RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBER INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

IMITATION LEARNING: A GROUND –BREAKING TECHNIQUE TO ENHANCE ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION SKILLS FOR SLOW BLOOMERS

Dr.A.RATHINA PRABHU[1], Dr.B.JEYANTHI[2], Dr.B.THENMALARBHARATHI[3]

[1]Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tamil Nadu, India
[2]Anna University Tirunelveli Region, Tamil Nadu, India
[3]RMD Engineering College ,Tamilnadu ,India

ABSTRACT

English has become the lingua Franca for communication from corner to corner in the Globe .English gives an amble opportunity to shape the future .It is a clean fact that no Indian language could replace English ever after a decades of colonial rule. So Engineering Students of West Tirunelveli are much interested to learn English at any price and also craving to speak English with good accent. But they have no clue how to do so. The teachers are the major reasons for the lack of right pronunciation .There is no much importance given to the right tone (pronunciation) and the teachers are not geared up to edify English with right tone. Teachers clutch the responsibility to help the students to obtain the accurate tone. Imitation learning is one of the innovative teaching methods for enhancing English pronunciation skills for slow bloomers. Various forms of imitation have been studied in apes (Byrne and Russon 2003) to understand how Imitation learning helps to learn language easily.Qualitative method was used by the researchers. It involved semi-structured interview questions with a volunteer sample of seven teachers from west Tirunelveli engineering colleges, Tamilnadu, India. According to the findings obtained from the study, use of Imitation Learning method by West Tirunelveli engineering teachers changed their conventional pedagogical methods. This change of teaching methods gave them more opportunities in the instruction of pronunciation. The study revealed that Imitation Learning helps the slowbloomers to acquire good pronunciation skills and entertains the students in the class room.

Key words: Imitation learning method, pronunciation, videos, songs

INTRODUCTION

India has more young people than any other country. 87% Indians feel that knowledge of English is important to succeed in life. (Graddal 2010).India is a multilingual country where people speak more than 400 languages .But English has got its own track. English has been chosen as an international language and people from different countries use English to understand each other (Ratnasari 2007). The Speakers of English know the benefits of speaking English. Even at the rule of Colonies, sophisticated life was offered to those who could

converse in English. People had zeal of learning English for the benefits. People love to learn English in order to obtain prosperity, health, and a peaceful life. No one wanted to lead their life in paucity or in a despondentstate without knowing English.Therefore, students have greatardor towards learning English. But they have no idea how to learn English efficiently. Classroom teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions have been shown to have a significant influence on students' attitudes toward learning and academic performance (Banks 2005).Teachers are critically important in helping students meet their academic needs and in preparing them for the workforce (Arias et al 2010). But West Tirunelveli Engineering teachers are not eager to open their mouth with right tone. Communication is the exchange of ideas and information between two or more people (Richard and Schmidt2002). But most of the teachers prefer one way communication.The students were compelled to follow the rote learning method in order to get good marks in English examination. This is the miserable part of the students of West Tirunelveli Engineering colleges.

These EFL teachers rely too much on traditional teaching methods in textbooks without paying attention to their own students' problems (Hayati 2010).It is very important to follow an innovative method to teach pronunciation skill. Teaching method must change from dispensing information to creating activities that engage students' minds and offer problems with numerous solutions (David 1991). Researchers in education and language teaching have shown that many educators are not adequately prepared to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students (Gay 2002). West Tirunelveli Engineering students are from rural and some of them are from linguistically diverse region like Kerala .It is very essential for a language teacher to use technology in the class room especially to acquire pronunciation.One of the significant parts of higher and professional education is technology-enhanced education (Wernet et al   2000).Frigaard (2002) emphasized the effectiveness of using technology in education and how it helps teachers improve their teaching methods and students' knowledge.

This paper analyses the benefits of a new teaching and learning method imitation learning.Learning through imitation helps the students to understand the culture, Pronunciation, style, vocabulary, Grammar and much more. So Imitation learning would be the nice choice for the slow bloomers.

