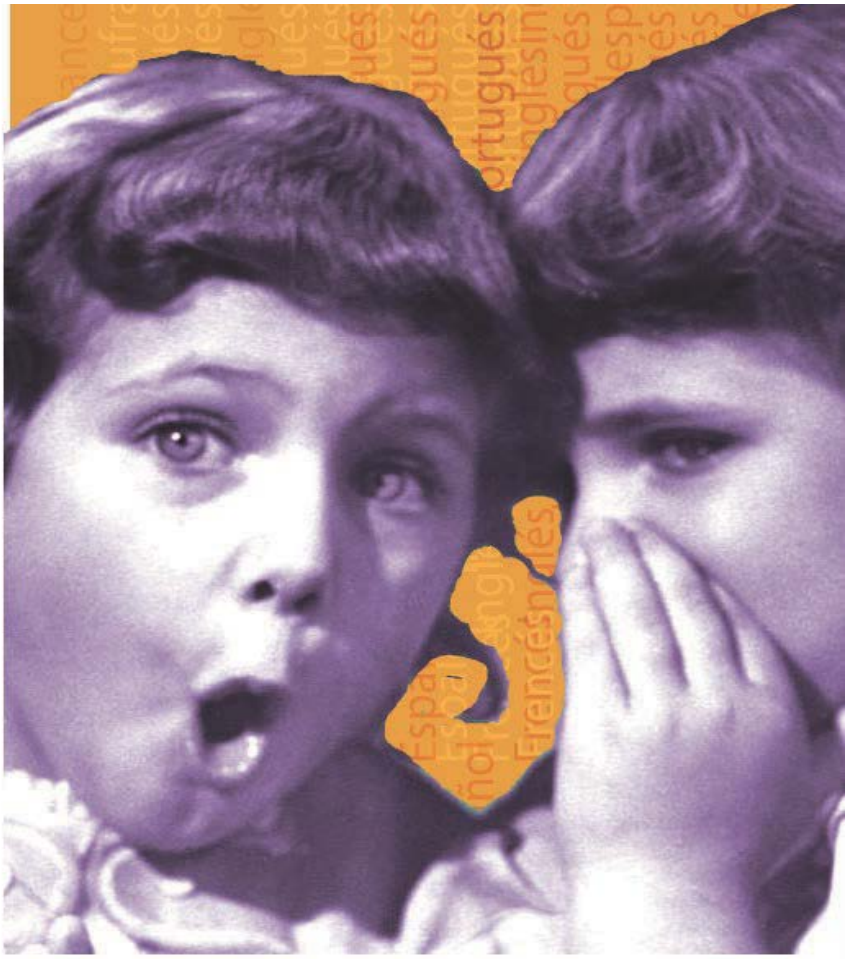
III Jornadas Internacionales



Didáctica de la Fonética de las Lenguas Extranjeras

Editora Gabriela Leiton

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE SAN MARTÍN

ESCUELA DE HUMANIDADES

CEPEL

III Jornadas Internacionales de Didáctica de la Fonética de las Lenguas Extranjeras / Evangelina Aguirre Sotelo ... [et al.]; editado por Gabriela Delia Leiton. - 1a ed. - San Antonio de Areco: Gabriela Delia Leiton, 2016. Libro digital, PDF

Archivo Digital: descarga
ISBN 978-987-42-1867-4

1. Fonética. 2. Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras. 3. Didáctica. I. Aguirre Sotelo, Evangelina II. Leiton, Gabriela Delia, ed.
CDD 401

III Jornadas Internacionales de Didáctica
de la Fonética de las Lenguas Extranjeras
(alemán, español, francés, inglés, italiano y portugués)

Videoconferencia Inaugural: Prof. Alan Cruttenden

29 y 30 de agosto de 2014

Centro para el Estudio de Lenguas

Escuela de Humanidades

Universidad Nacional de General San Martín

Campus Miguelete - Av. 25 de Mayo y Francia - 1650 San Martín (Bs. As.) - República Argentina www.unsam.edu.ar - Tel. 54 11

4006-1500 int. 1306 - jcepel@unsam.edu.ar – direccioncepel@gmail.com

Organizan

- Centro para el Estudio de Lenguas (Escuela de Humanidades - UNSAM)
- Instituto de Enseñanza Superior en Lenguas Vivas “Juan Ramón Fernández”

Auspician

- Diplomatura y Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa con orientación en Literatura y Cine
- Diplomatura en Enseñanza de Español como Lengua Segunda y Extranjera
- Diplomatura Universitaria en Pedagogía de la Fonética con orientación en Lengua Inglesa

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PHONOLOGICAL PERFORMANCE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE IN ADULT-EFL- TEACHING

Otero Paz, Graciela.

