

**Palatalization in English: An Articulation Problem for Turkish Teacher Trainees**

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Demirezen

**Abstract**

In the field of teacher training, there is a scarcity of teaching pronunciation teaching methodology to cure the fossilized mistakes of teacher trainees and foreign language teachers on-the-job. A case study pertaining to this situation is handled for the first time in this article under the title of "Audio-articulation Method" (Demirezen, 2003; Hişmanoğlu, 2004). This method takes up a fossilized mistake of teacher trainees or teachers on-the-job in fifty minutes and brings in pronunciation correction by using tongue-twisters, idioms, proverbs, and the like. Thus, it cures the fossilized mistake to a greater extent by creating a higher awareness and improving communicative fluency. This method through task-based point of view removes the related fossilized mistake and brings in pronunciation betterment to the teacher trainees and the teachers on-the-job.

**Key Words:** Palatalization, audio-articulation method, minimal pairs, contextual sentences, task-based teaching, fossilized mistakes.

**Özet**

Yabancı dil öğretmeni yetiştirme alanında, yabancı dil öğretmeni olacak öğretmen adaylarının ya da halen çalışan öğretmenlerin kemikleşmiş bir sesletim hatasını ele alıp, bir ders süresi boyunca gidermeye çalışan bir sesletim düzeltme yöntemi hemen hemen hiç yok gibidir. İlk kez böyle bir yöntemin kullanılışı, *duy-seslet yöntemi* (Demirezen, 2003) adı altında çalışılmıştır. Bu yöntem öğretmen adaylarının yabancı dildeki sesletimini bozan İngilizce bir sesbirimi ele almakta, 50 dakikalık bir ders süresinde ilgili sesin konumuyla bağlantılı olarak özel biçimde geliştirilmiş tekerlemeler, deyimler, atasözleri ve diğer söylemleri alıştırmaya gereği olarak kullanarak, yabancı dili konuşurken sorun yaratan sesbirimin sesletimini sorun olmaktan çıkarmaktadır. İş-odaklı öğretim gibi bir görüş açısından yola çıkarak kemikleşmiş sesletim yanlışlarının giderilmesine çözüm getirmektedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** damaksıllaşma, duy-konuş yöntemi, en küçük çift, içerik cümleler, iş-odaklı öğretim, kemikleşmiş hatalar.

**Introduction**

Palatalization is an important case of a phonetically orientated articulation problem for Turkish students. While the primary articulation goes on, some sounds require an activation of extra use of muscles in form of a secondary contact of the tongue to other points and places of articulation in the mouth. For example, in the English word *cute*, the initial / k / phoneme is mostly mispronounced by Turkish students because it requires both the primary and secondary articulations. As primary articulation, *velar* part of the tongue is activated while air stream

goes out through the mouth, but this is not enough. As a requirement of articulation the front of the mouth must be additionally raised up towards the palate simultaneously as the air stream goes out through the mouth. Here, the activation of the velar part of the tongue is the primary articulation, and simultaneous activation of the front part of mouth by raising up to the palate while the articulation goes on constitutes the secondary articulation, adding a [ I, i, j ] coloring on the / k / phoneme, totality of articulation end in [ kju:b ]. So is the case with the English word *cube*.

In fact, palatalization is a case of assimilation in which vowels and consonants condition each other in the structure of words reciprocally. It is mostly a phonetic happening, heavily influencing the beauty of articulation. As a phonetic case, a consonant gains a fronting feature by the phonetically oriented magnetic attraction of a vowel or vice versa. Phonetically speaking, palatal and palatalized consonants pose a phonetic characteristic like [ j ], [ I ], [ i ] coloring on the sounds (Demirezen 1986: 43). Many of the Turkish learners of English cannot properly articulate such English words as *huge, human, humid, cute, cube, popular, human,* and *humiliate*. If there are two occurrences of a palatalized case, for example, *union, accumulate* and *tumulus*, mispronunciation is bound to happen. In the articulation of palatalized consonants front upper surface of the tongue is raised towards the high palate in a narrowed manner while the air stream goes out through the oral cavity.

