

The Difficulties and Elucidations of Teaching and Learning English Pronunciation on Reading and Communication at Secondary Level Students in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to teach English pronunciation to learners who will make pronunciation like the native speaker. Individually, this goal of teaching English pronunciation is unrealistic. My aim to observe the present situation of teaching pronunciation in our schools has to give a suitable lesson plan so that they can communicate easily. This article investigates the pronunciation errors in English. These errors reflect the interference of different sound systems in the English pronunciation. Speech samples of the subjects' pronunciation were taken through words and sentences reading. Data was collected and analyzed with the guidance of phonemic transcription in Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary. Using Contrastive Analysis, potential difficulties of English pronunciation for the six subjects were listed by comparing the sound systems of English. On the other hand, the pronunciation errors of subjects were diagnosed in different categories based on Error Analysis. The findings help to provide a clear understanding of the common characteristics of pronunciation errors made by the subjects.

Introduction

Gross errors of pronunciation seriously distract attention and interfere with the communication process, however adequate the remainder of the utterance may be. If language is not correct then what is said is not what is meant. If what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone. Language is a means of communication and this act of communication takes place both in speech and in writing having variations in their respective exposures. Teaching pronunciation is an area of language teaching that many students and teachers avoid. In pronunciation there is the biggest difference between feet and fit. In this regard we need to learn pronunciation for the purpose of standard communication. So far the readers have been acquired with a term correct or standard pronunciation, this term will remain if it is not explained properly for their benefit

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as well as for the aim of the book. Speaking modestly, there exists no single form of pronunciation that alone can be regarded as correct in English. Even no two men of the same dialect speak alike. Since this language is spoken quite widely over the globe, it has developed a large number of spoken varieties, called 'accent'. Despite having a good grasp of vocabulary and the grammatical rules of English languages. Teachers vocabulary without correct sound as because they are not trained in International phonetic Alphabet (IPA). most of the teachers of our country are not familiar with phonemes.

The capability of the teacher should then be shaped by an effective curriculum and course design as well as the use of the right learning materials. Without proper development of English teachers, students will not develop the confidence to speak what they have learned or they might learn incorrect English-speaking skills. In this review, the role of the curriculum and course design in shaping English teachers will be considered. In particular, the efficacy of the curriculum used in Bangla for teaching English will be evaluated. Although some texts contain few phonemes, but they avoid it. As a result learners can not learn correct sounds as well as they can not learn correct pronunciation. the teaching pronunciation remains largely neglected in the field of learning language teaching. It is very difficult to communicate with of another country people without knowing pronunciation. So, English teaching pronunciation is most important in english language. That is why I am interested to work in this sector.

Problems

- a) Stressing individual words incorrectly
- b) Stressing the wrong words in a sentence
- c) Pronouncing certain consonant sounds incorrectly
- d) Mixing up short and long vowel sounds
- e) Forgetting to finish words
- f) Syllabus desinging effect.
- g) Educational institutions such as schools, colleges universities and coaching centers are responsible.
- h) Lack of expert teacher.
- i) Regional variety in pronunciation.

Stressing individual words incorrectly

If we usually speak with native English speakers, this will be the number one reason why they misunderstand us. It's very hard for native English speakers to

'translate' a word spoken as 'calendar' to the way they would pronounce it, 'Calenda'.

Stressing the wrong words in a sentence

Remember that we can completely change the meaning of a sentence by stressing different words in that sentence. For example, we could say this sentence in a number of different ways:

Pronouncing certain consonant sounds incorrectly

If people are misunderstanding us, it could very well be due to we confusing what we call 'voiced' and 'unvoiced' sounds. You might substitute 'p' for 'b' or 't' for 'd', for example. These sounds are so easily confused because their only difference is whether or not a learner uses voice to produce them. If learners aren't careful, learner could be making mistakes like saying 'tuck' for 'duck' or 'pay' for 'bay'.

