

PHONICS, PHONOLOGY AND PHONETICS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

АКУСТИКА, ФОНОЛОГИЯ И ФОНЕТИКА АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА
ДЛЯ ИЗУЧАЮЩИХ ИНОСТРАННЫЙ ЯЗЫК

YABANCI DİL ÖĞRENEMLER İÇİN İNGİLİZCENİN SES, FONETİĞİ VE
FONOLOJİSİ

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights that study of phonics, phonology and phonetics as the crux of any language. Some of the explicitly seen problems due to inappropriate way of learning concerning pronunciation of English in countries where English is Foreign and Second Language in general and arctic countries in particular are discussed. Factors leading to these problems are lack of knowledge in phonics, phonology and phonetics of English, habitual substitution with native accents and the like. The capabilities of the foreign language learner are highlighted. Problematic areas are pin pointed. Methods are suggested. A new outlook is drawn for phonics, phonology and phonetics by giving reasons for its non-acquisition and the ways to acquire it.

Phonics, phonology and phonetics are the backbone of language learning.

Keywords: English, phonics, phonetics, phonology, foreign language

АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье подчеркивается, что фоника, фонология и фонетика, являются основами любого языка. В некоторых странах, где английский преподают как иностранный и из-за неправильного способа обучения, возникают проблемы с произношением, ищут методы по решению его. Факторами этих проблем является отсутствие знаний в акустике, фонологии и фонетике английского языка, акценты родного языка и тому подобное. Нужно уделить внимание на проблемные участки обучения, надо

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применять разные методы, обратить внимание на акустику, фонологию и фонетику языка.

Акустика, фонология и фонетика являются основами по изучению языка.

Ключевые слова: Английский, фоникс, фонетика, фонология, иностранный язык

ÖZET

Bu makale, herhangi bir dilin çıkış noktası olarak phonics, fonoloji ve fonetik üzerinde durmaktadır. Genel olarak İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği ülkelerde uygun olmayan metodlar ile İngilizce öğrenirken karşılaşılan telaffuz ile alakalı sorunlara çözüm aranmaktadır. Bu sorunlara yol açan faktörler İngilizce phonics, fonoloji ve fonetik, yerli aksan ve benzeri ile alışılmış yerleşik bilgi eksikliğinden kaynaklıdır. Yabancı dil öğrenen kişinin kapasitesi vurgulanır. Sorunlu alanlara dikkat çekilir. Yöntemler önerilmektedir. Onunla alakalı olmayan kazanımlar ve elde etme yolları verilerek phonics, fonoloji ve fonetik için yeni bir görünüm çizilmektedir.

Phonics, fonoloji ve fonetik dil öğrenmenin belkemiğidir.

Anahtar kelimeler: İngilizce, phonics, fonetik, fonoloji, yabancı dil

Phonics, phonology and phonetics are the fundamental areas of speech sounds in any language. It could be mastered anytime and anywhere the only difference is the method of learning that makes it to achieve it. The reasons and problems of deviated pronunciation of words are analyzed and methods are discussed to overcome the problems and practice the right speech sounds in English language. The problems of English language learners are not uniform in nature as regions are spread across the globe with different cultural background. The method to overcome the problem too differs. This article starts with a wider analysis and localizes itself with analyzing the inappropriate articulation of speech sounds and the appropriate one is stressed.

This article affirms that a new language learner can acquire the speech sounds in its pristine form. He could belong to any age group or profession that doesn't make any difference. Native or near native accent could be achieved in any language if proper method is put in place, English language is not an exception for this. In the student community everybody is in the process of acquiring a language of international reach in one way or the other. There is no fixed time, age, or anything of that kind to learn a new language. This article will give a new boost to second, third or fourth language learner. Of course it doesn't limit up to four, it could be more. There is no limit to learn new languages. Learning new language is an art. There is no dearth of theories, myths and misconceptions with reference to phonics, phonology and phonetics of both first and second languages while both are the acquired one. The idea of people in their teen or young age learn or acquire quickly a new language (Lenneberg, 1967) is put aside that psychological and social factors contribute to their quick learning (Newport, 1990). Even sexagenarian performs well in learning a new language. (Krashen, Long, and Scarcella, 1979), (Ostwald and Williams, 1981). The point is age or second language is not an issue. It is the will power and the right method that is doing the round. The difference is the more time we give or the more practice we do for the

language concerned that will hit the nail on the head. Any human being in this world tends to use at least one language, the native or mother tongue and has a mastery over it due to the proximity to the language. Even a second language could be made as a first language if proper method of learning and the time required is used appropriately. Numerous examples could be cited. TESOL says that Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNEST) outnumber Native English-Speaking Teachers (NEST) in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) countries. This article concentrates on steps as to how to overcome the hurdles for a better speaking with a right pronunciation.