According to Wolfram and Johnson (1982: 93), assimilation processes in which a consonant sound takes on the qualities of a high front vowel or glide are typically referred to as palatalization. That's why, palatalization is a typical process of fronting.

### **Palatalization as a phonetic process**

Phonetic occurrence of palatalization is just a matter of secondary articulation, creating just an articulation hardship in pronunciation. In Turkish, *dünya* "world," *bünye* "edifice, structure," *künye* "patronymic", *Konya* "a city name," *inkâr* "denial," *belâ* "trouble, misfortune, calamity," *gâvur* "infidel," *gâlip* "winner" have palatalized cases of such consonants like [nj, kj, lj, gj]. Similarly, such English words like *annual, ambulance, accuse, accurate, assume, capsule, communicate, confuse, costume, continue, cucumber, due (Bri.) distribute, during, document, duplicate, duty, formula, furiously, fuse, ensue, human, humid, meticulous, manual, manufacture, manicure, manipulate, mutual, refute, reputation, stimulate, speculate, tumor, tune, tulip, unit, uniform, universal, value, acupuncture, altitude, amplitude, ambiguity, barbecue, euthanasia, evacuate, fugitive, genuine, intuition, fabulous, nuclear, future, miraculous,* and the like.

Palatalization as a phonetic case does not change the meaning of words but requires the simultaneous use of two articulation at the same time in the articulation of the same word. It is just a matter of articulation adding to the beauty of articulation.

### **Palatalization as a phonetic case in Modern Standard Turkish**

Palatalization as a phonetic case is a serious form of articulation because it brings in a change of meaning in words. Palatalization is not a phonemic problem in English. In phonetically oriented palatalization, a phoneme is changed into two different allophones, as is the case with the / l / phoneme in Turkish. For example, the word *sol* carries two different meanings due to its two different articulations, like *sol* "left" and *sol* "a musical note."

*sol* [ sɔɫ ] -----> / ɫ /, "left", a velar voiced lateral consonant phoneme.

sol [ sɔɫ ] -----> / ɫ /, “ a musical note ”, a voiced palatal consonant phoneme.

An other example would be the word *bol* in Turkish possessing two different meanings like “ loose” and “a drink”.

bol [ bɔɫ̥ ] -----> / ɫ̥ /, “ loose ”, ” a velar voiced lateral consonant.

bol [ bɔɫ ] -----> / ɫ /, “ a drink”, a voiced palatal consonant.

A statement like “*Bol, çok tehlikelidir* (Bowl / loose is very dangerous) carries two different meanings with bol [ bɔɫ ] and [ bɔɫ̥ ] cases of articulations. Similarly, “ *Ceketim çok bol* ” ( My jacket is too loose ) will make sense with [ bɔɫ̥ ], which has a velarized allophone, but not with [ bɔɫ ], which has a palatalized allophone. Then, palatalization, just like in English language, is a phonetic problem that requires the use of two different allophones in the modern standard Turkish.

### **Teaching Palatalization in Teacher Training by the Audio-Articulation Method to Turkish Students**

Palatalization is a serious, nagging pronunciation problem which harms the beauty of articulation. A great majority of Turkish teachers of English language and most of the students have this problem. Now, let’s correct this pronunciation problem by following the steps of the audio-articulation method. This teaching session takes approximately 50 minutes.

#### **1. Warm-up / motivation**

(English teacher enters the class).

**Teacher:** Good morning students, how are you all today?

**Students:** Thank you sir/mam, we’re fine. How about you?

**T:** Thank you all, I’m fine, too.

#### **2. Review the previous material**

**T:** Children, who will tell me, what did we do in our last class period?

**Sts:** We studied on the articulation of the phrase

“ *A usual mutual human communication* ”,  
and we had some pronunciation difficulties.

