

IIT Madras

ONLINE DEGREE

Copyright and terms of use

IIT Madras is the sole owner of the content available in this portal - onlinedegree.iitm.ac.in and the content is copyrighted to IIT Madras.

- Learners may download copyrighted material for their use for the purpose of the online program only.
- Except as otherwise expressly permitted under copyright law, no use other than for the purpose of the online program is permitted.
- No copying, redistribution, retransmission, publication or exploitation, commercial or otherwise of material will be permitted without the express permission of IIT Madras.
- Learner acknowledges that he/she does not acquire any ownership rights by downloading copyrighted material.
- Learners may not modify, publish, transmit, participate in the transfer or sale, create derivative works, or in any way exploit, any of the content, in whole or in part.

English – 1 (Basic English)
Lecture 54
Dr. Shreesh Chaudhary
Retired Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
Common Errors in English- Part 1

(Refer Slide Time: 0:16)



**COMMON ERRORS IN ENGLISH -
PART 1**

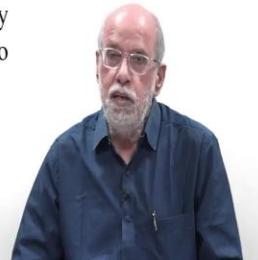
Prof. Shreesh Chaudhary



Welcome to this session on some very common errors learners of English make while learning this language. Sometimes others certified users of language, users of English also make these mistakes, and that is why we call them common errors. We will do two sessions on this topic; this is part one, the first session on common errors, next.

(Refer Slide Time: 1:09)

- In earlier units of this module, we have seen some aspects of English grammar.
- In this unit, we will look at some instances of some errors frequently made by students learning English; we will correct these mistakes, see why these mistakes occurred and ensure that they do not recur.



In earlier units, in earlier sessions we have seen some aspects of English grammar, we have seen how they work, we have seen, we have looked at their nuances and how we can get them right. In this unit, we will look at some instances of some errors frequently made by, frequently committed by students of the English language, students learning English. In this session, we will also correct these mistakes and see why these mistakes occurred and try and learn so that these mistakes do not recur in our use of English. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 2:09)

- The following, for example, is ungrammatical.

We got some informations.

So, you can say:

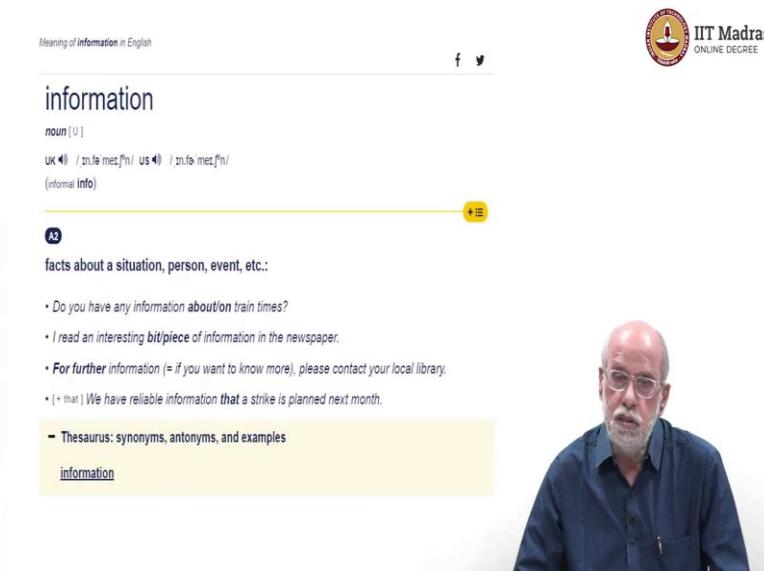
- a. I want some information
- b. I can give some information



The following sentence, for instance, is ungrammatical, is incorrect, we got some informations, you can say I want some information, you can see I can give some information, you can see

some other things for your information, for further information, for to give you required information but information is not used in plural, you cannot say ‘informations’, you cannot have a lot of ‘informations’, no, it stays in its citation form as given in dictionary, it is only information, next.

(Refer Slide Time: 3:02)



information

noun [U]

UK /ɪn.fə'meɪʃn/ US /ɪn.fə'meɪʃn/ (informal info)

A2 facts about a situation, person, event, etc.:

- Do you have any information about/on train times?
- I read an interesting bit/piece of information in the newspaper.
- For further information (= if you want to know more), please contact your local library.
- (+ that) We have reliable information that a strike is planned next month.

