

PRONUNCIATION: THE CENTRAL DOGMA OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

Bygone are the days when merely reading and writing skills were adequate to have expertise over English language. The very pedestal of communication is to be understood. To be effectual in world, the most needed and imperative is to utter the words clearly and precisely. The lack of language skills is characteristically acknowledged through poor oral skills, particularly inadequate pronunciation. Even the time powerfully showcases the strong need to put across words clearly by illustrating many examples where even the simplest error in pronunciation has led to the loss of life over and above great confusion. Despite the fact, how perfect a learner's is on the ground of grammar & vocabulary but if his pronunciation is not up to the mark, this, undoubtedly, portrays a negative picture of his language competency for the reason Poor pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings, even a breakdown in communication. Such speakers feel themselves tongue-tied which results in their social isolation. It is away from dispute that learners who aspire to foster good speaking skills in a language also require to develop good pronunciation. Although, Pronunciation has a great influence on successful communication but it is still neglected by major section of English language trainers and learners too who are more concerned about teaching lexis and grammar. The present paper is an endeavour to establish the inseparable magnitude of pronunciation in acquirement of English lingo.

Key Words: English, Communication, Pronunciation, Learning, Teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Learning a new language adds laurel to life in the same as colours enhance the beauty of a painting. Nevertheless, paintings without colours also have their existence but colourful paintings always receive the credential of fascinating the world. The same applies to individuals since the people with acquaintance of languages addition to their mother tongue are always welcomed wherever they go. Having good knowledge of English, similar to have international visa, broadens the horizon as English is aqueduct betwixt populace. In this age of globalization, anything invented in any corner of the world gets global repute with a blink of an eye so to maintain pace with the fast moving world, it becomes indispensable to empower the self with adequate knowledge of English since it makes one dexterous in demonstrating his acumen before the world more proficiently. English, as a facilitator, opens a plethora of opportunities in all fields. The lingo is transforming its multidimensional communicative structure gradually, and in

the progression has enhanced its efficacy quotient everywhere. It is an academic imbroglio for the students who lag behind in regard of English skills.

DISCUSSION

With the intention of becoming a multifaceted communicator one requires to be skilled in each of the four language skills viz., listening, speaking, reading and writing on which the edifice of a language rests. Among the four above stated pillars of language, the one which owns great magnitude is speaking skill which brings in its trail several advantages for the reason that exclusive of speech, a language is abridged to a mere script.

One of the greatest hindrances faced by non-native English speaker in the journey of learning and speaking English fluently is, undeniably, pronunciation, the ability to use the accurate stress, rhythm and intonation of the word while speaking a language. Pronunciation is, actually, the sound of the language, or we can say phonology; stress and rhythm; and intonation additionally includes the role played by individual sounds and segmental and supra segmental sounds. Spoken English is not only judged by perfect grammar and abundant vocabulary but on the faithful relationship between the segmental and supra segmental features making up pronunciation. Clarity in speech exhibits clarity of thinking.

People evaluate the competency of speaker by the way he utters the word since the wrong pronunciation leads to misunderstanding resultant into breakdown in communication. No matter how perfect a learner's grammar is and how rich and expressive vocabulary he has but if his pronunciation is poor, this portrays a depressing impression of his overall language level.

Hinofotis and Baily (1980, pp. 124-125) notes that "up to a certain proficiency standard, the fault which most severely impairs the communication process in EFL/ESL learners is pronunciation", not vocabulary or grammar.

If the listener needs to presume what sound the speaker is striving to produce, it's going to be harder to comprehend the ideas the latter is trying to convey. Such speakers feel themselves tongue-tied which results in their social and professional isolation. It is quite apparent that people, in general, undervalue those who don't possess good pronunciation but overestimate those who have good pronunciation to their credit. It is quite apparent, if someone cannot listen to English well, she or he brings to an end to the language whereas if someone cannot be understood effortlessly, she or he is cut off from discussion with native speakers."

