

PHONETICS IS AN IMPORTANT BRANCH OF ENGLISH LINGUISTICS

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Abstract. *The article outlines that phonetics can play a significant role in Modern English language teaching system. The main goals and objectives of the article are formulated. Based on the observation, the students still have lack of pronouncing words correctly. The relevance of the issue under consideration is indicated. Phonetics is of great theoretical and practical value. Theoretically, it is important to study the formation of speech sounds, their combinations, syllables, stress and intonation. There are various teaching and learning methods have been offered by the experts, one of them is through Pronunciation Games. Therefore, this paper explores how to spell English words correctly through practicing Pronunciation Games at primary school level.*

Keywords: *Phonetics, speech, phonology, sounds, syllables, stress, intonation, articulatory - acoustic, pronunciation, vocal cords.*

Phonetics is the study of the sounds of human speech. It involves analyzing the way sounds are produced, perceived, and used in different languages. It is a vital field of study for language learners, as it can help improve your English pronunciation, listening skills, and overall communication. Phonetics is important in English learning because it helps you to understand the sounds of the language. English has many sounds that are not found in other languages, so it can be challenging for non-native speakers to pronounce words correctly. By studying phonetics, you can learn how to produce these sounds and improve your pronunciation. Phonetics can also help improve your listening skills. By understanding the sounds of English, you can recognize words more easily when you hear them. This is particularly important when listening to native speakers who may speak quickly or use regional accents.

WHAT IS PHONETICS?

Phonetics (from the Greek word "phone" - meaning sound, voice and "-tika" a science) is a special science which studies the phonic substance and the expression area of the language, or otherwise the physical media of a language (sounds, syllables, stress and intonation). The linguistics form and content are described by other branches of linguistics, namely grammar (morphology and syntax), lexicology (lexicon or vocabulary, the formation and the meanings of the words) and stylistics (expressive- emotional meanings).

The definition of phonetics as «the study of the sounds of a language»[1] is not sufficient in modern linguistics. Nowadays phonetics is a science or a branch of linguistics studying articulatory - acoustic and perceptual features of a language. It is concerned with the linguistic expression represented in the speech sounds, syllables, stress and intonation. Phonetics deals with oral speech.[2]

Phonetics is concerned with the physical properties of sounds in languages. It is not focused on all of the sounds produced by humans (sneezing, coughs, etc.), but only on those with linguistic relevance. It is divided into three main sub-fields:

- **Articulatory Phonetics** focuses on the way that linguistic sounds are produced.

- **Acoustic Phonetics** focuses on the way that these sounds propagate through the air.

- **Perceptual Phonetics** focuses on the way that sounds are perceived by the auditory system.

This series is mainly focused on the articulatory aspects of linguistic sounds. All languages have a repertoire of vowels and consonants. Both these groups of sounds have an internal complexity that articulatory phonetics aims at describing in the most adequate way.[3]

Before inquiring the effect of phonetics on English literature, let us investigate the summary of phonetics. Varshney (1998) mentioned that phonetics is the scientific study of the production, transmission and reception of speech sound. In other words, it studies the defining characteristics of all human vocal noise, and focuses on its attention on those sounds occur in the languages of the world. The job of phoneticians is to study the various organs of human speech such as the lungs, the larynx, the soft palate, the tongue and the lip along their function in the production of speech. As one of the most problems for language learner is that how he writes down the language sounds and words phonetically. He may make a mistake in his transcription; this mistake shows that he has confused one sound with another. In this case, the role of language teacher is to teach the appropriate sequence of sounds to use in any given words by the use of phonetics transcription. Varshney (1998) argued that phonetics transcription is a device in which we use several symbols in such a way that one symbol always represents one sound. In other words, Jones (1972, p. 6) indicated that "phonetics transcription may be defined as an unambiguous system of representing pronunciation by means of writing, the basic principle being to assign one and only one letter to each phoneme of the language". However, the main aim of phonetics transcription is to record as accurately as possible all features of a word or a set of words which the language learner can hear and identify in the stream of speech. In order to improve the phonetics transcription difficulties of English language learners should be given more earing – training exercises by their language teachers in ELT classroom.

