

<p>PHONEMIC TRANSCRIPTION IN TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION TO FIRST YEAR EFL STUDENTS OF TEXTILE ENGINEERING</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">Phonetics</p> <p>Keywords: Phonemic transcription, IPA, Pronunciation, EFL, focused-group experimentation.</p>
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Abstract

Phonemic transcription by using IPA is the most traditional as well as the most widely used technique for teaching pronunciation to learners of English as a foreign or second language. Although the effectiveness of IPA and phonemic transcription has been an issue of debate among language teachers and researchers alike, it has still been supported by a number of researchers and language practitioners. The present study is conducted on a group of students of Bangladesh University of Textiles with a view to measuring the effectiveness of teaching IPA and phonemic transcription to improve pronunciation. The methodology includes focused-group experimentation. The paper aims to assess the efficacy of teaching IPA and phonemic transcription in improving the pronunciation of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) on the basis of the pronunciation achievements by learners of the focused-group experimentation. It also evaluates the merits of some useful techniques and activities for teaching IPA and phonemic transcription to the EFL students in improving their pronunciation in focused-group training sessions. Finally, the paper concludes by giving some recommendations for effective teaching of pronunciation to EFL students in the light of the experimental study and recent researches on pronunciation teaching.

1. Introduction

The literature on language teaching reveals that pronunciation teaching has not been given much attention in the total framework of language teaching. Derwing and Munro (2005) state that much less research has been carried out on L2 pronunciation than on other skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary; and the instructional materials and practices for teaching pronunciation are still heavily influenced by commonsense intuitive notions. This lack of attention to pronunciation teaching has resulted in limited knowledge about how to integrate appropriate pronunciation instruction into second/foreign language classrooms (Derwing and Munro, 2005). Recent researches on language teaching, however, have put a lot of emphasis on pronunciation (see, for example, Jenkins, 2004; Celce-Murcia et al. 1996), since “pronunciation intelligibility is of great importance for successful oral communication to take place” (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996). With this renewed interest and emphasis on pronunciation, there has been an influx of a number of new methods, techniques and tools, along with the older ones, for teaching pronunciation. Phonemic transcription by means of International Phonetic Alphabets (IPA) is one of the oldest and commonly used techniques among them. Celce-Murcia et al. (1996) states that it is an important tool of the ‘analytic-linguistic approach’, an explicit type of instruction which emphasizes on phonetic alphabet, articulatory description, charts of vocal apparatus, and so on. Although teaching pronunciation through phonemic transcription is considered as a traditional teaching technique and the effectiveness of it has been often doubted by many experts, there are numerous evidences from different experimental studies that IPA and phonemic transcription, if

applied properly, can contribute significantly to the development of learners' pronunciation, especially in contexts where the learners do not get much exposure to authentic native speech and where the learners' first language has one-to-one relationship between sound and spelling (Kelly, 2000; Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2015). The present study which is conducted on a group of students of Bangladesh University of Textiles studying communicative English in their first year, intends to investigate the effectiveness of teaching pronunciation with the help of IPA and phonemic transcription to the said EFL learners by employing some common techniques and activities on IPA and phonemic transcriptions in a focused-group experimentation. While conducting the study, the following research questions were formed:

1. How much effective the phonemic transcription with the help of IPA is in the students' achievements of pronunciation?
2. What further steps can be taken to make the pronunciation teaching fruitful and interesting to learners of English as a non-major subject?

2. Theoretical Overview

A discussion on phonemic transcription for teaching pronunciation demands at least a minimum of introduction to some basic concepts and terminologies found in the field of phonetics and phonology. What follows is a brief discussion of some concepts related to the topic of the paper.

2.1 Phoneme

Phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a language, which can distinguish two words (Richards et al. 1985, p. 214). For example, a single phoneme can distinguish the word 'cat' from 'rat'. Skandera and Burleigh (2011) argue that a phoneme can be defined as the smallest distinctive or contrastive unit in the sound system of a language. To put simply, a phoneme is the smallest meaning distinguishing unit of the sound system of a language. There are 24 consonant phonemes and 20 vowel phonemes in RP and in most other accents of English.

