

## **Factors Affecting Learning Speaking Skills in English among Rural Students in India**

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### **Abstract:**

*Speaking is one of the most important skills to be developed for effective communication. Speaking skill is regarded one of the most difficult aspects of language learning. Many language learners find it difficult to express themselves in spoken language. The rural students are generally facing problems to use the foreign language to express their thoughts effectively. They stop talking because they cannot find the suitable words and expressions. The modern world of media and mass communication requires good knowledge of spoken English. This paper aims at establishing the need to focus on the factors affecting on language learners' English speaking skill in rural areas of India. This study can be useful for teachers and researchers to consider their language learners' speaking needs in English language teaching and learning in rural context.*

**Keywords:** English, Skills, Rural.

### **Introduction:**

Today's globalized world, the most often used language is English. English has become the *lingua franca* for Communication, Business, Education and Opportunity in general. Today English occupies a place of prestige in India. Even after decades of Colonial rule, no indigenous language has come up to replace English, either as a medium of Communication or as an official language.

India is a multi-lingual country. In India people speak more than 350 languages and dialects. Indians are used to a particular pattern of pronunciation, intonation, stress and phonology of their mother tongue. English is a foreign language to India. Indians start learning English language with its own set of patterns and rules. This results in the problems in teaching and learning process of English language. Worldwide research is going on for the better communication skills for teaching, learning in English. Workshops, Seminars, Conferences are held on the same topics. The present paper makes an attempt to focus on the factors affecting learning speaking skills and outlines possible solutions. Proficiency of English language in the job market has opened up new jobs themselves with advances in telecommunication technology. Presently it is almost every country on earth where English is spoken. But even today Communication in English is a great problem in rural areas of India. The students are scared of English language or subject in school and colleges. The English learners in India lack competence in English language. The teaching of English in India is still fraught with a multitude of difficulties and obstacles. Realizing the demand and importance of English in almost all the states of India, English is taught as a compulsory language from the very first standard. Even then the outcome in the rural areas is unsatisfactory.

While training the rural students to develop their speaking skills and soft skills there are number of problems which act as hurdles for them to communicate effectively. Some students write well, but they are not able to express themselves orally, some speak fluently, but can't write without grammatical errors, some are comfortable speaking among themselves in a small group, but are not comfortable facing the audience, some have problems with their body language and use inappropriate gestures while interacting with others.

The significance of this study is that it would give further explanation with respect to the specific area of study which is problematic. It would be helpful to the researchers to find the solution to minimize the effects of the family factors. There are some problems for speaking skill that teachers can come across in helping students to speak in the classroom. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the factors affecting speaking

proficiency and specific skills or strategies in communication. Some of the learner centered factors affecting their speaking skills are discussed as below.

- **Learner inhibition:** The most common problem encountered by the learner in the language acquisition process is learner inhibition. Speaking activities require a learner to have all eyes on him; Exposure to an audience can often give learners stage fright. They may also be worried about making mistakes, being criticized or losing face in front of the rest of the class. This results in their performance where either they make a lot of mistakes in spite of having a very good knowledge in the area or totally keeping silent.
- **Lack of motivation:** Lower motivation levels or lack of motivation is another reason for hindering the learners from active participation in speaking activities. It leads to reluctance in active participation in the speaking activities leading to poor practice or no practice at all.
- **Lack of subject matter:** Another common problem seen in the rural learners is that they think that they have nothing to say on a particular topic. In reality, they may be bored or feel that the topic is unrelated to anything they know.
- **Lack of proper vocabulary:** Next problem encountered with the rural learners is that they often have to search for an appropriate word. They don't find one to fit into the context/content. This is because of lack of exposure to a variety of vocabulary. This also leads to failing speaking fluently in English Language, which again leads to lose confidence. As a result learners make an excessive overuse of fillers in their speech and conversation or give incomplete statements.
- **Lack of confidence:** A constant practice and patience are necessary to learn English Language. Learners believe that it is not possible to achieve fluency or master the language. This lack of confidence prevents them from learning the speaking skills.
- **Improper listening skills:** The central role of listening comprehension in the foreign language acquisition process is now largely accepted. Listening plays an extremely important role in the development of speaking abilities. Usually, one person speaks and the other responds through attending by means of the listening process. In fact, during interaction, every speaker plays a dual role- both as a listener and a speaker. If one cannot understand what is said, one is certainly unable to respond. In rural areas English speakers are little, so they have no platform to listen such conversations in English.
- **Poor non-verbal communication:** Speaking skill involves a very powerful non-verbal communication system, which sometimes contradicts the messages provided through the verbal listening channel. Lack of knowledge of the non-verbal communication system of the target language usually results in the inability to pick up non verbal cues by the learners, which often results in misunderstanding.
- **Anxiety:** Speaking a Foreign language in public, especially in front of native speakers often leads to anxiety. Sometimes, extreme anxiety results in the learners being tongue-tied or lost for words in an unexpected situation leading to discouragement and a general sense of failure in the learners. Unlike children, adults are very cautious about making errors in whatever they say. For them making errors would be a public display of ignorance which would be an obvious occasion of losing face. This is one of the major factors for the inability to speak in English.
- **Strong learner's domination in the class:** A large and mixed ability class is another factor affecting the language acquisition process. In these classes we have both strong and weak learners, where the strong and quick learners are often seen to be dominating and overtaking the slow and weak learners. The weak learners don't get opportunity in the presence of the strong ones, which results in the shrinking of the weak learners.

