

# THE IMPORTANCE OF PHONETICS IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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# ВАЖНОСТЬ ФОНЕТИКИ В ПОВЫШЕНИИ РАЗГОВОРНЫХ НАВЫКОВ УЧАЩИХСЯ

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# TALABALARNING GAPIRISH KO'NIKALARINI RIVOJLANTIRISHDA FONETIKANING AHAMIYATI

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**Abstract:** This article highlights the importance of phonetics for English speaking learners while speaking the language to a native speakers as well as understanding the context of another English speakers. The paper also emphasizes the role phonetics in improving student's speaking skills through the result of experiments. Besides that it will be focused in part on what phonetics is and what is studied in it.

**Key words:** Phonetics, pronunciation, heteronyms, homographs, homophones, word stress, spelling, syllables, minimal pairs, drills.

**Аннотация:** в этой статье подчеркивается важность фонетики для изучающих английский язык при разговоре на этом языке с носителями языка, а также для понимания контекста других носителей английского языка. В статье также подчеркивается роль фонетики в улучшении речевых навыков учащихся в результате экспериментов. Кроме того, он будет частично посвящен тому, что такое фонетика и что в ней изучается.

**Ключевые слова:** Фонетика, произношение, гетеронимы, омографы, омофоны, словесное ударение, орфография, слоги, минимальные пары, упражнения.

**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqola fonetikaning ingliz tilida so'zlashuvchilarni tilni ona tilida gaplashish paytida va boshqa ingliz tilida so'zlashuvchilarning kontekstini tushunishda ingliz tilida so'zlashuvchilar uchun ahamiyatini ta'kidlaydi. Shuningdek, maqolada eksperimentlar natijasida talabalarning nutq qobiliyatini oshirishda fonetikaning o'rni ta'kidlangan. Bundan tashqari, u fonetikaning nima ekanligi va unda nimalar o'rganilayotganiga qisman e'tibor qaratiladi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** Fonetika, talaffuz, heteronimlar, homograflar, gomofonlar, so'z urg'usi, imlo, minimal juftliklar.

There are many different nations in the world. According to their spoken languages are also different. In our globalized world, it is English that is seen as a convenient language for people of different nationalities to communicate with each other. And also in our country the demand for learning English is growing day by day. It enables life-enriching experiences like traveling studying and working abroad not only in the US but also many other countries where English is widely spoken. Basically there are four language skills that every student need to master in order to be able for communicate with others. They are reading, writing, listening and speaking. Speaking is an important skill that must be mastered by every person who wants to study English. But in order to pronounce word correctly and to make our speech fluent and understandable to the listener, we must also learn phonetics. At this point let's talk about what phonetics is and what it learns<sup>1</sup>.

Phonetics is the study of speech sounds. Phonetics is the important fundamental component of linguistics that deals with language sounds. Henry Sweet, an English philologist and phonetician, says that "Phonetics is the indispensable foundation to all studies of language". He considered that "Knowledge of phonetics was the first essential step in learning a foreign language, and that who attempt should be made to advance in grammar and vocabulary until the sounds of the language have been mastered". Besides that Phonetics is a discipline of linguistics that focuses on the study of sounds used in speech. It is not concerned with the meaning of these sounds the order in which they are placed or any other factor outside of how they are produced and heard and their various properties<sup>2</sup>.

When we talk about the role of phonetics in improving skills in this article, let's first think about pronunciation. If we take phonetics as a large section, pronunciation is a part of it. Before learning speaking skill, English language

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<sup>1</sup> Bowen T. & Marks. J."The pronunciation book". Harlow: Longman. 1992. – Page 67-80.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Roach."English Phonetics and Phonology: a practical course".Cambridge University Press 2009. - Page 56-60.

learners are recommended to learn pronunciation because it is the fundamental basic for teachers and students who want to master speaking in English. Pronunciation is one of the most aspects in speaking skill and one of the most important parts of English to communicate with others. In learning a foreign language pronunciation plays an important role. According to Farmand and Pourgharib “pronunciation is the way we pronounce a word, especially in a way that is accepted or generally understood. It is important when we pronounce a word, if speakers have very bad, our speech will not be understandable to the listener. Furthermore, Gilakjani mentions that pronunciation should be viewed as more than correct production of individual sounds or words. It should be viewed as an important part of communication that is incorporated into classroom activities. It means that the teachers have to work more with students to improve their pronunciation during the lesson. For example, at the end of the lesson, 10-15 minutes of conversation using English language should be organized and the teacher should pay attention to the pronunciation of the student who is speaking in the process. If the students’ pronunciation is not correct, the teacher must tell correct version. Teaching English pronunciation is an important aspect both of teaching and learning the language. Therefore, it is very crucial for students to start learning English pronunciation as much early as possible<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, there are many English words that are spelled the same but pronounced differently. Such words called heteronyms. The widest class of heteronyms are words that change their meaning depending on where the stress is placed. Heteronyms should also be considered as you develop your speaking skills. If such words are used in a sentence without knowing them, the meaning of the sentence may change completely. The example of such kind of heteronyms are given below.

Examples:

1. Tear- means “to rip a solid material” is a hole caused by tearing.

Tear- is a water drop coming from someone’s eyes.

2. Wind- is a movement of air (it can also be a verb meaning “to blow to a wind instrument”).

Wind- is a verb meaning “to turn, especially something around something else”.

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<sup>3</sup> Mohammad Hossein Keshavarz Girne American University. “An Introductory Course of English Phonetics”. The Organization for Researching & Composing University Textbooks 2018. ISBN: 078-600-02-0534-8. –Chapter 5 and 6. Page 65- 100.

3. Wound- is an injury.  
Wound- is the past tense of the verb “wind”.
4. Live- is a verb meaning “to be alive”.  
Live- is an adjective meaning “being alive”.
5. Read- means to perceive information provided in a written form.  
Read- is the past tense of the verb “to read”.

