

LEARNING TO SPEAK WITH EFFORTLESS ENGLISH SYSTEM

Achmad Basari (mrabasari@yahoo.com)

Dian Nuswantoro University

Abstract: *This article discusses an introduction to the new teaching system in the speaking classroom. This system is known as the Effortless English System. It is a system which relies much on listening activity. In recent years, most English students in schools have been stuck on a grammar-translation method. In practice, the students focus more on grammar rules teaching and translation. The results of this method show no improvement to their speaking skills. They tend to always think and translate before they speak. It obviously prevents them from being fluent and confident when speaking to other English students or to native speakers. On the other hand, Effortless English system teaches the students with fun and interesting stories. The system does not teach grammar rules consciously and analytically, instead it uses mini-story lessons to learn grammar intuitively. The major focus on this system is learning to speak by listening not by speaking. Speaking is optional after one listens to a lot of comprehensible inputs to his/her brain. Forced speaking is not recommended because it may damage final results. Listening to things that are always right will build the language right while saying things that are always wrong will build it wrong. The key to excellent speaking is listen to one thing many times not listen to many things one time. If students follow these rules, they will end up speaking English like a native.*

Keywords: *Effortless English System, Comprehensible Inputs, Forced Speaking, Listening Activity*

There are a lot of reasons why individuals want to speak English fluently. One of the reasons is that they purposefully want to communicate with English native speakers easily. Easily means the native speakers of English understand them and vice versa. Yet, the fact shows that many of those individuals still find it hard to achieve. They say that they are too embarrassed, shy and confused when speaking English, they also claim that they have bad pronunciation, make a lot of grammar mistakes, feel frustrated for being unable to understand native speakers easily, and they are angry that after studying for years, they still cannot speak English easily. Most of them who have studied English for years never feel relaxed and confident to speak English.

In Indonesia students who happened to study English have experienced a bunch of English teaching methods since English was first introduced to their classes. One method of teaching English that has been applied until today is Grammar-Translation method. As we know that such method has the major focus on mastering Reading and Writing skills. It has a little or no systemic attention to

Listening and Speaking. In fact, the goal of foreign language study (including English) is to learn a language in order to read its literature or to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign-language study. Kelly in Richards and Rodgers (1992:3) points out that Grammar-Translation method is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language. This simply implies that language learning is carried out through literacy of its grammar rules and translation in order to achieve a better understanding of written English rather than spoken one. Further issues can be explained why those students who have studied English in schools for years still find it hard to use English verbally to communicate with the native speakers. An early hypothesis must be put out here to conform to grammar translation method that has been used deliberately to teach both written and spoken English in class since then.

Spoken English is not the same as written or textbook English. This is a fact that few students understand. They simply do not realize that the English they learn in schools is not the English that native speakers use in normal conversations. To be honest, I have no idea why schools neglect real spoken English. Why do they teach only formal English? Why don't they prepare their students for the real world? What is wrong with our present teaching method that prevents students from easily and fluently communicating with native speakers? Why do native speakers not easily understand our modern students and vice versa? Why do schools seemingly focus more on the fluency among the English students? Why can't students use English in and out of class equally well? In fact, English is not their native language. Once again those questions have been bothering me until today.

Real spoken English is defined as the true, casual, everyday spoken English used by native speakers in the UK and North Americas. Idioms and slangs are often used in every conversation. In real conversations, they rarely find full, formal, complete sentences. Why rarely? Because native speakers almost never use complete sentences, speak in partial sentences, interrupt each other, change thoughts in the middle of a sentence, and use filler words constantly. Real spoken pronunciation is also quite different than what students learn from schools and textbooks. In a normal conversation, native speakers tend to mash words together. In schools, students learn a few standard contractions but in fact they create a huge number of nonstandard contractions all the time. Further, native speakers tend to connect some words together and cut other words shorter. So when they combine all of those differences, they get conversations that sound totally different than what students learned from schools and books. By 'real English conversation', it means that English is actually spoken by average native speakers in their day to day lives. By this definition, CNN and the BBC are not 'real English conversation' if people think that those two TV stations are good sources to learn to speak real English. In fact, an announcer reading a teleprompter is not conversation at all. There is nothing wrong with CNN or the BBC, but that style of English is not the style that is used in homes, in offices, and on the street every

