

Key demands to the BASIC SKILLS TEACHER

when teaching pronunciation in the GFL classroom

This special way of teaching pronunciation is based on various theories in the fields of linguistics, didactics, German as a foreign language, voice training and rhetoric which have to be taught to the future teacher:

1. Linguistics:

- a) word stress
- b) rhythm

2. Didactics:

- a) the “didactic three-step”
- b) “The centre of all activities is the lesson target”

3. Voice training (theory):

- a) body posture
- b) breathing
- c) articulation

4. Rhetoric:

- a) Improving the performance of the students with respect to the basics of voice training

5. German as a foreign language:

- a) Pronunciation problems of learners of English

6. Voice training (praxis):

- a) body posture exercises
- b) resonance and articulation exercises

7. Art of Speech:

- a) epochs in literature
- b) lyrical interpretation
- c) the three mainstreams of the art of speech
- d) reciting poems

It requires at least a preparation work of 18 hours:

- 3 seminars (3 hours each)
- Seminar preparation and evaluation of at least 3 hours per seminar

This was conducted in a seminar (two days) at Rostock University.

If a learner of German and a native speaker talk to each other, a **WRONG PRONUNCIATION** causes much more often and much graver **MISUNDERSTANDINGS** than f.i. a grammatical mistake.

Why is pronunciation so difficult?

What is the reason for that?

Is it the same with all learners?

... the role of **PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE** is to train **INTONATION** and **RHYTHM**, **SENTENCE** and **WORD STRESS**, so as to allow a native speaker to understand a learner of German despite grammatical mistakes.

1. Aspects of speech training

The following topics are covered:

- stage fright
- media usage
- feedback
- rules for a more illustrative presentation with respect to voice hygiene

So as to raise the students' awareness for these criteria, they are asked to fill in the following chart during each presentation of their fellow students. This chart will be the base for the later evaluation of the presentation.

Body posture	firm	rickety	first rickety – later firm		
Breathing	combined	high	only high in the beginning		
Level of voice lowering	enough	too low	first high pitched – later ok		
Breathers	enough	too few	too many		
Articulation	precise	too precise	unclear		
Mimic	correct amount	too few	too many		
Gestures	exact	minor mistakes because of...	too many		
Eye contact	exact	minor mistakes because of...	way too few, because...		

2. Theoretical basis

Rhythm: stress- and syllable based languages

Relevance: Sensitizing the future GFL teacher for the phonological characteristics of other languages

Syllable = carries the stress (c.f. Duden 4)

- every word consists of syllables
- every syllable contains sounds
- syllables can be stressed or unstressed; they carry the stress and, therefore, they determine the rhythm

Definition

Here, the syllable is not defined as a rhythmic-prosodic unit. (German = syllable counting, as its stress affects whole syllables)

It is rather a rhythm-typological classification with respect to the isochronic-hypothesis.

Isochrony = of the same time span / regular change of stressed and unstressed syllables (also referred to as stress-timed rhythm)

Isochrony – Hypothesis

- the human speech has a rhythm-isochronic structure
- every language belongs to either of the two types of rhythm: stress-timed or syllable timed
- (metrical) “Foot” = stressed syllable + all the following unstressed syllables up to the next stressed syllable
- **Isochrony of the foot in stress-timed languages** -> duration of a syllable must be variable.
- The rhythmic compression of a polysyllabic foot leads to a reduction of unstressed syllables (continuous reduction, change in vowel-quality, or even omission of syllables)

Syllable-timed Language:

- Isochrony of syllables -> The duration of syllables is not constant, a tendency to compensation is to be expected, e.g. nucleus and coda.

GERMAN		ITALIAN
/ Pe ter	/ raucht /	/ San / dro / fu / ma /
/ Fri do lin	/ raucht /	/ San / dro / ha / fu / ma / to /
/ Fri do lin	be / trinkt sich /	/ A / les / san / dro / ha / fu / ma / to /

Which are stress-timed languages?

German	Arabic
English	Vietnamese
Swedish	Thai
Danish	All members of the Mon- Khmer- language family
Russian	
Portuguese	Several Native American languages

Which are syllable-timed languages?

Spanish	Telugu
Italian	Hindi
French	Tamil
Turkish	Indonesian
Other altaic Languages	All members of the Munda- language family
Yoruba	

- A rhythm based typology only on the base of isochrony is impossible, as this classification is based rather on subjective perception than acoustic measurable reality.

