



A STUDY ON APPLIED STRATEGIES OF TELUGU MEDIUM STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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Abstract

The present study looks at the oral communication strategies adopted by Telugu Medium Government High School Students' oral interaction in English. The objective of this study is to find out the types of strategies and the changes happened in grammatical accuracy because of various socio-linguistic factors at the time of learning English as a Second Language and its impact on Social interaction. A school is selected nearby Hyderabad. The data was obtained from the stimulated oral interactions of 50 students. 'Critical Observation and analysis of these oral interactions explain the causes and consequences of those strategies at the time of interacting with the society. It includes different types of linguistic element errors such as 'articles, plural form of nouns, subject-verb agreements, prepositions, questions, and tense' made by them.

Keywords: Strategies, Social interaction, Oral Communication, Avoidance, Message abandonment, Appeal for Assistance, Approximation, Word coinage, Circumlocution, Literal translation, Code-mixing, Blending, Non-linguistic Expressions.

INTRODUCTION

In the process of globalization English became the major connecting and communicating language in the globe. It became a world language and many countries accepted as their official language of correspondence. English significantly plays a noteworthy role in the field of education. Higher, professional & technical educations medium of instruction and their reference books are available in English. In this scenario there is a need to study the performing competency of the learners at various levels. In Indian context still 90% of the people are adjusting their lives

below the poverty line. This population is sending their children to the Govt. Schools and most of these children are from first generation learners. Hence there is a supreme need to study their levels and find out the lacunae and suggest the remedial steps for up gradation of their lives.

Second Language learning is a process. In this process learners frequently face communication problems because of linguistic incompetency or lack of linguistic resources in their mental library. At this moment their intelligence plays a lead role and it starts to adopt some communicative strategies to overcome these hurdles and to convey their intended meaning: Richards, Jack C, (2009).

This study is aimed to investigate Communication Strategies adopted by Telugu Mother Tongue pupils at secondary level. This helps the linguists and educationists to ignite their brains to find out the remedial steps/methods for the strategies followed by learners. This study proclaims the causes for both successes and failures of the Teaching learning process.

Learning a language depends on its *understanding*. Hence he has not only to understand the linguistic components such as phonemes, lexemes, syntax and supra-segmental features but also to comprehend semantics, pragmatics etc., of that language. He can be expected to implement the same practice out of his listening. This effort makes him to develop correct, clean and clear communication.

Good speaking skill is an outcome of good listening and proper usage of words selected. When one is able to speak fluently, the next stage to be mastered is of narration, which depends on suitable vocabulary and word order. A speaker should follow rules of *intonation*, *stress* and a *tone*.

Listening and reading are known as Receptive or Comprehension Skills. They are meant for understanding something spoken or written. They are also termed as Passive Skills. Speaking and Writing are known as Productive Skills or Skills of Expression. They are also termed as Active Skills since one has to be active using the vocabulary or structures when one needs to produce. Hence, the researcher has concentrated to evaluate the strategies followed by the speaker which is a 'productive skill' – Oral Communication.

THEORETICAL OUTLOOK

There is no doubt. In the process of communication we face many problems. To come across these problems we use some communicative strategies. A well known factor is that a second language learner is different from a very young child acquiring

a first language. But all second language learners, irrespective of age, have already acquired at least one language. This knowledge of first language many times lead learners to make incorrect guesses about the second language functions and this may result errors in second language communication.

From the academic point of view second language acquisition is a scientific process and it is a branch of applied linguistics in addition to that it is closely related to its allied subject such as psychology and education.

To observe and analyze the learners learning output researcher has gone through the following studies of some renowned scholars. The term communication strategy was introduced by Masoud in 1972 and the first systematic analysis of communication strategies was made by Varadi (1973): Wikipedia.

As per Ellis (1994:396) “Communication strategies are what learners use to overcome the inadequacies of their interlanguage resources”.

According to Bartram and Walton (2002:32), accuracy in spoken English refers to “utterances are as near as to a native speaker as possible”. But it can be said that it is highly impossible to maintain as accuracy as native speaker. There are many factors involved in learning any second / third language. However, it can be maintained the grammatical accuracy in spoken language. But it is different in the case of written Language.

