SONSOLES SÁNCHEZ-REYES PEÑAMARÍA Y RAMIRO DURÁN MARTÍNEZ (EDS.). 2006: *NUEVAS PERSPECTIVAS EN LA DIDÁCTICA DE LA FONÉTICA INGLESA*. SALAMANCA: EDICIONES DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA. 168 PAGES*

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The topic under discussion in this volume has been the object of hundreds of critical articles and book-length studies. The main purpose of the present book is to bring to light the relevance of up-dated pedagogical methodologies in the teaching of pronunciation. It determines the degree to which a change such as an improvement in the educational sector entails repercussions in the teaching-learning process and in the core curricular design.

It is well-known that with the advent of communicative approaches, writing has been relegated to a second foreground. Under this false prevalence of oral language over written language, the label 'communication' has been taken to mean the same as 'oral language' and that is not true.

This study tackles in depth three fundamental axes in the current educational panorama: theory, practice and research. The three of them work hand in hand. Apart from having a scientific and academic nature, the book is clearly structured. In spite of the fact that various authors have written on different sub-topics within the pronunciation field, this book is still cohesive and coherent. Besides, this volume is representative of the new technological age since a variety of suggestions, practical tips, reflections, miscellaneous approaches and creative ideas are offered so as to improve students' pronunciation learning process.

The articles presented are homogeneous as regards difficulty and length and cover a wide spectrum of pedagogical variety. It is a contribution of 168 pages, conceived of as a blueprint of practical material dedicated to exploiting teaching factors interwoven in the

field of pronunciation teaching. Conceptually speaking, it is witty, entertaining and attractive for both readers and researchers.

In the first chapter, Catalina Montes adduces that the distance existing between graphemes and phonemes results in incorrect pronunciation and in problems of misunderstanding. Accordingly, on page 25 she says that the major difficulties encountered by Spanish students include the existence of one spelling for various phonemes, redundant graphemes, graphemes that do not correspond to any phoneme, or the non-representation of a phoneme. These 'hard aspects' lay the groundwork for intelligibility problems, which are obstacles to a good pronunciation and language use. That is why Montes proposes to simplify rules as it is done in American linguistics.

The second chapter, signed by Susan House, approaches the relationship between graphemes and phonemes from a more practical angle. She analyses a series of pronunciation problems and suggests some activities to overcome them. She tries to prevent errors rather than to tackle them *ad hoc*. She also offers interesting websites containing on-line learning exercises. In this respect, we shall mention Jenkins' work (2001), which tries to make the English language more transparent and phonological, by pronouncing more words as they are written and by reducing the number of phonemes. Jenkins's contribution, which represents a new view of pronunciation teaching, has aroused controversy and is still subject to conjecture even though everybody still complains about the gap between orthography and phonology.

Elena Suárez provides us with a detailed presentation of the IPA symbols and their features, the major reasons for pronunciation errors and some tips to teach pronunciation. L1 interference as well as extended generalisation of linguistic rules are the cornerstones that make learners commit mistakes. What is taught in the pronunciation class should fulfil the requirements of actual language use and should be a faithful reproduction of oral interactions. Suarez's problem-solving activities, role-plays and all those exercises with purposefully playful intentions take a leading role in ELT. She proposes to take especial care with homophones and homographs, which may lead to potential errors.

Eva Estebas concedes that suprasegmental features, which have been so marginalized for a long time, could be one starting point in the teaching of pronunciation. Resting on the assumption that the Spanish and the English prosodic systems are not as different as it was believed, she suggests that Spanish students should be aware of the similarities existing between English and Spanish to get used to English intonation and rhythm much faster.

The role of interlanguages, positive and negative transfers must always be borne in mind when coming to terms with any language skill or sub-skill such as pronunciation. That is why Elena González and Laura Filardo devote their chapter to these disciplines. Since communicative competence has often been quoted as a focal aim in the learning of a foreign language, there needs to be global concern for the linguistic divergences and/or convergences between two or more languages. González and Filardo encourage the use of contrastive analysis methodology, which entails a pedagogically oriented comparison between the L1 and the L2, based on students' learning habits. They claim that in order to prevent fossilized structures and to initiate *comfortable intelligible situations* (Kenworthy 1990: 16), teaching staff should be concerned with the intermediate stages which learners undergo, that is, their interlanguage or approximative system. Nonetheless, these authors argue that there should be more than one method to face the learning of an L2.

Christopher Moran capitalises on the importance of using a crystal-clear phonological theory to practise pronunciation in a realistic manner. In other words, what is explained should be directly related to what is practised in class. He sets out to draw attention to certain problematic aspects, such as the pronunciation of plurals and the –ed suffix or suprasegmental traits like the placement of stress. He summarises the main features of the above elements, emphasising their difficulty for the learning process.

