

# Language Learning Through Media: Role of Radio

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## Abstract

Language learning is based on the mastery of the four basic skills-listening, speaking, reading and writing. The first step in learning any language is listening. All the other skills depend on how far the learner has got the opportunity to listen to the language and that too by authentic speakers of that language. As English language is not the mother tongue (MT) of any group of people in India, so children do not get much practice in listening, as a consequence their speaking skill is also adversely affected. Although new approaches to English teaching like behavioral and humanistic approaches provide better scope for practicing these skills but English teaching in Indian schools have not been oriented according to these approaches. The need of the hour is, that our English teachers get well trained in the four basic skills so that they can be a model speaker with accurate pronunciation and accent for their students and are well prepared to use modern techniques and modern approaches to make English teaching interesting and flawless for their students and are well equipped to supplement their classroom English teaching with other medias. Radio is a powerful media at present in our country due to its economic feasibility and its wide broadcasting. It offers the possibility of extensive deployment in education because of available infrastructure and low cost of producing programmes. Radio is the electronic magic carpet that has the capacity to transport educational opportunities to faraway places impacting our social, political and cultural life. Radio broadcast and interactive radio is a very good tool that can serve to supplement class room instruction especially of English efficiently and effectively. Radio educational programmes can provide good speakers of English to students and give them a very clear and interesting explanation of grammatical concepts. Interactive radio can help to improve speaking skill. Although Radio broadcast no doubt has its potential in education but it has not been very well accepted and adequately utilized by schools. One of the main reasons of this is that teachers are not sensitive and are not trained to integrate the radio programmes with their class room teaching. The present paper discusses the ways to utilize radio in helping English teacher trainees to master English language in an effective manner and help them to utilize the benefit of radio in English learning of their students.

**Keywords:** Language learning, listening skill, interactive radio, language laboratory, english teachers training

## Introduction

The teaching and learning of any language has to be made keeping in view that language is a social phenomenon. The language learning always has an underlying internal social function in the community. The same is true for English learning in India. English in India belong to no region or group but it is welcomed everywhere though possessed by none. It has acquired the status of most preferred language. Emphasizing the importance of English language Radhakrishnan Commission states that-"it is true that English language has been one of the potent factors in the development of unity in country. In fact the concept of nationality and the sentiment of nationalism are largely the gifts of the English language and literature in India..."

English today enjoys the status of Global language, link language, and official language. So it is relevant to review and analyze the status of English teaching and learning in India time to time for identifying the areas that need to be amended and improved.

Language learning involves ,mastery of four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills are mastered on more or less hierarchical fashion and mastery of one depends on the other. The first step towards learning any language is 'Listening' that language, practicing the listening skill is the foundation stone of language learning. The term 'listening' is refers to the ability to understand, how a particular sentence relates to what else has been said and its function in the communication. At this stage the listener selects what is relevant to his purpose and rejects what is irrelevant. According to the Dictionary of Education "listening is the art of paying close attention to the conversation of another person or persons in order to obtain selectively verbal and nonverbal clauses to behavioral patterns explicit or implicit." In ancient times much emphasis was laid on the listening skill because education system in those days was depended on speaking and listening. However with the advent of printing the emphasis passed to reading also but still listening and speaking are considered the initial steps towards developing communication skill in particular language and their relevance cannot be challenged. Listening is essential to promote classroom interaction between the teachers and students. It is an active knowledge guided process. Dechant remarks, "Training in listening develops auditory discrimination which serves as a basis for phonetic analysis in reading" thus listening is of great importance in teaching English, it being cognitive process, in which factor of attention and memory play a vital role.

Although listening skill is the primary among all the four skills yet comparatively it is much neglected and least attention is paid to practice it in Indian schools. The main reason behind it is that teachers do not realize the importance of this skill; they are overburdened with the pressure to finish the course and hardly have time and will to make any effort to develop listening skill in students. Generally teachers do not take interest in oral work and they seldom ask question for oral answer. Thus students do not get opportunity for listening skill, consequently they do not cultivate the habit of listening and their speaking is also adversely affected.

