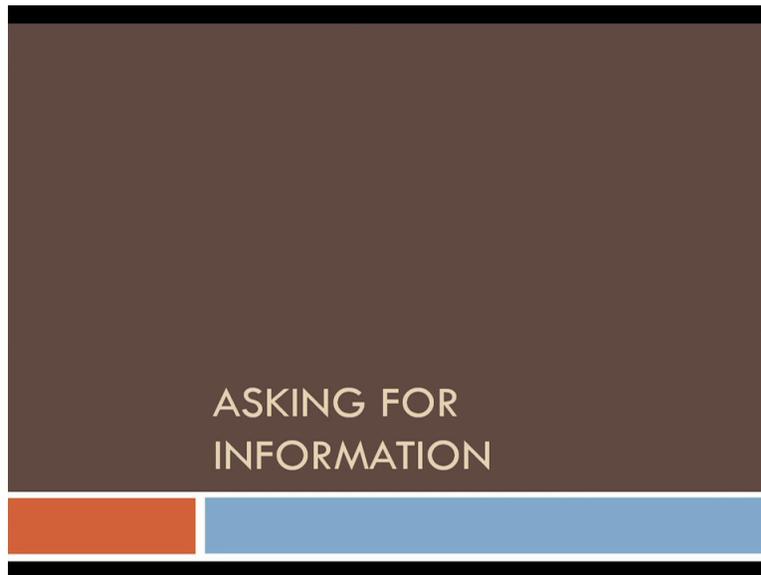


Speaking Effectively
Professor Anjali Gera Roy
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
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Lecture 22
Conversation Skills (Continued)

Hello. We looked at greetings and making introductions. Now let us move on to how to ask for information?

(Refer Slide Time: 00:30)



I am going to do two or three things again. I am going to show you the phrases and the structures you should use when you are asking for information. I will also take you through the entire range from the most informal to the formal and show you what is ok and what is not ok.

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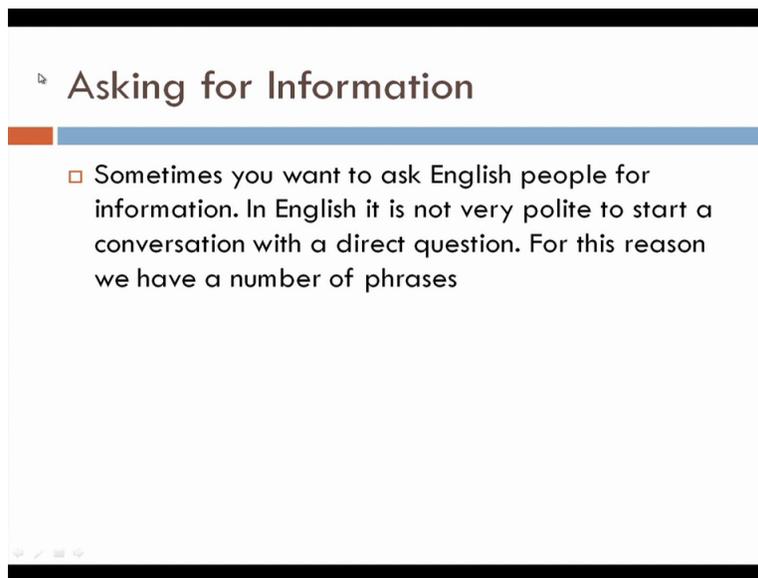
Asking for Information

- Asking for information can be as simple as asking for the time, or as complicated as asking for details about a complicated process.
- In both cases, it's important to use an appropriate form to the situation. For example, when asking for information from a friend, use a more informal form. When asking a colleague, use a slightly more formal form. Finally, when asking for information from a stranger, use an appropriately formal construction.

Now, whatever whether asking for information may be a very simple thing like asking somebody the time. Or it could be asking for something very detailed like a complicated process but in our everyday transactions we do need to ask for information. you should be able to ask for information without giving offence.

In both cases important to use an appropriate form. This is what we are trying to find out today. For example, when asking for information from my friend use a more informal form. When asking a colleague use a slightly more formal form. finally when asking for information from a stranger, use an appropriately formal construction.

