

Actas

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EL BILINGÜISMO A DEBATE

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El bilingüismo a debate

Actas del IV Congreso Internacional de Enseñanza Bilingüe en Centros Educativos

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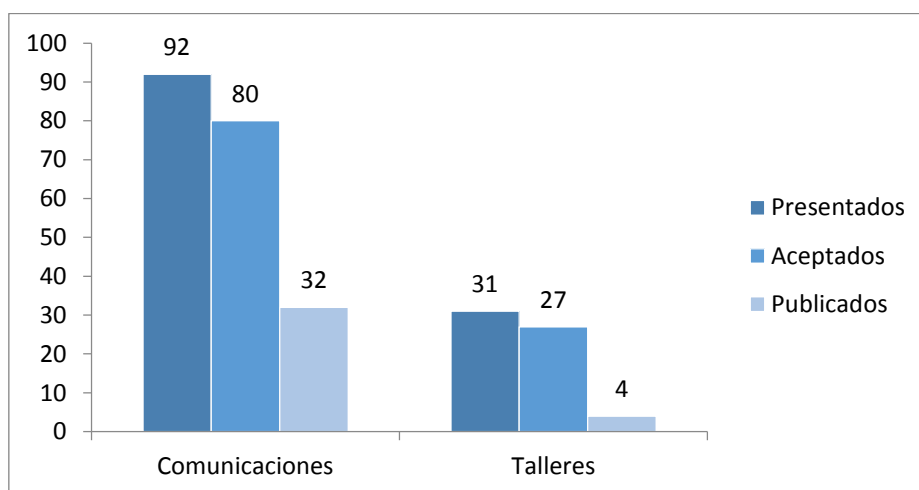
CIEB 2017

En el IV Congreso Internacional de Enseñanza Bilingüe en Centros Educativos (CIEB 2017) se presentaron para su valoración un total de 92 comunicaciones y 31 talleres.

Tras la revisión de todas las propuestas por parte del Comité Científico, se aceptaron un total de 80 comunicaciones, siendo rechazadas 12 propuestas, y un total de 27 talleres, siendo rechazados cuatro propuestas. No obstante, no todos los participantes enviaron su artículo para su publicación dentro del plazo previsto.

Por tanto, en estas Actas no se recogen las ochenta comunicaciones y los veintisiete talleres que fueron presentadas oralmente durante el Congreso, sino solamente las treinta y dos comunicaciones y los cuatro talleres cuyo texto completo fue recibido, revisado, evaluado y aceptado por los editores para su publicación. El Programa completo del Congreso puede consultarse en la página web del congreso: <http://www.cieb.es/>.

Para la publicación de la Actas del Congreso, se propone un formato digital con ISBN. En el siguiente gráfico, se muestra un resumen de los datos finales.



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PRESENTACIÓN IV CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL DE ENSEÑANZA BILINGÜE EN CENTROS EDUCATIVOS “LA ENSEÑANZA BILINGÜE A DEBATE”

La Universidad Rey Juan Carlos y la Asociación Enseñanza Bilingüe, fueron los organizadores del IV Congreso Internacional de Enseñanza Bilingüe en Centros Educativos –CIEB 2017– que se celebró en Madrid, en el Campus de Vicálvaro de la Universidad Rey Juan Carlos los días 20, 21 y 22 de octubre de 2017.

CIEB 2017, bajo el lema “La enseñanza bilingüe a debate”, planteo no solamente seguir analizando su funcionamiento sino también debatir sobre la enseñanza bilingüe, los programas, sus ventajas e inconvenientes, su desarrollo y su gestión, sus resultados, con el fin de contribuir a la búsqueda de soluciones para los problemas que se plantearon y por lo tanto, a la mejora de la calidad de todos los programas.

