

III. OTHER FEATURES

Spoken English of the Marathi and especially of the Satara speakers differs a lot from that of the native speakers. Among numerous reasons, defective sound segments discussed earlier are some but not the only ones. More than defective sound segments, other features such as suprasegmental features cause a lot of difference in connected speech. The various features that cause this difference are:

1. Stress
2. Prominence
3. Closure and Hold
4. Release
5. Aspiration
6. Weak-forms
7. Pause.

1. Stress: Stress is extra breath effort and muscular energy expended on a particular syllable in a multi-syllabic word. Though the exact intensity and strength is not fixed; in comparison with other syllables in the word, the stressed syllable is more strong and has more intensity.

Stress being a characteristic feature of English speech, its absence is easily noticed and felt. Among the Satara speakers of English very few have proper stress patterns in

their speech. Of course stress on certain syllables is felt because other syllables are not so intensively stressed. The most common phenomenon is to stress all the syllables equally. Some speakers adopt a little different way of pronunciation i.e., they maintain difference between stressed and unstressed syllable but again it is done in a very idiosyncratic manner. Throughout the speech, no pattern is found and as a result it gives a chaotic picture.

So the general tendency is to stress all the syllables thereby blurring distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables. e.g.

'I 'fared 'well 'I 'think.

'Don't 'worry 'it 'won't 'hurt 'you. etc. .

The mother-tongue influence dominates English speech very much. As in Marathi all the syllables are uttered with equal emphasis, the same manner is carried over to English speech. A very few who use stress in a haphazard manner are partially conscious that English is not spoken the way Marathi is spoken but fail to acquire stress pattern and intonation fully. One more aspect which is almost ignored is the 'regular time interval'. In English the interval between every two stresses is more or less same throughout the utterance but because of the tendency of stressing each and every syllable the regular time interval is lost.

2. Prominence: Generally prominence is the result of stress, pitch-change and quality of the syllable. In a word and mostly in a polysyllabic word, primary and secondary stresses exist. The primary stress stands out from the others in breath force and muscular energy expended on it. In a sentence, the syllable on which a pitch-change begins is the syllable with primary stress. It also is called a 'tonic' or 'nucleus'.

The Marathi speakers and especially the Satara speakers are not so particular in making a particular syllable prominent and those who do it, do it haphazardly without being aware of its appropriateness. Voluntary pitch-change disturbs the whole intonation pattern and the concept of the nucleus or tonic is lost. Some speakers have such a rigid manner of making pitch change that either the first syllable in the second or the third word or the first in the penultimate word is stressed irrespective of length of a sentence.

A majority of them make all the syllables equally prominent. So the problem of the prominence does not arise.

3. Closure and Hold: Closure and hold are the first two stages in the articulation of stops. Mainly, the quality of the third stage and its nature depends on these first two stages.

In the case of stops, a complete closure and for fricatives and affricates a partial closure are formed. For all the stops where firm closure is essential, only a loose one is formed and that affects the quality of the sound. For /pb, td, kg, p^h, t^h, d/ etc., the essential firm closure is hardly produced and it affects the following two stages. In the case of fricatives and affricates, partial closure are needed but except a few phonemes like /s, dz, ʃ, h/ all others from a full closure and the very manner of articulation gets modified. Because of this defective closure, the number of fricative phonemes gets reduced and the number of plosives gets boosted up.

The 'hold' stage is applicable to the plosives only. The second stage in the process of articulating plosives differs a lot from that of the R.P. manner.

To make the plosives sound plosives, closure and hold must be defectless. Sufficient duration and essential compression must take place to make the hold felt. In the Satara speakers of English this second stage is very short and abrupt on the one hand and the compression is incomplete on the other. Of course, the second defect arises out of the first defective stage. As the closure formed is not firm enough, it cannot bear strong compression or the force of

the compressed air. The hold is so short and abrupt that the moving organ rising and touching the static speech organ gives impression of a tap or a flap /f/ like sounds. e.g.

late /let /

left /lept /

did /did/

ride /raid/ etc.

4. Release: It is a third stage in the articulation of the stops and seems to result from the previous two stages. The nature of the closure and that of the hold is generally responsible for the quality of the release.

For the Satara speakers of English, both the closure and the hold are not clear. So, naturally the release gets affected to a great extent. Mainly in the case of the stops, the release is weak and though the speech organs draw apart immediately, it doesn't result in the usual explosion. The sudden release and the air-blasting are the essential features of the plosives which are absent in the speech of the Satara speakers of English. One more feature of the 'release' is that it disappears when another plosives follow it immediately and this is well maintained by the Satara speakers. e.g.

left /lep^ht /

kept /kep^ht/ etc.

