

An Analysis of Innovative Teaching of English Phonetics for Non-English Major Students

Hongke Yang*

Zhengzhou University of Science and Technology, Zhengzhou 450064, Henan Province, China

*Corresponding author: Hongke Yang, 897115946@qq.com

Copyright: © 2023 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: Phonetics is the cornerstone of language. The improvement of the proficiency of pronunciation has a great effect on the level of English listening and speaking skills. Learners with high proficiency in pronunciation can communicate effectively in terms of thoughts, culture, and emotions ^[1]. However, due to the limitations of the language environment, subject characteristics, and traditional teaching methods, non-English majors often face problems such as difficulty in pronunciation and lack of motivation for learning, which raise concerns regarding the English phonetic learning situation among these students. Therefore, innovative phonetic teaching is of great significance to non-English majors. This paper aims to provide some innovative and effective strategies for the innovative teaching of English phonetics for non-English majors to meet the learning needs of students, and to provide useful guidelines for future teaching reform and practice. According to the literature review and personal teaching experience, the article summarizes some innovative strategies that can improve the teaching of non-English majors' pronunciation, such as using real situations and technical assistance, encouraging cooperative learning, gamifying phonetic learning, and so on. By implementing these strategies, students can improve phonetic sensitivity and pronunciation accuracy, thereby enhancing their listening skills and oral fluency.

Keywords: Non-English major students; Phonetic teaching; Innovation

Online publication: August 24, 2023

1. Introduction

For non-English majors, learning English phonetics is an important part of improving overall language and communication skills. However, the traditional college English phonetics teaching is often based on the study of phonetic symbols, it lacks sufficient opportunities for practice and the integration into the real language environment, which limits the progress of students in phonetics learning. In addition, due to the characteristics of the major, non-English majors have limited motivation to learn English phonetics. At the same time, they also encounter differences in pronunciation and phonetic systems, as well as the influence of language and cultural background, which further increases the difficulty of their learning. Moreover, the students' pronunciation levels are different, but the teaching is centralized, thus the teaching pace may not be consistent for all students, which will also affect the teaching and learning effects to a certain extent ^[2].

Phonetics is an important component of language, and good phonetic skills can improve overall language proficiency. Through innovative phonetic teaching, teachers can help non-English major students to break through the traditional phonetic learning methods, stimulate their interest and motivation in learning, and enhance their enthusiasm for pronunciation learning. Consequently, students can better understand the pronunciation rules and characteristics, and improve simultaneously in vocabulary, grammar, listening, and other aspects. Therefore, it is significant to explore and innovate methods of teaching English phonetics for non-English major students, which will provide the students with more effective, interesting, and practical phonetic learning methods, thereby further improving their English phonetic level and overall language skills.

2. Current situation of college English phonetic teaching for non-English majors

2.1. Challenges and difficulties faced by students

Compared with English majors, most non-English majors are less interested in pronunciation learning. Speech has always been marginalized in the process of students' education ^[3]. Students focus more on vocabulary and grammar, and do not pay enough attention to improving the pronunciation skills. In addition, these students do not directly engage in English-related occupations after graduation. Their motivation for phonetic learning may be low, and they do not focus on pronunciation. At the same time, learning English in a non-English environment lacks opportunities for phonetic practice, which results in limited phonetic acquisition. Due to the limited learning time and resources of non-English majors, students may incline to traditional classroom learning, and engage less in autonomous practice and exploration of phonetics.

In the traditional teaching mode, non-English major students have limited opportunities to practice the pronunciation and often focus on written language, hence lacking oral practice in authentic contexts. Non-English majors may need to overcome some barriers in the process of pronunciation learning, such as habitual mispronunciation and intonation patterns. They need to make more efforts to improve their pronunciation.

To solve these problems, teachers can adopt targeted teaching strategies and activities to improve students' phonetic awareness, train their pronunciation skills, and encourage them to actively participate in phonetic practices and activities to improve the phonetic skills and self-confidence.

