

SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY: A NEED FOR UNDERDEVELOPED REGIONS LIKE JHARKHAND

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to discuss the importance of intelligible English pronunciation among the non- native speakers of English. It focuses on the common errors in English pronunciation of people of India in general and Jharkhand in particular. The paper further, highlights the important factors responsible for the errors in pronunciation of English by the speakers of India, particularly Jharkhand. It discusses the factors like cross- linguistic influence, age and other non- linguistic factors like personality, attitude, culture motivation and exposure to the target language. The paper mainly discusses the development of pronunciation skills through technology. The age of globalization is directly related to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and English Language and therefore, ICT can be proved significant to English language teaching and learning in different ways. Different technology enhanced language learning like CD ROM multimedia, web- based learning, mobile learning and language laboratory have been discussed to develop the authentic pronunciation like native speakers of the target language. Finally, it highlights the importance of imparting knowledge of phonetics and phonology of the second language to the second language learners through technology in order to learn an intelligible pronunciation.

Keywords: Pronunciation errors, cross- linguistic influence, Contrastive Analysis, Technology enhanced language learning

INTRODUCTION

English occupies a prestigious place in India. Even after decades of colonial rule, no Indian language has replaced English either as a means of communication or as an official language. English in India occupies a position of second language. Its popularity in India is not only because it is an international language but because it fulfills a need for communication in a multilingual India. In India, there are 28 states and more than 18 official languages. Urdu, Sindhi, Gujrati, and Hindi are the common languages in North India. These languages originated from the Sanskrit language and are linked to the Indo- European group (Mallikarjun, 2002). The people of North India often use Hindi as a Lingua Franca (Hohenthal, 2003). On the other hand, the South Indian Languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam originated from the Dravidian group (Mallikarjun, 2002). Dravidian Languages are very different from North Indian Languages and it becomes very difficult to communicate when people move from North India to South India or vice versa. Here English acts as a link language for communication between people from different regions of India.

Jharkhand is a microcosm of multilingual India with a rich diversity in race, region, caste, language, landscape, flora and fauna and so on. The state has a rich linguistic diversity. Over 96% of the population in Jharkhand communicates in tribal and regional languages at home. The tribal languages including Santhali, Ho, Mundari, Kurukh, Kharia etc. are spoken by about two-third (65.7%) of the population and regional languages such as Nagpuri, Khortha, Panchparganiya, Bangla, Odiya, Urdu, etc. are spoken by 30.6 of the population. Only 3.7% of the people communicate in Hindi as their mother tongue. A total of 19 major mother tongues are spoken by people in Jharkhand. Santhali, Khortha, Kurukh, Mundari and Ho emerged as dominant mother tongues in Santhal Pargana, North Chotanagpur, Palamu, South Chotanagpur and Kolhan Division respectively (MTALL Akhra 2013). These languages influence the English pronunciation because people resort to local languages to learn English pronunciations. Teachers use Hindi for interacting with students as per 92% of the surveyed children. 41% of the children use their mother tongue/s for communicating with teachers. Therefore, teachers use either Hindi or the local languages to teach English. Thus, mother tongue interference or cross linguistic interference is one of the important reasons for learners being unable to speak intelligible English. As English language holds a very important position in the world of globalization, spoken far more often among non- native speakers or among non- native and native speakers, it is very essential that English language learners learn to speak intelligible and comprehensible English. Intelligible pronunciation is an important component of communicative competence so that one is able to make oneself understand and can meet communicative needs with self confidence. In order to speak intelligible English, it is really important that both teachers and learners understand the common features of Indian English or the common errors that are made by people of Jharkhand in particular and India in general.

Common Errors in Pronunciation of people of Jharkhand (India)

1. If /p/, /t/, /k/ occur in the initial position of a stressed syllable, they are aspirated (an extra puff of air released with sound). For example,

Appoint --- [ə' phɔɪnt]

Indians usually pronounce un-aspirated sounds in all the positions.

2. No distinction between /v/ (labio-dental) and /w/ (bi-labial), as water / wɔ:tə / is pronounced as / v ɔ:tə /. Similarly, there is no distinction between /v / and / bh /as van pronounced as bhan, ventilator as bhentilator, vicks as bhicks, Victoria as bhictoria , vidya as bidya and so on. Same is the case with the pronunciation of labio-dental (f). /f/ (labio- dental) is pronounced as /ph/ (bilabial). For example, fan pronounced as phan, fool as phool, flower as phlower, filter as philter etc.

