

Role of YouTube in Developing Spoken English

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ABSTRACT

The present research paper is a product of qualitative research born of a minor research project conducted by the researcher. It explores the feasibility of employing digital OERs like YouTube as a source of meaningful comprehensible input and fine audio-visual English building tools for developing spoken English in the non-native ELT context. It discusses potential pro-spoken English building features and applications of YouTube against the backdrop of the failure of Indian ELT in promoting spoken English skills. It briefly defines the theory of spoken English with its features followed by a conclusive discussion. An attempt is made to establish that Indian English learners can potentially learn spoken English more effectively using digital tools like YouTube as it improves learners' engagement, motivation, and autonomy, providing holistically the basics of spoken English in a highly practical and functional form showing remarkable results. It proposes the creative use and integration of YouTube for effective English instruction in Indian classes.

Keywords: Spoken English, ELT, Exposure, Audio-visual aids, Communication skills, YouTube, Authentic material, Active vocabulary, Body language, Fluency.

Introduction

English is taught in India as a second language. Constitutionally, it is India's associate official language. The aim of teaching English as a second language in our non-native context is not only the teaching of the rules of grammar but also to enable the learners to use English in real-life communication. Good spoken communication skills in English are an essential prerequisite for personal success and professional growth. The decent ability to speak effectively in English has come to be seen as a fundamental requirement in all walks of life. Arguably, no one can dream of success in professional life without excellent communication skills in English. Renowned authors like Chetan Bhagat observe "A person with decent English language skills can increase earning power by 400 percent." (p.112). Scholars

like Krishna Mohan and N.P. Singh underlines the ever-increasing importance of spoken English in the *Preface* to their book entitled *Speaking English Effectively* (1995). To quote Krishna Mohan and N.P. Singh: "Spoken English is extensively used in business, industry, government, research, and education for day-to-day transactions. It is also an instrument of intellectual discussion and social interaction among the members of the educated class. To achieve success in one's career, it is, therefore, essential to acquire the ability to speak English effectively." Obviously, no surprise that there is mushrooming growth of spoken English training institutes across Maharashtra. Today, good spoken English skills have become an indispensable requisite for personal life and professional careers. Considering the rising importance and role of English as an international

lingua Franca and language of technology, science, knowledge, and intellectual deliberation, it is the need of the time to design and deliver spoken English programs with a view to meet this career requirement and employability skill. So, it has become urgent to discover, design, and deliver effective study material, audio-visual aids, and methods of developing effective spoken English. However, it is reported by many scholars that our regular English language teaching enterprise is not yielding the desired communicative competence even in degree students. The observations noted by Mohammad Aslam in *Teaching of English* (2008) are realistically eye-openers and call for serious efforts toward effective English instruction in India. It is quite noteworthy to quote Mohammad Aslam, from his book: "It should be unrealistic to expect a teacher to set objectives which he himself has difficulty in speaking the language he teaches is not going to succeed in giving his pupils a command of spoken English." (pp. 19-20). So, it is clear that in the absence of an efficient/competent English teacher in India, educated use of YouTube as a resource is a special need of Indian ELT. So, dedicated teachers share the feeling that educative and creative use of YouTube resources like TedTalk presentations, news shorties, bulletins, Weather forecasts, recorded speeches of eminent persons like Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Shashi Tharoor, Abdul Kalam, Priyanka Chopra, Boman Irani, Jack Ma, can considerably add to the spoken fluency of non-native English learners who suffer from adequate and holistic live exposure to the target language in the class and learn English in 'acquisition-poor-environment'. Consequently, the present article expounds on the

concept of spoken English by proposing an innovative way to develop it through the integration of modern ICT tools like YouTube. It discusses the potential role of modern technological gadgets like YouTube in rendering effective spoken English instruction. Quite considerably, YouTube has become the most effective tool for English learners that can greatly help English learners in non-native ELT contexts.

What is Spoken English?

