
UNIT 6 INFORMAL INTERPERSONAL FUNCTIONS

Structure

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6.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit, you should find it easy to

- start casual conversations,
- introduce yourself and others,
- bring a conversation to an end,
- take leave of others, and
- pronounce the sounds represented by the letters 'a', and 'o' especially the weak forms.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous block you learnt about some basic concepts for communication in English. In this unit you will get acquainted with some of the ways in which you can express yourself informally with friends, classmates or colleagues in English. You may have to do this, if the people around you speak a language different from your own. There are times when you may be in a group where the common language for communication is English.

The tips in this unit will help you get prepared to communicate well in such situations. We cannot really predict what you will need to talk about, but we can help you with some commonly used phrases and expressions.

We also provide you with samples of conversation from fiction, as one form of exposure to the conventions of everyday speech. You can in addition observe others speaking and notice some of the ways in which things are said. A colleague remembers how as a small child she waited with great curiosity to see what a group of visitors to her home would say as they took leave. The person who had brought the visitors usually spoke the language of their own home with them. But on that occasion she had brought other, English-speaking friends with her. When they were ready to leave, she said, "So, shall we go?" instead of the usual formula in their own language. As you work through the suggestions in this block, you can

similarly note the equivalences and differences between the kind of expressions you use in your other languages, and English. You can also watch movies or television serials and chat shows in English. Remember, what you say should be appropriate to the situation you are in and the kind of relationship you share with the people you speak to.

6.2 GREETINGS

Let us first look at a sample taken from a novel of a conversation between two old friends meeting after a long interval of time:

“Hallo, Raj!”

“Welcome Prashant ... take a seat”

“You startled me, Raj. When did you grow such long hair? You look like one of those ancient sages living out in the jungles”,...

“Whether I look like a sage or not is debatable. That New Delhi is a jungle, is not.!... Come tell us about good old Mumbai, which I miss so much. But first, tea or coffee?”

[The Return of Vaman]

‘Hello!’ is a common form of greeting among friends.

- There can be variations in the tone in which it is said, depending upon the emotional state of the speaker and the degree of intimacy between the people engaged in the conversation. In this case we can see that the two friends are overjoyed at meeting each other. The comment on physical appearance reflects the degree of intimacy between the two. There is also a reference to Raj’s feelings of nostalgia about the days he spent in Mumbai.

The next move in the conversation is the offering of a drink. Notice that this is not a full sentence: “But first, tea or coffee?” Expanded it means “Will you have tea or coffee?”

- Informal speech usually has half-sentences and phrases but because the speaker and the listener are face-to-face, much of the conversation is understood through facial expression and gestures.

Here is an exchange of greetings between a librarian and a library member:

“How are you this morning, sir?”

“All right, thank you. And how are you?”

“Fine. Here are some new arrivals. You’d really be interested in this new book by Pamuk.”

“Thank you very much. I read his Nobel Prize speech and I am really eager to read all his works.”

- Notice the respectful tone of the librarian and the politeness of the member’s response to it without being overfriendly. “How are you?” is responded to with “All right, thank you”. Or more commonly, “Fine, thank you”. This could be followed by “And how are you?”

Let us now look at a slightly more formal exchange of greetings between two neighbours:

“How do you do, Mr. Mehta?”

“How do you do Mr. Trivedi? I’m sorry I didn’t notice you.”

“Well, I haven’t seen you for quite some time _ well almost a week now.”

“I was out of town.”

“Is everything all right with you, Mr Mehta?”

[A River With Three Banks]

- “How do you do?” is a common greeting, especially among the British. “How do you do?” is not a question. It is a greeting. The response to “How do you do?” is “How do you do?” This example shows the kind of exchange that could take place between two neighbours used to seeing each other regularly. It also reflects concern felt by one for the other.

Now look at this example:

“Hi!”

“Hello.”

“Why, what’s the matter?”

“Nothing”

“Come on; get it off your chest.”

“Thanks, it’s nothing really.”

- Notice how the effusive greeting “Hi!” by the first speaker is responded to with a stiff “Hello” by the second. Notice that the exchange is not open. The second speaker obviously is not in a mood to talk freely.
- “Hello” is less informal than “Hi!”. We use “Hi” with very close friends, not generally with older people or people who are superiors at work.
- The word “Hello” is also the most frequent greeting with which one receives a telephone call.
- “Hello”, “Hullo”, “Hallo”, are variations of the same word.

