



Notes

# 3

## ADVANCED COMMUNICATION AT THE WORKPLACE

In the previous lesson you have learnt about the basic communication skills at the workplace. Since communication skills are the most crucial part of the BPO industry we will make you aware of the steps of taking your communication to the next level.

This lesson will enable you to understand the advanced aspects of communication ranging from consonant sounds which help you gain clarity while speaking. You will also get acquainted with vowel sounds and the various types of stress while speaking a word as well as a sentence. You will learn about listening and the barriers to listening. This will enable you to speak fluently. We will try and explore each aspect briefly to give you a fair idea of using your communication skills effectively.



### OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, you will be able to :

- identify consonant and vowel sounds;
- explain syllable and syllable stress;
- describe listening and types of listening;
- explain telephone etiquette as well as group discussion.

### 3.1 CONSONANT SOUNDS AND VOWEL SOUNDS, WORD STRESS

Let us discuss how using the consonant sounds and vowels sounds and word stress, accurately, helps us to improve fluency and voice modulation.



Notes

As mentioned in the previous lesson, English is not a phonetic language, which in simple terms means that a word spelled in a particular way, may not be pronounced that way.

Or, to make it even more simple, the same letter can be enunciated in multiple ways, while different letters may be enunciated in the same way.

For instance,

- The letter ‘s’ in ‘sugar’, the letters ‘ss’ in ‘pressure’, the letters ‘ti’ in ‘station’ and the letters ‘ch’ in ‘chef’, all produce the ‘sh’ sound
- The letter ‘a’ in the words ‘woman’, ‘ant’ and ‘nation’ produces different sounds

We will now explore the consonant sounds, vowel sounds and word stress patterns.

In order to learn the consonants and vowel sounds it is important that you get introduced to the IPA chart (International Phonetic Alphabet), the sound of each symbol is given against it.

IPA Chart



Fig. 3.1 : IPA Chart

a. Consonant Sounds

Consonant Sounds are sounds that are produced when there is a *partial or complete interruption of the flow of air by one of the speech organs* [also called articulators. e.g. tongue, teeth, lips, hard palate, alveolar ridge, soft palate, uvula, velum, larynx].



Notes

### Characteristics of Consonant Sounds

- These sounds are typically short and abrupt when used in speech
- These sounds are relatively sharper as compared to other sounds

p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j

Now look at the first two rows of the consonant sound grid, the consonant sounds have been put in pair e.g. P&B, T&D. The first sound in each pair is aspirated or voice less which means more gush of air whilst pronouncing the sound example – P,B,T, K and the second letter in the pair is voiced or non-aspirated (without air) which means it will be more crisp and clear and the gush of air will be less.

### b. Vowel Sounds

Vowel sounds are sounds that are produced when there is no interruption in the flow of air by the speech organs. They do, however, give it a shape when being exhaled.

### The need for vowel sounds

You need to study vowel sounds because **you may be unfamiliar with some of the sounds** and end up enunciating them incorrectly. This would lead to the word being mispronounced and would then impact one’s speech.

Also, there may be times when the sounds in the English language may be similar to some of the sounds in one’s native language. Since, one is more familiar with the native tongue; one may use those sounds while speaking English.

- For instance, swapping the ‘long i:’ and ‘short j ‘sounds and pronouncing the word ‘sleep’ as ‘slip’.

Long and short vowel sounds

i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:
e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ

**Diphthongs**

ɪə	eɪ	
ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ
eə	aɪ	aʊ



Notes

**Long vowels and Short vowels**

IPA Symbol	Example
ɪ	<u>T</u> ip
ɛ	P <u>e</u> t
æ	<u>A</u> nt
ʌ	<u>C</u> up
ʌŋ	<u>H</u> onk
ʊ	<u>P</u> ull
	<u>A</u> go

IPA Symbol	Example
i:	C <u>ee</u> se
a:	<u>S</u> tar
ɔ:	<u>F</u> orce
u:	Plat <u>oo</u> n
ɜ:	Sh <u>i</u> rt

