

TEACHING PRACTICAL PHONETICS TO FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH PHILOLOGY STUDENTS: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

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ANNOTATION

This article explores an integrated approach to teaching practical phonetics to first-year English philology students. The study highlights the importance of combining theoretical knowledge with practical application, utilizing modern pedagogical strategies, digital tools, and communicative methods. The research investigates how integrating auditory, articulatory, and visual techniques enhances students' phonetic competence. The results demonstrate that an integrated methodology significantly improves pronunciation accuracy, listening discrimination, and phonological awareness. The article concludes with recommendations for effective phonetics instruction in higher education.

Keywords: *practical phonetics, integrated approach, pronunciation, phonological competence, English philology, teaching methodology*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching practical phonetics is widely recognized as a core component of English philology programs, particularly at the initial stage of higher education. For first-year students, phonetics is not simply another subject within the curriculum; it forms the basis for developing accurate pronunciation, effective listening skills, and overall communicative competence. At this early stage, learners begin to shape their linguistic identity in English, and their success largely depends on how well they acquire the sound system of the language. Without a solid phonetic foundation, students often struggle with intelligibility, which can negatively affect both their academic performance and future professional communication.

Despite its importance, practical phonetics is often perceived by students as a challenging and sometimes abstract discipline. One of the main reasons for this difficulty lies in the significant differences between the phonological systems of English and students' native languages. For example, learners may encounter unfamiliar sounds, complex stress patterns, or intonation structures that do not exist in their first language. As a result, they may develop pronunciation errors that become fossilized over time if not addressed early. In addition, students frequently lack sufficient exposure to authentic spoken English, which further complicates their ability to perceive and reproduce correct sounds.

Traditional approaches to teaching phonetics have typically focused on theoretical instruction combined with repetitive drills. In many classrooms, students are introduced to phonetic symbols, rules of articulation, and classification of sounds through lectures and textbook exercises. While this method provides essential knowledge, it often fails to create meaningful learning experiences. Students may memorize phonetic transcription or repeat isolated sounds without fully understanding how these elements function in real communication. Consequently, there is a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, which limits students' ability to use phonetic skills effectively in everyday speech.

Another limitation of conventional methods is their teacher-centered nature. In such settings, the teacher is the primary source of knowledge, and students play a relatively passive role. This can reduce motivation and engagement, especially among first-year students who may already feel uncertain about their language abilities. Moreover, traditional drills often lack contextual relevance, making it difficult for learners to transfer their skills to authentic communicative situations. As modern language education increasingly emphasizes interaction and learner autonomy, it becomes clear that more dynamic and student-centered approaches are needed.

In response to these challenges, contemporary pedagogy advocates for an integrated approach to teaching practical phonetics. This approach is based on the idea that phonetic competence cannot be developed through isolated techniques alone; instead, it requires the combination of multiple methods that address different aspects of learning. An integrated approach typically includes auditory training, articulatory practice, visual support, and communicative activities, all working together to create a comprehensive learning environment.

Auditory training plays a crucial role in helping students develop the ability to distinguish between different sounds. By listening to authentic speech, learners become more sensitive to subtle phonetic contrasts, which is essential for accurate pronunciation. At the same time, articulatory practice enables students to understand how sounds are physically produced, allowing them to control their speech organs more effectively. Visual support, such as phonetic charts and diagrams, helps learners conceptualize abstract phonetic concepts and reinforces their understanding. Finally, communicative activities provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in meaningful contexts, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

An important feature of the integrated approach is its emphasis on active student participation. Instead of passively receiving information, learners are encouraged to engage in interactive tasks, collaborate with peers, and take responsibility for their own learning. This

not only enhances motivation but also promotes deeper cognitive processing, leading to more durable learning outcomes. Furthermore, the integration of modern technologies has significantly expanded the possibilities for phonetics instruction. Digital tools such as pronunciation applications, online platforms, and speech recognition software offer immediate feedback and allow students to practice independently outside the classroom.

The relevance of this study lies in its attempt to examine how an integrated approach can improve the teaching and learning of practical phonetics among first-year English philology students. As higher education institutions strive to prepare students for global communication, it is essential to adopt teaching strategies that are both effective and adaptable to the needs of modern learners. By exploring the impact of integrated methods, this research contributes to the ongoing discussion on innovative language teaching practices.

The main objective of the study is to analyze the effectiveness of an integrated approach in enhancing students' phonetic competence. In particular, the research seeks to investigate how combining different teaching techniques influences pronunciation accuracy, listening skills, and overall phonological awareness. Additionally, the study aims to identify which specific methods within the integrated framework are most beneficial for learners and how technology can be used to support the learning process.

