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Block

4

Rhetorical Devices

Block Introduction

UNIT 13 An Introduction to Rhetoric

UNIT 14 Structure and Style

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UNIT 17 Doing Things with Language: Politeness

Course Introduction
Language through Literature (BEGLA 137)
(CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM)
Credit weightage: 6 credits

Language Through Literature which has been adapted from BEGE-101 is aimed at providing a lucid account of how even the most common elements of language are used dexterously and aesthetically in literature/oratory to please, to entertain, to persuade, to gratify and to create aesthetic appeal. As a matter of fact, literature is nothing but a creative and imaginative use of language. This course will enable you to not only understand the various and dynamic ways in which writers/orators use language but also comprehend and appreciate literary/rhetorical pieces better and derive greater pleasure from them. This course will primarily deal with literal versus metaphorical meaning, literary and rhetorical devices and an understanding of the development of discourse.

This course seeks to equip you with some of the important aspects of English usage through the study of representative samples of literary works produced in English. The course is divided into 4 blocks of about 4 units each. Block 1 deals with the extension of meaning, multiple meanings and overlap of meaning in the context of language acquisition process through four units/chapters. Block 2 has four units that deal with confusion of semantic and structural criteria and escaping wrong analogies including studying literary texts. Block 3 introduces and takes you to an understanding of structure words and acquaints you with all its facets and dimensions including auxiliaries and structure words in discourse with a purpose to make you aware of the role of conjunctions and linking adverbials in combining ideas/events together.

Block 4 aims to clarify certain areas of confusion relating to rhetorical devices with an emphasis on structure and style including use of repetition and questions. The course does not include much linguistic theory and deals with the structure of English in a practical way. The aim is to help the undergraduate student acquire a better understanding of how language operates and attain a reasonable level of accuracy in the use of the language, both in speech and in writing.

Follow all the units and enjoy your Course.

Block 4 Introduction

In the first unit of the block, which is entitled *An introduction to Rhetoric*, Our aim is to introduce you to 'rhetoric' and to show with the help of a number of examples show how rhetorical speeches differ from ordinary prose. We shall follow this with a discussion of some of the characteristic features of rhetorical speech/writing.

In unit 14, we shall help you examine the structure and the style of rhetorical speeches and writings so that you can achieve more fluency in the use of language.

In Unit 15, we shall discuss the rhetorical device of repetition and the various ways in which words, syntactic structures and expressions are repeated for rhetorical effects. This unit is designed to familiarize you with a common rhetorical device *repetition* and the effects that this device can produce.

In Unit 16, we will deal with questions in rhetorical discourse. The various types of questions are discussed and you are supposed to read those carefully and try to take note of the different types of questions that are used in the speeches that you happen to read or listen to. Also, we will discuss the use and importance of questions in rhetoric and the ways in which they make oratorical communication effective. We shall also help you take note of the rhetorical devices used by Sarojini Naidu in one of the famous speeches delivered by her.

In Unit 17, you will learn about the use of polite forms of English language and also their use in communicative situations and in the due course you will be able to admire and appreciate more ways to use language effectively.

UNIT 13 AN INTRODUCTION TO RHETORIC

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Examples of Rhetoric
- 13.3 An Appeal to Emotions
- 13.4 Elevation of Style
- 13.5 Organization
- 13.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.7 Key Words
Answers

13.0 OBJECTIVES

Our aim in this unit is to introduce you to 'rhetoric' and present examples of rhetorical speeches to show how they differ from ordinary prose. We shall follow this with a discussion of some of the characteristic features of rhetorical speech/writing.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Rhetoric is derived from the Greek word *rhetor*, which means an orator or a public speaker. The term generally refers to persuasive or impressive speech or writing, that is, the use of language which is designed to persuade or sway or move people. It may sometimes be mere eloquence or exaggeration lacking substance and sincerity. When used with such implications, it is a derogatory term.

The term 'rhetoric' means different things to different people. For example, Wayne Booth in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* discusses the different ways in which a novelist gains control over his reader's imagination. Grierson wrote a book called *Rhetoric and English Composition*, using the two terms as being closely related.

Rhetoric is often used to refer to discourse of a particular kind built up for or against a person, idea or ideology. For instance, we often hear about 'anti- reservation' rhetoric or 'anti Sardar Sarovar Dam' rhetoric or 'WMD' (Weapons for Mass Destruction) rhetoric where facts and figures are selectively used by a person, a group or a party or a nation to persuade or impress or sway people.

13.2 EXAMPLES OF RHETORIC

Here is the opening section of Pandit Nehru's speech on the death of Mahatma Gandhi. It was broadcast from All India Radio on 30th January, 1948, the day Gandhiji was shot dead.

Friends and Comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. I do not know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved

leader, Bapu as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him, and that is a terrible blow not to me only but to millions and millions in this country. And it is a little difficult to soften the blow by any other advice that I or anyone else can give you. The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many many years will illumine this country for many more years, and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it, and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented something more than the immediate present; it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.

(From *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. I, Page 42, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi)

Now what has Pandit Nehru said in this part of the speech? Perhaps we can re-write it like this:

My countrymen, Mahatma Gandhi is dead and there is darkness everywhere. We shall not be able to go to him for advice any more, but in fact he will continue to guide us for many more years, because he represented the eternal truth, showed us the right path, and led us to freedom.

This version, even though it says the same things, does not perform the function that Pandit Nehru's speech does. It fails to move us in the way Nehru's speech does. Nor does it give an idea of Gandhiji's greatness. Now, what do you think brings about this difference? It is the difference in the two styles. Nehru's speech is a piece of rhetoric; the version we have produced is ordinary prose.

Check Your Progress

Example 1

Read the two passages given below and identify which of them is a piece of rhetoric and which one is not. Give reasons in support of your choice.

a) A few years ago, seven swallows were caught near their nests at Bremen in Germany. They were marked with a red dye on some of their white feathers, so that they could easily be seen. Then they were taken by aeroplane to Croydon, near London: this is a distance of 400 miles.

(Munro Fox)

b) We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I will say: it is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us: to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime.

That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim! I can answer in one word: Victory — Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival. Let that be realized; no survival for the British Empire; no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages that mankind will move forward towards its goal. But I take up my task with buoyancy and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. At this time, I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, 'Come, then let us go forward together with our united strength'.

(Winston Churchill, 1940)

Glossary

or'deal: a severe test

'grievous: causing grief or suffering *'monstrous*:

causing horror and disgust *'tyranny*: cruel or unjust use

of power *'lamentable*: regrettable

'catalogue: a list of names, etc. in a special order

'buoyancy: lightness of spirits

'suffered: allowed

Exercise 2

State in about 80 words the main points of the extract from Churchill's speech given above.

Rhetorical Devices

Now that you have converted a piece of rhetoric into ordinary prose, you should be able to see how words are used in rhetorical speech and writing.

Let us go back to the passage from Nehru 's speech on Gandhiji that you read earlier. Notice some of the expressions in the first paragraph that move us and thus contribute to the rhetorical effects:

'the light has gone out of our lives, and there is Darkness everywhere'.

'Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more'.

The whole of the second paragraph is charged with emotion and is thus rhetorical. Now can you point out some of the rhetorical words and expressions in the passage from Churchill's speech?

Did you list expressions like the following?

'an ordeal of the most grievous kind'.

'many, many long months of struggle'.

'...to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark,

'lamentable catalogue of human crime.'

'Victory — Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival. '

'the urge and impulse of the ages'.

'I take up my task with buoyancy and hope' 'Our cause will not be suffered to fail'.

'I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, 'Come, then let us go forward together with our united strength.'

13.3 AN APPEAL TO EMOTIONS

You have studied two examples of rhetoric in the previous section. You must have noticed some features of rhetoric which may be described as follows:

i) You will notice that, along with reasoning, or argument, there is usually an appeal to the emotions. Can you find examples of this in Nehru's speech ?

Let's read Nehru's speech again. You will agree that the following expressions must have had an emotional appeal for the Indian listeners:

'Friends and comrades',
'the light has gone out of our lives',
'Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the Father of the Nation', 'a thousand years later that light will still be seen', 'it represented the living, the eternal truths'.

For example, Mark Antony in Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar* begins his speech as follows:

'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.'

Nehru began his presidential address at the 50th session of the Indian National Congress at Faizpur in December 1930 as follows:

'Comrades, eight and a half months ago I addressed you from this tribune and now, at your bidding, I am here again'.

Such are the tactics of a direct opening. If, however, the orator feels he has to overcome any resistance from his audience or the nature of his case puts him at a disadvantage, he may take recourse to an indirect opening. That is, he may begin with an anecdote, a fable, or a jest. He may also pick a remark of

his adversary and turn it to ridicule. Nehru in his speech at Hyderabad in 1953, however, adopted no such strategy.

He agreed with the contention of his adversaries and said so, and thus made a better impression on his audience than he would have made otherwise. He began:

I am here at your bidding. I need hardly tell you how very greatly I appreciate this honour and the confidence and affection that accompanied it. And yet, I feel a little unhappy that I should have been chosen once again as Congress President. I agree entirely with those friends and comrades of ours who have objected to the high offices of Prime Minister and Congress President being held by one and the same person. I tried hard that this should not occur and pleaded with my comrades in the Congress to make some other choice, but their insistence and the circumstances were against me in this matter. I felt that for me to go on saying "No", in spite of the advice of so many of my valued colleagues, would not be proper.

(Jawaharlal Nehru: *India's Independence and Social Revolution*, Vikas, 1984, p.86)

A lot depends on the ingenuity and personality of the speaker. It is, however, important that the speaker creates a favourable impression about himself and arouses interest.

Narration of Facts

The narration of facts is generally more important in judicial discourses like those delivered in a court of law. It may not, however, be ruled out even in other fields like physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, or commerce. The narrative, however, must always be brief, clear, and convincing.

Proposition or Exposition

The issue under discussion, the problem, or the major concern of the speech must be stated briefly and clearly.

Div

The topic has to be divided into the major concerns of the oration. It is generally agreed that there should not be more than three major concerns or issues for discussion in one discourse.

The greater the number of issues, the greater will be the chances of confusion.

The divisions will help the listener or reader to keep track of the speaker's or writer's progress in the course of this discourse.

Proof or Confirmation

This is the core of the speech. The orator marshals all the facts in his/her favour — evidence of witnesses, indirect evidence, arguments on the basis of probability etc.

Classical rhetoricians advocated that these be arranged in a military formation, strong ones coming first, the weak ones sheltered in the middle, and the most powerful ones defending the rear. Hugh Blair, an eighteenth-century English rhetorician, suggested that arguments should advance towards a climax.

Refutation

Here the orator answers the arguments made or likely to be made against him. He may also refute the arguments of his adversary by exposing the latter's intentions and/or his character, or the verdict of others against him.

Conclusion

In the last part of his discourse the writer or speaker generally does three things:

- a) He sums up by enumerating the main points.
- b) He impressively affirms or emphatically states his position or findings.
- c) In a judicial oration he appeals to the tender feelings of the judge and the audience by arousing pity or indignation in them. He laments his ill luck and goes on to show that he will be brave and patient in his adversity. Cicero (106-43 B.C.), the Roman Consul, orator and writer, pointed out that a good orator would not linger over this, portion of his speech because 'a tear is quickly dried, especially when shed for the misfortunes of other'.

Check Your Progress 1

Now go back and notice how Pandit Nehru organizes his material in his speech on the occasion of Gandhiji's death. Attempt a similar analysis of the organization in the extract from Churchill's speech.

Rhetorical Devices

Let's now try to compare the styles of the two passages given in Exercise 1. — one by Munro Fox and the other by Winston Churchill.

Fox's passage is a matter-of-fact narrative, giving an account of an experiment performed with birds. The three steps in the experiment are described in the sequence in which they occurred. The past tense and the passive voice are used throughout except in the last statement. This is typical of scientific reporting. The passage is a clear exposition of the procedure adopted in the experiment, and no ornamental devices have been adopted. The style is appropriate for the subject of the discourse. Churchill's speech is in a different style altogether. The aim is obviously not to give information but to appeal to the emotions of his countrymen.

Its rhetorical effect is to a large extent due to the following devices:

- i) The use of words and expressions that have the effect of what we called 'elevation of style' in the previous unit.

For example

Ordeal; grievous; monstrous tyranny:
dark lamentable catalogue of human crime; the urge and impulse of the ages;
our cause will not be suffered to fail.

