

სწავლების მეთოდოლოგია Methodology of Teaching

## Significance of Teaching and Learning English Phonetics (Pronunciation), Influencing Factors and the Methods to Overcome those Challenges

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*The English language is widely spoken across the world and has a significant impact on various aspects of society. The purpose of learning foreign languages is to improve communicative competence (CC). While speaking in English, one may use accurate grammatical structures and lexical items, but if the accent and intonation are incorrect, it may cause difficulties in communication and the result might be the listener's misunderstanding of the speakers message. It is challenging for English language learners to achieve native-like pronunciation. The goal of teaching pronunciation should make the listener easily understood by both native and non-native speakers, the conversation should be understood without unnecessary difficulties and tension. The theme of pronunciation and communication is a complex one that involves multiple factors. It includes the various forms of the English language, the significance of the native speaker model in teaching, the preservation of identity, and the impact of the native language on pronunciation. It is essential to strike a balance between teaching the standard pronunciation and helping learners to be easily understood without undue pressure to achieve a native-like accent.*

**KeyWords:** Pronunciation, Influencing Factors, Teaching and Learning

It is undeniable that English is the most widely spoken language in the world and has a significant influence in various aspects of global society such as education, politics, economy, technology, science, tourism and transportation. When it comes to learning a foreign language, the focus is on improving communicative competence (CC), which includes the development of writing, reading, speaking, and listening skills. People learn a foreign language not only to communicate with foreigners but also to explore and learn about different cultures. Effective communication requires the proper use of vocabulary, lexical items, grammar structures, phonemes, intonation, and stress of the English language.

Why Teaching Pronunciation is important? It has been pointed out by Celce Murcia, M. Britton D.M and Goodwin (2000) as well as Joanne Kenworthy (1987:3) that having a good grasp

of pronunciation is crucial to successful communication. Certain groups of people, such as English teachers, business people, flight attendants, telephone operators, diplomats, tour guides, and hotel staff, require special attention to pronunciation. They need to study the phonetics of the English language thoroughly and aim to acquire a "native-like accent" in order to fulfill the requirements of their work.

Marla Yoshida shares her viewpoint on the importance of teaching phonetics in her book "Teaching the Pronunciation of English." She believes that phonetics play a crucial role in learning the English language. She argues that while the most common approach to teaching English today is through communication, incorrect pronunciation can hinder the communication process. This is because a speaker might use proper grammar and vocabulary but still mispronounce words, use the wrong intonation or stress, and make their message difficult to understand. Mispronunciation can lead to incomprehensible speech, especially when combined with fast speech, making it challenging to comprehend. Yoshida believes that understanding the prosodic characteristics of the language is an essential part of mastering it. As we can see, the perfect knowledge of the language also implies the knowledge of the prosodic characteristics of the language" M. Yoshida (2014:55)

The question is, how can we communicate effectively to avoid any misunderstandings? In order to communicate effectively, it is imperative to consider how we speak and pronounce words to avoid any misunderstandings. One aspect that plays a crucial role in communication is the Received Pronunciation (RP), which is considered the standard English used in textbooks and dictionaries. However, it is worth noting that it is difficult to define an "ideal" pronunciation since the English language has many variations. According to M. Yoshida (2014:7), the notion of good pronunciation is a complex issue. Moreover, some researchers argue that using a native speaker model in teaching can be disadvantageous for learners. Modiano (2009: 64-65) suggests that such an approach may not be helpful for non-native speakers, as it may create unrealistic expectations and put pressure on them to achieve a native-like pronunciation. Additionally, Pananen Poka (2007: 76) argues that foreign language speakers retain traces of their first language, particularly in terms of pronunciation, which helps preserve the identity of each nation or ethnic group. Furthermore, a learner's native language can influence their pronunciation of a foreign language. Several scientists, such as M. Hewings (2004), S. Murcia (2001), M. Yoshida (2014), A. S. Gimson (1973), G. Brown (1996), and V. M. Rivers (1968), have discussed that mastering a pronunciation similar to a native speaker's is unattainable for a foreign language learner. However, the goal of teaching pronunciation should be to help learners be easily understood by both native and non-native speakers so that they can communicate effectively without unnecessary difficulties and tense.

