Forming And Improving Pronunciation Of Preschoolers In Teaching Foreign Languages

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Abstract: *The article aims at investigating different approaches of developing pronunciation skills of preschoolers including techniques, methods, and models. This will be pursued on the basis of literature review of published books and materials. Efforts have been made to find out some useful solutions for developing English pronunciation of preschoolers in second/foreign language context, especially in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, there are given many methods and suggestions to foreign language teachers in order to obtain their goals in teaching in kindergartens' bright future.*

Key words: Correct pronunciation, stress, intonation, singing songs, incorrect pronunciation, self-confidence, being in depression, intelligibility, articulation.

The article aims at analyzing different investigations of developing pronunciation abilities of preschoolers including techniques, methods, and models. This will be scanned on the basis of literature review of published books and materials. Efforts have been made to find out some useful solutions for improving English pronunciation of preschoolers in second/foreign language context, especially in Uzbekistan. The writer has tried to find out some useful solutions for developing English pronunciation in second/foreign language acquisition. The writer believes that the result of the study will enrich the teaching of English pronunciation in preschool in a foreign/second language context.

People have enough reasons to speak such as to communicate, to ask for something, to ask somebody do something, to help others, to answer their interlocutors' questions, to show their thoughts or emotions about an issue. Despite the fact that speaking serves as a key for a great deal of different conversation needs of people and has a significant role in human

beings' life for centuries, it still is a complicated event which includes a message formation that is intelligible for other people and conveyance of this information by using the proper phonology, stress and intonation.

Studies surveyed on teaching pronunciation can be divided into three groups. Some of them are only theoretical [1, 3, 4, 9]. Other studies have tested a specific technique related to teaching pronunciation [2, 5, 6]. Still others have focused on the use of technology in teaching pronunciation [11, 13, 14]. Despite the fact that pronunciation has collected wider satisfaction as a base of language teaching, these observations also suggest that many foreign language teachers are in hesitation about how to teach it to different levels. While some teachers believe that there is not enough time to teach pronunciation [3, 54-56p.]. Others think that teaching pronunciation is not full of fun, they do not concentrate on their mind how to teach it, or their children are reluctant to learn it [4, 69-72p.]. One of the researchers' surveys in the field of teaching pronunciation is the use of some important methods in pronunciation construction. They interpret the relationship between teaching pronunciation, language learning techniques and speaking

confidence [7, 89-93p.]. Since the late 1980s, when interest in pronunciation teaching as an investigation issue was on the rise, the importance of pronunciation teaching has moved from practicing individual sounds to concentrating equally on supra-segmental features (e.g. intonation, rhythm, stress) – at least in (English) pronunciation teaching literature [6, 8-11p.]. Is this the case in the classrooms as well? This article informs the notion in the example of Uzbekistan, where English and other foreign languages are studied widely and language skills are highly valued.

The pronunciation abilities of advanced Uzbek learners of English (university students) have been recently studied by me (2018). My study shows that even advanced Uzbek learners of English make systematic errors in their pronunciation. This result made me to believe that pronunciation is not paid enough attention in school teaching. However, this complain hinted at teachers is only focused on the learners' pronunciation abilities, not on any practical work on EFL teaching, teacher questionnaires or the like. Thus, my study puts questions regarding how English pronunciation teaching is conducted in Uzbek schools and kindergartens if the learning results are found fault with. This article, part of

my recent Ph.D. project, aims to shed light on this question and to complete the research gap in English pronunciation teaching of preschoolers in Uzbekistan. An essential interest is taken in both teaching techniques and the contents of teaching. The following research questions were set for the recent article:

(1) Which methods and techniques are used in teaching English pronunciation in the example of Uzbek elementary schools and kindergartens?

(2) Which aspects are highly accentuated in English pronunciation teaching in the context of Uzbek elementary schools and kindergartens?

The Uzbek-speaking learners of English are keen on occurring problems in the following areas due to differences in the sound systems of Uzbek and English. First, some vowels and consonants give trouble to Uzbeks due to pronunciation distinctions, as they are sometimes missed while pronunciation, most of which do not occur in Uzbek. When I (2018) have made a special analysis of Uzbek university students' English pronunciation, I have been a witness of most difficulties lie in the above-mentioned areas. I have not taken a survey in pronunciation teaching in Uzbek schools. What is known about the matter is mainly focused on

learners' thoughts, and includes only few phonetic teaching methods. University students (78) have been asked whether they had been taught how to read phonetic symbols during their school years, and the students' answers do not show a strong phonetic orientation in school teaching: In the teaching of English, phonetic script was taught often to only 1% and never to 32% of the participants; phonetic listening tasks, e.g. sound discrimination, were done often in the teaching accepted by 1% and never in the teaching accepted by 55% of the participants and finally, none of the participants showed they had often accepted training in intonation and speech rhythm, whereas 46% informed that they had never accepted teaching in these fields. As highlighted learners' opinions suggest that phonetic training is not frequently used in English pronunciation teaching in Uzbek schools, even though phonemic transcription can be seen as an essential tool in pronunciation teaching for Uzbek-speaking learners in particular.

