



## TEACHING ENGLISH FRICATIVE SOUNDS TO THE LEARNERS WHOSE MOTHER TONGUE IS HINDI

**NIZAMUDDIN**

Research Scholar

The English and Foreign Languages University, Lucknow Campus



**Article Info:**

Article Received:20/01/2015

Revised on: 04/03/2015

Accepted on: 09/03/2015

### ABSTRACT

Communication is one of the most important needs of human being. For having communication, verbal, we need a language. Language is a code which has many varies. The sender of the message encodes a message into a language and receiver of it decodes it. So language is a system of communication through speech. It is speech which comes first and writing comes later in an individual's life. Today English is spoken in almost all over the world so it is considered as international link language and it is used with different accents in different parts of the world. Because of the differences English has many varieties as British English, American English, Canadian English and Indian English etc. English spoken in India radically differs from native English in terms of grammar, vocabulary and even in pronunciation also. Now- a- days India is considered as a developing country. English is a second language in India so the speakers find it difficult in reaching the perfection which a native speaker enjoys. This is seen vividly when it comes to pronouncing certain sounds of English for example English fricatives. The present paper deals with how English fricative learning is an instructional strategy. English fricative play vivid role in the pronunciation. Most of the Indian speakers of English face problem in articulating fricative sounds.

It is believed that first language can affect the learning of a second language. The areas where second language learners' first language have similarity with the areas of second language, become easy for the learner to learn them. In the case of similarity between both the language (first language and the second language) positive transfer takes place in the learning of the second language. On the other hand the areas where both languages have dissimilarities, second language learners face difficulty in learning them and negative transfer takes place. Weinreich (1953) defines interference as 'instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language, i.e. as a result of language contact' (Weinreich, 1953: 1).

**Key words-** Fricative, Orthography, initiate, strategy, pronunciation, proficiency, mother tongue, native language, and phonetically, air-training. Hindrance and facilitate.

©KY PUBLICATIONS

## INTRODUCTION

English has a status of a global language in modern time. It is said that language changes from place to place or even person to person so the same case is with English. It has many varieties which are known as British English, American English, Australian English and South African English etc... English spoken in India radically differs from native English (RP) in vocabulary, grammar, and in pronunciation also. Several regional varieties of English each is different from the other in certain ways are found in India itself. These regional varieties retain to some extent the phonetic patterns of the mother tongue spoken in that particular region. These regional varieties of English in India are sometimes not even mutually intelligible (Bansal, R. K. 1983: 38-39). India is a multilingual country so English has to co-exist with many different Indian languages. All foreign or second language learners of English have an aim to use spoken language primarily for transactional function rather than interactional function, i.e. to be able to express their intentions (Richards 2014).

MacKay (1967) points out, a pronunciation "...error may be due to a transfer from the native language; an analogy with something correctly learned in the foreign language; a wild guess, vagueness in remembering the right form; or general lack of accuracy and language skill." In this process, transfer from the mother tongue to the target language, English is the most common one. We can say that most of the errors committed while producing the sounds are due to mother tongue influence and due to the differences in sound systems of both the languages (mother tongue and target language). The pronunciation of the words of English is as important as the knowledge of its grammar and vocabulary.

### Main paper

Fricatives are sounds during the production of which there is a close approximation between the articulators. Due to the sudden narrowing in the oral cavity, the air flows out with a hissing sound. 'In the articulation of a fricative consonant, two organs are brought and held sufficiently close together for the

escaping airstream to produce local air turbulence'(Gimson:189).

While learning a second language, pronunciation of it is probably the most difficult part for learners to learn outside the class. It is not easy to know whether you are pronouncing something right or wrong. Some of the fricative sounds are very difficult for the second language learners to articulate according to RP. For teaching these fricatives, teachers are supposed to have good knowledge of the phonetics. The teacher should introduce fricative sounds with their phonetic symbols to the learners. After that, learners should engage in pronunciation activities, and they should practice all the English Fricatives with correct pronunciation. For this the learner can listen to a recording of himself while just listening for one Fricative sound that he needs to work on, e.g. making sure that his labio-dental fricative 'v' doesn't sound like 'b' or 'bh'. Once the learner hears the sounds he must add them to his phonetic inventory. This means that he will have in his mind the knowledge and understanding of how to produce Fricative sounds. With a few pronunciation rules trainers can usually make a good guess. For instance explain the difference between the last sounds in these words *boys* and *books*. Fricatives / f/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/ and /h/ are used in the words like *fill*, *sing*, *zoo*, *shame*, and *hats* in standard Indian English but general Indian speakers face problems in articulation of these words. Indian speakers do not make distinction between /s/ and /ʃ/ and /z/, /dʒ/ and /ʒ/ they use these phonemes interchangeably. This may be happening because of lack of exposure of correct English to the speakers.