Un objetivo prioritario fue generar un foro de discusión, de debate, de intercambio de ideas y de experiencias entre profesionales de la enseñanza bilingüe y la enseñanza de idiomas y, a la vez, apoyar a los miles de maestros y profesores que han entendido perfectamente el potencial que supone ofrecer enseñanzas bilingües a sus alumnos, y que trabajan incansablemente, esforzándose por adquirir el mayor dominio de la lengua de instrucción y las máximas competencias posibles, tratando de incorporar a su labor docente los últimos avances tecnológicos y de utilizar en la enseñanza de idiomas, las variadas metodologías activas en boga hoy en día.

El Congreso CIEB 2017 como siempre tuvo un carácter innovador y promovió la presencia de expertos nacionales, tanto en aspectos prácticos como teóricos del bilingüismo.

PRONUNCIATION: THE CINDERELLA OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN SPAIN

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Abstract: More often than not, pronunciation has played a Cinderella role in the world of foreign/second language teaching. This is surprising given the fact that it has an impact on the intelligibility (if the message is understood or not), comprehensibility (the perceived difficulty in understanding the message), fluency, accent and the self-image projected by the learner. It is also present, although from other angles, in the different skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. This lack of interest and attention is quite remarkable in English second/foreign language teaching in Spain. As a consequence, we find a high percentage of students whose pronunciation leaves a lot to be desired after so many years of regulated education. While it is true that the factors (biological, interlinguistic, psychological) that are responsible for "foreign accent" are not easy to tackle, it is also true that we can design and apply specific remedial treatments to try to reduce it and improve pronunciation. In order to do so, it is advisable to awaken the students' phonological awareness, to focus on those English sounds that may present major problems and contrast them with the Spanish ones, without ignoring the prosodic aspects.

Key words: pronunciation, intelligibility, comprehensibility, contrast, accent

Resumen: Con mayor frecuencia de la deseada, la pronunciación ha jugado el papel de la Cenicienta en el mundo de la enseñanza de segundas lenguas o lenguas extranjeras. Es cuando menos sorprendente teniendo en cuenta el hecho de que tiene un gran impacto en la inteligibilidad (si el mensaje se entiende o no), la comprensibilidad (la dificultad percibida en la comprensión del mensaje), la fluidez, el acento y en la imagen de sí mismo proyectada por el aprendiz. También está presente, aunque desde ángulos diferentes, en las distintas habilidades; comprensión lectora, expresión escrita, expresión oral y comprensión auditiva. Esta falta de interés y atención es bastante notable en la enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés como segunda lengua o lengua extranjera en España. Como consecuencia, nos encontramos con un alto porcentaje de alumnos cuya pronunciación no es la deseable después de tantos años de enseñanza reglada. Si bien es cierto que los factores (biológicos, interlingüísticos, psicológicos) responsables de la aparición de "acento extranjero" no son fáciles de abordar, no es menos cierto que podemos diseñar y aplicar tratamientos remediales específicos para intentar reducirlo y mejorar la pronunciación. Para ello, es conveniente despertar la conciencia fonológica de los alumnos, incidir en aquellos sonidos ingleses que puedan presentar mayores problemas y contrastarlos con los españoles, sin dejar de ejercitar los aspectos prosódicos.

Palabras clave: pronunciación, inteligibilidad, comprensibilidad, contraste, acento

Introduction

The evolution of language teaching in the Spanish educational system in the last twenty, thirty years has been remarkable. From a marginal role some forty years ago, it has gained a significant role in the curricula accommodating to the demands of globalization quickly. The results have not been in the line of that greater specific weight, though.

Today there is a widespread consensus in our country on the importance of being fluent in English. Bilingual education is defended as well as stays abroad, teacher training, etc. However, there still seems to be a psychological barrier to command this

language and, in particular, listening and speaking skills. The reasons for this state of affairs are complex: some refer to deficiencies in our educational system (inadequate level of teachers, lack of means, etc.); others, to the exaggerated feeling of embarrassment Spaniards have, even others that, until recently, there has not been a real need to use it... If I may give an anecdotal but illustrative example, there are many countries in Europe where English films are not dubbed. The teaching of English as a foreign language has been for many years, and continues to be, a pending subject and a subject in constant debate in Spain. It is paradoxical that a high percentage of students take English classes year after year in both compulsory and private education, and yet we are at the very bottom in Europe in foreign language proficiency and, more specifically, regarding oral skills.

