



## THE SPOKEN FORM OF ENGLISH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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### ABSTRACT

History tells us that the human civilization first itself formed with the aid of oral speech and homo sapiens have been in existence for about 50,000 years. Writing developed from speech only by the second half of the Medieval Age. i.e., the sixteenth century. The earliest script dates from only 6000 years ago. Speech and the oral – aural tradition, thus, dominated most of the ancient and the medieval ages.

The spoken form – at least the segmental – was always recognized as an important part of language learning. Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of modern linguistics, was one of the first to draw attention to the primary of oral speech. Writing, he believed, was a kind of compliment to oral speech and not a transformation of verbalization. It had its ‘usefulness, shortcomings and dangers’.

Even though later stages of English development are very thoroughly described by the contemporary authors, it is difficult to find the textual reference about the language of the Middle English period. Therefore, the focus of this Article was to find such references that would reveal additional information about the state attitude towards the English language at the time.

Of all the four skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, spoken form seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as ‘speakers’ of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing. And many, if not most, language learners are mainly interested in learning to communicate orally.

Even in classroom activities that develop students and learners’ ability to express themselves through speech would therefore seem an important component of a language course. Some courses are explicitly designed to promote oral fluency; others include specific lessons that the ability to produce formal, extended speech in the form of oral presentations. But in most cases, the primary aim is to improve language fluency in informal conversational interaction.

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English is the Language of first spoken in early medieval England and is now the global language and it has become the leading language of international discourse and the lingua franca in many regions and in professional contexts such as Education, science, Law and Navigation etc..

Modern English has little inflection compared with many other languages, and relies more on auxiliary verbs and word order for the expression of complex tense, aspect and mood, as well as passive constructions, interrogatives and some negation.

Over time, thus, the written language, in the western world elsewhere, become the language of literature and scholarship. It came to have more

Prestige and became a model for study. The word of concept of study itself became possible only through the advent of reading and writing, because oral cultures did not read. The codifications from written language represented in grammars and dictionaries became the benchmarks against which the correctness of any usage was checked. (McCarthy, 1998)

In spite of such heavy slant towards the written form, the spoken was never completely out of the picture, either in the study and description of language or writhing language teaching. From Tudor times in Britain and its concern for spoken Latin to the manuals on rhetoric in the sixteenth century which emphasized oratory and enunciation and the explosion of manuals in the nineteenth century, describing the unscripted spoken languages of communities in New Zealand, Africa, etc., the study of speech was always a concern for linguists and scholars through centuries. Still, it was written language that continued to hold sway, influencing all conceptions of language.

It was only after the end of Second World War that the spoken form of language made a decisive impact on foreign language teaching. Baker (1924), for example, pointed out the overwhelming need for the teaching of spoken communication, based on a survey conducted of the language needs of business people. The World Wars further stressed the need for accent and communications training, brought about by the displacement of soldiers and civilians from cities to countryside or to foreign lands. Initially, the teaching of spoken language began with the teaching of pronunciation and articulation of the sounds of English. Palmer's 'A Grammar of Spoken English' (1924) most significantly, not only brought the two divergent forms of writing and speech together for the first time but also made a departure from traditional notions of written English grammar of single sentence utterances to as Hornby, Jones and Gimson, produced major works on the correct articulation of the sounds of the English language. Hornby gave tips to teachers on the teaching of

stress and intonation, though at the level of sentence.

Such drilling and practice continued up to the 1970's, by which time conversation classes and even oral tests of various kinds had become common practice. The heavy focus on the study of grammar, vocabulary and composition, however, did not decline.

By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and concomitant with the advent of the tape recorder, existing standardized and decontextualized notions/assumptions about grammar began to be questioned. Dykema (1949), for instance, proposed that natural spoken data should be collected and observed to counteract the written bias. Chomsky's theories of language acquisition further strengthened the dominance of the written over the spoken form by the use of invented data rather real speech samples and oral speech was demoted as a corrupt form (Beaugrande, 1997). Thus, the history of linguistics, up until the advent of discourse analysis in the late 1970's and 1980's, has been a history of the study of written language while the spoken was treated as a poor relation of the written form. (McCarthy, 1997).

The second and the latter part of the century, however, began to see a shift in focus from the written to the spoken form. The development of more sophisticated technology for the reading and collection of spoken data played a facilitative role in the shift. The Hymesian (1969) notion of communicative competence and Austin's (1962) speech act-theories were the high-priests of the communicative 'revolution' during the 1970's and 80's, which gave rise to various communicative syllabuses and paved the way for a greater focus on spoken form of English. Communicative approaches to language teaching began to stress the use of the oral skills and the need for learners to be 'articulate as well as literate.' (Halliday 1987:55)

#### **Procedure**

Using previous studies done by the historical linguists as the main resource, the theoretical part introduces Middle English, its structure and external historical context.

