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ENCOUNTING DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING PRONUNCIATION AND SPELLING

*Sagoian Eraneac, Ph.D. Associate Professor,
"Ion Creangă" SPU*

*Sagoyan Agunik, english teacher,
"Dm. Cantemir" Lyceum Chisinau*

CZU:811.111'34

Rezumat

În acest articol este accentuată importanța predării pronunției și ortografiei. La fel, sunt evidențiate tehnici și metode eficiente de predare a pronunției și a ortografiei pentru a facilita înțelegerea sensului și scrierea corectă a cuvintelor în limba engleză.

Cuvinte-cheie: sunet, accent, intonație, pronunție, vocabular, silabisire/ortografie.

The present article aims at the correspondence between pronunciation and spelling of English words and the ways teachers have to use while teaching Vocabulary. English spelling is almost divorced from its pronunciation and it seems there is no perfect guide how to learn correct pronunciation.

"If we know the sounds of a word (in English) we can't know how to spell it; if we know the spelling, we can't know how to pronounce it"- Otto Jespersen [7, p.11]

"English spelling is almost divorced from its pronunciation and forms hardly any guide as to how words should be pronounced"-Mont Follick. [6, p. 87]

English is a global language of communication, is spoken, written and used widely for many different purposes- business, science, and technology. Students sometimes feel difficult and hard to learn the English language as there is no one-to-one relationship between the 26 letters of the English alphabet and the 44 sounds they represent. [9]

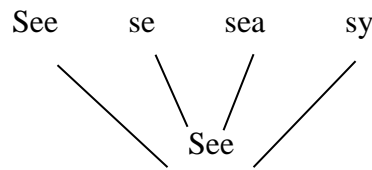
"The English language, for all its variety and richness, is illogical. There is no way to learn its spelling". [8]

The above statement reveals that one cannot find any correlation between the spelling and pronunciation of the English words. It is true that no one can learn English sounds without special and careful study. English spelling system is comparatively complicated as the complex history of the English language. Most of the letters produce multiple pronunciations because a large number of words have been borrowed from many other languages in the world throughout the history of the English language, without successful attempts of complete spelling reforms.

Learning to spell correctly is perhaps as important as learning grammar, vocabulary and phonology.

Bose (2005) argues that one of the important errors in learning of the English language is spelling errors. He believes that most language learners make errors in spelling due to wrong learning of the spelling of words and lack of practice in spelling. He mentions that the words are spelt according to their syllables in order to remember the spelling and a good dictionary can help the learners to improve the spelling errors in the English language. [1]

The relationship between spelling and pronunciation in the English language actually represents the two sounds /k/ and /s/; thus the phenomenon of identical pronunciations represented by different spelling applies not only to group of letters but to single letters as well



Spelling containing the rules which govern the way letters are used to write the words of speech; a particular sequence of letters in a word. Spelling is a linguistic unit of the language which refers to writing skill directly. Hedge (1983) mentioned that “writing is the way in which a writer puts together the pieces of text, developing ideas through sentences and paragraphs within an overall structure”. Writing is one of the most important skills that second language learners need to develop their ability to communicate ideas and information effectively in the target language. Spelling can be recognized as an integral part of the language learning process in ELT classroom. [4, p. 89]

As well as spelling, pronunciation also plays the key role in the recognition of a word. Learning correct pronunciation of English words is the most important factor in learning and teaching a foreign and second language. This is a big problem for English language learners, because the English language does not have fixed phonetic rules. An important point to note about the above sentence is that the English language has borrowed words and expressions extensively from many languages throughout its history. That, in fact, is the main reason for the pronunciation of those words which naturally sound different from the spelling, since they were borrowed from other languages into the English language.

An important factor in learning vocabulary is focusing on intelligible pronunciation. Gilbert (2008) states that “English language learners tend to ignore stress when they learn vocabulary. And failure to learn the stress of new words often leads to an inability to recognize those words in spoken form”. Within learning correct pronunciation of words and phrases, individuals can easily be misunderstood when speaking. By integrating pronunciation and vocabulary in the classroom, we help students develop a better awareness about these patterns and ability to apply this knowledge as they are exposed to new words and expressions. When learning word combinations, including phrasal verbs, collocations, and idioms, understanding pronunciation features such as thought groups, rhythm, linking, and intonation is essential.

Teaching and learning new vocabulary has traditionally focused primarily on the definition, and parts of speech, but pronunciation is clearly an important factor in learning new words. Thus, teaching should facilitate this learning by not only explaining definitions but also demonstrating the pronunciation of these words. In reference to the latter, wouldn't it be better to provide students with tools to facilitate intelligible pronunciation instead of just focusing on having students repeat after the teacher or dictionary recording? Word stress, vowel and consonant sounds, and word endings are pronunciation features that are relevant to teaching and learning vocabulary. [3]

Word stress and sounds are the basis of spoken vocabulary, and effective use of these pronunciation features ensures comprehensibility. Providing students with tools such as the Color Vowel Chart and explaining guidelines in understanding patterns in stress and sound production are beneficial instructional techniques for student learning. Brown (1994) states that

“written English typically utilizes a greater variety of lexical items than spoken conversational English.... because writing allows the writer more processing time”. To transfer the vocabulary used in writing into learners’ conversational English, learners need to develop the spoken aspect of the vocabulary as they are exposed to these words in reading and writing activities. One example is reading texts on their own written work out loud, which gives learners some practice in exploring the pronunciation features of new words and expressions as well as an opportunity for teachers to assist in correcting pronunciation errors.

Teaching pronunciation in association with teaching vocabulary is essential for second language acquisition in terms of improving learners’ speaking and listening skills and communicative competence. As students learn new words, they should learn the pronunciation of each word in addition to learning the definition(s) and spelling for each word.

To sum up, even though vocabulary may often be taught in association with reading, it is important that the oral use of the words be incorporated in the learning experience to improve oral/aural communication.

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COMPETENȚA INTERCULTURALĂ LA ORELE DE „CULTURA ȘI CIVILIZAȚIA SPANIEI”: METODE ȘI STRATEGII DIDACTICE

Surugiu Dorina, asistent univ.,
UPS „Ion Creangă” din Chișinău

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Abstract

Although in language teaching/learning the development of language skills is a priority, culture is the channel that optimises language learning. The intercultural method – based more on understanding than description, seeks to foster openness to other cultural horizons. Therefore, teaching/learning the discipline “The Culture and Civilisation of Spain” means much more than developing communication skills, it facilitates intercultural knowledge by comparing knowledge and perception of the relationship between the world of origin and the world of the studied community. In this particular context we can equip the student with the necessary comprehensive skills to be able to put them into practice and use them.

Keywords: culture, intercultural competence, teaching strategies, Spanish language, communication skills

Întroducere

În predarea/învățarea limbilor străine, dezvoltarea competențelor lingvistice este percepută ca o prioritate. Cu toate acestea, anume cultura este canalul care optimizează învățarea