2.2 Transcription: Phonemic and Phonetic

According to Roach (2000), transcription, in its most original meaning, implies converting from one representation (written text) into another (phonetic symbols). Roach, however, argues that transcription, in present-day usage, is the writing down of a spoken utterance using a suitable set of symbols. Crystal (2008) defines transcription as a method of writing down speech sounds in a systematic and consistent way (also known as a notation or script). There are many different types of transcription. However, the most fundamental division is made between Phonemic (Broad) and Phonetic (Narrow) transcription.

In Phonemic transcription, the only symbols that may be used are those which represent one of the phonemes of the language. For these purposes, the IPA offers the vowel and the

consonant charts. A phonemic transcription of a word or a phrase is given in slant brackets (/ /). In a phonetic transcription, on the other hand, one may use the full range of phonetic symbols if these are required. It is used to indicate particular details of the production of any particular sound by using special symbols, also referred to as ‘diacritics’, e.g. an aspirated /t/ is represented as [t^h]. Therefore, in phonemic transcription, only phonemes are given symbols compared with phonetic transcription, where different degrees of allophonic details are introduced.

2.3 International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is the contribution of International Phonetic Association founded by a group of European phoneticians namely Paul Passy, Wilhelm Viëtor, and Henry Sweet in 1888. It contains phonetic alphabet to symbolize the sounds of all languages of the world. The symbols consist of letters and diacritics. For example, the raised *h* in [t^h] is a diacritic which signifies *aspiration* and the *colon* in [a:] indicates a longer duration. From time to time, revisions are made to the alphabet by adding or removing symbols and renaming symbols or categories. Many of the symbols are taken from the Roman alphabet, with other letters and diacritics.

3. Review of Literature

Allegra (2018) proposes that phonemic transcription can be practiced by exposing learners either to transcription from orthography or ‘de-transcription’ exercises which imply the contrary, i.e., providing transcribed words, phrases, sentences or texts and turn them into their orthographic version. Allegra further proposes dictations for transcriptions and reading aloud activities from a phonetically transcribed text.

Kuutti (2009) investigates the use of phonetic transcription as a teaching method and its effect on language learning outcomes. The hypothesis was that the group receiving instruction about the interpretation and use of phonetic transcriptions would fare better than those not receiving any instruction. The result showed that those being taught in the use of phonetic transcriptions were more successful than the other tested group.

Lintunen (2009) mentions a study on 34 Finnish university students of English, who were taught pronunciation skills and phonemic transcription simultaneously. The data were collected from three separate tests for both pronunciation and transcription at various points during the course to observe the subjects’ development in these two tasks. The development of the subjects in both test types was clear, indicating that pronunciation and transcription skills correlate and that exercises in phonemic transcription are effective when teaching English as a foreign language.

On the basis of a quasi-experimental study, Saniei (2008) suggests a task-based model for pronunciation teaching and learning through which learners are able to self-monitor their pronunciation with the aid of phonetic alphabet. The researcher applied information gap activity that allowed EFL learners to practice both listening discrimination and oral production through the

transcription of uncommon word sounds. The result of the study shows that task-based activities on the basis of phonetic alphabets and phonemic transcription such as information gap, dictation, etc. could empower learners and help them to achieve better pronunciation.

Szpyra-Kozłowska and Bukowski (2006) conducted a study in which a group of teenage Polish learners were taught English pronunciation by means of a variety of techniques and then was asked to evaluate them in terms of their effectiveness. It was striking that phonemic script was assessed by the participants as the most effective technique which contributed significantly to the improvement of their pronunciation.

Kelly (2000) observes that phonemic transcription can be very useful when working with dictionaries as the teacher can show the learners that the symbols are indeed used and of great help. It encourages learners to acquire pronunciation independently.

