

**Participant Workbook for Speaking Skills**

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**Participant Workbook**

**Speaking Skills**

## Objective

By the end of this module, the learner will be able to:

* Understand skills required for speaking effectively
* Understand the various vowel and consonant sounds in English, and use this knowledge for pronouncing words clearly and correctly
* Use word and sentence stress while speaking
* Understand and avoid Indianisms

## Types of Speech

Irrespective of the language being used, speech has many complexities within it. Your speech will contain many units of ideas – planned or unplanned. It employs phrases, known and unknown words, fillers – both sounds and words, and also the right responses. Speech is also situation centric, ranging from casual to formal to direct or indirect.

Let us see how we can categorize speech based on the above aspects and the different functions of speech:

**Speech as Interaction:**

Here we look at our everyday interaction – conversations with clients/colleagues which do not look at deeper objectives or outcomes. Simple interactions such as greeting each other, small talk, sharing basic information in a friendly and non-threatening environment.

Here the intent of the speaker is to create a comfort zone for the other person. It is also about how they (the speaker) would like to portray themselves, to create a good image, in front of the other person.

In such interactions speech would take the following form:

* More formal than casual
* No emphasis on the message
* Polite and non-intrusive
* Conversation etiquettes are involved
* Balance between both the speaker and the receiver
* Reflects on the role and the relationship between them
* Is more of a formality/social obligation

Skills in speech as an interaction:

* Using the right openers and closures in conversation
* The art of making small talk
* Recounting experiences with clarity and specificity
* Taking turns to ensure balance in speaker and receiver’s response
* Interjecting at the appropriate place and in the right manner
* Giving suitable responses to carry the conversation forward

Some of the frequently used instances of speech as interaction:

* Chatting with your colleague over a cup of coffee
* Small talk when waiting for the elevator
* Talking to your neighbors, before a meeting begins
* First time meeting with a group of people – clients, visitors, colleagues from a different unit, etc.

**Speech as transaction:**

Here we refer to situations where we give a lot of importance to the message being given out. The focus is more on the information. More than creating the right image, the speaker will have to ensure that the information is given with clarity and accuracy and proper comprehension has happened.

We can categorize this function based on the outcome expected. For e.g. the first one is where the speaker’s intention is more on giving out the right information and ensuring the receiver has heard and understood the message correctly. The second one is more with the purpose of getting a buy-in to the idea of the speaker. Here the emphasis is more on obtaining suitable and desired response.

In such transactions speech would take the following form:

* Primary focus will be on the body of the message
* Communication strategies are employed
* Listening skills such as probing, summarizing, paraphrasing are used
* Interruptions, digressions, repetitions are a part of this function
* Influencing and negotiation skills become paramount

Skills in Speech as an Interaction:

* Ability to describe/explain in detail
* Listening skills such as Probing/clarifying/summarizing/paraphrasing
* Agreeing and disagreeing in the right manner
* Giving suggestions to further the objectives of the transaction
* Justifying ones point of view with data
* Making comparisons and evaluating the information

Some of the frequently used instances of speech as transaction:

* Team meeting for problem solving or strategizing
* Client calls/ meetings to negotiate
* Decision making and discussions

**Speech as performance**:

As the name suggests, here speech as performance refers to information which is given out to the audience maybe in a larger manner and in a different environment. The speaker has to focus both on him as well as the message so that both credibility and impact are not missed out.

In such performances speech would take the following form:

* It is more monologues than a dialogue
* Uses a standard format/structure
* More formal than casual
* Evaluates both the speaker and the delivery

Skills in speech as an interaction:

* Use of right structure/format
* Sequencing and organizing the information
* Audience orientation and management
* Language skills and flair
* Overall impact-from opening to closure

Some of the frequently used instances of speech as performance:

* Presentations to colleagues and clients
* Speech to welcome or share information
* Addressing a large group of people
* Facilitating a workshop/session

**Below are the characteristic features and skills related to the three types of speech:**

**Speech as interaction:**

**Features**

* Focus is on speaker’s identity
* Message is secondary
* Is more a social function
* can be in formal or casual
* Reflects role relationships
* Is a joint construction

**Skills involved:**

* Opener and closure
* Small talk
* Recounting experiences
* Taking turns
* Interjecting
* Suitable responses

**Speech as Transaction**

**Features:**

* Focus is on information
* Message is the key
* Importance to making oneself understood accurately.
* Significance is given to giving and receiving information
* Negotiation and digression

**Skills involved:**

* Describing/explaining
* Probing/clarifying
* Confirming
* Agreeing and disagreeing
* Giving suggestions
* Justifying
* Making comparisons

**Speech as performance:**

**Features:**

* Focus is on message and audience
* Structured and organized
* Form and accuracy is the key
* Importance to language
* Monologue

**Skills involved:**

* Use of right format/structure
* Sequencing and organizing information
* Audience orientation
* Language skills
* Overall impact-from opening to closure

As a speaker, it is extremely important to recognize the function where we are employing speech and thus tune ourselves to the requirement of the function as well as the situation and thus ensure our purpose to the communication is met.