Santinelli, Luciano.

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to discuss how self-confidence fostered in a safe environment contributes to the development of phonological performance when teaching adults. EFL teachers of adults many times face the psychological barriers that refrain some students from developing a more accurate phonology. Therefore, the intention of this study is to describe and discuss possible solutions to this problem. Consequently, the analysis will be centred on 'andragogy', a term coined by Malcolm Knowles, which means the art or science of teaching adults.

In order to discuss how inhibition may hinder self-confidence and, thus, performance we will scrutinize a scene from The King's Speech (Tom Hooper, 2010) in which the king is confronted with the fact that his performance has been altered by his self-awareness. This scene will be analysed in the light of David Nunan's book The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (2001) which shows how the language ego or identity is subject to emotional, non-cognitive parts of our human nature.

Various possible solutions to this issue will be examined such as e-learning, which allows a one-to-one interaction, leaving aside possibility of peer judgment. Another aspect to be developed is the concept of 'safe classroom', in which both students and teachers work to build an atmosphere of loyalty and tolerance that creates a sense of belonging enhancing 'connectedness' (Wlodkowski, 2008) and, therefore, self-confidence.

Keywords: self-confidence, connectedness, introversion/extroversion, motivation, safety, phonological performance

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PHONOLOGICAL PERFORMANCE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE IN ADULT-EFL- TEACHING

Teaching adults has become more and more popular in the twenty-first century due to the increasing need to be updated in the highly competitive professional world. Even though motivation is not a frequent problem among this group of learners, they sometimes face other obstacles that may hinder their progress. Among these barriers to the learning process teachers can sometimes find lack of self confidence in their students. Some adults are prone to feeling ashamed of what they say or do, which in the end, does not let them use the target language as successfully as they could.

One of the aspects in EFL studies that usually causes trouble is pronunciation. Many times adults claim that they can fully understand what they hear but they cannot put their ideas across effectively. That is why pronunciation becomes such an important issue in EFL learning. In this paper the term 'pronunciation' will refer to the production of the significant sounds in the target language in order 'to achieve meaning in contexts of language use'. This is particularly important when teaching adults because they are not only aware of what they say but also of how they sound, which many times is an extra source of stress to the learning process. That is why, it is also important to remember as teachers that the intended level of proficiency in pronunciation is not to get a native-like standard but an intelligible one that can allow successful communication.

To start with, a scene from The King's Speech will be analysed in order to exemplify how negative can self-awareness be in some adults when they are learning. Even if this scene shows a native speaker of English dealing with a speech impediment, it can help teachers reflect upon the negative effects of a low self-esteem. It is interesting to notice that the speech therapist asks the king, his patient, to listen to loud music while reading a text aloud. Later on, the audience learns that even if the king expected himself to have failed

the task, he is pleased to discover he has succeeded. Why does this happen? Because the loud music has made him focus on what he had to read and thus diverted his attention from what he finds humiliating and frustrating: listening to his own voice.

Although it is true that the king has a speech disorder, which this paper will not discuss, there are some aspects in this case teachers can profit from. One of them is to think of what teachers can do to make introverted students forget their weaknesses and profit from the chances they have to make progress in their spoken language. It is important to remember that the term 'introvert', according to the Merriam Webster dictionary, refers to someone who is concentrated or directed upon himself. Therefore, this kind of students are sometimes so focused on themselves, on how they sound, on what they lack that they generally miss the many chances they have to make progress in areas like pronunciation.

It is difficult to dislike a subject or a field of studies in which a student is successful. Then, what methodology or 'andragogy' can teachers apply to help EFL students become phonologically successful? The therapist in The King's Speech used loud music as a resource to make his patient focus on something else than his disability. Likewise, resourceful teachers can use many tools to help their adult students. In practical terms, andragogy focuses on 'how' adults learn and less on 'what' they learn. Therefore, it should include a variety of strategies that cater for the students' needs.

