

# Unit:2 Speaking

## Topics to Be Discuss:

1. Introduction and Polite Conversations
2. Situational Dialogues
3. Role Play
4. Group Discussion
5. Non-Verbal Communication

## 1. Introduction and Polite Conversations

### **Introduction:**

The art of small talk and polite conversation is quickly dying. Many people are uncomfortable in situations where they have to make small talk with others or chat with people they have just met. Understanding the etiquette of polite conversation, including what topics are acceptable, what topics to avoid, and how to end uncomfortable exchanges, will enable you to make conversation in any situation.

### **Defining Small Talk:**

Depending on the dictionary you consult, you will find small talk defined as "light, informal conversation for social occasions," or simply "casual conversation." Any of these definitions fit, but none of them teaches you the details of how to go about small talk with style. It should be pleasant and unhurried and should put everyone at ease.

Small talk is surprisingly important. It greases the wheels at business meals or meetings and social occasions and can make a long wait in line much less annoying. If you make a new colleague comfortable while waiting for a business meeting to start, you will be sought after in future business dealings.

### **Appropriate Topics:**

The key to polite conversation is keeping the topics light, interesting, and non-controversial. You want the discussion to be pleasant; you do not want to start a political debate. You must also be aware of your audience and the setting. While a great story about something amusing that happened on your last business trip might be perfect at a business lunch, it will not really interest a mixed group of friends at a weekend picnic who are not familiar with your business.

Some topics that are generally considered taboo for polite conversation include politics, religion, and any local "hot button" issues that have caused hard feelings and sharply divided camps. General observations about the turnout at voter

registration may be fine, but political comments might inadvertently insult another person's political views and can lead to arguments or uncomfortable silences. Here are some guidelines for choosing topics that will and will not work for polite conversation:

- **Asking about someone's family.**

In most cases, this is a welcome topic. Be sure to listen more than talk at this point; a good conversationalist knows when to listen. Parents love to talk about their children and grandchildren.

- **Newspaper stories.**

If it is an interesting or unusual story, it will be welcome. If it is grim or depressing, avoid it. No one wants to be brought down.

- **Sports.**

Choose this topic according to the audience. If you are with a group of people who share your interest in football, it is a great topic. If half the people know nothing about the game, save this topic for another time. A good conversationalist knows how to choose the right moment.

- **Relaying good news about friends.**

If you are talking to someone who has mutual friends with you, be sure to pass the word of good news.

- **Suggesting a good restaurant/movie/television program.**

Others always appreciate advice on something new that they might enjoy.

- **Discussing local events.**

If your community sponsors local activities, be sure to talk about them in a positive light.

- **General topics of interest.**

Depending on the group you are with, this might be local schools, real estate in your area, or local cultural programs. The key is to keep your comments upbeat. Do not make harsh criticisms of the school board, but comment on how impressive the high school football team's record was this year.

- **Human interest stories.**

If you have heard an inspiring story about a young person who has overcome steep odds, an individual who rescued a neighbor, or any other heartwarming tale, share these with others. Animal stories are always a good bet; people love their pets and enjoy hearing uplifting stories about animals.

When you are on the receiving end of questions, be sure you answer in the same vein: Be upbeat and charming. Polite conversation involves a good balance of talking and listening. No single person should dominate the conversation, so keep your answers to the point. If someone asks you about your family, be sure to give a

thorough answer, but do not drone on. You should always refer to your family members by name because the other person may have forgotten their names and you do not want to put them on the spot.

For instance, if someone asks about your kids, you could say, "Our youngest, Emma, started kindergarten this year, Molly started junior high and is in the band, and Joshua will graduate this year. They are all doing great! And how are your kids?" If you have been ill and people ask about your health, do not give them the details of your recovery! While they are genuinely concerned, they really do not want to hear about the messy details of your treatments and how miserable you were. Simply let them know that you are recovering and appreciate their thoughts and prayers.

### **Giving and Receiving Compliments:**

An unexpected compliment can brighten someone's day. Children notice this when their father tells their mother how pretty she is or their mother compliments their father on the great job he did installing the new bookshelves. Families who compliment each other regularly raise children who are comfortable both giving and receiving compliments.

