

STUDENTS FEEDBACK TO THEIR PRONUNCIATION LEARNING

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Abstract

English pronunciation and intonation are vital basic skills that remain hard to master . As one of the most difficult skills for ESL students , English pronunciation is difficult not only for Chinese students but also for students from other countries whose native language is not English , who will show different problems in learning English pronunciation . The survey indicates that the supra segmental features of stress , rhythm and intonation are important to pronunciation fluency and communicative tasks . Efforts should be made to help students acquire comprehensible pronunciation and speak intelligible and fluent English .

Key words

pronunciation ; phonetic symbols ; intelligibility ; communication

1 . Introduction

Pronunciation is an integral part of English language learning . College English Curriculum in China (1999) requires the non -English major college students to have speaking skills which include pronunciation and intonation . The College English Curriculum Requirements (for Trial implementation) issued by the Ministry of Education of China in 2004 set three levels of requirements : basic requirements , intermediate requirements and higher requirements . Both basic level and intermediate level require the students to have “ clear articulation and basically correct pronunciation and intonation ” , while the higher level requires the students to be able to speak English “ with certain degree of fluency and accuracy ” (2004) . The Syllabus of the CET Spoken English Test offers specific requirements for English pronunciation and intonation . According to the syllabus , the full score for speaking will be partly based on students pronunciation . It requires that students have “ fine pronunciation ” but they are allowed to speak understandable English “ with some accent of their native language ” (1999) . So , it is clearly indicated that English pronunciation and intonation are important for college students ; for whether they major in English or other disciplines , they are required to have a good mastery of English pronunciation . This study investigates the opinions about pronunciation of students from different language backgrounds . The study is significant in that the research is done from the learners perspective . It is hoped that the result of the study may help teachers of English better understand students struggles , their attitudes toward pronunciation learning and their needs , so that teachers can design teaching plans and conduct their second language learning classes to best meet these needs .

2 . Review of Related Research

Due to the important position of pronunciation in the second language learning , many researchers and professors have studied students attitudes toward pronunciation , and their subsequent problems with learning pronunciation .

Stevick (1982) points out that learners are particularly concerned with the pronunciation of the

target language and have demands for pronunciation drills. Willing (1988) conducts a study of the learning strategy preferences of 517 students. He finds that mastering the sounds and pronunciation of the target language is a high priority for most learners. Nunan (1988) also reports similar findings.

But correct English pronunciation and intonation are not easy to master. Odlin (1989) stresses the powerful influence of the first language on the efforts of learners to master the sound system of a second language. Swan & Smith (1987) present an outline of some of the problems for second language learners of English.

David Nunan devotes a chapter to discussion of mastering the sounds of the language in his *Language Teaching Methodology* (1991). In the chapter, he not only looks at some of the theoretical positions which have been taken in the teaching of pronunciation and explores pronunciation materials, but also tries to find out how pronunciation is taught from a communicative perspective. Pennington & Richards (1982) review the status of research into the teaching of pronunciation from the point of view of communicative language teaching and offer recommendations for teaching pronunciation. Hedge (2002) also points out that the ability to produce sounds intelligible to other speakers is part of the competency of speaking English.

As for helping improve students' pronunciation, Esling & Wong (1983) suggest early training should be given to the learners, hoping to awaken the young desire to practice. Thornbury (1993) supports the idea by further suggesting early activity for adult Spanish learners of English as a foreign language. Tarone (1974) and Channell (1988) emphasize that stress is important to understanding, so learners need to know for each word both the stress pattern found in a dictionary and heard in continuous speech and be able to stress words correctly if they wish to be intelligible. Hedge suggests that students practice in self-access mode, where teachers direct students to forms of practice they most need and monitor their activities using the self-report form to see how they are doing and what advice they need. With an increasing stress on speaking skill and communicative competence, pronunciation teaching and learning has drawn the attention of some Chinese scholars researching factors that influence Chinese students' English pronunciation (Li 2000; Yang 2006; Wan 2007; Fang 2007). Some researchers analyze the relationship between English pronunciation self-concept and English pronunciation learning (Wang 2004; He 2007; Zhu 2005). Some researchers focus on the problems of new college students in their English pronunciation and suggest some ways to improve their pronunciation (Wang, Zuo & Du 2005). Research has also been done on the content and methods of English pronunciation teaching (Yun 2000; Shi & Ling 2005).

