

Teaching English Pronunciation to L₂ Learners: An Articulatory-Perceptual Approach

C.U.C Ugorji

In language pedagogy, the target in the teaching of pronunciation is the acquisition of a phonology which does not interfere with communication, either from the speaker's point of view or from the listener's point of view, and this is largely thought to constitute the most difficult task to learners (Paulston and Bruder1976). Teaching English language pronunciation to speakers of other languages often involves the teacher conducting the lesson through some modelling in which learners are required to listen and repeat or imitate some recorded model. Corrections may follow next, still involving further listening and repeating of pronunciation materials usually in organised patterns of presentation (see Thirumalai2002, Wilkins1990, Paulston and Bruder1976, etc.). Thus, imitation constitutes the basic strategy for learning the pronunciation of a target language, coordinated with perception. This approach may be associated with a behavioural technique, namely, to memorise and reproduce patterns of models (Wilkins1990). It holds some advantages for children whose language habits might yet be in the early stages in the process of formation, and may not learn better otherwise, though perfect mimicry is the exception not the rule. It may also achieve some kind of linguistic conditioning for adult learners. However, it does not support creative participation in a learning process for the adult learner and fails as a tool for self-support which is of greater advantage to adult learners, namely, self-correction and independent practice, which are crucial to cultivation. Given the fact that the focus of second language teaching is learners who have acquired other language skills, the present study considers this traditional approach inadequate, and proposes an Articulatory-Perceptual approach instead. This alternative emphasises descriptions over and above imitation or mimicry and targets creative participation of learner in the learning process as well as learner self-correction and practice. In this perspective, phonological materials for presentation are viewed in terms of micro-gesture commands of the speech apparatus; involving some basic observable or tactile or demonstrable motions of the speech apparatus relevant in the production of given sounds, prosodies or features. This is considered pedagogically more efficient. It represents an expression of hope to help the teacher do the more difficult part of his job.

Works cited

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