Part - I

Elements of General Phonetics
CHAPTER-1
DEFINITION

1.1 COMMUNICATION

The concept of communication is derived from the Latin word 'communis' (common). During communication, a 'commonness' with someone is attempted to establish. Thus some information, idea or attitude is shared. The essence of communication is getting the receiver and the sender of a message 'tuned' together.

Communication requires at least three elements - a source, a message, and a destination. The source may be an individual or a communication organisation, e.g. a newspaper, publishing house, television station. The message may be in the form of signs and symbols on paper, sound waves in the air, or any other signal capable of being interpreted meaningfully. The destination may be a discussion group or a lecture audience, a mob or an individual member of the particular group known as the mass audience.

It is quite possible to draw a picture of the human communication system in the following manner:

![Diagram](Fig. 1 The Human Communication Circuit)
The source tries to build up this 'commonness' and encodes the message in such a way as to make it easy for the destination to tune in the message. Messages are made up of signs. A sign is a signal that stands for something in experience. The word 'dog' is a sign that stands for generalised experience with dogs. The word would be meaningless to a person who came from a dogless island and had never read or heard of a dog.

![Diagram](image)

**Fig. 2 The Sender and Receiver of a Message in a Communication**

It is obvious that each person in the communication process is both an encoder and a decoder.

![Diagram](image)

**Fig. 3 Feedback in Communication**
In a conversation between the people, one is constantly communicating back to the other. The return process is called feedback, and plays a very important part in communication because it tells us how messages are interpreted.

An experienced communicator is careful about the feedback, and constantly modifies the message in light of what he/she observes or hears from his/her audience.

It is clear that in any kind of communication one rarely sends out messages in a single channel. A communicator can emphasise a point by adding as many parallel messages as one feels are deserved. If one communicates through speech, one can stress a word, pause just before it, say it with a gesture or look earnestly at one's audience.

1.2 SPEECH

Speech may be defined as the use of articulate sound symbols for the expression of thought. Speech is a mode of communication; and just like all the other modes, it performs the function of establishing a community of knowledge, experience, attitudes and feelings; it makes possible much inquiry in search for information and understanding; it is a medium for issuing of commands, directives, orders, etc. designed to elicit various kinds of covert and overt behaviour.
Speech is a fundamental social and psychological phenomenon without which society could not exist.

According to Hockett (1958:8): Each language defines a speech community; the whole set of people who communicate with each other, either directly or indirectly, via the common language.....[1]. [cited in Agnihotry & Khanna, (1997)]

Labov (1972:20) defines speech community as: “The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behaviour, and by the uniformly abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage”[2].

Speech, then, is a learned activity, learned mainly in the formative years, through imitation of the speech of those who are closest to the learner. It consists not of language and delivery but of delivered language.

1.3 WRITING

Writing is a symbolic representation of language in storable graphic form. There are three types of writing systems. (i) If each symbol, character or grapheme represents a word or morpheme, the ‘orthography’ is known as ‘logographic’ or
'ideographic', e.g. Chinese. (ii) If each symbol indicates a single syllable, it is 'syllabic'. e.g. Japanese. (iii) If each symbol stands for a single sound segment, it is alphabetic', e.g. Roman. The system of writing is called 'alphabetic' if there is consistent correspondence between the sound and alphabet.

The Latin proverb (verbavolant, Scripta manent) says "the spoken word flies away, the word remains".3

So a written message is relatively permanent whereas speech is quite transient. It is by means of writing that language is made capable of transcending the ordinary condition of time and space.

Compare to speech, writing is often more homogeneous because it is the language of education, it tends to be the same for all over the country. Also, writing is more grammatical in the sense that it often indicates grammatical relationship more clearly and the writer is generally more careful about grammar than the speaker.

