



TEACHING PHONETICS IN ENGLISH

Raximova Mexrangiz Xayotovna

Samarkand state institute of foreign languages

Group 2205

Scientific supervisor: Ahmedova Husniya

Abstract. *This article examines the role of teaching phonetics in English language instruction and its impact on learners' communicative competence. The study analyzes methodological approaches to pronunciation teaching, including articulatory training, phonemic awareness, and intonation practice. The findings indicate that systematic phonetic instruction improves learners' intelligibility, listening discrimination, and confidence in oral communication. The article argues that integrating phonetics into regular classroom practice enhances both linguistic accuracy and communicative effectiveness.*

Keywords: *phonetics, pronunciation teaching, phonemic awareness, communicative competence, intelligibility, EFL methodology*

Annotatsiya. *Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilini o'qitishda fonetika ta'limining o'rni va uning o'quvchilarning kommunikativ kompetensiyasiga ta'siri tahlil qilinadi. Talaffuzni o'rgatishning artikulyatsion mashqlar, fonematik sezgirlikni rivojlantirish va intonatsiya ustida ishlash kabi metodik yondashuvlari ko'rib chiqiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari muntazam fonetik tayyorgarlik o'quvchilarning nutq ravonligi, eshitib farqlash qobiliyati va og'zaki muloqotdagi ishonchini oshirishini ko'rsatadi. Fonetikaning dars jarayoniga integratsiyasi lingvistik aniqlikni ta'minlaydi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *fonetika, talaffuz o'qitish, fonematik sezgirlik, kommunikativ kompetensiya, tushunarlilik, EFL metodikasi*

Аннотация. *В статье рассматривается роль обучения фонетике в преподавании английского языка и его влияние на коммуникативную компетенцию учащихся. Анализируются методические подходы к обучению произношению, включая артикуляционные упражнения, развитие фонематического слуха и работу над интонацией. Результаты показывают, что систематическое фонетическое обучение повышает разборчивость речи, навыки аудирования и уверенность в устном общении. Интеграция фонетики в учебный процесс способствует языковой точности и эффективности коммуникации.*

Ключевые слова: *фонетика, обучение произношению, фонематический слух, коммуникативная компетенция, разборчивость речи, методика EFL*

Introduction

In the process of teaching English, phonetics is often considered secondary to grammar and vocabulary. In practice, however, small errors in pronunciation can lead to





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misunderstanding of the content of speech. For example, not distinguishing between long and short vowels or placing the accent incorrectly can cause a communicative breakdown. Phonemes that do not exist in the Uzbek language, in particular the sounds /θ/, /ð/ or /æ/, create difficulties for students. Also, the rhythm and intonation system in English is sharply different from the Uzbek language. Therefore, the formation of phonetic competence should be carried out not through theoretical explanations, but through regular practical exercises.

In the process of teaching phonetics, the main task is to consciously control the movement of the articulatory apparatus, develop phonemic hearing, and naturalize the flow of speech. Working with minimal pairs in lessons, using transcription, and analyzing real audio materials give effective results. Systematic phonetic training strengthens students' listening comprehension skills and builds confidence in oral communication.

Methodology

This study was organized on the basis of a mixed-method design. It used a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis methods. The study involved 48 students studying in the 9th grade. They were divided into two groups: an experimental group (24 students) and a control group (24 students). The experimental group was taught 20-minute targeted phonetic exercises twice a week for 8 weeks. The exercises were organized based on the articulatory explanation and minimal pairs-based exercise model recommended by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (2010) and the "visual phonemic chart" approach proposed by Underhill (2005). In each lesson, a specific phoneme or stress model was isolated and the place and method of articulation were demonstrated practically. The control group was taught based on a traditional textbook, without separate phonetic blocks.