However, research from the learners' perspective on learning pronunciation is limited. This is especially unfortunate because not many teachers give due emphasis on pronunciation in teaching English and many learners' pronunciation is not satisfactory. Pronunciation teaching and learning have not been popular with teachers and learners. Then what is the learners' attitude toward learning pronunciation? What are efficient and effective ways to improve pronunciation from the learners' point of view? What do the second language learners think of pronunciation teaching at school? What do they think of their pronunciation? What problems do they have in their learning of pronunciation? How do they improve their pronunciation?

With these questions in mind, the author designed a study on the current practice of pronunciation at a university from the learners' perspective.

3. Research Method

3.1 Subjects

The research includes an interview and a questionnaire survey. The subjects for the interview are 11 ESL international students selected at random from different countries: Germany, Greece, Japan, France, Belgium, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Norway, Thailand and Spain, all studying at Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS), in California, and one Chinese student from Shanghai. They were all interviewed in their spare time on the campus of MIIS.

The interviewees' verbalizations are audio taped with their permission. They are at ease when their

speeches are being recorded . Then the tape recording is clear and all the interviewees verbalizations are transcribed later .

In order to get a more complete picture of the second language learners pronunciation ,along with the interview ,the author conducts a survey among 100 Chinese students of Chongqing Technology and Business University (CTBU). They are English majors or non -English majors selected at random in the second grade and third grade at university .

3 .2 Questions for interviews

The interviews are designed to find out what problems students from different language background may have and how they tackle their difficulties . The questions for the interviews are :

- 1) What are your main problems in learning English pronunciation ?
- 2) What does the teacher do to improve your pronunciation ?
- 3) How do you learn pronunciation ?(See Appendix I)

3 .3 Questions for the survey

The survey is designed to find out what Chinese students think of learning pronunciation and their learning strategies . For the survey ,100 copies of the questionnaire are distributed to the subjects ,but only 98 are returned with answers and the other two are not valid . The questionnaire for the survey has 28 questions regarding students attitudes toward pronunciation and ideas towards improving . (See Appendix II)

4 . The Results

4 .1 Problems in common

A problem the interviewees share in common is the pronunciation of some vowel sounds and diphthongs which are not found in their native language . For example ,a few students find difficulty pronouncing the sound [] and [] ,while some others have difficulty pronouncing [d] ,[t] ,[v] ... depending on which sound does not exist in their mother tongues .

Another phenomenon that should be paid attention to :English has word stress . Native English speakers use word stress all the time without thinking about it .If one does not speak a word clearly ,one can understand the word because of the position of the stress . But some other languages ,Japanese or French ,for example ,do not have a similar word stress . The students speak English in the same way as they speak their native tongue ,pronouncing each syllable with equal emphasis . That makes their spoken English less understandable .

The Chinese student interviewed is also studying at MIIS . She speaks slowly and clearly ,and is cautious with her pronunciation of certain words with “ v ” ,“ th ” letters in them . She also speaks with some accent from her native tongue .

4 .2 Effect of native language on their pronunciation

Since the students are not native English speakers ,they speak English with the accents of their mother tongues . From the interviews with the international students and Chinese student ,it can be seen clearly that mastering the sound system of a second language present difficulties for ESLstudents . This is because the first language has a great influence on the learners mastering of the sound system of a second language . For those who learn the language as a second language ,their accents offer hints about where they are from and when they learned the language . That is to say ,the first language interference is powerful . This reflects the contrasts between the first and second languages . For example ,the phonological system of Chinese is very different from that of English . The places and manners of articulation of English and Chinese are different . Some English phonemes do not have Chinese equivalents and are hard to learn . Others resemble L1 phonemes but are not identical to them in pronunciation ,and thus cause confusion .

4.3 Greater focus on communication

Another phenomenon the interviewer notices is that students speak naturally and smoothly, without feeling nervous while being interviewed, even though they know that their speeches are being recorded. They seem to pay more attention to the words they use and ideas they express when answering the interviewer's questions, instead of trying to speak with perfect pronunciation.

