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**Guidelines to Learn and Master English Language
Especially Spoken English**

Dr. T. Smiles

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Abstract

English language learning can really be fun, provided the learners are prepared to follow certain techniques with the right kind of mindset. ELL (English language learning) includes ESOL (English for speakers of other languages), EAL (English as an additional language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) learners. Learning and mastering Language learning, any language is a continuous process. The first and foremost decisive factor is an inherent thirst for language acquisition among the English Language Learners. Secondly, there has to be an uncompromising willingness to make mistakes like a child while learning the language. Thirdly, one should be aware of the fact that English language is unlike Tamil language (for that matter any regional language in India) as far as the relation between the alphabets and their corresponding pronunciation is concerned. Fourthly, the need for continuous passionate practice with all sorts of people who know some or almost perfect English has to be understood. Finally, the fifth and the most important point is to put into use all that has been learnt for continuous English language skill refinement.

Keyword: Language learning, Language acquisition, Language skills

Be Passionate and Committed

People all over the world are very clear now that there is no need for any prejudice against the usage of English language. The entire world has been using English language and its inevitable and enviable place is felt in India too. Though the origin for the extensive usage of English language in India is a British legacy, the deep rooted usage of this language cannot be done away with in the present multi-lingual Indian and International scenario. In this context, for

Indians, it is wise to find ways to learn and master the English language in order to be a citizen of the world and also be a successful individual in the field of one's own choice.

First of all, the decision to learn and master the English language should highly be a self motivated and passionate one. The opportunity for the exposure to English language varies from person to person. All the school going children in their impressionable years do not get the same kind of exposure to English language. Schools located in metropolitan cities and district head quarters have more emphasis for English language atmosphere. Also, it cannot be denied that even some schools located in rural locations attract young learners and their parents with English medium tag. It can even be concluded that the craze for English medium education has seen the mushroom growth of so many private English medium schools. Except the metropolitan and some second tier city English medium schools, most of the other English medium schools do not seem to impart satisfactorily English language skills. The main reason for this fact could be the lack of English atmosphere in the schools. Teachers themselves do not appear to be motivated and some of them even lack the required language skills and the school managements also do not pay enough attention to the basic requirement which is English only atmosphere.

If one does not find enough commitment for English only atmosphere in English medium schools, how is it possible in vernacular medium schools where English language is taught just for exams' sake. Only when students enter higher education institutions where all the subjects are taught in English, except some, most of the students find it difficult to cope with the language learning. In order to facilitate young children to speak or use English language, managements of schools have to play the pivotal role in creating English only atmosphere by appointing teachers who are highly motivated, and equipped with the required language skills.

Be Childlike and Make Mistakes

Secondly, there has to be an uncompromising willingness to make mistakes like a child while learning the language. English language learners should know that no language can be learnt without making mistakes. A sympathetic approach is very important from the teachers' end. Unless a friendly atmosphere is created, learning anything, especially a language, is likely to be strenuous. Here the approach "fluency over accuracy" is strongly recommended, until a time,

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the learners become really comfortable in expressing themselves without any inhibitions. Let the students be taught to think in English and express in English. Examples to think in English could be: to encourage the learners to talk to themselves in English, to count numbers mentally in English, visualize things, make plans and actions in English. By this practice the gap between the thinking process in English and the action of speaking in English becomes narrow and becomes nil in course of time. So the air around the learner must be vibrant with opportunities.

Be Open to the Uniqueness of English

Thirdly, one should become aware that English language is unlike Tamil language as far as the relation between the alphabets and their corresponding pronunciation. For the beginners of English language, the pronunciation of words may be a big challenge. Initially the learners can be accepted without any complaints as they struggle with pronunciation and grammatical errors. Unless some confidence is instilled, it is difficult to make learners continue to express themselves in English language. It is worth considering the idea of explaining how all the Tamil letters are pronounced as they are written, whereas, how the 26 English alphabets produce 44 different sounds: 12 pure vowels, 8 diphthongs and 24 consonants is really amazing.

Practice Makes Perfect

Fourthly, the need for continuous passionate practice with all sorts of people who know some or almost perfect English has to be understood. Let people who want to master English be on the lookout for people with whom they can communicate in English and also for occasions which throw opportunities to express themselves in English. In order to strengthen speaking skills, one has to have good vocabulary. Reading newspapers, listening to newscasts, watching English news channels and select English films with subtitles help people become confident and articulate in course of time.

Take to the Skies

Finally, the fifth and the most important point is, to put into use all that has been learnt for continuous English language skill refinement and application. When a new- language learning novice graduates to be an expert in course of time, he finds that all the four skills Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing are needed to strengthen each other and no particular

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skill can be learnt in isolation. The advantage of living in the modern world is to exploit the help one can get from technology. Both print and visual media can be good sources for English language learning. There are a number of English language enhancement columns in newspapers. English Blues and Know Your English are the regular weekly columns published in The New Indian Express and The Hindu respectively. Learning disparity, opportunity chasm and the achievement gap must be filled with acquired equity. Shedding all the inhibitions, if the learners of English language find ways and means with the help of language facilitators, they are bound to fly to new heights. Let the first and the right step of using the first few words in English take place for an enriching experience of extensive use of English language.

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