In general, Phonetics always plays a vital role in the study of English literature. The use of literature came back to the eighteen centuries, and it is applied to designate fictional and imaginative writings such as poetry, prose, fiction and drama (Abrams and Harpham, 2012). [4] For English language teachers a question arises that why the use of phonetics is important in teaching English literature for foreign and second language. Answered this question is that the first problem that confronts the English learner in his effort in order to learn a speaking –knowledge of English language as his foreign or second language is its pronunciation. Before, English pupil starts learning any part of the vocabulary or grammar of the language, he must be able to recognize the sound system of the language as uttered by an English native speaker or he must be able to produce them himself in such a way that an English native speaker understands him. The role of language phonetics in today's educational system of language literature delineates that to be phonetics in any language literature classroom; an English language learner must be able to use it for a wide range of purposes.

However, phonetics cannot be studied properly without touching upon the notion of phonology. Phonology has been commonly recognized as a branch of Linguistics. According to Bloomfield (1933), phonology is the organization of sounds into patterns. In order to fulfill the communicative functions, languages organize their material, the vocal noises, into recurrent bits and pieces arranged in sound patterns. It is the study of this formal organization of languages which is known as phonology. Varshney (1998) mentioned that phonetics is differs from phonology in

that phonetics is the science of speech sounds, their production, transmission and reception and the signs to represent them in general with no particular reference to any one language, whereas phonology is the study of the vocal sounds and sounds changes, phonemes and their variants in a particular language. Phonetics is one and the same for all the languages of the world, but the phonology of one language will differ from the phonology of another. Macmahon in the hand book of English linguistics (2006) made differentiate between phonetics and phonology, according his idea, phonetics focuses on the mechanics of sound production and transmission, irrespective of how the sounds may operate as part of a language system; whereas phonology focuses on the function or organization, or patterning of the sounds.[5]

A language literature student should have a set of language skills, knowledge, and understanding of phonetics that help him to use language for reading and writing in and out of his classroom. However, it is felt that English language literature teachers should be made aware of the use of phonetics system in teaching English literature in classroom. In other words, part of the role of the English language literature teacher is to help students perceive sounds of English. Note that the sound system of a foreign language is not easy for a second or foreign language learner. Each language has its own set of sounds system; there is, in fact, some sounds of English language are different from other languages. In this case, some sounds of English do not occur in other languages. One of the best ways to teach the learners is that they should be made familiar with the sound system of this language. The English literature teachers should check their learners' pronunciation and help them to do appropriate pronunciation

Pronunciation

Units of speech such sounds, syllables, words and words in connected speech are important aspects of pronunciation. These also account a lot for intelligibility. A speaker or a listener is frustrated if communication breaks down because of problems in pronunciation. So, whatever our preferences may be to teach spoken English, we cannot avoid learning and teaching pronunciation. However, the ideal way of learning pronunciation is to create one's own pattern of pronunciation in consonance with the goals of intelligibility, communicability and self-confidence.

Pronunciation and Listening

Pronunciation is an important aspect of both speaking and listening. A listener decodes the stream of speech into meaningful units, words and individual sounds to understand what the speaker means. It is here that the listener cites the weak forms, like don't for do not, mustn't've for must not have. The listener ear should be trained for such features as they occur substantially in spoken English. Therefore, one should practise weak forms and distinguish characteristic features of connected speech to overcome communication difficulties and be intelligible.

