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MOTHER TONGUE INFLUENCE IN INDIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

English is valued highly in the Indian society with a lot of prestige being attached to the language. The English language play a vital role in our life. It is known as global language. It is understood by many people since it is the most spoken language. A lot of energy is dedicated to learn and teach English in Indian schools. Despite this, not much attention is given to enhance the speaking skill in the average Indian classroom.

KEYWORDS: *English Speaking , language, Native language, and Pronunciation*

1. MOTHER TONGUE INFLUENCE

Introduction - That the learner pick up the skill of English speaking from the general classroom activities and instructions over period of time is a false assumption made. Students are always imitating the words as their teacher speaks to them. As a result, the learners are not able to develop this skill set and the confidence while conversing in English.

In continuation of this, through articulation of individual sounds while teaching this language is addressed, teaching of pronunciation is not given much importance either. In regular Indian classroom, the importance of native-like accent is not given due stress. One strong reason that could be attributed to this could be that number of dialects found is so large that it is practically impossible to address all the accents in a classroom. This is serious challenge in the Indian classroom. The areas of sound relating to spoken English and to pronunciation in the Indian context needs to be consciously addressed to counter this challenge and to make native- like accent in Indian learners more plausible.

2. HOW TO RECOGNIZE MTI

A very simple test is if you can guess where a guy comes from by the way he speaks English, his English communication suffers from mother tongue

influence . Let me tell you a story about three of my dear friends

A very simple test is if you can guess where a guy comes from by the way he speaks English, his English communication suffers from mother tongue influence. Let me tell you a story about three of my dear friends. First one is Yo Yo Honey Singh who lives in “Kanedda” and wants to open a “Toyotta” showroom with financial “sport” from his “dad ji”.

Then there is Chinah Chakraborty who is going to get “mayrid” to the “garl of hiz drims” because he “labhs” her “bhery much”.

There is also Narendra Yadav who is fighting University elections and promises everyone to “gibh” them “neat and clean univashty”, “class on time”, “egjaminesan on time” if he wins.

The story is all three suffer from heavy mother tongue influence.

Effect of mother tongue influence

MIT in always worked as barrier to language. But it’s the true reality which exists in Indian houses. A native influence seems good at your home place but out of your territory it’s appears as a disasters.

The worst part of mother tongue influence (MTI) is that it kills your confidence. You as a speaker know you sound wrong and even funny. It makes you

self conscious and requires hard work for a long time to get over.

Just as each language has different words, letters and script – so does each have different sounds? Thus there are some sounds which are found in Hindi but not in English and some sounds may be found in English but not in Tamil.

For example: in the word “Pleasure”, the second syllable is a sound not found in Hindi. It’s not “plezar” and it’s not “pleshar” – it is the mix of sounds of “z” and “sh”. Thus, for native Hindi speakers with insufficient English speaking exposure, pronouncing pleasure (or measure or leisure) correctly takes time and practice.

Similarly, there are sounds in your regional language which may not exist in English.

When we begin speaking in the second language (i.e. English), we initially use sounds from our mother tongue. Thus, everyone has mother tongue influence (MTI) to begin with. With more and more listening to those fluent in the second language, practicing speaking yourself and correcting mistakes, you slowly learn to replace your mother tongue sounds with the original sounds of English.

The importance of pronunciation in communication cannot be denied. In fact it is as important as grammar and vocabulary. Yet, the evidence of mother tongue influence on English is very obvious. This manifests in the form of incorrect pronunciation.

3. REASONS BEHIND MTI

Pronunciation error may be due to many issues. Guesswork or vagueness of the correct form of a word or sentence, or a general ineptness of the language could be the reason of mispronunciation. The most common reason is transfer or interference from the mother tongue. Generally, errors made in pronunciation are due to difference in the sound system and spelling symbols between the mother tongue and English.

Heavy mother tongue influence happens because your native language sounds have not yet been replaced with the second language sounds.

This, in turn may happen due to one or more of the following reasons:

- No knowledge of transcription (phonetics)
- Non English speaking family background
- You have not heard enough English
- You have not spoken enough English
- You have not been corrected enough

“Stop now!”, the smarter of you would say.

The Americans do speak English like Americans, the British like the British and Indians like the Indians. Aren’t these mother tongue influences?

Yes they are. In fact, accents are nothing but mother tongue influences so widespread that they become mainstream. Two characteristics distinguish accents from MTI (which essentially means “undesirable” mother tongue influence):

Widespread adoption Uniformity Thus, those regional, local or language influences which are adopted by so many people that the purists cannot ignore or isolate them become recognized as accents.

4. Is Indian neutral accent a solution to MTI?

We can’t do away with mother tongue influence completely. In fact, to ease our pain, certain Indian peculiarities of pronunciation have actually become acceptable and that’s what neutral Indian accent is.

For us Indians, the target should be to reduce our mother tongue influence so much that from a Punjabi/Bhojpuri/Tamil/Marathi or Bengali English speaker, we become an Indian English speaker.

As a regular practice the teacher is seen as a model for correct speaking in class. The learners are expected to be introduced to the pronunciation of words in English by their teacher during the day-to-day interaction. It is when the teacher her/himself has colored pronunciation that the learners are unable to acquire correct skills in spoken English. The pronunciation samples they are exposed to in their classroom environment being inappropriate, the learners are most likely to adopt a similar pronunciation skill.

Added to this is the challenge of the fossilised sound system of the mother tongue of the learners that inhibits the acquisition of the pronunciation and sound system of the second language. It is

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