For example, in the evaluation carried out by the National Institute of Quality and Evaluation in 1999 on the teaching and learning of the English language in Primary Education, the results at this linguistic level were 26% in terms of correct pronunciation in the responses of the whole oral expression test. The students had to answer a series of questions about personal data, tastes and actions that they habitually carried out and describe a drawing.

In the evaluation carried out at compulsory education in 2001, within the pronunciation section, the students' ability to be understood using appropriate accent and intonation was assessed. On a scale of between 0 (the lowest value) and 5 (the highest value) the mean was 1.99 points. Only 15% of the students got 4 or 5 points. These students produced an understandable message and used an appropriate accent and intonation. 25% scored 3 points. In this case the message was understandable, although it required a certain effort on the part of the interlocutor. 40% received 1 or 2 points. In this case, the demand for the interlocutors was very high. The remaining 20% scored zero points. The Eurobarometer¹ *Europeans and their languages* (published in February 2012, reference 386) shows that just 22% of the interviewees say that they speak English well enough in order to be able to have a conversation. However, 82% think English is the most useful language for their personal development and 92 % think it is the most useful for children to learn for their future.

In this context, there is a linguistic level especially abandoned; the phonic level. For the public, learning a language equals learning grammar and vocabulary. There does not seem to be an awareness of the importance of pronunciation to be understood without risk of misunderstanding or requiring a superhuman effort in comprehension on the part of the listener.

There are several reasons for this state of affairs in the specific case of oral skills, and in particular pronunciation. On the one hand, many of the teachers do not have the necessary preparation to adequately teach English pronunciation. Neither have they been trained to be good linguistic models nor do they give it the importance that this level deserves in daily classroom practice. On the other hand, didactic materials often relegate their practice to a very secondary role when they are not completely ignored. Traditionally pronunciation has been considered the Cinderella of language teaching;

¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/General/index>

the attention of researchers and teachers has been focused on grammar and vocabulary, and more recently on communicative functions. It is not surprising that researchers like Derwing and Munro (2005) insist on the need for more empirical studies on foreign pronunciation and accent.

We believe that it is important to awaken and promote phonological awareness and the need for correct pronunciation, both in children and in teachers, as one of the cornerstones of linguistic competence and learning oral skills. It is true that the task is not simple. There are many interlinguistic differences between the phonic system of Spanish and that of English. It is equally true that these differences involve a sense of difficulty that intimidates teachers and students. However, if one intends to raise the level of linguistic mastery, it will be necessary to seek formulas to overcome these difficulties.

The first step, in my view, is to train teachers at all levels of education, from pre-school to university, to promote real language immersion, to have the appropriate means in schools, to encourage abroad and exchange programs, reduce the number of students per class, etc.

Phonological awareness

Language awareness can be defined as explicit language knowledge, conscious development of learning strategies and curiosity, motivation and interest in acquiring, using and teaching the language. Several authors have shown in their research the importance of this concept and the influence it may have on learning (Rosa and O'Neil, 1999; Leow, 2000). It should also be noted that there are some teaching manuals that stress their importance (Kenworthy, 1987; Dalton and Seidlhofer, 1994), for example.

In the case of pronunciation, we consider essential to refer to phonological awareness, which indicates the degree of sensitivity to sounds. At the segmental level we could refer to phonological awareness as a combination of phonetic awareness and phonemic awareness. Phonetic awareness indicates an apprentice's ability to identify consonants by their manner and point of articulation and vowels according to the height and position of the tongue and the placement of the lips. By phonemic awareness we mean the apprentice's ability to combine phonemes to form syllables and words, to add, to remove, to substitute or to replace phonemes or groups of phonemes within a word or phrase, to decompose a word into phonemes and syllables, to identify the position of a specific phoneme or a sequence of phonemes within a word and identify rhymes and be able to perform them. (Venkatagiri and Levis, 2009).

