CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIVE METHODS IN TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

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Abstract. This article investigates the key challenges in teaching English pronunciation to non-native speakers and examines innovative solutions that improve learners' phonetic competence. Major obstacles include phonological differences between L1 and English, limited instructional time, and learner anxiety. The study reviews technological tools, communicative activities, and eclectic teaching methods that enhance pronunciation accuracy and learner confidence. Practical classroom strategies and future directions for research are also discussed, providing insights for EFL/ESL educators.

Keywords: English pronunciation, challenges, innovative methods, technology, EFL teaching, phonetics.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola ingliz tili talaffuzini o'rgatishda uchraydigan asosiy muammolar va ularni bartaraf etish uchun innovatsion yondashuvlarni o'rganadi. Lingvistik farqlar, dars vaqti cheklanganligi hamda o'quvchi tashvishi kabi to'siqlar tahlil qilinadi.

Maqolada texnologik vositalar, kommunikativ faoliyatlar va eklektik metodlar kabi til o'rgatuvchi usullar ko'rib chiqilib, talaffuz aniqligi va o'quvchi ishonchini oshiruvchi strategiyalar taklif etiladi.

Kalit so'zlar : Ingliz tili talaffuzi, muammolar, innovatsion usullar, texnologiya, EFL (ingliz tili xorijiy til sifatida) o'qitish, fonetika.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются ключевые трудности в обучении произношению английского языка у носителей других языков и анализируются инновационные решения, способствующие развитию фонетической компетенции обучающихся. К основным препятствиям относятся фонологические различия между родным языком и английским, ограниченное учебное время и тревожность учащихся. В исследовании рассматриваются технологические инструменты, коммуникативные виды деятельности и эклектичные методы обучения, которые повышают точность произношения и уверенность обучающихся. Также обсуждаются практические стратегии работы в классе и перспективные направления дальнейших исследований, представляющие интерес для преподавателей EFL/ESL.

Ключевые слова: Произношение английского языка, проблемы, инновационные методы, технологии, преподавание EFL (английского языка как иностранного), фонетика.

Teaching English pronunciation is a central yet complex component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. Pronunciation affects intelligibility, learner confidence, and overall communicative competence (Brown & Lee, 2020, p. 45). Despite its importance, many educators find it difficult to integrate pronunciation systematically into language curricula due to its perceived complexity and the lack of teacher training (Al-Asi, 2025). Pronunciation instruction must address segmental issues (individual sounds) such as vowels and consonants, as well as suprasegmental features like stress, rhythm, and intonation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010).

These linguistic aspects often differ markedly between learners' first languages (L1) and English, which creates barriers to acquisition (Yusupov, 2025). Learners frequently struggle with phonemes that do not exist in their native languages.

For example, Uzbek speakers may find English vowel length contrasts and consonant clusters challenging because Uzbek phonology lacks similar distinctions (Sohibov & Narmanova, 2025). These phonological discrepancies lead to fossilized mispronunciations that persist even at advanced proficiency levels if not targeted explicitly (Harmer, 2007). Furthermore, learners' anxiety, limited exposure to native-speaker models, and insufficient feedback mechanisms contribute to slow progress in pronunciation development (Al-Asi, 2025).

Traditional pronunciation teaching often relied on "listen and repeat" drills, minimal pairs, and phonetic charts. While beneficial, such techniques may be monotonous and not sufficiently communicative or contextualized for meaningful language use (Brown & Lee, 2020, p. 47). In contrast, modern pedagogical research advocates for **eclectic approaches** that combine multiple methods—such as communicative pronunciation teaching, technology-assisted practice, and perceptual training—to address diverse learner needs (Mirzayev, 2025). (egarp.lt)

Technological advances have expanded the repertoire of pronunciation tools. **Computer-Assisted Pronunciation Training (CAPT)** systems, speech recognition software, mobile applications, and audiovisual feedback technologies can provide individualized practice and immediate corrective feedback. For example, multimodal tools that combine sound, image, and interaction enhance learner motivation and engagement compared to traditional drills (Cerezo, Calderon, & Romero, 2024). These tools support both **segmental awareness** (e.g., unfamiliar phonemes) and **suprasegmental proficiency** (e.g., stress patterns), helping learners bridge phonological gaps more effectively.

Research also emphasizes the importance of **contextual and communicative activities**.

Techniques such as role-plays, dialogues, and task-based exercises embed pronunciation practice in meaningful language use, which promotes automaticity and long-term retention (Mulya, 2025). Moreover, teacher strategies such as corrective recasts, peer feedback, and guided self-monitoring further enhance learner autonomy and confidence.

Despite these pedagogical advances, pronunciation often remains marginalized in curricula because summative assessments prioritize grammar and vocabulary over oral competence. Given the increasing global demand for effective spoken English proficiency, pronunciation instruction deserves deeper integration and innovation in EFL/ESL contexts (Brown & Lee, 2020, p. 50).

2.1 Challenges in Teaching English Pronunciation

2.1.1 Phonological Interference from First Language

Phonological interference occurs when features of a learner's L1 influence their production of English sounds. This includes substitution of unfamiliar English phonemes with the nearest L1 equivalent. For Uzbek learners, the absence of certain vowels (such as /ɪ/ vs /iː/) and consonant clusters common in English leads to simplification or mispronunciation, which impairs intelligibility (Sohibov & Narmanova, 2025).

