

EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION TO EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract: *English pronunciation remains one of the most challenging aspects for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners due to differences in sound systems, stress, rhythm, and intonation. This article explores effective techniques for teaching pronunciation in EFL classrooms, focusing on both segmental (individual sounds) and suprasegmental (stress, intonation, rhythm) features. The study finds that using a combination of auditory discrimination, visual aids, kinesthetic activities, and technology-based tools improves learners' accuracy, fluency, and confidence in spoken English.*

Keywords: *pronunciation, EFL, segmentals, suprasegmentals, phonology, listening discrimination, minimal pairs, speech tools*

Pronunciation is a crucial component of communicative competence in any language. While vocabulary and grammar allow learners to build meaning, clear pronunciation ensures they are understood. Mispronunciation may lead to misunderstandings, even when other linguistic elements are correct.

For EFL learners, pronunciation is particularly challenging because of:

- The mismatch between English spelling and sound
- The presence of new or unfamiliar sounds
- The rhythmic and stress-timed nature of English
- Limited input and practice opportunities in non-English-speaking environments

Despite its importance, pronunciation instruction is often neglected or inconsistently taught. Many teachers lack formal training in phonology, and curricula prioritize reading and writing skills.

This study aims to identify and evaluate effective, practical techniques that EFL teachers can use to help learners overcome pronunciation difficulties and speak more confidently.

The research was conducted in three language centers across Uzbekistan with 60 intermediate-level EFL learners (aged 16–20) over a 6-week period.

Learners were divided into two groups:

- Group A received integrated pronunciation instruction using various techniques.

• Group B received general speaking practice without focused pronunciation instruction.

Techniques used in Group A included:

- Minimal pairs for sound contrast practice (e.g., ship/sheep)
- Phoneme charts and IPA symbols
- Choral and individual repetition
- Stress and intonation training through rhythm exercises and shadowing
- Recording and playback using apps for self-evaluation
- Mouth movement visuals and mirrors for articulatory awareness

Data collection methods:

Pre- and post-tests for pronunciation accuracy

Audio recordings analyzed by native-speaking raters

Student feedback forms on learning experiences

Performance Metric	Control Group (B)	Pronunciation Group (A)
Improvement in segmental accuracy	+5%	+22%
Improvement in stress/intonation	+3%	+18%
Speaking confidence (1–5 scale)	3.1	4.5
Student-reported usefulness (1–5)	3.4	4.7

• Group A showed significantly greater improvement in both segmental (individual sounds) and suprasegmental features.

• Learners particularly benefited from visual and auditory tools, as well as recording and feedback cycles.

• Students reported feeling more aware of their errors and more motivated to improve when using interactive techniques.

The findings highlight that explicit, focused pronunciation training yields substantial benefits for EFL learners. Unlike general speaking activities, targeted techniques address specific phonetic challenges and help learners form new articulatory habits.

Minimal pairs and discrimination exercises sharpen learners' ability to distinguish between similar sounds.

Shadowing and repetition build rhythm, stress, and fluency, especially when combined with audio models.

Kinesthetic and visual techniques—such as mirror work and gesture-based stress marking—enhance body awareness and pronunciation memory.

Technology tools like language apps, speech analysis software (e.g., ELSA Speak), and digital recorders allow learners to get instant feedback and track progress over time.

However, challenges include:

- Time constraints in the classroom
- Teacher discomfort or lack of training in phonology
- Students' fear of making mistakes during speaking

An additional finding of this study is the positive psychological effect of structured pronunciation activities. Learners who practiced pronunciation regularly reported a greater sense of control over their speaking performance. This suggests that pronunciation training does not only improve phonological accuracy but also enhances learners' self-esteem, a key factor in successful language acquisition.

Furthermore, explicit pronunciation teaching helps address fossilized errors, which often go unnoticed in communicative classes focused mainly on fluency. By drawing learners' attention to problematic sounds (such as /θ/ in "think" or word stress in "REcord" vs. "reCORD"), instructors can help students notice and correct long-standing mispronunciations.

The study also reinforces the importance of teaching suprasegmental features—word stress, sentence rhythm, and intonation—alongside individual sounds. Learners who improved in these areas sounded more natural and intelligible, even when they still had slight foreign accents. This aligns with research indicating that suprasegmentals contribute more to comprehensibility than segmental precision alone.

Another key insight is the effectiveness of learner autonomy tools, such as self-recording and pronunciation apps. These tools allow students to take control of their own learning and receive consistent input and feedback outside the classroom. Teachers should encourage learners to practice pronunciation as a daily habit, not just during lessons.

However, implementing these techniques effectively requires:

- Sufficient classroom time for pronunciation-focused activities
- Teacher confidence and training in articulatory phonetics
- A supportive learning environment, where making mistakes is seen as a valuable part of the learning process

Finally, cultural factors may influence learners' willingness to engage in pronunciation practice. In some educational settings, speaking aloud or mimicking teacher models may feel uncomfortable. Thus, teachers must create a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere, integrating pronunciation into games, group work, and performance-based tasks to encourage participation.

To overcome these, pronunciation should be integrated regularly into lessons rather than treated as an occasional add-on. Teacher training programs should also include practical phonetics and pronunciation pedagogy.

Effective pronunciation teaching is essential for developing intelligible and confident EFL speakers. By combining auditory, visual, and kinesthetic techniques—and leveraging technology—teachers can help learners overcome phonological barriers and improve spoken communication.

Rather than focusing solely on accent reduction, pronunciation instruction should aim to build comprehensibility, confidence, and authentic rhythm. With consistent practice and supportive strategies, EFL learners can make remarkable progress in their spoken English skills.

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