**T:** Yes, now, once again, who is going to articulate this phrase again?

(Teacher does single, group repetitions of this phrase, but most of the students misarticulate this phrase again owing to palatalization involved in articulation)

**T:** Well, students there is a secondary articulation involved in the articulation, and that’s why you are still not good in pronouncing them.

#### **2. Introduce the new topic**

**T:** Students, we will study a new topic called PALATALIZATION today. It is because of the phonetic difficulty involved in palatalization that most of you mispronounced the tongue twister “ *A usual mutual human communication* ” in our last session. So, we must do further practice on it.

### 3. Establishing a CORPUS

This corpus includes 50 to 100 words that carry palatalization in them. All of the exercises used during the teaching period are derived from this corpus. (Teacher handles the unknown words first and practices them in single, group or choir articulations):

cue	unit	uniform	accuse	unusual	cucumber
fuse	fuel	pure	moot	humane	duplicate
due(Bri.)	beauty	unicorn	accuracy	durable	reputation
fool	poor	unique	tooter	tutor	manipulation
cute	pupil	stupid	continue	manual	stimulate
cube	unite	who	community	manicure	nutrition
coo	tulip	union	music	formula	ambulance
use	tumor	unify	popular	speculate	accumulate
duty	humor	value	student	mutual	document
mute	usual	rescue	costume	mutilate	institute
mule	hues	queue	perfume	humanity	constitute
tune	humid	during	assume	uvular	distribute
huge	human	refute	capsule	mutiny	communicate
coup	unique	confuse	cubicle	tumulus	universal
hue	furious	evaluate	museum	humiliate	recapitulate
cure	immune	puberty	monument	ammunition	municipality
eunuch	deputy	evacuate	consumer	uranium	tuberculosis

### 4. Establish minimal pairs for practice

( Teacher puts down some carefully selected minimal pairs that show the phonetic differences which yield different articulations in American English.)

#### Non-palatalization

do / du: /  
 coup / ku: /  
 coo / ku: /  
 who / hu: /  
 poor / pu:ɹ /  
 food / fu:d /  
 fool / fu:l /  
 pool / pu:l /  
 moot / mu:t /  
 souper / su:pəɹ /  
 tooter / tu:təɹ /  
 whose / hu:z /

#### palatalization

due / dju: / (Bri.)  
 cue / kju: /  
 cue / kju: /  
 hue / hju: /  
 pure / pjʊ:ɹ /  
 fued / fju:d /  
 fuel / fju:l /  
 pule / pjʊ:l /  
 mute / mju:t /  
 super / sju:pəɹ /  
 tutor / tjʊ:təɹ /  
 hues / hju:z /

#### Better indication for Turkish students

Since there is no / w phoneme or no [ w ] sound in Modern standard Turkish, students have a strong affiliation not to give the bilabial lip rounding that is required after the long [u:] or short [ʊ] for correct articulation. That's why, Turkish teachers of English can use the data given below to better achieve the correct articulation.

do / duw /	due / djuw / (Bri.)
coup / kuw /	cue / kjuw /
coo / kuw /	cue / kjuw /
who / huw /	hue / hjuw /
poor / puwɾ /	pure / puwɾ /
pool / puwl /	pule / puwl /
food / fuwd /	fued/ fjuwd /
fool / fuwl /	fuel / fjuwl /
moot / muwt /	mute / mjuwt /
souper / suwpeɾ /	super / suwpeɾ /
tooter / tuwtəɾ /	tutor / tuwtəɾ /
whose / huwz /	hues / hjuwz /

### A. Repetition drill

Repetition drills are designed to develop aptitude for oral mimicry. Teacher distinctly articulates them without boring the students, gives the explanation on palatalization, and gets the students to articulate them in single or group. Students are also warned on the correct articulation of word-final retracting diphthongs as heard in do/ duw / or / djuw /, which are indicated here as do / du: / or due / dju: / respectively. In addition, they are also warned on the correct articulation of retroflex American-r sound, which is indicated by the / ɾ / sign if necessary.

### A. Recognition exercises

Recognition drills are primarily designed to advance auditory discrimination ability in students.