- ii) The repetition of words, and parts of sentences, e.g., We have before us. ...
We have before us....
many, many.....
with all our might and with all the strength.....

you ask, what is our policy?

....you ask. what is our aim?

Victory —

Victory....;

there is no

no survival

Empire; no

Victor....., Victory

for without victory.....

survival.....

for the British

survival for the

- iii) A direct style using pronouns of the first person and the second person
Which establish close relationship between the speaker and the audience, e.g.,

We have We have

You ask what is our policy?

I will say all our might...the strength that God can give us.

You ask, what is

our aim?

I can answer

.....

I take up my

task

I feel sure ... our cause

I feel entitled....

I say.... let us go forward

our united strength

Check Your Progress 2

Compare the styles of the speeches of Pandit Nehru and Winston Churchill given in the Unit.

13.4 ELEVATION OF STYLE

Another feature you will notice in rhetorical speeches, or oratory, and in rhetorical writings is what we may call an 'elevation of style'. Now, what does that mean? It means that the style has a kind of grandeur or dignity about it that raises it above the level of ordinary speech or writing. It was this that enabled you to distinguish between the passages from the speeches

of Nehru and Churchill and the passage from Fox. Go back to Churchill's speech and give examples of this 'elevated' style.

You probably included the following expressions in your list:

'an ordeal of the most grievous kind',

'many long months of struggle and suffering',

'with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us,' 'a monstrous tyranny',

'the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime', 'the urge and impulse of the ages',

'our cause will not be suffered to fail'.

13.5 ORGANIZATION

Another feature you would have noticed in rhetorical speeches is the way they are organized. There is usually an introductory part, and at the end there is a summing up or conclusion. You will notice it even in the extracts we have given in Section 26.2 from two famous speeches.

Take Nehru's speech. It begins with a statement about the occasion of the speech. The sad news is communicated to the nation and the loss is emphasized. There is, however, the consolation that Gandhiji will continue to guide humanity even after his death because he represented eternal truths. The last sentence of the second paragraph sums up the lasting contribution Gandhiji made to human thought, ethics, and moral conduct.

13.6 LET US SUM UP

Rhetoric refers to persuasive or impressive speech or writing. We have given examples of rhetoric in two famous speeches and shown how they differ from ordinary prose. Some of the features we have noticed in these speeches are:

- an appeal to emotions,
- elevation of style, and
- effective organization.

13.7 KEY WORDS

elevation: grandeur

emotions: feelings

organization: systematic arrangement

rhetoric: the art of using words impressively in speech and writing

style: manner of writing or speaking

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

The first passage is not rhetorical, while the second is. In the first passage, Fox merely states the facts:

Seven swallows were caught in Germany, marked with a dye, and taken by air to Croydon near London.

In the second passage Churchill is trying to persuade his British listeners during the Second World War (1939-1945) to fight the dictators in Europe unitedly. In order to do so, he uses language in a special way, just as Pandit Nehru did on a very different occasion.

Exercise 2

UNIT 14 STRUCTURE AND STYLE

Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Structure
 - 14.2.1 Introduction
 - 14.2.2 Narration of Facts
 - 14.2.3 Proposition or Exposition
 - 14.2.4 Division of the Topic
 - 14.2.5 Proof or Confirmation
 - 14.2.6 Refutation
 - 14.2.7 Conclusion
- 14.3 Style
 - Purity; clarity; decorum; ornament
- 14.4 Strategies for Communication
- 14.5 Signals of communication – Some Examples of Exceptions
- 14.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.7 Key Words
 - Answers

14.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall help you examine

- the structure, and
- the style

of rhetorical speeches and writings.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we introduced you to the subject of rhetoric. In this unit, we shall discuss two things: the organization of a rhetorical text in a proper sequence and the language of this kind of discourse. We shall make a passing reference to 'gestures' and 'body language' as well. That is mainly because an orator conveys his message not only through his words but also through gestures and postures. Gestures and postures are thus a part of the style of the speaker. We cannot, however, discuss this subject in any great detail because that would distract us from a discussion of the language which is going to be the focus of our discussion.

14.2 STRUCTURE

Any good speech, or a piece of writing, has to be properly organized; that is, it must have a structure. You know from your past experience that lack of organization leads to confusion, and the speech or writing fails to make an impression on the listeners or the readers. A simple plan can be as follows:

- i) Introduction
- ii) Statement of the case
- iii) Proof, in support of the case
- iv) Conclusion

Now let us look at a slightly expanded version of the above plan.

- i) Introduction
- ii) Narration
- iii) Proposition or exposition
- iv) Division of the topic
- v) Proof or Confirmation
- vi) Refutation
- vii) Conclusion

Let's see what these sections mean.

14.2.1 Introduction

Here, the speaker or writer draws the attention and arouses the interest of his audience with a promise of important things to follow. He addresses the listeners or the readers directly, drawing them into a personal relationship with him:

For example, Mark Antony in Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar* begins his speech as follows:

“Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears”

Nehru began his presidential address at the 50th session of the Indian National Congress at Faizpur in December 1930 as follows:

'Comrades, eight and a half months ago I addressed you from this tribune and now, at your bidding, I am here again'.

Such are the tactics of a direct opening. If, however, the orator feels he/s has to overcome any resistance from his audience or the nature of his case puts him/her at a disadvantage, he/s may take recourse to an indirect opening. That is, he/s may begin with an anecdote, a fable, or a jest. He/s may also pick a remark of his adversary and turn it to ridicule. Nehru in his speech at Hyderabad in 1953, however, adopted no such strategy. He agreed with the contention of his adversaries and said so, and thus made a better impression on his audience than he would have made otherwise. He began:

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14.2.2 Narration of Facts

The narration of facts is generally more important in judicial discourses like those delivered in a court of law. It may not, however, be ruled out even in other fields like physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, or commerce. The narrative, however, must always be brief, clear, and convincing.

14.2.3 Proposition or Exposition

The issue under discussion, the problem, or the major concern of the speech must be stated briefly and clearly.

14.2.4 Division of the Topic

The topic has to be divided into the major concerns of the oration. It is generally agreed that there should not be more than three major concerns or issues for discussion in one discourse. The greater the number of issues, the greater will be the chances of confusion.

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14.2.5 Proof or Confirmation

This is the core of the speech. The orator marshals all the facts in his favour — evidence of witnesses, indirect evidence, arguments on the basis of probability etc.

Classical rhetoricians advocated that these be arranged in a military formation, strong ones coming test, the weak ones sheltered in the middle, and the most powerful ones defending the rear. Hugh Blair, an eighteenth-century English rhetorician, suggested that arguments should advance towards a climax.

14.2.6 Refutation

Here the orator answers the arguments made or likely to be made against him. He may also refute the arguments of his adversary by exposing the latter's intentions and/or his character, or the verdict of others against him.

14.2.7 Conclusion

In the last part of his discourse the writer or speaker generally does three things:

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- c. In a judicial ovation he appeals to the tender feelings of the judge and the

audience by arousing pity or indignation in them. He laments his ill luck and goes on to show that he will be brave and patient in his adversity. Cicero (106-43 B.C.), the Roman Consul, orator and writer, pointed out that a good orator would not linger over this, portion of his speech because 'a tear is quickly dried, especially when shed for the misfortunes of other'.

Check Your Progress 1

Read the section and organise again. Notice how Pandit Nehru organizes his material in his speech on the occasion of Gandhiji's death. Attempt a similar analysis of the organization in the extract from Churchill's speech.

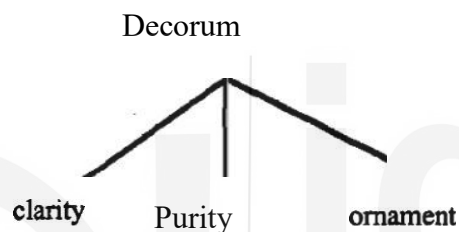
14.3 STYLE

In the previous section, we discussed the structure of a discourse. You will appreciate that although the structure contributes to clear and effective presentation, it is not sufficient in itself. The style in which the matter is presented is also important.

Style may be simply defined the manner in which things are said/written. The choices that a speaker/writer makes as far as elements of language are concerned - words, phrases, clauses, sentence-types, etc. — constitute the person's style or manner of expression. There has always been a debate between those who believe that style and content ('manner and matter' or 'expression and content') are inseparable and others who believe the two to be not only separable, but also separately describable. However, now more and more scholars tend to agree that language performs several functions and that, depending on the particular function (use/effect) one has in mind, one manipulates the elements of language. This manipulation of language by a speaker/orator/writer constitutes his/her style.

There is an ancient Indian saying according to which those who know how to speak have no quarrels, just as those who know how to eat have no illness. Ancient Indian grammarians thought that a knowledge of grammar gave a person mastery over words or *padasiddhi*, which led to *arthavichara* or *enquiry* into meaning, which produced philosophical knowledge or *tatvajnana*, which culminated in *mokshasadhana* or self-realization. A letter (of the alphabet) was called *akshar* –indestructible. Bhartrihari, in his *Vakyapadiya* talks about *akshara lakshmi*, the letter that is the veritable goddess of peace, plenty and prosperity.

In the western tradition, scholars have always put a great deal of emphasis on *decorum* (propriety or appropriateness) as the chief element of style. The other important elements that, directly or indirectly, contribute to decorum, are *purity*, *clarity* and *ornament*. These elements of style may be represented as follows:



Let's discuss them briefly.

Decorum refers to the quality of appropriateness. In daily life we always change our tone of voice, our gestures, not to speak of the words, to fit an occasion and the person we are talking to. So, we do not make jokes at a solemn occasion or make a serious speech in our sitting room at home. The universal rule, said Cicero, 'in oratory as in life, is to consider propriety'.

In the west, there is a long tradition of the study of oral delivery. Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the English philosopher, statesman and essayist, suggested a scientific approach to the study of gestures. The tradition has not died to this day. The American linguist Edward T. Hall studies physical, non-verbal expressions of ideas, which he calls silent language.

Clarity helps intelligibility. Any confusion in expression leads to vagueness and ambiguity and a speaker or writer must avoid this at all costs.

Purity refers to the language. The language of discourse should be correct. It should not have errors of grammar or usage.

Ornament provides decoration. It may sometimes give us an impression of superficiality, but neither in life nor in discourse need it *always* be so. The figures

of speech, that is, the use of words in ways other than their ordinary meanings to make word pictures, or comparisons, discussed already in Units, are in a way counterpart of postures in 'silent language'. Meaning is created and communication made possible, not only because words have well-defined meanings like the traffic- signs, but also because words have varying shades of meanings that they express only in a discourse in combination with other words. When words are used in discourse, they are at times used in a different way and thus arise figures of speech, like metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole, which give force and variety to one's expression.

Such figures of speech constitute ornament or adornment.

Let's now try to compare the styles of the two passages— one by Munro Fox and the other by Winston Churchill.

Fox's passage is a matter-of-fact narrative, giving an account of an experiment performed with birds. The three steps in the experiment are described in the sequence in which they occurred. The past tense and the passive voice are used throughout except in the last statement. This is typical of scientific reporting. The passage is a clear exposition of the procedure adopted in the experiment, and no ornamental devices have been adopted. The style is appropriate for the subject of the discourse. Churchill's speech is in a different style altogether. The aim is obviously not to give information but to appeal to the emotions of his countrymen.

Its rhetorical effect is, to a large extent, due to the following devices:

- i) The use of words and expressions that have the effect of what we called 'elevation of style' in the previous unit. For example,

ordeal; grievous; monstrous tyranny;
dark lamentable catalogue of human crime; the urge
and impulse of the ages;
our cause will not be suffered to fail.

- ii) The repetition of words, and parts of sentences, e.g., We

have before us. ...
We have before us. ...
many, many.....
with all our might and with all the strength. . . .
you ask, what is our policy?
. . .you ask, what is our aim
Victory — Victor, Victory
Victory....; for without victory.....
there is no survival.....
no survival for the British Empire; no survival for the

- iii) A direct style using pronouns of the first person and the second person, which establish close relationship between the speaker and the audience, e.g.,

We have *We* have
You ask what is *our* policy?

I will say all our might...the strength that God can give us.
You ask, what is our aim?
I can answer
I take up my task
I feel sure ... *our* cause
I feel entitled....
I say.... let us go forward
our united strength

Check Your Progress 2

Compare the styles of the speeches of Pandit Nehru and Winston Churchill.

