

# Phonetic Teaching Strategies in Listening and Speaking Training of Primary-Secondary Students

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## ABSTRACT

The cultivation of English listening and speaking abilities has been paid more attention nowadays, while diversified phonetic teaching strategies provide students with approaches to learn phonetics native speakers. This paper aims to study the phonetic teaching strategies, particularly the impact of online phonetic teaching videos on English learners in primary-secondary schools. The research provides the valid data of students' level of phonetics and indicators' teaching strategies in the actual teaching process. Through analysis, the author puts forward reasonable suggestions for improving students' English listening and speaking abilities from the perspective of phonetic teaching strategies. In addition, through the analysis of the inadequacy of students' learning abilities, promoting the mastery of phonetics will help improve students' comprehensive qualities.

**Keywords:** *phonetic teaching strategies, primary-secondary school, listening and speaking abilities*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the reform of English listening test model in junior middle school, the skills of listening and speaking of English are playing an increasingly significant role in contemporary society. Therefore, improving listening and speaking abilities of students' from the perspective of phonetic teaching strategies comes into the field. Nevertheless, there still remains an unsolved problem concerning how to apply phonetics to the development of speaking and listening. However, the out-dated textbooks and the unreasonable arrangement of the teaching schedule makes it difficult for teachers to have a long term consolidation for phonetics. Taking the result of the research obtained from primary-secondary students in Zhoushan as an example, the author will study how phonetic teaching strategies counterbalance the restrictions of traditional learning mode in training listening and speaking abilities. Therefore, instructors can fully utilize the advantages of strategies through providing accurate and native language input so as to enhance the enthusiasm of students in English learning.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Policy Background

In 2019, a blueprint of China's educational development in The upcoming decade was promulgated by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council. China's Education Modernization 2035 plan illuminates the direction of the modern educational system that enhances the

higher education and vocational education. With the aim of making China a powerhouse in aspects of education, talent and human resources by 2035, one of its missions is to create a new pattern of opening up education to the world. To comprehensively enhance the level of international exchanges and cooperation, and promote the mutual recognition of academic degrees, second language learners need to equipped themselves with abilities that can help them communicate with native speakers without obstacles.

Compulsory Education English Curriculum Standards (2017) points out that phonetic teaching is one of the important contents of language teaching. Naturally standardized pronunciation and intonation will lay a good foundation for effective oral communication. As the speaking and listening abilities are highly paid attention, the proportion of it in English education will be increased and change people's inherent concepts.

### 2.2. Theoretical Background

At the end of the early 19th century, scholars began a special study on phonetic teaching. In the period of the Reform Movement, the International Phonetic Alphabet Association was established. As a result, phonetics began to become standardized and unified. Subsequently, a variety of teaching methods were produced, such as Audio-Lingual Method and Direct Method[1]. However, diversified teaching methods have not raise people's interest on phonetics. Subsequently, in the 1970s, the emergence and popularity of the Communicative Approach eventually make people turn their attention to speech learning.

In the researches about second language, researchers

generally believe that there is a certain relationship between the mother tongue and the second language. However, the positive and negative transfers between them will vary depending on factors such as teachers' teaching strategies and learners' motivation[2]. Therefore, teachers need to continue to explore suitable teaching methods.

In addition, second language acquisition emphasizes the Critical Period[3] of learners. By conducting phonetic teaching at an appropriate period, learners can easily make achievement. In the meanwhile, the Critical Period follows the stages of learners' physical and mental development. Learning phonetics in scientific time is beneficial to promote the learners' success rate and stimulate their senses of accomplishment[4], thereby improve their level of second language and establish an effective relationship between language sense and listening and speaking abilities[5].

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND FINDINGS

#### 3.1. Research Objects

This research carried out questionnaire investigation to primary-secondary students, front-line teachers and tutors from Dinghai No. 2 Middle school and Donggang Middle school, Zhoushan, China. For the part of students, most of the respondents have learned the phonetics. Since teachers and tutors have better understanding of students' actual listening and speaking level, all the indicators are proficient in listening and speaking lessons and phonetics.

#### 3.2. Research Methods

The author sent the paper questionnaires to the respondents for random sample collection. The content of the questionnaires include the basic information of students and teachers, the students' attitudes toward phonetic teaching strategies as well as improvement after leaning phonetics. In order to get comprehensive data, the author also interviewed teachers and audited in listening and speaking lessons .

#### 3.3. Research Results

According to the data of questionnaire, 85.71% of students have learned the phonetics systematically. 9.18% of respondents formed a basic impression on phonetics but have not been taught in class, only 5.10% completely have no concept of phonetics. As for students' opinions to phonetic teaching in English class, the answers are divided into five levels. 65.30% of students fully agree that phonetic teaching is necessary, 4.08% agree, the rate of students who disagree and completely disagree the teaching content comes to 7.14% and 10.20%, and 13.26% remain unclear. For the contents of current textbooks, the exponents' ratio is only 40.82%. In the question about bringing phonetic teaching videos in English class, 83.67% agree on this

proposal. For the students' attitude towards reading assignments, 63.27% of students do not accomplish assignments punctually. However, 80% of teachers require students' feedback in the next day class. 48.98% of students anticipate that the pronunciation of words can be improved after learning phonetics, following by words spellings 12.24% and understanding more contents in listening practices 10.20%. However, the improvements in spoken English are considered as relatively less prominent, for only 5.10%.