IMITATION LEARNING

According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary,Impersonation of a person's speech or behavior is called Imitation .It is a rigid fact that a person can very easily acquire a language when he or she stays in the particular region for a while because they learn the language through Imitation. The researchers applied the same technique to enhance pronunciation learning. In West Tirunelveli; most of the engineering students are addicted to movies. Whenever a movie star introduces a new approach in the movie, the students are not reluctant to go after them even intricate to follow. A language teacher ought to exploit this method to stimulate the students. Dwyeret al (1991) stated that technology changes teachings. Good English videos can be played inside the class room for imitation learning. Mayer (2009) agreed that multimedia instruction (combining video, sound, words, and pictures together) would support meaningful learning as well as enable learners to understand the materials better. Mayer asserted (2004: 47), "People learn more deeply from words and pictures than from words alone."

A teacher would play nice English videos in the class room with sub-titles. Ask the students to listen and imitate the words or dialogues. A nice English song can be selected and it can be played in the class room and after two times of listening, teacher can lead them to sing the song. Singing English song is believed to have direct influence on the pronunciation skills (Ratnasari 2007).Students are interested in singing than speaking (Murphey 1998).This will help them to understand the pronunciation of the native speaker .whilst they watch movies they can learn grammar, structures of the sentences and even body language as well . Imitation will definitely help the students to learn in an easy and a perfect way. It is monotones to sit inside the grammar class for every Engineer of West Tirunelveli. But when they sit for a movie, they love to sit and learn many things. The use of music helps to ease the mind and makes the brain receptive (Lozano1978).This music creates a safe space to experience learning collectively (Lems 1996). Fonseca Mora (2000) asserts that songs have a positive outcome on the students .language acquisition can be stored in a long-term memory and can be retrieved very easily. Music changes brain waves and makes the brain more active and receptive for

leaning. Functions of the right andleft hemispheres of the brain are connected together by music; because right and left hemispheres are influenced at the same time learning is maximized. The information activates the left brain and the music activates the right brain. Therefore, activities such as playing an instrument or singing activate both right and left hemispheres simultaneously and make the brain more capable of processing information (Salsedo 2010). Language researcher (Swain1986) believes that there is a relationship between mental processing of language and music at the Meta level.

Many of the learning systems generateanxiety and monotones feeling to the language learners. Music and videos in the classroom help even the teachers to teach in a wonderful and easy way. Video-based materials have caused pronunciation teachers to enter colorful, natural and interesting teachingmaterials into their lessons.(Hişmanoğlu2010).Neri et al (2002) said that technology-assisted pronunciation instruction has numerous advantages that cannot be found in traditional teaching methods.So learning through imitation makes them worth spending their precious time.

PRONUNCIATION

Hayati (2010) stated that one of the difficult skills for language users is English pronunciation and it is veryimportant for them.Morley (1999) clearly states that severe pronunciation problems generate educational, Occupational, professional and social risk. K.M. swing exclaims that producing right tone is more important than speaking. Iyadurai, (1992) states that, albeit, language has got letters, words and sentences, it is made up of Sounds. Using right tone is very important for any language. Nowadays, teachers are not ready to give importance to pronunciation. They are not ready to prepare lectures for culturally diverse learners (Santoro 2007). It is not required to sound like an American or Native British. But; at least student should learn RP (Received Pronunciation). Without correct pronunciation, however, effective communication does not occur. Bad English pronunciation confuses people and often gets irritated. Imitate learning helps to learn pronunciation easily and energetically. Pronunciation can always be introduced into the classes by teachers (Rajaduari 2001) to strengthen the concepts that might have been taught before in pronunciation classes, enhance the importance of pronunciation as a necessary part of the teaching of English as a second/foreign language, provide opportunities for learners to practice and give motivation to learners to use it outside the classroom. As a guide, the teacher urges students for new learning and persuades students to take part in activities that raise their higher order thinking skills (Ryba and Anderson1990). According to Morley (1991), teachers should be pronunciation trainers and learners should be proactive learners who take the first step to learn it. Teachers can teach pronunciation in an easy way by implementing Imitation Learning in the class room.