14.4 STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATION

In the above example, you have seen how tentative and indirect the man was while making a request. This was especially so because he was addressing a total stranger. However, one can be spontaneous without being impolite when we meet our close friends and acquaintances. Consider the following examples:

- a. Read the following conversation between two acquaintances, who are meeting after a long time. Notice how the language is used to express the informal relationship between the two men:

"Why, Newman—I'll be blowed! Where in the world—I declare—who would have thought? You know you have changed."

"You haven't," said Newman.
"Not for the better, no doubt. When did you get here?"
"Three days ago."

"Why didn't you let me know?" "I had no idea you were here."

"I have been here these six years."

"It must be eight or nine since we met."

"Something of that sort when we were very young."

"It was in St. Louis, during the war. You were in the army." "Oh no, not I. But you were."

"I believe I was."

"You came out all right?"

"I came out with my legs and arms—and with satisfaction. All that seems very far away."

"And how long have you been in Europe?"

"Seventeen days."

"First time?"

"Yes, very much so."

(Henry James: *The American*)

Notice the use of markers, like „I'll be blown“, „I declare“, „I believe I was“, „very much so“, etc. We use such phrases to add more colour, emphasis and variety to the language. Try removing these expressions and reconstruct the dialogue without them. You will realize, we are sure, that the conversation sounds very dull and mechanical.

Thus, we need discourse markers to make our communication appear more stylish and lively.

Check Your Progress 3

Can you make a list of a few discourse markers? Use them in a short dialogue with your friend.

- a. Read the following piece of short exchange between a boy and a girl:

“Have to go,” she jumped up. “Shall we walk back?” “Yeah. Separately, though right?” I was catching on fast.

“Yes, sorry please,” she said in a mock-baby tone that girls lapse into at the slightest provocation.

(Chetan Bhagat: *Five Point Someone. What Not to do at IIT*)

Did you notice the use of the expression ‘*sorry please*’ here? Of course, it is an example of very Indian English. A native speaker of English would never combine the two: *sorry* and *please*. However, Indian variety of English is fast catching up, and is quite intelligible to the rest of the world.

In this section, you should focus on some of the strategies of communication where you can be ***informal without sounding rude***. You have also seen how ***discourse markers*** can add to the flavour of language. So, remember that there are **always** different degrees of politeness.

14.5 SIGNALS OF COMMUNICATION—SOME EXAMPLES OF EXCEPTIONS

So far, you have been reading about grammatical, accurate language, where devices, such as discourse markers, signals of politeness and question tags help in adding colour to your speech. When you add the right amount of accuracy and appropriateness to it, then you can conclude that your communication is polite and intelligent enough. However, there are examples, where in spite of all these features conversation remains strange and unintelligible. Read the following dialogue and notice how peculiar it sounds:

a. ESTRAGON: Could I be of any help?

POZZO: If you asked me perhaps. ESTRAGON: What?

POZZO: If you asked me to sit down. ESTRAGON: Would that be a help?

POZZO: I fancy so.

ESTRAGON: Here we go. Be seated sir, I beg of you.

POZZO: No, no, I wouldn't think of it! *{Pause. Aside.}* Ask me again.

ESTRAGON: Come, come, take a seat, I beseech you, you'll get

pneumonia. (Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot*)

The conversation as you might have noticed does not make much sense. There is no logical sequence of thought-process here. Such dialogue is called *non-sequitor*, or something which does not follow. One of the major rules of communication, therefore, which you must follow is that your speech should be logically linked and coherent.

Activity 2

Can you imagine and rewrite the entire situation given above in a more logical order? Do not hesitate to use your own words. Try to be as creative as possible.

a. Read the dialogue between an army doctor and an army captain. Notice how in spite of all the conventions of communication, the conversation appears so unconventional. The entire idea, of course, is to satirize the system in army:

'Of course, they're crazy, ' Doc Daneeka replied. "I just told you they're crazy, didn't I? And you can't let crazy people decide whether you're crazy or not, can you? '

Yossarian looked at him soberly and tried another approach. 'Is Orr Crazy"?"

"He sure is", Doc Daneeka said.

'Can you ground him? '

'I sure can. But first he has to ask me to. That's part of the rule. '

'Then why doesn't he ask you to? '

'Because he's crazy,' Doc Daneeka said, 'He has to be crazy to keep flying combat missions after all the close calls he's had. Sure, I can ground Orr. But first he has to ask me to. '

"That's all he has to do to be grounded?"

'That's all. Let him ask me.'

'And then you can ground him?' Yossarian asked him.

'No. Then I can't ground him.'

'You mean there's a catch? '

'Sure, there's a catch,' Doc Daneeka replied. 'Catch-22'. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn't really crazy.'

Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch- 22 and let out a respectful whistle.

'That's some catch, that Catch-22,' he observed.

'It's the best there is,' Doc Daneeka agreed.

(Joseph Heller: *Catch-22*)

What are the conventional elements of communication in this dialogue? Is the conversation polite enough?

14.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed two aspects of rhetorical speeches and writings — structure and style.

14.7 KEY WORDS

'akshara: literally, that which does not decrease or get destroyed, the letter of the alphabet syllable.

'Akshar'lakshmi: literally, the wealth of letters; the letter is the veritable goddess of peace, plenty and prosperity

'artha'vichara: consideration/speculation about meaning

confir'mation: making firmer or stronger

de'corum: right and proper behaviour

'discourse (noun): a speech, a lecture or a treatise, on a subject

,expo'sition: explaining or making clear

'moksha'sadbana: self-realization; attainment of salvation

nar'ratiion: telling of a story; giving an orderly account of events

'ornament: that which is added for decoration

'pada'siddhi: mastery over words

,propo'sition: a statement or an assertion

refu'tation: proving somebody's statements or opinions to be wrong or mistaken

'structure: the way in which something is put together and organized

style: manner of writing or speaking

'tatva' jnana: literally, knowledge of the matter, philosophical

knowledge, fundamental understanding.

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

Churchill begins by introducing the subject of his speech — the future course of the war, which is going to be a severe test for his countrymen, and the hardship and suffering it is going to cause. He then divides his topic into two sections — (i) the policy and (ii) the aim, and presents his arguments in support of the stated objectives. He concludes by expressing his confidence and hope and making an appeal to his countrymen to fight the war against the enemy with their united strength.

Check Your Progress 2

Pandit Nehru addresses the nation on an occasion of national bereavement. His aim was to express the nation's sorrow but also to point out that Gandhiji would continue to guide us in the years to come because he represented the eternal truths. The mood in the beginning is that of sadness, but in the second paragraph it turns to hope because the light that was Gandhiji will continue to illumine this country and the rest of the world.

Churchill addresses the British people on an occasion of national importance, but of a different type altogether. There was the threat of the invasion of Britain by the Germans. So, he asks his people to rise in arms against the enemy and gain victory over him. The mood in the beginning is that of anxiety but soon changes to one of determination and confidence.

The style of each of these speeches is appropriate to the occasion on which it was made.

UNIT 15 USE OF REPETITION

Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Repetition as a Rhetorical Device
- 15.3 Various Patterns of Repetition
- 15.4 Abraham Lincoln: *The Gettysberg Address*
- 15.5 Definition of Requests, Offers and Invitations
 - 15.5.1 Requests
 - 15.5.2 Offers
 - 15.5.3 Invitations
- 15.6 Alternative Forms for Requests, Offers and Invitations
 - 15.6.1 Variant Forms with Modals
 - 15.6.2 Tentative Equivalents of shall, may, can, will
- 15.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.8 Key Words
- Answers

15.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is designed to familiarize you with a common rhetorical device — *repetition* - and the effects that this device can produce.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall discuss the rhetorical device of repetition and the various ways in which words, syntactic structures and expressions are repeated for rhetorical effects.

15.2 REPETITION AS A RHETORICAL DEVICE

You may have noticed that even in ordinary everyday communication we say certain things again and again when we wish to lay emphasis on them. For instance, a mother may say to her child:

Kitty, you must get out of bed early. You must go to the toilet, wash your face, and brush your teeth. You must come to the breakfast table on time. And, you must be ready for your school bus at 8.

Notice the repetition of the grammatical structure 'You must. . . .' used by the mother to emphasize certain things the daughter has to do. An important part of one's communication is through gestures and the quality, the loudness, and the pitch of one's voice, but the language patterns in the example given above also convey the absolute necessity of doing certain things in time.

Apart from emphasis, we also repeat certain words, expressions or even sentences to produce a pleasing effect. For instance, let us read these lines from a nursery rhyme:

'Polly, 'put the, 'kettle 'on.
'Polly, 'put the 'kettle 'on,
'Polly, 'put the 'kettle 'on.
We'll 'all has 'tea.

One of the functions of repetition here is the repetition of the rhythmic pattern, which is a common feature in nursery rhymes.

In the case of a long speech, the listener usually finds it difficult to understand the main points if the speaker does not repeat the things which he considers more important than the rest. In his speech on Mahatma Gandhi's death, Pandit Nehru repeated the word 'light' seven times. 'Light' there almost stands for Gandhi: 'The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere.' Darkness is the result of Gandhi's death because the light has gone out. This use of metaphor is part of the rhetorical devices in Nehru's speech.

Now read the following passage from the speech made in the British Parliament by Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1731-1816), British dramatist and parliamentarian, on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, the first British Governor-General of India.

In looking round for an object fit to beheld out to an oppressed people, and to the world as example of national justice, we are forced to fix our eyes on Mr. Hastings. It is he, my Lords, who has degraded our fame, and blasted our fortunes in the East. It is he who has tyrannised with relentless severity over the, devoted natives of those regions. It is he who must atone, as a victim, for the multiplied calamities he has produced.

Check Your Progress I

- 1 Which expression has been repeated a number of times by Sheridan?

- 2 What does Sheridan achieve by this repetition?

15.3 VARIOUS PATTERNS OF REPETITION

As you read oratorical writings, you discover that orators use repetition in a variety of ways. So do literary artists. Let us look at some of the examples given below:

Example 1

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time.
(Shakespeare: *Macbeth*)

Example 2

It is the glory of the constitution under which we live, that no man can be punished without guilt, and this guilt must be publicly demonstrated by a series of clear, legal,

Rhetorical Devices

manifest evidence, so that nothing dark, nothing oblique, nothing authoritative, nothing insidious, shall work to the detriment of the subject.

(from R.B. Sheridan: 'Summing up the Evidence on the Second Charge Against Warren Hastings').

In the two examples above, you will notice that the words 'tomorrow' and 'and' in Example 1 and the word 'nothing' in Example 2 have been repeated according to a pattern, the word being repeated occurring alternately with some other word.

Example 3

And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no, life!
Never, never, never, never, never.
(Shakespeare: *King Lear*)

Example 4

My love is like a red rose.

(Burns)

Example 5

If I were an American, as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I never would lay down my never—never—never!

(William Pitt, Earl of Chatham (1708-1778) 'On a Motion for an Address to the Throne', Nov. 18, 1777)

In the three examples given above, certain words — 'never' and 'red' — have been repeated consecutively.

- iii) You saw above that in a nursery rhyme whole lines could be repeated. Such repetitions are in fact quite common in serious poetry as well, especially religious poetry. T.S. Eliot's 'Ash Wednesday' begins thus:

Example 6

Because I do not hope to turn again
Because I do not hope
Because I do not hope to turn
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
I no longer strive to strive towards such things
Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?

The repetition of almost a whole line three times makes it very effective and emphasizes the poet's resolve not to turn Amin towards worldly possessions and power.

- iv) At times you find that an author repeats the whole sentence but in an inverse order. For instance,

I love my country. My country I love.

- v) One may begin and end a sentence with the same word. In the sentence, 'For the light that shone...was no ordinary light' (see section 36.2). Nehru has used the word 'light' almost at the beginning and the end of the sentence.
- vi) At times one may begin a sentence with a word with which a previous sentence ends.

For instance;

Ramcharitmanas I greatly love. Love I also the novels of Lawrence.

Here by the repetition of words in the way it has been done, the differences between the two literary works are also emphasized.

- vii) There is an interesting type of repetition that generally goes unnoticed in discourse and perhaps for that reason has greater effect. In Example 2 above, notice the use of the word 'guilt' twice. It has been repeated after only two words. At times a clause may separate such words instead of just a few words. In this particular example, the speaker wishes to emphasize the point that he would recommend punishment for Hastings only if he was found guilty on the basis of clear evidence.

