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THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTHER TONGUE IN EDUCATION - ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Data analysis was done by the process of preparing questionnaire, interviewing the learners to observe their pronunciation difficulties, recording their voices to watch the difficulties in pronunciation, interacting with the learners to investigate the problem areas in learning English, observing the learners using English while conversing, etc.

Keywords: Data analysis, learning, pronunciation, learning, capitalization.

1. Introduction

The questionnaire was prepared on learners' demographic details, interest, opinion in learning English, etc. and

distributed to 200 respondents selected from four engineering colleges in and around Chennai. Among them 100 respondents' feedback were selected for

analysis. After analysing the questionnaire, 50 students from different languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Hindi and Bhojpuri were selected for oral interview and their difficulties in pronunciation at the time of interview were noted and discussed. After finishing the interview process, 25 students were selected for voice recording. They were asked to read one passage from their core subject and their voices were recorded while reading. The process was continued and they were made to hear their own voices to realize their mistakes in pronunciation. The recorded voices were analysed.

The regional languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Bhojpuri, etc. are not at all close to English, the structural pattern is not same, and vocabulary and syntax are not identical. So the learners naturally found it difficult to speak and write in English. Hence the interference of mother tongue was felt for the learners coming from above said languages.

The grammatical elements such as the usage of verbs, auxiliaries, articles, prepositions, etc. and linguistic analysis such as phonology, morphology and sentence structure, etc. in Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Bhojpuri, and bilingual of Hindi and Bhojpuri languages to find out the differences and usage of English comprising grammatical and linguistic elements using the data of questionnaire, interview, observation, video recording, etc. The grammatical and linguistic analysis in these languages helped the researcher to find out the way and the reason for the learners finding it difficult to pronounce English words properly and write sentences in English correctly. Some of the grammatical elements such as the usage of articles, adjectives, auxiliary verbs, capitalization, etc. and linguistic elements such as phonology, morphology, sentence structure, etc. between mother tongue and foreign tongue are the problematic areas for the learners hailing from rural areas of T.N.,

A.P., M.P., U.P., etc. speaking Ta.Te. Hi.Bhoj. and bilingual of Hi and Bhojpuri.

The major reason for the problem of interference of their mother tongue is the translation of each word from the mother tongue to the foreign tongue because of the misconception that all languages are alike. In all other above said regional languages, extensive scrambling is possible with different pragmatic effects. Absence of capitalization, no usage of auxiliary verbs and article, sentence without verb, and the possibility of the word order in the sentence not changing the meaning, etc. made the learners get confused. The analysis helped the researcher to get possible conclusion to eliminate the problem of interference of mother Tongue in learning English as second language. It started with the different features of language such as grammatical and linguistic elements and illustrated.

Analysis of Linguistic Elements

The influence of the mother tongue is contributive to the problems in English sounds and pronunciation. For example, in Tamil there is no exact letter for each sound. One letter can be used for two, three sounds e.g. for 'pa', 'ba', 'pha', 'bha' words they are using one letter 'pa'. So when students were asked to pronounce the voiced and voiceless plosives /p/ and /b/ they felt difficult and there occurred the interference. They pronounced 'pin' and 'bin' alike. The Telugu students pronounced every word without exception with the vowel sound /u/ because most of the words in Telugu end with /u/ sound like 'kooralu', 'bommalu', etc. So they pronounced English words end with the vowel sound /u/. e.g. 'girl' is pronounced as 'girlu'. The Hindi students found it difficult to pronounce the short vowel sound /e/ in words and they elongated the /e/ sound in words such as /red/ /ten/, etc. and pronounced because they did not have the short vowel /e/ sound. The Bhojpuri students shortened the long vowel sounds

and pronounced nasal sounds as consonant sounds. e.g. 'present' was pronounced 'prezent' and 'Rajeev' as 'Rajiv' because the long vowel sounds were not found enough in Bhojpuri language.

