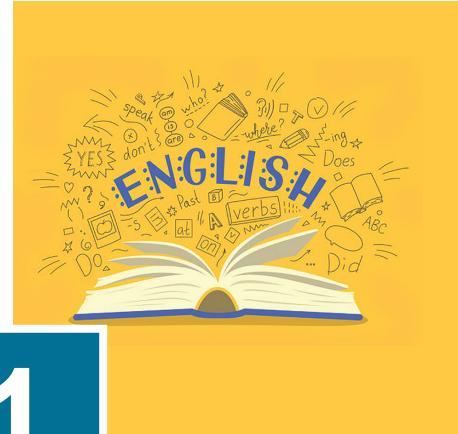


English–A Global Tool

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CHAPTER



CHAPTER OUTLINE

⌚ Some Common 'Indianisms'	⌚ Grammar
⌚ Learning a Language	⌚ Parts of Speech

The British Council estimates that the world has about 375 million people who speak English as a first language, another 375 million who speak it regularly as a second language in a country where English has some semi-official status (such as India) and about 750 million more people who speak English as a foreign language.

Communication is a key skill in today's corporate world. In order to attain success, one needs to communicate and the base of any communication is a language. The world is shrinking and it is very rightly said that today we are living in a "Global Village", English plays a central role in this "globalisation" and it has become the language of choice for communication at globe level.

English has gained immense importance in today's competitive world. In this growing race, one doesn't wish to be left out and in order to be a part of the race, fluency in this language is imperative.

Although English is not our mother tongue, we are fortunate to be well versed with this language as it is taught to us right at the school level. This gives us a leading edge and prepares us for an enriched future.

Unfortunately, this advantage over time has been eroded due to improper teaching - learning, the mother-tongue influence, the rise of 'Hinglish' (Hindi + English) and 'Indianisms'. All these are serious barriers to effective communication.

SOME COMMON 'INDIANISMS'

- Entry from the backside
- "Myself" as an introduction
- My good name is
- Words and phrases to avoid:
 - Basically, actually, having, around about (together),
 - Myself What is your 'good' name?
 - Very very, again again, fastly fastly,
 - 'Very much' easy, 'too much' beautiful,

- Tags-also, no? Isn't it?
- Doing job, backside, my place, marketing (for shopping)
- Means, what you can say, what you call, same to same
- *Mutlab, toh, voh, ekdum, jaise*, madam, sir (only when appropriate)
- Strong **t, d** ending sounds e.g., good, **didn't**

LEARNING A LANGUAGE

Language as defined by the Oxford Dictionary is “the means of human communication, consisting of the use of spoken or written words in a structured way.”

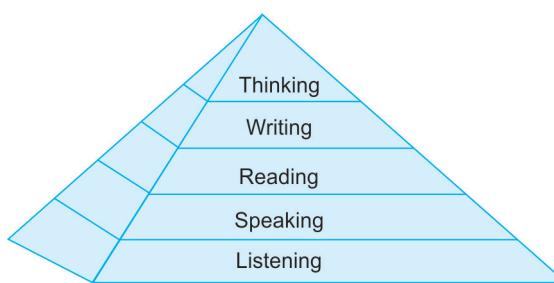


Fig. 1 Hierarchy of skills

To learn a language or to have a command over a language, certain steps are followed in both formal and informal methods of learning. If viewed as a pyramid, it would be something as viewed in Figure 1.

Listening

As you can see in Figure 1, the first skill required to learn a language is ‘Listening’— a *receptive* skill. We learn to speak our native language effortlessly simply because we are constantly exposed to the language. Our mind learns to process the different sounds we hear (receive) into a form and flow (grammar and fluency) and recall it as and when required without formal tutoring. Maximum learning takes place at this level.

- Did I first learn to listen or speak?
- What are the informal sources/methods of learning a language through listening?
- How can I increase my exposure to listening to correct English sounds?

Speaking

The second level of proficiency in a language is ‘Speaking’. It is a *productive* skill. Once a person has a storehouse of sounds and words (vocabulary) in his memory, he can express himself as he is able to establish meaning and thought flow when speaking. This level takes the longest to master. The other two higher levels are a natural outcome of this level.

- How long was it before I learnt to speak (native language)?
- What does the term ‘fluency’ mean to me?
- How long will it take for me to become fluent in English?
- What do I need to do for it?

Reading

The third level of skill required for proficiency is 'Reading', which again like listening is a receptive skill. Reading implies the ability to understand the meaning of the written or printed words. This skill enables a person to enhance and expand his knowledge and reinforce other skills.