We will learn more on articulation and speaking skills in this series in the next eight modules.

## The 5 P’s of Effective Speaking

* **Picture**: Create a similar picture to the one you are thinking about for the listener to comprehend. Be vivid, if you have to.
* **Pitch**: Make your voice interesting by bringing in inflections and changing the pitch. For e.g.: high pitch reflects high energy; low pitch reflects low energy. Pitch is largely related to our emotions and hence, we need to be careful.
* **Pace**: Make sure the speed at which you speak is appropriate for the audience and the effect that you aim to create. For e.g.: fast pace to show excitement; slow pace to lay emphasis, etc.
* **Pause**: No word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause.Pauses are a powerful mechanism to convey information and keep your audience interested. For e.g.: to create eagerness among the audience.
* **Power**: Speak with energy, emphasize on words, and be loud and distinct for people to hear you clearly. You can also project power with the help of your language, words, content, knowledge, body language, gestures, attitude, etc.

## Indianism

Indianisms are certain grammatical errors that creep in when an Indian speaks English by transliterating, i.e. the speaker thinks in his native language and translates it into English when communicating. When this is done, numerous grammatical errors and improper sentence construct occur.

For e.g.: “It was getting very dark in the afternoon as my daddy returned to home from work. As he entered the bedroom he tried to switch the light on, but there was some problem. And then my daddy said, ‘Why is light not oning?’ (ing form of on)”

Words such as these are often used without much conscious awareness of its unique local flavor, can create confusion for a native speaker who is listening to him.

Let us look at some of the commonly used Indianisms in our everyday life:

**a. Use of progressive tense in stative verbs:**

The famous McDonalds line – “I am loving it.’ When using stative words such as like, love, have, feel, etc., do not use progressive tense.

* I am having a brother – wrong
* I have a brother – correct

**b. Wrong usage of prepositions:**

* Let us discuss about this - incorrect
* Let us discuss this - correct
* She has so much of time to do it - incorrect
* She has plenty of time to do it - correct

**c. Use of incorrect tag questions:**

Incorrect:

* Raj did it, no?
* Dev is here, isn’t it?
* Sheila closed the door, did she?

Correct:

* Raj did it, didn’t he?
* Dev is here, isn’t he?
* Sheila closed the door, didn’t she?

**d. Variations in Word order:**

* My all pockets are empty. – Incorrect
* My pockets are all empty. – Correct
* She is late always. – Incorrect
* She is always late. – Correct

**e. Answers to a question:**

* “Didn’t you take Rita to school?”
* Yes, I didn’t. - Correct
* No, I didn’t. - Incorrect

**f. Inappropriate usage:**

* Ram was not available but. - Incorrect
* But Ram was not unavailable. - Correct
* I only told her to do that. - Incorrect
* I told her to do that. – Correct

**g. Use of “of”:**

* Jane had so much of time at hand hence… - Incorrect
* Jane had so much time at hand hence… - Correct

**h. Usage of rhyming words:**

* Let’s have some chai- vai/coffee-shoffee

**Frequently made mistakes and why:**

* I **passed out** from my college last year:

Why – You graduate from that college; pass out refers to losing consciousness.

You do not "pass out" from that institution.

* Kindly **revert** if you have any further questions.

Why – Revert means "to return to a former state."

* I saw that movie **years back.**

Why – Use years ago, not years back.

* Please refer to the mail below and kindly **do the needful.**

Why – Obsolete phrase, not used anymore.

* I need to **discuss about** the budget with you**.**

Why – Discuss means to "talk about", hence about becomes redundant.

* I want to **order for** a strong coffee.

Why – We "order" something and not "order for" it.

* **‘Do one thing- take the stairs and then turn right….”**

Why – Using a term such as do one thing before giving information, does not make sense.

* “Sorry he is **out of station,** come back next week.”

Why – One may be “out of town”, not “out of station” it is Indianism.

* **“**Why are you awake? **Sleep is not coming**?"

Why – Sleep is not a person! “Aren’t you feeling sleepy?” is a better way of saying it.

