

IMPORTANCE OF PHONETICS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The world during all its History has made use of certain languages as a mean of communication between people of all countries and cultures. Living nowadays in a world where information travels almost at the speed of light, everybody is directly affected by occurrences all around the globe; therefore there is a great need of a language to serve as link between the nations. Language is not just words and structures; its value lies in the communicative function it performs. Littlewood says that a student must develop skills in manipulating the linguistic system in order to use the language spontaneously and flexibly to express his/her intended message. He/she must gain the ability to develop skills for using language to communicate meanings. She/he should become aware of the social meaning of language forms. The teacher should combine learning values with interest and enjoyment so that the students are highly motivated.

Key Words: intelligibility, intonation, language, learning, students, Phonetics

Introduction

English is an associate official language in India. It enjoys the status of language of administration, medium of instruction at higher education level and a link language. It is also used in national and international seminars, conferences and intellectual gatherings. In addition, the technological developments have necessitated its use in the fields of information and technology and media. Further, the demand for and use of spoken English is notably seen in news reading announcements, advertisements, tourism and hotel industry. In fact English is the only language which can meet the needs of international communication for the purposes of trade and culture. The students who wish to go abroad are expected to pass certain tests of English, which demand a fair proficiency in spoken English (Phonetics). The questions on English proficiency tests include tests on pronunciation and interactional skills. Moreover, the interest and ambition of a large number of people in developing a career abroad has renewed interests in pronunciation to negotiate meaning in discourse. Therefore, knowledge of phonetics deserves attention on par with other skills of English.

Before inquiring the effect of phonetics on English literature, let us investigate the summary of phonetics. Varshney (1998) mentioned that phonetics is the scientific study of the production, transmission and reception of speech sound. In other words, it studies the defining characteristics of all human vocal noise, and focuses on its attention on those sounds occur in the languages of the world. The job of phoneticians is to study the various organs of human speech such as the lungs, the larynx, the soft palate, the tongue and the lip along their function in the production of speech. Phonetics has three main areas: 1. Acoustic phonetics is the study of transmission of speech sounds through the air; 2. Articulatory phonetics is the study the way in which speech sounds are produced; 3. Auditory phonetics is the study hearing and the perception of speech sounds. As one of the most problems for language learner is that how he writes down the language sounds and words phonetically. He may make a mistake in his transcription; this mistake shows that he has confused one sound with another. In this case, the role of language teacher is to teach the appropriate sequence of sounds to use in any given words by the use of phonetics transcription. Varshney (1998) argued that phonetics transcription is a device in which we use several symbols in such a way that one symbol always represents one sound. In other words, Jones (1972, p. 6) indicated that "phonetics transcription

may be defined as an unambiguous system of representing pronunciation by means of writing , the basic principle being to assign one and only one letter to each phoneme of the language". However, the main aim of phonetics transcription is to record as accurately as possible all features of a word or a set of words which the language learner can hear and identify in the stream of speech. In order to improve the phonetics transcription difficulties of English language learners should be given more earing –training exercises by their language teachers in ELT classroom.

However, phonetics cannot be studied properly without touching upon the notion of phonology. Phonology has been commonly recognized as a branch of Linguistics. According to Bloomfield (1933), phonology is the organization of sounds into patterns. In order to fulfill the communicative functions, languages organize their material, the vocal noises, into recurrent bits and pieces arranged in sound patterns. It is the study of this formal organization of languages which is known as phonology. Varshney (1998) mentioned that phonetics is differs from phonology in that phonetics is the science of speech sounds, their production, transmission and reception and the signs to represent them in general with no particular reference to any one language, whereas phonology is the study of the vocal sounds and sounds changes , phonemes and their variants in a particular language. Phonetics is one and the same for all the languages of the world, but the phonology of one language will differ from the phonology of another. Macmahon in the hand book of English linguistics (2006) made differentiate between phonetics and phonology, according his idea, phonetics focuses on the mechanics of sound production and transmission, irrespective of how the sounds may operate as part of a language system; whereas phonology focuses on the function or organization, or patterning of the sounds.

In general, Phonetics always plays a vital role in the study of English literature. The use of literature came back to the eighteen century, and it is applied to designate fictional and imaginative writings such as poetry, prose, fiction and drama (Abrams and Harpham, 2012). For English language teachers a question arises that why the use of phonetics is important in teaching English literature for foreign and second language. Answered this question is that the first problem that confronts the English learner in his effort in order to learn a speaking – knowledge of English language as his foreign or second language is its pronunciation. Before, English pupil starts learning any part of the vocabulary or grammar of the language, he must be able to recognize the sound system of the language as uttered by an English native speaker or he must be able to produce them himself in such a way that an English native speaker understands him. The role of language phonetics in today's educational system of language literature delineates that to be phonetics in any language literature classroom; an English language learner must be able to use it for a wide range of purposes.