3. No distinction between different pronunciations of /z /, /ʒ /, / dʒ /
 / z / - zoo- / z u: /
 / dʒ / -jug- / dʒ ᵅg /
 / ʒ / - pleasure- / pleʒ ə /
 Instead of the correct pronunciation as given above, zoo- /z u:/ is pronounced as /dʒu: / and pleasure /pleʒə / as /pledʒə /

4. When ‘r’ occurs before a consonant it is not pronounced.
 eg: cart /kɑ: t /, and arm /ɑ:m /
 When ‘r’ occurs before a vowel, it is pronounced.
 Eg: courage /kʌri dʒ/
 When ‘r’ occurs at the end of a word, it is not pronounced.
 Eg: car /kɑ: /, teacher / ti:tʃə /
 Indians pronounce the last sound /r/ in the words like [teacher], [doctor], [player], [singer], etc. arm /ɑ: m/ is pronounced as /ɑ:rm/, alarm /əɫɑ:m/ as /əɫɑ:rm/.

5. Do not differentiate between / s /, /ʃ / as in ship / ʃip /and sip / sip /, short / ʃɔ:t / and sort / sɔ:t /.

6. Insertion of high front short vowel /ɪ/ in the beginning of words like start, station, school, straight to make /ista:t/, /isku:l/, /istreit/. The insertion of high front short vowel /ɪ / declusterizes the clusters CCVC to VC- CVC, CCVCVC to VC- CVCVC and likewise to ease their pronunciation.

7. Sometimes Diphthongs are pronounced as monophthongs as in go, goat, gate, baby.
 British Pronunciation - go /gəʊ/, gate /geɪt/, baby /beɪbi/
 Indian Pronunciation- go /gɔ:/, gate /ge:t/, baby /be:bi/

8. Cannot distinguish between minimal pairs like bet /bet/ and bat /bæt/, met /met/ and mat /mæt/, cot /kɒt/ and caught /kɔ:t/, sit /sɪt/ and seat /si:t/, full /fʊl/ and fool /fʊ:l/.

9. English is a stress-timed language whereas Hindi is a syllable-timed language. It is because of this, Hindi speakers usually put stress accent on the wrong syllabus, as in words like photographer, politician, development, academician, economics.

10. The stress on word ‘as a noun’ and ‘as a verb’ changes in English language. For example the pronunciation of words like record, conduct, present, as noun is different from the same words as verb, but Hindi speakers pronounce the words with no distinction.

FACTORS INFLUENCING PRONUNCIATION

There are several factors that influence the pronunciation of the second language learners or non-native speakers of any language. These are cross linguistic interference or first language interference and is also called mother tongue interference. The factors responsible for the degree of this interference are the learner’s age, learner’s attitude, and insufficient knowledge of phonetics and phonology of the target language.

AGE

Pronunciation is considered to be the most difficult parts of a language for adult learners to master. Contrary to this, younger children seem to pick the correct tone, accent and pronunciation of the language to which they get exposed, very quickly. The most common explanation for this is age and the influence of a critical period for language learning in general and for pronunciation in particular (Lenneberg, 1967; Scovel, 2000). According to Lenneberg, there is a period of time when language learning is easier and successful than any other time in one’s life. This critical period is nothing but biological and neurological period, which ends around the age of 12; after which, it becomes extremely difficult to attain the complete mastery of a second language, especially pronunciation. Contrary to this, Bongaerts, Planken and Schils (1997) have shown that it is not always the case: and adult learners are capable of achieving native like pronunciation of second language.

FIRST LANGUAGE/ MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE

In the words of Odlin (1989: 112), “There is no little doubt that native language phonetics and phonology are powerful influences on second language pronunciation.” Most researchers agree with the fact that first language influences the pronunciation of the second language and becomes one of the major factors for the errors in structures, stress, intonation and pronunciation of the target language. In the first language acquisition, learners have no difficulty in producing words, sounds or tones of the language, after the age of puberty because it is the only language system that learner’s mind try to understand and is also exposed to the same language all the time. However, in second language learning, there is a clash between the systems of L1 and that of L2.

