

PRONUNCIATION TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Sayfutdinova Nilufar

Teacher of Andijan Academic lyceum of the Ministry of Internal Affairs

Abstract: This paper explores effective pronunciation teaching techniques tailored for non-native English speakers, emphasizing their critical role in improving oral communication and overall language proficiency. Pronunciation instruction encompasses various components, including segmental features (individual sounds) and suprasegmental features (stress, rhythm, and intonation), which collectively influence intelligibility and comprehensibility. The study reviews both traditional and contemporary pedagogical approaches, such as explicit phonetic instruction, communicative practice, technological tools, and learner-centered activities. It further examines the challenges faced by learners due to first language interference and proposes strategies for fostering autonomous learning and pronunciation self-monitoring. The findings highlight the importance of integrating systematic pronunciation training within the broader language curriculum to enhance learners' confidence, fluency, and effective communication in diverse sociolinguistic contexts.

Key words: Pronunciation teaching, non-native speakers, segmental features, suprasegmental features, phonetic instruction, communicative approach, language intelligibility.

Pronunciation plays a pivotal role in effective communication for non-native English speakers, significantly impacting intelligibility and listener comprehension. Despite the centrality of pronunciation in language learning, it has historically received less explicit attention in English language teaching (ELT) curricula compared to other language skills such as grammar or vocabulary. However, with the increasing globalization and the rise of English as a lingua franca, there is a growing recognition of the need for systematic and targeted pronunciation instruction. Teaching pronunciation involves addressing both segmental features (individual phonemes) and suprasegmental features (stress, rhythm, intonation), which jointly contribute to natural and comprehensible

speech. Various pedagogical techniques have been developed to facilitate pronunciation acquisition, ranging from traditional phonetic drills to communicative and technology-enhanced methods. This paper aims to critically analyze these techniques, their theoretical foundations, and practical effectiveness, with a focus on overcoming common challenges faced by learners, such as first language interference and fossilized errors.

Explicit Phonetic Instruction

Explicit phonetic instruction involves direct teaching of the articulatory features of English sounds. This method equips learners with the knowledge to produce and discriminate phonemes accurately by focusing on mouth positions, airflow, and voicing. Such instruction often utilizes visual aids like phonetic charts and mirrors.[1]

Example:

Teachers may use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to illustrate the difference between the voiced /v/ and voiceless /f/ sounds, helping learners distinguish and reproduce them correctly.

While explicit instruction provides a solid foundation, its mechanical nature may limit communicative practice unless supplemented with interactive activities.

Communicative Approach

The communicative approach integrates pronunciation practice within meaningful language use, emphasizing fluency and intelligibility over native-like accuracy. Activities such as role-plays, dialogues, and group discussions encourage learners to practice pronunciation in authentic contexts[2]

Example:

Learners participate in a simulated phone conversation, focusing on correct intonation patterns to convey politeness and urgency.

This method fosters learner engagement and motivation but may require initial phonetic training to prevent fossilization of errors.

Technology-Enhanced Techniques

Technological tools, including language learning software, mobile applications, and speech analysis programs, provide immediate and personalized feedback on pronunciation. Features such as waveforms, pitch visualization, and automated error detection support autonomous learning[3]

Example:

Applications like “Pronunciation Power” or “ELSA Speak” allow learners to compare their pronunciation with native speakers and receive corrective suggestions.

Technology facilitates flexible and individualized practice but depends on learners’ digital literacy and access to resources.

Learner Autonomy and Self-Monitoring

Encouraging learner autonomy involves training students to self-assess and regulate their pronunciation through recording, peer feedback, and reflection. Developing self-monitoring skills empowers learners to identify errors and implement corrective strategies independently[4]

Example:

Students record their speech, listen critically, and note problematic sounds to focus on in subsequent practice sessions.

This approach promotes long-term retention and continuous improvement but requires guidance to develop effective self-assessment techniques.

Pronunciation teaching is a vital component of English language education that directly influences learners’ communicative effectiveness and intelligibility. The diverse techniques available—from explicit phonetic instruction to communicative and technology-assisted methods—offer comprehensive tools to address the multifaceted challenges faced by non-native speakers. Integrating these approaches within a learner-centered framework fosters not only improved pronunciation accuracy but also greater learner motivation and autonomy. Ultimately, effective pronunciation instruction enhances learners’ oral proficiency and confidence, enabling successful interaction in global and multicultural contexts. Continued research and innovation in pronunciation pedagogy are essential to meet the evolving needs of English learners worldwide.

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