To achieve these goals, the research is guided by the following questions: How does an integrated approach improve students' pronunciation skills? What teaching techniques are most effective in phonetics instruction? And how can modern technologies support phonetics learning? By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide practical insights for educators and contribute to the development of more effective phonetics teaching methodologies.

In summary, teaching practical phonetics to first-year students requires a shift from traditional, theory-based instruction to a more holistic and interactive approach. The integrated model offers a promising solution by combining multiple methods and placing learners at the center of the educational process. As this study will demonstrate, such an approach not only enhances phonetic competence but also fosters greater engagement and confidence among students, ultimately leading to more successful language learning outcomes.

METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of an integrated approach to teaching practical phonetics. The use of mixed methods allows the researcher to not only measure improvements in students' phonetic

performance through numerical data, but also to explore learners' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions in greater depth.

The research was conducted over the course of one academic semester (approximately 16 weeks), which provided sufficient time to observe gradual changes in students' pronunciation skills and phonological awareness. The study followed a quasi-experimental design, as it involved two groups of students receiving different types of instruction: one group was taught using traditional methods, while the other was exposed to the integrated approach. Both groups followed the same curriculum content, ensuring that any differences in outcomes could be attributed primarily to the teaching methodology rather than differences in material.

Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 60 first-year university students enrolled in an English philology program. All participants had a similar educational background and had studied English as a foreign language prior to entering university. However, their proficiency levels ranged from elementary to intermediate, which reflects the typical diversity found in first-year cohorts.

The students were randomly divided into two equal groups of 30 participants each:

- **Control group** – received instruction through traditional phonetics teaching methods, including lectures, textbook exercises, and repetition drills.
- **Experimental group** – was taught using the integrated approach, which combined multiple teaching techniques and emphasized active student participation.

Both groups were taught by the same instructor to ensure consistency in teaching style and to minimize external variables. In addition, both groups had the same number of instructional hours per week, allowing for a fair comparison between the two approaches.

Teaching Methods

The experimental group was instructed using an integrated approach that incorporated several complementary components designed to address different aspects of phonetic learning.

1. Auditory Training

Auditory training was used to develop students' ability to recognize and differentiate English sounds. Learners were exposed to a variety of authentic audio materials, including recordings of native speakers, podcasts, and short dialogues. These materials were carefully selected to represent different accents and speaking styles, helping students become familiar with natural speech patterns. Listening tasks were often accompanied by discrimination exercises, where students identified minimal pairs or distinguished between similar sounds.

2. Articulatory Practice

Articulatory practice focused on the physical production of sounds. Students were guided to understand how speech organs function during pronunciation. Activities included phonetic transcription exercises, which helped learners connect sounds with their symbolic representations, as well as mirror practice, where students observed their mouth movements while producing sounds. Repetition drills were also used, but unlike traditional methods, they were combined with immediate corrective feedback from the teacher, making the process more interactive and effective.

3. Visual Support

Visual aids played an important role in enhancing students' understanding of abstract phonetic concepts. Tools such as International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) charts were regularly used to familiarize students with sound symbols. In addition, diagrams illustrating the position and movement of speech organs provided a clear representation of how sounds are articulated. Video demonstrations further supported learning by showing real-life examples of pronunciation, allowing students to observe both auditory and visual aspects simultaneously.

4. Communicative Activities

To bridge the gap between theory and practice, communicative activities were incorporated into the learning process. These included role plays, pair work dialogues, and group discussions, all designed to encourage students to use correct pronunciation in meaningful contexts. Such activities not only improved students' speaking skills but also increased their confidence and motivation. By practicing phonetics in real-life scenarios, learners were able to internalize phonetic patterns more effectively.

5. Technology Integration

Modern technology was integrated into the teaching process to provide additional support and flexibility. Students used pronunciation applications that offered interactive exercises and instant feedback. Speech recognition software allowed learners to compare their pronunciation with native speaker models, helping them identify and correct errors independently. Online phonetics platforms provided supplementary materials, enabling students to practice outside the classroom at their own pace.

Data Collection

Data collection was carried out using multiple instruments to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

First, **pre-tests and post-tests** were administered to both groups to measure changes in pronunciation accuracy and listening discrimination skills. These tests included tasks such as reading aloud, phonetic transcription, and sound recognition exercises.

Second, **classroom observations** were conducted throughout the semester to monitor student engagement, participation, and interaction during lessons. These observations provided qualitative insights into how students responded to different teaching methods.

Finally, **student feedback questionnaires** were distributed at the end of the study. These questionnaires gathered information about learners' attitudes toward phonetics, their perceived difficulties, and their opinions on the effectiveness of the teaching methods used.

