International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning
2017 April, Volume 6 Number 2, 69-81

Changing paradigms in teaching English pronunciation: A historical overview

Afshari, Sajad ✉
University of Isfahan, Iran (afshari.sajad@yahoo.com)
Ketabi, Saeed
University of Isfahan, Iran (s.ketabi@yahoo.com)

ISSN: 2243-7754
Online ISSN: 2243-7762

OPEN ACCESS

Received: 20 January 2016 **Revised**: 17 February 2016 **Accepted**: 7 March 2016
Available Online: 13 May 2016 **DOI**: 10.5861/ijrsll.2016.1423

Abstract

The role of pronunciation has varied widely in different methods and approaches of language teaching. In Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the cognitive learning it received virtually no role. In Audio Lingual Method (ALM), on the other hand, it had a pivotal role. In communication-oriented approaches and within the broad context of EFL/ESL teaching in which successful communication is emphasized, it has been argued that pronunciation pedagogy deserves neither fate. This paper provides a historical overview of pronunciation teaching from GTM to communicative language teaching (CLT) highlighting the fact that until CLT, pronunciation pedagogy witnessed some drastic fluctuations; nevertheless, from then on, most of the researchers and practitioners in the field have come to the conclusion that the most reasonable and logical goal for pronunciation pedagogy should be intelligibility and functional communicability rather than nativeness.

Keywords: pronunciation pedagogy; historical overview; intelligibility; nativeness

Changing paradigms in teaching English pronunciation: A historical overview

1. Introduction

The history of pronunciation teaching and learning demonstrates the profound influence of the methods and approaches that waxed and waned. Accordingly, the status of pronunciation in second/foreign language teaching and learning contexts has witnessed dramatic rise and fall. Issacs (2013) contends that:

> From a historical perspective, it can be argued that pronunciation, more than any other component within the broad construct of second language (L2) speaking ability, has been subject to the whims of the time and the fashions of the day. That is, pronunciation, once dubbed "*the Cinderella of language teaching*" to depict its potentially glamorous yet marginalised existence (Kelly, 1969, p. 87), experienced a fall from grace after being a focal point of L2 instruction and teacher literacy training during its heyday-a prime example of a pendulum swing in L2 teaching methodologies and practices (Gass, 1996) that have affected substantive coverage for learners in L2 classrooms, often with detrimental effects for stakeholders (e.g. Morley, 1991). Naturally, the aspects of L2 speech (pronunciation) that are ascribed pedagogical value in the minds of teachers and researchers have shifted over time (Munro & Derwing, 2011). However, an aerial view of developments over the past century reveals the polarised nature of researchers' and practitioners' beliefs on the relative importance of pronunciation in L2 aural/oral instruction and assessment (p. 1).

According to Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin (1996), the history of pronunciation in English language teaching is a study in extremes. Some approaches to teaching, such as the *reformed movement* and *audiolingualism,* elevated pronunciation to a pinnacle of importance, while other approaches, such as the *cognitive learning* and early *communicative language teaching,* mostly ignored pronunciation.

While some scholars emphasize the importance of focusing on this component (Nation & Newton, 2009), others have questioned the effectiveness of teaching pronunciation, especially in the EFL classroom (Purcell & Suter, 1980). The former camp emphasizes the role of pronunciation in effective communication and comprehensibility, alongside its high social value and link to prestige (Gelvanovsky, 2002). They believe that teaching can play an important role in helping learners develop ways of improving their pronunciation and shaping their attitude toward the importance of pronunciation (Richards & Renandya, 2002). The usefulness of teaching pronunciation is also a widely debated subject in the language teaching context. Fraser (1999) concludes that most ESL teachers agree that explicit pronunciation teaching is an essential part of language courses and confidence with pronunciation allows learners to interact with native speakers, which are essential for all aspects of their linguistic development. Those against teaching pronunciation, on the other hand, base their reasoning upon biological restrictions (especially among adult learners), as well as inhibiting sociological and personality factors (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Despite the ongoing debate among these camps, most language teaching experts would agree that comprehensible pronunciation is a common feature among all successful language learners, and intelligible/comprehensible pronunciation is deemed to be necessary for each and every user of the target language (Zemanova, 2007). Furthermore, even if pronunciation is not desired for its own sake, many scholars believe that a certain level of pronunciation instruction is necessary because achievements in pronunciation often help learners to increase their expertise in other skills (e.g., Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Jenkins, 1998; Levis & Grant, 2003; Morley, 1991; Zemanova, 2007). Kellerman (1990), for instance, points out that by mastering the phonology of the target language, learners will be able to improve their listening skill simultaneously. He concluded that despite the lack of unanimity regarding its importance, almost all language teaching experts

would agree that pronunciation ought to be included in all EFL/ESL textbooks and curriculums.

