together all the time. In this regard, you should know about the importance of ***chunks*** for better speaking. Chunks are important because they make one sound natural.

When learning English, it is important to notice how words are often heard together. Let us take for example, the phrase '*different sorts of things'.* In this expression, '*sorts'* means '*types',* but we would not usually say *'different types of things'*. This linking together of words is called ***collocation.*** Therefore, we can say that '*sorts of' **collocates with** 'things'.* By listening to English a lot, you will begin to notice/hear, which words are usually found together. Very often, within a single situation such as a news reading in TV or other situations, phrases like '*take it as it comes', 'coming up next',*are examples of phrases that have a fixed meaning. By learning and using useful ***chunks*** of language, you can begin to sound more fluent. By focusing on phrases rather than individual words, you can begin to build your store of language chunks. This can help you become more fluent because you will not need to think about each individual word in the sentence.

Similarly, collocations shall also help you to progress. For example, when you are learning new vocabulary, if you have learned the verb 'to depend', do not forget that it is almost always followed by the preposition 'on'. Therefore, while writing, you will always write 'to depend on'. You will find that many nouns have strong collocating adjectives (e.g. heavy/chain smoker) or verbs (do your homework).

5. Showing where you are going

One important thing to consider when you are speaking in English is to find out how you are going to show the listeners what is important in

your talk. This is called ***signposting*** meaning to show how the information is relevant to the talk. You will note that this is an important feature of Spoken English.

When one introduces a list of new information with phrases like 'First of all…' it means that we know he will gradually has more. Phrases like 'One thing I have to say is…' show that what he is going to say is important. However, you will have to learn the art of signposting your talk effectively. The following are the ways.

- **Listen out for signposting:** How does your favourite news anchor/ presenter show where the programme is going next? Listen out for the phrases, which they use for signposting in the programmes. Becoming aware of how other speakers signpost their talks will help you to do the same.
- **Use your plan as a map:** If you are going to give a talk or presentation, plan the different stages in your talk. When you introduce a new idea, show the listener by using phrases like 'Let me tell you about…' Think of phrases such as 'first of all…', 'another thing is…' In addition, how are you going to finish? Perhaps you could say 'in conclusion…' or 'to finish off…' Use your plan as a map through your talk, showing how things link together.
- **Ask a friend to follow your plan:** If you are speaking in your friend circle, ask one of your friends to note down the phrases you are using to signpost your talk. Did they notice all the important points? Getting ***feedback*** like this from friends is one good way of finding out how effective your speaking is.

6. Keeping the Listener Interested

When you speak English, how can you make sure that the person you are speaking to really wants to listen to you? When we are learning to speak a new language, we often focus on the accuracy of what we are saying, making sure we choose the right words and grammar to express our ideas precisely. However, as a speaker, it is also important to think about how your listener *feels*. If what you say is dull and boring, or if the

listener does not get a chance to become involved, then she/he may stop listening. The following are some tactics of keeping your listener's attention.

- **Vary your vocabulary:** The effective speakers usually make use of a variety of words for the same idea. When speaking English, it is important to avoid repeating the same words too often, because this can make what you say sound very boring. To help you vary your vocabulary, you can use 'synonyms'–words which have the same meaning.
- **Plan what you want to say:** It is important to think about the topics you are going to discuss *before* the actual discussions begin. Take a few minutes to remind yourself of all the words you know about this topic. Then, when the discussion starts, you will have a stock of words ready to use.
- **Involve your listeners:** Keeping the listeners involved is the quality of a good speaker. The easiest way to do this is to ask questions– do not worry, the listeners do not actually need to answer. But questions such as 'Have you thought of…?','Do you know about…?' asked *before* you tell your story will get the listeners to think about the topic, and to be more interested in what you have to say.

7. Being a Supportive Listener

The person who is listening in a conversation can also help the speaker a lot. When we start a conversation, we usually speak for some of the time, and listen for some of the time. However, while listening, it is important to remember that you have an important part to play in ensuring that the speaker's message is clear. In a conversation, show your interest in what the speaker is saying. By being an active listener, you can ensure that the conversation is successful. Therefore, the following are the most important things to do to be an effective listener.

- **Try to recognise how you listen in your own language:** In any language, be it Assamese, Hindi, Bodo, Nepali, there are words, phrases or noises, which are used in the language to show interest and understanding. However, as a learner you must see how often do you use those words? Do you usually make eye contact with the

person who is speaking? Try to identify how you become an 'active' listener in your own language.

- **Show you are interested:** Make sure you take an active interest when you are listening. Think of at least one question you can ask the speaker to show you have been listening.
- **Ask for clarification:** Sometimes a speaker can say something, which you do not understand, or which is not clear. Practise asking for ***clarification***–that is, asking the speaker to make their meaning clearer. For example, if the speaker says he or she is feeling 'exhausted', and you are not sure of the meaning, you can ask 'I'm sorry, I'm not sure what you mean. The point you should remember that the responsibility for making the conversation successful, is always shared between the speaker and the listener.

8. Sounding Natural

For many people, who are learning to speak English, pronunciation is a big problem. Many sounds available in English may not be available in your own mother tongue. Therefore, you may face the difficulty to make yourself understood, even though your vocabulary and grammar are too good. Therefore, right pronunciation is very important while learning to speak a language like English. In a country like India, pronunciation is often a difficult area for both the students and teachers. Improving your pronunciation in English involves many things. You need to be aware of the **sound systems** of English as well as the **stress patterns** in words and sentences. You will also need to think about **intonation**, which differs across languages. However, you will get to read about all these aspects in units 7 and 8 of this course.

The following are some of the ways to concentrate on for sounding natural.

- **Notice the stress pattern:** When you learn a new word, always try to notice which syllable is stressed. For example, in the word 'dictionary', the syllable **dic-**is the one, which carries most emphasis. Getting the stress right is very important. If you put the stress on the wrong syllable, the listeners may not be able to understand you.

- **Getting the Intonation right:** Just as words have stressed syllables, so sentences have stressed words. When speaking in English, try to think which words are the most important in showing the meaning of what you want to say. The result of this type of stress is that some of the other words in the sentence almost disappear.
- **You can hear the speaker jump from one important word to the next:** To practise identifying stress in sentences, make it a habit to listen to your favourite English news presenter. Can you identify which words she or he often stresses?



1.5 LET US SUM UP

From this introductory unit, you have learnt that

- English may not be the most spoken language in the world, but it is the official language in a large number of countries across the world.
- English is the dominant business language and it has become almost a necessity for people to speak English if they are to enter a global workforce.
- English is the language of science, of aviation, computers, diplomacy, and tourism.
- English is the language of the media industry. If you speak English, you will not need to rely on translations and subtitles anymore to enjoy your favourite books, songs, films and TV shows.
- English is also the language of the Internet. Many websites are written in English – you will be able to understand them and to take part in forums and discussions.
- Confidence is a very important aspect in learning to speak any language.
- Speaking English *fluently* has been a goal for many learners of the English language. However, along with *Fluency* many other learners may also have the goal of spoken *accuracy*. Speaking *accurately* means that you speak without errors of grammar and vocabulary.

- Finding the right word for the idea you want to express is important for becoming a fluent, confident speaker.
- The fixed phrases or *chunks* are useful in language communication because, when we use them, we do not need to build each sentence word by word.
- When you are speaking in English, *signposting* or showing how the information is relevant to the talk, is an important feature.
- When you speak English, how can you make sure that the person you are speaking to really wants to listen?
- The person who is listening in a conversation can also help the speaker a lot. When we have a conversation, we usually speak for some of the time, and listen for some of the time.
- For many people who are learning to speak English, pronunciation is a big problem. Many sounds available in English may not be available in your own mother tongue. Therefore, you will need to know what stress and intonation are while speaking in English.



1.6 FURTHER READING

British Broadcasting Corporation. (2003). *Better Speaking: A Guide to Improving Your Spoken English.*

Sethi, J. & Dhamija P. V. (2009). *Course in Phonetics And Spoken English.* PHI Learning.

Sasikumar, V. & P. V. Dhamija. (1995). *Spoken English: A Self-Learning Guide to Conversation Practice.* New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited.



1.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Why is English important in the 21st century? Write in detail.

Q 2: What are the qualities of a good speaker of English or any language? Illustrate with examples.

Q 3: Why is listening also important while speaking in English?

Q 4: How to become a confident speaker of English? Discuss with examples.

Q 5: What does it mean to Learn Language in Chunks? Explain with examples.

Q 6: In what ways, does listening to news channels in Radio and Television help in the acquisition of the art of speaking? Discuss.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 2: ISSUES ON ORAL COMMUNICATION I

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Skills Involved in Oral Communication

- 2.3.1 Listening and Speaking Skills
- 2.3.2 Reading and Writing Skills

2.4 The Process of Speech

2.5 Non-verbal Communication

2.6 Let us Sum up

2.7 Further Reading

2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.9 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain the concept of language skills
- note the sub - skills involved in oral communication
- appreciate the importance of an awareness of sub-skills
- understand the process of speech production
- explain non-verbal communication techniques.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first of the two units on issues of oral communication. This unit primarily aims at highlighting a number of basic issues involved in using language in terms of skills by stating that using language is essentially the use of the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Though from the point of view of oral communication, it appears that the skills of listening and speaking are of paramount importance, the fact is that effective oral communication is the combination of all the four skills. Collectively, all the four skills contribute to effective communication. This unit explores the

various elements that a good language user needs to demonstrate for effective communication. Generally speaking, listening skill implies understanding the language when spoken at a normal conversational speed. Similarly, speaking skill implies an ability to speak the language fluently and appropriately. In the same way, reading skill implies an ability to read different kinds of texts either silently and fluently with comprehension. Likewise, writing as a skill involves an ability to write different kinds of texts. From general statements about skills, we moved on to specific elements underlying each of these four skills. We observed that these specifics would make a language user aware of the little things that are to be acquired in order to be competent oral communicators. We call these little things the sub-skills underlying each of these language skills.

Next, we shall move on to the process of speech production by identifying the different elements that are involved in the process. These include a sender of the message and a receiver of the message. Between the sender and the receiver, there is a process in which the speaker transmits the intended message. In doing so, the sender encounters both linguistic and situational constraints, which affect the utterance. The receiver, in his/her turn, interprets the message and provides feedback to the sender as part of the communicative process. We shall also refer to the different types of non-verbal communication techniques also called non-linguistic communication techniques, which include body language, personal appearance, facial expressions and gestures that can combine with speech to make the communication more effective.

2.3 SKILLS INVOLVED IN ORAL COMMUNICATION

Communication is often used as a term or a concept to refer to an activity or a process of expressing ideas and feelings or of giving people some information. We can say that:

- speech is one of the means of communication
- writing is another means of communication

We can make our oral communication more effective by combining our speech with different non-verbal techniques of communication, which include sign language, body language, gestures and so on.

From the above statements, we note that speech and writing are the two modes of using language for the purpose of communication. We may generalise what is exactly involved when we consider a person to be a competent user of the language. For example, when we say that Rhea is a competent user of English, we mean that she is able to demonstrate the following four of abilities among others. She can

(a) understand English when spoken at a normal conversational speed,
(b) speak the language fluently and appropriately,
(c) read different types of texts either silently or aloud with comprehension and
(d) write different types of communications in English.

These four statements tell us what Rhea can do with the language. An ability to do something is a skill. The four statements listed above — (a) to (d) – are language skills or abilities that can be termed as *listening, speaking, reading* and *writing* respectively. Generally speaking,

- listening skill implies understanding the language when spoken at a normal conversational speed;
- speaking skill implies an ability to speak the language fluently and appropriately;
- reading skill implies an ability to read different kinds of texts either silently and fluently with comprehension and
- writing as a skill involves an ability to write different kinds of texts.

2.3.1 LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

Moving from general statements on language skills, we need to know the specifics underlying each general statement. An analysis of these specifics will make a language user know and to know about the little things that are required to be mastered in order to be competent oral communicators. We call these little things the sub-skills underlying each of these language skills

We begin with the listening skill. Listening as a skill involves the ability in a person to be able to do a number of activities. The little activities that a language user can perform or demonstrate can

be referred to as sub-skills underlying a skill. For example, the ability to distinguish the difference in the sounds of the two words *bit* and *hit* to grasp their meanings is a sub-skill of the skill of listening. The skill of listening can be analysed in terms of the following sub-skills:

- recognise the characteristics of English speech sounds
- recognise stress and intonation of English when spoken and follow their significance
- recognize the meanings of words, phrases and sentences in context
- grasp the ideas in a piece of connected speech
- understand the views, opinions and ideas expressed or events narrated
- gather the views, opinions and ideas expressed
- interpret the views, opinions and ideas expressed and
- appreciate the views, and opinions and ideas read out or spoken to him/her.
- know conventional greetings and modes of address
- have knowledge of the contracted forms that are common in speech
- understand sentence fragments rather than complete sentences that are natural in speech
- have knowledge of utterances that are structured according to tone units or tone groups rather than phrases and clauses
- recognise appropriate discourse markers.

On the other hand, speaking being a productive skill, is a fairly complex activity involving a number of sub-skills. Most importantly, production of speech involves not only an ability to listen correctly to the spoken text and understand it in order to make an effective response but also to

- use proper pronunciation, stress and intonation
- distinguish the sounds of English from those of his/her mother tongue
- use appropriate words, phrases and sentences

- use proper pauses in speech
- use varied sentence patterns
- present ideas in proper sequence
- has reasonable speed and flow in speech, suited to the situation
- use conventional greetings and modes of address
- use the contracted forms that are common in speech
- use sentence fragments rather than complete sentences that are natural in speech
- make utterances that are structured according to tone units or tone groups rather than phrases and clauses
- make use of appropriate discourse markers.

In the above points a number of terms have been used like *contracted forms, tone groups* and *discourse markers*. You will come across these terms as you go along in this course. However, as a starting point, you may find the following information useful for an understanding of the terms.

(a) Contracted forms are short forms of certain full forms that we use in informal speech or writing e.g.
Full form: I shall see you tomorrow.
Short form: I'll see you tomorrow.
I'll is the contracted form of I will or I shall".

(b) Tone groups, also called tone units, are the basic units of intonation in a language. We do not and cannot utter a long sentence with a rapidity non-stop in one breath. We break up the utterance into tone units. A short utterance like "What's your name?" may consist of one tone group. However, we chunk up longer utterances with slight paused in between chunks. In uttering a sentence like "When I reached the station, the train had left" we prefer a mid-break in the comma. Thus, we can utter the sentence by using two-tone units.

(c) Discourse markers are words like 'well'. 'You know' etc. that speakers often use in conversation.

Remember that these statements can be seen as norms that a competent language user must acquire in order to be a fluent communicator.

2.3.2 READING AND WRITING SKILLS

Next, let us move on to the skills of reading and writing, beginning with reading especially the skill of reading silently. This skill involves an ability to

- display reasonable speed in silent reading
- grasp the meaning of words, phrases and sentences from the context
- locate key-words, phrases and sentences from the text
- locate important facts and ideas
- identify relationship between objects, ideas, events, facts etc
- infer the meaning, ideas and the message of a passage
- infer the mood of the author or character
- interpret ideas, events, traits of character
- get at the central idea of the piece
- evaluate events, actions, ideas, feelings and views.