- **Family background:** The environment and family background plays a vital role in the learning process. In a country like India majority of the people are farmers with poor educational background. Learners coming from such background when asked to take part or do a speaking activity they fail to do it. Moreover, the poor income status of the family makes the parents engage their children in petty jobs instead of sending them to schools and colleges resulting in poor speaking skills.
- **Rural background:** Rural background of the learners where English is generally not used is another cause affecting the learning process. Most of the learners coming from rural background are first generation learners of English Language. Their parents being farmers and uneducated, they lack guidance from their elders in this aspect. When learners of such background are asked to do a speaking activity, they end up in saying nothing. Even if they try to speak, they often tend to use their mother tongue, resulting in the failure of the learning process.
- **Excessive use of mother-tongue:** Learners generally tend to make an excessive use of their mother-tongue when it comes to the activities in productive skills namely- speaking and writing. When the learners are asked to perform a speaking activity, they immediately start thinking about the topic in their mother tongue, frame what they want to say in their mother-tongue and then translate it into English, which often results in mistakes. Indians are used to a particular set of pattern of pronunciation, Intonation, stress-pattern and phonology of their mother-tongue which has an obvious impact on acquiring a foreign language. The changes in the patterns used in English and that of their mother-tongue often create confusion in the learners. In addition to these learners often tend to make excessive use of their mother-tongue which results in losing the motive of learning the language and lack of practice.
- **Lack of proper orientation:** Even though some learners have learnt the language at their school levels, they are unable to produce even a single sentence without grammatical error. The basic reason for this is, learning the subjects from the examination point of view. The learners, their parents as well as the teachers lay more stress on the core subjects than the English language. In order to convey meaning; the learners must have the knowledge of words and sentences. They must understand how words are segmented into various sounds, how sentences are stressed in particular ways that contributes to their fluency.
- **Indian phonology** The phonological system of Indian languages and English differ in important aspects notably in the prominence given to distinctions between vowels and distinctions between consonants. While English has 22 vowel phonemes and diphthongs and 24 consonants, Hindi has only ten vowel phonemes but distinguishes over 30 consonants. The pronunciation of long and short vowels often creates confusion to learners. The consonant cluster is another cause of confusion for the learners. These are a few factors encountered by the rural learners in the process of foreign language acquisition.

### Conclusions:

To conclude-the process of minimizing the factors affecting English speaking skill we have to focus on the qualified and competent teachers. Special attention must be paid to ensure that the Language Teachers have a very good command of English Language. They must be well qualified and certified. It is necessary to upgrade themselves and keep competent for which it is necessary to continue their research activities by participating in seminars/conferences and workshops. Building rapport and good relation with the learners is essential to make the learning atmosphere friendly.

Once the teacher establishes a good rapport with the learners, it is important to build their confidence. This can be done by starting with simple and easy tasks. This will encourage the slow learners to participate in the activity and boost their moral. The teacher should be a guide, mentor and facilitator. The teacher should

ensure to get proper teaching aids and facilities which include- proper space, books and teaching aids. When the learners get proper learning facilities and ambiance, their learning process will be effective and speedy.

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