In the next point the benefits of word stress in developing speaking skills will be discussed. Word stress is your magic key to understanding spoken English. Native speakers of English use word stress naturally. Word stress is so natural for them that they don't even know they use it. Non-native speakers who speak English to native speakers without using word stress.

There are two problems:

1. They find it difficult to understand native speakers, especially those speaking fast.
2. The native speakers may find it difficult to understand them.

To understand word stress, it helps to understand syllables. Every word is made from syllables. Each word has one, two, three or more syllables.

For example: green, bag, egg...- one syllable; orange, apple, total...- two syllable; notebook, expensive...- three syllable; interesting, intelligent...- four syllable; unexceptional, unrealistic...- five syllable

In English, we do not say each syllable with the same force or strength. In one word, we stress one syllable. We say one syllable loudly and all the other syllable very quietly. This happens with all words with two or more syllables: **Teacher**, **japan**, **conversation**, **important** and etc.

The syllables that are not stressed are weak or small or quiet. Native speakers of English listen for the stressed syllables, not the weak syllables. If you use word stress in your speech, you will instantly and automatically improve your pronunciation and your comprehension.

Try to hear the stress in individual words each time you listen to English - on the radio, or in films for example. Your first step is to hear and recognize it. After that, you can use it!

There are two very important rules about word stress:

1. One word, one stress. (One word cannot have two stresses. So if you hear two stresses, you have heard two words, not one word.)

2. The stress is always on a vowel.

Maybe one question comes in your mind “Why is Word Stress Important?”. Word stress is not used in all languages. Some languages, Japanese or French for example, pronounce each syllable with equal emphasis. Other languages, English for example, use word stress<sup>4</sup>.

Word stress is not an optional extra that you can add to the English language if you want. It is part of the language! English speakers use word stress to communicate rapidly and accurately, even in difficult conditions. If, for example, you do not hear a word clearly, you can still understand the word because of the position of the stress. Think again about the two words photograph and photographer. Now imagine that you are speaking to somebody by telephone over a very bad line. You cannot hear clearly. In fact, you hear only the first two syllables of one of these words, photo... Which word is it, photograph or photographer? Of course, with word stress you will know immediately which word it is because in reality you will hear either PHOto... or phoTO... So without hearing the whole word, you probably know what the word is ( PHOto...graph or phoTO...grapher). It's magic! (Of course, you also have the 'context' of your conversation to help you.) This is a simple example of how word stress helps us understand English. There are many, many other examples, because we use word stress all the time, without thinking about it.

Here again the question may arise as to where the emphasis is placed and how we may know it

There are some rules about which syllable to stress. But...the rules are rather complicated! Probably the best way to learn is from experience. Listen carefully to spoken English and try to develop a feeling for the “music” of the language. When you learn a new word, you should also learn its stress pattern. If you keep a vocabulary book, make a note to show which syllable is stressed. If you do not know, you can look in a dictionary. All dictionaries give the phonetic spelling of a word. This is where they show which syllable is stressed, usually with an apostrophe (') just before or just after the stressed syllable. (The notes at the front of the dictionary will explain the system used.) Look at (and listen to) this example for the word plastic.

It can be said a lot about the uniqueness of the role of phonetics and its contribution to the study of English. But as a proof this experiment was conducted

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Roach. “English Phonetics and Phonology: a practical course”. Cambridge University Press 2009. - Page 73-75.

among a group of students to test whether phonetics really helps to develop speaking skills.

## **Experiment**

The first year students (from 18 to 19 years old) of the faculty of primary education in Samarkand State Pedagogical Institute. It is effective working with a small number of students in developing speaking skills and teaching correct pronunciation. Accordingly, the group was divided into two and there were 11 students in each group. The experiment was conducted with the first group of 11 people, the next group lessons continued as usual. Because at the end of experiment, when the speaking skills of the students of these two groups were tested, it was found that the speaking skills of the students of first group increased by 80% compared to the second group<sup>5</sup>.

**The techniques and methods used in the experiment are given in detail below:**

**Pronunciation and spelling activities:** Pronunciation and spelling is connected with each other. Homographs and homophones can be example of their relationship. During the experiment, students were taught how they are differed from each other. For example: will you “read” this book. I “read” this book yesterday. The examples of homophones: ”fair” and “fare”, “write” and “right”. Listening content was given to students and they were asked to identify few words and their correct spelling that they heard in the sentences.

**Minimal pairs:** it supports to identify the correct sounds from the given words. Activities like identifying the correct sounds from the given words can be introduced too. For example: pen, pin, put; tin, thin; tree, three and etc.

**Recording students’ English:** in the process of teaching or learning pronunciation students are given one minute text which was consisted of word that they were not able to pronounce correctly. This can help the students to go back and recheck their enhancement of pronunciation. Sounds, stress and intonation can be effectively tested by this technique.

**Reading aloud and listening activities:** in listening activities 1 or 2 minutes of tracks were given for students only to listen and remember without any text. It was homework. In next lesson, after listening the answer of students’, teacher let once again to hear audio track with texts in order to correct their mistakes. In reading aloud activities the teacher selected such as activity which is likely to be

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<sup>5</sup> Szilagy Laszlo. “Put English Phonetics into Practice”. BregzaszPress,2014.– Page 17-22.

mispronounced by the learners. First students rectified the mistakes and if not, it was done by the teacher<sup>6</sup>.

It can be concluded that this paper has attempted the need of phonetics in improving not only speaking skills but also in other aspects. The most important thing in learning process is that we can first choose what we need and the techniques and methods which are most convenient and effective for us. But keep in your mind that the role of an experienced teacher in this process is also invaluable.

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