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THE ROLE OF TEACHING PRONUNCIATION IN FLT

This work deals with new ways and methods of correcting students' pronunciation mistakes. Teaching English pronunciation is important and actual nowadays, so problems of teaching pronunciation and correcting students' mistakes in pronouncing are discovered in this work. There are a variety of good methods and techniques suggested for correcting learners' errors on the spot. Mistakes are part of our life; we all make mistakes now and then.

В этой работе рассматриваются новые способы и методы коррекции ошибки в произношении студентов. Изучение английского языка важно в настоящее время, в данной научной работе рассмотрены проблемы обучения произношению и исправления ошибок учащихся. Есть множество хороших методов и приемов предложенных для исправления ошибок обучающихся. Ошибки являются частью нашей жизни; все мы делаем ошибки время от времени.

Ключевые слова: *intonation, rhythm of English sentences, individually with each student, the theories and methodologies of language teaching.*

Keywords: *интонация, ритм английских предложений, индивидуально с каждым учеником, теории и методологии преподавания языка.*

Most native speakers of English have not formally studied the mechanics of English pronunciation, so this is an area in which it would be helpful to do some homework so that you are prepared to explain how sounds are made if called on to do so. However, you will almost certainly be expected to serve as a model for pronunciation, and for this purpose a limited amount of choral drill can be useful. Steps for such a drill would be as follows:

1) Choose a text that represents normal spoken English (as opposed to more bookish language). A dialog from your textbook would be a good choice.

2) Read sentences aloud, clearly but at a fairly normal speed. Have students listen to each sentence once or twice before attempting to repeat it. Remind them that they should be listening to

and trying to mimic the rhythm, stress, and intonation patterns of your speech as well as your pronunciation.

3) Build up longer sentences from the end, starting with the last few words, and then adding the previous ones. Ex: "...give you money?" "...expect me to give you money?" "Do you really expect me to give you money?" (This approach tends to preserve sentence intonation better than working from the beginning.)

One fun way to practice the rhythm of English sentences is by taking a dialog from a book, preferably one with short sentences, and turning it into a "jazz chant." In essence, this means finding the natural rhythm of each sentence and then chanting it with emphasis on the key words, something like a group cheer at a football game or a chant at a protest rally ("Hell no, we won't go" and so forth). Clapping or pounding desks adds to the festive nature of the activity. This exercise is particularly good for driving home the point that not all words in English sentences get equal stress.

Suggestions:

If you want students to prepare choral drill of a dialog before class, it is best if they have a taped model to work with. Without having heard a dialog before they repeat it, they may wind up polishing an incorrect performance.

Choral drill is best in small doses. It generally only takes a short period of drill for students to get the point you wish to make, and drill beyond that point rapidly turns into mindless parroting.

Once students are able to repeat accurately after a spoken model, the next step is to have them practice speaking from a written text. Keeping pronunciation accurate while reading a text aloud is more difficult than repeating after a teacher, but it is still easier for students than maintaining correct pronunciation in free conversation because they can focus their attention on pronunciation rather than grammar or word choice.

One way to do this is to choose a text and copy it for students. If the goal is to teach daily conversational English, it is best if the text represents normal spoken English, though an argument can be made for sometimes including texts of literary and cultural merit (famous orations, poems, etc.) that were also intended to be read aloud or recited. Having chosen a text, go over it with students in class and have them take whatever notes they need on pronunciation, syllable stress, sentence intonation and stressed words. Next have students practice reading the text aloud (either in class or at home). Students should become very familiar with the text. Finally, either have students perform the text in class or -- if the equipment is available -- have them tape a reading of the text. The advantages of the latter approach are that students don't all have to listen to each other read the same text, and that you can listen at your leisure.

Many students tend to think of pronunciation primarily as accurate production of the sounds of English words, but this is neither the only aspect of the problem nor the only important one. Consequently, one way in which you can help students improve is by ensuring that they are aware of all of the important issues.

1) Accurate pronunciation of sounds: This is really two problems, one of ability and one of knowledge. Students first need to learn to pronounce as many of the sounds of English as possible accurately. The particular sounds with which students will have difficulty depend to a large extent on students' first language, but there are some sounds in English such as the "th" sounds in "think" and "this", or the short vowels in "head," "hit," and "put" which are difficult for students from many language backgrounds.

The second problem is making sure that students know what sounds they should pronounce in a given word. Common pronunciation problems include omitting sounds, adding extra ones, or simply pronouncing the wrong sound.

2) Syllable stress: Unlike many other languages, English requires that one syllable in each word be stressed more than others. The importance of putting the stress on the right syllable in

English cannot be underestimated; putting the stress on the wrong syllable is more likely to make a word unintelligible than is mispronouncing one of its sounds. For many students who are especially hard to understand, misplaced syllable stress is the main problem.