- Thesaurus: synonyms, antonyms, and examples

information



This is the dictionary you see, look at the dictionary, your dictionary also has a similar page and the dictionary gives you a variety of information, it gives you the spelling of the word, it tells you what the word means, it also tells you the part of speech to which that particular word belongs to.

Then it tells you how this word can be used in a sentence, any good dictionary that you have gives you these six or seven different kinds of information, you cannot say the dictionary gives you six or seven informations, that will become incorrect, the dictionary gives you six or seven different kinds of information about the word.

Look at the word information here, so the first information you get about this word is that it is a noun. Then right next to it within the square bracket you see the word ‘you’, now what does that, sorry “U” see the letter “U”, how does the, what does that letter “U” stand for here? It indicates as the dictionary all dictionaries give you the list of abbreviations, they use you should see these things before, they, these things are given at the beginning of the dictionary itself, every dictionary gives you, every standard dictionary I mean gives you this kind of information.

So, at the beginning of the dictionary itself, you will find that “U” stands for uncountable, here is a word which cannot be singular, which cannot be plural it is a mass noun, it is a collective noun, it is a group of words together. And there are lots of words of this kind in nearly any language and particularly so in English.

So here, after each word, if it is a noun, then the dictionary tells you it is a noun, and immediately after that the dictionary tells you it is “U” which means uncountable, if it is not “U” then what is the opposite of “U”? The opposite of “U” is ‘c’, suppose it is apple, then against apple, you find noun and then within the square brackets or within another kind of bracket these things differ from dictionary to dictionary, but that abbreviation will still be there, the dictionary would say ‘c’.

If it says nothing, if it shows nothing, not even “U” then that means it is countable, but an uncountable noun is definitely indicated, is definitely shown through this abbreviation “U” which means it is an uncountable noun. Then other kinds of information follow, you get pronunciation of the word both in voice if you click the microphone you get voice or in phonetic transcription, the symbols stand for particular sounds your dictionary will tell you which symbol stands for which sound, better get used to these things, learn them, spend it does not take a long time.

Then in the dictionary you have the usage of the word, meaning then. What does the word information mean? It means facts, verifiable facts, facts that you know, you can see, you can check, facts about a situation, a person, an event, a place, an organization, facts that can be checked that is information.

How do you use it in a sentence? You use in the following manner; you can say do you have any information about the train times, you do not say do you have informations about. Next sentence also it only says information, I read an interesting bit or piece of information, so 'a' or 'an' is for bit or for peace but not for information.

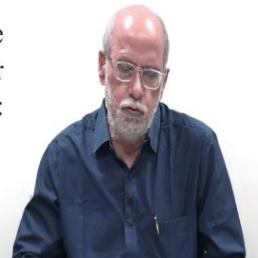
For further information the next sentence is, that is if you want to know more then for further information please contact the local library, go to the local library you will find books about the city of Chennai, and this will tell you more than, these books will tell you more than an ordinary guide or website may tell you.

So, for further information or for more information, to know more, please contact your local library, or we have reliable information it does not say we have an information, we have two informations, no you can have reliable, unreliable, dependable information, credible information, but not an information. So, this is how some other words also go; information is not the only word, come back to the previous slide.

(Refer Slide Time: 9:06)



- Some nouns have no plural; you use them only in the singular number as given in the dictionary.
- So, for instance, words like **equipment, meat, oil, rice, wheat, milk, information, fish, furniture** do not have a singular or plural form.
- They are uncountable, and are shown in the dictionary with a “U”. So, for instance, for “milk”, the dictionary cites milk as follows: “Milk (Noun) U”, meaning uncountable.



There are other words; the information is not the only noun that does not take ‘s’ or ‘es’ that does not take plural, that is not the only noun which is used in real language, real life as given in dictionary, as given in dictionary is also known as citation form as cited in the dictionary. So, information is not the only noun, you have words like equipment, ordinarily, in standard English you do not say equipments or you do not say an equipment.

Similarly, you do not say meats or oils or rices or wheats or milks, milks is possible when you use it as a verb, farmers milk the cows or a farmer milks his cow that means taking milk from the udder of the cow or if you are talking about a variety of fishes then perhaps in rare case otherwise it is not I ate one fish, I ate two fishes, no, you ate fish, you ate a lot of fish.

Similarly, furniture you do not say I have bought furnitures, you can see I bought several pieces of furniture, I bought a table, I bought a chair, I bought some bookshelves, I bought a devan, but you do not say I bought furnitures, because these words do not have a singular or a plural form, they are the mass nouns, and they are used in neutral form, neither singular they do not take ‘an’

nor plural, they do not take ‘s’ or ‘es’. They are uncountable, and therefore they are shown in the dictionary with “U” as I have said already, go next.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:25)



- Uncountable nouns do not take a/an, neither do they have a plural form. When milk is used as a noun, you cannot say “milk+s”.