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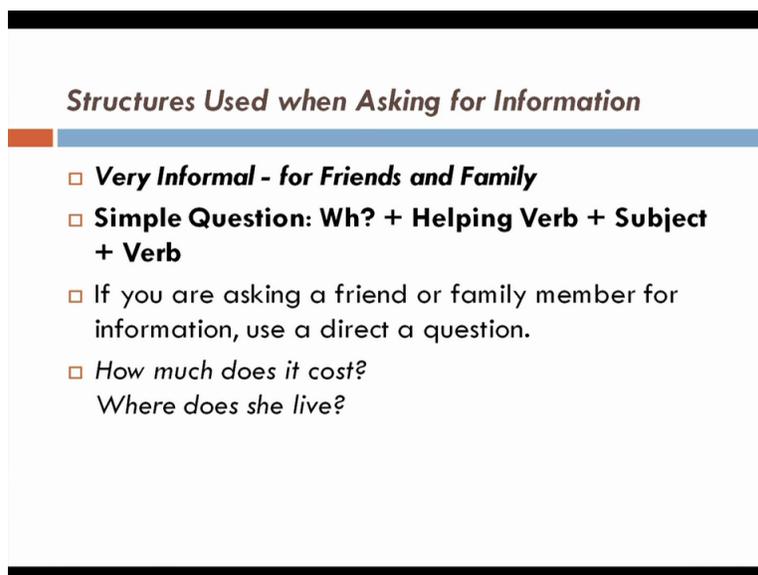


▸ **Asking for Information**

- Sometimes you want to ask English people for information. In English it is not very polite to start a conversation with a direct question. For this reason we have a number of phrases

So, sometimes you want to ask English people for information. In English, it is not very polite to start a conversation with a direct question. For this reason we have a number of phrases. Let us begin with the most informal.

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Structures Used when Asking for Information

- **Very Informal - for Friends and Family**
- **Simple Question: Wh? + Helping Verb + Subject + Verb**
- If you are asking a friend or family member for information, use a direct a question.
- *How much does it cost?*
Where does she live?

When structures used for when asking for information, very informal and these are permissible only when you are with friends and family. So it begins with a very simple question, what? +

Helping Verb + Subject + Verb. So if you are asking a friend or a family member for information, you can ask a direct question. Like, how old are you? Where do you live? It is okay to do that.

(Refer Video Start Time: 02:27)



Student 1: Hi.

Student 2: Hi.

Student 1: Nice shirt.

Student 2: Thank you.

Student 1: How much did it cost?

Student 2: A lot.

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(Refer Slide Time: 02:38)

More Formal for Everyday Simple Questions

- Use these forms for simple, everyday questions in stores, with colleagues at work, and in other informal situations.
- **(Pardon me, Excuse me) Can / could you tell me + wh? + S + verb?**
- *Can you tell me when the train arrives?*
Pardon me, could you tell me how much the book costs?

Now we move on to more formal for every day simple questions. Use these forms for simple everyday questions in stores, with colleagues at work and in other informal situations. Pardon me, excuse me, can you tell me + wh? + subject + verb. Can you tell me when the train arrives? Pardon me, could you tell me how much the book costs? Now let us watch a role play.

(Refer Video Start Time: 03:12)



Student 1: Excuse me.

Student 2: Ya.

Student 1: , do you mind me asking how much did the book cost you?

Student 2: Ya, sure you can. It is for Rs.500/-.

Student 1: Okay.

(Refer Video End Time: 03:32)

(Refer Slide Time: 03:35)

Formal for More Complicated Questions and Asking Important People Questions

- Use these forms when asking complicated questions that require a lot of information, as well as asking information questions of important people such as your boss, on a job interview, etc.
- **I wonder if you could + tell me / explain / provide information on ...**
- *I wonder if you could explain how health insurance is handled at your company.*
I wonder if you could provide information on your pricing structure.
- **Would you mind + verb + ing ...?**
- *Would you mind telling me a little bit more about benefits at this company?*
Would you mind going over the savings plan again?