day. Announcers, for example, are very careful to speak in complete sentences, to avoid most slang, to speak very clearly, and to avoid using filler words. As stated in the previous discussion that real people constantly speak in sentence fragments, constantly interrupt each other, constantly use idioms and slang, constantly smash words together into strange contractions, constantly speak quickly and constantly use filler words. That is why so many students have trouble when they visit the USA, Canada, Australia and the UK. The English they hear on the street is nothing like the English they learned in school and nothing like the English they heard on the news shows. Casual conversation is the **FIRST** kind of English that small children learn. Children first learn to chat with their family and friends. They become totally fluent at real conversation before they learn to speak formally and even before they focus on reading or learn writing.

There are two worlds in English conversation learning: the school world and the real world. Unfortunately, the school world is nothing like the real world. In the school world of English conversation, students study books full of grammar rules and books full of individual vocabulary words. Students learn such rules as *never use a sentence fragment, avoid run-on sentences, never begin a sentence with 'and'*, and so on and so forth. Yet, in the real world, native English speakers do all of these things every day. They frequently speak in fragments, they frequently use long run-on sentences, they frequently begin sentences with *and*, and they frequently end sentences with prepositions. Here is the ugly truth -- English textbooks are written by old clueless academics who have very little understanding of the real world. Likewise, most teachers are more interested in their own authority and position than in helping their students prepare for real English conversation. And so, students spend years in school vainly learning English from textbooks. They waste years taking tests and memorizing rules that are not really rules at all.

LANGUAGE TEACHING INNOVATIONS

In the earlier discussion, the so-called Grammar-Translation method has been put out clearly how it dominated European and foreign language teaching more than a decade. Even today it still continues to be widely used in some parts of the world (Howatt, 1984:4). Although the Grammar-Translation method often creates frustration for students, but it makes only a few demands on teachers. It is still used in situations where understanding literary texts is the primary focus of foreign language study and there is little need for a speaking knowledge of the language.

As times passed by, there was a demand in 19th century for oral proficiency in foreign languages. New approaches of teaching foreign languages were then developed by individual language specialists with a specific method for reforming the teaching of modern languages. Among the approaches are the Direct Method, Total Physical Response Method and The Natural Approach.

1. The Direct Method

The Direct Method originated from the natural language learning principles which were used as foundation to build a methodology around observation of child language learning. Attempts have been made to make second language learning more like first language learning. Finally, among those who tried to apply natural principles to language classes was L. Sauveur (in Richards and Rodgers, 1992:9), who used intensive oral interaction in the target language, employing questions as a way of presenting and eliciting language. He further stated that a foreign language could be taught without translation or the use of the learner's mother tongue if meaning was conveyed directly through demonstration and action. However, the principles and procedures of the Direct Method in practice stood as follows:

1. Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.
2. Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.
3. Oral communication skills were built up in a carefully graded progression organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
4. Grammar was taught inductively
5. New teaching points were introduced orally
6. Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas
7. Both speech and listening were taught
8. Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized

The above principles are seen in the following guidelines for teaching oral language:

1. Never translate: demonstrate
2. Never explain: act
3. Never make a speech: ask questions
4. Never imitate mistakes: correct
5. Never speak with single words: use sentences
6. Never speak too much: make students speak much
7. Never use the book: use your lesson plan
8. Never go too fast: keep the pace of the student
9. Never speak too slowly: speak normally
10. Never speak too quickly: speak naturally
11. Never speak too loudly: speak naturally
12. Never be impatient: take it easy

(cited in Titone, 1968: 100-1)

2. Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a method developed by Dr. James J. Asher, a professor emeritus of psychology at San José State University, to aid learning second languages. The method relies on the assumption that when learning a second or additional language, language is internalized through a process of code breaking similar to first language development and that the process allows for a long period of listening and developing comprehension prior to production. Asher states that most of the grammatical structure of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary items can be learned from the skillful use of imperative by the instructor (1977:4). Students respond to commands that require physical movement. In a developmental sense, Asher sees successful adult second language learning as a parallel process to child first language acquisition. He claims that speech directed to young children consists primarily of commands, which children respond to physically before they begin to produce verbal responses. TPR is primarily intended for ESL/EAL teachers, although the method is used in teaching other languages as well.

