



Investigating the effective strategies for teaching pronunciation

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Abstract

Teaching English pronunciation strategies is very important and valuable in the English language, which in our country doesn't have any proper strategies for teaching English pronunciation to English students because of these reasons most of the students have difficulties in learning English pronunciation. And using this strategy can solve the students' problems. It also makes it easier for the language teachers to teach English pronunciation in a successful and reasonable matter. According to Mortimer (1997), English pronunciation strategies are very important and valuable in English language. Therefore, the title of my research is about investigating the effective strategies for teaching pronunciation at English Department of Sarepol University. Quantitative research method is used in this research. The populations of sample of this research consist of 100 students from different class of English Department of Sarepol University. In this study 50% the research population is male and 50% of them were female. The result obtained in this research by the questioner as a survey is as follow, which are the answer to the research questions. At the end of this research some recommendations and suggestions were inserted by the students as well as by researchers to the English Department of Sarepol University. Teaching English pronunciation included the teaching curriculum of the English Department. Finally, it's suggested that effective strategies for teaching English Pronunciation must be include in the curriculum of English Department of Education Faculty to facilitate the students' problems in the field of English pronunciation.

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1. Introduction

The subject of my research is the investigating the effective strategies for teaching pronunciation. As you know, it is impossible for English teacher and instructors to teach English pronunciation without effective strategies. Therefore, knowledge of these strategies is very important and vital in teaching English language. Pronunciation means making of sound of speech. It has a key role for learning a language especially it has direct connection with listening and speaking skills. According to Harmer (2007) ^[1, 5], almost all English language teachers get students to study grammar and vocabulary. This means the main focus of most teachers are in teaching vocabulary and grammar. The aim of teaching pronunciation is to make aware students to understand the pronunciation of long and hard words. In addition, in the Afghan context, there are number of challenges such as most language teachers do not know how to teach and learn pronunciation, most of the material designers do not pay attention on teaching pronunciation and most of the books do not have pronunciation activities. I believe that teaching pronunciation has a key role in understanding the message of the speakers of different dialects. In this case, it is important for learners to learn pronunciation. According to Harmer (2007) ^[1, 5], pronunciation teaching not just makes students aware of different sounds and sound features but it can also improve the speaking skill of students. There are lots of issues to be discussed about teaching pronunciation.

There are several specific goals for teaching pronunciation in English classrooms. One of my basic goals for teaching pronunciation is to make students speak real English. When we want to check students' pronunciation skills, we usually make students speaking fluently with native-like pronunciation. In other words, when we think of foreign language learning, we first think of speaking with good pronunciation. Pronunciation pushes students to have good speaking. Indeed, pronunciation is implied as a component of speaking. I believe that when students listen to real English, they are likely to communicate real English in their everyday conversation with good pronunciation ^[1].

2. Research Objectives

In this research the researcher wants to find the flowing goals that need to know:

- 1 Investigation about effective strategies for teaching English pronunciation.
- 2 Use of effective strategies in teaching English pronunciation to English language learners.
- 3 Introducing English pronunciation teaching techniques for English teachers and students.
- 4 Upgrading students' Knowledge level in English pronunciation.

3. Research Questions

1. What are the Effective strategies in pronunciations?
2. What is the role of pronunciation in English Language Learning?
3. What is the role of pronunciation in English language teaching?

4. Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to introduce effective strategies for teaching pronunciation, especially for English teachers and English students. Without knowledge of English pronunciation, English language can't be used properly while speaking. And makes comprehension difficult for the speaker and the listener. So knowledge of these strategies of teaching pronunciation is very important. So, in this research the researcher is going to know what are the roles of pronunciations in teaching and learning process. and also the researcher is going to know what are effective strategies or techniques for teaching and learning pronunciations.

5. Literature Review

Morley (1991) ^[2] insisted that, English pronunciation in the ESL or EFL classroom, nevertheless, this important area still neglected or ignored at many University and colleges around the world. In China, an English phonetics course is simply left to chance or given no place at all in English teaching and learning ^[2]. A pronunciation course is still only an elective in the universities or colleges. According to Lin, Fan and Chen (1995) ^[3] some teachers in Taiwan might argue that English pronunciation is not important at all, for very few tests would require students to show abilities related to pronunciation or speaking. In the U.S, many students and teachers believe that spending time on pronunciation is useless because it would be difficult, if not impossible for students to her differences, for instance, between ship and sheep ^[3]. English pronunciation is simply ignored in the curriculum of some universities in Thailand ^[4, 5]. In Mexico, pronunciation was described as "the Cinderella of language teaching"; that

means an often low level of emphasis was placed on this very important language skill ^[6].