Besides plosives, other phonemes too need to form some stages out of these three. Affricates, nasals and lateral need to form the closure and here too the closure is often weak and loose. e.g.

/m/ in 'me' /mi/

/dʒ / in 'suggest' /sə dʒ e-st /

/l/ in 'looks' /luks/ etc.

All these defective stages result in some serious and major defects. So the articulation of plosives and of other phonemes does not sound as it does when articulated by the R.P. speaker or by the natives.

5. Aspiration: The plosives and the affricates when initial in words are pronounced with extra breath effort and muscular energy and stands out very easily from all other syllables. In an aspirated phoneme some of /h/ is heard but this /h/ is not heard in the speech of the Satara speakers.

There seems to be two major reasons for the lack of the aspiration:

- a. Defective (closure, hold and release) stages.
- b. Different phonology.

(a) Defective Stages:

As we have seen earlier, the closure, the hold and the release are very much defective. The release and the air-blast that follows are immensely important and contribute a lot to the production of aspiration. Aspiration like many other features of phonology is not made transparent or is not given graphic presentation in the writing system of English.

The Marathi speakers of English are habituated to pronounce whatever is visible in the writing system and the same linguistic habit is carried over to English. As the aspiration is not recorded visibly in writing, it is neglected and it results in spelling pronunciation. e.g.

/k/ in 'cart' is pronounced as /k/ instead of /k^h/.

/t/ in 'time' is pronounced as /t/ instead of /t^h/.

/p/ in 'prices' is pronounced as /p/ instead of /p^h/.

(b) Different Phonology:

The second and more important reason for the lack of the aspiration is the difference between the phonology of English and that of Marathi. In English /p/ and aspirated /p^h/ are one and the same phoneme though they are pronounced in a slightly different manner. It is aspirated when it occurs initially but in Marathi /p/ and /p^h/ are two different phonemes and mean two different things. This is not an allephonic

difference; the two sounds stand in contrast with each other. In Marathi /p^h/ is articulated as [p̥] and so it is understood as a different phoneme. If the aspiration is added to existing English plosives and affricates, they are recognised and understood as different phonemes. Mainly for this reason, the aspiration remains absent or is unconsciously ignored by the Satara speakers.

6. Weak Forms

What is true of stressed and unstressed syllables in words is true of weak and strong forms in an utterance. In English some 32 to 34 structure words are capable of being pronounced with low stress and have different phonological shape when used in connected speech than their regular phonological shape when pronounced in isolation. These weak forms make possible the 'regular time interval'. Even to foreigners who do not understand English, spoken English is a series of regular beats.

For the Marathi speakers of English, all words and syllables are equally important as far as their pronunciation is concerned. Here, too, Marathi 'stress' and 'intonation patterns' are carried over to English. As every word and every letter is given individual utterance and more or less spoken with equal breath force and muscular energy in Marathi;

no discrimination is made between the weak forms and the rest while speaking English. Such tendency of giving equal phonic weightage to every syllable negates the possibility of 'regular time interval' and consequently disturbs intonation pattern. This can even hamper intelligibility. e.g.

'He 'was 'sorry 'to 'be 'late.

'Did 'you 'have 'any fears.

'Now 'you 'can 'begin. etc.

Certain words in English have more than one weak form and are used in a particular circumstances. Consonants and vowels that follow the weak forms, decide their form. Only meaningful and important words receive stress and probably the most important word receives pitch-change. For the Marathi speakers the weak forms do not matter much because in Marathi to make a word sound important, the speaker either gives emphasis on the word or mostly adds a letter /ts/ to the word.

7. Pause

A majority of the subjects follow a certain pause pattern but it seems to be difficult to lay down hard and fast rules according to which the subjects use the pattern. The majority takes a pause either after the second or the third word in a sentence. There seems to be no regard for grammatical components of any level — subject, verb, complement or phrase, clause etc. There are some pauses almost at the

end of sentences but they are marginal enough to be neglected. This out of way pause-pattern seems to be the result of reading habits imposed on them in schools.

Other speakers either take a pause after every word sometimes within a word or no pause is taken at all. To find a pattern in their utterances seems to be a futile job as it presents a chaotic picture. e.g.

- i. Did | you | have | any | fears.
- ii. I | fared | well | I think.
- iii. He | was | admitted | to | the course.
- iv. That | zoo | is | very | interesting. etc.

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