In a country where success in the society depends largely upon success in learning English, challenges for English teaching are multifaceted. Today in spite of giving English an important place in curriculum, fluency and accuracy in this language still elude the learner. The diagnosis of this problem highlights different limitations in our system of English language teaching. The major among them are-

- Family background of most of the Indian families is not appropriate for developing proficiency in English
- Schools fail to provide opportunity to students to experience native speakers.
- Students don't get ideal models to follow
- Methods and approaches of English teaching are obsolete, traditional and un-psychological.
- Teachers don't follow the principles of connectivity with life while teaching English. Hence application aspect of English is ignored.
- Over emphasis is laid on literature than on language proficiency.
- Lack of motivation to excel, in students
- Disinterest in language learning.

- More emphasis on the subjects like science and mathematics.
- The behaviour of the teachers is not very motivating
- Teacher themselves have faulty accent and pronunciation
- Teachers training courses don't have any provision for training English teachers with different approach and extra effort.
- No provision for in-service teachers to improve their language skills
- There is a wide gap between teaching standards of government and private schools.
- Teachers are not oriented and are not aware of new approaches to English teaching like humanistic, audio-lingual and communicative etc.

The scenario of English teaching in India is with grey shades due to the above stated problems. Reorientation of English teaching is needed in India with an approach that gives concrete solution to these problems.

Focusing on individual solution to the problems will not be fruitful but there is an urgent need to improve the overall atmosphere of English language learning in India .Following means should be adopted to improve the condition of English language-I

- The teacher, who is the backbone of the teaching learning process should have a good communication skill in English, well trained with modern psychological approaches, and should have love, interest and dedication for English language
- Teacher should be mentored to be an ideal speaker for their students with model pronunciation and accent.
- Students should be given scope to listen to native speakers and communication in English in social settings.
- More drill in listening and speaking skills should be provided.
- Training institutes and schools should be well equipped with the different tool that aid in developing proficiency in listening and speaking skill.

These can be done with the use of language laboratory, lingua-phones, e-labs, e-classes, videoconferencing etc in teaching training courses , refresher courses for in-service teachers, in schools for students but in Indian setting we need ways and strategies that are very feasible-cost feasible, time feasible and feasible in terms of resources and energy. So Potentials of mass media in India can be utilized for this purpose, Radio has a very high prospects to be used as an aid in teaching learning of English in our country.

Radio is a powerful media at present in our country due to its economic feasibility and its wide broadcasting. It offers the possibility of being utilized successfully in education because of available infrastructure and low cost of producing programmes. Radio has been playing an important role for promoting relevant and interesting education in India since 1929 when All India Radio introduced programme for children. The first school broadcast programme started in 1932 in India. Radio is the electronic magic carpet that has the capacity to transport educational opportunities to faraway places impacting our social, political and cultural life. The radio educational programmes support the system that is providing facilities to dropouts and those who have not yet entered mainstream education as well as working towards quality enhancement also.

Although there is no central planning and production of education programmes there has been exception to this, in case of about programmes in English that are planned and produced in joint collaboration of All India Radio and Central Institute of English and Foreign language at Hyderabad. Radio has been playing an important role for promoting relevant and interesting education. It brings the outside world in classroom and thus makes teaching learning process more attractive and inspiring for the students as well as teachers. Being an inexpensive medium it has reached to every individual in spite of economical, social and geographical limitations. At present radio is use as an instructional tool in the formal, informal and non-formal education.

Radio has been telecasting educational broadcast for primary, secondary as well as university students. These programmes are focused mainly on the curriculum based content and they also aim at helping students and teachers by giving latest information related to content and providing new approaches and methods of teaching and filling curricular gaps. There are also special programmes for teachers and teacher educators. These are intended to familiarize teachers with innovative teaching methods, curricular changes, advanced content and so on. This service need to be geared rigorously for the rapid changes in the field of education due to influences by technological and psychological field. Teachers have to be oriented to these changes and their knowledge in content and methodology need to be updated. Hence radio broadcast for teachers have gained much importance today than before. In many states like Kerala, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Assam and Tami, Nadu Radio stations have organized Radio-cum-correspondence training in languages and sciences.