Undoubtedly, to communicate aptly, Pronunciation is of paramount importance which a learner should have mastery on. As stated by Fangzhi (1998:39), that it is important to pay attention to pronunciation since it results in whether or not someone's message can be passed or not by other people.

Keeping the mistaken belief that pronunciation is comparatively less imperative than other aspects of English language i.e. grammar, vocabulary, lexicology, the learners and teachers put less emphasis on learning correct pronunciation. Educators have a tendency to regard pronunciation as the least useful language skills and consequently they, in general, develop the habit of sacrificing teaching pronunciation for spending valuable class time on other aspects of

English language. Therefore, pronunciation is practiced on ad-hoc basis unlike grammar and vocabulary.

In actual fact, Pronunciation matters a lot no matter whether someone cares for it not. Rather than being peripheral to learning English, it is enormously central dogma to the learning process.

Teaching pronunciation to the learners is essential because it lends hand with which learners can improve on his speaking skills for the reason that when learners come across a word difficult to pronounce they evade using it.

The expanses of English pronunciation are proprietary into two, in which the first is segmental (e.g. English consonant and vowel sounds) and the second one is supra segmental (e.g. stress, linking, weak forms, intonation). It has always been an issue of debate to give more importance to which area of pronunciation while teaching. Rajadurai (2001:13) supported segmental areas of pronunciation by saying that teaching supra segmental is less valued than the teaching of segmental areas. Although, Harmer (2002:183) claimed in disagreement that overtraining of supra segmental areas, predominantly, stretches improved comprehension and intelligibly. If learners are focused about the stress pattern in English words, and the pitch of the voice can transfer the meaning, they will be acquainted with what to pay attention on and can build basic awareness. In conclusion, the duos, segmental and supra segmental areas of teaching contribute noteworthy outcomes in affecting students' pronunciation.

Mother Tongue Influence

Teaching pronunciation witnesses many bottlenecks since the non-native speakers are not acquainted with how to produce sounds. Mother tongue influence plays a great role in wrong pronunciation of word. Mother tongue, a language which a set of populace acquire in their early age, becomes their accepted apparatus of thoughts and communication. The disparities and alikeness the mother tongue and target language hold much importance in acquiring the second language. The learner of second language always prefers to think in their language, try to express themselves in second language consequential to conflicts which are merely because of mother-tongue interference. The wrong pronunciation of words by nonnative speakers mirrors the influence of their native language

The sound system of the first language manipulates the pronunciation of a second language to a great extent because learners fail to produce the sounds which are not available in learners' native sound inventory. Furthermore, since the rules of combining sounds into words vary from language to language, it generates hindrances for the language learners.

Ur stated (2001, p.52) that some causes have an adverse effect on pronunciation mistakes:

- 1.) Substitute second language with first language sound because there is no in first language;
- 2.) Create wrong perception on second language sounds because the sound is an allophone in first language;
- 3.) Use a stress pattern and first language intonation when pronouncing second language in order to create a strange accent.

Age-

Language attainment, especially in regard of pronunciation, is exceedingly influenced by the age of learners. Hence adults, unlike children, find pronunciation more complex to acquire. In line with “Critical Period Hypothesis” anticipated by Lenneberg (1967) there is a biological or neurological period which comes to an end around at the age of 12; after this period it becomes enormously challenging to conquer the ample mastery of a second language especially pronunciation. This is the period when human brain is more inclined to learn, learning process runs more effectively and so the learners are more likely to have great outcomes. Lenneberg supports that after the period of puberty the ability of language turns into worse and the process of learning becomes less effectual. Lenneberg’s arguments are supported by the study carried out by Fathman (1975) and Williams (1979) in which they wrapped up that younger students were more dexterous to acclimatize the pronunciation of the language attained whereas the older ones were more likely to speak with an accent.

