



**UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DEL ESTADO DE HIDALGO  
INSTITUTO DE CIENCIAS SOCIALES Y HUMANIDADES**

**THE TEACHING OF PRONUNCIATION**

**MONOGRAFÍA  
QUE PARA OBTENER EL GRADO DE  
LICENCIADO EN  
ENSEÑANZA DE LA LENGUA INGLESA**

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**Diciembre 2010**

# **The Teaching of Pronunciation**

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Ante la Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo  
para optar por el título de

LICENCIADO EN ENSEÑANZA DE LA LENGUA INGLESA

Diciembre de 2010

## Acknowledgements

First of all I want to say thank you to the person who always was there doing her best in order to help me and impulse me to finish what I begin... Thank you! Mother. Father, I just hope you to be proud Of me, and with all my heart to my wife and my little girl Naomi, because they were always supporting me and because of all the patient the were, I love you so much. Finally thank you Maestra Bertha because you trusted on me and also for your help, I learnt too much with you.

Thank you God!

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

According to O'Connor (1992), it is important to remember that the way a person speaks is a sign of his origin. Every language in the world has different varieties and different accents. In some languages, there are even different styles of pronunciation for men and women. The way we speak is really a part of our identity. Much the same applies to a foreign accent; to speak English with a foreign accent amounts to a declaration: "I am not English, I am from somewhere else." People may actually feel, though they are not conscious of it, that there are advantages in being immediately identifiable as a foreigner, because their listeners will be aware of the possibility of misunderstanding and perhaps adjust the way they listen. It has been said that native speakers can actually be suspicious of a too perfect accent – that in American and British cultures in particular- correctness of any kind is treated with scorn. Perhaps such feelings are akin to listeners often negative reactions to a foreigner's use of newly-coined or slang expressions – the foreigner is seen as encroaching on private territory. A comparison has been made with a host who sees an uninvited guest making free with his possessions. But if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then such reactions, if they do indeed exist, seem difficult to understand. Certainly the reaction of most people when they meet someone whose English is virtually indistinguishable from that of a native speaker is one of admiration and high praise.

Currently there are more native than non-native speakers of English, in the coming decades, more and more users of English will be bilingual speakers of English who use English for a variety of specific purposes, often for cross-cultural communication. Some of these bilingual speakers will use English on a daily basis within their own country, at times for cross-cultural communication within their own borders. Others will have more restricted purposes in using English, often for accessing and sharing information (Sandra lee McKay, 2002). According to this author apart from the need to learn the language of international communication, non-native speakers of English must also possess an intelligible pronunciation so that communication can actually take place.

As a result, teachers must be aware of the need to teach Pronunciation to their learners in the language classroom so that communication can successfully take place when English is used as the *Lengua Franca* of communication. As well as the fact of not only to teaching pronunciation in the language classroom but also to expose learners to the different accents they could encounter outside the classroom in their every day life.



## **1.1 Objective**

The aim of this paper is twofold: a) to raise teachers' awareness of the need to teach pronunciation in the language classroom b) to provide information with regard to the implications of teaching pronunciation in the language classroom.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Pronunciation**

According to Richards (1992), pronunciation is the way a certain sound or sounds are produced. Unlike articulation, which refers to the actual production of speech sounds in the mouth, pronunciation stresses more the way sounds are perceived by the hearer.

#### **2.1 The role of pronunciation throughout the history of English language teaching.**

Changes in language teaching methods throughout history have reflected recognition of changes in the kind of proficiency learners need, such as a move toward oral proficiency rather than reading comprehension as the goal of language study; they have also reflected changes in theories of the nature of language and of language learning. Celce-Murcia (2002) points out that the history of foreign language instruction reveals that there have been many differences of opinion over the years about the value of teaching pronunciation and about how best to teach it.

##### **2.1.1 Methods and Approaches**

In order to better understand the role pronunciation has played throughout the history of English language teaching, it is necessary to start by looking at the basic principles of language learning and teaching. According to Richards and Rodgers (2008), *an approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It*

*describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught, a Method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural. Within one approach, there can be many methods.*

According to Anthony's model (Anthony 1963: 63-67 quoted in Richards and Rodgers: 2008) approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning are specified; method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught, and the order in which the content will be presented; technique is the level at which classroom procedures are described.

As "modern" languages began to enter the curriculum of European schools in the eighteenth century, they were taught using the same basic procedures that were used for teaching Latin. Textbooks consisted of statements of abstract grammar rules, lists of vocabulary, and sentences for translation. Speaking the foreign language was not the goal, and oral practice was limited to students reading aloud the sentences they had translated. By the nineteenth century, this approach based on the study of Latin had become the standard way of studying foreign languages in schools. A typical textbook in the mid-nineteenth century thus consisted of chapters or lessons organized around grammar points. Each grammar point was listed, rules on its use were explained, and it was illustrated by sample sentences. This approach to foreign language teaching became known as the Grammar-Translation Method.

### **2.1.1.1 Grammar Translation Method**

The main features of this method are:

- The goal of foreign language study is to learn a language in order to read its literature or in order to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign language study.
- Reading and writing are the major focus; little or no systematic attention is paid to speaking or listening
- The sentence is the basic unit of teaching and language practice. Much of the lesson is devoted to translating sentences into and out of the target language. Grammar is taught deductively – that is by presentation and study of grammar rules.
- The students' native language is the medium of instruction.

Oral work was reduced to an absolute minimum; pronunciation was considered irrelevant (Richards and Rodgers: 2008).

### **2.1.1.2 The Reform Movement**

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, language educators recognized the need for speaking proficiency rather than reading comprehension, grammar, or literary appreciation as the goal for foreign language programs; parallel to this concern, linguists also became interested in the controversies that emerged about the best way to teach foreign languages. The discipline of linguistics was revitalized and phonetics played a major role. Phonetics –the scientific analysis and description of the sound systems of languages- was established, giving new insight into speech processes. Linguists emphasized that speech, rather

than the written word, was the primary form of language. The International Phonetic Association was founded in 1886, and its International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) was designed to enable the sounds of any language to be accurately transcribed. One of the earliest goals of the association was to improve the teaching of modern languages. It focused on:

- The study of the spoken language
- Phonetic training in order to establish good pronunciation habits
- The uses of conversation texts and dialogues, among other aspects.

Some reformers among them Gouin and Sauveur (Richards and Rodgers: 2008) toward the end of the century turned their attention to naturalistic principles of language learning and for this reason they are sometimes referred to as advocates of a “natural” method. They argued that a foreign language could be taught without translation or the use of the learner’s native language if meaning was conveyed directly through demonstration and action. The natural language learning principles provided the foundation for what came to be known as the Direct Method.