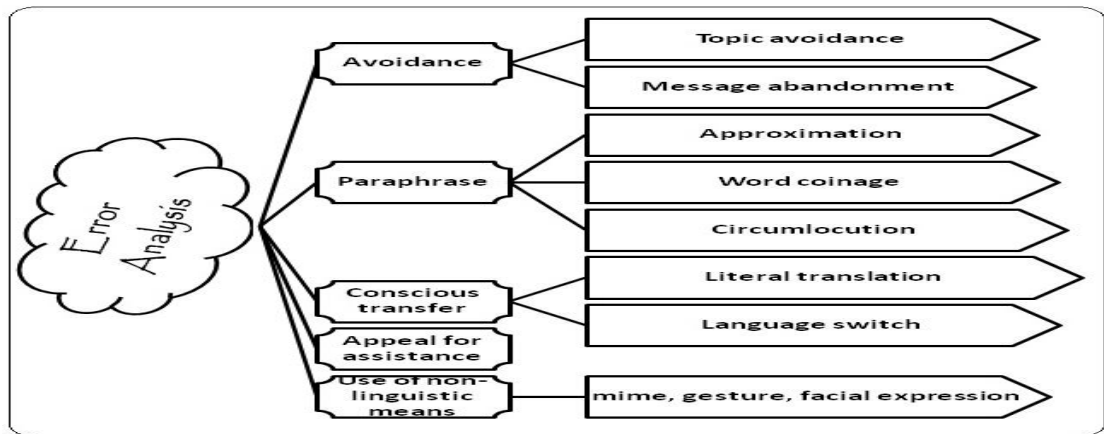
Richards and Sampson, (1978:15) supported that, “At the classroom level, error analysis will continue to provide one means by which the teacher assesses learning and teaching and determine priorities for future effort.”

Corder (1978) stated that “what has come to be known as error analysis has to do with the investigation of the language of second language learners.” It is very apposite to the present study. Furthermore he [Corder, (1981:112)] opined “a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his [or her] meaning when faced with some difficulty” and in the context of pedagogical aspect argued that there are two justifications for studying learners' errors: its relevance to language teaching and the study of the language acquisition process and he mentioned in relevant to that –

... the pedagogical justification, namely that a good understanding of the nature of error is necessary before a systematic means of eradicating them could be found, and the theoretical justification, which claims that a study of learners' errors is part of the systematic study of the learners' language which is itself necessary to an understanding of the process of second language acquisition.

This is the apt statement about the hidden purpose of ‘error analyses.’ Early studies focused on identifying, defining and classifying Communication Strategies into taxonomies. But present studies are paying attention to focus on learners’ errors to forecast the difficulties involved in acquiring. It helps teachers to be aware of the problems encountered by their pupils. It is important not to conclude that learner’s mother tongue is only the reason for committing errors. Recent researches in applied linguistics underlined the significance of learner’s errors in second language learning.

Tarone, E (1980:417) summarized the types of communication strategies under five main categories, along with their subcategories. The list goes as follows:



METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE

Instruments used are – a tape recorder and pictorial stories.

Data Source and Data Collection:

The data is collected in oral from the students of X in a created classroom situation in which the students had to speak in front of the researcher. This situation is chosen, because it helps the children to speak in a natural way as if they were in a real classroom and it helps to collect perfect data.

The following observations have been made by the researcher –

Avoidance

As it is said by the Schachter, (1974) ‘if a student finds a particular construction in the target language is difficult to comprehend, it is very likely that he will try to avoid producing it’. Students in general adopt this strategy of *avoidance* to cover their linguistic inadequacy. When the researcher had started conversation, majority of the

students nearly 85% of them did not pay attention to take part in the activity. They simply avoided by hiding their faces and by exhibiting their non-interested body language.

However, he started dialogue with the help of the local teacher. Then they sat in the class and participated. The researcher started with introducing himself to the students and continued with following questions:

Researcher (R): “How do you feel if you get 90% in X class?”

Student (St): “Happy.”

In continuation of the conversation the researcher asked

R: “What will you do if you become a collector?”

St: “Help poor.”

R: “What will you do if you don’t get a collector’s job?”