The field of language teaching and learning has witnessed a gradual shift from teaching-centered classroom towards greater emphasis on learner and learning-centered classroom, and from specific linguistic competencies to broader communicative competencies. Four dimensions of communicative competence were identified: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Morley, 1991; Canale & Swain, 1980). According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1996), with regard to the linguistic element, it is evident that nonnative speakers can successfully develop native-like proficiency in speaking sub-skills such as in vocabulary, grammar, pragmatics, and the like; pronunciation is one critical field most learners have severe difficulty with regarding the significant impact of learner's mother tongue, age, attitude, motivation, etc. Since lacking an intelligible pronunciation leads to an abortive and/or meaningless communication and expecting nonnative speakers to achieve native like pronunciation is considered unrealistic, it has been argued that the more realistic goal of pronunciation teaching should be intelligibility.

2. Historical overview

2.1 Grammar Translation Method

The fundamental purpose of teaching and learning in Grammar-Translation method was to acquire a reading knowledge of the target language because literary language was considered superior to spoken language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Therefore, for the Grammar-Translation method, what needed to be developed were reading and writing and, consequently, grammar and vocabulary were emphasized. Speaking and listening skills were neglected and pronunciation received virtually no attention (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Since pronunciation was viewed as totally irrelevant, it found no place in Grammar-Translation method and Reading based approaches in which oral communication in target language is not a primary instructional objective (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996; Florez, 1998).

2.2 IPA and Reform Movement

It was 1890s when the first systematic contribution to pronunciation teaching in terms of linguistic analysis of sound systems took place as it had become the center of attention of a handful of scholars such as Henry Sweet, Wilhelm Viëtor, and Paul Passy who developed the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) within the field of phonetics. And this analytical contribution strongly influenced a movement which instigated a prominent shift in language acquisition known as Reform Movement. Concurrently, the advent of IPA paved the way for the emergence of another pronunciation teaching approach known as analytic-linguistic approach, an explicit type of instruction in which the emphasis was on phonetic alphabet, articulatory description, and contrastive information as a complement to intuitive-imitative approach (Celce-Murcia et al.,1996).

Proponents of the Reform Movement made pronunciation (phonetics) as foundational to L2 teaching and teacher training at the turn of the 20th century (Sweet 1899), with phonetic transcriptions emphasized as obviating the need for a native speaking teacher to model the accurate production of target language sounds (Isaacs, 2013).

The exponents of the Reform Movement reacted to historical linguistics, the analysis of classical texts and the emphasis on the written text. They argued for the primacy of the spoken language over the written language and believed that its primacy should be reflected in an oral-based language teaching methodology. Phonetics, "*the science of speech-sounds*" (Sweet, 1890, as cited in Henderson, 1971, p. 28) and "*the art of pronunciation*" (Sweet, 1899, as cited in Henderson, 1971, p. 28), offered both a scientific foundation for the reformers' zeal in rejecting the teaching methods of the time and a practical technique for bringing about the improvements in the classroom they were looking for (Howatt, 1984, p. 177). The reformers, Viëtor, Sweet, Jespersen, and Passy, regarded phonetics as the foundation of all study of language and accurate pronunciation as the foundation of

successful language learning; Henry Sweet (1877, as cites in Howat, 1984) went as far as to declare that phonetics and phonology are the indispensable foundation of all study of language. The importance attached to the mastery of accurate pronunciation made it imperative for teachers and learners to acquire knowledge of phonetics. Thus, the phoneticians and spoken language enthusiasts of the Reform Movement all shared the belief that training teachers and learners in phonetics would lead to the establishment of good pronunciation habits. Sweet demanded that teachers understand how sounds are produced physiologically and that they should be proficient performers themselves (Howatt, 1984). Sweet's 'phonetic spelling system' influenced the final shape of the International Phonetic Alphabet (Howatt, 1984). The International Phonetic Alphabet was designed by the International Phonetic Association as a means of symbolizing the distinctive sound segments of any language or accent. The aim of the notation was that "*there should be a separate letter for each distinctive sound: that is for each sound which being used instead of another, in the same language, can change the meaning of a word*" (Phonetic Teachers' Association, 1888, as cited in Finch, 2000, p. 47).

2.3 Direct Method

The first oral-based teaching method that was widely adopted as a reaction against and a refreshing alternative to Grammar-Translation was the Direct Method. One cannot fail to acknowledge the debt owed to Maximilian D. Berlitz for making the Direct Method available to large numbers of learners through his network of language schools; according to Howatt (1984, p. 204), "*without Berlitz, very few people would have benefited from it*".