You cannot, for instance say,

**I like cow and buffalo milks.*

You can only say

“I like both cow milk and buffalo milk.”



Uncountable nouns do not, because they are uncountable you cannot use a or an and I give you the example of milks, that when it is used as a noun, then you cannot say it milks, you can say I take apples for breakfast, but you cannot say I take milks for breakfast, you can say I take goat milk for breakfast like Gandhiji used to, you can say I take cow milk for breakfast like lots of people do, but you cannot say I like cow and buffalo milks, no, that is not permitted by the English language, that is not permitted by its grammar, you can only say I like both cow milk and buffalo milk, next.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:20)

ACTIVITY 1



Which of the following words can go with an article “a/an”, or can be made plural?

apple, bread, call, egg, meat, petrol, rice,
school, sugar, tea, tiger, umbrella, water,
wheat, year, zebra.



It is pretty easy I have given you randomly some words you can also do that yourself, take 50 words beginning with a or take two words each beginning with ‘a c e g l y’ randomly take about 40 30, 30 40 words and check with the dictionary are they all countable, are they all uncountable, what do dictionaries, what does your dictionary say about these words.

You see these are the roads to learning; these are the roads to better learning for the rest of your life, you understand something that is why I have been saying, again and again, excellence is the product of constant pursuit. The day you imagine and assume now I know enough, I have no more to learn. Well, that may give you temporary comfort, and in a moment of acute embarrassment, you will realize that ‘God I did not know’, I did not have this critical part.

And it does not matter which words you take, take any words you like, it is better if you take frequently occurring word, it is better to check if cat is plural than to check if zebra is plural, how often do you hear a word like zebra, but cat or monkey or dog in most cultures in the world you hear almost every day. So, here we have given you some frequently occurring words, look up your dictionary and make a list of words that are countable here and another list of words that are uncountable, go next.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:25)

ANSWERS



	A/An	Plurals
Apple	An apple	Apples
Call	A call	Calls
Egg	An egg	Eggs
School	A school	Schools
Tiger	A tiger	Tigers
Umbrella	An umbrella	Umbrellas
Year	A year	Years
Zebra	A zebra	Zebras



We have given you an answer, you can do it this way, and you see apple is countable, we can say an apple, Raghavachari has an apple for a breakfast every morning. A call, Raghavachari's husband gets calls until, you can say calls, gets calls until midnight, he is the marketing head of a big company.

You can say an egg or eggs, Ismail has an egg every day for breakfast. The political meeting today was a disaster, the speaker had eggs all over her face or his face, why say her, so this is how you can check, and while checking the word for it is status as noun or pronoun, you can also look at the usage, and what context, how it is used, so that when you use these words, you make no mistake.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:44)

ANSWERS

Words with no plural form/ a or an
Bread
Petrol
Rice
Sugar
Tea
Water
Wheat
Meat



Similarly, these are the words that have no plural form, whereas you could have said apples, you cannot say breads in English, you cannot say petrols, you cannot say rices, you cannot say sugars, teas, waters, wheats, meat, these things and there are other words, do check. Whatever you think is a mass noun, check the dictionary, this is exactly what we have been trying to say again and again, language is best learnt, teacher is there as a coach, we can tell you what you should do today, how you should do that, how long you should do that, but unless you do them yourselves you do not become a good user of any language including your mother tongue, unless you try, unless you experiment, Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:47)

- You can ask why “bread” cannot be counted. In Hindi, it is a countable noun. These things are not always logical, nor are they alike in all languages.
- We must learn that some nouns cannot be used in English with an “a/an” or “-s/es”.



You can now ask, let us become a little bit theoretical, let us ask questions that are not usually asked, that are not obvious. Why cannot we say, why cannot we say breads, so easy to pronounce, no problem. In many languages, the word, the equivalent of bread in that language is sometimes used in plural.

In Hindi the equivalent of bread is roti, you can in hindi say rotiya, “who to ghar baithe rotiya tod raha hai”, that guy is unemployed, and he is just breaking bread that is English. So, why cannot English have breads? Well, the answer is language is not always mathematical; language is not always logical, not all languages are alike.

For example, I will give you a well-known example, and I am quite sure you know that already but allow me to repeat. Say, for instance, Hindi has a grammatical gender, every noun is either a masculine a man or feminine or a female, table in Hindi it is a masculine noun ‘man’, chair it is a feminine noun.