6. Definition of Pronunciation

There are a lot of definition of the word "pronunciation" that have been suggested by experts of language learning. In Lynda and Beth books, pronunciation refers to how we produce the sounds that we use to make meaning when we speak. It includes the particular consonant and vowels of a language (segments), aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual segments, such as stress, timing, rhythm, intonation, phrasing, (supra-segmental aspect), and how the voice is projected (voice quality). Although we often talk about these as if they were separate, they all work together in combination when we speak, so that difficulties in one area may impact on another, and it is the combined result that makes someone's pronunciation easy or difficult to understand. According to Helen Fraser, pronunciation here includes all of those aspects of speech which make for an easily intelligible flow of speech, including segmental articulation, rhythm, intonation and phrasing, and more peripherally even gesture, body language and eye contact. Furthermore, pronunciation in the general term is the production of significant sound in two senses; first, sound is important because it is used as a part of the code of a particular language. In this sense, we can talk about distinctive sound in English, French this and other languages, and we can about pronunciation as the production and perception of sound of speech. Second, sound is important because it is used to achieve meaning in the context of use. In line with Richard and Schmidt, they define pronunciation as the method of producing certain sounds. In addition, Otłowski define pronunciation as the way of uttering a word in an accepted manner.

7. The Importance of Pronunciation

It is commonly encountered that many students ignore pronunciation in language learning. Unfortunately, a large number of teacher also ignore it. Students with good pronunciation in English are more likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas, whereas students whose pronunciation is difficult to understand will not be understood, even if their grammar is perfect. Pronunciation is the biggest that people notice about English and uses different sound than native language, and we have to be able to recognize them and pronounce them. Pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence. Celce-Murcia agrees with her statement claiming that intelligible pronunciation is one of the necessary components of oral communication. Similarly, Burns claims said clear pronunciation is essential in spoken communication. Even where learners produce minor inaccuracies in vocabulary and grammar, they are more likely to communicate effectively when they have good pronunciation and intonation. It is more important that speakers of English can achieve; intelligibility means the speaker produce sound patterns that are recognizable as English, comprehensibility means the listener is able to understand the meaning of what is said. Hewing's has also underlined the importance of pronunciation in effective communication, and the difficulties with pronunciation might mean that students fail to get their meaning across, even when the correct words are being used, or they might fail to understand what is said.

7.1. Intonation

Intonation is a significant feature in English. The purpose of intonation, according to Gilbert (1994), is “helping the listener to follow.” Lin, Fan and Chen (1995) [3] showed that many L2 students when listening to English pay more attention to sounds, vocabulary and grammar. They paid very little attention to pitch changes. Therefore, when it comes to speaking, it is no surprise to find that many students’ English sounds monotonous. Lin, Fan and Chen (1995) [3] suggested some strategies including drawing pitch lines/curves or arrows and musical scores [7].

1). The most commonly used strategy is to draw pitch lines/curves. Besides drawing the pitch lines/curves, they suggested that the teacher blacken the last stress syllable and put a dot over it. In doing so, students can be expected to produce the appropriate intonation with the correct words.

Lisa: How was your trip (rising/ Falling intonation)

2) Musical scores. The other effective visual effect is musical scores. For example, Lisa: is that Estelle with them? (Rising Intonation)

7.2. Word stress

1. Visual effects. Emphasize the stressed syllable by using visual effects: thicken, capitalize, underline, or color the stressed syllable. For example,
2. Today today today today
3. Rubber bands. Pull a wide rubber band between the two thumbs while saying a word. Stretch it out during the stressed syllable but leave it short during other syllables.
4. Tapping, clapping, or playing simple rhythm instruments. Give a strong beat to the stressed syllable and weak beats to the others by clapping, tapping on the desk. It helps students to be aware that unstressed syllables have weak beats and so their vowels need to be reduced [8].

7.3. Consonants

There are several strategies to teach consonants, according to Lin, Fan and Chen (1995) [3].

1. Song lyrics. Teachers can ask students to read some popular song aloud to practice final consonants.
Silent night, holy night, all is bright
Round young virgin, mother and child
Holy infant, so tender and mild.
Sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.
2. Numbers. Numbers are another choice for practicing consonants. For example, 301 405-5616

7.4. Vowels

The strategies to teach vowels are as follows, according to Lin, Fan and Chen (1995) [3].

1. Providing meaningful materials: Teachers choose several articles of various styles from the student textbooks to use 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.
2. Using song, games and tongues twisters: Using song, games, and tongue twisters can increase student motivation in a pronunciation class: motivation is a highly significant factor in pronunciation.
3. Assessing students’ progress: Assessing progress is a

crucial factor in maintaining students’ motivation.

