

Learning and Teaching English Pronunciation is SoDifficult: WHY?

Dr Ramachandra Kumar R¹ MrBaskara Rao Ch²

St. Martin's Engineering College

Dhulapally (V), Komplalli

Secunderabad, Telanagana

India- 500100

Abstract

Teaching pronunciation is given the least emphasis in many English language classrooms. When ESL teachers defend their students' poor pronunciation skills, their comments can be interpreted as either a cop-out for their failure to teach appropriate pronunciation to their pupils or as a fight against linguistic influence. When we acquire a second language as a child, we learn to speak it fluently and without a 'foreign accent,' however when we learn as an adult, we are unlikely to achieve a native accent. The researchers in this study go through common misconceptions regarding pronunciation as well as elements that influence pronunciation acquisition. The needs of learners will next be examined, as well as suggestions for teaching pronunciation. Pronunciation has a favourable impact on learning a second language, and students can obtain the abilities they need to communicate effectively in English.

Keywords: Pronunciation, Learning, Teaching, Misconceptions, Factors, Needs, Suggestions.

1. Introduction

According to general observation, persons who begin learning English after high school have the greatest difficulty achieving understandable pronunciation, with the degree of difficulty growing dramatically with age. This problem is unrelated to IQ, educational attainment, or even understanding of English grammar and vocabulary. Of course, there is no straightforward solution to why pronunciation is so difficult to master; in fact, there are a variety of theoretical approaches to the problem. The difficulty of learning to pronounce a foreign language is cognitive rather than physical, according to psycholinguists and phonologists who specialise in this field, and it has something to do with how 'raw sound' is classed or conceived in speech. Even after years of studying the language, many English as a second language students have "severe difficulty" with English pronunciation. As a result, they frequently have challenges in areas such as getting work. "Up to a particular proficiency standard, the fault which most significantly hinders the communication process in EFL/ESL learners is pronunciation," according to Hinofotis and Baily (1980, pp. 124-125). This is true despite the fact that research by Davis (1999), for example, shows that pronunciation is a source of concern and one of the top priorities for ESL students after they complete elementary English classes. It's critical to distinguish between the two at this time. The terms "speaking" and "pronunciation," as they are

commonly used interchangeably, are not interchangeable. Pronunciation is considered a sub-skill of communication. In general, if we want a student to modify the way they pronounce words, we must first change the way they think about the sounds that make up those words. This applies to larger aspects of speech, such as syllables, stress patterns, and rhythm, as well as individual sounds. Despite this, pronunciation instruction is generally overlooked in the English language classroom. The researchers in this study talk about some of the most prevalent problems that people have. Misconceptions concerning pronunciation influence pronunciation learning. Then they go over the learners' needs and make suggestions for teaching pronunciation.

2. Misconceptions about English Pronunciation

Pronunciation skills are thought to be linked to musical abilities. However, no link has been established between musical talent and pronunciation ability, although a substantial proportion of people have both natural abilities but not both at the same time. Second language pronunciation is a cognitive skill for which some people have a natural aptitude, interest, and drive than others, but which everyone can learn to a degree if given the right opportunities. The biggest issue that second language learners have when it comes to pronunciation is the necessity to shift a conceptual pattern that they learned in their original language and have internalised since childhood. It is not true that learners benefit most from being able to 'see' speech, whether verbal or acoustic. Learners require assistance in categorising or conceiving sounds in an English-appropriate manner. Simply seeing a speech-wave or a diagram of the articulation of a sound, no matter how 'animated' or realistic, will not help them replicate it unless they are also educated to grasp what characteristics of the sound are important and given suitable ways of thinking about the sound. In fact, most students - and even most teachers - will struggle to connect a speech wave or articulate graphic to the auditory quality of the sound. Sounds unlikely to assist an aspiring tennis player perfect her stroke, for the same reason that thorough physiology of essential shoulder movements is unlikely to help an aspiring tennis player perfect her stroke. In the case of a tennis player, teaching in how to think about the actions, such as 'consider hitting it beyond the baseline,' and 'keep your sight on the ball,' is beneficial (Baker, 1981). Because most people conceive of sounds in terms of their auditory quality rather than their articulation or acoustics, the key is to come up with ways to describe the auditory quality of sounds in a way that makes sense to the learner. There is a significant role for computers in assisting learners with pronunciation - but it is not the duty of showing speech-waves without instructions on how to read them. This isn't true because learners have an accent as they 'translate' their native languages' sounds into English. For at least two decades, experts have questioned the notion of 'transfer' as the 'cause' of accents and the key to assisting learners with pronunciation. Though the 'transfer' concept has some merit, it is only helpful in its more developed form, which necessitates a thorough awareness of its limitations and repercussions. The naive notion that learners transmit sounds from their native language to the new language is more of a hindrance than an aid. It's regrettable that so many educators still believe in the simple concept of transfer (Gass et al., 1989; Bohn, 1995).

