

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION5.1 Introduction

Larry Nessly says about the process of scientific discovery:

"... there are two aspects of it that are important. One involves such activities as theorizing, gaining insights, using intuition, and extrapolating. This part can be called 'extension' (in the sense of adding to current ideas). The other aspect involves collecting data, noticing patterns, identifying processes, and exhaustively describing given phenomena. This can be called 'consolidation' (in the sense of filling in the gaps in what is known)."

(Nessly; 1977:221)

The earlier chapters dealt with the collection of data, noticing patterns, identification of processes and an elaborate description. This chapter attempts a review of the study and gives suggestions for future research. As stated in section 1.2 this is a preliminary attempt to describe the actual users' English spoken in Pondicherry. As Labov stated "with the pleasure of being the first goes the certainty of being wrong, which is the converse of CUMULATIVE PRINCIPLE: the more that is known

about a language, the more we can find out about it" (emphasis author's) (Labov; 1972:98). Here an attempt has been made to discuss how this study could be useful at two levels -- pure research work and application of the insights gained.

5.2 Pure Research

At the level of research, this study is meant to be useful to two different sets of people -- dialectologists and psycholinguists.

5.2.1 Dialectologists

When a detailed study of English spoken by educated speakers in India is made we can know if there is a variety of English which can be justifiably called General Indian English. It should have qualities which are pan -Indian cutting across linguistic barriers. To make a comparative study of the "Englishes" of the different linguistic states, we must prepare an elaborate language atlas of English in India. In such a venture, which the researcher is sure, will be undertaken, the present study can supply the special qualities of ETPK. The above venture will be a sure step towards evolving a model in the pluralistic context that exists in India. In countries like ours there has always been a quest for a model which is expected to describe the formal characteristics of a variety that is acceptable.

In the immediate context every Pondicherian has to make himself intelligible to the others around him who have L_1 s that are different. It is an urgent necessity of every Pondicherian to have an acceptable model. To have this, this study, along with such studies made in the case of people speaking Malayalam, Telugu and French when made, will be very useful.

5.2.2 Psycholinguists

The earlier studies as mentioned in 1.4 were of learner languages. These learner languages, have, in the social context, for their model ETPK, which is dealt with in the present study. Hence a detailed analysis can help the psycholinguists explore a new source of insight into language acquisition. The learning strategies applied or misapplied as revealed in Chapter 3, can be of use to teachers and teacher trainers in planning their future course of action. This leads us to the other level of application of the insights gained through this study.

5.2.3 Application

The facts of pronunciation after an in-depth study reveal their source which is intuitive data. This intuitive data, once understood leads us to a very effective application of what is learnt from analysis. The intuitive knowledge gained can be summed up in terms of learning strategies or the absence of them.

5.2.3.1 Learning Strategies

5.2.3.1.1 Using Orthography to Master Pronunciation

We find a very strong dependency on spelling *helps one to* master the pronunciation of the second language. This may be because the written form leaves a lasting impression on our minds as it is apprehended through our eyes at our own pace without having to adjust ourselves to the speed of the speaker in the case of the spoken form. We can go back to the impressions that set our nerve impulses again and again which also is not possible in the case of the sound waves which are transient. The influence becomes all the more pronounced in the case of vowels as they "are typically less clearly defined categorically than consonants in speech production and perception (Liberman, Cooper, Shankweiler and Studdert-Kennedy; 1967) they are ^{the} more fluid and variable of the two classes of phonetic elements, being more subject to phonetic variation across individual and dialect groups. Finally, vowels and consonants have different functional roles in English phonology. For example, vowels are the foundation on which syllables are constructed and as such are carriers of prosodic features, while consonants carry the heavier information load" (Fowler, et al.; 1979:244). These second language learners do make a successful use of spelling forms.

