

Quadrant II - Notes

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Teaching Speaking- Concepts of Pronunciation, Articulation, Intonation and Diction.

Language is primarily speech. Speech is an important tool of communication . Speaking is a productive skill .Speaking is a skill and hence can be developed. Accuracy and Fluency, both are significant aspects of spoken language as intelligibility and communication are equally important. Accuracy refers to how correct learners use the language system, including their use of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. While fluency refers to how well a learner communicates meaning without hesitation and many mistakes in grammar and pronunciation. Listening and speaking have traditionally been neglected in schools and reasons cited for these are lack of resources, lack of initiative by teachers and absence of these in formal examination. These two important abilities most often do not find a place in classroom teaching situations but are essential for developing communicative competence of the learners.

A person who speaks English effectively can;

- Produce characteristic English speech sounds and sound patterns.
- Use appropriate stress and intonation patterns.
- Use appropriate words and structures to express the intended meaning.
- Organize ones thoughts logically and convey /express meaningfully.
- Adjust speech according to the audience, situation and the subject matter.

To understand speaking as a linguistic skill and to know how to teach speaking in an ELT classroom a teacher needs to comprehend the basics of speaking. Let us now consider the aspects of pronunciation, articulation, intonation and diction , in detail;

Concepts of Pronunciation, Articulation, Intonation and Diction .

Pronunciation-

- Pronunciation can be defined as the production of English sounds (Cook, 1996)
- Pronunciation is the production of sounds that is used for making meaning (Yales , 2002)

- Pronunciation is the way of uttering a word in an accepted manner.(Otlowski ,1998)

Intelligible pronunciation should be the real purpose of oral communication and not merely to ask learners to pronounce like native speakers. Pronunciation is more than 'listen and repeat'. It includes features of language (vocabulary and grammar) and skills (speaking and listening). We pronounce by noticing and understanding rules and patterns which lie beneath the surface of speech. For example; if an English word has two syllables, the stress is usually on the first syllable for nouns (water) and adjectives and the second syllable for verbs. In her book 'the phone allergy of English as an international language' Jennifer Jenkins argues that, 'English's role as the lingua franca has implications for teaching pronunciation. The goal is not to sound like a native speaker but rather to communicate effectively in a global context.' Thus pronunciation refers to the ability to use the correct stress, rhythm and intonation of a word in a spoken language.

Articulation

Articulation is the way in which we pronounce words or produce sound. It is the act or process of articulating speech, the adjustments and movements of speech organs involved in pronouncing a particular sound, taken as a whole. Articulation is defined as the formation of a speech sound by constriction of the air flow in the vocal organs at a particular place(example the tongue, teeth or the palate) and in a particular way(as a plosive, affricate etc. Hence simply put articulation is the ability to use the tongue, lip, lips, and jaw to produce sequences of sounds, which make up words and sentences.(Britannica). Articulation creates the specific sounds that make up words. By using our tongue, teeth, palate and lips (our articulators), we create recognisable words. In order to be clear in our speech, we need to exercise our articulators by going through the vowel sounds.

Intonation

Intonation as a feature of pronunciation, refers to the way we use the pitch of our voice to express particular meanings and attitudes .At its simplest, intonation could be described as the 'music of speech'. A change in the music or the pitch can affect the meaning of what we say.

Intonation is crucial for communication. It's also a largely unconscious mechanism, and as such, a complex aspect of pronunciation. Intonation is about how we say things, rather than what we say. Without intonation, it's impossible to understand the expressions and thoughts that go with words. Incorrect intonation can result in misunderstandings, speakers losing interest or even taking offence!

Different functions of intonation in English

- i. Attitudinal-the speaker's attitude: boredom, interest, surprise, anger, appreciation, happiness, and so on, are often evident in their intonation
- ii. Grammatical- here are some intonation patterns in English, which, for the most part, correspond to the use of particular grammar structures. The

most common example is in the use of wh-questions (questions beginning with 'who', 'what', 'why', 'where', 'when', 'which', and 'how'), which usually have a falling intonation.

Diction

Diction is a choice of right words and the harmony to express ideas to obtain certain effects. Diction refers to a choice of words used to convey an idea. Understanding the nuances of meaning, of the ideas to be conveyed and the ability to choose the right words or use appropriate expressions as is best suited to a situation. In phonology and phonetics diction is a way of speaking, usually judged in terms of prevailing standards of pronunciation and elocution. To understand the term better we need to consider various aspects of diction, which are as follows;

- ✓ *Diction based on meaning-* denotative meaning(original meaning, true meaning possessed by a word), connotative meaning
- ✓ *Diction based on lexical aspects-* synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, homophones, homographs, polysemy.
- ✓ *Formal diction-* sophisticated language found in professional text, documents without slang or colloquialism.
- ✓ *Informal diction_-* abstract, or concrete, scientific, special, for, common, slang.
- ✓ *Diction as clarity of speech-* it refers to how clearly words are pronounced. a few examples to show the difference between diction and pronunciation. read can be pronounced as read or red. did he just say wed or wet, failing to pronounce consonants clearly.

To conclude, we can say that speaking is seemingly simple and natural, but actually is a very complex activity. To understand this complex activity, we need to understand what knowledge and cognitive processes one needs, so as to be able to speak. To teach speaking we have to understand the basic concepts of pronunciation, articulation, intonation and diction.