Example 7

In Mahesh Dattani's 'Tara', Dan says at the end of the play:

Someday, after I die, a stranger will find
this recording and play it. the voice is all
that will remain. No writing.
No masterpiece.
Only a voice — that once belonged to an object.
An object like other objects in a cosmos. . .

Note, how effectively the words "voice" and "objects" are recreated.

15.4 ABRAHAM LINCOLN: 'THE GETTYSBERG ADDRESS'

In U.S.A., there was a Civil War during the presidency of Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865). One of the battles was fought at Gettysberg, where more than 40,000 people were killed. Some of them were buried there and Lincoln came to speak.

(Nov. 19, 1863) at the dedication of the national cemetery to the memory of the martyrs, the Gettysberg Address, as it is called, is given below.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether the nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate we cannot consecrate we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have

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consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom - and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

(From *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* in 9 volumes, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1955, Vol. VII, p, 23)

Check Your Progress 2

1 Point out instances of repetition in the address given above and comment briefly on them.

Lined area for writing answers to question 1.

2 Comment in not more than 400 words on the structure and style of the address.

Lined area for writing answers to question 2.

15.5 DEFINITION OF REQUESTS, OFFERS AND INVITATIONS

It may be in order to consider briefly what we mean by requests, offers and invitations.

15.5.1 Requests

Generally speaking, a request means one of two things:

- i) to ask people to do something (for example to wait, to stop making a noise, to help, to run an errand for you, to pay attention, to repeat)
 - (1) Can you wait for a few minutes, please?
 - (2) Do you think you could stop making that noise?
 - (3) I wonder if you could help her.
 - (4) Remember to write, won't you?
 - (5) Put your books back on the shelf.
 - (6) I want you to be a little more attentive.
 - (7) Give me a hand with this heavy typewriter.
 - (8) Sorry, can you say it again? (request for repetition)
 - (9) If you will just wait a moment.
 - (10) Would you mind being quiet?

- (ii) to ask for something (objects, advice, instructions, information, permission)
 - (11) Can I have a glass of water?
 - (12) 'Could I have the book back?
 - (13) May I have your attention, please?
 - (14) What shall I do? (request for advice)
 - (15) Where should I hang the picture? (request for instructions)
 - (16) Shall I send you a cheque? (request for instructions)
 - (17) May I ask how much it cost you? (request for information)
 - (18) Excuse me. Could you tell me the way to the station? (request for information)
 - (19) Could I use your telephone? (request for permission)
 - (20) Do you mind if I leave my books in your room? (request for permission)
 - (21) Would you mind if I left my books in your room? (request for permission)
 - (22) Is it all right if I open the window? (request for permission)
 - (23) Might I borrow your bicycle? (request for permission)

15.5.2 Offers

An 'offer' means:

i) to offer something to someone or to offer to do something

24. Would you like some tea?
25. I've finished the paper. Do you want to read it?
26. Would you like to work for us?
27. I've got lots of envelopes, if you're short.
28. Would you like to telephone now?
29. I could write to him tomorrow.
30. Can I help you?
cf. Can you help me? (request)
31. May I help you?
32. Shall I help you?
33. I can meet him in the afternoon if you like.
34. I'll buy you 2 more tickets.
35. Leave the seating arrangement to me.
36. Give me that heavy case.
37. Shall I carry it for you?
38. Can I get you a cup of coffee†
39. Would you like me to help you?

(ii) to offer to let someone do something:

40. You can drive if you like.
41. You could meet them if you wanted to.
42. Stay away if you like.
43. You needn't do it if you are not interested.

15.5.3 Invitations

An invitation is to ask people

(i) to take part in something (to give a talk, to attend a meeting, to pay a visit).
(An invitation then is a type of request.)

44. If you are free on the 15th, shall we go to Jaipur?
45. Would you like a trip to Jaipur on the 15th?
46. How about going to Jaipur on the 15th?
47. We're thinking of visiting Jaipur on the 15th.
48. Have you been to Jaipur? If you haven't, you could come with us on the 15th.
49. How about coming to the play tonight?
50. Come and see us next time you're in Delhi.
51. Do come in!
52. How would you like to spend the weekend with us?

(ii) to come to a party, meal etc., or to have something to eat and drink.

53. We were wondering if you'd like to come to the reception.
54. Why don't you come and eat with us?
55. Would you like some tea and eats?
56. Have a samosa.
57. Try some of this pudding.
58. Will you have another cup of tea?
59. Won't you have another cup of tea?
60. Do have another mango!

Although the examples of requests, offers and invitations in 15.5.1, 15.5.2 and 15.5.3, each cited in isolation, are given under separate headings, there may be many occasions of use when the function has to be inferred from the context. Consider the following example:

61. Would you like a cup of coffee?

Is 61 an invitation or an offer? If you return to 24, which is given under the heading 'offer', you may see that 61 is an offer. The point to note is that, depending on the context in which it is said, it can be either an invitation or an offer.

62. You might type this for me, please.

Is 62 a command or a request? You will be able to answer the question if you are given the necessary information about the context in which it is said. A command or an order implies that the person giving the command has a right to be obeyed because he is in a position of authority. If the speaker of 62 has such a right, then 62 is a command; if he has no such right, then it is a request. It is useful to remind yourself that a function is not always expressed in a unique form.

The definitions of requests, offers and invitations given above are only intended to help you understand these concepts. For example, the illustrative sentences would suggest that in an offer there is a strong accent on 'giving' while in an invitation it is on 'participating'. Whether a particular occurrence of language is doing the work of offering or inviting has to be determined from the context if the language used does not reflect the function directly.

The examples in 15.5.1, 15.5.2 and 15.5.3 also point to the fact that requests, offers and invitations can be made in a number of alternative forms. In the section that follows we shall discuss the ways in which these forms are produced.

15.6 ALTERNATIVE FORMS FOR REQUESTS, OFFERS AND INVITATIONS

In doing such things with language as making a request, an offer and an invitation, speakers use a number of different forms. For example, requests can be made with 'shall', 'may', 'can', 'will' or with 'should', 'might', 'could' and 'would'. They can be made without modals too. They can also vary from statements to imperatives to interrogatives.

15.6.1 Variant Forms with Modals

Let us look at the variation in form with modals. We begin with 'shall'. When the speaker uses 'shall' with he in questions, and the result may be polite *offers*, *requests for advice*, *suggestions*, he is motivated to consult his hearer; he lets the hearer as it were impose the obligation on him (instead of the speaker imposing the obligation on his hearer):

'My God! Spencer, what shall we do?' (request for advice) Shall we go out for a walk?' (suggestion)

Let's go, shall we? (suggestion)

Shall I give you a hand with your shopping? (offer)

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'Shall' in this sense cannot be replaced by 'will'. It is also interesting to note that with second and third person, it is the speaker who imposes the obligation and the result is usually 'orders'.

Nobody shall leave the room. (order)
You shall stay where you are. (order)

In other words, with *I/We* questions used as offers, suggestions and requests for advice, only *shall* is possible. Furthermore, 'shall' in this sense of obligation is not to be confused with 'shall' for the prediction of future:

A Shall we ever find the treasure?

or with 'shall' for a self-imposed obligation (threat or promise): B I/We shall

punish the guilty.
Don't worry. I shall help.

'Shall' in A and B can be replaced by 'will'.

Requests and offers can be made with *may*. *May* in one of its senses means permission. In using the form with 'may', the speaker is asking as it were for his hearer's permission.

May I borrow your screwdriver? (request)

May I hold it for you? (offer)

In offers of help 'can' and 'may' are interchangeable: Can I hold it for you? (offer)

'May' can be replaced by 'can' in requests if the 'request' asks for the hearer's permission because 'can' in one of its senses also means 'permission'.

Can I borrow your screwdriver? (request)

'May' however cannot replace 'can' in requests if the request with 'can' is directed at the ability of the hearer (*can* as ability vs *can* as permission):

Can you help me? (request)

*May you help me?

Requests and offers can also be made with 'can'.

- A Can I spend the night in your house? (request)
- B Can I run down to the shop for you? (offer)
- C Can you lend me some money? (request)
- D I can write the letter next week if you like. (offer)

In A and B the request and the offer imply that the speaker is asking for the hearer's permission. As already noted, 'can' in this sense is interchangeable with 'may'. In C, the request is an appeal to the hearer's 'ability', 'may' is not possible for 'can' in this sense. In D, the speaker making the offer takes recourse to 'can' meaning 'opportunity' but combines it with an appeal to the hearer's pleasure ('if you like').

Requests and invitations in the question form with 'will' make use of the sense of 'willingness' in 'will', they are as it were enquiries about the hearer's willingness:

Will you stick up the notice, please? (request)

Will you have another chance to shoot at the target? (invitation) Won't you have another chance to shoot at the target? (invitation) Remember to post the letter, won't you? (request)

Even orders can be dressed up with 'will' in this sense:

Will you mind your business! (angry order)
Hurry up, will you. (order)

An 'offer' does not lend itself to such an enquiry about the hearer's willingness, and so offers are not made with 'will' in the question form: *Will* can be used in the statement form

I'll go to the post office, if you like.

15.6.2 Tentative Equivalents of *shall, may, can, will*

Let us now consider 'should', 'might', 'could', 'would', which are tentative equivalents of 'shall', 'may', 'can', 'will', in such functions as requests, offers and invitations.

The tentative 'should' is not part of the structures for requests, offers and invitations. Therefore

A Shall I lock up the bicycles? (offer)
has no tentative counterpart in B:
B *Should I lock up the bicycles?

The tentative 'should' can however be used with 'like' to express a 'desire' politely:
I should like them to help me.

It is commonly used when we are giving a slightly uncertain opinion or advice that is when we are not completely confident of what we are saying:

I should say/think it's unnecessary.
Why should anyone steal my umbrella?
I should say nothing.

If 'should' is not part of the structures for requests, offers and invitations, 'might' is infrequently used in requests and offers because it is very formal:

Might I borrow your screwdriver? (request) Might I hold it for you? (offer)
You might file them away, please. (request)

'Could' is used as a tentative equivalent of 'can' in requests both in questions and statements, but in offers only in statements, to put them across more politely:

Could I spend the night in your house? Could you type this for me?
I could write the letter next week. You could type this for me.
Do you think you could stop throwing stones at the bird?

'Would' is a tentative alternative, usually politer, to 'will' in requests, offers and invitations made in the question form:

Would you like a cup of tea?
Would you stick up the notice, please?
Would you have another chance to shoot at the target? Would you like me to buy you the tickets?
Hurry up, would you.
Remember to post the letter, would you/wouldn't you?

It is however not a politer alternative in statements of willingness, since it often has conditional overtones:

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I will help you.

I would help you (if you asked for it).

I don't suppose you could look after my house for a week, could you? If you would wait for a minute.

I could telephone you tomorrow. I would telephone you tomorrow.

KEY WORDS

al'ternative: that may be used instead of another

e'quivalent (n.): that which has the same meaning

invi'tation: the act of asking somebody to take part in something or to come to a party, a meal, etc.

'modals: the verb forms can, could, may, might, shall, should, will would, must ought to use to , need, and dare.

'offer (n.): the act of holding out something to a person for acceptance or refusal; an expression of willingness to do something or to let someone else do something.

re'quest: a polite demand; asking people to do something; asking for something

'tentative: hesitant

'variant: different

15.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed and illustrated the use of repetition as a device in rhetoric.

15.8 KEY WORDS

'Civil 'War: a war between two sides in the same country, e.g. in the U.S. 1861-65

'nursery rhyme: a poem or song for young children

'pattern: way in which something is arranged

,repe'tition: saying again

syn'tactic: related to the patterns of sentence building

Check Your Progress 1

1. It is he.....
2. Sheridan is able to focus the attention of the audience on Warren Hastings, who according to him was responsible for various oppressive acts against the Indian people and should therefore be punished for the suffering he had caused.

Check Your Progress 2

- i. The repetition of 'we cannot... ..!' emphasizes the fact that the American people could not do anything to make the ground sacred, as it had already become a sacred place as a result of the sacrifice of the brave soldiers who died there. *Cannot* is usually said as one word with the stress on the first syllable. Lincoln says it as two separate words with the stress on *not* to point out that it would be presumptuous on his part to declare the ground a sacred place.
- ii. The repetition of the word 'here' six times emphasizes the importance of the ground on which they had met to honour the dead soldiers.
- iii. 'Of the people, by the people, for the people.' The repetition in the last sentence of the address emphasizes the important fact that their democratic set-up placed all the power in the hands of the people and it would be used *for* the welfare of the people.