Unfortunately, some people today are either uncomfortable with compliments and try to deflect them with humor, or they are suspicious of them and fear that the person complimenting them has an ulterior motive. Fortunately, the majority of people still welcome a compliment and are pleased to receive one.

A compliment can get the conversation started on a positive note in almost any situation. You can compliment someone's appearance, intelligence, ability, personality, or talent; it really depends on the situation. If you are on a date, you might want to tell the person you are with how great he or she looks, that you think the person's opinions on the latest energy program are interesting, or that you love the way she or he laughs.

Some situations that call for a compliment include the following:

- invitations to events in which someone provided you with a meal;
- when someone has received any kind of recognition, honor, or award;
- when someone has put in extra effort on a job or project;
- a case when someone has done something brave or unusual to help another;
- any time a major change, such as weight loss, has taken place;
- when someone achieves some milestone, such as a promotion or degree;
- when someone looks particularly nice or is dressed for a special occasion;
- when someone has competed in any type of competition. The person does not need to have won; you can congratulate the competitor on a job well done.

Compliments do not have to be fancy or elaborate. Simple and sincere compliments are best:

"The meal was delicious. I loved the pork tenderloin!"

"I heard about your Rotary Scholarship! I knew you were an outstanding student. You'll do great at college."

"You look great, Jenn! It's like you're a teen again!"

"That color looks great on you."

### **Receiving Compliments Graciously:**

For some of us, the reflexive response to a compliment is to protest. We feel like it is vain or presumptuous to accept a compliment, so we argue, saying things like, "Oh, no, I didn't do that great," or "I look awful! My hair is a mess!" This is actually rude because it is insulting the person giving you the compliment; you are insinuating the person does not know what he or she is talking about.

The appropriate response to a compliment is simply a smile and, "Thank you," or "That's so nice of you," or something similar. Do not feel embarrassed when someone compliments you. Take it in stride and savor it.

## **2. Situational Dialogues**

There are several occasions or situations that require us to speak to another person for getting or giving information, making inquiries or a request, or getting something done. The dialogues spoken on such occasions are called Situational dialogues. The following are some examples of such situations.

### **At the tailor's shop:**

A customer (Ram) meets his tailor to get his clothes stitched:

'Good morning! I have got two shirts and a pair of trousers for stitching,' said Ram entering the tailor's shop.

'Let me take the measurements...Sir,' smiled the tailor.

'No, no, it is not necessary. I have got the sample shirt and trousers,' Ram handed over the samples in a hurry.

'Oh, that is good. Let me see them.' The tailor's voice expressed relief from taking the measurements.

'Do you want to have two pockets at the back of your trousers or only one as in this?'

'Please follow exactly the sample.' Ram got annoyed.

'Okay sir.'

'When can I get the shirts and trousers?'

'After a week, that is, on the 20th,' he assured.

### **At the library desk:**

A student finds it difficult to locate a book in the library and at this time the librarian comes forward to help her out.

'Good morning, what can I do for you?' asked the librarian with a smile to Leena who was struggling to locate a book.

'I need the book Organic Synthesis by Stuart Warren,' uttered Leena without looking at the librarian.

'Did you search through the online catalogue search?' asked the librarian gently.

'I did, but I could not succeed,' answered Leena disappointedly.

'Let me try,' said the librarian starting the online search.

'Do you need the details once again?' asked Leena expressing concern.

'If I am right it is a book on Organic Synthesis by ...' said the librarian still searching online.

'Stuart Warren,' completed Leena.

'Here it is, the number is 201.15W,' said the librarian triumphantly. 'Please take this slip with you. It contains the number.'

'Thank you very much for your help.'

### **At the bank:**

A lady meets the manager in connection with understanding a scheme.

'Good morning sir, I am Swapna Sood from Goodwill Corporation,' said the lady to the bank manager.

'Good morning. What can I do for you?' replied the manager.

'I would like to understand the scheme XYZ-life offered by your bank,' expressed the lady in a hurried tone.

'You are most welcome Madam. But you know, as I am busy now, could you please come after half an hour or tomorrow?' asked the manager apologetically.

'I have travelled about 15 kilometers to reach this place and I cannot come again,' shot back the lady arrogantly.

'Please try to understand my problem,' requested the manager.

'It is your problem,' the lady replied back, 'and it does not speak well of your bank if you turn down customers like this,' she added in an admonitory tone.