Noll & Collins (2002) showed strategies for several types of pronunciation error correction. Finger correction [9].

1. Elicit the sounds/syllables/words/phrases/sentence from of the students. Load one item per finger.
2. While indicating the problem finger, try some of these approaches:
 - a. Mime or mouth the correction.
 - b. Write the phonemic/diacritic/custom syllable on the board.
 - c. Mouth the ending.
 - d. Add a sound by inserting it between your fingers or by adding a finger.
 - e. Bend a finger to remove a sound.
 - f. Get rid of an ending by giving it to the student to “hold”.
 - g. Hit the finger to indicate stress. Group fingers to indicate contractions, linking, etc.
 - h. Make a “short” or “sh” gesture to indicate a reduction.
- 1) If the students can’t finger out the error, invite peer correction/correct the mistake.
- 2) Once the mistake has been corrected, ask the student to say the whole utterance in one smooth flow.

Using Mime and Gesture

Show students the target pronunciation (whenever possible). Call upon students to reproduce what is in them.

- 1) Mime /i/
- 2) Ask students to guess the sound. Ask them how they knew.
- 3) Mime /ai/
- 4) Ask, “How many sound?” [10].

8. Research Methodology

Quantitative method has been used in this research. The information obtained from the questionnaire is presented in quantitative form and the answers to these questionnaires are presented in Yes/No form. Further questionnaires have been emphasized for teaching English pronunciation and in particular of effective English language pronunciation techniques and strategies at English Department of Sarepol University.

9. Population and Sampling

English Department Students were the participants of this study. The 100 students who participate in this study were from different classes of English department of Sarepol University and they were all adult, which encompass both males and females. The participant ranged in the age from 18-30 and the sample comprised of female (50) and male (50). Therefore, males and females have the equal right in this study.

10. Questionnaire for Students

The questionnaires for students contained the questions, which designed to measure the effective strategies for teaching English pronunciation. All the questions included in the questionnaire had to be rated in Likert scale containing simple answers just by simple answer Yes/No. The students had to fill the questionnaire by simply ticking the appropriate answer for research topic. The learners fill the questionnaire

simply with Tick a mark in appropriate answer.

11. Data Collection Tools

For gathering and collecting data. I have chosen my own University (Sarepol). I prepared a questionnaire with closed-ended, that separated among different classes at English department of Sarepol University. The participants include only both (males and females) whom they are students. Therefore, the questions are including closed - ended questions. This type of questions is easy to answer, and take less time to answer the appropriate option. In this stage I will distribute the questionnaire for 100 participants and gather their ideas about the research topic.

12. Data Analysis Plan

The questionnaire was distributing by the researcher himself distributes the questionnaire among different classes of English department of Sarepol University for participation. All of the students will take part optional in this research. Researcher first get students' permissions and then points them for writing their names is optional, which their names will secret. During the investigation researcher observe the private of participant means do not waste their time or take their time. After the data collection, all the achieved data get in to Excel Microsoft office and analyzed. When the data collected and researcher gather the entire questionnaire from participants first, researcher will analyze the questionnaire and see what questions have more pro or advocate in her survey to find out the best ideas for research topic, and she gives score for each statements, next she will explain the issue.

13. Research Findings

This research includes questionnaire which the researcher distributed (100) questionnaire among participants after collecting the questionnaires she finds that all there was are right and no of them rejected, they choose two options which they must choose only one option. All the participant females were (50) and males were (50). They were from English department of Sarepol University. The participants of this research were 100 students.

13.1. Analysis of the Student's Responses

The participants of this research were 100 students.

Table 13.1.1: Age of Participant.

Age categories	18-20	21-26	26-30
Percentage	10 %	85 %	5 %

Table 13.1.2: Class of Participants.

Class	Third class students	Fourth class students
Number	50	50
Percentage	50 %	50 %

Table 13.1.3: Mother tongue of Participant.

Language	Dari	Pashto
Number	70	30
Percentage	70 %	30 %

Table 13.1.4: Do you have the subject of phonology and phonetics included in your curriculum or not?

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	89	89%
No	11	11%

Approximately 89% respondents agreed with the fact that the subject of phonology and phonetics should include in curriculum. And 11% of students responded it is not important to be including in curriculum.

Table 13.1.5: Do you have information about of the International Phonetic Alphabet or not?

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	65%
No	35	35%

Approximately 65% respondents answered that they had information about International Phonetic Alphabet. And 35% of student's respondents they didn't had information.

Table 13.1.6: Do you know about pronunciation features or not?

