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ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION SYSTEM: PHONETIC FEATURES, COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS, AND CHALLENGES FOR UZBEK AND RUSSIAN LEARNERS

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Abstract

The present article examines the fundamental aspects of English pronunciation, including phonetic transcription, vowel and consonant sounds, word stress, and intonation. Furthermore, it provides comparative examples from English, Uzbek, and Russian, highlighting common pronunciation difficulties encountered by non-native speakers. The article also discusses practical strategies for improving pronunciation skills and emphasizes the importance of phonetic competence in language learning and translation studies.

Keywords: English pronunciation, phonetics, phonetic transcription, vowel sounds, consonant sounds, stress, intonation, comparative linguistics, Uzbek language, Russian language, language learning.

Introduction

Language serves as a primary means of communication, and pronunciation plays a crucial role in ensuring successful interaction between speakers. Although vocabulary and grammar are essential components of language proficiency,

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inaccurate pronunciation can often lead to misunderstanding even when grammar is correct. Pronunciation is one of the most important components of language acquisition and effective communication.

English pronunciation differs significantly from Uzbek and Russian pronunciation due to its unique phonetic system, vowel length distinctions, consonant articulation, stress patterns, and intonation structures. English pronunciation is particularly challenging for learners because the relationship between spelling and pronunciation is often inconsistent. Unlike Uzbek, where pronunciation generally corresponds closely to spelling, English contains numerous exceptions, silent letters, and variable sound patterns. Russian learners face additional difficulties due to differences in consonant voicing, vowel reduction, and intonation patterns.

In the opinion of many linguists, pronunciation should not be viewed merely as an additional language skill but as an integral component of communicative competence. Accurate pronunciation enhances intelligibility, confidence, and intercultural communication.

Phonetic transcription is a system of symbols used to represent the sounds of speech accurately. English dictionaries commonly employ the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which enables learners to understand the correct pronunciation of words regardless of spelling.

English Example

- transcription [træn 'skripʃən]

Uzbek Equivalent

- transkripsiya

Russian Equivalent

- транскрипция

Phonetic transcription is particularly useful because English spelling often differs considerably from pronunciation.

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Example:

Word	English Spelling
enough	[ɪˈnʌf]
though	[ðəʊ]
knight	[naɪt]

According to the author, phonetic transcription remains indispensable even in the digital age because learners frequently rely on visual memory when acquiring new vocabulary.

English contains a rich system of vowel sounds that differ in quality and length. Vowel length is phonemic, meaning that changing the length of a vowel can alter the meaning of a word.

English Examples:

Short Vowel	Long Vowel
ship [ʃɪp]	sheep [ʃi:p]
full [fʊl]	fool [fu:l]
sit [sɪt]	seat [si:t]

In Uzbek, vowel length generally does not distinguish word meanings. Therefore, Uzbek learners often find it difficult to differentiate between long and short English vowels.

Russian also lacks systematic phonemic vowel length distinctions, causing Russian-speaking learners to make similar pronunciation errors.

In my view, mastering English vowel length is one of the most critical steps toward achieving intelligible pronunciation. Many communication failures occur because learners pronounce long and short vowels identically.

One of the most complex aspects of English pronunciation is that the same vowel letter may be pronounced differently depending on its position within a word.

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Open Syllable

When a vowel appears in an open syllable, it is usually pronounced according to its alphabet name.

Examples:

- stone [stəʊn]
- name [neɪm]
- potato [pə'teɪtəʊ]

Closed Syllable

Examples:

- hot [hɒt]
- big [bɪg]
- pen [pen]

Vowel + R

Examples:

- farm [fɑ:m]
- bird [bɜ:d]
- car [kɑ:]

Vowel + R + Vowel

Examples:

- fire [faɪə]
- stare [steə]
- more [mɔ:]

The author believes that understanding these reading patterns enables learners to predict pronunciation more accurately and reduces dependence on memorization. English consonants differ significantly from their Uzbek and Russian counterparts. A particularly important distinction concerns voiced and voiceless consonants.

