Importance of Teaching the Pronunciation of Suprasegmental Features of English

Yadgarova Zebiniso Tolibovna
PhD student, Bukhara State University, Bukhara

Abtract. One fundamental and important aspect of language used in oral communication is pronunciation. The purpose of this essay is to emphasize the importance of teaching English pronunciation of suprasegmental elements. The suprasegmental characteristics include pitch, length, intonation, stress, and rhythm. Speech communication is the primary purpose of a language. Sequences of segmental and suprasegmental feature pronunciation make up speech. At the very least, clear pronunciation is necessary for effective communication. When teaching English to pupils in Uzbekistan, Standard British English (SBE) is frequently employed. Although it might be challenging to teach pupils whose first language is not English the correct pronunciation, doing so can help them communicate more clearly. In words, the correspondence between their spellings and their sounds is not always exact. In various phonetic environments, a spelling may preserve many sounds. The article's author has identified certain situations in which a speaker's incorrect pronounciation might result in misinterpreted messages. We must teach our kids the correct or standard pronunciation of English in order to prevent incorrect or incomprehensible pronunciation.

Keywords: pronunciation, segmental, suprasegmental, teaching, Standard British English (SBE)

Introduction. One of the world's official languages, English is also used for trade, education, literature, philosophy, diplomatic relations, science, and technology. Regarding the English language, Huwari and Mehawesh (2015) claim that "English language has become the language of choice in most countries around the world" (p. 31). English is spoken across the world in a variety of dialects or accents. In relation to vowel inventory, Giegerich (2009) has referred to the three variants of Standard English. The three variants are Southern British Standard Vowel Phonemes, Scottish Standard English Vowel Phonemes, and General American Vowel Phonemes (RP: Received Pronunciation). However, we educate the kids using the Classical System of English, which has 24 consonant phonemes and 20 vowel phonemes. There are 12 monophthongs and 8 diphthongs among the 20 vowel phonemes.

While speaking, we use both segmental features and suprasegmental features. Consonant and vowel sounds or phonemes are considered segmental features, whereas suprasegmental qualities include stress, pitch, intonation, length, juncture, etc. The mood, sex, emotional state, gender, and age of the speaker, as well as the meanings of his or her utterances, are strongly influenced by the suprasegmental properties of the brain.

This article defines and discusses English's suprasegmental properties. More crucially, examples of occurrences or circumstances when communication fragments are misinterpreted as a result of incorrect or poor pronunciation are given to illustrate the importance of accurate pronunciation. The goal of pronunciation instruction is to enhance communication.

Significance of Teaching the Pronunciation of English. The primary, universal purpose of language is communication. Pronunciation mistakes make communication difficult or ineffective. For effective communication, pronunciation instruction is crucial. At the very least, communication must make sense. Teaching pronunciation may improve communication by facilitating the expression of meaning, the performance of a function, and the expression of attitude and mood, according to Kelly (2006, pp. 11–13). For language proficiency and linguistic awareness to grow, pronunciation instruction is crucial. Tudor (2001) claims that a language's "command of phonology can play an important affective role in language use" (p. 53). Through instruction and diligent practice, this command may be improved. Similar to this, Setter and Jenkins (2005) claim that pronunciation "plays a vital role in successful communication both productively and receptively" (p. 2).According to Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996), "intelligible pronunciation is one of the necessary

components of oral communication" (p. Teaching pronunciation gives the pupils a fundamental understanding of how to pronounce segmental and suprasegmental characteristics in a way that facilitates understandable communication. Students gain confidence in their ability to speak English wherever they go by receiving instruction in English pronunciation. According to Fraser (2000), "with good pronunciation, a speaker is intelligible despite other errors; with poor pronunciation, a speaker can be very difficult to understand, despite accuracy in other areas" (p. 7).

Suprasegmental Features. Speech characteristics known as supra-segmental features cover more than one sound in an utterance. They employ the volume, pitch, juncture, and duration characteristics. In a language, supra-segmental elements play specific functions in separating utterances' meanings, moods, and senses. The term suprasegmental characteristics is used by Ladefoged (2006) to refer to "those aspects of speech that involve more than single consonants or vowels" (p. 237). In this article, the following primary categories of supra-segmental properties will be covered:

Length: The length of a sound is the amount of time it takes for it to be articulated. Length is the quality of vowel in most of languages. Jones (1979) considers length as "the length of time during which it is held on continuously in a given word or phrase" (232), for example, / ɪ/ is a short vowel and / i: / is a long vowel. They create different meanings in the words. /sɪt/ is the phonemic transcription of the word "sit" (to take a seat), and / si:t /is the phonemic transcription of the word " seat" (a place to sit).

Stress: An additional force called stress is applied when speaking a syllable. It refers to the degree of loudness, tenseness, sonority and muscular energy utilized to pronounce a certain syllable. Jones (1979) describes stress as "the degree of force with which a sound or syllable is uttered" (p.245). Gimson (1990) affirms that "the number of syllables stressed by the speaker depends largely upon the nature of words composing the utterance "(p.263). Cross (1992) defines stress as "the articulation of a syllable with greater emphasis, or more force than others" (p.224). In English, stress has a distinctive (phonemic) function. Similar words may have distinct meanings and parts of speech depending on where the emphasis is placed.

