

“Even if you do learn to speak correct English, whom are you going to speak it to?”
Clarence Darrow (1857 – 1938)

Teaching Pronunciation:

Children naturally need to communicate. This is a precious advantage we can use in our English lessons. It seems to be easy: just bring challenging activities and children will pronounce and speak. However, it's not as simple as it looks at first sight.

Firstly the teacher should **use English from the start**. “Children acquire language by taking part in activities, and to take part in activities, they must want and need to communicate. The need to communicate in English is immediate and from the first lesson activities should take place in English.” (Dunn 1991) We don't have to be worried about it as the classroom English used together with gestures, miming, visual aids and real activities is quite well understandable because the teacher with the help of the things mentioned above makes the meaning obvious. Besides, language used with games is quite predictable and it can be picked up easily. Children know the routines of games played in their age, which helps them to understand quickly. With constant repetition of the same routines the language will be soon acquired.

Secondly the **language level should be adequate** to young learners. The words used in the first lesson therefore must be very simple. Later we bring more items into the vocabulary used; anyhow, it always should include words bringing the meanings of the children's world like colours, numbers, things in the classroom, their hobbies and interests and personal items. This requires careful planning of the lesson as well as planning from lesson to lesson.

Thirdly the **activities chosen must be adequate to children's age**. That's why we bring rhymes, stories, songs, games, and riddles. The same rhymes, stories, songs, games are used repeatedly in the particular lesson and in the following lessons. With the older ones pop-songs, jazz-chants, clever riddles and rhymes would be more suitable.

Fourthly the **items should be used repeatedly**. Children will naturally require repetition because that's what they do in their everyday games and activities outside the classroom. In English lessons it brings them feeling of success and safe progress. It helps to motivate, too. Surprisingly it doesn't bore young children as it appears to bore older learners. However, it is wise to plan one or two new games, activities, rhymes or songs in each lesson. They are first understood by gist. Later they'll pronounce them with full understanding. The procedure just mentioned brings drill into training pronunciation. Obviously it cannot be avoided when teaching pronunciation. With older learners new and more challenging situations, circumstances and ways should appear. This age is “quick”, therefore they don't like slow procedures and mechanical repetition. The teacher should hide the revision of words into new and new activities.

Fifthly methods of **communication should be brought** into the classroom to make children speak and pronounce. In the beginning it's not easy to start language interaction as the teacher is the only English speaker in the classroom (unless there is a child who has lived abroad in English speaking countries and the teacher can make dialogues with him). Then gestures, miming and facial expressions help a lot. Activities and exercises chosen should bring the chance to speak. The teacher mustn't be afraid of noise in the classroom when using pair-

work, dialogues, mingling. Organization like that gives everybody chance to speak. The teacher only does his monitoring, encouraging pupils and sensitive correcting mistakes. When we want pupils to speak, the mistakes (only the most obvious mistakes) should be corrected after the speech. Pupils interrupted during speaking may refuse to speak at all. This provides opportunities for the use of language and for training pronunciation.

Young learners have an amazing ability to pick up the sounds and patterns of intonation. They do not need to be explained pronunciation; they do not need to be taught pronunciation heavily. If the model pronunciation (the teacher's speech, the native speaker's records) is good and the learners have opportunities to use language in communicative situations, they are able to acquire pronunciation hardly distinguishable from the model. If this is not taught well at the very beginning, a disastrous hard work of retraining is put on the shoulders of the next teacher.