4. Methodology

The present study is experimental in nature. It was conducted on 10 students who were studying Communicative English as non-major subject in their first-year undergraduate program. The experimentation went for six months long along with instructions and practical sessions in IPA and phonemic transcriptions. The students were selected for the experimentation randomly from different sections with having differing level of pronunciation competence. Sixteen interactive sessions were held all together in which the learners were given instructions in IPA and phonemic transcriptions. In the beginning few class students were introduced with the concept of IPA and phonemic transcriptions. In the very first class, the researcher showed them a dictionary (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*) and asked them whether they had any idea about the symbols in parenthesis after every word. They collectively told the researcher that they had no idea about that. Then the researcher briefly explained the symbols to them and offered a brief discussion on what IPA and phonemic transcriptions are. They felt highly enthusiastic about the things instantly. They were then introduced with the phonemes gradually, very much like the ways discussed in the “Methods, Techniques, and Activities for Teaching Phonemic Transcription” chapter discussed below. A good number of examples were given for each phoneme so that they could easily grasp the sounds. They were also made to practice all those phonemes along with some other examples’ multiple times during the sessions. Besides, they were provided with charts of vowels and consonants sounds of IPA along with some pictures of the places and manners of articulation of those sounds. Besides, the researcher used some popular *Youtube* videos and some open internet sources for showing them visually how the sounds are produced.

Out of the sixteen sessions, six sessions were completely devoted to instructing students about the theoretical issues related to IPA and phonemic transcriptions. Students practiced transcribing English words and expressions into IPA and vice-versa extensively in the eight sessions. And two sessions were allocated to assessing students progresses in mastering IPA and phonemic transcriptions. Every session ended with the students being assigned with some home tasks and activities on the phonetic symbols for the next meeting from a pronunciation practice

book with CD (*Ship or Sheep?* by Ann Baker) given to them and suggested to practice those things at home.

This focused-group experimentation was conducted on those students in the Language Lab of the university with the help of voice recording devices. The analysis of the recordings was impressionistic but was cross-checked by another instructor.

In the first phase of the experimentation, the researcher identified 10 English expressions which do not have form-sound relationships. Those expressions were then given to the students in written forms and they were asked to pronounce them. Each student's articulation of the individual expressions was recorded by using the voice recording software of Samsung M31 cell phone. The articulated sounds were then transcribed and kept as record in the students' portfolio. Although the transcriptions of the sounds produced by students were impressionistic, they were cross-checked by another instructor.

In the second phase of the experimentation which took place 3 months later during which instructions in IPA and phonetic transcriptions were given in several sessions, students were provided with the same set of linguistic items in the written form and they were asked to pronounce them and transcribe them in their practice books. The articulated sounds were recorded by using the same tools and devices. The transcriptions of the sounds were also put into the students' portfolio.

In the third phase of the experimentation which took place 6 months later by which the learners got good number of classes and practice sessions in IPA and phonemic transcription, students were given the same set of expressions in the written forms and they were asked to pronounce them aloud. Their articulations of those individual expressions were again recorded by using the same electronic tools and devices. They were again asked to transcribe the sounds and their articulated sounds were put in the students' portfolio.

By comparing the pronunciations of the individual linguistic items of those three phases and the students' transcriptions in the second and third phases, qualitative differences of the three phases were then identified and analyzed.

5. Analysis

In the initial phase of the experiment, ten out of ten learners produced the selected linguistic expressions incorrectly as evidenced from the performance of the students in the first phase presented in table of each student's performance on the linguistic expressions. In the second phase of the experimentation, students' performance in articulating those expressions improved a lot, though still deviating in a number of instances. In the final phase of the experimentation, learners exhibited significant progress in articulating all of those expressions. Most of the learners produced eight to nine expressions in the way as they are found in the *Oxford Advance Learner's*

Dictionary. The learners' performances in producing the selected expressions in the three experimental phases are shown in the tables below:

Student 01			
Linguistic Expressions	Phase 01	Phase 02	Phase 03
1. son	/sɒn/	/sɑ:n/	/sʌn/
2. foreign	/fɔren/	/fɔrən/	/'fɔrən/
3. realm	/ri:alm/	/reəlm/	/reɪlm/
4. tomb	/tɒmb/	/tu:mb/	/tu:m/
5. women	/wɔmen/	/wɔmen/	/'wɪmɪn/
6. respect	/respekt/	/respect/	/rɪ'spekt/
7. Wednesday	/wednesde/	/wenesde/	/'wenzdeɪ/
8. subtle	/sʌbtl/	/subtel/	/'sʌtel/
9. fruit	/fru:ɪt/	/frut/	/fru:t/
10. island	/ɪslænd/	/aɪlənd/	/'aɪlənd/

