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Abstract

Phonetics plays a vital role in speaking a second language. It is an indispensable component of English language. Why should the Indian students learn phonetics? How should they learn it? Do the English teachers have to face any hurdles while teaching English phonetics? Teaching phonetics to the students in India is too difficult because various dialect problems will arise. The teacher should try to avoid the serious problems in pronunciation of the learners. The article exposes how one can easily learn phonetics. It gives the readers not only the importance of phonetics in the modern days but also tells them how to transcribe the English words in to phonemically.
Phonetics is a branch of linguistics which deals with the study of the sounds. It also deals with the production, transmission and reception of the sounds of human speech. It is generally considered to be a field of modern linguistics. Phonetics was studied as early as 2000 years ago in ancient India. Since Indians have a variety of local languages and dialects, teaching phonetics to them is somewhat tough. Although phonetics is existed in the syllabus of the students in India, it is not a separate subject. It is an internal part of English language. Many Indian students think what the constructive things are from learning pronunciation. We know that all languages are spoken first and written second. If we speak in English with our local people, however the pronunciation is, it is not observable but whenever we want to communicate with others means especially foreigners, the speakers must articulate in standard pronunciation. Regarding this, P. Tench (1981:1) says that “Pronunciation is not an optional extra for the language learner, any more than grammar, vocabulary or any other aspect of language is. If a learner's general aim is to talk intelligibly to others in another language, a reasonable pronunciation is important.” The learners who do not have proper wisdom in pronunciation may be weak in other skills also. If the speaker is sure that his accent is understandable, there is no problem. In order to achieve these goals, there's no doubt, the people will need to contemplate about pronunciation and spend some time on it.

**English Pronunciation in India:**

Teaching English pronunciation is still abandoned in the syllabuses in tertiary education in India.

Although the course writers indulge the speaking and listening activities for the learners, they are not immersing phonetics in the curriculum. Till intermediate, the students in the most of the states in India do not have the phonetics in their syllabus. It is necessary to incorporate the phonetics from school studies so that the learners may habituate to articulate words in a correct way. As phonetics is not in the syllabus of high school standard in Southern places, the learners do not realize their mistakes in their pronunciation. Southern languages in India such as Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam dialects interfere in their pronunciation so that the errors will occur in Indian pronunciation. For instance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Wrongly Pronunciation by Indians</th>
<th>RP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. God</td>
<td>/ga:d/</td>
<td>/god/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Marriage</td>
<td>/m?rtdz/</td>
<td>/m?rtdz/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hotel</td>
<td>/h?t?l/</td>
<td>/h?uteIl/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What is Phonetic Transcription?**

Before going to know what the phonetic transcription is, one should first know what a phoneme is. A phoneme is a set of similar sounds illustrating meaning differences or differentiating between words. A syllable consists of a vowel as an essential element and one or more consonants at the onset which is pronounced with a single contraction of the lungs. The English language has twenty vowel phonemes, i.e., twelve pure vowels and eight diphthongs. We have twenty four consonant phonemes. While the vowels are articulated without any obstacle in the vocal tract, the consonants are produced with some friction of the air passage. The treatment of the segmental basically includes sound contrast in words,
pronunciation of vowel and consonant phonemes. The phonemes which are not available in the learner's mother tongue and problematic to him or her should receive special treatment in the teaching material and methodology and sufficient room in the learner's practice.

Phonetic transcription means a written or printed representation of using a phonetic alphabet. It is necessary, because the spelling of an English word does not tell us how we should pronounce it. The interesting thing is that we can not say that each alphabet gives the sound(s); sometimes two or more alphabets provide only one sound. For example employee has four vowel letters but it has three syllables and the last two letters “ee” give one sound only that is /i:. A letter can represent many sounds such as “c” as in car /ka:/, cell /sel/ and church /t?ːt?/ and one of the alphabets stands for a sequence of two sounds. Eg. Quality, queen and exact. So we can say that there is no relationship between sound and spelling. Some more complexities are:

1. Some words can have the same spelling but different pronunciation:
   a. I saw him at CHARUSAT yesterday.
   b. I saw a saw near the sea.

2. Some words have different spelling but the same pronunciation, for example:
   a. He gave me a one rupee note.
   B. She won the cup.

In the first example, both the verbs (a) and (b) “saw” gives same meaning but in (b) “saw” is used as a verb and a noun. Though the pronunciation is same, it gives the different meaning whereas in the second example, “one” and “won” are pronounced same although they have different meanings.