Radio broadcast is a very effective tool that can serve to supplement class room instruction especially of English, efficiently and effectively. Due to lack of finance, schools, especially those of Government sector cannot afford to have good devices needed for language learning like a well furnished audio system, lingua-phone devices or language laboratory. For such schools radio broadcast is a very good option which is also feasible as well as very easy to access. Radio has potential to be a tremendous resource for learning and dissemination that only requires a radio and an adult facilitator, and it reaches large numbers of teachers and learners who are isolated by distance and poor infrastructure. It can be used in almost any setting, from formal classrooms to community learning centers to outdoor venues. Radio educational programmes can provide good speakers of English to students and give them a very clear and interesting explanation of grammatical concepts. Interactive radio can help to improve speaking skill. Also, material can be recorded from it, preserved and played later to learners. Apart from prepared lessons that are relayed, learners can pickup expressions, vocabulary, pronunciation and other elements of language from the radio. It is also extremely useful for teaching listening comprehension, and particularly valuable in bringing native speakers closer to the learner.

Various projects have been implemented to use radio in English learning in different states. The 3-year bilingual interactive radio course “Aamhi Ingraji Shikto / We Learn English” for teaching spoken English to Marathi speaking students was implemented in Pune district between 2001-2004 and in Mumbai, between 2002-2005. In 2005-2008, we included a reading and writing component to each of the 3-years of the radio course. “Aamhi Ingraji Shikto” is currently being broadcast by All India Radio for all the Pune Zilla Parishad elementary schools from 2009 onwards. The Hindi version of this course, “Aao Angrezi Sikhe / We Learn English” was broadcast in the following states:

- Delhi - 2002-04
- Jharkhand - 2004-06 (several districts)
- Rajasthan - 2005-06 (2 districts)

- Uttarakhand - 2004-06 (2 districts)
- Uttar Pradesh – 2008 – 2010 (1 district)

The result of this project was very encouraging. Millions of students have listened to this radio course in various states of India. As the radio course was broadcast during the school-day, and sometimes repeated at night by All-India Radio (AIR), many adult listeners also benefitted from the broadcasts. The AIR Listenership Survey in 2002 estimated that about 200,000 urban and rural people, outside the formal school system, were listening to the CLR radio lessons in Pune District alone, making it one of the most popular radio programmes in Pune District. The impact of this English Radio Course on Listening and Spoken English Skills of Students was seen as follows-

- There was a deep impact of radio course on the listening and spoken English skills of large numbers of students who have been listened to the broadcasts of English radio course. Rural and urban students in Class 5, who had just begun to learn English and listened to the 90 radio lessons scheduled for Class 5, spoke far more English than Class 7 students from the same schools, who had not been exposed to the radio programme.
- After 3 years of radio lessons, rural students in Class 7 not only spoke far more English, but were also able to write better than rural Class 9 students not exposed to the radio programme.
- Teachers were extremely appreciative that the radio lessons helped them to teach spoken English, and that the lessons fulfilled a real need to improve the confidence and abilities of their students to speak English.
- Based on the significant impact of the radio course on the English skills of Class 4 rural students studying in Pune district government schools, a 2011 independent evaluation recommended that this 3-year course should be broadcast throughout Maharashtra state

In the present era of technology Radio has also modified its form. Its scope is widened by accessibility on mobiles, online channels; face book links of radio channels and programmes, as well as interactive radio. This has added to the benefits of Radio as an educational tool in country like India.

### **Interactive Radio Instruction**

Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) is an innovative, interactive pedagogy; it is a methodology in which a radio broadcast guides a teacher and learners through the activities of a lesson. While listening to the radio, learners actively participate in the lesson by singing, reading, writing, answering questions and solving problems in ways that ensure active learning. IRI is an active teaching methodology designed to make learning fun. IRI is aimed at:

- Increasing access to basic education for all learners of school going age
- Improve educational quality.
- Making teaching participatory through Radio broadcast also.
- Providing a forum to teachers and students for sharing their problems and discussing their views with experts and other members of their communities.
- Giving practice in communication skills.

Interactive Radio Instruction will be an additional benefit towards improving the quality of English learning and teaching as -

- It allows listeners to not only hear English being spoken, but gives them opportunities during the radio lesson itself to speak in English.
- It can very well employ bilingual approach of English learning in regional medium government schools - where English is rarely spoken or heard, and is taught by teachers whose own knowledge of English is very limited. The bilingual approach helps students to engage in their own learning, and to understand and enjoy English, rather than learning it by rote.
- Proper exams of listening and speaking skill can be conducted through Interactive Radio.