Total Physical Response is linked to the ‘trace theory’ of memory in psychology which holds that the more often or the more intensively a memory connection is traced, the stronger the memory association will be and the more likely it will be recalled. Retracing can be done verbally or in association with motor activity. Combined tracing activities, such as verbal rehearsal accompanied by motor activity will increase the probability of successful recall. Asher’s emphasis on developing comprehension skills before the learner is taught to speak links it to a movement in foreign language teaching referred to as the Comprehension Approach introduced by Winitz (1981). This refers to several different comprehension-based language teaching proposals which share the belief that (a) comprehension abilities precede productive skills in learning a language; (b) the teaching of speaking should be delayed until comprehension skills are established; (c) skills acquired through listening transfer to other skills; (d) teaching should emphasize meaning rather than form; and (e) teaching should minimize learner stress.

However, the general objectives of Total Psychological Response are to teach oral proficiency at a beginning level. Comprehension is a means to an end, and the ultimate aim is to teach basic speaking skills. A TPR course aims to produce learners who are capable of an uninhibited communication that is intelligible to a native speaker. Specific instructional objectives are not elaborated, for these will depend on the particular needs of the learners. Once again, whatever goals are set; they must be attainable through the use of action-based drills in the imperative form.

3. The Natural Approach

Terrell and Krashen (1983) published their book called ‘The Natural Approach’ which was an attempt to develop a language teaching proposal that

incorporated the naturalistic principles researchers had identified in studies of second language acquisition. Originally this approach grew out of Terrell's experiences teaching Spanish classes ranging from elementary to advanced-level ones and his drawing on Krashen's influential language acquisition theory. They have identified the Natural Approach with what they call 'traditional' approaches to language teaching. Traditional approaches are defined as 'based on the use of language in communicative situations without recourse to the native language' and perhaps, needless to say, without reference to grammatical analysis, grammatical drilling, or to a particular theory of grammar. Such approaches have been noted as natural, psychological, phonetic, new, reform, direct, analytic, imitative and so forth (1983:9)

In the later discussion, it is assumed that the terms *Natural Approach* and *Natural Method* are synonymous. Although the tradition is a common one, there are important differences between the Natural Approach and the Natural Method. The latter one is actually another term known as the Direct Method. The term *Natural* used in reference to the Direct Method merely emphasized that the principles underlying the method were believed to conform to the principles of naturalistic language learning in young children. Similarly, the Natural Approach, as defined by Krashen and Terrell (1983), is believed to conform to the naturalistic principles found in successful second language acquisition. However, unlike the Direct Method, the Natural Method puts less emphasis on teacher monologues, direct repetition, and formal questions and answers, and less focus on accurate production of target language sentences. In the Natural Approach there is an emphasis on exposure, or input, rather than practice; optimizing emotional preparation for learning; a prolonged period of attention to what the language learners hear before they try to produce language, and a willingness to use written and other materials as a source of comprehensible input.

EFFORTLESS ENGLISH SYSTEM

This teaching system has been developed since 2008 by A.J. Hoge as the Director of Effortless English Club, together with his friends Kristin Dodds and Joe Weiss from San Francisco-California. They created the Effortless English System based on the researches on Language Acquisition conducted by Dr. Stephen Krashen (1981) and Dr. J. Marvin Brown (1984). The primary goal of this system is to improve a native-like English speaking skill and it mainly focuses on everyday English. It makes sense because native speakers in any country spend most of their time speaking their day-to-day language not the formal one. With this system, the learners will speak fluently with English native speakers through audio lesson sets within shorter requested-time or 6 to 12 months. The lessons are designed to enable the learners to improve their speaking quickly and effortlessly. The Lessons Set consists of *Learn Real English* and *Power English*. They can be downloaded easily as the required payment is fulfilled and the lessons set are sold on the following website www.effortlessenglishclub.com. In fact, students are free to search for other additional audio materials that may become the lessons of their own to learn as

inspired by A.J. Hoge's teaching system. It is best suggested that as soon as you have got all the lessons, you had better transfer them to your MP3 player, iPod, or Cell phone to help you carry and learn them at any time convenient to you.