According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) in the Direct method, originated in late 1800s and early 1900s, pronunciation was considered an important component; albeit, the methodology for teaching pronunciation was not rigorously nurtured and was primitive: in this method, the teacher is ideally a native or near-native speaker of the target language presenting pronunciation inductively and correcting through modeling, meanwhile, learners are to listen meticulously and do their utmost to reproduce the sounds through imitation and repetition.

2.4 Audio-Lingual Method and Situational Language Teaching

Pronunciation is likewise very important in the audio-lingual approach, and there is a great emphasis on the traditional notions of pronunciation, minimal pairs, drills and short conversations (Celce-Murcia & Goodwin 1991, p. 136). Situational language teaching, developed in Britain between 1940 and 1960, also reflected the audio-lingual view of the pronunciation class (Richards & Rodgers 1986). Morley (1991, p. 484) states that, "*The pronunciation class... was one that gave primary attention to phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, environmental allophonic variations, and combinatory phonotactic rules, along with ... attention to stress, rhythm, and intonation*."

Structuralism views "*language as a system and… investigates the place that linguistic units such as sounds, words, sentences have within this system*" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 519). As the dominant linguistic model of the 1940s and 1950s, it placed great emphasis on the description of different levels of production in speech (Saville-Troike, 2006). In the application of structuralism to second language acquisition (SLA), as pioneered by Fries (1945), pronunciation was placed at the forefront of L2 pedagogy. In his seminal volume entitled '*Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language*' (1945), Fries proposed that in learning a new language the primary concern should be "*first, the mastery of the sound system*" (p. 3) and then the mastery of morphology, syntax and lexis. Overall, the syllabus should be characterized by systematic attention to pronunciation right from the beginning as well as intensive oral drilling of the basic sentence patterns of the target language. The combination of structuralism with the then dominant theory of psychology known as behaviourism, which views learning as the result of habit formation (Osgood, 1953; Skinner, 1957), led to the development of the Audio-lingual method in language teaching.

The Behaviorist approach (Brown, 2001) creates very limited progress in teaching pronunciation via

Imitation Theory and Reinforcement Theory, which are full of mechanistic exhortations made by the teachers. Minimal pair drills and substitution drills are extensively used. The students are almost converted to parrots during the teaching hours due to mechanistic repetitions and drills. Listening and speaking exercises were designed to concentrate on the area of pronunciation, for example, the discrimination between members of minimal pairs, and "*oral proficiency is equated with accurate pronunciation and grammar*" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 58).

In the 1940s, 1950s, and into the 1960s pronunciation was viewed as an important component of English language teaching curricula in both the audio-lingual methodology developed in the U.S. and the British system of situational language teaching. In situational language teaching, the language lesson began with the focus on pronunciation; drilling formed part of classroom tasks. Accuracy in pronunciation was regarded as crucial and practice techniques consisted of "*guided repetition and substitution activities, including chorus repetition, dictation, drills and controlled oral-based reading and writing tasks*" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 43). In fact, along with correct grammar, accuracy of pronunciation was a high-priority goal in both systems (Morley, 1991). Although these two schools of language teaching developed from different traditions, as pointed out by Richards and Rodgers (1986), they reflected quite similar views on the nature of both language and language learning. In general, language was viewed as consisting of hierarchies of structurally related items for encoding meaning. Language learning was viewed as mastering these forms, the building blocks of the language, along with the combining rules for phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, sentences. The pronunciation class in this view was one that gave primary attention to phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, environmental allophonic variations, and combinatory phonotactic rules, along with structurally based attention to stress, rhythm, and intonation. Instruction featured articulatory explanations, imitation, and memorization of patterns through drills and dialogues, with extensive attention to correction. One text that was very widely used and served as a source of much imitation in the preparation of pronunciation teaching materials was an oral approach volume produced under the supervision of Robinett (Lado, Fries, & Robinett, 1954, as cited in Morley, 1991).

2.5 Cognitive Code Learning

The cognitive code approach de-emphasized pronunciation in favor of grammar and vocabulary because the conventional wisdom of the late 1960's and early 1970's held that native-like pronunciation could not be totally taught. It was during these years that questions were asked about the role of pronunciation in the ESL/EFL curriculum, whether the focus of the programs and the instructional methods were effective or not. Pronunciation programs until then were "*viewed as meaningless non-communicative drill-and-exercise gambits*" (Morley 1991, pp. 485-486). In many language programs, the teaching of pronunciation was eliminated because many studies concluded "*that little relationship exists between teaching pronunciation in the classroom and attained proficiency in pronunciation; the strongest factors found to affect pronunciation (i.e. native language and motivation) seem to have little to do with classroom activities*" (Suter, 1976, pp. 233-253, Purcell & Suter, 1980, pp. 271-287, as cited in Hishmanoglou, 2006). There was a shift in attention from phonology to grammar and syntax and this was largely attributed to Chomsky's (1965) works, for example, his introduction of *transformational-generative grammar*.