'Sorry, madam, I did not mean to discourage you. I understand your problem and I will put a person right now on this job.'

'Thank you,' said the lady curtly and went to the person referred to.

## **3. Role-Play**

### **Introduction:**

Incorporating role-play into the classroom adds variety, a change of pace and opportunities for a lot of language production and also a lot of fun! It can be an integral part of the class and not a 'one-off' event. If the teacher believes that the activity will work and the necessary support is provided, it can be very successful.

### **What is role-play?**

Role-play is any speaking activity when you either put yourself into somebody else's shoes, or when you stay in your own shoes but put yourself into an imaginary situation!

Imaginary people - The joy of role-play is that students can 'become' anyone they like for a short time! The President, the Queen, a millionaire, a pop star ..... the choice is endless! Students can also take on the opinions of someone else. 'For and Against' debates can be used and the class can be split into those who are expressing

views in favour and those who are against the theme.

Imaginary situations - Functional language for a multitude of scenarios can be activated and practised through role-play. 'At the restaurant', 'Checking in at the airport', 'Looking for lost property' are all possible role-plays.

### **Why use role-play?**

It is widely agreed that learning takes place when activities are engaging and memorable. Jeremy Harmer advocates the use of role-play for the following reasons:

- It's fun and motivating
- Quieter students get the chance to express themselves in a more forthright way
- The world of the classroom is broadened to include the outside world - thus offering a much wider range of language opportunities

In addition to these reasons, students who will at some point travel to an English-speaking country are given a chance to rehearse their English in a safe environment. Real situations can be created and students can benefit from the practice. Mistakes can be made with no drastic consequences.

## **4. Group Discussion**

Group discussions (GDs) are now being used as an important step in the selection of candidates both in private and government organizations. It is a formal discussion which involves six to fifteen participants who sit in a group to discuss a topic or a case given for this purpose. GD is like a football or hockey game where all the players pass the ball to their team players and aim for a common goal. In these games, the team which has better coordination and skills wins the game and so is the case with GDs. In GDs, the group members have to interpret, analyse, and argue, so as to discuss the topic or case threadbare as a team.

### **Difference between GD and Debate**

A GD is not the same as a formal debate. In a debate, you are supposed to speak either for or against a motion. In GDs, on the other hand, all the members of the group are expected to deliberate upon the issue extensively, and it is possible for any of them to change their stand if they find themselves convinced about the other side of the perspective. This kind of alteration in the stance does not find a place in debates where those who speak for the motion or against it prepare their argument well in advance, and the contestant is not supposed to argue for both the sides. Such is not the case in GDs, where the discussion just involves naturally without anything to be proved, from the onset.

### **Personality Traits**

(Techniques of organizational GD, Guidelines for GD, Components of evaluation in GD) Following are the most important personality traits that a candidate should possess to do well in GDs:

**1. Team Player:**

Managers always work in teams. Therefore it is essential for managers to be team players. Management aspirants who lack team skills cannot be good managers.

**2. Resonating Ability:**

Resonating ability plays an important role while expressing your opinions or ideas at a GD. For example, if a topic on India's economy and its growth is given, any answer for this should be based on reasons, not assumptions.

**3. Leadership:**

A mere coordinator in a GD does not help, because it is a secondary role. A candidate must contribute to the GD with his ideas and opinions, steer the conversation towards a goal.

**4. Flexibility:**

The candidate must be open to other's ideas. Remember, a GD should never start with a stand or conclusion.

**5. Assertiveness:**

Do not get confused between assertiveness and aggressiveness. Aggressiveness is all about forcing one's point on the other person, and can be a threat to the group. An aggressive person can also demonstrate negative body language, whereas an assertive person displays positive body language.

**6. Initiative:**

A general trend amongst students is to start a GD and get the more points given to the initiator. It is a high risk strategy. A GD should be initiated only if the candidate is well versed with topic. If he starts and fails to contribute at regular intervals, it gives the impression that he started the GD just for the sake of the initial points. Also, if he fumbles and misquotes facts, it may work against him. You do not get a second chance to create a good impression!

**7. Creativity:**

A new idea for discussion on the GD topic is always highly appreciated. When candidate puts across a new idea convincingly, such that it is discussed at length by the group, it can only be positive.

