



## THE ROLE OF PHONETICS IN LANGUAGES TEACHING

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### ABSTRACT

The most distinctive feature of a language that makes it different from another language is its 'sound scheme'. Phonetics began a century ago in foreign language teaching. It offers the means to develop good pronunciation through enhanced awareness of relevant aspects of speech. How beneficial it will be depends on motivation and long term goals, Comparing with most European languages, English is not a phonetic language because words can have structural vowel letters and pronounced in different ways. Inherently, studying pronunciation may be difficult, but if we reduce everything which is difficult we may end up doing very little with language learning. This study clarifies the consciously use of phonetics in ELT and give useful methods to practice phonetics in long term goals.

*Key words: dental fricatives, voiced consonants, contrasts, major allophones, processes, prosodies*

### Annotation

This article deals with phonetics is meant the science of speech sounds, their production by means of lips, tongue, palate, and vocal chords, their acoustic qualities, their combination into syllables and other sound groups, and finally quantity, stress and intonation. Phonetics thus may be called that part of linguistic science which deals with the outward aspect of language as opposed to the inner or psychological side of language, or it may be lookt upon as that part of physics and of physiology which deals specially with sounds as used by human beings to communicate thoughts and feelings to one another.

### Аннотация

В данной статье речь идет о фонетике, которая подразумевает науку о звуках речи, их производстве с помощью губ, языка, неба и голосовых связок, об их акустических качествах, их объединении в слоги и другие звуковые группы и, наконец, о количестве, стрессе и интонации. Таким образом, фонетику можно назвать той частью лингвистической науки, которая имеет дело с внешним аспектом языка, а не с внутренней или психологической стороной языка, или ее можно рассматривать как ту часть физики и физиологии, которая имеет дело с используемыми звуками человеческими существами, чтобы передавать мысли и чувства друг другу.

**MAIN PART**

This study investigated whether the English pronunciation of those advanced Dutch learners improved, deteriorated, or remained stable over time once explicit pronunciation had ceased, by means of a longitudinal study of the speech of Dutch university students who were studying English. The speech of a cohort of learners was sampled at several points during their undergraduate degree by means of making audio recordings of several tasks; importantly, the explicit phonetics and RP pronunciation instruction they received during their degree stopped after the second year. The main sub-questions that were investigated were, therefore, whether degree year and task type were of any influence on the learners' pronunciation. This study also explored any possibly confounding influence of the amount of exposure to English learners received by taking into account the number of English-taught courses that they took during their undergraduate degree, and whether they spent a term abroad in an English-speaking country. The hypothesis was that the pronunciation of third-year students would become less native-like than it was before, with their pronunciation not being as native-like as it was at the end of the second year, but more native-like than at the end of the first year. Read speech was expected to be more native-like in pronunciation than spontaneous speech, and the possible confounder of having more exposure to English in general, whether through courses or going abroad, was expected to have a positive influence on the students' pronunciation.

Comparing with most European languages, English is not a phonetic language because words can have structural vowel letters and pronounced in different ways. That means that the words are not always pronounced the way they are spelled, e.g. great, treat, and threat. There are also words the way you spell is differently but they can be pronounced in the same manner. For instance, the word "read" is pronounced differently in these two sentences:

- I like to read newspaper.
- I have read the yesterday's newspaper. On the other hand, some words are pronounced precisely the same, but spelled differently. For example "way" and "weigh" in these two sentences:
- The way to cope with social problems.
- How much do you weigh? The following features show that English appears to be idiosyncratic which includes various features that are eccentric;

1. Large and detailed vowel system including complex process of length succession and weakening ( compete, competitive and competition)

2. A consonant system that includes dental fricatives - unusual sounds – and voiced consonants, which cause problems for learners: /ð/ Lenis Articulation: The same for the fortis dental fricative, with less muscular tension and weaker friction. Sometimes the vocal cords vibrate. Spelling: Regularly represented by th, as in this. Note that this is also true of/ θ/ Examples: That / θæt/ Mother / mʌθə/ Soothe /su:θ/ 3. Word stress placement, the syllable or syllables that are stressed can vary depending on the structure and function of a word. The first language speakers can usually predict accurately to put the stress correctly. However, it can be very difficult for second language learners. For example: • Economy • Economic In the word economy, the stress goes on the third last syllable unlike in economic the stress goes on the second last syllable.

