



## **Why should Speech Rate (Tempo) be Integrated into Pronunciation Teaching Curriculum?**

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### **Abstract**

The pace of speech i.e. tempo can be varied to our mood of the moment. Fast speech can convey urgency, whereas slower speech can be used for emphasis. In public speaking, orators produce powerful effects by varying the loudness and pace of their speech. The juxtaposition of very loud and very quiet utterances is a device often used by those trying to arouse strong emotions in their audience. Talking too quickly is one of the most common behaviors that can discount professional speaking skills. It is exhausting being forced to listen to uncomfortable speech patterns. This creates the potential for miscommunication, lost opportunity or decreased credibility. Researches have shown that one of the hardest things about learning English is understanding the native speakers when they speak too fast. So teachers must lower their rate of speech when they teach English in order that their students should benefit from their teaching. Many studies have shown that lowering the speech rate does affect the intelligibility of the speakers' utterance; and the students need this more than anything. Teachers who wish to be effective in their teaching should not only relate information to their students but especially be able to communicate with them at a speed level of their understanding at a steady but not fast rate, and make sure to pause briefly at the end of their meaningful phrases. And as for the students' oral performance they should naturally concentrate on grammatical items along with their correct articulation, intonation and tempo. If they speak too fast, they risk mispronunciation of syllables and become incomprehensible even to natives. Non-native English speakers often speak too slowly when they don't have a good grasp of English yet, but when their knowledge of the language and thought process goes faster, their speech also gets faster.

**Keywords:** the pace of speech, the tempo, intelligibility, speed level

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## Konuşma Hızı (Tempo) Telaffuz Öğretimi Programına Neden Dahil Edilmelidir?

### Öz

Konuşmanın hızı yani temposu konuşulan andaki duygularımızla ilişkilidir. Hızlı konuşmada bir aciliyet, yavaş konuşmada ise vurgulama söz konusudur. Halk önünde konuşanlar seslerinin yüksekliği ile birlikte konuşmalarının hızını ayarlarlar. Konuşmanın çok yüksek perdeden veya düşük perdeden çıkışı arasında gidiş geliş dinleyicilerde kuvvetli heyecanlar oluşturur. Çok hızlı bir tempoda konuşmak profesyonel konuşmacıların normalde tercih ettikleri bir tarz değildir. Çünkü dinleyiciler kendilerini rahat hissetmedikleri bir tempoda konuşulmasından rahatsız olurlar. Bu durumda iletişim kopukluğu, fırsatların kaybı veya güven zedelenmesi yaşanır. Araştırmacılar İngilizce öğrenmede en zor işin ana dili İngilizce konuşanları anlamak olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu nedenle öğrencilerinin öğretmenlerinin öğretilerinden yararlanmaları için İngilizce öğrettiklerinde konuşmalarının hızını azaltmaları gerekir. Araştırmalar göstermiştir ki konuşma temposunun düşürülmesi konuşmacıların söylediklerinin anlaşılmasını etkilemektedir. Öğrencilerin ise buna her şeyden daha fazla ihtiyacı vardır. Öğretim tarzlarında etkili olmak isteyen öğretmenlerin öğrencilerine bilgiyi herhangi bir şekilde aktarmaya çalışmaları yeterli değildir; özellikle mesajlarını onların anlayabilecekleri biçimde ve hızda iletmeleri büyük önem taşır. Öğrencilerin kendilerini sözlü olarak ifadelerinde de aynı şekilde gramer kurallarına uymaları kadar telaffuzlarına, vurgularına ve özellikle konuşma hızlarına dikkat etmeleri gerekir. İngilizceyi eğer çok hızlı konuşurlarsa bazı heceleri yanlış telaffuz edecekleri için ana dili İngilizce olanlar dahi kendilerini anlayamaz. İngilizce'yi iyi bilmeyenler genellikle çok yavaş konuşurlar; dili daha iyi öğrendikçe, hem düşüncelerinin oluşumu hem de konuşmaları giderek hızlanır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** konuşma hızı, tempo, anlaşılabilirlik, telaffuz, hız düzeyi

## **Introduction**

### **The Speech Tempo**

We speak more or less quickly for many different reasons and purposes. Occasionally it may be that we are adapting our speech to the time we have in which to utter it (as, for example, in a horse-racing commentary). But mostly our speech rate reflects some kinds of meaning or attitude – we slow down when we give a truthful answer to a question, but we speed up to convey our distraction or irritation (Schnoebelen, 2012).

