

## YOU CAN SPEAK IN ENGLISH WITH ÉLAN: A REVIEW

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In today's world of globalization pronouncing a word correctly is as important as using correct syntax. People understand how embarrassing it could be if a word mispronounced means something else. It may lead to unexpectedly awful results. You Can Speak in English with élan can help those readers who want to improve their pronunciation. Dr. Arun Behera, the author of the text has put in all his efforts to make this a reader friendly book. Yes it is reader friendly with easily conceivable and lucid words used. It is 130 pages slim book yet healthy enough to enrich its readers.

Dr. Behera starts with *The Sound System of English* where he introduces his readers to the sounds of English. Each sound is explained vividly with not just examples of isolated words but with at least four to five sentences from each.

Understanding the sounds of English could over work the readers' brains, but the following section focusing on, "The Flexibility of English: A Study" points out the diverse use of English and immense flexibility as a language. He justifies the flexibility in language through "New Words". He first discusses the etymology of certain interesting words like, 'Timbuktu' and 'Valentine' and some very commonly used words like 'Diesel' and 'coach'. Memorizing all the words is possible only by a gifted few, but if one knows the meanings of some common suffixes and prefixes it becomes easier to know and understand the meanings of many words. It also

enables in guessing the meanings from the context. Then moving on to the loan words and portmanteau words, which could be very interesting for the readers. The flexibility is also shown through the uncommon formation of words when used as past tense, positives and plurals in “Interchange of Parts of Speech”. The projection of the difference in meaning that the same word can have when used in its different parts of speech comes as a solution at a glance to those who have always found this confusing.

We use sounds, words, sentences and discourse to communicate. The section “Communication: the Myths and the Facts” helps in overcoming the taboos many of us have on communication. Dr. Behera points out the common myths that are pronounced and then goes on to explain the major realities that we adopt while communicating. If all could understand and overcome the barriers to communication there would be no differences in the human world. The section “Barriers to Effective Communication and how to overcome them” enlightens the readers on how communication could be marred. Here he enlists and explains the major barriers to communication with the ways to overcome them.

Dr. Arun Behera again comes back to the sounds of English in the section “Pronunciation Patterns of English: Irregularities and the Means of Overcoming them”. Here he invariably provides “a solution to the problems in pronunciation of Indian speakers” (pg 53). The focus may be on Indian speakers but by and large it is true to all non-native speakers of English. English being a non-phonetic language has every chance in confusing the non-native learners and the new learners as many a time the same letter represents different sounds and also the same sound may stand for different letters of the English alphabet. He makes it easier for the readers by dealing on the ‘Areas of Difficulty in Learning Pronunciation.’

India being a country with twenty two languages and as many as 200 dialects, “The Indian census records over 200 different mother tongues”(Daniel 1999-2000). Daniel refers to dialects as mother tongue. With such diversity of spoken language it is obvious that these “non-native speakers, tend to make errors in pronunciation mainly due to the influence of mother tongue” (pg 57). This is discussed in detail with reference to Indian languages with valid examples in the section “What Affects Our Pronunciation: Mother Tongue Interference”. The examples here are

basically defining the Odiya language and its dialects and how it affects in the pronunciation of English when spoken by an Odiya speaker for whom English is not a day to day affair.

It is a nightmare for many teachers when it comes to the teaching of pronunciation. The section “Teaching English Pronunciation to non-native speakers: Myth and Facts”. The author very aptly makes his teacher readers aware of the four major myths commonly believed viz. “learning English pronunciation means learning how to pronounce the individual sounds: vowel and consonant” (pg 63), “there is an accepted belief that it is very difficult- almost impossible- for students to hear and pronounce some sounds” (pg 64), “teaching English pronunciation is monotonous” (pg 66) and “non-native teachers of English cannot teach pronunciation” (67). He also highlights the truth against these myths thus making it a teacher friendly book.

The next section “Does Stress- shift lead to word- class conversation in English?” is all about Stress shift in English language. Stress shift “also affects the meaning and the pronunciation in a substantial manner” (pg 71). This is explained again with varied examples, thus helping the readers to understand the importance using the right stress in words. The examples used are not just isolated words but sentences where the difference in pronunciation is highlighted through the phonetically transcribed words helping the readers to pronounce it in a right way. Specific reference to acronyms, homophones and onomatopoeia is highly appreciated.

Shift of stress due to its use as different parts of speech by and large changes the pronunciation of the root words. Similarly, on pluralization of the root word too changes its pronunciation. “The same word is used in two different ways when used in the singular and in the plural” (pg 75). This is discussed with interesting examples in the section “Pluralization Affects English Pronunciation”. A similar story is repeated in the next section “Capitalization of Words Affects English Pronunciation” with examples like ‘August’ is pronounced differently from ‘august’. The variation in pronunciation pattern extends to actual pronunciation of foreign words and the English pronunciation of those words. This is discussed in “Pronunciation in case of Foreign Words in English”. The section “Word Stress” deals exhaustively through examples on word stress in the different syllables. These examples cover sixteen pages of the book. We again come back to

stress shift with specific reference to derivatives in “Stress Shift in Derivatives”.

“English has stress- timed rhythm” (pg 99) and a few examples on it is what is the next section “Sentence Stress and Rhythm” about. This section is followed by “Intonation” pattern in English language. The different situations where there could be falling, rising and falling- rising intonation is discussed with examples.

Many a times we mispronounce the English words. The most common mispronounced words are discussed in the section “Some Commonly Mispronounced Words”. The section also enlists some pairs and groups of words which may sound similar but they actually have a difference in pronunciation. The author helps his readers improve their spoken skills in “How can one speak well?” To continue with it he explains the “Rules of Pronunciation” where he deals with the Rules of Vowel Sounds” and “Rules of Accent”.

I remember my English teacher teaching the pronunciation of words like psychology, pneumonia where she always told that the first letter of these words remain silent. But such silent letters could be present in different positions in an English word. Like in ‘half’ the sound /l/ remains silent. The section “Silent letters in English Words” and these silent letters are many a time notorious to the non-native speakers putting them in to the trouble of mispronunciation. Dr. Behera gets the readers acquainted with difficulty underlying this and at says, “It requires constant practice and regular usage to get out of this problem of sonority”. True practice can overcome any flaw.

The last section is “Three Factors Required for a Good Speaker” where Dr Behera explains how control of volume, pitch and speed in speaking can make an effective speaker. Not just this, an important an often neglected area in teaching effecting speaking and communication in English is to overcome the stage fright of nervousness. “To Overcome Nervousness” coupled with “Ways to Relax Before Speaking” is a section with valuable tips on this. To help the readers he also notes down the methods of improving English fluency in “Success in Spoken English Study”.

The salient features of the book are clarity in the use of language, use of ample examples, the topics are self-explanatory and it is easy to read. If the book had a CD pronouncing the words used as examples would help the readers in a better way.

The book can be handy to everybody irrespective of the profession they are in to. It could be prescribed by the universities especially those in to technical education.

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