4. The intonation system. This means that there is rising tone and falling tone when you ask questions. The former is used in a question that is answerable with "yes" or "no" while the

latter is used in a question that is not answerable with "yes" or "no" but is answerable by a simple sentence or statement:

The ability to hear and manipulate phonemes plays a causal role in the acquisition of beginning reading skills (Smith, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1998). Phonemic awareness is a major factor to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system, because letters represent sounds or phonemes. Without phonemic awareness, phonics makes little sense. It is essential to mapping speech to print. The best predictor of reading difficulty in kindergarten or first grade is the inability to segment words and syllables into constituent sound units (phonemic awareness)" (Lyon, 1995). A child hears and recognizes much more sounds of a language than he can produce himself. If a child cannot hear that "dark" and "dog" begin with the same sound or cannot blend the sounds /fffaaaaasssttt/ into the word "fast", he or she may have great difficulty connecting sounds with their written symbols to make a word. Therefore, phonemic awareness requires readers to notice how letters represent sounds. Then, it makes readers productive for print. There is respectable confirmation that the primary difference between good and poor readers lies in the good reader's phonological processing ability.

Phonetic lessons improved the temporal resolution ability in both groups. Hearing development may be benefited by the proficiency in two languages since the language acquisition and development is done by hearing, allowing people to share their ideas, information, feelings and thoughts[3]

Auditory perception of the speech is enhanced by the increase of acoustic experiences and the learning of phonological rules from the studied language. Auditory processing is responsible for processing phonemes, obtaining neural organization to learn from the environment

The hearing experience of a second language makes the recognition of the sound frequency standard easier. Although the lessons on the Phonetic system resulted in a better performance of the EG at the auditory processing test, the temporal resolution did not do the same for the Oral Test. The hearing experience of L2 may negatively affect for there are two different linguistic contexts which may lead to processing errors [1]. Hence, it is possible to state that the EG may have made mistakes for being exposed to more content.

Results do not corroborate with literature, which emphasizes the importance of the temporal processing at the phoneme identification in speech contexts. Temporal resolution is the ability to detect fast and sudden changes at the sound stimuli to differentiate two acoustic stimuli. This differentiation is essential to the oral and reading comprehension.

A study aiming to examine the association between the auditory processing and self-perception of teenagers/young adults registered at an English school program indicated the performance was affected in all age ranges. Data indicate that subjects succeeded at the RGTD, that is, after learning a second language they had better outcomes at the temporal resolution ability.

This study corroborates with the literature, which indicates that there were not found any effects of the Japanese knowledge at the temporal ability when compared to speakers of Brazilian Portuguese. Nevertheless, the study used the Test GAP in Noise (GIN).

It is important to consider, as qualitative data, that the words ended in /z/, /s/, /t/, /d/ and /th/ were pronounced incorrectly because they had the vowel i (semivowel /y/) at the end of

words. Phonemes /t/ and /d/ were pronounced as affricate (/tch/ or /dch/). Another common mistake was the pronunciation of the phoneme /e/ at the end of words. This phoneme is not pronounced in English when in the end, as a voiceless sound. It indicates phonetic-phonological confusion between both languages by the subjects. It is common at the L2 learning process since it is affected by the L1 because when there is basis and development of the L1, the L2 acquisition is reinforced which may cause positive or negative consequences. Subjects may have performed the interlanguage, which refers to a system of bilingual production that is not equivalent to L1 neither L2. It occurs due to lack of basic elements in a language although present in the other one which leads to mental confusion.

The phonetic-phonological confusion occurs since both languages are activated during the reading of the words in L2. The more experience the L2 learner has, the more sensitive they are to phonological system.

Classroom experiences are also important to the target language learning. Activities are interpreted and affected by different expectations of the learners, which are influenced by their beliefs and previous expectations of the learners which are led to do several activities and create various relationships in class, affecting the learning process. This study states the results since other qualitative data point out the relationship among the subjects as relevant. In the control group the relationship and the interaction among subjects was more successful.[2]

Much modern phonetic practice began a century ago in foreign language teaching classrooms. Courses mushroomed across Europe, directed by specialists such as Tilly and Vitor (Germany), Passy (France) and Jones (UK). Development was market-led, responding to requests for language-specific phonetics courses from students themselves. Phonetics is not an instant remedy for all pronunciation problems; it offers the means to develop good pronunciation through enhanced awareness of relevant aspects of speech. How good will depend on motivation and long term goals. The specific needs of all engaged in pronunciation teaching are encompassed by a mix of theoretical knowledge and practical skills: sufficient general phonetic theory, some comparative phonetics and phonology, practical phonetics

Teachers need: a (good) grasp of articulatory phonetics; a well-trained ear; knowledge of the phonology (contrasts, major allophones, processes and prosodies) of both the mother tongue(s) (today's language classes increasingly take place in multilingual classrooms) and the target language.

Teachers will anticipate likely problems arising from the interface between first and target languages (utilising knowledge of comparative phonetics and phonology), notice and analyse actual problems as they occur (using practical phonetic skills derived from ear-training experience), remedy the situation with bespoke exercises (applying knowledge of articulatory phonetic theory and pedagogy).