Formal for more complicated questions and asking important people questions. (Pe) How formal can you be? You have to use your discretion to decide (ho) how far formal you can go. Sometimes it is very awkward when you try to be formal . What is okay in one language is not okay in another language. So I have a German friend, a young German friend who is studying Punjabi music.

He speaks pure Punjabi and pure Hindi but whenever he asks for information, he uses a German structure. In German, we never ask for information without saying, 'entschuldigen sie, bitte.'excuse me please. So now we are on a busy intersection on Janpath in Delhi and I have my friend say stopping at the corner on a very busy intersection and asking people, 'maaf kijiyege, aap hume bata sakte hai ke waha ka raasta kaha hai?' And people look at him okay what is wrong with you.

People do not have time on a busy (ex) intersections for excuse me. Instead, 'udhar kaise jaana hai?' usually in Hindi you say, how do I get there? But in German you always ask entschuldigen sie, bitte. Excuse me please, how do I get there? So you have to use your discretion to decide what is okay in what situation. Use these forms when asking complicated questions that require a lot of information, as well as asking information questions of important people such as your boss

or on a job interview, etc. Such as I wonder, you always use buffers, because you want to be tentative, you do not want to ask information directly.

So you use phrases like, I wonder, would you mind? I wonder if you could explain how health Insurance is handled at your company, I wonder if you could provide information on your pricing structure, would you mind telling me a little more about the benefits of this company, would you mind going over the savings plan again. Let us watch another role play.

(Refer Video Start Time: 05:55)





Student 1: Come right in, Zeniya Nandra. I have some good news for you.

Student 2: Hello, mam.

Student 1: You are hired. We've selected you for the position of the P.R. officer.

Student 2: Thank you so much mam. I was wondering if I could ask you about my package.

Student 1: Not at all. You may go to accounts section and they will explain the company policy to you.

Student 2: Thank you so much mam.

(Refer Video End Time: 06:21)

Asking for information, mind you, there is wall of difference between, a can and could, do you mind, would you? They are not the same.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:33)

Asking for Information

- Can you tell me...?
- Could you tell me...?
- I'd like to know...
- D'you know...
- (Got / Have you) any idea...?
- Could anyone tell me...?
- (Do / Would) you happen to know...?
- I don't suppose you (would) know...?
- I wonder if you could tell me...?
- I wonder if someone could tell me...?

- Phrases 1 - 10 are all followed by indirect questions. So 'What's the time?' becomes 'Can you tell me what the time is?'.
- Phrase 2 is a little more formal and polite than phrase 1.
- Phrases 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 are polite and are good to use if you are asking a stranger or you are asking at a public information desk.
- Phrase 4 is more informal.
- Phrases 5 and 7 are more informal if you say them with out the part in () brackets.
- Phrases 9 and 10 are very formal and in an informal situation some people may react strangely if they think that you are being sarcastic.
- By using phrases 1 to 10, we make it easier for the listener to say 'Sorry I don't know'.

We tend to think that we can substitute one for the other, but it makes a lot of difference. Which particular phrase you use in which situation. So, a phrase like, can you tell me? Could you tell me? I'd like to know. Do you know? Do you have any idea? Could anyone tell me? Would you happen to know? I do not suppose you would know. I wonder, if you could tell me? I wonder, if someone could tell me? Now, phrase one to ten are all followed by indirect question. So instead of saying, 'what is the time?' becomes, 'can you tell me what the time is?' you are tentative. phrase two is a little more, phrase two is a little more formal and polite than phrase one.

Instead of saying, 'can you' if you say 'could' is more polite. Phase three, six, seven, eight, nine and ten are polite and good to use if you are asking a stranger or you are asking at a Public Information Desk. Phrases like, do you know? Do you have any idea? Could anyone tell me? I'd like to know? You could use these to a stranger. Phrase four is more formal, 'do you know?' Phrase five and seven are more informal if you say them without the part in brackets.

