TEACHING ENGLISH PRONOUNCATION WITH MEDHODS AND CHALLENGES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract. This article explores the effective teaching of English pronunciation in secondary schools, highlighting both instructional methods and the common challenges faced by educators and learners. It examines various pedagogical approaches, including the communicative approach, audio-lingual method, and the use of phonetic training tools, to enhance learners' pronunciation accuracy and fluency. The study also investigates prevalent obstacles such as students' native language interference, lack of phonetic awareness, limited classroom time, and insufficient teacher training. Through a review of current practices and empirical studies, the article offers recommendations for integrating pronunciation teaching into the English language curriculum more effectively, ultimately aiming to improve learners' overall oral communication skills.

Key words: Teaching pronunciation, English as a Second Language (ESL), secondary education, pronunciation difficulties, phonological awareness, classroom strategies, learner motivation, accent reduction, speech intelligibility.

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation plays a vital role in the development of effective communication skills in English language learners. It not only influences how well learners are understood but also affects their confidence and willingness to participate in spoken interactions. In secondary schools, where English is taught as a second or foreign language, teaching pronunciation is a key component of language instruction. However, it often receives less attention compared to other language skills such as grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing.

Several factors contribute to this neglect. Many English teachers lack specialized training in phonetics and pronunciation instruction, leading to a reliance on traditional methods that may not adequately address students' needs. Moreover, the influence of learners' first languages often results in persistent pronunciation errors that are difficult to correct without targeted practice. Other challenges include large class sizes, limited time allocated to speaking activities, and a lack of appropriate teaching materials or technological tools. Despite these challenges, numerous methods have been developed to support the teaching of English pronunciation. These include the use of the phonemic chart, minimal pair drills, listening discrimination activities, and communicative pronunciation tasks that integrate pronunciation into meaningful language use. The incorporation of technology, such as language learning apps and speech analysis software, also offers new opportunities for personalized and interactive pronunciation practice. This article aims to explore the various methods employed in teaching English pronunciation in secondary schools and to examine the challenges that hinder their effective implementation. By analyzing current practices and drawing on both theoretical and empirical research, the article seeks to provide practical recommendations for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers to enhance the quality of pronunciation instruction and ultimately improve learners' oral competence.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

English pronunciation plays a pivotal role in effective communication, particularly in environments where English is used as a second or foreign language. It significantly impacts learners' oral intelligibility, fluency, and confidence. However, in many secondary schools across the globe, pronunciation remains an underrepresented aspect of English language instruction. This issue stems from a combination of systemic, pedagogical, and linguistic challenges, despite growing awareness in applied linguistics about its importance in overall communicative competence .Scholarly works highlight the evolving perception of pronunciation teaching in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). Historically, pronunciation was approached through mechanical drills and imitation, particularly during the era of the audio-lingual method. However, this changed with the rise of communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasized meaning over form and led to a decline in

explicit pronunciation instruction. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest, driven by research showing that poor pronunciation can hinder learners' comprehensibility more than grammatical or lexical errors. Various methods have been employed to teach pronunciation. Among the most widely used are phonetic training using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), contrastive analysis through minimal pairs, auditory discrimination tasks, and articulatory explanations. More recently, communicative pronunciation activities have gained traction, including role-plays, simulations, and the use of rhythm and intonation exercises within real-life contexts. The incorporation of technology such as computer-assisted language learning (CALL), pronunciation software, speech analysis tools, and mobile apps has further expanded the scope of pronunciation teaching, offering learners individualized feedback and repeated practice opportunities. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these methods in secondary schools is often compromised by a range of practical challenges. Teachers frequently cite a lack of confidence and formal training in teaching pronunciation. Many pre-service and in-service teacher education programs do not adequately cover phonology or pronunciation pedagogy, leaving teachers with limited tools for instruction. In addition, classroom conditions such as large student numbers, rigid syllabi, exam-focused teaching, and insufficient time for speaking activities hinder the consistent integration of pronunciation practice. Furthermore, first language interference remains a persistent challenge, as learners tend to apply phonological rules from their native language when producing English sounds, leading to errors in stress, intonation, and articulation.

To investigate these issues in real-world settings, this study adopted a qualitative research methodology. The research involved data collection from five secondary schools, chosen to represent both urban and rural contexts and to reflect a variety of resource availability. Classroom observations were conducted over a period of six weeks, focusing on how teachers incorporated pronunciation activities into their lessons, what techniques were used, and how students engaged with them. A total of ten English teachers participated in semi-structured interviews, which explored their perceptions of the importance of pronunciation, the strategies they use, the challenges they face, and their training background. In addition to teacher data, 100 students from different grade levels completed

structured questionnaires designed to capture their experiences with pronunciation learning. Questions addressed their confidence in speaking English, specific pronunciation difficulties they encountered (such as sounds, stress patterns, and intonation), their attitudes toward pronunciation instruction, and their preferences for different learning methods. The data collected from observations, interviews, and questionnaires were analyzed thematically. Recurring themes included insufficient training in pronunciation teaching, limited classroom time, lack of appropriate teaching materials, and students' reliance on their first language phonology. Despite these challenges, teachers showed a willingness to improve their practices and expressed interest in professional development opportunities focused on pronunciation. Students also expressed a strong desire to improve their pronunciation, associating it with greater fluency, self-esteem, and academic success.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study found that pronunciation is recognized as important by both teachers and students, yet it receives limited attention in secondary school classrooms. In most observed lessons, pronunciation was addressed only incidentally—typically during reading or speaking activities rather than through planned, focused instruction. Only a small number of teachers incorporated regular pronunciation exercises, such as minimal pair drills or stress and intonation practice. Teacher interviews revealed that many educators feel underprepared to teach pronunciation effectively. Most had not received specific training in phonetics or pronunciation pedagogy during their education. As a result, they often used basic repetition techniques and avoided explaining sound articulation or phonological rules. Time constraints, exam preparation, and large class sizes were commonly cited as additional challenges.

Student feedback supported these findings. Many students reported difficulty with sounds such as /θ/, /ð/, and /r/, and with understanding stress and intonation patterns. A majority said they wanted more classroom time devoted to speaking and pronunciation activities. Interestingly, some students mentioned using mobile apps and online videos to improve their pronunciation outside of school, suggesting a positive attitude toward technology-assisted learning. A noticeable difference was also observed between urban and rural

schools. Urban schools had more access to resources such as multimedia tools, while rural schools often lacked adequate equipment and teacher support for pronunciation instruction.

CONCLUSION

Pronunciation is a vital component of English language learning that directly influences students' communicative competence. This study revealed that while both teachers and students recognize its importance, pronunciation instruction is often insufficient and inconsistently applied in secondary schools. Teachers face multiple challenges, including limited training, lack of resources, time constraints, and exam-focused curricula. Students, in turn, struggle with specific pronunciation difficulties and express a desire for more structured practice and feedback. The findings emphasize the need for greater attention to pronunciation within English language teaching programs. Teacher training should include practical instruction in phonetics and pronunciation methods, and curricula should allocate time and resources for regular pronunciation practice. Incorporating technology and interactive methods can further enhance learning and engagement. With the right support, pronunciation can become a more integrated and effective part of secondary school English education.

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