Other ways of greeting are:

“Good Morning” “Morning!” In the second instance the word ‘good’ is not uttered aloud but is understood.

“Good Evening”

“Nice to see you!”

“Hullo, seeing you after a long time.”

“Nice to see you after so long”

“Hi, it seems ages since we met! How **are** you?”

“Delighted to see you!”

Activity

Write down five other greetings you hear being used by people around you or on television or any English movie.

6.3 INTRODUCTIONS

How do we introduce ourselves to people whom we have never met before?

“I’m Vinita Shukla. How do you do?”

“Hello. I’am Naresh Tripathi from Convensys. Nice to meet you”.

“Have me meet before” I’m Renu Vyas”

“Tarun George. I have a vague feeling we have met somewhere”.

“Was it at Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore?”

“That’s right. I did my Master’s there 2004-2006”.

“That’s it then. I was doing my research there; same time”

“Sudhir Shah. Come for the interview?”

“Yes. My name’s Dina Vakil. You’re from?”

“Surat. And you?”

“Vandodra. Are we too early”.

“It’s better this way than late”.

“I agree”.

Those are some of the ways in which we introduce ourselves to others. Notice we do not refer to ourselves as Mr or Ms or Dr.

Do not say, “I’m Mr. Sudhir Shah”.

While speaking we use contracted forms:

“I am” “I’m”

“My name is” “My name’s”.

✓ **Check Your Progress 1**

List 5 contracted forms of verbs and give their expanded forms:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

6.4 EXTENDING INVITATIONS; ACCEPTING, DECLINING INVITATIONS; TAKING LEAVE

Now read this conversation and notice the way these two friends talk to each other. Notice the welcome, the introductions, the way an invitation is extended, accepted and declined.

<p>“Is Mr. Dhawan there, please?” “Please do come in.” “I’m sorry to barge in like this.”</p>	<p>Ways of life have changed and now it is generally considered impolite to barge into someone’s house without intimation. In the first section the visitor excuses himself for his unannounced visit and is welcomed by the hostess.</p>
<p>“Hello, Bob! What a surprise!” ... “This is my afternoon round of rum.” “How about joining me?” “Too early for me.” “Look, you don’t have a phone and I didn’t note your address the last time I was here.” “Ah, the explanations and apologies.” ... “Back to your Englishness _ appointments, phone calls. You’re welcome here any time, Bob” “Still...”</p>	<p>Compare the formality of Bob with the informal tone of his friend Berry. In the second section he is greeted effusively by his friend asking him to join him in drinks. Bob refuses politely, apologises for dropping in unannounced.</p>
<p>“And that’s my bride. Married seven years now.” “Pleased to meet you, Mrs Dhawan.”...</p>	<p>Berry introduces his wife to him. Notice the expression “Pleased to meet you.” This is the response when somebody is introduced to you. Other expressions are: “Glad to meet you.” “Pleasure meeting you.” These are not full sentences but phrases. “I am pleased/glad to meet you” “It is a pleasure meeting you” would be the implied sentences. This is another example of how we leave out some very common words, easily understood from the context, when we speak.</p>
<p>“Well, I’m in a hurry. I just came to ask you, Mrs Dhawan and Gautam...” “Sonali is the name.”... “All right... I should be delighted if both of you and Gautam could come to my party next Saturday...” “I am not so sure about Sona. You see, she may have to visit her ailing aunt that evening. And Gautam’s away at Allahabad. But I’ll come.” “I’m sorry, my aunt has not been keeping too well, lately.” “What a pity!... I hope she gets well soon.”</p>	<p>The visitor signals that he wishes to leave with the words, “Well, I’m in a hurry.” He begins stating the purpose of his visit when Bob interrupts him commanding him to drop the formality with his wife and address her by her first name. Next, Berry invites Bob and his wife for the party. “I should be delighted...” Other expressions could be: “It would be lovely if...” “It would be great if...” This is the way in which one could excuse oneself or someone else from accepting an invitation. Apologising for non-acceptance. Polite response. [A River with Three Banks]</p>

Here are some ways of leave-taking. Notice the polite responses by the hosts.

"He hasn't come yet," ... "I think I should leave."

"Do sit for a little while more. You have waited for so long. He should be back any minute. Can I get you something to drink?"

"No thanks...." ...

"Did he know you were coming?"