So, the phrase, any idea , what is cooking for dinner today? That will be informal. But, 'do you have any idea if the boss is out of station or in town?' That becomes formal. Phrase nine and ten are very formal. I wonder, if you could tell me? I wonder, if someone could tell me? And in an informal situation some people may react strangely, if they think that you are being sarcastic. So if everyone is not shown up for the meeting and I say, 'I wonder if someone could tell me when

we are going to start the meeting?’ that would sound as if I am being sarcastic. By using phrases one to ten we make it easier for the listener to say, ‘sorry I do not know.’

(Refer Slide Time: 08:50)

Formulas for asking for information

Here are some of the most common:

- Could you tell me...?
- Do you know...?
- Do you happen to know...?
- I'd like to know...
- Could you find out...?
- I'm interested in...
- I'm looking for..

Okay. Formulas for asking for information. Here are some of the most common ones, could you tell me? Do you know? Do you happen to know? Do you happen to have a piece of paper on you? Do you happen to have a pen on you? We do not ask, give me a pen. You say, do you happen to have a pen on you? I would like to know. Could you find out? I am interested in. I am looking for. And now, you try them out. Could you tell me what is the time by your watch? Do you know we have spring fest coming up next week? I would like to know, at what time will the professor come? Could you find out about my mid semester marks as I am unable go to class because of my injury? I am interested in finance. I was wondering, if you could tell me about the upcoming projects?

(Refer Slide Time: 09:58)

Using could

Could you tell me	when	the next train leaves?
Do you know	how much	that vase costs?
Do you happen to know	where	Tom lives?
I'd like to know	what	you think about the new project.
Could you tell me	when	the next train leaves?
Could you find out	when	she is going to arrive?

So, you can try these. Could you tell me when the next train leaves? Do you know how much that vase costs? Do you happen to know where Tom lives? I'd like to know, what you think about the new project. Could you tell me when the next train leaves? Could you find out when she is going to arrive? So these are some for you to try out. You can try out the variations. Let us watch these siblings waiting in patiently for their favorite movie to start.

(Refer Video Start Time: 10:30)





Student 1: What time is the movie?

Student 2: I think it is at 8 o clock.

Student 1: Can you check please?

Student 2: You are such a lazy. Give me a second.

Student 1: Thanks sis.

Student 2: Ya, the movie is at 8. Get off the couch sometimes.

(Refer Video End Time: 10:59)

Now try this yourself. Try this role play yourself in a simple situation and then watch a customer ask a shop assistant for information.

(Refer Video Start Time: 11:20)



Student 1: Hey, excuse me. can you guide me to the men's way please?

Student 2: Sure, the men's way is right at the top floor.

Student 1: Okay. Can you just guide me to the sheets section?

Student 2: No problem. The sheet are right at the 3rd floor at the back.

Student 1: Oh, thank you. Thanks for your help.

Student 2: My pleasure.

(Refer Video End Time: 11:43)

Now let us move to a more complex, more formal situation between two colleagues.

(Refer Video Start Time: 11:56)







Student 1: Hello Angad.

Student 2: Hey hi.

Student 1: How you doing?

Student 2: I am doing great.

Student 1: So, you are ready for the event?

Student 2: Ya, ya.

Student 1: Do you mind me asking some of the questions about your event?

Student 2: Ya sure.

Student 1: Okay. You could tell me have you planned about the date when would it begin so that I could start the publicity?

Student 2: Ya, it is like starting from 1st March.

Student 1: Okay. And I was wondering if you (fa) decided upon your sponsors?

Student 2: Ya, I had a word with like few multinational companies. Let us see which one I finalize.

Student 1: And the cost of your some sources in the event?

Student 2: It is quite big.

Student 1: Okay. And how about the outsourcing of the event?

Student 2: It is going great ya.

Student 1: Okay, wonderful. Okay see you then.

Student 2: Ya sure.

Student 1: Thanks.

(Refer Video End Time: 12:52)

Asking for information, asking for directions to go somewhere. where is the chemist? Can you give me the directions to the nearest bus-stop? How do you get to the train station? where can I get the nearest bakery? How do I get to the park? Is there a super market here? Is there a sports shop around here? Can you tell me how to get to the library from here? What is the best way to get to the computer stop from here? What is the quickest way to get to the music store from here? And what is the easiest way to the nearest McDonald's from here?