Without writing, culture, which has been defined as 'communicable intelligence', law, religion, trade, poetry, philosophy history, all those human activities which depend upon a degree of permanence and transmission- would not be possible. Elimination of 'writing' would mean elimination of all post-offices, libraries, printing presses, magazines, books and
newspapers; reading and research would also be wiped out. Without writing, even the administrative machinery would come to a halt.

Writing exists only in a civilization of human intercommunication by means of conventional visible marks.

1.4 LANGUAGE

Language is the 'species-specific' and 'species-uniform' possession of man. Language is ubiquitous. It is present everywhere - in our thoughts and dreams, prayers and meditations, relations and communications, and sanskars and rituals.

Language deals with all phases of human behaviour and all aspects of human activity. It brings the child into direct touch with humanity's past and present. It puts him into living contact with the thoughts and feelings; and also deals with men belonging to all ages and places.

"Language is a purely human and non-instantive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" - Sapir, Language, 1921.

"Language may be defined as the expression of thought by means of speech-sounds" - Henry Sweet, The History of
Language. [cited in R.L. Varshney (1997)]

"A Language is a device that establishes sound meaning correlations, pairing meanings with signals to enable people to exchange ideas through observably sequences of sound". - Ronald W. Langacker, Language and its structure, 1967. [cited in R.L. Varshney (1997)]

Anthropologists regard language as a form of cultural behaviour, sociologists as an interaction between members of social group, students of literature as an artistic medium. Truly, language is such a complex phenomenon that to define it in terms of single level, as knowledge, skill or habit, cannot solve the problem of its definition.

1.5 LINGUISTICS AND PHONETICS

The word 'Linguistics' is derived from Latin lingua (tongue) and istics (knowledge or science). Etymologically, therefore, linguistics is the scientific study of language. But it is the study not of one particular language but of human language in general. It studies language as a universal and recognizable part of human behaviour. It attempts to describe and analyse language. So linguistics is that science which studies the origin, organisation, nature and development of language.

Phonetics is a branch of linguistics and it is the scientific
study of the production, transmission and reception of speech sounds. It studies the medium of spoken language. Touching upon physiology and physics, phonetics is now a pure science that studies speech processes, including the anatomy, neurology and pathology of speech, as well as the articulation, description classification and perception of speech sounds.

The study of phonetics can be divided into three main branches: ACOUSTIC, AUDITORY and ARTICULATORY.

1.5.1 Acoustic Phonetics:

It is the study of physical properties of speech sounds, such as frequency and amplitude in their transmission. Acoustic phonetics analyses the speech waves with the help of instruments. The physical properties of the stream of sound issuing forth from the mouth of the speaker are described.

1.5.2 Auditory Phonetics:

Auditory phonetics is the study of hearing mechanism and the perception of speech sounds. It studies different auditory impressions of quality, pitch and loudness of sounds.

1.5.3 Articulatory Phonetics:

It recognises that speech is produced by some kind of sound making apparatus inside the human body, and that specific
sounds may be related to specific movement of the apparatus. Hence it is the study of movements of the speech organs in the articulation of speech- lungs, larynx, soft palate, tongue, teeth and lips.

1.6 THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The English language as used in different English speaking countries has marked linguistic features associated with each country, in lexis, grammar and phonology. The variation is much greater in respect of phonological and phonetic patterns.

There are marked phonetic features associated with English spoken in the important English speaking countries - the U.K., the USA, Canada and Australia. Even within the UK, there are variations between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. English itself provides an interesting example of different pronunciations existing within a small geographical area.

In India, English is used as a second language - as the associate official language of administration and higher education. English has performed three functions-

(i) It has been used as the medium of instruction in some schools from the beginning, in other a little later and in most universities throughout.
(ii) To a large extent it has been used as the lingua franca of India among the educated.

(iii) For all international purposes, English has been used.

English has a definite place in the curriculum of Indian schools and universities. Students will have to be bilingual and some of them trilingual. But in India, education will be unilingual both in its receptive aspect and English will be learnt as it is learnt in Europe, as an extra language, as an additional equipment, for its usefulness, beauty and power for the greatness its literature.