5.2.3.1.2 Using What They Learnt in L₁

Experts in Contrastive Analysis have convincingly argued how a learner, when he comes across items similar to what he has in his L₁ prefers to use the L₁ items in his L₂ and if he comes across new items, he finds the acquisition a little difficult. He seems to "'hear' in terms of the phonological system of his native language" (Hatch; 1983:21). The Tamilians hear the English dental fricatives as denti-alveolar plosives and use only denti-alveolar plosives in their speech. Apart from the fact that the sounds are "strained through the 'phonological sieve' of one's own mother tongue" (Hatch op.cit. quoted Trubetzkoy; 1939:52), articulatory difficulty also tempts them to do this. As a complete closure is production-wise easier, they naturally choose a plosive to ^africative. Apart from the easiness of stopping the airstream completely they might be put off by the difficulty of maintaining the correct level of open approximation to be maintained between the tip of the tongue and the teeth. In Tamil there is a predominance of plosives. The two fricatives viz., [ʃ] and [ʒ], are actually borrowed from Sanskrit. So they take to the plosives easily. We find the reluctance for learning a voiced fricative in the rare use of /ʒ/ too. The pronunciation becomes all the more difficult for them because, they have only voiced frictionless continuants in the mother tongue and hence they are not used to

maintaining the correct level of air pressure which could let the vocal cords vibrate at a time when the air-stream escapes with audible friction. Hence we find the substitution of voiceless sounds /ʃ/ and /f/ in the place of /ʒ/ as mentioned in section 5.2.2.2. The one voiced substitute [ʒ] is an easily produceable affricate and the spelling form too is favourable.

Application of L₁ could be seen in the case of vowels too. In Tamil they have the pure vowel /o:/ and /e:/. So they substitute these nearest possible sounds to the R.P. diphthongs /əu/ and /ei/. The first elements of the diphthongs /ai/ and /au/ of R.P. get substituted by /ʌ/ because, again in their mother tongue they have these diphthongs with /ʌ/ as the first element.

5.2.3.1.3 An Ingenious Combination of the Orthography of L₂ and the Sounds of L₁

In the case of the R.P. diphthong /ei/ we see that, as mentioned in 5.2.3.2, it is generally substituted by /e:/, a vowel they have in their mother tongue. But we find them retaining [ei] in the case of words which have the spelling form i as in the case of words like eight.

Regarding the R.P. diphthong /əu/, as seen in 5.2.3.2, it is substituted by the pure vowel /o:/, a vowel they have in their L₁. But this substitution is governed by the L₂

orthography because they use it correctly in the case of the spelling forms o, oe and so on in words like tone, toe where they are realised as /əu/. They do not use it in the words hot, son, shoe and so on, which too have the same spelling forms but NOT the same sound realisation.

5.2.3.1.4 Incomplete Mastery of the Rules

Though they do use sounds appropriately as mentioned above, sometimes they fail because of incomplete mastery. They have assimilated the fact that o is realised differently in different contexts, but have not mastered all the contexts, for, when o is followed by r an opener /ɔ:/ is used in R.P. in words like fort and pork which the informants do not do consistently. The term 'consistently' is used because, as can be seen from the data, nobody has used /o:/ in the words sort and cork. Hence we use the term incomplete mastery. The same type of incomplete mastery is there in the case of /e:/ too. There they have mastered the fact that if r follows the spelling forms for /ei/ as in the case of air, eir the sound changes. They have used an opener pure vowel [ɛ:] instead of the R.P. /ei/. But, again incomplete, because, they introduce /æ/ too in words like fair and air because of the strong pull of spelling pronunciation. In the same way, in the case of the letter u when it is followed by r in R.P. it becomes /uə/ which the informants don't use. They go by the other realisation in words like mute where it is not followed by r and pronounce curiosity as /kju:riɔ:siʔi/.

5.2.3.1.5 Regularisation

Jessica Williams (1987:170) quotes Long (1982) and Clark (1981) defining regularisation "as any changes which result in surface forms which are less diverse or contain few exceptions to the basic, canonical patterns of the target system." We find the informants using this strategy in the case of words like bow which are pronounced with two different vowels /əu/ and /aʊ/ in R.P. depending upon its grammatical function. They regularise this exception by pronouncing this word with one of its realisation /o:/ which is the major realisation of that spelling form as in words like owe or fellow and so on.

