

ILM FAN XABARNOMASI

Ilmiy elektron jurnali

DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH WORDS

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Abstract: This paper explores the challenges and determining factors influencing the pronunciation of words in the English language. Pronunciation in English poses difficulties due to its inconsistent spelling-to-sound mappings, regional variations, and diverse phonetic patterns. Factors such as linguistic background, exposure to native speakers, and individual aptitude play crucial roles in learning accurate pronunciation. Understanding these complexities aids in developing effective strategies and resources for learners and educators to enhance English pronunciation proficiency.

Key words: attitude, motivation, stress

Аннотация: В данной статье исследуются проблемы и определяющие факторы, влияющие на произношение слов в английском языке. Произношение на английском языке представляет трудности из-за непоследовательного сопоставления написания со звуком, региональных различий и разнообразных фонетических моделей. Такие факторы, как лингвистическое происхождение, общение с носителями языка и индивидуальные способности, играют решающую роль в обучении точному произношению. Понимание этих сложностей помогает в разработке эффективных стратегий и ресурсов для учащихся и преподавателей, направленных на улучшение навыков английского произношения.

Ключевые слова: установка, мотивация, стресс.

Introduction

Learning the pronunciation of English can be a challenging task for many non-native speakers. With its complex system of sounds and rules, English pronunciation poses difficulties that can make language acquisition a daunting experience.

One of the main difficulties in learning English pronunciation is the vast number of sounds present in the language. English has a wide range of vowels, consonants, and diphthongs, each of which can be produced in various ways depending on the context. This can be especially confusing for those coming from languages that have a more limited set of sounds. Another challenge lies in the irregularities and inconsistencies in English spelling and pronunciation. Unlike languages such as Spanish or Italian, where letters generally correspond to specific sounds, English has many words with unpredictable pronunciations that defy conventional spelling rules.

Definitions of Pronunciation

Pronunciation plays a very important role in communicative English nowadays, consequently, it is very necessary for English learners to know more about the definitions of pronunciation in the modern life with the use of language to communicate with each other. When learning English, we usually focus on the four skills Listening - Speaking - Reading - Writing but forgetting the equally important skill is pronunciation. Cook (1996 as cited in Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2016) defined pronunciation as the production of English sounds. Pronunciation is how to read a word or a language, the way someone uttered a word. Wikipedia defined pronunciation is “the way a word or a language is spoken, or the manner in which someone utters a word. If one is said to have “correct pronunciation”, then it refers to both within a particular dialect”. A word can be spoken in different ways by various individuals or groups, depending on many factors, such as: the area in which they grew up, the area in which they now live, if they have a speech or voice disorder, their ethnic group, their social class, or their education. Besides, Higgs Graph of Learner Needs (2011) stated that “pronunciation is something that is very important to beginners”. It allows them to feel more comfortable when speaking. Obviously, no one can deny the importance of pronunciation. It is considered as one of the most significant factors in English speaking. Therefore, students should take pronunciation into account in order to have good speaking English. There are so many different definitions of pronunciation, this one from Oxford Dictionary (2005) seems to be easier to understanding: “pronunciation is the way in which the word is pronounced”. Furthermore, pronunciation has been described as the "Cinderella" of language teaching (CelceMurcia, Brinton & Goodwin (1996); Seidlhofer (2001), students are still difficult to deal with English pronunciation although they have studied English for many years. According to James (2010), acceptable pronunciation can be understood based on the following basic levels. In level 1, what the speaker is saying is not understandable to people. In level 2, what the speaker is saying can be understandable to people, but the speaker’s pronunciation is not acceptable to listen to because he/she has a strange and heavy accent. In level 3, people understand the speaker and the speaker’s English is acceptable to listen to. All in all, the above definitions show that pronunciation is an indispensable factor in communication and helps learners with clarity, providing optimal solutions to improve their English proficiency effectively.

