



Developing Confidence Building Activities to Accelerate Pronunciation

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ABSTRACT

Pronunciation in the present scenario gains much exposure from the studies on English language which gradually awaken the awareness among the second language learners to develop their pronunciation. SL learners find it more difficult to pronounce like the native due to lot of factors like mother tongue interference, lack of proper training in production of speech sounds, inadequate language syllabus etc.,. After a long period of their school years, the students are required to speak with correct pronunciation. As the proverb "you can't teach an old dog new trick" it is very hard for the learners to pick up the correct pronunciation without proper training at the beginning. It is the need of the hour not only to give training on pronunciation but also to build the confidence of the learners to learn it. Confidence plays a vital role in shaping once will to do anything. Ultimately the hindrance lies in the lack of confidence and willingness in the young minds. As the education system becomes more and more child centered it is obvious that there is a wider scope to teach according to the students mind. Activities that promote the students' confidence to speak a language without hesitation can be imported in the school language curriculum. At once they developed their confidence, they can pronounce well and speak fluently.

Keywords : pronunciation , training, confidence, activities, curriculum

Introduction:

It is indispensable in our daily life to live without communication. People need to talk to each other to convey their thoughts and to execute the daily life works. We can say that we need communication to move further in our life. It is clearly observed that even the people who are not bestowed with the ability to speak, they need communication, and they have their own ways to express their thoughts. In short, the significance of communication cannot be ignored at all. In case of people who have been gifted with the ability to talk, communication is much easier. (Bowen & Marks, 1992) But here the question rises that it is really about only communication. If so, then what is the significance of verbal communication when the deaf and dumb people can do it as well? Here it is important to understand the role of pronunciation in communication which makes the difference. Pronunciation is an aspect of verbal communication which makes it more effective and attractive. Therefore, the significance of pronunciation becomes highly considerable in the process of verbal communication. Speakers of a particular language have a very deep and strong impact of the sounds of the alphabet on their pronunciation. (Collier, 1997) There are certain sounds which every language possesses. Most of the sounds which a language has seem to be similar, but they are not pronounced in the exact manner. There are certain differences in pronunciation. Therefore, when a person speaks any non-native language, he / she has to face certain sound difficulties. It is observed that the Indian students are very good speakers of English language and can pronounce all the sounds of it. However, a lot of Indian

English speakers are observed mispronouncing the certain sounds and even the particular words of English language. Therefore it is necessary to impart the training in pronunciation by a different innovative way which will make the learners confident enough to pronounce and speak. The training can be given in such a way to develop the psychology of the learners to prepare them to come forward to speak correctly.

Psychological component of Language

Almost every human child succeeds in learning language. As a result, people often tend to take the process of language learning for granted. To many, language seems like a basic instinct, as simple as breathing or blinking. But language is not simple at all; in fact it is the most complex skill that a human being will ever master. That nearly all people succeed in learning this complex skill demonstrates how well language has adapted to human nature. In a very real sense, language is the complete expression of what it means to be human. Linguists in the tradition of Noam Chomsky tend to think of language as having a universal core from which individual languages select out a particular configuration of features, parameters, and settings. (Fortune, 2002) As a result, they see language as an instinct that is driven by specifically human evolutionary adaptations. In their view, language resides in a unique mental organ that has been given as a "special gift" to the human species. This mental organ contains rules, constraints, and other structures that can be specified by linguistic analysis.

Psychologists and those linguists who reject the Chomskyan approach often view language learning from a very different perspective. To the psychologist, language acquisition is a window on the operation of the human mind. The patterns of language emerge not from a unique instinct but from the operation of general processes of evolution and cognition. For researchers who accept this emergentist approach, the goal of language acquisition studies is to understand how regularities in linguistic form emerge from the operation of low-level physical, neural, and social processes. (Saravanakumar & Subbiah, 2011) Before considering the current state of the dialog between the view of language as a hard-wired instinct and the view of language as an emergent process, it will be useful to review a few basic facts about the shape of language acquisition and some of the methods that are used to study it.

Language Teacher Proficiency

In this discussion of the definition of proficiency in the context of foreign language teaching and learning, Chastain (1989:48) suggests that, 'The term seems to fall into that category of words that are commonly used without conscious attention to exact meaning. The result is fuzzy thinking that characterizes our discussions and carries over into our teaching'. The literature in Australia reveals those terms such as 'quality', 'proficiency' and 'competency' are used almost interchangeably and with imprecise definition.

In compiling their recent report Language Teacher Proficiency Assessment, Briguglio and Kirkpatrick (1996:34) found that the definition of 'language teacher proficiency' held by those in the field was broad and included attributes of a 'competent' language teacher. It appeared, however, that with two exceptions the main area of concern of those interviewed for the report was actually 'linguistic' proficiency. This raises a question about whether those 'in the field' are taking a broad enough approach to foreign language teaching and are fully aware of the more holistic and conceptual approaches to the discipline of teaching.

There are three broad components of language teacher proficiency. These are what we have chosen to call 'linguistic knowledge', 'cultural knowledge' and 'pedagogical knowledge'. Language teacher is the one who forms the platform for the language development of the students. (Cotterall, 2005) Language development happens not only by achieving any one of the proficiencies but in the combination of multiple competencies which will make the learners the wholesome confident individuals. Development will be complete endeavor only if the teacher of language has the multiple competencies. Therefore language teacher proficiency is not just as linguistic or pedagogical knowledge, but rather, as the interrelation of multiple knowledges.