**8. Inspiring Ability:**

A good group discussion should get views of all the team members. If some team members are not getting the opportunity to express their ideas, giving them an opportunity will be seen as a positive trait. If a participant is not willing to speak, candidate need not necessarily go out of the way to ask him to express his views.

**9. Listening:**

There must be a proper balance between expressing your ideas and listening to others' ideas.

**10. Awareness:**

Candidate's awareness about his environment helps a lot in GD content, which carries maximum weightage.

**Phases of GD**

A group discussion can be divided into three Phases.

1. Initiation or Introduction
2. Body of the Group Discussion
3. Summarization

When you initiate a GD, you not only grab opportunity to speak, you also grab the attention of the examiner and your fellow candidates. If you can make a favorable first impression with your content, it will you sail through the discussion. There are different techniques to initiate a GD and make a good first by making use of Quotes, Definition, Question, Short story, General statement, Facts, Figures and Statistics.

### **Types of GD**

GDs are of two types.

1. Topic – based
2. Case – based

Topic – based GDs can be divided into three types:

- (i) Factual topics
- (ii) Abstract topics
- (iii) Controversial topics

### **Factual topics:**

Mostly groups are given topics which are factual in nature. These are related to day-to-day socio-economic facts or environmental issues. For example, Growth of Tourism in India and Higher Education in India are factual topics.

### **Abstract topics:**

Abstract topics are given at the higher level. These are usually intangible in nature. You need to approach these topics with innovative and lateral thinking. For example, topics such as Blue is greater than Green, All are equal but Some are more equal than Others, Money makes You poor etc. are some abstract topics.

### **Controversial Topics:**

These topics are controversial in nature. Participants are bound to have divided opinions. These topics are given so as to observe the maturity level of participants on such issues. You should not lose your temper or give a narrow interpretation of issues being discussed. For example, you may be asked to discuss debatable issues such as Reservation should be Abolished in India or Women are unfit for Defence Services.

### **Case studies – based discussion**

These are real life simulated situations. Usually, these involve some kind of problems which are to be resolved. The key to such topics is that there is no right or wrong answer, but your approach to the solution is highly important.

## **5. Non verbal communication:**

Non-verbal communication refers to all communication that occurs without the use of words, spoken or written. It is concerned with body movements (kinesics), space (proxemics), and vocal (paralinguistic) features. It includes all unwritten and unspoken messages, both intentional and unintentional. Non-verbal cues, however, speak louder than words, as even though speech can be made up, bodily expressions can rarely be masked well enough to hide one's true feelings and emotions. Personal



appearances, facial expressions, postures, gestures, eye contact, voice, proximity, and touch are all non-verbal signals that influence the way in which a message is interpreted and understood. Though they have a profound impact on the receivers, it is difficult to analyse them accurately. This is because the interpretation of non-verbal cues is a very subjective concept, varying based on people's varied backgrounds (refer to cross-cultural communication). Nevertheless, they must not be ignored, but recognized and understood as correctly as possible.

### **KINESICS (Body Language):**

Kinesics is the study of the body's physical movements. It is the way the body communicates without words, i.e., through the various movements of its parts. When a speaker presents himself/herself, we see him/her before we start hearing him/her. Immediately, we begin developing impressions of his/her abilities and attitudes based on the non-verbal signals he/she sends. This is why body language is so critical in oral communication.

Body language includes every aspect of our appearance, from what we wear, how we stand, look, and move, to our facial expressions and physical habits, such as nodding the head, jingling change in the pocket, or fiddling with a necktie. Our use of space and gestures are other key indicators.

#### **1. Personal appearance**

Personal appearance plays an important role; people see before they hear. Just like we adapt our language to the audience, we should also dress appropriately. Appearance includes clothes, hair, accessories, cosmetics, and so on. Today, the purpose of clothing has altered from fulfilling a basic need to expressing oneself. Clothes also accentuate the body's movements, and the choice of clothes reveals a lot about the wearer's personality and attitude. Personal appearance must be so planned that it communicates effectively to others. Even before a speaker utters his/her first syllable the audience begins to form an opinion about him/ her and visualizes the way he/she is going to talk. One's appearance may put the audience into a resistant or hostile attitude or induce in them a receptive mood. To be clean and well groomed, conforming to the need of the occasion, is of utmost importance. Appearances communicate how we feel about ourselves and how we want to be viewed.

