

3.4 Think Before You Speak!

Warming up!

Chit-Chat

- Do you write a diary?
- Do you write letters or notes to your friends and relatives?
- Do you ever fight with your friends?
- Do you have arguments with your family members?
What are the arguments about?



- politely
- brightly
- sweetly
- nicely
- lovingly
- kindly

Prepare a similar list of adverbs which show the difference in the manner of saying or communicating something. A few examples are given here.

- angrily
- rudely
- nastily
- quietly
- slowly
- quickly

Read the following words which may be used in place of speak—

- talk • utter • tell • announce • declare
- voice (an opinion, etc.) • converse • say
- chat • gossip • lecture • communicate
- explain • uphold (an opinion) • support
- praise • recommend • request • urge
- plead • introduce • mention • refer to
- discuss • remark on • rebuke • comment on
- scold • chide • criticise • berate • pull up
- reproach • admonish • suggest • indicate • mean
- denote • show • reflect • express • reveal

(a) Tick the words you know and underline the ones that you do not know. Find their meaning and pronunciation from a good dictionary.

- Which of these words have a positive meaning?
- Which of these words suggest an unpleasant context?

(b) Try to **translate** these words into your mother tongue to show the different shades of meaning.

Think Before You Speak!

Man was meant to listen more and talk less. That is why as the great British statesman Benjamin Disraeli said: “Nature has endowed man with two ears and one mouth. If man was meant to talk more and listen less, he would have two mouths and only one ear.” Imagine how we would have looked, how strange with two mouths on the two sides and one ear at the centre.

And mind you, the ears are like funnels, open all the time. There is no door with which you can close them. Whereas if you have to speak even one single word, that word must pass through two walls—two fences. There is firstly the fence of these two rows of teeth. There is secondly the fence of the two lips. Before a word can be spoken, it has to pass, it has to pierce through these two walls, through these two fences. Therefore we must think at least twice before we utter a word.

A very wise man once remarked that of the unspoken word you are a master, of the spoken word, you are a slave. Once you have spoken a word you cannot get it back, do what you will. Therefore you must be very careful about the words that you speak. Once the word has left your lips, you will not be able to get it back.

What are unspoken words? They are things you want to say, but remain unsaid, as thoughts in your mind. Once you have put the thoughts into words, once the words have left your lips, you cannot change them or control them.

A young man went to his spiritual teacher and said, “I have spoken very harsh and unkind words to my friend, and he is deeply hurt. I am afraid I have lost my friendship with him. How can I make amends?”

The wise teacher gave him a fresh sheet of blank paper and a pen; he said to the young man, “Write down on this paper all the harsh things you said to him.”

The young man did as he was told, and showed the paper to the teacher.

- ◆ Was Disraeli trying to give a scientific reason?
- ◆ Was he only trying to give a message in a lighthearted but effective way?

You have learnt about adaptation in living things in your science textbooks. Find the biological reasons, why man's ears and mouth have developed the way they are now.

- ◆ Draw comic diagrams to represent the content of the first two paragraphs.

Guess the meaning of :

- was taken aback
- stammered
- exhausted

Think about it :

- ◆ Do you remember someone speaking to you angrily, without thinking?
- ◆ What did you do on that occasion? Did you also speak angrily?
- ◆ Discuss what you can do to control your anger.

“Now tear up this sheet of paper into as many small bits as you can,” the wise teacher said.

Soon, the single sheet was torn into a hundred tiny bits of paper.

“Throw the bits out of this window,” the teacher told him.

That was easily done! It was a windy day and the tiny bits were scattered far and wide even as the young man watched.

“Now, go out into the street and collect as many bits of the paper as you can,” the teacher ordered him.

The young man was taken aback. “But...but, that will be difficult ...” he stammered.

“It will be difficult indeed, but do give it a try,” the teacher suggested.

The young man went out. He returned half an hour later, exhausted. He had not been able to get hold of a single torn bit from the paper he had torn up just a while earlier!

“This is what happens with the spoken word,” the teacher said to him. “Once you have spoken the words aloud, it is very difficult to take them back. Therefore, learn to think before you speak in anger.”



Socrates was one of the wisest men of the ancient world. Many were the youths whose lives he influenced for the better.

Socrates counselled his disciples to keep their mouths shut – and speak only when absolutely necessary.

“O wise one, how may we know when it is right to speak?” they asked him.

“Open your mouths to speak only after you have asked yourself three questions, and received an affirmative answer to each of the three,” replied Socrates.

What were the three questions?

The first question we must ask ourselves before we speak is – **is it true?** If we are not sure about the veracity of what we are saying, it is better that we do not utter a word. When we utter words carelessly, we ourselves become transmitters of untruth.

The second question to ask is – **is it pleasant?** Many are the empty remarks and vain statements that people make in idleness to hurt others. It is better that these unpleasant words remain unspoken.

The third question according to Socrates is – **is it useful?** Is our statement going to benefit the listener? Will our words bring comfort to someone? Are we likely to help someone with what we say? Only in that case should we go ahead and speak.

- counselled : advised, guided
- affirmative : An affirmative answer is the answer, ‘Yes’.
- veracity : truth
- transmitters : Here, it means persons who spread something; in this case, untruth.

Reflect : Have you ever passed on an empty remark or vain statement that might hurt someone else? What can you do to avoid doing it again?



