

LINGUISTIC SKILL OF LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING

*Rabindra Nath Mohanty

**Dr Dhirendra Kumar Mohanty

Abstract

A pupil should be able to understand simple English when spoken. This ability requires him to be able to recognize and distinguish between speech sounds, sound units, contrast, as well as its use being in terms grammar, syntax and context. A teacher has to be very careful while teaching how to listen, because this cannot be properly evaluated to know the progress of a student. A teacher has to be patient while teaching listening, as speakers use the language in different tones with regional tongues, which can make listening and understanding difficult.

Keywords: Linguistic, Skills, Communication, English.

Introduction

Speech is basic to language, written word came into existence as a graphic manipulation representing the spoken word. It is for this reason that even when we write or read, we continue to speak the written word in our mind. Dr. B. Ballard states, "We are ever liable to forget that language is first and foremost a spoken thing, not a written thing. Its appeal is to the ear, not to the eye." He has further stated that "the bulk of mankind are as illiterate as our multitudinous ancestors and the literate themselves speak far more abundantly than they write." This statement in no way divests the written word of its significance. Due to this, Dr. Ballard, in his book Teaching and Testing English, recommends, "Speech training should have precedence over learning to read, in point of time as well as in point of importance." F.G. French too is of the same opinion when he writes, "Speech is the groundwork; all the rest are built up from it. Through speech, the pupil learns to make the direct connection between the English word or phrase and the object, action or idea it bears. He learns the habit of using words in the correct sentence-patterns and phrase-patterns and he can learn this in no other way."

The above discussion clearly illustrates that speech enables the pupil to make all the links and associations in his mind required to fix new words. A.W. Frisby writes, "A good speech is just as much normal behaviour as being polite; slovenly, unintelligible speech from a person who should know better, is impolite." Because of it, we have fixed our linguistic aims by giving priority to spoken English. The cultural aim of teaching English also is in practice, as Menon and Patel have described it, "Good pronunciation is a hallmark of culture." We learn our mother tongue starting from speech.

As we have to do more with the spoken form in our day-to-day life. A.W. Frisby writes, "Communicative English by spoken language is a social activity, it is a type of social behaviour just like eating, earning one's living or knocking on the Principal's door before going in."

We have also discussed in the preceding chapters that many of our speakers of English language use it much the same way as they use their mother tongue or regional language. A person living in West Bengal can be known of his origin the way he

* Research Scholar, Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences, Sehore (M.P.)

**Supervisor, Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences, Sehore (M.P.)

speaks English. So is the case with other people living in other parts of India. In fact, we have allowed our regional identity to prevail on English speech. In the words of V.K. Gokak, "Our pupils and indeed many of their teachers, speak English as if it were Hindi, Bengali, Marathi or Tamil. Our regional speech habits have absorbed spoken English and regionalised it."

We can see abundant examples of retardation of English speech all around us. We can pronounce school as sakul, iskul, askul, and so on depending on the region we live. There can hardly be made any distinction between fool and phone. We are prone to speaking flame as phalaem.

A.W. Frisby writes, "Correct speech, therefore, is the essence of refinement." By correct speech is meant to speak the language as it should be spoken, and not in the way a person may desire to under various regional and ethnic angularities and influences. There is no doubt that the mother tongue serves as a deterrent or obstacle in learning English, however, it should be overcome if linguistic and cultural aims of learning English are to be realised and achieved. We have to achieve linguistic refinement despite our shortcomings and drawbacks of not being face-to-face with real English situations, which can be said to be the ideal objective of learning English.

Review of Literature

Tata Umar Sa'ad (2014) examined the students of secondary school metropolis of Jigawa state. the author analyzed the reasons behind poor performance of the students in oral communicative english. The present study included the investigation of teachers and students of five secondary schools in Dutse metropolis. The study was conducted on 379 people out of which 300 were students and 79 were teachers. The descriptive survey design was used and questionnaire was used in collection of data. Frequency and simple percentage were used in the analysis of data. The study concluded that there are some factors which are responsible for use of mother tongue instead of English as a communicating language. It is because that teachers were not so much qualified that they can make understood to the students the importance of oral communicative english through English, moreover students also have negative attitude towards.

S Sharma (2013) studied and concluded that it was very necessary to learn to communicate in English language because this language had become most popular among all working areas. Oral communicative english through English language was globally accepted. English language was

important for business, commerce and cultural reasons and especially for accessing the internet anywhere in the world. The researcher used 't' test to compare the communicative english skill in English, of higher students.

Nguyen Hoang Tuan (2015) examined that in learning any language it was most difficult task to speak that language. Brown et al., (1983) also showed in their study that oral communicative english was the most important and difficult task of any learning language. It was always observed that when learner learnt many language, they find it really difficult to express themselves in spoken language in the target language.

Norma Nel (2010) concluded that each and every person have their own mother tongue, and because of this English was considered as second language. There were certain education programmes for teachers as well as students. It played a very important role in teacher education programmes and in children's learning. The present study revealed the English as the language of learning and teaching. Oral communicative english through English language had its impact on the language development of English second language (ESL) student teachers and ESL learners.

Regional Standard of Speech in English

We are aware that there are available several varieties of English, the prominent among them being British English, American English, African English, and now South Asian English (Indian English). Since the speech habits of our native languages make us distinct from the European speakers with different stress and intonation habits, our English can never tuned like that of a British. And if we try to emulate them, we are liable to termed as 'feigning'. It is for this reason that voices have been raised accord a regional standard to the variety of English as prevalent in South in general and India in particular. Gatenby too has recognised "Indian English" and he says that it is the ripe time we should recognize It as a regional standard. The desired standard is the English speech of educated Indians in general, much similar to the RP (received pronunciation) being the speech of the educated British people in South Prof. V.K. Gokak too has treaded the similar lines when he says that exists an Indian pronunciation of English as spoken by educated. He further recommends that this standard of English should be in each state according to the local standard of the native tongue.