Several obstacles prevent English language learners from mastering proper pronunciation. First of all, it is the native language factor, namely the differences that are expressed in the sound system, accent, and intonation of two different languages. The greater the difference, the greater obstacles the learner faces in pronouncing the words correctly. As Joanna Kenworthy (1987:3) points out, there are "more or less acceptable" languages. This means that it is easier for a speaker of some languages to acquire a pronunciation close to English, while for others it is the opposite. Wilga M. Rivers (1968:112-113) continues to argue that the acquisition of correct pronunciation is complicated by the degree of difference in the sound system and intonation of the native and target languages. Undoubtedly, every language has its sound system, in which all

elements are related to each other, and it is impossible to find two languages with identical sound systems and intonation. Therefore, the teacher must understand the essence of the problem to better eliminate the difficulties inherent in the teaching process.

Apart from above mentioned, one of the biggest obstacles to learning a language is age. It is generally easier to learn a language in childhood than in adulthood. In the 1950s and 1960s, Fenfield and Roberts were the first to suggest the idea that there is a critical period of language learning. This is a biologically determined period in a person's life when language acquisition is easier than in other periods. According to S. Brown, speaking with an accent close to that of a native speaker is difficult for people of all ages if they have not started learning the language at an early age. Some scientists believe that there is a "sensitive period" for learning a foreign language, which occurs between the ages of 10 and 13. During this time, biological changes take place in the human brain, which positively affect the acquisition of language pronunciation. Joanna Kenworthy believes that younger individuals are better at perceiving and assimilating the pronunciation of a foreign language because they already understand their native language. D. Nunan (2002), on the other hand, believes that, from the perspective of foreign language teaching, the phonological system of the native language has a greater impact on the acquisition of pronunciation than grammar or vocabulary. Therefore, the critical period is of great importance. It should be noted, however, that effective pronunciation is not limited to the childhood period. Adults also have the ability to master proper pronunciation, because they can better formulate goals, apply targeted frequent practice, and understand the differences and definitions between segmental and suprasegmental features of the language.

Another important factor is whether the learner (pupil) lives in an English-speaking country or not. If the learner lives in an English-speaking environment, then his pronunciation is especially refined. However, this opinion is not always correct. Some people live in an English-speaking country but spend most of their time around non-English speakers. On the contrary, the learner may not live in an English-speaking country but uses English so often (at home, school or work, listening or watching movies, or video recordings) that his pronunciation is completely consistent with speaking in his native language. As we can see, it is important how much the learner uses English, not whether he is in an English-speaking environment or not.

Teaching English pronunciation involves several challenges. Primary and high school teachers often find that they don't have enough time to focus on pronunciation improvement tasks. Moreover, activities to improve pronunciation are not aligned with the lesson's objective, which is mainly to learn vocabulary and grammar. In the process of learning the language, the teacher plays a crucial role in helping learners to perceive the sounds since they tend to make English sounds similar to their mother tongue. The teacher should ensure that the students understand the sounds characteristic of the language. When learning a new language, pupils may sometimes correctly imitate the sounds of the new language, using the correct intonation and pronunciation. However, at other times, they may fall back on the sounds of their native language when speaking the new language. As a result, it is important for learners (pupils) to be aware of what they need to focus on and practice, as speaking is mostly an unconscious process. During a conversation, the learner may not realize that they are using the wrong pronunciation or intonation, which can lead to misunderstandings and negatively impact the conversation. As we see, the issue of pronunciation and communication is a complex one that involves several factors, including the variety of English language, the role of the native speaker model in teaching, the preservation of

identity, and the influence of the native language on pronunciation. It is essential to strike a balance between teaching the standard pronunciation and helping learners to be easily understood without undue pressure to achieve a native-like accent.