Objective of the Study

This study investigated how West Tirunelveli engineering college teachers' conventional pedagogical methods have changed through using Imitation learning method.

Research Question

This study answered the following research question

- How has the West Tirunelveli engineering college teachers' conventional pedagogical methods changed when Imitation learning method is used?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Researchers used a qualitative method design for this study. They interviewed a volunteer sample of seven Teachers of West Tirunelveli Engineering Colleges. Qualitative method provided a clearer image of the change of West Tirunelveli engineering college teachers' conventional pedagogical methods about utilizing Imitation learning method   in English pronunciation enhancing.

Population

Researchers informed the objective of the research   to the seven faculty members of the English Department at West Tirunelveli Engineering colleges and got their agreement to take part in the qualitative research. They willingly participated in the semi-structured interview sessions of data collection processes. Researchers used West Tirunelveli engineering college teachers' pseudonyms for this study and not their real

names. They were called J1, J2, J3, J4, J5, J6 and J7.

Research Instrument

Researchers used semi-structured interview as an instrument for gathering data .They conducted semi-structured interview questions with seven volunteer teachers from West Tirunelveli engineering colleges. A high quality mobile phone was used by researchers to record interviews. Researchers tagged audio files for recording information at the beginning of each interview. After finishing each interview, they transcribed that interview. Word-by-word transcription was used by the researchers. They did a careful revision of transcription to make sure that the transcription matches the actual interview. After revising the transcription, researchers interpreted the interviews. Researchers revisited the interviewees to eliminate any latent of wrong interpretations of the interviews and shared with them some of the interpretations. They informed the interviewees at the first meetings that follow-up interviews might be needed.

RESULTS

Researchers analyzed the semi-structured interview questions based on the qualitative data analysis procedures. Data analysis consists of reduction of collected data, theme construction or displaying the collected data, and theory building or drawing conclusions from the collected data (Miles and Huberman 1994). Miles and Huberman's suggestions were used by the researchers in analyzing the data. The collected data was reduced based on simplifying the data, selecting and focusing on the relevant data, and eliminating the irrelevant data. Researchers arranged data according to different themes and looked at the categories based on the change of teachers' traditional pedagogical methods. Then researchers drew conclusions. Each part of the interview had a theme that helped researchers to see the related data and to use quotations from the interviewees input to support arguments.

Analysis of Research Question

- *How has the West Tirunelveli engineering college teachers' conventional pedagogical methods changed when Imitation learning method is used?*

The use of Imitation Learning method affected the quality of West Tirunelveli engineering teachers' pronunciation lessons. There was a change in the quality of teachers' pronunciation instruction through the change in the learners' competence in English pronunciation. Imitation learning method provided better opportunities to follow native-like pronunciation, knowing how to use the correct intonation, comparing one's own pronunciation with native speakers' pronunciation, being enjoyable and attractive and offering interactive pronunciation learning environment. West Tirunelveli engineering teachers' supported Imitation Learning method and regarded traditional teaching methods as superficial and too old to be used. Important themes of the above question are shown in the following table.

Quality of Teaching

Based on the interviews, imitation Learning Method changed the quality of West Tirunelveli engineering teachers' instruction in English pronunciation lessons.

I have used Imitation learning method for the first time to my students and made my students to understand the pronunciation of native speakers. Well .it gave me new stamina to handle class effectively   *J1*

There was a change in the quality of my instruction through the use of this method.
It is a boon to all engineering teachers of West Tirunelveli.   *J2*

I realized that my success in using Imitation learning method was bounded by my willingness to change my teaching methods.   I helped my learners to get knowledge about pronunciation and wanted them not to be just dependent on me as the source of pronunciation.

