Using Film-Dubbing to Teaching EFL Freshmen English Pronunciation in Chinese Universities
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Yun Li
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Abstract

Using Film-Dubbing to Teaching EFL Freshmen English Pronunciation in Chinese Universities

Yun Li

Under the Supervision of Dr. Dan Leitch, Ph.D.

There are many important aspects to teaching the English language. Educators know what each of these areas include and focus on them in many ways. Often, the basics of listening and speaking are taught. Students are taught grammar and how to write sentences well. Teachers then go on to focus on writing full paragraphs and even essay style writing. Students are exposed to literature and to cultures that use English in areas of children’s stories, music and even theater. Students are taught to give speeches and even to debate their ideas on various topics in a way that shows their points of view and how those may differ from person to person. However, there is one area where teachers often fail to teach in a way that is truly useful to the student. That is the area of pronunciation. Then, educators should take a look at what causes students to make consistent problems in pronunciation. Finally, the educators should use proper teaching strategy make the pronunciation class more fun and interesting. The purpose of this paper is to introduce the film-dubbing in English pronunciation class.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Terms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The role of pronunciation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of pronunciation problems of Chinese students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter I Introduction

Teaching English pronunciation in Chinese universities is an important course, but it is still neglected by Chinese teachers. Li (2007) maintained that teaching pronunciation for English majors has long been considered not as important as other abilities of English learning. Pronunciation problems have become obstacles to students’ listening comprehension, speaking and reading proficiency.

According to Cheng (1998), In China, an English phonetics course is simply left in English teaching and learning, the pronunciation course is only an elective class in universities or colleges. Similarly, according to Chen (1995) and Wei & Zhou (2002), English pronunciation is simply ignored in the curriculum of some universities in Taiwan. The purpose of the paper is to provide teachers the teaching strategies to improve pronunciation of EFL (English as a foreign language) freshmen.

Statement of the Problem

1. Why teaching EFL freshmen English pronunciation is significant in Chinese universities?
2. How to use film-dubbing to teach pronunciation class for EFL freshmen in Chinese universities?

Definition of Terms
**Phonetics:** It is the science which studies the characteristics of human sound-making, especially that sound used in speech, and provides methods for their description, classification and transcription (Hu, 1988, p. 39-40).

**Dubbing:** A post-production process used in filmmaking and video production in which additional or supplementary recordings are "mixed" with original production sound to create the finished soundtrack.

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**Purpose of the Study**

This paper aims to attach great importance to pronunciation instruction and find out appropriate teaching strategies for English pronunciation and to create much fun in English pronunciation class.

**Significance of the Study**

According to Ganske (2000), the educators should use strategies in teaching students at the beginning Level. This usually happens in the preschool levels. Long (1999) stated that the beginners in the preschool or level with students read short poems from volumes like Mother Goose. When teaching the upper grade levels including middle, high school, as well as the freshmen in the college level, teachers can expand this poetry recitation strategy by using music in the classroom. This study attempts to explore two useful teaching strategies: one is film dubbing and the other is Word Study. Both of them will enhance the freshmen’s level of pronunciation in English in universities.

**Methodology**
A brief review of literature on the teaching strategies for EFL freshmen English pronunciation in Chinese Universities. The two teaching strategies are appropriate for Chinese Universities. The author will examine examples of strategies for teaching pronunciation to freshmen English students in China universities and search for best practices.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The role of pronunciation

The writer has been an English teacher for ten years. She realizes that most freshman Chinese English learners have poor English pronunciation and their pronunciation sounds strange. The first class, they are scared and shy when the teachers ask them to do the self-introduction, some of the Chinese English students make an introduction using standard English including correct word choice, sentence structure, grammar and syntax. But we are unable to understand his or her pronunciation, we cannot describe that she or he can speak very good English.