It is very necessary to talk about Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) while discussing the influence of L1 on L2. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) states that those L2 elements that are similar to learner’s L1 will be simple for him/her and those which are different elements, will be difficult. The pioneers of contrastive analysis believed that by making cross linguistic comparisons one could predict learning difficulties. Lado puts it as, "We assume that the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult." (Lado 1957: 2)

Avery and Ehrlich (1992) claim that learners transfer their L1 sound patterns into the second language and this transfer is likely to cause foreign accents. It is reflected by the mispronunciations of words by non-native speakers. In this respect, Avery and Ehrlich, point out

that the sound system of the native language can influence the learners' pronunciation of a target language in at least three ways. First, when there is a sound in the target language, which is absent from the learners' native sound inventory, or vice versa, learners may not be able to produce or even perceive the sound(s). Second, when the rules of combining sounds into words (i.e., phonotactic constraints/rules) are different in the learners' mother tongue from those of the target language, they cause problems for learners because these rules are language specific as they vary from one language to another. Thirdly, since the rhythm and melody of a language determine its patterns of stress and intonation, learners may transfer these patterns into the target language.

Second language is the language acquired by a person after having acquired the basic system of L1 and the notions of cross-linguistic influence and learning difficulty later came to be more clearly distinguished, and learners' errors were seen as falling into two possible categories: 'interlingual' confusions, caused by interference or transfer from the mother tongue, and 'intralingual' confusions, caused by complexities in the second language itself. As errors are natural in L2 learning, researchers are interested in errors because errors are believed to contain valuable information about the language and the way it is learned.

NON- LINGUISTIC FACTORS

Certain non-linguistic factors related to an individual's personality, learning goals, attitude towards the target language, native speakers and their culture, and type of motivation, all have their role in the development of pronunciation skills. In addition, the degree of exposure and use of the target language can support or impede pronunciation skills development. For example, learners who are outgoing and confident and get involved in interactions with native speakers are liable to practice the foreign language pronunciation (Avery and Ehrlich, 1992). On the other hand, some learners feel shy and uncomfortable trying out new speech rhythm and melody patterns, while others feel stupid pronouncing 'weird' sounds, and with time, they decide that it is worthless and impossible to learn English pronunciation. In this respect, Miller (2000) believes that changing – and not changing – speech patterns is affected by how much responsibility the learner takes, how much the learner practices outside of class, and how ready the learner is. A number of researchers have claimed that work on pronunciation needs to be tied in with on the individual's value set, attitude and socio- schemata (Pennington, 1994). Attitude for learning can either help or hinder pronunciation skills development. Fossilization of errors also takes place when learners develop habitual, systematic pronunciation errors. They become habituated to their version of pronunciation mostly with minimal pairs like ship and sheep, sit and seat, bet and bat, sad and said or phan instead of fan, bhan instead of van or wrong pronunciation of /s/ and /ʃ/.

DEVELOPING PRONUNCIATION SKILLS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

The world has become a global village today. Globalization has made the world as small as a village in terms of interconnectivity across the world. The main factors behind this are Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and English language. English has become the lingua-franca for communication, business, education and opportunity and technology has played an important role in keeping English at the centre of communication revolution. The new advancement in computer, high- tech gadgets and mobile technologies has been hailed by the educators of ESL and EFL worldwide. Now the role of technology as a resource for English language teaching is increasing as educators recognize its ability to create both independent and

collaborative and interactive learning environment. It has been realized that with the use of internet, multimedia and hypermedia, students can be engaged in autonomous, individualized instruction designed to meet their special needs that foster communication with peers in their classrooms and throughout the global community. According to Warschauer (1996), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) contributes to create authentic learning environment and allows the development of language skills like listening, reading, writing and speaking at the same time. Computers can provide individualized instruction, frequent practice through listening discrimination and focused repetition exercises, and automatic visual support that demonstrates to learners how closely their own pronunciation approximates model utterance.