J7

Imitation learning method certainly made an important change in my English pronunciation instruction. It was an essential part for effective teaching methods of English language pronunciation. I played the role of a guide and helper to my students to find pronunciation knowledge rather than giving them that knowledge.   *J6*

I used Imitation learning method in my English pronunciation teaching because I wanted to have a change in my teaching method.   Instead of telling everything about pronunciation to my students, I tried to help them find that knowledge.   *J5*

Traditional Teaching Methods vs. Imitation learning method

Interviews exhibited that Imitation learning method provided native-like pronunciation, correct intonation and sensitivity to the incorrect pronunciation. According to the researcher's observation, West Tirunelveli engineering college teachers gained near-native pronunciation and they were too sensitive to wrong pronunciation.

I support Imitation learning method because I got the native-like pronunciation and transferred it to my Learners.   *J3*

I used Imitation learning method in teaching English pronunciation because I could repeat the video and pronounce each sentence correctly and I was very sensitive to incorrect pronunciation.   *J5*

Through using Imitation learning method I knew how to use the correct intonation and I will be motivated to use this videos and songs for the other skills of pronunciation such as American accent, stress and rhythm.   *J2*

Imitation learning method helped my students to learn pronunciation as well good body language .It served in a dual purpose.   *J1*

My engineering students never attentive in the class room but after the introduction of Imitation learning method, they never wanted to miss my class.   *J4*

I support Imitation learning method because a) I searched on the internet, b) I listened to videos and songs and c) I downloaded programs from the net and it will in turn help them. I could not find these in traditional teaching methods.   *J7*

DISCUSSION

Imitation learning method changed West Tirunelveli engineering college teachers' teaching methods. The above finding is also supported by Becker (2000 a).He stated that teacher's pedagogical methods are very important in affecting teachers' uses of computer technology. The above finding is also in accordance with the finding of Chapman (1997).Hecontinued that through integrating computer technology into instruction, teachers become more student-centered and less interested in whole-class instruction.This change in teaching method sometimes causes a barrier in using computer technology. But it can be removed by training and supporting teachers in the change process. Teachers will be less of an information-giver and more ofa learning facilitatorEly and Plomp (1986).This would be the prime objective of Imitation learning method.

To sum up, the West Tirunelveli engineering college teachers:

a) Changed the quality of their teaching methods.

b) Changed their teaching methods through training.

c) Found better solutions for teaching pronunciation than conventional teaching methods.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the change of West Tirunelveli engineering college teachers' conventional pedagogical methods through utilizing Imitation learning method in English pronunciation instruction. Better solutions for pronunciation teaching methods were provided by Imitation learning method such as native-like pronunciation and comparing one's own pronunciation with native speakers' pronunciation. This method provided the teachers with individualized pronunciation learning and increased their access to more pronunciation materials that were not attainable through conventional pedagogical methods. The study and its results might also suggest better ways of training and equipping teachers with strategies, techniques, and approaches.

REFERENCES

Arias M B, Garcia E, Harris-Murria N J, Serna C (2010).Developing responsive teachers: A challenge for a demographic reality. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *61*(1-2), 132-142. From http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022487109347878 Retrieved (January 25, 2014)

Byrne R W,Russon A E (2003). Learning by imitation: a   hierarchical approach. Behavioral and Brain Sciences.

Banks J A (2005). *Cultural diversity and education* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Becker H J (2000a). Findings from the Teaching, Learning, and Computing Survey: Is Larry CubanRight? Education Policy Analysis Archives, 8(51), 2-32.

Chapman D W (1997).Improving instructional practice: The teacher's dilemma. In J. Lynch, C. Modgil,S. Modgil (Eds.), Innovations in delivering primary education,. Volume 3 of the Education and Development: Tradition and Innovation series. London: Cassell Publishers,

David J L (1991). Restructuring and technology: Partners in change. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *73*(1), 37-40, 78-82.