* ‘The meeting has been **preponed** to Monday.’

Why – Although the opposite of postpone is prepone, it is used only in India. Instead use advance.

**Do it yourself:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Rewrite the following Indianism with proper grammatical construct.**   1. I’m having two sisters |
| 1. They had gone there yesterday |
| 1. I didn’t knew that |
| 1. I am listening music |
| 1. I’m telling to you |
| 1. I cannot discuss you that |
| 1. My cousin brother |
| 1. My sister is in 12th std. |
| 1. My sister is reading in Class 1 |
| 1. Transportation facility is not available |
| 1. I got a phone on my phone today |
| 1. My house is at the backside of the school |
| 1. Mother in laws |
| 1. On the light |
| 1. You people |
| 1. I am putting up at |
| 1. I think so that |
| 1. I told to you |
| 1. I am wanting |
| 1. Meet at 6 am in the morning |
| 1. I am agree/disagree |
| 1. Have a seat |
| 1. I am having long hair |
| 1. Your dressing sense is pathetic |
| 1. How did you find the place? |
| 1. Enclosed within |
| 1. When I was small |
| 1. Cook myself |
| 1. Give an exam |
| 1. Give me a ring |
| 1. Press my clothes |
| 1. Drinking Soup |
| 1. Today morning |
| 1. Yesterday evening |
| 1. I and my brother |
| 1. This is more preferable |
| 1. I am understanding it know |
| 1. I am ABC this side |
| 1. Regarding to |
| 1. I don’t think so that your phone is working |
| 1. What is your good name? |
| 1. Please hold the line |
| 1. She is more taller than John |
| 1. I am looking for job |
| 1. Myself Krishna |
| 1. Can you tell me what time is it? |
| 1. This scissor is not working |
| 1. He gave me all information |
| 1. One of my friend |

## Word/Syllable Stress

A **syllable** is a unit of sound made from a single vowel, or single vowel + consonant combination.  
**Note:** Syllables never have more than 1 vowel sound in them. For e.g: bit; a; un; as; dog; re; etc.

* **Monosyllable**: Words with one syllable
* **Disyllable**: Words with two syllables
* **Trisyllable**: Words with three syllables
* **Polysyllable**: Words with four or more syllables (words with three or more syllable are referred as polysyllabic)

**Syllable Stress:**

Syllables break our words into sections which can be stressed, or unstressed. The syllable that is stressed will alter the pronunciation of the word.

**Do it yourself:**

The easiest way to decide how many syllables are in a particular word is to clap it out. Clap your hands along while you say the following words aloud:

* **Monosyllabic**: dog, there, bike, he, walk, bounce
* **Dysyllabic**: doc/tor, Fri/day, o/ver, yel/low, chick/en
* **Trisyllabic**: hos/pit/al, yes/ter/day, de/tec/tive, am/bi/ence
* **Polysyllabic**: un/wa/ver/ing, no/tif/ica/tion, re/an/i/ma/tion, pri/va/ti/zation

**Try saying the following words aloud while stressing the first syllable:**

doc/tor, Fri/day, o/ver, mis/take, pur/ple

**Now try saying this again but with stress given to the second syllable:**

doc/tor, Fri/day, o/ver, mis/take, pur/ple

**Note**: The above words will always have their first syllable stressed.

Here are some more examples. The **bold O** given on the side will indicate to you on which syllable should be stressed in each word:

* **Monosyllabic** O: bike, cat, black
* **Disyllabic** O/o: prob/lem, en/gine, yel/low
* **Disyllabic** o/O: be/side, di/vide, un/do
* **Trisyllablic** O/o/o: dif/fi/cult, hos/pit/al, of/fi/cer
* **Trisyllablic** o/O/o: de/tec/tive, pro/fess/or, re/dun/dant

## Sentence Stress

English language is considered a stressed language whereas many other languages are reflected as syllabic language. In English, we stress upon certain words while other words are spoken quickly. When languages such as French or Italian are spoken, each syllable spoken obtains equal importance (there is stress, but each syllable has its own length). This creates some confusion for non-native speakers. Speakers of syllabic languages are not able to understand why native speakers speak some words quickly or swallow certain word/s in a sentence. Articulation in syllabic languages uses a technique wherein each syllable is given equal importance, and therefore equal time is required.

The English language though, applies more time and stress on specific words while swiftly skating over the other maybe less essential words.

For e.g.: The modal verb ‘should’, when used in the positive form will have the speaker quickly glide over it and not put too much emphasis on its pronunciation.

You **should** adhere to the Infosys dress policy.