The sub - skills of reading aloud are closer to the sub- skills of speaking. Finally, let us come to writing as a skill which involves an ability to

- use appropriate words, idioms and structures
- use varied sentences
- spell correctly
- use capital letters and marks of punctuation
- make appropriate use of connectives
- present only relevant facts and ideas
- avoid unnecessary repetition
- organize ideas, facts etc into paragraphs
- make notes of speeches heard
- write outlines for guidance in making a speech
- write a summary/gist/review of a speech heard.

We observe that to develop oral communicative competence we need to acquire all the four language skills considering that listening and reading are skills that enable us to receive information or the material we want to include in our speech. Likewise, we can say that speaking and writing are skills that enable us to send information.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Read each of these sub-skills and name the skill that each one of them represent:

(a) spells correctly

(b) infers the mood of the author

(c) uses proper pronunciation

(d) recognizes stress and intonation

(e) has reasonable speed and flow.

2.4 THE PROCESS OF SPEECH

Before discussing the process of speech, it would be useful to specify what we mean by speech. Are we talking about conversation or a talk or both?

Conversation is used loosely and non-technically to refer to any interactional stretch of talk involving at least two persons and taking place in a non-formalized setting. A talk can be a discussion, a lecture or speech or any other oral communication.

We cannot call a debate in the Lok Sabha or the State Assembly a piece of conversation, while an interview conducted on television may approximate to conversation. Here we are using the word *speech* in a general sense to include different types of oral communication.

The process of speech can be explained by referring to speech as product. An utterance that we hear spoken to us is an example of speech as product. The process of speech involves the performance, the act of speaking which can be explained with the following flow-chart.

(a) the person who is the speaker

(b) the message intended to be transmitted

(c) the linguistic and situational constraints through which the message is transmitted

(d) the message received by the receiver

(e) interpreting the message and

(f) feedback on the message.

The message could be a piece of information that is spoken to be passed from one person to another. The message may consist of facts, ideas, opinions, attitude, feelings or courses of actions sent by the face-to-face mode. It could consist of a set of verbal and non-verbal cues sent by the speaker. The cues include words, figures, gestures, movement's personal appearance, facial expressions, postures, eye contact and vocal techniques. However, the message intended to be transmitted often face two kinds of constraints:

(a) linguistic constraint

(b) situational constraint.

A linguistic constraint may be an ambiguous utterance, faulty pronunciation, a jargon or any homophone that may create problems of speech.

- Ambiguous utterances are utterances having more than one meaning e.g., "The police stopped drinking by midnight."
- Homophones are words like *peace/piece, nose/knows* etc which have the same pronunciation though the words are different.

A situational constraint may be noise that can cause interference in the communication process, which causes hindrance in the transmission or reception of the message. It distorts the interpretation of the message in the communicative process.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: Give brief answers:

(a) Give an example of an ambiguous sentence.

(b) Define homophone and give an example.

(c) Define noise in the process of communication

2.5 NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

At this point, the role of the non-verbal communication techniques also called non-verbal communication techniques in the process of speech production need to be highlighted. We have stated earlier that to convey a message effectively, we often combine speech with non-verbal techniques like body language as part of the process of speech. Body language and spoken language are dependent on each other. Spoken language alone cannot give us the full meaning of what a person is saying nor for that matter can body language do this alone.

Similarly, personal appearance is a significant non-verbal clue to a person's personality. If the speaker is at ease, the audience will also be at ease; if you appear nervous and jittery, the audience will also feel the same way'.

Thirdly, facial expressions can contribute to effective communication. For example, imagine a person making a speech as follows: "I am very delighted to be here this lovely morning to address this gathering of young civil service trainees..." the speaker's delight must show in his/her face. If the speaker appears glum with creased eyebrows, the magic of the utterance will be altogether lost.

Fourthly, the gestures that the speaker makes can be another area of interest in the process of speech. Well-selected and well-timed gestures can add effectively to the type of audience-reaction we want. For example, sweeping hands to indicate that the speaker is covering a broad field or taking in the entire audience can add to the speech event with more effectiveness.

All these elements are part of the process of speaking. The sender decides when and what to communicate, to whom to communicate and how to communicate and decides the way in which they will communicate. The receiver takes the message, interprets it and gives a response.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Give brief answers:

(a) Briefly explain non-verbal communication.

(b) Explain eye contact as a non-verbal technique.



2.6 LET US SUM UP

This unit primarily aims at highlighting a number of basic issues involved in using language in terms of skills. We learnt from the unit that,

- using language is essentially the use of the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- We understood that from the point of view of oral communication, though the skills of listening and speaking are of paramount importance, oral communication can be effective by combining all the four skills. Collectively all the four skills contribute to effective communication.
- We also learnt about the various elements or skills that a good language user needs to demonstrate for effective communication.
- Generally speaking, listening skill implies understanding the language when spoken at a normal conversational speed. Similarly, speaking skill implies an ability to speak the language fluently and appropriately. In the same way, reading skill implies an ability to read different kinds of texts either silently and fluently with comprehension. Likewise, writing as a skill involves an ability to write different kinds of texts.
- From general statements about skills, we moved on to specific elements underlying each of these four skills. We observed that these specifics would make a language user aware of the little things that are to be acquired in order to be competent oral communicators. We call these little things the sub-skills underlying each of these language skills.

- Next, we moved on to the process of speech production by identifying the different elements that are involved in the process. These include a sender of the message and a receiver of the message. Between the sender and the receiver, there is a process in which the speaker transmits the intended message. In doing so, the sender encounters both linguistic and situational constraints, which affect the utterance. The receiver, in his/her turn, interprets the message and provides feedback to the sender as part of the communicative process.
- We also referred to the different types of non-verbal communication techniques also called non-linguistic communication techniques, which include body language, personal appearance, facial expressions and gestures that can combine with speech to make the communication more effective.



2.7 FURTHER READING

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2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1:

(a) writing

(b) reading

(c) speaking

(d) listening

(e) speaking

Ans to Q 2:

(a) Flying planes can be dangerous.

(b) See 2.4.

(c) Noise can be defined as interference in the communication process, which causes hindrance in the transmission or reception of the message.

Ans to Q 3:

(a) Non-verbal communication is the process of communication without the use of words. It includes gestures that contribute to the effectiveness of speech.

(b) Eye can signal intimacy, concern, naughtiness, joy, surprise, curiosity, need for approval, affection, love, plea for mercy etc. Eye can also disclose a person's true moods, their state of health, personality and so on.



2.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Give brief answers.

(a) Define language skill.

(b) Explain the tern 'sub-skill of listening'.

(c) Give an example of a sub-skill of writing.

Q 2: Write short notes on.

(a) Listening skill

(b) Speaking skill

(c) Linguistic and situational constraints in communication.

Q 3: Answer the following questions.

(a) Write a note on non-verbal technique.

(b) Discuss the process of oral communication.

(c) Discuss some problems of listening correctly.

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UNIT 3: ISSUES ON ORAL COMMUNICATION-II

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Conversation as a Speech event

3.4 Turn-Taking

3.5 The Language of Conversation

3.6 Phrasal Verbs

3.7 Let us Sum up

3.8 Further Reading

3.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.10 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain conversation in terms of a speech event
- appreciate the qualities of a good conversationalist
- enlist the rules of turn-taking
- discuss the use of discourse markers
- evaluate the language of conversation

3.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we propose to introduce you to a few other aspects of oral communication. Though oral communication includes conversation both through the face-to-face and the telephonic mode, this unit shall concentrate only on the face-to-face mode. We shall first discuss conversation as a speech event. We defined speech event as an act of exchanging or sharing of information or ideas and thoughts that are of mutual interest to the participants of the speech event. Next, we shall discuss the norms of conversational behaviour by taking up the concept of turn taking, which is a norm for effective conversation implying that the roles of the

speaker and the listener change constantly. We stated that the person who speaks first becomes a listener as soon as the person addressed takes his or her turn in the conversational act by beginning to speak. When there are more than two persons in the conversational act, each individual would follow the norm of turn taking to contribute to the conversational act.

We have also attempted in this unit to distinguish between written and spoken language from the point of view of production and observed that the basic difference between spoken and written language is in the manner of production. The speaker has available to him a number of advantages to express himself effectively notably, voice quality, facial expressions, gestures etc. which are denied to the writer. Secondly, the speaker, in course of the conversation, can go on modifying or monitoring his production under circumstances that are considerably more demanding. Moreover, the setting plays a dominant role in finding the meaning of an utterance. However, drawn away from the setting, if the same utterances are written down, they become difficult to understand.

3.3 CONVERSATION AS A SPEECH EVENT

Oral communication includes both face-to-face communication and telephonic communication. As a separate unit on telephonic communication skills is included in this course, this unit and the others that follow, we attempt to provide you with the necessary guidance developing oral communication skills or what is known as conversational skills.

Conversation is the art of exchanging information between persons. Conversation is basically a speech event. A speech event refers to an act of exchanging or sharing information or ideas and thoughts that are of mutual interest to the speakers. However, some speech event may be exchanges of polite courtesies that are very common in society. You may like to imagine a situation in which acquaintances come across each other in the street. Social norms do not allow a person ignore an acquaintance of his/hers' while passing by in the street. For example, the usual exchange between them would be something like this.

1.	Person A	: Hello! How are you?
	Person B	: Pretty well, thanks. And you?
	Person A	: I'm fine, thanks.
	Person B	: It's good to see you again. Bye
	Person A	: Bye

In our social life, such exchanges are the most natural things to happen. Even if the two persons who come across each other either as fellow passengers in a bus or in a waiting room or at any such places, would invariably try to get introduced to each other and start a conversation. The important thing is that the participants of the conversational act must show interest in talking to each other.

2.	Person A	: Hello! I'm Reeta.
	Person B	: Hi! I'm Reena. Going to Dibrugarh?
	Reeta	: No, to Jorhat. And you?
	Reena	: To Dibrugarh
	Reeta	: You live there.....

In this extract, you will find that two persons Reeta and Reena find themselves as fellow passengers in a Dibrugarh-bound bus. They get introduced to each other and you can be sure that though they were strangers they soon became good friends. Your conversational skills, your ability to make friends, or your ability to socialise will bring a great difference to your life.

Good conversationalists develop in them a number of qualities, which include an ability to make listeners interested in listening to what they say. They actively invite us to get closer, creating an environment in which we can relax our guard and relate more directly and openly. For example, if speakers have the ability to make the utterance warm and friendly rather than being pompous and patronising, dogmatic and argumentative, they should be able to make themselves heard and accordingly they would receive a similar kind of response.

Secondly, good conversationalists are knowledgeable persons they know what to talk about and how to talk. Being confident and reassuring, they never get tongue-tied. Being tongue-tied means being unable to speak

a nasty experience, which many speakers often encounter as a result of hesitation or lack of proper ideas. Thus, it is important to have sufficient resources to keep a conversation going.

Moreover, it is possible for a person to become tongue-tied when a person shows a sense of superiority over the person talking to. Hence, in order to be a good conversationalist, speakers should be able to adjust well to the attitude of the persons they are talking to and to know how to start and how to end a conversation. This would also require them to be familiar with the norms of conversational behaviour notably turn- taking.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Give brief answers:

(a) Give a definition of 'speech event'.

(b) Give the meaning of the term 'being tongue-tied'.

(c) What do you mean by 'being dogmatic'?

3.4 TURN-TAKING

We stated in section 3.3 that among other things, a speech event requires us to be familiar with the norms of conversational behaviour. One of these norms is *turn taking.* We note that in conversation the roles of the speaker and the listener change constantly. The person who speaks first becomes a listener as soon as the person addressed takes his or her turn in the conversational act by beginning to speak. When there are more than two persons in the conversational act, each individual would follow certain norms of waiting for his or her turn to contribute to the conversational act. We may illustrate the above information by taking a situation in which the conversation takes place with two persons. Let us say the persons are A and B.

- When A speaks to B, we say that A is the speaker and B is the listener.
- Next, when B speaks to A, their roles change. Now B is the speaker and A is the listener.

- In conversation, the roles of the speaker and the listener change constantly. When there is no change of roles, instead of a speech, it becomes a monologue.
- The person who speaks first becomes a listener as soon as the person addressed takes his or her turn in the conversation by beginning to speak.

The rules of conversational behaviour allow that a person who is the listener will take his/her turn to speak when the person had completed his/ her utterance. This suggests a second part: If speaker A gives listener B the turn, listener B must take the turn. If B doesn't take his/her turn, A will carry on. On the other hand, if speaker A goes on speaking, listener B may show a willingness to give up his/her turn. B may through gestures suggest to A that he/she would like to take turn.

Sometimes, however, in certain situations where conversation is going on in which several persons are participating, several conversations may simultaneously be in progress. In such gatherings, invariably one takes a privileged position whereby the person controls turn taking at conventionally determined points. When the turn taking norm gets violated, systematic conversation breaks down and everyone will be talking to everyone at the same time. Such a situation is sometimes observed in certain talk shows or TV debates where no one understands or cares to understand the other and consequently there is a total breakdown of the rules of conversational behaviour.

While we are discussing 'turn taking', the impression that has been given so far is that the exchange that takes place between two persons is always verbal.

(3) Dristi : Tripti.
Tripti : Yes?
Dristi : Have you got an extra pen?
Tripti : Sure, take this.
Dristi : Thanks.

An important aspect of informal conversation is that it is not always that an exchange that takes place between two persons has to be verbal (using words or sentences as responses). It may be non-verbal as well. Let us reconstruct the conversation at (3) above here:

(4)	Dristi	:	Tripti
	Tripti	:	(looks at Dristi)
	Dristi	:	Have you got an extra pen?
	Tripti	:	(hands in a pen to Dristi)
	Dristi	:	(Smiles at Tripti)

If you compare the conversation in (3) and (4), you will discover how non-verbal action can be communicative. Tripti's eye contact with Dristi at (4) is equivalent to Tripti's 'Yes' at (3). Similarly, Dristi's smile at (4) is equivalent to her "Thanks" at (3). In other words, we often have a choice between verbal and non-verbal communication to express an idea or to convey a message.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: Answer the following questions:

(a) Define the term 'turn-taking'.

(b) Explain what you mean by 'verbal exchange'.

(c) Explain the term 'non-verbal exchange'.

3.5 THE LANGUAGE OF CONVERSATION

The language of conversation has been discussed here in relation to the written variety of language. From the point of view of production, it is clear that the language of conversation is strikingly different from written language. These differences are listed here.

(a) The basic difference between spoken and written language is in the manner of production. The speaker has available to him a number of advantages to express himself effectively. These include voice quality, facial expressions, gestures etc., which are denied to the writer.

(b) The speaker, in course of the conversation, can go on modifying his production under circumstances that are considerably more demanding. The speaker can monitor what he has just said and determine whether it matches his intentions. This facility is also denied to the writer.

(c) In speech, the setting plays a dominant role in finding the meaning of an utterance. However, drawn away from the setting, if the same utterances are written down, they become difficult to understand. Therefore, in writing, one has to be more detailed so as to grasp the meaning:

(5)	Dona	:	Sunny, do you like this?
	Sunny	:	Oh, it's marvellous. Where did you get it?
	Dona	:	My brother gave it to me.
	Sunny	:	Now, what are you going to do with it?
	Dona	:	Let's see.