The pace of speech is called tempo which can be varied to our mood. Fast speech can convey urgency, whereas slower speech can be used for emphasis. Varying the tempo can also be used for effect in public speaking, often accompanying changes in loudness. When reading stories to children, we can vary the tempo and loudness to reinforce the meaning of the words: *Then carefully, / Tenderly, / Gently he crept / Up the trunk to the nest where the little egg slept.* Dr Seuss: *Horton Hatches the Egg.* (Te Kete, 2012)

As part of various features of Intonation, tempo is considered an important one along with pitch, loudness, stress and rhythm to convey a certain message to our audience. Loudness uttered on weak and strong syllables along with nucleus syllables provides extra prominence and other effects in our message (Vrabel, 2009).

Loudness of tone and rapid pace of speech can be associated with anger (though anger can also be indicated by very quiet, tense speech). In public speaking, orators produce powerful effects by varying the loudness and pace of their speech. The juxtaposition of very loud and very quiet utterances is a device often used by those trying to arouse strong emotions in their audience (Te Kete, 2012).

The teaching of pronunciation must definitely integrate the concept of speech rate. English teachers must speak clearly and with constant pauses and at a slower than normal pace to their students to help their comprehension. As the 'listener understanding' plays an important role in pronunciation, strategies for listening, evaluating, calculating and responding meaningfully by students should become part of the pronunciation program.

### **How Does Tempo Affect Our Speech**

The tempo (rate, speed, temporal organization) of utterance and its loudness (intensity) are the key factors in terms of its intelligibility. Both speakers and hearers concentrate more on the content and context of utterances as well as segmental and suprasegmental features. No one seems to realize the significance of tempo and loudness as factors of an utterance being intelligible and acceptable, because both of them bring about surprising results in practice (Ferencik, 2012).

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Speech tempo can be deployed consciously to achieve particular effects, but it can also send cues to listeners that the speaker didn't intend to convey. What this means for us is that tempo is a stylistic resource, expressive for both speakers and listeners—creating expectations about the speaker and their attitude toward a situation and audience (Schnoebelen, 2012). These expressions, however, don't happen in a vacuum. The use of tempo reflects and constructs various ideologies, allowing tempo to signal emotional state, occupation, geographical origin, ethnic identification, and more (Schnoebelen, 2012).

While the good speakers can afford to speak quickly and quietly as long as their speech is authentic enough to be understood, those whose pronunciation is heavily accented can compensate for this defect by speaking slowly and loudly so that the assessor has time and chance to decode their pronunciation mistakes. In other words, by slowing down and making the loudness of his/her speech prominent, the heavily-accented speaker retrieves the benefit of redundancy effect which would not work otherwise (Tomková, 2008).

Variations of both tempo and loudness are a useful tool of expressing emotions. Authors to date have either not included speech tempo in their considerations of language at all or they have treated it as a secondary feature. Wood (1973) complains as late as in the early 1970's that "Tempo is not one of the more frequently explored areas of speech research, and any possible consequences of tempo variation for other phonetic phenomena have all too often been taken for granted" suggests further investigations of how speaking rate and intelligibility are related and highlights the importance of pauses in considering speech tempo. It is important to distinguish the rate of articulation as opposed to the rate of speaking. While the former measures the number of syllables per second (5.3 syllables per second in English is considered the average) and creates the impression of easy or difficult intelligibility and pauses are not included in the measurements, the latter is given in words per minute, measures the rate of information provided by the speaker and considers pauses in the measurements (Laver, 1995).

According to Roach (1995) there is no real difference between different languages in terms of sounds per second in normal speaking styles. What creates the illusion that some languages are spoken quicker than others are their characteristic rhythms. Speakers of stress-timed languages such as English get the impression that syllable-timed languages, such as Turkish, are spoken faster than their own. In fact it is more than the language itself, social and personal factors, gender and speaking styles as well as the speaker's momentary emotional state play their roles in influencing the rate of speech (Tomková, 2008).

The speed of utterance also influences personality perception. Giles (qtd. in Roach, 1995) reports that "a positive linear relationship has repeatedly been found between speech rate and perceived competence." This is universally valid and may

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be the reason why most learners of a foreign language aspire at speed rather than accuracy (Gross, 2012).