#### **2. Posture**

Posture generally refers to the way we hold ourselves when we stand, sit, or walk. One's posture changes according to the situation. If nervous, one would normally be seen pacing, bobbing the shoulders, fidgeting with notes, jingling coins, moving constantly, or staying glued to the ground. When we are with friends we are probably spontaneous. We are not conscious about our posture and our physical movement is natural. But when we encounter an unfamiliar situation, we become more conscious of our posture. For instance, during an oral presentation, stiff positions, such as standing akimbo (with hands on hips and elbows pointing away from the body), send the message of defiance or aggression. It is always better to lower the hands to one's sides in a natural, relaxed, and resting posture. Standing, sitting, or walking in a relaxed way is a positive posture, which will encourage

questions and discussion. Also being comfortably upright, squarely facing an audience, and evenly distributing one's weight are aspects of posture that communicate professionalism, confidence, attention to detail, and organization. The way one sits, stands, or walks reveals a lot:

- Slumped posture—low spirits
- Erect posture—high spirits, energy, and confidence
- Lean forward—open, honest, and interested
- Lean backward—defensive or disinterested
- Crossed arms—defensive and not ready to listen
- Uncrossed arms—willingness to listen

### **3. Gesture**

Gesture is the movement made by hands, head, or face. Skillful and appropriate gestures can add to the impact of verbal communication. A well-timed gesture not only drives a point home but also enhances the value of what is being said. Similarly, an awkward gesture (like playing with a key chain or button) can mar the effectiveness of the message. Gestures clarify our ideas or reinforce them and should be well suited to the audience and occasion. Gestures are more numerous than any other form of non-verbal communication, and the meanings attached to them are diverse. Gestures should not divert the attention of the listener from one's message. They should be quite natural and spontaneous. Be aware of and avoid irritating gestures such as playing with a ring, twisting a key chain, clasping hands tightly, or cracking knuckles. Gestures can roughly be divided into the following types:

- Enumerative—numbers
- Descriptive—size of the objects
- Symbolic—abstract concepts
- Locative—location of an object
- Emphatic—emphasis

### **4. Facial Expressions**

Along with postures and gestures, facial expressions also play an important part in non-verbal communication. The face is the most expressive part of our body. A smile stands for friendliness, a frown for discontent, raised eyebrows for disbelief, tightened jaw muscles for antagonism, etc. Facial expressions are subtle. They can be used in a variety of ways to aid, inhibit, or complement communication. The face rarely sends a single message at a time. Instead, it sends a series of messages—facial expressions may show anxiety, recognition, hesitation, and pleasure in quick succession. Facial expressions are difficult to interpret. Though there are only six basic expressions, there can be many shades and blends of these. Also, people tend to hide their true feelings, and project expressions that are appropriate according to the circumstances. The six basic facial expressions are:

- Happiness
- Surprise
- Disgust
- Fear
- Anger

- Sadness

## **5. Eye contact**

Eye contact is a direct and powerful form of non-verbal communication. We use our eyes to cull information. Eyes are also a rich source of feedback. Looking directly at listeners builds rapport. Prolonging the eye contact for three to five seconds (without, however, giving the impression of staring) tells the audience that the presenter is sincere in what he/she says and that he/she wants us to pay attention. Eye contact is especially important when we start a conversation. Our upper eyelids and eyebrows help us convey an intricate array of non-verbal messages. In the professional world one should make personal and pleasant eye contact with the listeners. Eye contact shows one's intensity and elicits a feeling of trust. A direct look conveys candour and openness. This direct and powerful form is a signal of confidence or sincerity; therefore, experienced speakers maintain longer eye contact.

## **PARALINGUISTIC (Paralanguage):**

Vocal Clues

### **1. Quality of Voice**

Voice is the first signal that we receive or use. There are various categories of voices. A voice can be sweet, soft, musical, cultivated, pleasant, nasty, clear or indistinct, among other things.

### **2. Volume Variation**

Volume is the loudness or the softness of the voice. Voice should always project but need not always be loud. If our volume is too high, it sounds boorish and insensitive. If our volume is too low, it conveys an impression of timidity, and also gives the impression that we are not well prepared and lack confidence to express ourselves.

