

# Lecture 29

## 29.1 Word Order Rules

- **Basic Rule**  
Subject + Verb(s) + Object
  - I speak English.
- **Rule 01**  
In case of using indirect objects, direct objects, place and time expressions, follow this order:  
Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object + Place + Time
  - I will tell you the story at school tomorrow
- **Rule 02**  
In case of subordinate clauses, follow this order:  
Conjunction + Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object + Place + Time
  - Because I don't have time now.
- **Rule 03**  
If the emphasis is not on time, time expressions can be placed at the beginning of a sentence.
  - Tomorrow I will tell you the story.
- **Rule 04**  
In case of adverbs of frequency (always, never, usually), place these adverbs before the main verb (except for be as main verb) as follows:  
Subject + Auxiliary/ be + Adverb + Main Verb + Object, place or time
  - I often go swimming in the evenings.
  - He doesn't always play tennis.
- **Rule 05**  
Adverb of manner (slowly, carefully, awfully) is placed after the direct object. Same word order is to be followed for adverb of place (here, there, behind, above) and adverb of time (tomorrow, yesterday).  
Subject + Verb(s) + Direct Object + Adverb
  - He drove the car carefully.
  - He is coming here.
  - The match will be played tomorrow.
- **Rule for Word Order in Questions**  
Interrogatives (W/H Expressions) are placed first. Auxiliary verb (or the main verb 'be') comes before the subject. Follow this order:  
Interrogative + Auxiliary Verb + Subject + Other Verb(s) + Indirect Object + Direct Object + Place + Time
  - What would you like to tell me?
  - Did you have a party in your flat yesterday?
  - When were you here?

## 29.2 Barriers to Effective Communication

Communication is considered effective when the message reaches the audience without any barrier and they comprehend it well. At times, there are different faults in communication system which can become an impediment and affect the process of communication. The nature of these barriers may be physical, professional or inter-cultural. We will discuss these types in detail.

### 29.2.1 Physical Barriers: Defects in the medium

Technology advancement has provided us several mediums for communication. However, sometimes faults of equipment or other technical glitches hamper the process of communication. If you are using a telephone, distortion in the line or loss of signals may result in failure of the communication process. Sometimes, a fax message is delivered at a wrong number and it compromises the security of your information. If you are taking prints and toner gets finished, your document would look faded and thus, it would be a physical barrier as the reader won't be able to comprehend the message.

#### 29.2.1.1 Physical Barriers: Noise in the environment

Noise pollution becomes a barrier if you are talking on Skype to somebody or trying to record a video tutorial for your students. To deal with this, awareness should be created among people to not disturb others with their noise. One solution for the organizations is to have sound-proof rooms.

#### 29.2.1.2 Information Overload

If you bombard the audience with information, they may miss the important information. For example, if a same advertisement of a product keeps playing innumerable times, the target audience may choose to ignore it.

### 29.2.2 Semantic and Language Barriers

As language is slippery, a single sentence may have several interpretations. Barriers arise from different meanings of words. For example, 'head' may be the person who is in charge, it may refer to your body part, and it also means introduction or peak of some thing. Similarly, you have a bank where you deposit money, and there is bank of a river.

- We have words that have same spelling but are pronounced differently to give different meanings like minute and wind. See these examples:
  - We need salt in minute amount.
  - I need a minute to send this email.
  
- The position of stress on the word '**present**' can also convey two separate meanings. See these examples:
  - I got a Swatch watch as a present.
  - Only two people were present in the meeting.