(a)

T: Students, now I'm going to give you first member of the minimal pair, when call on you, you give me the palatalized member, or vice versa. Here is an example:

Teacher: Ahmet, I give you the word *poor*, give me the palatalized form of it.

Ahmet: *pure*!

T: Very good. Ayşe, *who*!

Ayşe: *Hue*!

T: Correct! Very good! ( Exercise goes on this way as the time allow, without boring the students)

(b)

T: Students, I'm going to give you two words. If you hear the palatalized word in the first order, you say one, or in the second order you say two. Here is an example:

T: *fool-fuel*, Murat, would you tell me the palatalized form of the word in number?

Murat: *two!*

T: Correct.

T: *tutor-tooter*, Cem, you tell me!

Cem: *One!*

T: Very good! (The exercise goes on this way as the timing allows)

### (c) Using tongue twisters

The following tongue twisters can be practiced in class to reinforce the correct articulation of palatalized words:

#### 1.

A student  
A huge student  
A huge cute student  
A huge cute humorous student

#### 2.

A duty  
A beautiful duty  
A beautiful duty for humanity  
A huge beautiful duty for humanity

#### 3.

A tooter  
A stupid tooter  
A stupid ridiculous tooter  
A stupid ridiculous tooter as a tutor

#### 4.

A costume  
A beautiful costume  
A beautiful unique costume  
A beautiful unique costume in perfume

#### 5.

A unit  
A cube unit  
A cumulative cube unit  
A cumulative cube unit in the tube

#### 6.

A cue  
A cue for the coup  
A unique cue for the coup  
A unique puny cue for the coup

#### 7.

A mule  
A huge mule  
A huge mute mule  
A huge mute mule in the institute

#### 8.

A unit  
A poor unit  
A poor union unit  
A usual poor union unit

#### 9.

Music  
Popular music  
Using popular music  
Using popular music in the union

#### 10.

A community  
A huge community  
A huge poor community  
A huge poor but pure community

### 5. Give the RULE

Teacher: Now is the RULE TIME. Please listen to me carefully. Palatalization in English is a phonetic case that requires a secondary articulation, as seen in the minimal pairs cited in part 4. The causer of palatalization is the / j / phoneme which is represented by the letter *y*. Firstly, all of the consonants that come before / j / are directly palatalized. For example, *cute* / kju:t/, *tune* / tju:n /, *music* / mju:zɪk /, *rumor* / rju:məɹ /, *manipulate* / mənɪpjʊleɪt /, and *distribute* / dɪstrɪbjʊt / carry such palatalized consonants as / kj, tj, mj, rj /. Secondly, words that begin with the letter *u* always receive a [ j ] phone before themselves, as seen in *use* / ju:z /, *unit* / ju:nət /, and *union* / ju:njən /.

### 6. Further exercises

## (a). Using minimal sentences

The following minimal sentences are repeated in single or group without boring the students

1. This is PURE / POOR.
2. A TUTOR / TOOTER will come.
3. WHO / HUE is expected today?
4. That's a MOOT / MUTE case.
5. It was not a sound COO / CUE.
6. I guess this is a terrible FOOD / FUED.
7. This FUEL / FOOL has been wasted away.
8. This is a clear-cut QUEUE / COUP.
9. WHOSE HUES can be in those clouds?
10. It was one of that terrible tribe's FUEDS / FOODS.
11. It was very hard to handle that FOOL / FUEL.
12. Luke is a SOUPER / SUPER villager.
13. Children POOL / PULE in the bathtub.

## (b). Using sentences with contextual clues

The following exercises are practiced in class by paying close attention to the correct articulation of the palatalized words.