Mixing up short and long vowel sounds

Vowel sounds, like consonant sounds, can also be confused easily. The main problem with vowels happens when we mix up long and short vowel sounds. For example, the long 'ee' sound in 'seat' with the short 'i' sound in 'sit.' If you confuse these sounds, you end up saying completely different words. This can get confusing in conversation and forces people to draw much more from the context of your speech than the speech itself

Note versus not

The silent "e" on the ends of words that change the vowel sounds in them can also be confusing for English language learners. In particular, the long "o" sound you hear in the word "note" or "dote" might be pronounced as "not" or "dot", respectively, by an English language learner. Students should concentrate on keeping their tongues in the middle of their mouths and then round their lips tightly as they make the sound.

W

The "w" sound in English can also be difficult for English language learners to master. Sometimes, the "w" comes out sounding like the letter "v". Instead of "west", students will say "vest", or "vipe" instead of "wipe". Some English language learners do not have as difficult a time with this sound as others. Spanish speakers actually have a difficult time producing the sound "v". To correct the "w" pronunciation problem, students should begin the sound with their mouths in a

tight "o" shape. Then, they should unround their lips, and let the sound roll out smoothly.

Short "I"

Another common pronunciation problem for English language learners is the short "i" sound, heard in the words "sit", "bit" and "hit". This sound often ends up sounding like a long "e" vowel as heard in "seat", "beet", "meet" and "feet". Students should relax their mouths and keep the sound short when they make the short "i" sound.

Voiced "Th"

The "th" sound can be particularly difficult for English language learners to master. It is heard in words such as "they", "that", "these" and "those". Many English language learners will pronounce this sound as if it were the letter "d". "They" therefore becomes "day"; "that" becomes "dat"; "these" becomes "deeze"; and "those" becomes "doze". This particular "th" sound is also heard in the word "clothe". English language learners may make the "th" sound heard in "cloth" instead. To solve this problem, students should put their tongues between their teeth, force air through the passage and use their vocal chords to produce the correct sound.

Reasoning

At present English as a global language has acquired the prestige of being an International language. We learn English for the basic purpose of communication with foreigners and others, our aspect of communication to get a good job, higher education, trade and commerce etc. English language means with standard pronunciation. Without knowing standard pronunciation for the communication foreigners do not understand what we are going to say. English is an obligatory subject at school level. It is a matter of great sorrow that majority people of Bangladesh they cannot speak in English with standard pronunciation. Even though some people are able to speak in English fluently but they don't know to speak correctly with standard pronunciation. At school level the teachers are mainly responsible to create the miserable situation of pronunciation, if the teacher had taught them English with correct pronunciation, give them knowledge about 44 sounds stress, intonation the learner must be benefited. Our educational board also responsible for this because they do not include IPA sounds along with English alphabet. I think we have a chance to develop pronunciation from school level. If we take some measures in our classroom practice we can solve the problem. So we should give attention in teaching pronunciation.