### **2.1.1.3 Direct Method**

The Direct Method was introduced in France, Germany and in the United States in the early 1920s. It became widely known specially in the United States as the Berlitz Method. In practice it stood for the following principles and procedures, among others (Richards and Rodgers: 2008):

- Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.
- Oral communication skills were built up in a carefully graded progression organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
- Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects, and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas.
- Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.
- Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.

One of the lasting legacies of the Direct Method was the notion of “*Method*” itself. The controversy over the Direct Method was the first of many debates over how second and foreign languages should be taught. The history of language teaching throughout much of the twentieth century saw the rise and fall of a variety of language teaching approaches and methods.

### **2.1.1.4 The Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching**

This approach was developed by British applied linguists from the 1930s to the 1960s. Two of the leaders in this movement were Harold Palmer and A.S. Hornby two of the most prominent figures in British twentieth-century language teaching. They attempted to develop a more scientific foundation for an oral

approach to teaching English. They developed an approach to methodology that involved systematic principles of *selection* –the procedures by which lexical and grammatical content was chosen- *gradation* –principles by which the organization and sequencing of content were determined- and *presentation* – techniques used for presentation and practice of items in a course) (Richards and Rodgers: 2008). Some of the main characteristics of the approach were as follows:

- Language teaching begins with the spoken language.
- The target language is the language of the classroom
- New language points are introduced and practiced situationally

It was the third principle that became a key feature of the approach in the 60s known as *Situational Language Teaching*. Accuracy in both pronunciation and grammar was regarded as crucial, and errors were to be avoided at all costs. A typical classroom procedure in Situational Language Teaching would start by practicing stress and intonation.

### **2.1.1.5 The Audiolingual Method**

The emergence of the Audiolingual Method resulted from the increased attention given to foreign language teaching in the United States toward the end of the 1950s. The combination of structural linguistic theory, contrastive analysis, aural-oral procedures, and behaviorist psychology led to the Audiolingual Method. Dialogues and drills form the basis of audiolingual classroom practices. Dialogues provide the means of contextualizing key structures and illustrate situations in which structures might be used. Dialogues

are used for repetition and memorization. Correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are emphasized. There are many similarities between Situational Language Teaching and Audiolingualism. The similarities of the two methods reflect similar views about the nature of language and of language learning, though these views were in fact developed from quite different traditions.

The period from the 1970s through the 1980s witnessed a major paradigm shift in language teaching. The pursuit for alternatives to grammar based approaches and methods led in several different directions. The communicative movement focused on language as communication and on making the classroom an environment for authentic communication. However, alternative approaches and methods emerged. Among them: *Total Physical Response*, *Silent Way*, *Counseling Learning*, *Suggestopedia*, and more recently *Neurolinguistic Programming and Multiple Intelligence*, which were developed around particular theories of learners and learning, sometimes the theories of a single theorizer or educator. Due to the nature of this study: *The teaching of Pronunciation*, the last approach to be discussed in this Chapter is *Communicative Language Teaching*.

#### **2.1.1.6 Communicative Language Teaching**

The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are to be found in the changes in the British language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s; since the mid-1970s the scope of Communicative Language Teaching has expanded. CLT aims to a) make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and b) develop procedures for the teaching of the four



language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication.

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) contrast the major distinctive features of the Audiolingual Method and the Communicative Approach; among others:

*Audiolingual*

*Communicative Language Teaching*

Attends to structure and form more than meaning

Meaning is paramount

Language learning is learning

Language learning is learning to

Structures, sounds or words

communicate

Native speaker like pronunciation is sought.

Comprehensible pronunciation is sought.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Teaching Pronunciation**

In one sense there are as many different kind of English as there are speakers of it; no two people speak exactly alike – we can always hear differences between them – and the pronunciation of English varies a great deal in different geographical areas. There is an enormous amount of variation in how a language is pronounced. These variations according to Roach (2002) are mainly in terms of:

#### **3.1 Regional Variation**

It is usual to make a distinction between the study of dialect, which looks not only at pronunciation but also vocabulary and grammar, and accent, which is purely a matter of pronunciation.

Regional variation can arise from many causes. One cause is invasion or colonization: parts of Britain, for example, were colonized by Norse and Saxon invaders while other parts remained unconquered, and there are still recognizable differences in English language and pronunciation due to this fact. Historically speaking, we can see that separate varieties were most likely to emerge when there were barriers and frontiers between the areas in which a language was spoken. For example American English moved away from the

pronunciation of English in England where it originated, thanks to the barrier of the Atlantic.

Since English is now used by so many people around the world for international communication, it is possible to see pronunciation varieties emerging which are not based primarily on the native-speaker accent of some part of the English-speaking world. Instead, the show English as a global “common property” in which key phonetic and phonological distinctions are retained, but choosing to sound, for example, English or American seems irrelevant.

### **3.2 Social Variation**

To consider the complex ways in which social factors affect variation would take us into the domain of sociolinguistics and beyond the scope of this paper. However it is possible to broadly distinguish among three different kinds of variation. One is related to social class: in some societies people have a pronunciation which identifies them as a member of some social class, or as being at some point on a scale from low to high social class. A second type of social factor is speakers’ tendency to use different pronunciations in different social situations. Not everyone does this, and many people who do it are reluctant to admit that they do. Many people can and do speak something like the standard accent in their professional life, but switch to a different accent when they are with family and friends.

Finally there are social divisions in society other than class ones. Many languages show differences between the speech of men and women: different

professional groups and many societies, though with a common language, have strong differences of religion which are reflected in the variety of the language spoken.

### **3.3 Style Variation**

We are all capable of changing the way we speak when this is necessary for successful communication. Teachers, priests, and politicians are good examples of people who need to be able to speak in a range of styles: public speaking is something which does not come easily to everyone, and in some cases people even take lessons in how to address a large group of people.

### **3.4 Age and variation**

Everyone knows that young people speak differently from older people. It is not likely that this is due to physical causes. We do not know how much of age-based variation is due to individuals changing as they grow older and how much is due to the pronunciation changing from year to year. It is likely that a major factor is the wish of young people to speak in a different way from their parents and in the present day is strengthened by broadcasting aimed specially at young people. Some changes happen rapidly while others emerge only over a very long period.

The pronunciation of a language, then, is liable to constant change, and at any time there are many varieties which are found in different places and situations.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Teaching Pronunciation in the language classroom**

Various authors, among them J. Harmer (2004) and Kelly (2004) point out that there are two key problems with pronunciation teaching. Firstly it tends to be neglected. And secondly when it is not neglected, it tends to be reactive to a particular problem that has arisen in the classroom rather than being strategically planned.

Kelly (2004) believes that the fact that pronunciation tends to suffer from neglect may not be due to teachers lacking interest in the subject but rather to a feeling of doubts as to how to teach it. Many experienced teachers would admit to a lack of knowledge of the theory of pronunciation teaching and they may therefore feel the need to improve their practical skills in pronunciation teaching. In spite of the fact those trainees and less experienced teachers may be very interested in pronunciation, their concern with grammar and vocabulary tends to take precedence. Language learners, on the other hand, often show considerable enthusiasm for pronunciation. They feel it is something that would help them to communicate better. So, paradoxically, even though both teachers and learners are keen on the subject, it is often neglected.

