



ENGLISH SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION

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Pronunciation is the way a word or a language is spoken, or the manner which someone letters a word. A way of speaking a word, especially a way that is accepted or generally understood. Pronunciation is a graphic representation of the way a word is spoken, using phonetic symbols.

A common mistake made by many students studying English as a second language is not paying adequate attention to English pronunciation. This underestimation of the importance of pronunciation is mainly because students tend to think mistakenly that pronunciation is less important compared to other aspects of the English language such as grammar, lexicology and vocabulary.

Pronunciation is vital to proper communication because the incorrect use of pronunciation inevitably leads to the message being misunderstood by the recipient. Pronunciation of the letter sounds in words as well as syllable emphasis on parts of words will more often than not change the words meaning and context drastically thereby irreversibly altering the meaning of the sentence being communicated. A good example of this is the word present. If one were to say “I am present” with an emphasis on the first syllable of the word, one is referring to one’s presence at a particular place or time. On the other hand, if one were to say “I wish to present....” Then one refers to a statement or article one wishes to announce.

Another important aspect is, the proper use of English pronunciation inclines to highlight and add value to an individual speaking English. Consider the following: in a situation where a student’s grammar and vocabulary is exceptionally good, he or she may be able to write good English. But, if that same student lacks a fundamental knowledge of pronunciation despite having an excellent knowledge of grammar, etc. his or her communication in English will be severely impeded. He or she will be able to write in English, but will not be able to construct a meaningful sentence when speaking and thus fails at communicating a message.

At the very least, students studying English as a second language, should give all the aspects of English an equal importance. At best, however, those who wish to excel at the English language will always have to give the knowledge of pronunciation a higher priority. They should also endeavor to learn this aspect of the English language more thoroughly if they wish to be recognized as effective communicators. Students who prefer self-learning should visit sites such as T.V-English. Club, which offers a myriad of programs to help students learn proper pronunciation. Programs such as “Art of Conversation” and “Speak Up” are excellent resources for those looking to improve their English pronunciation.

It is common knowledge that many learners ignore pronunciation in language learning. Unfortunately, a large number of teachers also ignore it. However, the reasons for this negligence vary greatly. Almost all learners of English claim that they do not need to study pronunciation. Many of them are convinced that it is simply a waste of time. They just want to communicate in English



and, as long as they are understood, little else matters. It is obvious that the main purpose of teaching and learning any foreign language is to enable students to communicate in the target language. If this is the case, the meaning of the word 'communication' is worth explaining. In brief, it means to understand and be understood. A considerable number of learners think that they can communicate in English because they can converse with their teacher and other students. However, they err in their thinking. A teacher can understand his students much more easily than an average person because his ear is used to 'bad English'. Secondly, other students are often speakers of the same language have similar pronunciation patterns and make the same mistakes so it is easy for them to understand each other. Thirdly, the classroom situation is not 'real'; it takes place at school and students generally do not have an opportunity to talk to native speakers. In this connection, it is beyond doubt that going to a foreign country and talking to ordinary people, is the best way to practice speaking skills. If they can understand a learner, then he can rightly say that he is able to communicate in English. Unquestionably, it is a significant achievement.

Unfortunately, numerous teachers are not aware of the importance of pronunciation and spellings. In the first place, they emphasize the role of grammar and vocabulary learning in the acquisition of a foreign language. The overwhelming majority of English language teachers help students become competent above all in listening and reading. Secondly, many of them think that pronunciation study is too difficult and worse, boring for young learners. Besides, teachers complain about the lack of high quality and suitable teaching and learning materials and about the lack of time to practice pronunciation. According to Harmer (2001), 'they feel they have too much to do already and pronunciation teaching will only make things worse.' Moreover, Harmer adds that there are teachers who claim that students acquire quite good pronunciation in the course of their studies without specific pronunciation teaching.

However, the acquisition of reasonable pronunciation by some students without any effort from the side of the teacher depends on a number of factors. Ken worthy (1987) specifies some of them, in particular the phonetic abilities of learners, integrative motivation and 'achievement motivation.' Equally, it appears that the number of students who appreciate the importance of good pronunciation is limited. Taking these facts into account, teachers ought to convince their students of the need to study pronunciation rigorously and help them to learn how to pronounce English sounds correctly. What is more, it is tempting to suggest that the very first English lesson should deal with pronunciation. If students do not have an opportunity to practice good pronunciation at the beginning of their learning, they may build their habits in the wrong way. For this reason, learning words without pronunciation during beginning lessons is potentially damaging to their overall success.