From the above conversation, it is difficult to state what Dona is talking about. However, it is not difficult for Sunny to understand Dona's words because she has the advantage of the setting that has led to the conversation. Let us assume that Dona's brother had given her a parrot. Sunny deduces the meaning of 'it' from the situation of setting.

(d) Unlike written language, the syntax of spoken language is typically much less structured than that of written language. For example, spoken language makes use of many incomplete sentences, often simply sequences of phrases. Read this extract:

(6)	Dhruva	:	Hi! Going somewhere?
	Tina	:	Oh Dhruva!
	Dhruva	:	Surprised to see me?
	Tina	:	I thought you were in Bangalore.
	Dhruva	:	I was.
	Tina	:	When did you come?
	Dhruva	:	Yesterday.

Notice the incomplete utterances used by Dhruva:

(i) Going somewhere?

(ii) Surprised to see me?

(iii) I was.

(iv) Yesterday.

These incomplete forms are very commonly used in spoken language. There are shortened forms of simple sentences.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Answer the following questions:

(a) In what way is oral communication at an advantage over written communication?

(b) Give an example with the help of a dialogue how a speaker can monitor what he/she had just said.

(c) What is the function of setting in oral communication?

3.6 PHRASAL VERBS

Phrasal verbs are very important components in our conversation. They refer to a verb structure in which a verb combines with an adverb as in "*Please sit down*." Verbs can also combine with a preposition, which is referred to as prepositional verbs, eg. Please look at this report.

Phrasal verbs are usually more informal than the one-word verb that expresses the same meaning as the phrasal verbs. For this reason, phrasal verbs are more commonly used in day-to-day conversation. Examples include:

- *pull down* in place of demolish a structure,
- *take up* in place of accept,
- *put off* in place of defer,
- *put by* in place of store for future use,
- *carry on* in place of continue with a work,
- *hang on* in place of waiting for something,

- *cross out* in place of cancel,
- *work out* in place of to do a calculation for results etc.

Here is a dialogue between the Principal of an educational institution and a staff member on the arrangements for a felicitation programme for the rank holders in the HSLC and HS examination. Note the use of the phrasal verbs and also the style of conversation.

(7)	Prl	:	I sent for you on an urgent matter, Ms Sarma.
	S	:	Yes, Ma' am?
	Prl	:	Can you find out if Mr H.P. Das is free on the 15th of this month?
	S	:	Sure. Shall I ring him up?
	Prl	:	No, don't. You don't ring up Mr Das just like that.
	S	:	True.
	Prl	:	Fix up an appointment and call on him. Take someone with you.
	S	:	Shall I take a letter?
	Prl	:	Of course, you will. But you'll have to discuss if he's free that day.
	S	:	Yes ma'am.
	Prl	:	You may hang on till I type out the letter for him.

Note the use of single verbs in the first sentence of each pair and how the single verb has been replaced by a phrasal verb in the second sentence.

1. (a) We're trying to <u>discover</u> the truth.
   (b) We're trying to <u>find out</u> the truth.
2. (a) Can you <u>arrange</u> an appointment?
   (b) Can you <u>fix up</u> an appointment?
3. (a) You have <u>omitted</u> his name.
   (b) You have <u>left out</u> his name.
4. (a) He <u>established</u> a small business in the city.
   (b) He <u>set up</u> a small business in the city.

You may look up a grammar book or a dictionary of phrasal verbs for more examples.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Replace the underlined verbs with a phrasal verb

(a) I wonder how he managed to escape.

(b) He phoned me this morning.

(c) I have overcome this difficulty.

(d) The case will arrive for decision.

(e) The bridge collapsed under heavy traffic.



3.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we learnt the following aspects of oral communication concentrating only on the face-to-face mode of communication.

- We learnt conversation as a speech event, which refers to an act of exchanging or sharing of information or ideas and thoughts that are of mutual interest to the participants of the speech event.
- Next, we learnt about turn-taking in terms of a norm for effective conversation implying that the roles of the speaker and the listener change constantly. We learnt that the person who speaks first becomes a listener as soon as the person addressed takes his or her turn in the conversational act by beginning to speak.
- We also learnt the distinction between written and spoken language from the point of view of production and noted the advantages of a speaker over the writer to express himself effectively for having available to him or her the advantages of voice quality, facial expressions, gestures etc. which are denied to the writer.
- We also learnt how the speaker, in course of the conversation, can go on modifying or monitoring his production under circumstances that are considerably more demanding and also how the setting plays a dominant role in finding the meaning of an utterance.



3.8 FURTHER READING

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3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1:

(a) A speech event is an act of exchanging or sharing information, ideas and thoughts that are of mutual interest to the speakers.

(b) Being tongue-tied is an inability to speak freely as through awkwardness in the presence of others.

(c) Being dogmatic means lacking a flexibility in the communication activity. Such a person would like to flout the norms of conversational behaviour.

Ans to Q 2:

(a) See 3.4.

(b) A verbal exchange is the conversation between persons that is carried out with words or sentences.

(c) A non-verbal exchange is an exchange that takes place between persons where no words or sentences are used. Instead the participants use signs, gestures, facial expressions, eye-contact and so on

Ans to Q 3:

(a) run away

(b) rang me up

(c) got over

(d) come up

(e) gave way



3.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Answer the following questions very briefly:

(a) Give a definition of conversation.

(b) Explain the term 'non-verbal exchange'.

(c) Rewrite the sentence replacing the underlined verb with a phrasal verb.

I visited my uncle at Delhi.

(d) Here is an incomplete exchange between A and B

A: Hello! _____?

B: Fine, Thank you, and you?

A: I'm fine, Thanks.

Supply the possible utterances to complete the conversation.

Q 2: Give answers to the following questions.

(a) Explain the term 'speech event'.

(b) Discuss briefly the importance of 'a setting' in a conversational act.

(c) Construct a dialogue between two persons A and B on the function of making enquiries in a shop counter on certain items for purchase.

(d) Construct a dialogue between A and B where one of the speakers makes use of at least two non-verbal exchanges.

Q 3: Answer the following questions.

(a) Discuss the characteristics of a good conversationalist.

(b) Discuss the importance of turn-taking as a norm of conversational behaviour.

(c) Discuss the differences between the language of speech and written language.

(d) You would like to visit a few places in South India by train. Write a conversation with a travel agent on routes, visits, etc. for buying tickets.

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UNIT 4: GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT I

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 Grammaticality and Appropriateness

4.4 Eliciting Information

4.5 Question Patterns in Context

4.6 Some Verb Forms in Context

4.7 Let us Sum up

4.8 Further Reading

4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.10 Model Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- appreciate the notions of grammaticality and appropriateness in speech
- grasp some of the techniques of eliciting information in speech
- select the appropriate type of grammatical form in oral communication
- select vocabulary items appropriate for oral communication.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

We begin this unit by introducing you to two concepts that are considered to be of much importance in oral communication. These two concepts are grammaticality and appropriateness. We have used the term 'grammaticality' to mean that a particular sentence or a piece of text has made use of the forms of the language that are correct according to the rules of grammar. If a sentence does not follow the rules of grammar, the sentence is unacceptable irrespective of whether we use that sentence in our speech or writing. Our sentences or oral utterances must conform to

the norms of grammaticality. We have defined grammaticality as the permissible ways by which words and phrases can be organized in a clause structure. We noted that sometimes a sentence may be grammatically correct but may still be inappropriate for a particular context. The important point to note is that *Grammaticality depends on context in order for a sentence to be appropriate and acceptable*.

Next, we shall turn our attention to the issue of eliciting information. We noted that communication involves the skill of eliciting information. There are several aspects of eliciting information.ome of them is that the information that we elicit has to be a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication. There may be occasions where verbal communication does not provide us the real information. The real information has to be elicited from the non-verbal behaviour of the speaker. Secondly, in order to elicit information effectively, it becomes necessary to make our utterances grammatically correct and appropriate. We highlighted the different uses of a few grammatical forms notably question patterns and forms in different contexts or situations. The objective has been to enable language users to select the grammatical form that would be appropriate for oral communication in a particular situation.

4.3 GRAMMATICALITY AND APPROPRIATENESS

Many of us tend to believe that speakers like to take liberty with 'grammar' in their use of language in oral conversation. We often argue that it is all right to use ungrammatical forms in our speech, which would be considered unacceptable in formal writing. This notion that we can use ungrammatical forms in our speech is not at all true. On the contrary, our spoken language has to be not only grammatical but also appropriate in order to be acceptable. In other words, our spoken language must follow the norms of grammaticality and appropriateness leading to acceptability.

By the term grammaticality, we mean that a particular sentence or a piece of text has made use of the forms of the language that are correct according to the rules of grammar. If a sentence does not follow the rules of grammar, that sentence is unacceptable irrespective of whether we use it

in our speech or writing. Our sentences or oral utterances in speech must conform to the norms of grammaticality. We can say that the term grammaticality refers to whether a sentence structure is formally possible or not. It is concerned with whether the language permits a sentence structure as grammatical or possible or rejects it as ungrammatical or impossible. In other words, grammaticality is the permissible ways by which words and phrases can be organized in a clause structure. For example, grammaticality does not permit the use of forms like:

(a) *John play tennis.

(b) *The boys is playing in the field.

(The star [*] at the beginning of a sentences is used to indicate that the sentence is wrong.)

The above two sentences are not grammatically possible. In the first sentence, the subject is in the third person singular number, which requires that the verb that follows will take the –s form (plays). In the second sentence, the subject in the plural does not permit a singular verb form. Grammatically, there is no subject-verb agreement in the sentence.

However, sometimes a sentence may be grammatically correct but may still be inappropriate for a particular context. *Grammaticality depends on context*. (Hence, we have used the heading “Grammar in Context” for units 4 and 5.) There are certain norms of appropriateness, which implies that even if a sentence is grammatically correct, it may still be inappropriate for a particular context and hence unacceptable. To illustrate the point, let us take two versions of the same conversation. Both the versions are grammatically correct, as you will see below. But before that, let me explain the context or the situation in which the conversation takes place.

Context:

Let us suppose that while travelling in a bus, a passenger Barun noticed that his fellow passenger Kushal had just completed reading his copy of *The Assam Tribune* and Barun would like to borrow it from him. A conversation between the two takes place.

Version 1

Barun: Hello!

Kushal: Yes, please?

Barun: Give me that newspaper.

Kushal: You want the newspaper?

Barun: Yes, I want the newspaper.

(*He hands him the newspaper.*)

Version 2

Barun: Excuse me please!

Kushal: Yes, please?

Barun: May I borrow your newspaper?

Kushal: Sure. (*He hands him the newspaper.*)

Barun: Thanks.

Comment on the two versions:

Both the versions make use of grammatical utterances but the first version is not appropriate for the context in which these utterances were made. The second version is appropriate and hence acceptable. Note that a sentence like “Give me your newspaper” is a rude demand. Thus, we see that grammaticality is not the sole criterion for language use.

Appropriateness seems to suggest readily the requirement of a grammatical form to contextual features for acceptability. In order to achieve acceptability, the sentence or the utterance has to be appropriate both in terms of grammar and in terms of the context or the situation in which the sentence or the utterance is being used. For example, an interrogative sentence structure may not always be used to ask a question. We can use the interrogative form to make requests in a polite social context. Examples include:

(a) Would you mind closing the door?

(b) Could you come tomorrow morning at 8 o’clock?

(c) Can I come in, please?

These sentences are interrogative in form but functionally they are polite requests.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Give brief answers.

(a) State whether the following sentence is appropriate:

"I purchased a pen, look!"

(b) State why the following sentence is not grammatical;

"The climate of Guwahati is hotter than Shillong".

(c) Comment on this utterance:

"Give me two thousand rupees change", he said to the cashier.

4.4 ELICITING INFORMATION

In this section, we shall take up the issue of eliciting information. Elicitation is the technique or procedure that we use to obtain information on a particular topic or idea. Oral communication is an engagement of the skill of eliciting information. There are several aspects of eliciting information. As a general case, the information that we elicit can be a combination of both verbal and non-verbal communication. There may be oral communication activities where verbal communication does not provide us the real or the complete information. In such situations, we have to rely upon the non-verbal behaviour of the speaker. Here is an example:

You (walking up to Kunal): "Hi, Kunal, I haven't seen you in a while. How's everything going?"

You are trying to strike a conversation with Kunal. You show your interest by walking up to him; using a greeting expression used for informal chats "Hi, Kunal". Your question to him aims at eliciting information. You watch how Kunal reacts to your words.

Kunal (*backs away hastily, avoiding eye contact*): "Fine, fine."

The verbal information that you have been able to elicit is only partial information. The body language of Kunal, the non-verbal message that you receive makes you wonder if Kunal is actually fine. Therefore, you put a second question to him.

You: "What's up? Are you okay?"

Now you are more interested in the non-verbal aspect of the communication. You watch Kunal closely when he responds to you verbally of course.

Kunal (*dropping his papers, scrambling for them, getting up and quickly looking past you as he shifts from one foot to the other*): "Yes sure, I'm fine. Everything's just fine."

You would like to probe a little further and remark to him:

You: "You seem a little distracted".

Kunal (*stepping back, finally looking at you)*: No, no – believe me, I'm okay (*heaving a sigh)* Everything's — just — fine... (*looking off*).

It is difficult to believe that Kunal is really fine. Kunal's verbal input that we have elicited does not tell us what we need to know. It is actually the non-verbal information that enables us to elicit the real information.

We all share a primary human need not just to accept what is communicated to us but to evaluate it. We automatically filter incoming messages through such questions: "What does the person really mean?" Eliciting information involves understanding a piece of information fully. Words may be the primary vehicle of meaning in an utterance. However, non-verbal communication (body language) is the other dictionary we use for the meaning of an utterance. Each is powerful and eloquent in different ways to help us to elicit information.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: Answer the following questions.

(a) Define the term 'elicitation'.

(b) Effective communication is a combination of _____ and_____ information. (Fill in the blanks)

(c) In the dialogue at 4.4, Kunal informs you that he is really fine. But, why do you suspect that he is not so?

4.5 QUESTION PATTERNS IN CONTEXT

It is rather redundant to state that we use questions to elicit information. But what interests us is the nature of the question patterns that we often use and this is our primary focus here. In order to elicit information effectively, it becomes necessary to make our questions grammatically correct, appropriate and acceptable.

Read the following conversation between a passenger and an official in the railway enquiry on the train timing. [Note that sentences that begin with an asterisk (*) indicate that these sentences are not grammatically appropriate. Passenger=A; Official=B]

(1)	A	: Excuse me please.
	B	: How can I help you?
	A	: * Why the up Kamrup Express is late today?
	B	: There's an accident at a level crossing.
	A	: *Where the accident has taken place?
	B	: Near Baihata Chari Ali.
	A	: *How long we will have to wait for the train?
	B	: Another fifteen minutes.
	A	: Thanks.

There are three utterances of the passenger in asterisks (*). They are question forms but not grammatically acceptable. You will find that each of these three utterances of the passenger beginning with an asterisk (*) are structurally different from the way we normally use in eliciting information. Let us examine how they are different from the normal forms:

1. * Why the up Kamrup Express is late today?

Comment: In the interrogative form, subject-verb inversion takes place. The normal form will be: *Why is the up Kamrup-Express late today?*

2.* Where the accident has taken place?

