



TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH

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Abstract

Phobia to speak in English is the major problem of many students of Rural India. After studying for fifteen years in different classes students are unable to acquire English speaking skills. Where is that lapse? It's very common that even after completion of their graduation most of the students fail to speak in English. Though they could learn to read and write to some extent, fail to acquire speaking skills. It is common feature in many schools that many teachers though they are good in their subject, are unable to speak in English and often they turn to mother tongue while teaching.

There are many friends from Muslim community. They speak Urdu and Telugu the state language with the same authority. Telugu will be taught in Schools when they join the school after attaining five years of age. But before entering the school they will be able to speak in both the languages. As my native place is adjacent to Karnataka many of my friends use to speak Telugu and Kannada equally well. But these friends did not learn Kannada in any school. But when need arises they could express their ideas in both the languages without any hesitation. One can find the same experience with Telugu and Tamil in Tamilnadu borders.

To our surprise some students speak Telugu, Marathi, Kannada and Urdu clearly even in their early age before going to school. A question arises when these students are capable to learn languages so easily and so quickly, why they fail in learning and speaking English. Most of the students have been studying English since their elementary level but fail to speak in English.

This it clearly shows that somewhere the way English language imparted in the class room and the methodology used could not meet the purpose. The purpose of my paper is to explain where the focus should be to improve the speaking skills of the students. I will also discuss the areas to be improved in present methodology in teaching English to inculcate speaking skills in the students.

Introduction:

Globalisation and privatisation turned the entire world into a global village and need for common language for communication has become inevitable for every country. Already English was under use in many countries. Certain countries which were opposing the importance of English Language also accepted English as a global language and realised its need and role in global trade. India is one of the major countries in the world to supply man power in different fields. But in India the entire student community has been divided into two groups that are rural students and urban students. Urban students take an edge with good communication skills got in English medium schools secure major number of jobs where as the rural students fail to compete with urban students due to phobia to speak in English and low confidence levels though they are potentially good. This problem of rural students and the action to be taken makes a good article.

No separate subject teachers:



In this context India has an advantage of language as British ruled the country for two hundred years and their English has become National Language even after securing independence. That helped India to get more jobs in abroad. At the same time the gap between the rural students and the urban students widened in acquiring English language skills. Earlier no separate teachers were posted to teach English in AP Government schools at High School level. Other subject teachers use to take English classes. Thus rural students were deprived of the facility to learn English. Urban students got the opportunity to study in English medium schools and they could secure major jobs in the country and abroad. Later Government identified its mistake and created separate English teacher posts in all high schools and qualified teachers were posted. Even then the problems of rural student in learning English at competitive level could not be solved. Though the rural students are potentially good in maths, Science and Social sciences, but are weak in English. The reasons are many. We will discuss one by one in detail.

Learning Environment:

First of all, rural students have no environment to learn English. Either in the house or in the society, rural students never get a chance to improve their language. The only opportunity they get is in the school. In the school students will be pressurised to learn writing skills at first. They have to learn English alphabet and when they start identifying the sounds, reading skills will be imparted. Most of the students after learning reading skills, simply by heart the answers and write in the Examination as they are unable to understand the meaning. In the case of mother tongue it's totally different. Students acquire listening skills first and then speaking skills. Writing and reading will start only at later stage. Many students learn different languages which are in their environment.

To our surprise some students speak Telugu, Marathi, Kannada and Urdu clearly even in their early age before going to school. A question arises when these students are capable to learn languages so easily and so quickly, why they fail in learning and speaking English. It shows clearly that when environment is created for any child it will be easy to learn any language. Hence, it is required to create environment to learn English in rural schools. The teachers should help the students and encourage the students to use more English vocabulary. Usually English alphabet starts with 'A' for 'Apple' which is not in their environment and many rural students find rare chance to see an apple. Using the word and repeating the word does not arise in his day to day life except in the class room. Many such things have to be replaced and introduced vocabulary required for their daily use.

Once I participated in a free summer camp which is designed to impart Communication skills in English to rural students for one month in my native place. There the teachers have designed many things activity based and opportunity is given to the students to use



English language. As a part of such activities once JAM was conducted. Each student was asked to speak for a minute on the given topic. Where ever the speaker fails to express his/her ideas in English the audience use to help to complete the sentences. Once a Degree student was on the dais and the theme given to her is to narrate the daily activities of her father. She started to say about how her father fresh up in the early morning and his activity in the field. She could utter some sentences regarding how her father fresh up in the early morning. Regarding field activity she could not get suitable words in English. She stopped and blinking at the audience. The teacher encouraged her to speak out in her mother tongue what she wanted to say so as the audience help her to complete the sentence. What she wants to say is 'Her father goes to field in the early morning and spreads the manure heaps four sides so as to mix evenly in the soil. All the students tried to help her to complete the sentence but they could not get the word 'Manure'. Students struggled to find suitable word. After some effort urban students suggested the word 'Fertiliser' as they have seen it on the name boards of the fertiliser shops. Finally the teacher helped to rectify with suitable 'Manure'. In villages big manure heaps can be seen everywhere and but it won't find place in English text book. Thus the child miss vocabulary of his environment required for his/her daily use. The text books should include the vocabulary required by the students.