According to Kenworthy (1992), the first sensible step would be to make the learners aware of the role of his English pronunciation. English pronunciation is the first step in learning English languages. In other words, it looks like people’s faces. For example, it resembles the entire English language learning based on pronunciation, good English pronunciation can learn the grammar, memory words, develop the oral English and improve listening.

Pronouncing a language is a skill (MacCarthy, Peter.A.D, 2014). Pronunciation is an important element of oral competence. Non-native pronunciation of the sounds or intonation patterns of an L2 speakers are fluent and have a good level language proficiency (Derwing and Munro, 2005). Good pronunciation can develop student’s intuition about the language and to promote and
facilitate individual explorations into the English phonetic system. In addition, good pronunciation can build up student’s confidence in the oral discourse and communication with others. On the other hand, failure in pronunciation is a hindrance in language learning. Thus, for the Chinese English EFL freshman learners, it is unnecessary for us to require them to acquire native-like pronunciation. The goal of teaching pronunciation is not to teach EFL learners to achieve a perfect imitation of a native accent, but simply to get the EFL learners to pronounce accurately enough to be easily and comfortably understood by the listeners. Consequently, language is a means of communication by word of mouth in order to make oneself easily understood while expressing one’s own other people’s thoughts in any language. In summary, one must be able to pronounce in that language quite correctly. It is a fact that one must have a good pronunciation in order to be able to understand other people easily when we speak or read aloud. This is proved that better we pronounce a foreign language the easier we understand it when we hear it.

**Analysis of pronunciation problems of Chinese students**

Most students in the writer’s class are poor in pronunciation. In the writer’s opinion, a significant number of them are from rural areas in China and when they began to learn English, they focused primarily on their grades, grammar, sentence structure, syntax and reading comprehension etc. They neglected the learning of speaking and listening and they did not pay attention the importance of English pronunciation.

Maccarthy (1972) says that few people are proficient at pronouncing foreign language. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, the fundamental reason why people in general cannot speak foreign language very much better than they do, is that they fail to grasp the true nature of the problem of learning to pronounce and as a result never set about tackling pronunciation
correctly. Secondly, too many people fail to realize that pronouncing a foreign language is a skill – one needs careful training and one that cannot be acquired by just leaving it to take care of itself.

Learning to pronounce English accurately, is notoriously difficult due to two factors. First, at the phonetic level, the EFL learners may have problems in discriminating and pronouncing certain speech sounds in English because they do not occur in their native language. The other complicated factor is the poor letter-to-sound correspondence in English, where a same speech sound can be represented by different letters (e.g. the sound [I:] can be spelt as ‘ea’ as in ‘pea’, ‘ee’ as in tree, ‘ie’ as in ‘piece’, ‘e’ as in ‘me’) a same letter can be pronounced as different sounds. This is a big challenge to the EFL freshmen (Jorge dos Reis and Valerie Hazan, 2011, p.157). According to Li (2012) in the study of phonetics, students would link the knowledge of English phonetics with the Chinese one, and learn the similarities between the two. Thus, it is easy to cause problems during the study, For example, though some initials as z, s, zh, ch, sh, r, of Chinese are similar with the consonants of English, but not exact the same, some manners of articulation of phonemes in English have no existence in Chinese, such as [Q, U,ts,dz,tr,dr,v,W ,e,j]

Li (2012) stated that the following problems which the Chinese students usually meet, in Chinese are 35 vowels, because in English there are only 24 vowels. And there are hardly the same pronunciation of vowels between two different languages, some English vowels do not exist in Chinese, such as [A],[C],[Q].some have differences which caused confusion in learning, for example, though [i:] in English is similar with i in Chinese, the front part of tongue should be lower but not touch the palate, in addition, Chinese has no distinction between long and short vowels ,which the students often neglect. Look at the example ,when the students pronounce
[liːd] and [siː], they sometimes sound as [lid], and [si] which is no long enough. Another mistake is that students make it that [A] as in the initial sound of apple is often pronounced as [e], so some of the Chinese students often cannot open their mouths big enough and can’t get the exact position of their tongues when they produce this vowel. Diphthongs in English consist of two single vowels, and the sound is a movement or glide from one vowel to another. The most important thing to remember about diphthongs is that the first part is much longer and stronger than the second part, as the glide to the second vowel of a diphthong, the loudness of the second decreases. While in Chinese, the double finals are pronounced as the single one and between the two sounds and there are no distinctive glides, so when students pronounce [u] of English, they often pronounce as ou of Chinese, for example speak old [uld] as oud, both [Beuw], so on, which is as the result of inadequate lips position.

