



SRI RAMAKRISHNA ENGINEERING COLLEGE

Autonomous Institution, ISO 9001:2008 Certified.
Approved by AICTE and Affiliated to Anna University, Chennai
(All Eligible Courses Accredited by NBA)
Vattamalaipalayam, NGGO Colony Post



COIMBATORE-641022, Tamilnadu, India

www.srec.ac.in

11th International Congress on English Grammar (ICEG 2014)
In association with Systemic Functional Linguistics

Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives

Editor
Dr. Vathana Fenn

Master Listening to Master the Language

Ms. Deepa Caroline Devaraj and Dr. K Brindha

Growing Importance of English in India

The importance of English language competency increase as more and more people in India crave to learn the language. Various State Governments also have introduced English as the educational medium and as a Second Language. Expansion of business and increased occupational mobility contribute to the growing need of English as the common medium of communication. This language has the access to almost all scientific and technical literature to such an extent that one is really paralysed if he or she lacks the knowledge of English. This demand and requirement has led the researchers to either discover or formulate newer methodologies for teaching English as a Second Language for Specific Purposes and for Academic Purposes (ESL, ESP and EAP).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:1 March 2014

Dr. Vathana Fenn (Ed.) *Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives*

Ms. Deepa Caroline Devaraj and Dr. K Brindha

Master Listening to Master the Language

Recognition of the Usefulness of the Medium of English

In schools in India English is taught as a Second Language predominantly. The medium of instruction is English in the urban areas whereas in the rural areas it is in the regional or the vernacular medium of instruction. When in the school level, the learners of English are not aware of the real purpose behind the language learning for the future. But when they come to the University for Graduation they realize the purpose of the English language learning.

The learners want to function independently in English both in the university as well as in their career to improve their job opportunities. So, they have the urge and the motivation. English language Teachers try to design methodologies which encourage the autonomy of learning without diminishing their urge for language fluency.

Statistics about Engineering Education in India

- In India it has been roughly estimated that every year 580,000 students graduate as engineers.
- There are about 420 Engineering colleges in Tamilnadu alone. Every year the number keeps on increasing.
- Of all the engineering students who graduate every year in India, 25% of them do not possess English comprehension skills to understand the Engineering school curriculum.
- Only 57% of Engineering graduates can write grammatically correct sentences in English.
- Only 42% - 45% of Engineering graduates demonstrate capabilities in English required for the knowledge- based industries.
- Not more than 27% of Engineering graduates show capabilities in business English.
- India is one of the few countries which produce the highest number of engineers every year. But unfortunately it does not produce the so called “desirable engineers” to meet the industrial needs and standards.

- As per the *Outlook* magazine, the Indian engineers' unemployment rate is 9.4% in 2011 and their English language proficiency is the key factor behind this huge figure of unemployment.
- *Aspiring Minds Survey* tells us that those candidates with sound knowledge of English draw 30% - 40% higher salaries than the rest.

The statistical information also shows that the technical engineers' English is not worth that of a VII grade CBSE Syllabus learner.

Student Enrollment in Engineering Colleges

Since there are many professional Engineering colleges, every year many students have been given the opportunities to pursue engineering courses. The minimum eligibility for a candidate to enter in to an engineering stream is 45% score in the Higher Secondary School Leaving examination. Moreover in Tamilnadu, there is no entrance examination for the professional courses. With these changes, English competence at the entrance is not insisted upon. So, the English language teachers have the responsibility to meet the language needs of the students in these engineering colleges and bring them to an acceptable level of competence while they graduate.

Language Learners in an Engineering Class

In an engineering college there is a mixed group of learners from varied backgrounds both socially and in relation to their learning capabilities. Obviously their language competency also varies from one person to the other person and their language need varies from one department to the other department. In a college which has atleast crossed more than a decade, like the one in which we work for, a fair number of students respond fluently in the oral form of the language and have fairly efficient writing skills as well. These learners get acquainted easily to the new learning experiences; whereas a handful of learners fail to follow the lectures properly and when asked, they also open up telling that they do not understand anything that is going on

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:1 March 2014

Dr. Vathana Fenn (Ed.) *Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives*

Ms. Deepa Caroline Devaraj and Dr. K Brindha

Master Listening to Master the Language

in the class as the medium of instruction is only English. Despite their efforts and hard work they are not able to comprehend even though they were admitted based on their meritorious performance in the Higher Secondary Examinations. To these learners being in an engineering college, which is supposed to be a prestigious fact, is itself a painful experience. Some of the learners do not even pass the minimum criteria required to move on to the next semester.

What Place English Holds in School Curriculum?

This state or the plight of the student results from the lesser importance given to language in their schools. Right after middle school they are being trained only for the public examinations. The main subjects are given more importance and the language is treated with a “step motherly” care. Moreover, the language curriculum and the way it is tested and evaluated are also diluted. The teaching has been driven from usage based on text books to marks based and they have been taught that the sciences and mathematics, commerce and accounts will only fetch you a seat in the college. Except for the degree in literature the language marks have not been taken in for eligibility moreover the marks they award is not subjective and proficiency but objective. If a student can memorize essays and the questions behind the lessons in the text book the learner can get 99% of the marks. Their score in English subject does not correspond to their language competency but their ability to learn that prescribed textbook. Their language competency is therefore not up to the marks they get.

