

UNIT 9 IDENTIFICATION OF LANGUAGE PROBLEMS

Structure

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Objectives
- 9.3 Pronunciation Errors and Speech Training
 - 9.3.1 Organs of Speech
 - 9.3.2 Categories of Sounds
 - 9.3.3 Pronunciation Errors
 - 9.3.4 Speech Training
- 9.4 Reading Errors and Remedial Teaching
- 9.5 Writing Errors and Remedial Teaching
- 9.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.7 Unit-end Exercises

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In learning a language learners are expected to pronounce the words (speaking skills) correctly, to write correctly (writing skills) and to read and comprehend effectively (reading skills). As you know, in the previous unit, activities for each of the language skills have been discussed in detail. You must have observed that the level of your learners and the problems of learning language are varied in nature. Learners differ from one another and they also differ in the span of time required for mastering language skills.

You are well aware that in the teaching-learning process, a teacher faces a lot of problems and it is more so with language learning. These problems are mostly connected with the errors committed by learners during language learning. In general, the reasons for these errors may be as follows:

- i) Lack of effective approach to language teaching-learning process.
- ii) Lack of adequate practice in the field of speaking, reading and writing.
- iii) Lack of motivation on the part of learners for language learning.
- iv) Interference of the mother tongue in learning a different language.

A child learns how to speak before s/he learns how to read and write. Listening to a model speech enables the child to produce standard speech. Hence, we have already emphasized that both the activities (listening and speaking) are to be given due attention for effective language learning.

Being a teacher, you should always recognize the differences among the learners and adopt suitable strategies to promote learning among them. The factors responsible for such differences may be expressed in the following ways.

- i) **Intellectual** : Learners differ in their intelligence. In case of learning a language other than mother tongue, some may not have adequate intellectual capacity.
- ii) **Physical** : Learners can also differ in seeing an object from a long, distance or short distance (visual problems). Some

learners may have a problem in listening to a speech. A few learners may have the problem of stammering (such as when pronouncing the word "that" some learners say "th-th-that").

- iii) **Psychological** : Learners can have different psychological problems. These problems are related to shyness, timidity, or lack of motivation.
- iv) **Home Environment** : All learners may not have a similar kind of environment for practising language (through listening and speaking). While some have a good environment - when parents encourage a learner to speak to them and help him in saying what he wants to say or guide him how to write - but others may not have such an environment. Some learners may be getting help from their elder brothers or sisters, while others may be deprived of such guidance from brother or sister.
- v) **School Environment** : Some of the problems related to the school are faulty teaching methods and the unsympathetic attitude of teachers towards students. To meet the varied needs of learners and to help them develop adequate skills, a good school environment is required. Schools should be equipped with appropriate teaching aids to ensure the progress of every learner.

All the above factors are to be taken care of in the language teaching-learning programmes. Some suggestions in this regard are allowing the more intelligent learners to guide low- intelligence ones (group activities); helping learners to consult an eye specialist and a speech therapist; and providing a proper environment in the school.

9.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- identify learners' language problems;
- identify the causes of pronunciation errors;
- list the various organs involved in the speech process;
- explain the importance of pronouncing words accurately;
- identify the causes of reading and writing errors; and
- describe the role of remedial teaching to avoid pronunciation, reading and writing errors.

9.3 PRONUNCIATION ERRORS AND SPEECH TRAINING

Good speech or speaking well depends upon proper pronunciation of words. Whenever we pronounce, we produce a sound through our mouth. Speech involves a number of organs called organs of speech. We speak when the air passes through the throat, mouth or nose. For good speech, correct breathing is important. During speech, it is necessary to breathe at the right time and retain the breath to make the appropriate sound.

9.3.1 Organs of Speech

Let us discuss how we produce sound. We produce sound when we breathe. In breathing, a body organ called the diaphragm plays an important role. The diaphragm is a muscle located below the lungs and above the waist. When we breathe in, the air goes into our lungs and the diaphragm goes down horizontally. When we breathe out, air comes out of the lungs and the diaphragm consequently goes up. The action of the diaphragm causes breathing. You might have experienced that when you run a few metres and immediately after that want to say something, you fail to produce a sound in a normal way. Why? It is because of fast Identification of breathing caused by running that you fail to produce normal sounds. Hence, by breathing Language Problems properly, breathing at the right time and keeping control over our breathing we produce sound (speech).

There are other organs also which play an important role in pronouncing a vowel, a consonant or a word. These organs are the wind pipe, the vocal cords, the tongue, the hard palate, the soft palate, the teeth ridge and the nasal cavity. Let us look at the organs given below and recognise all those organs involved in our speech.