- There are words which are comprehensible in writing but misunderstood in speech:
  - Access vs. Excess
  - Flower vs. Flour
  - Cite vs. Site
- We also have words whose orthography (spelling) is mixed even in writing:
  - Week vs. Weak
  - Steel vs. Steal
- There are certain adjectives and adverbs which convey different meanings to different persons depending upon daily activities and way of life. For example, the idea of beauty is relative. It varies from culture to culture and person to person. In Eastern culture, thin lips are seen as beautiful whereas, in West a fuller pout is considered beautiful.
- Some animals are used as symbols, but they stand for different ideas in different cultures. An owl is a symbol of wisdom in the West, but a symbol of foolishness in East. Similarly, a dog is considered human's best friend in the West, but just a means of security in East.
- Phrases are tricky when it comes to semantic confusion:  
Consider **A red** and **a blue** carpet vs. **A red and blue** carpet. In the first phrase, two carpets are being mentioned; one is red and the other is blue. In the second phrase, one carpet is mentioned whose color is red and blue.
- The position of stress on words in a sentence also create difference in meaning. For example:
  - I asked **John** to buy me a bunch of red roses. (The person, 'John', is emphasized here.)
  - I asked you to buy me a bunch of **red** roses. (The color, red, is emphasized here.)
  - I asked you to buy me a bunch of red **roses**. (The type of flower, roses, is the focus.)
- Jargon or vocabulary that is specific to a profession also create a barrier in comprehension when lay audience listens to these words. For example, in legal jargon one may say, I have applied for the affidavit. A lay person would not understand what affidavit means.

### 29.2.2 Socio-Psychological Barriers

Human beings are complex creatures. They have different personality traits that are shaped by both nature and nurture. Due to these different personalities, they respond to ideas and situations in a

different way. An idea that is clear to an individual may seem confusing to another. Similarly, problems of understanding arise due to socially learnt behaviors.

#### *29.2.2.1 Self-centered Attitudes*

It is our nature that we hear everything in the light of our own interest, needs and desires. We pay attention only to messages which are useful to us. But if this tendency goes beyond a limit, it makes us self-centered and we fail to accept others' point-of-view. We should be open-minded enough to listen to different ideas and appreciate them so that it does not become a communication barrier for us.

#### *29.2.2.2 Group Identity*

As we are social creatures, we cannot exist in isolation. We need to belong to a large social group in order to feel socially secure. When we affiliate ourselves with some linguistic, ethnic or cultural group, we sync our view and thoughts with theirs and often resist ideas that are not welcomed by our group. For example, families that prefer cousin marriages do not accept the idea to marry outside family. Similarly, you might have observed that Pathans converse in Pushto with each other in order to highlight their linguistic identity and bond. In such contexts, new ideas are not easily accepted and their conventional values or practices become a communication barrier.

#### *29.2.2.3 Self Image*

Self-image is our idea about what we are, what we look like and what impression we make on others. It is usually based on some truth and some exaggeration of our good points. If we see ourselves as perfect, it will lead us to narcissism. If we see ourselves as utter failure at life, we will have a negative self-image. We need to listen to others to have a balanced and reality-based self-image so that it does not become a barrier in our self-growth.

#### *29.2.2.4 Defensiveness*

If we feel threatened by a message, we become defensive and respond in such ways that reduce understanding. We may question the motives of others or become sarcastic and judgmental. This defensive attitude becomes a barrier when we are dealing with people on regular basis. In order to avoid this approach, cultivate a positive mindset that nobody seeks to attack your self-respect or ideas. People just express their wants and needs.

**'People are not against you,  
They are for themselves'**

#### *29.2.2.5 Filtering*

Filtering is the process of reducing the details or aspects of a message. Information which has to be sent up the levels of hierarchy (vertical communication) has to be condensed and integrated for the senior managers. The more the levels of hierarchy in an organization, the greater is the filtering and loss of information. There is a negative use of filtering information in organizational politics. If there is a bad news or some incident details that are against the rules, employees withhold that info do not let it reach

the managers. If managers have to take a decision or assess a situation, this becomes a communication barrier as managers don't know all the details.

#### *29.2.2.6 Resistance to Change*

Resistance to new ideas is a serious psychological barrier. It develops due to the fear of opposing established opinions, traditions and social customs. This barrier can be overcome if we understand that change is necessary for growth and evolution.