2.6 Silent Way

Another method that emphasized the importance of pronunciation was the Silent Way, in which L2 students' exposure to vocabulary was extremely limited in the first month. All their words were represented in wall charts and each letter was color-coded to provide a visual representation of sound and spelling correspondences. Gattegno believed that sounds are the most basic feature of language. Pronunciation is worked on from the beginning to get the melody of the language – it is melody-centered. Since it required considerable training on the part of the teachers the Silent Way, in its pure form, was not practiced in very many locations. But its founder, Caleb Gattegno (1976, as cited in Derwing, 2010), maintained that the method was highly successful in producing L2 speakers who had excellent pronunciation. To Silent Way advocates and trainers, the production of

accurate L2 sounds as well as other phonological elements of an utterance such as stress and intonation was deemed crucial and, accordingly, dealt with from embryonic stages of learning. Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) contend that it can largely be likened to Audiolingualism except for the fact that in Silent Way phonetic alphabet or explicit linguistic instruction has no place in the language program.

2.7 Community Language Learning

In Community Language Learning (CLL), correct pronunciation receives special attention to an extent which would gratify the learners. CLL pronunciation approach as in the Direct Method is intuitive-imitative and the only difference appears in the content and degree of practice which is learning-centered and controlled by the learner (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996).

2.8 Communicative Language Teaching

Adherents of communicative language teaching (CLT) criticized traditional pronunciation teaching methods, as utilized in audiolingualism: "*a mere parroting of the forms of language, as in an audio-lingual drill, will get the student nowhere*" (Prodromou, 1995, p. 100, as cited in Kanellou, 2011). Pronunciation drills were considered to be purposeful only in a purely linguistic sense; there was no purpose beyond practicing pronunciation forms for their own sake. Instead, it is through the performance of meaningful tasks, activities that involve real communication, that learners could 'pick up' pronunciation effectively.

It was CLT, which was seen as "*a reaction away from… the audiolingual method*" (Richards & Schimdt, 2002, p. 90) that played an instrumental role in the considerable reduction of the status of pronunciation in language teaching. "*Pronunciation, traditionally viewed as a component of linguistic rather than communicative competence or as an aspect of accuracy rather than conversational fluency, has come to be regarded as of limited importance in a communicatively orientated classroom*" (Pennington & Richards, 1986, p. 207). It seems that researchers and practitioners failed to deal with the role of pronunciation in a model of language teaching predicated upon the attainment of communicative rather than linguistic competence.

Though pronunciation is not an explicit feature in this mode of instruction, the prominence of pronunciation has been stressed by it (Carey, 2002). Students can be expected to do well in the pronunciation of English if the pronunciation class is taken out of isolation and becomes an "*integral part of [the] oral communication*" class (Morley 1991, p. 496). Moreover, the goal of pronunciation has changed from the attainment of 'perfect' pronunciation to the more realistic goals of developing functional intelligibility, communicability, increased self-confidence, the development of speech monitoring abilities and speech modification strategies for use beyond the classroom (Morley 1991, p. 500). The overall aim of these goals is for the learner to develop spoken English that is easy to understand, serves the learner's individual needs, and allows a positive image of himself as a speaker of a foreign language. The learner needs to develop awareness and monitoring skills which will pave the way for learning opportunities outside the classroom environment.

With the communicative paradigm, it has been recognized that the goal of getting foreign/second language learners to have perfect pronunciation may be unrealistic and inappropriate (Jenkins, 1998). Instead, it has been suggested that the goal in teaching pronunciation should be "*intelligibility*" (Kenworthy, 1987) and "*communicative efficiency*" (Harmer, 1991). As Harmer (1991, p. 22) states, "*our aim should be to make sure that students can always be understood to say what they want to say. They will need good pronunciation for this, though they may not need to have perfect accents.*"

Scarcella and Oxford (1994) proposed research-based approach to pronunciation teaching which is a major break from traditional, audiolingual approaches to teaching pronunciation. Their approach emphasizes pronunciation in a meaningful interaction. In this approach, pronunciation should be taught in all second language classes through a variety of activities and it is not regarded as an isolated skill. The students take primary responsibility for improving their pronunciation, but the teacher provides them with the tools they need

to accomplish this objective. This approach is more comprehensive in its instructional design and yet more realistic. The two approaches are compared in figure 1.

