

CILAMPA

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PRESENTACIÓN



Uno de los problemas centrales de los profesionales en nuestra área de conocimientos se refiere a la didáctica de las segundas lenguas. Diversos estudios han mostrado la compleja red de aspectos que rodean la enseñanza de idiomas, y como parte de los objetivos de CILAMPA ofrecemos aquí algunos aportes

que apuntan a esa problemática. Este número reúne artículos e informaciones referidas a **la enseñanza del Inglés**; se encuentra en preparación uno próximo destinado a **la enseñanza del Francés**. Las razones son evidentes: como ambas son las lenguas extranjeras que se ofrece en el III y IV Ciclos de Enseñanza del país, creemos pertinente contribuir con reflexiones y elementos prácticos a mejorar este ámbito de trabajo.

Por la naturaleza de los problemas que trata, el presente número es ligeramente distinto de los que lo han precedido. Se ofrecen tres tipos de escritos: los de carácter propiamente reflexivo en torno a la problemática específica, los de orden técnico-didáctico que procuran poner en juego algunas ideas y procedimientos sobre la enseñanza de la lengua, y los de información bibliográfica que dan luz sobre algunos textos de singular importancia en el campo de la enseñanza del inglés. Un conjunto de trabajos como éste es necesario y urgente; quienes se dedican a la enseñanza de segundas lenguas saben muy bien que las respuestas a ese campo de la didáctica son innumerables, y la renovación de conocimientos y destrezas resulta ser un afán cotidiano. CILAMPA quiere acercarse también al problema, y tanto el presente como próximos números se ocupará en sus páginas de esa cuestión.

El grupo de redactores le agradece cordialmente al Doctor Luis Bolaños Ugalde su voluntario ofrecimiento a coordinar la elaboración del presente número, así como al estimable grupo de especialistas que colaboraron en él.

Como hemos indicado en el número anterior, nuestro interés es promover la calidad académica de los profesionales en ejercicio; el diálogo y la participación directa de los destinatarios de esta publicación serán los factores que harán posible su propósito.

Carlos Francisco Monge.

ARTICULOS

Continuing Pronunciation Improvement

Good pronunciation requires the constant effort of anyone living where English is not spoken. Even the speech of a native speaker of English may eventually be affected after living for many years in another language environment. Since we, as teachers, are often our students only model, it is important that our pronunciation be correct. Not quite adults, many students at the secondary-school level are able to achieve good pronunciation fairly easily if given the opportunity. In order to take best advantage of this capacity, it is the high school teachers' responsibility to improve his own pronunciation so that he can provide his students with as perfect a model as possible. If not, the students transfer the characteristics of the sound system of the Spanish language to English and establish incorrect pronunciation habits which become more and more difficult to eliminate.

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Perhaps we have all heard someone remark that correct pronunciation is not as important as other aspects of the language. Some people consider that they speak English fluently even if they do have a "Spanish accent", because they believe that incorrect pronunciation does not affect the meaning. In the following examples, one incorrect vowel or consonant phoneme changes the meaning of the sentence.

1. I want some coffee. Where's my **cap**? (He meant **cup**.)
2. The priest said that people should not **sing**.
(He meant to say **sin**.)

The intended meaning also may be obscured by incorrect rhythm, stress, and intonation. If Spanish intonation patterns are transferred to English, often the speaker sounds bored or impatient. When this occurs, communication is far from adequate.

Communicating our thoughts and feelings is our most important goal in any foreign language. As adults, we often continue to perfect syntax and vocabulary usage because we see a direct relation to correct grammar and the words needed to express our ideas. At the same time, adults unintentionally neglect to improve their pronunciation in a second language. Nevertheless, as seen above, incorrect pronunciation does affect meaning and hinder communication. Many people notice pronunciation errors more in their native language. Imagine a native speaker of English who is learning Spanish. His pronunciation of "caro" with an English /r/ would sound very incorrect and could even lead to confusion with the word "carro". It is easy for a native Spanish speaker to hear the difference between /s/ and /z/ when a native English speaker who is learning Spanish pronounces "Rosa" with a voiced sound as if it were a /z/. Yet, the native Spanish speaker who has learned English often does not realize the importance of distinguishing between the voiceless /s/ in "lacy" and the voice /z/ in "lazy". Since native Spanish speakers hear any pronunciation error immediately in their native language, it should not be difficult to remember

that this type of error sounds just as bad in any language, and must be avoided.

Pronunciation improvement at an advanced level is best achieved through a personalized program, developed to fit the needs of the individual. The best way to begin is by making a self-evaluation of your own pronunciation. Tape record yourself while reading aloud several pages of English and then continue recording as you speak freely in English for approximately ten minutes about what you have just read and other related topics. Another day, listen to your recording several times. First, make a note of any general impressions (such as too slow, too fast, too monotonous, or too choppy). Then, listen to your recording and make a note of any vowels, consonants and words that you may have mispronounced. Finally, listen again and concentrate on stress, rhythm, linking or blending, and intonation. Once you have completed your self-evaluation, use the results to make an individualized program of pronunciation improvement.

This type of personalized program is based on the vowels, consonants, and other aspects that each individual sometimes uses incorrectly. Designate a time period (such as one week or one month) during which you will be careful to pronounce **one** particular sound correctly every time you speak English. The most effective way to change any pronunciation habit is to work on only one at a time until you are always using the correct form, at first consciously and then unconsciously. Listen to yourself when you speak; learn to monitor your own pronunciation. It is also very helpful to read **aloud** in English, concentrating on the sound or aspect you are working to improve. You may wish to record yourself periodically to check your progress and compare your results with your original recording. Many people find singing along with English songs another pleasant way to perfect their pronunciation. Others find it helpful to review basic theoretical aspects of English pronunciation, along with their oral practice. After mastering one sound or one feature of the English sound system, you will be ready to continue with another and then another, and soon you will find that your

pronunciation has improved tremendously. By just eliminating **one** error, you are actually eliminating thousands of errors because of the number of times one particular sound is repeated in whatever you say.

Communication in any language is only complete when all the different skills —such as grammar and vocabulary usage, as well as pronunciation— are being coordinated correctly. An English teacher should be even more fluent than people who have learned English for other purposes (business, tourism, etc.), because often a teacher's fluency determines whether his students will ever learn to speak English correctly. Pronunciation improvement must be a continuous, never-ending process for anyone who has chosen to teach English.

Sherry E. Gapper.