Strategies for Teaching Spoken and Written English for Telugu Speaking Students

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ABSTRACT *What can be the best approach so that students can become fluent in less time? There is no way students can become fluent faster unless they are exposed to the language they are to learn. The sentence patterns give students the skills to create original sentences that express their ideas and knowledge. The SPM (Sentence Pattern Method) was tested with engineering graduates from Telugu medium. With this approach the learner started speaking English without fear. The errors of the learner were reduced considerably. The paper also discusses some important rules/suggestions for developing spoken English fluency for the learner in a very short time.*

Introduction

"English has become the medium of all relevant Social interactions and the ability to use English effectively is considered an absolute essential for honorable existence."

There is no way students can become fluent faster unless they are exposed to the language they are to learn. And of course, the more they are exposed, the less time it takes. Most people say that being exposed 24x7 that is living in the country of their new language, made them communicate within six months. If the students are exposed to English only temporarily, that is, their families aren't English speakers, and then you would have to find ways of exposing them to English through radio, films and music. When it comes to exposure through radio, movies etc. they really can't understand the foreign accent. That's why it becomes such a daunting task. Most of the learners complain many a times that they don't get to speak in English outside the class. Perhaps this is the plight of all such small towns where Telugu is the main language for conversation.

The students educated in a reputed convent school also gradually doing away with the English Language, once they pass out of school. It is also critical to understand that most of the learning happens at the school level, from where it has to be carried further. College education is looked upon as a means of enjoying oneself since they are experiencing a totally different scenario where they are free birds. It is only in select colleges that students continue honing their skills but here again the slang language replaces proper English and the vocabulary level remains the same. There is also a feeling of superiority which creeps in wherein students feel that they are masters of the English Language.

The sentence patterns give students the skills to create original sentences that express their ideas and knowledge. Students learn to write through imitation. They study an author's craft and techniques. Once they have reached a comfort level with the patterns, teachers must encourage students to play. Combine patterns, move embedded elements to new positions, take risks, make decisions, let voice evolve. There are five basic patterns around which most English sentences are built. They are as follows: S-V, S-V-O, S-V-Adj, S-V-Adv and S-V-N. At the heart of every English sentence is the Subject-Verb relationship. Other elements can be added to make a sentence more interesting, but they are not essential to its formation.

Linguists cite eight major sentence patterns in the English language (Benjamin & Oliva, 2007). I think that can be simplified for our students by teaching two basic patterns: noun-verb (N-V) and noun-verb-noun (N-V-N). After all, noun–linking verb–noun is just a variation of noun-verb-noun. Once students can create those, they can then embed or add sentence elements to create a wide range of patterns.

With the advent of the Common Core State Standards, the ability to write coherent essays and narratives will be crucial. Students will be required to "develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach" Knowing a range of patterns will give students the ability to revise sentences by adding or deleting information and by rearranging the elements of a sentence. The rules of standard written English are taught with each pattern so that students can edit their work.

There are some methods that can be used to guide students to speak and write better English.

a)Repeat
Initially the child learns by repeating what they hear even without understanding the word or its meaning as do kindergarten children recite nursery rhymes.

b)Conversation
In a conversation, non-English speakers might not understand all of the words, and they might not know what is being said. However, through the flow of conversation, and through actions and facial expressions, learners will begin to pick out pieces of the language that they do understand.

c)Translation
Translate sentences and ideas from the student's native language into English. Then have the student say the phrases back, both in their own language and in English. Although this process takes a long time, it can help students understand the meanings of what they say, and might help them learn more quickly.

d)Immersion
If the teacher creates an English atmosphere or makes the students live in an English area, no specific method is required, the students learn through experiencing the language.

Literature Review
Seven basic sentence patterns by Martha Kolln's book Rhetorical Grammar, enhances the ability to use those patterns in writing, speaking and understanding the better functions of grammar. Skehan (1998) and Foster (2001) mentioned the formulaic expressions called Sentence Pattern Method (SPM), played an important role in second language acquisi-

tion and native speakers have been shown to use a much larger number of formulaic expressions than even advanced second language learners. Ellis (1984) and Myles, Mitchell, and Hooper (1998) demonstrated that learners often internalize the formulaic expressions and reuse them for different situations by substituting variables. Ellis (2005) proposed ten principles for language learning, which play the important role in designing the curriculum for spoken English teaching. Rebecca (2006) and Prabhu (1987) discussed the task based language teaching and learning and it is based on the concept that effective learning occurs when students are fully engaged in a language task, rather than just learning about language and tasks comprise the foundation of the curriculum.