Comment: In this utterance, there is no subject-verb inversion. The normal form will be: *Where has the accident taken place?*

3.* How long we will have to wait for the train?

Comment: In the interrogative form, the subject and the verb *we will* undergo inversion that requires us to reconstruct the sentence as: *How long will we have to wait for the train?*

You can see how important it is to get your sentence structures correct and acceptable. Making unacceptable utterances in speech may lead the listener to form negative attitude towards you. Here is a dialogue between two morning walkers:

(2)	Ankur	: Hello! Good morning.
	Kunal	: Morning. I'am Kunal Baruah.
	Ankur	: I'm Ankur Dutta. You stay somewhere close by?
	Kunal	: Yes, I do.
	Ankur	: No wonder I see you so often. Do you stay in our neighbourhood?
	Kunal	: Yes, a little way down this road.
	Ankur	: What time do you get up?
	Kunal	: About five-fifteen. And you?
	Ankur	: Just at five.
	Kunal	: We're early birds, aren't we?
	Ankur	: Yes, we are...

From the dialogues at (7) and (8) above, we have noted that we elicit information by making use of different types of question patterns. They include.

(a) Wh-question types:

Atul: Why are you late today, Borun?

Borun: The bus-drivers are on strike today.

Atul: Oh, I see.

(b) Yes-no type questions:

(i) Arpita: Do you stay in our neighbourhood?

Binny: Yes, I do.

Arpita: Strange, I haven't seen you.

(ii) Arun: Did Niva phone today?

Biren: No, She didn't.

Arun: Strange, isn't it?

(c) Tag questions:

Anil: We're early birds, aren't we?

Bobby: Yes, we are.

Anil: It's good to be early.

(d) Intonation questions:

Mr. Das: You stay somewhere close by?

Dimpi: Yes, I do.

Note that we often add relevant information after a simple yes or no or after Short Answers. Read the following examples:

(a) John: Were you late?

Mary: Yes, the car had a puncture.

John: Oh!

(b) Reena: Have you got a pen?

Rina: Yes, I have. But I'll be using it to fill the form.

Reena: Ok. I'll try someone else.

Rina: Or else you can wait for a minute or so. I won't be long, you know.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: Comment why the following sentences are not appropriate:

(a) Why you are late?

(b) Who you want to meet?

(c) When you are coming again?

(d) Where he is living these days?

(e) Whose pen this is?

4.6 SOME VERB FORMS IN CONTEXT

One of the issues identified here is the confusion in the use of the present perfect and past tense forms of the verb in a context. Here is a dialogue between two persons Dilip and Tridip. The conversation takes place in a bus in which they meet as fellow passengers.

(3)	Dilip	: Hello! Have we met before?
	Tridip	: No, I don't think, we have. I'm Tridip Phukan.
	Dilip	: I'm Dilip Das. Going to Dibrugarh?
	Tridip	: No, not really. I'm going to Jorhat.
	Dilip	: You live there?
	Tridip	: Yes, I do. Have you been there?
	Dilip	: Yes, I have. I stayed there for a few days.
	Tridip	: Liked it?
	Dilip	: A nice little town. I've always wanted to revisit the place.
	Tridip	: Please do. You can be my guest.
	Dilip	: Thank you.

You may like to take note of the uses of (a) the present perfect tense and (b) the simple past tense form of the verb in the above dialogue between Dilip and Tridip.

Note these uses:

(i) Have we met before?

(ii) I don't think we have?

(iii) Have you been there? etc.

The speakers use the present perfect tense to indicate that the topic (of meeting or staying) is still relevant within the conversation. In such contexts, we do not use the simple past tense. Now look at these utterances:

(i) I stayed there for a few days.

(ii) (You) liked it?

We use the simple past tense to indicate that the 'event' of staying in Jorhat or liking the experiences is completed. It has no 'present relevance' in the context of the conversation.

Now, let us take another problem: the uses of 'will' and 'be+ going to'. Let us look at this conversation between two ladies in a restaurant of a posh Hotel in a city.

(4)	Arpita	: What are you going to have Shukla?
	Shukla	: I'm going to have a vegetable sandwich and a cup of green tea. What about you?

Arpita	:	I think I'm going to take a cutlet and some tea.
		(Presently the waiter arrives at the table.)
Waiter	:	Yes ma' am?
Shukla	:	I'll have a chicken burger and a cup of coffee, please.
Arpita	:	I'll have a chicken sandwich and coffee, please.
Waiter	:	Give me five minutes ma'am.

From the dialogue we see that the speakers use 'be+going to' to refer to a decision already made. Shukla and Arpita had already made the decision on what they would order when the waiter comes.

(i) I'm going to have a vegetable sandwich.

(ii) I' m going to take a cutlet.

But, when the waiter arrives, they make other decisions. They made these decisions at the time of speaking.

(i) I'll have a chicken burger.

(ii) I'll have a chicken sandwich.

This difference is very useful in view of the fact that we generalise by stating that futurity can be expresed in a variety of ways 'will' and 'be+going to' being two of them. However, we must note the differences between them.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Answer the following questions.

(a) Rewrite the reply of Juri to make it more appropriate.

Anita: you work in this school?

Juri : Yes, I work in this school.

(b) Point out the difference between:

i. The shop has just opened.

ii. The shop opened last month.

(c) Fill in the blanks with either will or be going to.

i. Help! I _____ fall.

ii. It _____ rain. Look at the sky.



4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we learnt a number of concepts that are considered to be of much importance in oral communication, two of them being grammaticality and appropriateness.

- We used the term grammaticality to mean that a particular sentence or a piece of text has made use of the forms of the language that are correct according to the rules of grammar. If a sentence does not follow the rules of grammar, the sentence is unacceptable irrespective of whether we use that sentence in our speech or writing.
- We learnt that oral utterances must conform to the permissible ways by which words and phrases can be organized in a clause structure.
- We learnt that sometimes a sentence may be grammatically correct but may still be inappropriate for a particular context; hence, the importance of understanding that *grammaticality depends on context in order for a sentence to be appropriate and acceptable*.
- Next, we learnt that communication involves the skill of eliciting information, which could be a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication. There may be occasions where verbal communication does not provide us the real information.
- We also learnt that in order to elicit information effectively, we need to make our utterances grammatically correct and appropriate.



4.8 FURTHER READING

Coe, Norman. (2009). *Oxford Living Grammar: Intermediate.* Oxford University Press.

Eastwood, John. (1994). *Oxford Guide to English Grammar.* Oxford University Press.

Harrison, Mark. (2010). *Oxford Living Grammar, Pre-Intermediate* Oxford University Press.

Palmer, F. R. (1985). *The English Verb.* Longman.

Paterson, Ken. (2010). *Oxford Living Grammar, Elementary.* Oxford University Press.

4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1:

(a) In day-do-day conversation, we do not use formal words like purchase. The appropriate word is bought.

(b) The comparison is between climates, not between the climate of a place and a place. The climate of Guwahati is hotter than that of Shillong.

(c) It is a request. We have to use a polite form like “Could you give me...”

Ans to Q 2:

(a) See 4.4

(b) verbal; non-verbal

(c) The non-verbal information notably Kunal’s body language, eye movement etc do not indicate that he is fine

Ans to Q 3:

(a) The subject-verb inversion in wh-questions is not used here. The sentence should have been : Why are you late?

(b) – (e) Try yourself.

Ans to Q 4:

(a) Juri : Yes, I do.

(b) The first sentence tells us something about the present condition of the shop; it is open now. The second sentence does not tell us about the present.

(c) (i) am going to fall, (ii) is going to



4.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Give brief answers to the following questions

(a) Define the term 'grammaticality'.

(b) Comment on the sentence:"When you are coming?"

(c) Give an example of an intonation question.

(d) I am your well-wisher, _____? (Supply tag)

Q 2: Answer the following questions:

(a) Explain why grammaticality is not the sole criteria of acceptability of a sentence.

(b) Explain how non-verbal communication contributes to more effective comprehension.

(c) Give two examples of an interrogative sentence that performs an imperative function.

Q 3: Answer the following questions.

(a) Bring out a distinction between the present perfect and the past tense with the help of a dialogue.

(b) Construct a dialogue between you and a house owner based on a "To Let" advertisement that had appeared in the newspaper.

(c) Construct a dialogue using both verbal and non-verbal communication on a topic of your choice.

*** ***** ***

UNIT 5: GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT II

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Modals in Conversation

- 5.3.1 Uses of Will and Would
- 5.3.2 Uses of May, Might and Must

5.4 Uses of Other Modals

- 5.4.1 Uses of Shall, Should, Shouldn't etc.
- 5.4.2 Miscellaneous Uses of Modals

5.5 Let us Sum up

5.6 Further Reading

5.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.8 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- describe the concept of the modals
- understand modal meanings of auxiliaries
- explain the meaning and function of modals
- use modals in communicative functions

5.2 INTRODUCTION

In your school grammar books, you had already been acquainted with a grammatical concept called "auxiliaries" which we also call "helping verbs" because they help the main verb or the lexical verb to form tense and aspect. We are in this unit, going beyond the grammatical form of tenses of school grammar books to discuss modal meanings that reflect different communicative functions. In other words, in this unit we are talking about modality. We define modality in terms of the attitude of the speakers towards a state or event that is expressed in terms of certain communicative

functions. With the help of dialogues, we discussed communicative functions related to what is done through an utterance. We noted that a sentence in the act of conversation, communicates something more than just information notably levels of formality, degrees of politeness and so on besides performing various communicative functions like making requests, expressing obligations and necessity, expressing possibility, ability, etc.

5.3 MODALS IN CONVERSATION

We begin with the issue of modality in conversation. The term modality is related to the grammatical term modals or modal auxiliaries. You are all familiar with the concept of auxiliaries from your reading of English grammar at school. Auxiliaries are referred to as helping verbs because they help the lexical verb or main verb in the formation of tense and aspect. To refresh your memory, an English grammar book divides auxiliaries into 'primary auxiliaries' and 'modals'. Primary auxiliaries include the verbs *be, have, do* together with their related forms.

- The related forms of **be** are: *am, is, are, was, were.*
- The related forms of **have** are: *has* and *had*.
- The related forms of **do** are: *does* and *did*.

Modals, on the other hand, include the following: *can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, must,* etc. The basic difference between the primary auxiliaries and modals is that the primary auxiliaries can also function has lexical verbs. Look at the following pairs of sentences.

(a) Urmi has a car.

(b) She has read the book.

In the first sentence above, has is a lexical or main verb whereas in the second sentence has is an auxiliary.

Auxiliaries, both primary auxiliaries and modals, help the main verb or the lexical verb in the formation of tense and aspect. In the case of modals, we discover that they perform a useful communicative function. Modals can indicate the attitude of a speaker or writer towards the state or event expressed by another verb. This function of modals is known as modality. Thus, we can define modality as *the use of modals in the*

performance of various communicative functions. A speaker's attitude as to whether he is annoyed, polite or pleading etc. is brought out in the communicative function that the speaker performs.

The modals, often called modal auxiliaries, play an important part in our communicative activities. One would be amazed at the frequency with which they occur in our social communicative functions. Here we shall discuss these modals:

1. ***The use of can****:*
   - (a) Making request: Can you lend me some money?
   - (b) Seeking permission: Can I leave now?
   - (c) Making offer: Can I help you?
   - (d) Expressing ability: I can swim.
   - (e) Expressing possibility: Swimming can be fun.
2. ***The use of could:***
   - (a) Making request: Could you close the window?
   - (b) Asking permission: Could I ask you something?
   - (c) Making suggestion: We could meet tomorrow.
   - (d) Giving permission: You could use my bicycle.
   - (e) Expressing possibility: He could be wrong about it.
   - (f) Expressing ability: I could write the book if I had the time.
3. ***The use of shall:***
   - (a) Asking permission: Shall I come tomorrow?
   - (b) Making promise: You shall have the money.
   - (c) Making prediction: We shall be away next week.
4. ***The use of should:***
   - (a) Giving advice: You should work hard.
   - (b) Expressing probability: It should be fine tomorrow.
5. ***The use of will:***
   - (a) Making decision: I'll buy the book.
   - (b) Expressing willingness: Will you come today?
   - (c) Making prediction: My wife will be at home.
   - (d) Giving order: All staff members will attend the meeting.

6. ***The use of would:***
   (a) Making request: Would you ask him to come?
   (b) Expressing willingness: He wouldn't listen to me.
   (c) Making prediction: He would always arrive late.
7. ***The use of may:***
   (a) Seeking permission: May I come in?
   (b) Expressing possibility: The train may be late.
   (c) Making request: May I know the time please?
8. ***The use of might***:
   (a) Making request: You might leave now
   (b) Expressing possibility: They might not come now.
9. ***The use of must***:
   (a) Expressing necessity: You must take exercises.
   (b) Expressing certainty: You must be tired.
10. ***The use of ought to:***
   (a) Expressing obligation: You ought to work hard.
   (b) Giving advice: You ought to do it now.
11. ***The use of dare:***
   (a) Expressing bravery: I didn't dare to meet him.

From the above list of functions, it is seen that several modals can perform the same function. For example, the function of seeking permission can be expressed by the use of the modals can, could and must. Likewise, requests can be made by using the modals can, could and might.

5.3.1 Uses of Will and Would

In section 5.3 above, we identified four functions of will and three functions of would. Imagine you are going to a bookshop in order to buy a book on a particular subject. You may have to explain to the manager what your specific requirement is. The manager may help you out by bringing down a number of books on the topic and help you out to select the best one. Here is such a dialogue: (The manager is A; the customer is B)

(1)	A	:	Yes please? What can I do for you?
	B	:	I'd like to see some English Grammar books please.
	A	:	For which level would you like?
	B	:	I'll be appearing in the Bank PO exams next month.
	A	:	I see. Would you like to see these two books?
	B	:	Which of these two would you suggest?
	A	:	You will know better. This one is in greater demand. +
	B	:	In that case, I'd like a copy of this book. How much do I pay?
	A	:	Its four hundred. But I'll give you a 5% discount.
	B	:	Thanks.

Let us examine two of the utterances from the above dialogue. First the customer's statement:

(a) I'd like see some English grammar books please.

How is this sentence different from the following sentence?

(b) I want to see some English grammar books please?

Note that sentence (b) "I want to..." is a direct demand and is a little impolite. One the other hand, sentence (a) "I'd like to....." is less direct in approach and more polite than the other sentences.

Secondly, let us look at the following statement of the customer.

(c) I'll be appearing in the Bank PO exams next month.

How is the sentence different from the following sentence?

(d) I shall appear in the Bank PO exams next month.

Note that sentence (d) "I shall appear..." means that the person shall sit for the Bank PO exams when the date of the exam arrives next month. On the other hand, sentence (c) "I'll be appearing..." suggests a process which in this case would include buying related books and making preparations for the great day that comes next month. We use this form for an action over a period of future time.

5.3.2 Uses of May, Might and Must

In affirmative sentences (that is, sentences that are not negative), we use *may* or *might* to mean that there is a possibility of

something happening or being true but the certainty is thin. Here is a dialogue between two persons A and B.

(2) A : Shall we go to the theatre for the 6 O'clock show?
B : Well! It's rather late. We may get tickets but I don't think we will.
A : Why not ring up the theatre booking office?
B : Not a bad idea. You know, we might get tickets if we phone now.