A foreign language learner faces numerous language related problems in the course of his learning a new language. Problems could be categorized under listening, speaking, reading and writing. The problems could be of internal or external or both. One has no/less opportunity to hear native/neutral English sounds. Opportunities are limited. Even if one speaks with his friend in a foreign language both tend to switch over to native language many times due to the situation and environment. However, sheer practice in a methodical way yields. Learners of any level cannot rely on the spelling of a word for pronunciation as English is a learned language. This is the same case even with native speakers. Even English students spend more time learning to read and write their language. To learn to pronounce English correctly it is of much help to learn to read phonic transcription and/or have a CD dictionary with sound. In the earlier stage of learning English Language especially phonics, phonology and phonetics the minds of EFL/ESL learner come to a jerk. Therefore the greatest difficulties are faced by the learners at the start.

Word is a linguistic phenomenon of phonemes. Word accent is a characteristic pronunciation and is determined by cultural background of a person. It is a common knowledge that native accents substitute sounds in all its dimension in the new language learning process, if the right thrust is not given to the structure of speech sounds in any foreign language at the time of learning especially English language. No two languages are same in its structure and so the elements of language stress, intonation, pitch and other properties of sound must be learned in and out for these are governed by certain principles which could be mastered. Basic knowledge on sound system must be inculcated with priority in the first place for other things to fall in line in matters of foreign language learning.

Modulating the sounds really count in speaking of a new language learning process especially in English. Tone and tenor have control over meaning. When the vocal cords come together during the course of speaking it vibrate and produce sound. The maximum number vibration of the vocal cords is considered as frequency of vibration. The more the frequency is the higher the pitch is. It is the will with the right method of the learner that prompts him or her to learn and excel in the sound system of a new language.

Languages follow different stress patterns. In English language one syllable is stressed more than others in a word. A syllable is stressed primarily, with a higher pitch, while the remaining are modulated accordingly. The basic necessity of a syllable is a vowel sound the centre of any syllable which starts with a consonant sound and almost it ends too. There are words with one syllable of only vowel sound. Syllable study must be made thoroughly and practiced appropriately to fine tune the language learning.

The backbone of any language is its sound system. Understanding the phonics, phonology and phonetics of language is the primary requirement for mastering any foreign language. It is true as for as English language learning too. Phonics is relationship between

the sounds and the letters used to represent the sounds. Students or the learner must be educated in phonics even in the earlier stages of learning a foreign language including English. Phonology is the distribution pattern of speech sounds. It is about how speech sounds behave in a language. Phonology is a link between phonetics and the rest of linguistics. To have full understanding of sounds in English the knowledge of phonics, phonology and phonetics are required. The primary areas are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening: New language learner must create an environment where he could listen the speech sounds of the new language. Speaking: The learner must speak in the target language almost every time if possible. Reading: Before phonetics phonics the sound structure must be learned to pave the way for a better reading. Words could be learned by analyzing the sounds which make it. This could be started off with alphabetical sounds. Learning alphabetical sounds would help students to decipher or decode the sounds to some extent as it is a learned language. Learner at any level cannot expect that he would encounter with known words when he reads English, in such a scenario phonic and alphabetical sound lessons would prop a learner up and putting to and together he could read English well. In today's world there are plenty of opportunities for reading in any language and English is not an exception. It depends on the interest of the learner. Newspapers and news services online could be made use of. Learner could choose their area of interest and there is no dearth of material on the internet.

The study of speech sound in any language is phonetics. English language has forty four generally accepted speech sounds. Phonetics is fundamental in linguistics. Phonetics is of three branches namely Articulatory, Acoustics and Auditory Phonetics. Articulatory phonetics deals with how sounds are articulated where mouth, tongue and lungs are parts of the system. Auditory phonetics deals with how it sounds when articulated. Acoustic phonetics is about how the sounds are perceived in our brain. Phonology deals with the way in which speech sounds behave in any language. When there is difference in sounds there would be difference in meaning too. Phonology is dealt with this difference in meaning due to the difference in sound. The idea of phonology is that any spoken language can be broken down into pieces of sound called phoneme. Phonology links phonetics with other organs of linguistics. The knowledge of phonetics and phonology make English language learner to have a command over the sounds of English speech.

It is a common knowledge too that there are English language speakers who have developed native accents and have not visited countries where English is first language. One thing is clear that impossible is impossible in matters related to acquiring native accents wherever the learner is. However the approach must be methodical to achieve this. A multi pronged strategy would be the appropriate one. This strategy could be streamlined under four categories. Exposure to listening, speaking, reading and writing English pave the way.

