RESEARCH ARTICLE

AN ASPECT OF UNINTELLIGIBILITY IN ENGINEERING STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS ON THE BASIS OF SEGMENTAL AND SUPRA SEGMENTAL FEATURES -A CASE STUDY

G G RATNAM[1], Prof.P.RAJENDRA KRMARKAR[2]

[1]Research Scholar, ANUCDE, Dept.of English, Nagarjuna University Guntur, Asst.Prof. of English, DNR College of Engg. &Tech., Bhimavaram, Email:ggratnam@gmail.com.
[2]Research Supervisor, Dept. of English, College of Arts & Sciences, Andhra University,Visakhapatnam.

G G RATNAM

Prof.P.RAJENDRA KRMARKAR

ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study is to look at the word accent of the English cause's unintelligibility spoken by engineering students in India. Intelligibility is an important aspect in language learning. To asses one's language efficiency both segmental and supra segmental features will be consider to look into the intelligibility of a person. Students from Andhra Pradesh Engineering colleges have problems in pronunciation because of vary reasons the major reason is mother tongue influence. Sine these students are from Telugu language background which is syllable timed language but English is non phonem is language as it is produced by a combination of weak and strong syllables and word stress and sentence stress pattern moreover students are learning the second language from the local English teachers they have mother tongue influence too. According to Balasubramanian (1988, p. 131) "anyone using English should learn and acquire the supra-segmental features of native English This variation between the first language and English causes many difficulties in acquiring the English language. The word stress and weak forms in English play a significant role for the language to sound natural and fluent. Telugu speaking students find a great difficulty in using word stress in their speech and this is one of the reasons for the unnaturalness and unintelligibility of the English spoken by them. This aims the present research and fined the common problems in uttering word stress in Engineering student's communication in West Godavari, AP, India. The research helps the students in gaining mastery over word stress and sentence stress in spoken communication that would result in proper pronunciation and intelligibility. It examines the word stress patterns and deviations of word stress from Received Pronunciation and its impact on intelligibility. No specific model of divergences in uttering the stress in words emerges which reflects the lack of explicit knowledge and awareness of English word stress. To overcome difficulties in placing word stress in English, it is Recommended that a organized course, involving the introduction of stress rules, ear training and production practice be given to engineering students and training them in this regard to attain 'Accent neutralisation'

Keyword: Intelligibility, pronunciation, language, word stress Engineering, communication

SIGNIFICANCE OF ENGLISH

English Language is the most important link in the world. The spread of British rule introduced this Language in India, Australia, Africa, South Asia, New Zealand and America. Basically it entered to these states as the language of business, travel and exploration and then it became the sole medium of instruction. David Crystal (2003) considers English "the world's first truly global language. Presently it is the official language of international business, world banking, shipping, air traffic control, United Nations Diplomacy, science and technology, , space travel, academic research and global computing. It is the major medium of education, publishing and international negotiation. It is perhaps the most flexible of all languages in the world. As a result, people belonging different areas of the world broadly use English. It is the lingua franca of the world. Now the world is developing in field of science and technology. Scientific inventions in France, Germany, and Russia cannot reach India through any language other than English. Therefore, a scientific or Technological invention in Germany or Russia will have become outdated and old by the time it reaches to Indian scientists through translation. Moreover the role of English language has been multiplied its way in the form of Education, because universities worldwide often use English as the common mode of learning and communication. Since the Supreme Court, the High Court, and official departments have intensified English became is an international language of the Constitute. English is firmly rooted in the soil of India. A person in Telugu does not speak Hindi, however he can understands English. Hence English is called a link language. Various people can communicate with one another with the help of English..It will get you anywhere. If you are good speaker in English means good in all. Therefore, engineers have to communicate in English.

Word Stress and its importance

The English words are combination of syllables, like every other language. The vowel is the centre of the syllable and it is articulated between consonant vowel. In any word of two or other than two syllables, only one syllable is given higher breath fore or given stress with a greater prominence. So that stressed or aspirated syllable is called accented syllable. Peter Roach (2000), in his work on word stress, categorizes four factors that are important in syllable stress. These are the loudness, length, pitch, and quality of the syllable. It is generally opined that this word stress hampers a great difficulty to second language learners of English. It is very difficult to learn the placement of word stress as it is important to speak in accented language. The non native learners face the problem to predict which syllable is stressed. Bansal (1969) states that "A very common fault among Indian speakers is the incorrect stressing of English words, that is different from the usual RP or the pattern of other native varieties".