Speech Organs

Nasal cavity

Hard palate

Teeth ridge

Soft palate

Tip of the tongue

Front of the tongue

Blade

Middle of the tongue

Back of the tongue

Lips

Vocal cords

Wind pipe

Food passage.

We speak only when we breathe out. If you breathe in either through the nose or through the mouth or through both of them, you can make sounds but such sounds cannot be considered speech because these sounds are meaningless and convey nothing.

When we breathe out, air comes from the lungs towards the throat through the wind pipe. Then the air comes in contact with the vocal cords. These vocal cords are situated just behind the "V" shaped hard structure. You can feel this "V" shaped hard structure by pressing two fingers in the middle of the front throat. You can see possibly through a mirror also. When the air comes in contact with the vocal cords, the cords start vibrating (moving back and forth). When they move forth and air passes freely between them, they make no sound, when they are drawn back, they make no sound. Once the sounds are made, we start saying any of the vowels and a few consonants. Details of these vowels and consonants will be discussed later.

After passing through the vocal cords, air reaches the cavity called pharynx, which is located just behind the back of the tongue. Now, air can come out either through the mouth or through the nose. To regulate the air for passing through the mouth or the

nose, there is the soft palate inside our mouth. You can see the soft palate which is shaped almost like the tongue (some people call it small tongue). Just open your mouth in front of a mirror and look at the end of the hard palate, see there is tongue-shaped thick and small structure. This is nothing but the soft palate. When the soft palate hangs down loosely, air passes through our nose and we produce some sounds such as "m", "n", "ng" (as in "mango"). These sounds are called nasal sounds.

When the soft palate allows air to come out through the mouth, mouth sounds are produced. These mouth sounds can again be regulated or controlled in various ways. They can be controlled through the lips, the tongue, different parts of the tongue; the hard palate (the hard roof of mouth) and the teeth ridge.

You might have realised the importance of the various organs involved in the process of producing sound. Your knowledge about how to control or regulate various sounds will help you in pronouncing alphabets (vowels and consonants) and various words properly. As young learners imitate you, they will also start pronouncing in a proper way.

9.3.2 Categories of Sounds

As you have seen, our speech depends upon the sounds we produce. These sounds can be broadly classified into two categories, (i) vowels and (ii) consonants. Vowel sounds are produced when the vocal cords vibrate and air passes freely between them. Consonant sounds are all other sounds in which the air gets obstructed or does not pass through the mouth. When a sound starts on one vowel and goes in the direction of or finishes on another, the sound is called diphthong.

There are five vowels in English — a,e,i,o and u. But there are twelve pure vowel sounds and eight diphthongs in English. Diphthongs are sounds during the articulation of which the tongue starts in the position required for the articulation of a particular vowel and moves in the direction of the position required for the articulation of a different vowel.

The language being taught by you as L 1 at the primary stage also contains these vowels and consonants. We are, however, giving below in a tabular form the phonetic symbols used to indicate the sounds of the vowels, consonants and diphthongs in the English language. These might help you get an understanding of the position of the speech organs in pronouncing a particular vowel/consonant or diphthong. This may also help you to guide your students in pronouncing the vowels, consonants, etc., in the L 1 taught to them wherever their pronunciation is identical or somewhat similar to those of the vowels, consonants etc., in English.

Phonetic Symbols : Vowels

Symbols	Words	Pronunciation	Position of Speech Organs
a) i:	see	si	Tongue is raised as high as possible. The front part of the tongue is raised in the direction of the hard palate. The lips are spread. The tongue is long and tense (muscular tension).
b) I	hit	hit	The tongue is raised as high as possible. The front of the tongue is raised in the direction of the hard palate. The lips are spread. The tongue is short and relaxed (held loosely).
c) e	ten	ten	The tongue is raised normally and the front part of it is raised in the direction of the hard palate. The lips are spread. The tongue is short and relaxed.