Research-based approach	Traditional approach
The goal is to gain sufficient pronunciation skills so that the quality of pronunciation will not inhibit communication.	The goal of instruction is to acquire nativelike pronunciation.
Instead of putting the emphasis on sounds, teachers concentrate on stress and intonation.	The primary emphasis is teaching sounds.
The emphasis of instruction is on teaching pronunciation communicatively.	Sound segments are taught non-communicatively through drills of isolated words.
The teacher provides students with phonetic description only when they are helpful to students in tutorials.	Phonetic descriptions are a primary component of traditional pronunciation classes.
The student's motivation is seen as central to successful language instruction. The student plays a primary role in improving pronunciation. Self-monitoring skills and awareness strategies are taught.	Students do not take responsibility for improving their own pronunciation.
Affect is critical in pronunciation instruction. Students learn specific relaxation activities to lower anxieties and resistance to improving pronunciation.	Affect is not viewed as important in instructional activities.

Figure 1. Comparison of the research-based approach and the traditional approach to pronunciation instruction. Adopted from Scarcella and Oxford (1994).

Pennington and Richards (1986) describe the current status of research on teaching pronunciation from the perspective of CLT. They suggest focusing on a long-term goal for teaching pronunciation. Pronunciation should be taught as an integral part of oral language use and teaching should aim to reduce the amount of native language influence. As pronunciation is linked to listening, vocabulary and grammar, teacher should highlight these interdependent factors. While integrating pronunciation into other program, we should concentrate on the error in phonological forms, those that can make problems to comprehension. Kenworthy (1987) have identified six main factors affecting pronunciation learning. These are: the native language, the age factor, amount of exposure, phonetic ability, attitude and identity, motivation and concern for good pronunciation. Other researchers (e.g., Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996; Gillette, 1994, as cited in Florez, 1998; Graham, 1994; Pennington, 1994, as cited in Florez, 1994), report on the following factors: age, personality, mother tongue influence, gender and learning context, some of which are explained below.

3. Factors affecting pronunciation learning

3.1 Age

It is believed that age is one of the factors that can make language learning in general and pronunciation learning in particular difficult for adults compared to children. Age is also one of the factors which may explain

why adults cannot achieve native-like pronunciation. Lenneberg's (1967) Critical Period Hypothesis proposes that there is a biological or neurological period, ending around the age of 12, after which it becomes extremely difficult to attain the complete mastery of a second language, especially pronunciation. However, according to Yates (2002), there is a progressive decline rather than a strong drop-off after puberty in the ability to learn the sounds of a new language. "*The good news is that these neurological differences between adults and children seem to result from a change, rather than a deterioration, in the way the sounds in a new language are processed, and so training can help adults improve in their ability to discriminate new sounds and establish new phonetic boundaries*" (Yates, 2002, p. 14).

Furthermore, some researchers (e.g. Bialystock, 1997; Bongaerts, Planken, & Schils, 1997, as cited in Florez, 1998), have shown that adult learners are capable of achieving native-like pronunciation in an L2. However, the degree of pronunciation accuracy, according to Avery and Ehrlich (1992, as cited in Barros, 2003) varies considerably from one individual to another. To them, this discrepancy in pronunciation among adult learners means that ESL classroom time can profitably be devoted to improving students' pronunciation.

3.2 Personality

Non-linguistic factors related to an individual's personality and learning goals, attitude towards the target language, culture, native speakers, and type of motivation, which are beyond the teacher's control, all influence the development of pronunciation skills. Furthermore, the degree of exposure to and use of the target language can support or impede pronunciation skills development. For example, learners who are outgoing and confident and get involved in interactions with native speakers are liable to practice their foreign language pronunciation (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992, as cited in Thanasoulas, no date). Conversely, some learners feel uncomfortable trying out new speech rhythm and melody patterns, while others feel stupid pronouncing "*weird*" sounds, and with time, they decide that it is futile and impossible to learn English pronunciation (Laroy, 1995, as cited in Thanasoulas, no date).

3.3 Motivation and concern for good pronunciation

According to Nunan (1991), this factor is related to personality. "*Some learners seem unconcerned about making mistakes, be it grammatical or phonological, just so long as they are communicating effectively. Others are very concerned about correctness, which may stem from the desire to identify with the target culture, or because they have a natural inclination to speak correctly* (p. 107)." The learners' motivation and the desire to be integrated in the target language and be an indistinguishable member of the target society (known as integrative motivation) serves as a very strong factor to help learners acquire native-like or near-native pronunciation (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996).

