

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION USING TECHNOLOGY AND INTERACTION

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This research paper investigates advanced and innovative approaches to teaching English pronunciation, with particular emphasis on the integration of digital technologies, learner-centered interaction, and contextualized phonological training. Traditional pronunciation teaching methods, largely based on repetition and mechanical drills, are increasingly inadequate in addressing the complex phonetic challenges faced by modern learners. This study explores how mobile applications, artificial intelligence-based tools, gamification strategies, and collaborative learning environments can significantly enhance learners' phonological competence, motivation, and autonomy. Special attention is given to Uzbek learners, whose phonetic system differs considerably from English. The findings suggest that combining interactive methodologies with technological tools results in substantial improvements in intelligibility, fluency, and learner confidence.

Introduction

The teaching of English pronunciation has undergone a substantial transformation in recent decades, evolving from teacher-centered repetition drills to dynamic, technology-enhanced learning environments. In the contemporary globalized world, English serves as a lingua franca, making intelligible pronunciation more important than ever before. However, pronunciation remains one of the most challenging aspects of second language acquisition due to the interplay of cognitive, linguistic, and socio-cultural factors.

For learners whose first language is Uzbek, pronunciation difficulties are particularly pronounced. Uzbek phonology differs significantly from English in terms of vowel inventory, consonant clusters, stress patterns, and intonation. For instance, English distinguishes between long and short vowels (e.g., ship vs sheep), whereas Uzbek does not emphasize such distinctions to the same degree. Similarly, consonant clusters such as strengths or texts are difficult for Uzbek learners because Uzbek phonotactics typically avoid complex clusters.

Traditional methods of pronunciation teaching often fail to address these challenges effectively. Repetitive drills and teacher-led correction may lead to short-term improvement but do not foster long-term retention or learner autonomy. Consequently, there is a growing need for innovative approaches that integrate technology, interaction, and contextual learning.

This paper aims to explore such approaches, analyzing their effectiveness through empirical evidence and pedagogical theory.

Methodology

The study adopts a quasi-experimental design involving 60 intermediate-level English learners from an academic institution. Participants were divided into two groups:

Control Group (30 students): taught using traditional pronunciation methods (repetition, teacher correction, minimal interaction)

Experimental Group (30 students): taught using innovative approaches (technology, peer interaction, gamification)

The study was conducted over 16 weeks and included the following tools:

Pre-test and post-test pronunciation assessments

Audio recordings analyzed for intelligibility, stress, and phoneme accuracy

Student questionnaires on motivation and learning experience

Classroom observations

The experimental group was exposed to:

Mobile pronunciation applications

AI-based speech recognition tools

Peer feedback sessions

Gamified pronunciation activities

Contextualized speaking tasks

Data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure comprehensive results.

Discussion and Results

1. Mobile Learning Applications and Flexibility

Mobile-assisted language learning has revolutionized pronunciation practice by enabling learners to engage in self-directed learning anytime and anywhere.[6]

Students in the experimental group used applications that provided:

Native speaker audio models

Real-time pronunciation scoring

Repetition and recording features

This flexibility significantly increased practice frequency. Learners reported practicing pronunciation outside the classroom for an average of 20 minutes per day, compared to less than 5 minutes in the control group.

Illustrative Example:

An Uzbek learner initially pronounced “vegetable” as “ve-ge-ta-ble” with equal stress on each syllable. After repeated practice with an application, the pronunciation improved to /'vedʒtəbl/, with correct stress and reduced syllables.

Uzbek explanation:

“Talaba so‘zni bo‘lib-bo‘lib aytardi, lekin ilova orqali tabiiy talaffuzni o‘rgandi.”

2. Artificial Intelligence and Speech Recognition

AI-powered tools represent a major advancement in pronunciation teaching. These tools analyze learners’ speech and provide immediate, personalized feedback.[3]

Unlike traditional classroom settings, where teacher feedback is limited, AI allows for:

Instant error detection

Individualized correction

Continuous practice

Example:

A student pronounces “this” as “dis”. The software highlights the incorrect /d/ sound and provides a model for /ð/.

This immediate feedback loop accelerates learning and prevents fossilization of errors.

3. Peer Feedback and Collaborative Learning

Social interaction plays a crucial role in language acquisition, as emphasized by sociocultural theory.[7] Peer feedback encourages active participation and deeper cognitive processing.

In the experimental group:

Students worked in pairs or small groups

They evaluated each other's pronunciation

They discussed errors and suggested corrections

Example Activity:

Student A reads a sentence:

"I think this theory is interesting."

Student B identifies errors in /θ/ sounds and provides feedback.

Uzbek context:

"Talabalar bir-biriga xatolarini aytib, o'zaro o'rganishdi."

This collaborative approach reduced anxiety and increased confidence.

4. Gamification and Motivation

Gamification integrates game elements into learning, making it more engaging and enjoyable.[8]

In pronunciation teaching, this included:

Points for correct pronunciation

Leaderboards

Pronunciation challenges

Example:

Students compete to pronounce difficult words like:

through

thought

thorough

Gamification increased participation rates and created a positive learning environment.

5. Contextualized Pronunciation Teaching

Teaching pronunciation in isolation is less effective than embedding it in meaningful contexts.[9]

Instead of drilling individual sounds, students practiced pronunciation through:

Dialogues

Role-plays

Storytelling

Example:

Instead of repeating /ɪ/ and /i:/, students practiced sentences:

“I live in a big city.”

“She is sleeping.”

This approach improved both pronunciation and communicative competence.

6. Addressing Uzbek Learners' Specific Challenges

Uzbek learners face unique pronunciation challenges:

a) Vowel Length Distinction

ship vs sheep

bit vs beat

b) Consonant Sounds

/θ/ and /ð/ do not exist in Uzbek

c) Stress and Intonation

Uzbek language has more predictable stress patterns, unlike English.

Innovative methods helped learners overcome these challenges through:

Visual aids

Audio comparison

Interactive practice

7. Learner Autonomy and Self-Regulation

One of the most significant outcomes of innovative methods is the development of learner autonomy.[10]

Students became:

More responsible for their learning

More motivated to practice independently

More aware of their pronunciation errors

This shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered education is essential for long-term success.

Additional Information

The study also highlights the importance of affective factors such as motivation, confidence, and anxiety. Innovative methods create a supportive environment where learners feel comfortable experimenting with language.

Moreover, integrating multimedia resources such as songs, films, and podcasts enhances both listening and pronunciation skills.

Example:

Students listen to a song and imitate pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation.

Conclusion

Innovative approaches to teaching English pronunciation, particularly those integrating technology and interaction, offer significant advantages over traditional methods. For Uzbek learners, these approaches effectively address phonological challenges while promoting engagement, autonomy, and confidence. The findings suggest that future pronunciation teaching should adopt a holistic, learner-centered model that combines digital tools, collaborative learning, and contextualized practice.

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