First and foremost, when you visit the website, you will have to submit your email address and password in order to get the seven-rule email courses for free within 8 days plus extra email courses for 2 weeks. The 7 rules are the rules to follow the new method of learning to speak English faster, easily, without thinking and translation. Here are the 7 rules suggested by the Effortless English System:

1. Do not learn individual words
2. Do not study grammar
3. Listen first
4. Slow, deep learning is best
5. Use point of view mini-stories
6. Only use real English conversations and materials
7. Listen and answer Not listen and repeat

The so-called rules are made up in audio and written materials. When receiving one rule at a time, you are suggested to listen and read the text script of the rule at the same time. By doing such a way, you will understand it easily and effortlessly. Here is the following complete explanation of the 7 rules:

1. **Do not learn individual words** – do not study English words because in fact native speakers do not learn English by remembering single words but rather they learn phrases. Phrases are group of words that naturally go together. Research by Dr James Asher proves that learning with phrases is 4-5 times faster than learning individual words. Students who learn phrases have much better grammar. When you find a new word, always write down the phrase it is in. When you review, always review the entire phrase, not the word.
2. **Do not study grammar** – do not study grammar because grammar damages your speaking. Instead of teaching grammar consciously, A.J. Hoge focuses on teaching grammar intuitively through stories. In the stories; in fact crazy-sounded ones, he asks many questions and requires answers from the students as well. By listening repeatedly to the stories and answering the questions at the same time, the students will intuitively learn the grammar faster and stress free. It ends up with a faster speaking improvement.
3. **Listen first** – listen to understandable English everyday. Do not read textbooks. Learn with your ears not with your eyes. In most school, students learn English with their eyes; read textbooks and learn grammar rules. Effortless English is a listening system. By listening to easy and understandable English 1 – 3 hours everyday, their speaking improves quickly. Spend most of your time listening that is the key to great speaking.

4. **Slow, deep learning is best** – the secret to speaking easily is to learn every word and phrase deeply. Put the words and phrases deep into the brain. To speak English easily, one must repeat each lesson many times. The number of repeating the lessons varies from person to person, but in order to have English words and phrases deep into the brain, it requires deep learning at least 2 hours a day for one week.
5. **Use point of view mini-stories** – the point of view mini stories are the most powerful way to learn and use English grammar automatically. Students must learn grammar by listening to real English. The best way is to listen to stories told in different times; Past, Perfect, Present, Future. Then they can listen to stories with many different kinds of grammar and need not study grammar rules but rather listen only to point of view stories. In this way, they will use correct grammar naturally and automatically.
6. **Only use real English conversations and materials** – Learn casual conversational English if students want to understand native speakers and speak easily. Use real conversations, magazines, audio articles, TV shows, movies, radio talk shows and audio books. Learn real English, not textbook English.
7. **Listen and answer, not listen and repeat** – In each mini-story lesson, a speaker tells a short simple story. The speaker also asks a lot of easy questions. Every time one hears a question, he has to pause and answer it. He learns to answer questions quickly without thinking. His English becomes automatic.

THE SET OF LESSONS

The set of lessons of Effortless English System is created under the name of Learn Real English lessons and Power English lessons. Each lesson set out of 30 set of lessons in Learn Real English has a real conversation audio lesson, a vocabulary audio lesson and a mini-story audio lesson, along with the text script of each lesson. The text script is included, in case a learner wants to read along as he listens. All lessons in a set have the same name. These lessons go together. Learn Real English lessons are designed to teach English learners to have proficiency in casual real conversations. In Power English, on the other hand, there are also 30 set of lessons plus a set of commentary audio bonuses. It has a main article audio lesson, a vocabulary audio lesson, a point of view audio lesson and a mini-story audio lesson. The text script is also included to benefit a better understanding for each lesson more quickly. Power English lessons are designed to teach English learners to focus more on the psychology of learning and the psychology of success. The idea of issuing these lessons comes from a lot of different famous people with their success stories. In addition, through many years of teaching experiences, A.J. Hoge says that most English students struggle and fail to improve because of psychology, not because of the methods they use and not because of the teachers they have. Those things are important. Tony Robbin, a famous coach says that psychology is 80% of success. A.J. Hoge himself agrees

