

The Importance of Teacher's and Student's Role in Teaching and Learning Pronunciation

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Abstract. *This article is about the main approaches to developing the main role of teachers and students in teaching and learning pronunciation in high schools of Uzbekistan.*

Key words: *Bottom-up approach, comprehensible pronunciation, intonation, teachability, misperceive, misperceive, establishing priorities.*

Teaching pronunciation is very much noteworthy, since the key of communication is correct pronunciation. For instance, there is a big difference between “beer” and “bear”. So, to make competent them in communication and understanding, the students must be mastered the skill of good pronunciation. As, Hasimanoglu notices that “pronunciation teaching is a prominent factor in foreign language teaching. Since sounds play an important role in communication, foreign language teachers must attribute proper importance to teaching pronunciation in their classes”.

Here are some important reasons behind teaching pronunciation as follows:

Good pronunciation will boost self- esteem, facilitate communication, and possibly lead to a better job or at least more respect in the work place.

- Second language learners worry about having an obvious accent when they speak. There is a wide range of accents, because the English spoken in England, Australia or Canada is different than the English spoken in the United States of America. In this case, teachers can encourage students to follow “BBC English”, “Standard English”, “RP(Received Pronunciation)”, or “GA(General American English).
- Foreign learners studying in English Speaking Countries need better pronunciation.
- International business people and diplomats should learn pronunciation for better communication.
- Immigrants living in English speaking countries have to hang out with the natives in English speaking countries.
- People who are non – natives and doing jobs like tourist guide, waiter, hotel personnel, and custom agents need comprehensible pronunciation.

When learning pronunciation, we use different strategies in order to achieve comprehensible pronunciation. According to Dalton and Seidlhofer there are two approaches aimed at pronunciation teaching- the bottom-up approach and top-down approach.

Bottom-up approach means that learners start with learning how to pronounce individual phonemes and then they work their way to intonation. Generally speaking, when teaching the segments of pronunciation the supra segmental features will take care of themselves. Anderson and Lynch claim that we perceive speech by building up an interpretation in a series of separate stages, beginning by the lowest units and gradually working up to the larger units such as the utterance, from which we

then derive our interpretation of the speaker's meaning. Based on the findings mentioned above, this approach is very similar to a structural approach used for teaching grammar and lexis. As far as the top-down approach is concerned, at the beginning the attention is paid to patterns of intonation and then if required individual sounds are taken into focal point. In other words, once the prosodic features of pronunciation are in place, the necessary segmental discriminations will follow of their own accord. According to Pinker, top-down process, which largely corresponds with communicative aspects of language teaching, uses knowledge and expectancies to guess, predict, or fill in the perceived event or message.

Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin offer another elaboration of two general approaches concerning pronunciation teaching e.g. intuitive-imitative approach and analytic-linguistic approach. Intuitive-imitative approach conveys the learner's ability to listen and imitate the rhythms and sounds of the target language without the intervention of any explicit information. Analytic-linguistic approach, on the other hand, utilizes information and tools such as phonetic alphabet, articulatory descriptions, chart of vocal apparatus, contrastive information, and other aids to supplement listening, imitation, and production. It explicitly informs the learner of and focuses attention on the sounds and rhythms of the target language.

Obviously, the approaches presented above can be combined in any way, but it is vital to set which approach or a combination of approaches is the most suitable for our language purposes.

When teaching pronunciation teachers need to bear in mind that pronunciation in comparison with the other aspects of learning will be always marked with personal attitudes towards the target language, learner's abilities and so on; therefore, there can never be a one-to-one relationship between what is taught and what is learnt.

Because of above mentioned facts, we should pay certain attention to teach ability—learn ability (*ibid.*) presenting aspects of pronunciation that are teachable e.g. individual sounds and segments, and others such as intonation that are bound to certain circumstances and therefore extremely problematic to teach. Roach states that the complexity of the total set of sequential and prosodic components of intonation and of paralinguistic features makes it a very difficult to teach. ... The attitudinal use of intonation is something that is best acquired through talking with and listening to English speakers [8, 15]. Dalton and Seidlhofer point out that intonation as a part of pronunciation teaching-learning is problematic, individual sound segments are on the other hand fairly easy to be taught but not so important for communication. However, stress was identified as an area with maximum overlap of communicative importance and teachability, therefore is the most convenient focal point for any course in pronunciation [8, 20].

Teachers as models of pronunciation carry a huge responsibility in their classrooms, they influence their learners either in a positive or negative way and their main goal is to create a friendly and supportive atmosphere. On the other hand, their practical proficiency is not sufficient since if the teacher can only exemplify pronunciation by his or her own speech performance, the learners are left to work out what is significant for themselves. Learners of a second language will not readily discern crucial phonological distinctions. On one hand, there are so called gifted learners that are able to pick up the pronunciation of the target language only by being exposed to it, but on the contrary many students, if not majority, need as explicit explanations as possible to be able to acquire and imitate difficult sounds when speaking. Generally speaking they need a teacher who would draw their attention to how sounds should be pronounced and guide them in order to achieve intelligible pronunciation.

Kenworthy offers several ways of teachers' roles in pronunciation learning process:

➤ Helping learners hear

The role of teachers is to help their students to perceive sounds that are often misperceive because of the false similarity in learners' mother tongue. Teachers need to check whether their learners are hearing sounds according to the appropriate categories and help them to develop new categories if necessary.

➤ Helping learners make sounds

In this situation teachers have to explain and guide their students how to imitate and pronounce new sounds that do not exist in their mother tongue.

➤ Providing feedback

Teachers need to give their students accurate and constructive feedback about how they are doing, since they are not able to judge whether their pronunciation is comprehensible or not. Not providing students with feedback could mean that students make wrong assumptions about pronunciation.

➤ Pointing out what's going on

As speaking is unconsciously controlled, students can miss important features of conversation, and therefore teachers should always highlight the key features.

➤ Establishing priorities

Learners themselves are aware that their pronunciation is in some ways different in comparison with native speakers, but what they are unaware of is whether it is relevant or not. Here teachers guide them which features they should focus on and which not.

➤ Devising activities

When choosing the most suitable activities that offer the best opportunities for practice teachers need to also take into consideration students learning styles as the effectors of their progress.

➤ Assessing progress

➤ Assessing progress is not an easy task for any teacher but providing students with information about their progress is essential for further motivation.

The primarily learners' roles are not only to pay attention to what they are doing in the classes or to be active participants of the learning process but also they need to be able to observe their progress. In other words, what all learners need to do is respond (Kenworthy 1990: 2) to the teacher otherwise no progress or slight improvement will become evident. Therefore, there is no doubt that ultimately success in pronunciation will depend on how much effort the learner puts into it and whether the student is willing to take responsibility for his or her own learning [5, 46].

Learners' willingness to be responsible for their own learning and to take action goes hand in hand with factors influencing learners' pronunciation learning. These factors will be tackled in the following subchapter.

In conclusion, during the pronunciation teaching teachers not only serve as guides, who help their students to form necessary categories, establish priorities but also they need to provide their students with appropriate exercises and relevant feedback.

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