So you would find yourself asking for information when you go to a strange place, a strange city and you often ask people for information. How do you do it?

(Refer Slide Time: 13:50)

Replying to a Request for Information

- If you would like to provide information when asked for information, start your reply with one of the following phrases.
- **Informal**
 - Sure
 - No problem.
 - Let me see ...
- **More Formal**
 - I'd be happy to answer that.
 - I should be able to answer your question.
 - It'd be a pleasure to help you.
- When providing information people will sometimes also offer to help in other ways. See the example conversations below for an example.

Now we move on to, we conclude (whet) how to reply to a request for information. When you are asked for information, how do you reply? If you would like to provide information when asked for information, start your reply with one of the following phrases. Informal, sure, no problem, let me see. More formal would be, I'd be happy to answer that, I should be able to answer your question, it'd be a pleasure to help you. When providing information people will sometimes also offer to help in other ways. See the examples, we are gonna watch some examples now. Informal.

(Refer Video Start Time: 14:44)



Student 1: Could you please tell me if there is a Sub-Way in the campus?

Student 2: Sure, ya there is one.

Student 1: Okay. And if you are not busy could you please direct me to Sub-Way or take me along?

Student 2: Ya, let me see because I think I have an appointment right now.

Student 1: Anyways, thank you.

(Refer Video End Time: 15:06)

Formal.

(Refer Video Start Time: 15:10)



Student 1: Do you have any idea at what time the seminar would begin?

Student 2: Ya, I will be happy to help you with that. I think it will begin in next half an hour.

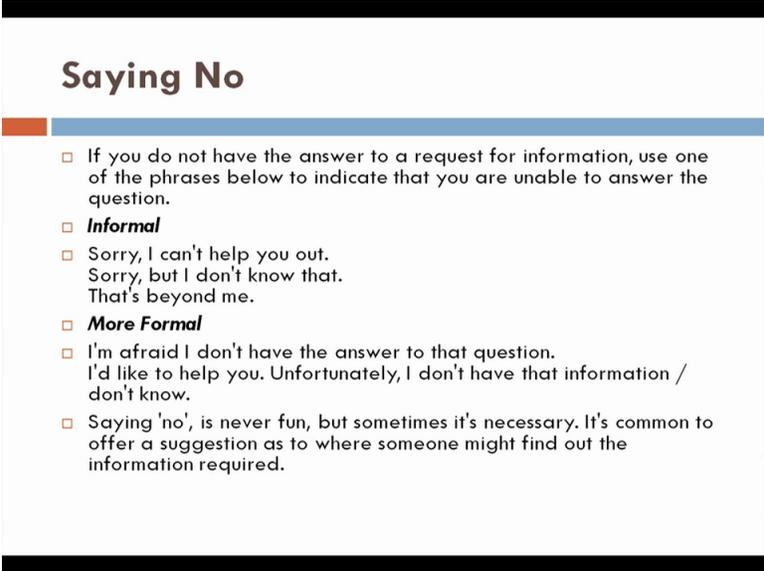
Student 1: Okay. And would you mind taking me to the registration desk?

Student 2: No, I will be happy to help you with that.

(Refer Video End Time: 15:27)

How do you say no? when you are not able to help someone and not provide the information. How do you say you cannot provide the information? If you do not have the answer to a request for information, use one of the phrases to indicate that you are unable to answer the question.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:50)



Saying No

- If you do not have the answer to a request for information, use one of the phrases below to indicate that you are unable to answer the question.
- **Informal**
- Sorry, I can't help you out.
Sorry, but I don't know that.
That's beyond me.
- **More Formal**
- I'm afraid I don't have the answer to that question.
I'd like to help you. Unfortunately, I don't have that information / don't know.
- Saying 'no', is never fun, but sometimes it's necessary. It's common to offer a suggestion as to where someone might find out the information required.