1.6.1 Spoken English in India:

English is a living medium of communication and not just like a school or college subject in India. Hence the teaching of spoken English cannot be neglected and it should be taught carefully in an organised manner. The teacher should use English in the classroom in order to enable the learners listen, understand and speak English fluently.

Considering the need for the use of spoken English in India this language skill has been by and large neglected. According to the Constitution, Hindi in Devnagari Script is the official language for an indefinite period. It can be found that English continues to be used as the language of administration and
higher education. It is also the language generally used when educated people discuss academic and other matters. It is needed not only for academic but also social purpose in India. Indian learners can improve their proficiency in spoken English by developing their skills in listening and speaking along with their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and usage. The main difficulty is the wide diversity of background. The learners come from different social back grounds. Some of them study through the medium of English and others through the medium of any Indian language.

Spoken English should have three main components-

(i) listening comprehension;

(ii) pronunciation;

(iii) conversation.

(i) Listening comprehension:

The aim of listening comprehension is to help the students listen, understand and speak English better. The materials for listening comprehension, as far as possible, should be similar to what the learners normally listen to during the course of their lives- e.g. news bulletins, talks, lectures, academic papers, reports, etc.
(ii) *Pronunciation:*

A course in spoken English should include specific training in pronunciation. The items suggested for inclusion in the course are-

(a) relationship between spelling and pronunciation in English.
(b) word stress
(c) stress and rhythm in connected speech.
(d) English vowels and consonants; phonetic symbols. Practice in the production of difficult English sounds: vowels, consonants and consonant clusters in word initial and final positions.
(e) intonation; Grammatical and attitudinal function.

(iii) *Conversation:*

For training in conversation, one needs specimen dialogues both formal and informal on common everyday situations. Some of the typical situations suggested for conversations are -

(a) dialogue between a shopkeeper and a customer;
(b) dialogue between friends who meet after a long time;
(c) asking for directions; giving directions.

English spoken by educated people in India does no differ radically from the native English in vocabulary and grammar, though there are some well known differences. There are regional differences within India due to the influence of the various Indian languages spoken in different regions. There is substantial minority of people in India whose speech is based on an approximation to British R.P.

It is the professional duty to acquire as high a standard of proficiency in spoken English as possible and learners acquire the skill of listening and speaking in English.

1.6.2. Learning English as Foreign Language or Second language:

The learner of a foreign language has some special problems. For one thing, learning a foreign language is an artificial process. It is not the same as the natural process by which a child learns his/her mother tongue. Learning a foreign language is a painful process and requires a lot of practice. It is an intellectual task, but it will not have a chance of success if one ignores the students intellectual needs like knowledge and understanding.

In countries where English is not an official language, it may have a significant role to play. It may an important school
subject and it may be necessary to pass an examination in English to enter a university. It may be needed for people who work in tourism, business, and for some sections of the civil service. In countries, (such as: China, Japan, France, Germany, Mexico, Israel), where English has these functions, it is taught as a foreign language.

Learning a second language is described as acquiring the ability to use its structure within a general vocabulary under essentially the conditions of normal communication among native speakers at conversational speed. Learning a second language then involves acquiring varying degrees of facility for each phoneme and sequence of phonemes; for each word, part of word, and pattern of words, for the parts of speech. These facilities may be learned so that it can be operated when attention is on the content and the thread of the argument and not on the expression items. In many countries, a language that is not the mother tongue of the majority of the population may still function as an official language, that is, as the sole or major language of law, government, education, business and the media. In countries where English has these functions it is used as a second language. English is an official language in Botswana, Cameroon, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, India, Mauritius, Namibia, Nauru, Nigeria, Philippines, Zimbabwe, Sierra, Leone,
Singapore, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Uganda, Western Samoa and Zambia.

When English functions as a second language, that is where it is used alongside other languages but is commonly the most important language of education, government and business.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid, p. 15