Teachers of pronunciation need:

- A good grounding in theoretical knowledge
- Practical classroom skills

- Access to good ideas for classroom activities

#### **4.1 From reactive to planned teaching**

A lot of pronunciation teaching tends to be done in response to errors which students make in the classroom. Such reactive teaching is, of course absolutely necessary, and will always be so. Grammatical and lexical difficulties arise in the classroom too, and teachers also deal with these reactively. However, when it comes to planning a lesson or devising a timetable of work to be covered, teachers tend to make grammar their first concern. Lexis follows closely behind, with items of vocabulary and longer phrases being 'slotted in' where appropriate. A look at the contents pages of most coursebooks will show that we tend to think of the organization of language in terms of grammatical structures, although some recent publications claim to have a lexically arranged syllabus. Therefore, it is quite natural to make grammar the primary reference when planning lessons.

Yet pronunciation work can, and should, be planned for too. Teachers should regard features of pronunciation as integral to language analysis and lesson planning. Any analysis of language that disregards or sidelines factors of pronunciation is incomplete. Similarly, a lesson which focuses on particular language structure or lexis needs to include features of pronunciation in order to give students the full picture, and hence a better chance of being able to communicate successfully. While planning, teachers should decide what pronunciation issues are relevant to the particular structures and lexis being dealt with in the lesson. They can also anticipate the pronunciation difficulties

their students are likely to experience, and further plan their lesson accordingly. There will still, of course, be reactive work to be done in the classroom, just as there is with grammar and lexis, but by anticipating and planning, the teacher can present a fuller analysis to learners, and give them the opportunity for fuller language practice. Integrating pronunciation teaching fully with the study of grammatical and lexical features has the further incremental benefit that learners will increasingly appreciate the significance of pronunciation in determining successful communication.

As a result, lessons should be divided into three main types:

- **Integrated** lessons: in which pronunciation forms an essential part of the language analysis and the planning process, and the language presentation and practice within the lesson.
- **Remedial** or reactive lessons, where a pronunciation difficulty which arises in class is dealt with there and then, in order to facilitate the successful achievement of classroom tasks.
- **Practice** lessons, in which a particular feature of pronunciation is isolated and practised for its own sake, forming the main focus of a lesson period.

#### **4.2 What pronunciation model to teach?**

The growth in the use of English together with the ease of communication worldwide means that English is increasingly being used as a medium of communication between speakers for whom it is not a first language. In the past the preferred pronunciation model for teaching in Britain or among British teachers abroad, was Received Pronunciation of RP. RP is concerned with social standing rather than geographical. It is still perceived as signifying status

and education and “the Queen’s English” or “BBC English” are often used as synonyms. However, the number of people who speak with an RP accent in Britain is currently estimated at about only 3% of the population and declining (Harmer: 2004).

As a teacher the model to use in the classroom will usually be close to the language used in the real world outside the classroom. In addition, language teachers need to be aware of variations and differences, and the more knowledge one has with regard to different accents and varieties of English, the more informed one’s teaching is likely to be. However teachers should expose their students to a wide range of varieties and accents while allowing them to choose their own target model as long as it is widely comprehensible. The best advice for teachers is to teach what they know and use, and be as informed as they can be about other varieties.

#### **4.3 Implications of Teaching Pronunciation in the Language Classroom**

Several authors among them Penny Ur (1997), Harmer J. (2005) Kelly G. (2004) point out that there are three areas a language teacher should know about in the pronunciation of English in addition to speed and volume which are intimately connected with meaning:

- The sounds of the language, or phonology
- Stress and rhythms
- Intonation



### 4.3.1 Sounds

Words are made up of individual sounds or phonemes. A phoneme is the smallest sound in a language which can differentiate words. It is useful to be able to list and define the sounds or phonemes of the language by writing them down using phonetic representations. The term “phonetic” is used to refer to transcriptions of the sounds of all human languages which make distinctions between sounds that may not be distinguished in a given language system. “Phonemic” is used to refer to transcriptions of a particular sound system (Ur: 1997). For example “beat” = /b + i: + t/ (i: is the symbol for the sound “ee”) “coffee” = /kofi/ and “cease” = /si:s/.

Sounds are represented by phonetic symbols because there is no one to one correspondence between written letters and spoken sounds. Thus the “c” of “cat” is pronounced differently from the “c” of “cease”, but is the same as the “c” of “coffee”. “Though”, “trough” and “rough” all have the “ou” spelling but it is pronounced differently in each case. Different spellings can have the same sound too: “plane” and “gain” both have the same vowel sound, but they are spelt differently. By changing one sound the word meaning can be changed. For example if we replace the sound /b/ with the sound /m/, we get “meat” instead of “beat” (Harmer: 2005). It is vital to remember that the symbols do not “spell” words but represent their pronunciation in phonetic script.

According to Davies and Fraenkel (2003) the phonemic system of English is generally considered to have up to 12 vowel phonemes, plus 8 diphthongs

(vowel combinations) and up to 21 consonant phonemes, plus 3 semi-vowels (vowel-like consonants). The variation in number is due to differences among varieties of English, for example, standard American and standard British English, and slightly different analyses by linguistics

The following table represents the most common symbols used in most British English dictionaries; the set of symbols used in American dictionaries is slightly different, based on General American pronunciation.

Consonants		Vowels and diphthongs	
<b>P</b>	<i>pan, cup, happy</i>	<b>ɪ</b>	<i>hit, fill, women</i>
<b>B</b>	<i>ban, cub, hobby</i>	<b>e</b>	<i>head, fell any</i>
<b>T</b>	<i>ton, sat, writer</i>	<b>æ</b>	<i>hat, fan, ant</i>
<b>D</b>	<i>done, sad, rider</i>	<b>ɒ</b>	<i>hot, fog, what</i>
<b>K</b>	<i>come, back, oblique</i>	<b>ʌ</b>	<i>hut, mother, buck</i>
<b>G</b>	<i>gum, bag, vague</i>	<b>ʊ</b>	<i>hook, full, would/ wood</i>
<b>tʃ</b>	<i>chest, batch, feature</i>	<b>iː</b>	<i>heat, feel, scene/seen</i>
<b>dʒ</b>	<i>jest, badge, ages</i>	<b>eɪ</b>	<i>day, weight, tail/ tale</i>
<b>F</b>	<i>fine, cough, phone</i>	<b>aɪ</b>	<i>die, height, write/ right</i>
<b>V</b>	<i>vine, of, ever</i>	<b>ɔɪ</b>	<i>toy, oil, loyal</i>
<b>θ</b>	<i>thin, breath, arithmetic</i>	<b>uɪ</b>	<i>who, fool, true</i>
<b>ð</b>	<i>t en, breathe, other</i>	<b>əʊ</b>	<i>toe/ tow, note, boat</i>
<b>S</b>	<i>soon, rice, scene/ seen</i>	<b>aʊ</b>	<i>out, fowl/ fo l, house</i>
<b>Z</b>	<i>zoo, rise, busy</i>	<b>ɪə</b>	<i>ear, peer, here</i>
<b>ʃ</b>	<i>shoe, motion, mission</i>	<b>eə</b>	<i>air, pear, hare</i>
<b>ʒ</b>	<i>treasure, visi3n, entourage</i>	<b>ɑː</b>	<i>heart, father, calm</i>
<b>H</b>	<i>hope, behave, who</i>	<b>ɔː</b>	<i>ought, fall, cau e</i>
<b>M</b>	<i>meat/ meet, ram, hammer</i>	<b>ʊə</b>	<i>poor, jury, cure</i>
<b>N</b>	<i>neat, ran, sinner</i>		
<b>ŋ</b>	<i>thank, rang, singer</i>		