Overall Situation

English pronunciation is still neglected in EFL/ESL classrooms throughout the world including Bangladesh. One of the reasons that it is neglected or ignored is because not many English pronunciation teaching strategies or techniques are available to teachers in the classroom. The purpose of this study is to review articles on strategies for teaching pronunciation from different sources, so public school teachers and ESOL instructors at higher education institution can make use of the strategies reviewed here. In this article, I will first state the problem of the study and a theoretical framework into which the problem fits. Then, I will review articles from different sources on what contents should be included in a pronunciation instruction class and specific strategies or techniques on how to teach these components including intonation, stress (word stress and sentence stress) and rhythm, consonants (phonemes) and vowels (phonemes). Interpretation of the results and a conclusion are provided at the end of the article. Pronunciation is useless because it would be difficult, if not impossible for students to hear differences, for instance, between ship and sheep (Wong, 1993). English pronunciation is simply ignored in the curriculum of some universities in Thailand (Wei and Zhou, 2002; see also Syananondh, 1983). In Mexico, pronunciation was described as “the Cinderella of language teaching”; that means an often low level of emphasis was placed on this very important language skill (Dalton, 2002). Pronunciation has no position in my university’s curriculum. That doesn’t mean pronunciation is not important. The fact is that the curriculum designers have not noticed its importance. As we know, pronunciation is an integrated and integral part of language learning. It consists of elements much wider than sounds of consonants The Difficulties and Elucidations of Teaching and Learning English Pronunciation on Reading and Communication at Secondary Level Students in Bangladesh and vowels. It includes the elements of rhythm and intonation, which support the communicative process. That is to say, anyone who wants to gain communicative competence has to study pronunciation. Wong (1987) pointed out that even when the non-native speakers’ vocabulary and grammar are excellent, if their pronunciation falls below a certain threshold level; they are unable to communicate effectively. Wong (1993) argues that the importance of pronunciation is even more distinct when the connection between pronunciation and listening comprehension is considered. As listeners expect spoken English to follow certain patterns of rhythm and intonation, speakers need to employ these patterns to communicate effectively. If the rhythm and intonation are different, listeners simply can’t get the meaning. Similarly, listeners need to know how speech is organized and what patterns of intonation mean in order to interpret speech accurately. Thus, learning about pronunciation develops learners’ abilities to comprehend spoken English. Furthermore, Wong demonstrated that a lack of

knowledge of pronunciation could even affect students' reading and spelling. Varonis and Gass (1982) examined the factors affecting listening comprehension in native speakers of English exposed to foreign or second language (L2) accents. They concluded that grammar and pronunciation interact to influence overall intelligibility. Thus, native English speakers often judge non-native English speakers as being unintelligible if the latter's 5, Grammatical competence, (b) sociolinguistic competence, (c) discourse competence, and (d) strategic competence. These developments have led to a wide variety of changes in virtually all aspects of ESL/EFL, including the area of pronunciation teaching. For example, pronunciation could no longer be taught merely as a set of rules but instead as part of an overall system of communication. Derwing, Munro and Wiebe (1997) conducted a study that thirteen adult students of English as a Second Language (ESL) enrolled in a speaking improvement program read aloud a list of true and false sentences at the beginning (Time 1) and end (Time 2) of their twelve-week course. Their recorded utterances were used in a listening task in which 37 native speakers transcribed the utterances as a measure of intelligibility. The listeners were also asked to judge utterances from Time 1 and Time 2 for degree of general comprehensibility and accent. An analysis of the transcriptions indicated that the utterances recorded at Time 2 were more intelligible than those produced at Time 1. However, only the true sentences were rated as significantly less accented and more comprehensible at Time 2 than at Time 1. There are a number of limitations here, including the fact that the listening tasks were carried out on isolated sentences. Another limitation here was that only one method of instruction was employed. Just after this study, Derwing and Munro (1997) had the second study on the same topic. This study was designed to extend previous research on the relationships among intelligibility, perceived comprehensibility, and accentedness. Accent and comprehensibility ratings and transcriptions of accented speech from Cantonese, Japanese, Polish, and Spanish intermediate ESL students were obtained from 26 native English listeners. The listeners were also asked to identify the first language backgrounds of the same takers and to provide information on their familiarity with the four accents used in this study. When the results of this study were compared with the Munro and Derwing's study of learners of high proficiency, speaker proficiency level did not appear to affect the quasi-independent relationships among intelligibility, perceived 5 Some students in some circumstances. Utilization of Known Comparisons with the students' first language may help some Sounds students to produce a second language pattern, Incorporation of Novel Using novel elements with the use of directions. Elements Communication Students can be taught some useful communication strategies which will help them give the impression that their pronunciation is better than it really is. The communication strategies are retrieval strategies, rehearsal strategies, cover strategies, and "communication" strategies (Oxford 2000). Affective