**Diphthongs**

IPA Symbol	Example
eɪ	<u>P</u> ain
aɪ	<u>B</u> uy
ɔɪ	<u>S</u> oil
	<u>S</u> tone
	<u>S</u> cowl
ɪ	<u>B</u> eer
ɛ	<u>S</u> tare
	<u>T</u> our

**Word Stress Rules**

There are two very simple rules about word stress:

1. One word has only one stress.
2. We can only stress vowels, not consonants.

**Syllables & Syllabic Stress**

**What is a syllable?**

Every word is either made up of a part or is a sum of parts. If these parts are not pronounced properly or the sounds in the parts are not enunciated correctly, then the meaning that the word is trying to convey would not be transferred properly to the listener.



Notes

These parts are called syllables. A syllable therefore,

- Is a unit of pronunciation that is made up of one or more than one sound.
  - e.g. Ago: A-go [First syllable has one sound, the second syllable has two sounds]
- Can only have one vowel sound. It may have one or more than one consonant sound.
  - e.g. About: A – bout [First syllable only has a vowel sound, the second syllable has a vowel sound and two consonant sounds]
- Every word has at least one syllable. **E.g. Cat**

**How to count the number of syllables in a word?**

- Count the number of vowel sounds in a word. The number of vowel sounds will be equal to the number of syllables.
  - e.g. Cataract: Cat-a-ract [three vowel sounds and hence, three syllables]
- Jaw Drop Method: the jaw moves with each syllable that needs to be enunciated as it encounters a vowel sound. To enunciate the next consonant sound it needs to then move back to its original position.

**Note: Syllables are always counted from left to right, as you read the word on the page.**

**Syllabic Stress**

**How does one make out if the syllable is stressed?**

The effects of stress can be very easily made out in speech. A stressed syllable would generally have the following features:

- **Pitch:** The stressed syllable would have a different pitch. It is usually higher in pitch than all the other syllables in a word.
- **Length:** A stressed syllable is slightly longer in length as compared to the other syllables in the word.
- **Loudness:** A stressed syllable is louder than the other syllable in the word.
- This means that the speaker’s volume increases fractionally when s/he is enunciating the stressed syllable.

**Need for Syllabic Stress**

It is important for the following reasons:

- Correct pronunciation.
  - Clarity of speech.
  - Correct meaning [the word ‘present’ can be used as a noun and as a verb, and
-

the only difference in speech is apparent through the change in syllabic stress]

- Maintaining the rhythm and music of the language.
- Listener's perception.

## Patterns of Syllabic Stress

### Penultimate stress

When a word ends with **-ic, -sive, -sion, cian or -tion**, the maximum or primary stress is usually on the **second last syllable**.

- Democratic, economic
- Compre**h**ensive, apprehensive
- Dec**is**ion, inc**is**ion
- Mus**ic**ian, mathemat**ic**ian
- Att**en**tion, det**en**tion

- Ante Penultimate

When a word ends with, **-ity, -phy, -cy, -gy, -me.ter/me.tre, -ical, -ular, -try/tory, my**, the maximum or primary stress is usually on the **third last syllable**.

- Facility, cap**ab**ility
- **G**eography, choreo**g**raphy
- Dem**o**cracy, **de**gency
- Biology, physio**l**ogy
- Kilomet**r**e, thermo**m**eter
- **T**echnical, phys**ic**al
- Mole**cu**lar, perpend**ic**ular
- **G**eometry, **de**ntistry
- Economy, poly**g**amy
- In a **Bi-syllabic noun**, the maximum or primary stress is usually on the **first syllable**
  - **B**ottle
  - **T**able
  - **C**ycle
  - **W**icket
  - **M**erger
  - **F**inger



Notes



Notes

However, there are exceptions to the above rule. There are times when the maximum or primary stress shifts to the **second syllable in disyllabic nouns**

- **Cartoon**
- **Thirteen**
- **Stampede**
- **Canoe**
- In a **two syllabic verb**, the maximum or primary stress is usually on the second syllable.
  - **Debate**
  - **Review**
  - **Reduce**
  - **Install**
  - **Infer**
  - **Address**

However, there are **exceptions** to the above rule. There are times when the maximum or primary stress shifts to the first syllable in two syllabic verbs.

