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THE IMPORTANCE OF PHONETICS IN ENGLISH TEACHING PROCEDURE

Zulaykho Shamshidinovna Jurayeva
Senior Teacher
Kokand State University
E-mail address: zulayxo_jurayeva@icloud.com
Kokand, Uzbekistan

Z. Sultonova
Student
Kokand State University
E-mail address: zaynabxonsultonova9@gmail.com
Kokand, Uzbekistan

ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: The article argues that phonetics is fundamental to effective language learning and presents a practical, integrated approach to teaching pronunciation. It advocates starting with articulatory training (using diagrams, mirrors, or digital tools), gradually introducing IPA focusing on learners' most problematic sounds, and using activities like minimal pairs "think" vs. "sink", shadowing, tongue twisters, and phonetic transcription exercises. It emphasizes recording and self-transcription for self-correction, and it recommends embedding phonetics within grammar, vocabulary, and speaking lessons rather than isolating it in a separate course.

Introduction. Phonetic knowledge is considered as one of the crucial part of language learning period. Phonetics is the scientific study of speech sounds, how they are pronounced, transmitted, and perceived by humans. In other words, it studies how we make sounds with our mouth, lips, tongue and vocal cords as well as the physical properties of sounds like pitch, volume, and duration by learning how we hear and recognize the sounds directly. The use of phonetics in English learning can be considered a recent trend for both young learners and ESL

learners that can be included in must-have curriculum. This process can help in recognizing not only familiar but also unfamiliar sounds, hone communication skills, and develops autonomy in words and sound recognition. As mentioned previously, when students by themselves can decode sounds and their relation to the pronounciation of letters and their combination in words, communication becomes a natural process for them. Even when the words seem non-familiar to them, instead of getting overwhelmed they will be able to associate words with clear conceptualization. Be it young or adults, once they know how to use phonetics everyday life, they can easily recognize the sound each letter makes and how they must be pronounced when they are in combination with each other. One of the core objectives of mastering phonetics is to make students capable of interpreting the words even when they listen from a person having a different accent. When it comes to fluency of a speaker two things matter most; how fast a person can indentify words and how accurate the pronounciation is. Phonetics take into consideration of both. Fluency indicates the "ease" with which one can read text. Moreover, as they can decode words it builds a memory dictionary in their minds and with times this helps to build up the comprehension skill within oneself. The purpose of a phonetics is to explain the role and significance of phonetics in learning and teaching English. As Daniel Jones states, "Phonetics is the science of speech sounds," highlighting its fundamental importance in understanding how language is produced and perceived [1, 19.p]. Phonetics helps learners produce and hear sounds correctly, improving both pronunciation and listening skills. It allows students to distinguish between similar-sounding words, avoid common errors, and communicate more confidently. For teachers, phonetics provides systematic methods and tools, such as the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), to teach sounds clearly and effectively. Practical applications, including minimal pairs, tongue twisters, shadowing, and listening exercises, make lessons more engaging. Additionally, phonetics articles can address common challenges faced by learners from different language backgrounds, such as vowel or consonant difficulties and stress patterns. Ultimately, the purpose of a phonetics article is to show that phonetics is not only theoretical but a vital tool for successful English teaching and learning.

Phonetics is the backbone of effective language learning and teaching. At its core, it is the scientific study of how speech sounds are produced, transmitted, and perceived. Understanding phonetics helps language learners improve their pronunciation, listening skills, and overall communicative competence. Without this foundation, learners risk developing fossilized pronunciation errors, misunderstanding native speakers, and lacking confidence in speaking. As Peter Roach insightfully notes, "It is really a matter of the importance of having some background knowledge that helps you to understand the learners' problems." [2, Roach,

n.d.]. This quote underscores that phonetic knowledge is not just theoretical but deeply practical for addressing real pronunciation difficulties.

One of the primary roles of phonetics in English teaching is to give learners a clear model of how sounds are formed. By studying articulatory phonetics, students learn where in the mouth a sound is made, lips, tongue, velum, whether the vocal cords vibrate, and how the airflow moves. This knowledge demystifies why certain English sounds are difficult. For example, many non-native speakers struggle with the /θ/ as in think or /ð/ as in this because their native languages may lack these dental fricatives. Phonetics also helps learners with listening comprehension: when students understand how sounds vary in connected speech such as assimilation, elision, or linking, they can more easily decode fluent speech.Phonetics also supports intelligible speaking. Without phonetic awareness, learners may misplace stress, mispronounce vowel quality, or mis-handle intonation, all of which impede clarity. Indeed, rhythm and stress are often more critical for intelligibility than perfect articulation of individual consonants. As Roach observes, "the major causes of misunderstandings, and of lack of fluency … are to be found in … wrong placement of stress failure to weaken the weak syllables, and so on." [3, 2009, p. 65]. Such mistakes lead to unnatural rhythm, which can make speech sound halting or foreign. Moreover, phonetics empowers teachers. With phonetic training, teachers can diagnose learners' pronunciation problems, design targeted corrective activities, and provide clear explanations using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). This is especially helpful when learners ask "Why do I have to say it that way?" The IPA gives a visual and standardized representation of sounds, which both teachers and students can use as a reference.