However, in this form, it would become too generalised. Hence, the standard of English should be taken as centrally belonging to the whole of India. Moreover, the so-called Indian standard of English is a vague idea, but it is being identified

increasingly as a kind of English, and its evidence can be found in several Indian words being included in Oxford and Webster's dictionaries. Just consider a few words dhartal, bandh, dhoti, papa, goonda, chapati, and so on.

There is no doubt that patience and work is required to be done in this field before we can come to a conclusion to know the standard of English as it exists in India. A research would have to be conducted of the way people in various professions speak it. After an exhaustive study, standard Indian pronunciation of English words can be found out. The aim of this whole exercise would be to teach our pupils the standard 'Indian English pronunciation' as made out with the help of several graphic signs for wide distribution in the public. Jespersen says that 'the science of phonetics' can be of positive help in learning something. The statement of Thompson and Wyatt is relevant, "We should aim at teaching an intelligible rather than a correct pronunciation as other items of work of greater relative importance claim our attention."

Retardation of Speech

The above discussion entails that forming of good speaking habits is necessary for our pupils. Indian pronunciation is being accepted as a standard. Even the professors, businessmen, industrialists and other professionals who have to go abroad in the land where English is a native language, they tend to adopt the Indian standard variety of English after they come back home, only to make themselves more intelligible, and for the fear of being termed as aliens. So, our aim of learning English has to be 'educated Indian standard' or 'near pronunciation' as it is said. Though our speech may seem to be retarded to the native speakers of English, yet we should not be bogged down by it so far we are able to use correct word in their proper grammar and syntax. Jespersen also advocates teaching of an intelligible rather than correct pronunciation. He has advised as such because 'English pronunciation contains a large number of vowels, diphthongs and consonants than the average Indian pronunciation of English; that it has a stress system and a system of intonation; and that it is completely intelligible to speakers of other educated dialects of English in India'.

Despite the 'near pronunciation', which can be seen as a concession from exact English RP, there can be seen general retardation in spoken English in India. It is because of the fact that spoken aspect does not receive proper attention it should be given, and that it suffers from niggles and incompetence of the teachers. More emphasis is laid on the write-work and oral work is given a second-nay-third or perhaps the last and least significance. The teachers with this bent of mind simply forget that let a

student master a sentence-pattern in speech, and he would find that easier to master it in writing as well, rather than the other way round.

If a student is unable to understand something owing to linguistic limitations, effort should be made to seek specialist teachers for him, so that he may not be deprived from vital knowledge.

When students coming from diverse languages and cultures mingle at school, they cultivate tolerance and harmony, as they get a chance to know about different languages and cultures. They also come to know of the strong and weak points of different cultures, and they adopt the good points.

This helps in multicultural awareness, which is so vital for the country's strength and freedom. It has been seen that those who have studied in multilingual classrooms and who have lived in multicultural environment, are better humans. They are also able to understand things in a more proper context. Therefore, an emphasis should be laid on cultivation of multicultural awareness among all students. This can be done by bringing students in interaction with students/people coming from diverse cultures.

Another Aspect of Multilingualism

The NCERT has pointed out yet another aspect of multilingualism in education. It truly says that a small child learns language by imitation, and it can learn all those languages that are being used in his environment. Thus, a child is able to grasp all those languages that may be used before him. If a Bengali child lives in Delhi, he can pick up the mother tongue (Bengali) and the language being spoken in his environment (which may be Hindi and/or Punjabi) in addition to English. He is able to shift from using one language to another without losing no time. Thus, childhood is the right age to teach several languages, but this can be done not by pedagogy, but by giving suitable multilingual environment. This will also help to bind the whole country in a single cord. Solemn effort should be made towards this direction.

Conclusion

India is home to diverse cultures, lifestyles, codes of conduct and languages. The number of speakers of different languages in the country has presented a burning problem before the country as to adopt which language as the medium of instruction. Even after recognising fourteen languages in the Constitution of India, no solution has been presented.

The traits that we earned due to slavery to the British are also at its root. This can be inferred from the statement of Lord Macaulay who said that

the books of European literature that can be kept in one shelf of a library cupboard are more valuable than the whole Arabian or Indian literature, so the European culture should be propagated by the medium of English by which the Indians despite their native dress and physique should be physically foreign.

This statement of Lord Macaulay is quite applicable, because while taking mother tongue as the medium of instruction, a child has also to study English forcibly, and this trend is based in getting employment. It seems that the Indian civilization remains incomplete without having studied English.

References

1. Bilal, H. A. Rehman, A. Rashi, C. H. A. Adnan, R. Abbas, M., Problems in Speaking English with L2 Learners of Rural Area School of Pakistan, *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2013, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 1222-1228.
2. Farooq, M. S. Hassan, M. U. Wahid, S., Opinion of Second Language Learners about Writing Difficulties in English Language, *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, 2012, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 185- 194.
3. Haider, G., An Exploratory Study of Organizational Problems Faced by Pakistani Student Writers with Learning Difficulties (LD) in EFL Writing. *International Journals of English and Education*, 2014, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 127-145.
4. Tariq, A. Bilal, A. Sandhu, M. Iqbal, A. & Hayat, U., Difficulties in learning English as a second language in Rural areas of Pakistan. *Journal social sciences and humanities*, 2013, vol. 4, no. 6.
5. Hassan T. & Sajid, A., ICTs in learning: problems faced by Pakistan, *Journal of Research and Reflections in Education*, 2013, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 52-64.
6. Teevno, R., Challenges in teaching and learning of English at secondary level class x, *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 2011, Vol. 1, no. 2.