From the above dialogue we see that

- may is often less certain than might. We often use may to make it clear that something is possible but that we do not think will happen.
- We often use might to make it clear that it really is possible that something will happen.

Let us read another dialogue between Raju (A) and his friend Arup's father (B).

(3) A : Uncle, may I see Arup?
B : May I know who you are?
A : I'm his classmate Raju.
B : You see Raju, Arup left early this morning.
I guess he might have reached college by now.
A : Has he? In that case, I must rush to college now.
B : You had better hurry.

From dialogue (3), we have noted that B had used the phrase "I guess" before might:

(a) I guess he might have reached college by now.

Note that we often use phrases like *I think, I should think, I suppose, I guess* before *may*, *might* and *much*. The person could have used any of these phrases.

Another interesting expression that the 'uncle' had used is "had better":

(b) You had better hurry.

We use “had better” to say *what is the best thing to do in a particular situation.* Read these exchanges showing the use of “had better” and its negative “better not”:

(4)	A	: What’s wrong with you? So silent all day.
	B	: I have a bad headache.
	A	: You never know these days. You had better see a doctor.
	B	: I’ll go in the evening.
	A	: You’d better not waste time waiting for the evening.
	B	: OK. As you say.

Before we move on to the next sub-section, you may go back to dialogue (3) to look at the use of must in the following sentence.

(c) In that case, I must rush to college now.

Let us rewrite this sentence by using the expression have to and note the difference if any:

(d) In that case, I have to rush to college now.

When we talk about necessity in the present or the near future, we can use both must and have to or have got to. Try guess if there is a difference in meaning in these two sentences:

(e) Oh I’m getting late. I must take an auto to reach the station.

(f) I have to complete the assignment by Monday.

Note that we use **must + verb** when we think it is important to do an action; when we are obliged to do something. It’s negative must not or mustn’t is used when something is against the rules. On the other hand, ‘must’ and ‘have to’ have very similar meaning. However, ‘must’ tends to be more personal while ‘have to’ tends to be more impersonal.

(5) A : Hi Disha!

B : Hi Nisha! Happy Birthday.

A : Thanks. This evening you must come to my birthday party. Bring your sister along.

B : Thanks. But you see, tomorrow I have to submit my project. I need to complete it tonight.

A : Oh so sad? See if you can complete your project after school. That's plenty of time.

B : OK let's see.

Going back to sentence (e) above, the urgency of taking the auto is personal whereas in sentence (f) the urgency of completing the assignment is impersonal.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Give brief answers to the following questions.

(a) Give an example of the use of 'can' to express ability.

(b) Give an example of the use of 'could' to express possibility.

(c) Give an example of the use of 'ought to' to express giving advice.

(d) Comment on the difference between

(i) I'd like to see the book.

(ii) I want to see the book.

5.4 USES OF OTHER MODALS

In section 5.3.1 and 5.3.2, we discussed the uses of five modals in conversational contexts. In doing so, you might have noticed that there is no one-to-one correspondence between a modal and a related function. Situations occur when we see that more than one modal can perform the same function. For example, both 'must' and 'need to' perform the function of expressing one's duty or obligation. In this section, we bring together other modals in different conversational contexts.

5.4.1 Uses of Shall, Should, Shouldn't etc.

From our knowledge of tenses, we know that we can talk about the future by using will + verb.

(a) He will come tomorrow.

With 'I' and 'we' we generally use shall.

(b) I shall buy this book.

However, it is important to note that we can use both 'shall' and 'will' in positive sentences and 'shall' in questions.

(c) I'll buy a bicycle.

(d) Shall I ring her up now?

Functionally, we can use "shall" to make suggestions, offers or arrangements. Shall is used with first person pronouns in speech. "Shall" and "should" can often be interchanged in the context of a suggestion, but there is a slight difference in meaning. Compare the two sentences given below:

(e) Shall I meet the Director on this matter?

(f) Should I meet the Director on this matter?

When we say *shall I meet...*, we are actually making a straightforward offer or a question. On the other hand, when we say *should I meet...*, we are actually asking whether it is advisable for the person concerned to go and meet the director.

Below you will find a conversation between two persons A and B. They are friends and happened to meet somewhere in South India. A invites B to join him for dinner. Read the dialogue and note the use of the modals:

(6) A : When are you returning?
B : Tomorrow. The flight's at 9.30.
C : My wife and I would be delighted if you and your wife could join us for dinner.
B : Oh thank you. We'd love to.
A : We'll pick you up from the guest house.
B : At what time?

A : Shall we say 7 O'clock?
B : By the way, I should say, my wife is veggie.
A : No problem. What would you like to have?
B : How about something Southie?
A : Sure. See you then.

Note that

(i) A uses the expression "shall we say 7 O'clock" to perform the function of *suggesting* the appropriate time of his coming to the Guest House.

(ii) B uses the expression "By the way, I should say..." to perform the function of introducing a new piece of information.

In the above dialogue (6), you will find the following structure used by B:

(g) How about something Southie?

Note that "Southie" is a colloquial form used by some educated classes of people of South India to refer to South Indian as in Southie food. The expression "How about..." is used in conversation to draw attention to something or to make a suggestion. "Veggie" is again a colloquial form of vegetarian. The use of colloquial forms are usually restricted among friends who are familiar with these forms.

5.4.2 Miscellaneous Uses of Modals

In this section, we shall identify a few communicative functions where we find occasions to use the modals.

1. ***Asking for identification:*** The situation identified is a reception counter in a corporate office. (In each of the conversations, the speakers are identified as A, B, etc.)

(7) A : Excuse me please. Can I meet the GM?
B : May I look at your ID card please?
A : Here it is.
B : Could you fill this in stating your purpose of meeting him?
A : OK.

2. ***Making requests to meet someone:*** The situation identified is a reception counter in a large nursing home in a city.

(8) A : Hello! Here's my Card.
B : Can I help you?
A : Could I meet Dr Ahmed please?
B : We have several Dr Ahmeds. Would you give his full name?
A : Dr A.K.Z. Ahmed. He must be a dietician.

3. ***Asking about a process:*** The situation identified is an electronic and domestic appliances store.

(9) A : Could you show me your micro-ovens?
B : Here we are. You may like to look at these.
A : This one looks fairly compact.
B : Yes, it's good value for your money.
A : Would you explain to me how it works?

4. ***Asking for and telling time:*** The situation could be anywhere.

(10) A : Excuse me. Could you tell me the time?
B : It's a quarter to five.
A : Oh dear! My watch is so slow. Are you sure your watch is right?
B : I think it's all right.
A : Thanks, I have an appointment with the doctor, you know.

5. ***Discussion with a doctor:*** Obviously, the conversation takes place at a doctor's chamber (Doctor-A. Patient-B)

(11) A : I wouldn't say your knee problem is very serious. We needn't worry about the uric acid angle. Your tests are OK.
B : But I have problems in climbing down the stairs.
A : I guess you have. I'm prescribing a set of tablets for fifteen days. By that time, you should be all right.
B : When do I come again?
A : Shall we say, after this course is finished?

Apart from the different uses of the modals, you will discover other useful aspects of the language of speech in these dialogues. For example, the dialogue on asking for and telling the time in Ex. (10) uses the expression: "It's a quarter to five".

Note that we don't use o'clock in such expressions. We use O'clock only on the hour i.e.

(a) It's five o'clock.

However, in informal conversation, we can leave out o'clock. Moreover, we do not use a.m. /p.m. with o'clock. We can say (b) it's six p.m. However, we don't say (c) * It's six o'clock p.m.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: Answer the following questions as directed.

(a) Complete the following dialogues by selecting the appropriate words against each blank.

1. _____ (could/should/would) we invite Dipu and Smita to Niti's birthday?
2. You_____ (shall/would/ can/) but I don't think they would come.
3. Do you think I_____ (can/should/ Could) talk to Smita?

(b) Complete the dialogue as (a) above:

1. I think students of all colleges_____ (Should/have to) wear uniforms.
2. When you are in college you really _____ (ought to/ have to)
3. At least at the undergraduate level everybody_____ (has to/should)

However, it may be relaxed at the postgraduate level.

(c) Imagine you are visiting a town for some work. You do not have a hotel reservation. Write a dialogue that takes place between You (A) and the employee at the hotel reception counter (B) where you request him for a room for two nights.



5.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we learnt the following aspects of conversation.

- We learnt that modal verbs have a modality. It refers to the fact that they have modal meanings, which reflect different communicative functions like making request, seeking permission, making offer, expressing ability/possibility etc.
- With the help of dialogues, we discussed communicative functions related to what is done through an utterance.
- We noted that a sentence in the act of conversation, communicates something more than just information notably levels of formality, degrees of politeness and so on.



5.6 FURTHER READING

Coe, Norman. (2009). *Oxford Living Grammar: Intermediate.* Oxford University Press.

Eastwood, John. (1994). *Oxford Guide to English Grammar.* Oxford University Press.

Harrison, Mark. (2010). *Oxford Living Grammar Pre-Intermediate.*Oxford University Press.

Palmer, F.R. (1985). *The English Verb.* London: Longman.

Peterson, Ken. (2010). *Oxford Living Grammar Elementary.* Oxford University Press.



5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1:

(a) I can play tennis.

(b) It could be cold in Shillong at this time of the year.

(c) You ought to work harder to do well in the exams.

(d) 'I want to see' is a direct demand, whereas 'I'd like to see' is less direct and more polite than 'I want to see'.

Ans to Q 2:

(a) 1. could 2. can 3. should

(b) 1. should 2. ought to 3. has to

(c) At a hotel reception counter:

A: Good afternoon sir, can I help you?

B: Could I have a single room for two nights?

C: Do you have a reservation?

B: No, I haven't actually. As a matter of fact.
This trip materialised at the last moment.

A: Would you like a room without A/C?

B: Well, I'd certainly love an air-conditioned room, you know.

A: Yeah well. If you stay just one night, tomorrow morning we'd shift you to an air-conditioned room.

B: That's fine for me. Thanks.



5.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Answer the following questions:

(a) Define the term 'modality".

(b) What are primary auxiliaries?

(c) Give an example of the use of 'can' for making an offer.

(d) Give an example of should to express giving advice.

Q 2: Give brief answers.

(a) What is the difference between primary auxiliaries and modals?

(b) Give two examples to distinguish between will and be+going to.

(c) Give two examples showing the difference between shall and should.

(d) Give two functions of the modal "may".

Q 3: (a) You have come across an advertisement on letting out a house by Mr. Das. Write a conversation with Mr. Das whom you are visiting to make enquiries about the house.

(b) Write a dialogue in which a person complains to his/ her neighbour about the loudness of his TV set which has been disturbing the complainant.

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UNIT 6: INFORMAL AND FORMAL SPEECH

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Features of Informal speech

6.4 Ellipsis

6.5 Discourse Markers in Informal Speech

6.6 Discourse Markers in Formal Speech

6.7 Let us Sum up

6.8 Further Reading

6.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

6.10 Model Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- distinguish the features of informal and formal speech
- explain the techniques of making ellipses
- explain the techniques of retrieving information from ellipses
- use appropriate discourse markers in speech.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall discuss the features of informal and formal oral communication. We shall initiate our discussion on informal communication by using the term “small talk”. We defined small talk as a light-hearted conversation on a trivial subject by stating that it is a valuable asset in building social relationships. We stated that the best thing about small talk is that it helps us to connect and get to know each other with a most relaxed, personal kind of contact. If we find ourselves sitting next to a person in a bus or a train we are not acquainted with, small talk helps us to get to know each other. In this unit, we shall also throw light on the stylistic features of informal style by stating that the style used for small talk is warm, friendly,

honest and open; it puts us at ease so that we can relate more directly and openly. Some of the grammatical elements that are of use in small talk are tags, ellipsis, clipped forms and discourse markers in informal speech. Secondly, we shall take up the use of ellipsis by stating that they are a stylistic device of speech; speakers like to leave out words or phrases from sentences/utterances where they are considered unnecessary because they have already been referred to or mentioned. We also noted that they depend upon the linguistic context. Finally, we shall discuss a few discourse markers that refer to a set of words and phrases used only in Spoken English. We noted that Brown and Yule in their excellent book *Discourse Analysis* (1983) use the term "fillers" (pp17, 18) to refer to the sets of words that speakers produce in conversation:

6.3 FEATURES OF INFORMAL SPEECH

While talking about 'informal speech', let us refer to an expression called "small talk". Small talk can be defined as a light-hearted conversation on a trivial subject. An interesting thing about small talk is that it is a valuable asset in building social relationships; in getting to know each other or to engage ourselves in small talk.

The best thing about small talk is that it helps us to connect and get to know each other, to build up a personal kind of contact. When we find ourselves sitting next to a person in a bus or in a train, we are not acquainted with; small talk helps us to get to know each other. Professor Peter Trudgill of the University of Reading states that when two Englishmen who have never met before come face to face in a railway compartment, they start talking about the weather. In some cases, this may simply be because they happen to find the subject to be of mutual interest because of the unpredictability of the English weather. They like to use the climatic analysis as a starter to get introduced to each other. The important thing is that the starter helps the other person begin to build up a contact. In this way, new friends are made.

However, most people who are not particularly interested in the analysis of climatic conditions may find other topics of mutual interest.

People by and large, are extremely social and like to open up and talk about little things of their lives. An interesting thing about small talk is that there is plenty of material around us to initiate a small talk; all we have to do is to pick and choose. When you visit someone, a book the person is reading, a photograph or a painting that you see on the wall can be used as starters too.

Here is an extract of a conversation between two friends introduced as A and B, who are hurrying to a movie. The conversation, which is an example of small talk, takes place in the car on the way to the theatre.

(1) A : Getting late, aren't we?
B : Guess so. Have to take the short cut.
A : Hope the level crossing isn't closed.
B : Oh dear! Never know with them.
A : Well, forget the short-cut.
B : Right. No point taking risks.
A : At least we won't be that late!

An interesting thing about small talk as you can see from the above extract is the informality of the style used by the speakers. The style is warm, friendly, honest and open; it puts speakers at ease. Such conversation actively invites us to get closer, creating an environment in which we can relax our guard and relate more directly and openly. The sentences are different from those used in formal speech. There is profuse use of grammatical elements like tags, clipped forms and discourse markers.

However, not all conversation that takes place around us is small talk. A one-to-one meeting with your boss, client or staff member is not exactly small talk. The language becomes formal unlike the one used by the two persons in the car who are becoming anxious not to get late to the movies. Read the following extract of a conversation between an official and an employee in an office.

(2) Boss : Look Borah, I've told you twice now that your reports are late. I won't have it happen again.
Emp : But it's not my fault. It's....

Boss : Look. No more excuses. Just put some interest in your work. Can you speed up your work or can't you? I want the reports on time. That's all.

Emp : Okay, Sorry. You'll have them.

By comparing the extracts of the conversation at (1) and (2), we discover that an interesting part of our conversations is that depending upon the situation as to whether it is a formal or an informal one, we modify our speech as we go along to suit the situation. Our speech can be formal, semi formal or informal depending upon the persons we are talking to, the setting where the conversation takes place, and of course, our mood and attitude towards the person with whom we are engaged in conversation. In work places, most people like to keep their conversation at the semi-formal level rather than making their conversation either too formal or informal.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Give brief answers to the following questions.

