



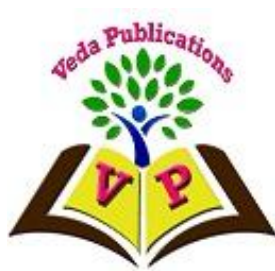
METHODOLOGY OF ACTIVITY BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT



English is considered the *Lingua franca* of the world. The behavior (syntactic and semantic) of the language has many peculiarities. Without an understanding of the fundamental features of the language, it is very difficult for anybody to acquire mastery, if not proficiency. Hence, we have to learn some of the very important aspects of language. The basic language skills are Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Listening and Reading are called receptive skills. Speaking and Writing are productive skills. We have to learn some of the very influential factors regarding each of these skills that govern the process of attaining proficiency in the acquisition and use of language for various academic and professional purposes.

English has now become a language of opportunity. A fairly high degree of proficiency in English and excellent communication skills enhance students' employability. Keeping in view the increasing importance of English for career purposes, the Govt. of Andhra Pradesh and the state universities have introduced practical in teaching English language at undergraduate level to improve communication skills among the learners as 'A Course in Listening and Speaking-I' for the first year students and 'A Course in Listening and Speaking - II' for the second year Degree students as part of their general English course. These course books aim to develop students' ability to use English accurately, appropriately and fluently both for face-to-face and telephone communication in academic, social and work situations.

Keywords: *English Language, Teaching, Methodology, Language skills.*

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PART I: PRONUNCIATION AND NEUTRALIZATION OF ACCENT AND LISTENING SKILLS

This Research Article is divided into three parts. All the three parts have a good mixture of listening and speaking activities. The first part aims at Pronunciation and Neutralization of Accent. It familiarizes with the twenty six letters of English alphabet that represent forty four sounds. The five pure vowel letters-a,e,i,o,u represent 20 sounds (vowels and diphthongs) and the rest of letters (21) consonants represent 24 sounds and their symbols in English. All these sounds deal with the concepts of word stress, sentences stress and intonation. Majority of the units in this part deals with the sounds in English. Each unit has a few listening exercises.

The first part makes the student clarify almost all of his/her doubts of phonemic symbols and their sounds regarding problems in pronunciation, syllables, word stress, sentence stress, rising and falling tone, intonation, stress in compound words, stress in words in different Parts of Speech etc. This part also attempts to neutralize students' accent by drawing their attention to common errors made by the speakers of Indian languages with respect to sounds in English that are not found in Indian languages.

As we are aware, Listening is the first of the four basic skills. Listening is the art of carefully hearing to something that is spoken by somebody else in a given situation, and understanding, interrupting, analyzing, and assimilating the data presented. It is assumed that all of us know the importance of effective listening. A lot of factors govern the process of listening.

All the activities integrate several language skills. A writing activity may follow a listening activity or a reading activity may precede a speaking activity. The language skills are integrated and not discrete at the advanced levels of English language instruction. In this part, learners are introduced to a series of carefully selected, controlled and systematically presented listening activities that gradually enable the learners to improve their listening skills. Integrated into the listening and speaking activities are writing and, occasionally, reading activities. The

learners are required to listen to the compact disk enclosed with the text book.

All the tasks require the following stages to be completed-pre listening (stating specific objectives, highlighting the purpose of listening, discussing probable), while-listening and post-listening (discussing areas of difficulty, preparing for follow-up activity). The teacher has to assure his/ her students that they need not understand all that is listened to. They should be able to respond even if they do not understand every word. Real communication occurs in this manner.

In general, every day we hear a number of people talking- at home, at work, on the radio and TV, in the bus, in the street, etc. However, we don't listen to everyone in the same manner. This is because we usually listen for a particular reason. We may want some specific information, for example, a name of a particular detail. We wait for that information to be given and listen for it very carefully. Sometimes we listen to get a general idea of what someone is saying. Sometimes when we are not interested in what the person is saying, we do not really listen at all. We merely hear the speaker's words without understanding them.

It focuses on how to differentiate between formal and informal speech, practice making predictions about what a speaker is likely to say, listen for details and listen for taking notes. In order to understand what people are saying it helps to know what their relationship with each other is? The levels of formality and informality are determined by three factors i.e. who the speakers are, where they are and what the context is.

