



## **The Importance of Phonetics in ELT**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2021.v3.i1a.128>

### **Abstract**

Teaching English Phonetics is now basic. Not only the ESL teachers are into teaching phonetics, but for young learners, phonetics is essential to language learning. Among the importance of communication skills, Reading, Writing, and Speaking come in a bundle. And to develop effective communication skills it is integral to be robust in all of these three areas. Phonetics is the study of human speech. Phonetics includes the study of how sounds are physically produced (by positioning the mouth, lips and tongue), and how sounds are perceived by a listener. Phonetics can be compared to phonology, which is the study of the particular sound units (phonemes) of language.

**Keywords:** Language, communication skills, reading, writing, speaking, EST

### **Introduction**

#### **Phonetics**

Phonetics is the study of the production of speech sounds by the speaker and how they are perceived by the listener. It involves the production, transmission, and reception of the sound. Oftentimes, the term phonology is used interchangeably; however, phonology is the branch of linguistics where phonetics is a part of it.

The use of phonetics in English learning can be considered a recent trend. Both for young learners and ESL learners phonetics is a must-have in the curriculum. Learning phonetics help in recognizing both familiar and unfamiliar sounds, improves pronunciation skills, and develops autonomy in words and sound recognition.

#### **Phonetics and Pronunciation**

Over the years English teachers have found that mere teaching of pronunciation is not sufficient for the students to produce appropriate sounds for letters and their combination in different words. While it is integral to teach the pronunciation for effective communication, students need to know the reason why sounds are important and how they can impact while they communicate. Both reception and production of the sound are equally important.

To simplify, applying phonetics for language learning can help eliminate the confusion in pronunciation and it can also facilitate to grasp stress and intonation of sound which are major components of pronunciation.

#### **Types of Phonetics**

- Articulatory
- Auditory
- Acoustics

#### **The transmission of the speech is dissected in these three parts**

Articulatory phonetics (Production) studies how the movement of the air stream and the speech organs

coordinates in the production of the sound. Such as when we pronounce words like read, write, pen, and paper it belongs to articulatory phonetics.

On the other hand, auditory phonetics (Perception) is a vast area, where your ability to distinguish sounds, length, pitch, and loudness influences your reaction. It simply means your ability to decode what you hear and what you have perceived.

And Acoustic phonetics (Transmission) deals with how the sound travels through the medium of air between the mouth of the speaker and the ear of the listener. Meaning, how the sound wave travels from the speaker to the listener.

#### **Why it is crucial to learn Phonetics?**

##### **1. Builds Confidence**

When learners by themselves can decode sounds and their relation to the pronunciation of letters and their combination in words, communication becomes a natural process for them. Even when the words seem unfamiliar to them, instead of getting overwhelmed they will be able to associate words with clear conceptualization.

##### **2. Helps in Recognition and Interpretation**

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.

##### **3. Helps to Spell Words Correctly**

Phonetics not only guides the learner in decoding the sound, it also helps them to know how a word must be spelt out while writing. When you spell a word with a phoneme, it is called Grapheme. Graphemes are the symbols that are used to identify a single phoneme – a letter or group of letters

that represent the sound. And effective communication can only be completed when learners can use the language appropriately in both reading and writing.

#### 4. Improves Fluency

When it comes to the fluency of a speaker, two things matter the most:

- How fast can a person recognize words!
- How accurate the pronunciation is!

Phonetics does take care of both. Fluency indicates the 'ease' with which one can read text. Moreover, when learners can decode words it builds a memory dictionary in their minds and with times this helps to build up the comprehension skill within oneself.

#### Conclusion

All in all the awareness of sound gives readers a procedure to approach sounding out and reading new words. It helps readers understand the alphabetic principle that the letters in words are systematically represented by sounds. To simplify, applying phonetics for language learning can help eliminate the confusion in pronunciation and it can also facilitate to grasp stress and intonation of sound which are major components of pronunciation. As a result, children become a strong predictor who experience early reading success.

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