Strategies a number of excellent affective strategies can be taught to help learners lower their anxieties and gain confidence. Let's see the strategies to teach different components of pronunciation by different researchers. I review the techniques according to the orders of contents of pronunciation instruction. I. Intonation: Intonation is a significant feature in English. The purpose of intonation, according to Gilbert (1994), is "helping the listener to follow." Lin, Fan and Chen (1995) showed that many L2 students when listening to English pay more attention to sounds, vocabulary and grammar. They paid very little attention to pitch changes. Therefore, when it comes to speaking, it is no surprise to find that many students' English sounds monotonous. Lin, Fan and Chen (1995) suggested some strategies including drawing pitch lines/curves or arrows and using musical scores. 1). the most commonly used strategy is to draw pitch lines/curves. Besides drawing the pitch lines/curves, they suggested that the teacher blacken the last stress syllable and put a dot over it. In doing so, students can be expected to produce the appropriate intonation with the correct word stress. The audio-lingual method focuses on the traditional notions of pronunciation, minimal pairs, drills and mini-conversations. And, with the advent of communicative language teaching in the late 1960s (Richards and Rodgers, 1986), the role of pronunciation in the EFL curriculum started facing questions: whether the focus of the programmers and the instructional methods were effective or not. Maya Angelou (born Marguerite Ann Johnson; April 4, 1928) is an American author and poet. She has published six autobiographies, five books of essays, and several books of poetry, and is credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning more than fifty years. She has received dozens of awards and over thirty honorary doctoral degrees. Angelou is best known for her series of autobiographies, which focus on her childhood and early adult experiences. The first, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), tells of her life up to the age of seventeen, and brought her international recognition and acclaim. Angelou's list of occupations includes pimp, prostitute, night-club dancer and performer, cast member of the opera *Porgy and Bess*, coordinator for Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, author, journalist in Egypt and Ghana during the days of decolonization, and actor, writer, director, and producer of plays, movies, and public television programs. Since 1982, she has taught at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where she holds the first lifetime Reynolds Professorship of American Studies. She was active in the Civil Rights movement, and worked with both Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Since the 1990s she has made around eighty appearances a year on the lecture circuit, something she continued into her eighties. In 1993, Angelou recited her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" at President Bill Clinton's inauguration, the first poet to make an inaugural recitation since Robert Frost at John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961.

With the publication of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Angelou was one of the first African American women who was able to publicly discuss her personal life. She is respected as a spokesperson of Black people and women, and her works have been considered a defence of Black culture. Although attempts have been made to ban her books from some US libraries, her works are widely used in schools and universities worldwide. Angelou's major works have been labelled as autobiographical fiction, but many critics have characterized them as autobiographies. She has made a deliberate attempt to challenge the common structure of the autobiography by critiquing, changing, and expanding the genre. Her books center on themes such as racism, identity, family, and travel. Angelou is best known for her autobiographies, but she is also an established poet, although her poems have received mixed reviews.

Suggestions

There are numbers of problems which learner face towards pronunciation class. In this section I want to mention some of the major problems of learners faced by pronunciation learning. The serious difficulty faced by learners in their classrooms are lack of exposure to the target language, not having good attitude towards pronunciation, lack of emphasis on pronunciation by teacher, lack of necessary tools to teach pronunciation by teachers, learners' problems in English spelling systems, lack of enough attention to sounds, stress, rhythm intonation.

1. Everyone can speak English clearly

The first thing student should know is that everyone can speak English with a clear pronunciation; everybody has a mouth, a tongue and lips. Everyone can speak every language because there is no difference between human; we are all born with the same mechanism.

2. English environment

If students really want to improve their English pronunciation, student should be surrounded by English everyday, which means the best thing is to be in a place where we talk only in English, like the USA or Britain or Australia. If they can't have this situation, they can do it by listening to English everyday, learner can listen to English radio, or TV, and you can also have some CDs in English.