- **Edit**
  - **Cancel**
  - **Murder**
  - **Budget**
  - **Contrastive stress** – There are a lot of disyllabic words that are spelt the same way but pronounced differently as a noun and as a verb. As a noun, the maximum or primary stress is on the first syllable and as a verb, it is on the second syllable.
    - **Accent:** The manager's **accent** **accented** the speech.
    - **Addict:** He is a play station **addict**; he got **addicted** a year ago.
    - **Conduct:** You have to **conduct** yourself in accordance with the company's code of **conduct**.
    - **Conflict:** The schedules should not **conflict** with each other; they might lead to a **conflict** between the departments.
    - **Content:** I am not **content** [**adjective**] with this document as it does not have enough **content**.
    - **Contest:** We have to **contest** the decision taken by the **contest** organisers
-

- **Contract:** We seem to have **contracted** a disease which is not covered in the medical **contract**.
- **Convert:** I am not an android **convert**; you cannot **convert** me from being an I-phone lover.



Notes



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.1

1. Choose the correct option:

- (i) A smallest part of a word is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. word
  - b. letter
  - c. syllable
  - d. alphabet
- (ii) A syllable can have only \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. two vowels
  - b. one vowel
  - c. no vowels
  - d. no consonants
- (iii) Syllables are always counted from \_\_\_\_\_ as you read the word on the page.
  - a. right to left
  - b. left to right
  - c. down to up
  - d. up to down
- (iv) In a bi-syllabic noun, the maximum or primary stress is usually on the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. first syllable
  - b. second syllable
  - c. third syllable
  - d. whole word
- (v) In \_\_\_\_\_, the word is stressed differently as a noun and a verb.
  - a. penultimate stress
  - b. ante- penultimate stress
  - c. contrastive stress
  - d. stative stress





**Notes**

### **3.2 LISTENING**

You will learn about listening, its various types and some key barriers.

We listen every day, in fact every moment of the day. The first language that we acquire is purely by listening that is why children who are deaf take longer to grasp a language than others. Listening is the art of interpreting and analysing what you hear and respond accordingly. It is the most critical part of the communication chain.

Listening is not the same as hearing. Hearing refers to the sounds that you hear, whereas listening requires more than that it requires focus. Listening means paying attention not only to the story, but how it is told, the use of language and voice, and how the other person uses his or her body.

#### **The Principles of Listening**

A good listener will listen not only to what is being said, but also to what is left unsaid or only partially said. Effective listening involves observing body language and noticing inconsistencies between verbal and non-verbal messages.

For example, if someone tells you that they are happy with their life but through gritted teeth or with tears filling their eyes, you should consider that the verbal and non-verbal messages are in conflict, they maybe do not mean what they say.

In order to listen effectively one must -

#### **1. Stop Talking**

“If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two tongues and one ear.” Mark Twain.

Don't talk, listen. When somebody else is talking listen to what they are saying, do not interrupt, talk over them or finish their sentences for them. Stop, just listen. Prepare Yourself to Listen. Focus on the speaker. Put other things out of mind.

#### **2. Put the Speaker at Ease**

Remember their needs and concerns. Nod or use other gestures or words to encourage them to continue. Maintain eye contact but don't stare – show you are listening and understanding what is being said.

#### **3. Remove Distractions**

Don't doodle, shuffle papers, look out of the window, pick your fingernails or similar. Avoid unnecessary interruptions. These behaviours disrupt the listening process and send messages to the speaker that you are bored or distracted.

---



Notes

#### 4. Empathise

Look at issues from their perspective. Let go of preconceived ideas. By keeping an open mind we can more fully empathise with the speaker. If the speaker says something that you disagree with then wait and construct an argument to counter what is said but keep an open mind to the views and opinions of others.