4.4 Factors resulting in good pronunciation

The problem in learning L2 pronunciation also involves some other factors, such as amount of exposure, phonetic ability and psychological factors. The Norwegian student in the interview finds it not very difficult to learn English pronunciation because he has significant exposure to L2: talking with English speaking visitors, listening to the radio and tapes, watching TV and going to the language laboratory.

4.5 Attitude toward learning pronunciation

It is believed that better learning pronunciation takes place when students have positive attitudes towards both the task and their own method. The result of the questionnaire for the survey from the Chinese students (Table 1) presents the students' attitude toward learning pronunciation. As many as 82 out of 98 students have a strong desire to improve, while 14 want to improve their pronunciation, but not so much. Though most students want to improve their pronunciation, 16.32% do not spend any time practicing their pronunciation and 12.24% only spend 10 minutes per week on their pronunciation practice. Concerning whether the students have confidence in their learning pronunciation, 32.65% have the confidence to learn pronunciation well, and more than half express a belief that they can at least be close to the native English speakers if they do their best; but 8.16% of the students don't think they can even if they do their best. With regard to their feelings about mistakes in their pronunciation, 89.79% students have different degrees of unhappiness when they have significant pronunciation mistakes while 10.2% do not care. As for responses to the teacher's correcting their pronunciation mistakes, most students respond positively. They are glad that the teacher points out and corrects their mistakes.

4.6 Activities beneficial to improving pronunciation

The result of the questionnaire also shows students' opinion about related activities. 64% of the students think that reading aloud after the recorded English material helps improve their pronunciation; 74% of the students think it helps to read aloud after the teacher, while 26% of the students think that it helps, but not very much. The students rank eight different activities in the order of degree of helpfulness in learning pronunciation. "Reading aloud after the recorded English material" is on the top of the list followed by "Watching English program on TV" and "Singing English songs", while "Reading aloud after the teacher" is the seventh in the list. This result indicates that the students find it most helpful to read aloud after the recorded English by native English speakers.

When asked whether the mini pair exercise helps improve pronunciation, 36.73% of the students think that it helps greatly, 40.82% find it helpful but not very much, while 24.49% don't think it is helpful at all.

As for how much reading helps pronunciation, students have different opinions. 12 (24%) chose "reading phonetic symbols aloud", 14 (28%) chose "reading sentences aloud", 18 (36%) chose "reading the whole passage", and 3 (6%) chose "reading words/phrases aloud". This indicates that 64% of the students don't think that it is very helpful to only read words/phrases/phonetic symbols aloud to improve their pronunciation.

4.7 Students' expectation of their teachers

With respect to what the students expect the teacher to do to help them improve pronunciation, the students are allowed to choose more than one among 6 choices. Forty-four students (44.9%) chose "ask the students to read after the recorded speech". Forty-eight students (48.98%) chose "ask the students to listen to the recorded English by native speakers". Thirty-six students (36.73%) chose "ask the students to have free conversation". Twenty-four students (24.49%) thought that it is helpful to "ask the students

to give an English speech". Twenty students (20.41 %) chose "tell in detail how to pronounce each and every phonetic symbol and word". Only 8 students (8.16 %) chose "ask the students to read after the teacher".

4.8 Activities students have in their pronunciation learning

In response to "What do you usually do to improve your pronunciation?", students' answers vary. Most students improve their pronunciation by listening and speaking. They listen to English songs, native speakers talk, singing English songs, watching English TV programs and seeing English movies,

In the survey, many students expect that the teacher should have standard pronunciation, give the students more opportunity to practice speaking, get the students to speak to one another in English in class and hope that the teacher points out difficulty in pronunciation and corrects their mistakes. Quite a number of students think that having situational dialogues and giving English speeches help them improve their pronunciation, and some students express their wish to learn to read phonetic symbols and features of stress, rhythm, etc. Some students believe that listening to the English test is helpful. Some students hope that the teacher could teach them pronouncing technique and special points such as features of stress, rhythm, linking, ellipsis, etc.

5. Discussion and Suggestions

All in all, the result of the survey shows that both foreign students and Chinese students have some problems in learning pronunciation. Their first language interferes with English pronunciation. They have difficulty pronouncing certain words and phonetic symbols that do not exist in their mother tongues. Many students wish to have a good mastery of pronunciation. This corresponds to the findings of the research on pronunciation, that is, "mastery of the sounds and pronunciation of the target language is a high priority for most learners" (Nunan 1988). The learners expect teachers to correct their mistakes.