At the suprasegmental level, phonological awareness refers to the degree of sensitivity of the learner towards the accent, rhythm and intonation of the foreign language. Venkatagiri and Levis (2009) point out that phonological awareness can be key to students' intelligibility.

In my view, it is essential to develop phonological awareness in both students and prospective teachers. A good way to know the level of phonological awareness would be to conduct questionnaires, which may help to reflect on some of the aspects that make intelligibility difficult or affect the pronunciation of a strong foreign accent. We

can find some proposals in Fitzpatrick (1995: 5), who offers a battery of open questions: (*How important is doing pronunciation for understanding? Why?*), for instance; in Kenworthy (1987: 54-55), who proposes a questionnaire with closed questions, such as: *How do you feel when you meet a foreigner who speaks your language with a very good accent? (a) surprised, (b) pleased, (c) not surprised, (d) full of admiration (e) don't care or think about it*; or in Hewings (2004: 25-26), with a questionnaire more focused on the concrete realization of phonetic aspects by the student, both segmental and suprasegmental, as in this example: *How good is your English pronunciation? (Circle your answer: 1 = high, 5 = low) vowels, consonants, consonant clusters, word stress, intonation*. Subsequently, one can work to create a greater phonological awareness, while at the same time improving the perception and production of the foreign language, by performing activities that may be oriented to other linguistic areas (Hancock, 2000: 69).

It seems that all of them emphasize fostering the taste for learning the pronunciation of the English language and the importance of a correct production for a good understanding. It also becomes clear how the accent influences the projection of the image that we have of the person; there is a tendency for admiration towards speakers who have a good accent in the foreign language, even having a positive effect on the credibility of the messages issued by these individuals. It also shows how pronunciation can affect complex situations such as talking on the phone or with a stranger. It is remarkable the idea of making the student think about his own production and how this helps them to identify potential problems of pronunciation.

And, apart from this, we especially need to train properly prospective teachers who will be models for their own students.

Foreign accent

We say that someone speaks our language with "foreign accent" when we perceive certain deviations with respect to the pronunciation of a native speaker, either because some sounds become strange to us or because the accentuation or intonation are "out of tune".

Often, we can even attribute a linguistic origin to a way of pronouncing. We then speak of someone having an accent, French, English, German, etc. There are several effects that can produce this "foreign accent" to which we refer. The most problematic is that of interference in communication, that is, that hinders or impedes the understanding of the message by the native speaker. In other cases, when it affects some phonological element that is key in the message, the foreign accent can cause confusion and lead to misunderstandings. As an example, the confusion between sheet /ʃi:t/ and shit /ʃɪt/ typical of Spanish speakers with second language English.

Causes of foreign accent

Basically, we could divide the causes of foreign accent into three different types: biological, psychological and interlinguistic. We will briefly comment on them and focus on the interlinguistic ones more specifically.

Biological causes

When children acquire their mother tongue (MT, hereafter), they usually achieve excellent phonological competence. However, when adults acquire a second language (L2, henceforth), they may achieve good phonological competence, but it is quite probable that they will not be able to get rid of a marked foreign accent in their production, except on rare occasions. For decades, many linguists and psycholinguists have wondered why this happens.

In the first place, all children, with few exceptions of a pathological nature, develop a competence of their MT that identifies them within their linguistic community as native speakers. In the case of L2 trainees, it is rare that such a competence is reached, and it is frequent, however, that even in the same learning conditions there are very different levels among them. Second, the linguistic evolution of children is very similar regardless of their MT or the social environment in which it takes place.