3) Sentence word stress: In English sentences, not all words are given equal emphasis. Key words (usually the words that contain new or important information) are stressed and pronounced more slowly and clearly than other words. Take, for example, the question "Are you going to go to Boston?" If the focus of the question is on where the listener will go, the sentence will sound something like "Ya gonna go ta Boston"; the word "Boston" would be pronounced clearly and with more emphasis. If, in contrast, the emphasis is on who is going, the sentence would sound like "Are you gonna go ta Boston?" While students don't necessarily need to learn to reduce the unimportant words in sentence, they should learn to stress key ones. (Students should also be made aware of English word reductions for listening comprehension.)

4) Sentence intonation: Intonation patterns in English sentences primarily indicate the degree of certainty of an utterance, i.e. whether it is a statement, question, or suggestion. Statements rise to a plateau, and then end with falling intonation. Most questions end in rising intonation; however, Wh- questions (who, what, where, when, why and how) end with falling intonation. It is important for students to learn these patterns not only in order to communicate meaning, but also in order to avoid unwittingly sounding rude or indecisive.

5) Enunciation: A final important aspect of pronunciation is clear enunciation. Some students lack confidence in speaking or are unsure of their pronunciation, and therefore speak either very quietly or unclearly. Obviously this makes them more difficult to understand, and students should therefore be reminded that speaking audibly and clearly is an important aspect of pronunciation.

The ideal approach to student pronunciation problems is for you to work individually with each student, listening for problems, explaining the proper pronunciation (intonation, etc.), modelling correct pronunciation, and listening to the student practice. However, this is usually not possible because of time limitations and class size, so the discussion below will focus on approaches which can be used with a class.

Teaching English pronunciation is an area of language teaching that many English teachers avoid. While there are many textbooks and instruction manuals available, as well as books on the theories and methodologies of language teaching there is comparatively little on learning pronunciation.

Why? Is it because we don't need to teach pronunciation or because it cannot be taught?

Certainly, we need to teach pronunciation. There is a big difference between a ship and a sheep and a pear and a bear! When teaching any language as a foreign or second language, our first goal for our students is basic communication, and that can't happen if no one can understand what they are saying.

How NOT to Teach Pronunciation. When teachers decide to focus on pronunciation practise many of them make the mistake of trying to teach pronunciation along with introducing vocabulary. This can work with students who have a "good ear," or who perhaps speak a related language. However it can be hit and miss with students whose mother tongue has no relation to the target language.

This brings us back to the question of whether pronunciation can be effectively taught at all? The answer is yes, of course it can be taught, it's just that the way many textbooks tell us to teach it is actually one of the least effective.

Most textbooks will have you drill pronunciation with repetition of the vocabulary. Some of the better ones will have you work on it with spelling, which is an important skill, especially in English with its many irregularities and exceptions. Very few will start you and your students where you need to start, however, and that is at the level of the phoneme.

Speaking is so important in my opinion, in acquiring and using a language, and language-competence covers so many aspects. Phonetics, both theory and practice constitute the basis of speaking above all other aspects of language in my opinion. Speaking is a tool of communication. Many teachers, especially if they are new to teaching ESL classes, may be a little intimidated by the prospect of having to teach pronunciation. But, just like almost every thing else, if the process is broken down into small manageable steps, the task is not all that daunting. This site is an attempt to do just that- to break the process of teaching pronunciation down into smaller steps.

Why is proper pronunciation important? Because without correct pronunciation- no matter how vast the students vocabulary may be, no matter how well the student understands and uses grammatical rules, no matter what their level of reading or writing skills may be- if they don't use correct pronunciation it may be very difficult for listeners to understand what they say. And that is a huge hindrance to communication. In addition, some research indicates that if a student can not pronounce a word correctly, they may not be able to hear it when spoken by another person either, which further hinders communication. The students can then repeat the correct version or tell you what the difference between the two sentences was and why their version was wrong. Because the students don't do much of the work in this way of being corrected, it might not be as good a way of remembering the correction as methods where you give more subtle clues. Its advantages are that it is quick and suits cultures, classes and students that think of elicitation as shirking by the teacher. It can also be more face-saving than asking them for self-correction, as trying to correct themselves risks making even more mistakes. The "right version" could mean the whole sentence or just the correction of the part that was wrong. In the latter case, you can then ask them to put it into the sentence in the right place and repeat the whole thing.

Students from different languages have different pronunciation difficulties. Not all sounds in the English language are common to other languages. For example, some languages do not have an 'r' sound, so students use a similar sound 'l' instead. So when a student says "What a lovely libbon", the native English is totally confused. Or maybe in a student's native tongue there is no distinction between 'b' and 'p'. Just imagine the misunderstanding that will result if a teacher says "I need to be on that bus" and the student hears "I need to pee on that bus".

Mastering proper pronunciation is not just a matter of learning individual sounds. Many students can hear and make the different sounds for all the vowels and consonants in English. Unfortunately, they also have to contend with the sound changes that occur with different letter combinations resulting from linking or reduction of vowels and consonants, not to mention stress, pitch, and intonation differences between their native tongue and English.

That's basically all there is to teaching pronunciation- giving feedback and ensuring that the student uses the feedback to improve their speaking skills. That along with providing adequate practice to the students to hear the sounds and practice making the sounds. Remember (as some research implies) if a student can't say a sound, they won't be able to hear it either.

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