Student 02			
Linguistic Expressions	Phase 01	Phase 02	Phase 03
1. son	/sɒn/	/sɒn/	/sʌn/
2. foreign	/fɔren/	/fɔren/	/'fɔrən/
3. realm	/ri:alm/	/reɪlm/	/reɪlm/
4. tomb	/tɒmb/	/tʊm/	/tu:m/
5. women	/wɔmen/	/wɔmen/	/'wɪmɪn/
6. respect	/respekt/	/respect/	/rɪ'spekt/
7. Wednesday	/wednesde/	/wenesde/	/'wenzdeɪ/
8. subtle	/sʌbtl/	/sʌbtel/	/'sʌtel/
9. fruit	/frʊ:ɪt/	/frut/	/fru:t/
10. island	/ɪslend/	/aɪlənd/	/'aɪlənd/

Student 03			
Linguistic Expressions	Phase 01	Phase 02	Phase 03
1. son	/sa:n/	/sɑ:n/	/sʌn/
2. foreign	/fɔren/	/fɔren/	/'fɔrən/
3. realm	/rɪalm/	/reəlm/	/reɪlm/
4. tomb	/tɒmb/	/tu:mb/	/tu:m/
5. women	/wɔmen/	/wɔmɪn/	/'wɪmɪn/
6. respect	/respekt/	/respect/	/rɪ'spekt/
7. Wednesday	/wenesde/	/wenzde/	/'wenzdeɪ/

8. subtle	/sʌbtel/	/sɑ:btel/	/'sʌtel/
9. fruit	/frot/	/frut/	/fru:t/
10. island	/islænd/	/aɪlənd/	/'aɪlənd/

Student 04			
Linguistic Expressions	Phase 01	Phase 02	Phase 03
1. son	/sɒn/	/sɑ:n/	/sʌn/
2. foreign	/fɔren/	/fɔren/	/'fɔrən/
3. realm	/ri:elm/	/reəlm/	/reɪlm/
4. tomb	/tɒmb/	/tu:mb/	/tu:m/
5. women	/wɒmen/	/wɒmen/	/'wɪmɪn/
6. respect	/respekt/	/respect/	/rɪ'spekt/
7. Wednesday	/wednesde/	/wednesde/	/'wenzdeɪ/
8. subtle	/sʌbtɪ/	/sʌbtel/	/'sʌtel/
9. fruit	/frʊ:t/	/frut/	/fru:t/
10. island	/islænd/	/aɪlənd/	/'aɪlənd/

Student 05			
Linguistic Expressions	Phase 01	Phase 02	Phase 03
1. son	/sɒn/	/sɑ:n/	/sʌn/
2. foreign	/fɔren/	/fɔren/	/'fɔrən/
3. realm	/reəlm/	/reɪlm/	/reɪlm/
4. tomb	/tɒmb/	/tu:mb/	/tu:m/
5. women	/wɒmen/	/wɒmen/	/'wɪmɪn/
6. respect	/respekt/	/respect/	/rɪ'spekt/
7. Wednesday	/wednesde/	/wenesde/	/'wenzdeɪ/
8. subtle	/sʌbtɪ/	/sʌbtel/	/'sʌtel/
9. fruit	/frʊ:t/	/frut/	/fru:t/
10. island	/aɪlənd/	/aɪlənd/	/'aɪlənd/

Student 06			
Linguistic Expressions	Phase 01	Phase 02	Phase 03
1. son	/sɒn/	/sɑ:n/	/sʌn/
2. foreign	/fɔren/	/fɔrən/	/'fɔrən/
3. realm	/ri:alm/	/reəlm/	/reɪlm/
4. tomb	/tɒmb/	/t u:m/	/tu:m/
5. women	/wɒmen/	/wɒmen/	/'wɪmɪn/

6. respect	/respekt/	/respect/	/rɪˈspekt/
7. Wednesday	/wednesde/	/wenesde/	/'wenzdeɪ/
8. subtle	/sʌbtel/	/sʌbtel/	/'sʌtel/
9. fruit	/frʊ:ɪt/	/frut/	/fru:t/
10. island	/ɪslænd/	/aɪlənd/	/'aɪlənd/