Nation (2003) discussed the role first language or mother tongue in English language learning and it showed that teaching the vocabulary in the first language gives the better understanding of the meaning. What problems do you encounter while teaching writing to students? Teachers consistently cite three student-related problems related to teaching writing and speaking: lack of motivation, lack of basic skills, and lack of content knowledge or information about the topics.

Methodology:
120 students of Engineering were selected randomly who had their earlier education in vernacular medium. The teacher grouped them into teams of six. She started conducting an hour of training for about three months using sentence pattern method. There are different ways of teaching language both written and spoken to the students learning English as the second language. As India has many regional languages, English language learners feel difficult in learning written and spoken English language because they get troubled by their mother tongue influence. Through reflection the author of this paper tried to use the following ways successfully to train them:

a. The students were primarily trained for parts of speech, such that they could put any word given into its functional group. Then they were introduced to the five basic patterns around which most English sentences are built. They are as follows:

Pattern	Pattern expansion	Example
S-V	Subject-Verb	Ravi cries.
S-V-O	Subject-Verb-Object	She ate an apple.
S-V-Adj.	Subject-Verb-Adjective	He is lazy.
S-V-Adv.	Subject-Verb-Adverb	She walks fast.
S-V-N	Subject-Vern-Noun	She is a doctor.

At the heart of every English sentence is the Subject-Verb relationship. Other elements can be added to make a sentence more interesting, but they are not essential to its formation. The students were trained to form as many sentences as they can on their own on all these patterns.

b. Another way adopted to make the students learn to make longer and better sentences was by fixing certain words in a sentence as constants and making new sentences by changing a few other words treating them as variables.

Example: She is eating an apple. (Keeping the V-O as constants, the students were asked to make new sentences like-Ravi is eating an apple.

The students were asked to make more sentences changing the V-O, keeping the Subject constant.

Ravi is drinking milk.
Ravi is playing cricket.

c. As the students were found to be good at making sentences in their mother tongue, they were asked to write a sentence in their mother tongue and translate it into English.

Initially the students found it interesting to write a sentence in Telugu but felt hard to translate it. Slowly they started learning and enjoying during the process. This method involved three steps as shown below:

Step 1:
Ramudu mamidipandu thinenu.(Transliteration of a Telugu sentence)

(S) (O) (V)

Step 2:
Ram mango ate. (Translation of the Telugu sentence in Telugu pattern)

(S) (O) (V)

Step 3:
Ram ate mango. (Translation of the Telugu sentence into English language pattern.)

(S) (V) (O)

Thus students were given strict drilling using good number of sentences until they were confident of doing that task.

d. Students were encouraged always to use simple sentences but were taught how to synthesize simple sentences into compound and complex sentences also.

Example:
1. Two simple sentences can be combined to form a simple sentence, as:
   He went over the hill. He saw the river.
   Having gone over the hill, he saw the river. (Simple sentence)
2. Two simple sentences can be combined to form a compound sentence, as:
   Summer is hot. Winter is cold.
   Summer is hot but winter is cold. (Compound sentence)
3. Two simple sentences can be combined to form a complex sentence, as:
   I have met a man. He knows your uncle.
   I have met a man who knows your uncle. (Complex sentence)

Findings
The important research findings have been identified in the spoken and written English training conducted for 120 students and they are as follows:

1. Maximum numbers of students are motivated towards this method.
2. Maximum numbers of students are seen practicing it.
3. Students appreciated the importance of SPM approach for converting Telugu sentences into English sentences.
4. The learner who is from Telugu medium and who didn't understand the SPM approach did not perform well in the training.
5. The sentence order played important role in forming English sentences for Telugu medium students.
6. Many students tried to use complex sentences for the speech. They felt very difficult to speak English fluently. They were advised to use compound sentences and as a result they spoke very well and felt comfortable.
7. Maximum number of students learned how to use which, when, where and what etc.

Conclusion
SPM method is useful for Telugu medium students in initiating themselves to speak and write in English. This method is of immense help for the teachers while creating interest among the student learners. However the best way to learn four skills of English language is to practice it well.

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