with this statement. From his teaching experience with many English students, he says that psychology is also 80% of success and the other 20% is the methods, the schools, the teachers and the books they have. Psychology here is associated with motivations, emotions, and time management. All of these things are in fact much more important in learning a new language.

HOW TO USE THE SET OF LESSONS

In the audio files that have been downloaded, there is one particular file containing a guidance to use the lessons. Here are the following guidance steps to use the lessons:

1. A Text Article (Adobe .pdf file)

Read the article. Do not “study” it. Do not try to memorize it. Just read it a couple of times each day and review new words. Use a dictionary to translate difficult words if necessary.

2. Vocabulary Lesson (MP3)

Just listen. Do not try to memorize the words.

3. Mini-Story Lesson (MP3)

This is the most powerful lesson. First time, just listen. Then, listen and pause after each question. Answer each question loudly in English and then play again. Do not worry if you do not understand everything. Do not worry about mistakes.

In the Mini-Story, Joe Weiss & AJ Hoge will do only three things:

1. They will make a statement. After a statement, just say, ‘Ahhhh’ or ‘Ohhhh’.
2. They will ask a question that you know the answer to. Just answer the question. You do not need to answer with a sentence. You can answer with only one word or two words.
3. They will ask a question that you do not know the answer to. Guess. Yell a guess immediately.
4. Again, you can guess with just one (or a few) words. Saying a correct and exact answer is not important. The most important thing is speed. Try to answer very quickly (remember, one word is fine). Speed is your goal. You want short fast answers, not long answers! In the beginning, this may be difficult. That's OK. Use your pause button. Listen to this lesson many times every day for at least a week. The Mini-Story is the **MOST IMPORTANT LESSON** in the Learn Real English and the Power English system. Listen to these lessons the most. Just listen. Relax and enjoy. Listen to it several times each day for at least a week. Your goal is to understand 100% instantly and automatically.

ARTICLES RELATED TO EFFORTLESS ENGLISH SYSTEM

1. Learning languages like children (by Dr. J. Marvin Brown)

In 1984, the American University Language Center in Bangkok started using a new approach to teach the Thai language. The method is called 'The Listening Approach'. In more recent years it has become known as 'Automatic Language Growth'.

The method says that any attempt to speak (or even think about language), before automatic speaking comes, will cause damage and limit final results! In other words, the method uses a very long "silent period".

During the "silent period", students focus only on listening. After 6 - 12 months of intensive listening, students begin to speak spontaneously and naturally-- without effort and without thinking!

One - the child's secret

Everyone knows that when people move to a new country the children will eventually speak the language natively and the adults won't. The normal explanation is that children have a special 'talent' that they lose as they grow up. Teachers said that for adults, languages should be taught and studied instead of learned naturally.

The mistake – Children can do something that adults cannot.

The unasked question – What would happen if an adult were to just listen for a year without speaking?

Our answer – Both adults and children can do it right, but only adults can do it wrong.

Imagine a 4 year-old child and an adult reacting to somebody talking to them in a foreign language. The child most often just listens, while the adult usually tries to talk back. Now imagine that 'not trying to speak' was the child's secret. It makes sense that listening to things that are always right would build the language right, while saying things that are always wrong would build it wrong.

It seems that the difference between adults and children is not that adults have lost the ability to do it right-- but that children have not yet gained the ability to do it wrong (that is, to destroy it with forced speaking). Forced speaking damages adults. Consciously thinking of one's sentences – with translations, rules, substitutions, or any other kind of thinking prevents you from speaking like a native. The reason that children always end up as native

speakers is because they learn to speak by listening. And the reason that adults don't is because they learn to speak by speaking.