Many researches show that speech tempo is directly related to intelligibility. It is a well-known fact that BBC and VOA international programmes reduce the speed of their reporters' presentations, wherever possible, by approximately 20 per cent, which facilitates comprehension of broadcasts worldwide (BBC and Europe, 2000).

Crystal (1969) recollects Sapir's insistence on the speed of utterance being a "non-linguistic fact". In his own classification, speed (slow or fast) ranks among the constituents of voice-quality. Each sense-group of the sentence is pronounced at approximately the same period of time, unstressed syllables are pronounced more rapidly: the greater the number of unstressed syllables, the quicker they are pronounced. Under the influence of rhythm words which are normally pronounced with two equally strong stresses may lose one of them, or may have their word stress realized differently, e.g. ,*Picca'dilly* — '*Piccadilly* '*Circus* — '*close to* ,*Picca'dilly* — '*princess*—a '*royal* ,*prin'cess* —'*indiarubber* — a '*piece of* '*india,rubber* — an '*india,rubber* ,*ball* (Kostenko, 2007).

Talking too quickly is one of the most common behaviors that can discount professional speaking skills. Studies show that people who speak too quickly appear cluttered and unorganized and are not judged as competent or polished. An out-of-control rate of speech hinders the quality of your message as listeners are forced to work harder to understand you. In addition, an error in pronunciation is more likely to occur because your speech articulators are tripping over one another as they attempt to produce sounds (Peterson, 2009).

Speech rate along with melody (i.e., intonation) are the two key factors that influence an individual's spoken language. If your rate of speech is too fast, it must be addressed if you have the goal of smooth and clear speech. If you tend to have a fast rate of speech you usually run up with some typical communication problems: you are perceived as nervous and less confident; you appear unorganized and poorly prepared; it may be difficult to arrange your thoughts and ideas while speaking. If you are more likely to use "filler" words such as "umm, like, ya know" this discounts the quality of the message (Peterson, 2009).

If your control over your speech melody is lost, it is replaced with a staccato, choppy or monotone rhythm. It is not possible to speak with melody and have pitch changes, which you may find beneficial while speaking, with a fast speech rate. The result will be a monotonous speech with articulation errors. You will then more likely to mispronounce words or delete specific sounds and syllables that compromise crisp articulation and diction. You create unfortunate communication breakdowns because when your speech is too fast and loud your listener's brain tunes it out (Speech and Voice Enterprises, 2012).

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It is exhausting being forced to listen to uncomfortable speech patterns. This creates the potential for miscommunication, lost opportunity or decreased credibility. When your rate of speech is too fast, listeners have to struggle with processing the information and often have to fill in their own gaps when information is missed, increasing the likelihood of a communication breakdown. This is a detrimental speech habit when presenting valuable information, negotiating or trying to persuade in the business world (Speech and Voice Enterprises, 2012).

Comedy actors discovering the importance of the tempo and pacing within a scene make various vocal choices which determine not only the emotional intent behind their words, but also set up the humor within that scene. The pacing of a character's dialogue is directly related to his personality. For example, a character who is high strung and anxious will normally talk faster and carry a quicker dialogue pace than a laidback personality. It is the professional actor's responsibility to isolate the tempo and pacing of that character by identifying his personality traits. Sometimes a particular interpretation of a speech mode between two characters may be turned into very funny by the pacing their words. For example, in the film "Bridesmaids" Kristen Wiig's character has a conversation with a young customer. This customer is a completely rude and spoiled teenage brat, and while the actual words that were being said were not hilarious, it was the tempo and pacing used that allowed the words to be funny (Aphter, 2012).

### **How Can We Control Our Speech Tempo**

To be perceived as a trustworthy, competent and well spoken person, managing our rate of speech is most critical. We can learn how to control our fast speech rate with strategies. To be successful with our new rate of speed and intonation we must continue with our drills until we feel natural in our communication. In order to train for controlled speech habits, here are step by step strategies to follow:

#### **1) We must speak using intonation in our speech:**

Mastering the skill of intonation and speech rhythm will complement our speed because we will be speaking with controlled pitch patterns and phrases. Our speech articulators will be in a better position to follow through and say all of our ending sounds. When we start using intonation in our speech our overall speaking rate and articulation will sound clearer, more professional and we will be perceived as a well spoken person.