Accent is not caused by the incapacity of speakers of other languages to reproduce the sounds of English. This isn't to argue that individual sounds, or more specifically combinations of sounds, in English aren't challenging for learners from various backgrounds to generate. To be sure, this problem is a minor feature of intelligibility, and it is far from the primary reason of the accent. To begin with, individual sounds do not contribute significantly to intelligibility. After all, many native speakers and fluent non-native speakers (NNSs) are fluent in more than one language. Individual sounds are pronounced differently than the norm, with no intelligibility issues. A student who uses good emphasis and intonation but mispronounces 'th,' for example, is very easy to understand. Second, in many circumstances where a learner appears to be having difficulty pronouncing a particular sound, it is simple to show that the learner frequently pronounces a completely acceptable form of the sound in another context. Consider a German learner of English who struggles with the 'v' sound in words like 'very,' despite the fact that the sound of the German 'w' is nearly identical to the English 'v'. The same can be said for the typical situations of 'r' and 'l': learners are not unable to generate these sounds; in almost all circumstances, they can produce perfectly acceptable versions of both. The issue is that they do not perceive them as distinct sounds, but rather as indistinguishable variations of a single sound. Another classic example is the English vowel sound of words like "bird" and "term," with which Japanese and other learners frequently struggle: the difficulty is not in creating the sound, which they can easily accomplish if they think of it as a non-speech sound. The challenge is forming a mental image of the sound that they can utilise as a vowel in words. Consider the infamous 'final consonant problem' as an example. This isn't even largely an articulation issue. Consider the statement 'Put it back up,' which is certain to be challenging for speakers of Thai, which has a limited variety of consonants in word final position. The difficulty a student has reproducing an English pronunciation of this statement is due to the appropriate sounds being seen as 'word final' by the learner's brain. As it is written, the sentence is a continuous flow of vowels and consonants. The last three sounds of this statement, '...ck up,' are quite similar to the pronunciation of the word 'cup,' but a learner will have a lot of trouble with the former and minimal trouble with the latter.

3. Factors Affecting the Learning of Pronunciation

The researchers discuss some of the key aspects that influence pronunciation learning in this section. The following are the details:

3.1 Accent

"The cumulative auditory effect of those aspects of pronunciation that identify where a person comes from, regionally or socially," according to the dictionary (Crystal, 2003, p. 3). Accentness is defined as a "listener's perception of how different a speaker's accent is from that of the L1 community" (Derwing& Munro, 2005, p. 383). It is a "natural result of second language learning" (Derwing& Munro, 2005, p. 383). (p. 385). Many adult English learners have foreign accents that distinguish them as nonnative speakers. Some linguists believe that in order

to attain native-like pronunciation, a learner must begin studying the language before the age of seven. This is known as the Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967). Recent research reveals that context and motivation, rather than age of acquisition, are more essential determinants in the development of native-like pronunciation (Marinova-Todd, Marshall, & Snow, 2000). Teachers can detect and address elements of student pronunciation by knowing the qualities of learner accents and their impact on intelligibility (Derwing & Munro, 1997). The main goal is for kids to be understood. This requires good pronunciation, but not a "perfect accent" (Harmer, 1991).

