COMMUNICATION IS THE GOAL: BARRIERS, MYTHS, AND MISCONCEPTIONS IN THE TEACHING OF ESL/EFL PRONUNCIATION

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Abstract

Aiding learners in communicating should be the chief goal of the teaching of speaking in second language teaching. “Accurate enough” pronunciation is needed for this communication. This pronunciation can be taught – the teaching of pronunciation has been shown to be effective in increasing learner communication ability (intelligibility). What is more, the “hows” of pronunciation teaching are becoming increasingly clear, and clear distinctions between the imposition of an accent and promoting sufficient accuracy to be intelligible are being made. Yet, even so, pronunciation remains neglected in ESL and EFL teaching.

This research asks: What prevents English as a Second and Foreign language teachers from teaching pronunciation in their own classrooms? Both electronic surveys and open-ended in person and video conferencing/phone interviews were conducted with English teachers from around the globe. It was found that even otherwise experienced teachers often lack confidence in addressing “such a complicated subject” and underestimate the importance of the teaching of pronunciation. Furthermore, it was seen, given limited time and curricular pressures, teachers divide their time within the classroom, and pronunciation falls further down the list of teaching priorities than perhaps it should.

Hence, this presentation will provide concrete implications for the effective teaching of pronunciation with real English language classrooms; a practitioner-friendly voice will be employed to suggest doable pronunciation teaching strategies for real teachers.

Keywords: English as a Second Language, English as a Foreign Language, pronunciation, intelligibility.