Introduction

0.1 Preliminaries

Most Iranian students of English as a foreign language admit that acquiring an intelligible pronunciation in the English language, although not impossible, is a very difficult task. It is also unanimously agreed upon that learning English pronunciation is a problematic experience in language learning. The inherent difficulty of learning English pronunciation to the students of English is due to a number of problems which will be dealt with in some detail in this book. In discussing and teaching the pronunciation of a language, as stated by Kreidler (1993) we can focus on one or both of two aspects. On the one hand, we may want to describe what people do when they are speaking the language. This is the aspect of speech, an activity carried on by people who use the language for communicating. On the other hand, we may address the question `What are the characteristics of the words and sentences that are realized in speech?' This is the aspect of language, a code which exists, handed down from the past with slight changes made by each generation, something that is known by those who speak and understand the language.

Speech is not the same as language. For one thing; the voice has characteristics which may carry extra messages: we can often identify someone we know by his or her voice (over the telephone, for instance), and we can sometimes determine something of the speaker's mood anger, elation, nervousness, impatience fatigue from the way of speaking, as distinct from what is said. More important, speech is an activity which is carried out in numerous events; language is knowledge, a code which is known and shared by people who use their knowledge for transmitting and interpreting messages in these events. When someone is speaking, anyone who is close enough can hear the sound waves set up in the air by the speaker reach the eardrums of the hearer. But only a person who knows the language can understand what is said.

Because we are interested in pronunciation from both these aspects, we will make use of information and concepts drawn from two disciplines, *phonetics* and *phonology*. Phonetics, as it was explained, deals with speech in its purely physical aspects the way sounds are articulated by the speaker, the acoustic properties of sound waves, and the effects that these have on the ear of the hearer (and on the ear of the speaker, for that matter). Phonology is concerned with the way speech sounds are organized into a system, the sound system of a specific language. Phonology relates the physical facts of speech to other linguistic knowledge which speakers possess, knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.

Phonology is concerned with describing pronunciations but, more than that, with accounting for what is relevant in pronunciations, what makes it possible to communicate, what makes one utterance different from another. In the production, or articulation, of a segment the vocal organs have some particular configuration the lips are rounded or stretched, the tongue is low in the mouth or not, it has a flat surface or not, air is escaping through the mouth or through the nose or not escaping the vocal cords are vibrating or not, etc. Each such position or movement is an *articulatory feature*. These features always occur in simultaneous bundles; no segment can consist of a single feature. The segment [m] which occurs at the beginning of the word *meat*, is produced with the vocal cords vibrating, the lips closed together, and air coming out of the nose. These are three articulatory features combined. Other segments may be voiced (made with vocal cords vibrating), labial (articulated with one or two lips), or nasal (produced with air flowing through the nasal cavity), but only [m] is all three a voiced labial nasal.

In mastering the pronunciation of a language, then, one has to acquire the ability to articulate the individual sound segments and to accentuate the stretches of sounds together, namely phonetic substances, on the one side and to develop the capability of organizing different segments into

acceptable wholes and systems, i.e. phonological rules governing the language, on the other.

0.2 Pronunciation and Orthography

In learning English pronunciation, we, in Iran, usually start in our schools with already specified textbooks. We are introduced to English orthography right from the beginning.

Alphabetic spelling is assumed to represent the pronunciations of words. But it is often meant to be the case that the sounds of the words in a language are rather unsystemically represented by orthographythat is, by spelling. In cases such as English one can find fairly regular relationship between individual sounds and specific letters. But this relationship is quite complex and needs to be discovered and formulated.

The discrepancy between spelling and sounds gave rise to movements by English or Persian ``spelling reformers''. They wanted to revise the alphabet so that one letter would correspond to one sound, and one sound to one letter, thus simplifying spelling.

If we look at English spelling, it is easy to understand why there has been so much concern about spelling systems.

1. Different letters may represent a single sound, as shown in the following:

   to   too   two   through   threw   clue   shoe

2. A combination of letters may represent a single sound:

s**hoot**	**character**	**Thomas**	**physics**
ei**t**her	**deal**	**rough**	**nation**
co**at**	**glacial**	**theater**	**plain**

3. A single letter may represent different sounds:

   Dame   dad   father   village

4. Some letters have no sound at all in certain words in which they occur:

whole	**resign**	**ghost**	**psychology**
write	**hole**	**corps**	**bough**
sword	**debt**	**knife**	
lamb	**Island**		

5. Some sounds are not represented in the spelling. In many words the letter u represents a / y / sound followed by an / u / sound:

cute	(compare:	**loot**)
futile	(comapre:	**fool**)
utility	(comapre:	**ooze**)

6. One letter may represent two sounds: the final x in **box** represents a / k / followed by / s /.

Though by careful examination, one can find systematic correspondences between letters and sounds in English, yet our first observation may give a feeling about the existence of optimal irregularity.

The following verses in English reflect the general public impression about English spelling and even grammatical rules.

I:

When the English tongue we speak
Why is break not rhymed with weak?
Won't you tell me why it's true
We say sew, but also few?
And the marker of a verse
Cannot rhyme his horse with worse?
Beard is not the same as heard,

Cord is different from word,
Cow is cow, but low is low,
Shoe is never rhymed with foe.
Think of hose and does and lose,
And think of goose and yet of choose,
Think of comb and tomb and bomb,
Doll and roll and home and some.
And since pay is rhymed with say,
Why not paid with said I pray?
Think of blood and food and good;
Mould is not pronounced like could.
Why is it done, but gone and lone
Is there any reason known?
To sum it up, it seems to me
That sounds and letters don't agree.