#### 5. Be Patient

Be patient and let the speaker continue in their own time, sometimes it takes time to formulate what to say and how to say it. Never interrupt or finish a sentence for someone.

#### 6. Avoid Personal Prejudice

Don't become irritated and do not let the person's habits or mannerisms distract you from what the speaker is really saying. Everybody has a different way of speaking - some people are for example more nervous or shy than others, some have regional accents or make excessive arm movements, some people like to pace whilst talking - others like to sit still.

#### 7. Listen to the Tone

A good speaker will use both volume and tone to their advantage to keep an audience attentive; everybody will use pitch, tone and volume of voice in certain situations – let these help you to understand the emphasis of what is being said.

#### 8. Listen for Ideas – Not Just Words

Maybe one of the most difficult aspects of listening is the ability to link together pieces of information to reveal the ideas of others. With proper concentration, letting go of distractions, and focus this becomes easier.

#### 9. Wait and Watch for Non-Verbal Communication

Gestures, facial expressions, and eye-movements can all be important. We do not just listen with our ears but also with our eyes – watch and pick up the additional information being transmitted via non-verbal communication.

### 3.2.1 Types of Listening

Let us now look at some types of listening -

#### 1. Discriminative listening

Discriminative listening is the most basic type of listening, whereby the difference between different sounds is identified. If you cannot hear differences, then you cannot make sense of the meaning that is expressed by such differences.

#### 2. Comprehension listening

The next step beyond discriminating between different sound and sights is to make sense of them. To comprehend the meaning requires first having a lexicon



## Notes

of words at our fingertips and also all rules of grammar and syntax by which we can understand what others are saying.

### 3. Critical listening

Critical listening is listening in order to evaluate and judge, forming opinion about what is being said. Judgment includes assessing strengths and weaknesses, agreement and approval.

### 4. Selective listening

Selective listening happens when the person hears only what they want to hear, typically misinterpreting what the other person says, based on the stereotypes and other biases that they have. Such biased listening is often very evaluative in nature.

### 5. Active listening – it is the best form of listening where full attention is given to what the other person is saying, this can be displayed by asking questions or paraphrasing.

## Let us now look at some key barriers to Listening

- Trying to listen to more than one conversation at a time, this includes having the television or radio on while attempting to listen to someone's speech; being on the phone to one person and talking to another person in the same room and also being distracted by some dominant noise in the immediate environment.
- You find the communicator attractive/unattractive and you pay more attention to how you feel about the communicator and their physical appearance than to what they are saying. Perhaps you simply do not like the speaker - you may mentally argue with the speaker and be fast to criticise, either verbally or in your head.
- You are not interested in the topic/issue being discussed and become bored.
- Not focusing and being easily distracted, fiddling with your hair, fingers, a pen etc. or gazing out of the window or focusing on objects other than the speaker.
- Feeling unwell or tired, hungry, thirsty or needing to use the toilet.
- Identifying rather than empathising.
- Sympathising rather than empathising - sympathy is not the same as empathy, you sympathise when you feel sorry for the experiences of another, to empathise is to put yourself in the position of the other person.
- You are prejudiced or biased by race, gender, age, religion, accent, and/or past experiences.
- You have preconceived ideas or bias - effective listening includes being open-minded to the ideas and opinions of others, this does not mean you have to agree but should listen and attempt to understand.
- You make judgements, thinking, for example that a person is not very bright or is under-qualified so there is no point listening to what they have to say.

- Previous experiences – we are all influenced by previous experiences in life. We respond to people based on personal appearances, how initial introductions or welcomes were received and/or previous interpersonal encounters.
- Preoccupation - when we have a lot on our minds we can fail to listen to what is being said as we are too busy concentrating on what we are thinking about. This is particularly true when we feel stressed or worried about issues.
- Having a closed mind.