The word 'Spoken English' refers to oral communication skills in English. It connotes English learners' 'developed human abilities/competencies to understand and use English effectively (to use G.B. Shaw's words from his essay *Spoken English and Broken English: intelligibly and presentably*) in day-to-day personal and professional communication'. It is described with different terms like 'conversational English', and 'art of public speaking in English.' 'presentation skill', 'oral communication skills' etc. However, it can be described as 'the art and skill of using English effectively, competently, confidently, comfortably, presentably and intelligibly in real-life and professional communication. In other words, spoken English signifies an English learner's developed ability to practically and functionally use English in real-life situations. It represents a bunch of employability skills like presentation, interview, group discussion, telephonic communication, public speaking, etc.

Major Features of Spoken English

1. Spoken English is one of the forms/types of English communication skills.

2. Effective use of body language forms an integral part of effective spoken English. Spoken English is always accompanied and supported by non-verbal communication (body language).

3. Spoken English is one of the employability, soft and interpersonal skills.

4. Fluency, accuracy, and creativity of expression constitute good spoken English.

5. Studied the use of incomplete sentences, contracted forms, fillers, discourse markers, and interjections are important features of spoken English.

6. Spoken English is a stress-toned phenomenon that requires skillful and accurate observance of stress and intonation.

7. Good mannerisms and style are essential parts of spoken English.

8. Intelligible and presentable communication of ideas, thoughts, information, feelings, and attitudes in easy-to-understand English makes great spoken English.

9. Modulation of voice, intonation, style, enthusiasm, and confidence are important ingredients of spoken English.

10. There is no such thing as 'standard' spoken English. Rather, English learners' ability to use English words, and set sentence patterns (structures) with grammar, soft skills, body language, and confidence, in real-life communication make 'employable and decent' spoken English.

11. Fluency is one of the much-desired qualities

in communication that refers to speakers' ability to speak in English comfortably, confidently, smoothly, and naturally without hesitation, pauses, and silences.

12. Use of contracted forms and negatives like 'I'm', 'we're', 'won't', 'didn't', 'isn't' and 'isn't' in spoken English are special features of effective communication that can be known and understood effectively by using technology like YouTube.

Integrating YouTube in ELT: Call of the Time

Integration of YouTube in English Language Teaching is a recent trend in the modern era. In addition to this, intensive study of spoken English is evidently a new trend in non-native ELT. It is clear from Dr. V. Syamalas' observation in the 'Preface' to her book *Effective English Communication for You* (2002) when she maintains that "The focus of English language teaching has shifted from the subtleties of grammar rules to the actual use of English in the real context of life." The growing realization of English as a global lingua franca and one of the employability skills made the ELT stakeholders revisit traditional English teaching, learning, and evaluation with a special focus on spoken communication skills. With a rapid increase in technology, communication skills in English have become the first and foremost requirement of a fulfilling career and success in every arena of life.

Present-day English language teaching-learning is profoundly influenced by YouTube. YouTube provides English learners amply with the extremely essential practical knowledge of effective spoken English conspicuously missing

in the prescribed curriculum, classroom practice, and study material. Pro-spoken English building things are qualitatively available on YouTube. If we have to attend what the English scholar V. Shamala observes in the book *Effective English Communication for You*, we must promote the informed use of YouTube. It is indeed relevant to quote the scholar in this regard:

“For developing your skills in conversational English, it is important that you should know “what to say” in a particular context and “how to say it.” You should learn how to use language for carrying out various communicative functions such as greetings, thanking, congratulating, etc. There are certain set patterns in English generally used for such. (p.171)

In short, YouTube exposes English learners amply to the specific set patterns with their various communicative functions like greeting, thanking, requesting, congratulating, appreciating, etc.

YouTube provides extremely essential practical and functional knowledge of oral communication skills that do not find a place in the prescribed curriculum of non-native Indian universities. Apart from this, it is a rich storehouse of learner-friendly, relevant and adequate (authentic material) practice material for underprivileged English language learners, especially in non-native contexts like India. It is also worthwhile to note the observations of Krishna Mohan and N.P. Singh from their book *Speaking English Effectively*. (1995). To quote the scholars:

“Though spoken English finds a place in the English language syllabi of many universities and is also included in the training and executive development programs run by reputed institutions,

its teaching leaves much to be desired. One of the main reasons for this is the paucity of relevant and adequate practice material and detailed guidance on how to use it effectively.”

