

## ROLE OF PHONETICS IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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### *Abstract:*

Phonetics is one of the important branches of linguistics. It is not significant only for pronunciation but also for listening and spelling sounds correctly when communicating with people. Which means it has its role in speaking too. Nevertheless, at present many English learners try different ways of improving speaking and listening skills such as shadowing, listening podcasts that are not appropriate for their level and etc. They have no idea about phonetics and how it can help them for improving these two skills while learning English. Therefore, they face obstacles in the way of language acquisition for many years. It is not a problem just for pupils, otherwise university students are no exception too. It is more efficient to get the knowledge of speech sounds, how they are pronounced, which part of the body is active during producing each sound instead of imitating different videos, though it is not understandable. This article is mainly devoted to the phonetics and to what extent it is essential while learning English. In addition, there are some facts that are proven by survey as in the following paragraphs.

*Key words:* phonetics, phonemes, sounds, communication, pronunciation

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### Introduction

Phonetics is a branch of linguistics that deals with production, transmission and reception of the sound. The word "Phonetics" itself derived from Greek word "fone" meaning "sound". Even though it is not specific to any particular language, the significance of this branch plays a huge role in learning English. Linguists who have a speciality in concerning with speech sounds are called "Phoneticians".

According to phoneticians, this branch of linguistics is in use since ancient times, as there are evidences that in the 6th century BC phonetic studies were conducted by Sanskrit grammarians. Panini- Hindu scholar is one of the examples of this grammarians. [Wikipedia]

### Literature review

In English language, the field of phonetics is traditionally divided into three sub-disciplines based on the research questions involved such as how humans plan and execute movements to produce speech (articulatory phonetics), how various movements affect the properties of the resulting sound (acoustic phonetics), or how humans convert sound waves to linguistic information (auditory phonetics). Traditionally, the minimal linguistic unit of phonetics is the phone—a speech sound in a language which differs from the phonological unit of phoneme; the phoneme is an abstract categorization of phones, and it is also

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defined as the smallest unit that discerns meaning between sounds in any given language.[Lynch, Matthew (2021.04.07)"The Differences Between a Phone, Phoneme And an Allophone"]

In general, Phonetics always plays a vital role in the study of English literature. The use of literature came back to the eighteen century, and it is applied to designate fictional and imaginative writings such as poetry, prose, fiction and drama [Abrams and Harpham, 2012]. According to Dr. Anil M. Shende professor at the city college Nagpur, For English language teachers a question arises that why the use of phonetics is important in teaching English literature for foreign and second language. Answered this question is that the first problem that confronts the English learner in his effort in order to learn a speaking –knowledge of English language as his foreign or second language is its pronunciation. Before, English pupil starts learning any part of the vocabulary or grammar of the language, he must be able to recognize the sound system of the language as uttered by an English native speaker or he must be able to produce them himself in such a way that an English native speaker understands him. The role of language phonetics in today's educational system of language literature delineates that to be phonetics in any language literature classroom; an English language learner must be able to use it for a wide range of purposes.

A language literature student should have a set of language skills, knowledge, and understanding of phonetics that help him to use language for reading and writing in and out of his classroom. However, it is felt that English language literature teachers should be made aware of the use of phonetics system in teaching English literature in classroom. In other words, part of the role of the English language literature teacher is to help students perceive sounds of English. Note that the sound system of a foreign language is not easy for a second or foreign language learner. Each language has its own set of sounds system; there is, in fact, some sounds of English language are different from other languages. In this case, some sounds of English do not occur in other languages. One of the best ways to teach the learners is that they should be made familiar with the sound system of this language. The English literature teachers should check their learners' pronunciation and help them to do appropriate pronunciation.

Be it young learners or adults, once they know how to use phonetics in everyday life, they can easily recognize the sound each letter makes and how they must be pronounced when they are in combination with each other. One of the core objectives of learning phonetics is to make learners capable of interpreting the words even when they listen from a person having a different accent.

For many English learners, nowadays correct pronunciation, spelling as well as listening native speakers are considered as problem while learning this language. In Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, in particular students have a difficulty while communicating with other speakers. Therefore, I have recently conducted a survey among the students of this Institute for proving the role of phonetics in english acquisition.

#### **Research and Methodology**

At Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages the course of Phonetics is taught at the first year of the institute. The main purpose of this course is improve pronunciation, listening as well as spelling skills of students in order to

make them a good language user. The department of English history and grammar is responsible for this task. Lessons in this course consists of learning speech sounds with their transcripts from the IPA- International Phonetic Alphabet in the beginning of the course and later students learn speech sounds at the context of poems, musics movies as well. For evaluating whether students are able to end this course they have to pass exam orally as this subject is related to speech sounds.

The subject of phonetics is divided into 4 credits which includes 120 hour with independent studies within one semester. For independent tasks students have to learn native speakers' pronunciation by watching or listening different movies and podcasts, then writing review or reflection on them. In general, at the end of the course if students participated lessons actively they are provided with good pronunciation and listening skills.

At Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages the survey was conducted recently in order to prove the role of phonetics in learning English. This survey was carried out between students who had the course of phonetics when they were first year and those who have not studied this subject yet. Second year and the third year students were asked to participate in the survey respectively in 2023.

#### Results and Discussion

In this survey there were 28 questions with 4 choices which was in the same intermediate level for each group

The survey was conducted between 30 students who have different levels of English. The questions in the survey are as in the following:

- In each line identify the consonant or vowel sound that is silent in three out of 4 words;
- In each line, identify the word that has a different final sound;
- -ed ending in each line of words, circle the odd one out

The questions in the survey are in the form of exercises with choices and above instructions are given as an example..

For first type of exercise students illustrated their skills whether they can distinguish which one is silent consonant and which one a silent vowel

In the second exercise, it can be easily seen that students have to find difference of the sounds in the given context.

For the last one knowing -ed ending is demanded from participants to differentiate whether the ending is pronounced as -t, -d or -id.

According to the results of the survey, students who studied the subject of phonetics very well demonstrated good results by answering 22-25 correct answers out of 28. These students are from the second year students whose proportion is considered 45% if calculated. The rest 20% of the students answered 13-15 correct answers while 35% of them constituted 7 or 8 correct answers.

When it comes to the third year students, however, they did not have correct answers more than 10 out of 28 despite the fact that some of them copied answers from each other and used their smartphones. 11 out of 15 participants have 9 correct answers meanwhile even some of them were not able to understand the instructions.

From the survey, it is identified that those who passed from phonetics course with good grades, demonstrated high results as compared with those who could not get good grades. Moreover, when compared two group of participants

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with each other, third year students (who have not studied phonetics yet) showed lower results even compared with low-grade students.

In addition, when these students spoke in English they had many errors when it comes to pronouncing words such as "thanks" "think" or "thin".

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, phonetics is a branch of linguistics which helps to communicate correctly with another language user by the improvement of correctly listening and pronouncing speech sounds. Its role in learning English is undebatable as a good English speaker have to know how to pronouncing and differentiating sounds while communicating. To prove this opinion, we have just recently conducted a survey on the topic of phonetics as given above. From this perspective we can easily conclude that importance of phonetics is essential in English acquisition.

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