#### **2) We must feel our articulators touch:**

We must control our rate of speech by feeling our articulators make contact with one another. Our articulators are our lips, teeth, tongue, jaw and facial muscles. When speaking, we must feel our lips and jaw move as they touch one another, as well as our tongue contacting our teeth and jaw. The purpose of this strategy is for us to feel and notice the tactile sensation from our mouth while speaking. If we cannot feel the tactile sensation in our mouth from our articulators while talking, then we are

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speaking too fast. We must take a moment to feel the contact in our mouth from our different articulators. Using this strategy will significantly help us reduce our speed.

### **3) We must say every sound in every word:**

When speaking, we must concentrate on producing every sound in every word. We must be aware of saying all of our sounds, particularly the ones at the ends of words. We must be certain to say every sound in multi-syllable words. We must remind ourselves all the time to "say every sound in every word" to prompt ourselves to use this strategy. When this technique is used we are more aware of our articulators (i.e., lips, tongue and jaw) moving at a controlled rate so they do not trip over one another during connected speech. This strategy will assist us with slowing down our rate of speed while improving our overall articulation.

### **4) We must hold our vowel sounds longer:**

Many speakers who have a fast rate will often cut the duration of "long" vowel sounds too short. We want to get our message out fast so we should chop the longer sounds. Professional actors and politicians produce both long and short vowel sounds distinct from one another correctly to avoid sounding choppy to their listeners. Therefore we must also hold our vowel sounds, especially the long ones, for the appropriate amount of time. Here are some examples: BEAU ti ful -- Hor I zon -- Re FLEC tion

### **5) We must watch our rate with another speaker:**

We must be aware of other people's speech habits and identify other fast talkers. Then, we will find people who speak at a controlled and pleasant rate. When we can identify fast talkers and people who have a pleasant rate our awareness of our own speech behavior will be significantly improved. We must think of our family members, co-workers and friends and identify those who are fast talkers and who are not. We must write down the three fast talkers and controlled speech talkers in your speech notebook for improving your own awareness (Speech and Voice Enterprises, 2012).

When we have an opportunity to speak with someone we feel is a good speech model, we must match our speaking rate with his or her speed during conversation. We may feel like we are speaking too slowly. We are not! We must remember, we are the fast talker and need to slow down. If this new strategy feels funny or convoluted then we are probably doing it correctly! In order to make changes in our speech rate we must study the characteristics of famous speakers. Besides the content of their message, perhaps the way they speak may be appealing to us (American Rhetoric, 2012).

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Here is a very important speech note: While practicing these speech strategies we may feel we are speaking too slowly and sound weird. We mustn't worry, we're not. We must remember our style of talking is too fast. If this new speed and style feels odd, we are doing it correctly. It may feel strange at first because it is a new behavior. Our old behavior of speaking too fast interfered with the quality of our speech and professional image. We must keep practicing and it will begin to feel natural. When we are practicing with our speech notebook and Speech Triggers, our speech rate is another skill to rehearse for improving our communication skills (Speech and Voice Enterprises, 2012).

### **How to Use Speech Rate Techniques in Teaching English**

While teaching English pronunciation we must consider also our students' rate of speech and how that relates to the intelligibility of their utterance. We must remember that fast speech may increase the mispronunciation of syllables and change good English to poor English. Students should know that it does no harm to slow down their rate of speech until their pronunciation becomes clearer. Examples of fast speech pronunciation are too innumerable to cite, but a professional teacher needs no list to know what spoken words are sounding 'bad' as opposed to what spoken words are sounding 'very nice.' Supplying them a transcript of the words at first is suggested, with later emphasis on the student's perception and performance. As the 'listener understanding' plays an important role in pronunciation, strategies for listening, evaluating, calculating and responding meaningfully should become part of the pronunciation program (Robertson, 2002).

Learners of English, either juvenile or adult frequently say the hardest thing about learning English is understanding the native English speaker. The vast majority of learners lament that they cannot understand U.S. English, and have a clear preference for Canadian English. The rate of U.S. speech is, for them, too fast. Thus their speech coach, if he/she is to teach pronunciation and to teach it successfully, will be critically aware of his/her rate of normal speech. A number of studies carried out suggest that a slower rate of speech aids comprehension. Ellis (1996) claims that speech rate which has a clear effect and grammatical modifications does not always result in improved comprehension." Therefore the teacher must determine which speed he/she desires to pursue for the level of their students. It is suggested that the speech rate for elementary students should be as low as 120 words per minute. This would ideally be termed "foreigner talk with explicit teaching function" (Naro, 1983).