Based on the findings of the research, the investigator suggests the following ways for teaching of pronunciation.

1) Raising the learners' awareness of English pronunciation with related knowledge. If learners acquire phonetic and phonological awareness of English, they know how to monitor their speech or employ other meta-cognitive strategies. At the beginning of the students' learning, the teacher may give clear and concise explanations and descriptions of pronunciation phenomena so that the students know the difference between their native tongue and the foreign language they are learning. This can raise the learners' awareness of English pronunciation and encourage them to produce English that is clearer and more comprehensible. When the learners have difficulties pronouncing certain sounds, the teacher can treat the sounds specifically and point out the difference between English sounds and the similar sounds in L1 so that the learners are aware of the differences and pay special attention to them when pronouncing the English sounds.

2) Some elements for pronunciation fluency cannot be ignored. "It is difficult to master phonological aspects of a language without some form of repetitive drilling" (Nunan 1991). The students need to practice step by step elements such as linking, reduction, word and sentence stress, intonation, ellipsis, consonant replacements and inflectional endings. Minimal pair practice for both consonants and vowels could also be included in the pronunciation teaching. Especially, at an early stage of learning pronunciation, minimal pair exercises are still helpful, especially to those students with difficulties distinguishing some sounds. "Getting your students to learn and practice correct word stress is a relatively easy way to improve their pronunciation" (Knight, O'Neil & Hayden 2004). Many languages do not use word stress, while word stress is key to understanding spoken English. English speakers use word stress to communicate rapidly and accurately, even in difficult conditions. They vary their stress, rhythm and intonation to signal different attitudes in real communication and the supra-segmental features of stress, rhythm and intonation play an important part in oral communication. Practice of word and sentence stress, rhythm and intonation are very important in pronunciation fluency. So emphasis should be given to supra-segmental features of stress, rhythm and intonation.

3) The teacher can provide a variety of exercises and activities, from controlled practice such as

listening and production exercises concerning the shift of intonation and stress signaling attitudinal difference , to more student-generated exercises including dialogues , paragraph readings , short presentations , picture descriptions and interview exercises . The step by step exercises and activities may bring the students from the stage of word , phrase , sentence to discourse level pronunciation , from controlled cognitively based performance to automatic skill based performance , which enable the learners to involve themselves in interactive activities and enable them to get communicative fluency .

4) Based on the belief “ Pronunciation forms a natural link to other aspects of language use , such as listening , vocabulary , ... ” (Pennington & Richards 1986) , there should be interdependence and mutual reinforcement of pronunciation and listening . Listening practice must be an integral part of pronunciation . Listening exercises can include “ listening for and marking a particular aspect of pronunciation ” , “ filling in the blanks , listening for a particular feature ” , “ listening and repeating ” , “ creating sentences for other students to repeat ” , “ creating questions for other students to answer ” .

5) It must be remembered that “ part of speaking the English language competently is the ability to produce its sounds in ways that are intelligible to other speakers ” (Gimson & Crutten 2001) . The goal of learning pronunciation is intelligibility and communicative effectiveness , not native speaking mastery . Therefore , the stress should be on developing intelligible and acceptable pronunciation . More emphasis should be placed on global learning . When the students speak complete sentences , they may get themselves across even if they have some problems with individual phonetic sounds . In a word , efforts should be made to help the students acquire comprehensible pronunciation and to help them to have correct pronunciation and speak intelligible and fluent English .

6) It is advisable to have the students listen to the recording of native English speakers as much as possible and imitate what they say . The material ranges from recorded talks , speeches , conversations of the native English speakers to English songs , movies and TV programs by native English speakers . The learners can have much fun in improving their pronunciation with a variety of listening resources . There is no doubt that the more learners are exposed to the native English speakers speaking of English , the better their pronunciation will become .

7) It is better not to interrupt fluency activities in order to correct pronunciation errors . Instead , write mispronounced words (or words containing a problem sound) on the board after an activity and have students mark the correct stress and practice pronouncing them .