Lincoln begins by referring to the establishment of the American republic 87 years ago and the two principles of liberty and equality on which it was based. This introduction serves as the basis for whatever is said later. The Civil War was fought to save the American nation from division on the issue of the abolition of slavery and a number of soldiers gave their lives in the battle at Gettysberg. The aim of the meeting at Gettysberg was to honour these martyrs and to declare the place where they were buried a national memorial. But Lincoln goes on to point out that the place had already become sacred as a result of the sacrifice of these martyrs and there was nothing people could do to add to their glory. All they could do was to dedicate themselves to the task for which the soldiers had given their lives. They should therefore resolve to ensure that democracy based on the will of the people and devoted to the service of the people would survive in the world. This resolution is an effective conclusion to this powerful speech, which is so short but has moved millions of people all over the world.

Style

A number of devices in this speech help to raise the style to the level of rhetoric and make the speech powerful and effective.

Here are some:

- i. The use of expressions like
'*four score and seven years ago*' for '87 years ago'
'Our fathers *brought forth* a new nation', *conceived* in liberty... a new *birth*...' (metaphor)
'dedicate, consecrate, hallow'.

Rhetorical Devices

ii. Repetition

e.g.,

'conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition.....

'any nation so conceived and dedicated....'

'We have come to dedicate.....we cannot dedicate — we can not consecrate — we cannot hallow it..... The brave men.....have consecrated it..

'It is for us..... to be dedicated...It is for us to

be. dedicated'

'government of the people, by the people, for the people'.

iii. Contrast

e.g.,

'The world will little note, nor long remember what we *say* here, but

It all never forget what they *did* here'.

It is surprising how, even with the use of simple language the speaker is able to make such a powerful impact on the listeners and the readers.



UNIT 16 USE OF QUESTIONS

Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Questions as a Rhetorical Device
- 16.3 Various Types of Questions
- 16.4 Sarojini Naidu: 'The Battle of Freedom is Over'
- 16.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.6 Key Words
Answers

16.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall discuss the use and importance of questions in rhetoric and the ways in which they make oratorical communication effective. We shall also help you take note of the rhetorical devices used by Sarojini Naidu in a famous speech she made.

16.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with questions in rhetorical discourse.

Read it carefully and try to take note of the different types of questions that are used in the speeches that you happen to read or listen to.

There is a passage for study at the end of this unit. The exercise on the passage is based on a number of devices we have discussed in previous units. It is meant to be a sort of revision exercise.

16.2 QUESTIONS AS A RHETORICAL DEVICE

An interrogative sentence can have a number of different functions and it may not always ask for information. For example, if you say 'Didn't I tell you so?', you may in fact be making a statement: 'I told you so'. Similarly, if someone says: 'May I congratulate you on your success in the B.A. examination?', you will not say, 'You may' in reply. You would rather say, 'Thank you', because the speaker in this case is not asking for permission. He is in fact making a statement.

Now take another example. If your mother says to you, 'Why don't you listen to your father?', she is not asking for a reason. What she actually wants to say is that you should pay attention to your father's advice because it is in your own interest.

Art is often considered a reflection of life. So the way we speak in our daily life is sure to be reflected in art. Do you recall W.H. Davies's poem, *Leisure*? The opening lines,

What is this life if full of care
We have no time to stand and stare

express, as it were the theme of the poem; the absence of leisure in modern life. The poet makes it more powerful by asking a question at the outset, which is more

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effective than a statement like, 'There is very little leisure in modern life and we have no time to stand and stare at the world around us.' In previous units, we quoted the opening lines of Eliot's poem, *Ash Wednesday*, a kind of religious and confessional poem. The sixth line is a question:

Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?

Here the poet compares himself to an aged eagle. An eagle stretches its wings in order to fly when it wishes to hunt for its prey. It stretches its wings in order to collect material for the nest in which it can lay its eggs. The whole image of the aged eagle not wishing to stretch its wings, metaphorically speaking, refers to the poet himself. It may also stand for all those who wish to turn away from the strife of life towards God. In this sense the aged eagle is a symbol.

Here we are interested in another feature in this line: its interrogative form. The poet could have conveyed his meaning even with a plain statement like 'The aged eagle need not stretch its wings'. The powerful effect that Eliot's line would have been lost in that case.

When you read oratorical writings, you often find that the speaker asks questions rather freely. Let's read the passage below from Pitt the Elder's speech on the American Revolution, in the British Parliament.

What makes ambition virtue? The sense of honour. But is the sense of honour consistent with a spirit of plunder, or, the practice of murder? Can it flow from mercenary motives, or can it prompt to cruel deeds? Besides these murderers and plunderers, let me ask our ministers, 'What other allies have they acquired? What other powers have they associated to their cause? Have they entered into alliance with the king of the gypsies?' Nothing, my Lords, is too low or too ludicrous to be consistent with their counsels.

(William Pitt, Earl of Chatham (1708-1778), *On a Motion for an Address to the Throne*. Nov. 18, 1777)

You will notice the large number of questions asked by the speaker in a short section of his speech, something that one does not ordinarily find in everyday discourse. The speaker here levels a series of allegations against his countrymen — to be more precise, against the government of the day that they allowed the British armed forces to get corrupted in America by robbing, plundering and murdering the people there. These charges gain much more force when put in the interrogative form.

A classic example of rhetorical questions is the impassioned speech of Shylock, the Jew merchant in *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare. Notice how one question follows fast on the heel of another till an overwhelming case is built by Shylock.

"Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions, fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter, as a Christian is? If you pick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die...? "

Check Your Progress 1

Give a short list of the various charges that Pitt brings against the British troops in America.

16.3 VARIOUS TYPES OF QUESTIONS

1 Let us start with the questions in Churchill's speech in the British Parliament. There are two questions in only one paragraph. They are:

- i) 'You ask, what is our policy? I will say.....'
- ii) 'You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory

In both cases you find that Churchill asks a question and then goes on to answer it.

2 There can be another situation in which the orator asks a question but does not expect a reply. The reply, however, often audibly, is given by the audience. Such questions are called **rhetorical questions**. Read the passage below:

You will be surprised to hear that the floods have caused havoc in Mokama and Barahiya. The dam and the canal promised long ago have not been built to this day. The result is annual floods. Animals die, men and women take shelter on the roads and are there often bitten by snakes. Relief is slow to reach them. How long, sirs, can people live without food? A month has now passed since the emergency arose, and doctors are nowhere around. The people of Mokama and Barahiya are left to the mercy of nature.

There is just one question in the passage above. The speaker is trying to give a list of the problems of the people of Mokama and Barahiya, which possibly are flood-prone areas. He complains that even after a month the government hasn't started any relief work in the area. Even food, without which people cannot live long, has not been sent. This matter he presents in the form of a question. It is obvious that this fact stands out as the most important grievance. He does not supply an answer in this case but certainly expects his listeners to participate in the discourse by murmuring 'not long' or 'what a shame!' or some such utterance. You will agree that such a device gives the speech the power that it will not have if only a list of grievances is read out in the assembly.

3 Let us go back to Pitt's speech that you read before. If you read it carefully, you find that the first question, 'What makes ambition virtue?' is answered by the speaker himself and is an example of the first type of question we have discussed above.

After that follow four questions asked one after another. These are the charges that Chatham brings against the British troops in America. He asks if acts such as these can be considered honourable and virtuous. By putting the list of charges in the form of a succession of questions the speaker brings them into sharper focus than he could have done in any other way. This is a third way of asking questions in a speech.

- 4 There is a fourth variety, which is rather uncommon. Questions can be asked in a spirit of amazement or bewilderment. Here is the opening of Cicero's speech against Catilina in the Roman Senate.

In the name of heaven, Catilina, how long do you propose to exploit our patience? Do you really suppose that your lunatic activities are going to escape our retaliation for evermore? Are there no limits to this audacious, uncontrollable swaggering?

(From *Selected Political Speeches of Cicero* translated by Michael Grant, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986, p. 76.)

The questions here are a very powerful device but they have to be used with discretion.

16.4 SAROJINI NAIDU: 'THE BATTLE OF FREEDOM IS OVER'

Let us now read this speech by Sarojini Naidu (1879-1945), broadcasted on All India Radio on 15 August, 1947, i.e. on the occasion of our attainment of independence. She was a leading poet and freedom fighter.

- 1 Oh, world of free nations, on this day of our freedom, we greet you. Oh, world of nations not yet free, on the day of our freedom we pray for your freedom in the future.
- 2 Ours has been an epic struggle, covering many years and costing many lives. It has been a struggle, a dramatic struggle. It has been a struggle of heroes chiefly anonymous in their millions. It has been a struggle of women transformed into strength and power like the Kali, the goddess of strength they worship. It has been a struggle of youth suddenly transfigured into power itself, sacrifice and ideals. It has been a struggle of young men and old men, of rich and poor, the literate, the illiterate, the stricken, the outcast, the leper and the saint. It has been the only revolution in the whole history of the world that has been without bloodshed; and for this we thank one man, one tiny person, who on this day that he has brought to us, is somewhere remote in a little far-off corner of India, wiping the tears of those who feel themselves exiled from our midst. Mahatma Gandhi, our prophet of non-violence, our general of victory, he taught us a new way of deliverance from evil. He had no device of his banner except non-violence. He had no weapons for his legions except self-sacrifice and suffering. We marched to the tune of faith and hope and charity that forgives all sins of trespassers that ruined our country through the ages. We have to thank him, our leader, whose life is immutable, immortal, in the love of his countrymen, whose days are imperishable, who has created a new civilization for the world to be based, in the years to come, on his gospel of love, truth and non-violence.
- 3 But we wish to offer today our thanks to the men and women of all races who have striven for India's freedom, the scholars of Europe, who restored to us our pride and ancient culture, to the antiquarian and the archaeologist who

has discovered for us our own ruined cities, to the missionaries of the countries who chose the life of poverty in far-off villages and served the poor and the needy and the desolate. To all we owe thanks.

- 4 Today I remember those abroad who were the pioneers of our dream of freedom, men who are in exiles if they are alive, forgotten if they are dead, who neither sought nor received recognition nor reward, only privation, persecution and death. But all these today are immortal in our minds. We thank the Englishmen who were our friends, though many Englishmen were our enemies, not personal enemies but the victims themselves of a system of iniquitous imperialism. But those Englishmen, who served us, became part of our Indian history, part of our struggle for India's independence. And it seems somehow poetical, it seems somehow romantic, it seems somehow logical that the great grandson of Queen Victoria, Louis Mountbatten, should have, by grace and generosity, dissolved the empire that Disraeli built for her. All of them we thank.
- 5 The battle of freedom is over. The struggle for peace begins. And my country, my India, that has never excluded friend or foe from her hospitality, my India that has taken knowledge from all over the world, that has offered knowledge and wisdom to the world, once more will she stand in the forefront of the world civilization, once more will she bring the message of peace, once more will she carry her lamp into the darkness of strife and struggle and hatred; and the nations of the world who are free, nations of the world who are not free, we pledge you our comradeship, our fellowship, our understanding, our love. Let us move together towards the great world fellowship of which we dream. Let us work together for the peace that will never be ended. Let us work for justice, for equity, for human rights but no privileges, for human duties but no prerogatives, let us follow the citizens of a great free world of which our ancestors dreamed and for which we have striven. Men and women together, men and women of a common humanity, let no religion, no community, no text, no tongues divide us, and for ours is a common destiny. Ours is a common purpose. Ours is a common wish and ambition to rebuild this broken world into the image of our heart's desire. And which country but India can take the lead in restoring the world to its pristine glory! We who have been the dreamers of dreams, the seers of visions, the creators of wisdom, the followers of renunciation, we, who have given the heroes of the Independence struggle for India, we have run through the whole gamut of the world's adventures, of the world's emotions. We are the wise. We are reborn today of the crucible of our sufferings.
- 6 Nations of the world, I greet you in the name of India, my mother, my mother whose home has a roof of snow, whose walls are of living seas, whose doors are always open to you. Do you seek peace or wisdom, do you seek love and understanding, come to us. Come to us in faith, come to us in hope, come to us believing that is a gift of ours to give. Today, in the name of India, I give for the whole world the freedom of this India that had never died in the past that shall be indestructible in the future and shall lead the world to ultimate peace.