Confidence building activities to accelerate pronunciation:

The language classroom can be encompassed with lot of activities like the following to make the process of teaching and learning more comprehensible. Teaching is not simply making the students rotten with bookish knowledge but to prepare them for life. Language is unlike other subjects which are based on knowledge only. It is a skill subject. In order to make the learners more and more skillful the learners ought to be confident. Simply methods of teaching won't be helpful. So activities can be given to the learners to boost their skills along with their confidence. Following are some of the activities selected by us for better language learning.

The phoneme race:

This is useful for introducing students to new phonemes and revising recently learnt sounds. In this activity we can put six or so symbols on the board and write words on cards big enough to be seen when stuck on the board. Five for each sound is enough. Then we can drill the sounds. We can be imaginative with our voice if doing it with young learners. They will remember it better if they are having fun. Then the students can be put in teams. One person from each team

runs to the teacher and is given a card. They return to the group and decide which phoneme is used in the word from the board. They write the phoneme on the back of the card and run back to the teacher. If the symbol is correct the student is given another card. They must keep the cards and try to accumulate as many as possible. The winning team is the one with the most cards at the end. Teacher may give the students blue tack and ask them to stick the symbols to the board. Then do another drilling session. (Harmer, 1995) Then, in the teams, the students choose two symbols and race to make a sentence for each that includes three of the words from that symbol. The sentence must make some sense! Then we can reward the most imaginative sentences.

Wall charts:

The teacher can put the symbols you want to learn on the board and drill them. Then students are asked to match flash cards with each symbol. For example, /i:/ can be matched with a picture of cheese. Then they can be asked to draw the symbol and the picture on the top of a large piece of coloured card. These cards are then stuck to the wall for the next class. In the next class, the children are put into coloured teams. Each team is given ten words on cards which they have to stick to the posters. Play some fun music to do this! Give them a time limit. Then, the teacher has to check how many they got correct. (Hancock, 1995) The winners are those with most correct. Every few classes you can revise this, repeat it and add to it. So the teacher end up with a comprehensive and colourful wall display all created by them.

Mouth workout:

The teacher can give some tongue twisters such as "The lazy jazz musician jogged to the zoo just to view the zebra physician, After church I went to the beach to teach at the car wash for cash." To train the students' articulatory system and to eradicate their fear and hesitation in uttering some sounds.

Chinese whispers:

This is for revising individual sounds. The teacher sits the learners in a circle and shows a student a symbol, also whispering it in their ear. The sound is passed around the class. If the sound is correct at the end of the symbol the students get a point, if not the teacher gets a point.

Using dictionaries:

This should be done with students who are familiar with the script and is suitable more for teenagers and adults. The teacher can choose five words from the dictionary and write them in phonetic script and ask the students in pairs to write down what they think the word is. Then he can get the students to swap papers with a different group and ask them to look up the word to see if they were correct. (Scarcella & Oxford, 2004) The winners are the group with most correct. Then they can make a new list of five words for the other group to repeat the activity with. This can be combined with a revision of vocabulary from the course book they are using. The students look up words in the dictionary from the book and transcribe them for the other group to guess.

Going shopping:

This is a communicative activity which incorporates some sounds you have been doing in class into a shopping list activity where the students have to practice dialogues buying certain items like cheese, meat, /i:/, and crisps, milk /I/. Students can be put into two groups of shop owners and customers with a budget to make it more 'authentic'. Then they have a certain time to buy all the items they can on the list. For the shop owners, give them flash cards of food items or pieces of card with the food and prices on them. Afterwards they can decide the cheapest and most expensive shops as a class.

Students as Teachers of Phonetics:

In higher classes a competent student teaches the class for about 10-15 minutes. This activity is called "an intonation revision seminar." Consecutive parts of a highly entertaining recording consisting of short episodes, such as a detective story, are selected as material for the "seminar." By the time students take on this task they should have acquired knowledge of all aspects of English pronunciation on the curriculum. (Huber, 1995)

Say what:

Teacher can frame sentences having similar sounding words like "what a beautiful ship/sheep, this is a big cop/cup etc." and ask the student to guess the difference between the similar words.

Bingo :

One of our favorite activities for a change of pace is PRONUNCIATION BINGO!!! To play pronunciation bingo, first we need to think up a bunch of words that sound similar (bath, bass, Beth, Bess, bus, but, bat, path, pat, bit, pit, etc, etc). Teacher asks students to find as many objects as they can with a specific vowel or consonant sound.

By these kind of activities the learners finds their pleasure in learning. Their confidence automatically boosted up to make them pronounce correctly.

Suggestions

1. Phonetic lessons can be included in the English language curriculum.
2. Pre service and in-service training may be given in phonetic instruction with special emphasis on multiple activities.
3. Instructional materials such as flashcards, game cards , symbol charts can be provided along with the textbook.
4. Language classrooms can be equipped with linguaphones and computers to ensure proper linguistic input.
5. Extra class hours can be allotted to the language classes to practise the activities completely

Conclusion

Innovations emerge in every field day by day. English plays the fundamental aspect of any field. Along with the knowledge of the subject, expertise in English language is very essential for every one of us. But almost all the students are feeling uncomfortable in English classrooms. This situation can be changed only by means of the innovative activities which can build the confidence of the students and promotes wholesome language learning.

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