2.2. Limitations of traditional teaching

China's non-English majors generally lack the systematic study and training of English phonetics ^[4]. The following limitations exist in the traditional teaching of college English phonetics for non-English majors. Firstly, traditional phonetic teaching usually focuses on the learning of phonetic symbols, and emphasizes rule memorization and repeated practice. However, this method may lack practical opportunities and application to cultivate students' pronunciation skills. Secondly, the traditional "lecture-style" English teaching method has great restrictions on students' English pronunciation learning, and it is difficult for teachers to carry out high-quality teaching under the conditions of limited class hours and equipment ^[5]. Thirdly, traditional teaching adopts uniform teaching methods and materials, which are unable to meet students' individual differences and needs. Each student has different problems and difficulties in pronunciation, thus traditional teaching cannot provide targeted support and counseling. Besides, in traditional teaching, students are usually the passive recipients while teachers play the dominant role. This limits students' active participation and independent learning in pronunciation, leading to a decline in learning interest and motivation. Plus, traditional teaching often focuses on teaching theoretical knowledge and lacks creativity. This makes the learning process monotonous and boring, and it is difficult to attract students' interest and maintain their learning motivation. In addition, there are also some English teachers who may have relatively insufficient knowledge and skills in

teaching pronunciation to non-English majors. They may not have enough teaching experience to help students to overcome pronunciation difficulties.

To sum up, traditional teaching has multiple limitations in the teaching of college English phonetics for non-English majors, which cannot meet students' individual needs and develop students' comprehensive pronunciation skills in real contexts. Therefore, overcoming these limitations with the help of innovative teaching methods and techniques is important for the teaching of college English phonetic for non-English majors.

3. Suggestions for innovative teaching strategies

In view of the mentioned unfavorable teaching situation, teachers in this field have begun to explore innovative teaching methods to improve college English phonetic teaching for non-English majors. Based on personal teaching experience and literature review, the following strategic suggestions are summarized to provide a more practical, interactive, and personalized learning experience, and promote the improvement of English pronunciation of non-English major students, including situational teaching, using technical assistance, encouraging cooperative learning, gamifying phonetic learning, and other strategies.

3.1. Situational teaching

Situational teaching refers to creating and simulating real language environments and situations in the teaching process to help students to improve their pronunciation skills in communication. Teachers should integrate phonetic teaching into meaningful language exercises with scenarios and task-oriented language training, so that students can learn by doing^[6]. Authentic English phonetic instruction can provide a more challenging and dynamic learning experience, thus encouraging students to actively engage and apply what they have learned about phonetics. It not only improves students' pronunciation accuracy and fluency, but also develops their practical communication skills and self-confidence. There are several specific strategies for organizing phonetic instruction using authentic contexts.

(1) Using English materials: English materials such as movie clips, news reports, interview programs, etc., can be used. Students can listen to the audio or watch videos, imitate and follow the standard pronunciation, and enhance their listening and pronunciation skills. Together with listening practices such as recordings, stories, songs, etc., these activities can develop students' perception of English pronunciation and improve their ability to listen, distinguish, and imitate.

(2) Creating more English-speaking opportunities: Students can be encouraged to participate in English corners or other English social activities, and environments, allowing them to experience and participate in the on-site practice of English pronunciation, and improve their sensitivity and natural fluency in pronunciation.

(3) Organizing role-plays: Students can role-play to simulate real-life dialogue scenarios, such as ordering food, shopping, traveling, etc. These activities allow students to apply phonetic skills to real-world communication and increase their fluency and confidence in pronunciation.

(4) Seeking the assistance of foreign teachers: Teachers can invite foreign teachers to teach English pronunciation in the class, so that students can learn and experience standard English pronunciation in a real language environment. At the same time, through communication and interaction with foreign teachers, the students can correct pronunciation errors and improve their speaking skills.

(5) Offering feedback and self-assessment: Teachers can provide students with feedback and self-assessment, so that students can identify and correct their own pronunciation errors in time, thus encouraging them to continue to work hard.

3.2. Using technical assistance

The use of technology to assist college English phonetic teaching can provide a more immersive and interesting learning experience, and enhance students' learning motivation and engagement. By using technical assistance, teachers can create a more flexible and personalized learning environment, provide more diverse learning resources and activities, promote active learning and participation of students, and simultaneously help students to better understand and apply phonetic knowledge, thus improving their English phonetic ability. Teachers can choose appropriate technical tools and methods according to the teaching needs and resources, and integrate them into teaching practice to improve students' pronunciation skills and learning effect. The following are some strategies for using technology to assist innovative English phonetics teaching for non-English major students in college.