2. Consonants, According to Wang (1998), there are also differences between consonants and Chinese initials.

2.1 Stops, sis stops of English divided into two groups according to whether voice onset is premature (voiced of premature, voiceless of not), while the six oral stops of Mandarin are divided according to whether voiced onset is delayed (aspirated if delayed, unaspirated if not).

2.2 Word-initial and word-medial stops

The presence or absence of aspiration that is said to divide Mandarin into oral stops and presence or absence of voicing that is said to divide English into oral stops are, after all, differences of two dimensions. But they are subtle difference and, for that reason, a possible source of the Chinese accent in English spoken by many Chinese. Though Chinese has three lightly aspirated, invoiced stops similar to [p, t, k], students frequently omit the aspiration of [p, t, k] in English. This may cause native speakers to perceive these sounds as attempts to produce
[b, d, g.], because of the shorter time span between the release of the air pressure and the onset of the following vowel.

2.3 Word-final stops

Now, consider the English final stops [p, b, t, d, k]. Li(2012) cited Major (1987), the second language learners naturally do better at pronouncing isolated words because they can pay more attention to producing the word. In Major’s view, in spontaneous speech, a speaker pay less attention to form and more attention to content, so that inference from the first language appears in the surface forms of utterance in the second language. So the production of consonants in final position should show more the first language interference in informal as contrasted with formal speaking tasks.

Since voiceless [p,t,k] are basic consonants than voiced [b,t,d,g], it is thought that [p,t,k] are easier to produce [b,d,g]. In final position, it can also be predicted that native speakers of Chinese will have more difficulty with the production of voiced than voiceless stops since the latter but not the former occur finally in varieties.

Weinberger (1984), found that in the study of the production of English obstruent by Chinese students that his Chinese subjects demonstrated a high rate of devoicing of word-final voiced obstruent. He proposed that devoicing, like epenthesis, is a strategy used by Chinese speakers to maintain the integrity of the underlying form of a word.

3) Fricatives and affricates, according to Li (2012), Chinese students would find it difficult to pronounce fricatives for some of them do not exist in Mandarin such as [v,w,t,f,v], they often pronounce [w] as @, [t] as z, and v as j, so in the daily speech we can hear that thing read as “sing nation” as “neixing”. Chinese students are not used to stretch their tongue between upper teeth and lower teeth, for the affricates, according to Li (2012), in Chinese, there are six affricates,
which are divided into two groups differing in the presence or absence of aspiration. The two affricates of English differ from each other in that \([\text{tf}]\) is voiceless whereas \([\text{dv}]\) is voiced.

Ren (1997) states that, the Mandarin affricates are differentiated in manner of articulation according to whether voice onset is delay or not delay, which English affricates are differentiated by whether voice onset is premature are not premature. Chinese students usually are able to produce the voiceless sounds well, but the voiced sounds are more difficult to them.

According to Li (2012), Chinese students often meet the problems, substitution, they often substitute each other in their speeches. About nasals, Chinese students often speak \(m\) as \([\text{emo}]\), because the open CV syllable is a universal preference, so the Chinese students is used to this kind of pronunciation.