Conscious Learning of English:

One should learn the language in unconscious way. Usually many children learn the mother tongue in an unconscious way. At the same time the different languages in their environment also they learn in unconscious way. English has to be learnt in conscious way in the class room is another problem of rural students in India. In Indian languages the number of sounds and the number of symbols will be equal and ther will be no confusion. But in English the number of sounds (44) will be more and the number of symbols (26) will be less. Unless the students learn English Phonetics they are unable to understand the difference between their mother tongue and English. In class room there will be a prescribed syllabus and the content will be not related to their environment. Students learn the language in question and answer method which is no way related in their day to day life. Hence learning English has to be brought to the daily need of the students. Though the prescribed text books include some activities they are not paid any attention in the class room and hence the purpose is defeated. It has to be attended.

Teacher Centre Learning Process:

The present Education system in India is teacher centre learning. Teacher will be active in the class room and the students will be a passive listener. The role of the student in this process is limited. This has to be changed. Student should be given ample opportunity to use the language. The only opportunity students gets to use the language is writing Examination in English subject. Hence, activities have to be designed for active participation of the students. There are many



language games designed and they have to be brought into use. So that the learning activity becomes interesting and the learner will be involved in learning process.

Phobia to Speak in Public meetings:

Generally many people try to avoid speaking in public meetings with the fear that they will be evaluated by others. At the same time low level of confidence also works behind the phobia. There is no exception even to speak in mother tongue also. When comes to public speaking in English the fear of committing mistakes due to shortage of suitable vocabulary, grammatical errors and failure to complete the sentences often. This it is called 'Anglo Phobia'. I have seen many friends of mine who studied in reputed English medium schools since their childhood, are also unable to speak in English public meetings.

Therefore, students in their age opportunity should be provided to speak in the class room by asking them to tell small stories. Picture composition is another method to inculcate this attitude. Teachers have to encourage the students to speak in English though they commit mistakes. Gradually children will learn to avoid mistakes while speaking English. For grown up students the ego is another problem. Opportunity should be provided to speak in English by involving them in role plays, presentation of small skits etc., to gain confidence. The teachers should encourage them without hurting their ego. Other students usually laugh at their friends when they fail to speak on the dais. They have to be advised not to laugh at them and in that place they have to encourage them by helping to complete assignments. Many events which occur in our day today life can be converted into conversations and can be displayed as role plays to come out of this phobia.

Influence of mother tongue:

Influence of mother tongue is another problem for Indian students. The number of sounds and symbols are different in English. Whereas in Indian languages there is no such confusion. The structure of construction of a sentence also will be different. Usually the structure will be 'Subject +Verb +Object' in English. Where as in Telugu it is 'Subject +Object +Verb'. While speaking in English the students follow translation method. As the structure is different in English and mother tongue, students get confused and stop speaking and as far as possible avoid the situation where they need to speak in English. Many times students though they know the answer, they keep quite when a question is put to them due to the language problem.

Sufficient practice, encouragement will help the students to come out of the problem. They have to be enlightened where ever major differences are there in the sentences construction in English mother tongue



I have seen and participated in many activities in one month Free Summer camp on communication skills in English in my native place. Students will be provided ample opportunities to participate in activity based learning. In the initial stage all the students will be guided how to cooperate with other students when they try to perform.

Anglophobia

The fear to speak in English is called "Anglophobia". Right from their childhood a myriad of students are studying in English medium. But they are unable to speak in English. Because they are being bullied by other students, family members etc, for the mistakes they are committing. So they are afraid to speak in English. Eventually they are facing problems in the interviews. As English is a foreign language, it is common to commit mistakes. Some people will laugh at their friends, when they are trying to speak in English. The students are not getting enough encouragement

Student centred teaching and learning

The students must be active. The teacher must be passive and encourage the students in the activities which enhance the communication skills in the students. For the last three years I have been attending a summer coaching camp in my native place. In that camp i have sensed the original innovation in the English Language Teaching.

In that camp both the Essential English Grammar and Communication skills are teaches. And everything is taught through different activities.

For EX: Pronouns are taught by the activity

I – II: I gave my pen to you

I – III: I gave my pen to him

II – I; You gave your pen to me

II – III: He gave his pen to me

III – I: You gave your pen to him

III – II: He gave his pen to me

For Adjectives:

Two persons were invited on to the stage. The first person has to describe the other person by using a list of Adjectives. So that the students will learn how to form the sentences instantaneously. And they will come to know, How to use the Adjectives?

