

## TEACHING PRONUNCIATION IN A MEANINGFUL AND MOTIVATING WAY

*This article is devoted to the study of the effective ways of teaching pronunciation. In pronunciation class, it is advisable that the teacher should pay more attention to the areas where the students are likely to have problems, and plan his teaching strategies accordingly. Above all, the teacher must involve the students in meaningful and communicative activities and make learning as interesting and motivating as possible.*

Pronunciation teaching is an essential part of any language teaching process. On the one hand, confidence with pronunciation allows learners to interact with native speakers that is so essential for all aspects of their linguistic development. On the other hand, poor pronunciation can mask otherwise good language skills condemning learners to less than their deserved social, academic and work advancement.

Good pronunciation is closely linked with clear oral communication: therefore, it is advisable to place students in a meaningful and contextual situation, rather than present them with a series of isolated sentences. In practicing the phoneme /ai/, for example, students are made to repeat sentences like “Mike tried five times to get the prize.” “Five times five is twenty-five.” Though these isolated sentences have a high concentration of the sound to be practiced, they are not sentences frequently used in everyday conversation. The students who are trained in this way tend to make more pronunciation errors when speaking spontaneously. What is more, such a pronunciation class is not motivating. The students sit passively and are bored by the repeating task. In order to improve the situation, the following strategies will be quite stimulating.

### 1. Providing meaningful materials

In selecting or designing materials, special attention should be paid to those which contain not only a sufficient concentration of the sound to be practiced, but short dialogues, pair work, or other contextual practices as well. The students first learn stress accompanied by basic intonation in meaningful sentences: then work on the difficult sounds. This meaningful practice has the advantage of making the students aware of the stress and intonation patterns from the beginning. As the course proceeds, the teacher chooses several articles of various styles from the student textbooks to use as models for practicing linking, rhythm, stress, or intonation. Students feel that the pronunciation class is relevant to their regular course work. Thus, they become active participants in their pair or group work, applying the phonetic rules they have learned to the actual practice. Through these meaningful and contextual activities the students can learn to speak both intelligibly and accurately.

### 2. Using songs, games, and tongue twisters.

Using songs, games, and tongue twisters can increase students' motivation in a pronunciation class: motivation is a highly significant factor in pronunciation. The more a student is motivated and is willing to improve his speech, the more rewarding the teaching will be.

In choosing songs, a teacher's first consideration is that they should be simple enough for the students to practice stress and rhythm as well as individual sounds. For example, in teaching the difficult phoneme /ei/, a teacher may use the first verse of the song “This is the Way”

This is the way we wash our face,  
Wash our face, wash our face,  
This is the way we wash our face  
At seven o'clock in the morning.

The teaching procedures include the following tasks:

1) read the words containing / ei / sounds:

- 2) mark out the stress:
- 3) sing the song to the students:
- 4) repeat the words chorally, tapping on the desk to establish the rhythm:
- 5) put the words into the tune.

Eventually, the song helps the students pronounce the phoneme /e i/ and allows the weaker ones to feel a real sense of achievement when they are able to sing it.

Using games in a pronunciation class can also increase students' motivation. Pronunciation and sound- discrimination games can make practice of sounds lively and entertaining. The games like MINI- BINGO for discriminating sounds and WILD GUESS for practicing the use of intonation are very simple in use and stimulating as well. Sometimes a teacher can design the games himself, attempting to make them appropriate to the level and interests of the students.

Tongue twisters are particularly useful for the students who have unique pronunciation problems. For example, before teaching the students the English sounds / I / and / n /, first let them make a clear distinction between " I " and " n " offering them words containing these sounds then design a contrastive exercise of rapidly repeating the words like light night light: night light night .... The result has proven to be very effective.

### 3. Assessing students' progress.

Assessing progress is an important factor in maintaining students' motivation. The teacher should provide learners with information about their performance from time to time so that they may know what they have accomplished and what they still have to do. One style of assessment is to use tape recordings to keep a record of the students' progress. At the beginning of the course, each student is given a cassette to record the assigned exercises. The recording is a good source of useful information in diagnosing the students' original pronunciation. A teacher listens to the tapes carefully and takes detailed notes. In the notes a teacher lists such items as the student's personal data and individual pronunciation problems. The personal data is an important indicator of some regional pronunciation problems: it helps to analyze where some of the students' difficulties lie and to work out plans for who will need special help to eliminated regional accents. During the term, the students are assigned to use their cassettes at regular intervals to record oral homework or carefully chosen materials with emphasis on particular phonetic points. These assignments include pure imitation tasks and individual work on applying the phonetic rules to actual speech production. For example, when practicing stress and intonation, ask the students to mark out the stress first: then divide sequences of utterances into separate tone –groups and decide what tones are most suitable to adopt according to the context or the kind of sentence. Although the primary emphasis is on stress and intonation, other phonetic aspects, such as assimilation, incomplete plosion, length, or linking are by no means neglected. After listening to each cassette, a teacher sets a consultation period to work with one small group of students at a time, replays their recordings, and offers help to correct their pronunciation errors.

As the student's achievements reach a certain level, a teacher can make the learning process more motivating by involving the students in a speaking activity (a role play, a story-telling activity, or a speech contest). The aim is to train the students to acquire accurate pronunciation when speaking spontaneously. During these activities a teacher uses a tape recorder so that at the end of each activity the students can listen to themselves and evaluate their own speech.

The value of using tape recorders to assess the student's progress lies in the fact that it can provide immediate feedback.

Individual "pronunciation correction "procedures with the teacher, or workshops which may be part of a consultation period with a very small number of students. Students know that the teacher will be working with the whole class on certain general priority areas, but it is vital that the students feel that their individual problems are being catered to as well.

Spoken language begins with sounds. In order to make oneself intelligible and to understand the spoken language, one must have a good working knowledge of the pronunciation of that language. Therefore, in English language teaching, attention should be paid to the

teaching of pronunciation throughout all stages.

In pronunciation class, it is advisable that the teacher pay more attention to the areas where the students are likely to have problems, and plan his teaching strategies accordingly. Above all, the teacher must involve the students in meaningful and communicative activities and make learning as interesting and motivating as possible.

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