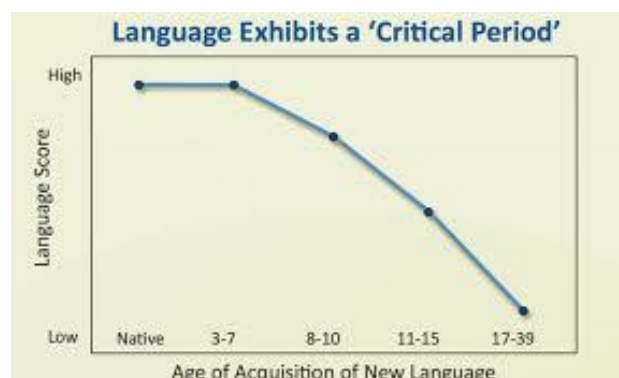
On the contrary, L2 trainees follow different paths and obtain different results. In this sense, it is normal that, after a while, they will come to a standstill at a lower knowledge level than a native speaker and a greater exposure to the foreign language or academic practice cannot do much to avoid that fossilization. Consequently, native speakers attain a level of competence that allow them to use their language with relative conviction, while the non-native tend to hesitate more and to feel less sure whether what they say is natural or artificial. Third, the acquisition of MT is done in a non-academic context and without specific instruction in the rules that govern the use of language. In contrast, normally in L2 classes there is an explanation and practice of pronunciation, lexicon, grammar, etc. Fourth, children are rarely exposed to theoretical explanations of the various uses of this or that verb tense or a certain conditional type, to give some examples. Students of a foreign language, on the other hand, are usually informed in class of these restrictions. Finally, the affective factors do not seem to have relevance in the acquisition of MT. It is not easy to know whether a person has had a miserable or happy childhood because of his or her way of speaking, nor is it necessary to motivate a child to develop his/her MT. However, although their influence is not yet well determined, a negative attitude or a lack of motivation hardly facilitate the learning of L2.

Even before birth, the auditory perception of children seems especially tuned to process the sounds of language. Recent research by Patricia Kuhl, a professor of Language and Hearing Science, and Alison Gopnik, a professor of Psychology²,

² http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/es/patricia_kuhl_the_linguistic_genius_of_babies.html

indicate that infants begin to recognize and learn their mother tongue since they are in the womb, and can distinguish between two different languages at seven months of age.

Kuhl shows the influence of age over learning a new language by showing a graph of the critical period curve:



According to the critical period hypothesis, as postulated by Lenneberg (1967), the ability to acquire the language shrinks beyond the puberty barrier. For reasons still difficult to delimit, the brain loses plasticity with the consequent diminution of the capacity to learn a language. After this barrier, the learners of a second language seem to lose the ability to perceive clearly and effectively the phonic differences with other languages. The Critical Period Hypothesis is supported by other arguments that show that puberty is a turning point in the acquisition of the first language: for example, enormous difficulties in acquiring language in people who have been socially isolated during childhood.

Interlinguistic causes

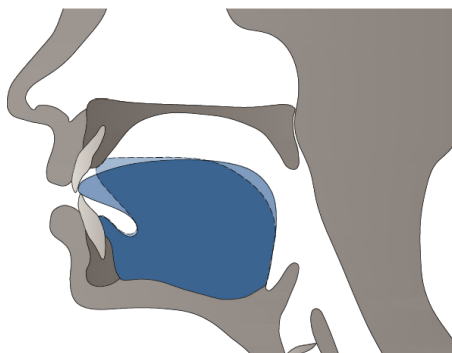
Languages have different phonic systems. This is something obvious and known by any linguist but often ignored by language learners. They usually transfer the pronunciation habits of their own language to the foreign language. This transfer can be manifested in different ways:

- **Phonological differences.** A language may have a phoneme which another lacks. For example, it is characteristic that Spanish speakers reinterpret some English sounds adapting them to the Spanish language. This can lead to confusion on the part of the listener, hindering or altering the understanding. Let's look at an example.

In English there is a fricative palato-alveolar sound /ʃ/ in words like *shake*, *she*, *shoot*, ... and in Spanish there isn't; this makes English-speaking Spanish speakers reinterpret this strange phoneme according to their phonic system, either by converting it into a fricative alveolar /s/ or a palato-alveolar affricate /tʃ/.