There must be an evaluation mechanism to know the level of English language acquired by any student. It must be started in the beginning of a term itself. This would help to know whether there is progress or stagnation in the process of acquiring a foreign language. A simple logic would be recording a student's level of English knowledge in the beginning and in the end of a term would suffice to see the difference.

There are certain speech sounds in consonant and vowel need more attention as these are substituted by native speech sounds frequently. Few of them are /ð/, /l/, /ʊ/, /w/, /z/

and /θ/. These sounds belong to the category of voiced lingua-dental, front, back vowels and approximant respectively.

The articulation of the sound /ð/ must involve the tongue and the teeth and must produce vibration on the throat. However it is articulated as fricative sound and vocal card is applied to make it voiced, at times as voiceless sounds and mispronounced as /s/ and /z/. Words like ‘brother’, ‘father’ and ‘they’ could be cited as examples. The correct way is /brʌðə(r)/, /fɑ:ðə(r)/ and /ðei/. The incorrect way is /brʌzə(r)/, /fɑ:zə(r)/ and /zei/. Reasons for these substitutions are due to varieties of native sounds in the EFL/ESL regions and other sounds where the sounds are not exactly voiced lingua-dental as in English language.

Man is a social animal. He is not an island. He comes in contact with others one way or the other. The first step is choosing friends who have the same temperament or instill in them an interest in the new language will do. This will help one learn, develop or refine English language. Exposure to speaking in English could be achieved through this way. Visual pictures which represent the positions of speech organs including tongue would help more.

The learner would know as to where the articulation takes place, the involved speech organs and its positions if the articulation picture is in front of him or at least he could visualize the same in his mind’s eye at the time of pronouncing the sound. These are the vital areas learner of any level and stage must pay attention to. Repeated practice makes one perfect.

The articulation of vowel sound /ɪ/ must be done using the front portion of the tongue. However the sound is prolonged mistakenly. Word like ‘pity’ could be cited as example. The correct way is /pɪtɪ/ and the incorrect way is /pi:ti/. Every language is a system of culture of people of different regions in this globe. It brings the cultural linguistic aspect with the learner to a new language.

The articulation of vowel sound /ʊ/ must be done using the back portion of the tongue instead it is prolonged mistakenly. Words like ‘look’, ‘book’, ‘good’ and ‘wood’ could be cited as example. The correct way is /lʊk/, /bʊk/, /gʊd/ and /wʊd/. The incorrect way is /lv:k/, /bv:k/, /gv:d/ and /wv:d/. Listening the right sound of the word is limited in any EFL/ESL area however this could be achieved through listening audio files or class lectures repeatedly.

The articulation of the approximant sound /w/ must make the organs of speech to be away from contact as it is labiodental. However it is articulated as fricative sound and vocal card is applied to make it voiced sound and mispronounced as /v/. Word like ‘where’ could be cited as example. The correct way is /wɛə/ and the incorrect way is /vɪə/.

The articulation of the sound /ɜ/ must evoke the central portion of the tongue into action to be called as central vowel sound. At least there must be prolongation of the sound. However it is articulated as approximant sound and middle portion of the tongue come near the upper ridge of the mouth, and the edges of tongue in both sides touch teeth and ridge joint and mispronounced as /j/. Words like ‘birthday’, and ‘her’ could be cited as example. The correct way is /bɜθdeɪ/ and /hɜ/. The incorrect way it is pronounced is /bɜsdeɪ/ and /hɪə/. Differences of opinion are abound among linguists here however popular variants follow two ways namely rolling back or pulling back of the tongue to produce this sound. The sound /θ/ must be articulated as lingua dental voiceless fricative.

A teacher or guide who is aware of the hurdles in the minds of EFL/ESL learner in form beliefs or assumption like age factor, exposure to the language, influence of native language and other negative theories of the like removes and proves as myths to the learners to take the step towards learning the sounds of the language with new vigor. There are many ways to get the correct pronunciation. Listening and imitating the mouth movements of the speaker or teacher is one of the direct observation methods. Reading aloud after the teacher is the next. Listening to recorded model of sounds is another way. A teacher arranges conversation and role play exercises among students in the class room. Correct pronunciation enhances the speaker's acceptability among language speakers' circle. The right pronunciation of English language kick starts the smooth sailing of the speaker whether he is a student, teacher, businessman, politician or whoever he is as English language is an international medium in many ways. It is explicitly clear that learning quality pronunciation of English is a prioritized area for a learner.

Conclusion

In order to learn the language English well, the EFL/ESL learner must prioritize the learning of pronunciation of English in all its dimensions namely phonics, phonology and phonetics in the first place. The other aspects of linguistics of English language would be set right in one's mind for mastering it though one element cannot replace the vitality of the other one in linguistics.

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