### 4. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PROBLEMS

#### 4.1. The Restriction of the Textbook

And the textbook does not have an independent unit to introduce phonetics. Phonetics in vocabulary lists for each word are difficult for certain students. Although all the students are taught phonetics before they start a new unit , it is very easy to forget if the teachers do not help them solidify. Besides, some of the students reflect that the contents of the textbook can not raise their learning motivation and some themes are obsolete. Nevertheless, one of the requirements of China's Education Modernization 2035 plan is to strengthen the construction of curriculum and textbook system. The renovation of textbook is time-consuming and investigation-needed so that the cases in the textbook can't keep pace with the changing world and learners' requirements.

#### 4.2. A Lack of Sufficient Comprehensible Input

The second language acquisition can take place when students have sufficient comprehensible input. As a significant source of input, listening practice can be an effective strategy to train students' language senses. Although the multitude researches and practices confirm that students can accept abundant inputs in short time, they can only master extremely small part of them. Low achievers in class say that they can not understand teachers' teaching contents if they speak in English, which indicates the input is beyond students' abilities. Therefore, the material need to be made easier until students can basically understand most of it.

#### 4.3. A Lack of Initiative of Students

In the interview, teachers show the author their concern about the lack of initiative of students. Although teachers set homework to help students consolidate knowledge, many students neglect requirements. Due to this condition, teachers will take dictations as feedback. However, this method still remains invalid to some students. As the problem discussed above, without

sufficient input, students can not gain further achievement in second language acquisition. Especially when vocabulary is the basis for learners to understand the meaning of conversations, the deficiency of vocabulary disables students to have self development and influences their further study.

## 5. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the above data-analysis, the author identifies three problems unsolved, thus, following suggestions are intended to provide viable strategies for both teachers and students to enhance the teaching effectiveness and listening and speaking abilities.

### 5.1. Applying Multiple Methods to Practice Phonetics

In the class of speaking and listening, students are given multitude chances to practice these two abilities. Teachers should pay special attention to the step of lead-in, the key mission for students at this segment falls on the acknowledgement of pronunciation. To augment the impression of new vocabularies based on the practice of phonetics, except choosing to play the record and require students to read after it, teachers can be an adept at leading students pronounce the word according to the rules of phonetic. And teachers can add extra words related to the theme of teaching but do not appear in the textbook. Students here should be given adequate time to spell and read these extra words. Teachers can stimulate students by adopting quick ask and answer. The student who has the correct pronunciation can get reward, which can promote students' motivations and interests of self-thinking and also, deepen their impression of phonetics and new words.

### 5.2. Using Videos About Phonetics to Raise Learning Interests

With the booming of modern technologies, the youngsters show their preference for electronic equipment for its convenience. And the resources of study website and videos are increasing rapidly. The amount of videos about phonetics can be found easily, especially in some digital platforms contains some materials that are accepted by native speakers. For instance, an App named Bilibili provides tremendous amount of information. Learners can choose British or American accent according to their partiality. And the duration of each video is short, which enables students to study whenever and wherever possible. Thus, the constant input from native linguistic environment plays more effective role in students learning process. Besides, videos can present the change of the mouth shape of native speakers and this can not be displayed by tapes. The combination of aural and visual image shall deepen students' understanding of pronunciation rules and raise them a strong sense of interest about how sounds are

formed.

### 5.3. Requiring the prompt feedback of students

In leaning a new language, consolidating the pronunciation of phonetics makes the basis of study. Therefore, after the class, teachers need to recheck the mastery of phonetics of students. In this paper, the objects and audiences are students from the primary-secondary school. At their age grades, it is extremely for them to forget the new knowledge, which is one of the reason for teachers to keep inputting the same knowledge periodically. Hence, in the class of the next day, teachers can require students to spell the words or have dictations according to the phonetics learned yesterday. All of these strategies are effective for teacher to be aware of whether students consolidate the knowledge or not.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Phonetic teaching and learning plays a vital role in English learning[6], according to the mandatory requirements of the skills of listening and speaking. In the era of intercultural society, the communication between foreign countries and China becomes the mainstream in the world. Although Chinese school realized the importance of English course, students are still unconscious about the status of phonetics. Besides, due to the arrangement of curriculum, teachers are not given enough time to consolidate the teaching product. Therefore, it is necessary to use effective phonetic teaching strategies to help students acknowledge phonetics while would not let phonetics be a cumbrance for class schedule. According to the characteristics of phonetics, they serves as a basis in English learning, which influence the stress of the word, the tone of the sentence, etc., and furthermore, affect learners' alertness in their perception of English materials. Utilizing proper phonetic teaching strategies enables students to preview the knowledge, dispels their dread and raise the interest of speaking English confidently.

In addition, English first should be considered as a language, and then a course, learners can not understand or speak without enough accumulation of vocabulary. Although teachers may use some methods such as dictation and recitation to help students remember new words, the cramming method seemingly works in a short period but not for a long-term memory. Besides, the contents of textbook is considered as slightly out-dated, which limit students' horizons and could not appeal student. Thus, making students fully master the phonetics is regarded as a proper option to self-learning. What's more, when students learn the new knowledge that they are interested in, they can truly mobilize learning initiative. And adding additional information about

foreign culture as a kind of input can actually create an environment to deepen the understanding of a second language.

Nevertheless, this survey is tentative in this field aiming at offering several suggestions geared to the need of improving the English listening and speaking abilities by using valid phonetic teaching strategies. Errors in the data gathered by the questionnaire may exist owing to the respondents lack of experience or have ambiguity towards particular questions.

In conclusion, it is beyond doubt that phonetic teaching strategies play an important role in the second language acquisition, especially for listening and speaking abilities, and highlight the student-oriented teaching as well.

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