Some of the ways through which technology can be best used in teaching English language in general and English pronunciation in particular are explained as follows:

CD- ROM MULTIMEDIA TECHNOLOGY

CD ROM is one of the standard drives which every PC has. It allows computers to make sophisticated audio and video effects into a compact disc. In Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), it is a good idea to combine text, audio and pictures on a single platform. There are programmes specifically designed for language teaching with a lot of audio and video content. There are CDs which provide audio and video of pronunciation of consonants and vowels, word stress, sentence stress and intonation by native speakers of the target language. There are also programmes which provide animated presentation of place and manner of articulation of the sounds of target language which help in the correct pronunciation of sounds. The multisensory involvement of learners encourages and expedites language learning and help in learning correct pronunciation. There are CDs of dictionaries like Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary, CALD- Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, LIED- Longman's Interactive English Dictionary, Oxford Word power Dictionary which give spoken pronunciation of every word along with its transcriptions.

WEB- BASED LEARNING

In order to make the teaching of EFL/ ESL authentic, Web- based learning has gained status and is used as a means of student- centered, task- based and collaborative learning. Web based technologies can enhance language learning by facilitating many of the key characteristics of an ideal language learning like social interaction, authenticity, exposure, feedback, and learner autonomy. Using social networking sites in English language teaching and learning, students get an opportunity to get exposed to the target language and its native speakers, learn the language collaboratively, be more motivated about learning, become autonomous learner, become more accustomed to native speakers' accent and pronunciation because they learn the target language in real and authentic situation. Videos of native speakers of the target language can foster development of various language skills as for instance enhancement of vocabulary, accents, intonations, voice modulation and pronunciation. It offers authentic examples of everyday English used by everyday people.

MOBILE LEARNING

Mobile Assisted Language Learning describes an approach to language learning that is assisted or enhanced through the use of a handheld mobile device. It has evolved to support students' language learning with the increased use of mobile technologies such as mobile phones (cellphones), palmtop computers, portable radios. With mobile technology, students are able to

access language learning materials and to communicate with their teachers and peers at any time, anywhere.

In language learning all the features of a latest mobile phone like internet access, voice-messaging, SMS text-messaging, cameras, video recording enable communicative language practice, access to authentic content and task completion. A mobile phone is the most popular and accessible device in language learning as it is widely used by individuals of all age groups and of all financial backgrounds. Number of applications of English language teaching like Grammar learning, vocabulary, interactive English and dictionaries like Merriam Webster with spoken pronunciation of every word can be easily downloaded in an Android or smart phone. There are also several subscriptions on phone which provide a new word daily with its pronunciation, meaning and usage.

LANGUAGE LABORATORY

Language lab offers a remarkable platform to practice and enhance listening skills and speaking skills. Accurate perception of the sounds of the language is the first stage which leads to correct pronunciation, interpretation and comprehension. When listening to a foreign language, we need to know the sounds, rhythms, tunes and stress patterns of that language. The exercises on phonetics, and listening exercises done in the language lab foster students' listening ability. The sounds of the English language can be written down using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Exercises on minimal pair perception (ship/sheep, ten /then) help students learn the sounds and distinguish the similar kind of sounds of English. Practice and pronunciation exercises can be done with the help of software or by using CDs in language lab. There are also programmes that allow viewers to see and hear words as they are pronounced. The sounds are explained in detail by showing how the mouth moves and what is required to produce the sounds. In any lesson, the learner can listen, repeat, and record. It facilitates learning with practice and allows self assessment of his/ her performance. Learners can record their own sound to match with the model sound. Students can play, replay the exercise until they are satisfied.

CONCLUSION

Pronunciation is an integral part of foreign language learning since it directly affects learners' communicative competence as well as performance. Limited pronunciation skills can decrease learners' self-confidence, restrict social interactions, and negatively affect estimations of a speaker's credibility and abilities. There are many non-native English speakers who have made themselves sound like native speakers through consistent practice. Correct pronunciation makes communicating easier and makes the non-native speaker more confident.

Therefore, the primary goals of pronunciation teaching are for the learner to develop intelligible speech and to be able to effectively communicate in the target language (Miller, 2000). Morely (1991) identified four basic pronunciation goals that are realistic aspirations; Functional intelligibility, Functional communicability, Increased self-confidence, Speech monitoring ability and speech modification. The proper use of technology can help in achieving the above goals through authentic resources, exposure and interaction with the native speakers of the target language. In addition, phonetics especially IPA phonetic symbols should be part of Indian Education System as this would finally lead to the acquisition of correct pronunciation.

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