In order to gain crucial information about English pronunciation teaching, classroom observations were chosen as the method. In the description of the classroom and kindergarten observations, the notion is partly

devoted to explaining why the record-taking method of the observations was chosen. Finally, the cases and data analysis are introduced. Four teachers from two different schools and two different kindergartens were chosen for this observation. I was attended EFL lessons by one teacher from each class without participating in the teaching in any way. Each teacher was observed within a period of one week. The kindergartens were small with teaching groups of 10 to 15 preschoolers and the two others were medium-sized schools with teaching classes of 14 to 20 pupils. The teachers knew that the classes were observed for research goals, but the aim of the observations was showed to them only after the period of observation, in order not to disturb their teaching and behavior in class. They did not know whether the goal of the observation was on them or their pupils. The choice of the record-keeping method of the observations was made in written accounts. Audio recording was not seen as an option due to practical reasons – classrooms are too large and often have poor acoustics, teachers walk around the class and essential information can be missed in other voices and general noise. The mixture of recording and writing transcripts was controlled because the survey did not aim at a word to word analysis of what is said

during the lessons. Video recording would have offered a good, re-playable visual and audio account when analyzing the data, but teachers and pupils, if not used to being video recorded, might have been affected by the presence of the video camera. Overall, it might have been more difficult to find teachers willing to participate. Written notes were considered suitable for the recent goals and were chosen as the method, though immediate decisions about what to record were required and the possibility of action replay was excluded. However, an observer with pen and paper rather than a video camera was estimated to have less of an effect on the teachers and the pupils.

Data collection was conducted as focused observations. An observation form was prepared beforehand and completed during the lessons. The form consisted of a list of pronunciation teaching methods drawn from pronunciation teaching literature [1, 27p.]. In addition, the form included space for notes after each pronunciation teaching method in the list, which was used to describe the procedure in class if the method in question was used by the teacher.

After the observation period the teachers completed a short questionnaire regarding their education,

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work experience, and teaching materials they use in their pronunciation teaching. Because of the relatively short observation period, the teachers were also asked to value how much they taught pronunciation during the observations compared to usual. The teachers were chosen for this study so that they would represent teaching at all school levels from basic education to upper secondary school. The four observed teachers –Xalilova N., Saidova T., (school teachers) and Olimova S., Latipova D. (Kindergarten teachers)– had teaching experience from 7 to 15 years. All teachers were qualified teachers holding B.A. degree. The primary school teacher, N. Xalilova, was responsible for teaching English to children in basic education classes 1-2, and the teacher T. Saidova taught pupils in basic education classes 3-4. Other teachers, S. Olimova, and D. Latipova taught children in kindergartens. Relevant background information about the teachers is given in Table 1 below.

Full names of teachers	Qualifications	Experience	Pupils
Xalilova N.	B.A.	15 years	7–8 years old
Saidova T.	B.A.	9 years	9-10 years old
Olimova S.	B.A.	7 years	4–5 years old
Latipova D.	B.A.	5 years	5–6 years old

TABLE 2.

Teaching method	Times used in teaching				
	Xalilova N.	Saidova T.	Olimova S.	Latipova D.	Total
Listen and repeat	34	-	2	3	39
Teacher corrects	11	4	8	-	23

Teacher points out	5	-	-	16	21
Read aloud	4	-	6	-	10
Phonemic script	2	-	-	7	9
Rhyme	3	-	-	-	3
Rules	1	-	-	1	2
Dictation/spelling	1	-	1	-	2
Discrimination	1	-	-	-	1
Tactile reinforcement	-	-	-	1	1
Total	62	4	17	28	111

As believed, the teachers showed great difference in their teaching. Xalilova N., teaching beginners, was the most active in teaching pronunciation: she used pronunciation activities in most of the categories. More than half of all pronunciation activities detected during the observations were seen in N. Xalilova's teaching. Saidova T. teaching at elementary level, was the opposite of N. Xalilova. She did not teach much pronunciation during the observed lessons, and when she did, she always used the same method: correcting the pupils. Olimova S. and Latipova D. were more active in pronunciation teaching, but they used various techniques. They each used many kind of methods from four or five categories. As compare with other teachers, D. Latipova's pronunciation teaching is more analytical: she focuses on explaining pronunciation issues and uses phonetic training frequently. The other teachers are more practical. In their pronunciation teaching, they concentrate on listen and repeat activities, reading aloud tasks and correcting their pupils.