For articulatory phonetics [Ashby 1995](#), [Ladefoged 2001](#) and [Wells & Colson 1971](#) are recommended; for in-depth English phonetics, readers are directed to [Cruttenden 2001](#). Other language-specific literature will need to be individually researched depending on requirements, but access to a dictionary with reliable pronunciation information is imperative for all languages with non-phonetic spelling; yardsticks here are [Wells 2000](#) or [Crowther 1995](#). There are many (often anglocentric) conventional and electronic sources with ideas on

pedagogy in pronunciation teaching, including Avery & Erlich 1992, Baker & Goldstein 1990, Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994, Kenworthy 1987, MacCarthy 1978 (whose list of exercise types remains unrivalled) and Rudd 1971.

Among those who have contributed to the development of phonetic science we find physicists like Helmholtz, physiologists like Brücke, and philologists like Sievers, Storm and Sweet.

But what is the use of this science of speech sounds? Before attempting to answer this question I must be permitted to say that such a question in itself is not a scientific question. The true man of science pursues his inquiries without asking at every point about the use of examining this or that. A zoologist will not be deterred from examining the habits of ants or the muscular structure of their hindlegs by the cry of the man in the street that it is no use knowing all these things; he will go on patiently observing his animals in exactly the same conscientious and laborious way as if each little step in advance meant so much money saved or gained for mankind, or so much food for the poor. The truly scientific mind does not ask about profit or use, but tries by every accessible means to add to human knowledge and to our intelligent understanding of the wonderful world that surrounds us.

Still, the question about utility is not quite futile; only it should not be urged in the first place, and it should never stand in the way of scientific research, however useless it may seem in the eyes of the uninitiated. Science *is* useful; but often it is so in a roundabout or indirect way. When my countryman Oersted discovered that an electric current influenced the movements of a magnetic needle, he made a great step forward in science. He immediately saw the immense importance of his discovery for our knowledge of the great mystical powers of electricity and magnetism; he did not stop to ask himself about the practical usefulness of such knowledge; his concern was exclusively with the theoretical side of the question, and joyfully he sent out the message to his brother scientists that here was one important problem solved. But then, *your* countryman (1) Morse seized upon this theoretical discovery and turned it to practical account: the electric telegraph came into existence, and everybody saw the use of Oersted's discovery. In the same manner purely scientific investigations may unexpectedly lead to some great practical result: the observation of the habits of mosquitoes leads to the diminution of malaria and other diseases, and research work in chemistry may eventually benefit mankind in some way not at all anticipated by the original initiator.

Practical usefulness thus often comes in at the back door, tho it should not be our primary object in scientific pursuits. But on the other hand, if it is possible to point out some practical advantages, this can do no harm, and may even be valuable in inducing people to take up some line of study which has not hitherto been thought necessary to average students. And this applies with especial force to phonetics, which, besides presenting great interest to the inquisitive spirit, offers also no inconsiderable practical advantage to the student.

The teacher of foreign languages will find that a thoro knowledge of the essentials of phonetics will be extremely helpful to him in his classroom. Everybody knows the manner in which corrections of pronunciation were generally made in old-fashioned classes, and how they are still made by too many teachers, even among those who have themselves acquired a good pronunciation of the language they are teaching. The pupil reads some word in some miserably erroneous way, the teacher stops him and pronounces the word in, let us assume, the correct way. The pupil tries to imitate that pronunciation, but fails, and thus we have an endless repetition of the same word by the teacher, followed very often on the part of the

pupil by an equally endless repetition of nearly the same bad pronunciation as before, tempered as often as not by mistakes in the opposite direction, the pupil shooting over the mark where before he had shot below the mark. By dint of enormous patience much may no doubt be achieved in this way; but the way is long and laborious, and so tedious that generally all attempts are given up after some time, with no visible result except that of some precious time lost to both parties concerned. How different, if the teacher knows his business, that is to say, knows enough of phonetics to be able to tell the pupil just exactly what is the difference between the sound as he pronounced it and the sound as it should be. Then he is able to strike at the root of the evil, chiefly thru an isolation of both sounds concerned: he pronounces them long and distinct by themselves, without any sounds before or after which are apt to bewilder the ear by diverting the attention from the sounds themselves, and then he shows how the difference of impression which it is now easy to appreciate, is produced by shifting the tongue a little forward or a little backward, or by voicing the sound, or whatever the mistake in question may be. He has here to give a few explanations which are theoretical, to be sure, but of the kind that appeal at the same time to the practical instinct of the pupils and can be made interesting and attractive. A simple drawing on the blackboard, a look into a hand-mirror, a little experimenting with your fingers, and there you are: the sound that appeared so difficult to appreciate is now understood in its mechanism, and the practise needed to possess it for ever is nothing but a kind of play, which is felt to be just as enjoyable as learning how to whistle or to play other tricks with one's mouth is to the average child.[4]

## CONCLUSION

All in all the awareness of sound gives readers a procedure to approach sounding out and reading new words. It helps readers understand the alphabetic principle that the letters in words are systematically represented by sounds. As a result, children become a strong predictor who experience early reading success.

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