(a) Define the expression "small talk".

(b) Why do Englishmen talk about the weather in small talk?

(c) Comment on the style of small talk.

6.4 ELLIPSIS

Ellipsis refers to a stylistic device of leaving out words or phrases from sentences where they are considered unnecessary because they have already been referred to or mentioned. Ellipsis depends upon the linguistic context. For example, we can avoid the words shown in brackets in the following sentences.

(a) Adity might come, but I don't think she will (come).

(b) I've got a friend (who is) keen on photography.

(c) Pick the fruit when (it is) ripe.

(d) I don't want to spend any more money than (it is) necessary.

(e) A: Who has (got) an umbrella?

B: John has (got an umbrella)

(f) (Please) Handle (the packet) with care.

A: When did he lose the key?

B: Probably (he lost it) last night.

Sometimes, instead of repeating the word we use an alternative form.

(g) Adity might come, but I don't think she will do so.

(h) A: He drives a car

B: Does his wife do so?

C: I think his wife can too.

Another important reason for ellipsis is that by omitting shared items, attention is focussed on new information. Eg.

A: Have you spoken to Adity?

B: No, I haven't. (spoken to Adity)

From the utterance of B above (No, I haven't) we see that a sentence can end with an auxiliary if the meaning is clear from the context.

A: I'm getting old.

B: Yes, I'm afraid you are.

In informed conversation, it is fairly common to use ellipsis. Let us go back to the dialogue at (1) in 6.3 and retrieve the words that we have left out.

(3) A : We are getting late, aren't we?
B : I guess so. I think we have to take the short cut.
A : Let's hope the level crossing isn't closed.
B : Oh dear! One can never know with them.
A : Let us forget the short cut.
B : You are right. There is no point in taking risks.
A : At least we won't be that late for the film.

You will see that the underlined parts of the sentences were ellipsed in the dialogue at (1). Ellipsis has helped to make the conversation informal. While the dialogue at (1) is acceptable in informal situations, the one at (3) is acceptable in informal situations. Thus, we can state that ellipsis is one of the ways of making our conversation informal.

Here is one more example. Read it carefully and see if you can retrieve the left out words and phrases. The conversation is between a husband (A) and a wife (B) about to drive to the airport where the husband would drop his wife. Obviously, the wife discovers at the last moment that she has to visit a pharmacy on the way.

(4) A : Ready?
B : Oh, not yet.
A : Now what?
B : Can't find my tablets. Don't want to make myself sick on the plane.
A : It would be nasty, wouldn't it?
B : You'd better stop for a minute at a pharmacy.
A : Okay. Better get going. We're already late.
B : Right.

Note that:

- "Ready?" means "Are you ready?"
- "to make myself sick": In this expression 'sick' means to vomit.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: Rewrite the dialogue using necessary ellipsis.

(a) A. Did Juli take the medicine?
B. Yes, she took the medicine.

(b) A. Have you spoken to the doctor?
B. No, I haven't spoken to him.

(d) A. Did you speak to her mother about it?
B. No, I spoke to her aunt.

6.5 DISCOURSE MARKERS IN INFORMAL SPEECH

Discourse markers refer to a set of words and phrases used only in spoken English. Brown and Yule in their excellent book *Discourse Analysis* (1983) uses the term "fillers" (p17,18) to refer to these sets of words. These

are words that speakers may produce in conversation: *well, erm, I think, you know, if you see what I mean, of course* and so on. A few of them have been introduced here.

(a) Well

This word usually comes at the beginning of a clause or a sentence. Speakers generally use this word.

(i) to signal the change the topic of a conversation:
" Well, how about some tea?"

(ii) to express feeling or reaction to what a person had just said:
A : Sir what do you think about the last item in the cultural programme?
B: Erm which one? The dance? Well, frankly I wasn't impressed.

(iii) to express hesitation before making a response.
A: There's a trade fair going on in Chandmari field. Like to come with us?
B: Well, I'm not quite sure. I wish it were a book fair, Y' know.

(b) You know/ Y' know

(i) This is a favourite expression for many teachers in their classroom interaction. There are expanded varieties of *you know* as well, e.g.:
- in fact you know
- as a matter of fact you know, etc.

(ii) You know at the beginning of an utterance minimises the abruptness of an utterance and gives a relaxed ambience to the exchange that takes place.

(iii) You know can soften the sting of an utterance that you make in a fit of annoyance.

(iv) You know and their extended forms can very conveniently be used as fillers in gaps of silence that might otherwise occur when a speaker pauses for a moment or so to make up his/her mind what to say in response to a query or in the context of an on-going discussion.

(c) Erm / umph

This expression is typically used as a filler in an utterance between tone groups in an utterance. It is generally used to mark hesitancy or pause. For example, here is an extract of a dialogue between Mr Chips, a teacher and his pupil Greyston from the novel *Good-bye, Mr Chips*:

"Greyston, stay behind – umph — after the rest."

"Then..."

"Greyston, I don't want to be – umph — severe, because you are generally pretty good – umph – in your work..." (p 71)

Below you will find a dialogue given in two versions as (5) and (6). Read the two dialogues and see if there is any difference in the attitudes of the speakers. A= Hostel Warden B= boarder, a girl

(5) A : Late, aren't you?
B : Sorry, I'm a bit late.
A : Eight o'clock is more than "a bit''.
B : I had tuitions.
A : Whatever you have is fine for me as long as it is within six o'clock or six-fifteen at the most.
B : I can't come earlier than that.
A : We have our rules. It's up to You. I ought to inform your parents.

(6) A : Well, Well ! Late aren't you?
B : Sorry, I'm sort of a bit late.
A : Well ! Eight o'clock is more than 'a bit late', Y' know.
B : I had tuitions.
A : Well, whatever you have is fine for me you know, as long as it is within six or shall we say. Six-fifteen at the most.
B : I can't come earlier than that, I'm afraid.
A : We have our rules you know. Well, it's up to you. You know. I ought to inform your parents.

It is worth noting that <u>you know</u> and the other phrases that we have referred to as discourse markers, are governed by the rules of English

grammar. We make use of "You know" only in statements. These phrases are much rarer with other types of sentences.

You must have formed your views by now on the distinction between the dialogue at (5) with that at (6). You must also have noted that all the sentences at (5) are grammatically correct. They follow the "rules" of the language. However, more than being grammatically correct, sentences must also be appropriate to a situation so as to reflect the speaker-hearer relationship. We cannot possibly run the risk of being misunderstood as rude because of our use of language in communication. Our competence in communication, that is, communicative competence grows out of the knowledge of the rules of the language and the appropriateness to a situation. Communicative competence implies an awareness of the social norms of language use — how language is used or ought to be used in society.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate word from the choices given.

(a) A: Lovely weather, don't you think?
B: Yes, _____.(by all means/sure/indeed)

(b) A: His salary is five lakh, you know.
B: _____. (Sure, sure!/ Well, well!/OK)

(c) You must reach office latest by 9 o'clock, _____.
(you know/ in fact, you know/indeed)

6.6 DISCOURSE MARKERS IN FORMAL SPEECH

Formal speech is speech for formal occasions. In most cases, these speeches are written and read out in formal occasions. The text of formal speech correlates with formal prose style. We have a unit exclusively on public speaking in the next block at unit 12 where we shall find occasions to discuss formal speech in greater detail. As a preliminary to the topic, we may state that the discourse markers used in informal

speech, especially the space fillers *well, erm, I think, you know, if you see what I mean, of course* and so on are hardly used in formal speech. Instead, we have to look for other types of discourse markers in formal speech.

In formal speech, the language may be register-bound, which means that it may be exclusive to a specific field of language use. If it is a formal speech on a scientific topic, a lot of words and expressions that belong to the field of science and technology may find place in the speech. Likewise, if the speech is on a literary subject, a lot of literary expressions may find place in the speech. These features can be seen as markers of formality in the speech presented.

Secondly, formal speech is characterised by the extensive use of cohesive devises which are explicit discourse markers like

- additives: *similarly, furthermore, in addition* etc
- adversatives: *however, on the other hand, nevertheless* etc
- causal: *consequently, for that reason, it follows from this* etc
- temporal: *after that, an hour later, finally, at last* etc

Moreover, coherence is a basic feature of formal speech. It would not create a good impression on the part of a speaker if the speaker in a formal occasion goes on rambling and trying to make up his mind or trying to decide what to say next. To illustrate this point, here is a sample of the first few lines of possibly one of the best speeches of all time in the world, Note the discourse markers used to give a sense of formality to the speech.

"Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes which comes but rarely in history, when we step out of the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation long suppressed, finds utterance..."



6.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we discussed the following aspects of informal and formal oral communication.

- We initiated our discussion on informal communication by using the term “small talk”. We defined small talk as a light-hearted conversation on a trivial subject by stating that it is a valuable asset in building social relationships.
- We stated that small talk helps us to connect and get to know each other. If we find ourselves sitting next to a person, we had never met before in a bus or in a train, small talk helps us to get to know each other.
- We also threw light on the stylistic features of informal style by stating that the style used for small talk is warm, friendly, honest and open; it puts us at ease so that we can relate more directly and openly.
- Some of the grammatical elements that are of use in small talk are tags, ellipsis, clipped forms and discourse markers.
- We also discussed the use of ellipsis by stating that they are a stylistic device of speech; speakers like to leave out words or phrases from sentences/utterances where they are considered unnecessary because they have already been referred to or mentioned. We also noted that they depend upon the linguistic context.
- Moreover, we discussed a few discourse markers in both informal and formal speech that refer to a set of words and phrases used only in spoken English.
- We noted that Brown and Yule in their excellent book *Discourse Analysis* (1983) use the term “fillers” (pp17,18) to refer to the sets of words that speakers produce in conversation:



6.8 FURTHER READING

Coe, Norman. (2009). *Oxford Living Grammar: Intermediate.* Oxford University Press.

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6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1:

(a) Small talk is a light conversation on a trivial subject. It is generally informal.

(b) They find the subject to be mutually interesting because of the unpredictability of the weather. They use the topic as a starter to communicate to each other.

(c) Try yourself from 6.3.

Ans to Q 2:

(a) B. Yes, she did.

(b) B. No, she hasn't.

(c) B. No, I did so to her aunt.

Ans to Q 3:

(a) Indeed

(b) "Well, well!"

(c) You know.



6.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Answer the following questions:

(a) Define the term ‘small talk’.

(b) Explain briefly what you mean by ellipsis.

(c) Give a function of “well” in a sentence.

(d) Show the use of ‘you know’ in a sentence.

Q 2: Give brief answers.

(a) Write a brief dialogue between two persons A and B as an example of small talk that aims at getting to know a person A meets at a dentist’s waiting room.

(b) Explain with examples two uses of ‘well’.

(c) Explain the function of ellipsis in conversation.

(d) Briefly explain the term ‘discourse marker’.

Q 3: Answer the following questions.

(a) You have come across an advertisement on letting out a house by Mr. Das. Write a conversation with Mr. Das whom you are visiting to make enquiries about the house.

(b) Write a dialogue in which a person complains to his/ her neighbour about the loudness of his TV set which has been disturbing the complainant.

(c) Comment on the style of formal speech and informal speech with an illustrative dialogue each.

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UNIT 7: SOUNDS OF ENGLISH I

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives

7.2 Introduction

7.3 Importance of Speech Skills

7.4 Units of Speech Sounds

- 7.4.1 The Vowel Sounds
- 7.4.2 The Consonant Sounds

7.5 Minimal Pairs

- 7.5.1 Vowel Contrasts
- 7.5.2 Consonant Contrasts

7.6 Let us Sum up

7.7 Further Reading

7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

7.9 Model Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- identify the units of speech sounds
- explain the articulatory features of vowel sounds
- distinguish the articulatory features of vowel and consonant sounds
- develop strategies for construction of minimum pair drills for remedial work.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first of the two units on Sounds of English. This unit aims at providing you with the basics of the sound system of English that would contribute in an effective way towards enhancing your communication skills in English. We began this unit by discussing the importance of speech skills in oral communication. Simply knowledge of grammar does not make competent speakers; we need good pronunciation. We liked to emphasise

the point that if your pronunciation is defective, you will have serious problems in expressing yourselves with fluency. This problem is natural for most second language speakers of English. We noted the effect of the sound system of our mother tongue in the sound system of the second language.

Then we shall introduce you to the units of speech sounds of English. Each of these sound units is called a phoneme. The phonemes of a language constitute the sound system of the language. In the sound system of English, there are forty-four phonemes. These phonemes are divided into twenty vowel sounds and twenty-four consonant sounds. The twenty vowel sounds are further sub-divided into twelve *pure vowels* and eight *diphthongs*. We begin with the twelve pure vowels followed by eight diphthongs and twenty-four consonant sounds.

The unit also contains minimal pair drills contrasting individual speech sounds. The term minimal pair is used to refer to a pair of words in a language which differ from each other by only one distinctive sound (one phoneme) and which also differ in meaning. For example, the English words pit and bit are a minimal pair as they differ in meaning and in their initial phonemes /p/ and /b/.

7.3 IMPORTANCE OF SPEECH SKILLS

One of the characteristics of a fluent speaker of English is a good knowledge of the speech skills of English. The term speech skills refers to an ability to understand English speech when spoken, besides an ability to communicate in the language in natural situations by using appropriate speech sounds, stress and intonation. Effective communication requires an ability to pronounce the sound units of the language correctly and appropriately.

You may know the rules of grammar well; but if your pronunciation is defective, you will discover that you have serious problems in expressing yourselves with fluency. This problem is natural for most second language speakers of English. All of us have already mastered the sound system of

our mother tongue or regional language and find no problem in communicating with other members of our speech community in the mother tongue. However, when we attempt to speak English we are faced with problems relating to the sound system of English.

It is important for you to know that every language has its own distinctive speech sounds. An individual speech sound is called a phoneme. The phonemes of a language collectively constitute the sound system of a language. When you speak Assamese, you produce the speech sounds of Assamese. In the same way, when you speak English, you would be required to produce the speech sounds of English. A major problem of second language speakers is that they find that there are some speech sounds in English, which are not there in the sound system of their mother tongue. We have to acquaint ourselves with these sounds to be good speakers of English.

When you start using English for oral communication, you are often influenced by the sound system of your mother tongue or regional language while speaking English. Consequently, your spoken English may sound quite different from standard English speech. In order to acquire standard English speech, it becomes important to familiarize yourselves with the sound system and the prosodic features of English speech. This is the main objective of units 7 and 8 in this block.

You will find some technical words and sound symbols used here. However, they should not worry you. By familiarizing yourselves with the units of speech sounds of English known as *phonemes,* you find yourselves at an advantage to learn how a word is pronounced. The pronunciation of words in a good dictionary is given by using phonemes. In other words, the speech sounds are represented by using phonetic symbols. It is rather difficult to represent English sounds perfectly by using the letters of one's mother tongue. We have to use phonetic symbols called phonemes. We say that a phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a language, which can distinguish two words. For example in English the word, pen and men differ only in their initial sound: pen begins with/p/ and man begins with /m/. We say /p/, /m/, /e/ and /í/ are phonemes of English.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Give brief answers to the following questions.

(a) Define speech skills.

(b) You are a second language speaker of English. State briefly what kind of problem you face when you attempt to speak English.

(c) Why does the spoken English of many of us appear to be different from Standard English?