3.2 Stress, intonation, and rhythm

Even heavily accented speech is sometimes intelligible, according to Munro and Derwing (1999), and prosodic errors (i.e., errors in stress, intonation, and rhythm) appear to affect intelligibility more than phonetic errors (i.e., errors in single sounds). As a result, pronunciation study and instruction concentrate on both language sounds (vowels and consonants) and supra-segmental elements (vocal effects that span several sounds), such as stress, sentence and word intonation, and speech rhythm. (Munro & Derwing, 1999; Crystal, 2003; Low, 2006). Stress-timed or syllable-timed languages have been identified. "Stressed syllables fall at regular intervals throughout an utterance" (Crystal, 2003, p. 245) in stress-timed languages (e.g., British and American English, German, Dutch, Thai), and rhythm is ordered according to regularity in the timing of the stressed syllables. Because unstressed syllables are uttered more quickly and vowel reduction occurs, the duration between stressed syllables is equal. The statement "Tom runs rapidly," for example, is made up of three stressed syllables, as illustrated by the boldface letters. Only three of the six syllables in the line "Meredith can run swiftly" are stressed. The unstressed syllables -e-, -dith, and can are said swiftly, with vowel reduction, so the time between the stressed syllables is roughly equal, and both sentences take about the same amount of time to say. Syllables are considered to be equal in timing in syllable-timed languages (e.g., some nonnative variants of English, such as Singapore and Malaysian English, and languages like Tamil, Spanish, and French) (Crystal, 2003). All syllables are stressed approximately equally, there is no vowel reduction, and all syllables appear to take the same amount of time to pronounce.

Languages cannot be classed strictly as syllable timed or stress timed, according to recent phonetic research. They are more accurately described as stress or syllable based; that is, they are not entirely in one category or the other, but they tend to have more stress- or syllable-timed elements (Low, 2006). The presence of shortened vowels for unstressed syllables in a phrase creates a stress-based rhythm. Reduced vowels are used instead of full ones in function words (e.g., articles, assisting verbs, and prepositions), and the reduced vowel version is known as a weak form. For example, in the line "Bob can swim," the stressed words are Bob and swim, and the unstressed word can is pronounced [kin]—its weak form. It's crucial to understand the difference between stress- and syllable-based languages, especially if an adult English language learner's original language has a rhythm that differs from stress-based British or American

English. A teacher can create appropriate pronunciation activities by knowing whether a learner's first language is stress or syllable oriented. Field (2005) asked trained listeners to transcribe recorded material while the variables of word stress and vowel quality were varied in order to investigate the impact of stress—"the degree of force utilised in creating a syllable" (Crystal, 2003, p. 435)—in intelligibility. He discovered that when word stress is incorrectly moved to an unstressed syllable without a change in vowel quality, utterances are much less understandable than when vowel quality is just changed. When it came to determining the intelligibility of words with misplaced word stress, native and nonnative English speakers had similar results. O'Brien (2004) presented the findings of a study on the role of emphasis, intonation, and rhythm in achieving a native-like German accent. German native speakers were asked to grade American university students who read aloud in the language. When judging speech samples as native-like, native speakers focused more on emphasis, intonation, and rhythm than on individual sounds. Teachers should spend time teaching students the norms for word stress, intonation, and rhythm in English, as well as focusing on individual sounds that may be problematic for their students, according to the findings of this study.

3.3 Motivation and exposure

If a student develops native-like pronunciation, it is determined by the learner's purpose for learning the language, as well as the cultural group with whom the learner identifies and spends time. The need and desire for native-like pronunciation might be influenced by having a personal or professional aim for learning English, according to research (Bernaus, Masgoret, Gardner, & Reyes, 2004; Gatbonton et al., 2005; Marinova-Todd et al., 2000; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Marinova-Todd et al., (2000) concluded from a review of research on adult English acquisition that adults can become highly proficient, even native-like speakers of second languages, provided they are driven to do so. Experience with the language and a good attitude toward it, according to Moyer (2007), appear to be crucial elements in acquiring native-like pronunciation. Shively (2008) discovered that accuracy in the production of Spanish is related to age at first exposure to the language, amount of formal Spanish instruction, residence in a Spanish-speaking country, amount of out-of-class contact with Spanish, and focus on pronunciation in class in a study of Spanish learners. Teachers should encourage students to speak English outside of the classroom and give them projects that structure those encounters, in addition to focusing on pronunciation and accent in class.