It is also important to consider the motivation and sense of responsibility of language learners (pupils) when it comes to the teaching process. While a teacher may be skilled at identifying errors and providing feedback on proper pronunciation, the pupils' lack of interest can significantly hinder progress. According to M. Yoshida (2014), learners are more likely to succeed in any subject if they have a strong desire to learn. Additionally, Gimson (1973) notes that attempting to learn a foreign language and its related elements in a short period, without the learner's motivation and incentive to practice, can result in partial or unsuccessful outcomes. The teacher has a responsibility and authority to enhance the motivation of language learners during the learning process. According to H. Gardner's (1985) book, motivation can be defined in three ways: the desire for success, the effort put into achieving it, and the satisfaction that comes with completing a task. However, when it comes to learning a foreign language, the learner should be motivated in two ways: interactive (when the learner is part of a group and interacts with others while learning and using the language) or instrumental (when the learner's desire to master the language is driven by a specific goal such as passing an exam, finding a job, or professional growth).

To sum up, when it comes to learning proper English pronunciation, there are several challenges that learners may face. These challenges may include differences in phonetics, intonation, and rhythm between the learner's first language and English. However, the teacher plays a crucial role in helping language learners overcome these psychological barriers and master the proper pronunciation of English. effective teaching process can provide the necessary guidance and support to help learners overcome these obstacles and achieve success. To teach English pronunciation effectively, the teacher should provide learners with a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental elements of spoken English. This includes both segmental and suprasegmental features of the language, such as vowels, consonants, stress, rhythm, and intonation. By teaching these elements, learners (pupils) can develop a better grasp of English pronunciation and improve their communication skills. Moreover, the teacher can enhance learners' motivation by introducing enjoyable learning activities. This could include games, songs, interactive phonetic activities and exercises that help learners practice their pronunciation skills while having fun. Additionally, providing learners with ample practice opportunities can help them overcome any obstacles or boredom, and ultimately improve their pronunciation skills.

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## ინგლისური ენის ფონეტიკის (წარმოთქმის) სწავლება/სწავლის მნიშვნელობა, მოქმედი ფაქტორები და მათი დამღვევის გზები

### აბსტრაქტი

ინგლისური ენა ყველაზე გავრცელებული ენაა მსოფლიოში, რომელიც დიდ ზეგავლენას ახდენს მსოფლიო საზოგადოების ყველა სფეროზე. უცხო ენების სწავლება/სწავლის პროცესი კომუნიკაციური კომპეტენციის (CC) გაიმჯობესებაზეა ორიენტირებული. ზოგჯერ ინგლისურ ენაზე მოსაუბრე სწორ გრამატიკულ სტრუქტურებს და ლექსიკურ ერთეულებს იყენებს საუბრისას, სწორად გამოთქვამს ინგლისური ენის ფონემებს, მაგრამ მისი ინტონაცია ან მახვილი არასწორია. არასწორმა მახვილმა და ინტონაციამ შესაძლოა კომუნიკაციის პროცესს ხელი შეუშალოს და მოსაუბრის გზავნილი ვერ იქნეს სწორად აღქმული მსმენელის მიერ. ინგლისური ენის შემსწავლელთათვის მშობლიურ-ენას მიმსგავსებული წარმოთქმის დაუფლება მიუღწეველია. წარმოთქმის სწავლების მიზანს მსმენელის ადვილად გაგებინება უნდა წარმოადგენდეს როგორც მშობლიურ, ასევე არა მშობლიურ ენაზე მოსაუბრეებთან, საუბრის გაგება ზედმეტი სირთულეებისა და დამაბულობის გარეშე უნდა ხდებოდეს. წარმოთქმა და კომუნიკაცია კომპლექსური საკითხია, რომელიც მოიცავს რამდენიმე ფაქტორს, მათ შორის ინგლისური ენის მრავალფეროვნება, მშობლიური ენის მოდელის როლი სწავლებაში, იდენტობის შენარჩუნება და მშობლიური ენის აქცენტისა და წარმოთქმის გავლენა. მნიშვნელოვანია ბალანსის დამყარება ინგლისური ენის სტანდარტული წარმოთქმის სწავლება/სწავლის პროცესში. ასევე, მოსწავლეთა დახმარება რათა მათი საუბარი ზედმეტი ზეწოლის გარეშე ადვილად აღქმადი გახდეს მსმენელის მიერ.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** წარმოთქმა, მოქმედი ფაქტორები, სწავლა/სწავლება

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