(1) Using online courses and teaching platforms: Online courses and teaching platforms enable students to engage in phonetics learning at anytime and anywhere. These platforms usually provide resources such as course videos, practice questions, and phonetic assessments to help students to systematically learn phonetic knowledge and skills.

(2) Utilizing recording devices or smartphone recording applications: Recording devices or smartphone recording applications allow students to record and replay their pronunciation practice for self-assessment. By listening to recordings of themselves and comparing them to standard pronunciation, students can better understand their own pronunciation problems and correct them.

(3) Using speech recognition software and application: With speech recognition software and application, students can practise the accuracy of pronunciation by reading aloud or imitating. These tools can detect students' pronunciation in real time and give real-time feedback to help students to correct pronunciation errors.

(4) Applying speech analysis tools: The use of speech analysis tools can help students to understand their own pronunciation problems more scientifically. These tools analyze the sound spectrum, formants, and other parameters for students to recognize and improve their pronunciation.

(5) Utilizing distance learning tools: By using distance learning tools, students can conduct online speech communication and collaboration with teachers and other students. This form of communication simulates a real language environment and promotes students' oral fluency and confidence.

(6) Using interactive software: Interactive software can increase students' interest and motivation in phonetics learning. This software often incorporates interaction, competition or reward mechanisms to motivate students to actively participate and learn.

(7) Applying virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technology: Integrating VR and AR technology into phonetic teaching can significantly enhance the learning experience. VR can create immersive environments where students can practise pronunciation in interactive virtual scenarios, such as ordering food in a restaurant or giving a presentation in a conference. On the other hand, AR can overlay pronunciation guides or visual cues onto real-world objects, thus aiding students in correct articulation. These technologies provide a realistic and engaging platform for students to refine their pronunciation skills.

3.3. Encouraging cooperative learning

By encouraging cooperative learning in English phonetics teaching for non-English major students, teachers can create a learning community, increase interaction and feedback among students, and provide more learning opportunities and motivation. Students can learn from and support each other, improve pronunciation skills and oral expression in cooperation, and develop independent learning and motivation at the same time. The following are some common cooperative learning strategies.

(1) Assigning group tasks: Students can be divided into groups and let them practice together to improve pronunciation learning. In small groups, students can help each other, correct mistakes, and work together to identify ways to improve. Teachers can set practice tasks and goals, such as recording a dialogue or speech, allowing each group to cooperate according to their own progress and difficulties, so that students can improve their pronunciation and accent in cooperation. Students can work together to plan, collaborate, and check and revise their pronunciation with each other. Teachers can also arrange group discussions. In the classroom, students are given a topic to discuss in groups. Through communication within and between groups, students can improve pronunciation accuracy and fluency of expression in practice.

(2) Conducting collaborative assessments: Teachers can encourage students to conduct collaborative assessments and provide each other with feedback and suggestions. After students complete a phonetic task, such as phonetic symbol practice, pausing exercise, or linking exercise, etc., they can use the evaluation form or criteria to evaluate each other and provide suggestions to improve pronunciation. At the same time, teachers can also provide guidance and evaluation to help students to turn the feedback into specific improvement measures.

(3) Organizing collective activities: Students can participate in activities such as reading a text or singing, and conduct phonetic learning in a collective way. Students can learn from each other by observing each other's pronunciation skills, and achieve better pronunciation outcomes through collective cooperation.

(4) Encouraging pair work: Teachers can assign learning partners to students or allow students to select their own learning partners, to conduct after-class exercises and provide feedback to each other. Students can practice dialogues, read, sing, etc., and supervise and guide each other to improve pronunciation skills.

3.4. Gamifying phonetic learning

Gamifying phonetic learning involves incorporating game elements, such as challenges, rewards, and competition, into the learning process. For example, teachers can design pronunciation-based interactive games or applications that encourage students to practice and improve their pronunciation. Gamification adds an element of fun, motivation, and active participation, making the learning process more enjoyable and effective. Students are more likely to invest time and effort in pronunciation practice when it is presented as an engaging game. The following are some specific strategies.