Wang (2000) states that for semi-vowels, initial \([\text{j}]\) is often spoken by students with a glottal stop, so the year sounds like the ear, initial \([\text{w}]\) is often mispronounced as \([\text{u}]\) so wood sounds like \([\text{ud}]\). Therefore, the Chinese students do not pay more attention to the movement of the tips. Another important factor to cause the pronunciation problem for Chinese students is linking, Reng (1997) states that many Chinese students can speak a single English sound well, but cannot speak out fluent and coherent sentences, they can hear a single sound clearly, but cannot hear a coherent sentence clearly. The reason is that they have not mastered the skill of linking. Many of English words are ended by consonants, and when they link with the initial vowel of the following word they make linking. But linking in Chinese is as wide as in English, because most of Chinese are ended with the vowels, which affects Chinese students’ learning English pronunciation.

For the subjective reason is that in Chinese English pronunciation classes, the teaching strategy is always boring, the teachers teach the rules of sounds and the articulation, position of
the sound, read, the students repeat and practice, parrot the teachers’ ideas, it is rigid, lack of the fun, it is very difficult to stimulate the students interest in learning English pronunciation.

Teaching Strategies

Another area of important focus when teaching proper pronunciation is that of the use of varied strategies. Educators cannot wish to be successful in teaching students to properly pronounce words in the English language unless their strategies for teaching such an aspect of the language are varied according to the way the students learn. One very popular set of varied strategies comes from an idea called Word Study. This method was first introduced by Kathy Ganske in her literary work called Word Journeys (2000).

Many teachers of the English language use this technique beginning with a pre-test known as a Developmental Spelling Analysis to see where exactly students are in their understanding of how to spell words. In knowing how to spell the patterns within words, students are able to memorize patterns for proper pronunciation depending on the level on which they are learning to spell and pronounce. Students work through five levels of study from the pre-kindergarten level to kindergarten and up through elementary and middle school to complete the study of each type of spelling pattern that will promote proper pronunciation and use of the words when shown in context. According to Ganske (2000), Word Study is always used in conjunction with other reading and writing activities in the English classroom. Its focus is on sounds, patterns, meanings and uses of words. There is no memorization because as the students learn the patterns, their minds remember the pronunciation more automatically than having rote memorization exercises out of context.

Ganske’s (2000) first level educators should use to strategize in teaching students is the Emergent Speller level. This usually happens in the pre-kindergarten or kindergarten levels. The
focus is on rhyming, letter names, and letter sounds. Words are given to students in groups and sorted by using alphabet games or matching activities. An example might be that one group of pictures given to students go with the letter “F” category. The other words might go with the “B” category. Students will have to look at the pictures, thinking about what they remember about what they know about the pictures and how to say them, and then they would place each picture under the proper letter.

The next level is generally reached by students around the first or second grade. This is the Letter Name level of word study for proper pronunciation and use. At this level, students might have the following set of words: pan, can, mitt, fan, kit, and hit. The words would have pictures underneath them. Students would have to identify the words that go in the “an” set versus the words that will go in “it” set. Students will use pictures to help them with the process of sorting the words into the proper groups or categories.

The third strategic level used in teaching students to pronounce words is called the Within Word level. This is typically where students are in their progress with English word pronunciation and use by the upper elementary grades. Here, the focus is on sounds and patterns in single syllable words. It might include some of the following pronunciation pattern studies:

- Long vowel patterns vs. Short vowel patterns (can vs. cane)
- Long vowel pattern variations (long e: jeep, meat)
- Silent patterns (dine, name, lone)
- Patterns that do not follow set rules (been, when, want, were)

Next, students will study words that have more than one syllable which creates a somewhat different pattern for pronunciation than at the previous level. This level is called the Syllable and Affix or Syllable Juncture stage. Students are usually in fourth grade or higher when they are
learning to pronounce and spell at this level. The focus is on sounds and patterns. The greatest
focus is on the sounds that change in words when endings are added. For example, the following
is a list of words that have special endings and also words that have different sounds depending
on how the words are spelled.