Dahl (1981) also investigated the relationship between the rate of speech and comprehensibility of nonnative students learning English. The subjects of the study (college students and nonnative speakers of English) were exposed to several messages and asked to rate how understandable these were. All of the subjects judged that the more comprehensible messages were those delivered more slowly. Dahl (1981) concluded that other factors such as the conciseness of information and



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the clarity of articulation, which are both linked to the perceived rate of speech, may have played a part in the students' judgments (Osbone, 2012).

Kelch's (1985) study also addressed the question of whether slowing speech enhanced comprehensibility. University students who were nonnative speakers of English were given dictations at varying speeds. It was found that the students performed substantially better when the rate of delivery was slowed from about 200 words per minute (normal speech) to 130 words per minute, which is the average rate of teacher-talk directed toward elementary students (Portland, 2010).

Blau (1990) also carried out two studies on this topic. One measured the effect of speed and syntactic complexity on learner comprehension and the other measured the effect of pauses. Contrary to Kelch, she found that slowing the rate of speech and simplifying syntax did not help learner comprehension significantly; however, pausing at constituent boundaries did help. At this point it is difficult to state with any scientific confidence that speaking more slowly and in simpler sentences actually works to acquire comprehensibility (Osbone, 2012).

Most pronunciation teachers incorporate techniques to reduce rate of speech to improve students' pronunciation and enhance their intelligibility. One English teacher comments on regional variations in the US claiming that the rate of speech varies greatly from one area to another. She says "she currently lives in the northeast where people speak very rapidly and sometimes they speak so fast that she even has to ask them to slow down and repeat themselves." She then continues: "In the Rocky Mountain West, where I am from, most of us speak fairly slowly," and concludes: "My students love this, because I naturally speak slowly and enunciate carefully." (ROS, 2012).

This observation is shared by several researchers claiming that there is some variance indeed to the acceptable rate of speech depending on the geographical area in which one resides. Again another researcher claims that in the Eastern states of the US, people typically talk faster than people in the south or in Midwest (Schnobelen, 2009).

Cucchiarini (2000) determines that the rate of speech correlates with speaker proficiency, and the ideal rate of speech in language teaching should fall within 140 to 160 words per minute (Cucchiarini, Strik & Boves 2008).

Spoken English consists of a significant stress-timed quality which means that the amount of time it takes to say a sentence depends on the number of syllables that receive stress in the sentence as opposed to the total number of syllables it contains. Native speakers of English will naturally increase their rate of speech when speaking non-stressed syllables and will slow their rate for stressed syllables (China EFL, 2012). However, non-native speakers focus on pronouncing each and every word fully and correctly, which results in staccato, mechanical, or choppy speech that can

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be so unnatural that it becomes incomprehensible even to a native speaker (Cohen, 2007).

If teachers speak at a moderate rate of speech and use effective pausing, this facilitates comprehension even of heavily accented speech. If they are used to speaking quickly or if they find native speakers asking them to slow down, then they should probably reduce their rate of speech. Speaking at a moderate rate with appropriate pauses not only makes it easier for students to understand their teacher, it also makes it easier for them to take notes. So teachers should speak at a steady but not fast rate, and make sure to pause briefly at the end of meaningful phrases (Communication Skills, 2012).

They must make sure to tell their students to raise their hands and stop them if they are having trouble hearing their teacher because they are going too fast. Teachers should raise the pitch of their voice as well as their volume, to emphasize important points for their students especially for those students in the back row of the classroom could hear and understand them. Using speech dynamics (varying their volume, rate of speech, and pitch) can also show enthusiasm and generate interest of students. Native speakers of American English find it difficult to process a consistently flat pitch (or "monotone" delivery), and their ability to pay attention quickly lapses. The same content, presented with varied intonation patterns, will hold students' attention much better (Communication Skills, 2012).

One Korean learner of English relates his experience of how he manages in an English speaking environment with his imperfect English accent:

*"When I speak in English, I am very aware of the different communication patterns and behaviors in the U.S.A. I try to speak clearer, louder, and slower than when I speak in Korean. I found out that this helps others understand my foreign accent. After trying hard for several years, now I know that I can't change my accent in a short time and possibly never. Also, I don't think I need to change my Korean accent, BUT still I can be a good speaker of English as long as I am aware of the different ways of making my speech effective and use them."* (Soonhyang, 2012).