It is generally recognized that pronunciation is the first and most important thing native speakers notice during a conversation. Knowing grammar and vocabulary is important but useless if the speaker is unable to pronounce those structures or words correctly. Additionally, native speakers are more likely to understand someone, even in spite of Grammatical errors, if this person uses correct pronunciation. When mispronounced, the simplest words will prevent the speaker from communicating effectively in English.

Good pronunciation should be one of the first things that one should learn in English. You can live without advanced vocabulary — you can use simple words to say what you want to say. You can live



without advanced grammar — you can use simple grammar structures instead. But there is no such thing as “simple pronunciation”. If a person don’t have good pronunciation, than will only have bad pronunciation.

And the consequences of bad pronunciation are tragic. Even if someone use correct grammar, For example, if you pronounce *sheep* like people may simply not understand what you want to say. This, and not like that, or if you pronounce *ghost* like this instead of this, native speakers will have serious problems understanding you! In my opinion, you should know how to say English sounds like the *ee* in *sheep* or the *o* in *ghost*, before you even learn words like *sheep* and *ghost*.

Almost all English learners say “I don’t need to study pronunciation. I just want to communicate in English.” Many of them think that they can communicate in English because they can communicate with their teacher and other students.

Do not make this mistake! You have to remember that:

- Your teacher has been listening to bad English for years. He or she can understand it much more easily than the average person.
- Other students are usually from the same country as you. Therefore, they speak English like you and they make the same mistakes. So it is easy for them to understand you.

The only true test is: Go to America or Britain and try to talk to “normal people” — a clerk ,at a supermarket, a bus driver, etc. If they can understand you, *then* you can say that you can communicate in English.

Unfortunately, many learners ignore pronunciation. They can communicate in class, so they think that they are good enough.

If you can communicate in English with people from other countries, congratulations! It’s a big achievement. Now you should ask yourself two questions:

- *Is my English easy to understand?*
- *Is my English pleasant to listen to?*

Some people communicate successfully in English, but have a strong foreign accent. Although you can understand what they are saying, it is not easy. You have to listen to them really carefully, which takes effort. In addition, some foreign accents are simply unpleasant to listen to.

If you speak English with a strong foreign accent, you are making things difficult for people who listen to you. If understanding your English takes effort or your accent is unpleasant, people will avoid talking to you if they have the choice. On the other hand, if you have a clear, pleasant accent, people will simply enjoy talking to you. They will want to spend time with you.



Causes of Errors related to Spelling and Pronunciation-

Influence of mother tongue: A Child develops the speech habit of his mother tongue. When he learns a foreign language, his mother tongue speech habits come in the way. He thinks in his mother tongue and then translates his thoughts in English. Thinking and speaking should be in one language. Our English teacher and their pupils speak English as it were English as it were Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi, Haryanvi etc. our regional speech habits have influenced our spoken English and regionalized it.

Dearth of books on phonetics: The books on phonetics can help the English teachers and their students. But today there is death of books on phonetics written in a simple language. Teachers and students in government schools neither aware nor study books related to phonetics.

Lack of Phonetics Knowledge: Most of our English teachers do not know about phonetics or phonology. Therefore they do not impart good training of speech to their students. They have got their defective pronunciation. The students learn the defective pronunciation from their teachers. This process goes on when the students become teacher they also impart the training of defective speech habit. This vicious circle of speech habit is developed and it is rather impossible to break it.

Reflection of Regional Area: A sound of Indian Language differs from English Language. In India, English Pronunciation is different from region to region and it is marked by regionalism.

Pronunciation and spellings defects in teachers and students: Many teachers are not able to pronounce correctly. This effects the pronunciation of their students. They have not sufficient knowledge of phonetics and phonology. The physical disability of a child sometimes causes poor pronunciation. It is cause of retardation in pronunciation as well as spellings.

Lack of Congenial Environment: Sometimes speaking opportunity is not provided by the English teacher in the classroom. Oral practice is not done during teaching learning process. Oral aspect of the language is totally neglected which leads to wrong pronunciation. Proper attention is not paid to English Pronunciation. Most of the teachers have got their poor pronunciation and that is why they are unable to improve the pronunciation of their students. Proper congenial environment is not provided in school to improve pronunciation skills.

English Language has its unique sound system- There are 26 letters in the English alphabet but there are 44 sounds in the English language. This means that the number of sounds in a word is not always the same as the number of letters. The word 'CAT' has three letters and three sounds but the word 'CATCH' has five letters but still only three sounds. If we write these words using phonemic symbols, we can see exactly how many sounds they have.

