

Pronunciation In The Classroom: Teachers And Teaching Methods

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Abstract: *The article provides a review of recommended pronunciation teaching approaches and techniques that are otherwise dispersed throughout the literature. The range and variety of approaches and activities illustrate how pronunciation training can be incorporated into courses.*

Keywords: pronunciation; teaching methodology; methodology proposal; English pronunciation for Spanish students.

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation as one of the subskills is very important in EFL classes and different teachers try to help their learners in the best way. Knowing the way of pronouncing a sample word is useful to transfer the information because mispronouncing a word may mislead the learners to transfer and obtain the information. It is believed that pronunciation is a manner the individuals pronounce a sample word, especially in a manner that is understood or accepted. It is also emphasized that pronunciation involves attending to the especial sounds of a language and also different aspects of speech like stress, intonation, vowel, consonants, rhythm and voice, and voiceless of different sounds. Within the current trend in ELT, it is up to individual teachers to incorporate pronunciation training into their lessons (Jenkins, 2002; Derwing & Munro, 2005).

METHOD

However, a lack of formal training combined with an absence of program directives means that is up to teachers to inform and prepare themselves on how to best meet their students' needs (Breitkreutz et al. 2002; Fraser, 2002; Macdonald, 2002). Consequently, most teachers do not provide instruction at all and those few that do generally adopt a hit or miss approach, relying on materials that lack grounding and the desired results (Fraser, 2002). This situation is worsened by the fact that, even when included in coursebooks, pronunciation is marginalized and treated superficially (Marks, 2006; Silveira, 2002). Therefore, it is important to understand that students are not receiving the training they need in this important aspect of linguistic competence. The role of the teacher is to guide, monitor, support, and encourage learners to set and reach high standards. Learners progress from controlled production of selected features (individual segments \bar{A} stress \bar{A} rhythm \bar{A} intonation) to rehearsed speech practice (oral readings and pre-planned talks). The studied features are put to communicative use in partially planned and unplanned talks, presentations, and discussions as well as in question and answer sessions. The final stage is when skills and knowledge become internalized as the learned patterns are integrated into spontaneous production (extemporaneous speech practice). Throughout training, learners record themselves and assess their production, focusing on particular aspects consistent with each practice mode.

RESULTS

Fraser's (1999) Critical Listening approach also makes use of student recordings; their use is believed to be most suitable since it externalizes speech and provides a means of subsequent analysis and feedback. Critical Listening focuses on observation and analysis of interactions. This approach highlights the fact that there is a difference between what people think they are saying, what they actually produce, and how it is perceived by others. Therefore, prominence is placed on the instructor's insight into where the learners are coming from in order to lead them to new understanding (Fraser, 1999). The instructor's job is to help the learner understand how listeners use speaker cues to interpret the message being communicated and the factors that lead to successful as well as unsuccessful exchanges. In her discussion, Fraser speaks of recordings of real-life interactions in which learners participate. These recordings are analyzed in the classroom where effective and ineffective strategies are identified and addressed with the assistance of the instructor and classmates.

DISCUSSION

Fraser (2006) suggests that methods that work well "are based on the insight that pronunciation is a cognitive skill... [and] involves both 'knowing' things (subconsciously) about language, and being able to do things physically with the body" (p. 4). It is relevant to note that analysis of third party interactions and student group recordings can also serve as input for discussion and reflection. Training follows a strictly ordered three-step process. The first step in the process involves learners singularly identifying target phonemes and phonological structures. This stage very much depends on the aid of the instructor, who points out the salient features and then provides multiple repetitions of a sample phrase in order to exemplify the realizations (and its intra-

speaker variation) of the target feature. Next is the automatization phase, which entails the learners producing multiple chorus repetitions of the sample phrase and receiving immediate feedback, encouragement, and reassurance from the instructor. It is suggested that this kind of drilling helps train the speech organs and allows the learner to discover the category boundaries that yield permissible phonetic variability in target language speech. The last step is that of transferring the newly acquired skills to novel utterances. Kjellin (1999) contends that it may take place instantaneously if learners are motivated and teachers are enthusiastic but is not specific in reference to instructional implementations. Of note, this kind of training lends itself well to the kind of lexical phrases that are often targets in commercial course books. It is feasible to consider spending part of the class engaging students in the first two stages as a way of reinforcing a chosen feature that is presented in the text.

CONCLUSION

Summing up, there exists a wide range of activities that target pronunciation skills. And, given how pronunciation impacts learning and language use, it is a competency that merits more attention than it currently receives. We must, however, recognize that effective instruction (in pronunciation as well as any other area) is directly related to a teacher's understanding of the subject matter and the student population. Students cannot receive proper and adequate pronunciation instruction unless teachers possess the expertise and knowhow which allows them to anticipate and recognize problem areas, identify and impart relevant information, and design and implement appropriate instruction.

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