St: “Doctor.”

R: “What will you do if it rains while going to school?”

St: “House.”

The above conversation has taken place between the researcher and the students, before the instructions were given to respond the questions asked by the researcher. Here the students responses are elliptical form rather than elaborate.

Message abandonment

Here the researcher has shown the pictures of trees and asked the student to arrange them in proper way and narrate the story. Then he started to speak few words about the picture.

St: The student started “tree.... tree is..... tree is used for.....without tree no.....(discontinued the sentence).

In continuation the researcher asked the student

R: “do you like English?”

St: “yes”.

R: Then can you explain “why do you like it?”

St: “I like English.....mmmm..... I like English for.....”
(Discontinued).

Through this, it can be understood that student initiated his speech on a given topic. But after one or two words or sentences, he has taken long pause then continued the speech and again took a long pause, and then he discontinued the sentence without completing. Researcher asked him to continue, immediately he has switched over to his mother tongue (Telugu). Here, it is understood through this discussion that he has an idea about the topic but he failed to find out the words from his mental library. So that he discontinued sentence.

Appeal for Assistance

Researcher asked one of the students

R: “What is your father?”

St: “mmmmm.....my father....my father....my father.....is.....”

Student has taken pause and slowly in a low voice he asked his co-students for help because they knew his father’s occupation. His friends also failed to find out the exact word. Then he turned his face towards the researcher. But the researcher doesn’t know his father’s occupation. Then the student switched-over to his mother tongue and said –

St: “*taapimeestri*”.

The student used this *Appeal for Assistance* strategy because of his inadequate vocabulary or forgot some English words due to his nervousness. Then he thought that it would be better to ask someone else than to produce the wrong words themselves.

Approximation

Here in this context the researcher has shown a ‘*creeper*’ to the students and asked one of them.

R: “what is this?”

St: “tree”

Researcher asked another student about the picture in his hand

R: “can you explain the name of the picture?”

St: “plant”

Here students explain the name of that particular picture very near to its name. Its exact name is ‘creeper’. But, instead of ‘creeper’ they used two different names – ‘tree and plant’. They have sense relationship. However, they are not exact words for the object shown in the picture. It can be understood that the students have given approximate meaning rather exact meaning.

Blending

Researcher asked the learner

R: “Are you vegetarian or non-vegetarian?”

St: “Non-veg”

R: “Do you like chicken?”

St: “Yes. I like”

R: “Where do you purchase chicken?”

St: “purchase form ‘koollaform”.

Instead of ‘poultry form’ the learner coined ‘*koollaform*’. In another context they said ‘*bottlemuuta*’ for bottle lid. It can be called as blending.

Word coinage

In continuation, the researcher enquired another student about the boundaries of our country, India.

R: “Do you know the boundaries of our country?”

St: “Yes”

R: “Can you tell me the boundary in the east?”

St: “Bangalaghatam” (*it is a Telugu word used for ‘Bay of Bengal’*)

R: “what is there in the west?”

St: “Arebia Sea”

R: “What is there in the south?”

St: “Hindu ocean”

R: “What is there in the north?”

St: “Himalaya *parvatams*” (*for Himalaya Mountains*)

Here he created or coined certain new words for the purpose of communication. Their intention is to fill the gap of their mental lexicon for expressing meaning. This is the creation of a new, artificial word. Here the meaning is informed. Nevertheless, we cannot find these two words in any English dictionary. By knowing the morphological rules of the Target Language the student coined those words ‘Himalaya *parvatams*’.

Circumlocution

Here the researcher has shown the picture of three persons (*an old man, a middle aged man & a young boy*) and enquired them about the relationship of those three. Then they started –

R: “How many are there in the picture?”

St: “Three”

R: “Who are they?”

St: “Son, father,.....*father father*” (he used ‘father-father’ for grandfather)

During the conversation wherever they felt it difficult to find the exact word they use different words or phrases to express their expected meaning. We cannot find these words and their meanings in lexical dictionaries. In the case of above context student struggled to find the exact word and for which he used the phrase ‘*father-father*’. It is called Circumlocution.

Non-verbal Strategy

Researcher has picked up one cutlery item (*fork*) from his bag, showed it to the students, and asked the name of that item.