The learners need to keep these things in mind. This helps them comprehend speech better and also use appropriate language while speaking. Comprehension of what we listen to increases when we understand the purpose of listening. Most often in a classroom situation we listen to talks or lectures with the purpose of understanding the main points by focusing on the supporting details. There are activities like project work about an important task which improve listening and understanding activity.

Most often we listen to people for the facts that are relevant to us for what they say. This would be so in an academic setting as well as professional



setting. These facts could be numbers, ideas, concepts, dates, etc. Regarding listening to talks and descriptions, if someone is describing an object, like an umbrella, it is the detail in the description, such as the colour or a reference to the shape, which helps us differentiate it from another umbrella. So we need to listen carefully for the words which describe the details. In listening for making inferences, it is not always easy to infer the actual meaning of a person's words. He/ she might disguise it through an indirect statement or use a different tone to indicate that he actually wants to say something else.

When we listen, we are only interested in finding out specific information such as the date, time, names, key words, etc. For others to comprehend one's speech properly, it should be clear in terms of delivery as well as content. The manner of delivery is especially significant when it comes to making announcements to large gatherings. If we observe good public speakers, we will find that they make use of variations of stress, rhythm and intonation in their speech to divide information into 'chunks' of meaning. We should be able to recognize these speech patterns in order to understand formal spoken English. In order to draw the attention of the listeners, we use phrases like 'Your attention please', 'May I have your attention please', etc. Such phrases should always be stressed.

Good public speakers illustrate the stages of their task through the use of 'signpost words'. Being able to identify and follow the signpost words will help us understand formal spoken English better. Speakers must make use of these special words to help introduce ideas and to provide a framework for what they are saying. We can call them 'signpost words' because they direct our listening; in other words, they warn us that more information is coming and suggest what kind of information it may be, e.g., additional, positive, negative, similar, different, etc.

There are some activities which highlight how the use of signpost words is important in making communication clear and effective. The other focuses on the use of cohesive devices or signpost words that enable effective communication. All these involve active and skilful listening. There are activities like a dialogue between a receptionist at a hotel and a caller, a transcript of a telephone conversation

between two persons, listening to the proceedings of a meeting and write down its minutes as directed help concentrate on what we listen to. They also help us in taking down what we hear. One way of improving our communicative competence would be to make good use of the radio and the television, as they are tremendous resources to learn English. We see how we can use these resources consciously to improve our communication skills. There are activities that help us streamline our efforts to learn the English language to communicate.

PART II: COMMUNICATION AND SPEAKING SKILLS

In India, most of us are exposed to the English language only in the written or printed form. In speech, English uses several features like stress, weak forms, rhythm and intonation. These cannot be identified in written English. In Part II, attention is paid to these aspects, the problem sounds for Indian speakers of English and reducing mother tongue interference. As we are aware, we don't pronounce many words the way we write them. In other words, spelling and pronunciation do not go together in many words. There are many reasons for it. Among all the reasons put forward, the following are considered very significant:

- Because of Alphabet –sound mismatch
- Many words that had made an entry into the language did not undergo many changes. Their spellings and pronunciation contribute heavily to the peculiarity. E.g.: resume
- In many of Indian languages, sounds are represented by separate letters. In other words, a particular letter represents a particular sound. But in English, there is a letter-sound mismatch. E.g.: 26 letters represent 44 sounds.

Communication Skills attempt to familiarize the learners with the basics of oral communication and to develop their ability to use English for performing some of the most common communicative functions in academic, social and work situations. This part aims at the students' capability of speaking English fluently with accuracy. Through this part we can assess that how fluently the



student is speaking and how much fluency is required to improve further course of learning.

This part familiarizes the different ways of Greeting and introducing i.e. how do you greet people? Greetings on different occasions, Introducing one self and others in different situations using role-play activity, how to make requests appropriately in different situations, how important to learn to ask for permission and how to refuse or deny permission in the most appropriate way so that one can get or deny permission from different people in a pleasing manner. When someone offers help to us, we either accept it or decline it. Through this we also know that how to ask for help for different problems in a very polite manner. This makes us know how to give instructions or directions and also makes us recollect our occasions when we had difficulty giving instructions or directions to someone.

There are a number of role play activities in this part. In some of them students have to pair up with a partner and play the parts of two persons in a dialogue. The teacher has to divide the entire class into pairs and ensure that everybody has a partner. If there is anyone without a partner, the teacher has to offer to be his/her partner. The students have to study the dialogues carefully. There should be a time limit. While students are engaged in the role play activity, the teacher has to monitor their roles by avoiding their interruption to conversation and observation of their common errors.