<b>L</b>	<i>lend, silly, bel</i>	<b>ɜː</b>	<i>hurt, first, learn</i>
<b>R</b>	<i>red/ read, green, rray</i>	<b>ə</b>	<i>̲a, the, again</i>
<b>J</b>	<i>yet, cure, universo, soya</i>		
<b>W</b>	<i>wed, quite, one/ won, away</i>		

Table 1 The Sounds

#### 4.3.2 Stress

The second area of importance is stress, in other words where emphasis is placed in words and sentences. It has been claimed that certain languages, for example English and Arabic among others are stress-timed. That is to say stresses occur at regular intervals within connected speech and the duration of an utterance is more dependent upon the number of stresses than the number of syllables. As a result English speech rhythm is characterized by tone-units: a word or group of words which carries one central stressed syllable, other syllables, if there are any, is lightened (Ur: 1997). Harmer (2005) points out that the stressed syllable, the syllable which carries the main stress, is that part of a word or phrase which has the greatest emphasis because the speakers increase the volume or change the pitch of their voice when saying that syllable e.g “important” , “complain”. And in many longer words, there is both a main stress and a secondary stress, eg “interpretation” where “ter” has the secondary stress and “ta” the main stress. In addition, different varieties of English can often stress words differently. For example British English speakers usually say “advertisement” whereas some American speakers say “advertisment”. The placing of stress can also affect the meaning of a word. For example, “import” is a noun, but “import” is a verb.

According to Davies and Fraenkel ((2003) there are some general patterns of word stress. Two-syllable nouns and adjectives tend to have stress on the first syllable and two-syllable verbs on the second, but there are exceptions. Compound nouns are even more likely to have the stress on the first syllable and some compound nouns, like blackboard and briefcase, contrast with adjective-noun combinations, like black board (any board that is black) and brief case, (a case, e.g. a law case that is brief).

There are a number of nouns and verbs that are spelt the same but with first-syllable stress for the nouns and second-syllable stress for the verbs, for example:

<b>Noun</b>	<b>Verb</b>	<b>Noun</b>	<b>Verb</b>
<u>C</u> ontrast	Contr <u>a</u> st	<u>R</u> ebel	Re <u>b</u> el
<u>E</u> xport	Exp <u>o</u> rt	<u>R</u> ecord	Rec <u>o</u> rd
<u>O</u> bject	Obj <u>e</u> ct	<u>S</u> uspect	Sus <u>p</u> ect

Although there are again exceptions, three-syllable words tend to have the stress on the first or second syllable, not the last one, for example:

Photograph, beautiful, cultivate

Computer, important, develop

In some cases, when suffixes are added to words the stress moves forwards:

Photograph ----- photography ----- photographic

Psychology / psychologist ----- psychological

There are a number of suffixes that attract the main stress to the syllable immediately before the suffix. They include:

-ity, -ial, -ic, -ical, -ically, -ious, -ian, -ion

Examples:

Public ----- publicity

Drama ----- dramatic / dramatically

Grammar-----grammatical

The use of stress in speech helps us both deliver and understand meaning in longer utterances and it is closely linked with intonation. Within utterances, therefore, tonic syllables are emphasized in order to highlight the most significant new information. Onset syllables are used to initiate a pitch which continues up to the tonic syllable.

With regard to sentence stress Kelly (2004) outlines a three-stage process which enables the speakers of English to say the same thing in different ways:

- When the speakers say words of more than one syllable in isolation the stress is on one of the syllables.
- When words are arranged together in a sentence or utterance, certain syllables will be stressed in order to convey the most important new information. This may cancel out normal word stress.

- Intonation is used to give further subtleties of meaning to the syllables we have chosen to stress.

According to Kenworthy (1992) correct word stress patterns are essential for learner's production and perception of English. If a non-native speaker produces a word with the wrong stress pattern, an English listener may have great difficulty in understanding the word, even if most of the individual sounds have been well pronounced. In listening, if learners of English expect a word to have a particular stress pattern, they may not recognize it when a native speaker says it. In other words, what they hear does not match with what they have in their mental dictionary. That is to say from just sounding right or wrong, word stress can be important for intelligibility and comprehension.

### **4.3.3 Intonation**

The term intonation refers to the way the voice goes up and down in pitch when we are speaking. It is a fundamental part of the way we express our own thoughts and it enables us to understand those of others (Kelly: 2004). The rises and falls in tone that make the "tune" of an utterance is an important aspect of the pronunciation of English, often making a difference to meaning or implication. Stress, for example, is most commonly indicated not by increased volume but by a slight rise in intonation. A native speaker usually has little difficulty in hearing intonation changes in his or her own language: others however, may not find it so easy. The different kinds of intonation are most simply shown by the symbols  $\overset{\frown}{\quad}$  over the relevant syllable or word in order to show falling and rising intonations; and the symbols  $\overset{\frown}{\quad}$  to show fall-rise and rise-fall (Ur: 1997). Intonation according to Harmer (2005) is often described as

the music of speech. It encompasses the moments at which we change the pitch of our voices in order to give certain messages. It is absolutely crucial for getting our meaning across. The word “Yes” for example, can be said with a falling voice, a rising voice or a combination of the two. By changing the direction of the voice we can make “Yes” mean “I agree” or “Perhaps it’s true” or “You can’t be serious” or “Wow, you are o right” or any number of other things.

Teachers often use arrows or wavy lines to show intonation tunes –pitch change-. Pitch describes the level at which one speaks. Some people have high-pitched voices, others say thing in a low-pitched voice. When we pitch the words we say, we may use a variety of different levels: higher when we are excited or terrified, for example, but lower when we are sleepy or bored.