The fricatives of English /f , v , θ , ð z, ʒ, / do not have their existence in Hindi. Fricatives /θ , ð/ of English are missing from Indian English. Some speakers of English in India are able to articulate the phoneme /f , v z, ʒ, / in their spoken English. The reason of their using these fricatives may be given as there are other languages like Urdu, Arabic and Panjabi which are also spoken in India so the subjects might have acquired these sounds from these languages as the Urdu has /f z, ʒ, / in its phonemic system. But most of the time, a

majority of the speakers is found deviating from it. Although Hindi language has two fricatives which are similar to /s/ and /ʃ/ of RP yet the speakers face problem in maintaining distinction between /s/ and /ʃ/ in their reading of the words like *ship*, *shop*, *bishop*, *wash*, *fish*, *sea*, *see* and *simple*.

#### **The voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/**

The speakers replace English fricative /f/ by a voiceless aspirated bilabial plosive /p.h/ of Hindi. It may be based on the analogy of the Hindi /p.h/ that is an aspirated bilabial plosive but it is not an allophone of voiceless bilabial plosive /p/. /p.h/ of Hindi has its own phonemic status. As we see that in RP, the aspirated sounds have allophonic status of some phoneme. Some of the speakers use /f/. The reason behind it may be the speakers contact with some languages other than Hindi: i.e Urdu.

#### **Voiced labiodental fricative /v/**

The Indian speakers of English are not comfortable in the production of /v/. They usually replace it by labio-dental approximants /ʋ/. Again the same logic can be given as Hindi, the mother tongue of the subjects do not have the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/. It has labio-dental approximants /ʋ/ that is phonetically similar to /v/. As the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ does not exist in the phonemic inventory of Hindi, the acquisition of this sound falls in the area of difficulty for the learners whose mother tongue is Hindi.

#### **The dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/**

The English dental fricatives, /θ/ and /ð/ falls under difficult area for Indian speakers of English. Since most Indian languages, including Hindi, have dental plosives, so the speakers replace /θ/ and /ð/ by /tʰ/ and /d/ respectively. The voiced dental fricative does not occur in the phonemic inventory of Hindi. Due to unavailability of the voiced dental fricative /ð/ in their mother tongue, the acquisition of these sounds fall in the area of difficulty for them to learn them. Due to negative transfer, the voiced dental plosive [d] that occurs in the mother tongue of the subjects replaced the voiced dental fricative /ð/. The sound /ð/ is missing from Indian English. The sound /θ/ is sometimes articulated. These two sounds /θ/

and /ð/ are usually replaced by Indian dental plosives /tʰ/ or /t.h/ and /d/. Speakers use the voiceless dental plosive [tʰ] as in the initial sound in the words like *thigh* and in the final position of the words like *truth*.

#### **The alveolar and the palate-alveolar fricatives /s/ and /ʃ/**

Two fricatives of Hindi are similar to /s/ and /ʃ/ of English, yet the speakers face problem in maintaining distinction between /s/ and /ʃ/. Being unable to maintain the distinction between /s/ and /ʃ/ they use these phonemes interchangeably, though they have both the phonemes in their phonemic inventory. The reason behind it may be the lack of exposure of English to the speakers

#### **The voiced alveolar fricative /z/**

The phoneme /z/ as the initial phoneme in *zoo* is difficult for some speakers of English to pronounce. They are in the habit of using /dʒ/, and /ʒ/ in place of /z/. The speakers deviate from this phoneme into two directions as some use /dʒ/ in their pronunciation of *zoo* and *rose* and some of them articulated /ʒ/ in place of /z/.

The voiced alveolar fricative /z/ does not occur in Hindi so according to Contrastive analysis theory the acquisition of /z/ falls in the area of difficulty for the learners to acquire it. They are observed using the voiced palatal stop [j] in place of a voiced alveolar fricative /z/. However, the voiced alveolar fricative /z/ occurs in Urdu, a language that coexists with Hindi in the Western Uttar Pradesh so this may be one of the reasons that some speakers are able to use it.

#### **Teaching of Fricatives**

For teaching of English fricative consonants to the Indian speakers of English whose mother tongue is Hindi, the teachers are supposed to describe the articulation process of them. The fricatives of English are described by using three main criteria: place of articulation, manner of articulation, and voicing of the fricatives. In some cases, Non-native speakers of English replace some fricatives of English with the fricatives of their mother tongue (here Hindi). In such cases, it is the responsibility of the teacher or the trainer to point out the differences between these

fricatives and the fricatives substituted for them by learners. The teachers are supposed to demonstrate of those sounds in which the learners have problems.