R: "What is this?"

St: "We use it at the time of eating"

R: "Can we eat rice with it?"

St: "No. Noodles"

R: "Is it the spoon?"

St: "No. No spoon"

R: "Then what?"

Now all the students are silent. They discussed within the group. They knew it very well, but they forgot the name of that particular cutlery item. They tried from their mental word-bank but failed. Then to cover their inadequacy they started to explain the way we use that item. But the exact word is '*fork*'. This strategy is called as Non-verbal Strategy.

Literal translation (word for word translation)

In continuation the researcher enquired about their interests:

R: "Do you like games?"

St: "Yes."

R: "Which games do you play?"

St: "cricket, kabadi, coco....."

R: "When do you play kabadi?"

St: "*I evening kabadi play.*"

In the above discourse the student responded for the question “When do you play kabadi?” is “I evening kabadi play.” Instead of “I play kabadi in the evening” he said like “I evening kabadi play”. It is the *Literal Translation*. Here the meaning of word, phrase, clause and sentence of source language is transferred as it is to the target language. Here the learners simply followed the word for word translation from the source language. The corpus is as follows:

I evening kabadi play.

Source Language	Neenu	Saayantram	kabadi	aadataanu
Target language	I	Evening	kabadi	play

In another context one of them responded as follows –

I teaching very like.

Source Language	Neenu	Boodhananu	baagaa	ista padataanu
Target language	I	Teaching	Very	like

Students respond as ‘I teaching very like’ instead of ‘I like teaching very much’.

These examples show that the student did word for word translation. Actually the word order of the target language (English) and the source language (Telugu) are different. English word order is *subject + verb + object*, but the Telugu word order is *subject + object + verb*. English is a language of fixed word order. The place of each word decides its relationship with other words. But in the case of Telugu, it is verb final language. Hence, at the time of word for word translation the learner faces above said problems. It is caused due to the impact of the Telugu Mother Tongue. It is the interference of Mother Tongue on Target Language. In this case, the learners apply their mental storage of Mother Tongue without considering the Target Language. Here the students borrowed word for word translation to express their intended meaning by applying mother tongue syntactic rules.

Code – mixing

With the intention of continuing the conversation, the researcher has shown his pen and asked the student –

R: “What is this?”

St: “Pen”

R: "Will you purchase it?"

St: "No"

R: "Why don't you purchase?"

St: "*naa pocket lo money leedu*" (I have no money in my pocket).

In continuation the researcher showed one flower and asked the student

R: "How is it?"

St: "Beautiful"

Researcher showed two different flowers and asked

R: "which one is beautiful?"

Then the student replied

St: "Two flowers beautiful. This flower '*Chaala* beautiful'".

Here the student switched down to Telugu and used the word '*Chaala beautiful*' instead of 'more beautiful'. In many a times this '*Chaala*' functions as an intensifier like 'more' in English language.

Researcher asked same questions an another student. Then he replied

St: "These two flowers beautiful. This flower *baaga* beautiful".

Here the Telugu word '*baaga*' functions as intensifier and it intensifies the beauty. It indicates 'more beautiful'. Students followed this language switching strategy in their communication. Sometime these pupils are using Telugu terms as their fillers in communication like *incaa, aagu, mari*, etc.

Analysis and discussion

Learners Vs Topic Avoidance: This strategy scored 43 (86%). The students in this strategy avoided telling words or sentences where they felt it difficult. Probably, these students scared of making mistakes. As a result, they have chosen to avoidance strategy rather than to articulate.

Learners Vs message abandonment: It scored 17 (34%). In this strategy the student did not finish his sentence by saying ‘*my father is*’. It might be that they lack brain of vocabulary or found it difficult to construct proper structure or confused to continue due to their anxiety or worried of making mistakes.

Learners Vs appeal for help: It got the score of 46 (92%). Majority of the students appealed for help from colleagues and sometimes from the researcher. Students used this strategy mainly because lack of vocabulary, confidence, fear about the language due to their nervousness.

Learners Vs approximation: The total number of approximation used by students with communication apprehension is 41(82%). Student’s nervousness found it difficult to reproduce certain words. Their anxiety did not allow their mental capacity to recollect.