What is Intelligibility

While English is being received more and more in the world, it is obvious that for the need of communication there is greater scope for exchange of ideas among peoples of the world. Catford, says the term 'intelligibility' can be used only when the speech is both intelligible and effective. Secondly Ken worthy (1950)*,* put forward the concept of ***comfortable intelligibility*** as a suitable goal for the majority of learners. The term is self explanatory, but does not actually specify which features of English pronunciation need to be learned in order to attain this intelligibility. Bryan Jenner (1989) also considered a set of factors of English pronunciation essential for intelligibility anywhere in the world calling those factors as Common Core. Jennifer Jenkins (2000) modified this term Common Core so as to take the reality of English as an International Language (EIL) into an account. The resulting *lingua franca Core* identifies 7 areas in which it is essential to eliminate error in the students' pronunciation. They are consonant conflations, vowel quantity, phonetic realizations, consonant cluster simplification, tone groups, prominence and weak forms, and nuclear/contrastive stress but not tone. Linda Shockey (2003)in her work '*Sound Patterns of Spoken English'* says "*Conversational speech processes are partially conditioned by the phonetic nature of surrounding segments, but other factors such as stress, timing, syllable structure and higher level discourse play a part in nearly every course*." For intelligibility, Robin Walker (2001) recommends "*good vowel length, good pronunciation of most of the consonants, good handling of clusters, the avoidance of incorrect deletions, prominence and good tonic stress"* In the views of various language experts the common point to overcome their unintelligibility in speech is to strengthen the segmental and supra segmental features of English

Language learners.For instance, Telugu is a phonemic Language the letter 'a' is pronounced as / æ /. But, in English 'a' may be pronounced as /ʌ/, / ɑ:/, /e/, / ə/, / eɪ/ or even /æ/. It is therefore, anticipated that students are likely to be confused and make pronunciation errors and causes unintelligibility when learning to pronounce sounds and words of English

Elements of Indian English

As English is booming in India wide range of people speak different varieties of Indian English. Some of these varieties are mutually intelligible and some are unintelligible. For instance, Bansal (1969) emphasized major differences in phonetic deviations. He states that Indians do not use aspiration word initially. seeing that a result, words like 'pen' and 'cup' are usually unaspirated by Indian speakers unlike native speakers. Moreover, the voiced and voiceless alveolar consonants are pronounced as retroflex consonants. In addition, dental fricatives in words like *health* and *that* are pronounced as alveolar plosives. He also observed the use of bilabials in place of fricatives. Jenkins (2005), clearly mentions the demographics of English speakers in India. It is astonishing that there are about 37 million proficient English speakers in India and about 200 million Indians with some English language skills. She also mentions that due to the influence of local cultures, Indian English has evolved its own characteristics. This evolution is due to the existence of various Indian languages and social conditions that have had a great influence on English language. Indians learn English from Indians, which is one of the reasons that Indian English is evolving as a variety with its own distinctive features. Another characteristic of the pronunciation of Indian English is spelling based pronunciation. In Indian languages, there is a close connection between spelling and pronunciation and they have one to one correspondence between letters and sounds unlike English. David Crystal (1987, p.214) reports that about 400 or so most frequently used words in English have irregular spelling which makes it difficult to learn the spelling and Pronunciation of English language.

Features of Indian English

English is spoken in India by a wide variety of people. There are different kinds of Indian English. Some of them are mutually intelligible and some are not. Jenkins (2005), mentions the demographics of English speakers in India. It is astonishing that there are about 37 million proficient English speakers in India and about 200 million Indians with some English language skills. She also mentions that due to the influence of local cultures, Indian English has evolved its own characteristics. This evolution is due to the existence of various Indian languages and social conditions that have had a great influence on English language. Indians learn English from Indians, which is one of the reasons that Indian English is evolving as a variety with its own distinctive features. For example, Bansal (1969) highlights major differences in phonetic deviations. He states that Indians do not use aspiration word initially. As a result, words like 'pen' and 'cup' are usually unaspirated by Indian speakers unlike native speakers. Secondly, the voiced and voiceless alveolar consonants are pronounced as retroflex consonants. In addition, dental fricatives in words like *health* and *that* are pronounced as alveolar plosives. He also observed the use of bilabials in place of fricatives. Another characteristic of the pronunciation of Indian English is spelling based pronunciation. In Indian languages, there is a close connection between spelling and pronunciation and they have one to one correspondence between letters and sounds unlike English. David Crystal (1987, p.214) reports that about 400 or so most frequently used words in English have irregular spelling which makes it difficult to learn the spelling and Pronunciation of English language.