There are role play activities in the form of flow charts where students are told what to say in each of their turns in the conversation. In such activities, students are given sufficient time to study the charts and prepare themselves before they start their conversation. They are helped if necessary. A third type of role play activity gives them their role cards that describe their roles and students are expected to engage themselves in a conversation for the purpose mentioned in the role card.

Part II describes what a syllable is-its nature, structure and production, to identify the number of syllables in a word, to divide a given word into its syllables and the importance of the syllable in speech i.e. pronunciation. In order to analyze speech, we need a unit longer than a speech sound. The syllable is, thus, a very significant unit in the production of

speech, without which we cannot analyze or describe it. The student is analyzed with division of syllables from monosyllabic words to six syllabic words and structure of the syllable.

Word Stress, an important feature of spoken English, describes the principle of stress in a word. Some common rules of word stress and how to identify the stress in a word and also to reproduce it in speech are also significant to learn word stress. Accent and Rhythm express the complexities involved in using connected speech in English, to identify and use sentence stress in English, the use of weak forms and to recognize the contributory factors to rhythm in English speech.

Intonation teaches us the terms 'tone', 'accent', 'nucleus' and 'pitch'. It also teaches us the functions of pauses and tone groups, how to choose the tone to be used on the nucleus, to recognize and produce the falling and rising tone and the functions of the falling and rising. Problematic Sounds enable us to identify the sounds in English that are difficult for Indian speakers and how to master these sounds with the help of exercises that focus on the problematic sounds of pure vowels, diphthongs and consonants in English for non-native speakers like Indians.

Reducing Mother Tongue Interference helps us identify the sounds in English in the production of learners' mother tongue interference, how to reduce the mother tongue interference and the importance of a neutral accent in effective communication. Every language has its own unique sounds which may not be present in other languages. Young children can acquire the native speaker's pronunciation in any language as they can imitate sounds easily and well. Adults, however, may find learning a second language difficult, especially those sounds which are not present in their mother tongue.

American and British Accents show the difference between British and American pronunciation and how to develop a neutral pronunciation for international intelligibility. As we are aware; it is for historical reasons that Indians chose the British model of English. However, in the current scenario of globalization, we hear the American variety of English often through mass media and movies. In this unit there are some ways discussed in which American



English differs from British English especially in vocabulary, pronunciation and accent.

Language is a tool for communication which plays a vital role in transmitting information and exchange of ideas mutually or to one another in an accepted language. Nowadays communication skills, particularly in English, have become essential especially for unemployed youth to get selected for employment in the job market. Every student must be able to communicate fluently as well as accurately besides his/ her merit in his/ her respective disciplines. To acquire mastery over English language one must get exposed to standard speakers and pronunciation.

PART III TELEPHONE SKILLS

Part three describes Telephone Skills. This part helps students understand telephone as a mode of communication and prepares the students to handle telephone calls and use the telephone for basic communicative functions such as requesting and asking for and giving information. In telephone communication, the speaker and the listener cannot see each other unless they use a video phone. Therefore, to simulate the situation, the teacher has to ask the two partners in each pair to sit back-to-back facing away from each other and attempt the conversation. Role cards for A and B will be found on two different pages of the book. Each student is allowed to pair up with a partner, study his/her role and when they are ready ask them to sit face-to-face and practice the conversation.

Understanding Telephone Communication prepares students for a telephone call. The different stages of a telephone call and the difficulties in telephone communication are the sub topics discussed in the unit to make the learner enable in handling the telephone calls. In order to be an effective communicator on telephone, it is important to understand this medium of communication well. Unlike face-to face communication, in telephone conversation the participants generally cannot see each other. Body language and facial expression which are central to face-to-face communication are absent in telephone conversation. It helps to make preparations before making a phone call. This is all the more important in the case of business or professional calls. Although a telephone call could be

as short as a few seconds, it helps understand the various stages of a call. Whether it is a formal call or an informal call, the stages exist in some form or the other.

Conversation on phone has its own difficulties. Telephone communication is generally difficult because of different reasons. Often we have to ask the caller to be louder, softer, slower etc. Handling Calls is a difficult task. We make telephone calls for personal and official or business purposes. It is important to be aware of the differences in the language, etiquette and manners to be observed while making calls for different purposes. When someone answers our call, we need to say who he/she is and say who he/she wants to speak to.