1. The same word can be used as a noun in some sentences and as a verb in others. For example,

(1) Many are the empty *remarks*. (Noun)

(2) A wise man once *remarked*, (Verb)

Make two sentences of your own with each of the words given below, **using the same word as a noun in one and as a verb in another.**

- change • show • throw • return • benefit

2. Complete the following:

(a) Our ears are like funnels because

(b) The two rows of teeth are like a fence because

(c) The two lips are like a fence because

(d) Harsh words are like scattered bits of paper carried away by the wind because

3. **Write a brief summary** of the story of the young man and his spiritual teacher, making the young man the narrator.

You may begin as given below. 'I went quickly to my spiritual teacher for advice because I had (Now continue)

4. Translate the following sentences into your mother tongue.

(a) The first question we must ask ourselves before we speak is – **is it true?**

(b) The second question to ask is – **is it pleasant?**

(c) The third question according to Socrates is – **is it useful?**

Language Study

5. Read the following sentence.

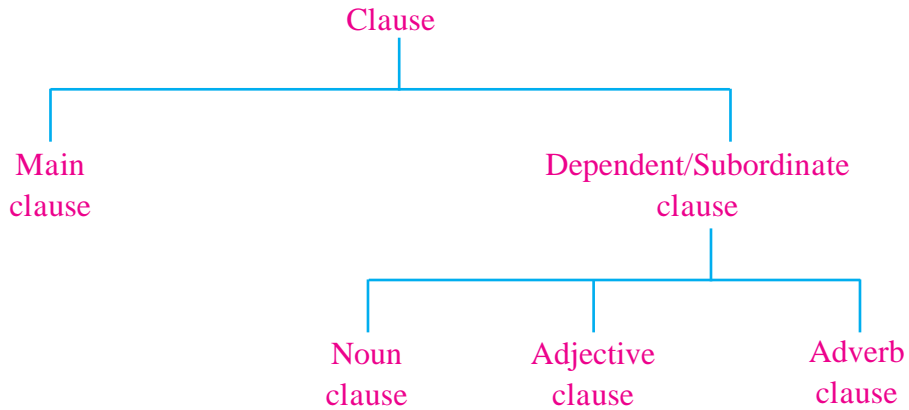
'A very wise man once remarked that of the unspoken word you are a master, of the spoken word, you are a slave.'

The sentence has two pairs of opposites – spoken and unspoken, and master and slave. The contrasting ideas make the sentence more effective. Putting together opposite or contrasting ideas in one sentence is a literary device. It is called **antithesis**.

Read the following examples of antithesis.

- Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice.
- Man proposes, God disposes.
- Speech is silver, but silence is gold.
- Patience is bitter, but it has a sweet fruit.

6. Find some examples of antithesis from your mother tongue and translate them into English.
7. We have seen that clauses are parts of a sentence, and they are classified as main and subordinate or dependent clauses. Dependent clauses can be further classified as follows according to the work they do in a sentence.



How do we decide whether a clause is a noun clause, an adjective clause or an adverb clause? There is a simple rule - we can replace an adverb clause with an adverb, an adjective clause with an adjective and a noun clause with a noun.

Look at the following examples -

- But I don't know the *answer*. (Noun)
But I don't know *what they want*. (Noun clause)
- He told us a funny story. (Adjective)
He told us a story that was funny. (Adjective clause)
- They went away. (Adverb)
They went when you were talking to your friend. (Adverb clause)

Now complete the following on your own :

- But I don't know
- He told us
- They went

8. **Think before you use!** Name some 'ready to eat' and 'ready to cook' food items available in the market. Discuss the following in groups
 - (a) Discuss whether it is necessary to use such items and why they are sold.
 - (b) Discuss the possible adverse effects of such food items.

5. Activity : **Live English : Packs, packets, pouches, wrappers**



(a) Given above is the picture of an imaginary food item's packet. Let us see how to 'read' the matter on the packet as a vigilant consumer.

- Look at the wrapper and complete the sentences.
 - (1) The name of the food item is
 - (2) It is made by
 - (3) It is a food item. (Veg/Non-veg)
 - (4) The sign indicates whether it is a Veg or Non-veg food item.
 - (5) The ingredients are,,,
 - (6) The date of packing is and the expiry date is
 - (7) It should be consumed before from the date of manufacturing.
 - Try and obtain more information about the various symbols printed on the packet.
 - Discuss the following –
 - (1) Why the ‘recipe’ is given on the packet.
 - (2) Why the packet tells us to visit the website of the company.
 - (3) What ideas are used to make the packet attractive.
 - (4) How you will verify whether something is good for you to eat.
- (b) Collect the outer coverings of fast food items. Discuss the following points in groups and then write your observations in your notebook.
- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| • Ingredients | • Nutrition facts |
| • Manufactured by | • MRP |
| • Net weight | • Mfg date |
| • Veg or Non-veg | • Website |
| • Recipe | • Other instructions, if any |
- (c) Work in groups and **prepare an attractive wrapper or packet** for any product of your choice. **Prepare an advertisement** for your product.
- (d) You want to **convince the customer** to buy your product. Prepare a conversation between you and the customer about it.
- (e) Your younger sister wants to eat something tasty. You are telling her the recipe of one such food item. Prepare a dialogue about it.

