

## THE ROLE OF PRONUNCIATION INTO CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES.

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**Abstract:** This article examines the importance of pronunciation and integration into classroom activities with a number of practical concepts. When learners acquire new language, they face several problems, because each language is unique and has particular features. Learning how to speak a new language is not just learning words or grammar. The place of pronunciation in the classroom should be in high position as it requires the awareness of pronouncing and linking sounds or sentences along with intonation. Most teachers mainly focus on grammar, as a result learner know the language very well, but cannot be understood by listeners. Limited pronunciation skills can influence learners' self-confidence, demarcate social interactions as a result can negatively affect on the ability. Using the right pronunciation is a key fact in proper communication.

**Key words:** pronunciation, classroom activities, word stress, intonation, linking sounds, techniques.

### Introduction

The pronunciation work plays a fundamental role in language teaching. When considering how to integrate pronunciation instruction into classroom activities, it can be a challenge both for teachers to decide what aspects of pronunciation to focus on, and for learners for whom isolated exercises once a week do not seem much of an effect. Teaching pronunciation is a long lasting procedure which needs constant attention to gain positive results. Good pronunciation leads to learning while bad pronunciation promotes to great difficulties in language learning.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of pronunciation is to empower learners to be easily understood, that is why the methods in the lesson process should focus on the pronunciation, i.e. the importance of pronunciation in the classroom should stand in the first stage of the lesson plan. Learning any language begins with the correct pronunciation. For most teachers, vocabulary and grammar are the main basis for beginners. According to Gilbert<sup>2</sup>, teachers often state that there is not enough time for them to teach pronunciation in their classes and they are more assured to teach grammar and vocabulary. If pronunciation is not given proper attention in the early stages of learning, then it will be more difficult to correct mistakes and improve pronunciation later. The older the learner gets, the stronger is the influence of native accent. Teachers need to be provided with guidelines to improve effectiveness in teaching pronunciation.

Suprasegmental features of English Pronunciation

Word stress.

Due to the influence of native accent, many learners use stress incorrectly, which leads to misunderstandings. Stressing a word differently can change the meaning of the word: e.g. "My friends are going to desert the desert by tomorrow." Even if the listeners understand what the speaker is talking about, the words with wrong stresses are irritating and tough for listeners. The word stress is used to prioritize the importance of a word in the sentence.

In the classroom activities the stress should be marked on the board and on handouts for students in order to pronounce every word correctly. Most teachers use **big circle –small circle (O o) method** to identify the stressed syllables. When the learners see the big circle, it expresses a syllable is stressed. Learners also need to know how dictionaries mark the stress – with a mark before the stressed syllable, e.g. ['teɪbl]. By being aware of this, learners can check word stress independently.

**"Telephone Conversations"** activity is very supportive, when practicing the word stress and enhancing learners' fluency. Learners should sit in a circle and the teacher whispers a word or a phrase with a certain

<sup>1</sup> Abbas Pourhosein Gilakjani (2012) "The Significance of Pronunciation in English Language Teaching" Journal "English language teaching"

<sup>2</sup> Judy B. Gilbert (2018) "Teaching Pronunciation: Using the Prosody Pyramid" Cambridge University Press

stress to the first learner. That learner should whisper this word or phrase to the next and it continues until the last learner say the word aloud and all can hear how the words or phrases changed in the pronunciation of learners. Depending on the result, the teacher makes the activity to the advanced level. She can tell even the whole sentence with emotions putting stress in a correct order.

### Intonation

Intonation leads to the judgement of speaker's attitude, character, and ways of behaving in communication<sup>3</sup>. J.C. Wells has distinguished 6 significant functions of intonation: attitudinal, grammatical, discourse, psychological, focusing, and indexical functions. These functions are used to impart knowledge to learners and to help them understand the similarities and differences between their L1 and L2. It is very important to master the tones of English to avoid misinterpretations. English has 3 simple tones (level, fall, rise) and 2 complex tones (fall-rise, rise-fall). Falling tones are utilized in statements, commands, and wh-questions. However, rising tones are used to give the notion that something is coming or idea that speaker has not expressed his/her final thought. To increase the communication competence of learners, intonation plays a vital role in the classroom activities.

One of the method of increasing the awareness of intonation to learners is using **Kazoo**. This method is very productive for learners, who have never been exposed to real language and highlighted the idea of rhythm in their voices. The kazoo creates a friendly environment for learning.

Another important method, which helps to show intonation contrast is **rubber bands**. When introducing new vocabulary, teacher should hold up his/her hands, palms outwards and place a rubber band on his/her thumbs. Say the new word or sentence. Every time, when saying the stressed syllable, the teacher stretches the rubber band farther. When learners see that stressed syllable is longer they try to repeat it and stress the correct syllable. Even learners can do it in pairs to identify a tone of each other. This method will give the learners concrete idea of what intonation is.

Doing **short dialogs or role plays** can also be fruitful for learners for practicing intonation. Because, when learners say the phrases from dialogs, they put their emotions and attitudes.