Role plays

Students have to perform role plays and conversations with their partners. This kind of activity is meant for improving the Communication skills. The rural students are lacking in this part. So these kinds of activities play a key role in improving the Soft skills.



This camp is based on the student centered learning process. The participation of the students is very high. Everything shall be taught through the activities. Here, students get the required encouragement to learn the language. The suitable environment will be created in this camp and this made the students to learn the language in an unconscious way. The students will enjoy the learning process.

Introduction of phonetics

The Phonetics is introduced to the school students. The pronunciation of the words makes the students to feel thrilled and make the students enthusiastic to learn the language. But in our present curricula phonetics are introduced in the intermediate stage for the sake of gaining good score, but not to improve the language.

Spontaneous Speaking

Students are given spontaneous topics to speak .So that they will learn how to speak spontaneously. And this helps them to improve their vocabulary and sentence formation.

JAM

Just Minute (JAM) sessions are conducted regularly to improve the fluency of the students. It is common for the pious two and graduation students, But it is practised by the secondary school students in our camp to reduce the stage fear of the students.

Encouragement to the students

We all know that English is a foreign language. While we are learning English, we may commit so many mistakes. When a small kid is learning to walk, it won't occur in a single day. Firstly, He turns that side this side and in this process the stomach will be pressed against the floor, some whitish matter comes out of his mouth. Then what will the mother do? She will place the pillows on two sides of the kid to avoid turning but encourages the kid to walk. The kid slowly learns to sit, and then he stands and finally learns to walk. Just like this we will learn the language. First we learn the words then sentences and we starts to form sentences and finally we will able to speak with a lot of mistakes. In this way we need some encouragement and support from the teachers and from the community. There is no one in this world who knows everything. Even the noble prize (literature) winner also commits some mistakes while writing and speaking.

“The student must be encouraged to speak, even though he/she is committing mistakes they will be encouraged to speak in English”

Soft skill development classes

Now a day Soft skills are gaining importance. A soft skill includes communication in English and speaking efficiency in English. The rural students are lacking in the Communication skills, but there is a need for the communication skills to survive in this world. These soft skills can't be learned overnight, it is a gradual process. From the childhood itself there is a need to introduce the soft skills. Communication in the sense



not just about barely speaking in English, But it is about expressing our views and opinions in a clear way. Most of the students are good at technical skills, but they are not well trained in the soft skills. So many of the students are not selecting for the jobs in the interviews. Rural students can't afford the fee to get trained in the Soft skills in the coaching centres.

Our mother India has a good deal of potential youth. But due to the lack of soft skills, youth are remaining as jobless. To change this situation one has to improve their Soft skills. So to overcome this problem it is better to introduce Soft skill development classes in the early stage of the school. The things which are learned in the early stage has a great effect on the child, and also one will find time to practise their communication skills.

Activity based learning

To smoothen the process of learning, it is better to introduce Activity based learning. Through the activities one can easily learn the language. In India, teachers are permitted themselves to teach only Text book content and syllabus. This makes the students to learn only limited thing and that to by hearted, how can they learn the language effectively? To inculcate the habit of speaking English it is necessary to introduce the Activity based learning.

If the teacher is teaching a story, then it is better to ask the students to narrate saw story of their choice in the class. So that the students will learn how to form the sentences spontaneously. Their Imagination power, Vocabulary power will be improved. This kind of activity based learning will enhance the student to improve their language. If the activities are funny and creative, students will enjoy the learning process.

The Conclusion

In the contemporary world, English is a global language. All the science and mathematical subjects are in English only. Even in interviews they are asking questions in English only. If you are not thorough in English, you can't answer them. It is very easy for the urban students to create English environment. What about the rural students like me? Our education system is still sticking to the traditional system in teaching the English language. Now the problem is identified, some innovations are taking place in the teaching process. But they are confined to the graduation level only. In the short span of only three or four years, How can a student learn all the things? The innovation must occur in the school teaching.

The innovations that took place in the English language teaching are limited to some students only. The innovator teaching is not reaching the ground level students. If the base is not good, how can you build a strong building? To make the foundation strong we have to include the rural students. We have to sharpen their soft skills and



communication skills. We have to encourage them to speak English. We have to encourage them to correct their mistakes. We have to give them confidence to learn English.

Apart from the rural students, some urban students are also lacking in English. Even some of the engineering students are also not capable to speak and write good English, Even though they are the outcomes of some innovative teaching methods. Where is the problem? The problem is in the effective implementation of the teaching methods. So there is a great need to implement the innovative teaching methods in all sections of the society.