

EFFECT OF GOOD ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION IN ART OF SPEAKING DURING ORAL COMMUNICATION: A STUDY AMONG TERTIARY LEVEL STUDENTS IN BANGLADESH

S. M. Wahiduzzaman

MPhil Fellow, Assistant Professor (Adjunct)

FBS, Bangladesh University of Professionals

ABSTRACT

Orally, English is widely used all over the world in communication. As English is a stress-timed language, it demands correct pronunciation, stress, intonation and rhythm in speaking to express the real meanings and feelings where art in speaking enhance the impression upon the audience. This study discloses why and how good English pronunciation in art of speaking creates effective impression whereas wrong pronunciation in art of speaking changes the meanings which sometimes create negative impact upon the listeners. For this study, the researcher has examined a hundred students. Observation, interview and video recording methods have been applied for collecting data.

Key Words: Good pronunciation, impress, art of speaking, effective oral communication

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays people can hardly think about their student lives, professional lives, even trade and commerce without effective oral communication skill. So creating positive impression is one of the key factors in oral communication. While speaking in English, a speaker can impress the audience within a few seconds with good pronunciation. When stress, intonation, rhythm along with eye contact, facial expression, gesture and a moderate movement are added, it becomes more appealing to the audience. On the other hand, bad English pronunciation can ruin that chance of taking pertinent to creating impression and conveying the message. According to J. B. Gilbert (2008), rhythm and melody convey the intentions of the speaker. English pronunciation and tone of voice play an influential role to the development of students' communicative competence, language proficiency and comprehensibility. As Burns (2003) concedes, despite minor inaccuracies in vocabulary and grammar, learners are more likely to communicate effectively when they have

good pronunciation and intonation. Howlader (2010) – found that mutual intelligibility, comprehensibility and neutral accent can promote better oral communication. This article highlights a vital role of good English pronunciation and art of speaking in oral communication.

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Bangladeshi students have been learning English since the British colonial days. English is taught all over the country as a compulsory subject from Grade 1 to Grade 12, but in most cases, there are no or less provisions for teaching pronunciation and other elements, i.e. stress, intonation, rhythm in their art of speaking. They pronounce English like they pronounce their mother tongue. As a result, their speaking is not rhythmic and does not have a native flavour. English is a stress-timed language while Bangla is a syllable-timed language. So naturally, English language demands stress, intonation and rhythm along with good pronunciation for effective conversation which Bangladeshi learners fail to achieve in their

considerable period of time in educational life. In their English curriculum there is little or no provision for the teaching of pronunciation and voice variation. But good pronunciation, appropriate stress, rhythm and intonation are necessary to develop students' communicative competence in English. It is also important to teach learners the value of art of speaking for effectiveness.

Traditionally, in Bangladesh, very less attention has been paid to learners' perceptions of pronunciation and comprehension instruction while teaching English. In most cases, the teachers and students have tended a tradition (and still tend) to neglect the teaching and learning of pronunciation in EFL settings. Instead of that, they give emphasis on grammar, reading, writing skills and another so called artificial skill named memorizing without applying any techniques. In connection to this phenomenon, Pourhosein (2012) lists a series of factors affecting the learning of English pronunciation among which we find: attitude, motivation, instruction and exposure to target language. Already in 1994, Gilbert described pronunciation as an orphan in English programs around the world and in 2010 she still believed that "pronunciation continues to be the EFL/ESL orphan" (Gilbert, 2010, p. 1).

As Bangla is a syllable-timed language and it superimposes on their English speaking, most of the Bangladeshi learners fail to give proper stress, intonation and rhythm in speech. Traditionally, they are not practiced of speaking in keeping eye contact, using facial expressions, gestures and a moderate movement which imply the confidence and authority on conveying message to impress the audience during oral communication. All these have been happening because of the following reasons:

- i) The lack of proper system of teaching English as skills.
- ii) The lack of practicing option and taking part in speaking competitions in primary and secondary level.
- iii) The teachers of primary, secondary and higher secondary levels are not supportive enough to give emphasis on good English pronunciation.

iv) Listening skill is not practiced in primary, secondary and higher secondary levels as there is no examination system on listening skill.

v) Speaking skill is not prominent or not applied in their classes. In their exam system, this skill is not included.

vi) There is no option for oral presentation.

vii) There is no opportunity to learn eye contact, facial expressions, gestures and a moderate movement along with speaking English, which reflect the confidence and authority in oral communication.

3.0 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

3.1 General Objective

General objective is to observe the effect of good English pronunciation in art of speaking for impressive oral communication among the tertiary level students in Bangladesh.

3.2 Specific Objective

- a) To identify the role of good 'English pronunciation' in speaking.
- b) To define the impression of the 'art of speaking' for effective oral communication.
- c) To see the effective response of the audience to the speaker.