The Article was analyzed further shorted into deferent categories according to the nature of their

linguistic commentary. Which were taken from additional secondary sources: Language as a Communication and Structure of Modern English: Prof.A.Subbarao, Osmania University: , Course in English Language Teaching: Penny Ur., - <http://www.google>, creative methods of teaching English//html, -L.N. Kinnock.2006. The "English factors in globalization".

### **The coming of Age of the Spoken in Language Classrooms**

Since the eighties, the spoken has come to be considered as a valid and legitimate counterpart of the written, worth an equal of attention and study (Halliday, 1987). Language classes today stress the need to include and study both the spoken and written forms. Proficiency in language today is understood to mean the knowledge and use of both the spoken and written forms. Language classes are moving on from the teaching of pronunciation to providing practice in listening to examples of carefully spoken English. Instead of written texts being read aloud, language classes have begun to use extracts from natural speech and authentic conversations such as in interviews, lectures, radio broadcasts, airport announcements and so on.

Spoken English today, thus, is 'breaking out' of the written mode and coming into its own. The movement is towards more natural, spontaneous, and authentic real-world use of the spoken form and not 'spoken varieties of written language sentences'. This implies a shift also from extremely formal, write varieties of language to less formal and colloquial usage.

McCarthy, in fact, finds that... the historical dominance of the written language in applied linguistics has militated against good understanding of the spoken language. (McCarthy 1998: 47 ).

This gives rise to the question, therefore, "what is spoken standard English?" It is our notions of the rules of the written language apparently that govern our notions of correctness. According to Carter and McCarthy, We are at a stage where we recognize the need for standard spoken English but we also realize that standard spoken English is not standard written English spoken. (Carter & Mc Carthy 1997:12)

The studies and research of English corpora are concerned with analyzing the dichotomy and / or continua between the spoken and written forms of English. Descriptive research into spoken English discourse is beginning to refine our understanding of the differences between and written English. Grammar, again associated with the spoken form, is currently a subject for study with questions being raised about the need for a 'spoken grammar' (Mc Carthy,1997).

### **Some of the features observed specific to the spoken form are:**

**Elipsisl-**where words are left out in speech because the reference is obvious from the context. '(I) think so'; (I) wonder what he'll do next'.

**Tails-** adding a phrase or word at the end for emphasis. E.g., 'she's a really good actress, Julia Roberts.'

**Heads-** the fronting of an element as the first element in a sentence e.g., 'I dedicated my life to that man and music'- to that man and his music I dedicated my life', to identify and focus the attention of the listener on key information.

**Vague language** (non-specific vocabulary): 'something', 'whatchamacallit', 'whatever', 'thingamajig', etc.

**Deixis/Deictic words:** words like 'these, those/that, this' referring to things outside the text, adverbs such as 'here', 'there, etc. connecting a person temporally, spatially, interpersonally.

Realizing the centrally of the differences between the spoken and the written forms at all levels, i.e., in terms of pronunciation, word and the sentence, dictionaries have appeared distinguishing between spoken and written usage (E.g., Longman's Dictionary of the spoken and written Language).

It has been found that the language spoken by adults is very different from that from adolescents. Also, it now appears that real life use of the spoken language is not as direct and simple as it was thought to be as, for instance, in speech acts. Real data shows that a speech act is a process that unfolds indirectly, through a number of phases and in negotiation with the interlocutor, involving socio-linguistic as well as socio-cultural choices.

Studies in discourse analysis have been providing useful insights into language patterning at the

sentence level and beyond. (Cook, 1989; McCarthy, 1991) Conversation analysts have been studying 'talk in interaction' considering all aspects of interaction, including the non-vocal and the nonverbal. These insights however, had are yet to be incorporated into materials production and activities for language teaching. Overall, with the advent of electronic mail, fax and word-processed texts, especially, written language is becoming less formal and approximating spoken discourse.

#### **Conclusion**

The present Article discussed extant notions of communication in the academic world and presented a revised and working model of communication. It reviewed the significance of the verbal skills of listening and speaking in spoken communication and discussed their significance in the proposed curriculum. It concluded by highlighting the unique features of spoken skills and the need to incorporate these basic features in English language courses in higher education. And, with this Article the learner should consciously realize that significance of the spoken form which is most important.

#### **References**

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