Now, there is no reason why should chair be feminine, why should masculine, why should table be masculine, these are arbitrary, there is no logic behind them and Hindi is not the only language, there are other languages Sanskrit has three feminine, masculine and neuter. French has two, so has German in these languages French and German even an article as a singular and sorry, a masculine and feminine.

But modern English language for some reason does not have a masculine noun or a feminine noun, but it has a countable noun and an uncountable noun and some nouns even though you could count them, I understand you cannot count oil or water in the sea, maybe not even rice, it will be a boring thing to do to count grains of rice in a kilogram of rice, you would much rather do something else.

Languages are like that they are arbitrary. So, in English it so happens that some nouns are countable, some nouns are uncountable, some nouns can take ‘a, an’ before or ‘s, es’ at the end, you can say a boy a girl, you can say apple and apples, you can say loaf and loaves, you can say flourish and flourishes, he sang with a flourish, and there he or she sang with several flourishes, you can do that. But there are some other nouns where you do not have this kind of phenomenon in English, next.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:27)

How do you then talk about small and large quantities of them?

So, for instance, you can say as follows:

- some information,
- a little knowledge,
- a news item / all the news
- a loaf/slice/morsel of bread,
- a head of fish,
- a portion of meat,
- a gallon of petrol,
- a grain of rice/wheat,
- a litre of water



Look at this. So then the question is how do you then talk about a little bit of that, a little bit of that species, how do you distinguish between much information and little information, a massive information and no information, how do you do that? They take other kinds of adjectives or what we call quantifiers, the adjectives or words that show a part of them, some people also call them partitive adjectives or quantifying adjectives or some other words.

Say for example, ‘some’ shows a quantity, some information, some oil, some sugar, some rice, some meat, some bread or you can say some knowledge, you can say little knowledge, a little

information, you cannot say, you can say a news item, you cannot a news, I have a news for you, no, I have a news item, you can say I have some news for you, I have good news for you, I have bad news for you, I have exciting news for you, I have a very depressing news, God forbid, I have provoking news, you can use all that but you do not say newses or a news.

Similarly, you can say a loaf of bread if you have one plural loaves of bread, slices of bread, a morsel of bread, students are on hunger strike, they have not had a morsel of bread, so you can use expressions of this kind. If you are very particular you want to say eat only one, I eat only one fish for dinner, you can say I take a head of fish, I can tell if, but you do not say I eat a fish.

But you can say a portion of meat, a gallon of petrol, a grain of rice or wheat, a litre of water or oil or anything else, so liquid will be counted with a liter, solid with kilogram or quintal or ton, units are there, so that is how we show quantities, next.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:58)



ACTIVITY 2

You can look up your dictionary and

- a. Find atleast a dozen other nouns that are uncountable, and, therefore, they do not take "a/an" or "s/es".

- b. You can also note how their small or large quantities are mentioned.



Now, it will be best as I said check, take about it as another nouns on the same lines and see if they take "a/an" or "s/es" that will bring perfection to your knowledge, you can also note while looking at these words you can also note how different quantities of the same thing are shown in the English language, are they shown with a litre, a gallon or are they shown with a kilogram or a ton, etc, next.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:38)



- Some verbs, such as the following, are not used in progressive mode, with + ing.

appear, feel, have, look, seem, stand, etc.

- You can use this verb in the simple present or past tense form, but not in the progressive present or past tense form, as indicated below.



Similarly, some verbs such as the following are not used with an “ing”, you do not say appearing or having or feeling, I am feeling good, no, you say I feel good, you cannot say I am having a car, I am having a class, no, some of these verbs are not used in progressive mode, either present or past, they are only used in the neutral present, simple present tense form or if it is past it will be felt, it felt alright, I feel alright, you cannot say I am feeling alright, or I was feeling alright, so with appear you do not say she is looking good, you say my friend looks good, Ruth looks good or John looks good. So, with same with stand, next.

(Refer Slide Time: 24:52)



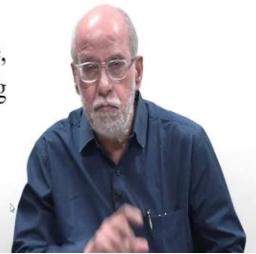
Cannot say	Can say
You are appearing to be tired.	You appear to be tired.
I am feeling all right.	I feel all right.
I am having a car/meeting case.	I have a car/meeting already.
You are looking angry.	You look angry.
It is seeming correct.	It seems correct.
A policemen is standing at the post.	A policemen stands at the post.