3.4 Mother tongue influence

According to Avery and Ehrlich (1992, as cited in Thanasoulas, no date) transferring the sound pattern of the first language into the second language may cause foreign accents. The mispronunciations of words by nonnative speakers reflect the influence of the sounds, rules, stress, and intonation of their native language**.** For example, nonnative speakers' production of English rhythm was investigated in several studies (Anderson, 1993; Mochizuki-Sudo, & Kiritani, 1991; Wenk, 1985, as cited in Hahn, 2004). These researchers concluded that the transfer from the learners' native language influenced their production of English-like stress alternation across a phrase. Avery and Ehrlich (1992, as cited in Thanasoulas, no date) contend that the learners' pronunciation of a target language can be influenced by the sound system of their native language in three ways. First, when there is a sound in the target language, which is absent from the learners' native sound inventory, or vice versa, learners may not be able to produce or even perceive the sound(s). Second, when the rules of combining sounds into words (i.e., phonotactic constraints/rules) are different in the learners' mother tongue from those of the target language, they cause problems for learners because these rules are language specific as they vary from one

language to another. Thirdly, since the rhythm and melody of a language determine its patterns of stress and intonation, learners may transfer these patterns into the target language.

3.5 Phonetic ability

Phonetic ability refers to whether someone has an 'ear' for a foreign language or not. According to Nunan (1991), there are tests to measure this ability which are referred to as 'phonetic coding ability' or 'auditory discrimination ability'. It is claimed that there are some evidence that good discriminators are able to benefit from pronunciation drills, while poor discriminators are not. Kenworthy (1987) contends that this is an ability which the learner brings to the learning situation, and claims that as a result it is beyond the control of the teacher.

3.6 Exposure to target language

Krashen (1982) believes that greater exposure to the target language makes it easier to acquire good pronunciation and that students need to receive large amounts of perceptible input before they are required to speak a language. Lack of authentic exposure and oral discourse with native speakers brings about a lot of problems in pronunciation learning for EFL learners (Fraser, 2000). According to Morley (1991), though in ESL contexts learners are in real situations and they receive real input, many speakers may live and work in what is known as linguistic ghettos where they have little meaningful exposure to the target language which inhibits their acquisition. The burden is on teachers to counterbalance such a barrier to pronunciation learning by providing students with as much exposure as possible inside and outside the class walls (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). EFL/ESL teachers' awareness of these factors along with some other factors, can help them make better decisions and adopt suitable strategies to help their students deal with their pronunciation problems.

4. Competencies involved in pronunciation

According to Canale and Swain's (1980) categorization, grammatical competence includes knowledge of pronunciation which consists of the following types of knowledge: stress, rhythm, intonation, linking, assimilation, and sounds.

4.1 Stress

Stress refers to the use of extra respiratory energy. It applies to both individual sounds as well as to whole syllables, and involves pushing out air from the lungs and sometimes increasing the activity of the laryngeal muscles. There are several different speech signals for stress. These include loudness, pitch, and vowel length.

4.2 Rhythm

Stress contributes to rhythm. Linguists use the term *rhythm* to refer to the measured movement or musical flow of language. English has a rhythm in which stressed syllables normally occur at regular time intervals. Thus, in English, rhythmic patterns are based upon a fairly regular recurrence of stressed syllables. That is why English is often called a *stress-timed language.* Stress is always restricted to those words which native speakers consider important. In contrast, in *syllable-timed* languages such as French, Japanese, and Spanish, each syllable tends to have the same duration. When native speakers of these languages speak English, they often employ a rhythmic pattern that fails to give the most important words of the sentence the prominence which native English speakers expect to hear.

4.3 Intonation

Intonation refers to the pattern of pitch changes which occur during a phrase and often a complete sentence (Allen, 1971, as cited in Scarcella & Oxford, 1994). It conveys certain information concerning the grammar of

the language. For example, in English, we may change a statement into a question just by intonation, with the pitch normally falling at the end of the statement. In addition to conveying grammatical information, intonation in English may also convey a speaker's involvement in a conversation as well as a desire to take a turn of talk or leave a conversation (Brazil et al., 1980, as cited in Scarcella & Oxford, 1994).

4.4 Linking

Linking sounds is important in stress-timed languages. While there are spaces between words in written English, sounds are linked in spoken English. For example, in spoken English, we say *sen-dit* instead of *send it.*

4.5 Assimilation

Assimilation is related to linking. Linguists use this term to refer to sound changes which occur because of the influence of neighboring sounds. Consider, for example, the word *input.* The [n] in this word is often pronounced as an [m] for greater ease.