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	80	80%
No	20	20%

Approximately 80% responded that they knew pronunciation features. And 20% of student's responded that they don't know about pronunciation features.

Table 13.1.7: Do you use pronunciation components like (intonation, stress, rhythm, consonants and vowels) while speaking or not?

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	90	90%
No	10	10%

Approximately 90% of research participants choose (Yes) it means while speaking they were using from (intonation, stress, rhythm, consonants and vowels). But 10% of them chose (No) it means, while speaking they did not use from (intonation, stress, rhythm, consonants and vowels).

Table 13.1.8: Do you know the difference between American and British pronunciation or not?

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	60%
No	40	40%

Approximately 60% research participants knew about differences between American and British pronunciation. But 40% of them did not have any information about American and British pronunciation.

Table 13.1.9: Do you know about effective strategies for teaching English pronunciation or not?

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	55	55%
No	45	45%

Approximately 55% participants answered that they had information about effective strategies for teaching English pronunciation. And 45% of them did not know the effective strategies for teaching pronunciations.

Table 13.1.10: Do you face with problems of English words' pronunciation, when you don't have information about effective strategies of teaching English pronunciation?

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	53	53%
No	47	47%

Of course, 53% students replied that, if we do not have information about effective strategies of pronunciation of course we face in a problem. But 47% of them mentioned that, if we do not have information about effective strategies of pronunciation we do not face a problem.

Table 13.1.11: Does knowledge of strategies in teaching English pronunciation eliminate abnormal accents, when you speaking or not?

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	56	56%
No	44	44%

Approximately 56% participants replied that knowledge of strategies in teaching English pronunciation eliminates abnormal accents, when you speak. But 44% of participants replied that knowledge of strategies in teaching English pronunciation not eliminates abnormal accents, when you speak.

Table 13.1.12.: Watching videos, sharing captions, watching movies, travelling to native language countries important in learning to pronunciation or not?

Options	Number of students	Percentage (%)
Yes	94	94%
No	6	6%

94% participants replied that watching videos, sharing captions, watching movies, travelling to native language countries has important role in order to develop pronunciation skills. But 6% of students replied that, watching videos, sharing captions, watching movies, travelling to native language countries has not important role in order to develop pronunciation skills.

14. Discussion

According to the respondents of the current study, pronunciation plays a vital role in students English Language speaking. Quite most of the research participants were positive about it. However, their perceptions differed in a number of cases. Most of the students believed that, in order to develop students' English pronunciations the phonetics and phonology should be included in curriculum. In addition, the research showed that, most of the students familiar with International phonetic Alphabets and some of them were not familiar with English phonetic Alphabets. Based on the study, 80% of research participants had information with pronunciation features. And 20% of them did not have any information about pronunciation features. Furthermore, it is mentionable that, the research showed that 90% of research participants were using from (intonation, stress, rhythm, consonants and vowels) while speaking. But 10% of them

chose (No) it means, they did not use from (intonation, stress, rhythm, consonants and vowels) while speaking^[11]. So, the research study showed that, from 100% participants 60% research participants knew about differences between American and British pronunciation. But 40% of them did not have any information about American and British pronunciation. Research showed that 55% participants had information about effective strategies for teaching English pronunciation. And 45% of them did not know the effective strategies for teaching pronunciations. The research showed that, 53% research participants replied that, if they do not have information about effective strategies of pronunciation of course they face in a problem. But 47% of them mentioned that, if they do not have information about effective strategies of pronunciation they do not face in a problem. Research showed that, 56% participants replied that knowledge of strategies in teaching English pronunciation eliminates abnormal accents, when you speak. But 44% of participants replied that, knowledge of strategies in teaching English pronunciation not eliminates abnormal accents, when you speak. Thus, research showed that, 94% participants replied that watching videos, sharing captions, watching movies, travelling to native language countries has important role in order to develop pronunciation skills. But 6% of students replied that, watching videos, sharing captions, watching movies, travelling to native language countries has not important role in order to develop pronunciation skills.

15. Conclusion

Pronunciation helps students to pronounce the words and letters in standard ways of pronunciation. In this case, both the teachers and the material designers should focus on pronunciation that we should have enough pronunciation activities in the text books. Besides, if the teacher teaches in monolingual or multilingual classes he/she should find the problems of students and he/she should explain the problems of students for them not to do the same mistakes in the future^[12]. I believe that at first the students should know about phonetics of English language. Then, the students should know about the differences between vowels and consonants. In addition, the students should know about the differences between American and British pronunciations. I as a researcher suggest for those teachers who are teaching pronunciation; they should bring some audios and videos of native speakers of English language for students because listening to audios and videos improve the listening, speaking and the pronunciation skills of students.

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