

Situational Dialogues / Role Play

INTRODUCTION

We spend most of our conscious time either speaking or listening to others. In our conversations with people we may want to –

“agree or disagree with someone”,

“accept or reject an offer”,

“deny something”,

“express likes/dislikes”,

“offer food and drink”,

“compliment someone” and do a lot of other things like these.

In other words, we want to use language and perform a number of **“everyday communicative functions”**. Functions like these are everyday functions, because you will have to perform these functions whenever you deal with people. In fact, we all perform each of these functions not once but several times every day.

When two or more persons come together and start communicating with each other orally, conversation/dialogue occurs. Good conversation calls for a high degree of concentration and skill.

Conversation specifically requires:

Content i.e. a topic or subject matter to talk about. This depends on the context of the conversation and the purpose.

The purpose of the conversation/dialogue can be

- i) a simple greeting for social purposes
- ii) spending/killing time in social gatherings
- iii) giving and asking for information
- iv) sharing of ideas in the form a conversation/discussion/debate/argument

Expression i.e. language and non-language behavior including body language, facial expressions, tone of the voice etc. Using correct language and proper expressions goes a long way in making a successful conversation. One has to pay attention also to the use of good vocabulary. Matching body language also helps in making pleasant and effective conversations.

The relationship between the speaker and other people can be that of between - total strangers, mere acquaintances, neighbours, colleagues, superiors, subordinates, distant or close relations, intimate or non-intimate friends, immediate family members etc.

FORMAL SITUATIONS

With strangers we generally speak only what is essential or unavoidable. The amount of content is minimal. For example, you do not talk about your family and other private matters or theirs. You do not know each other, so you will be polite and show respect in your language and behavior. You will control your emotions. Even if you are angry, you will not show it, for instance.

Similarly, with officials working in offices and with your superiors, you speak only what is essential. There will be no enquiries of families or personal problems. In your language and behaviour you will be polite and respectful. Of course, very occasionally, you or your superior may talk about family if something unfortunate has occurred (a death, a sickness or an accident) to express sympathy, for instance.

SEMI-FORMAL SITUATIONS

Greetings, enquiries, discussions of personal problems to a limited extent can be part of the content. However, you will still be polite and respectful. Acquaintances are those whom you have already met at a party, on a train, in a café, at a function and with whom you are not likely to develop intimacy.

Elders and public figures are not likely to know you. But you know them because of other activities or professions. You will have several colleagues, friends and neighbors with whom you may not feel free and so you will be polite to them and avoid intimate sharing or discussion. There are relatives who are distantly related to you through your parents and with whom the contact is minimal. Naturally, your intimacy level will be low.

During formal and semi-formal conversations, we are very much conscious of our body language. We stand or sit erect in an upright position, we do not make elaborate gestures and we try to hide our emotions behind the veil of courtesy.

INFORMAL SITUATIONS

This consists of friends, colleagues, relatives and neighbors with whom you move very freely and feel like sharing most of information about you and others. The others also reciprocate. Thus, the intimacy level is high. There is no need to be formal, no need to be polite, no need to insist on respect and courtesy.

So remember that the level of intimacy between you and the other persons shapes what you will say and how you will say it, be it oral or written communication.

During informal conversation, we tend keep our body loose, we make elaborate gestures and we freely express our emotions. In short, we do not pay too much attention to our body language.

ROLE PLAY

Role-play is the act of imitating the character and behaviour of someone else, for example as a training exercise. In a role-play, participants act out various characters or parts. This helps them face confidently different people, situations and settings. They can also practice them with their friends, family members and others. It will be very helpful for them if they act out the roles and keep changing their roles as they practice. Audio or video recordings of role-plays can also be very useful tools for getting feedback. You can even ask others to observe you and evaluate your performance.

Study and act out the dialogues/conversations given. Give importance to how you say your dialogues. Stressing, pausing and intonation are very important. Be clear about your vocabulary and key sentences used in various dialogues.