Problems of students with stress. Generally, the first syllable of disyllabic words receives the emphasis when they are nouns or adjectives, and the second syllable when they are verbs.

`INcrease(noun)	in`CREASE(verb)
`EXport (noun)	ex`PORT(verb)
`PREsent(adjective)	pre`SENT(verb)
`ABsent (adjective)	ab`SENT(verb)

Intonation: Intonation is the use of pitch in language at the sentence level. It is known as intonation when a phrase or sentence is spoken with a rise or fall in pitch. It is an utterance's quality. Intonation is referred to as "the music of speech" by Harmer (1990; p. 11). Intonation is described by Kelly (2006) as "the way voice goes up and down in pitch when we are speaking" (p. 86).

Pronunciation of intonation. In spoken language, intonation is crucial, and a native speaker employs it to convey the intended meaning or impact. Intonation is referred to as "the melody of speech and is to be analyzed in terms of variations in pitch" (Roach, 2001, p. 33). Depending on how it is tuned, a statement might signify many different things. There are four different song shapes in English, according to O'Connor:

i.   The falling tune (the glide –down)
ii.   The first rising tune (the glide-up)
iii.   The second rising tune (the take-off)
iv.   The falling –rising tune (the dive)

Example: You will be late. The meanings of this sentence can be explained differently based on its tune shape:

- If a speaker pronounces this utterance with the falling tune, it shows his general statement.
- If a speaker pronounces this utterance with the rising tune, it shows his intention of questioning.
- If a speaker pronounces this utterance with the falling-rising tune, it shows his warning statement.

Juncture: A phonetic border between phonemes or syllables is known as a juncture. This is connected to the appropriate speaking pause. As "a boundary or transition point in a phonological sequence" (Carr, 2008, p. 81), juncture is defined by Carr as. "Juncture" is defined by Trask (2005) as "any phonetic feature whose presence signals the existence of a grammatical boundary" (p. 189). Due to halting at various points, the same phonological utterance might have several alternative interpretations. Examples: /ən-eɪm/. The pause after "n" forms a phrase "an aim", and / ə-neɪm / in which the pause occurs after "a" constructs a phrase "a name".

Pronunciation with juncture. Students need to know where to pause while speaking. The pause determines the meaning as in:

/ **kæmpəs** /

- If we do not pause, the pronunciation shows a single word 'campus'.
- If we pause after /m/, it shows us two words 'camp' and 'us'.

/ **aɪ-skriː m** /

- If we pause after, /ɪ /, it shows two words 'I' and 'scream'.
- If we pause after /s/, it shows two words 'ice' and 'cream'.

Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) mention "accent, stress, intonation and rhythm, motivation and exposure, attitude, instruction, age, personality, and mother tongue influence" (p.81) as the factors that make pronunciation difficult to learn.

Pitch / Tone: Without taking into account its acoustic characteristics, the pitch of a sound is an auditory characteristic that allows a listener to position it on a scale ranging from low to high. Pitch is "the attribute of auditory sensation in terms of which a sound may be ordered on a scale from low to high" (355), according to Crystal (2003). Tones, according to Ladefoged (1982), are "pitch variations that affect a word's meaning" (227). Tone is described as "height of pitch and change of pitch which is associated with the pronunciation of syllables or words, and which affects the meaning of the words" by Richards, Platt and Platt (1999) (382). The speaker's age, gender, and emotional states, as well as the word meanings, may all be inferred from the speaker's pitch change.

The author of the article advises instructors to teach suprasegmental characteristics using an integrative method whereas segmental features should be taught using an analytic-linguistic approach. The charts of vocal tracks, the phonetic alphabet in imitation, listening, and production are used as supplemental elements in the analytic-linguistic method. With this strategy, the teachers should make apparent several characteristics of pronunciation, including the tongue's posture, articulation style, and location. The integrative method primarily focuses on rhythm, intonation, stress, and other phonological features since they must be practiced in discourses that go beyond the word and phoneme levels.

Pronunciation of pitch. A word's meaning is influenced by its pitch. For instance, depending on the pitch levels used, the Chinese character for "ma" might have several different meanings. Other languages also include instances like this.

(High level tone): mother

(High rising tone): hemp

 (Fallingtone): horse

(High falling tone): scold

Conclusion. For non-native English speakers, teaching the pronunciation of segmental and suprasegmental elements is surely difficult. Despite this difficult task, teachers must instruct pupils in proper pronunciation for clear and productive oral communication. Despite a variety of pronunciation-related challenges, students learning English as a foreign language can acquire an understandable pronunciation of the language via extensive training or instruction. At this paper, the author has tried to largely discuss ideas that are based on his personal teaching experience at the bachelor and master levels in the Faculty of Education. Students and teachers who are active in teaching-learning the English language may find this article useful.

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