ENHANCING PRONUNCIATION SKILLS OF TEACHERS

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The ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language since speech is the most basic means of human communication. Nevertheless, “speaking in a second or foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four macro-skills” listening, reading, speaking and writing.

Is it different to study speaking in a second or foreign language? Prown (1994) mentions a number of features that interact to make speaking as challenging a language skill as it is.

The teaching of pronunciation is as crucial to our students. Pronunciation is the language feature that most readily identifies speakers as non-native.

Fluent speech of course is composed of fluent pronunciation of reduced forms, such as contractions, vowel reduction and elision, so that learners who are not exposed to or do not get sufficient practice with reduced speech will retain their rather formal-sounding full forms. Students mostly, also acquire the stress, rhythm and intonation of English, a complicated task for many.

Perhaps, the most difficult aspect of spoken English is that it is almost always accomplished via interaction with at least one another speaker. Teachers may or may not be given textbook or materials for teaching pronunciation. Since not all materials live up to their claims about what they promote or teach in terms of language content, teaching methodology and textual-authenticity.
In the past, pronunciation instruction usually focused on the articulation of consonants and vowels and the discrimination of minimal pairs. In recent years, the focus has shifted to include a broader emphasis on suprasegmental features such as stress and intonation. However, many teaching materials still do not make clear that pronunciation is just one piece of the whole communicative competence puzzle. As Seidholfes (1995) states, “pronunciation is never an end in itself but a means of negotiating meaning in discourse, embedded in specific socio-cultural and interpersonal contexts.

Indeed, pronunciation instruction needs to be taught as communicative interaction along with other aspects of spoken discourse, such as pragmatic meaning and non-verbal communication.

A wide variety of pronunciation textbooks in English are on the market today, allowing teachers to select the most suitable materials to use in teaching pronunciation.