4.6 Sounds

The term *sound* is used to refer to the smallest units of sound that can be distinguished by their contrast within words. They consist of both vowels and consonants.

5. Conclusion

From a historical point of view, pronunciation pedagogy has witnessed drastic fluctuations in different teaching methods and approaches. While some of them completely ignored the role of pronunciation and its value in overall language competency, others made it the focal point of second/foreign language instruction and aimed at nativelike pronunciation. During the heyday of the audio-lingual approach, in the 50's and 60's, the main goal of L2 pronunciation instruction was the attainment of a native-like accent. Pronunciation teaching instruction focused on the discrimination and articulation of sounds as a way of improving the perception and production of L2 non-native sounds. Phonetics and phonology was brought into the language classroom because it was believed that correct articulation of L2 sounds required a basic understanding of the mechanisms for L2 and L1 sound production (Lambacher, 1996a). During the late 60's and 70's, when the cognitive approach was dominant, it was believed that native-like pronunciation was impossible to attain for an adult second language learner. Therefore, less attention was given to pronunciation and the amount of knowledge about L2 phonetics and phonological systems. During communicative approaches to language teaching, in the early 1980's, the key role of pronunciation in improving the learner's oral skills, and in contributing to ensuring the success of oral communication was recognized. Today, there is a general consensus among language teachers and researchers that the ultimate goal of pronunciation teaching should not be to eradicate a foreign accent, but rather to promote pronunciation which is reasonably intelligible, as intelligible pronunciation is considered an essential component of communicative competence (Celce-Murcia, 1987; Anderson-Hsieh, 1989; Morley, 1991; Lambacher, 1996b, 1996b; Stibbard, 1996). If the learners are to increase their self-confidence and promote their social interactions outside the classroom, they need to attain intelligible pronunciation (Morley, 1991; Cunningham Florez, 1998). Accurate pronunciation can also help improve their social acceptance, since a foreign accent may be socially stigmatized and contribute to negative stereotyping of some second-language learners, and thus result in social or professional discrimination (Derwing, Rossiter, & Munro, 2002). The most important issues are intelligibility (ability to make oneself relatively easily understood), functional communicability (ability to meet the communication needs one faces), increased self-confidence, speech monitoring abilities, speech modification strategies for use beyond the classroom and communicative efficiency rather than nativeness or perfect pronunciation. Pronunciation teaching has witnessed some major changes including: a shift of focus to stress and intonation from the sounds of the language, emphasis on communicative activities instead of pronunciation drills, de-emphasis on explanation and description, integration of pronunciation with other language activities,

self-monitoring, greater learner speech awareness, and relaxation strategies. It has been suggested that teaching pronunciation should focus on a long-term goal and that it should be taught as an integral part of oral language use.

6. References

Anderson-Hsieh, J. (1989). Approaches toward teaching pronunciation: A brief history. *Cross Current, 16*(2), 73-78.

Barros, A. (2003). *Pronunciation difficulties in the consonant system experienced by Arabic speakers when learning English after the age of puberty*. Unpublished Masteral thesis, West Virginia University, Retrieved from http://etd.wvu.edu/ETDS/E2937/Barros_Ana_Marina_thesis.pdf

Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). NY: Longman.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, 1,* 1-47. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/applin/1.1.1

Carey, M. (2002). *An L1-specific CALL pedagogy for the instruction of pronunciation with Korean learners of English*. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation. Macquarie: Macquaire University.

Celce-Murcia, M. & Goodwin, J. (1991). Teaching Pronunciation. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp: 136–153). Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Celce-Murcia, M. (1987). Teaching pronunciation as communication. In J. Morley (Ed.), *Current Perspectives on Pronunciation* (pp: 1-12). Washington, DC, TESOL.

Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin J. M. (1996). *Teaching pronunciation: A reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Cunningham, F. M. (1998). *Improving adult ESL learners' pronunciation skills*. Center for adult English language acquisition, Retrieved from http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/Pronun.html

Derwing, T. M. (2010). Utopian goals for pronunciation teaching. In J. Levis & K. LeVelle (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 1st Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching Conference, Iowa State University*, Sept. 2009. (pp. 24-37), Ames, IA: Iowa State University.

Derwing, T. Rossiter, M., & Munro, M. J. (2002). Teaching native speakers to listen to foreign accented speech. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 23*(4), 245-259. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01434630208666468

Finch, G. (2000). *Linguistic terms and concepts.* London: Macmillan Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27748-3

Florez, M. C. (1998). *Improving adult ESL learners' pronunciation skills*. ERIC Digest.