Leaving a message on an answering machine is used on certain occasions when the person we call is unavailable. It may be necessary to leave a message for the person. In such situations, both the caller and the person answering the call will have to be very clear in leaving and taking the message. At the end of the call, either the caller or the person answering the call should check whether the message is received correctly. To conduct this activity, the learners are to be instructed to sit back-to-back with a partner and play a role in the conversation. The teacher has to switch roles and make students do it a second time. At times, when the person called is unavailable, the receiver hears an answering machine answering the phone call. The caller is expected to say whatever he/ she wants to tell the person and his/ her message gets recorded on the machine. This helps the person listen to the recorded message when he/ she returns and takes suitable action.

Making requests on phone helps the learner distinguish between direct and indirect requests. It is also helpful in using direct and indirect requests in communication, listening and identifying purposes of requests. As in face- to-face communication, in telephone conversation too it is important that requests are made using appropriate language. While it is difficult to say 'no' to a request when talking to someone face-to-face, people find it easy to do so when talking on the phone. In communication, indirect requests are considered more polite than direct requests. In real conversation, we usually use a



combination of indirect requests and *wh* questions. To perform this activity, the participants need to sit back-to-back with a partner and play the roles of A and B and practice the conversation. After the completion, they reverse their roles and repeat the same.

The learner is familiarized with asking for and giving information. He/she is confident in checking readiness, giving accurate information, spelling out names of words, asking for repetitions and asking for information. There are many occasions when you have to give the caller some information on the phone. On certain occasions the listener may want to make a note of the information that we give. There are occasions when we have to spell words over the phone. When the listener has difficulty in understanding the sound of a particular letter, it is useful to give a word beginning with that letter that we think is familiar to the listener. To conduct this activity, the students are instructed to sit back-to-back and play roles in the given situations with his/her partner. They are also informed to use role cards.

There might be occasions when somebody who has made a commitment to us fails to meet it. On such occasions, we might have to express our displeasure to the person either directly or through the phone. This should be done using proper expressions without being rude so that the other person realizes his mistake. We should also be factual and precise when we speak to them. On the other hand, if there has been a lapse on our part, admit the mistake and offer an apology promptly.

Telephone etiquette teaches telephone etiquette in day-to-day interactions, telephone etiquette at work and how to take down messages over the phone. Making and receiving calls on the telephone is such an integral part of our lives that we may not realize that we need to follow certain etiquette while doing so. Good telephone etiquette is essential when we take up jobs as sales persons, personal secretaries, telemarketers, customer service representatives, receptionists, etc.

IMPRESSION

All the three parts have many activities in which each learner is expected to speak and practice. In Part I most of the speaking activities require students to listen and repeat words, phrases and

short sentences. In such exercises, first the students are allowed to listen to the recording of the relevant sections or read them aloud. The students are also instructed to listen to the recording with much concentration and they have to repeat and practice the same as many a time as they get perfection.

At the end of every activity, the teacher is required to identify the merits and errors made by the students and give feedback on their strengths and weaknesses that are noticed among students and suggestions are to be given to rectify their mistakes and improve their communication. The teacher needs to deal with common errors in plenary sessions and talk to students individually giving feedback on their specific problems. A separate register exclusively for English practical classes should be maintained by the teacher to note day wise performance and feedback of the learners.

The main objective of introducing all these three parts of accuracy, fluency and listening comprehension is to create enthusiasm among the learners and make them get exposed to English language which has become an indispensable skill to meet the global challenges. As English is a semi-phonetic language, the people of English elite across the world are being confronted at understanding the pronunciation and accent of the other (whose mother tongue is different) because of mother tongue influence. We also find difference in accent between the British and the Americans even though their mother tongue is same. Hence, the people of one regional language are partly understood to other regional language/ area. For example, an American feels difficulty to understand the accent of an Indian and vice-versa and an Indian mumbles to understand the accent of a British and vice-versa. Even a South Indian accent is different from that of a North Indian because of the mother tongue influence.

Keeping in view all these difficulties faced by English speakers all over the world, English language accent has been neutralized to a standard pronunciation and accent to make understanding easy. This system enables the students to utilize better opportunities that improve their employment potentiality especially in multinational companies of India and abroad.

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