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 English Pronunciation

Pronunciation is how words are pronounced in a language. It is very much important for all to uphold the beauty of their language. Sometimes a wrong pronunciation changes the meaning and creates embarrassed situation. Especially, in English language there are many same words which have different pronunciations based on variation of parts of speech. i. e. when the word 'record' is a verb, its pronunciation is /rɪ'kɔ:d/ but when it is a noun, its pronunciation is /'re.kɔ:d/. Again when the word 'absent' is an adjective, its pronunciation is /'æb.sənt/ but when it is a verb, its pronunciation is /æb'sent/. There are some English words which are different in spelling but same in pronunciation – i. e. the words 'sun' and 'son' have the same pronunciation /sʌn/. In other cases, for the variation of long and short sounds,

meanings become horribly difference. i. e. the word ‘bitch /bitʃ/’ and ‘beach - /bi:tʃ/’ again ‘shit - /ʃɪt/’ and ‘sheet - /ʃi:t/’.

For English pronunciation, there are 44 sounds apart from 26 letters. These 44 sounds are used for all types of English pronunciation. In the pronunciation mechanism, stress, intonation and rhythm play an influential role for the way of expressions.

4.2 Stress

Stress is to give emphasis on the syllable(s) in a word or on the word(s) in a sentence.

4.2.1 Word Stress

For words, there are two types of stresses a) primary stress and b) secondary stress. Primary stress is marked by upper vertical mark (') and secondary stress is marked by lower vertical mark (,). While pronouncing words, primary stress requires more force than the secondary stress (Roach, 1998, p. 85, 95). i. e. the word ‘academic - /æk.ə'dem.ɪk/’ has four syllables - first syllable ‘/æk/’ which contains secondary stress (,) and the third syllable ‘/dem/’ contains primary stress ('). So while pronouncing the word ‘academic’, if we put emphasis on the third syllable, it becomes rhythmic and more pleasant to listen.

4.2.2 Sentence Stress

Every sentence contains two types of words – *Informative words and Structural words*. So naturally, a speaker must give emphasis on the informative words. Sentence stress varies according to the meaning the speaker wants to convey. Stress is given on the informative words in a sentence and its variation can change the meaning of what is being said.

i. e. The following sentences ‘I love you’ and ‘We assure that you must be benefited’. While uttering these sentences if emphasis is given on different words, it changes the meanings differently.

‘I love you’ in this sentence if voice gradually goes down giving emphasis on ‘I’, the meaning will be negative. Again if the voice gradually goes high and giving emphasis on ‘you’, also the meaning will be negative. But when the word

‘love’ is emphasized following the falling tone, it means positive.

‘We assure that you must be benefited.’ In this sentence, the effect of emphasizes are as follows-

* **We** assure that you must be benefited. (Emphasis on the authority)

* We **assure** that you must be benefited. (Emphasis on the certainty)

* We assure that **you** must be benefited. (Emphasis on the consumer)

* We assure that you **must** be benefited. (Emphasis on how important it is.)

* We assure that you must be **benefited**. (Emphasis on advantage)

Each sentence now carries a different meaning!

4.3 Intonation

Intonation is the tone of voice. It depends on the situation and mental status. Mainly there are two types of intonations – a) upward intonation or rising tune and b) downward intonation or falling tune (Roach, 1998, p. 133, 152). In general, yes/no question, surprise, excitement etc. are rising tune and w/h-question, assertive sentence, command, request, advice etc. are falling tune.

Every language of the world has different tunes. Sometimes voice is raised and sometimes voice is lowered and it depends on the situation because situation demands the variation and for this variation, the meaning is changed. i. e. The sentence “Excuse me”, if it is told in two ways: firstly, starts high and ends low it shows real apology, secondly, if voice starts low and ends high it shows doubt/something wrong or an objection! So for showing real expression, appropriate intonation is a must which makes the voice variation.

4.4 Rhythm

Rhythm is the regular movement of stress and intonation in speech that creates a melody in speech. Rhythm in speech creates a friendly environment for the audience to draw the attention. When a speaker aligns good pronunciation using stress and intonation, it creates rhythm.

4.5 Art of Speaking

It is actually the way of speaking applying tone of voice, keeping eye contact eye to with the listeners, using facial expressions, gestures and a moderate movement during oral communication. So it is a skill or special ability of conversation that impresses the listeners. When a speaker speaks English using stress and intonation, subconsciously the speaker uses some facial expressions and gestures. Actually, stress, intonation and rhythm go together with facial expressions and gestures. Sometimes it is impossible to put stress and intonation without applying facial expressions and gestures. Michael Gungor says "Art is the body's pronunciation of the soul."