Student 07

Linguistic Expressions	Phase 01	Phase 02	Phase 03
1. son	/sɒn/	/sɑ:n/	/sʌn/
2. foreign	/fɔren/	/fɔren/	/'fɔrən/
3. realm	/rɪalm/	/reəlm/	/relm/
4. tomb	/tɒmb/	/tu:mb/	/tu:m/
5. women	/wɔ:men/	/wɒmen/	/'wɪmɪn/
6. respect	/respekt/	/respect/	/rɪˈspekt/
7. Wednesday	/wednesde/	/wenesde/	/'wenzdeɪ/
8. subtle	/sʌbtel/	/sʌbtel/	/'sʌtel/
9. fruit	/frʊ:ɪt/	/frut/	/fru:t/
10. island	/ɪslænd/	/aɪlənd/	/'aɪlənd/

Student 08

Linguistic Expressions	Phase 01	Phase 02	Phase 03
1. son	/sɒn/	/sɒn/	/sʌn/
2. foreign	/fɔren/	/fɔren/	/'fɔrən/
3. realm	/ri:alm/	/reəlm/	/relm/
4. tomb	/tɒmb/	/tu:mb/	/tu:m/
5. women	/wɔ:men/	/wɒmen/	/'wɪmɪn/
6. respect	/respekt/	/respect/	/rɪˈspekt/
7. Wednesday	/wenesde/	/wenesde/	/'wenzdeɪ/
8. subtle	/sʌbtel/	/sʌbtel/	/'sʌtel/
9. fruit	/frʊ:ɪt/	/frut/	/fru:t/
10. island	/ɪslænd/	/aɪlənd/	/'aɪlənd/

Student 09

Linguistic Expressions	Phase 01	Phase 02	Phase 03
1. son	/sɒn/	/sɑ:n/	/sʌn/
2. foreign	/fɔren/	/fɔren/	/'fɔrən/
3. realm	/realm/	/reəlm/	/relm/

4. tomb	/tɒmb/	/tu:mb/	/tu:m/
5. women	/wɒmen/	/wɒmen/	/'wɪmɪn/
6. respect	/respekt/	/respect/	/rɪ'spekt/
7. Wednesday	/wednesde/	/wenesde/	/'wenzdeɪ/
8. subtle	/sʌbtel/	/sʌbtel/	/'sʌtel/
9. fruit	/frʊ:t/	/frut/	/fru:t/
10. island	/ɪslænd/	/aɪlənd/	/'aɪlənd/

Student 10			
Linguistic Expressions	Phase 01	Phase 02	Phase 03
1. son	/sɒn/	/sɑ:n/	/sʌn/
2. foreign	/fɔren/	/fɔren/	/'fɔren/
3. realm	/realm/	/reəlm/	/reɪlm/
4. tomb	/tɒmb/	/tɒmb/	/tu:m/
5. women	/wɒmen/	/wɒmen/	/'wɪmɪn/
6. respect	/respekt/	/respect/	/rɪ'spekt/
7. Wednesday	/wednesde/	/wenesde/	/'wenzdeɪ/
8. subtle	/sʌbtel/	/sʌbtel/	/'sʌtel/
9. fruit	/frʊ:t/	/fru:t/	/fru:t/
10. island	/ɪslænd/	/aɪlənd/	/'aɪlənd/

6. Discussion

As in majority of EFL settings, the students of Bangladesh University of Textiles, who are learning English as a non-major subject, learners learn English language without direct interaction with the native speakers. They receive the language input from different reading materials and non-native English teachers. Some learners may get exposed to the native speech through internet, video games, music and television but that number is still very small. Considering the amount of time, they spend with English; it can be said that they are most frequently exposed to the written form of English than to the spoken form. As a result, the orthography of English tends to exert a powerful impact on their English pronunciation, i.e. they are likely to pronounce the sounds of English in terms of their orthographic spelling. But as it is well established that there are discrepancies between the orthographic spelling and the pronunciation of English, (for instance, 'a' is pronounced /eɪ/ in the English word 'day' and /æ/ in 'bad'), EFL learners develop incorrect pronunciation while learning English if they are not made aware of this. Szpyra-Kozłowska (2015) points out that EFL learner, having very limited exposure to spoken English, are particularly liable to be affected by its written form, with all its irregularities and idiosyncrasies. To overcome this powerful impact of English spelling, phonemic transcription is necessary. Rogerson-Ravell (2011) points out that phonemic transcription raises learners' awareness of the number of phonemes in English and helps them to internalize the sound system of the language. As it is evident from the

experimentation, instructions in IPA and phonemic transcription can make learners aware of the pronunciation patterns of English, hence improving their pronunciation. In the first phase, learners' productions of the selected expressions were based on the orthographic spelling. In the second phase, their productions of those expressions were much closer to the actual forms because of their having some instructions in IPA and phonemic transcriptions. In the third phase of the experimentation, maximum amount of accuracy has been ensured owing to the fact that they have received good number of instructions as well as practical session in IPA and phonemic transcriptions.