2. Myths on language learning

Myth#1 – Adults cannot do like children do

Many people have noticed that children learn second languages perfectly, and that adults almost never do. The conclusion that seems to have been drawn from this is that adults can't learn like children; that somehow and for some reason, adults have lost the child's magic!

We think that perhaps the reality lies in exactly the opposite direction and that adults have not lost some ability, but have rather gained an ability that children don't yet have: the ability to reason, to translate, to memorize, and to analyze. This ability '*naturally*' becomes the adult's primary conscious method of 'learning'. While it's certainly invaluable for many things, this adult ability simply cannot match what a child, without it, is able to do.

So can adults do what children do? Does the ability to analyze the language mean that we can no longer learn as young children? The evidence seems to say no. Many of our students find that there are some things that the unconscious mind just does better - like learn a new language. The place for analysis is there - it just comes later, after the natural process has had the chance to do its work.

Myth #2 - 'Practice Makes Perfect'

Just about every adult will agree with this statement. What's most amazing about it is that children don't practice their language! They either 'know' what they want to say, and they say it, or they don't 'know' what they want to say, and they are quiet.* Where do they gain the 'know' from? They 'know' as a result of their experiences in that language and culture. Never from practice! And for all the practice that adults do, they still cannot match the perfection of the child!

*(While there is an early period of mimicry, it may have more to do with physiological development than with language acquisition itself. Where young children are learning a second language, this mimicry is largely absent.)

Myth #3 - Language must be 'studied'

If it is evident that adults 'study' foreign languages, it is also just as evident that children do not study. What is it that children do then? What is it that enables them to 'learn' without study? They live, they look, they listen, and they learn. Children gather up experiences and simply try to understand what's going on around them. Where there are understandable things happening around you, you learn. No matter what your age - no matter what your language. It is from just this sort of environment

that language develops; automatically and naturally.

As I put out in the previous discussion, grammar-translation method has influenced the most teaching method of English in schools until today. For years the English students have spent to master it but most of them still find it hard to use English in real communication. Only a few who can really use it in real conversations but many of the students seem to be lost in real speech mastery. They are mostly good at attending tests on grammar rules. However, they still struggle when speaking to classmates, teachers and even worse to English native speakers. In short, their English sounds more like written English where sometimes it is not understandable and it sounds unfamiliar. It is obvious that teaching English with grammar-translation based method is merely a waste of time and efforts. Meanwhile, there is a new breakthrough of teaching English where time is less consumed; it is also stress free and almost effortless. The Effortless English method offers English learners to speak real English easily, spontaneously without thinking or translation. They will speak confidently to everyone (classmates, teachers and native speakers). Most importantly their English sounds like native because they learn to speak by listening not by speaking as everybody believes to be the best formula to improve their English. Practice makes perfect is not recommended if practice means do a lot of speaking drills here since listening to things that are always right will build the language right and forced speaking or saying things that are always wrong will build the language wrong. The good things about Effortless English system is that the learners will spend lesser time to master speaking skill and their English is native-like.

CONCLUSION

The goal of second or foreign language study from various methods is to learn the language in order to read its literature, to write in the language's writing system, to speak fluently like its native speaker. However, there is one particular language teaching method or system that is worth trying. It is known as Effortless English System. The so-called system is created based on researches conducted by Dr. Stephen Krashen and Dr. Marvin Brown and also previous teaching methods. This system is well-known as a listening system in teaching real spoken English where students are exposed totally on listening activities. In fact, the Effortless English system is inspired by some characteristic principles of the Natural Approach, TPR method, and the Direct Method. It has become obvious that the system suggests the language learners to delay practice speaking before automatic language growth comes, focus more on listening first, not to translate, not to be impatient, not to speak with single words, to comprehend first, to learn grammar subconsciously and to do more repetition. As traditional boring methods have shown the results to language teaching in schools for many years until today, the English students are frustrated for not being able to speak English easily and confidently. This could be even worse for them when speaking with English native speakers. The new system created in 2008 offers English students to improve their speaking faster, effortlessly and confidently.

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