- bed [bed]
- bad [bæd]

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Russian speakers often devoice final consonants:

- bed → bet
- bad → bat

This changes meaning completely.

English Word	Correct Pronunciation	Incorrect Pronunciation	Meaning Change
bed	[bed]	[bet]	bed → bet
bad	[bæd]	[bæt]	bad → bat

Failure to maintain consonant voicing is one of the most serious pronunciation errors because it directly affects comprehension.

Several English sounds do not exist in either Uzbek or Russian.

The Sounds [θ] and [ð]

Examples:

- think [θɪŋk]
- thought [θɔ:t]
- this [ðɪs]
- these [ði:z]

Correct Sound Russian / Uzbek Substitute

[θ] [s], [f], [t]

[ð] [z], [d]

The Sound [w] -Examples:

- water ['wɔ:tə]
- wet [wet]

Learners often replace [w] with [v].

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The Sound [ŋ]- Examples:

- sing [sɪŋ]
- singer ['sɪŋə]

Many learners incorrectly pronounce the final sound as [n].

According to the author, systematic articulatory training is necessary because these sounds cannot be mastered through imitation alone.

Stress plays a vital role in English pronunciation.

Example:

Noun	Verb
Present ['prezənt]	Present [prɪ'zent]
Record ['rekɔ:d]	Record [rɪ'kɔ:d]
object ['ɒb.dʒɪkt]	to object [əb'dʒɛkt]
refuse ['ref.ju:z]	to refuse [rɪ'fju:z]
export ['ek.spɔ:rt]	to export [ɪk'spɔ:rt]

The position of stress can change the grammatical function and meaning of a word.

Stress in Uzbek is relatively predictable and frequently occurs on the final syllable. Russian stress is mobile and unpredictable but does not usually alter grammatical category in the same way as English.

Incorrect stress often sounds more unnatural than minor sound errors. Therefore, stress training should accompany vocabulary acquisition.

Intonation refers to the rise and fall of the voice during speech.

Falling Intonation

Used in:

- statements
- commands

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- special questions

Example:

- Where are you going?

Rising Intonation

Used in:

- yes/no questions

Example:

- Are you ready?

Comparative Example

English

Are you coming? ↗

Uzbek

Sen kelyapsanmi? ↘

Russian

Ты придёшь? ↘

This difference often causes English speakers to perceive Russian or Uzbek-accented English as abrupt or impolite. Intonation conveys emotional meaning and speaker attitude. Consequently, pronunciation training should extend beyond individual sounds and include sentence-level prosody.

Common Pronunciation Mistakes

The most frequent errors include:

1. Devoicing final consonants.
2. Confusing long and short vowels.
3. Replacing [w] with [v].
4. Mispronouncing [θ] and [ð].
5. Incorrect stress placement.
6. Using native-language intonation patterns.

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Correct English

sheep [ʃi:p]

west [west]

think [θɪŋk]

Common Error

ship [ʃɪp]

vest [vest]

sink [sɪŋk]

Researchers and language teachers recommend several approaches:

- Using phonetic transcription regularly.
- Listening to native speakers.
- Watching films and documentaries in English.
- Recording and analyzing one's speech.
- Practicing minimal pairs.
- Learning stress and intonation patterns.
- Working with pronunciation-focused instructors.

In my opinion, pronunciation improvement requires consistent practice rather than theoretical knowledge alone. Learners must actively produce sounds and receive corrective feedback.

English pronunciation is a complex system involving phonetic transcription, vowel and consonant distinctions, stress placement, and intonation patterns. The differences between English, Uzbek, and Russian phonological systems create challenges for learners, particularly regarding vowel length, consonant voicing, and intonation. Nevertheless, these difficulties can be overcome through systematic phonetic training, regular listening practice, and conscious attention to pronunciation rules. Mastery of pronunciation contributes significantly to communicative competence and enables learners to participate more effectively in international academic, professional, and social contexts.

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