A: I am getting **married** next month.

B: Oh! That's **wonderful** news! I'm **so** glad to hear.

### Linking Sounds

Linking is a pronunciation technique, which allows the speaker to say two or more words together smoothly. The use of linking sounds makes speech more fluent and natural. To form connected speech we use words together to link consonant to vowel, consonant to consonant, and vowel to vowel.

Consonant to vowel: When a consonant sound at the end of the word encounters a vowel sound at the beginning of a word, the consonant moves to the beginning of the next word.

[ turn off: Can you tur-noff the light?].

Consonant to consonant: When a consonant sound at the end of the word is the same with a consonant sound at the beginning of the next word, the sound can just be continued and two words can sound like one word. Gas station [gastation], red dress [redress]. Linking also happens, if the first word ends with a consonant sound and the next word begins with a similar consonant sound. Dark grey [dargrey], sleep better [sleebetter].

Vowel to vowel: If a word ends with a vowel sound and the next words also starts with a vowel sound, /w/ or /y/ sounds will help to link to words. Two apples [twowapples], he asked [heyasked].

[She y: ate all the apples.]

**“Say it correctly”** The teacher selects one of the dialogues or texts spoken by native speakers and plays them in accelerated mode. Afterwards, the learners pronounce what they have heard. The teacher once again plays this dialogue or text in a slightly slower mode. The learners say it again. This continues until the audio material set to the slowest mode and learners pronounce dialog correctly. This activity is important for learners to pronounce linking sounds correctly where they are needed, understand them in context and distinguish them.

### Techniques of teaching pronunciation.

<sup>3</sup> Kenworthy, J. (1987). “Teaching English Pronunciation”. Harlow: Longman.

The recommended techniques are *sound-color chart, minimal pair drills, jazz chants, sound TPR, reader's theatre*. These techniques help reduce the pressure on the learners and confidently focus on pronunciation and intonation. Memorized phrases established for correct pronunciation are eventually adopted and correct pronunciation develops general pronunciation.

#### ***Sound-color charts.***

This is a very popular technique among classroom activities. Sound-color charts provide a direct link between colors and sounds. The teacher teaches learners vocal gymnastics, which means that learners become aware of various lip positions, muscle movements for new sounds. Sound-color charts exchange phonemic alphabet learning and can be suitable for all age groups.

#### ***Minimal pair drills.***

As a Brown<sup>4</sup> points, there is a common belief among teachers that perceptual and productive language skills such as listening and speaking are taught through the same medium of speaking and listening. As a result, many of them use the traditional listen-and-repeat approach, despite their current trend towards communicative language teaching. Techniques based on this method are often production-oriented and aim to improve the English spoken by students. Many of these techniques use minimal pairs. Words which differ in only one phonological element are called minimal pairs. [bit-beat, hard-heart, thin-thing]. This technique helps learners to identify differences between sounds, and it helps them express individual sounds. When doing minimal pairing activities (*minimal pair fruit salad, minimal pair exploration, minimal pair bingo*) learners should distinguish and be familiar with sounds and lastly imitate minimal pairs with correct sounds.

#### ***Sound Total Physical Response (TPR)***

This technique can be worthwhile for kinesthetic and young learners, who are passionate about movement and to create the interactive atmosphere. Firstly, a teacher should choose movements to a particular sound: e.g. when learners hear a sound /oi/ in such words like *oil* or *boil* in the dialogue or in the audio text, they should stand up and when learners hear a sound /ai/ in such words like *cry* or *like*, they should sit down. Teacher can put a video of the fairy tales told by native speakers in order to aware them how actually words are pronounced. This technique supports to distinguish sounds in phrase, analyze them and pronounce words correctly.

### **Conclusion**

Pronunciation can be the most difficult part of classroom activities. Pronunciation must be observed more than syntax or discourse, as it is a key of communication. If the teacher and learners work collaboratively, all the learners can progress in learning the pronunciation. The main idea of the course should be integrated into the communication class, with the substance emphasizing the teaching of suprasegmental features like linking pronunciation with listening ability and permitting for meaningful pronunciation practice. Unlike other languages, English is stress-timed and syllable-timed which highlights that effective communicative competence can be achieved through suprasegmental features. Most activities which were mentioned above can be used in mostly intermediate levels. However, by evaluating them, the teachers may utilize these activities to interact learners and enhance their ability. All activities and techniques, are beneficial in terms of learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. For visual learners, "Say it correctly", "Minimal Pair Drills" activities and techniques can show an effective result in improving pronunciation. For Auditory learners, it can be valuable to practice "Telephone Conversations" "Sound-color charts" "Sound TPR" and short dialogues or role plays. Finally, for kinesthetic learners, it is very suitable using "Rubber bands" or "Sound Total Physical Response (TPR) to enhance pronunciation. When the teacher plays a role of "speech coach" rather than simply checking pronunciation, the feedback given to the learner can itself encourage learners to improve their pronunciation. If the teacher uses at least one method or activity, all learners can be expected to boost in learning pronunciation in a foreign language.

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