- **Phonetic differences.** In some cases, languages share phonemes whose articulation is not exactly the same. For example, in Spanish the phoneme /t/ is dental, pronounced with the tip of the tongue in contact with the upper teeth; in English it is alveolar, the tongue touches the alveoli and, in addition, it is aspirated

when it occurs in accented syllable. The articulation of vowel sounds presents some differences as well. The English phoneme /e/ is very similar to Spanish although, in general, the English one is more open.

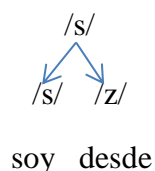


English phoneme /t/ in dotted lines

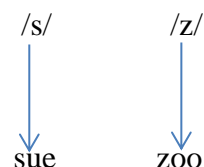
In these cases, it hardly differs in comprehension but marks the foreign accent remarkably.

- **Differences in phonological status.** In English we can find two different phonemes that in Spanish correspond to two allophones of the same phoneme. It is the case, for example, of /s/ in *sala* (room) and /z/ in front of voiced consonant like in *mismo* (same), allophones of /s/ in Spanish.

Spanish



English



Because of this, a Spanish speaker may find it difficult to distinguish between *ice* /aɪs/ and *eyes* /aɪz/ or *price* /praɪs/ and *prize* /praɪz/.

- **Phonotactic differences.** The distribution of phonemes and possible combinations can cause problems as well. In this sense, we find that in English there are many more combinations of consonant groupings than in Spanish. For example, while the combinations "st-" or "sp-" are typical of English in initial position of word, they are non-existent in Spanish in that position. Thus, a Spanish speaker tends to insert an "e" in front of this combination trying to regularize it, thus pronouncing the word *sleep* /esli:p/ instead of /sli:p/ since there is not a similar combination of phonemes in their language.

- **Different phonological processes.** The existence of different phonological processes complicates a little more this already complex panorama of differences. For example, the tendency of the unaccented vowels of English to become the

neutral central vowel schwa /ə/ is well known. Thus, in English we can find variations such as:

photograph /'fəʊtəgrɑ:f/

photographer /fə'tɒgrəfə/

photographic /,fəʊtə'græfɪk/

● **Graphic differences.** One of the reasons why trainees are not sensitive to phonic differences is due to the graphical interface. A great majority of languages, as in the case of those concerned, share the Latin alphabet, which could lead learners to assume that identical spellings in both languages are pronounced in the same way; in many cases, this is not so. In the process of learning of a foreign language, the student tends to transfer the phonological/graphical rules of his own language. In this way, the graphical differences lead to erroneous pronunciations. There is still a strong current inherited from the literary-writing tradition of teaching the traditional method of grammar-translation. It is the case of Spanish learners of English who pronounce all the letters they see written even if they are silent, for example: island /'aɪlənd/, calm /kɑ:m/, etc.

● **Accentual differences.** According to a study carried out by Navarro Tomás (1968: 45-46), the words stressed on the penultimate syllable constitute 38.86% of the lexicon of Spanish. Those stressed on the last syllable represent 10.66%; the words stressed on the antepenultimate syllable, 1.90%; and the unstressed, 41.04%. Quilis (1981: 336) offers the following results: words stressed on the penultimate syllable, 79.50%; those stressed on the last syllable, 17.68%; words stressed on the antepenultimate syllable 2.46%, after discarding unstressed words, tonic monosyllables and adverbs ending in "-mente" (-ly). Again, there are frequent errors in pronunciation since English, although the pronouncing tendency in the first syllable of the words stands out, shows more variation in the accentual distribution. Take the following cases as an example:

comfortable /'kʌmfətəbl/

rebel /'rebl/ (noun) /rɪ'bel/ (verb)

afternoon /,ɑ:ftE'nu:n/

● **Tonal differences.** We can divide most languages into two groups: tonal and non-tonal. The Chinese language, for example, belongs to the first group, where the tone has great importance. A small difference in the tone of certain sounds can completely change the meaning. It may happen that by using a tone frequency different from the one which the Spanish-speaking apprentices are accustomed to in their native language, they may imply something radically different from what they mean by not using the tone a native would in English. A Spanish speaker may express indifference to something when he wants to express his enthusiasm, for example when commenting on the quality of a meal: The meal is delicious!