5.0 EFFECT OF GOOD ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION IN ART OF SPEAKING.

At the tertiary level, the students are found from different regions of the country. Due to the influence of their local dialect, less or no provision of learning good English pronunciation in art of speaking in their primary, secondary and higher secondary education; they are individually different with different ways of speaking. Most of them are not up to the mark. As these students are the future leaders of the country, they will lead different sectors in future; some of them will go abroad for higher study, they must have a reasonable accepted good English pronunciation with real expressions. More specifically, who are getting degrees from renowned institutions and universities, they must have good English pronunciation in their art of speaking as other people try to follow them. In their academic life in every semester or trimester, they are to deliver many oral presentations as exams which carry good marks. From the experience, it is found that the students who have mastery over good English pronunciation with voice variations, eye contact, facial expressions and gestures, can disseminate the ideas effectively and make the audience understand well. As a result, they are getting good marks. Same things happen when they go to the professional life for getting jobs as well as promotions.

6.0 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study was based on the class room performance of a single university. The researcher did not get the opportunities to compare it with the corporate situation. There was no native speaker to observe and share his/her experience.

7.0 METHODOLOGY

7.1 Selecting Population

The respondents were selected from a university of first year students.

7.2 Sampling Method

The researcher chose 'simple random sampling method' from different departments of that university.

7.3 Number of Population

Total numbers of respondents were one hundred.

7.4 Methods of Collecting Data

Data collecting source was primary data. For collecting data, the researcher applied three methods - a) observation, b) interview and c) video recording

7.5 Process of Data Collection

To collect the data, researcher firstly, asked the students to perform on the stage on a certain topic and noted their performance, audience's responses as well as recorded their videos. Secondly, an oral interview session was arranged to get the feedback of their previous knowledge on good English pronunciation and art of speaking. Finally, the researcher analyzed all the information and compared the observation with the video recording.

7.6 Data Analysis

7.6.1 Observation and Video Recording

After collecting the observation data, the researcher analyzed the data comparing with the video recording and found the following responses:

Table: 1. Observation and video recording data

Respondents	Pronunciation	Voice variation	Expression and body language	Impression upon the audience
7	Good	Applied stress, intonation and rhythm	Kept eye contact, used facial expression, gestures with a moderate movement	Satisfactory
21	Moderate	Failed to apply proper stress, intonation and rhythm	Kept scattered eye contact, used a little bit facial expression without using gestures and movement	Not satisfactory
72	poor and influenced by their local accent	Flat and chopping	Felt shy to keep eye contact, there were no facial expressions and gestures. Stood still like a statue	Monotonous

7.6.2 Critical Analysis

After analyzing critically, the researcher found that only 7% respondents who had good English pronunciation in their speech could keep proper eye contact to the audience, used voice variations, facial expressions, gestures and a moderate movement in speaking. Those speakers effectively delivered their message and created a

good impression upon the audience.

On the other hand, 93% of the learners who had moderate (21%) and poor (72%) English pronunciation, failed to keep proper eye contact. They did not apply voice variations, facial expressions, gestures and movement. They could not deliver their messages effectively and made dissatisfaction and monotonous impression upon the audience.

7.7 Interview

In interview session, the researcher made three different groups based on their performance and asked some yes/no questions and also gave them opportunity to express their opinions on those questions and got the following responses:

1st group (7% respondents who has got good pronunciation)

Table: 2.1 Interview data

Questions	Answer	other opinion
Did you learn English pronunciation in school /college?	Yes	In school
Did you learn stress, intonation and rhythm in English speaking?	Yes	At the same time while learning English pronunciation
Did you participate in any competition?	Yes	In debate, poem recitation etc.

2nd group (21% respondents who has got moderate pronunciation)

Table: 2.2 Interview data

Questions	Answer	other opinion
Did you learn English pronunciation in school /college?	Yes	In school and did not get environment for practicing
Did you learn stress, intonation and rhythm in English speaking?	Yes	Forgot for lack of practice
Did you participate in any competition?	No	Did not get enough confidence

3rd group (72% respondents who has got poor pronunciation)

Table: 2.3 Interview data

Questions	Answer	other opinion
Did you learn English pronunciation in school /college?	No	There was no potion in school and college
Did you learn stress, intonation and rhythm in English speaking?	No	Have no idea about it
Did you participate in any competition?	No	There were no options

7.7.1 Critical Analysis

Critical analysis of data shows that only the 7% respondents who performed satisfactorily, they learned good English pronunciation, art of speaking and participated in different speaking competitions. On the other hand, 21% of the learners learned good English pronunciation in their speaking but for the lack of practice and application, they forgot the functions and lost confidence to participate in speaking competitions. Rest of 72% which is the greater part of the respondents did not learn or did not get the opportunity to learn good English pronunciation in their speaking and did not participate any speaking competition. They learned English speaking in their own ways and had the local accent influence.