PRACTICE

It is important that one is familiar with various expressions used in different formal and informal situations. Here are some expressions used to greet people and take leave of them.

Formal:

- Good morning, how are you?
- I am very well, thank you. What about you?
- I'm fine, thanks.
- We haven't met for quite some time, have we?
- It's a pleasure to see you.
- It was nice meeting you, but I'm afraid I have to go now.
- I must leave. I hope you'll excuse me.
- That's quite all right. I hope we can meet again soon.
- Yes, we must.
- Yes, I hope so too.
- Yes. Please do come over.
- Bye, bye!

Non-formal:

- Hello! What a lovely surprise!
- Good to see you after so long.
- Hi! It's great to see you so long.
- Hi! It's great to see you too.
- How're you and where have you been?
- Just fine, thanks. How're things with you?
- Everything's okay, thanks.
- We must meet and catch up on what's happening.
- Yes, we must do that.
- Wish I could have stayed longer, but I must run.
- Sure, see you sometime. Bye, bye!

Here are some expressions used in formal and in informal situations to introduce two persons to each other and those that they can use to respond.

- I'd like to introduce you to
- Please meet.....
- This is.....
-, meet.....
- I'm happy to meet you.
- This is indeed a pleasure.

Some expressions used in both formal and informal situations to make requests and also to respond to them

- Do you think I could use your telephone, please?
- Could I ask a favour of you?
- Excuse me, could you help me, please.
- I'm sorry to trouble you, but I need your help.
- Would you mind helping me with this, please?
- I wonder if you could do me favor.
- Certainly, I shall be glad to help.

- Sure. I'd be glad to help.
- Of course, by all means.
- Thank you.
- Thank you very much.
- Thanks a lot.
- You're most welcome.
- Not at all

Some expressions used in both formal and informal situations to make apologies and to respond to them.

- I must apologise for.....
- I'm terribly sorry about.....
- Please accept my sincere apologies.
- I hope you'll excuse me.
- Please forgive me.
- I'm so sorry.
- It won't happen again. I promise
- I'm really ashamed of myself.
- It's quite all right.
- I really hope it won't happen again.
- No need to feel so bad about it. These things happen.

Some expressions used in both formal and informal situations to extend invitations and also to accept and decline them.

- There's some good news.
- I'm so happy to hear that.
- My son/daughter is getting engaged.
- I'll be happy if you and your family could come.
- Are you free tomorrow evening?
- Why don't you join us at a get-together?
- Thank you for the invitation. We'll certainly come.
- It'll be a pleasure.
- Oh, sure. I'd love to come!
- Thank you for inviting me. I wish I could have come.
- I'm afraid I'll have to miss the engagement.
- What a pity I won't be able to come!
- Thank you so much. We look forward to seeing you.
- Thanks for saying yes. Be there on time.
- It's disappointing that you won't be there.
- We'll all miss you.
- It can't be helped, I suppose. But we'll make it up some other time.

Some expressions used in both formal and informal situations to make complaints.

- I'm sorry to trouble you, but there's a problem I'd like to speak to you about.
- It would help if you could have the leaking pipe repairing.
- That's very kind of you.
- I hope you didn't mind.
- I have a complaint to make.
- My new washing machine is not working.
- Your dealer has not responded to my calls.

- I'd like to have the piece replaced.
- I insist on having the piece replaced.
- Thank you for being so understanding and helpful.
- I'm sorry to have bothered you.
- I'm very upset with you.
- I'm very annoyed with you.
- I'm surprised you didn't think of giving me the good news.
- That's all right.
- I guess these things happen.
- Let's just forget it, shall we?

Some expressions used in both formal and informal situations to congratulate somebody on an achievement, to express sympathy and to offer condolences.