CAT is written /k æ t/

CATCH is written /k æ tʃ/

In 'CATCH' the three letters TCH are one sound represented by one phonemic



Symbol /f/

Difficulties arise from two major sources:

1. Actual production of English sounds, such as by means of the correct articulators processes
2. Interrelationship between the written forms of words and their equivalents in spoken English learners are introduced to English orthography.

There is, of course a general regular phonemic – graphic correspondence with noticeable productivity in English orthography which will soon be picked up by student. But due to misapplied analogical formulations, learners show a strong tendency to extend the use of a pattern beyond the permissible limits. In this way, error in pronunciation may be either error in how a sound is pronounced or errors resulting from misguided interpretation of the pronunciation of written words. However a very important variable to be taken into account with this respect is the learners' first language. Teachers must be able to analyze utterances and break them up into their constituents and they must also be acquainted with the structural similarities and differences between the native language and the foreign language and analyze error in pronunciation. This is a prerequisite for proper error correction. Teachers also need this kind of information to be able to plan their teaching to make it possible for learners to avoid the most obvious mispronunciations.

Correct Pronunciation and spellings are necessary for correct language:

Wrong pronunciation is cause of wrong spelling and the wrong spelling is the cause of wrong pronunciation. If pronunciation errors of would be teachers are rectified, they will certainly improve linguistic ability. Since English in India taught as a second language, so neither parents nor teachers pay attention which is required to develop language ability sometimes due to regional speech habits people commit pronunciation errors. Some other commits pronunciation error due to lack of script knowledge and carelessness in writing.

Therefore, it is decided to carry a research project in order to develop remedial exercises for English pronunciation.

Problems related to Spelling and Pronunciation:

English is a language which has acquired great reach and influence all over the world. It is taught all over the world under different circumstances. Teaching English involves not only helping the students to use the form of English most suitable for their purposes, but also exposure to regional forms and cultural styles so that the students will be able to discern meaning even when the words, grammar or pronunciation are different from the form of English they are being taught to speak. Some professionals in the field have recommended incorporating information about non-standard forms of English in ESL programs. For example, in advocating the African-American English for classroom-based instruction, linguist Richard Mc Dorman has argued, "Simply put, the ESL syllabus must break free of the longstanding intellectual imperiousness of the standard to embrace instruction that encompasses the many English forms that learners will encounter and thereby achieve the culturally responsive pedagogy so often advocated by leaders in *EFL*".



English as a foreign language indicates the teaching of English in a non-English-speaking region. Study can occur either in the student's home country, as part of the normal school curriculum or otherwise. TEFL is the teaching of English as a foreign language. In India English is taught mainly as a Second Language. Language teaching practice often assumes that most of the difficulties that learners face in the study of English are a consequence of the degree to which their native language differs from English. A native speaker of Tamil, for example, may face many more difficulties than a native speaker of German, because German is more closely related to English than Tamil is.

Language learners often produce errors of syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation thought to result from the influence of their mother tongue, such as mapping its grammatical patterns inappropriately into the second language, confusing items of vocabulary like homophones and homonyms and pronouncing certain sounds incorrectly or with difficulty. This is known as "language interference". However, these transfer effects are typically stronger for beginner's language production, and Second Language Acquisition research has highlighted many errors which cannot be attributed to the LI, as they are attested in learners of many language backgrounds

Indian Learners of English encounter a lot of problems at the school and undergraduate level. The reasons being most of them come to the universities after studying in the local vernacular. The areas where they feel utmost difficulties are pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and meaning. Their difficulty in pronunciation springs from the fact that their articulator system gets tuned with sounds of their mother tongue the time they start learning English. So it is quite natural that when they speak English, there will be mother tongue interference. What we aim is to develop in them a form of Standard English i.e. they should be able to listen to native speakers and to understand the English language and to speak the type of English which is intelligible to native speakers. This is essential in the changing global scenario where communication is the key to success. We can achieve this objective by exposing them to Standard English.

The following activities and exercise are suggested for English teachers while developing speaking and reading in order to improve English spellings and pronunciation.

1. Teacher should correct faulty pronunciation of words while reading text book and other unseen passages.
2. Teachers should develop fluency, clarity, speed, accuracy, pauses etc while reading oral text.
3. Teachers while ideal reading should take care of stress, intonation and rhythm.
4. Correct articulation of different types of vowels, consonants and dip thongs should be taken care of while reading and speaking by students.
5. Training of rhyming words in necessary by proper demonstration. Different looking words may rhyme together and similar looking words may not for example school -route and new- sew respectively.



