

THE PROBLEM WITH PRONUNCIATION

by:

Julie Ann P. Menil

Teacher I, Justice Emilio Angeles Gancayco Memorial High School

I guess more than anything else, the most challenging part of being an English teacher is mastering the correct pronunciation of English words. Usually, teachers get anxious about whether or not they had uttered the English word correctly. And this is what makes some English teachers reluctant in speaking in front of many audiences.

Every culture has a different way to pronounce English. In the same way, Filipinos do speak English in their own unique way. For us, Filipino English teachers, we tried to utter English words to sound like American English to which Philippine Standard English was patterned. However, no matter how hard we try, this remains a vision especially if we are teaching in a public educational institution

However, Jenkins (2009) opined that it has been found that pronunciation could be the cause of intelligibility problems. However, this intelligibility problem does not mean that it occurred because the non-native speaker was not following the standard pronunciation of the native speakers. Rather, Jenkins explained that the British and American accents, contrary to popular belief, are even less intelligible compared to other non-native speakers' accents. For Jenkin, as long as you understand each other in the use of the English language, pronunciation should only be the least problem.

Though it is said that as we deal with Filipino learners, we must speak the way Filipinos do for us to be understood, it is still essential to point out that we need to clarify to them how English is pronounced variedly in a different cultures. According to Deterding (2011), the materials can be created, such as textbooks or modules on the awareness of the speakers of the differences in pronunciation by different races and or

cultures. These can be based on how different cultures or races produce different consonant or vowel sounds, thus the need to gather data on the common errors and misunderstandings between and among speakers, and to analyze why each one occurred.

We may use the Filipino style of speaking the English language, yet it is still our responsibility to teach our students how different variety of English differs in terms of pronunciation. At least they have an idea of what others sound like. Diversity, after all, is an essential part of globalization.

References:

Jenkins, J. (2009). (Un)pleasant? (In)correct? (Un)intelligible? ELF speakers' perceptions of their accents. In A. Mauranen & E. Ranta (Eds.). *English as a Lingua Franca: Studies and Findings*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Deterding, W. (2011). English language teaching and lingua franca core in East Asia. ICPHS XVII. Hong Kong, 17-21