Phonemic transcription provides visual reinforcement of auditory input. Since engineering students are most of the time visual learners and remember things better when they are presented in the forms of symbols, charts, diagrams, pictures, etc. instructions in IPA and phonemic transcriptions can be of great help for them as IPA and phonemic transcriptions are taught through the activities of writing down the sound symbols, using sound charts, articulatory diagrams, pictures of vocal tracts, and so on. In addition, phonemic transcription is also an invaluable aid in enhancing learner autonomy which is highly prioritized in contemporary approaches to language teaching (Benson, 2007, pp. 21-40). Once the learners know the phonetic symbols representing sounds of English, they may consult an English dictionary containing pronunciation to learn the pronunciation of a new word by their own and solve any confusion about the spelling and pronunciation ambiguities.

Besides, phonemic transcription is very beneficial for learners who are accustomed to a close phoneme-grapheme correspondence in their native language, especially, when they want to learn a language with more complicated grapheme-phoneme rules (Lintunen, 2009). As the students on which the experimentation was conducted are Bangladeshi EFL learners and their mother tongue is Bengali, these factors have great influence in their adopting the orthographic spelling while pronouncing English expressions. It is well known that the sound pattern of Bengali language is closely connected to the orthographic spelling. In other words, there is a close phoneme-grapheme correspondence in Bengali language. Being native speakers of Bengali language, the students of the focused-group experimentation are habituated with using orthographic spelling when it comes to pronunciation. As a matter of fact, the transference phenomenon is found to in operation for these learners when the approach English pronunciation. That is, they depend on the orthographic spelling of the English expressions while pronouncing them, as it is found in the first phase of the experimentation. However, after providing them with some interactive teaching in pronunciation, the learners came to realize the discrepancies between the orthographic pattern and the phonemic pattern of English language and they could overcome their errors in this regard, which is evidenced in their performances in the second and third phases of the experimentation.

7. Implications and Recommendations for Teaching Phonemic Transcription

Although phonemic transcription offers a number of advantages to EFL learners to learn pronunciation correctly, it appears “to be used reluctantly by many, if not the majority of English teachers, who find many faults with it” (Schmitt, 2016, p. 75). It is not only claimed to be time consuming and tedious to teach, but also unattractive and difficult for learners. However, Szpyra-Kozłowska (2015) points out that the teachers’ reluctance to employ phonemic transcription in the classroom seems to be the outcome of their lack of familiarity with interesting techniques of introducing and practicing it, which leads to the view that phonemic transcription is extremely boring for students to learn and for teachers to teach. Therefore, the question is not whether to teach phonemic transcription or not, but how to teach it in an interesting and appealing ways. Like the pronunciation teaching itself, teaching of phonemic transcription should, therefore, start up with planned lessons and activities (Kenworthy, 1987, p.27), which the teacher finds useful and which meet the needs of the students. What follows is a brief discussion on the different techniques and activities for teaching phonemic transcription in EFL contexts.

As a very first step of teaching phonemic transcript to EFL learners, experts have emphasized on the importance of motivating learners to learn phonemic transcription (see, for example, Schmitt 2016, Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2015, Averyand Ehrlich, 1992). To do so, the teacher should give a brief talk explaining why phonemic transcription is necessary by providing some examples of words whose pronunciation departs drastically from the orthographic forms, e.g., *foreign*, *enough*, *through*, *island*, etc. The teacher can also give some other set of words in which spelling and pronunciation do not match. Students are asked to guess how they are pronounced. This can be done to demonstrate that such guesses are frequently incorrect and that a system of transcription is needed to avoid serious mispronunciations.