Intelligibility in Indian English

As India is a multilingual nation this causes general intelligibility of Indian English. Such causes normally called MTI(mother Tongue Influence). In this concern Universities, colleges and multinational companies are concentrating towards accent neutralisation so that the English of Indian speakers will become globally intelligible. For example an employee in MNC company suppose to communicate with an employee who is working in another part of the word. In this case it is very important that both the people must atke care in accent is neutral and intelligible sothat they have effective communication between them . Bansal (1969) says, "English spoken in India does not differ radically from native English in vocabulary and grammar, though there are some well-known differences. In pronunciation, a large number of people deviate from both British and American English in a number of ways." He further states, " *As language is primarily a means of*

communication, we must ensure that we retain at least those features not only phonological and phonetic, but also those related to clear, articulate speech in the absence of which mutual intelligibility is likely to be affected." Another point that hampers intelligibility unintelligibility to a native speaker is stress and intonation, the supra-segmental features of articulation.. Therefore Engineering students in Andhra Pradesh have a hurdle in their intelligibility because of the MTI, Local Teacher, less Practice in Language labs. Lack of awareness in word stress and sentence stress and waitage in syllabus for word stress

The Study

The objective of the present study is to analyze word stress patterns of English spoken by engineering students in West Godavari Andhra Pradesh, India and its impact on intelligibility in order to see the levels of intelligibility of Indian Engineering students leaving colleges and seeking employment. The analysis is projected to reflect the present state of spoken English of engineering students, so that remedial actions or steps for improvement can be suggested For historical reasons, India has had longer association with British English than any other variety. This model is well described in many books including the English pronouncing dictionary available in the market. By and large, the education system in India follows the British model. As British Received Pronunciation (RP) is widely accepted and easily understood worldwide, this model was selected as standard for comparison.

Methodology

The speech of 20 randomly chosen students of a first year engineering students' voice was recorded from top five Engineering colleges in West Godavari District Andhra Pradesh, India and divergences from RP were analyzed. The speech samples were keenly listened by the researcher based on his hearing the word stress impression and the result out analysis is shown in the tabular form.

Participants in the Study

For the study, ten students of Engineering first year students were chosen as speech samples the sample was viewed as adequate as a representative sample of Engineering students' English. The speakers are from different colleges in West Godavari. All participants ranged from 18 to 22 years of age. Their learning background and environment was homogeneous. Their mother tongue was Telugu.

Test Material Used for the Study

The data comprises speech samples obtained from first year students of engineering from various engineering colleges in West Godavari. The test material used for the study was a set reading individual words and sentences. The individual words and sentences include all the 44 RP phonemes of English with different types of words that are bi, tri, and polysyllabic. After thorough analysis of various books in language learning the words are taken from the book "*English Pronunciation practice for Indian students*" by Sadanand J Seth and Jindal. The words are reproduced in the given table

Recording Procedures

All the speech samples were recorded by using a very good quality Sony CD writer. A quiet room was chosen for recording at various colleges. The words were typed neatly on a sheet of paper and were handed to each speaker. They were asked to read the words as naturally as possible. They were, however, given a few minutes to look through the words before reading. No interruption took place throughout the recording.. Each speaker was asked to say his/her name before reading the words in Entry level Test. Followed by the entry level test the students are trained up in segmental and supra segmental features to fulfill the research objective. The stress identified word sheets are given to the students. The stress rules, shifting of stress from noun to verb, stress change in suffixes and prefixes every minute thing is taught to every student they are allowed to drill all the words in Exit Level Test. The Exit Level recording has been done after the researcher satisfied in delivering the training to the students. The care has been taken while recording the exit level test and the data is stored in Sony CD for the further analysis.