3.4 Attitude

Some students appear to be better at learning proper pronunciation than others. Even within a single homogeneous classroom, there is frequently a substantial disparity in the kids' ability to pronounce words. Many academics have studied the personal traits of learners that contribute to their success in foreign language acquisition as a result of this phenomena. Elliot (1995) found that the subjects' attitude toward acquiring native or near-native pronunciation, as measured by the Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI), was the main variable in relation to target language

pronunciation in a study on pronunciation accuracy of university students studying intermediate Spanish as a foreign language. Some learners appear to master accurate pronunciation more quickly than others. Even within a single homogeneous classroom, there is sometimes a significant variance in the ability of the students to pronounce words. As a result of this phenomenon, many academics have examined the personal characteristics of learners that contribute to their success in foreign language acquisition. In a study on pronunciation accuracy of university students studying intermediate Spanish as a foreign language, Elliot (1995) discovered that the subjects' attitude toward acquiring native or near-native pronunciation, as measured by the Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI), was the main variable in relation to target language pronunciation. According to his acculturation paradigm, learners will learn the target language to the extent that they acculturate (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996). According to Schumann, acculturation refers to a learner's willingness to be socially integrated into a target culture as well as their openness to it. His acculturation research (1976, 1986) looks at immigrant students' social and psychological integration as a predictor of how much English they learn and utilise. The degree to which pupils have become acculturated to the host culture, according to Schumann, is measured by their ability to learn and utilise English. According to Schumann (1986), acculturation is the process of social and cultural adaptation. Contact between members of one group and members of the target culture on a psychological level. The more engagement (i.e., social/psychological proximity) a group has with the target group, the more possibilities for the group to learn and utilise English will arise. Less interaction (i.e., social/psychological distance) leads to less English acquisition and use. The amount of contact the group has with the target culture has an impact on the amount of English they learn and use. Personality research by Sparks and Glachow (1991) yielded comparable results. They claim that pupils who were motivated to learn and had favourable opinions toward the target language and its speakers performed better than those who had negative sentiments. They cite Gardner and Lambert's motivation study, which identifies two types of motivation. The first sort of motivation is instrumental motivation, which refers to a desire to acquire a second language for the sake of linguistic achievement. The second type of motivation is integrative motivation, which refers to a desire to learn more about the culture of a second language. According to Gardner and Lambert, students with integrative motivation are more likely than their less motivated counterparts to seek out native speakers of the language, therefore they should work harder to acquire communication skills in the second language.

3.5 Instruction

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the four main areas of development in foreign or second language instruction. When introducing the target language's alphabet and sound system in the first year of study, foreign language curricula emphasise pronunciation, but this concentration rarely extends beyond the introductory level. It's possible that the lack of emphasis on pronunciation development is related to a general lack of enthusiasm among second language acquisition researchers, teachers, and students who believe that pronunciation is unimportant

(Elliot, 1995). Furthermore, Pennington (1994) claims that in a communicatively oriented classroom, pronunciation, which is often perceived as a component of linguistic rather than conversational fluency, is often overlooked (Elliot, 1995). According to Elliot (1995), teachers consider pronunciation to be the least helpful of the basic language abilities, and as a result, they often skip teaching it in order to devote more class time to other subjects. Or perhaps teachers believe it is OK to ignore pronunciation because it is more difficult for adult foreign language learners to acquire target language pronunciation skills than other aspects of second language learning. Teachers may just lack the background or skills necessary to adequately teach pronunciation, therefore it gets overlooked (Elliot, 1995).