d)	æ	man	maen	The tongue is kept as low as possible and its front is moved in the direction of the hard palate. The lips are spread. The tongue is short.
e)	a:	arm	a:m	The tongue is kept low. The back part of it is raised in the direction of the soft palate. The lips are neutral. The tongue is long.
f)	ɔ	got	nɔt	The tongue is kept as low as possible. The back part, of it is raised in the direction of the soft palate. The lips become open rounded. The tongue becomes short.
g)	ɔ:	saw	sɔ:	The tongue occupies a position about two-thirds of the distance from "close" (the tongue is raised as high as possible) to "open" (the tongue is kept low). Its back part is raised towards the soft palate. The lips are closed rounded. The tongue becomes long.
h)	ʊ	put	put	The tongue occupies a position about two-thirds of the distance from "open" to "close". The back of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate. The lips are closed rounded. The tongue becomes short.
i)	u:	pool	pu:l	The tongue is raised as high as possible. The back of the tongue is raised in the direction of the soft palate. The lips are closed rounded, The tongue becomes long.
j)	ʌ	son	sʌn	The tongue occupies a position about two-thirds of the distance from "close" to "open". The central part of the tongue is the highest. The lips are neutral and the tongue become long.
k)	ɜ:	fur	fɜ:r	The tongue occupies a position about two-thirds of the distance from "open" to "close". The central part of the tongue is highest. The lips are neutral and tongue becomes long.
l)	ə	about	əbaut	The tongue occupies a position about two-thirds of the distance from "close" to "open", The central part of the tongue is the highest. The lips are neutral and the tongue becomes short and relaxed (the tongue is held loosely).

Phonetic Symbols: Diphthongs

Symbols	Words	Pronunciation	Position of Speech Organs
m) ei	they	thei	The tongue starts in the position for vowel (e) and moves In the direction of vowel (i).

n)	ɒu	home	hɒum	The tongue starts in the position for vowel (a) and moves in the direction of vowel (u).
o)	ai	five	faiv	The tongue moves in the direction of vowel (a) and then in the direction of vowel (i).
p)	au	how	hau	The tongue starts in the production of vowel (a) and then in the direction of (u).
q)	ɔi	join	dʒɔin	The tongue is raised to a point mid-way between the half-open and open positions (j) and moves towards the position of (i).
r)	ið	dear	diðr	The tongue starts in the position of vowel (i) and moves in the direction of (ð).
s)	eð	air	ear	The tongue changes its position from (e) to (ð).
t)	uð	tour	tuar	The tongue starts in the position for vowel (u) and moves to (ð).

9.3.3 Pronunciation Errors

As you know speech depends exclusively on sounds and if sounds are not pronounced properly speech problems arise. Let us look at some of the common errors found in English. A few group of words are given below which are confused owing to faulty pronunciation.

Floor - Flower	Quite - Quiet
Wonder - Wander	Taste - Test
Where - Were	There - Their
Leave - Live	Pour - Poor
Fill - Feel	Later - Latter
Price - Prize	Affect - Effect
Boss-Bus	

9.3.4 Speech Training

Good speech training leads to better learning in language. You must introduce speech training right from the beginning. Encourage your learners to take interest in their own progress. It is probably best in the beginning to allow children to use such expressions as good morning, good afternoon, thank you, please excuse me, may I come in, etc. These will help build up their confidence. Similar expressions from the language taught by you may be taken up.

Speech training lessons should begin with the following exercises:

- Correct use of speech organs for pronouncing different sounds.
- Demonstration of correct pronunciation by you.
- Group practice to ensure the correct position of the tongue and lips.
- Diagnosis of the errors at individual level and individual practice to correct the pronunciation.
- Providing opportunity to each child to speak two or three sentences coherently for about one minute to enable you to diagnose the error.

- During speech training do not be discouraged if you do not see improvement in the spoken language of your pupils. A well directed sounds drill will definitely bring improvement among your learners.

Check Your Progress

Notes : a) Write your answer in the space given below.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

1. Why do learners commit mistakes in language learning? Give at least four reasons.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

2. List the organs that are involved in the speech process.

- a) b)
- c) d)
- e) f)
- g) h)
- i) j)
- k) l)

3. When do we produce vowel sounds?

.....
.....
.....

4. What is diphthong? Write your answer within two sentences.

.....
.....
.....

9.4 READING ERRORS AND REMEDIAL TEACHING

At the elementary grades, learners commit a lot of reading errors. You should make an attempt to remove them through your guidance and help. As you know, learning to read is aimed.

- to help the learners to enjoy;
- to guide them to collect information; and
- to make them learn use of the language.

There are some common reading errors found among learners. These errors are —

- errors at the level of word, phrase and sentence;

- reading letters instead of complete word (it has been discussed in detail in the unit related to reading skills);
- inability to distinguish between different sounds;
- inaudibility;
- lack of fluency; and
- incorrect pronunciation.

Reading errors among learners arise mainly for the following reasons:

- i) lack of proper training of eye movement;
- ii) unfamiliar words;
- iii) lack of interest;
- iv) lack of ample practice etc.; and
- v) interference of mother tongue.