- Drop – dropping (cvc pattern with a doubled consonant on the end)
- Hope – hoping (cvc pattern with a dropped ‘e’ on the end)
- Hop – hopping (cvc pattern with a doubled consonant on the end)
- Supper vs. super (two similar words with different sounds and spellings)

The final strategic variation for teaching pronunciation to students who are learning
English as a first or second language is the stage called Derivational Constancy or Relationships.
This level can be reached by students in the middle grades fifth through eighth but is often
unreached even among adult learners. Here, students focus on prefixes and suffixes in words,
root and base words, and varied spellings that change the pronunciation of words. For example,
an ending might be “ible” vs. “able,” “ence” vs. “ance,” or it may be a change in spelling. In that
case, it may be a word like ‘connect’ that ends in the /t/ sound. With the changed ending, the
word will be “connection” and the sound will be /sh/.

No matter the level of the student learner, educators must give students many opportunities
to practice with words. As Ganske (2000) notes, students will need to have copies of words at
each level in order to be able to sort them into categories based on the sounds, patterns and
pronunciation of the words. Many educators will create games and other activities for students to
have chances to use the words in the reading classroom throughout the week. Also, they will
assign homework activities for students to do that focus on the spellings, patterns and
pronunciation of words.
By using the Word Study technique, educators assist students in learning how to not only pronounce words they are studying at a certain level but how to remember these patterns over time. When teachers try to focus on just having students memorize a word list to spell for a few days or weeks, this defeats the purpose of helping students learn to truly use the English language. When students memorize words all at once just for the sake of saying the words, they do not do as well with remembering the word patterns and varied pronunciation patterns as when they actually study the word patterns over time like the Word Study program promotes.

Another strategy is English dubbing using films to teach English pronunciation in Chinese universities. Darlens (1996) cited H.Garrity (1987) that since the Lumiere brothers showed the first film in 1896, and the public has enjoyed fascination and a respect for cinema. Although teaching a language was not the initial purpose for which movie were produced, foreign films hold much potential as language learning tools. Darlens (1996) also states the current use of foreign film videos has made it much easier for teachers to put incorporate language into their courses. He also pointed out that all of the students said that they replayed the audio many times and accessed the dictionary frequently to learn the new vocabulary words. It would be helpful in improving listening, reading, and writing skills. Darlen (1996) states that a foreign language film is a motivating and valuable tool for the language learning classroom. This study provides evidence that multimedia program is more effective in improving language proficiency than watching a video of the film itself. Andraw (1992) states English movies provide a good learning environment for university learners. Image and sound stimulate the brain through the multimedia devices simultaneously, the students also could feel the difference between American pronunciation and English pronunciation. According to Zhou (2009), listening and speaking are two important ways to learn language. They are also the most natural
and efficient ways. By repeatedly listening and speaking from films, students can accumulate vocabulary, grasp the commonly used oral English sentences patterns. It also can train the sense different stress, rhythm, pitch, pause, speed which carries large amount of information.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In English learning, pronunciation is the most basic and important English ability. The traditional English teaching pronunciation method such as word study and teaching phonetic transcription, although beneficial, cannot fully meet the needs of the students to quickly improve their ability in English pronunciation. Therefore, the use of English film dubbing teaching English pronunciation shows its unique advantages in this field. With the development of modern society, it’s convenient for us to find more suitable means and methods for teaching English pronunciation. Research and personal experience suggest that film dubbing could help the students improve their English pronunciation. Film dubbing would permit students to learn English in a more harmonious and interesting environment. Subsequently, the students’ motivation can be aroused and flexibility improved in real-life applications. English movies, integrating script, picture and audio, vividly and intuitively embody the social culture and life at a certain time of English speaking countries. English movies provide a vivid environment of English. Therefore, teaching and learning English pronunciation through dubbing English movies is a good and efficient way to improve students’ pronunciation.
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