8) Learning pronunciation is a long term task . The teaching of pronunciation must be patient and persistent throughout the whole process of learning . It is important to keep the students aware of their pronunciation and constantly self correct and improve their pronunciation spontaneously .

9) In teaching pronunciation , students needs should be considered . Students in a class may have different competency levels , learning speeds or expectations . Each student should be regarded as an individual with his / her own special needs and problems . The teacher can conduct a students needs analysis to prompt the students to reflect upon their learning strategies , language needs , learning enjoyment , motivation , language strengths and weaknesses . Knowing the special needs and problems of each student , the teacher can help them work out a practical way of improving their pronunciation .

6 . Conclusion

Like other English skills , English pronunciation and intonation is important for efficient communication . It is a basic skill required of students in their English learning . But it is difficult to have a good mastery of correct English pronunciation and intonation . However students from different L1 backgrounds have different problems . (None of the 12 interviewees has a native like pronunciation , but their pronunciation is intelligible .) Even native English speakers have different accents when they speak English . It is almost impossible to expect the ESL students to have one hundred percent accurate pronunciation . So , as one of the most difficult skills for ESL students , pronunciation and intonation is difficult not only for the Chinese students but also for students speaking other languages . Students whose native language is not English have different problems in learning English pronunciation . English learners understand the importance of having correct / natural pronunciation and desire to improve their

pronunciation . There are efficient ways to successfully improve their pronunciation . The teachers can adapt diverse strategies for teaching pronunciation . The supra segmental features of stress ,rhythm and intonation are important to pronunciation fluency and communicative tasks . Efforts should be made to help the students acquire comprehensible pronunciation and to speak intelligible and fluent English . Hopefully ,the result of this research provides some insight into the students problems and needs in pronunciation learning so that the teachers can adjust their teaching methods to the individual needs of the students .

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Appendix I

Interviews

Interview 1 . A student from France

English words and French words are similar . Sometimes I can guess the meaning of English words with the knowledge of French ,but I don't know how to pronounce them . I pronounce English words with strong French accent . It's especially very hard for me to pronounce [] and [] . We don't have these two sounds in French . In French ,there are no close diphthongs like [ai] ,[au] ,[i] . When French people speak English with these diphthongs ,they sound as if they are speaking French . In the high school , teachers of English may have sound knowledge of English grammar ,but they are not good at English pronunciation . They pay more attention to English grammar and vocabulary ,etc . I improve my pronunciation by listening to the radio ,native speakers talk and watching TV . Also I've found it very helpful to have my speech recorded and then listen to the recording ,so that I can find out what's wrong with my pronunciation ,what mistake I have made ,and what problem I have in intonation .

Interview 2 . A student from Greece

My L2 pronunciation learning suffers from much interference from my native language . In English , one letter may be pronounced in different ways or may not be pronounced at all according to its position . For example ,in the word "knife " "k " is not pronounced ,and the letter "c " may be pronounced [k] or [s] . But in Greek we don't have so many sound changes . We have only one sound corresponding to one graph presentation . In Greek ,there are no long vowels such as [i] . As for consonants we have no [] sound . We only have [s] . So it is hard for me to distinguish between [] and [s] . In Greek ,letter "r " is always pronounced . With the first language interference ,Greek students tend to pronounce [r] whenever it appears in an English word . Actually it should not be pronounced in some cases .

Teachers usually ask the students to repeat and imitate correct English sounds . At the university level ,students do some minimal pair exercises . For me ,I think ,listening to the tape and native speakers talk is effective . I can get used to their pronunciation and try to imitate .

Interview 3 . A student from Belgium

My first language is Flemish . (It is a dialect . The official language is Dutch .) In learning English pronunciation ,I have difficulty pronouncing [] and [] ,because we have not these sounds in Flemish . These two sounds are not natural to me . I always pronounce [d] when I should say [] . Teachers sometimes focus on the pronunciation of English . They just repeat the sounds difficult for the students to pronounce and ask the students to repeat also . That helps to some extent . At college ,I had a teacher of English . He did well in teaching us English pronunciation . He taught the students English pronunciation by exaggerating the sounds and asked us to repeat and imitate . I think that helps a lot .