You may have some pupils who have not yet learnt to read at all. The method you adopt must be in tune with the needs of the learners. Teaching children to read should be a continuous process. To remove reading errors the following points may be kept in mind:

- i) Proper training for eye movement.
- ii) Emphasis on the recognition and reading of phrases and not individual words. Reading of words separately may become a bad habit which affects comprehension.
- iii) Reading aloud at the initial stage is essential in order to teach the mechanics of reading and pronunciation. However due emphasis should be given to silent reading for the development of better comprehension skills.
- iv) Plenty of vocal drill should be given in pronunciation and using new words.
- v) Presenting model reading and encouraging the children to read the passage accordingly. Difficult words should be explained in order to make them comprehend the text.

Practice in silent reading should be done by providing plenty of suitable reading material. This may be supplied by you, the library or the home. The textbook alone is not sufficient for this purpose. Supplementary material in the form of stories, comics, children's magazines etc, should be given to the children.

Check Your Progress

- Notes : a) Write your answer in the space given below.
b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

5. List the reading errors committed by your learners.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)
- f)

6. Put a tick mark (✓) against the reasons that are related to reading errors.
 - a) Lack of proper framing of eye movement
 - b) Interference of mother tongue
 - c) Unfamiliar and unknown words
 - d) Complex sentence structure
 - e) Lack of interest
 - f) Lack of adequate practice
7. What points would you keep in mind to remove the reading errors committed by your students?
 - a)
 - b)

9.5 WRITING ERRORS AND REMEDIAL TEACHING

Writing in the early stages can be more correctly described as transcription. Transcription and dictation lessons form the base for written composition. The purpose of transcription is to fix in the minds of learners what they have learnt. It is therefore very important that there should be no mistakes in the early transcription lessons. If in the early stages there are many errors in the written exercises, we should think that there is something wrong with the teaching.

Writing errors that are commonly found among learners are :

- i) the letters which are not distinctly written e.g. b-d, j-g, v-u, etc. in the English language;
- ii) there is no proper spacing between letters in a word, words in a line and lines in a paragraph;
- iii) there is no uniformity in size, spacing and alignment particularly in the direction of strokes;
- iv) the writing speed is very slow; and
- vii) inadequate practice in reading and writing.

Being a teacher, you can help your learners to avoid such errors in writing. Let us discuss how the use of dictation can help to provide remedial teaching to avoid writing errors among learners.

- i) Dictation is a good exercise in listening and comprehension. It combines the hearing of the spoken word and then writing it. It demands careful attention to spoken sounds. It also helps in the teaching of spellings.
- ii) Mistakes must be examined thoroughly since they will indicate weaknesses of spellings and in understanding sentences and phrase patterns. Pupils should be regrouped from time to time so that the slow-learners may be given special and extra teaching. Do not punish the children for mistakes as this will affect their self-confidence. Try to diagnose the individual's problems and tackle it sympathetically.
- iii) Speed is an important factor in a dictation exercise. Take a familiar passage from the text for dictation. Then read out the passage carefully and ask the

children to write. After you finish the passage, read it out once again so that the children revise their writing.

- iv) The ability to spell varies from one pupil to another. Errors made by individuals should be corrected individually. Give ample practice of copy writing so that they get the feel of words.
- v) Correct the spelling errors in the copies and make them write the words several times. Common spelling errors can be corrected and written on the blackboard. You can also ask the pupils to exchange their copies and make corrections in spellings.

Check Your Progress

Notes a) Write your answer in the space given below.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

8. Write some of the common writing errors made by your learners.

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

9. How will you correct writing errors in dictation? Give at least five ways to correct them

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)
- e)

9.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the errors that are committed by learners specially in language at the elementary level. These are pronunciation errors, reading errors and writing errors. Apart from a discussion about the types of errors, various organs involved in speech, different phonetic symbols and how to pronounce vowels and diphthongs have also been discussed. The causes of various errors and the ways to help learners to avoid such errors have also been described so that you can guide your learners towards better language learning.

9.7 UNIT-END EXERCISES

1. Why is speech training important? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Why should you encourage silent reading among your learners?
3. Write down at least three methods to improve spelling among your learners.
4. What are the causes of reading errors? How would you help your learners avoid them?

- c) Speed is an important factor in dictation. So take a familiar passage from the text for dictation. Read out the passage carefully and ask the learners to write.
- d) The ability to spell varies from one pupil to another. Therefore, errors made by them should be corrected individually. Give ample practice of copy-writing to let them get the feel of words.
- e) Correct the spelling errors in the copy and make them write the words several times.