II:
We'll begin with a box, and the plural is boxes,
But the plural of ox should be oxen, not oxes,
The one fowl is goose, but two are called geese,
Yet the plural of mouse should never be meese;
You may find a lone mouse, or a whole nest of mice,
But the plural of house is houses, not hice;
If the plural of man is always called men,
Why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?
The cow in the plural may be called cows or kine,
But a cow if repeated is never called kine,
And the plural fo vow is vows, not vine,
And if I speak of a foot and you show me your feet,
And if I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?
If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth,
Why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?
If the singular's this and the plural is these,
Should the plural of kiss be nicknamed keese?
Then one may be that and three would be those,
Yet hat in a plural would never be hose,
And the plural of cat is cats, not cose,
We speak of a brother and also of brethren,
But though we may say mother, we never say methren;
The masculine pronouns are he, his, and him
But imagine the feminine, she, shis, and shim.
So English, I think, you will all agree,
Is the funniest language you ever did see.

III:
I take it you already know
of tough and bough and cough and dough?
Others may stumble but not you,
On hiccough, thorough, laugh and through,

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Well done! And now you wish, perhaps,
To learn of less familiar traps?

Beware of heard, and dreadful word
That looks like beard and sounds like bird,
And dead: it's said like bed, not bead
For goodness' sake don't call it ``deed''!
Watch out for meat and great and threat
(They rhyme with suite and straight and debt.)

A moth is not a moth in mother
Nor both in bother, broth in brother,
And here is not a match of there
Nor dear and fear for bear and pear,
And then there's dose and rose and lose
Just look them upand goose and choose,
And cork and work and card and ward,
And font and front and word and sword,
And do and go and thwart and cart
Come, come, I've hardly made a start!
A dreadful language? Man alive.
I'd mastered it when I was five.

This sort of thing just presented is according to Lefevre (1964: 182).

``is what impelled the late George Bernard Shaw to assert that in English, the word **fish** might just as well be spelled **ghoti** (and to leave substantial funds in his will to help promote a vast spelling reform). In **ghoti**, if we ``sound'' **gh** as in **enough, o** as in **women**, and **ti** as in nationtrue enough, we get **fish** / fiš /

1.3. From Spelling to Sound

As it was stated above many people believed that English spelling is very much irregular and inconsistent and does not explicitly reveal information about sound quality.

The stress placement of English words was also thought to be irregular to a great extent. Many scholars believed that in English the degree of predictability of word stress is very low. This is true if we compare it with Persian. Many linguists and foreign language teachers are reluctant to give rules for stress patterns which could be of significant help to the learners. O'Connor (1967: 115) says ``There is no simple way of knowing which syllable or syllables in an English word must be stressed, but every time you learn another word you must be sure to learn how it is stressed.'' Gordon (1974) recommends that if you are in doubt about the stress pattern you should look it up in a good dictionary. In their various ways authors and teaching texts acknowledge the basic importance of word stress. They, however, are unable to help the learner predict word stress and vowel quality because they believe that stress, like vowel quality, is not predictable. However, Chomsky and Halle (1968) have shown that conventional spelling pattern includes enough information as to which syllables should be stressed and how vowels and consonants should be pronounced. The point is that certain redundancy rules like the ones pertaining to phonology are at work and that conventional orthography gets in fact closer to ``the optimal phonological representation'' than ``standard phonetic transcription''. (Chomsky and Halle, 1968: 69).

This means that through spelling we can predict the pronunciation of consonant and vowels and decide which syllables in the words should be stressed. Even in the case of **ghoti** of Shaw in spelling practice, not one of the three phonemes is regularly represented in these positions by these graphemes. The **gh** is never used initially; **ti** representing / š / does not occur finally but mediallythe initial part of a suffix such as **-tion** or **-tiate**; and o as / i / occurs precisely once in English, in the word **women.**

A very strong proof of the fact that normal orthography is not really inconsistent is the ability of the native speaker of English to figure out the pronunciation and stress of written words as they are normally spelled.Chomsky and Halle (1968) have accounted for this tacit knowledge and have expressed the rules that govern this area. But these rules, as they are, are not pedagogically applicable to EFL situations, as learners of English as a foreign language lack the competence that every native speaker possesses. It is necessary for an EFL teacher to reformulate these rules in a way that learners can easily understand and absorb them. Wayne Dickerson in his various published works (1977, 1978a, 1978b, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1985a, 1985b, 1985c, 1986b, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1992) has tried to provide a number of pedagogical rules for the learners to utilize spelling as a guide to detect word stress and the pronunciation of words in harmony with generative phonological approach advanced by Chomsky and Halle (1968).

The authors of this manual have tried to consolidate, modify, simplify and put together the information provided by Dickerson.

_The authors have also benefited from Yarmohammadi's (forthcoming) and Pouretedal's (1994) studies in compiling the manual. Furthermore, the authors have provided simple explanations for the rules, arranged them in appropriate teaching sequences and provided suitable examples to teach individual rules and patterns in different units.

The book first tries to provide some, though not extensive, practice in the pronunciation of different English sound segments. More attention will be paid to those elements which are thought to present more problems for Persian learners. Then, the manual aims at leading learners to gain the necessary information to pronounce English words through spelling patterns. For pedagogical reasons some rules or explanations may be repeated more than once or portions of a rule or pattern be introduced gradually.

Our initial experiences and impressions have shown us that Persian students have found the rules very useful and practical.

Without having in mind to be snobish, the authors wish to claim that this manual can be considered one of the first attempts to reduce generative phonology into a practical and pedagogical format in its totality. We hope our students and colleagues to be able to use it enjoyable and profitably.

The first attempt is not without flaws. The authors will be much appreciative to receive constructive comments to improve the manual and make it more suitable for our future needs.