1. This COUP is the CUE of the war.
2. WHO is responsible for this HUE?
3. A TOOTER is not a good TUTOR.
4. I guess this FOOL driver needs FUEL.
5. The pigeon's COO is the right CUE.
6. I think this POOR man is PURE.
7. WHO saw the HUE of the clouds first.
8. Anger is a FOOL's FUEL.
9. This is a QUEUE for the COUP.
10. WHO does not mean HUE?
11. WHOSE does not mean HUES.
12. To COO does not mean to CUE.
13. This MOOT point belongs to that MUTE man.
14. Please no not PULE in this POOL.
15. Lucky Luke is a SUPER SOUPER.
16. The COOING pigeons were QUEUEING up on the telegraph lines.

## (c) Problem sound-concentrated exercises

The following sentences are repeated in class without boring the students by bearing the fact in mind that the students are not parrots.

1. Please, DO USE this HUGE CUBE in DUE time.
2. The POOR man kicked the PURE MULE and MUTILATED it FURIOUSLY in the AMBULANCE:
3. The STUPID STUDENT's CUBICLE was full of TUTORIAL DOCUMENTS in the MUSEUM.
4. The TUTOR's COSTUME with a UNICORN as a UNIFORM was UNUSUAL in the INSTITUTE.

5. The USUAL MUTUAL EQUAL COMMUNICATION in the COMMUNITY CONTINUED DURING the COUP in the EUROPEAN UNION.
6. The RUMORS on the FORMULA of the TOOTING TUTOR on the UNUSUAL USE of MUSIC were very CONFUSING.
7. The UNON'S REPUTATION on ACCUSING and DEVALUING the HUMAN COMMUNICATION as a DEVALATION of HUMAN rights STIMULATED the other UNIONS.
8. The TUMULUS built by the UNION on the VALUE of KING MIDAS CONSTITUTED a good FUSION of UNIQUE EVALUATION of HUMAN rights in the COMMUNITY.
9. The PUPIL CONFUSED the FORMULA of the PERFUME on the FUSION of PURE TULIP JUICE WITH CUCUMBER WATER.
10. The ACCUMULATION of the DUPLICATED DOCUMENTS in the UNION'S INSTITUTE DEVALUED and MUTILATED the USUAL CONTINUATION of HUMAN rights in the MUSEUM.

### 7. Make a summary

T: Now, it is time to make a summary. Today, we studied the a common pronunciation problem called PALATALIZATION. It is a case of phonetic development in which consonants get into a fronted articulation by way of gaining a secondary articulation, which is a bit hard to articulate. In palatalization the blade of the tongue is raised up to the hard palate and establish a narrow passage where a friction like / I, i, j / is attached to the related consonant, as heard in the comparison of such words like *do / due, poor / pure, whose / hues, tooter / tutor, and super/ souper*. It must be noted that palatalization does not change the meaning of words but harms the beauty of articulation in relation to fluency in intonation.

### 8. Give an assignment

Dear students, prepare the following questions for our next meeting. I will collect and grade them for you. Well-prepared ones will be practiced in class.

1. Each student should prepare 3 tongue twisters as seen in **4c**.
2. Prepare the correct articulation of the following words in transcription:

(a).	(b).	(c).	(d)
human	music	tutor	accumulate
humane	musical	tutoring	accumulation
humanity	musicality	tutorial	accumulated
humanitarian	musician	tutored	accumulative
(e)	(f)		
immune	union		
immunize	unionize		
immunity	reunionize		
immunization	reunionized		

3. Each student should prepare 3 exercises in minimal sentences as indicated in **6a**.
4. Each student should prepare 3 exercises in contextual clues, as indicated in **6b**.
5. Write a cause- effect paragraph by using the words given in corpus ( step 3)

Now, I will close. Thank you for your patience. See you in our next meeting.



## Conclusion

Fossilized mistakes are persistent and seemingly not easily correctable errors of pronunciation, which are detrimental both to the teachers and students. In teacher training, there is a scarcity of methods in teaching pronunciation to cure the fossilized mistakes of the teacher-trainees, novice teachers, and teachers-on-the-job. There is only one type of pronunciation teaching method to solve the problems caused by fossilized pronunciation mistakes developed by Demirezen (2003: 51-57, 2004: 7-22) under the title the “*audio-articulation method*.” Fossilized mistakes are dangerous happenings that slow down pronunciation ability and thus the improvement of communicative competence. Obviously, fossilized mistakes are impediments in achieving native-like or near native-like efficiency in teaching a foreign language.