How to teach pronunciation communicatively is a difficult process and this seems to be true for Uzbek

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EFL teachers as well. In the world of communicative language teaching (CLT), it is surprising how teacher-led pronunciation teaching seems to be in the light of these four cases. This is shown for example by the high frequency of teachers correcting pupils' pronunciation. Correcting pupils, however, should not affect feelings in pupils, and they should not think as if they were punished, as stated by [8, 23p.]. Morley adds it is always the pupil who corrects or better, modifies the pronunciation, whereas the teacher's task is to give cues on how to do that. The pupils should be given a choice to self-correct, and suggest an instant cue (e.g. teacher saying "Pronunciation!") to remind the pupil of the mispronunciation without correcting him/her. In fact, this was usually not what the Uzbek EFL teachers did. Mainly the teachers corrected their pupils by repeating a mispronounced word in the desired form. On one occasion Saidova T. also repeated the undesired form uttered first by a pupil, and then she explained that the undesired form could be misinterpreted as another word. Olimova S. came closest to giving cues on how to correct mispronunciations, but in fact gave orders.

Researchers believe that some abilities like reading and writing have grammar, semantics and syntax. They argue that pronunciation should have some method and technique like other language skills. Most of the methods ignored pronunciation. But some English teaching methods embrace pronunciation. In **direct method** pronunciation is taught through imitation and repetition, **audio-lingual** method uses pronunciation through imitation supported by analysis and linguistic information. **The silent way** also uses sound color chart, Fidel charts, word chart and colored rods. Pronunciation is also taught in Community Language Learning. A tape recorder is used in this case. This is the history of teaching pronunciation. But in today's world communicative approach is an essential approach. Some researchers argue that the goal of teaching pronunciation to ESL/EFL learners is not to make them sound like native speakers of English. They overstate that establishing **intelligible pronunciation** should be the most important factor of oral communication. But still there are some problems with the methodological issue. It raises the question as to how can the unintelligible pronunciation become intelligible. This is even a problem for the communicative language teaching (CLT). Because CLT has not developed an agreed–upon set of strategies for

teaching pronunciation communicatively. They suggest some techniques of teaching pronunciation as a part of CLT by reviewing the types of techniques and practice materials that have traditionally been used to teach pronunciation [3, 21-25p.]:

1. Listening and imitating 2. Phonetic teaching 3. Minimal pair drills 4. Contextualized minimal pairs 5. Visual aids (e.g. sound-color chart, Fidel wall charts, rods, pictures, mirrors) 6. Tongue twisters 7. Developmental approximation drills. 8. Practice of vowel shifts and stress shifts related by affixation 9. Reading aloud/recitation 10. Recordings of learners' production. They propose that methods like visual and auditory reinforcement, tactile reinforcement, kinesthetic enforcement, use of authentic materials (e.g. jokes, advertising copy, comic strips, passages from literature) can be effective in developing approaches of pronunciation in a second language context. They also suggest using techniques from psychology, theatre arts and other disciplines. Their proposals and suggestions are certainly effective and worth following. Cook also finds a number of notions in teaching and learning pronunciation. Teachers are prone to correct learners' mistake when there is a major problem in their production. This incidental correction

does not do much for the learning of pronunciation. In this respect Cook says, "…learning of sound is not just a matter of mastering the second language phonemes and their predictable variants….it means learning the rules of pronunciation for the languages..." Cook says that learners' has great contribution in acquiring second language pronunciation. He suggests a number of methods in teaching and learning pronunciation.

1. Use of phonetic transcript 2. Imitation 3. Discrimination of sounds 4. Communication. Cook identifies how learner's second language is affected by their first language. 1. **Sounds:** learning of pronunciation depends on aspects other than the phoneme, for example, distinctive feature. 2. **Syllable structure:** second language learners simplify use consonant clusters and add extra 'epenthetic' vowels, often to fit the first language. 3. **Voice onset time:** second language learners gradually acquire the second language way of voicing stop consonants. Their first language is affected by their knowledge of the second language. 1. **Intonation:** second language learners are still capable of discriminating tones. Second language learners have strategies for dealing with new intonation. N. Schmitt suggests "pronunciation does not work in isolation from other factors: in

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addition to employing our voice, we also use eye movement, mime, and gesture. "It is also evident in his book that we speak with our vocal organs, but we converse with our entire body. He also emphasizes learners' age, purpose and setting. He suggests some techniques of learning pronunciation. 2. Elicited mechanical production 3. Ear training for sound contrast 4. Sounds for meaning contrasts

While showing cognitive analysis he emphasizes some points.