If one knows the phonetic transcriptions, they are able to understand the correct pronunciation by looking the transcription in the dictionary. There are two well-known dictionaries that are available in the market. One is Danial Jones English pronouncing dictionary and the other one is Oxford. Though many people think that it is very hard to learn English phonetic transcription, the learned masters utter that it is not that much difficult that we expect. As most of us do not keep our concentration on phonetics, the Indians are not good at articulation. D. Dalton (2002) rightly says: “We are comfortable teaching reading, writing, listening and to a degree, general oral skills, but when it comes to pronunciation we often lack the basic knowledge of articulator phonetics (not difficult to acquire) to offer our students anything more than rudimentary (and often unhelpful) advice.” The learners should notice improved pronunciation of individual words. Besides the students, the English teachers should also practice phonetic transcription. They should teach in RP English so that they make the learners to learn and articulate the correct pronunciation. If they teach their classes with Indian pronunciation which is happening in India, the students may not know the RP so we would like to say that it is the onus of the English teachers to make the learners to speak in RP. They should unfold the easy methods in phonetic transcription and exemplify the differences between Indian English and R.P.

How should the English teachers create the atmosphere of good pronunciation? What should the learners do to improve their pronunciation? What are the techniques that make them to learn and articulate good English? Although there are many procedures to learn phonetics, the final choice is to
transcribe the words into phonemically and give the ears to the speeches. We would like to propose ten techniques and activities that appear to be useful for learners and teachers alike:

1. **Read aloud:**

   The learner should read the paragraphs or text aloud to improve good pronunciation. Teacher should try to identify the errors and mistakes in pronunciation made by the learner and give feedback which will help the learner to improve his pronunciation. The classroom techniques and activities for teaching EFL pronunciation make the learners to add their talent in improving good pronunciation. J. Morley says that (1991: 507), “the teacher can perform the role of a 'speech coach' or 'pronunciation coach' who, rather than just correcting the learner's errors and mistakes, supplies information, gives models, offers cues, suggestions and constructive feedback about the performance, sets high standards, provides a wide variety of practice opportunities, and overall supports and encourages the learner.”

2. **Provide the Conversational Activities:**

   The teacher should design communicative tasks so that he indirectly improves the learners' pronunciation as well as speaking skills. The dialogues or mini-conversations for both young and adult EFL learners according to their linguistic level to practice particular sounds, especially those which are not available in their mother tongue. Pronunciation while participating in role plays, debates, group discussions, rehearsal strategies and cover strategies will help the learners and give the impression that their pronunciation is better than it really is.

3. **Practice through the Dictionary:**

   An authentic dictionary provides the meaning as well as phonetic transcription. It enables the learner phonetic transcription including syllable division and stress mark. As they see the phonetic transcription, they easily find out the correct pronunciation. The dictionary not only helps them to improve the phonetic transcription but also provides vocabulary and grammar.

4. **Use and repeat the sounds:**

   Pronunciation is very important and learners should pay close attention to pronunciation as early as possible. By using and repeating the sounds, one can easily remember the correct articulation. Whenever the learners eloquent a word frequently, they can easily remember its pronunciation and phonetic transcription.

5. **CALL:**

   Computer-assisted language learning plays a significant role in helping the students in learning phonetics. It provides the students to find out their mistakes through using Computer. The learners get many benefits by it. They will be monitored, guided and given full of freedom. It keeps the learners concentration on learning. In addition, the teacher can exploit visual displays of speech patterns to teach intonation, stress and phonemes to individuals and small groups of learners. This tool can be used for all the learners.

6. **Self-study:**

   When the learners practice the phonetic transcriptions and pay the attention to the phonetics, the improvement will be come in their articulation. Self-monitoring is also the important action of listening to
one's own speech in order to find out mistakes. It is followed by self-correction standing for the process of fixing one's inaccuracy after they have occurred by repeating the word or phrase correctly. If we teach the learners self monitor, we make them to learn sufficiently as they and we expect. The class will be more effective if the learners are able to give feedback regarding their participation.

Conclusion:

We conclude that phonetics is one of the indispensable components in English language. Learning phonetics is nothing but eloquent in a language. Although the syllabus designers are not incorporating the phonetics in English curriculum, they have to remind that phonetics is also compulsory constituent in speaking a second language. Pronunciation materials should be added in the classroom activities so that the learners will realize the importance of phonetics. The techniques and activities that are given in this article bring high-quality articulation.

References:


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