Attitude

Attitude, a mental state which includes beliefs and feelings, an important concept to learn human behavior, is among the determining factors that can influence the journey of language acquisition since attitude towards language learning is, in a straight line, allied to success. Negative attitude of learner results in hindrances in language learning. Lennartsson (2008) utters, “Students’ belief can be an obstacle if they believe that they cannot learn the new language successfully.” On the contrary, the learners with positive attitude are comparatively more proficient in learning good pronunciation. This observable fact stimulated the researchers to more investigate the personal traits of the learners which add to their victory. Elliot (1995) found, if the students were more concerned about their pronunciation of the target language, they tended to have better pronunciation of the target allophones. Researches show that students who have positive attitudes in the path of learning the targeted language were more victorious comparatively to those who owned less positive attitudes. While determining the impact of attitude in second language acquisition, the work done by Schumann (1986) on acculturation and its role in the process of language learning is worth noticing. In his model, acculturation stands for learner’s openness to a target culture as well as a desire to be socially integrated in the target culture. Schumann stated that the acquisition and use of English is a measure of the degree to which students have become acculturated to the host culture. The more interaction a group does with the group which is at target, the more openings will bring into existence for the group to obtain English. On the contrary, less interaction consequences in less acquisition and use of English language.

Hence, positive attitude is needed to strengthen the pronunciation skills of learners.

Motivation

The relationship between motivation and language acquisition is more than imperative to take into consideration. Subsequent to learner’s age, the learner’s pronunciation is determined by his motivation as the goals of learners are it personal or professional, can influence his aspiration of grabbing the lingo. The positive orientation to the language is, beyond the shadow of the doubt, is one of the important factors in developing pronunciation. Time and again, it has been proven

by the studies of scholars that adults can be converted into tremendously dexterous, if they are motivated to do so. Learners successful in learning the target language are those who admire the people that converse in that language, have a high sense of regard for their culture and have a temptation to be familiar with or even take in into the society in which the language is used.

Here, the research of Gardner and Lambert's on motivation is important to quote wherein he highlighted two types of motivation wherein the first is instrumental motivation, which inspires the learner to gain knowledge of the new language due to the importance of linguistic accomplishment and the second is integrative motivation which ignites the craving to persist learning about the culture of second language. Learners with integrative motivation apparently put more hard work to enlarge communication skills in the second language.

Learners needs to be taught pronunciation in the same communicative way in which the others aspects of language are taught. Unfortunately, there seems little progress of a communicative technique for teaching pronunciation. Teaching pronunciation is not an easy task.

In the teaching of pronunciation, Nunan (2003, p. 115-117), gave five principles, they are:

Nurture intelligibility throughout spontaneous speech. Instructors are required to keep fostering the students' intelligibility to get them focused to coherent words while they are doing the impulsive speech.

Keep affective considerations firmly in mind. It is needed on the part of teacher to give affective support to their students with the intention to remove their fear of failure in developing new pronunciation habits.

Avoid the teaching of individual sounds in isolation. Learners assess opportunities to communicate eloquently with friends more captivating. Such tricks, in the long run, are more productive in improving students' speech intelligibility.

Provide feedback on learner progress. Teachers, with their expert guidance, need to provide feedback on students' efforts; to make the students aware where they need to place their energies.

Realize that finally it is the learner who is in control of changes in pronunciation.

Language instructors are required to pass on the needed information, models, wide variety of practice opportunities to encourage the learner.

Celce Murcia, et.al. (1996:2) brought into light two approaches, which can be functional in improving students' pronunciation wherein the first an intuitive-imitative approach talks about the students' talent to listen to and replicate sounds of an aimed language; and the second an analytic-linguistic approach recognizes the importance of intervention of pronunciation in language acquisition. With the help of this approach, teacher is to discover students' quandary in pronouncing the foreign language.

CONCLUSION

All the aspects of English language should be given equivalent importance. Nevertheless, the learners who aspire to shine at the lingo need to acknowledge pronunciation on higher precedence. It should be observed as a central and fundamental part of communication which needs be included into classroom activities.

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