Learners at the University Level

When these learners come to the university they come with the same expectation. But when they don't get the same grades they get annoyed and depressed. We remember one of the bright students in the class who came to one of the authors of this article and asked that how he has got such a low mark which he has never got before in his life. It took quite a lot of time to counsel him and finally he then asked how could he improve his performance. Not everyone in the class is like that so the learner's needs are varied and the impact materials also should be varied. The college's curriculum should cater to the needs of the learners.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:1 March 2014

Dr. Vathana Fenn (Ed.) *Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives*

Ms. Deepa Caroline Devaraj and Dr. K Brindha

Master Listening to Master the Language

Unlike certain other countries, English is not the only or main medium of communication in business, government and education. It is only a subject in the school curriculum and considered as a medium providing access to the sciences and the technologies. These differences also have considerable impact on the learners as well as the learning processes, as their knowledge in English would vary based on their exposure.

Role of Listening in Language Acquisition

Listening plays an important role in learning and mastering a language. The teaching community thought that some aspects of listening skills are more important than others for academic success. These included the basic skills to comprehend various aspects of lecture content. They also perceived that the non-native speakers experience more difficulty than the native speakers with all listening activities and that the non-native students have disproportionately greater difficulty with some activities like following lectures given with different speeds, and comprehending or deducing a meaning of important vocabulary.

Learning a language takes place in various places. It can take place in a specialized center or it can take place when learning some other subjects. Spoken English centers, schools, colleges and other institutions are part of the facilities that provide teaching English. In the real world, many of the students who attend college show poor English proficiency even after twelve to fourteen years of learning the language and learning their subjects also in the same language. They do not speak fluently. Their pronunciation is not clear and they commit errors even in the basic sentence formation. They are ready with pre-tailored speech topics, essays and so on. But when it comes to reading a random text aloud or a spontaneous extempore on the spot they stammer and stumble showing their lack of confidence and proficiency. It is not that they do not know the language basics like grammar, sentence formation, etc., but they are not complete in their learning and understanding of the language.

Listening to Learn a Language

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:1 March 2014

Dr. Vathana Fenn (Ed.) *Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives*

Ms. Deepa Caroline Devaraj and Dr. K Brindha

Master Listening to Master the Language

The complete learning of a language comes when more importance is given to listening skills of a language. The proficiency we usually have in the mother tongue mainly comes through listening. We propose the following methodology to learn a language which will be apt for a 50 minutes class.

The pre-requisites for this method are given below.

- a. Listening audio or video for about 5 – 7 minutes.
- b. The transcript for the video and the audio clipping
- c. A dictionary in any form (mobile or thesaurus software)
- d. A questionnaire based on the clipping.

First the audio or the video is played for the learners to listen. After they listen to the clipping for the first time the transcript is given, and the clipping is played for the second time. When they listen by following the transcript they also note down the words they find it difficult or unfamiliar. With the help of the dictionary they find the meaning of those words and try to write a sentence using those words.

After this a questionnaire is distributed to gauge their understanding about the clipping. In the questionnaire there will be both direct questions and inferential questions. And the questionnaire will have a common activity of writing what they understood in about 75 -100 words.

Analysis of This Methodology

In this method when the learners listen to the text for the first time they are not under compulsion to understand the whole clipping. When the clipping is played for the second time, with the transcript in hand they try to understand it completely. They also get to know the pronunciation and the spelling of those words. They also learn new words which will add to their vocabulary knowledge.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:1 March 2014

Dr. Vathana Fenn (Ed.) *Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives*

Ms. Deepa Caroline Devaraj and Dr. K Brindha

Master Listening to Master the Language

When a questionnaire is given, the learners try to recollect what they had listened in order to answer the questions. Even if they cannot fully recollect they will have the transcripts to find out the answers. This will improve their reading skills. After all these when they try to write what they understood about the clipping, their writing skill is developed. This writing activity can be later transformed into giving opinion and criticism activities.

When ten or fifteen modules like these are over, an oral viva voce based on all the modules can be conducted to ensure that there was indeed improvement in speaking skills. So, on the whole, this method concentrates not on one but all the four skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking which will help in the complete learning of the language. Especially in the college level learners this method will be successful as this is through listening and is not based on the old chalk and talk method. Moreover, this gives more autonomy in learning where the teachers are only facilitators and students play a vital role in acquiring the language.

References

1. De Casper, A., & Spence, M. (1986). Prenatal maternal speech influences newborns' perceptions of speech sounds. *Infant behaviour and Infant Development* , 133-50.
2. Diller, K. C. (1971). *The Language Teaching Controversy*. Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers.
3. Flowerdew, J., & Miller, L. (2005). *Second language Listening theory and Practice*. Delhi: Cambridge University Press.
4. Nagaraj, G. (2008). *English Language Teaching Approaches methods and Techniques*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman Private Limited.

Ms. Deepa Caroline Devaraj (**Corresponding Author**)

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Sri Krishna College of Engineering and Technology

Coimbatore 641008

Tamilnadu

India

caroline193@gmail.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:1 March 2014

Dr. Vathana Fenn (Ed.) Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives

Ms. Deepa Caroline Devaraj and Dr. K Brindha

Master Listening to Master the Language

Dr. K Brindha
Associate Professor
Department of English
Sri Krishna College of Engineering and Technology
Coimbatore 641008
Tamilnadu
India
brindhaprabhakar@yahoo.co.in