According to Kenworthy (1992) rhythm is a product of word stress and the way in which important items are back grounded by their occurrence on a weak beat. The rhythm of English is, then, mainly a function of its stress patterns; these may also affect such aspects as speed of delivery, volume and the use of pause.

## CHAPTER 5

### The physiology of pronunciation

Teachers also need to consider how the sounds we use come about, and to study the physiology which allows us to use those sounds. We all use the same speech organs to produce the sounds we become accustomed to producing. The set of sounds we acquire, however varies according to our bringing up. That is to say a child brought up in an English-speaking environment will develop the phonemes of English, a French-speaking child will develop a different set, and so on.

To a certain extent we can learn to use our speech organs in new ways in order to produce learnt sounds in a foreign language or to lose sounds from our own language which are not appropriate in the foreign language.

The diagram below shows the location of the main areas of the head and neck associated with the production of sounds. In the human larynx or *voice box* as it is commonly known, there are two flaps of elastic connective tissue known as vocal cords, which can open and close. During normal breathing, and also in the production of unvoiced sounds, the cords are open. When the edges of the vocal cords come close together, the air which passes between them makes them vibrate, resulting in voicing. The pitch of the sound –how high or low- is controlled by muscles which slacken and lengthen the cords for low tones, and shorten the cords, pulling them taut, for high-pitched tones.



We speak using the palate, alveolar ridge, teeth, tongue and lips. The nasal cavity comes into play for certain sounds, and the movement of the lower jaw is also important. Articulation happens when the airstream is interrupted, shaped, restricted or diverted (Kelly: 2004).

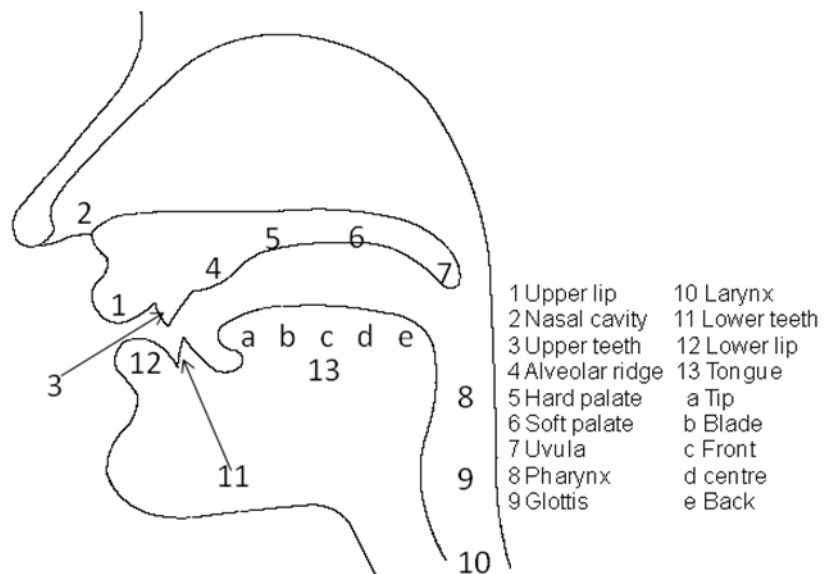
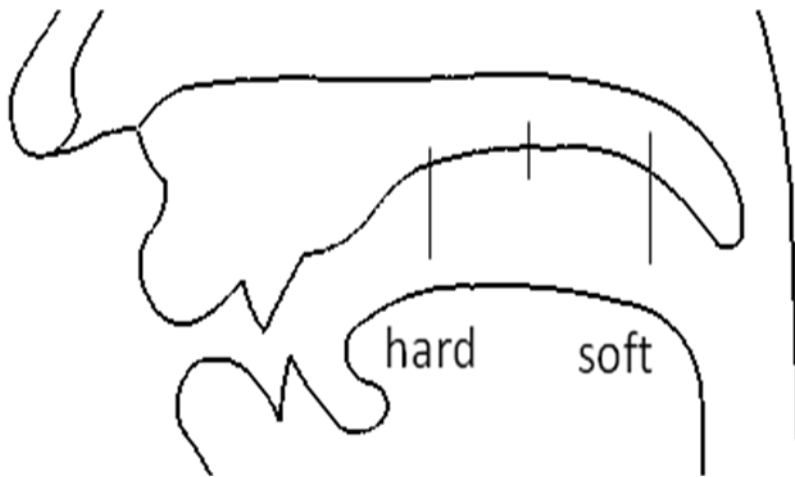


Fig. 1 Speech Organs

## 5.1 The palate

The palate, as Figure 1 shows, forms the roof of the mouth and separates the mouth cavity from the nose (or nasal) cavity. Make the tip of your tongue touch as much of your own plate as you can: most of it is hard and fixed in position, but when your tongue-tip is as far back as it will go, away from your teeth, you will notice that the palate becomes soft.



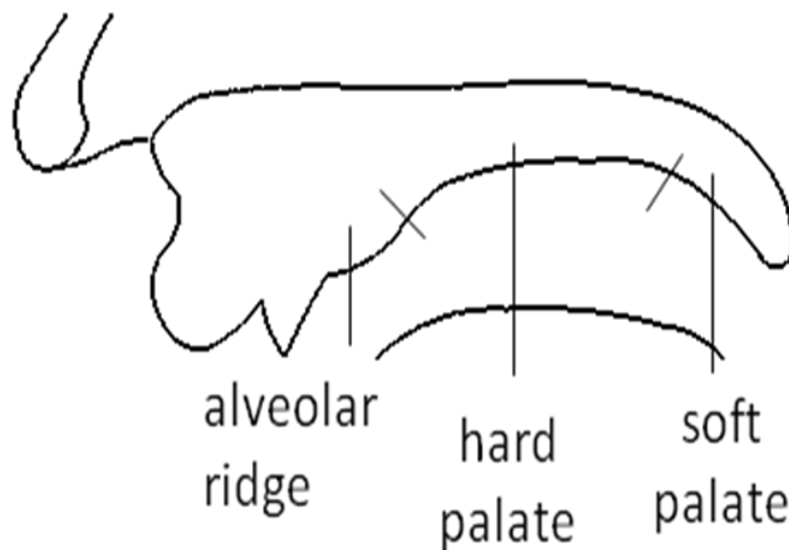
*Fig. 2 The soft and hard parts of the palate*

The soft part of the palate if you use a mirror: turn your back to the light, open your mouth wide open and say the vowel /a:/, and move the mirror so that the light shines into your mouth. You will be able to see the soft palate curving down towards the tongue and becoming narrower as it does so until it ends in a point called the uvula /ju:vjʊə/. Behind the soft palate you will be able to see part of the back wall of the pharynx.