Learners Vs word blending: It scored 32 (64%). Students used words from Mother Tongue (*Telugu*) which give added meaning of the target words. Here to refer to ‘bottle lid’ they said *bottle muuta* (*English+Telugu*) and for poultry form they called “koollaform” – It is the mixture of Telugu and English languages. Howbeit, this strategy could not overcome their struggle.

Learners Vs literal translation: Students used this strategy to overcome their nervosity of target language. It scored 32 (64%). In this strategy, the student translated the sentence word for word as ‘I evening kabadi play’.

Learners Vs non-linguistic means: It scored 13 (26%). Wherever earners felt it difficult to find out apt words they expressed the meaning through their expressions/body moments. In this context, a student rounded his finger to refer a ‘creeper’. At the time of telling the story also, they used mime or gesture to help them in expressing certain things.

Remedial measure

The following suggestions not only will help to come out of hindrances but also help to improve or at least to minimize the severity of the problems –

- Teachers should not correct all errors committed by their students. In addition, the continuous correction of oral slips/slipups/inaccuracies upsets the process of learning and discourages shy students from communicating in the target language.

- Activities and exercises play major role in language learning. Here, they need more activities and exercises to be involved. To make each student an active performer in learning process.
- Conversational discourses should be maintained in the schools. They should be given more time. These practices reduce and sometimes eradicate the anxiety among the learners. If learners overcome from this unease, it improves competence in the learners.
- High frequency and over-generalization errors should be corrected more often than less frequent errors.
- Schools should provide language labs. At least should provide TV & DVD player to watch English programs. Students should be made to watch English news daily. These habits develop English communication skills among the students.
- Flawed or grammatically unacceptable structures should be paid more attention. This factor is related to the sociolinguistic feature of language learning.
- Students should be motivated to interact with teachers and the peer groups to speak in English. Teacher should follow the Community Language Learning systems. Teacher should develop repo with the students and interact in English.
- Teachers should correct errors affecting intelligibility, that is to say, they should concentrate on correcting global errors more than local errors.
- To develop linguistic competence of the learners, the language may be taught by the linguists or should be taught linguistically. Because linguistic approach helps a lot in the beginning in the process of learning a second language. It develops the learners' competence at various levels of linguistic elements. In the case of English language, it is must. As it is not our mother tongue and not an Indian language.
- While teaching pronunciation, the phonological similarities and differences should be demonstrated (*phonemes*) clearly in the classroom. It stops the interference of mother tongue in English language communication.

- Finally, communication interaction provides learners with opportunities to receive language input (*hearing the language*) and feedback. It also allows them to make changes to their language. This allows learners to “notice the gap” between their perception and use of the language. Here it is lacking. Practicing the language interactions facilitates second language development.

Conclusion

‘*Motivation*’ is the basic factor especially in the process of second language teaching and learning. But, Teachers simply failed in this aspect. Teachers should create different contexts where students can perform and provide opportunity to use the language to express their own personal meanings and feelings in English naturally. Instead of implementing this act they are simply and mechanically following the TLM rather than creating the language environment. Students are to be encouraged to learn phrases more willingly than individual words. But, they are simply providing word level meanings and explaining them in their mother tongue and are not showing much interest to employ new strategies. It should be avoided. They have to guide learners in a systematic way (*listen then speak & read then write*). Somewhere I read that FEAR is an acronym of Fantasized Experience Appearing Real. It is the prime responsibility of teachers to eradicate fear and anxiety rather than the importation of content or completion of prescribed textbook. Teachers have to offer a full range of contexts and accommodate them to develop their confidence and competence in English. This is the way to develop the confidence to speak confidently without worrying about their mistakes. Teachers need to develop knowledge and understanding of the learner’s impediments that to bring awareness of English language. Equipping students with communicative competence is the final goal in which all teachers strive to produce. To reach this goal, teachers should develop three major characteristics of learning; observation, adaptation and implementation. Teacher should act like a guide, facilitator, philosopher and someplace psychologist to understand and to build up the confidence among them to convey the information that they want to send in an approved manner. Finally it can be suggested “*take them to the heart rather to punish them.*”

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