Pronunciation and Spelling

Spelling, though, a feature of writing often influences speech. The relationship between pronunciation and spelling is understood to be very complex and sometimes even confusing and chaotic. This is so because the 26 letters have to function for 44 sounds. A single sound might be represented by a number of letters or letter combinations in different words. As such, there doesn't always seem to be a one-to-one correspondence between spelling and pronunciation. For example, the letter f can be pronounced /v/ in of (weak form) but /f/ in roof. On other hand, sound /k/ stands for different letters like - c in call, - cc in occasion and -ck in attack and is silent in words like knee, knife, and know. Therefore, it is important for a student to develop an intuitive relationship

between spelling and pronunciation. Such knowledge will help pronounce a new word correctly and conversely spell the word rightly when they hear a new word.[6]

Practical Activities in Teaching Pronunciation

There has been a great deal of debate on what techniques can be used to teach pronunciation effectively. One of the prominent debates centers on whether to teach pronunciation through imitation or through consciousness-raising. In this regard, Jones (2002) highlights the importance of habit-formation and imitation and its persistence in teaching pronunciation even after the rise of Communicative language teaching. As he states:

“Part of the reason for the focus on habit-formation in acquiring L2 phonology is the special characteristic of pronunciation, which, unlike other language skills, involves both cognitive and motor functions: few would deny that repeated practice of motor functions results in increased dexterity.” (p. 180).

One of the prominent techniques used in the teaching of pronunciation is one that makes use of phonemes and minimal pairs. According to Cook (2008), the concepts of phoneme and minimal pair have proved useful in organizing materials for teaching pronunciation. Generally, students are presented with pairs of words like “car” / ka:/ versus “cow” / kaʊ/ or “bra” /bra:/ versus “brow” /braʊ/. Then, they are asked whether they are different or not. This allows the teacher to build the whole phonemic inventory from scratch. Furthermore, for students, learning how to distinguish one phoneme from another becomes easy by distinguishing minimal pairs.

Another application of the same technique is discussed in Bowen (1972). According to the latter, a contrast (or minimal pair) is illustrated, explained and then presented for identification by students. For instance, for the contrast [base/vase], two words will be presented, sometimes alike (base...base), and sometimes different (base...vase). Students will be asked to respond “same” or “different”. Furthermore, the words can also be given one at a time with instructions to raise the left arm if “base” is heard or the right arm if it is “vase”. In this way, the teacher can make use of several contrasts which can be practiced later by students.

Finally, in terms of classroom procedures, Broughton et. al. (1980) advocates a “little and often” teaching sequence. As he describes it: “The teaching sequence must therefore be organized in terms of priorities and degrees of difficulty. The amount of time devoted to specifically pronunciation teaching depends on the larger priorities of the course in general” (p. 62). More specifically, pronunciation practice can be introduced into a lesson at any point where a significant problem is noticed. Broughton et. al. (ibid) further presents some guidelines that can be followed in the teaching of pronunciation, chief of which are the following:

- Recognition practice should precede production practice.
- The sound to be heard and spoken should be clearly highlighted in short utterances.
- Students should be given the opportunity to hear the same things said by more than one voice as the model.
- The English sounds can be demonstrated in contrast with other English sounds or in contrast with sounds from the native language.

Conclusion:

The topic of "Phonetics as a branch of linguistics " focus of this paper. Phonetics is study of human sounds that give idea form or make it audible. It examines the characteristics of these sounds ,how they are combined and how they relate to meaning. Today, this theme is one of the most fascinating, disputable, and crucial issues of theoretical phonetics of modern English. All in

all, the teaching of pronunciation has witnessed a considerable amount of changes in both approaches and techniques. Since the rise of traditional approaches to language teaching, teaching pronunciation has gained momentum. However, with the increased focus on the learner in learner-centered approaches and with the continuing emphasis on the communicative aspect of language teaching, teachers have sought new ways of incorporating pronunciation with other language skills. This has resulted in pronunciation being linked mainly to speaking and listening. Nevertheless, one should not deny the role of phonetics and phonology in the teaching of pronunciation since the more students are aware of the precepts and underpinnings of these branches of study, the more they will become aware of the idiosyncrasies of the target language and the more they are likely to achieve a native-like pronunciation.

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