If palatalization is not properly articulated, then it becomes a serious case of pronunciation error that impedes the native-like or near native-like pronunciation ability of the non-native foreign language teachers. The articulation difficulty in palatalization is that most students or speakers are not able to raise the blade of the tongue towards the hard palate to create a narrow passage where the outgoing air stream is modified into a secondary articulation in form [ I, i, j ] friction type of coloring over the related consonant. In addition, it happens to be very hard for the Turkish trainees, novice teachers, and teachers-on-the job to give the primary articulation at the same time while the secondary articulation takes place in the articulation of the same word.

Lasting 50 minutes, the audio-articulation method first makes the learners aware of the pronunciation mistake at hand. Then, it tries to eradicate it by means of carefully selected and developed minimal pair analysis, back-chaining drills, tongue twisters, clichés, minimal sentences and contextual clues. It must be noted that to have at least a near native-like pronunciation, or ideally native like pronunciation, which is the educational responsibility of the foreign language teacher, is also a clear-cut way of gaining maximum respect in the foreign language teaching profession.

## References

- Acton, W. 1991. Changing fossilised pronunciation. In A Brown (ed.) 120-35
- Asher, J. 1977. Learning another language through actions: The complete teacher’s guide book. Los Gatos, Calif. Sky Oaks Productions.
- Baker, A. and Goldstein, S.1990. Pronunciation pairs: An introductory course for students of English: Cambridge: Cambridge university Press.
- Demirezen, M. 2003. “İngilizcenin theta sesbiriminin ( peltek-t ) Türkler için çıkardığı sesletim sorunları”, TÖMER Dil Dergisi - Mayıs-Haziran, sayı 120, 57 - 71.
- . 2004. İngilizcenin Peltek-d (ETH) Sesbiriminin Türkler İçin Çıkardığı Sesletim Sorunları ve Çözümler”, Çankaya University, Journal of Arts and Sciences, Vol. 1, Number 1, May 2004, 7-22.
- Hişmanoğlu, M. (2004). Problematic English Consonants and Vowels for Turks in Relation to ELT. Text Development and Problem Solutions. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Hacettepe University, The Institute of Social Sciences.
- Jenkins, J. 1996b. Native speaker, non-native speaker and English as a foreign language. Time for a change. IATEFL Newsletter 131, 10-11.
- Jenkins, J. 1998. Which pronunciation norms and models for English as an international language. ELT Journal, Vol 52/2, April 1998, Oxford University Press, 119-126.

- Leather, J. 1983. Second-language pronunciation teaching. *Language Teaching* 16/3, 198-219.
- Levis, J. 2001. Teaching focus for conversational use. *ELT Journal*, 55(1), 47-54.
- Levis, John M. and Grant, L. 2002. Integrating pronunciation into ESL/EFL classrooms. *TESOL JOURNAL*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 13-19.
- Linse, C. 2003. Twisting tongues: Tongue twisters in the classroom. *MET* Vol. 12, No: 4, 26-28.
- Marianne Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Donna M, and Goodwin, Janet M. 1997. *Teaching pronunciation: A reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morley, J. 1991. The pronunciation component in teaching English to speakers of other languages, *TESOL Quarterly* 25, 481-520.
- Munro, M. and Derwing, T. 1995. Foreign accent, comprehensibility and intelligibility in the speech of second language learners, *Language Learning* 45, I, 73-97.
- Nilsen, Don L. and Nilsen, A. P. 1973. *Pronunciation contrasts in English*. New York: Regents publishing company

*Mehmet Demirezen* is an ELT professor at Hacettepe University. He has published five books on the phonetics, phonology and teaching writing. He is the author of forty-one articles on English language teaching and linguistics. He has presented seventeen papers in both national and international conferences. He has been teaching different courses on ELT and linguistics.