A language literature student should have a set of language skills, knowledge, and understanding of phonetics that help him to use language for reading and writing in and out of his classroom. However, it is felt that English language literature teachers should be made aware of the use of phonetics system in teaching English literature in classroom. In other words, part of the role of the English language literature teacher is to help students perceive sounds of English. Note that the sound system of a foreign language is not easy for a second or foreign language learner. Each language has its own set of sounds system; there is, in fact, some sounds of English language are different from other languages. In this case, some sounds of English do not occur in other languages. One of the best ways to teach the learners is that they should be made familiar with the sound system of this language. The English literature teachers should check their learners' pronunciation and help them to do appropriate

pronunciation.

Pronunciation

Units of speech such sounds, syllables, words and words in connected speech are important aspects of pronunciation. These also account a lot for intelligibility. A speaker or a listener is frustrated if communication breaks down because of problems in pronunciation. So, whatever our preferences may be to teach spoken English, we cannot avoid learning and teaching pronunciation. However, the ideal way of learning pronunciation is to create one's own pattern of pronunciation in consonance with the goals of intelligibility, communicability and self-confidence.

Pronunciation and Listening

Pronunciation is an important aspect of both speaking and listening. A listener decodes the stream of speech into meaningful units, words and individual sounds to understand what the speaker means. It is here that the listener cites the weak forms, like don't for do not, mustn't've for must not have. The listener ear should be trained for such features as they occur substantially in spoken English. Therefore, one should practise weak forms and distinguish characteristic features of connected speech to overcome communication difficulties and be intelligible.

Pronunciation and Spelling

Spelling, though, a feature of writing often influences speech. The relationship between pronunciation and spelling is understood to be very complex and sometimes even confusing and chaotic. This is so because the 26 letters have to function for 44 sounds. A single sound might be represented by a number of letters or letter combinations in different words. As such, there doesn't always seem to be a one-to-one correspondence between spelling and pronunciation. For example, the letter f can be pronounced /v/ in of (weak form) but /f/ in roof. On other hand, sound /k/ stands for different letters like -c in call, -cc in occasion and -ck in attack and is silent in words like knee, knife, and know. Therefore, it is important for a student to develop an intuitive relationship between spelling and pronunciation. Such knowledge will help pronounce a new word correctly and conversely spell the word rightly when they hear a new word.

Intelligibility and a Model of Pronunciation

Intelligibility is the quality of being understood. A speaker may become unintelligible when her/his speech differs radically from the listener's model. His/her speech may differ because of the influence of his/her firstlanguage or due to a standard pattern spoken in her country which varies widely from that of listener's. If the speaker substitutes one sound or feature of pronunciation for another, the result is that the listener hears a different word and the communication ends in unintelligibility. In brief, the role of phonetics to the teaching of English poetry has key role for the English language literature learners are needed to be familiarized with the ways of phonetics firstly and then the poems are put forth to them. For many reasons, thus, poetry starts with reading, and poetry makes sound, rhythm, music, beauty, feeling, emotion, and vision; a language learner should learn science of speech sounds of his language in order to read poems correctly. In this case, a language learner should be familiar with the rules of places of articulation which is concerned with many parts of the mouth and throat that are used in the production of speech sounds, and manner of articulation which is concerned with the way that a speech sound is produced by the speech organs. One of the most important for language learner is that he should learn how to write phonetic transcriptions in order to find out distinguish between spelling of words and their pronunciations. He should learn how

to make differentiate between vowels and consonants in English language.

However, a student of English literature should understand phonetics of this language, otherwise; he may be confronted with the problem of not being able to appreciate poetry. If the English literature student is familiar with the sound system of the English language, it can help the student for better understanding of poetry and appreciation of a literary text. So the role of phonetics in the study of a poem may help the learner receive the knowledge about the language and thus create a sophisticated awareness of the language in order to enable one develop greater sensitivity to the works of literature in general and poetry in particular and respond to them better. Keeping in mind the fact, a learner of English literature should know that poetry is musical speech and thus, within the perimeter of the article, in general, from what has been discussed above in this paper can be used as various devices by the learner to read a correct poem, because reading of a poem is needed to analyze it. Finally, the researchers believe that the students of English literature yet need to have knowledge of phonetics to talk about poetry. Therefore, understanding of phonetics of English language can be used in order to resolve the complexities of teaching English poetry in English language teaching classroom

Conclusion

As mentioned above, language is a tool for human beings communication and men use it for receiving and sending their information in their society. This communication can be oral or written. Therefore, language learners should know the knowledge of their language includes knowledge of the morphemes, words, phrases, sentences, and phonetics. One of the basic factors in learning language is speech sounds of this language. It refers to phonetics. Phonetics is almost as old as the language of human being. Birjandi and Salmaninodoushan (2005) mentioned that the earliest contributions to phonetics were made by Sanskrit scholars more than 2000 years and the first phonetician of the modern world was Dana J. Matthias, author of *De Litteris* in 1588. Ladefoged (1982) mentioned that phonetics is concerned with describing the speech sounds that occur in the language of the world.

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