6. Students should be trained in homophones and homographs. Homophones are those with having same pronunciation but different spellings and meanings like flour- flower, site - sight. Whereas homographs are words having same spellings but different pronunciation and meaning.
7. Correct pronunciation could be assured to a considerable extent by exploring student's proper nouns (persons and places)
8. Teachers should make efforts in helping students in learning correct pronunciation of commonly pronounced words.
9. Teachers should give their students practices of possible sound variations of different vowels, consonants and clusters for examples has three different sounds /s/, /z/ and /sh/ which are commonly pronounced as silence, business and shoes respectively 'c' has three different sounds like car, cinema and cello similarly 'ch' has three different sounds like chemistry, charm and machine,
10. Teachers should teach students pronunciation of words in which at least one consonant remains silent (such as half, receipt, knife and debt etc.)
11. Teachers should discuss with students about equivalence between English, sounds and Devnagari, letters, which is quite useful for students belonging to different regions of Rajasthan due to variation in speech habits in different states like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab which are nearby states of Rajasthan, apart from that speech habits are different in Maharashtra, Bengal and Bihar
12. The Sound /z/ requires specific and careful acquisition as there is no letter in the Devnagari alphabet to represent this sound, although it has four orthographic equivalents in Urdu, e.g. Business, centuries such /z/ sound is commonly mispronounced even by people with high status in their own fields, due to regional speech habits.
13. Teachers should discuss with students regarding how to pronounce the inflexions of words, that is, the past tense of verbs and the plurals of nouns sometimes even advanced level of students are unwilling to believe that two words have the same pronunciations 'past and passed', mist and missed, pact and packed etc.
14. The plural nouns like girls, fans and beds, ends in the letter 's' but the terminal sound is not /s/ but /z/ such articulations should be taught to students for developing correct pronunciation not only at higher level but also at primary so that student develop sound structure with strong root base.

Although English is more difficult to learn than Spanish as far as pronunciation is concerned unlike Spanish, English is a language of Germanic origin but also of influence of Latin and French, which is not read as it is written as it is mostly done in Spanish, that is why English is said to be little phonological. There is no one to one relation between phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letter) in



English. We can distinguish 12 vowel sounds in English but only in Spanish, 8 diphthong sounds and 24 consonant sounds (including the two semi vowels.)

But a teacher with strong positive mindset can enlighten students that English spelling is actually not as unphonetic as it is usually believed to be. It is possible to frame, within limits, some definite relationships between letters (cluster of letters) of the English alphabet and their sounds teacher should teach students the following rules in order to learn correct pronunciation.

The cluster 'stion' at the end of a word always gives sound of /tʃ/, most of the students mispronounce the words 'suggestion' and 'digestion'

Any 'd' followed by 'j' or 'g' is always silent, as in judge, adjourn and fidget. Therefore some students also mispronounce simple words like 'Adjust' and adjectives, therefore teachers should make their students aware of such traits of letter sound correspondence by which number of pitfalls related to pronunciation could be avoided. Schools of different stages should provide students sufficient with theoretical details and subtleties of spoken English in linguistically planned manner with required practice.

Teachers should make their students aware about IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbols. So as to be able to learn the student pronunciation of words and transcribe words and sentences in phonetic script.

Sometimes situation specific traits of spoken English with proper stress and intonation should be practiced with the help of audio-visual aids.

English pronunciation is also dependent on etymology of words; this should be taught to students by giving references of root words. French words constitute a large part of English vocabulary. Students should be made aware of the important differences between British and American Trends of pronunciation and at the sometimes they must be familiar with (IRP) Indian Recommended Pronunciation. Teachers should keep in mind the phonological limitations and speech habits of average Indian student. Teachers should follow native model while not deviating too much from (BRP) British Received pronunciation.

The kind of spoken English that we actually need is to be based on what we now call Indian recommended pronunciation (IRP). This is a model based on Educated Indian English (EIE) which, while, retaining, the essentials of British stress, rhythm and intonation, obviates some of the unnecessary strains imposed by BRP as far as pronunciation of isolated words are concerned. Indian schools should take a middle path for learning standard pronunciation i.e. to practice a model of pronunciation which is neither pedantically and painfully correct nor ridiculously and unintelligibly deviant when we refer to BRP as the standard school should guide students towards standard pronunciation fluent speech and good oral expression.

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