RESULTS

The findings of the study reveal clear and meaningful differences between the control group, which followed traditional phonetics instruction, and the experimental group, which was taught using the integrated approach. The results demonstrate that combining auditory, articulatory, visual, and communicative methods has a strong positive impact on students' phonetic development. Both quantitative test scores and qualitative observations confirm that the integrated approach leads to more effective learning outcomes.

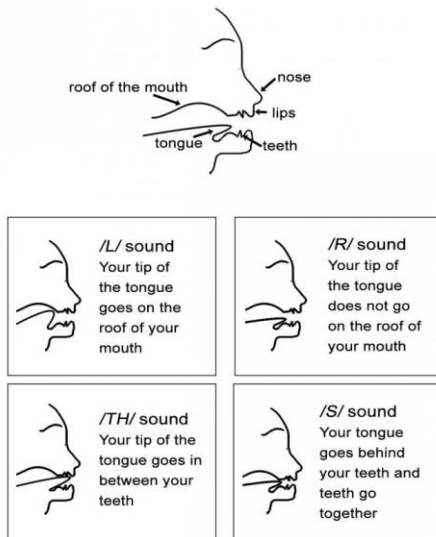
1. Improvement in Pronunciation Accuracy

One of the most significant outcomes of the study was the improvement in students' pronunciation accuracy. At the beginning of the semester, both groups showed similar levels of pronunciation proficiency, with common errors in vowel length, consonant articulation, and word stress. However, by the end of the study, the experimental group demonstrated a noticeable advancement.

Students who were taught using the integrated approach showed an average improvement of **35%**, while those in the control group improved by only **15%**. This difference can be explained by the variety of techniques used in the experimental group, which allowed students to practice pronunciation in multiple ways rather than relying solely on repetition drills. The combination of listening, visual observation, and physical articulation helped students internalize correct pronunciation patterns more effectively.



Sounds of English



2. Enhanced Listening Skills

Another important result of the study was the improvement in students’ listening discrimination skills. In the pre-test, many students struggled to distinguish between similar English sounds, such as /ɪ/ and /i:/ or /θ/ and /s/. These difficulties are common among learners whose native language does not include such distinctions.

After the implementation of the integrated approach, students in the experimental group showed a marked improvement in their ability to identify and differentiate sounds. Regular exposure to authentic audio materials, such as native speaker recordings and podcasts, played a key role in this

progress. Listening activities were not passive; they were combined with focused exercises that required students to actively analyze what they heard.

As a result, students became more confident in understanding spoken English and were better able to notice subtle phonetic differences. In contrast, the control group showed only limited improvement, likely due to the lack of consistent auditory training.

3. Increased Student Engagement

The study also revealed a significant increase in student engagement within the experimental group. Classroom observations indicated that students who participated in interactive and communicative activities were more actively involved in the learning process. Unlike traditional lessons, where students often remain passive, the integrated approach encouraged participation through pair work, group discussions, and role plays.

Student feedback questionnaires further supported this observation. Many learners reported that the use of technology, such as pronunciation applications and speech recognition tools, made learning more interesting and enjoyable. They appreciated the opportunity to practice independently and receive immediate feedback on their performance.



This increased engagement had a direct impact on learning outcomes. Motivated students were more willing to practice, take risks, and correct their mistakes, which ultimately contributed to their improvement in phonetic competence.

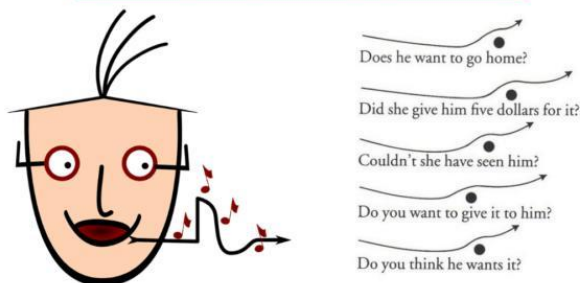
4. Better Phonological Awareness

In addition to improving specific skills, the integrated approach helped students develop a deeper understanding of phonological features. By the end of the semester, students in the experimental group demonstrated greater awareness of stress patterns, intonation, and the rhythm of English speech.

For example, students became more capable of identifying stressed syllables in words and sentences, which is essential for natural-sounding speech. They also showed improvement in using appropriate intonation patterns, such as rising and falling tones, to convey meaning and emotion. Furthermore, learners developed a better sense of rhythm, allowing them to produce more fluent and connected speech.



WHAT IS INTONATION?