- assimilation and elision as crucial feature of connected speech.

- phonetic training (e.g. using videos and head diagrams)

- teaching learners phonemic transcription

- teaching rules: simple and comprehensive

- comparison between L1 and L2 sound system

- analysis of sounds in texts

- using a dictionary for pronunciation

He also reminds that the right side of the human brain often includes music, poetry, guided imaginations, relaxation techniques such as yoga respiration, and kinesthetic tests. He accentuates **attitudinal duty of intonation.** Penny Ur emphasizes "the target of the pronunciation is not to accomplish a perfect imitation of native accent, but simply to get the learner to articulate

carefully sufficient to be easily and comfortably **intelligible** to other speakers". She offers some methods of teaching pronunciation. **Techniques of pronunciation:** 1. Mimic of teacher or recorded standard of sounds 2. Recording of learner oration and opposition with native standard 3. Systematic description and teaching 4. Imitation trains; reiteration of sounds 5. Choral reiteration of instructions 6. Modified repetition of drills (varied speed, dimension, state) 7. Learning and accomplishing dialogues 8. Learning by heart of phrases, rhythms, jingles 9. Jazz chants 10. Tongue twisters 11. Self-correction through listening to recordings of own speech.

Penny Ur does not worry about pattern. What he notifies is the **model easily comprehended** by other users of language. He also luminously emphasizes that for teaching English in Europe the British accent may be elected, in Japan the American. He declares that it is good to give learners at least some exposure to others, through the use of live speakers or recordings, in order to elevate awareness of other practicable accents and, of course, for listening action. Harmer recommends in pronunciation instructing learners should be "given extra information about spoken English and aid them to obtain the goal of

improved **comprehension and intelligibility**". Harmer exhibits the requirement of intelligibility rather than completion. He says "under the urgency of such personal, political and phonological importance, it has become customary for teachers to think intelligibility as the culmination goal of pronunciation teaching".

Suggestions on the techniques of teaching English pronunciation:

• Use of phonetic transcript: Practice of phonetic transcript can help learners become self-dependent in recognizing sounds. The writer believes that the learners can benefit themselves considerably through practice of phonetic transcript. Imitation: It is an effective way of developing pronunciation skill in audio-lingual method. Learners can listen to a sound and try to mimic in the same way.

• Ear trailing: By regular training in listening to sounds one can greatly develop one's ability to recognize and distinguish different speech sounds. Such practice is known as Ear-Training. It is best done with the help of dictation from someone familiar with the phonetic material to be learnt."

• Phonetic drill: Phonetic drill can be done through the use of videos and head diagrams. This is an attentional way of training pronunciation.

• Difference between L1 and L2 sound system: It is expressively accentuated that learners get a clear image about their mother tongue and the target language. This will underestimate and increase their learning of English pronunciation.

• Minimal pair drill: Minimal couple teaching is an operative way of learning pronunciation ability.

• Pronunciation games (based on disclosing approach)

• Sound waves exercise

• Learning combined speech

• Making cards of rhyming words, e.g. take, make, do, true etc.

• Mimic of teacher or recorded standard of sounds

• Recording of learner oration and opposition with native standard

• Systematic description and teaching

• Imitation trains; reiteration of sounds

• Choral reiteration of instructions

• Modified repetition of drills (varied speed, dimension, state)

• Telling story and watching learners' errors and finally correcting them

• Setting up a speaking exercise, e.g. dialogue, role-play, chat and etc.