On the other hand, in its negative form ‘shouldn’t’, we tend to stress on its negative form by stressing on ‘should not’.

You **should not** violate the Infosys dress policy.

As you can see in the second sentence which is longer than the first, both ‘should’ and ‘not’ are stressed.

Thus, we need to understand that we generally stress on some words which are considered **CONTENT WORDS** such as

* Nouns. For e.g.: Town, India, etc.
* Most principal verbs. For e.g.: visit, construct, etc.
* Adjectives. For e.g.: exciting, boring, etc.
* Adverbs. For e.g.: daily, quietly, etc.

Non-stressed words are considered **FUNCTION WORDS** such as

* Determiners. For e.g.: the, many, some, etc.
* Auxiliary verbs. For e.g.: don't, am, can, were, etc.
* Prepositions. For e.g.: below, next to, adjacent, etc.
* Conjunctions. For e.g.: for, while, and, etc.
* Pronouns. For e.g.: them, he, you, etc.

## Intonation

One of the important parameters of effective speaking skills is ‘pronunciation’. This is connected to the standard construction of a specific word. Every letter in the word has its own purpose or usage and it is through correct pronunciation that we are able to get the desired result. Whereas when we speak of intonation, this speech skill is connected to the tone or note of a word in our spoken communication. Intonation adds deeper implication and gives the extra stress to the word. In a lot of significant ways, intonation is as important as pronunciation and both needs to be kept in mind to achieve eloquence and complete comprehension.

Intonation is like adding a musical touch to our spoken communication. It is the way our voice goes up and down when we articulate. Intonation pattern varies with different languages. In simple words we can say it is about how we speak out, rather than what we speak out. Without this important speech facet, it may not be completely possible to understand the expressions and thoughts of the speaker and what the implicit message is that is attached to the words. To summarize, we can safely say that intonation is the music behind the words and we need to concentrate to listen not only to the words but also the music.

Intonation will guide the listener on subtle data such as which parts of utterances are to be regarded as background, or common-ground material, and which parts are the significant ones that carry the information focus.

Since intonation, like body language, is open to several interpretations, it allows for variation. However some universals such as the difference between a question intonation and a statement intonation need to be followed as is ‘universally’ done.

When speaking in English the words we stress can change the underlying meaning of a sentence. Let's take a look at the following sentence:

**We don't think she should get the job.**

This above given sentence may contain different meanings based on the word we stress upon. Let us see how the stress on a word can change the meaning.

Read the sentence aloud stressing on the word in bold:

1. **We** don't think she should get the job.

**Meaning:** *Somebody else may think that he should get the job.*

1. We **don't** think she should get the job.

**Meaning:** *It's not true that we think she should get the job.*

1. We don't **think** she should get that job.

**Meaning:** *That's not really what we mean. OR We are not sure she'll get that job.*

1. We don't think **she** should get that job.

**Meaning:** *Somebody else should get that job, not she.*

1. We don't think she **should** get that job.

**Meaning:** *In our opinion it's wrong that she's going to get that job.*

1. We don't think she should **get** that job.

**Meaning:** Sh*e should have to earn (be worthy of, work hard for) that job.*

1. We don't think she should get **that** job.

**Meaning:** Sh*e should get another job.*

1. We don't think she should get that **job**.

**Meaning:** *Maybe she should get something else instead.*

From this we realize that the important point to remember is that the true meaning of the sentence is also expressed through the stressed word or words.

## Pronunciation

**Pronunciation** refers to the manner in which a word or a language is spoken, or the manner in which someone utters a word. If one is said to have "correct pronunciation", then it refers to both the factors within a particular dialect. (Wikipedia)

A word may be spoken in various ways by people depending on multiple factors such as the cultural milieu, whether they are native or non-native speakers, the environment around them etc. For e.g. Data can be pronounced as datah or dayta. In India most people would say en-viron-ment, instead of envyrment, or em-baa-razzed instead of embarezd.

Since English is not a phonetic language, we do not say a word the way we write it.

For e.g.:

* Champagne
* Chancellor
* Character

Some words have the same spelling but different pronunciation. In the above example, all the three Ch has a different sound.

Similarly, some words have different spellings but the same pronunciation. For e.g.: right, write, rite (homophones)

However in Indian languages we write the word the way it is said, so there I no confusion at all.

For e.g.:

* Ramesh: Ra-me-sh
* Hanuman: Ha-nu-man

Hence, pronunciation is a bit complex in English. The English language has 26 alphabets, but it has double the number of sounds: 52. Knowing and recognizing the 52 sounds will help us use proper pronunciation.