Teachers have taught what they thought was pronunciation through drills on a single word or phrase level, or by teaching pupils the rules of pronunciation, such as how the vowel in a CVC pattern pronounces its name when given an e at the end. When an e is added to the word bit (CVC), the "short I becomes lengthy and therefore "states its name." This sort of training is intended to assist children in deciphering words for reading rather than pronunciation. Students are rarely taught about the variations between fricatives and non-fricative continuants, or the minute differences between Spanish and English trilled and flapped /r/. (Elliot, 1995). This knowledge is frequently left to the pupils to find on their own. The subject of whether explicit instruction benefits these second language learners has been investigated by researchers. The findings of such investigations have been mixed. According to Suter (1976), there is no link between formal pronunciation and students' pronunciation of English as a Second Language (Elliot, 1995). Adult L2 English learners can enhance their allophonic articulation after 12 weeks of phonetic instruction, according to Murakawa (1981). (Elliot, 1995). Adults can obtain near native fluency in a relatively short time, according to Nuefield and Scheiderman (1980), and it can be developed without causing significant disturbance to the second language education programme if proper pronunciation instruction is provided (Elliot, 1995). It is important to emphasise at this point that, while the variety of results reported appears to be somewhat contradictory, the diversity of those results may be due to the different designs of the individual tests. Some research focus primarily on supra-segmental pronunciation instruction. ESL learners who had been studying for an average of ten years took part in a speaking enhancement course that concentrated on supra-segmental characteristics of pronunciation, according to Derwing, Munro, and Wiebe (1997). (e.g. stress, rhythm, intonation). In order to test the learners' intelligibility, 37 native listeners transcribed speech samples (true/false phrases) obtained at the start of a 12-week course. Each sample was given a score based on its comprehensibility and accentedness. In the end, there was a significant improvement in intelligibility, as well as improved comprehensibility and accentedness scores over time. In a reading assignment, they demonstrated that 30 language learners could change their pronunciation (Derwing& Rossiter, 2003).

3.6 Age

Because of the impact of age on language acquisition, particularly pronunciation, adults may find it more difficult than children to pronounce words correctly, and they are unlikely to reach native-like pronunciation. According to Lenneberg's (1967) "Critical Period Hypothesis," there is a biological or neurological period that ends at the age of 12 and after which total command of a second language, particularly pronunciation, becomes extremely difficult. Adult learners, on the other hand, have been proven by Bialystock (1997), Bongaerts, Planken, and Schils (1997), among others, to be capable of acquiring native-like proficiency in a second language. However, according to Avery and Ehrlich (1992), the degree of pronunciation accuracy varies greatly from one person to the next. This disparity in pronunciation among adult learners, they believe, suggests that ESL classroom time can be better spent on improving students' pronunciation.

3.7 Personality

Non-linguistic elements such as an individual's personality and learning goals, attitude toward the target language, culture, native speakers, and motivation type, all of which are beyond the control of the teacher (Miller, 2003), all play a role in the development of pronouncing abilities. Furthermore, the amount of exposure to and use of the target language can help or hinder the development of pronouncing skills. Learners who are outgoing and confident, for example, are more likely to practise their foreign language pronunciation when they interact with native speakers (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992). Conversely, some learners are hesitant to try out new speech rhythm and melody patterns (Miller, 2003), while others feel ridiculous saying "strange" sounds, and eventually determine that learning English pronunciation is fruitless and unattainable (Laroy, 1995). Miller (2003) argues that how much responsibility a student takes, how much practise he or she does outside of class, and how prepared the student is all play a role in changing – or not changing – speech patterns.

3.8 Mother tongue influence

According to Avery and Ehrlich (1992), the learner's first language's sound pattern is transmitted to the second language, resulting in foreign accents. Nonnative speakers' mispronunciations of words reflect the influence of their native language's sounds, rules, stress, and intonation. Several research, for example, looked into nonnative speakers' development of English rhythm (Wenk, 1985; Machizuki-Sudo, Kiritani, 1991). These researchers came to the conclusion that the learners' ability to produce English-like stress alternation across a phrase was influenced by the transfer from their native language. Avery and Ehrlich point out that the native language's sound system can impact learners' pronunciation of a target language in at least three ways. For starters, learners may be unable to make or even hear a sound in the target language that is not present in their native sound inventory, or vice versa (s). Second, when the rules for combining sounds into words (i.e., phonotactic constraints/rules) in the learners' mother tongue differ from those in the target language, learners have difficulties because these rules are language specific and differ