2.1.2 Limited Instructional Time and Curricular Priority

Pronunciation is often under-emphasized in curricula that prioritize reading, writing, and grammar. Teachers may struggle to allocate sufficient class time for pronunciation drills and individualized feedback.

Time constraints lead instructors to adopt superficial approaches, focusing on isolated sounds rather than integrating pronunciation into communicative activities (Al-Asi, 2025).

2.1.3 Learner Anxiety and Attitudes Toward Accented Speech

Learners may feel self-conscious about their pronunciation errors, which can exacerbate anxiety and reduce participation. Fear of ridicule or lack of confidence in oral performance inhibits practice and slows progress. Attitudinal factors must be addressed alongside linguistic instruction (Brown & Lee, 2020, p. 49).

2.2 Innovative Methods in Teaching Pronunciation

2.2.1 Eclectic Teaching Approaches

Eclectic approaches draw on multiple methodologies tailored to learner needs.

Techniques include drilling minimal pairs, **shadowing** (simultaneous imitation of speech), peer dialogues, and communicative tasks embedded with pronunciation goals. These strategies help learners acquire both segmental and suprasegmental features in meaningful contexts (Mirzayev, 2025).

2.2.2 Technology-Assisted Pronunciation Tools

Technological integration has revolutionized pronunciation instruction. **CAPT systems** provide automated feedback on mispronounced sounds, allowing learners to self-correct. Mobile applications and speech recognition tools offer flexible, personalized practice. For example, holographic and multimodal apps combine auditory and visual elements to enhance learner motivation and performance outcomes (Cerezo et al., 2024).

2.2.3 Communicative and Task-Based Activities

Embedding pronunciation goals in communicative tasks (e.g., role-plays, discussions, presentations) increases the relevance of practice and supports transfer to real-world language use. These tasks allow naturalistic repetition and contextualized practice, reducing the artificiality of isolated drills. Importantly, communicative approaches align pronunciation with broader language goals.

2.2.4 Perceptual Training and Listening Activities

Perceptual training enhances learners' ability to distinguish between similar phonemes (e.g., /θ/ vs /s/). Carefully designed listening tasks sharpen auditory discrimination, which is a precursor to accurate pronunciation. Visual cues and spectrograms further support learners' understanding of articulatory differences.

2.2.5 Peer and Self-Assessment Techniques

Encouraging peer feedback and self-recording promotes learner autonomy. Self-monitoring through recorded speech raises awareness of habitual patterns and allows iterative improvement. Teacher-guided peer review also fosters collaborative learning and reduces individual performance anxiety.

Effective pronunciation instruction remains a critical yet challenging component of language education. The multifaceted nature of pronunciation—encompassing segmental and suprasegmental elements—requires sustained attention and thoughtful pedagogical planning.

Traditional methods such as repetitive drills and phonetic charts alone are insufficient to address the diverse needs of modern learners (Brown & Lee, 2020, p. 47). Instead, innovative practices that integrate technological tools, communicative tasks, and learner-centered activities demonstrate greater potential for improving pronunciation accuracy and learner motivation.

Phonological interference from a learner's first language presents a persistent challenge, particularly when phonemic inventories differ significantly between L1 and English. Uzbek

learners often experience difficulty with English vowels, consonant clusters, stress, and intonation patterns due to such discrepancies (Sohibov & Narmanova, 2025). These challenges underscore the necessity for explicit instruction that goes beyond incidental exposure. Teachers must raise learners' phonological awareness through perceptual training, targeted production exercises, and consistent corrective feedback.

However, time constraints and curricular priorities often limit pronunciation instruction in EFL/ESL contexts. Educators may find it difficult to balance pronunciation with other language skills. Therefore, pronunciation teaching should be embedded within communicative frameworks that simultaneously develop speaking, listening, and interactive competence. Task-based activities where learners negotiate meaning and engage in authentic dialogue can naturally integrate pronunciation practice without isolating it as an add-on.

Technological innovations have expanded the horizons of pronunciation pedagogy. CAPT tools, mobile apps, and multimodal systems provide opportunities for individualized practice that extends learning beyond the classroom. Such technologies can offer immediate corrective feedback and adaptive exercises tailored to specific phonetic needs. Research suggests that multimodal and interactive applications significantly increase learners' engagement and performance compared to traditional methods (Cerezo et al., 2024).

Teacher attitudes and learner psychology also play influential roles. Reducing learner anxiety through supportive feedback, creating low-stakes practice environments, and reinforcing progress can boost learner confidence and willingness to participate. Collaborative activities that emphasize peer support and shared learning goals further reduce performance pressure.

In conclusion, addressing pronunciation challenges requires a holistic approach that combines **linguistic insight**, **pedagogical innovation**, and **technological support**. Educators should adopt eclectic teaching methods, leverage technology for adaptive feedback, and integrate pronunciation into everyday communicative practice. Future research should explore longitudinal studies on technology-mediated pronunciation gains and investigate culturally responsive practices that acknowledge the unique phonological backgrounds of diverse learner populations.

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