

## **Attitude of English Language Learners as an obstacle in enhancing their speaking skill: A study.**

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### **Abstract:**

The researcher has been teaching English at Diploma (Technical) level. During the course of teaching English he found the fact that students were very poor at spoken English and quite slow at learning to speak in English. The observation encouraged the researcher to conduct such a study to find out the obstacles in learning spoken English and to design solutions for the same. There are various problems of ELT as SL at Diploma (Technical) level. However, the researcher has focused on the attitude of ELL in the present study for he found the same as an obstacle in the teaching-learning process, especially in enhancing their speaking skill. The present study was undertaken at C. U. Shah University, Wadhwan city, Gujarat. A focused group of learners and teachers, consisting of the students from different branches of diploma engineering and teachers teaching English in the said university was interviewed and analyzed in a qualitative tradition of analysis. One of the major obstacles in enhancing the speaking skill of the learner, as found in the study was the attitude of learners. Here the researcher has focused only on speaking skill out of the four skills i.e. LSRW.

**Key Words:** Attitude, English-Language Learner, ELT, SL, LSRW, Obstacle.

## **Introduction:**

Significance and inevitability of language and communication are quite obvious as a living being cannot exist and survive without language and communication. C. L. Wrenn defines language in the following words, “Language is the expression of human personality in words, whether written or spoken. It is the universal medium alike for conveying the common facts and feelings.....” (Wrenn 1) Mr. P. P. Mehta and Dr. P. N. Bhatt emphasize on accuracy in language in following words, “Language is the expression of human mind and a vehicle to express human thinking. For this reason it must be accurate as well as complete. All kinds of truths, facts and reality find expression through language.” (Mehta and Bhatt 1)

Importance of language and accuracy in the same make language teachers and educators ponder over the teaching-learning process of English as a second language for English has been considered to be the world language. Further, English Language Teaching (as a second language) and the problems encountered by the teachers and learners have been a crucial matter to think over so far due to the same reason. The world has been transformed into a glob by globalization and English has become the medium of communication all over the world. Thus it becomes the most significant duty of a teacher to teach English as a second language very effectively so that the generation can be trained to cop up with the recent trends and technology invented all over the world. There will no exaggeration in stating that without English Language one cannot even survive in this radically competitive world. It becomes a duty of a language teacher (i.e English as a second language) to find out various problems faced by the learners in learning, acquiring, and mastering it.

There are four skills to be developed i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing to build the language of a learner. So far it has been observed by the teachers that learners who study in Gujarati (or any other regional language) medium are very slow at developing their speaking skill. There are various reasons for the above mentioned fact. However, the researcher has found the attitude of learners as one of the major obstacles.

## **Problem Statement:**

The present study focuses on ‘Attitude of learners’ as an obstacle in learning spoken English. Here terms ‘Attitude’ and ‘English Language Learners’ need to be explained.

Online business dictionary defines attitude as “a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation.” (Business Dictionary) Oxford advanced Learner Dictionary defines attitude as, “The way that you think and feel about sb/sth, the way that you behave sb/sth that shows how you think and feel.” (Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary 85) Both the definitions cited above focuses on one’s feeling for something or somebody, inclination for action and positive or negative response to something or somebody. Four major components of attitude are as follows: 1) Affective: emotions and feelings. 2) Cognitive: belief or opinions held consciously. 3) Conative: inclination for action. 4) Evaluative: positive or negative response.

In the present study learners mean English Language Learners, which has been defined by *edglossory* in following words, “English-Language Learners, or ELL, are students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-Speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses.” (edglossary)

The present study will analyze the attitude of ELL and find out how it creates obstacles in the process of ELT as SL and specifically enhancing the speaking skill of ELL.

### **Aim and Objectives:**

The present research work aims at analyzing the attitude of ELL including their feelings and beliefs about English Language which leads them to a certain type of behavior and responses during the teaching-learning process of English as SL, which creates obstacles in the process. The study aims at providing the remedies too for the same.

Objectives of the present study are as follows:

- 1) To study and analyze the attitude of ELL.
- 2) To investigate the obstacles in teaching spoken English.
- 3) To suggest effective techniques to overcome the problem.
- 4) To contribute in the present knowledge domain of ELT.
- 5) To motivate teachers and ELL.
- 6) To help ELL in acquiring English language in general and speaking skill in particular.
- 7) To help teachers in making their teaching more effective.

## **Research Questions:**

- 1) Why are ELL very slow at learning spoken English?
- 2) What is the social and academic background of the ELL?
- 3) How is the attitude of ELL towards learning spoken English?
- 4) How does the attitude of ELL effect language acquisition in general and spoken English in particular?