from one language to the next. Thirdly, because a language's rhythm and melody influence its stress and intonation patterns, learners can transmit these patterns to the target language. In conclusion, while other factors influence a learner's L2 pronunciation acquisition (Graham, 1994), the elements discussed above can assist ESL/EFL teachers in considering what learners from various backgrounds are likely to experience when learning English as a second language. These variables would enable teachers to recognise non-native speakers' difficulty in pronouncing the target language in order to assist them in overcoming their foreign accent and improving their pronunciation. They would also allow teachers to deliver effective pronunciation lessons and tailor their teaching technique to the needs of their students.

4. What Learners Need?

Pronunciation, like all other parts of language, should be taught in a conversational manner to students. Despite the fact that communicative methods for teaching vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics have been around for decades, there has been little progress in developing a communicative method for teaching pronunciation. Here we look at some of the elements of a communicative approach to pronunciation. One thing that students require is teachers that are confident in their ability to meet their needs through communicative means. Some students assume that they require instruction in how to pronounce specific English sounds. Some professors defend their emphasis on articulation by citing the students' thirst for this knowledge. The following are the requirements for learners as a whole:

4.1 Conversation

Lots of authentic conversation practise (Burns & Joyce, 1997), reinforced by expert assistance on how to recognise and rectify their mistakes is what learners most want (Willing, 1993; Volkoff & Golding, 1998) - and what will help them the most. Teachers can provide skills for how to establish and continue discussion with native speakers outside of the classroom, but learners must eventually do this on their own. The attitudes of native speakers with whom they engage might either help or hinder them in this endeavour. One of the most valuable assets a student can have is native speakers who encourage discourse and are not themselves uneasy in cross-cultural contact.

4.2 Drilling

Drilling and repetition are equally necessary for learners, but they must directly practise the speech that they will use in real life. Drilling of sounds and minimal pairs, as well as more modern practise with chants and tongue twisters are only beneficial if they are directly tied in the minds of the students to the speech they would use outside the classroom.

4.3 Expert guidance

To pronounce a new language in a way that native speakers can understand, learners must first cease thinking about speech in terms of their first language's categories and begin thinking about it in terms that are appropriate to the new language. Even if the actual realisation of some of the sounds is likely to be a little 'strange,' their message will be obvious if they can achieve this. Teachers who can respect and imaginatively explore what the sounds sound like to learners, gradually moving them to more suitable ways of thinking about English pronunciation, are the most helpful to students. Indeed, some of the most gifted teachers are likely to be individuals who are skilled at pronouncing words and are receptive to hearing sounds in a variety of ways, but this isn't enough for teachers. It's also important to be able to explain what you're doing. This necessitates an awareness of cross-language phonetics and phonology, as well as speech perception and production (psycholinguistics). It also takes more than just the ability to reproduce this knowledge in technical terms that are unlikely to be understood by learners. When a student has trouble pronouncing specific English sounds or sound sequences, they need an explanation of how to think about the sounds in ways they can grasp and 'latch on to.' They must be terms that reflect how the learner perceives the sounds, not how English speakers do. Most students can benefit from a variety of 'tricks' (Burns & Joyce, 1997).

4.4 Critical listening

Learners require plenty of opportunities to compare their own speech and that of their peers to that of native speakers, as well as to learn to discern the characteristics of learner pronunciation that make it difficult for NSs to understand. It's tough to listen to your own words while speaking. Discussion of specific characteristics of the pronunciation of a phrase or sentence that has just vanished into thin air is also prohibited. As a result, it is critical for students and professors to engage with recorded voices so that the speech they are discussing is external to both of them and can be referred to objectively and without distortion. This form of recording and playback is relatively simple because to computer technology.

5. Suggestions for Teaching Pronunciation

The researchers present the guidelines for teaching pronunciation in the context of the communicative technique of teaching English that is used in most ESL courses.

