

PHONETICS AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

English, the global language or the whites' language has conquered the whole world. English language has connected people across the world. Everyone knows the language, but most of us do not know the way it is pronounced. A neutral accent is acquired by the people. So it has variant forms in different places. To make it globally intelligible a concern must be given to the pronunciation, stress, syllables, intonation etc. The relevance of phonetics comes here. This article tries to look into the inevitable role of phonetics in effective communication and the factors affect it.

Keywords: - phonetics, pronunciation, stress, intonation, communication.

INTRODUCTION

Language is the medium of communication. Language is the combination of sounds. Communication is the exchange of our ideas or emotions either in written or spoken form. Gestures and making sounds are also the means of communication. To stand tall in this competitive world an individual must have good communication skills. Language is primarily considered as a spoken one in earlier periods. Later its written forms occur. Among different languages, English emerges as the prominent one. The advancement in science and technology contributes to the need of handling English with great fluency. It earns universality with its uniform written codes. The influence of regional languages gives a different output of English in different places. It diminishes the universality of English languages. International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) made the Received Pronunciation (RP) as the accepted form of English language. It makes us aware that communication is not just using words but also to correctly pronounce them. Pronunciation is the correct articulation of the words based on the phonetic language. Phonetics deals with the scientific study of the production of speech sounds that combine to form words and sentences. A speech

sound is mainly meant to be heard. Phonetics describes a speech sound based on its production (Articulatory Phonetics) and how it is heard (Auditory Phonetics). The forty four speech sounds are classified into vowels (20) and consonants (24). Each sound has its own phonemic symbol and articulation which makes it different from other sounds. For effective communication, all the letters and words must sound correctly. Otherwise the communication will lack clarity.

I. PHONETICS AND COMMUNICATION

Phonetics describes the way sounds are produced by the speech organs like lips, tongue and lungs, and it relate the sound of a word. The shape of lips and the position of tongue, and the modification of airstream by the larynx and articulatory organs enable the production and articulation of speech sounds. These sounds combine to form language, the means of communication. In communication, both written and spoken, the grammar and rules should be followed for an effective result. In spoken form, phonetics put forward the rules of pronunciation. It says how the speech organs should be while uttering each sound which results in correct pronunciation and good communication. For example:-

- i. Initial sound in 'bat' is produced with a vibration of vocal folds is said to be voiced and the initial one in 'pat' is voiceless which is produced without the vibration of vocal folds.
- ii. In the production of consonant sounds /t/, /d/, /s/, and /n/, the place of articulation is the teeth ridge or the alveolar ridge (the tip of the tongue moves towards the teeth ridge). So they are called as alveolar sounds.
- iii. The vowel sounds /i:/, /I/ and /e/ in the words *meat*, *hit* and *met* respectively are known as front vowels (produced when the front of the tongue raised).
- iv. The vowel sounds /a:/, /ɔ/, /U/, and /u:/ in the words *calm*, *odd*, *full* and *fool* are back vowels (back of the tongue is raised).
- v. The vowels in the words *cut*, *bird* and *short* (/ʌ/, /ɜ:/ and /ɪ:/) are central vowels.

These all show how a sound should be correctly pronounced. Vocabulary, spelling and grammar are the three distinct aspects of language other than pronunciation. Correct use of all these aspects gives an effective communication.

II. FACTORS AFFECT EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

i. Influence of native language(mother tongue interference)

People from different nation have different types of difficulties in learning correct pronunciation. Different places in a single state have distinct pronunciation it is because of the interference of native language while speaking English. Symbols and letter used for each sound and the usage of articulatory organs are also different in each language. That's why residents of a particular state could not pronounce some word or letters of another state. For example Indians give more stress to each and every sound. It is absent in RP. The differences and similarity between the mother tongue and the second language (here English) hampers and facilitates the acquisition of the second language.

Eg:-/ʌ/ is replaced by /e/ as in the word bus.

/b^s/ is pronounced as /bes/ in Malayalam.

/b/ is replaced by /ɔ:/ as in the word hot

/hɒt/ is pronounced as /hɔ:t/

ii. Lack of pronunciation classes from the school level itself.

In most of the schools pronunciation training classes are absent. It leads to poor communication. So students pronounce words based on their knowledge in their native language. This makes a difference in acquisition of pronunciation. When come in to contact with a wider audience or in a formal environment they could not make out what other say. Imperfect learning of sounds of language amounts in inaccurate communication. From the age of 1 to 12 children could grasp more. So it is essential to teach phonetics from school level itself. Exposure to English language is a solution for rectifying this pronunciation defect. Language labs in school, playing English

films and pronunciation training help in improving the correct pronunciation and good communication.

iii. Incorrect use of supra-segmental features.

The properties of a sentence in an utterance are called as supra-segmental features. Stress, tone, intonation, length of the stress and the arrangement of segments into syllables are the different supra-segmental features. Some syllables (parts of words or combination of sounds) are pronounced with great force than other ones. Then it can be said that the syllable is stressed. Stress is the force with which a syllable is pronounced. It helps to distinguish the meanings of different words or phrases that appear to be the same. For example, when a declarative question “*She writes it on a paper?*” is asked, stress is given in the end. When same one is said as a declarative sentence, “*she writes it on a paper.*”, stress is given to ‘she’ and ‘paper’. So it is the speaker who should give stress on correct words according to his intension. Tone (the emotion of the speaker is expressed through the tone), pitch (frequency of vibration of vocal cords which shows the prominent syllable in an utterance), loudness, and intonation (variation in pitch and stress) are other features a speaker must focus on for effective communication.

iv. Unequal importance given to written and spoken language.

In earlier period, written language was given more importance. People focused on grammar and spelling of words. They paid less attention on the rendering of words in a language. The pronunciation of words and the correct utterance make a language complete and beautiful. It makes the communication effective and impressive. It reduces the doubts and ends in good understanding among the speaker and listener. A communication becomes effective only when the speaker conveys his message properly, the listener gets it and when correct reply is received. At the same time, some people give importance only to spoken one and ignore the grammar and spelling in written form which ends in an ineffective written communication. The reader does not get the correct idea and manipulate another meaning from it. This also makes the language ugly. So, a person who tries to communicate should follow the rules both in written and spoken form.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion shows that phonetics or the correct pronunciation of English sounds is the most important factor that helps to make a communication effective. Imperfect learning and some other linguistic factors make it difficult for some people to articulate English words appropriately. The knowledge of how to pronounce and use a language properly results in an effective communication. It leads to an easy encoding and decoding of messages. Teachers and communication experts should study phonetics and other rules of the language correctly. To withstand in this competitive world global intelligibility of English language is an essential thing. It brings the speaker to the zenith.

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