Interview 4 . A student from Korea

Korean is different from English in pronunciation . In Korean ,the last sound of the word is always pronounced with stress —with a vowel sound . So the Korean students usually add vowel sounds at the end of the word in English . For instance ,they pronounce "church " not [t t] but [t ti] . As for me ,I often make mistakes in articulating [p] and [f] . When I should pronounce [p] ,I pronounce [f] ,and when I come across [f] ,I pronounce [p] . I try to pay attention to the problem and get rid of it by imitating . Imitation is the best way ,I think . I improve my pronunciation also by listening to the native speakers ,radio ,and watching TV .

Interview 5 . A student from Saudi Arabia

Arabic and English have different phonological systems both in the sounds used as well as in the emphasis placed on vowels and consonants in expressing meanings . I have difficulty distinguishing [v] and [f] ,and [p] and [b] ,because the difference between [v] and [f] ,and [b] and [p] doesn't exist in our language . We only have [f] and [b] sounds . I often make mistakes in pronouncing these sounds . We start English learning at high school . Teachers do not focus on the details of language such as pronunciation . Their stress is on the basic structure of English . Only those students whose major is English pay attention to pronunciation .

As for me ,the best way to improve my pronunciation is to repeat and compare the different sounds . Minimal pair exercises are helpful . I believe after this summer course ,I can do well in my pronunciation because I practice a lot .

Interview 6 . A student from Norway

I have 8 years English learning experience . Generally speaking ,I don't think it is very difficult for us to learn English pronunciation . There are two reasons . First ,we have many means to learn English . Radio programs , movies , TV programs , language labs ,... are very convenient . And we have many English speaking tourists and visitors , who cannot speak Norwegian ,so we must speak English to communicate with them . Second ,Norwegian and English are quite similar ,esp .the sentence is made in the same way . (Of course ,we can't translate Norwegian into English word by word .) Norwegian alphabet is the same as English but has different pronunciation . It seems that to pronounce English letters is easier than to pronounce Norwegian letters . Because Norwegian sounds are quite sharp ,involving more changes . Anyhow ,I also have some problems in learning though not big ones . In Norwegian ,each letter has only one sound . If one word consists of different letters ,we just utter the sound of each letter . English is variable . One letter may have different pronunciations in different positions . That is somewhat confusing . The teacher asks us to read ,to speak ,to listen to the radio and tapes to improve our pronunciation . Also we have glossaries . We read and re-read after the teacher . The teachers pay more attention to our conversation ability . If the student makes some mistake when speaking ,the teacher doesn't correct sometimes . The way the teacher speaks afterward gives a clue to whether the student's pronunciation is wrong or correct .

Interview 7 . A student from Malaysia

Many of the Malaysian words are borrowed from English . But they are spelt and sound differently . For example ,“sains” is borrowed from the English word “science” and “talivisen” from “television” in English ,but the word “sains” sound somewhat like “science” but not exactly . The Malay word for television ,“talivisen” ,does not sound exactly like television ,especially the last syllable .

In Malay ,there are no consonants like [] ,[] ,[] ,[] . Sometimes ,the students find it difficult to pronounce these sounds and they pronounce these words with these sounds with the heavy Malay accent . There is a lot of [] sound in Malay . Malaysians tend to pronounce [] sound in the speech . For example ,when they say “yes” ,they do not pronounce it as [jes] . Instead they pronounce it as [j] . They also tend to end their sentence with [la h] when they should not say it with the sound . For example :They say “I am going to school .” [ai m g ui t skulla h] .

Interview 8 . A student from Thailand

Thai is a tonal language . We have five tones for words ,which are important to decide the meaning of the sentence . In Thai there are no [r] ,[] ,[] ,[] [] . As for intonation ,English sounds musical . We have no rising intonation in yes/no question . All these factors give us much difficulty in learning English pronunciation . We can hardly distinguish [r] and [l] ,[v] and [w] . Teachers ask us to do some minimal pair exercises ,read after them ,and practice a lot . That seems helpful .

Interview 9 . A student from Spain

The Spanish and English consonant systems are quite similar ,but the vowel systems and sentence

stress are different . Spanish intonation is flat , while English has rise and fall . We have difficulty learning English intonation . Also it is hard for us to pronounce [] and [] , because we have not such sounds in Spanish . We learn English pronunciation through listening , imitating , and repeating exercises .