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is a central tool in phonetics. It is a national system that represents every sound of spoken language in a consistent way, regardless of the language or dialect. By learning IPA symbols, learners can precisely see how each sound is articulated, and teachers can accurately show how to produce them. IPA helps in several concrete ways. Firstly to the clarity of articulation, When students see the symbol [ʃ] for the "sh" sound, they understand where and how that sound is made. That it is a voiceless postalveolar fricative. Secondly, Transcription practice that can offer learners to transcribe words or short phrases into IPA, reinforcing their understanding of sound–symbol correspondences. Thirdly, Students can record their speech, transcribe it, and compare it with standard IPA, identifying deviations and self-correcting. In addition, many learner dictionaries provide IPA transcriptions, enabling students to learn pronunciation independently. Through the IPA,

phonetics becomes tangible rather than abstract, giving students and teachers a shared language to talk about sounds.

Even with phonetic knowledge, learners often struggle with certain recurring issues. Some of the most common pronunciation mistakes include vowel confusion. English has many vowel sounds, some of which do not exist in learners' first languages. For instance, the difference between /iː/ as in sheep and /ɪ/ as in ship is minimal in some languages, leading to confusion. As far as consonant clusters are concerned, many learners find it hard to articulate groups of consonants like /str/ in street or /ŋθ/ in length, often reducing or omitting sounds. As Roach pointed out, incorrect placement of stress or failure to weaken unstressed syllables reduces natural rhythm and clarity. Learners may speak with unnatural pitch patterns, monotone intonation, or wrong rhythm. Without phonetic sensitivity to suprasegmental features, speech can sound flat or robotic.In connected speech, native speakers often link words want to → /ˈwɒn tə/ or reduce syllables. Learners unfamiliar with these processes may over-enunciate every word, making their speech slow and unnature.

Given its importance, how should learners and teachers approach phonetic learning? Begin with articulatory training, have students explore where and how sounds are made using diagrams, mirrors, or digital articulatory tools. Introduce the IPA gradually, focusing first on the sounds most problematic to your learners. For example, dedicate sessions to minimal pairs "think- sink" to sharpen discrimination. By using shadowing techniques, students listen to a native speaker like an audio or video and try to repeat exactly what they hear in real time, mimicking intonation, rhythm, and stress. This helps internalize the phonetic features of connected speech. Incorporating tongue twisters, minimal-pair drills, and phonetic transcription exercises are gamified activities which make repetition enjoyable and lower the affective filter, helping learners practice more freely. Ask students to record themselves reading passages, then transcribe their recording in IPA. Compare with a target model and provide feedback. This encourages self-reflection and self-correction. Rather than isolating phonetics in a separate "pronunciation class," embed phonetic elements into grammar, vocabulary, and speaking lessons. Discuss why a word is stressed in a certain way, or practice linking in typical phrases like going to, used to.

Phonetics is not an optional add-on in language learning. it is essential. Without it, learners may rely solely on their ear and articulators to guess, leading to repeated errors and misunderstandings. As Peter Roach succinctly states in his glossary, "Phonetics is the scientific study of speech." (Roach, 2009). This science gives structure, clarity, and precision to pronunciation learning. Moreover, phonetics bridges theory and practice. Through the IPA and

phonetic exercises, abstract linguistic knowledge becomes usable in the classroom. Teachers with phonetic training can tailor instruction to their students' specific pronunciation issues, making learning more efficient and impactful. As Roach warns, ignoring phonetics can result in persistent misunderstandings: "the major causes of misunderstandings … are to be found in … wrong placement of stress …" [4, 2009, p. 65].Finally, phonetics supports learner autonomy. When students understand how sounds work, they gain the power to self-correct, to use dictionaries confidently, and to speak more naturally. The background knowledge that Roach emphasizes is precisely what empowers learners to move from imitation to independent, accurate, and confident use of English.

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