The rate of speech normally refers to the the number of words per minute (w.p.m.). However, some researchers think that is this type of measurement is unsatisfactory (Owen, 1996). After taking numerous samples from a variety of sources they came to the conclusion that: "..... for the purpose of assessing whether speech is delivered at a normal rate, syllables should be used as the unit of measurement in preference to words." (Tauroza and Allison 1990).

Some speech therapists think that prolonged speech will sound unnatural, as their clients are encouraged to begin speaking extremely slowly, at around only 40-60 syllables per minute (spm). This is gradually quickened over the following weeks,

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aiming for a speed of about 120-150 spm. This is the typical rate of speech of most adult speakers who are considered to be fluent (Fluency Shaping, 2009).

The rate of speech that we use in normal conversation affects our fluency rating. This is the first area of speech we will address since it affects so many other areas. If you are a speaker with excellent command of the English language, you are more likely to speak too quickly compared to the speaker who is still learning the language and speaks more slowly to find the right words, carefully considering pronunciation. If a speaker is too slow, his speech sounds labored, broken up and is difficult to listen to. On the opposite end, when his rate of speech is too fast, the listener can't comprehend the content or understand the speaker. A normal rate of speech benefits the speaker in enormous ways: pronunciation is easier, intonation and stress are appropriate and pauses can easily be inserted. In addition, the quality of voice and resonance is at its best at that speech rate (Clearly Speaking, 2012).

The rate we choose to adopt may depend upon the setting in which we are speaking, the difficulty of material and the audience we are addressing to. A good way to monitor the rate of our speech is to "mirror" the rate of the speakers around us. Our rate of speech may need to change on any given day. We may also want to consider the perceptions we have of the speaker who speaks too slowly or who talks too quickly (ehow.com, 2011).

We must become an attentive listener to critique different rates of speech and then listen to several samples around us. We could read the same speech sample at different rates to see the difference for ourselves. We could notice the difference in terms of the amount of pausing, the length of pauses and the intonation. We could judge whether a paragraph read at 160 wpm is as vocally interesting as the paragraph read at 140 wpm? Which rate seems easier to understand? We could compare the differences between 140 WPM and 180 WPM and notice the way they both sound? Speaking slowly helps us add emphasis and stress in all the right places. If a speaker is too fast, the conversation may sound hurried and may put the listener on edge. However, speaking too slowly will reduce our effectiveness too. Our listeners may get impatient and not be able to follow, and their minds may begin to wander. By practicing the rate that is appropriate over and over again, we can learn to feel the rate and adjust to the right rate that we need in conversation (Clearly Speaking, 2012).

We need a stopwatch or a clock with a second hand on it (or ask a partner to time us) to do this exercise. We must first read a paragraph quietly to become familiar with it, then time ourselves reading the paragraph to determine how fast we read. We can see where we end up in the passage after reading it for one minute. We can then read that passage at the same rate we speak in a conversation.

While practicing, if we find out that our rate of speech is too fast we could then begin pausing more often and for longer periods of time especially at grammatical markers (where there are commas and periods). We could make slash marks at all the

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commas and periods; we could use one slash for commas and two slashes for periods to indicate a little longer of a pause. We could also exaggerate our mouth movements as we speak. We must remember that broadcasters on TV open their mouths when they speak. Likewise we could open our mouth widely when we read out a passage for practice. We could then watch ourselves in the mirror to be able to see our teeth while we speak. It is difficult to talk fast when we exaggerate our mouth opening. Then we could read passages between the rates of 140 - 150 words per minute by making adjustments until our speech rate feels natural to us (Donovan, 2011).

The rate of speech is a most important area of speech many people have difficulty to tackle. One needs to acquire this skill and transfer it into his / her everyday conversation. Here are some ways to get started:

We must practice using this speed as frequently as possible. This is done by reading at the rate we need to go as often as possible. Thus we will be creating a habit and getting used to hearing ourselves speak at a slower rate if we practice daily. We must read out loud 5-10 minutes a day at the speed we need to go. 2. We must consciously control our rate one time a day. We must make a conscious effort to be aware of our rate of speech in a certain situation (e.g. on the phone) or with a certain person. As we learn to speak at a slower rate of speech, we will be able to control a lot of the other areas of fluency like intonation and inflection, pausing, linking. This is the first step towards mastering the higher level skills of the English language. If we have learned to speak at a faster rate of speech, then we need to learn another type of control that improves our ability to captivate our listener (How to learn speed reading, 2012).

