

TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION TO THE STUDENTS AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL: PRACTISES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract: *English pronunciation is a crucial component of language learning, especially for secondary school students who are preparing for effective communication in real-life situations. Despite its importance, teaching English pronunciation presents numerous challenges due to the intricacies of phonetic systems, regional accents, and the diverse proficiency levels among students. This article examines the current methods employed in teaching English pronunciation to secondary students, identifies the obstacles faced by educators, and provides recommendations for addressing these challenges. The results emphasize the need to combine both traditional and contemporary teaching approaches to deliver effective pronunciation instruction.*

Keywords: *English pronunciation, Secondary education, Teaching methods, Language challenges, Phonetic systems, Communicative competence, Language acquisition.*

Introduction. Instructing secondary-level students in English pronunciation is a vital yet frequently overlooked element of language education. While many learners prioritize vocabulary and grammar during their English studies, proper pronunciation is essential for effective communication, academic achievement, and social integration in English-speaking contexts. Historically, pronunciation instruction has been marginalized in favor of grammar and vocabulary, often due to the challenges in evaluating pronunciation and the belief that phonetic accuracy is less important in language use. At the secondary level,

students typically possess a better understanding of language mechanics but may find the complexities of English sounds, stress patterns, intonation, and rhythm challenging. This difficulty is exacerbated by their exposure to various accents, dialects, and the influence of their native language. Consequently, effective pronunciation teaching necessitates specific strategies and an awareness of the associated challenges. This article explores the current methods used in secondary schools for teaching English pronunciation, outlines the primary challenges faced by both educators and students, and proposes practical solutions to enhance pronunciation instruction.

Methodology. This study aimed to investigate the practices and challenges associated with teaching English pronunciation at the secondary level through a thorough review of existing literature on pronunciation instruction. In addition, qualitative data was gathered via surveys and interviews with English teachers from secondary schools across different regions. These educators were questioned about their teaching strategies, the obstacles they face, and the resources they utilize to help students overcome pronunciation challenges. The research also included classroom observations of English lessons at the secondary level that focused on pronunciation. This mixed-methods approach offered both theoretical insights and practical viewpoints on the teaching and learning of English pronunciation.

Literature Review. Conducting a comprehensive review of existing research is typically the initial step in any academic investigation. When it comes to teaching English pronunciation, researchers would examine prior studies on: Teaching methods: This encompasses the strategies employed by educators to assist students in enhancing their pronunciation, including direct instruction on sounds, prosody (which involves rhythm, stress, and intonation), as well as communicative approaches like shadowing or listening activities. Challenges in pronunciation instruction: This may involve recognizing common obstacles that learners encounter, such as the contrasts between sounds in their native language

and those in English, the intricacies of English vowels and consonants, or difficulties in recognizing and producing intonation patterns.

Results and Discussion. Current Teaching Practices A range of methods is used to improve English pronunciation skills among secondary students. The most frequently employed practices include: 1. Phonetic Training: Teachers typically start by introducing the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to assist students in grasping the sounds of English. This approach is especially beneficial for identifying and practicing challenging sounds that may not exist in the students' native languages. Common techniques include phonetic drills and minimal pairs exercises to help students distinguish between similar sounds. 2. Listening and Imitation: Another widely used method involves having students listen to native speakers and mimic their pronunciation. Resources like audio recordings, videos, and interactive software enable students to hear various accents and intonations, helping them to understand different pronunciation patterns. 3. Student Motivation and Engagement: Many students feel shy or self-conscious about their pronunciation, particularly in a classroom where they might compare themselves to their peers, which can be daunting. This anxiety can hinder their willingness to participate in pronunciation exercises. Furthermore, students might not recognize the immediate importance of pronunciation skills in their overall English language development, resulting in lower motivation. 4. Diverse Accents and Varied English Variants: English pronunciation varies significantly by region, and students are often exposed to different accents (such as British, American, Australian, etc.). This variety can lead to confusion and inconsistency in pronunciation teaching, as instructors may struggle to decide which accent to emphasize and which pronunciation rules to prioritize. 5. Assessment of Pronunciation: Assessing pronunciation can be subjective and difficult. Unlike grammar or vocabulary, which can be easily evaluated through written tests, pronunciation often requires more subtle, oral assessments. Teachers may find it

challenging to consistently and fairly evaluate their students' progress in pronunciation.

Conclusion. Teaching English pronunciation in secondary schools is vital for enabling students to become fluent and communicate effectively. Although various teaching methods are used, the difficulties of pronunciation instruction should not be ignored. Educators need to tackle the intricacies of phonetic systems, the influence of students' native languages, and the diverse accents of English in their teaching approaches. It is important to incorporate pronunciation training into the broader language curriculum, create a supportive atmosphere for practice, and leverage modern technology to improve learning experiences. With appropriate strategies, secondary school students can overcome pronunciation obstacles and enhance their speaking skills with greater accuracy and confidence.

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