In the same way, in the case of the allomorphs of the ~~past plural and~~ past tense suffixes -d, -ed and ~~/~~present tense singular suffixes -s and -es, they take the regular realisations of these letters and pronounce them as /d/ or /əd/ and /s/ or /əs/ only.

5.2.3.1.6 Absence of a Strategy

In the case of the above mentioned strategies there is a point of take off for them either in the Target Language itself or in their L₁, but, in the case of supra-segmental features they are denied of it. With regard to suprasegmental features speech error researches reveal that the message to be conveyed is clothed in its suprasegmental cover before the segmental features are decided upon. In the chronology of learning too, the infant learns to react to intonation contours before it learns

the individual segments. So the L₂ learner is at a disadvantage because as he comes to the L₂ classroom he is already well versed in the suprasegmental features of his L₁. Nothing is done in the classroom to affect this. Neither is he exposed to the new form nor is he told of it. So he is at a loss to learn when it comes to the learning of stress and intonation. He faithfully continues with what he had earlier.

5.2.3.2 What is Expected of the Teachers and the Researchers?

5.2.3.2.1 Teachers

As Chomsky and Halle say, "It is noteworthy, but not too surprising, that English orthography, despite its often cited inconsistencies, comes remarkably close to being an optimal orthographic system for English" (1968:49), and the pronunciation of the vowels which are problematic is fairly predictable. For example, if o occurs finally it is realised as /əʊ/ as in go, no, mosquito, negro and so on but it becomes opener when followed by a consonant as in cot, pot, got and so on. We must take care to inform them the exceptions as in the case of to, do, two; son, none and so on but not simultaneously. First, attention must be drawn to uniform pronunciation which can help them predict the occurrence. Then their attention can be drawn to how the vowel quality changes when the vowel letters are followed by r as in the case of words like born, fort and so on. The vowel letters ei, e, ai

realised as /ei/ are realised as /ɛə/ if r follows them as in their, where, air and so on. The vowel letter u which is realised as /ʌ/ in cut is realised as /ə:/ in cut and as said earlier, u which is realised as /u:/ in puny is realised as /uə/ in pure. An exhaustive list is not intended here. The teachers may have to prepare lists on these lines and focus the attention of the students on the spelling forms. They can also bring to their attention how the vowel realisation changes with the shifting of stress as in the case of words like 'photo', 'photograph', pho'tography. A very methodical and systematic introduction of stress and orthography in the teaching of English has been discussed in the article "English Orthography -- A Guide to Word Stress and Vowel Quality" by Wayne B. Dickerson in IRAL, Volume XVI/2 May 1978.

The strategies of incomplete mastery of the rules and regularisation can be guided properly by teaching them the rule restrictions in the language. The mother tongue can be successfully used where there is ^{an} analogy. Care must be taken to warn them against the differences.

The productive problems could be taken care of by meticulous practice. At the college level the students are receptive and interested in learning the spoken form. Hence it is in the hands of the teachers to spare time for spoken English.

Being a college teacher, the investigator is very much aware of how absolutely impossible it is, unless the curriculum planners provide a slot for spoken English in the curriculum. It is essential for curriculum designers to take interest in the popular demand of students all over India for a course in spoken English and give college students an opportunity to have practice in spoken English.

5.2.3.2.2 Researchers

As stated so far, it is in the hands of teachers to take the contents to the students but it is the researchers who provide the contents to them. The researchers' venture will be meaningful if they

- (1) do a detailed study of the English spoken by the people of the Union Territory of Pondicherry who have Malayalam, Telugu and French as their effective first language,
- (2) study meticulously the relationship between the orthographic vowels and their phonetic realization,
- (3) do a detailed analysis of the interaction of stress and orthography in the pronunciation, and
- (4) tell the teachers how the research findings could be presented in a graded manner.

5.2.4 Conclusion

This study attempted a detailed phonological description of ETPK and explained how the mother tongue makes an indelible mark on the vowels and the suprasegmental features. The researcher firmly believes that the insights gained will be made use of by researchers and teachers. May their joint venture be the answer to the prayer of the students of Pondicherry "Lead us from Darkness to Light, O Lord!" (Tamasō mā jyōtir gamaya).

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