7.4 UNITS OF SPEECH SOUNDS

The units of speech sounds of English are the phonemes in the sound system of the language. There are altogether forty-four phonemes that are divided into twenty vowel sounds and twenty-four consonant sounds. The 20 vowel sounds are further divided into twelve *pure vowels* and eight *diphthongs*. We begin with the vowels.

7.4.1 The Vowels

When you were learning your English alphabet system as a child, you had learnt that a, e, i, o and u are vowels while the remaining letters of the alphabet are consonants. Now you must be wondering about the twenty vowel sounds here. Note that we are not talking about the letters of the alphabet but the sound system of English. In the sound system of English, the term vowel is used to refer to a type of speech sound in which there is no friction in the manner of production. The stream of air from the lungs passes freely and continuously in the production of the vowel sounds. The term diphthong is essentially a unit of vowel sound consisting of two vowels with one vowel gliding to the other.

Vowel No 1: / i: / The sound is close to Assamese [ই].

The sound occurs in the spelling forms under lined in the following words: tree, green, these, he, sea, leaf, field, piece, seize, receive,

key, police, ski etc.

Vowel No 2: /ɪ/ The sound is close to Assamese [ই].

The sound occurs in the spelling forms underlined in the following words: rich, fish, pity, city, pretty, ticket, ladies,cities, village , private, etc.

Vowel No 3: /e/ The sound is close to Assamese [এ] in the word [এই]. The sound occurs in the spelling forms underlined in the following words: bed, went, dead, lead, many, any etc.

Vowel No 4: /æ/The sound is close to the Assamese sound [এ]

The sound occurs in words like hand, land etc.

Vowel No 5: /ʌ/ The sound is close to the Assamese sound [আ] when the [অ] is pronounced as if you are saying [অ]. The sound occurs in words like sun, run, come, son, cousin, country, blood, flood, does etc.

Vowel No 6: /ɑ/ The sound is close to the Assamese sound [অ]. The sound occurs in words like pass, part, heart, clerk, calm, laught, aunt etc.

Vowel No 7: /ɒ:/ The sound is close to the Assamese sound [অ] in the word [গৰম]. The sound occurs in words like dog, what, swan, cough, trough etc.

Vowel No 8: /ɔ:/ The sound is close to the Assamese sound [অ]. The sound occurs in words like horse, saw, lawn, bought, ought, fault, all, before, door, board, four, court.

Vowel No 9: /ʊ/ The sound is close to the Assamese sound [উ]

The sound occurs in words like put, wolf, good, could, should etc.

Vowel No 10:/u:/The sound is close to the Assamese sound [উ]. The sound occurs in words like food, do, group, soup, rude, chew, blue, juice, shoe etc.

Vowel No 11: /ɜ:/ The sound is close to [আ] when the [আ] is pronounced with the mouth half open. The sound occurs in words like bird, first, her, earth, heard, turn, purt, word, journey etc.

Vowel No 12: /ə/ The sound is close to Assamese [অ] when the [অ] is brought closer to [আ]. The sound occurs in words like above,

about, father, mother, police, martyr etc.

Diphthong No 1: /eɪ/ The sound is close to Assamese [এই]. The sound occurs in words like make, late, nail, may, vein, obey, great, eight etc.

Diphthong No 2: /ɑɪ/ The sound is close to Assamese [আই]. The sound occurs in words like time, cry, hight, bight, height, die, tried. dye, eyes either aisle etc.

Diphthong No 3: /ɔɪ/ The sound is close to the Assamese [অয়] as in [হ + অয় = হয়]. The sound occurs in words like noise, voice, boy, toy etc.

Diphthong No 4: /əʊ/ The sound is close to the Assamese vowel [[ঔ]. The sound occurs in words like bone, home, oak, toe, soul, know etc.

Diphthong No 5: /ɑʊ/The sound can be nearly represented by the sound [আও]. The sound occurs in words like house, sound, cow, town etc.

Diphthong No 6: /ɪ ə/ The sound can be nearly represented by the sound [য়া] in Assamese. The sound ocurs in words like cheer, near, here, weird, fierce, idea, India, theology, museum, hero etc.

Diphthong No 7: /ɛ ə/ The sound is nearly close to the Assamese sound [এয়া]. The sound occurs in words like care, rare, pair, chair, bear, pear etc.

Diphthong No 8: /ʊə/ The sound is nearly close to the Assamese sound [উৱা]. The sound occurs in words like poor, pure, tour, etc.

7.4.2 The Consonant Sounds

1 /p/: Like the Assamese [প], sound, /p/ occurs in words like pin, spin, appear etc.

2 /b/: Like the Assamese [ব], sound, / b / occurs in words like big, rib, ribbon, bubble etc.

3 /t/: Like the Assamese [ট], the sound occurs in words like take, stake, butter, thanked etc.

4 /d/: Like the Assamese [ড], the sound occurs in words like dog, middle, add etc.

5 /k/: Like the Assamese [ক], the sound occurs in words like kind, cake, accord, conquer, stomach, sick, yolk, folk etc.

6 /g/: Like the Assamese [গ], the sound occurs in words like go, giggle, ghost, guard etc.

7 /ɛʃ/: Like Assamese [চ্ছ], the sound occurs in words like chain, rich, catch, nature etc.

8 /dʒ/: Like Assamese [জ্জ], the sound occurs in words like jam, just, gem, giraffe, edge, judge suggest, adjust, soldier etc.

9 /f/: Bring your upper teeth in contact with the lower lip to say the Assamese [ফ], and thereby you produce the /f/ consonant sound. It occurs in feet, leaf, office, photo, phone, tough, enough, physics, carf, half etc.

10 /v/: Bring your upper teeth in contact with the lower lip to say the Assamese [ভ] and thereby you produce [v]. It occurs in over, vine, of etc.

11 /θ/: Bring the tip of your tongue between the pairs of teeth to say the Assamese [ঠ] and thereby you produce [θ]. The sound occurs in think, thank, author etc.

12 /ð/: Bring the tip of your tongue between the pairs of teeth to say Assamese [ড] and thereby you produce. The sound occurs in this, those, other, etc.

13 /s/: Like Assamese [চ], the sound occurs in soul, past, grass, class, niece, science, scene, psychology etc.

14 /z/: Like Assamese [জ], the sound occurs in dogs, roses, seissors, zoo, dozen, dizzy, puzzle, exact, etc.

15 /ʃ/: It is like to Assamese sound [শ], and occurs in shoe, cash, machine, schedule, sure, sugar, assume, nation, mansion, conscience, special. ocean

16 /z/: The sound is closer to Assamese [য] when it is pronounced with the tongue raised in the back. It occurs in vision, measure, pleasure, garage etc.

17 /h/: Closer to Assamese [হ], the sound occurs in how, who, whom, whole etc.

18 /m/: Close to Assamese [ম], the sound occurs in meet, make, summer, comb, tomb, autumn, solemn etc.

19 /n/: Close to Assamese [ন], the sound occurs in now, many, funny, know, knife, gnaw etc.

20 /ŋ/: Close to Assamese [ঙ], the sound occurs in sing, finger etc.

21 /l/: Close to Assamese [ল], the sound occurs in live, lock, chilly, yellow etc.

22 /r/: Close to Assamese [ৰ], the sound occurs in red, cry, carry, write, rhino, etc.

23 /j/: Close to Assamese [য়], the sound occurs in yes, your, union, university, Europe, new beauty, suit, due, queue etc

24 /w/: Close to Assamese [ৱ], the sound occurs in west, which, language, quick etc. Note that /j/ and /w/ are called semi-vowels.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 2: Give brief answer to the following questions

(a) What is a phoneme?

(b) How many vowel sounds are there in the sound system of English?

(c) Which two sounds are called semi-vowels?

(d) Give two words containing the vowel / i:/ in the medial position (i.e. or the middle) of a word in English.

(e) Give two words containing the consonant / s / in the medial position of an English word.

(f) What are the units of sounds contained in the words: calm, heard, village, deed, shoe?

7.5 MINIMAL PAIRS

The term minimal pair is used to refer to a pair of words in a language which differ from each other by only one distinctive sound (one phoneme) and which also differ in meaning. For example, the English words pit and bit are a minimal pair as they differ in meaning and in their initial phonemes/ /p/ and /b/. In the words pit and bit, the phonemes /p/ and /b/ set up the basic sound contrast to make one word different from another.

The phonemes of a language can therefore be viewed as the total number of sound contrasts used by a language to differentiate meaning. These contrasts can be established by comparing pairs of words, which differ only in a single sound. The two words hut and cut differ only in the initial sounds. Since these two words have different meanings in English, we can say that these two phonemes belong to two different phonemes in English. Similarly, other phonemes can be established by comparing contrastive pairs like bit-beat, bet-bat, pool-pool. Contrastive pairs like these where the two words, differ in only one sound, are called **minimal pairs**.

In this section, we are making use of minimal pairs as a technique of drilling some of the sounds that are likely to be confused with others. Given in pairs, first you will learn to recognise the two sounds. For example, you may have problems in maintaining the length of vowel sounds like hit and heat. Given in the format of a contrasting pair, it becomes convenient for you to recognise the difference between the sets of pairs. Drilling these contrasts help in minimising the problems. The minimal pair drills given in the next two sub-sections take up vowel and consonant contrasts separately.

7.5.1 Vowel Contrasts

1. Contrast between / i:/ and /i/ : (Note that the vowel /i:/ is a long vowel sound while /i/ is a short vowel sound.)

beat- bit	sheep-ship	leap-lip
heat-bit	read-rid	eat-it
seat-sit	seen-sin	keal-kill
feat-fit	neat-knit	bead-bid

2. Contrast between /e/ and /æ/: (Note that you open your mouth wider when you say /æ/)

bet- bat	met-mat	pen-pan
bed-bad	bend-band	men-man
beg-bag	lend-land	fen-fan
set-sat	send-sand	led-lad

3. Contrast between /e/ and /eɪ/ : (Note that /e/ is a diphthong). A diphthong is a vowel that change its quality in the course of its production: it begins with one vowel and ends with another.

get-gate	pen-pain	sell-sale
bet-bait	men-main	well-wail
lat-late	bed-bade	wet-wait
met-mate	tell-tale	red-raid

4. Contrast between /ʌ/ and /ɑ:/ : (Note that /ɑ:/ is more open then /ʌ/)

hut-heart	luck-lark	come-calm
bad-band	much- march	cut-cart
duch-dark	done-darn	luck-lark

5. Contrast between /ɒ/ and /ɔ:/ : (Note that the sound /ɔ:/ is larger than /ɒ/)

cot-cought	shot-short	tot-taught
pot-port	rod-roared	spot-sport
cock-cork	nod-gnawed	cool-cord

6. Contrast between /ʌ/and /3:/ : (Note that /3:/ is a long vowel sound)

bud-bird	shut-shirt	cut-curt
bun-burn	such-search	stun-stern
hut-hurt	ton-turn	gull-girl

7.5.2 Consonant Contrasts

1. Contrast between /d/ and /ð/

den-then	day-they
dose-those	dare-there

read-wreathe bread- breathe

2. Contrast between /s/ and /tʃ/

sin-chin	sear-cheer
sick-chick	seat-cheat
sip-chip	seep-cheap
seek-cheek	soak-choke

3. Contrast between /f/ and /v/

fat-vat	fan-van	few-view
fast-vast	feel-veal	fine vine
fail-vel	ferry-very	file-vile
seek-cheek	soak-choke	

4. Contrast between /s/ and /ʃ/

sall-shall	self-shelf	sift-shift
sign-shine	sip-ship	sole-shoal
sin-shin	same-shame	suit-shoot

5. Contrast between /z/ and /dʒ/

zoo-jew	raise-rage
zest-jest	ways-wage
buzz-budge	seize-siege



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3. Give brief answers.

(a) What is a minimal pair?

(b) Construct a minimal pair drill contrasting /ʊ/ and /u:/ (at least three pairs).

(c) Construct a minimal pair drill contrasting /q/ and /t/ (at least three pairs).

(d) Construct a minimal pair drill contrasting /əɪ/ and /eɪ/ (at least three pairs).



7.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we learnt that in order to be fluent speakers of English, apart from a grammatical knowledge of sentence forms and correct usage, we need a fair knowledge of the sound system of English. We also learnt that –

- The basics of the sound system of English would contribute in an effective way towards enhancing your communication skills in English.
- The phonemes of a language constitute the sound system of the language. In the sound system of English, there are forty-four phonemes. These phonemes are divided into twenty vowel sounds and twenty-four consonant sounds.
- The features of the twenty vowel sounds are sub-divided into twelve *pure vowels* and eight *diphthongs.*
- The twenty-four consonant sounds have distinctive features.
- The minimal pairs have distinctive features. We noted the different contrasting individual speech sounds.
- The term minimal pair is used to refer to a pair of words in a language which differ from each other by only one distinctive sound (one phoneme) and which also differ in meaning. For example, the English words pit and bit are a minimal pair as they differ in meaning and in their initial phonemes//p/ and /b/.



7.7 FURTHER READING

Allen, W.S. (1984). *Living English Speech.* Orient Longman.

T. Balasubramaniam. (2005). *A Textbook of English Phonetics for Indian Students.* Macmillan.

Roach, Peter. (2002). *English Phonetics and Phonology.* Cambridge.

Sethi, J. & P. D. Dhamija. (1999). *A Course in Phonetics and spoken English*. Prentice Hall.



7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1:

(a) See 7.3

(b) Try yourself

(c) Our spoken English appears to be rather different from standard English speech when the sound system of the language is heavily affected by the sound system of our mother tongue.

Ans to Q 2:

(a) A phoneme is a minimal unit of speech sound in a language.

(b) There are twenty vowel sounds in the sound system of English out of which twelve are pure vowels and eight are diphthongs.

(c) The consonant sounds /w/ and /j/ are called semi-vowels in English.

(d) feel /fi:l/; green /gri:n/

(e) asset; beside.

(f) calm= /k/+/ɑ:/+/m/

heard=/h/+/3:/+/d/

village=/v/+/i/+/l/+/i/+/j/

deed= /d/+/i:/+/d/

shoe = /ʃ/+ /u:/

Ans to Q 3:

(a) A minimal pair is a pair of words in a language which differ from each other by only one distinctive sound or phoneme and which also differ in meaning. For example, pit/fit are a minimal pair.

(b) /ʊ/ - /u:/

pull - pool

full - fool

should - shooed

(c) /θ/ /t/

thank tank

thought taught

three tree

(d) /aɪ/ /eɪ/

height hate

light late

fight fate



7.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Give brief answers to the following questions:

(a) How many consonant sounds are there in the sound system of English?

(b) What are the two types of vowel sounds in the sound system of English?

(c) How many phonemes are there in the following two words?

(i) ought (ii) juice

Q 2: Answer the following questions.

(a) Why is pen and pit not a minimal pair?

(b) Why is bed and bud not a minimal pair?

Q 3: Construct a minimal pair drill contrasting the underlined sounds (at least 4 pairs each).

(a) The consonant sound in shoe and the consonant sound in sit.

(b) The vowel sound in any and the vowel sound in ant.

Q 4: Answer the following questions.

(a) List the diphthongs of English.

(b) List the units of sounds contained in the following words.

(i) police (ii) laugh (iii) bought (iv) town.