In other words, exposure to the target language in syllabi, practice, and study material is a matter of concern.

In addition to the above discussion, YouTube represents a rich source of guidance material on functional and practical aspects of English oral communication skills, samples of commonly used expressions illustrating their use in live form. English learners should get proactive about their English learning enterprise. They should realize the language teaching potential and audio-visual linguistic exposure provided by YouTube. They should use YouTube, for increasing their motivation, retainability, autonomy, engagement, quality linguistic input and common communicative patterns, essential basic sentence structures, common expressions, paralinguistic features, suprasegmental features of English, high-frequency words, grammatical items like tense, modals, collocations, interjections, etc. English learners should note and use these practically and functionally in their real-life communication to improve their spoken English communication skills in presentations, seminars, interviews, group discussions, panel discussions, etc.

Role of YouTube in Spoken English Instruction

With the change in time and global demands, the use of new tools and techniques in improving the English learning experience has become inevitable. YouTube is a user-friendly

complementary learning device. It provides multi-channel and multi-sensory exposure to spoken English. Considering the importance of listening as the most reliable and effective means of providing exposure, YouTube with English stuff could be a brilliant audio-visual aid for non-native English learners. Interactive and visually appealing select English YouTube content constitutes authentic study material. Developing spoken English is a matter of knowledge (what to say) and art, style, manner, body language, mannerisms, and soft skills (How to say). If the learner could have the passion of the great Eklavya, every English learner can acquire, improve and develop spoken English through the efficient and creative use of YouTube. Following are some of the important aspects of spoken English that can be learned through the creative and wise use of YouTube:

1) YouTube amply and qualitatively provides the much-needed holistic and practical knowledge of spoken English. Effective use of grammatical items like modals, conjunctions, interjections, flow markers, attitude markers, fillers, time markers, and incomplete sentences in real-life communication can be effectively understood by YouTube. So, quality exposure and practical application of these things in spoken communication form a major part of effective spoken English. YouTube provides this greatest linguistic facility unavailable to traditional ELT classes.

2) YouTube as a source of active (core) vocabulary. It is a treasure house of commonly needed high-frequency words and expressions for building effective spoken English skills.

3) YouTube is a source of rich linguistic (input)

exposure. Lack of adequate, quality, and practical exposure is a leading cause for the failure of effective English communication skills among non-native English learners. Exposure is “all the language which the learner hears or reads.” (p.200). To speak effective, confident, and comfortable English, one needs to have a great stock of active English vocabulary. Reportedly, it is found that the present-day classroom English teaching in states like Maharashtra with its outdated methods, texts, tools, and teachers has badly failed to provide English learners with the needed active vocabulary in practical form. So, YouTube, being a rich source of recurring phrases and expressions, provides rich and motivating exposure to the core vocabulary.

4) YouTube provides rich examples and exposure to the basic aspects of English that are extremely difficult to find on the ground to emulate like the suprasegmental features of English. Seminal suprasegmental aspects of the target language like pronunciation, sentence stress, intonation, and rhythm (accent) are amply and practically exposed by the English-rich YouTube resources.

5) YouTube exposes learners to the basic features of spoken English like contracted forms, use of incomplete sentences, use of negatives, conversation starters, conversation propellers, feedback techniques, acknowledgment, and appreciating techniques, address words, greeting expressions, leave-taking expressions, etc.

7) YouTube helps English learners understand the techniques of successful public speaking. The art of asking questions, using tense, modals, basic English structure, contextual use of conjunctions, prepositions, interjections, adverbs, adjectives, and other grammatical items are brilliantly exposed

with pronunciation and rhythm in the select English YouTube videos.

8) Cultural orientation is the most ignored aspect of Indian ELT. Learning a language requires cultural orientation of the target language. Language is believed to be the vehicle of culture. Culture plays a very influential role in our communication and interaction with others. So, learners are appealingly exposed to the target English culture through English movies, songs, and literary adaptations like dramas.

