

TO SPEAK FLUENT ENGLISH, LEARN TO THINK IN ENGLISH

Suresh S. Wakode

‘TO SPEAK FLUENT ENGLISH, LEARN TO THINK IN ENGLISH’”. This is the mantra of fluency not only for English but also for any foreign language. English being an international language, its fluency is sought all over the world by all non-English speaking nations. Luckily for us Indians, legacy of English as a language spoken in educated circles has been left behind by Britishers. Despite this fact, many of the graduates are suffering from an inferiority complex of not being able to speak fluently enough to qualify them to earn a good job. In the modern world of open economy, the ability to speak English fluently has become an essential precondition. This bitter fact becomes quite evident to our graduates when they go for interview and are denied the job just because they are not able to answer questions in English despite being otherwise suitable from other considerations like qualifications, experience, suitability of background etc. It is therefore essential for every educated person, aspiring to become successful in their career, to acquire fluency.

WHAT IS FLUENCY?

Fluency has two basic elements: (1) The ability to speak naturally, easily and uninterruptedly – let us call this FLUENCY- and (2) The ability to speak grammatically accurately and logically giving due regard to the coherence of tenses so as to communicate thoughts unambiguously – let us call this ACCURACY. Considering these two elements of fluency, people speaking in English fall in four categories: (i) Those who are FLUENT but not ACCURATE. (ii) Those who are ACCURATE but not FLUENT. (iii) Those who are FLUENT and also ACCURATE. (iv) Those who are neither FLUENT nor ACCURATE.

Obviously, those who belong to category (i) are the ones who speak speedily but are making lot of grammatical mistakes. Their speech is full of wrong sentences like, ‘He don’t know’, ‘She sing sweetly’, ‘The childrens are playing’, ‘He have gone to college’ etc. and the worst part is that they are not even aware of their mistakes. They are happy with their English; but the listeners wish they had automatic shutters to their ears.

Those belonging to category (ii) are so slow as to test the patience of the listeners. But the saving grace is that they are at least accurate and seem to be lacking in practice. It appears as if they are trying hard to remember the correct form of words while speaking. Due to their attempt to follow accuracy, listeners show understanding.

Those belonging to category (iii) are the ones who are really fluent. It is a pleasure to hear their English because they are both fluent and accurate.

Those of category (iv) are the ones who need a thorough overhauling. They are simply not doing anything to improve their English. They don't want to exert at all. They need to have high motivation to put in lot of efforts if they really desire to acquire fluency with fluency..

HOW CAN LEARNERS OF EACH CATEGORY

IMPROVE THEIR ENGLISH?

Learners of category (i): A thorough understanding of easily understood spoken oriented grammar needs to be explained to them. When I say spoken oriented grammar, it means the knowledge of correct sequence and forms of the combination of auxiliary and main verbs to express the thought to represent the proper mode of action and tense. Use of memory improvement **technique like Mnemonics** can come to their rescue. Since they are already in the habit of speaking fast, they can easily be weaned into speaking grammatically correct English.

Learners of category (ii): They are overcautious about accuracy; as a result of which their speed is hampered due to the constant apprehension as to whether what they speak is correct or not. They need to imbibe the grammatical structures so perfectly in their subconscious mind that their correct use becomes their spontaneous habit. Here again the use of Mnemonics based technique can help them fast.

Learners of category (iii): This category of speakers are quite fluent. They should concentrate on use of improving their vocabulary to enrich their spoken language. They should participate in discussions in English with friends motivated for improving their fluency. If such a friend circle is not possible to form, then they can join a good spoken English class having GD (group discussions), public speaking as part of their teaching programme.

Learners of category (iv): They find learning a most arduous task. If they are introduced to a learning technique which is very interesting and which they can find quite exciting, then this arduous task becomes not only simple but also interesting. In the Mnemonics way of learning, the things to be remembered are converted into visuals ie given names of objects or persons based on the principle of phonetic identity. For fluency purpose, the grammatical structures of English

sentences are given names of characters of interesting stories due to which it becomes easy to remember them.

If on top of that, you can devise a technique by which making of sentences at rapid rate becomes possible, then it will further add to the effectiveness of the whole teaching programme.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO DEVISE SUCH A TEACHING TOOL?

Yes absolutely! If you use your creativity coupled with experience, then it is possible to devise such a method. I would like to share with the readers about one such technique which has been compiled in the form of **Master-V-Chart** by the author and used for teaching which the learners find quite interesting to practice with. It is a chart showing modes of action as rows and tenses and modal auxiliaries as columns. The variable verb parts have been given Mnemonics names based on phonetic identity principle of Mnemonics. This chart consists of four main rows to correspond to the affirmative sentences of four modes of action both for active and passive voice sentences. Each row has three sub-rows each to represent negative, interrogative and negative-interrogative sentences. There are ten columns to represent tenses as well as modal auxiliary verbs, such as can, could, may, might, should, must etc. to give the meaning to the sentence represented by the corresponding modal auxiliary verb. The whole process of making sentences with this Master-V-Chart acts like a system.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE SYSTEM OF MAKING SENTENCES?

The definition of system is as follows:

Input + Processing = Output

Things happen in a 'systematic' manner even in the nature also. For example when a seed is sown in the soil, it becomes 'input'. When the seed germinates and grows into a tree, it becomes 'processing'; and when the tree bears fruits, it is like an 'output'. Our learning process is also like a system. We learn a thing as input, then we revise again and again to remember it, which is nothing but processing; and finally we reproduce learned things when we need like in examination, which is the output.

In the mnemonics way of learning to speak English fluently, each element of this system becomes very powerful. Input part of this system becomes powerful because grasping in the form of pictures makes it 25 times more effective. The seeds of vocabulary are kept ready in the form of 'Word Group' charts or power point slides. A typical word group consists of Subject, Verb, Object, Adjectival parts and Adverbial parts of a sentence. Different word groups are taken every day for practice. One word group at a time is taken and whatever number is shown on the Master-V-Chart, the corresponding sentence can be quickly processed mentally by the learners due to the use of Mnemonics. The way chart has been made to make grammatical sentences of any mode of action, tense, whether of active or passive voice, the whole grammar has been compiled on a single chart. So the processing part of the system is thus made very effective with the help of this chart because of improved capacity to remember fast and the brevity exercised in its making. When the input is effective, processing is effective, the output has got to be effective. The output here is the ability of learners to make sentences of all types very fast to represent any thought that you want to express.

The working of computers is also like a system. We input the data, the processing unit of the computer processes the data and you get output on the monitor. The God has gifted us the humans a brain computer. We can increase the memory of this computer also by use of Mnemonics. The Master-V-Chart likewise becomes the user-friendly programme for improving English.

The author is the Director of Harmony training Centre, Ashwamedh Apts., Near Dhanwantari Hosp. Dharampeth, Nagpur.

He can also be accessed on: harmonywakode@yahoo.co.in