ICTs in andragogy: an out-of- class approach

Although, andragogy places instructional emphasis on groupwork, which encourages a manner of interaction similar to how adults cope with real-life experiences, they can also profit from other type of self-directed learning. One example of this is the use of information and communication technologies applied to learning and, in this case, pronunciation. The advantage of this type of education is that it offers students the chance to adjust activities to the students' learning styles and also to their own pace. Research suggests that the integrated use of modern techniques can yield positive results and lead to the improvement of communicative competence. This requires, from the teacher/

facilitator, making choices from all options available and employing an appropriate methodology responsive to the needs of specific learners learning English.

Providing students with a variety of situations and frequent speaking tasks plays a significant role in the improvement of students' fluency when speaking (Tam, 1997). Confidence and competence usually reinforce English speaking skills. Nunan (2001) asserted that building up the learner's confidence to eliminate their fear of making errors was a priority that a teacher should consider in order to make learners feel comfortable with their language use. Web-based technologies and useful Internet sites provide new possibilities and latest trends for teachers and students.

Some out-of-class factors that enhanced students' speaking abilities may include frequent listening to English materials, such as listening to music, watching movies, listening to the radio, watching television programs, and accessing websites in which they can record their own voice. Previous studies supported the finding that speaking and listening skills were usually intertwined in terms of language learning and development (Kidd, 2010). In addition, suggestions for EFL learners' speaking improvement included a variety of course activities, encouragement of more listening through the media, and seeking opportunities to speak in real situations. Moreover, practice and exposure to both listening and speaking activities in real-world situations appeared to be a practical method to promote speaking confidence. Some of the web sites that can be used are listed below:

- Online practice: http://www.spokenskills.com/student-activities.cfm?section=studentpractice&practicepageID=1823
- Listening to real life situations: http://www.esl-lab.com/
- Online chatting with foreign students: http://www.englishclub.com/
- Phonetics practice: http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/english/frameset.html
- Listening and speaking: real life conversations http://www.busuu.com/enc/dashboard#/timeline/regular/a1

Creating safe classrooms

Going back to the example of the tutor in "The King's Speech" it is important to consider the psychological barriers that students can manifest that may hinder their progress in the learning of a foreign language. In this context the phonetics instructor needs to provide a "safe" environment in which the student would feel relaxed and comfortable to talk, exposing his feelings without the fear of being judged negatively. Therefore, the instructor may propose one-to-one conversation sessions in which the student may propose a topic or would talk of a non-established subject. This idea was developed by Elbow (2002: 1), a writing coach, who believes that in a safe environment -a place where the student feels that he can express himself freely, not being watched over by a judgmental teacher who just focuses on the formal aspects of language, but on fluency and communication- the student-writer or in this case, the student in free speech sessions, will build along with self- confidence a strong sense of self. This is the same as saying that in free speech sessions teachers work on the learners' affect. When the students are not bound to follow instructions, they talk about whatsoever assaults their minds, with the obvious limitations of speaking for EFL students, but with the motivation of choosing a subject in which they feel comfortable.

Connectedness: The help of a more experienced guide

In spite of the drawbacks that students may be affected by when speaking in a foreign language, for instance deficiencies in vocabulary, grammar mistakes and lack of confidence, the main purpose of this technique is to foster fluency, rather than speaking in correct English. Therefore, the instructor needs to work on this relationship of confidence and transference to foster fluency among their students. Wlodkowski (2008: 102) claims that "Inclusion is the awareness of adults that they are part of a learning environment in which they and their instructor are respected by and connected to one another." What this author labeled as "connectedness" is the bond between instructor-trainee, based on safety and confidence, can be compared with the client-analyst relationship. David Taylor (2003) claims that the aim of the therapist is to release a patient's capacity to deal constructively with life; thereby, giving to the person the power to resume control and move forward. Then, it is possible to argue that the speech therapist

that treats the King in the example proposed by this study is working on the connectedness as a bond in which transference is possible.

Then, it is feasible to claim that whenever the teacher assumes the role of an instructor, leaving behind behaviouristic teaching approaches that considered students passive in the learning process; both teacher and student establish a relationship of confidence and dialogue. In this case, the instructor behaves as a more experienced EFL speaker who has been in the same place, i.e. making the same type of mistakes and facing the same insecurities as the student. In consequence, he/she can understand the students' weaknesses and fears, listening and giving advice. Consequently, the student may carry some demons of his/her own, the fear of failing the course of studies, pressures, anxiety, and when he/she is able to talk with a more experienced guide, for example a teacher or a tutor, those demons may vanish.