Interview 10 . A student from China

Most Chinese students tend to have difficulties with the English [u] [e] , [] , [] for they are influenced by the Chinese vowels [u] [e] [o] which are very different from the English vowels . The students also find it difficult to pronounce [v] [] [] , because there is not any sound in Chinese which is close to them and it is a common mistake for the students to pronounce [v] as [w] , [is] as [dis] and [t] as [dis] or [d t] . Teachers provide some minimal pair exercises for us to practice , especially at an early stage of learning pronunciation . They also present us the simple description of sounds . The teachers focus seems to be on imitation . For me , I did a lot of minimal pair exercises when I first learned English . But I didn't pay much attention to the intonation and rhythm . That is why I now can pronounce individual words of English correctly but my intonation is poor .

Interview 11 . A student from Japan

Generally speaking , Japanese students have problem in pronouncing [v] , [] , [r] , because in Japanese we do not have these sounds . In high school teachers drew pictures of the mouth to explain how the tongue and lips work and how we let air go . They actually didn't teach us pronunciation at all . Now things are changing . Some native speakers have come to Japan and there are many schools offering English conversation courses . In my case , I like English . I think pronunciation is very important in learning English . I improve my pronunciation by listening to the radio , watching TV , seeing films ... There are many kinds of sources I can use to improve my pronunciation . It seems that I am better in English pronunciation than other Japanese students . In addition , speaking is most difficult for Japanese students . It has something to do with language learning ability . Some students who major in English can't speak English .

Interview 12 . A student from Germany

In English , not all letters of every word are pronounced , there are words with silent letters , e. g. in "knight" the word initial "k" is silent . In contrast , in German , all letters are pronounced , e. g. in "Kneipe" , which means "pub" , the word initial "k" is pronounced . Therefore German speakers would have to learn which letter in which English words should remain silent .

In general , in English , sound doesn't always correspond to spelling , e. g. the pronunciation of "photograph" as a word in itself is different from when it forms part of the longer word "photography" . German has more regular sound-spelling correspondence , so "foto" meaning "photograph" (noun) is pronounced in the same way even as it forms part of the larger word "fotografieren" , meaning "to photograph" .

Therefore German speakers would have to learn to identify the differing word stress patterns present in English .

There are also sounds in German that are not found in English .

German contains more guttural sounds , e. g. the guttural pronunciation in German of the "ch" sequence in the word "Bach" which means "stream" , and the "ch" sequence in the word "Ich" meaning "I" . Thus English speakers would generally pronounce the same word "Bach" without attributing a guttural quality to the "ch" sequence in the word .

Like other languages that use the Latin alphabet , German attributes its own set of sounds to the letters "a" to "z" , so German speakers would have to memorize the sound qualities that English attaches to its alphabet . The German alphabet also contains letters not found in English , including the "a-Umlaut" or "Ä" in "Universität" meaning "university" ; the "o-Umlaut" or "Ö" in "Schneider" which is the surname of the current German chancellor ; "u-Umlaut" or "Ü" in "Universität" meaning "books" .

Appendix II

The survey

Table 1 . Students attitude toward their pronunciation learning

		Yes ,very much .	Yes ,but not very much .	No .	
1	Do you want to improve your pronunciation ?	82 83 .67 %	14 14 .29 %		
2	Do you believe that if you do your best ,you can have a pronunciation as a native English speaker ?	32 32 .65 %	56 57 .14 %	8 8 .16 %	
3	How do you feel when you hear yourself speaking English with good pronunciation ?	Very happy 84 85 .71 %	Happy 12 12 .24 %	Don t care 2 2 .04 %	
4	How do you feel when people compliment your pronunciation ?	48 48 .98 %	30 30 .61 %	20 20 .41 %	
5	How do you feel when you have significant pronunciation mistakes ?	Very unhappy 12 12 .24 %	unhappy 76 77 .55 %	Don t care 10 10 .2 %	
6	How do you feel when you hear others speak English with good pronunciation ?	Have a strong desire to have the same good pronunciation. 80 81 .63 %	Want to have the same good pronunciation , but don t have not strong desire . 18 18 .38 %	Don t care much .	
7	How do you feel when the teacher corrects your pronunciation mistakes ?	Glad 82 83 .67 %	Not very glad 12 12 .24 %	Embarrassed 4 4 .08 %	
8	How many hours do you spend each week improving your pronunciation ?	One hour 36 36 .73 %	Half an hour 30 30 .61 %	Ten minutes 12 12 .24 %	None at all 16 16 .32 %