5.1 Curriculum design

Morley (1998) proposes that ESL programmes begin by "defining long-range oral communication goals and objectives" that help identify pronunciation demands as well as speech functions and the circumstances in which they may occur. These goals and objectives should be realistic, aiming for "functional intelligibility (ability to make oneself relatively easy to understand), functional communicability (ability to meet one's communication needs), and

increased confidence in use," and should be the result of a thorough analysis and description of the learners' needs.

5.2 Focus on the supra-segmental features

Beginning in the late 1970s, numerous teachers/theorists took a stand by arguing that if communicative competence was the goal of language learning, then intelligible pronunciation would be one of its key components, according to Bray (1995, p. 3). The goal of phonological education became intelligence rather than the native-like competence sought in old techniques. As a result, teaching speech from a supra-segmental perspective appears to be essential within the communicative approach to ESL teaching. Although many theorists began to make a case for supra-segmental phonology's importance in communication on paper, Bray (1995, p. 3) adds that "many teachers continue to have a restricted view of the role of explicit phonological instruction in the language classroom." Curriculum and syllabus designers should concentrate on supra-segmental characteristics of pronunciation. Chen et al. (1996) discovered that Chinese students were unaware of the difference between the syllable-timed Chinese language and the stress-timed English language, and that drawing their attention to this supra-segmental feature helped them significantly improve their communicative ability.

5.3 Academic research and classroom experiments

There is now "a scarcity of trustworthy research-based information regarding what works and what doesn't in pronunciation teaching," according to Fraser (2000b, p. 5). She goes on to say that there is a need to "increase the research orientation of teachers and their opportunities to contribute to serious research because teachers are in a position to provide essential information to linguistics," as well as "increase the research orientation of teachers and their opportunities to contribute to serious research because teachers are in a position to provide essential information to linguistics" (Fraser, 2000b, p. 5). The assessment of ESL pronunciation is one area that requires special attention. It's difficult to measure the effectiveness of methods or materials and get beyond opinion-based argument without credible assessment and diagnosis tools. Teachers are constantly experimenting with different teaching approaches, improvising and even improving on past methods. This tradition must be upheld, particularly when it comes to teaching pronunciation. Tested methods should be turned into research papers that may be shared with others. Bray (1995) covers the usage of limericks in the ESL classroom and gives an effective methodology for employing limericks to assist solve problems linked to supra-segmental elements including stressed, unstressed, and stress-timed rhythm using such methods. Chen et al. (1996) discuss a variety of techniques and tools for teaching word rhythm, including the use of visual effects to teach word stress, auditory techniques such as clapping to distinguish between stressed and unstressed syllables, the use of rubber bands as a visual image for syllable length variation, and stress matching games. Makarova (1996) considers how to teach pronunciation to big groups of students when it is optimal to have close individual interaction between the teacher and the students. She claims that using less traditional techniques such as phoneme cards,

pronunciation-based quiz games, using "sign language," and using materials prepared by students such as tongue twisters and limericks, it is possible to get feedback from a large number of students and increase student motivation.

5.4 Training for teachers

Existing teachers should be able to get professional development in pronunciation teaching (on a voluntary but adequately paid basis), and trainee teachers should receive such training as part of their teacher education programmes. Teachers should be given a variety of stories from various pronunciation experts. A more coordinated strategy is necessary. It is suggested that a conference of people interested in ESL pronunciation be held to examine a variety of concerns. It appears that integrating a variety of existing practises into a coordinated approach to pronunciation teaching, or at the very least identifying opposing schools of thought that can be articulated and evaluated so that teachers and teacher trainers can choose which they wish to adhere to, would be possible (Forman, 1993).

5.5 Materials and courseware for teachers and learners

The lack of appropriate materials for teachers, teacher trainers, and learners has already been mentioned multiple times. Though there are some excellent materials, much more is required to meet the vast range of requirements. This should ideally be built on a solid foundation of well-documented research on "what works" in pronunciation instruction. Computer discs are particularly well adapted as a medium for disseminating information on pronunciation and pronunciation instruction, and they can also be used to up-skill teachers and learners in computer use. Written content will, of course, always have a place. As a help to learners and other customers, it would be beneficial to construct an informal endorsement scheme in which books and computer discs that adhered to basic concepts of linguistics and language education could be easily identified from those that did not. It would also be beneficial to make information on what types of materials are beneficial and why widely available in the media. This would serve the dual purposes of gradually eliminating myths and attracting students and scholars interested in related subjects to the subject of pronunciation.