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UNIT 8: SOUNDS OF ENGLISH II

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives

8.2 Introduction

8.3 Word Stress

- 8.3.1 Placement of Word Stress
- 8.3.2 Stress in Compound Words
- 8.3.3 Grammatical Function of Stress

8.4 Sentence Stress and Intonation

8.5 Let us Sum up

8.6 Further Reading

8.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

8.8 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- familiarize yourself with the concept of word stress
- enlist the stress patterns of English words
- explain the grammatical function of stress
- familiarize yourself with the intonation patterns of English

8.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, which is also the last unit of the Block, we move away from individual units of sounds to utterances or oral communication. We are now entering the concept of syllables that will lead us to words and then to tone groups. The unit begins by introducing you to the concept of the syllable. We defined the concept of the syllable as a unit of speech that is often longer than one sound unit e.g. /p/ but shorter than a word. Some words may be made up of one syllable and some more than one syllable. We drew your attention to the fact that in words of more than one syllable, one of the syllables is stressed. We explained the word stress in a syllable:

one of the syllables is said with more force than the others. It also means that one of the requirements of using word stress is that a speaker needs to have some knowledge of syllable structure of words.

We noted in this unit that a word in English has one or more syllables and that in each syllable, there is usually a vowel sound that appears more prominent than the rest. This observation will enable us to identify the syllables in the word pencil (pen – cil). Now, in polysyllabic English words one of the syllables will take the stress. We have shown that in a longer word having about four syllables, one of the syllables will take the primary stress; another one will take the secondary stress. We have introduced you to the patterns of stresses of words, compound words and the grammatical functions of word stress. Next, we noted that in an English sentence not all the words in the sentence receive equal prominence. Some words, or syllables in words having more than one syllable, are more prominent than others. Generally, nouns, main verbs, adjectives and adverbs in a sentence are stressed. Besides, apart from stressing the syllables contained in the noun, verb, adjective and adverb, we have also to use intonation, which refers to the melody of speech, the changing pitch of the voice.

8.3 WORD STRESS

You will recall that the focus of unit 7 was on discrete sound units, the phonemes of the language, which we discussed in terms of vowels and consonants. Now, in this unit we aim to introduce you to the features of English speech. Therefore, we move to the next stage, the syllable. What is a syllable?

A syllable is a unit in speech, which is often longer that, a unit of sound, the phoneme, but smaller than a whole word. The word tea consists of one syllable whereas the word teacher consists of two syllables: tea-cher. The word important consists of three syllables: im-por-tant. One of the basic features of English speech is that while pronouncing words of more than one syllable, one of the syllables is stressed. It means that one of the syllables is said with more force than the others.

Let us take the word teacher. When we pronounce the word, the second syllable is stressed. We put a stress mark before the stressed syllable to indicate the stressed portion that has to be uttered with greater force. Try reading the word with greater force on the It also means that one of the requirements of using word stress is that a speaker needs to have some knowledge of syllable structure of words. This unit Stress is the degree of force with which a syllable or a word is uttered. The usual distinction is between stressed and unstressed syllables. The word **teacher**, for example, is made up of two syllables **tea +** cher**.** In this word, the first syllable 'tea' is more prominent than the second syllable 'cher'. We have made the stressed portion bold for your convenience.

On the other hand, the word "remain" is made up of two syllables in which the first syllable 're' is unstressed and the second syllable '**main**' is stressed. When we speak out words of more than one syllable, one of the syllables attains more prominence than the other. The prominence is due to an increase in loudness of the stressed syllable to contrast with the unstressed syllables. In this section, we shall discuss the patterns of word stress in English.

It is important to note that English is a stress-timed language. In a stress-timed language, the stressed syllables in a sentence recur at regular intervals of time, regardless of the intervening unstressed syllables. It is distinguished from syllable-timed languages. Assamese is a syllable-timed language; while speaking, we do not follow the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

8.3.1 Placement of Word Stress

A word in English has one or more syllables. In each syllable, there is one sound, usually a vowel, that appears more prominent than the others. When you look at a word having more than one syllable, you should be able to identify the syllables contained in the word. A word may be pronounced 'syllable at a time' as in de-mo-cra-cy, and a good dictionary will indicate where the syllabic divisions occur in writing.

In polysyllabic English words, that is, words of more than one syllable, one of the syllables will take the stress. If it is a longer word having about four syllables, while one of the syllables will take the primary stress, another one will take the secondary stress. We have to learn the patterns of stresses of words. Here, a selection of words of more than one syllable is given indicating the stressed syllables for your practice.

A. Words of two syllables :

I. First syllable stressed

Examples: Take the word doctor. The word has two syllables doc and tor. When we are to stress the first syllable say the first syllable **doc** with extra force, pronounce it as if you are saying 'dock'. Then say the second syllable lightly. Now follow the same technique and practice the following words. However, before that, take a pencil and mark the stressed syllable as follows: ˈdoctor. The horizontal bar before doc is the stress mark.

(1) able	(10) failure	(19) open
(2) after	(11) future	(20) programme
(3) broken	(12) ginger	(21) pillar
(4) better	(13) joker	(22) question
(5) captain	(14) kitten	(23) quarter
(6) colour	(15) master	(24) ready
(7) daughter	(16) nature	(25) summer
(8) dancer	(17) never	(26) teacher
(9) eager	(18) offer	(27) window

II. Second syllable stressed

Examples: Take the word remain. The word has two syllables re-main. When you are to stress the second syllable, say the first syllable 're' softly and put the extra force on the syllable 'main'. The stress mark on the second syllable will make the stressed word as follows: reˈmain. Now follow the same technique and practice the following words.

(1) about	(11) far-flung	(21) knee-deep
(2) above	(12) fulfil	(22) Lahore
(3) before	(13) good-day	(23) lasso
(4) begin	(14) good-bye	(24) maroon
(5) complete	(15) hard-earned	(25) machine
(6) condemn	(16) hurray	(26) narrate
(7) decay	(17) ill-bred	(27) negate
(8) divide	(18) imply	(28) occur
(9) employ	(19) Japan	(29) prepare
(10) enjoy	(20) July	(30) refuse

B. Words of three syllables:

I. First syllable stressed

Examples: Take the word 'absolute'. The word has three syllable ab-so-lute. Put the force on the first syllable 'ab' and say the other two syllables softly and quickly.

Practice the following words

(1) advertise	(6) character	(11) happily
(2) anything	(7) definite	(12) industry
(3) bicycle	(8) dangerous	(13) lecturer
(4) bachelor	(9) furniture	(14) manager
(5) confiscate	(10) generally	(15) Yesterday

II. Second syllable stressed

Examples: The word 'exception' has the following syllables ex-cap-tion. Put your force on the second syllable and say the other two softly. This is the technique you'll follow for all the three or more syllabled words.

(1) agreement	(6) election	(11) mechanic
(2) another	(7) familiar	(12) politely
(3) banana	(8) genetic	(13) production
(4) committee	(9) important	(14) refusal
(5) director	(10) librarian	(15) selection

III. Third syllable stressed

(1) afternoon (6) guarantee
(2) cigarette (7) magazine
(3) disbelief (8) personnel
(4) entertain (9) seventeen
(5) engineer (10) underpaid

C. Words of Four syllables:

I. First syllable stressed

(1) absolutely (6) definitely
(2) comfortable (7) modifying
(3) criticism (8) melancholy
(4) confiscated (9) positively
(5) demonstrating (10) territory

II. Second syllable stressed

(1) appreciate (6) democracy
(2) ability (7) important
(3) ambassador (8) participate
(4) affirmation (9) ridiculous
(5) comparison (10) significant

III. Third syllable stressed

(1) application (6) democratic
(2) apparatus (7) diplomatic
(3) apposition (8) preservation
(4) accidental (9) incidental
(5) circulation (10) photographic

IV. Fourth syllable stressed

(1) aristocratic (6) modification
(2) autobiography (7) misunderstand
(3) communication (8) misrepresent
(4) co-operation (9) incomprehensible
(5) investigation (10) investigation

8.3.2 Stress in Compound Words

When two or more words are joined to make a longer word, the process in known as compound formation and the words thus formed are known as compound words. A compound word can be analysed into two words both of which can exist independently as English words. Compound words are written in different ways.

- Sometimes they are written as one word: armchair, sunflower, headache, goldfish, handwriting etc.
- Sometime they are written with the words separated by a hyphen e.g. pain-killer, hold-all, cut-throat, gear-change, fruit-cake etc.
- Sometime they are written as two words separated by a space e.g. gold mine, honeybee, tear gas, oil well, book review etc.

As far as stress is concerned, the following rules can be helpful.

(a) When both the elements of a compound word are nouns, the first element is stressed:
ˈgoldsmith, ˈnewspaper, ˈsunrise, ˈtypewriter,
ˈrainbow, ˈmotorcar, ˈhomework, ˈmaidservant.

(b) When both the elements of a compound noun is an adjective, the second element with an-ed suffix takes the stress
bad-ˈtempered, heavy-ˈhanded, far-ˈfetched

(c) Compounds in which the first element is a number in some form, take the stress in the second element:
three-ˈwheeler, second-ˈclass

(d) Compounds functioning as adverbs are usually final stressed;
North-ˈEast down-ˈstream

8.3.3 Grammatical Function of Stress

There are a number of words in English whose stress pattern depends on whether the word is used as a noun, an adjective or a verb. As a rule if the word is a noun or an adjective, the stress will be

on the first syllable. On the other hand, if the word is a verb, the second syllable of the word is stressed. Read the following words.

Noun/Adjective	**Verb**
absent	absent
accent	accent
addict	addict
concent	concert
conduct	conduct
conflict	conflict
content	content
contest	contest
contract	contract
contrast	contrast
convent	convent
desent	desent
exploit	exploit
incline	incline
increase	increase
insent	insent
insult	insult
object	object
permit	permit
present	present
produce	produce
progress	progress
project	project
protest	protest
rabel	rabel
record	record
survey	survey
suspect	suspect

Note that the underlined portion of the word/the syllable has to be stressed.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Answer the following questions in brief.

(a) Rewrite the words by breaking them into syllables: example, record = re+cord

(i) realize (ii) translate (iii) drama

(iv) admission (v) economist

(b) Put appropriate stress marks in the following words

(i) follow (ii) today (iii) minister

(iv) example (v) introduce

8.4 SENTENCE STRESS AND INTONATION

We shall now go beyond the level of words to sentences or utterances. When you listen to an English sentence spoken, you will find that not all the words in the sentence receive equal prominence. Some words, or syllables in words having more than one syllable, are more prominent than the others. Generally, nouns, main verbs, adjectives and adverbs in a sentence are stressed.

When you utter a sentence, apart from stressing the syllables contained in the noun, verb, adjective and adverb, you have also to use intonation. By intonation is meant the melody of speech, the changing pitch of the voice. It is to a certain extent controlled by the stressed syllables of the sentence.

Moreover, depending upon the type of sentence the tone of the sentence can have variations. For example:

(a) A statement (assertive sentence) ends with a falling tone. Observe how the stress marks are modified in the following statement:

ˈWhen he ˈsaw the poˌliceman / he ˈran away.

In this sentence you stress <u>when, saw, policeman</u> away. Since the sentence is too long to be uttered in natural conversation, you take a break at the clause margin. The sentence now has the following two tone groups.

(a) ˈWhen he ˈsaw the poˌliceman

(b) he ˈran a ˈway.

Parts of a longer utterance are called tone groups or tone units. A tone group is a basic unit of intonation in a language. The most important word in the tone group can take a rising tone or a falling tone depending upon its position in the utterance.

Here, you put a rising tone (your voice rises) at the syllable lice in the first tone unit. This will indicate that the utterance is not complete. You put a falling tone in the syllable way in the word away. A complete statement ends with a falling tone.

(b) A 'wh' question has the same intonation pattern as an assertive sentence.

|What is your \name?

This is the normal pattern. However, when you use an encouraging tone, for example, while asking a young child his/ her name, you can use a rising tone.

|What is your /name?

The tone rises with name.

(c) A yes-no type question ends with a rising tone.

\Have you seen my /bag?

Note that the tone falls at have and rises in the last noun bag.



ACTIVITY

Read these dialogues aloud. The names of the persons are given as A, B and C.

1. A: \Has she /come?
   B: Yes, she \has.
   C: No, she \hasn't.
2. A: \Are you /ready?
   B: Yes, I \am.
   C: No, I'm \not.
3. A: \May I /come in?
   B: Yes,You \may.
   C: No, you \can't.

4. A: \Have they /left?
   B: Yes, they \have.
   C: No, they \haven't.
5. A: The |sun's |setting al\ready.
   B: So it \is.
6. A: I'm |not late/ /am I?
   B: No, you \aren't.
7. A: By |getting there /early, / we |got the |best \seats
   B: You're \lucky.
8. A: \Can you /help me?
   B: I |can't \promise, anything, / but I'll 'do
   what I /can for you.



8.5 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, we have learnt that –

- Phonemes, syllables, words and tone groups form a hierarchy of speech.
- The syllable has been seen as a unit of speech often longer than one sound but shorter than a word.
- The word is seen as a unit higher than a syllable though short words like 'book' consist of one syllable.
- Some words have more than one syllable.
- While pronouncing words of more than one syllable, one of the syllables is stressed. It means that one of the syllables is said with more force than the others.
- A word in English has one or more syllables and that in each syllable, there is usually a vowel sound that appears more prominent than the rest. In polysyllabic English words, one of the syllables will take the stress. We have shown that in a longer word of about four syllables, one of the syllables will take the primary stress and another one will take the secondary stress.

- Stress patterns of compound words and the grammatical function of stress are important aspects of language.
- In an English sentence not all the words in the sentence receive equal prominence. Some words, or syllables in words having more than one syllable, are more prominent than others. Generally, nouns, main verbs, adjectives and adverbs in a sentence are stressed.
- Besides, we noted that apart from stressing the syllables contained in the noun, verb, adjective and adverb, we have also to use intonation, which refers to the melody of speech, the changing pitch of the voice.



8.6 FURTHER READING

Allen, W.S. (1984). *Living English Speech.* Orient Longman.

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8.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q 1:

(a) (i) real+ize (ii) trans+late
(iii) dra+ma (iv) ad+mi+ssion
(v) e+co+nom+ist

(b) (i) ˈfollow (ii) to ˈday (iii) ˈminister
(iv) exˈample (v) ˈintroduce



8.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1. Give brief answers to the following questions:

(a) Define the concept of the syllable.

(b) Explain what you mean by tone group.

(c) What class of words are generally stressed in a sentence?

(d) Define the term intonation.

Q 2. Answer the following questions.

(a) Rewrite the following words by breaking them into syllables:

(i) ability (ii) cigarette

(b) Put appropriate stress marks in the following words

(i) obey (ii) democratise

(c) Put appropriate stress marks on the following:

(i) Conduct as noun and verb

(ii) Perfect as noun and verb

(d) Put appropriate stress and intonation marks in the following dialogue.

A: Where did you go this morning?

B: We went to the park.

Q 3. Answer the following questions.

(a) Discuss the grammatical function of stress with examples.

(b) What are compound words? Explain the stress pattern of compound words.

(c) Write a dialogue between two persons where A makes enquiries and B provides information. Put appropriate stress and intonation marks.

*** ***** ***



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