Notes

### 3.3 TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

You will now understand some basics of telephone etiquette. The word etiquette means 'manners' and the word 'telephone etiquette' involves 'manners' while talking on the phone.

Whether at work, at home, or on your mobile phone, here are 8 solid telephone etiquette tips everyone should be displaying at all times.

1. Always identify yourself at the beginning of all calls.
2. Be sensitive to the tone of your voice.
3. Think through exactly what you plan to say and discuss BEFORE you place a call.
4. Do not allow interruptions to occur during conversations.
5. Especially when leaving messages, speak clearly and slowly.
6. Build the habit of always turning off your cell phone ringer when entering a meeting, restaurant, theatre, training class.
7. Always speak into the telephone receiver with an even and low tone of voice.
8. Do not allow yourself to be distracted by other activities while speaking on the telephone,

### 3.4 GROUP DISCUSSION

Let us discuss some key elements needed to succeed in a group discussion. The word group discussion literally means discussion in a group. However a group discussion is a very powerful screening device to select candidates for a prospective assignment or job. Usually, a group discussion takes place between eight to ten candidates. All the candidates in the group can express themselves without hassles. Each of them is free to express himself/herself the way he/she pleases.

#### Constituents of a Group Discussion:

A group discussion consists of the following parameters:

- Display of communication skills through knowledge of ideas regarding the subject.
- Exhibiting leadership qualities.
- Positive and cooperative approach towards other candidates in the group.



Notes

- Addressing the group as a whole.
- Ability to stand up to physical and mental stresses and difficulties.

### **Important Guidelines for Candidates Preparing For Group Discussion:**

- Always remember to keep the discussion on the mentioned subject on the track. Bring it back on track once it is off the track.
- Do not over indulge in irrelevant discussion obscuring critical issues.
- Be tactful to control the over-talkative member.
- Do not let one or two members to monopolise the discussion.
- With your knowledge and ability, it would be useful to make original observations that steer the group into discussing other angles to the topic.
- Be mature enough to handle criticism and provocation. Avoid personal arguments.
- Candidates lacking self-confidence tend to converse with other members instead of addressing the group directly. Avoid such sub grouping tendencies.
- It is very important to conclude each argument at the right time and in the right time and in the right manner.
- If you are not sure about the topic of discussion, do not initiate, lack of knowledge and a wrong approach creates a negative impression.
- Never interrupt another speaker when the session is on. Don't try to cut others short instead listen and speak when your time comes.
- Address the entire group in such a way that you create a favourable impression on everyone.
- Maintain a good rapport with fellow participants. Non-verbal gestures such as listening attentively or nodding while appreciating someone's viewpoint speak positively of you.
- Clarity in speech and expression is another essential trait for performing well in the group discussion.



### **INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.2**

- I. Fill in the blanks
    - a. Do not allow yourself to be \_\_\_\_\_ by other activities while speaking on the telephone.
    - b. Do not allow \_\_\_\_\_ to occur during conversations.
-

- c. Think through exactly what you plan to say and discuss \_\_\_\_\_ you place a call.
- d. Always \_\_\_\_\_ yourself at the beginning of all calls.
- e. When leaving messages, speak \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.



Notes



### WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

In this lesson you became familiar with the consonant as well as vowel sounds and able to enunciate properly. You also understand the phenomenon of syllabic stress and the segregation of syllable. You are aware of the difference between listening and hearing, and can avoid barriers of listening. You are now familiar with manners while speaking on the telephone and the process of group discussion.



### TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. What are the different types of listening?
2. How can one become an effective listener?
3. Illustrate in detail the types of consonant sounds.
4. Differentiate between voiced and voiceless consonants.
5. Describe the different patterns of the syllabic stress?
6. What are some common barriers to listening? List any five.



### ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

#### 3.1

- I. (i) c
- (ii) b
- (iii) b
- (iv) b
- (v) c

#### 3.2

- I. a. distracted
- b. interrupted
- c. before
- d. introduce
- e. clearly, slowly