Listening Procedures

Care was taken to ensure that the listening sessions were free from noise that could affect the procedure. For the sake of convenience, the recorded data was transferred to a compact disc and a CD player

was used for the listening sessions. The researcher has paid keen observation each and every word of the students in the analysis part.

Action Hypotheses

The case study: The case study is conducted in West Godavari Engineering Colleges in three stages of different steps taken by individual words and sentences. Thus process of this conduct some group of students has been taken as samples. Primarily an entry level test is made to calculate previous knowledge of pronunciation of the students by assigning various handouts in their own voice. The performance of the students is clearly recorded. The sample students are given hand outs of individual words of monosyllables, disyllables and poly syllables as it is a first stage of reading. Secondly some sentences are given to diagnose student's knowledge in stress over an accuracy of reading sentences. On the basis of R K Bansali's pronunciations to Indian students an attempt has been made to calculate the skills of identifying and using stress in dialogue mode at three levels of student's voices which are clearly recorded with help of the digital voice recorder as it is useful further level of exit test.

Aim of the case studies: The case study intends to show the performance of the entry level and exit level. Between these two tests the problems are identified in stress implementation of the students and remedies have been discussed to develop effective language skills – stress based pronunciation. The main objective of this research and case study is The data has been taken in entry level test to estimate the level of the students competence in targeted area of stress. Required remedies are instructed through suitable approaches the sample students are trained to reach the objective of the research and to estimate the students growth in stress the exit level test is conducted. Findings and comments and necessary recommendations are given. Hence the case study helped to develop the objective of research topic.

Entry Level Test: In Entry level test top five Engineering colleges have been identified and two students have been taken from each College as a sample of voice recording. The wordsand sentences are taken and comprised from English Pronunciation by J Seth and Sadan and for effective. The comprised text is distributed to the sample students and guides them to go through. After a while the students are instructed to read the given text with their own knowledge in word stress and sentence stress. The necessary action has been taken while recording the students reciting the text. After successful completion of voice recording the data is preserved in DVD. The recording process is completed for all five Engineering colleges of Ten students.

Exit level Test: The exit level test has been conducted for the students who participated in entry level test. Before conducting this test the students are instructed segmental and super segmental features i.e what is phoneme and syllable besides what is word stress and sentence stress. The students have been thoroughly inculcated by the research scholar and practiced by them. After drilling all the words and sentences applying word stress rules in the presence of the research scholar, they are preceded to participate to reciting the given words for recording. The necessary action is taken while recording the exit level test.

Analysis: When the case study is successfully completed, the research analysis will take place by considering both entry level and exit level test. The recorded data is studied in depth and each sample recording is identified whether the student is articulating the stress properly or not. The stress or prominence is mainly produced by four ways a) loudness b) length c) pitch d) quality. Besides the students are diagnosed that which syllable they stressed in the given words and sentences. Based on the analysis the findings are identified and suggestions if any will be forwarded.

CONCLUSION

In the research data analysis is viewed in a micro level of the samples. All the speakers are keenly observed in segmental and supra segmental area. As we discussed in the previous chapter, communication skills in engineering students is playing key role in their job settlement so that the corporate companies also look in to their pronunciation skills to deal with global customers. In this aspect the researcher aimed to reveal the practical problems in Telugu speaking engineering students. The problem is identified into segmental supra segmental in two ways like entry level test and exit level test. The segmental area of vowels, diphthongs and consonants has been deeply examined in the speakers because the basic phonemes are articulated by the speakers to well practiced pronunciation of the English language learner. As our Engineering students are

highly influenced mother tongue influence (MTI) their pronunciation goes wrong because they utter some similar Telugu sounds in English pronunciation. These problems are vividly shown in a tabular form. The second examination area of the research is supra segmental features known as word stress. The words stress is a good mechanism in better pronunciation skills. As English is a non phonemic language our students are habituated for their phonemic language i.e Telugu. Since Telugu is a not aspirated sound system that is very plain in its articulation but English is quite different in its articulation example Paper /ˈpeɪpə/ in English /pepr/ in Telugu. Many things are come to know in this research regarding pronunciation in engineering students in West Godavari. If the problem are any identified in supra segmental features in wider spread manner shown in the research and suggestions as well as recommendations will be shown.

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