This Interactive Radio Instruction has been very successfully used to teach English, other school subjects and educational programmes for adults in a number of other countries.

Although Radio broadcast, no doubt has its potential in education and few courses are running successfully but it has not been very well accepted and adequately utilized by schools all over the country One of the main reason is, that teachers are not sensitive and trained to integrate the radio programmes with their class room teaching. There is an urgent need of well planned and organized strategies to help English teacher trainees to master English language in an effective manner and help them to utilize the benefits of radio in English learning of their students.

These are certain suggestive measures of how Radio Broadcast can be used to enhance the proficiency of English teachers in our country–

- For B.Ed trainees who are aspiring to become English teachers it should be made compulsory to clear a practical examination. Theory paper should reduce to half; the other 50% should be of practical exam of 'listening' and 'speaking' skill. These exams can be conducted by different bodies like IGNOU, Centre institute of languages Hyderabad, TOFEL, etc. and through interactive radio sessions experts on the radio stations can test the communicative skills of English teachers without much extra expenses.
- Regular classes to listen to the educational broadcast from radio channels should be made essential.
- It can be made available in their home or institutes and that should be supplemented by feedback and assignments on it so that their participation is ensured.
- Refresher courses for teachers educators should be organized through radio broadcast and IR session
- Contact programmes for English teacher trainees and in-service teachers to give them help and guidance to utilize radio in their classes in an effective way.
- The schedule of radio broadcast specially designed for in-service teachers should be revised according to their comfort.
- Some of the enthusiastic and willing teachers should be selected and trained to develop scrip writing for radio programmes and conduct IR sessions so that they can take initiative to run such programmes from their local radio channels or community radio.
- Appraisals of teachers should be done considering their participation in such programmes to motivate them

- Virtual forum can be made of English teachers community where the teachers can share their experiences, discuss innovative ways for improvement in English learning atmosphere, creative language games and solution to the problems they are facing.
- The radio can also provide experts views to teachers and an interactive session with them will help experts and specialist to solve their problems
- The Radio programmes can be supplemented with Mentor's guides that support the radio lessons These Guides should be the resources that link the teachers to the daily radio broadcast. They can assist teachers in three ways. Firstly, each guide should have a section that explains how to use the programme. Secondly, the guide should provide teachers with the words of all the songs, instructions for making simple teaching aids such as puppets, and explanations to difficult concepts. Thirdly, each guide should have lesson plans for each of the Radio Broadcast including what activities the learners should do before, during and after the radio broadcast. Pre-broadcast activities help the learners to review skill and information from previous lessons and prepare them for the lesson for the day. Since air-time is limited, it is essential that teachers follow up each broadcast with the post broadcast activities described in the daily lesson plan.
- The radio broadcast should be aired in the morning or late evenings for benefit of teachers and teacher trainees with a provision that after listening to this telecast they have to write or speak whatever they have comprehended. This can be done in their institute in hard copy or might be done on face book pages of concerned programme, or as blogs. To practice speaking skill the listened mater should be retraced by the listeners on recorded tapes to be checked by their mentors or may leave it as recorded messages on internet or uploaded on you-tubes.the similar way was used in 1986 by PFU university, Moscow for developing proficiency in Russian Language.
- Benefits of Radio instruction can be blended with the flexibility and advantages provided by learning through mobile phones. Mobile is used by nearly every individual irrespective of age, socio economic status so the educational broadcast should be made available on mobiles. It will increase their accessibility without even spending on radio sets and the programmes can be recorded, user can record her own voice after listening to the programme and compare it with the experts' so this integration of technologies will be very beneficial.

Thus it can be concluded that radio is very promising yet not well employed teaching learning tool for English. There is a need to realize its importance and explore innovative ways to integrate it in our system of English Language learning and teaching. Our foremost focus on using it for improving language skills of teacher trainees and In-service teachers because once the mentors will be improved the improvement will easily filter down to our students and will give us positive results. Though technological advancement has provided us with many more fast and efficient ways and Radio may seem obsolete device, to many, but certain qualities of Radio like accessibility, affordability, feasibility, easy to use etc. make it, an effective resource for the field of education in developing country like India.

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