In this lowered position, the soft palate allows the breath to pass behind itself and up into the nasal cavity and out through the nose. This is the position for the /m/-, /n/- and /ŋ/- sounds; say a long /m/- sound and nip your nose; this will stop the breath moving, and when you release it, the breath will continue out in a normal /m/-sound. Keep your lips closed and blow breath (without voice) hard through your nose, then draw it in again sharply: this will give you the feeling of breath moving in and out behind the soft palate.

Apart from this important raising and lowering of the soft palate, the whole of the palate, including the hard palate, is used by the tongue to interfere with the

air stream. Say the vowel /a: / again and watch the tongue in your mirror: it is flat in the mouth. Now add a /k / after the /a: / and you will see the back part of your tongue rise up and touch the soft palate so that the breath is completely stopped; then when you lower your tongue the breath rushes out again.



*Fig.3 The parts of the palate*

The hard fixed part of the palate is divided into two sections, shown in figure 3, the alveolar ridge and the hard palate.

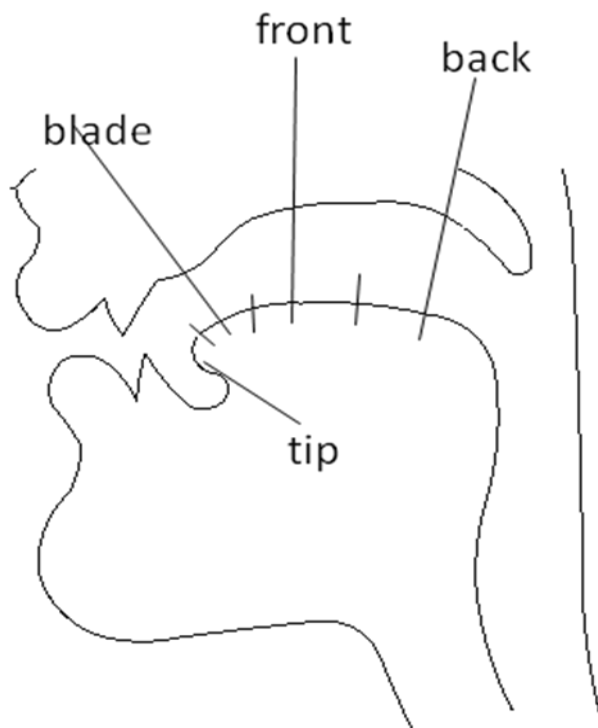
**The alveolar ridge** is that part of the gums immediately behind the upper front teeth, and the hard palate is the highest part of the palate, between the alveolar ridge and the beginning of the soft palate. The alveolar ridge is especially important in English because many of the consonant sounds like /t d n l r s z ʃ ʒ tʃ dʒ / are made with the tongue touching or close to the alveolar ridge.

## 5.2 The teeth

The lower front teeth are not very important in speech except that if they are missing certain sounds, e.g. /s/ and /z/, will be difficult to make; and the two upper front teeth are used in English to some extent. For example, put the tip of your tongue very close to the edge of these teeth and blow: this will produce a sound like the English /θ/ in thin; if you turn on the voice during this /θ/-sound you will get a sound like the English /ð/ in this.

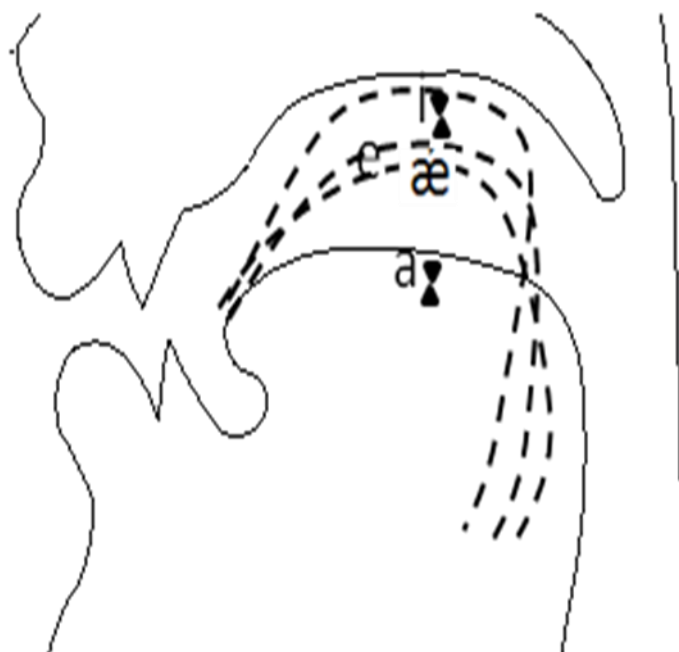
## 5.3 The tongue

The tongue is the most important of the organs of speech because it has the greatest variety of movement. Although the tongue has no obvious natural divisions like the palate, it is useful to think of it as divided into four parts: (O'Connor 1992).



*Fig. 4 the parts of the tongue*

The back of the tongue lies under the soft palate when the tongue at rest; the front lies under the hard palate, the tip and the blade lie under the alveolar ridge, the tip being the most forward part of all and the blade between the tip and the front. Say the vowel /a: / again and look into your mirror: the front is flat on the bottom of the mouth; now say /æ / as in cat: the front rises a little; now say /e / as in met (still keep your mouth as wide open as you can): the front rises again; and if you go on to say /i: / as in see you will see that the front rises to a very high position, so high that it is hidden behind the teeth. These positions are shown in the next figure.