9) Practical and authentic knowledge of certain communicative set patterns (functional structures) used for particular communicative functions constitutes a decisive factor of effective spoken English. Curriculum and classroom teaching does not provide the much-needed practical and authentic knowledge of certain communicative set patterns (structures) used for particular communicative functions. Communicative functions include congratulating, greeting, thanking, requesting, advising, asking for guidance, etc. These typical set patterns in English used for communicative functions are exemplified by the YouTube resources in action mode with engaging examples with audio-visual support that help the learners strengthen (reinforce) language structures. This aspect of spoken English is ignored in the traditional non-native ELT. It is neither considered in the curriculum nor in study material nor in classroom teaching. This gives birth to a grave problem of poor spoken English in non-native contexts. In short, the much-needed practical and authentic knowledge of English structures with their functional realization could be provided by YouTube.

10) We cannot learn different nuances/ connotations or use or speak a particular word effectively in real-life communication unless we see and feel it in action somewhere. For instance, words like ‘huge’, ‘enormous’, ‘fascinating’, ‘incredible’, ‘amazing’, ‘wonderful’, ‘fine’, ‘just’, ‘nice’, ‘fantastic’ etc. are extremely difficult to teach and learn without proper live, audio-visual exposure. So, modern technology like YouTube can come in handy in this case. Special and unknown connotations of the models could be effectively picked by attending YouTube, English movies, and news channels.

11) Thinking, the cognitive and psychological component of the ELT, is a very important part of spoken English which is ignored inexcusably in the existing English language instruction. Extensive use of YouTube can promote the habit of thinking directly in the target language. It helps learners think in English, and coin new words and expressions. It promotes our creativity. It helps us to submerge in a complete English ambiance. It teaches and promotes the effective use of adverbials and adjectives in spoken English.

12) Selecting English songs on YouTube can help English learners to catch the rhythm and other suprasegmental features of English like accent, intonation, tonality, and tonicity. etc.

How to Select YouTube Resources to Teach Spoken English?

YouTube resources should be selected considering English learners’ psycho-linguistic needs like phobia, lack of confidence, motivation, lack of holistic and adequate exposure to the target language, practice aspects of language

instruction, and audio-visual factors. Suprasegmental features of English like Accent, intonation, contracted form, soft skills, mannerisms, and paralinguistic features of English like body language should be considered while selecting YouTube resources for learners by dedicated teachers.

The teacher's role as a friendly mentor and resourceful facilitator in the process of teaching learning and evaluation is of paramount importance as far as the effective integration of YouTube resources in ELT is concerned. Extensive and rigorous training for teachers from institutes like UGC HRDC, ELTAI, EFLU, YASHADA, or like bodies can go a long way in translating this idea into a reality. English teachers should put their resourcefulness, experience, and efforts to use in selecting the 'spoken English-rich YouTube video resources like English movies, media shorties, bulletin recordings, songs, weather reports, or shootings of speech competitions, TedTalks, etc. Teachers should be given proper training to consider the English-building potential of YouTube resources for effective spoken English instruction. With the help of the right training, long-standing teaching experience and needs analysis of students, English teachers could be able to suggest the select English-rich stuff from YouTube that would help English learners to understand, acquire and practice basic features of spoken English. Apart from this, colleges should conduct district-level workshops on the effective use of YouTube resources for spoken English development for students. Teachers and educated parents should educate students on the dos and don'ts of effective employment of YouTube resources for improving spoken English.

Role of Teachers for Using YouTube in Teaching-learning of Spoken English

Teachers play a crucial role in employing YouTube as an English-building tool for their English learners. Rapid changes in all aspects of life propel teachers to reinvent their role as resourceful facilitators for their students and effective English instruction. Teachers should identify specimen English-rich YouTube videos that exemplify and illustrate practical samples of imitable spoken English, commonly used expressions, collocations, linguistic examples, and functional aspects of grammar and phonology. They should realize the educational potential of YouTube and educate their students on the effective use of modern-day open educational resources like YouTube. They should make their students understand the language-teaching potential of YouTube for effective English instruction.

In short, powerful demonstrations of imitable sample spoken English are amply availed by YouTube. Effective public speaking skills like presentation, group discussion, and personal interviews can be effectively learned by learners through the creative use of YouTube. YouTube English videos (TedTalk), Tollywood movies, English songs, Cartoons, Web series, etc. can potentially teach these aspects in a far better way than the actual non-native teachers.

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