● **Rhythmical differences.** In English, the semantically most important words such as verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs, for example, are those that are stressed; on the other hand, functional words, such as articles, prepositions,

conjunctions, etc., are usually unstressed. Thus, the rhythm of an English sentence will be the same regardless of the number of syllables it contains because the stresses appear at regular intervals; this does not happen in Spanish, where the rhythm is marked by the number of syllables regardless of whether they are stressed or not. The time of realization in English between a sentence composed only of three words, all with an accentual burden and another that contains seven words but only three of them support the accentual burden is very similar.

Tom lives here

/ˈtóm ˈlɪvz ˈhiː/

The father has arrived at the station

/TE ˈfɑːTE z E ˈrɑɪvd Et TE ˈsteɪʃən/

- **Intonation differences.** This prosodic element is perhaps the most difficult to systematize since in it, in addition to the purely linguistic, different factors such as affective, attitudinal, sex, etc. play an important role. Broadly speaking, both languages share the basic patterns of intonation: tonal fall at the end of a phonic group to indicate the end of the communicative sequence or final rising intonation to indicate that the expression of thought is incomplete.

However, if we look in more detail at both systems, we find striking differences. For example, confirmatory questions in English acquire falling intonation if the sentence as a whole is to be interpreted as a statement and rising if a listener is actually asked to respond. This does not exist in Spanish, so it is more difficult for Spanish speakers to acquire these traits.

Psychological causes

- **Musical ability and the ability to imitate.** Most experimental studies that have sought a relationship between musical ability and the ability to pronounce a language have discarded this hypothesis. For example, neither Thomson (1991) nor Coates (1986) found any relation between them. In some cases, it has been possible to demonstrate the relationship between musical ability and the capacity for phonological discrimination or some link between musical aptitude and pronunciation, but they are so scarce that we cannot assure that there is a direct relationship between them or some of their elements such as intonation and rhythm.

As for the ability to imitate, the studies have been varied. In some, a certain influence of this one on the pronunciation is recognized, although it is not considered too significant (Suter, 1976). However, in the Thomson study mentioned above, it was found that those subjects with good imitation ability had a better and more accurate pronunciation than those with a more limited ability.

- **Perception.** In recent years, it is the theory of the Speaking Learning Model (Flege, 1991b, 1992, 1995) that is most accepted in terms of the influence of

perception on correct pronunciation. The author argues that the age for the development of phonetic categories is between 5 and 7 years, when it is easier to acquire several phonic systems. Therefore, age seems to be a decisive factor for correct pronunciation, due to the lack of auditory perception of adults.

According to this theory, and relating the sounds of the MT with those of the L2, we can speak of identical sounds, similar sounds and new sounds. Similar sounds are the ones that cause the greatest problems and the causes of the foreign accent. When identified with a sound of the mother tongue, the apprentice will tend to reproduce the sound of his own language.

Even more recent studies corroborate this theory; in Major's words (2001: 105): *Similar phenomena are acquired more slowly than dissimilar phenomena.*

Anyway, the same authors recognize that it is not always the perception that causes an incorrect pronunciation. It seems clear that perception is necessary for accurate pronunciation but it is no guarantee that it will occur. The transfer of some elements of the mother tongue may also be the cause of foreign accent.

●**Motivation.** The motivation that a student can feel towards learning a language can be provoked by the desire to communicate or by the desire to learn with a specific goal, such as passing an exam. It is what some authors like Gardner and Lambert (1959) denominate integrative and instrumental motivation, respectively. According to their studies, it seems that the former is, in the long term, more determinant for a better learning of the language.