Glossary: (The numbers refer to paragraphs in the speech.)

1.

transformed: changed completely in form, appearance or nature

transfigured: changed in outward form or appearance

stricken: showing the effect of trouble or anxiety

banner: 1. a flag, 2. a long piece of cloth on which a sign is painted, usually carried between two poles.

legions: large number of soldiers

trespasser: 1. a person who goes on to privately-owned land without permission, 2. a wrongdoer; a sinner.

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immutable: unchangeable

'gospel: the set of principles that one acts upon or believes in

- 2. **antiquarian**: a person who studies, collects or sells objects that are very old
archaeologist: an expert in the study of ancient things, like buried remains of ancient times
desolate: (of a person) lonely and sad
- 3. **privation**: a lack of the necessities of life,
persecution: cruel treatment
iniquitous: very wicked or unjust
imperialism: the policy of extending a counts, empire and influence '*Queen Vic'toria*: Queen of Britain from 1837 to 1901.
Louis Mountbatten: (1900 -1979) Viceroy of India from March to August 1947. After the partition of the country and transfer of power to India and Pakistan he was the Governor General of India (August 1947-June 1948).
Disraeli: Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), novelist and twice Prime Minister of Britain (1 868, 1874-80), who, in 1876 brought a bill in the House of Commons, the British lower house of Parliament, conferring the title 'Empress of India' on Queen Victoria. It was passed in spite of much opposition.
- 4. **pledge** (verb): give
equity: fairness
prerogative: special right or privilege
renunciation: the act of giving up one's possessions
gamut: the whole range
crucible: a pot in which metals are melted; a severe test or trial.

Check Your Progress 2

What rhetorical devices do you notice in Sarojini Naidu's speech'?

16.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt about the use of questions as a rhetorical device. You have also examined a famous speech by Sarojini Naidu and the devices that contribute to its powerful effect.

16.6 KEY WORDS

discourse: a speech, lecture, etc.

House of Commons: the lower House of the British Parliament, elected directly by the people.

rhetorical question: a question asked for the sake of effect. to impress people, no answer being needed or expected.

ANSWERS

Check your **Progress I**

Pitt levels the following charges against the British troops in America:

- a) They have acted in a dishonourable way.
- b) Their motives were mercenary, that is, they wanted to make money.

- c) They have been cruel to the people in America.
- d) They have plundered the land.
- e) They have aligned themselves with native Indian chiefs.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Direct address:

Oh, world of free nations,
Oh, world of nations not yet free,
Nations of the world.

- 2) Repetition

i) an epic *struggle*, a *struggle*,
a dramatic *struggle*, a *struggle* of heroes. ,
a *struggle* of women... .., a *struggle* of youth,
a *struggle* of young men and old men....

ii) *my India*, that has,
my India, that has

iii) *once more* will she stand.,
once more will she bring. ,
once more will she carry

iv) *the nations of the world* who are free,
nations of the world who are not free.

v) *Let us move together*,
Let us work together,
let us follow.....

vi) *Men and women* together,
men and women of a common humanity,

vii) let no religion, no community, no text, no tongue divide us.

viii) *Ours is a common* purpose,
Ours is a common wind and,

ix) *We who have* been the dreamers,
we, who have given the heroes. ,
we have run through,
We are the wise.
We are reborn...

x) *my mother*,
my mother whose home...

xi) *Do you seek* peace,
do you seek love,

xii) *came to us*.
Come to us in faith,
Come to us in hope,
Come to us.....

- 3) Use of metaphorical expressions like
an epic struggle
wiping the tears of those who. ...
our general of victory
no device of his banner
no weapons for his legions
carry her lamp into the darkness of strife
reborn of the crucible of our sufferings.
- 4) contrast
e.g.,
The battle of freedom is over. The struggle for peace
begins for human rights but no privileges,
for human duties but no prerogatives, ...



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UNIT 17 DOING THINGS WITH LANGUAGE: POLITENESS

Structure

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 The Principle of Politeness
 - 17.2.1 Don't Impose on Your Hearer
 - 17.2.2 Give Your Hearer Options
 - 17.2.3 Make Your Hearer feel Good
- 17.3 Communicative Functions that Call for Politeness
- 17.4 Strategies for Politeness
 - 17.4.1 Indirectness
 - 17.4.2 Tentativeness
- 17.5 Signals of Politeness
- 17.6 Different Degrees of Politeness
- 17.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.8 Key Words
Answers

17.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will learn-

- Use of polite forms of English language
- and their use in communicative situations.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

If you take care of the grammar of a foreign/second language, you will learn to speak and write the language *correctly*. In the previous units, we emphasized the fact that a language also had to be used *appropriately*. Let us take a formal business situation to illustrate our point. You wish to thank the manager of the bank who provided you with necessary finance to help you buy a new machine for your factory. How should you express your thanks? Will you begin your letter as follows:

(1) Thanks a lot. I don't know what I'd have done without the loan from the bank. or as follows:

(2) Many thanks for providing us with the loan for our new machine.

or as follows:

(3) It was very good of you to provide us with a loan for our new machine.
Thank you indeed.

or as follows:

(4) I want to thank you very much for the loan you have provided us for our new machine.

or as follows:

(5) I write to thank you for giving us the loan for our new

machine. or as follows:

(6) We would like to thank you for providing us with the loan for our new machine.

In examples 1 to 6 you have not faced any grammatical problem: the sentences are all grammatically correct. You are faced with the question of appropriateness: which of the six forms is the most appropriate for the expression of thanks in the given situation? As you know that for using English appropriately we had to pay attention to such considerations as formal and informal language and spoken and written forms. If we look at sentences 1 to 6 from these considerations, we may say that 1 is inappropriate because an expression like 'thanks a lot' is informal and does not belong in a formal letter. But what about sentences 2 to 6? You can see that the distinction between formal and informal English alone does not help you to determine the most appropriate form in this communicative situation. Nor is the distinction between spoken and written forms sufficiently helpful.

We need to pay attention to yet another aspect of language in use: politeness. When we do such things in English as, for example, making requests, offers and invitations, or thanking someone for something, we do them politely. It is socially correct to be polite. Now, tentative modals such as 'could' and 'would' are markers of politeness in many situations in English, if we return to sentences 2 to 6, we can say that sentence 6 carries a politeness signal. It is also in order to print out that the pronoun used in 6 is 'we' instead of 'I' because 'we' is a 'formal' version of 'I'. If we now return to the situation of the letter referred to above, the writer of it is expected to say things formally and politely because the situation under consideration is formal and the function such as giving thanks to someone calls for politeness. Therefore sentence 6 is the most appropriate form in which you can express your thanks in the situation of the letter under consideration.

The discussion above is not intended to suggest that there is only one form that is sentence 6, in which we can express our thanks to the manager. What is emphasized is this: language in a formal situation and for a function calling for politeness should be both formal and polite. To be formal means to avoid informal expressions and to be polite in this context means not to miss out linguistic signals of politeness socially expected of you. So long as these considerations are observed, there can be variations on 6 by varying the degrees of politeness and formality. Therefore, instead of 6 you could also say:

(7) Please accept our grateful thanks for providing us with the loan for our new machine.

(8) We would like to express our gratitude for providing us with the loan for our new machine.

(9) The management would like to express its gratitude to you for providing it with the loan for a new machine.

If you did not wish to sound very formal, you could use language that was less formal but would still mark the function with politeness (for example by using the word 'grateful'):

(10) I am writing to say how grateful we are to you for giving us the loan for our new machine.

In this unit we focus on politeness as an important requirement for using language appropriately.

17.2 THE PRINCIPLE OF POLITENESS

It would seem that the principle of politeness revolves around three considerations:

- (i) Don't impose on your hearer.
- (ii) Give your hearer options.
- (iii) Make your hearer feel good (that is, be friendly).

We will discuss each briefly and illustrate it with examples.

17.2.1 Don't Impose on Your Hearer

The first consideration has to do with minding one's own business. So, we are not expected to intrude on our hearer's privacy. If we have to, we ask for his permission, as it were, while doing so politeness is called for. In other words, requests for information about one's 'private matters' are signaled by the question form directed at asking for the hearer's permission:

- (11) *May I ask* what this cricket bat cost you?
- (12) What did you pay for it, *if I may ask*?

No politeness marking in this form is required if the information asked for relates to matters that are not private to the hearer:

- (13) May I ask where Mool Chand hospital is?

The intended request in 13 can however be put across politely in other ways. For example:

- (14) Can you tell me where Mool Chand Hospital is?
- (15) Would you mind telling me where Mool Chand hospital is?

Money matters and family affairs, for example, are treated as private by members of British society. If we do such a thing with language as asking someone for information in these matters, we signal politeness by asking their permission:

- (16) May I ask what your eldest son is doing now?

Similarly, 'unmentionables' (e.g. defecation) or 'distressing facts' (e.g. sudden death) are put across politely. The strategy for politeness in these matters involves avoiding using the 'unmentionable' or 'unpleasant' word; it is tactful to use some technical/formal or euphemistic term:

- (17) The patient was delirious and passed water on his mattress. (cf. urinated)
- (18) The President was assassinated. (cf. murdered)
- (19) His father passed away yesterday. (cf. died)

17.2.2 Give Your Hearer Options

The second consideration, that is giving options to your hearer, is closely related to the first one of non-imposition. Giving options to the hearer involves making him feel that you are not imposing your will on him. The hearer is given the choice, as it were, to make his own decisions. Compare, for example, 20 with 21:

- (20) Lend me your bicycle.
(21) Can I borrow your bicycle?

In 21 the hearer has been given a fairly obvious option to decide whether to lend the bicycle or not. Not only is 21 polite but it is also appropriate; in doing such a thing as making a request with English, it is socially appropriate to be polite. The need to give options will also explain why such functions as making requests, offers, invitations and giving advice are put across in the question form or in the conditional form or with the help of non-committal words like 'wonder' and 'mind'. For example:

- (22) Can you wait for a moment?
(23) If you will wait for a moment.
(24) I wonder if you could wait for a moment.

To express a particular function indirectly is also to give options to your hearer: You let him, as it were, decide what inference to draw. And if you give options, you are polite. Therefore, the speakers of English can also take recourse to indirect expressions when they have to do things with language politely:

- (25) I was wondering if you could lend me your bicycle.

Consider 26 in which the speaker is so indirect that he hardly seems to refer to the intended communicative function:

- (26) It is very hot in this room.

Instead of saying directly 'Open the windows' or somewhat indirectly "Can you open the windows?", the boss, on the face of it, has made an observation on the state of the room in the example above in 26. The person in charge of cleaning and airing the rooms draws the conclusion that the windows should be opened: it is his conclusion as it were and not an order from the boss. In the context above, 26 is therefore, a very polite form of asking the employee to do what he forgot to do although it was his job to do it.

17.2.3 Make Your Hearer Feel Good

The third consideration involves establishing a proper relationship between the speaker and the hearer. For example, if they are equals, the hearer will reflect this relationship appropriately in doing things with language. If the speaker and the hearer are in a relationship of a superior to a subordinate, doing things appropriately with language will call for the use of right signals to reflect the relationship. If the speaker (Rakesh Verma), for example, is of a higher status to his hearer (Rohit Kumar), the use of familiar forms of address on his part will put the hearer at ease. But if the speaker's status is lower than that of his hearer, he must not use familiar forms; he will have to use forms which are deferential:

- (27) Rakesh: Rohit, have you drawn up the building plans?
Rohit: They are nearly ready, Mr. Verma. I'll place them before you within an hour.

To put forward the third consideration in being polite elaborately, we can say that doing things appropriately with language calls for a careful consideration of the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. How well does the speaker know the person he is talking to (a friend, a workmate or a complete stranger)? Is he talking to a person of an equal, superior or subordinate relationship? Is he talking to a person of a similar age or of a similar social background? It is out of these considerations that Rakesh uses the form of address 'Rohit' while Rohit calls him 'Mr. Verma'.

It is worth pointing out that this question of politeness is closely related to a particular culture and society. If we return to examples 11 and 12, it is not an imposition in Indian society to enquire about the cost of some item as it is in the middle strata of British society. Therefore, an Indian will have a very strong tendency to delete politeness forms from 11 and 12: he may opt for the following:

- (28) What did this cricket bat cost you?
(29) What did you pay for it?

Again, an Indian parent, for example, may find the following form odd or even strange when a middle-class British parent naturally opts for a polite form in asking her young child to do her a small favour:

- (30) John, would you mind turning on the TV?

