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ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

In today's intercultural educational environment, English serves as the primary means of communication between students from different countries. Spoken language is a key component of this interaction, as it conveys not only lexical and grammatical content but also emotional and intonational nuances that significantly influence how other participants understand the message.

One of the decisive factors in effective oral communication is pronunciation, which includes the correct reproduction of vowels and consonants, diphthongs, long and short vowels, and adherence to stress and rhythm. The peculiarities of English pronunciation directly affect how international students perceive speech. Failure to comply with phonetic norms often leads to communication misunderstandings. It reduces the effectiveness of intercultural communication. Thus, analyzing the impact of English

pronunciation characteristics on international students' comprehension of spoken language is relevant and important for improving teaching effectiveness and developing communicative competence in the international educational space.

English pronunciation, as a linguistic phenomenon, encompasses a set of phonetic and phonological means that ensure the adequate reproduction and perception of spoken language. In linguistics, pronunciation is defined as the realization of the sound aspect of language, which includes vocalism (monophthongs, diphthongs, long and short vowels), consonantism (a complex of consonant sounds), and suprasegmental elements – stress, rhythm, and intonation (Roach, 2009).

The English phonetic system is characterized by a large number of vowel phonemes and specific articulation characteristics of consonants, which distinguish it from many other language systems and often cause phonetic difficulties for non-native speakers (Roach, 2009).

Suprasegmental elements of English pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation, play an important role in conveying grammatical, semantic, and emotional meaning. The stress in a word or phrase can change the meaning of a statement. The rhythmic structure of English, based on the alternation of strong and weak syllables, contributes to a clear perception of spoken language. Intonation provides structure and emotional color to speech, which is a critical element for international students to understand and communicate effectively (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010).

International students often have difficulty perceiving English due to the influence of their native language, which manifests as phonetic interference. For example, students whose native language does not contain diphthongs or long vowels may mispronounce or fail to distinguish between minimal pairs such as /i:/ vs /ɪ/ (*sheep* – *ship*) or /æ/ vs /ʌ/ (*cat* – *cut*). In addition, problems arise with the reduction of vowels in unstressed syllables, which complicates the perception of fast spoken language (Roach, 2009). Students also often do not have time to distinguish words and phrases at

an authentic speech rate, which reduces the effectiveness of their comprehension and ability to communicate interculturally.

Incorrect pronunciation among international students can lead to communication misunderstandings, especially in an intercultural educational environment. Errors in reproducing vowels and consonants, as well as in stress or intonation, affect oral comprehension and complicate participation in discussions and group tasks. In addition, pronunciation quality is directly related to academic success and social adaptation, as students with incorrect pronunciation may avoid active communication. Therefore, systematic training in phonetics and suprasegmental elements (diphthongs, long/short vowels, stress, rhythm, intonation) is critical for improving mutual understanding and communication effectiveness (Pacheco Vásquez, 2025).

To effectively understand international students' spoken language, it is important to focus on teaching phonetics and suprasegmental elements of speech. The main activities include systematic training in vocalism and consonantism, in particular exercises on diphthongs (/aɪ/, /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/), long and short vowels (/i:/ vs /ɪ/, /u:/ vs /ʊ/), as well as articulation training for consonants that are absent in the students' native language, such as /θ/ and /ð/. It is also important to study and practice stress and rhythm, including learning the correct stress in words and phrases (e.g., record as a noun and a verb) and rhythm training through the repetition of sentences with strong and weak syllables to develop a sense of English stress-timed rhythm (Pacheco Vásquez, 2025).

Special attention should be paid to intonation exercises, including imitating native-speaker intonation patterns, listening to authentic audio materials, and repeating after native speakers to develop a phonetic ear. The use of interactive and digital tools, such as language trainers, online platforms, and apps for self-checking pronunciation, as well as recording one's own speech and comparing it with a native speaker's model, is also effective. Equally important is an intercultural approach to teaching, which involves explaining to students the differences between their native language and English in terms of vowel and consonant pronunciation and intonation, and integrating phonetics into communication tasks for practical application of knowledge.

Therefore, features of English pronunciation, including vocalism, consonantism, stress, rhythm, and intonation, significantly affect international students' understanding of spoken language. Typical difficulties associated with phonetic interference, failure to distinguish between minimal pairs, and problems with vowel reduction can lead to communication misunderstandings and reduced learning effectiveness. Systematic pronunciation training, the integration of phonetics into practical communication tasks, and the use of authentic materials contribute to improving perceptions of spoken language, increasing students' intercultural communication competence, and ensuring their successful social and academic adaptation.

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MINDFULNESS AS A PATHWAY TO COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL PERSPECTIVE IN EFL

In recent years, the development of learners' communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language has increasingly been discussed not only in linguistic and methodological terms but also in relation to affective, cognitive, and social-emotional factors. This shift is especially relevant in educational contexts where