3. Listen and don't speak

This is one of the biggest differences between children and adults, student should find the solution to this problem to not only improve your English pronunciation but also your global English learning which means English grammar, English speaking.

When someone talks to you or to someone else in English student should not speak at the same time, you should listen, focus on his speaking, his English intonation, which words he stress, which words he doesn't stress. Never speak when listening to English, always focus on listening first, speaking will come later!

4. Learn English subconsciously

Learner must know that he will learn English if he tries, he will speak English like a native speaker if he don't stop, but the problem is always the time. Never try to learn English in a short time, listen always to English and be sure that he will speak it one day, he doesn't know exactly when but he will learn it. Always listen to English and don't try anything else, student will learn English subconsciously.

5. Focus on listening

If student wants to learn English or to improve his English pronunciation without listening to English pronunciation, stop right now!! Student can improve his pronunciation without knowing what pronunciation is really, and he can't know what English pronunciation is if you don't listen to English.

6. Speak slowly

Never try to speak fast, always try to speak English slowly at the first time, student will get faster subconsciously without doing anything, he should pronounce each word correctly, that's the goal!

7. Practice English

Always practice English, read out loud, speak English with his friends, practice English everyday, this will help his to know the correct way to stress syllables.

8. Speak out loud

Never be quiet, always speak out loud, this helps you a lot if you are shy when you speak English.

9. Record yourself speaking English

And compare your speaking with a native speaker, you will see the mistakes you've done, you will improve your English pronunciation.

10. Have some English friends

Student should has some friends with the same goal as you, friends trying to learn English, you should practice your English with them, tell them if you find something useful to improve your English or if you find a new method, they will

also tell you, they help you when you get bored, it's really one of the best things to improve your English.

11. Motivation

Motivation is the most important issue to learn language. Motivation is some type of drive or interest that inspires somebody to achieve goal. The learning pronunciation is a difficult process because English is not our mother tongue. Learned helplessness is a less easily spotted hindrance. This refers to our psychological tendency to give up after a few failed attempts, especially if there is negative feedback from the teacher or classmates. The solution is simple keep it positive! Motivation by praising for each advancement, no motivation is important in a language classroom. This is the teachers' responsibility in creating motivation among the learners.

12. Teacher training

To get a high school teaching credential, students attend four-year colleges or universities and take a required program. The core courses are "English Teaching Methodology," which is usually a four-credit course and lasts one year, and "Teaching Practice," which is a two-week course in which students do practical teaching with the help of practitioners in an authentic classroom setting. "English Teaching Methodology" consists of theoretical and practical study in which students are engaged in micro-teaching in a laboratory setting. The problem with the preserves training is that the instructors lecture on "English Teaching Methodology." Because the study of TESOL is quite recent here, there are not enough instructors trained and knowledgeable in that area. Therefore, in some instances, non-TESOL specialists are giving the course.

Conclusion

Teaching English as a second language is really fun if you do it the right sporting way. You have to make it fun for your students too – that's the way they will learn better. English occupies a place of prestige in our country but at the same time we must accept that the standard of its teaching has deteriorated vastly and that is why it is essential to know the problems of teaching English in India at undergraduate level in the colleges. Then alone we can remove these problems and teach students effectively for better results. The misconception about pronunciation instruction undoubtedly stems from the type of pronunciation questions used in entrance examinations for universities or colleges. Many teachers still adhere to the kind of pronunciation practice once predominant during audio-lingualism which is not consistent with the recent trend towards CLT. Even though the suprasegmental approach is what is seriously needed in today's language learning setting,

allowance is to be made for a transitional and more practical approach and instruction emphasizing phonological linking and assimilation must be initiated. This approach is essential for those learners whose native language is an open-syllable type. At the same time, it is important to raise the awareness of all the people involved in English language learning on implementing this approach in their daily classroom activities.

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