(1) Designing pronunciation challenge games: Teachers can creatively design pronunciation challenge games that allow students to learn pronunciation through competition and entertainment. The games can include pronunciation battles, rapid recognition, and imitation of specific phonemes. These games not only motivate students but also improve their sensitivity and accuracy in pronunciation.

(2) Utilizing gamified applications: Teachers can utilize existing gamified applications or develop specific applications to teach pronunciation skills. These applications can provide a variety of oral practice and interactive games, allowing students to engage in pronunciation exercises, role-playing, and dialogues. This makes learning more fun, interactive, and tailored to individual learning needs.

(3) Creating pronunciation learning card games: Teachers can create pronunciation learning cards, with each card containing a phoneme, word, or sentence. Students can play the games individually or in groups, practising pronunciation through guessing, imitation, matching, and reading aloud. These games not only enhance pronunciation skills but also improve students' recognition abilities and confidence.

(4) Developing pronunciation maze games: Teachers can design pronunciation maze games that guide students to pronounce correctly while traversing the maze paths. Each maze level has specific pronunciation requirements, and students must pronounce correctly based on the instructions to progress. Such games enable students to consolidate their pronunciation skills through exploration and enhance their spatial awareness and

focus.

(5) Transforming classroom activities into competitions: Teachers can convert pronunciation exercises in the classroom into competitions. For example, teachers can organize pronunciation speaking competitions where students can engage in dialogues or deliver speeches in simulated contexts, with judges giving scores and selecting winners. Such competitions can stimulate students' competitive spirit, enhance their emphasis on pronunciation, and improve their ability to express themselves in authentic situations.

By employing gamified teaching methods, it is possible to stimulate students' interest in learning, enhance their motivation, and make the learning process more enjoyable, interactive, and effective. By designing and implementing gamification strategies appropriately, teachers can innovate their English phonetic teaching methods and improve teaching effectiveness.

4. Conclusion

Phonetic learning plays a crucial role in English language learning. It can not only improve listening and speaking skills, but also help students to communicate across cultures, improve learning skills and boost self-confidence. Therefore, phonetic learning is an integral part of the English learning process. Considering the unsatisfactory results of English phonetics learning for non-English major students, this paper conducted an analysis of innovative teaching and put forward some preliminary strategic suggestions to improve students' English phonetic expression and listening skills. These strategies mainly include situational teaching, the use of technological means, the encouragement of cooperative learning, the gamification of phonetic learning, and so on. Through these strategies, student engagement and motivation are increased, students' sensitivity and natural fluency in phonetics are enhanced, and their pronunciation skills and confidence are improved.

However, each student's phonetic problems and learning needs may be different, and teachers need to carry out personalized teaching according to the actual situation and level of students. Future research can further explore other effective methods and strategies, and conduct comparative studies among different student groups to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of innovative English phonetics teaching for non-English major students.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Pan Z, 2021, On the Application of Output-Oriented Method in College English Phonetics Teaching. *Campus English*, 2021(20): 70–71.
- [2] Qiu M, Zhuo J, 2020, The Construction and Practice of O2O Hybrid Teaching Mode of English Phonetics in Higher Vocational Colleges Under the Background of "Internet +". *Education and Teaching Forum*, 2020(22): 320–321.
- [3] Zhou X, 2020, The Design of Inquiry-Based MOOC Mode of English Phonetics Instruction for Non-English Major Undergraduates. *Overseas English*, 2020(12): 156–157.
- [4] Guo M, 2020, Research on the Blended Learning Mode of "College English Phonetics" Based on Credit-based Clubs. *Journal of Jilin Radio and Television University*, 2020(9): 38–40.
- [5] Yang H, 2019, Innovative Strategies for College English Phonetics Teaching in a Diverse Learning Environment. *Comparative Studies on Cultural Innovation*, 2019(6): 103–104.

- [6] Han L, 2014, New Thoughts on College English Phonetics Teaching Methods. Chinese Journal (Foreign Language Education and Teaching), 2014(5): 142–143.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.