With Nuria Rodríguez, the volume enters into its most practical part. She brings forward some innovative activities and motivating techniques. After describing the typical errors that Spanish learners usually commit, she sets out to draw on the approaches to be employed in class, namely suggestopedia and neurolinguistic programming. The

former is meant to suggest (hence its name) that positive reactions towards a fruitful learning result from learning in a relaxed atmosphere with background music, which activates pleasure in our mind. In keeping with suggestopedia, neurolinguistic programming holds that every teaching practice has to take into account learners' five senses, on the grounds that everybody has a personal learning style which is activated through stimuli. Therefore, for Rodríguez, music and the senses represent a milestone in the teaching of pronunciation.

Rodríguez's proposal works hand in hand with what Avery and Ehrlich (1999) orchestrate, that is, a teaching practice resting on movements and physical responses. The senses need to be used in learning to move around the paradigms of the tangible. These principles point the way towards knowledge and autonomy, which emerge from a balanced learning process. By offering the same 'hard-stone' concepts of traditional linguistics, Rodríguez turns down 'armchair' methods in favour of movable actions, varied exercises, innovative and modern activities, which are germane to learners' motivational orientation. Paz Framil (2001) also relies on the visual sense presenting 'funny parallel texts' and word maps to learners, so that students themselves recall phonological contrasts through images or through lexis.

By advocating that phonetics is a systematically structured science, María Sonsoles Sánchez acknowledges that the disciplines of phonetics and phonology have been erratically considered and taught on the grounds that pronunciation is not static, hard and unteachable but funny and useful. She describes an array of diverse motivation-oriented activities with a playful goal, such as phonetic-puns, families or riddles, tongue-twisters, bingos, jokes, alphabet, pyramids, poems and so on. All of them are fully exemplified. Students may benefit from these resources because they differ from traditional teaching, which was parrot-like and teacher-centred. Now the learner is allotted an active participation by giving an opinion and taking a leading part in exercises. This author draws the tentative conclusion that, although innovative materials are increasingly frequently offered to the scientific community, the pronunciation field is still allocated a minimalist place.

The perspective adopted by Sánchez bears much resemblance to those maintained by Kenworthy (1990), Laroy (1995) and Paz Framil (2001). These three authors already suggested using 'disguised' minimal pairs, that is, pairs in opposition introduced into activities such as games, problem-solving tasks, riddles, rhymes or other on-line tasks. In particular, Kenworthy (1990) suggests that apart from selecting alternative exercises, learners' responses to those exercises should be properly studied. Sánchez asserts that her experience with such activities has been satisfactory and effective. Yet, it would have been desirable for her to have provided some relevant statistics which might initiate a path for future research and debate.

The sudden appearance of the Internet in the classroom and educational scenario entails a revolutionary change whose effects are yet to be critically assessed. That is why Ramiro Durán attempts to enhance the comprehensibility of the complex enterprise of teaching pronunciation through the Internet. The intricate relation of new technologies to language learning lends a certain degree of support to the claim that whenever there is a change in linguistics, this change is reflected in language pedagogy. Roughly speaking, the advent of new technological improvement entails a shift in traditional teaching and learning procedures. The author enumerates a series of web pages to familiarise students with English phonetic symbols and with samples of electronic exercises that promote individual autonomous work.

We are all aware of the advantages that new technologies offer: finding information quickly, an amenable learning process, intrigue, challenge and an alternative approach to traditional teaching. However, as José María Aguilera (2005: 157-162) points out, the use of new technologies also implies negative traits. They are not accessible to everybody and they generate passivity and sedentary, anti-social habits.

In general terms, this volume is praiseworthy for its use of documentary evidence and its analysis of specific selective bibliography, which may be of great help for those who wish to survey the main lines of research in the field of phonetics teaching. Apart from the editors and contributors, the publishers also deserve praise for the careful editing of this hardback, with its illustrations and useful index. This contribution offers the reader documented materials from

the field of Applied Linguistics, which try to help bridge the gap existing between what one teaches and what is actually learnt. It is the result of a concern to produce enriching didactic materials and to facilitate the relation between pronunciation and language use intrinsic to the acquisition process.

However, what appears to be missing is an exhaustive explanation of the world of pronunciation learning strategies (term coined by Oxford, 1990), which embodies a must for language learning nowadays. Paraphrasing Oxford (1990), we believe that learners' strategic behaviour, how they go about learning, the decisions they take, the tactics they employ and their sensations require detailed, insightful and coherent close analysis. That is why we consider that the book should have reserved a chapter for learning strategies or at least made reference to them.

On the other hand, in spite of its Spanish title, most of the book is written in English. In fact, only three articles are written in Spanish. Because of this reason, it may easily be understood by readers from English speaking countries, which makes the volume have an international character.

The interest in the field of pronunciation teaching and the need for new handbooks in the educational system both for teachers and learners have propelled the publication of a great number of studies. We would like to recommend this publication as reference material and congratulate the authors for their constructivistic pedagogy and their effort to go beyond simplistic methodologies. Therefore, we encourage language practitioners, teachers, pedagogical experts and all those interested in inaugurating a new teaching stage in the field of SLA to read this volume, which, we believe, may bring about criticism, commentary and debate on language teaching.

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