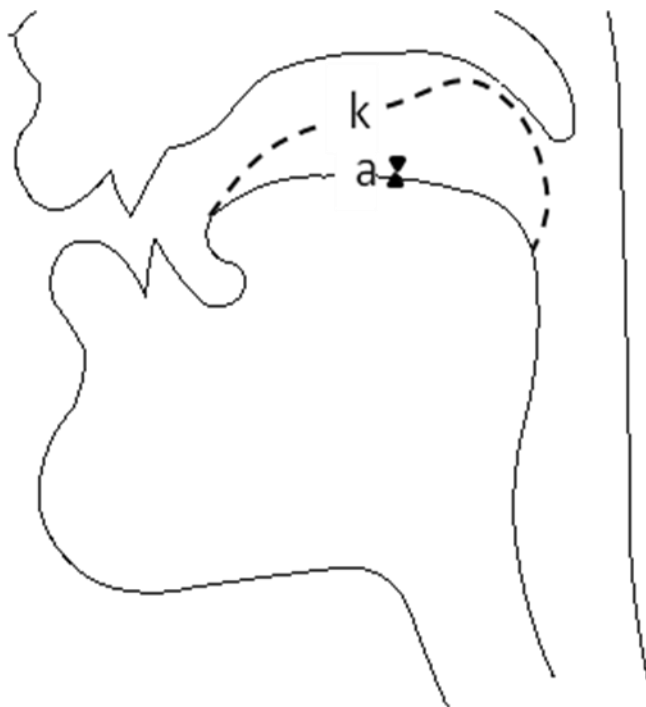


*Fig. 5 Tongue positions for i:, e, æ, a:*

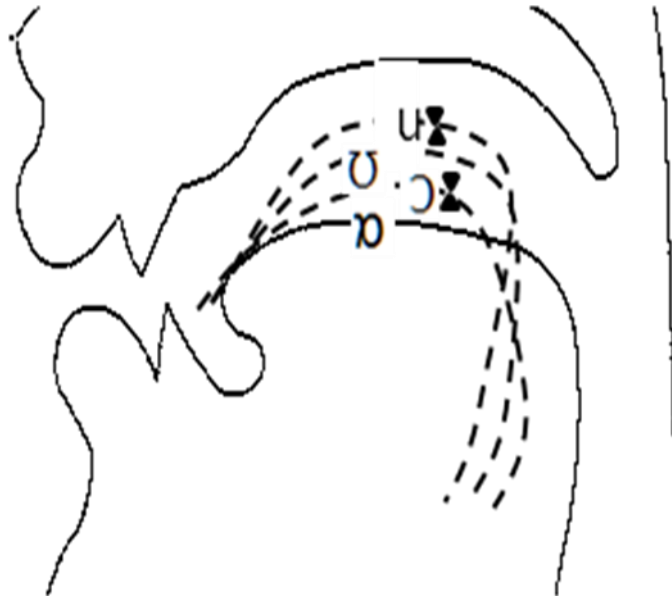
The tongue comes very close to the hard palate. Put your mouth in this position, for /i:/, and draw air inwards quickly; you will feel cold air on the front of the tongue and on the hard palate just above it. The back of the tongue too can be

flat in the mouth, or it can be raised to touch the soft palate, or it can be raised to any position between these two extremes. Say /aɪk/ again, as you did earlier, and hold the /k/-sound with your mouth wide open. You will see in your mirror that the back of the tongue rises from a very flat position for aɪ to a position actually touching the soft palate for the /k/.

The figure number six shows these two extreme positions. The back of the tongue is in various positions between these two extremes for the vowels /ɒ, ɔɪ, ʊ, uɪ/ in pot, fought, put, boot; say them in that order and feel the back of the tongue rise gradually towards the soft palate: you will not be able to



*Fig. 6 Tongue positions for aɪ, k*



*Fig. 7 Tongue positions for u:, ʊ, ɜ:, ɝ*

See the movement in the mirror because the lips will be in the way, but the position of the back of the tongue for each of these vowels is shown in last figure. In /u:/ the back of the tongue is very close to the soft palate; put your mouth in position for / u:/ and draw air inwards quickly: you will feel cold air on the back of the tongue and the soft palate. Now do the same for / i:/ again and feel the difference when the front of the tongue is raised. Go from the / i:/ position to the / u:/ position several times whilst drawing breath inwards, and get used to this difference between a high front and a high back position.

The tongue can also change its shape in another way. Say the sound /s/, keep your mouth in the /s/ position and draw breath inwards; you will feel cold air passing through a narrow passage between the blade of the tongue and the alveolar ridge, but no cold air at the sides of the tongue. Now say an /l/-sound

and draw air inwards. This time you will feel cold air passing between the sides of the tongue and the sides of the palate, but not down the centre of the tongue. This is because for /s/ the sides of the tongue are pressed firmly against the sides of the palate, so that the breath is forced to pass down the narrow central passage between the blade of the tongue and the alveolar ridge. In /l/ the centre of the mouth is blocked by the tip and blade of the tongue pressed firmly against the alveolar ridge and the air passes instead between the sides of the tongue and the sides of the palate.



*Fig. 8 Front view of flat tongue*





*Fig. 9 Front view of grooved tongue*

This last position is very important for English because many of the consonants sounds are pronounced with the sides of the tongue curved up in this way to meet the sides of the palate.

#### **5.4 The lips**

It is obvious that the lips can take up various different positions. They can be brought firmly together as in /p/ or /b/ or /m/ so that they completely block the mouth; the lower lip can be drawn inward and slightly upwards to touch the upper front teeth as in the sounds /f/ and /v/. and they can be kept apart either flat or with different amounts of rounding, and they can be pushed forward to a greater or lesser extent. The closed position for /p, b, m/ and the lip-teeth position for /f/ and /v/ are used in English, but apart from this the English do not move lips with very much energy: their lips are never very far apart, they do not take up very rounded shapes, they are rarely spread very much and almost never pushed forward or protruded.

## CHAPTER 6

### Suggestions for Improving Pronunciation

To function well in spoken English outside the classroom, learners need to handle the pronunciation of the language both productively and receptively, in speaking and listening. They need to make their own pronunciation close to some standard variety of English, and they need to be familiar with a range of common accents in English. They need to be able to make their own speech more comprehensible and meaningful to others. This involves more than recognizing and producing “the sounds of the language”. It is also a matter of the overall “sound of a language” – the typical combinations and sequences of sound, the rhythm and the intonation of the English language.

Therefore, learners need to be exposed to different teaching techniques and activities to practise pronunciation in the language classroom. Kelly (2004) proposes the use of the following activities, among others, to improve pronunciation:

- Drilling. One of the main ways in which pronunciation is practised in the classroom is through drilling. In its most basic form, drilling simply involves the teacher saying a word or structure, and getting the class to repeat it. Drilling includes substitution drilling.
- Chaining can be used for sentences which prove difficult for students to pronounce, either because they are long, or because they include difficult words and sounds. Chaining includes Back and Front chain.

- Minimal pairs and related activities. Words or utterances which differ by only one phoneme.
- Pronunciation and spelling activities. According to various authors it makes sense to tie pronunciation work closely in with spelling work in order to investigate the different ways in which sounds can be represented. Homographs, words which have the same spelling but with different pronunciation and homophones, words which have the same pronunciation but different spelling, can be very useful for these types of activities.
- Tasks too practise *attitude* and *intonation* variations.
- Listening and reading aloud activities. These activities can also enable learners to practise and improve their pronunciation skills, among others.

With regard to teaching techniques, Gower et al (1995) propose the following teaching techniques, among others:

- Mouthing the word. This involves exaggerated movements of the lips, teeth and tongue so that the students can see clearly what is happening.
- Using gestures. If you ask students to say some sounds with their hands on their throats or over their ears they will notice the difference between those that are voiced and those that are voiceless. Once students have learned about voicing then you can indicate that feature of the sound by making a gesture to remind them of it.
- Emphasizing the syllable containing the sound: This has the advantage of bringing it clearly to the students' attention but the disadvantage of possibly distorting the stress pattern of the word, as well as possibly

changing the production of the sound as it would occur in connected speech. It is best, then, to follow the simple rule that if you stress sound unnaturally for any reason, it should immediately be repeated normally. In this way the final thing which stays in the students' mind is the sound produced as it would be in the context from which it has been taken.