On the left hand same word with “ing” they are ungrammatical. You are appearing to be tired, no, you appear to be tired, I feel all right, you cannot say I am feeling all right, it is seeming correct, that is an incorrect sentence, you should say it seems correct, it seems all right, it looks all right, it appears to be fine. Similarly, a policeman is standing at the post, no, a policeman stands at the post, a policeman is there at the post, a policeman is at the post, next.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:30)

- But “have” in the sense of “eat” can be used in the progressive mode. You can, for instance say, “I am having breakfast”.
- Similarly, in the sense of “contest”, “stand” can be used in the progressive mode. You can say, “Gopal is standing for election to the parliament”.
- “Feel” can also be used in the progressive mode, when a doctor, for instance, says, “I am feeling the patient’s pulse”.



But in some senses when “have” is used in the sense of eat, you can say I am having breakfast which means you are eating breakfast, you can say I ordinarily have an egg for breakfast which means I eat though I am a vegetarian, but I ordinarily have an egg for breakfast. Similarly, when in the sense of contest you can use “stand” and you can say my friend is standing for election to parliament I am going to be very busy for the next few weeks.

“Feel” can be used with an “ing” when doctors, for instance, feel the pulse. So, if you are a doctor and feeling the pulse of a patient you can say I am feeling the patient's pulse, doctors are trained to keep their index finger, their king finger upon the pulse of the patient, and from that feeling they can tell you if the patient is in good health or requires or needs care, in that sense we can say, feeling the pulse, otherwise, you do not say “ing” with feel look, seem, appear, etc., next.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:57)

ACTIVITY 3



Check your dictionary and make a list of verbs that cannot be used in the progressive mode. You can also check for exceptions. Are there any specific situations when these verbs can be used with an +ing?



Check your dictionary, once again because no matter what we do, we cannot do everything in a classroom because learning eventually is an endless process. You never learn enough so rather than learn everything it is better that we should learn how to learn everything, go next.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:23)



- Similarly, some verbs, such as the following, for example, have the same form in all tenses.

cast, cost, cut, put



These verbs, they do not have the past tense form, you do not say casted, costed, cutted, footed, they remain the same in all forms, present or past, you can say, I cast my vote, you can say this book cost me 500 rupees, this car cost my friend 500000 rupees. Cut, before we go to the

kitchen, the apple is cut that is the apple is somebody cuts the apple and keep it ready for us so that when we go there, we have it available on our table in nice pieces.

Similarly, I do not remember, but I am almost sure that I put my phone here yesterday. So, you do not say I putted my phone here yesterday, you say I put my phone here yesterday. So, in a continuous, in a sentence, in use some words behave in a peculiar manner, and unless you learn the manner in which they are used you may be wrong, you may be ungrammatical, go next.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:00)



- You can use these verbs only in the given form in all situations, because they have no other form. So you can say:

Votes have been cast, result is awaited.

- But you cannot say,

**Votes have been casted, result is awaited.*



You can use these words only in their citation form, so you can say votes have been cast now result is awaited, you cannot say votes have been casted, go next.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:15)

ACTIVITY 4



- Check with a dictionary if there are other verbs that are used in the same form in all tenses.
- The best thing to do, therefore, is to pay some attention to the form of words in use when reading or listening to anything.
- In every language only a few words have exceptional forms and they are used frequently.



Check with a dictionary if there are other verbs that are used in this manner, but how many words can you check? You can say that I will try, it is not impossible to check all verbs, but it is a tedious job, will take a lot of time, a better thing to do, actually the best thing to do therefore is to pay some attention to the form of words in use when you read something.

Make it a habit not only to read for meaning but also to see the form in which a particular word is used or when you listen to a television broadcast, or you watch a film how do you listen to a news broadcast or recording, an audio recording then also pay attention to the form of words, and you will immediately understand in no time you will know that these are the word, these words are frequently used, and they are used only in this particular form.

Because in every language including in English there are only a few words that have exceptional forms and they are also used frequently, so it is not very difficult to learn from use, provided learn from others use, provided you pay attention. If you pay attention, it is easy to learn next.

(Refer Slide Time: 30:54)

Thank You!



Before I finish as I have been saying there always are easy ways to learn, and there always are ways to cheat yourself. The easy way to learn here is particularly when it comes to words and uses, you cannot be taught everything by anyone in any class, so pay attention to the language and use, spend some time even if it is 10 minutes every day, listen to some good broadcast, good telecast, watch some good documentary films or feature films, if possible with byline read some good books, good journals and while doing that pay attention not just to meaning but also to the language.

And in no time, in under six months by the time we finish with this semester if you spend about an hour or so on your own everyday listening to or reading some good interesting, authentic stuff, you will be a very good, a perfect user of language. Thank you, have a good day. Bye.