

Impingement of Urdu on Learning English: An Empirical Study

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Abstract: Every language has its beauty which can be tasted by understanding the language without translating into one's mother tongue. When a language is understood through translation method, the perceptible essence of that language cannot be attained. Therefore, it is requisite to focus more on listening to speak better and fluent. The aim of this paper is to bring to the fore the impact of Urdu in learning English. It highlights the problems that ESL students face owing to Urdu as their mother tongue. The article specifically focuses on difficulties in listening comprehension and a sense of uncertainty in speaking English with confidence. The study is based on the researcher's experience in teaching to high school students. The students who have been examined in this research are intermediate level from different schools of Aurangabad. The article provides some practical solutions and suggests some electronic sources to over come the problems. Moreover, the article focuses on teaching natural expressions through collocations and phrase that help speak in a natural way.

Key Words: Mother Tongue Influence, translation, listening, comprehension, speaking, collocation, phrases, natural, web based learning.

Introduction: Language is the most important source of communication which is why we cannot conceive world without language. Without language we cannot think either. Language acquisition is the process by which humans perceive and comprehend language and produce and use words and sentences to communicate. This process begins with listening and ends with writing. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the four basic skills that one needs to acquire to learn any language. These four elements are pervasively known as LSRW. However, if one wants to acquire writing skills, which is the peak of language acquisition, s/he must be a good reader. On the other hand, for speaking it is not necessary to be a literate person. When children learn their mother tongue, they first listen and then imitate what others say. Despite being illiterate, children understand and speak their mother tongue by imitation. The same natural way can be used in learning a foreign language in which listening plays a vital role to speak. Dr. Paul Sulzberger writes that the best way to learn a language (especially spoken) is through frequent exposure to its sound patterns. Listening and speaking are closely interrelated and they work simultaneously in real life situations. So, the integration of the two fosters effective oral communication. This integration will assure real life and purposeful communication. This paper specifically focuses on speaking skill which is essential to develop in Urdu medium students who, in spite of learning English for ten to twelve years, seem hesitant to speak. Moreover, the present article not only highlights the problems where Urdu medium students commit mistakes but suggests some solutions to tackle those problems.

Analysis:

Language Acquisition and Translation: Every language has its beauty which can be tasted by understanding the language without translating into one's mother tongue. When a language is understood through translation method, the perceptible essence of that language cannot be attained. Therefore, it is requisite to focus more on listening to speak better and fluent. The paper highlights the problems that ESL students face owing to Urdu as their mother tongue. The article specifically focuses on difficulties in listening comprehension and a sense of uncertainty in speaking English with confidence. The aim of this paper is to bring to the fore the impact of mother tongue generally and Urdu particularly in learning English. Moreover, the article specifically highlights problems and solutions to the listening and speaking skills. In spite of exposure to English language for twelve to fifteen years, students seem to fail speaking English fluently. The case of Urdu speakers studying in different schools bears greater significance in this context. Such learners remain deficient in using English language even in ordinary day-to-day communication.

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA):

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) is universal and Urdu speaking students are not exception to it. FLSA is "a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people" (Horwitz et al. 127). However, it is the trainer's responsibility to lower the 'affective filter' so that the progress of the students should not inhibit. Students do not speak as they have fear of making mistakes, and they compare themselves with others as a result they face problem of FLSA. Moreover, there are other significant sources of anxiety they are fear of communicating with native speakers, having native-speaker teachers, accent of the local people, and cultural differences etc. Conventionally English was taught through Grammar-Translation Method. Owing to phobia of grammar, students do not speak English and most of the students fear to make any mistake. Anxiety is, in MacIntyre's words, "worry and negative reaction arousal when learning or using a second language" (27). A. J. Hoge in his book, *Effortless English* writes, "Schools like the grammar translation method because it appears to be serious, academic and complex" (Hoge, np). Although students feel comfortable and stress free when translation method is used, it is observed that after learning English for years, students seem hesitant and shy to speak English.

When English is taught through translation method, students become habitual to translate English. They think in their mother tongue instead of thinking in English. When I taught to grade 8th, 9th and 10th, I observed that students do not understand specific preposition e.g. in English it said 'on the bus', 'on the train' and 'in the car'. However, Urdu medium students, due to their habit of translation, do not understand on the bus they think the correct expression is 'in the bus' and 'in the train'. Similar problem is seen when students write an exam, instead of using the appropriate expression "we take exam" they say "we give exam". It happens because in Urdu the word give means *dena*. When they get 20 marks out of 25, they say 25 out of 20 as the Urdu syntax goes 'pacchis me se bees'. Owing to teaching through translation method, students commit such mistakes. Hashmi in her article rightly asserts "the learner's

problems arose due to L1 (MTI i.e. mother tongue influence) interference on second language learning process” (29). Many pedagogues believe that conventional teaching techniques and translation method are not useful techniques, especially for English speaking. These techniques seem obstacles in the way of learning English for speaking as the students require adequate grasp of the language to communicate. Furthermore, grammar technique creates phobia about English. Therefore, instead of grammar, the term ‘Language Study’ has been introduced in the curriculum but when time comes to teach the topics of the so called ‘Language Study’, the students seem bored, frustrated, stressed and nervous. A. J. Hoge mentions his experience with one of his students, Seiko from Japan, who felt that learning English was boring and stressful and speaking English was even worse. Seiko felt she had developed a psychological problem with English and had named it “English trauma” (Hoge, np). This English Trauma needs to be treated by teaching English in a natural way- the way a child learns his/her mother tongue. A child learns his mother tongue by careful listening and by imitating of those expression which he listens.

