

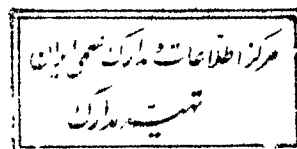
IN THE NAME OF GOD

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Non-corrective Approach to
Pronunciation

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Dedicated

to

My Parents

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays much of the pedagogy on teaching pronunciation, influenced by the direct method and the audio-lingual approach, seems to be focused on imitation and repetition techniques. Correction of errors also plays an important part in pronunciation classes. Although imitation and repetition of the foreign language phonemes and morphemes by the learners are actually two important factors in learning pronunciation, they may not be the only ones. There is also no evidence that correction of pronunciation errors be effective with regard to the learners' mispronunciations. (V. Cook, 1991)

The aim of this study has been to find answers for the following questions:

1. What is the effect of immediate correction on students' pronunciation errors?
2. What would be the effect of teaching the more regular patterns of English pronunciation?
3. Is there any significant difference between the two methods of dealing with pronunciation errors, i.e., correction and the teaching of the regular patterns?

Accordingly the following hypotheses were proposed:

(I) Immediate correction of errors does not have any improving effect on learners' mispronunciations.

(II) Teaching of the more regular patterns of English pronunciation does not have any improving effect either.

(III) There is no significant difference between the two methods of handling the pronunciation errors, the correction method and the teaching of the rules method.

Based on the research questions, two groups of high-school seniors were selected with 30 subjects in each group. The instruments used for the study consisted of two pronunciation tests which served as a pre-test and a post-test. The other instrument used was some lists of words which the subjects were to read aloud one by one in five sessions. The subjects in one group were corrected for their pronunciation errors, while the other group was taught the regular patterns of the English pronunciation.

The statistical procedure used was the T-test formula. The results showed that there was no significant difference between the means of the pre-test and the post-test scores, concerning the first hypothesis. (The T value exceeded none of the levels of significance) Concerning the second hypothesis, however, the T value exceeded the T critical values at both alpha levels, thus rejecting the second hypothesis. The third hypothesis was also rejected in favor of group B, the group whose subjects were taught the patterns of pronunciation. The T value in the third hypothesis was also significantly higher than the T critical values at both levels of significant.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In comparison with the mass of materials on teaching meaning and grammar , little has been written on pronunciation. However, pronunciation is an important aspect of every language without which oral communication seems to be impossible. For many language learners the sound system of a foreign language appears to be something full of perplexities. Teachers are often confused at the performances of their students in pronunciation. They sometimes observe some students who read or speak with highly distorted utterances which sometimes do not have the least similarity with the foreign language speech. They listen to their students and realize that something is wrong. But exactly, what is wrong and why? Why do some learners have little difficulty in pronunciation but others have a great many? What is it that accounts for the discrepancy between these two groups of learners? Language

teachers may also observe that a particular student is rather good in pronunciation at a particular time, but is desperately bad at another time with the same items. What factors can account for this variability? In fact, there are quite a number of questions like this which await researchers to find answers for.

But, perhaps, the most important question might be that what teachers should do and how they can help. In fact different approaches and techniques might be used in a pronunciation class. One of the widely used approaches, influenced by the direct method and the audiolingual approach, is that of imitation and repetition speech segments by the students. Pronunciation, based on this approach is seen as a set of habits for producing sounds. However, the most current ideas of phonology in linguistics and language learning do not seem to be in harmony with the idea of considering pronunciation as a set of habits. In fact, there is no evidence that children learn the phonemes of their language by repeating them one at a time or in pairs. Moreover, phonology concentrates less on the phonemes and more on the abstract relationships between sounds and structures. (V. Cook, 1991).

It is also frequently the case that in the

imitation and repetition approach, foreign language teachers are occasionally used to correcting the pronunciation errors whenever learners make any. It is in fact doubtful whether this practice proves effective at all. Foreign language teachers are also amazed when they observe a particular learner who repeats the same errors over and over, while he has been corrected for several times. This phenomenon might well conform with what Cook (1991) refers to as the concept of 'interlanguage': " The concept of interlanguage applies as much to pronunciation as to grammar. L2 learners have their own rules for pronunciation, which are not just pale shadows of the target language. ...Correcting a single phoneme may not have any effect on their pronunciation or may have the wrong effect."

By and large, the conventional techniques of discrimination of sounds, imitation and repetition of words, and correcting the errors seem to be just scratching the surface. they may not be directly linked to much of what the student has to learn or to the processes of learning. So what should be done? The answer appears to be somewhat far-fetched . If it is the case that language learners follow their own rules

of pronunciation in much the same way as forming temporary rules of grammar, the correction of errors may not be the solution to the problem. Learners must somehow realize that they have formed the wrong rules. They must be taught to replace their mistaken rules with the correct ones. In spite of the prevalent belief among students as well as some foreign language teachers that English language has an irregular pattern of pronunciation, about 90 to 95 per cent of the total vocabulary in English language do in fact follow certain regular patterns. (Wijk, 1966)

Therefore it might be effective to teach such rules to the language students instead of constant correction of their errors.

Purpose of the study

This study aims at finding answers to the following questions:

(I) To what extent does immediate correction of students' errors of pronunciation prove to be effective?

(II) What would be the effect if, on the other hand, the students were taught the regular patterns of English pronunciation?

(III) Is there any significant difference between the two approaches of handling the pronunciation errors, that is, the correction approach and the rule teaching approach?

Hypotheses

The study assumes the following hypotheses in the form of null:

The first hypothesis

Immediate correction of pronunciation errors does not have any effect in improving the learners' errors.

The second hypothesis

Teaching of the regular patterns of English pronunciation does not lead to any kind of improvement on pronunciation errors.

The third hypothesis

There is no meaningful significance between the correction approach and the rule-teaching approach concerning pronunciation errors.

Significance of the problem

With regard to the communicative role of pronunciation in language teaching and learning as well as in social interaction, it seems vital to put a special emphasis on the development of techniques which enhance the skill of pronunciation in language classes. If our students are supposed to learn a foreign language, they should be encouraged to learn it along with a correct and intelligible pronunciation. Although the aim of teaching and learning pronunciation may not be a native-like accent, acquiring a comfortably intelligible pronunciation as Kenworthy (1991) calls it, appears to be a far more reasonable goal. At the present time, it seems that much of the pedagogy on teaching pronunciation deals with the conventional repetition and correction method. However, as Cook argues, there is no evidence that foreign language learners acquire the sound system of the foreign language they are learning just by the repetition of the words and /or by correction of their errors. The results of this study will, to some extent, have implications for both language teachers and learners. If it is the case that correction of errors has no effect on improving learners errors, teachers should give up this practice in their classes.

The results of the study will also give contribution to other researchers who are interested in the in pronunciation grounds. Since the studies and researches on the domain of pronunciation are few in comparison with the studies and researches which have been done on other language skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, this study in its endeavor to pinpoint some of the main features of a pronunciation teaching and learning situation, will be of valuable contribution for those interested in the field.

The present research will also be of particular importance specially for foreign language teachers who are used to correcting their students, once they make any error.