Dwyer D, Ringstaff C, Sandholtz J (1991). Changes in teachers' beliefs and practices in technology-rich classrooms. *Educational Leadership*, *48*(8), 45-52.

Ely D, Plomp T (1986). The promises of educational technology: A reassessment. International ReviewofEducation,32,231-250.From   http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF02426060. Retrieved (25 January 20.2014)

Frigaard A (2002). *Does the computer lab improve student performance on vocabulary, grammar, and listening comprehension*? ERIC Document Reproduction Service. No. ED476749.

Fonseca Mora C (2000). Foreign language acquisition and melody singing.*English Language Teaching Journal, 54*(2), 146-152 From <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/elt/54.2.146 >(Retrieved February 7,2014).

Gay G (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum.*Journal of Teacher Education*, *53*(1), 20-32.

Graddol David (2010). *English next India. The future of English in India* .British Council

Hişmanoğlu M (2010). Online Pronunciation Resources: Hobbies or Fobbies of EFL Teachers? *IJONTE*, *1*(2),40-53.

Hayati A M (2010). Notes on Teaching English Pronunciation to EFL Learners: A Case of Iranian High School Students. *English Language Teaching*, *3*(4), 121-126.

Lozanov G(1978). *Suggestology and outlines of suggestopedy.*New York: Gordon and Breach Publishing.

Lems K 1996. For a Song: Music across the ESL Curriculum. *Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages,* 1-18. ED 396524

Mayer R E (2004). Should there be a three-strike rule against pure discovery learning: The case for guided methods of instruction. *American Psychologist*, *59*(1), 14-19. From http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.59.1.14 Retrieved (March 12 ,2014)

Mayer R E (2009).*Multimedia Learning* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Morley J (1999). New development in speech/pronunciation. *As we speak*, *2*(1), 1-5.

Murphey J (1998). *Music and song*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MorleyJ (1991).The pronunciation component in teaching English to speakers of other languages. *TESOL Quarterly*, *25*(1), 51-74.

Miles M B, Huberman, A M (1994). Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methodsThousandOaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Neri A, Cucchiarini, Strik H (2002). Feedback in computer assisted pronunciation training: When technology meets pedagogy. *Proceedings of CALL Conference "CALL professionals and the future of CALLresearch"*, Antwerp, Belgium, (pp. 179-188).

Ratnasari H (2007). *Songs to improve the students' achievement in pronouncing English words*. A Final Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of SarjanaPendidikan in English,Semarang State University.

Richards J C, Schmidt R (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rded.). London: Pearson Education Limited.

Santoro, N. (2007). "Outsiders" and "others": 'Different' teachers teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. *Teachers& Teaching*, *13*(1), 81-97. From http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13540600601106104 Retrieved (April 14,2014)

Salcedo C S (2010). The effects of songs in the foreign language classroom on text recall, delayed text recall and involuntary mental rehearsal. *Journal of College Teaching and Learning*, *7*(6), 19-30.

Wernet S, Olliges R, Delicath, T (2000). Post course evaluation of Web CT (Web Course Tools) classes by social work students. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *10*(4), 487-504.

Brief Bio-of Author

Rathina Prabhu A is an Assistant professor at M.S.University ,Tamilnadu, India. He teaches English as a foreign language. His area of research interest includes innovative language teaching methodology and fluency development.

Jeyanthi B is an Associate professor at Anna University Tirunelveli Region; Tamilnadu, India. She holds a PhD in Literature and teaches English as a foreign language. Her research interest includes Language assessment, nature of class room and rural student's development.

Thenmalar Bharathi B is an Associate professor at RMD Engineering College, Tamilnadu, India. She holds a PhD in ELT and teaches English as a foreign language. Her research interest includes Language assessment, modern pronunciation methods, and language enhancement.