



Most common myths about effective English speaking skills

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Abstract: *The twenty-first century can be called the age of quality and excellence. Anything that is average, or even the medium sort doesn't satisfy people in whatever they do or think of. The situation in education is not much different either. There was a time when even a matriculate was gracefully accepted as a teacher but now even a Ph.D., holder doesn't get a job in a school. Thus we see that there is hardly any area of human interest herein excellence of the highest order is not sought for. The area of oral communication is no exception to this universal trend. There is an urgent need for acquiring effective speaking skills in English by everyone who looks for all kinds of success in life. Wrong beliefs and scepticism are the seeds that need to be avoided at all cost to get success in life, whatsoever. This paper examines the most common myths about effective speaking and how far these myths are true.*

Key Words: *Spoken English, Myths, Practices, Recommendations.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever wondered why certain people always succeed in getting what they want? Have you ever wondered why some people are always the centre of attraction where ever they go? Have you ever wondered why some people get a big round of applause while others get very little attention inspite of their hard work? Well, the answers to these so-called vexing questions are very simple. In fact, you already know them. Of course it is their mind blowing and rocking speech that makes them to gain the popularity and win the hearts of the audience. They speak from their heart coupled with great expression on their face. Beside this success story there are also some common myths about effective English Speaking Skills.

2. Using Figurative Language Lends Effectiveness To One's Speaking Skills:

During the British rule in India, the British needed clerks to run the day-to-day administration of the country. English was therefore introduced as an integral part of the school syllabus with the main stress on written English, which as we know, is not the same as spoken English. Naturally the English knowing educated Indians started using this written English whenever they had to communicate orally in English. This led to the popular belief that only figurative English could make one's speech effective.

However, the fact is that figurative English is mainly meant for expression on subjects of literary and serious nature and for day-to-day oral communication, which forms about 80 percent of the total communication, simple spoken English is used. Therefore, speaking literary and figurative English can never be regarded as constituents of effective speaking.

3. KNOWLEDGE OF PHONETICS IS ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE SPEAKING:

It is also believed that knowledge of phonetics and phonetic symbols representing various vowel and consonant sounds is essential to be able to speak effectively. This is a wrong assumption. No doubt, the knowledge of phonetic symbols is quite helpful in understanding the sound system of English language for the English language teachers and advanced learners of English language, but it is, of course, not essential for a person working in the area of effective speaking English. In fact, producing the correct sound of an alphabet in usage even without knowing the internationally recommended phonetic symbols for it, or knowing from which part of the vocal organ it originates, is perfectly fine for acquiring the skills for good spoken English. Phonetics does not mean the knowledge of phonetic symbols alone, but is the study of the speech sounds, for which knowledge of phonetic symbols is not a must. In fact it is only an additional knowledge to learn the phonetic symbols without being able to produce these English sounds



correctly. So spending time on producing the vowel and consonant sounds correctly is much more important than learning the phonetic symbols representing them.

3.1. Practicing speaking in English by making use of the pronunciation acquired, with correct stress and intonation

It is often said and widely believed that using Received Pronunciation (RP) with English Stress and Intonation is the hallmark of effective speaking. In this connection, it should be clarified that RP is extremely helpful while interacting with people who use English as their first language or when they are native speakers of English. It cannot be treated as the soul of effective speaking, though knowledge of RP along with proper stress and intonation will definitely add to one's speaking ability.

3.2. Effective speaking is not everyman's cup of tea:

Many a time it is argued that effective speaking is God's gift, and hence cannot be acquired by everyone. That is to say, only those who have been blessed with the gift of the gab, can speak effectively.

Well, it is true that some people are cut out to be effective speakers, having been provided with the gift of the gab. But to say that all others cannot speak effectively is not true. Various researchers in this area have proved that, by and large every willing person with a good knowledge of the language can speak effectively, using various prescribed speech therapies and regular practice. A passionate desire to succeed, coupled with command of the English Language and with the necessary confidence, will empower most people with the ability to speak effectively. So What are you waiting for?

3.3. Effective speaking requires years of practice right from one's childhood:

This myth has got two parts to understand it in the right perspective. First, it requires a long practice, starting from one's childhood which is said to be the most conducive period for learning any language. Second, effective speaking cannot be acquired at a later stage of human life. Well, in this connection, it is worth remembering that early childhood up to 10-12 years of age is the most conducive period for language learning, but it does not mean that it can't be achieved subsequently. It is proved that effective speaking skills in English can be acquired with conscious efforts even at an advanced stage of life... of course, it cannot be acquired naturally as a child sometimes does.

3.4. Only a good conversationalist can be an effective public speaker:

It is wrong to think that conversation and public speaking are one and the same thing. They are not. In fact, they differ from each other in all aspects. In order to accomplish the expected results, these skills need different aspects of mind set. However the ability to converse well may certainly help an individual to be an effective speaker as he/she pays extra attention to all those traits that go on to make a speech effective. However, it is not spontaneous. While conversation is confined to two persons, public speaking involves usually a large number of people. In conversation, both are assisted by their background knowledge and exposure. There is a definite purpose in the minds of both the persons engaged in the conversation. But in the case of public speaking, the listeners may or may not have their personal experience and knowledge of the subject under discussion, while the speaker definitely has a lot to share with the listeners on the subject concerned. The success of public speaking, therefore, largely depends on how logically and effectively the speaker puts across his/her ideas before the audience. Therefore, conversation and public speaking cannot be treated at par for the purpose of making an effective speech.

3.5. Making effective speech is possible only with a good body language:

Undoubtedly, good language play a very important part in filling up the missing gaps in a speech. However, it cannot be compared to the heart in human body, without which there is no existence of a human being. All good speakers do use one or the other techniques to communicate effectively without necessarily resorting to various body signals. Of course, body language is a great helping hand in a two-way communication to save the speaker the unnecessary wastage to his/her lung power.

3.6. Effective use of quotation for an Enthralling speech:

Depending on the audience one addresses, it may be appropriate to quote a leader, a poet or a novelist (Ex: to quote Tagore while addressing a Bengali audience, to quote Lincoln or Kennedy while addressing a US audience). But one must avoid too many quotations in a speech as it allows the listeners to predict that you lack your original ideas on the prescribed subject. In other words, it is like walking on the crutches, which no sensible person would appreciate.



3.7. An effective speech always needs a carefully written out document to be rehearsed by a speaker:

There is another myth about giving an effective speech in English, that before speaking off-hand, especially in the public, it should be carefully written out to ensure that each and every point that a speaker considers important has been clothed in an impressive language. This argument is advanced only by those people who think that a well-thought-out subject matter written in a flawless language makes a speech effective. Without contradicting this argument, it can be argued that a speech which is first written out and then learned by heart and reproduced verbatim does not leave as much impact on the listeners' minds as the one that comes out spontaneously (Extempore) on the spur of the moment. The natural flavour that people look for in an effective speech in English or in any other language for that matter, is often found missing in the rehearsed speech, however well-written it may be.

4. CONCLUSION:

Effective speaking comes to an individual automatically; he should wait for the moment when it comes to him. The statement undermines the importance of hard work in the area of effective speaking, which, in fact, contributes substantially to one's success in life. There is no substitute for or short-cut to hard work. So, instead of waiting for effective speaking skills to be bestowed on you suddenly, you should start acquiring the skills right now.

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