If we are speaking too slowly, increasing your rate of speech is probably easier to do than slowing down. Non-native English speakers often speak too slowly when they don't have a good grasp of the English language yet. If this describes us, then we may need to work on English grammar before attacking the higher level skills like speech rate and other intonational skills (Sason, 2012).

If it feels like we are always being interrupted by our colleagues especially when we are speaking slowly, it may be that the person listening isn't used to a slower rate, but it may also be something else. Perhaps we have taken too long to make a point. Learning to get to the point quickly is a skill we must master to hold our listeners' attention. Or perhaps others are being more assertive and talking over us even when it should be our turn? Perhaps others are anticipating our sentence endings? Then we must practice pausing for a breath in the middle of our sentence instead of at the end. This may take some practice to keep it from sounding artificial but our listener is less likely to interrupt if we pause in the middle.

We must pick a method to concentrate on to decrease our rate of speech (lengthening vowels, adding more pauses, etc.). We must then practice the new rate of speech we have learned as often as possible. We must make a conscious effort

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every day by incorporating our rate into at least one speaking activity a day. Putting our newly acquired skill into practice we must find ways to make it a second habit for us. While on the telephone, knowing that our listener doesn't see us and only focus on the message, we can practice speaking with our desired tempo by concentrating on our speech rate with a consciousness on its effect on the hearer. We can also tape-record our conversation and then go back and listen to it to see how well we managed. We can monitor the change in our progress as we go ahead with our daily drills in our conversations with a certain person (maybe our boss, secretary or a certain friend), let's say every night at the dinner table with our family, etc.. We can remind ourselves on our new task by sticking colorful post-it notes at our phone or placing auditory or visual reminders in our Outlook (Clearly Speaking, 2012).

Last but not least, it will be worth remembering here a piece of advice given by an experienced teacher to her students on this theme: "Slow down your thought process in order to be a better speaker of English. Because when the thought process goes fast, the speech also gets faster. The accelerated speech can leave listeners behind, making a speaker less understood. When multiple thoughts overlap, the speech gets unorganized, spoiling communication with both the listeners and anything in a speaker's mind." She then concludes: "Once you control your thought process and your speech rate, you realize that you are beginning to "communicate" with any article that you are on. So do not just read what is written, but communicate with anything that you are reading aloud." (McKay, 2012).

### **Conclusion**

Many researches have proven that speech tempo is directly related to the intelligibility and effectiveness of our utterance. Talking too quickly is one of the most common behaviors that harm professional speaking image if not done skillfully for a good purpose. It is always exhausting the audience being forced to listen to uncomfortable speech patterns. This unacceptable habit disrupts effective communication and decreases credibility. In order to be perceived as a trustworthy, competent and well spoken person one must be managing one's rate of speech and especially control one's fast speech rate with certain strategies. As part of such a technique, one must use vowels and consonants properly, i.e. distinguish between short and long vowels, between single vowels and diphthongs and triphthongs, as for suprasegmentals watch primary and secondary stresses in individual words and in sentence intonation, stop for shorter and longer pauses between thought groups and apply various pitch patterns in utterances. While practicing such rhythm and tempo features and taking good examples as our model we soon start feeling better and more natural with our oral performances seeing that our communication skills bring credit to our image and achieve greater competence. The teaching of pronunciation must definitely integrate the concept of speech rate, i.e. tempo, as an important suprasegmental element.

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English teachers must speak clearly and with constant pauses and at a slower than normal pace to their students to help their comprehension. As the 'listener understanding' plays an important role in pronunciation, strategies for listening, evaluating, calculating and responding meaningfully by students should become part of the pronunciation program. Pronunciation teachers must incorporate techniques to reduce their rate of speech to improve students' pronunciation and enhance their intelligibility. Because they are more likely to speak too quickly compared to their students who are still learning the language as they speak more slowly to find the right words. A normal rate of speech benefits the speaker in enormous ways: pronunciation is easier, intonation and stress are appropriate and pauses can easily be inserted. In addition, the quality of voice and resonance is at its best at that speech rate. Speaking slowly helps a teacher to add emphasis and stress in all the right places. If a speaker is too fast with his speech, what he says may sound hurried and may put his listener on edge, on the other hand if his speaking is too slow this will reduce his effectiveness. As for the students' oral performance they should always start speaking at a slower than normal rate and gain speed and rhythm toward better expression taking after good models.

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