The next section in this unit therefore focuses on the following question: What are the functions that call for politeness from British speakers of English?

17.3 COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS THAT CALL FOR POLITENESS

Speakers of English use polite forms in performing certain communicative functions. We shall take a close look at some of the functions that call for politeness.

Let us consider some examples of politeness in many different communicative situations. Consider the following extract from a conversation between father and son:

- (E1) Daddy pushed Wallace off and got up. They went downstairs and Wallace let Wussy the cat in.

'What do you want for breakfast, Wallace?' Daddy asked.

'Can I open Wussy's tin?' said Wallace.

'Yes,' I said. 'What do you want for breakfast?'

Wallace turned the handle of the tin-opener. 'Coms,' he said.

Daddy got him the Corn Flakes.

'Do you like yoghurt?' Daddy asked.

'Yes,' said Wallace.

'Yes, *please*,' said Daddy.

(Simon Watson: *The New Red Bike & Other Stories*)

Glossary

yoghurt (also spelt *yogurt*, *yoghourt*): It is made from milk by turning it thick. It is slightly sour in taste and is generally eaten with a meal of vegetables or meat.

In the excerpt above, what did Wallace's daddy do with the language? He wanted to offer his son some yoghurt. What did Wallace do with the language? He expressed interest in eating it; his language (bare 'yes') was however abrupt and therefore

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lacked a certain politeness. His father pointed out to him the omission of 'please', a minimum politeness signal. It is interesting to note that in short answers to 'yes-no' questions (31 and 32) or to requests and offers made in the form of questions (33 and 34), and to statements (35), it is almost a matter of convention (except in familiar/casual speech) not to use a bare *Yes* or *No*: the subject and auxiliary verb of the question are often repeated, or words like *please*, *thanks*, *certainly* are added.

- (31) Are you coming?
Yes, I am.
- (32) Are you all right?
Yes, thanks.
- (33) Will you pass the plate, please?
Yes, certainly.
- (34) Would you like some yoghurt?
Yes, please.
- (35) He has left a message for
her. Yes, he has.

Do is used in answers to sentences with no auxiliary verb:

- (36) He enjoys playing
tennis. Yes, he does.

If you go over the replies in 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36 by omitting the words after the Yes/No, you can hear their abruptness and therefore also the lack of politeness. However, notice the replies to an echo question (E2) and to a tag question asking for confirmation of the opinion given in the statement (E3):

- (E2) Lamb: ... Jackal is very kind, you know, Ox. He has a lot of shops to sell. But
this was his *best* one.
Ox: His *best* one?
Lamb: Yes.

(Ronald Mackin & Miles Lee: *Ox and Lamb Go to Live in the Town*)

(E

- Lamb: Listen, Ox. *You* must earn some money. You're very strong. You can
pull carts.
Ox: Pull carts; I don't want to pull carts.
Lamb: You want to eat, don't you?
Ox: Yes.
(Ronald Mackin & Miles Lee: *Ox and Lamb Go to Live in the Town*)

In these contexts, the bare form 'Yes' is appropriate although it was hardly appropriate in 31 to 36.

When speakers of English make *requests and offers*, *give suggestions*, *advice and invitations*, *express desires*, *give uncertain opinions*, *make criticisms*, *accept or reject offers*, they perform these functions in polite language. We shall give here examples relating to such functions as expressing desires and giving uncertain opinions.

A 'desire' is a strong feeling that you want to do something or to get something; implicit in it is a strong sense of 'self'. English-speaking people consider it impolite to make a direct statement of desires like:

- (37) I want you to help her.
or
(38) I prefer to mend it myself.

To be polite, they would modify the forms in 37 and 38 as follows:

- (39) I should like you to help her.
- (41) I would prefer to mend it myself.

The use of *should/would* makes the statements sound less bold, more hesitant, and therefore more polite. In other words, the 'sense of self' in the desire is toned down as it were by *should/would*. It may be noted that in the first person *should* and *would* are both possible (with no real difference of meaning); in the second and third person *would* is used:

- (41) I should/would like to invite them all.
- (42) They would like to invite only a few.

We must remember that in casual, familiar speech features of politeness can be left out. In contexts where politeness is required, *I should/would like* is however more polite than *I want*. *I should/would* contracted to *I'd* is often more common in informal speech:

- (43) I'd like to meet your children.
- (44) I'd like to have a little rest this afternoon.
- (-45) I'd like you to meet my parents when you go to Calcutta.
- (46) I'd like to see your garden.
- (47) I'd like you to read my composition.

It may be worthwhile pointing out that 'like' in the context of a 'desire'/'wish' given above (that is, to ask for something, or to be allowed to do something) is different from 'like' meaning 'to be fond of':

- (48) I like mangoes.
- (49) I don't like big cities.

Notice that 'wish' also means 'want' and can be used to express what one may 'desire', but it is more formal than 'want'. The three examples given below would again point to the fact that for performing many different language functions language users have to pay attention to the appropriateness of language forms:

- (50) I wish to make a complaint. (formal)
- (51) I want to make a complaint. (neutral)
- (52) I'd like to make a complaint. (polite)

Now, let us consider such a function as giving slightly uncertain opinions, that is, when the speaker is not completely confident of his 'facts' or his 'opinion'. In the absence of facts or the inability to make up his mind, he should prefer, as it were, to put across his opinion hesitantly. And to be hesitant in such contexts is to be polite. The forms with conditional *should/would* are very common with the desire/opinion verbs such as 'like', 'think', 'say', 'argue' for signalling politeness. Consider the following:

- (53) I think she is about 30 years of age.
- (54) I should think she was about 30 years of age.

In 53, 'I think she is' would be much less uncertain than 'I should think she was.' Consider some more examples:

- (55) I would say that the building will be ready by the end of the year.
- (56) These examination results would seem to indicate a decline in standards.

Similarly, in the following extracts notice why the speakers say 'I should say net', and 'I should think'.

(E4) 'I'll be on my way. Hope your friend comes around all right. Going to call time on him sharp?'

'I should say not!' said the other. 'I'll give him half an hour at least. If Jimmy is alive on earth he'll be here by that time. So long, officer.'

(O. Henry: *After Twenty Years*)

Glossary

Going to call time on him sharp? : Will you only wait for him until the appointed time?

So long: goodbye

(E5) Suddenly, he broke off his singing and returned her stare.

'I take it, Madam,' he said, 'that you do not appreciate my singing.'

'I should think it's hardly the place,' she said shortly. 'That's all,' and turned her head away.

(Elizabeth Taylor: *The Fly-Paper*)

Again, the need to be polite in performing such functions as 'thanking somebody for help' or 'wishing somebody good luck', would require that 57 and 58

(57) I want to thank everyone who helped us.

(58) We wish you good luck.

should be in the form of 59 and 60:

(59) I would like to thank everyone who helped us.

(60) We'd like to wish you good luck.

It may be in order to consider briefly some of the language functions that are not expressed with particular markers of politeness. The point under consideration is that a marker of politeness used in doing such functions would be misplaced. Take for example the action of showing gratefulness on receiving a present. The marker of politeness for expressing gratefulness (i.e. 'grateful') is misplaced in 61 because English speakers do not expect a show of gratefulness for a present, but its expression is in order in 62:

*(61) I'm really grateful for that lovely present.

(62) I'm really grateful for your help.

Similarly, while we use 'please' in making requests and, on many occasions, in giving orders, we do not use it in giving permission. You can now see why 63 and 64 are in order and why 65, 66 and 67 are not:

(63) Please stand away from the door. (order)

(64) Could you stand away from the door, please? (request)

*(65) You may stand near the door, please. (permission)

*(66) You may give it to her, please.

*(67) Students may stay out only until 10 p.m., please.

Similarly, while invitations require a tentative 'would', information about one's customs/habits is obtained without tentative modals:

- (68) Would you like to meet a school friend of mine?
*(69) Would you like to have tea in bed every morning?

Therefore, 69 would become:

- (70) Do you like to have tea in bed every morning?

Check Your Progress 1

1. Change sentences 1 to 6 given below into polite forms according to the principle of politeness discussed in 34.2. There can be more than one polite form for each sentence. The first sentence has been done for you.

1. How much did these socks cost you?

Ans. May I ask you how much these socks cost you?

or

Do you mind if I ask you how much these socks cost you?

2. A has a headache and asks for help (i.e. makes a request): Give me an aspirin.

Ans. _____

3. A has a headache and B makes an offer of help (makes an offer): I will give you an aspirin.

Ans. _____

4. A's bicycle tyres have very little air. He wants to use B's bicycle pump (asks for permission):
Give me your bicycle pump.

Ans. _____

5. A is visiting B. B offers him some tea (makes an offer): Have some tea.

Ans. _____

6. A has to put some additional chairs in his classroom. He wants some from B's room (request for permission):
I will take 4 chairs from your room.

Ans. _____

2. Put a cross against the sentence in which a marker of politeness, such as 'please', 'grateful', 'would', is misplaced:

1 Would you like to have a bath every day?

2 May I come in, please?

3 Can you tell me his house number, please?

4 I'd like to know his address, please.

5 Will you please remember to post the letter?

6 I am grateful to you for these lovely presents.

7 I am grateful to you for what you have done for me.

8 You may come in, please.

17.4 STRATEGIES FOR POLITENESS

There would seem to be two main strategies for being polite while doing things with language: indirectness and tentativeness.

17.4.1 Indirectness

Indirectness, as the term implies, is a means of being less forceful and direct. Consider the following:

- (71) Your estimates of the repairs of the building are wrong.
 (72) I wonder if your estimates of the repairs of the building are quite right.

The difference between 71 and 72 is one of tact: the criticism in 71 is direct and in 72 indirect. What is the motivation to be indirect? Speakers tend to be indirect when there is a risk of causing offence or distress to someone. Therefore, in many situations an indirect expression like 72 may be more appropriate than 71. Besides trying to avoid offence, there may be many other reasons for being indirect. The reasons for indirectness would differ from one set of language functions to another.

Now, an extract from a story to illustrate indirectness. A recently released convict forces his entry into a bishop's house. 'the bishop tries to make him feel comfortable. He asks his old servant, Madame Magloire, to provide the guest with the necessary things. Notice how the bishop uses direct expressions in E6 and E7 and an indirect expression in E8 when he finally asks for more lights at the supper table:

- (E6) 'Can you give me something to eat, and a place to sleep? Have you a stable?'

'Madame Magloire,' said the bishop, 'put some sheets on the bed in the alcove.'

Glossary

alcove: a small partly enclosed space in a room.

They are about to sit down at supper. Madame Magloire brings in a plate and sets it on the table:

- (E7) 'Madame Magloire,' said the bishop 'put this plate as near the fire as you can.'

As she puts the plate on the table, the bishop feels that the lighting at the table is not sufficient. Notice how indirectly, almost in the form of a suggestion (*Zoe lamp gives a very poor light*), he asks his servant to supplement it; a direct order would have caused her distress because the candlesticks were of silver and the 'guest' was a recently released convict:

- (E8) 'The lamp,' said the bishop, 'gives a very poor light.'

Madame Magloire understood him, and going to his bed-chamber, took from the mantel the two silver candlesticks, lighted the candles, and placed them on the table.

17.4.2 Tentativeness

A parallel strategy for politeness is that of tentativeness. Tentativeness implies hesitation, a carefully planned effort to show some caution and, as it were, a lack of confidence. What is the motivation to be tentative? Tentativeness for speakers of English makes for politeness because it makes language do things in a less bold and more cautious way. The modal verbs *could*, *might*, *should/ would* are tentative counterparts of *can*, *may*, *shall/will*. Therefore 73, 74, 75 and 76 are more polite than 77, 78, 79 and 80

- (73) Could you hold the bag for me?
 (74) Might I write to her?
 (75) Would you put the chair away?
 (76) I should be perfectly happy if I had nothing to do.

- (77) Can you hold the bag for me?
- (78) May I write to her?
- (79) Will you put the chair away?
- (80) I shall be perfectly happy if I had nothing to do.

Modals are not the only signals of tentativeness. Consider the following:

- (81) Rakesh is not very clever, but he does try.