8.0 FINDINGS

The following findings were found by the researcher:

- 7% among the participants were more confident to convey the message for having their good English pronunciation in their art of speaking.
- These 7% respondents could use stress, intonation and rhythm in their speaking which created an attractive concentration among the

audience to listen to the speakers.

c) Along with the voice variation, when the speakers applied proper eye contact, facial expressions and aligned gestures with a moderate movement, the audience was spellbound and the speakers got a huge applause of appreciation from the audience.

d) 21% among the respondents were less confident to convey the message for having moderate English pronunciation with no voice variation and rhythm.

e) As these speakers had no proper stress and intonation in their speeches, they failed to align any facial expressions, gestures and stood still during speaking which created a few attentions among the audience with silent appreciation to the speakers.

f) The greater part of 72% speakers were suffering from lack of confidence to convey their message. As their English pronunciation was poor, they felt shy to speak properly.

g) Due to lack of the knowledge of good English pronunciation, they failed to use proper stress, intonation, rhythm in their speaking and there were no facial expressions, gestures and movements. Even they felt ashamed to keep eye

contact to the audience and looked up, down and around with their chopping utterance. All these together created a noisy attention with no appreciation from the audience.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

The study shows that the greater part of the students was deprived from:

- a) getting proper knowledge of good English pronunciation
- b) learning opportunity to the efficient teachers
- c) practicing and participating in different speaking competitions at their secondary and higher secondary level
- d) having listening and speaking skills in their secondary and higher secondary classes
- e) knowing the importance of voice variation, eye contact, facial expression, gestures and a moderate movement in oral communication

At tertiary level, their medium of teaching instruction is English. If they do not have the practical knowledge of good English pronunciation, they will not understand the most part of their teachers' lectures. In every semester and in every subject they have group as well as individual oral presentations. So it is very essential to teach them good English pronunciation using stress, intonation and rhythm along with proper eye contact, facial expressions, gestures and a moderate movement in oral communication. At the tertiary level, students have huge options and opportunities from the university to develop themselves as they are more mature and conscious than the previous. So at the beginning stage of the tertiary education if they are taught correct English pronunciation, voice variation, applying eye contact, facial expressions and some basics of body language, their confidence and competency will be high in oral communication. They will secure good marks in exams and gradually will develop the professionalism and leadership quality.

10.0 CONCLUSION

While speaking in English, good pronunciation, stress, intonation and rhythm in art of speaking

play an important role in growing confidence, competence and effective performance. On the other hand, the learners who can realize that their English pronunciation and art of speaking are poor and less effective, they feel shy to speak and try to escape from oral presentation. Most importantly, tertiary level is the perfect time to achieve professionalism and leadership quality. For achieving these qualities, a learner must have a good command on effective oral communication. But like school and college levels, at tertiary level students are hardly getting guidance on correct English pronunciation and art of speaking. It is a fact that correct English pronunciation and art of speaking are skills, so they need adequate scopes for practice under an expert. So at tertiary level, there is need for training. If the authorities take care and guide the students to acquire good English pronunciation and proper art of speaking, they will be promising communicators.

References

- [1] Jones, Danial, *English Pronouncing Dictionary*, UK., Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- [2] Roach, Peter, *English Phonetics and Phonology*, UK., Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- [3] Roach, Peter, *EPP_PED_Glossary*. (a little encyclopedia of phonetics), 2011.
- [4] Ma, Rui, "The Role of Pronunciation in Speaking Test Ratings", (2015). Paper 4426.
- [5] Uddin, Md. Nesar & Monjur, Sababa, *International Journal of Arts and Humanities and Management Studies*, December 2015, Volume 01, No.12.
- [6] Ball, W. J., & High, M. A, *The Sound Structures of English and Bengali*, The Department of Bengali, University of Dacc, 1961.
- [7] Farguson, Charles, & Chowdhury, Munier, *The Phonemes of Bengali*, Nabojug Publications, 1960.
- [8] High, M. A., *Phonology and Phonemes of Bengali*, Dhaka, Mallik Brother, 1964.
- [9] Catford, J. C., *A Practical Introduction to Phonetics*, Oxford University Press, 1988.
- [10] Rahman, A. M. M. Hamidur, *Problems of Pronunciation for Bengali Learners of English*, Journal of the Institute of Modern Languages, June, 1996, p 1-17.
- [11] Wahiduzzaman, S. M., *Classic Presentation & Public Speaking*, Classic Publications, Dhaka, 2016.
- [12] Burns, A., *Clearly speaking: pronunciation in action for teachers*. National Center for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquaire Universaity, Sydney NSW 2109, 2003.
- [13] Howlader, M. R., *Teaching English Pronunciation in Countries where English is a Second Language: Bangladesh Perspective*. ASA University Review 4, 2, 233-244, 2010.