"No, I thought I would take a chance. **I'll go now.**

"Oh, I'll tell him you came. Would you like to write down a message?"

"**No, I'll call later. Thanks.**"

"**I must leave now.**"

"It's getting late. You have a long way to go."

"Yes. Hope you get well soon."

"Thanks. Thanks for coming to see me."

√ **Check Your Progress 2**

Grade the following expressions according to their level of formality/informality. Use ranks 1-6: 1 for least formal and 6 for very formal.

- a. "Well, I think I should leave now."
- b. "That was a pleasant evening, indeed. Thanks. Good night"
- c. "It was indeed a pleasure, spending time with you. See you soon"
- d. "Well, thanks for the great time. Look forward to spending more such occasions."
- e. "Bye then. Hope to see you soon."
- f. "May I take leave of you now?."
- g. "See you."

6.5 PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE

The relationship between the spelling of a word and its sound in English is not regular.

A. The letter 'a', for example, has different sounds in these common words:

take

start

can

among

call

✓ **Check Your Progress 3**

Given below is a list of words/phrases with 'a' in their spelling. Pick out the words/phrases which rhyme with each of the words given above. Write them in the blanks given after the word.

casual basic ways may a group around as well as aunt small
addition watch what after chat exchange also accepted
back later thanks about gradual conversation barge
party

The letter 'a' when it is pronounced by itself rhymes with the 'a' in take. But in phrases like 'a book', it rhymes with the 'a' in 'among'. When 'a' is pronounced in this short way, it is called a 'weak form'. Also note that in the word 'any' 'a' has the sound 'e' as in 'egg'.

Activity

Pronounce 'a' in these phrases to rhyme with 'among'.

"Well, I'm in *a* hurry"

"What *a* pity!..."

"What *a* surprise!"

"Look, you don't have *a* phone and I didn't note your **address** the last time I **was** here."

"... well almost *a* week now."

"... take *a* seat"

Read these aloud. The italicized 'a' has a short sound:

Son: Observe *that* man. When he speaks *a* whole nation listens:

Father: A man of importance eh?

Son: No, *a* radio announcer.

There was *an* Old Man who said, "Hush!"

I perceive *a* young bird in this bush!"

When they said, "Is it small?"

He replied, "Not *at* all!

It is four times *as* big *as* the bush."

Notice how the sound of 'a' changes in the following pairs of words: In the words in the second column the final letter is 'e' changes the sound of 'a' to sound like 'came', 'date' etc.

can cane rat rate sham shame

ban bane mat mate Sam same

man mane at ate dam dame

pan pane fat fate

van vane hat hate

Notice these pairs: 'a' before ck is usually pronounced as in 'rat'. 'a' followed by 'ke' is pronounced like 'take'.

- back bake
- tack take
- rack rake
- lack lake
- sack sake

B. Let us now take the letter 'o' and see the ways in which it is pronounced. Here are some common words:

- come
- two
- comma
- took
- note
- word

✓ Check Your Progress 4

Pick out words from the list below and write them against the sounds of 'o' that they rhyme with:

- | | | | | | | |
|------------------|---------|------------|------------------|---------|------------|--------|
| communication | some | colleagues | to | do | from | common |
| form of exposure | observe | worse | others | look | notice | |
| some of the ways | brought | worthy | on that occasion | | | |
| off | work | also | novel | old | cup of tea | |
| hope | good | world | soon | through | | |

In the phrases 'tea **or** coffee', '**or**' is pronounced with a weak sound. Another example of a weak form of 'o' can be heard in '**of** course'.

Activity

Pronounce these phrases with a weak 'o' sound:

- "Thanks **for** coming to see me."
- "But first, tea **or** coffee?"
- "both **of** you"

Read out this simple rhyme with three different sounds for 'o':

Two or three Smiles
And two or three frowns
Two or three Miles
To two or three towns.

Read these aloud:

What keys **won't open doors?**

Don-keys, mon-keys, tur-keys.

Where **do ghosts go for** fresh air?

To the sea ghost (coast).

A **lemon** and an **orange** were **on** a high diving board. The **orange** jumped **off**.

Why didn't the **lemon?**

Because it was **yellow**.

Why **do** wallets make **so** much **noise?**

Because **money** talks.

Read this poem noticing the different sounds represented by 'a' and 'o'. The weak sounds are in italics:

Mr. Nobody

I know *a* funny little man,

As quiet as a mouse,

Who does the mischief *that* is done

In *everybody's* house.