The speaker knows that Rakesh's reputation is not very good, so he resorts to *cautious praise*; 'he does try'. If you should think up the question to which 81 is a reply, you could see the tentativeness/caution in the praise given: 'What do you think of Rakesh?' 'Well, he does try.' In addition to modals certain words make for tentativeness and therefore speakers often use them to be polite. Consider the use of *maybe* when making a suggestion and of *quite* in negative sentences in expressing disagreement:

- (82) Maybe we should ask Ravi for his opinion.
- (83) I didn't quite understand what it was all about.

In doing certain things with language politely, speakers also take recourse to formulate expressions. The fact is that a certain expression is so closely associated with a function that over a period of time it becomes a formula. Take for example the expression *I'm afraid*. It is often used as a polite phrase (a) when giving bad news or unpleasant information; (b) when disagreeing with someone; and (c) when turning down a request politely. It suggests an apologetic attitude. The construction with *so/not* (I'm afraid so/I'm afraid not) is often used in answers:

(a)

- (84) I'm afraid I forgot to post the letter.
- (85) I'm afraid your son has failed the exams.
- (86) Did she marry the man she loved? I'm afraid not.
- (87) Do I have to pay the fine?
I'm afraid so.

(b)

- (88) I'm afraid I can't accept your suggestions.
- (89) I'm afraid you didn't quite understand me.

(c)

- (90) Can I borrow your bike?
I'm afraid I can't lend it today.
- (91) Can you help me?
I'm afraid not. I'm busy right now.

17.5 SIGNALS OF POLITENESS

In the many examples given in sections 34.3 and 34.4, speakers very often signalled politeness by using modals (e.g., *can*, *should*, *would*) and certain words and expressions (e.g., *please*, *I'm afraid*). Are these the only language resources for signalling politeness? In this section we shall attempt an answer to this question.

When they do things with language and they have to be polite, speakers of English draw upon three types of language resources to signal politeness: intonation, grammar, and vocabulary.

(i) Let us begin with intonation. In many communicative situations direct commands are hardly polite, which are usually spoken on a falling tone:

(92) 'Get out of the 'building.

(93) 'Keep a'way.

The imperative force of the command can be weakened, and to that extent it becomes polite, by using a rising or a falling-rising tone:

(94) 'Keep away children.

(95) 'Don't for'get to 'post the letters.

(96) 'Don't make a noise.

(97) 'Hurry up.

ii) Speakers of English put various aspect of grammar to good use, such as changing the present tense into the past tense, using modals, and taking recourse to the question form, to signal politeness when they do things with language.

In the context of sequence of tenses 'would' is the past tense of 'will', but in signalling politeness it is a tentative equivalent of 'will'. Although 98 is polite,

(98) Will you pass the paper, please?

99 is politer because 'would' makes it tentative:

(99) Would you pass the paper, please?

Similarly, compare 100 and 101:

(100) Are you the captain?

(101) Would you be the' captain?

In a situation of uncertainty, the question in 101 more cautious and therefore polite. The modals *should*, *could*, *might*, *would* as tentative equivalents of *staff*, *can*, *may*, *will* are used to signal politeness in performing many functions. Compare 102 and 103:

(102) It may rain.

(103) It might rain.

The speaker of 103 is hesitant in the absence of any definite knowledge to commit himself about the event and therefore talks about it tentatively and therefore sounds polite. Notice the tentativeness in imposing oneself on someone's time when asking for advice:

(104) How slow would you like me to play?

(105) What do you think I should do?

The past simple tense is the one most often used to talk about the past, but with such verbs as 'wish', 'wonder', 'think', 'hope' it expresses a tentative attitude, suggesting politeness:

- (106) Did you wish to read it now?
- (107) I wondered if you could spare a few minutes for me.
- (108) I thought you might like to go out for a walk.
- (109) I was hoping we could travel together.

The past progressive with 'hope', 'want', 'wonder', 'think' can be used to make a request or suggestion sound more polite, less definite:

- (110) I was wondering if you'd like to spend the afternoon with me.
- (111) Were you wanting to see the secretary?
- (112) We are hoping you will do it.

When we make an invitation or an appeal, we can sound polite if we are persuasive. (We have noted that a request, for example, would sound polite only if it was put across tentatively, but an invitation because of the nature of the function involved would also seem polite if made persuasively.) If we are less tentative, we are persuasive; a negative construction is less tentative and therefore polite in the context of 113 and 114:

- (113) Won't you come in and sit down?
- (114) Couldn't you write to him again?

The imperative force of a command can be toned down by using the tag question *will you/ won't you*:

- (115) 'Don't waste it, will you?
- (116) 'Look after him, won't you?

(iii) On many occasions, speakers of English use certain vocabulary items/expressions to signal politeness: *maybe, perhaps, possibly, wonder, quite frankly, honestly, think, feel, suppose, so to speak, sort of, kind of, in my opinion*. We may call them 'softening' words because they soften the effect of what the speaker is putting across by making it less forceful and direct: they enable the speaker to be polite. Consider the following examples:

- (117) *Perhaps* you ought to discuss it with her.
- (118) Could you *possibly* see me tomorrow?
- (119) I *wonder* if we should go by bus.
- (120) 'What do you think of my book?' '*Frankly*, it's a disaster.'
- (121) I *think* you ought to do it again.

If, for example, you now compare 117, 118 and 121 with 117a, 118a and 121a, you would feel the absence of that extra 'softening' effect that *perhaps, possibly* and *think* helped to bring about:

- (117a) You ought to discuss it with her.
- (118a) Could you see me tomorrow?
- (121a) You ought to do it again.

You may also note that the language resources for politeness discussed above can be used singly or in combination. Consider, For example, the following:

- (122) *Could* you write to her?

The tentative modal 'could' signals politeness but 122 can be expressed more politely by also using a 'softening' word:

- (123) Could you *possibly* write to her?

We can similarly use several softening words together to make a request, suggestion, disagreement, etc. even more tentative:

- (124) Your proposal is interesting but *I think maybe* it is not *quiet* practicable.

17.6 DIFFERENT DEGREES OF POLITENESS

The discussion and examples above have pointed to the phenomenon of different degrees of politeness in doing things with English. Consider the following examples:

- (125) Will you help the child out of the pit?
(126) Would you help the child out of the pit?

126 is more polite than 125. Take a few more examples:

- (127) I wonder whether you would help the child out of the pit.
(128) I was wondering if you would help the child out of the pit.
(129) Do you think you could possibly help the child out of the pit?
(130) I was wondering if you could possibly help the child out of the pit.

127, 128, 129 and 130 are more polite than 125 and 126. Of the six forms given above, 130 is the most polite. The change in the degree of politeness is signalled by either a change from a modal verb to a tentative modal verb (e.g., 'will' to 'would') or from a less direct to a more indirect form (e.g., 'would you' to 'I wonder whether you would' / 'Do you think you could.'). The more indirect you are, the more polite you would sound. But there is a need for caution in varying the degrees of politeness. The change from one degree of politeness to another degree is relative to certain factors in the situation in which polite forms are required. For example, if the speaker feels that an offer will be to the advantage of the hearer, he would sound polite by using a direct form:

- (131) Have a cup of tea; it will comfort you.

If the speaker does not know whether an offer will be acceptable, he will tend to use an indirect form:

- (132) Would you like to have a cup of tea?

Furthermore, if the speaker and the hearer hardly know each other, he would use an even more indirect form:

- (133) I was wondering whether you would like a cup of tea.

If forms which seem to be 'too polite' are used regardless of taking note of such factors in the situation they would sound pompous or impolite. The speaker can also use them to express sarcasm or annoyance. For example (teacher to student):

- (134) Rakesh, I wonder whether you would like to take down notes.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Of the sentences given below, some express a communicative function directly and the others somewhat indirectly. Change the direct expressions into indirect forms and the indirect expressions into more indirect forms. One example has been done for you.

1. Put all your books away.
Ans. (a) Will you put all your books away?
(b) Would you put all your books away?
(c) I was wondering whether you would put all your books away.

2. Have another mango.

3. Unlock the door.

4. Will you post all the letters?

5. I wonder whether you would write to him.

6. Would you leave it to him?

7. I thank you for the help.

8. I wish you success in life.

2. Help the speaker of the following to put across his uncertain opinions and desires more tentatively than he has put them down in the given sentences. One example has been done for you.

1. I think the letter will arrive next week.
I should think the letter will arrive next week.

2. I think she's wrong.

3. It seems his ideas are half-baked.

4. I say he is mistaken.

5. 'Do you think it will rain?' 'I say not.'

6. 'What's she going to do now?' 'I cannot say.'

17.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we had a careful look at polite forms and their use in a number of communicative functions. We considered in some detail the principles of politeness that prompt speakers of English to use polite forms. The principle of not imposing on your hearer prompts the speaker to ask for his hearer's permission in order to enquire about his personal affairs: *May I ask you what salary they have offered you?* The principle of giving your hearer options enjoins the speaker to use the question form for such a function as making a request: *Could you lend me some money?* The principle of making your hearer feel good suggests to the speaker that he should use

language forms that reflect, for example, distance or familiarity that obtains between them: *Hi, how about going to the movies tonight?* It is important to note that politeness should not be missed out in functions such as requests, offers and invitations that call for it. Conversely, it should not be indicated where it is not required; the 'please' in the following is therefore misplaced: *You can have it, please.* Two main strategies for constructing polite forms are 'indirectness' and 'tentativeness', for example: *Shall I move this furniture into your office? Perhaps you'd like to let me know when you leave.* Speakers of English use intonation, some aspects of grammar and rather a limited number of words and expressions to signal politeness: *'Post the "letter for me, won't you; I was wondering whether you would take another look at it; Perhaps you ought to write to her.* Some situations ask for the usual polite forms in performing such functions as making a request or an offer; some other situations ask for more polite forms. The choice, for example, between *you would find this book easier* and *I wonder if you would find this book easier* has to be made with care. Sometimes speakers use several softening words together to make the suggestion, request, etc., very polite: *Z was wondering whether you could possibly call on him tomorrow.* Forms of language which are considered to be polite in English can sometimes seem strange or odd to speakers of other languages. When learning a language other than your mother tongue, it is often necessary to learn which things to say politely and how.

17.8 KEYWORDS

Tentative Modals: When *should/would* are used with certain verbs such as 'like', 'think', 'say', they make the statement sound less bold and more hesitant. Similarly, when they are used to make offers, requests, and invitations, they imply an attitude of non-imposition and help to signal politeness. It is therefore convenient to call them tentative modals when they are used in this way.

They are commonly used for making a statement tentative when we are giving a slightly uncertain opinion or asking a cautious question: *Z would say the bridge will be completed by the end of the year. Excuse me, would you be the father of the girl.*

When making a request, only *should/would* is used with the verb 'like'. *Would you like some apple juice? (*Will you like some apple juice?)*

In the context of making requests, and some other functions, *would and might* are tentative modals: *Could you see me tomorrow?*

Conditional *should/would*: The conditional *should/would* are used in conditional sentences, most of which depend on the word 'if: *If I climbed up the stairs, I would pant.* (Note that in such constructions the past tense of the verb in the 'if' clause refers to future time. And the past tense is used to imply 'doubt' in opposition to the idea of a 'distinct possibility'). The conditional tense is also used in implied conditions, when we are imagining a possibility, rather than stating a fact. For example, the implied condition in 'This would be wrong' is: 'This would be wrong if you said it', or something similar.

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Could you get me an aspirin?
2. Can you give me an aspirin?

- 3 Would you like an aspirin?
 Shall I get you an aspirin?
- 4 Do you mind if I use your bicycle pump?
 Is it all right if I use your bicycle pump? Can
 I use your bicycle pump?
 Would it be all right if I used your bicycle pump?
- 5 Would you like some tea?
 How about some tea?
- 6 Is it all right if I take 4 chairs from your room? Would
 you mind if I took 4 chairs from your room?

2. 1,6,8

Check Your Progress 2

1. 1. Would you like another mango?
 Would you like to have/care for another mango?
2. Would you unlock the door?
 Would you mind unlocking the door?
3. I was wondering if you would post all the letters!
 I wonder if you will post all the letters.
4. I was wondering whether you could write to him.
 I was wondering whether you could possibly write to him.
6. I wonder whether you would leave it to him.
 I wondered whether you would leave it to him.
7. I would like to thank you for the help.
8. I would wish you success in life.
2. 1. I should/would think she's wrong.
2. It would seem his ideas are half-baked.
3. I should say he is mistaken.
4. 'Do you think it will rain?' 'I should say not.'
5. 'What's she going to do now?' 'I'd rather not say.'