Fraser, H. (1999). ESL pronunciation teaching: Could it be more effective? *Australian Language Matters, 7*(4), 7-8.

Fraser, H. (2000). *Coordinating improvements in pronunciation teaching for adult learners of English as second language*. Canberra, Australia: University of New England.

Fries, C. (1945). *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Gelvanovsky, G. V. (2002). Effective pronunciation teaching: Principles, factors, and teachability. In P. V. Sysoyev (Ed.), *Identity, culture, and language teaching*. USA: CREEES.

Hahn, L. (2004). Primary stress and intelligibility: Research to motivate the teaching of suprasegmentals. *TESOL Quarterly, 38*(2), 201–223.

Harmer, J. (1991). *The practice of English language teaching* (2nd ed.). London: Longman.

Henderson, E. J. A. (Ed.) (1971). *The indispensible foundation a selection from the writings of Henry Sweet*. London: Oxford University Press.

Hismanoglu, M. (2006). Current perspectives on pronunciation tearning and teaching. *Journal of Language and Linguistic* Studies, *2*(1), 101-108.

Howatt, A. P. R. (1984). *A history of English language teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Isaacs, T. (2013). Pronunciation. In *Cambridge English centenary symposium on speaking assessment* (pp. 13-15). Cambridge English Language Assessment. Retrieved from http://events.cambridgeenglish.org/cambridge-english-centenary-symposium/files/issacs-pronunciation.pdf

Jenkins, J. (1998). Which pronunciation norms and models for English as an international language? *ELT Journal, 52*(2), 119-126. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/elt/52.2.119

Kanellou, V. (2011). *The place and practice of pronunciation teaching in the context of the EFL classroom in Thessaloniki, Greece*. Unpublished Doctoral dissertation. Wales: Cardiff University.

Kellerman, S. (1990). Lip service: The contribution of the visual modality to speech perception and its relevance to the teaching and testing of foreign language listening comprehension. *Applied Linguistics, 11*(3), 272–280. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/applin/11.3.272

Kenworthy, J. (1987). *Teaching English pronunciation.* Harlow, U. K.: Longman.

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon.

Lambacher, S. (1996a). *Teaching English pronunciation using a computer visual display.* Paper presented at the IATEFL 29th International Annual Conference, York, England. Retrieved from http://www.uaizu.ac.jp/~steeve/york95.html

Lambacher, S. (1996b). Spectrogram analysis as a tool in developing L2 pronunciation skills. In *Speak out!* (pp. 32-35). London: IATEFL.

Larsen-freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lenneberg, E. H. (1967). *Biological Foundations of Language*. New York: Wiley.

Levis, J. M., & Grant, L. (2003). Integrating pronunciation into ESL/EFL classrooms. *TESOL Journal, 12*(2), 13-19. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/j.1949-3533.2003.tb00125.x

Morley, J. (1991). The pronunciation component in teaching English to speakers of other languages. *TESOL Quarterly, 25*(3), 481-520. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3586981

Nation, I. S. P., & Newton, J. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis.

Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers*. UK: Prentice Hall International Ltd.

Osgood, C.E. (1953). *Method and theory in experimental psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Pennington, M. C. & Richards, J. C. (1986). Pronunciation revisited. *TESOL Quarterly, 20*(2), 207-225. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3586541

Purcell, E., & Suter, R. (1980). Predictors of pronunciation accuracy: A reexamination. *Language Learning, 30*(2), 271-287. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1980.tb00319.x

Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. *Section 8-teaching pronunciation* (pp. 175-177). Cambridge University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511667190

Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd ed.). London: Longman.

Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. S. (1986). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667305

Saville-Troike, M. (2006). *Introducing second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scarcella, R. C., & Oxford, R. L. (1994). Second language pronunciation: State of the art in instruction. *System, 22*(2), 221-230. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0346-251X(94)90058-2

Skinner, B. F. (1957). *Verbal behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/11256-000

Stibbard, R. (1996). Teaching English intonation with a visual display of fundamental frequency. *The Internet TESL Journal,* 2-8. Retrieved from http://iteslj.org/Articles/Stibbard-Intonation

Sweet, H. (1899). *The practical study of languages. A guide for teachers and learners*. London: Dent.

Thanasoulas, D. (no date). *"Pronunciation: The "Cinderella" of language teaching"*. Retrieved from http://www.developingteachers.com/articles_tchtraining/pronpf_dimitrios.htm

Yates, L. (2002). *Setting goals for teaching pronunciation*. AMEP Fact Sheet, Adult Migrant English Program Research Centre.

Zemanova, S. (2007). *Teaching English pronunciation to adult learners*. Diploma thesis, University of Masaryk.