## **Research Design:**

The present research deals with investigating and analyzing the attitude of ELL at Diploma (Technical) level. The researcher has selected students from different branches of diploma engineering. There were 15 students from Diploma Mechanical Engineering, 15 students from Diploma Electrical Engineering, 15 students from Diploma Computer Engineering, and 15 students from Diploma Civil Engineering. Among them 20 students were females and 40 students were males. All the students belong to the same age group i.e. 16 to 18. Random stratified method was used in selecting the sample of the study. Here English is taught in the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> semesters of diploma (technical) courses in C. U. Shah University, Wadhwan city, Gujarat. The syllabus has been designed to enhance LSRW of the students which include grammar, reading stories and technical passages, conversation practice, essay writing and notice writing. The researcher has selected interview as a data collection tool. Above mentioned students were interviewed to know the problems faced by the students in learning spoken English. The researcher is also an active member in the process of data collection. Along with his experience and observations, other teachers teaching English were interviewed for the same. Audio recording of the same was done to have more clarity. The data was analyzed in a qualitative tradition and the information was interpreted to get findings.

## **Research Findings:**

The participative and reflective expressions were interpreted and the following findings related to the attitude of ELL emerged:

- 1) They hesitate while speaking in English.
- 2) They lack courage and confidence.

- 3) They have fear of evaluation and mistake.
- 4) They are afraid of facing audience.
- 5) They compare themselves with other students and audience.
- 6) They don't consider English as their own Language.
- 7) They don't want to accept English Language as a medium of instruction.
- 8) They are afraid of being laughed at while speaking in English.
- 9) They lack positive thing while speaking in English.
- 10) They have fear of probable touch of mother tongue English while speaking in English.
- 11) They feel shy.
- 12) They are not committed to express their ideas in English.
- 13) They believe that they can survive without English Language.
- 14) They believe that English is a difficult language.
- 15) They suffer from inferiority complex.
- 16) They are prejudiced against English Language.
- 17) They desire to speak in English but never try to speak in English.
- 18) They criticize and laugh at English speaking class-mates that discourage speakers.
- 19) They don't think in English due to laziness and fear.
- 20) They avoid changes to speak in English.

The above mentioned traits of ELL have been formed due to the following reasons:

- 1) They cannot find some words, sentence structures, and expressions while speaking in English.
- 2) They have non-English and rural social and family background.
- 3) They have non-English academic background.
- 4) They have never been made to speak in English.
- 5) They had been allowed to speak in mother tongue during classes of English language at school level.
- 6) Teachers at school level used only mother tongue in the classes of English language.
- 7) They have done preparation of the subject (i.e.English) from examination point of view only.
- 8) They have never been taught English in direct method. So they always translate which need more time and create many problems while speaking.

- 9) They can think in English but cannot speak due to lack of practice and their own attitude.
- 10) Importance of English language has not been conveyed to the students properly.

The above list is not exhaustive. Many more can be added by further research.

### **Recommendations:**

With help of the following recommendations the above mentioned problems and obstacles can be overcome and teachers can make the teaching-learning process more effective and ELL can learn English and enhance their speaking skill along with other skills.

- 1) Language Laboratory should be used to teach English.
- 2) All types of fears should be removed by providing ELL with maximum regular practice.
- 3) ELL should be encouraged and motivated by positive feedback.
- 4) Mistakes should not be pointed out at initial level.
- 5) They should be allowed and encouraged to express their ideas in English.
- 6) Mixed ability groups and pairs should be formed if they cannot speak alone and on their own.
- 7) English atmosphere should be created in the class rooms and in the campus.
- 8) They should be convinced that English is their own language and by speaking in English they will not be doing injustice to their mother tongue.
- 9) They should be made to listen to English as much as possible.
- 10) They should be encouraged and compelled to think in English.
- 11) They should be convinced that they are inferior to none.
- 12) Audience also should be convinced not to laugh or criticize the speaker.
- 13) They should be made to face the audience regularly.
- 14) They should be advised not to compare themselves with others.
- 15) Teacher should make the subject so that a natural inclination of ELL towards English language can be gradually developed.
- 16) They should be allowed to use mother tongue but they should not be allowed to leave English completely.
- 17) They should not be allowed to escape from spoken English.

- 18) They should be convinced that English is an easy language.
- 19) They should be convinced that English is important and inevitable language.
- 20) They should be helped in forming informal groups for communicating in English.
- 21) They should be advised to listen to English on T.V. Radio and other sources.
- 22) They should be advised to practice loud reading.
- 23) Role play, one act play, group work and other techniques should be used in the class rooms.
- 24) Teacher should communicate with ELL in English as much as possible.

### **Conclusion:**

The above study was conducted at C. U. Shah University, Wadhwan city, Gujarat and the findings and recommendations are based on the research undertaken there. However, the above findings can be used by any teacher teaching at diploma level where students belong to regional area of India and who are very slow at learning spoken English. The above stated list of the recommendations is not an exhaustive as a lot of more can be added by conducting focused researches further. Modification of attitude of ELL will make the teaching-learning process more interesting and effective and help learners to acquire English language easily.

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