Once the learners are quite motivated to learn phonemic transcription, the transcription symbols should be introduced. They should not, however, be introduced at a time but gradually, starting with the simplest ones (Kelly, 2000), i.e. those which are identical to the ordinary letters of the Latin alphabet – /p, b, f, v, t, d, k, g, m, n, s, z, h, l, r, w, j/. Some examples for every symbol occurring in words should also be given, preferably in minimal pairs exercises in which pronunciation of the words are emphasized than writing, so that students can realize how phonemes distinguish words. In the next lesson the new symbols – /θ, ð, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ, ŋ/ – may be introduced with several examples. They should be practiced several times in minimal pair activities again. Practically, it means that they need to learn only seven addition symbols for consonant phonemes different from ordinary letters. In order to get acquainted with the new shapes and associate them with the corresponding sounds, some writing practices of those symbols should accompany oral practices.

In the third lesson, the teacher can devise some interesting and meaningful activities to practice those symbols introduced in the previous lessons. Szpyra-Kozłowska (2015) proposes a simple game for practicing those symbols. At first the teacher will divide the learners into several

teams. She/he will then write one or two symbols on the board, for instance, /tʃ/. The learners will be given two-three minutes to write on a paper as many words containing the given sound as they can. The team that list more examples is the winner. To make it a pronunciation practice, each word must be said aloud. The teacher must give feedback of their production, correcting if they produce any word incorrectly.

From the fourth lesson onward, learners may be introduced with the vowel sounds, again, not all at a time, but gradually. Vowels are found to be more difficult for learners to master than the consonant sounds since the English alphabet have only five vowel letters, but up to twenty vowel sounds, depending on the accent. Consequently, there is a need to introduce additional symbols like /æ/, /ə/ or /ʊ/ which are not part of the Latin alphabet. An excellent way of teaching the unfamiliar symbols has been referred to by Szpyra-Kozłowska:

A nice way of teaching transcription symbols to younger learners has been suggested to me by a student of mine, a primary school teacher. To make them less alien, she asked children (aged 8) to come up with names for the 'strange' symbols. They proposed 'a (little) flower' for the ash vowel (/æ/), 'a (little) tent' for wedge (/ʌ/), 'a (little) column' for the short high vowel (/ɪ/), 'upside down e' for schwa (/ə/), 'a flower pot' for the short high back vowel (/ʊ/), 'a snake' for the consonant in shoe (/ʃ/) and 'an n with a little tail' for angma (/ŋ/). According to the teacher, children used these names enthusiastically and remembered the symbols with names much better than those without them. (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2015, p.176)

In teaching the vowels, the twelve monophthongs (if RP is the accent model) should be subdivided into smaller classes like short vowels and long vowels. The short vowel should be taught first followed by the long vowels, with the focus on those symbols which are different from the letters of the alphabet. The same concerns diphthongs which should be taught once the monophthongs have become familiar to students. For every phoneme, enough examples should be provided so that learners can easily associate the symbols with their corresponding sounds.

Hewings (2004) suggests a very simple transcription exercise to teach the contrast between particular vowels or particular consonant sounds. To help students learn the symbols /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/, and /ɒ/, Hewings suggests to highlight the target sounds on a phonetics chart and then say some of the following words (in random order) for students to transcribe: *heart, half, hard, laugh, start* (all with /ɑ:/); *talk, hall, bought, taught, raw* (all with /ɔ:/); *rod, dog, hop, stop, not, loft* (all with /ɒ/). In all these words only the vowel symbol is problematic; the consonant symbols are the same as their letters. He further suggests similar exercises with other group of vowels and unfamiliar consonant symbols.

Once all the symbols have been learnt, more complex activities can be employed. The most commonly practiced one could be writing some transcribed words on the blackboard, asking students to pronounce them aloud and then write them in ordinary spelling. The items ought to be simple at first and then more difficult and should, of course, belong to the vocabulary already

familiar to the students. This type of activity can also be developed into a game. One team places a transcribed word on the blackboard and other competitors are supposed to supply the orthographic form, with emphasis on developing learners' ability to pronounce the transcribed forms aloud.

