

Teaching English Pronunciation

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English is a chief medium of communication all over the world. It is spoken in more parts of the world than any other language and by more people than any other tongue. We know that English dominates the world of international business, irrespective of the nationalities of the negotiating or commercial parties. The use of English is the accepted lingua franca.

Like all other areas of language teaching, pronunciation needs constant attention for it to have a lasting effect on students, which means integrating it into daily classroom procedures and it is also one of the most important parts of language knowledge. The first impact of any language learning comes from the spoken word. [n1] That is why teaching pronunciation has great importance in the developing of students listening and speaking habits and skills. It is a well-known fact that language can perform its function as the most important means of human intercommunication only as a language of sounds, because spoken words in all languages consist of speech-sounds, and speech without words is impossible. But words pronounced or written in isolation cannot express complete thoughts. More or less complete thoughts can only be expressed in sentences consisting of one or several words put together according to the grammar rules of the language and pronounced with the proper intonation. [n2]

Therefore, in order to make oneself easily understood while expressing ones own or other peoples thoughts in any language by means of oral speech or reading aloud, one must be able to pronounce sentences in that language quite correctly. Teachers and students of foreign language must also be able to pronounce isolated word and even separate sounds correctly, both in their mother tongue and in foreign language. [n3]

Here are some tips to help your students overcome the pronunciation barrier:

Same Sound, Different Spellings

Teach students to identify different ways to spell the same sound. Examples of these are the ai sound in mine, buy, pie, rye. Homophones are the perfect example of this: buy and by; pair and pear; cell and sell, etc There are lots of games and activities you can do with your class with homophones.

Poems

The teacher may take poems for pronunciation drills to help pupils to achieve good pronunciation of English sounds.

[w] []

When the weather is wet, we must not fret.

When the weather is cold, we must not scold.

When the weather is warm, we must not storm.

But be thankful together whatever the weather.

Proverbs and Sentences

Proverbs and some useful expressions can be used as material for pronunciation drills:

A friend in need is a friend indeed.

Glad to see you. So am I.

Additional information

International words, proper names, geographical names, etc. can also be used for pronunciation drills. Though these words are not difficult for pupils comprehension they require special

attention on the part of learners since phonetically they differ widely from the corresponding words of the mother tongue of the students, for example, culture, cosmic, style, type, machine;

William Shakespeare, George Gordon Byron, Edinburgh, the Atlantic Ocean, the English Channel, Australia, Asia.

Use Visuals

It's hard for students to simply imagine the difference in spelling, not to mention remember all the different phonetic symbols; try to use visual aids like consonants flashcards or IPA flashcards. Use them for introduction and practice, and make sure students become familiar with the symbols.

Teach Them to Use the Dictionary

You won't always be around to tell a student how a word is pronounced. Teach them where to find the pronunciation for a word in the dictionary. The best tool in this case is a dictionary app with sound, so that the student can hear the pronunciation with a simple click. These tools help students become more independent and more responsible for improving their pronunciation.

As a general recommendation, tell students to listen to as much as they can in English, whether it is movies, TV shows or songs.

Ask them to try to identify the different phonemes in different words they hear. Give them the right tools and they will make great strides towards improving their pronunciation!

References

- 1) Bobda A. S. Does Pronunciation matter? EFT. October issue, 1991.
- 2) Brown G. Listening to spoken English. London: Longman. 1977.
- 3) von Schon C. The Question of Pronunciation. EFT.
- 4) TEFL/TESL: Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language. Peace Corps. 1989.