Importance of Listening: We stress over the grammar learning a lot and we debate how language degrades by not focusing on grammar but we do not see how poor listening is making English hybrid. Many Urdu speakers distort the plurals in English, e.g. pena, (pens), booka (books), teachera (teachers), papera (papers), pencila (pencils), baga (bags), boysa (boys), girlsa (girls), and words like kilass (class), kilap (clap), etc. These are two kinds of errors, as Gass and Selinker assert, ‘interlingual’ and ‘intralingual’ errors. The former is caused by learners’ native language and the target language can lead to intralingual errors. (103). It is observed that students make such mistakes because they listen such words even in the school premises. We speak what we listen. Therefore, it is teachers’ responsibility to provide students proper environment to listen to correct English. Teachers should teach students to learn with their ears, not with their eyes. The more efficient a listener you are, the more successful and satisfied speaker you will be. It is crucial to understand that listening is not just hearing; it is rather a state of receptivity that allows understanding what is heard and it requires the listener’s sheer involvement in the communication process. As Nation and Newton assert in their book, *Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and Speaking*, that the receptive skills (listening and reading) as well as productive skills (speaking and writing) should be ‘meaning focused’. “It is called “meaning-focused” because in all the work done in this strand, the learners’ main focus and interest should be on understanding, and gaining knowledge or enjoyment or both from what they listen to and read” (3). An ESL teacher needs to develop a keen interest in making students better ears. In Hoge’s words, “When a baby first starts to learn English, or any language, it mostly just listens. In fact, for many months, the baby or child will only listen without any real speaking. This period of listening is called the “silent period” by linguists”. Here teachers need to treat the learner the way babies are treated without being impatient. A good listener shows readiness and possesses an ability to manipulate the sound into words and their contextual meaning. Then the good listener relates given meanings to other experiences and he shares responsibility with the speaker. Academically, listening skills play a vital role in the teaching learning cycle. A student learns better when he can listen better. A teacher is also in need of a good listening skill. All the way, listening should be enhanced in our life as to be a greater speaker.

In spite of its noticeable importance to language learning, listening skill has always been an ignored phenomenon. With the advent of communicative language teaching and the focus on ability, proficiency and skills, learning and teaching of listening received more attention. However, listening is not yet an essential part in most of the Indian classrooms. Moreover, in English learning situation, neither teachers nor the students spend enough time for the learning and practice of speaking skills for many reasons. Resultantly, the learners possess no enough vocabulary nor structure to communicate in English. Instead of displaying them language through grammar, learners need to be engaged in communication so that they should use the language pragmatically. They will seek to develop language proficiency through communication.

Sources to be Used:

It is absolutely important that technology must be brought into classrooms and teachers must be taught how to use and include it in their teaching methodology to bring about a more effective and inclusive learning experience. An evolution of teaching strategy, with technology integration may facilitate further to come out with fruitful results. When it is said students should listen more and more that means they should listen those who speak grammatically correct and it is the teacher's responsibility to provide the students such sources. If students listen correct language, they will speak correct. Here, I would like to introduce a web based source that can help improve English speaking through listening. The source is: www.eslfast.com. It has numerous short audios along with the script which can be useful not only to improve listening but also to improve reading. It has number of benefits as it will help improve pronunciation too. We need to add audio based oral exam to check listening comprehension that will help students to be a good listener. Additionally, it will provide the students chance to speak. Using [eslfast](http://www.eslfast.com) can dramatically change the students' speaking skill. The particularities and peculiarities of this source are it is errorless source made for English learning. This source needs to be introduced in the Urdu medium schools for developing speaking skill. Using English regularly and consistently and not the mother tongue as the medium of instruction can be a reparative measure to counter the problems that Urdu medium students face in speaking particularly.

Collocation: Collocations are the typical or common combinations of words we use together. Teaching English through collocation is one of the best ways to avoid mistakes. Students should be introduced collocation properly and should be given more collocation used in books. There are Cambridge publication books on collocations vocabulary such as English Vocabulary in Use and English Collocations in Use by Michael McCarthy and Felicity O'Dell. These books are tremendously helpful in learning English in natural way.

Phrases: Along with collocations, students should be taught to learn English through phrases. In a phrase students get syntax too so they understand how combination of words go together. Learning phrases leads to faster speech and faster understanding. To do this one needs to start keeping a "phrase" notebook. Every time one comes across a phrase, s/he should write it down in notebook. Not just one word, write

down the entire phrase, and then reviewing that phrase again and again will definitely help students to improve.

Conclusion: Along with use of technology, a better teaching strategy, teacher development, and environment enhancement is the only solution for the Urdu medium students who are hesitant in speaking English. Most importantly, ESL teachers should possess qualities such as PPP i.e. polite, passionate, and patient which help for sustaining a stress-free and friendly classroom. Moreover, we need to change the way in which English is being taught as a second language in Urdu medium schools. As mentioned previously in this work, the translation method is not a good tool for this exercise. Students must not be trained to translate words in their head before they can use them in their sentence. This exponentially reduces the student's proficiency and keeps him forever away from the much sought-after fluency.



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