Morphology

The influence of the mother tongue is contributive to the problems in English pronunciation. One letter in the verb indicates the gender of the doer in other languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, and Bhojpuri. But in English there is no change in the verb.

e.g. Eng. She/he comes.

Ta. Avan vandaan.

Aval vandaal

Here the letter 'n' indicates male gender and the letter 'l' indicates female gender in Tamil.

Te. Athadu vachinaadu.

Aavida vachinaadi.

Here the letter 'u' indicates male gender and the letter 'i' indicates female gender in Telugu.

Hi. Vah aaya

Vah aayi

Here the letter 'a' indicates male gender and the letter 'i' indicates female in Hindi.

Bhoj. U avatha

U avathia

Here the letter 'a' indicates male and the letters 'ia' indicates female in Bhojpuri.

The suffix to the verb in their respective mother tongue(s) may give the meaning of the past tense as well as plural form which gives confusion to the learners. The morphology is agglutinative or concatenating:

e.g. Eng. They destroyed the papers. (Only past form of verb)

Analysis of Phonology, Morphology and Sentence Structure of Tamil.

Tamil is the one of the major literary languages. It belongs to the south Dravidian sub group. It has high literary tradition. It is considered one of the Dravidian classical languages of the world. (www.google.com). In India, it is the

official language in the state of Tamil Nadu.

In English, there are 20 vowel sounds divided into 12 pure vowels and 8 diphthongs. But in Tamil there are only 12 vowels with long and short sounds. There is no exact letter for the sound. One letter can be used for two, there sounds e.g. 'pa' and 'ba' sounds are written using one letter 'Pa'. It interferes when students are asked to pronounce the voiced and voiceless plosive sounds / p/ and /b/ and they are pronounced alike. e.g. pin and bin get pronounced alike with 'p' sound. Caldwell argued, "Tamil grammar is not good either syntactically or semantically." (1856: pp 254,255). In Tamil, difference in phonological structure was conspicuous.

Vowels

In Tamil the vowel /e/ has two sounds, long and short, but in English there is one /e/ short vowel sound. The sound /e/ gets elongated and comes under the diphthongal sound as /ei/. The /ai/ diphthong comes as pure vowel sound in Tamil. But in English /ai/ comes under diphthongal sound. The letter 'o' is pronounced as short and long vowel in Tamil but it won't be pronounced as 'o' in English. The /au/ sound is pronounced as diphthong in English but it comes under pure vowel in Tamil. There are two /a/ sounds in Tamil in the form of short and long vowel but in English the letter 'a' is pronounced in 5 different ways.

Consonants

In English there are 24 consonants but in Tamil there are 18 consonants only which do not match with those in English. The consonants such as plosives /b/, /d/, /g/, fricatives /f/, /h/, /s/, /ʒ/, /z/, semi vowels /w/, / (j) y/, the affricates, etc. are not found in Tamil. In Tamil there is no Sanskrit siblings of 's, sh, and sHh', etc. Because of all these reasons, Tamil learners feel difficult to pronounce the voiced and voiceless words.

Conclusion

From this study the researcher has found that the interference of mother

tongue could be reduced to a greater level by organizing special programme such as introducing the language laboratory to the set of students taken as sample. To acquire proper pronunciation in English with less interference of mother tongue, modern spoken English classes can be conducted by trained faculties because continuous and vigorous practice makes them get proper knowledge in English. Conducting self assessment programmes such as learning programmes, power point presentation, presenting paper in seminar, submission of project report, lingua phone recording, etc. may help the learners learn English effectively. The family background, school surrounding such as poor infrastructure, over crowd in class, etc. unenthusiastic untrained teachers, the peer group, etc. are the true factors that affect the learners in learning English as second language.

By these efforts the researcher feels that the problem taken for research has been considerably eliminated though it could not be eradicated. No foreign tongue can be learnt at the expense of mother tongue. The study will be significant for English faculties who work in professional colleges as they will be able to understand the influence of mother tongue in learning English to communicate and help the learners to correct their mistakes in using English.