Differentiation according to Auer Uhmann (1988) -> Examination of the foot

Prototypical syllable-timed languages	Prototypical stress-timed rhythm languages
mainly CV – syllable structures	several, partly complex syllable structures
No difference in the structure of stressed and unstressed syllables	Heavy and light syllables = stressed vs. unstressed syllables
Constant, well defined syllable boundaries, geminates	Speed dependant variable and hard indentifyable syllable bondaries (Ambisyllabicity), reduction of ambisyllabic consonants and geminates
Stable vowel system, vowel harmony possible	Vowel system is reduced in secondary stress, no vowel harmony possible
Vowel omission for syllable optimisation	Vowel omission for stress reasons
Stress is only a little grammatical distinctive, partly no word stress	Stress is grammatical distinctive, complex stress-rules, euphony rules
Ictus- and stress-position: coda-chronic	Ictus- and stress-position: capo-chronic

- Within a language both types of isochrony can compete
- With a higher speed of speech, every language tends to become stress-timed
- Slower, over accentuated speech tends to become syllable-timed
- Language development needs variations -> a language can not easily be assigned to one of the two types of isochrony

Differentiation according to Michael Völtz (1991) -> Examination of the syllable

STRESS-TIMED RHYTHM	SYLLABLE-TIMED RHYTHM
Isochrony of stressed syllables	Isochrony of syllables
Complex syllable structures	Restriction on one syllable structure
CV- (open) and CVC- (closed) structures occur equally often and represent most of the syllable structures	There are only CV- (open) syllables
There are many combinations of C and V elements possible; every position can be very complex.	There are no exceptions to a CV structure; there are no more complex clusters.
Syllable length is variable.	Syllable length is uniform.
Every unstressed syllable is reduced – in quality and quantity.	There is no reduction; every syllable maintains its quality and quantity.
Stressed syllables are closed and are of a complex structure.	As there are only open CV-structures, stressed syllables are of the same structure.

- On a scale with stressed-timed rhythm and syllable-timed rhythm at the extreme points, every language is represented between the two of them. Some are closer to one end, but may show features of the other as well.

Word stress

If syllables are stressed within a word, we speak of word stress (c.f. Duden 4 and 6)

3. Consequences for GFL classes

- Violations against the rhythmic structure of the German language irritate the audio impression of the native speaker and thus the communication in a foreign language.

OBJECTIVES:

- Drawing up stress-structures and the tension difference between stressed and unstressed syllables.
- unstressed syllables are realised as non-tensed and reduced
- stressed syllables are realised as tensed and with a precise articulation
- strong and weak forms have to be made aware of and practised
- the distance between stressed syllables has to be the same (German)
- syntactic entities have to be marked, as they should be spoken as a whole (without breaks)

WHEN:

With better language fluency comes the increase of the speed of speech – now, classes should focus on unstressed syllables and their reductions.

CONTRASTIVE:

Learners with a syllable-timed native language usually have more problems learning German than learners with a stress-timed rhythm native language.

EAR TRAINING:

Reduction, assimilation, elision etc. are a consequence of the rhythmic structure as well as other factors which cause a language typical rhythm.

THE “DIDACTIC THREE-STEP”:

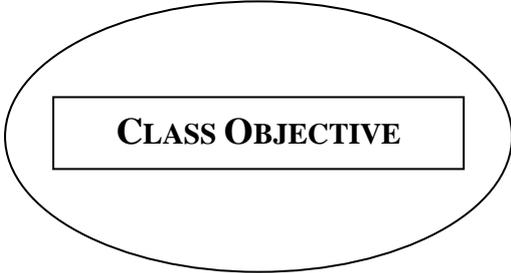
- a) **Listening:** The target language is perceived much better. Further listening to the new language.
- b) **Activation:** The perception of single sounds is structured. Reception and storage of new sounds in the long term memory. The learner can activate them at any given moment.
- c) **Speaking:** The language is produced by the learner. An accurate and correct pronunciation of the teacher is essential.

Teacher:

- Target oriented work / procedures
- Focus on the learners
- motivating, lively, enthusiasm filling, committed
- clear, comprehensible structure
- vary
- strict but just
- friendly but consequent

Learner:

- Background / background knowledge
- Attention / Interruption
- Participation (raising / not raising the arm)
- Quality of the contribution
- Behaviour in the group



CLASS OBJECTIVE

Teaching process:

- What is the **class objective**?
- How was the topic taught?
- How were the learners motivated?
- How were interruptions dealt with?
- Did the teacher pay attention to the learners?
- How effective was he media usage?
- Were the class abjectives met?

Bibliography

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