The sounds /ð/ and /θ/ do not exist in the phonemic inventory of Hindi so the Indian learners of English face difficulty in articulating them. For making the learners comfortable with these sounds, a suggestion often given is to ask learners to make an exaggerated version of the sounds, for example

- I. Teach the learners to place their tip of the tongue between the upper and lower front teeth, or to gently bite the tip of the tongue.
- II. Push the air through this narrow gape to make a hissing sound. This results in the production of /θ/ as the initial sound in these word *thank, thick and thin*.
- III. For the articulation of the fricative /ð/ as the initial sound in the word *then*, tell the learners to push the air through making a buzzing noise in which the vocal cords vibrate. For both the above fricative sounds, learners should be given a number of words for practicing.
- IV. The teacher should make the distinction clear between fricative /v/ and labio-dental approximants /ʋ/. The learners are supposed to be given a number of words in which these sounds occur for practicing.
- V. Some second language learners are not able to distinguish between certain consonants, e.g.,  
/s/ and /ʃ/ as the initial sounds in these words: *sea* and *she*,  
/z/, /dʒ/ and /ʒ/ as initial sounds in these words: *judge* and *zoo* and the second last sound in *pleasure*,  
/p/, /p.h/ and /f/ as in *pull* and *full*.

In such cases the learners should be given ear training with minimal pair. They should also be given speech training. The learners are supposed to be given a lot number of words for practice. While having this practice session, the teacher should monitor them and facilitate them.

The fricatives /s/ and /z/ also fall in the area of difficulty for the speakers of English so the distribution of these sounds in inflectional suffixes should be taught by giving them the rules.

#### Practice stage

In the practice session, the teacher can use some words containing fricatives at all the three positions: initial, middle and final. Learners can be divided into groups. First, teacher utters some words and asks the learners individual sounds. If someone faces problems in identifying or uttering sounds, the teacher will help him. In the second round, teacher guide them and one group asks the other one questions based on the fricative sounds in the words. This practice may help them to learn the sounds individually.

The further stage should be based on more demanding pronunciation exercise. It can be initiated with word elicitation wherein a problem sound is named and the learners are asked for the words to illustrate its use: e.g. /z/ in *zoo, busy, rough, half* and *zebra*. The teacher is supposed to observe the learners and can ensure correct pronunciation. Tongue twister is one of the best exercises to follow in this regard. At the next stage, learners should be set free for making conversation but the teacher should be present with them all the time. In this case the teacher should play the role of a facilitator.

#### Conclusion

In Indian context, the articulation of English fricatives can be taught by Direct method, Grammar translation method and Silent method etc. it one of the facts that age plays an important role in learning language so English should be exposed to them at the early age. The teachers should describe the process of articulating English fricative sounds, motivate learners, and facilitate them in learning. It is also suggested that learners should be given rigorous training of English phonetics so that they can know how to produce fricative phonemes of English according to RP. They must have a short course in phonetics in their proficiency course. The teachers should help them to understand the difference between English pronunciation and the mother tongue pronunciation

or any acquired language pronunciation. A course based on English phonetics should be prescribed at school, college and university level so that the students become familiar with sound system of English; how the sounds are produced, transmitted and received.

#### References

- Appel, Rene and Pieter Muysken. 1987. *Language Contact and Bilingualism*. Great Britain: Edward Arnold.
- Balasubramanian, T. (1981) *A Textbook of English Phonetics for Indian Students*. New Delhi: Macmillan.
- Bansal, R.K., and J.B. Harrison (1983) *Spoken English for India*. Madras: Orient Longman.
- Chaturvedi, M. (1973) *A Contrastive Study of Hindi-English Phonology*. New Delhi: National Publishing House.
- Gimson, AC *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Landon: Edward Arnold 1970.
- Gokak, V.K. *English in India- Its Present and Future*. Bombay: Asia publishing House, 1964.
- Koul, Omkar N. 1994. *Hindi Phonetic Reader*. Patiala: Indian Institute of Language Study.
- Lado, R. *Linguistics Across Cultures: Applied Linguistics for Language Teachers*, 195 in Ellis, Rod . *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Ladefoged, Peter. *Three Areas of Experimental Phonetics*. Landon: oxford University Press, 1967
- Ladefoged, Peter. *Preliminaries to Linguistic Phonetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971.
- MacKay, W. F. (1967). *Language teaching analysis*. Indiana: Indiana University Press. O'Conner, J. D. (1980). *Better English Pronunciation* (Second ed.). Cambridge: C.U.P.
- Richards, Jack (2014) <http://www.professorjackrichards.com/teaching-speakinginteractional-versus-transactional-purposes/>. Accessed on 10 September, 2015

Richards, J. C. 1985. *The Context of Language Teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sethi, J., and P.V. Dhamija (1999) *A Course in Phonetics and Spoken English* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd.

Weinreich, Uriel. 1953. *Language in Contact*. New York: Mouton.