The importance of pronunciation

Many people are learning English to communicate with foreigners or native speakers. To communicate well, the first point they need to be concerned about is pronunciation. Therefore, pronunciation is one of the most important things that learners have to master to uncrate appropriately states and fluently. Suwartono (2006:41) stated that “pronunciation is an essential part of a language, for the nature of language is spoken”. Pronunciation is the most important and difficult problem that non-native English speakers have to face when studying English. A common mistake often made by many international students who study English is not paying attention to English pronunciation well. Most students underestimate the importance of pronunciation because they consider that pronunciation is less important than other English aspects such as grammar, lexicology, and vocabulary. Thus, good, pronunciation skills and communication ability are closely linked. Standard pronunciation that is language, learners know how words are pronounced. Therefore, Pronunciation is very helpful for listening comprehension. According to Anil (2008) “pronunciation reinforces listening you've recently learnt through repeated exposure”. Specifically, hearing someone say the word the first time after you learnt its pronunciation can be very reassuring. In short, no one can deny that pronunciation is very important in learning to communicate. Because it’s the first step of communication is to pronounce correctly, which helps listeners to correctly understand the message being conveyed.

Moreover, English learners want to communicate like a native speaker, then pronunciation is an aspect that must be mastered. From the above points of view, the research will show that correct pronunciation brings many benefits and consequences of mispronouncing.

Difficulties in Pronunciation

Attitude

Researchers and studies indicate that the student with positive attitudes towards learning English learn faster and students who are genuinely open minded and interested in improving their pronunciation. According to Elliot (1995) students who were more concerned about their pronunciation had better pronunciation of English as a Second Language. They state that students with motivation to learn with positive attitudes towards the target language and its speakers were more successful than were students with less positive attitudes. According to Gardner and Lambert students with integrative motivation would be expected to work harder to develop communication skills in the second language because they are more likely than their less interested counterparts to seek out native speakers of the language. Dornyei as cited in Despagne (2003) stated that "attitudes are created, and can be changed, through family teachers, peers and school". For example: "I am scared of spiders". Behavioral (or conative) component: the way the attitude we have influences on how we act or behave. For example: "I will avoid spiders and scream if I see one". Besides, the attitude of the students is strongest barrier found by them, it affects their concentration on bad pronunciation because they do not feel that learn English is important and most of them do not have perspectives to future.

Motivation: Marinova-Todd et al. (2000) in the research on learners' acquisition of English concluded that learners can become highly proficient, even native-like speakers of second languages, if they are motivated to do so. Bernaus et al. (2004) found that having a personal or professional goal for learning English can influence the need and desire for native-like pronunciation. Besides, Moyer (2007) found that experience with and positive orientation is an important factor in developing native-like pronunciation. Student motivation can affect current learning as well as the skills and strategies learnt previously Schunk et al. (2008). Motivation is the length that pushes the person to achieve a goal; if the learners do not have motivation the learning process is harder. It cannot be denied that motivation is an important factor that determines the people's participation in every activity especially in language learning. Brophy (2010) describes students' motivation as the extent to which students will invest time, energy and attention towards various tasks, goals or activities.

Word stress

Word stress is a significant feature of English pronunciation. A part of the meaning of a word depends on stress. English pronunciation depends on stress to a great deal in order to become a good speaker pronunciation of English language. Word stress is your magic key to understanding spoken English. Native speakers of English use word stress naturally. Word stress is so natural for them that they do not even know they use it. Non-native speakers who speak English to native speakers without using word stress, encounter two problems: they find it difficult to understand native speakers, especially those speaking fast and the native speakers may find it difficult to understand them. Stress Avery and Ehrlich (1992) found that stress plays a significant role in identifying the "shape" (profile) of a word or a phrase. Therefore, wrong stress may make the conversation become confusing (Hahn, 2004). In a study by Field (2005) on the role of stress, when comparing the variables such as accented words, the shift of accent in a word (left or right) and the vowel change (quality vowel change), he also made a similar conclusion as both natives and the English learners encountered communication problems when the syllables in words were not stressed by any rules.

Conclusion: In conclusion, mastering the pronunciation of English words presents a multifaceted challenge influenced by various factors. The discrepancies between spelling and pronunciation, compounded by regional variations and diverse phonetic rules, create significant hurdles for learners. Moreover, individual differences in linguistic backgrounds, exposure to native speakers, and aptitude for phonetic learning further impact proficiency. Effective pedagogical approaches should integrate strategies that acknowledge these complexities, including phonetic training, exposure to authentic language use, and technology-assisted learning tools. By addressing these challenges and leveraging determining factors such as cultural immersion and linguistic sensitivity, educators can empower learners to achieve more accurate and fluent pronunciation. Future research should continue to explore innovative methodologies and technologies to enhance pronunciation instruction, ultimately fostering greater communicative competence in English learners worldwide.

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