To acquire proper pronunciation in English with less interference of mother tongue, vigorous practice must be given in IPA vowel sounds rather than consonantal sounds because the consonantal sounds may be acquired easily with the help of other letters in the word. English should be taught for specific purpose by strengthening the learners' general knowledge in English vocabulary, and grammar elements such as verb, adjectives, articles, homonyms, homophones, denotations, connotations, tense, etc.

The researcher has found out the learners' problems by analyzing the data

and concluded that using mother tongue in the English language class for the slow learners and the learners coming from rural areas could be benefit to some extent. But using of mother tongue should have some limitations. This idea is opened by the respondents at the time of interview and it should be explored. If the learners are involved in the learning process with some interest, then the teaching and learning process could reach successfully.

It is found that the learners wished to receive some changes inside the classroom in English teaching. The learners feel that instead of teaching simply using blackboard, teachers can follow some of the classroom activities such as role play, group discussion, enacting a play, etc. Here the researcher feels that to make the learners learn English effectively by understanding the concept, the curriculum should go beyond the text. The 'chalk and Talk' method in the class must be avoided and the class must be learner- centred. Learners should learn in what way they want to learn and what they want to learn rather than what they have to learn.

The English teacher should know the latest development in linguistic reforms going throughout the world. The teacher should act as a co-participant in the process of learning. The teacher should always go with an open mind and ready to learn. He/she should update his/her knowledge to teach effectively and efficiently, English teaching is not only based on four skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing but also on other skills such as personality, technical, etc. The teacher should be aware of current trends as well as technique to teach the learners because sometimes students know better than teachers as they are using new technological gadgets such as I-pod, I-pad, net browsing, etc.

The faculties handling other subjects in professional colleges should be well versed in the communicative language in English without their mother

tongue interference. For that, all faculty members should be given special training in spoken and written practice in English by the qualified organizations such as RIE (Regional Institute of English), CIEFL (Central Institute of English Foreign Language), and British Council, so that they could be a model to the students. Then it is possible to reduce the interference of mother tongue. However, the influence of the mother tongue cannot be altogether eradicated.

As the science subjects have practical laboratory classes, in English teaching, language laboratory training should be involved to teach proper pronunciation, stress, intonation, etc. Self-assessment programmes such as video-conferencing, power point presentation, etc. are more effective than attending seminars, workshop, etc. in learning English to speak and write because while attending the seminars and workshop, learners are not given more chance to learn themselves they involve.

If the learners could avoid common pitfalls in learning because of their mother tongue influence, they could learn the English language effectively up to the mark. Teachers should conduct some of the class room activities to get fruitful results in teaching as well as to help the learners learn more. Group Discussion helps the learners to develop thinking and listening skills. Topic for discussion should be on current news because it can help the learners to discuss. Role Play helps to develop speaking skill. Students should select a personality of their choice to play. JAM (Just A Minute) helps the learners to develop their vocabulary spontaneously. The topic for JAM should be given on the spot and ask the learners to talk on it. Teacher should develop the understanding skill in students to go beyond the given topic or information. Learners should try to develop their insight on other important concepts.

If the government and management intervene on ground realities such as

infrastructural facilities, well trained teachers to teach, syllabus design, etc., students' interests in learning English in professional colleges may be instigated further. Teachers should make the learners know the difference between 'wants' and 'needs' and make them fulfill their needs rather than their wants. Quality of English teaching in educational institutions is in a coma stage which needs much care and attention.

By these efforts the researcher feels that the problem taken for research has been exposed considerably for elimination though not for eradication. No foreign tongue can be learnt at the expense of one's mother tongue. It is proved that the native language of the learners hailing from rural areas of T.N., A.P., M.P., and U.P., etc. speaking Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, and Bhojpuri dominates in the English learning process.

The problem of mother tongue should be eliminated but how and when the interference of mother tongue can be eliminated is still a question to be answered.

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