Importance of Teaching Stress and Intonation to Improve Communication Skills- A Study Related to First Year Students of Bachelor of Physical Education.

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Abstract
The objective of this study is (1) to investigate the challenges faced by Physical Education students during the language learning, (2) measures taken to eradicate MTI,(3) the importance of Stress and Intonation lessons to eradicate the MTI and (4)the effectiveness of measures taken to meet the elicit challenges. The study is especially being focused on the physical education and sports students, as out of all the disciplines, the physical and mental exertion of these students on the practice grounds has been the highest and thus, they have least amount of time to spend on learning and improving their communication skills. To undertake this study, a sample of 50 students was taken and they had to give two pre-tests on grammatical range of accuracy which was a written test and an individual presentation which was a speaking test, the measures were implemented for a duration of 4 weeks and post-measurement tests were taken. The results were analyzed and data was prepared. The study and results revealed that how effective classroom measures can bring a drastic improvement in the communication skills of the first-year students without the extra classes or other foreign aids.

Key Words: Stress and Intonation, Language Learning, Communication Skills, Mother Tongue Influence, Grammatical Range and Accuracy

Introduction
Language is the primary mean of communicating, expressing and exchanging ideas and thoughts. Effective communication skills depend in many building elements which primarily include grammatical range and accuracy, pronunciation, tone and lexical resources (Morley, 1999). Correct pronunciation may lead to better understanding and better expression of ideas, whereas, a vague or incorrect pronunciation may mislead or even can be misunderstood (Zhang & Yin, 2009). The grammatical inaccuracies have always been the one to mislead the most. The physical education students are often found confused n even the basic concepts of grammar which are tenses and modals. In case of pronunciation the influence of their dominating mother tongues has been quite troublesome and changes the entire meaning of the word. For example, 2 students in the sample were from Haryana, it was observed that although they used fairly good grammar their pronunciation of even the simple English nouns was highly influenced with Haryanvi Accent which made it quite challenging for listener to understand what they are saying. However, the teaching measures were applied and the students were retested, in the result of which a fair amount of improvement was noticed in them. It has been seen that the most of the ESL students face major challenges in pronunciation which makes their speech unfathomable. A few examples to explain the ill-effects of wrong stress and intonation are following:
a. Stress

1. CONtent (N.) - subject matter, bulk, quantity, the amount of particular constituent in a substance
   (source: Cambridge dictionary, 2010)
2. conTENT (V.) - to satisfy. (Adjec.) - satisfaction (source: Cambridge dictionary, 2010)

Examples 1 and 2 are homographs, the words with same spellings but different pronunciations and hence completely different meaning. To a non-native speaker of English, it may sound same, but as the definitions imply, they have completely different meanings. As a Noun the stress is on first syllable whereas in verb and adjective the stress is on second syllable. And its not only the change in pronunciation, but also the interchange of pronunciations may mislead the entire message or information.

b. Intonation

3. Where are you going?

This question may be asked in various intonation patterns and every varying intonation pattern will give rise to a different expression.

If example 3, uttered using a Rising-falling Intonation, it means the speaker is generally asking that where the listener is going.

However, if the same question is asked using a falling intonation, the question is more hypothetical as if the speaker doesn’t want to listener to leave the conversation or task in hand incomplete.

Hence, change in tone, delivers a completely unique set of information

Methodology

1. Participants

   The study is conducted on 50 participants, the class-size of first-year students who were pursuing their Bachelor in Physical Education. The best practices are taken as independent variables and grammatical accuracy, pronunciation accuracy and learning outcomes are the dependent variables.

2. The Tools

   2.1. The Pronunciation Test

   There were two pronunciation tests: (1) Pre-Test and (2) Post-Test. Every test had the same pattern which included two parts. Part A. to pronounce a given set of basic to advanced words and Part B. to give a small public speaking presentation on any selected topic the participant liked. Same was the Post-Test. The evaluation was based on 5 parameters-

   a. Pronunciation
   b. Oral Fluency
   c. Grammatical Accuracy
   d. Content
   e. Body Language and Public Interaction Skills/Presentation Skills/ Public Speaking Skills.

   2.2. The Grammar Test

   Like pronunciation test there were two grammar tests too: (1) Pre-Test of Grammar and (2) Post-Test of grammar. Both the test had 30 grammar questions ranging from Basic to advanced difficulty levels. The topics were as follows:

   a. Tenses
   b. Auxiliary verbs
   c. Conditionals
   d. Passives
e. Reported speech

**Measures/ Best Practices Followed**

After taking the Pre-tests, the students were given 3 lessons per week as 1 lesson each week on stress and intonation, 1 lesson on grammar topic and 1 lesson on the practice of taught grammar topic. The measures were followed for 4 weeks and then the pre-tests were conducted.

**Results**

**Pre-Test Results**

a. The results of the Pre-tests

Before adopting the measures, the students’ results based on the selective parameters are as shown in Table 1 and Table 2:

**Table 1: The results of the Pronunciation Pre-Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Number of participants with Strong MTI/ Poor pronunciation</th>
<th>Number of participants with average performance</th>
<th>Number of participants with above average performance</th>
<th>Percentile for Poor pronunciation and strong MTI(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation Skills</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical accuracy</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As expected, just a few participants were able to display acceptable communication skills without formal training.

**Table 2: The results of the Grammar Pre-Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Below 10</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Above 20</th>
<th>Percentage of who scored below 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another foretold result before the formal training.

**The results of Post-Test**

After pre-tests, the students had to take grammar and pronunciation classes for a month i.e. 4 weeks. During this period, their weak areas-grammar and MTI were targeted with Grammar classes and tutorials; and stress and intonation lessons respectively. The lessons were fully interactive with pedagogical aids including:

- Video and audio lessons
- Grammar worksheets
Role plays
Discussion session
Practice sessions

The results are displayed in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3: The results of Pronunciation Post-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Number of participants with Strong MTI/ Poor pronunciation</th>
<th>Number of participants with average performance</th>
<th>Number of participants with above average performance</th>
<th>Percentile for Poor pronunciation and strong MTI(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Fluency</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation Skills</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>42 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical accuracy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it was observed that after 4 weeks’ training there was a drastic change in the figures. The figures have reduced to approximately half.

Table 4: The results of the Grammar Post-Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Below 10</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Above 20</th>
<th>Percentage of who scored below 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Same was the case with grammar post-test.

Conclusion

On comparing the scores of both Pre-tests and Post-tests, it can be concluded that the pronunciation training and grammar activities have marvelously improved their communication skills. From the Pre-Test and Post-Test results of Pronunciation, it can be inferred that the more pronunciation practice has impacted the other parameters too. In pre-test results, it can be concluded that with higher MTI, the parameters like oral fluency, body language and presentation skills were lower. But after the pronunciation training, with the improvement in pronunciation, the students have become more orally fluent and more confident in using English as a second language of communication. An improvement has been observed in their ease of using English. A four weeks’ training has uplifted their performance from poor to average and in some cases above average which means the further training can change this score too. Same was the case with their grammatical range and accuracy. The results showing improvement can be seen in both Table 3 and Table 4. In a nutshell, it can be retorted that improved pronunciation and grammar help the speakers to speak more fluently and confidently. In other words, oral fluency and confidence level are directly dependent on grammar and pronunciation. People with better command over grammar and sound pronunciations appear to be more confident and better non-
native speakers of English. The results have proved the theory that focusing on right grammar and pronunciation training can elevate communication skills.

**Bibliography**