- Finger indication. A word can be broken down into sounds and each segment associated with one of your fingers. You can then point to the appropriate finger and say the sound. The sound can be isolated by going through the word slowly, finger by finger, then going back to the finger representing the important sound and getting the students to pronounce it in isolation. At the end you should always put the sound back in its context in the word by either giving a sweeping gesture across all the fingers or closing the fingers and giving a clear, normal model.
- Hands. For consonant sounds such as / ð/ one hand can represent the top teeth and the other hand the tip of the tongue to show the light contact the tongue has with the teeth.

### **6.1 Indicating stress in the word**

You can indicate word stress to students in a number of ways:

**Where's the stress?** It is important that students realize that words consist of one or more syllables before you work on word stress in the classroom. You can demonstrate the number of syllables by clapping out the word; students generally get the idea very quickly.

**By overstressing.** This technique makes stress in words more easily perceived and experience suggests that there is little danger of them repeating the exaggeration outside the classroom.

**By gesture.** This is done by any of the following ways:

- Moving the hand, like a conductor, on the stressed syllable;
- Clapping the word- with a louder clap on the stressed syllable;
- Clicking the fingers on the stressed syllable;
- Tapping the desk.

**6.2 By making marks on the board.** There are a number of possible ways. For example, take the word *hotel*, where the stress is on the second syllable:

- a) Capitalization: hotel
- b) Underlying: hotel
- c) Stress marks: ho'tel

### 6.3 Indicating intonation

1. **By exaggeration.** When you exaggerate the main features the pattern is more easily recognized and more memorable for students. It also encourages them to widen their own range. In long utterances it is useful to use a technique called *backchainning* to maintain the intonation pattern and at the same time practise a long sentence in manageable chunks.
2. **By gesture.** It is possible to “draw” an approximation of the whole intonation pattern in the air with your hand, but this is usually unnecessarily complicated. It is far easier and perhaps more useful, to

give a clear sweep of the hand either up or down in order to indicate the general direction the voice should take on a particular syllable.

**3. By making marks on the board.** There are a number of possible ways.

For example: to draw arrows or to use curved writing.

In addition teachers should also be aware of the most common difficulties their learners face due to their mother tongue. According to O'Connor (1992) the most common difficulties Spanish speakers face, are:

***With regard to consonants***

/f, θ, s, h, p, t, k, g, tʃ, m, n, l, j, w, r/.

***Difficulties:***

- 1 /v/ and /b/ are confused; sometimes /b/ replaces /v/ and sometimes the reverse. /b/ must be a complete stop in all positions, and /v/ a lip-teeth friction sound.
- 2 /ð/ and /d/ are confused; sometimes /d/ (a very dental variety) replaces /ð/ and sometimes the reverse. /d/ must be a complete alveolar stop in all positions, and /ð/ a dental friction sound.
- 3 /g/ is often replaced by a similar friction sound; this does not generally lead to misunderstanding but should be avoided; /g/ must be a complete stop in all positions.
- 4 /s/ and /z/ are confused, /s/ usually being used for both, though only /z/ occurs before voiced consonants. /s/ before other consonants is very weak and in Latin American Spanish is often replaced by /h/.

- 5 /dʒ/ and /tʃ/ are confused, /tʃ/ being used for both.
- 6 /ŋ/ does not occur independently in Spanish and is replaced by /n/ or /ŋg/.
- 7 /r/ in Spanish is a tongue-tip roll or tap.
- 8 /p, t, k/ are not aspirated in Spanish.

Consonant sequences in Spanish consist of an initial stop or /f/ + /r, l, w/ or /j/. Other initial consonants may be followed only by /j/ or /w/. Many of the English initial sequences and almost all final sequences are very difficult and need much practice.

***In terms of vowels:***

/iː, e, ʌ, ɒ, uː, eɪ, aɪ, aʊ, ɔɪ/

***Difficulties***

1 /iː/ and /ɪ/ are confused, the replacement being a vowel usually more like /iː/ than /ɪ/.

2 /æ/, /ʌ/ and /ɑː/ (if there is no letter r in the spelling) are all confused, /ʌ/ being used for all three. Where r occurs in the spelling, /ɑː/ is replaced by the vowel + /r/ of Spanish carta “map”.

3 /ɒ/, /əʊ/ and /ɔː/ (if there is no letter r in the spelling) are all confused, a vowel intermediate between /ɒ/ and /ɔː/ being used for all three. Where r occurs in the spelling /ɔː/ is replaced by the vowel + /r/ of Spanish porque “because”.

- 3 /uː/ and /ʊ/ are confused, the replacement being a vowel usually more like /uː/ than /ʊ/.
- 4 /ɜː/ is replaced by the vowel + /r/ of Spanish ser “be”.
- 5 /ə/ is usually replaced by some other vowel suggested by the spelling (with /r/ added if the spelling has r).
- 6 /ɪə, eə, ʊə/ are replaced by the vowel + /r/ of Spanish ir “go”, ser “be”.
- 7 There is no distinction between long and short vowels in Spanish, and all vowels have the same length as the English short vowels.

Special attention must be given to lengthening the long vowels. Rhythm in Spanish is like that of French or Hindi. Stressed syllables occur, but each syllable has approximately the same length and there is none of the variation in length which results in English from the grouping of syllables into rhythm units. Special attention must be given to this, to the use of /ə/ in weak syllables and to the weak forms of unstressed words, which do not occur in Spanish.



## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSIONS

As it has been pointed out, according to various authors among them Harmer (2004) and Kelly (2004) consider that there are two major problems in the teaching of pronunciation:

1. - Pronunciation teaching tends to be neglected in the language classroom
2. - When it is not neglected, it tends to be reactive to a particular problem that has arisen in the classroom rather than being strategically planned.

In consequence pronunciation work should be planned. Teachers should regard features of pronunciation as integral to language analysis and lesson planning. Hence, lessons should be divided into three main types:

- ❖ Integrated lessons: in which pronunciation forms an essential part of the language analysis and the planning process.
- ❖ Remedial or reactive lessons, where a pronunciation difficulty which arises in class is dealt with there and then.
- ❖ Practice lessons, in which a particular feature of pronunciation is isolated and practised for its own sake, forming the main focus of a lesson period.

In addition teachers should be aware of the fact that there are three main areas a language teacher should know about in the pronunciation of English

besides the aspects of speed and volume which are intimately connected with meaning (Ur: 1997, Harmer: 2005 and Kelly: 2004):

- ❖ The sounds of the language, or phonology
- ❖ Stress and rhythms
- ❖ Intonation

It could be concluded that the main implications of dealing with the teaching of pronunciation in the language classroom are:

- Teachers should possess a sound knowledge of the theoretical aspects involved in the teaching of pronunciation
- Classroom-work needs to be focused on practice rather than on theory. Teachers need to show learners how the choices they make serve to determine the meaning of utterances.

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