Informal, sorry I can not help you out, sorry but I do not know that, that is beyond me. More formal, I am afraid I do not have the answer to that question. I'd like to help you. Unfortunately I do not have that information/I do not know. Saying 'no' is never fun, but sometimes it is necessary. it is common to offer a suggestion as to where someone might find out the information required. In India on the other hand, people are very afraid to say no. They want to be so helpful that they would always tell you something even if they do not have the answer.

You must have faced it when tried driving through a city and you asked your way to somebody's house and people say, turn left, turn right even if they do not know. From this point they say, okay go and (th) at the next traffic signal you can ask the person. But people do not like saying, 'no'. You can say no. Let us watch the two ladies say 'no' in the right way. Formal. Informal.

(Refer Video Start Time: 17:28)



Student 1: Hey, hello.

Student 2: Hello.

Student 1: Could you please tell me if there is a Sub-Way in the campus?

Student 2: Sure, ya there is one.

Student 1: Okay. And could you please direct me to Sub-Way or could you come along there?

Student 2: Umm, let me see.

(Refer Video End Time: 17:50)

You were supposed to be informal. Informal.

(Refer Video Start Time: 18:07)



Student 1: Hey.

Student 2: Hey.

Student 1: Is there Sub-Way around in the campus?

Student 2: Ya, there is one.

Student 1: Okay. So come along if you are not busy. You can direct me to the place.

Student 2: Umm, let me see.

Student 1: Okay.

(Refer Video End Time: 18:22)

More formal.

(Refer Video Start Time: 18:27)





Student 1: Good morning.

Student 2: Good morning.

Student 1: Could you tell me at what time the seminar would begin?

Student 2: Ya, I will be happy to answer that. it will begin in next one hour.

Student 1: Okay. And do you mind taking me towards the registration desk?

Student 2: Ya, it will be a pleasure to help you. I will just lead you to the desk.

Student 1: Thank you.

(Refer Video End Time: 18:48)

Sometimes you do not know the answer. When someone ask you for information, you do not have the answer, do not be afraid to say no. It is okay to say no. But it is important to say no in the right way.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:05)

Saying No

- If you do not have the answer to a request for information, use one of the phrases below to indicate that you are unable to answer the question.
- **Informal**
 - Sorry, I can't help you out.
 - Sorry, but I don't know that.
 - That's beyond me.
- **More Formal**
 - I'm afraid I don't have the answer to that question.
 - I'd like to help you. Unfortunately, I don't have that information / don't know.
- Saying 'no', is never fun, but sometimes it's necessary. It's common to offer a suggestion as to where someone might find out the information required.

If you do not have the answer to a request for information, use one of the phrases below to indicate that you are unable to answer the question. Sorry Informal, sorry I can not help you out, sorry but I do not know that, that is beyond me. You could also say it more formally. I am afraid I do not have the answer to that question, I'd like to help you, unfortunately I do not have that information. Saying 'no' is never fun, but sometimes it is necessary. It is common for people to offer a suggestion as to where someone (wa) might find out the information required. (Forma) Informal.

(Refer Video Start Time: 19:54)





Student 1: Can you help me out with this problem?

Student 2: sorry I cannot help you out.

Student 1: Umm, actually it was about the electronics you know.

Student 2: I am not interested in electronics, that is beyond me.

(Refer Video End Time: 20:10)

Formal. Let us begin with an informal way of saying no.

(Refer Video Start Time: 20:30)



Student 1: Hey, can you help me out with this problem?

Student 2: Sorry, I cannot help you out.

Student 1: Oh, I understand because I think it is about electronics.

Student 2: My God electronics, that is just beyond me.

(Refer Video End Time: 20:49)

More formal.

(Refer Video Start Time: 20:52)



Student 1: Hey, can you tell me why this device is not working? I am not getting the correct readings.

Student 2: I am afraid I do not have the answer to that question.

Student 1: Oh! And can you tell me, when is the end semester?

Student 2: I'd like to help you but unfortunately, I do not know when is your end semester. You would get to know soon about that from (())(21:12) section.

Student 1: Thank you.

(Refer Video End Time: 21:14)

We conclude the session on asking for information here. We will move on to making requests.