Overall, these results suggest that the integrated approach not only improves technical pronunciation skills but also enhances students' overall understanding of how English sounds function in real communication. This holistic development is essential for achieving communicative competence and preparing students

for future academic and professional contexts.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study clearly demonstrate that an integrated approach to teaching practical phonetics is more effective than traditional methods, particularly for first-year English philology students. The significant improvements observed in pronunciation accuracy, listening skills, student engagement, and phonological awareness highlight the value of combining multiple teaching techniques within a unified framework. These findings are consistent with contemporary trends in language pedagogy, which emphasize interaction, multimodality, and learner-centered instruction.

Integration of Skills

One of the most important advantages of the integrated approach is its ability to develop multiple phonetic skills simultaneously. Unlike traditional methods that often isolate individual elements—such as teaching sounds separately from their communicative use—the integrated model connects perception, production, and application in a meaningful way. Students are not only trained to recognize and articulate individual sounds, but also to use them appropriately in real speech.

For example, when auditory training is combined with articulatory practice, learners are better able to link what they hear with how sounds are physically produced. The addition of visual aids further reinforces this connection by providing clear representations of speech processes. Communicative activities then allow students to apply these skills in context, ensuring that phonetic knowledge is not limited to theory but becomes part of active language use. This holistic development is essential for building long-term phonological competence.

Role of Technology

Another key factor contributing to the success of the integrated approach is the effective use of technology. In modern education, digital tools have become an indispensable part of the learning process, and phonetics instruction is no exception. In this study, tools such as

pronunciation applications, online platforms, and speech recognition software played a significant role in enhancing learning outcomes.

One of the main advantages of these technologies is the provision of immediate and individualized feedback. Unlike traditional classroom settings, where the teacher may not have enough time to correct every student’s pronunciation in detail, digital tools allow learners to practice independently and receive instant corrections. This not only increases the amount of practice time but also helps students become more aware of their own errors.

Moreover, technology supports flexible and autonomous learning. Students can access materials outside the classroom, repeat exercises as needed, and progress at their own pace. This is particularly beneficial for first-year students, who often have varying levels of proficiency and require different amounts of practice. As a result, technology enhances both the efficiency and accessibility of phonetics instruction.

Student-Centered Learning

The integrated approach also represents a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. In traditional phonetics classes, the teacher typically dominates the lesson, while students play a passive role. In contrast, the integrated model encourages active participation, collaboration, and learner autonomy.

Through interactive activities such as role plays, group discussions, and peer practice, students become more engaged in the learning process. They are not only receiving information but also using it, experimenting with it, and reflecting on their performance. This active involvement leads to deeper understanding and better retention of phonetic concepts.

In addition, student-centered learning fosters confidence and motivation. When learners are given opportunities to participate and express themselves, they are more likely to take risks and overcome their fear of making mistakes. This is particularly important in phonetics, where anxiety about pronunciation can hinder progress. By creating a supportive and interactive environment, the integrated approach helps students develop both competence and confidence.

Challenges

Despite its many advantages, the implementation of an integrated approach is not without challenges. One of the primary difficulties is the need for adequate teacher training. Instructors must be familiar with a range of teaching techniques, as well as the effective use of technological tools. Without proper preparation, it may be difficult to design and manage integrated lessons.

Another challenge is access to technology. Not all educational institutions have sufficient resources to provide digital tools, language labs, or reliable internet access. This can limit the extent to which technology can be incorporated into phonetics instruction.

Finally, the integrated approach requires more time and effort in lesson planning. Teachers need to carefully design activities that combine different methods and ensure that all components are aligned with learning objectives. This can be demanding, especially in contexts where teachers already have heavy workloads.

In conclusion, while the integrated approach presents certain practical challenges, its benefits in improving phonetic competence and student engagement make it a highly effective strategy for teaching practical phonetics. With appropriate support and resources, it has the potential to significantly enhance language education in higher institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that an integrated approach to teaching practical phonetics is highly effective for first-year English philology students. By combining auditory training, articulatory practice, visual support, and communicative activities, learners develop not only more accurate pronunciation but also a deeper understanding of phonological features such as stress, intonation, and rhythm. The findings show that when phonetics is taught as a connected and interactive system rather than through isolated exercises, students are more engaged and achieve better learning outcomes.

In addition, the integration of modern technology plays an important role in enhancing the learning process. Digital tools provide immediate feedback, support independent practice, and make phonetics instruction more accessible and motivating. As a result, students become more confident and autonomous in improving their pronunciation skills.

Based on these results, it is recommended that educators move beyond traditional teaching methods and adopt more innovative, student-centered approaches. Future research could further investigate the long-term impact of integrated phonetics instruction and explore how it influences students' overall communicative competence in real-life contexts.

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