When the talk involves the speaker personally

During the previously mentioned non-stop free speech sessions, students are free to talk about whatever they want because there are no guidelines to follow as the main purpose is that the students can feel comfortable in order to express their ideas. When they are not forced to talk about a pre-established subject, they tend to show their inner reality. This process of becoming fluent is speaking in EFL contexts can be compared to writing as both require an effort on the part of the student to focus not only on content but also on linguistic forms when they are developing a topic. Therefore, in order to promote fluency a good technique is that students talk about topics they are familiar with in order to concentrate on how they are speaking rather than on what they are saying. As Elbow (2002) claimed, "Write what's important to you, write what's true, write what you care about and if you find yourself writing something that you can't share with each other in small groups or you don't want to share with me, come talk to me" (ibid: p.2). Thus the same concept can be applied to speaking. When this happens, the student's fluency together with phonology becomes the core of learning as putting ideas across becomes of utmost importance.

Belonging to community of learners

As discussed before, (Wlodkowski 2008: 103) "connectedness in a learning group is perceived as a sense of belonging for each individual and an awareness that each one cares for others and is cared for". Therefore, the bond that results from fostering tolerance and loyalty promotes fluency and freedom of speech and also enhances confidence among the members of the community in a personal and group level. Subsequently, with the creation of a relaxed atmosphere students will be more comfortable to lift their barriers and would become more fluent in their target language. In this context Wlodkowki (ibid: 103) claims:

> When the attribute of connectedness is joined with respect, it creates a climate in a learning group that invites adults to access their experience, to reflect, to engage in dialogue, all of which enhance motivation to learn. With a sense of inclusion, most adults can publicly bring their narratives to their learning experiences. Telling and hearing our stories is essential to human nature.

It is also very important to stress the fact that the tutor in order to build a safe environment needs to provide positive feedback in order to build students confidence. This means that teachers must not concentrate on providing grades and "correct" pronunciation only but on giving formative and not summative feedback in order to promote self-confidence. The author previously mentioned (ibid: 112) argues that the relationship between competence and self-confidence is mutually enhancing. Consequently, competence allows a person to become more confident, which provides emotional support for an effort to learn new skills and knowledge.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, after analysing the role of safe-confidence in adult EFL learning and how low self-esteem may hinder phonological performance it is important to raise awareness of the relevance of strategies that teachers can apply in andragogy. In order to help learners overcome their fear or frustration when it comes to pronunciation, out-of-

class activities as well as safe classrooms may be considered to be valuable tools. This paper has also discussed different ways in with teachers may become tutors stressing their roles as guides providing positive and formative feedback promoting freedom of speech and fluency rather than being accurate.

Furthermore, it has also been mentioned how self-confidence fostered in a safe environment contributes to build an atmosphere of loyalty and tolerance creating a sense of belonging enhancing connectedness. A variety of different ways to promote safe classrooms, which increase fluency, have been examined to allow students to lift their emotional barriers. We have also discussed e-learning, as a tool that allows a one-to- one interaction as well as out-of-class opportunities to expand the learning process. Consequently, the bond between the tutor and students is essential to motivate EFL learners to concentrate on fluency since success is determined by the students' enjoyment and intention when learning the phonological aspect of language in an EFL context.

REFERENCES

Bush, J. 2002: *A Free Conversation with Peter Elbow*. Pennsylvania: Critique Magazine.

Elbow, P. 2007: *Voice in Writing Again: Embracing Contraries.* College English. Retrieved from http://works.bepress.com/peter_elbow/23/

Freud, S. 1997: *Psychopathic Characters on the Stage.* California: Stanford University Press.

——— . 1998: *Conferencias de Introducción al Psicoanálisis*. Parte III, Obras Completas, Buenos Aires: Amorrotu.

Kidd, T 2010: *Online Education and Adult Learning: New Frontiers for Teaching Practices*. New York: Information Science Reference

Kristeva, J. 1989: *Language the Unknown an initiation into linguistics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Nunan, D et al 2001: *The Cambridge Guide* to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. London: CUP.

Taylor, D. 2003: *A Counselling Approach to Writing Conferences.* Pennsylvania: Moravian College.

Wlodkowski, R 2008: *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive for Teaching All Adults.* USA: HB Printing.