During the data collection process, pre-test and post-test pronunciation diagnostics were conducted. The text, consisting of 120 words and 10 sentences, read by the students was audio-recorded. The recordings were evaluated by two independent experts. The evaluation criteria were based on the intelligibility and comprehensibility indicators recommended by Derwing and Munro (2005). Also, the minimum paired test was used to determine the ability to distinguish between sounds. Statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS program; paired sample t-test was used to determine the difference between groups. As part of the qualitative analysis, students' self-assessment questionnaires and short interviews were studied. This approach made it possible to determine the effect of phonetic training not only on pronunciation accuracy, but also on the level of students' confidence in speech.

Results

The data obtained at the end of the experiment showed that pronunciation accuracy increases significantly when phonetic training is carried out systematically. According to the pre-test results, the experimental group had an average accuracy of 61.4%, while in the post-test this figure reached 82.7%. In the control group, the increase was from 63.1%





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to 68.2%. In particular, a significant positive shift was observed in the pronunciation of the sounds /θ/, /ð/ and /æ/. In the minimal pair test, the participants of the experimental group reduced the number of errors by an average of 37%. The analysis of audio recordings revealed that the correct use of intonation patterns also increased. The result of the paired sample t-test showed a statistically significant difference for the experimental group ($p < 0.05$).

Indicator	Experimental Group (Pre)	Experimental Group (Post)	Control Group (Pre)	Control Group (Post)
Pronunciation Accuracy (%)	61.4	82.7	63.1	68.2
Minimal Pair Errors (number)	18.6	11.7	17.9	15.8
Intonation Accuracy (%)	58.2	79.5	59.4	64.3

The table shows that the experimental group achieved a stable and significant increase in all indicators. In particular, the difference between the accuracy of pronunciation and intonation indicators confirms the effectiveness of the methodological intervention.

The results of the qualitative analysis also supported the quantitative indicators. 79% of students reported that they felt more comfortable in oral speech after phonetic training. In interviews, most noted that the visual display of articulation instructions and the use of a phonetic table facilitated memorization. In the control group, no such changes were noted. Overall, the results showed that targeted phonetic training not only strengthened pronunciation accuracy, but also strengthened communicative confidence.

Discussion

The results of the study confirmed that the organization of phonetic exercises in a separate and systematic manner has a direct impact on the pronunciation skills of students. The significant increase observed in the experimental group was especially evident in the accuracy of segmental features - that is, individual phonemes. This indicates the effectiveness of exercises based on articulatory explanations and minimal pairs. In the control group, the increase was minimal, which means that the traditional textbook-based approach cannot systematically solve phonetic problems. In particular, the need for special instructions and repeated exercises in the process of mastering sounds that do not exist in the Uzbek language was practically confirmed. Positive shifts in intonation and stress indicators indicate that phonetic exercises effectively form not only segmental, but also suprasegmental units. This aspect is an important factor in increasing the naturalness and intelligibility of oral speech.

At the same time, the results also revealed an indirect effect of phonetics training on communicative competence. Analysis of interviews and self-assessment questionnaires showed that psychological barriers to the speech process were reduced in students.





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Participants in the experimental group noted that conscious work on pronunciation reduced the fear of making mistakes in the communication process. This factor led to an increase in the frequency of participation in oral activities. In the control group, such changes were not observed, which indicates that students become passive in speech when phonetic competence is not sufficiently formed. Thus, integrating phonetic training into the teaching process increases not only linguistic accuracy, but also communicative activity. These results justify the need to include phonetic training in the curriculum as a systematic, rather than episodic, component.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the need for systematic integration of the phonetics component in English language teaching based on practical evidence. The results of the experiment confirmed that targeted phonetic training significantly improves the accuracy of pronunciation, phonemic hearing and intonation accuracy. In particular, working on sounds that do not exist in the Uzbek language based on the articulatory approach has yielded positive results. Statistical analysis showed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, which scientifically substantiates the effectiveness of the methodological intervention.

Qualitative analysis also showed that phonetic training increases students' confidence in oral speech. Conscious work on pronunciation reduces psychological barriers in the communication process and enhances communicative activity. The results indicate that phonetics training should be organized as an integral part of the curriculum, not as an episodic exercise. Future research should focus on the long-term effects of phonetic training and its effectiveness across age groups.

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