Szpyra-Kozłowska (2015) proposes another activity with the use of cards with transcription symbols written on them. In a simple task the teacher places several symbols in a random order on the blackboard, asking learners to form an English word (or words) out of them (e.g. /p, l, m, æ/ - /læmp/, /t, m, i:, s, r/ - /stri:m/). In a more complex exercise the teacher give the learners sets of identical cards with phonetic symbols. The task is to form as many transcribed words as they can out of the supplied symbols, e.g. /t, p, n, m, s, l, r, ʃ, i, i:, ei, aʊ, e/ - /ʃɪp, sli:p, naʊ, etc./. The team which comes up with the largest number of items is the winner.

Experts (Kelly. 2000 and Schmitt.2016) have agreed that using dictionaries in carrying out different activities for training in phonemic transcription can be very effective. If some copies are available in the classroom, the teacher might write a few words on the blackboard and ask the learners to find their transcribed versions, write them down on their exercise books, and then pronounce aloud. Alternatively, a similar task can be given to students as homework and repeated several times in order to show them that phonemic script could be very useful for learning pronunciation autonomously. Further, teacher can also present a list of some correctly and some incorrectly transcribed words to students. Students' task is to find out the correct transcribed forms and pronounce them aloud.

Another technique which might be very useful in teaching IPA and phonemic transcription is to make a recording of the students' production of words containing targeted phonemes (Kelly, 2000, p.21). Students can be asked to perform the same task on two occasions. The first time they are asked to pronounce the selected words without any tools such as a dictionary. The second time students can be asked to pronounce the same words again, but with the help of the phonetic transcriptions in a dictionary. When listening to the recorded pronunciation students can be asked to listen to how they have pronounced the words the first time and how that pronunciation differed from that of the second time. By letting students listen to the tape and talk about their pronunciation, they are made aware of their problem areas so that they can improve their pronunciation.

The phonemic transcription can be taught through different kinds of minimal pair activities where students are trained to listen for individual sounds in words which differ in one sound, as the vowels in *let* /let/ and *late* /leɪt/. One way to work with minimal pairs in the classroom would be for the teacher to read out minimal pairs which the students are then supposed to write down (Hewings, 2004). The teacher may use recording of native speaker (if necessary) from different minimal pair practice sources. At present there are a good number of online resources which provides interesting activities for practicing minimal pairs. The teacher can also ask students to

read minimal pairs aloud and listen to whether they manage to discriminate one word from the other (Schmitt, 2016, p.76).

With all these activities, it can be expected that learners would gain competence in phonemic transcription. The instructor can then proceed to the transcription of phrases and sentences, which are particularly useful in introducing weak forms as well as changes that occur in connected speech. It cannot, however, be assumed that phonemic script will be used correctly by learners once it is taught. It happens that many students forget the symbols. So, occasional practice in transcription is needed from time to time. It is also important to employ phonemic script regularly, particularly while introducing new vocabulary. It should, however, be remembered that, regardless of how exciting a given technique is, it stops being enjoyable if it is overused (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2015, p.171). Instead of adopting same activities repeatedly, teachers should, therefore, introduce diversified activities to make phonemic transcription attractive.

8. Conclusion

Although there are contradictory opinions regarding the effectiveness of IPA and phonemic transcription in pronunciation teaching, many linguists believe them to be invaluable tools in learning the sounds of English as a foreign. The present paper has concentrated on IPA phonemic transcription as pronunciation teaching techniques with a view to exploring and explaining the methods, techniques and activities for teaching them in the EFL contexts. Instructions in IPA and phonemic transcriptions to EFL students of Bangladesh University of Textiles brought favourable results as revealed in the second and third phases of the experimentation. Like all other methods and techniques of pronunciation teaching, IPA and phonemic transcription may obviously have some shortcomings. However, its usefulness in EFL contexts appears to have been of little doubt. It removes the powerful impact of English orthography and L1 sound patterns on learners' pronunciation and makes them more independent and autonomous in learning pronunciation of English by using dictionaries and other online sources. It may also be a very good starting point as it gives students the basic knowledge about the sound system of English language. Providing them with such basic knowledge may rectify the information that the learners may have received imperfectly by ear, which in turn, may have positive learning outcomes. Such a foundation will also help when more advanced tasks are to be taken on. If applied through planned instructional activities, it will definitely yield invaluable benefits to EFL learners. Therefore, further research on the application of phonemic transcription in the classroom by means of IPA is worthwhile.

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