#### *29.2.2.7 Poor Communication Skills*

If you don't have good speaking, reading, writing and listening skills, it will become a barrier in communication that may, in turn, affect your professional life. Work on improving your skills so that you don't have to face this barrier.

### **29.3 Organizational/Professional Barriers**

In a professional environment, there are two types of communication: horizontal and vertical. Communication among colleagues is called horizontal and communication between bosses and subordinates is called vertical communication. Barriers are created when information is withheld or filtered information is passed on.

Other causes of distortion can be misinterpretation, lack of understanding, neglect of message by some members. Deliberate suppression of information out of self-interest and jealousy also happens due to organizational politics. Some of its forms are as follows:

- A senior may change a good information/suggestion by a subordinate to take credit
- A junior may suppress a bad news or information from reaching the managers to avoid affecting his/her reputation
- Withholding good information from peers perceived as rivals or claiming somebody's good suggestion as your own can also become a barrier

Supplementing the oral message with a written email, memo or letter may minimize the creation of these barriers.

### **29.4 Inter-Cultural Barriers**

Culture is a shared set of values and attributes of a group. It is the sum of the ways of living built up by a group and transmitted from one generation to another. Culture is so much a part of an individual's manner of talking, behaving and thinking, that communication style and competence are influenced by it. Learning to communicate with people of different cultures is vital to success.

#### *29.4.1 Cultural Differences due to Language*

Language is the repository of culture. That is why it has culture-specific proverbs and idiomatic expressions which cannot be translated into other languages. For example, our festivals, rituals and local food do not have equivalent words in English. Like *jalebi*, *karahi* and *Eid* cannot be translated into English. They have to be written as such.

Also, there are words which have different connotations in different cultures. Like owl is considered the symbol of wisdom in Western culture while it connotes foolishness in the East.

To overcome these barriers, one may study the audience's culture before communicating with them.

#### *29.4.2 Cultural Differences due to Values*

Our ideas of what is good and what is evil form the basis of our behavior and actions. The idea of morality is relative and differ from culture to culture. For example, shaking hands with women is not considered good among Eastern cultures, while in the West it is a common practice.

#### *29.4.3 Social Relationships*

Words to show family relations like cousin, uncle and aunt can create confusion across cultures. In Eastern cultures, we have specific names for different relations like phuppo, khala, maamun, khala-zaad bhai, phuppi saas, and saaru. While in Western cultures, they have general categories: uncle, aunt and cousins.

#### *29.4.4 Cultural Differences due to Time*

Different perceptions of time lead to different work and social behavior. Eastern concept of time is circular while western concept of time is linear. Also, there is a difference of focus between past, present and future among different cultures. In Arabic, they have one tense for present and future.

In western culture, they strictly keep personal and professional life apart. However, in the East people are not so strict about it. Personal matters are often discussed at work and work is often brought home in case of meeting deadlines.

#### *29.4.5 Cultural Differences due to Space*

Concept of space also varies across cultures. Generally social and professional distance is less in east and more in west.

#### *29.4.6 Cultural Differences in Non-verbal Behavior*

Indians use much more natural gesture than the British. The Japanese have many formal gestures for social interaction but less free body movements.

#### *29.4.7 Appearance*

Ways of dressing and what is considered formal clothes is another problem area.

#### *29.4.8 Cultural Differences with respect to Paralanguage*

Intonation (rise and fall), stress, pauses, and interruption are interpreted differently across cultures. The Japanese believe, "Those who know do not speak-those who speak do not know". Americans fill the silence by speaking. Interruptions are generally accepted in east but tolerated in west as their convention is turn taking.

### **29.5 Overcoming Barriers**

The communication barriers like filtering, and distortion of info can be overcome if a positive, and healthy environment is created on organizational level. Moreover, use of visual aid may help to clarify the message when you are communicating with students. Feedback of the listeners must be taken into account in order to improve your speaking skills and to overcome communication barriers.