- Congratulations!
- We are proud of you.
- You really deserve this honour.
- Very well done! Keep it up.
- I'm sorry about what happened.
- You mustn't let this depress you.
- I'm sure this won't happen again.
- I've no doubt that you'll do much better next time.
- I just got the sad news. This must be a terrible blow to all of you.
- It is a great loss indeed.
- Remember that we are all with you.

Some expressions used in both formal and informal situations to offer suggestions, to advise or to persuade.

- I suggest you repeat these expressions twice each.
- I think you should repeat these expressions as often as you can.
- Let's repeat these expressions for practice.
- Why don't we repeat these expressions a few more times?
- I really advise you to repeat these expressions several times.
- You should repeat these expressions in order to perfect them.
- They ought to repeat these expressions if they wish to speak fluently.
- Why don't you try repeating these expressions?
- Do try repeating these expressions.

Some expressions used in both formal and informal situations to express agreement and disagreement.

- I quite agree with you.
- Perhaps you're right.
- I'm afraid, I'll differ with you on that point.
- I'm sorry, but I can't agree with you there.
- I'm afraid, I can't accept the idea.
- You're absolutely right.
- Excuse me. I'm sorry to interrupt, but I have a doubt that I'd like you to clarify.

MODEL CONVERSATIONS

Dialogue I

(Greeting and exchanging pleasantries)

Aman: Hi Sohan. How are you?

Sohan: I'm great, and you?

Aman: Things are going well with me.

Sohan: That's good to hear.

Aman: Isn't the weather beautiful this evening?

Sohan: It is.

Aman: How about taking a long walk?

Sohan: Let's go. And shall we go to Lake View?

Aman: That's OK with me.

Dialogue II

(A student and his teacher greet each other when they meet in a supermarket)

Student: Good morning, sir

Teacher: Good morning, Aman. How do you do?

Student: How do you do?

Teacher: What are you going to buy?

Student: I heard that there are some good quality note pads and folders here.

Teacher: I saw some over there. They must be the ones you are looking for!

Student: I'll take a look at them.

Teacher: I've finished my shopping. See you then!

Student: See you.

Dialogue III

(A traveler talks to a clerk at a foreign exchange outlet)

Traveler: Excuse me!

Clerk: Yes, Sir.

Traveler: Er...I'm going on a holiday, and I need some foreign currency.

Clerk: Cash or traveler's cheques?

Traveller: I need cash.

Clerk: Which currencies will you want the cash in?

Traveller: I need some dollars. What's the rate of exchange?

Clerk: It's up on the board.

Traveller: How about commission?

Clerk: There's no commission, sir

Traveller: I see, then, please change Rs. 75000/- for me.

Clerk: Ok... here you are. Please sign here.

Traveller: Thank you.

Dialogue IV

(Two people talking about a business trip)

Akshay: How did your business trip go? It was your first one overseas, I guess?

Vinay: Well, I came back with mixed results. We got some business but we didn't clinch the deal. We didn't clinch the deal we were expecting.

Akshay: That was going to be with the Atlanta Corporation, wasn't it?

Vinay: That's right. It was frustrating. We seemed to be making good progress in the negotiations and then they began to stall.

Akshay: Any idea why they were stalling?

Vinay: We weren't sure, but I've since learned that our biggest competitor was there at the same time as we were.

Akshay: Maybe they were talking to them while negotiating with you.

Vinay: I think that's pretty likely.

Dialogue V

(Two friends talk about an internet fraud)

Aparna: You are looking so gloomy. What's the matter with you?

Anjali: Oh, I lost my Rs. 7000 in a purchase on the internet.

Aparna: Gosh, how did that happen?

Anjali: I participated in an internet auction to purchase a good-looking mobile handset. I paid for the handset but it never arrived.

Aparna: This is happening too frequently these days. What did you do when the handset failed to arrive?

Anjali: Well, I contacted them of course. But the answer I got was that it must have got lost in the mail.

Aparna: That kind of internet fraud is all too common these days. You need to be a lot more careful when you buy stuff on the internet.