- When did I develop the ability to read?
- Are there different kinds of reading, what are they? (Silent/aloud/cursory/assimilate)
- What are the things we read other than books?
- Are there any smart ways to read?

Writing

Writing is the fourth level, a higher skill which again is a productive skill. It involves the ability to communicate ideas through the written or printed words. For this skill, you need to have an understanding of grammar of the language as there is no face-to-face contact. In absence of gestures and expressions to support or convey meaning, you rely solely on the written/printed words.

- What is the difference between writing and handwriting?
- What do I need to do to improve my writing ability?
- Are spellings important?
- Is punctuation needed?

Thinking

A person is considered proficient in a language when he/she can effortlessly think in that language. The reason is, it is the culmination or combination of all the skills and therefore, is at the highest level. People who are considered good orators or writers are those who have this skill. At the simplest level, it means one who is fluent in the language.

- Why do I need to think in English?
- What do I need to do to be able to think in English?

GRAMMAR

What is Grammar?

Grammar is the system of a language. People sometimes describe grammar as the "rules" of a language; but in fact no language has rules. If we use the word "rules", we suggest that somebody created the rules first and then spoke the language, like a new game. But languages did not start like that. Languages started by people making sounds which evolved into words, phrases and sentences. No commonly spoken language is fixed. All languages change over time. What we call "grammar" is simply a reflection of a language at a particular time.

What is the Study of Grammar?

Grammar is a branch of linguistics dealing with the form and structure of words (morphology) and their interrelation in sentences (syntax). The study of grammar reveals how language works.

- Do we need to study grammar to learn a language? The short answer is “no”. Very many people in the world speak their own native language without having studied its grammar. Children start to speak before they even know the word “grammar”. But if you are serious about learning a foreign language, the long answer is “yes, grammar can help you to learn a language more quickly and more efficiently.” It’s important to think of grammar as something that can help you like a friend. When you understand the grammar (or system) of a language, you can understand many things yourself, without having to ask a teacher or look in a book.
- So think of grammar as something good, something positive, something that you can use to find your way—like a signpost or a map.

PARTS OF SPEECH

The fundamental building block of all languages is the word. Words are classified into parts of speech according to the way the words function in a sentence. It is important to realize that a part of speech is not inherent in a word itself but in the way the word is used. It is not unusual for a word to belong to more than one part of speech and class depending on how the word is used. For example, the word ‘*round*’ can be used as a noun, a verb, or an adjective:

Noun: Should we get another round?

Verb: The horses round the last post and head for home.

Adjective: He puts a small, round pebble in his pocket.

So, instead of asking the question, “What part of speech is X?”, we should always ask the question, “What part of speech is X in this sentence?”

There are seven functional parts of speech: **nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, conjunctions** and **prepositions**. There is also by some reckoning an eighth part of speech, **interjections**. Interjections are like asides or commentaries that are really not part of the actual grammar of a sentence. For example, *well* and *damn* in the following sentences are interjections.

Well, because interjections, by definition, play no grammatical role in a sentence, we will ignore them from this point onward and concentrate on the remaining seven functional parts of speech.

- I don’t know what to tell you.

It is important to be able to recognize and identify the different types of words in English, so that you can understand grammar explanations and use the right word form in the right place. Here is a brief explanation of the parts of speech:

- **Noun:** A noun is a naming word. It names a person, place, thing, idea, living creature, quality or action. *Examples:* *cowboy, theatre, box, thought, tree, kindness, arrival.*
- **Verb:** A verb is a word which describes an action (doing something) or a state (being something). *Examples:* *walk, talk, think, believe, live, like, want.*
- **Adjective:** An adjective is a word that describes a noun. It tells you something about the noun. *Examples:* *big, yellow, thin, amazing, beautiful, quick, important.*
- **Adverb:** An adverb is a word which usually describes a verb. It tells you how something is done. It may also tell you when or where something happened. *Examples:* *slowly, intelligently, well, yesterday, tomorrow, here, everywhere, etc.*
- **Pronoun:** A pronoun is used instead of a noun to avoid repeating the noun. *Examples:* *I, you, he, she, it, we, they, etc.*

- **Conjunction:** A conjunction joins two words, phrases or sentences together. *Examples: but, so, and, because, or, etc.*
- **Preposition:** A preposition usually comes before a noun, pronoun or noun phrase. It joins the noun to some other part of the sentence. *Examples: on, in, by, with, under, through, at, etc.*
- **Interjection:** An interjection is an unusual kind of word, because it often stands alone. Interjections are words which express emotion or surprise, and they are usually followed by exclamation marks. *Examples: Ouch!, Hello!, Hurray!, Oh no!, Ha!, etc.*