Table 2 . Students opinions of activities that help them improve their pronunciation

		Yes ,very much .	Yes ,but not very much .	Not at all .
1	Does listening to English songs help improve pronunciation ?	40 41 .81 %	52 53 .06 %	4 4 .08 %
2	Does singing English songs help improve pronunciation ?	34 34 .69 %	56 57 .14 %	6 6 .12 %

		Yes ,very much .	Yes ,but not very much .	Not at all .
3	Does reading aloud after the recorded English material help improve pronunciation ?	62 65 .31 %	28 28 .57 %	6 6 .12 %
4	Does watching English program on TV help improve pronunciation ?	54 57 .14 %	36 36 .73 %	6 6 .12 %
5	Does seeing English movies help improve pronunciation ?	42 42 .86 %	50 53 .06 %	4 4 .08 %
6	Does reading aloud after the teacher help improve pronunciation ?	48 48 .98 %	24 26 .53 %	24 24 .49 %
7	Does having situation dialogues help improve pronunciation ?	40 40 .82 %	50 53 .06 %	6 6 .12 %
8	Does the teachers explaining how to pronounce phonetic symbols help improve your pronunciation ?	52 53 .06 %	30 32 .65 %	12 12 .24 %
9	Does it help to improve pronunciation when the teacher asks you to do the “ mini pair ” exercise ?	36 36 .73 %	38 40 .82 %	22 24 .49 %
10	Does phonetic knowledge help improve pronunciation ?	20 20 .41 %	34 36 .73 %	2 2 .04 %

(...continued from p .128)

文章标记对英语说明文的阅读理解与信息保持的影响

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本研究进行两个实验考察了在正常阅读(实验1)与快速阅读条件下(实验2)标题及小标题对高、低英语水平的大学生说明文阅读理解与信息保持的影响。实验结果表明:不论是正常阅读还是快速阅读,标题及小标题的呈现对读者的说明文阅读理解与信息保持均有显著的促进作用,即高、低英语水平的读者都能从标题及小标题中受益;但在正常阅读条件下,标题与小标题的呈现对低水平读者信息保持的促进作用比对高水平读者信息保持的促进作用大。
关键词:文章标记效应;阅读理解;信息保持;阅读水平

语义和频率对以汉语为母语的英语学习者习得英语中动结构的影响调查

西北师范大学外语学院 高育松 90

本文通过研究以汉语为母语的英语学习者对英语中动结构的习得,来调查语义和频率对学习者习得该结构的影响。研究设计了语法判断任务,有90名以汉语为母语的英语学习者,24名以英语为母语的人士参加了本研究。研究结果显示,语义与频率对学习者习得英语中动结构都有显著影响。但是,上述两个因素对二语学习者和母语人士的影响程度不尽相同,

母语人士受频率的影响更加明显。

关键词:语义;频率;中动结构;二语习得

中国高校口译培训问题调查报告

长沙理工大学外国语学院 罗春霞 108

我国口译人才奇缺,而口译人才的来源高校在口译培训方面却存在着诸多问题。这篇报告基于元分析方法,调查了中国高校在口译教学中存在的问题:口译课程地位不高、理论薄弱、师资力量欠缺、教学模式不科学、评估体系不合理等。并且就如何解决这些问题提出建议:教育部门应对口译教学予以重视,加强理论建设,夯实师资力量,建立科学的教学模式和评估体系等等。

关键词:口译;培训问题;建议

一项关于词汇附带习得研究方法的调查

对外经济贸易大学英语学院 王东志 120

本文就近五年来发表在国内主要期刊上的10项关于词汇附带习得的研究方法展开评述,重点讨论了概念的使用、干扰变量的控制、以及实验设计等问题,其中实验设计又涉及受试的选择、实验材料、实验方法和实施者等要素。最后指出,实证研究之所以存在这样或那样的问题皆源于二语习得的复杂性,使研究者很难排除所有的混杂因素。

关键词:词汇附带习得;实证研究;研究方法