Regarding the pronunciation and its direct relation with the motivation, we find discrepancies in the different studies carried out. While some find their influence irrelevant, others recognize its importance especially in natural learning contexts. Some studies that worked with apprentices who had high proficiency in their pronunciation showed a very high motivation. This leads us to consider whether it is motivation that leads to success or it is success that motivates the learner. In light of the results, motivation may be a positive factor, but it does not guarantee success in learning. In our opinion, it can be decisive for the improvement of the pronunciation when the appropriate strategies are used and there is a good knowledge of the phonic systems of the mother tongue and the language under study.

●**Anxiety.** Anxiety makes learning difficult for various reasons. Perhaps the most remarkable is the fear of not understanding and not being understood, which will be especially enhanced in the case of previous bad experiences with the foreign language.

Several studies, such as those by Gardner and MacIntyre (1993), show this negative effect of anxiety, but in many others it has been found that, sometimes, anxiety can act as a facilitator and help the learner to do more. Thus, when the level of anxiety is low, it can motivate the learner; however, when it is high, it blocks it (Scovel, 1978). Although some studies show no relationship between anxiety and learning, most of them show that anxiety often has a negative effect on learning.

Surely the pronunciation is the linguistic aspect that is most harmed by anxiety. It is possible to think that as the apprentice has a greater degree of competence the level of anxiety decreases by the self-confidence that the learner is acquiring.

●**Psychological inhibition.** Not few learners are inhibited when it comes to having to articulate strange sounds or strange intonations because they think they sound ridiculous. This greatly hinders progress in learning pronunciation. In a study by Guiora et al. (1972) an experiment was conducted in which alcohol was administered to a group of subjects to reduce temporary states of inhibition. The performance of the pronunciation test by the experimental group was significantly better than that of the control group.

The conclusion reached by Guiora et al. is that there is a direct relationship between inhibition and the ability to pronounce a foreign language. The ways of creating spaces of communication to lower the inhibition barrier might have to be sought in a balance between the cognitive and the affective; it does not seem too appropriate to use the resource discussed earlier in our schools and universities.

Teaching pronunciation. Techniques, materials, resources.

Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) reviewed “the kinds of techniques and practice materials that have traditionally been used – and are still being used – to teach pronunciation” and they wrote the following list:

Listen and imitate, phonetic training, minimal pair drills, contextualized minimal pair drills, visual aids, tongue twisters, developmental approximation drills, practice of vowel shifts and stress shifts related to affixation, reading aloud/recitation, recordings of learners’ production.

Most of them are currently used in teaching pronunciation although some of the approaches may have changed with the use of more modern techniques and the inclusion of modern materials and resources. Almost all of them emphasize mainly on getting the sounds right at word level. In the 1970s and 1980s the Communicative Language Teaching began to impose the idea that suprasegmental features of language (rhythm, stress and intonation) should be taught instead of paying attention just to the segmental level.

As Celce states (Celce-Murcia et al. 2010:11), nowadays, we can see a more balanced view of pronunciation teaching, focusing on identifying the most important aspects of both the segmentals and the suprasegmentals and integrating them properly in specific courses that really help students to get a better pronunciation.

We also believe that teachers can “effectively address the pronunciation needs of their students only through comprehensive knowledge of the English sound system and through familiarity with a variety of pedagogical techniques, many of which should be communicatively oriented.”

Some of the modern techniques to take into account could be speaking tasks, such as debates, presentations, interviews, etc.; role plays and simulations, dialogues, film

scripts; describing, comparing and contrasting pictures ... And we can use different material and resources such as newspapers, comics, magazines, stories; TV series, documentaries, shows, films; radio programmes, blogs, applications, pronunciation software ...

Most of the experts on pronunciation teaching advise that we pay attention to perception and discrimination, explicit correction, intelligibility, comprehensibility, authentic language, phonological awareness (recording ourselves and comparing to the model or imitating, for example), production in real and natural dialogues, for instance, and automation of language with constant practice. The sooner, the better.

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