### **3. Speech Rate/Pace**

Rate is the number of words that one speaks per minute. It varies person to person and from 80 to 250 words/min. The normal rate is 120 to 150 words/min. If the speech is too slow and monotonous, the speaker is most likely to be considered a dull speaker. If the speech is too fast, listeners do not get enough time to grasp the message.

### **4. Pitch**

Pitch refers to the number of vibrations of our voice per second. The rise and fall of the voice conveys various emotions. 'Thank you' is such a phrase. The low pitch expresses sadness, shock, dullness, guilt, etc. while the high pitch expresses excitement, joy, anger.

## **5. Pause**

A pause is a short silence flanked by words. It helps the listener reflect on the message and digest it accordingly. It also helps speakers glide from one thought to another. Being too self-conscious may make the process look artificial.

## **6. Pronunciation**

Pronunciation requires us to speak out sounds in a way that is generally accepted. We follow British Received Pronunciation. One should be careful enough to pronounce individual sounds along with word stress. Whenever there is confusion in pronouncing, always consult a good dictionary and try to pronounce it accordingly.

## **7. Articulation**

Speakers should be careful not to slop, slur, chop, truncate, or omit sounds between words or sentences. If all the sounds are not uttered properly, the flow of understanding gets interrupted.

## **8. Stress**

Stress is another important element of paralanguage. The way you emphasize words can change the meaning of your sentences. As you speak, be conscious of the effects of sense stress on the meaning you're trying to convey.

## **9. Intonation**

Intonation is the modulation of the voice and the shift in stress. For example, a message with serious content should not be delivered in a high tone, but in a somber tone.

## **PROXEMICS (Space Language):**

Proxemics is the study of physical space in interpersonal relations. Space is related to behavioural norms. The way people use space says a lot about them. In a professional setting, space is used to signal power and status. For instance, the head of a company has a larger office than junior employees. Gestures should be in accordance with the space available. When there is plenty of space to manoeuvre, one should move more boldly and expand one's gestures. When seated at a table, one should use milder gestures. One can even subtly reach out over the table to extend one's space. This expresses control and authority. Edward T Hall in his 'The Hidden Dimension' divides space into four distinct zones.

### **1. Intimate Zone**

This zone starts with personal touch and extends just to 18 inches (one and a half feet). Members of the family, lovers, spouses, relatives, and parents fall under this zone. The best relationship that describes it is the mother-child relationship. This zone does not need active conversation. One can whisper or make unintelligible sounds but still be able to communicate. Other individuals come close for a very brief period and only under special circumstances— when they want to congratulate, sympathize, or console. A handshake, a pat on the back, or a hug, all come into this zone.

## **2. Personal Zone**

This zone stretches from 18 inches (one and a half feet) to 4 feet. Close friends, colleagues, peers, etc. fall in this zone. Instead of whispering sounds or utter silence, there can be normal conversation in this zone. Though this zone is personal, it is quite a relaxed and casual place. It permits spontaneous and unplanned communication. Sitting or standing so close brings one closer to the listener and gives the impression of friendliness and warmth.

## **3. Social Zone**

Social events take place in the radius of 4 feet to 12 feet. In this zone, relationships are more formal and official. People are more cautious in their movements. These situations involve less emotion and more planning. The number of people decides whether it should be a sitting– sitting or sitting–standing position. It is through experience that one decides which position to take. If the number of people is less and eye contact can be maintained, a sitting–sitting position can be used. To be authoritative with a large audience, a sitting– standing position is used.

## **4. Public Zone**

This zone starts from 12 feet and may extend to 25 feet or to the range of eyesight and hearing. Events that take place in this zone are formal. Here the audience views what is happening as an impartial observer. The degree of detachment is very high. The audience is free to do whatever it feels like. Here the speaker has to raise his/her voice to communicate to others or use a microphone. Public figures like the prime minister of a country, for example, have to maintain this distance for security reasons.

## **CHRONEMICS (Science of Time):**

Chronemics is the study of how human beings communicate through their use of time. In order to use time as an effective communication tool, we should understand its impact on the various aspects of our lives and act accordingly. We must attempt to use time as effectively as possible. In the professional world, time is a valuable resource. For example, when we are late for an appointment, people react negatively. If we arrive early, we are considered either over-eager or aggressive. So, we should always be on time.