• Learning by heart of sentences, rhythms, jingles

• Jazz chants

• Tongue twisters

Preschool learners are children from 5 to7 years of age. They are

relatively mature children with both adult and childish features. I would like to concentrate on young learners of four and seven years of age. We can learn a lot from how little babies gain their first language. As Brumfit, Moon and Tongue claim: "An intriguing paradox in the outgrowth of young children is their skill to settle their first language at a time when they are unskillful to comprehend anything about the system which they come to use with such competence. From practices of learning other languages at later ages there is much that shows that learning a language is not easy. Yet young children the world over insist and make progress even though it later presents to be hard. The truth that young children learn their first language such speed and power must mean that if the training can be better understood, it should be potential to design systems through which children learn a second language in much the identical way as they learn their first language" (Teaching English to Children, 1991, p.213). Babies learn through voice, gestures, speaker's face and tone of the voice and they perceive an atmosphere around them. Then they examine the universe they exist in and attempt to give things some inscriptions. At first children control with concrete words and later then they improve their abstract thinking and try to use abstract words in their oration. The more concrete the words are the more children learn. They need many actual things, pictures and associations to make a second language. According to my experience they learn very quickly when they can play with real things or are able to imagine situations or actions. The best way is examining new language through real actions which are prompting for them in a right way. They do not like being taught in a directive way they enjoy active implication. There is another question about how can children be helped to learn a foreign language. It is not wonderful to inform that a child's concentration develops as he/she grows older. Children cannot concentrate on one thing for a long period and therefore the authors suggest that lessons should be divided into various activities and tasks lasting no longer than five or ten minutes. This is because children tend to acquire new experiences and information. Teachers should introduce a reasonable number of new language items and present and practice them in a number of different practices. Children who are tired after their school work are not skillful to concentrate on after-school language course very much and one must plan his lessons thoughtfully and then be creative during them and alter prepared ones according to the pupils´ mood. A teacher should identify that an activity is not good in a very limited time and must be prepared to modify it. Another question is that is there a best way to train preschool EFL?

Using stories in teaching is very suitable, inspiring and enjoyable. According to the above mentioned

theory and my experience I will choose a story as a suitable material for teaching and learning a second language. A story is something that everybody is familiar with, a superiority of people used to listen to stories and approve them very much. Children want to enjoy a character's adventures and like to compare good and bad. After having worked with children's stories I have made my own conclusion. Although I work with children who are implicated in learning English very much, it is very significant to select a proper level for a certain class. They study English as their leisure activity and this is why they are very implicated. Stories give many choices for training everything children have known.

· Stories are motivating and fun; they make a profound interest and a desire to persist learning.

· Listening to stories is a shared social experience; it provokes a shared answer of merriment, sadness, excitement and prevention.

· Stories exercise the creativeness; children can become individually concerned in a story as they identify with the natures and try to interpret the narrative and illustrations.

· Stories are profitable tools in connecting fantasy and the creation with the child's existing world; they supply a way of enabling children to make sense of their everyday life.

· Listening to stories concedes the teacher to introduce or revise new vocabulary and sentence constructions by exposing the children to language.

· Stories assist students of whole levels to get literature, they carry ideological massages.

· Children books suggest real truths, mental appeals to one generation after another.

Creating a good atmosphere: Classroom is a place where children should feel certainty, satisfied and lucky although they should learn something new there. As teachers we should have regard towards our children and like them all. This is a very crucial part of a teacher´s behavior. Young children have a very clever sense of fairness and they often realize inequity earlier than a teacher. Another essential thing is to create pleasant and familiar environments. The classroom should be ornamented not only by the teacher's instruments and pictures but also by the pupils´ works, schemes and physical object which can make it a lovely place to learn. My pupils have a big benefit of having the classroom only for their lessons. We can make our own surroundings with all kinds of personal belongings. One often may alter desks lay-out in the classroom to make it more interesting and proper for various activities. Children like working with groups or couples. A safe class atmosphere is very essential for shaping good lessons. Here are some of the

suggestions which help to create a secure class atmosphere.

· Pupils should know what we are doing and what is happening in the classroom.

· Regard your pupils.

· Whenever a pupil is attempting to tell you something, accept whatever he or she declares.

- Mistakes: Regular, direct discipline does not have benefits and it does not help to make a good class atmosphere. Correction has benefits when you are working on language practices.

· Children of all ages are sometimes unkind and unfair to each other. They should not laugh at others´ errors, and this has to be part of the disciplines of the classroom. Pupils

have to be told that everyone has errors when they are learning a new language, and that it is all possible.

· Settle customs.

· Give the children the choice for doing practical tasks in the classroom.

· Do not organize competitions. Language learning is an event where everyone can win. Children race naturally with each other - to see whose finished first etc., but this is something various.

· Escape motivating with physical rewards or prizes. It shows others that they are not "winners" and it does not give them a hand learning to take place.

· Avoid giving children English titles. Language is a personal belonging, and you are the same person no matter what language you are practicing.

Conclusion

The writer believes that the outcome of the literature review has led us to some useful suggestions about learning and teaching pronunciation. The writer hopes that the suggested techniques will be tried by EFL/ESL teachers in the class room. Since English is a world language, intelligibility and comprehensibility should be brought under consideration while applying these techniques in a second/foreign language teaching context.

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