5.6 Pronunciation teaching methodology

It will be evident that there is a pressing need for more serious study on a wide variety of issues related to ESL pronunciation teaching at all levels. The first aim is to create a set of assessment tools that will allow approaches and policies to be evaluated for their efficacy. While I understand why some individuals are opposed to objective assessment of learners' pronunciation, it is hard to enhance a system that does not allow for accurate benchmarking or analysis. A series of benchmarking studies would be a first priority with an acceptable assessment method, to provide answers to queries like 'How much development is conceivable, or realistic, to expect from a pronunciation class over a certain period?' Following that, a series of studies should be conducted to determine the relative effectiveness of various approaches and materials with

various types of learners (Macdonald et al., 1994; Munro & Derwing, 1995). Is it better to focus on teaching stressed syllables before teaching unstressed syllables; is it better to represent pronunciation for learners with symbols of the international phonetic alphabet, or with ordinary English spelling conventions? An early opportunity should be taken to investigate empirically a range of questions that are the subject of debate among teachers, but have never been properly tested, such as: is it better to focus on teaching stressed syllables before teaching unstressed syllables? Similarly, experiments to look into the relative effects of frequent pronunciation problems on ESL English listeners would help with curriculum planning. The link between general pronunciation tuition and integrated training is one pressing issue that must be addressed immediately. The relationship between these is a little skewed; on the one hand, there is a desire for integrated training to give workers with the specialised skills they require for their jobs. On the other hand, there is a request for the development of generic abilities that will allow businesses to hire highly adaptable employees. Pronunciation appears to be a perfect candidate for generic training on the surface, as increased oral communication abilities in one area are very likely to translate into improvements in others. Demonstrating this - as part of a larger demonstration of the value of ESL pronunciation training in the workplace - would be beneficial.

5.7 Methods and materials development

Teachers require a better grasp of the pronunciation problems that ESL students confront and the reasons behind these problems, as well as a clear framework for comprehending the predicament of the second language learner. According to Lambacher (1999, p. 138), "difficult L2 contrasts (not simply suprasegmentals) can interfere with intelligibility," and "there is a need within the pronouncing curriculum to address the issues of L2 learners in identifying and creating difficult L2 speech contrasts." Because it "provides electronic visual feedback (EVF), which can help meet this essential need by showing the exact sound features that learners produce and thus drawing attention to changes that they need to make," Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) for pronunciation can be an effective tool (Lambacher, 1999, p. 138).

6. Conclusion

One of the most challenging aspects of learning a language is mastering pronunciation, which is also one of the most difficult issues for teachers to discuss in the classroom. There are numerous reasons why ESL pronunciation instruction is currently ineffective, and blaming any group, whether instructors, pronunciation specialists, or academics, is incorrect. Pronunciation in a second language is a topic of significant academic and practical importance that has been out of favour for decades. A few well-publicized interesting developments appear to have the potential to bring this issue back into favour among a wide range of people with relevant skills and interests, allowing EFL learners to make a significant contribution to global advancements in this area. When there is the opportunity and time, EFL/ESL teachers should focus on the students' requirements, level, and ability, include pronunciation into their oral skills and other classes, and focus on both segmental and supra-segmental aspects. Pronunciation must be considered more

than the accurate production of separate sounds or words. Instead, it should be considered as an important and fundamental aspect of communication that should be included in classroom activities. Teachers can assist pupils by emphasising sounds, syllables, emphasis, and intonation. Students will know what to focus on and can build on this fundamental awareness once they grasp the functions of these elements. Teachers can actively support students' actual output, build pronunciation awareness, and practise in class, gradually improving listening and speaking skills in both formal and casual contexts. It can be stated and concluded that, with careful planning and integration, pronunciation can help learners improve their total communicating power.

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