There's no one ever sees his face,

And yet we all agree

That every plate we break *was* cracked

By Mr. Nobody

'Tis he *who* always tears our books,

Who leaves the door *ajar*

He pulls the buttons from our shirts,

And scatters pins *afar*;

That squeaking door will always squeak,

For prithee, don't *you* see,

We leave the oiling *to* be done

By Mr. Nobody.

The finger marks upon the door

By none *of* us are made;

We never leave the blinds unclosed,

To let the curtains fade,

The ink we never spill; the boots

Are not our boots – they all belong

To Mr. Nobody.

C. Now notice these words with the letter 'u' in them:

just

full

unite

sure

pure

√ **Check Your Progress 4**

Pick out the words from the list below with a 'u' which have the same sound of the words above:

communication much pull must regularly usual cure

6.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we looked at some of the ways in which we greet, introduce, welcome, invite, accept or decline invitations and take leave.

As already mentioned these are not formulaic phrases to be learnt verbatim but indicate ways in which common everyday communicative functions are performed.

You would have noticed that conversation does not begin or end abruptly. Politeness principles suggest gradual beginnings and endings.

We also noticed the different sounds represented by the letters 'a' and 'o'; especially the weak forms.

Further Tasks

I. *Read these extracts from the novel Not a penny more, not a penny less by Jeffrey Archer. Say which situation each extract describes – leave-taking or parting, greeting, or greeting and extending an invitation. Can you guess what the social relationship is between the speakers?*

1. 'See you in the morning, Professor. Thanks for a great evening.' 'My pleasure. I'll pick you up at 10 a.m. Sleep well – you have a full day ahead of you tomorrow.'
2. 'Good morning, David.' 'Good morning, Bernie. I thought I ought to let you know I spent the evening with a friend at Oxford, and he may invest some money in the company.' 'That's fine, David, keep up the good work.'
3. 'Good morning, Mr. Silverman.' 'Bernie, please call me Bernie. Take a seat.'
4. (on the telephone) 'Hi, Lloyd. Didn't know you were in Monte ... why don't we get together? ... 8 p.m.? ... Great, I'll see you then.'
5. 'Well, that seems to be all. Thank you for your cooperation. We may be in touch again some time in the future. We'll keep you informed of developments, and I hope you'll do the same for us.' 'Of course, Inspector. I do hope you have a safe journey back to town.'

II. *Comment on the situations described in these extracts from Jamila Gavin, The Wheel of Surya. Say who the speakers are and what they do (apologize, introduce themselves or others, etc.)*

1. "I'm so sorry to intrude like this", said Tom awkwardly. "Let me introduce myself. My name is Tom Fletcher. I'm a teacher in India, but over on leave [in England] to see my parents ..."

2. 'Are you Jaspal Singh?' she demanded.

Jaspal nodded.

'Come with me then', and ... she marched him over to one of the line-ups in front of the class teachers.

'Class 6', announced the teacher. 'This is a new boy. He comes from India. His name is Jaspal Singh.'

6.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. 'Can't believe it! How nice to see you after such a long time!'
'Good evening! So glad to see you'
'How lovely! You are just the person I was thinking of'
'Sweta! How **are** you?' So good to see you'
'Good morning! Vintex Consultants.' (on the telephone)
2. g1 e2, c3, d4, a5, b6, f7
3. **take:** basic may later ways conversation exchange
start: after aunt barge party
can: casual back chat gradual thanks
among: a group around as well as addition accepted about
call: small also watch what
4. **come:** communication some from others
you: two do soon
occasion: observe here or there: cup of tea
comma: form colleagues brought on off novel
took: to look good
note: notice old hope exposure
word: work worthy worse world

Answers to the assignment

- I.
 1. [Leave-taking or parting] [A professor and his guest, perhaps a professional colleague]
 2. [Greeting] [Colleagues at work: Bernie is David's superior or senior]
 3. [Greeting] [A boss and a newly appointed person]
 4. [Greeting and extending an invitation] [friends]
 5. [Leave-taking or parting] [An Inspector and a person who has helped him in his inquiries]
- II.
 1. Tom is a teacher. He is speaking to someone who doesn't know him, so he introduces himself and apologizes for his unexpected visit to their house. He is a little embarrassed.
 2. Jaspal is a new boy from India, and this is his first day at a school in England. A teacher takes him to his class teacher, and the class teacher introduces him to the class.