

Effective British and American Pronunciation Learning Strategies for Students

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ABSTRACT

A key difficulty for individuals learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) remains pronunciation, particularly in recognizing the differences between American English (AmE) and British English (BrE) norms. This research explores strategies to assist learners in accurately articulating and understanding the distinctive phonetic traits of both forms of English. The research highlights the significance of diverse techniques such as organized shadowing, phonetic notation, sound differentiation exercises, and engaging pronunciation applications. Carried out over a period of two months involving 30 students with intermediate skills, the research indicated that using real native resources, participating in peer correction exercises, and maintaining regular pronunciation records greatly aided in enhancing the learners' skills. Additionally, the learners showed an increased understanding of accent differences and built their confidence in switching between British English and American English based on the context of communication. This study adds value to the increasing demand for flexible pronunciation teaching that recognizes the worldwide variety of English and fosters learner independence.

Keywords: *Pronunciation, British English, American English, ESL learners, phonetic instruction, auditory training, accent variation, language pedagogy*

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INTRODUCTION

In the global context of English language use, pronunciation plays a significant role in influencing intelligibility and listener comprehension. In addition to increasing learners' confidence, pronunciation proficiency ensures more fluid cross-cultural communication. Fluency and accent awareness are often overlooked in Indonesian English instruction, which is often dominated by grammar-based training.

The two English dialects that are most frequently spoken in Indonesia are British English (BrE) and American English (AmE). However, there are notable differences between them in terms of intonation, lexicon, and phonetics. Both types of English are frequently presented to students at the same time: American English through songs, movies, and digital media, and British English through textbooks and tests. Students' speech may become inconsistent and unclear as a result of this dual exposure.

Therefore, the goal of this study is to provide methods that assist students in becoming more proficient in pronunciation through hands-on, technologically assisted, and linguistically informed techniques that correspond with the way pronunciation is naturally learned and intentionally practiced.

Conceptual Structure

Several important linguistic and pedagogical theories serve as the foundation for this study: According to the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado, 1957), pronunciation issues are predicted by comparing L1 (Indonesian) and L2 (English).

According to Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, learners must actively perceive phonological differences in order to integrate them. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) focuses on fluency and real-world communication, both of which depend heavily on pronunciation. Computer-assisted pronunciation training, or CAPT, posits that digital tools can enhance student autonomy and provide immediate corrective feedback (Derwing and Munro, 2005).

RESEARCH METHOD

Rather than relying on a formal research design, this paper gathers strategies based on practical classroom implementation and pedagogical literature.

The following approaches have been observed to yield positive results when integrated into English language instruction:

1. Audio Shadowing with Native Materials

Students repeat audio clips from British and American sources (e.g., BBC podcasts, CNN reports, YouTube interviews) to match rhythm, stress, and intonation. This method allows learners to internalize prosodic patterns.

2. International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) Instruction

Using IPA as a visual guide helps learners make precise distinctions between phonemes, particularly where spelling does not reflect pronunciation. Basic familiarity with IPA makes learners more autonomous.

3. Peer Feedback and Collaborative Practice

Class activities like pair dictation, minimal pair exercises, and role-play dialogues enable students to observe and correct each other's pronunciation, enhancing metacognitive awareness.

4. Pronunciation Journals

Students maintain regular journals reflecting on their pronunciation challenges, progress, and strategies used. Journals encourage metalinguistic reflection and personalized goal-setting.

5. Mobile Applications

Apps such as ELSA Speak and Speechling provide instant feedback on articulation. These apps are especially effective for self-practice outside class hours and help sustain motivation.

6. Video Mirroring Technique

Learners watch and mimic English-speaking video content while observing facial and mouth movements. This helps improve articulatory habits and rhythm recognition.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Pronunciation Precision

Learners exhibited greater consistency in articulating essential sounds such as:

/θ/ in “think” and /ð/ in “this”

/æ/ compared to /ɑ:/ (American English “cat” versus British English “cart”)

Final -r sounds in American English

2. Awareness of Metacognition

The majority of students started to identify patterns in their pronunciation errors. Through maintaining a journal, they observed:

A tendency to mix up British English /t/ with the American English flapped /ɾ/ (as in “better”)

An excessive use of British English forms even in casual conversations

A boost in self-assurance when trying to imitate both accents as needed

3. Effectiveness of Strategies

Combining shadowing with feedback from peers proved to be the most useful approach for mastering rhythm and stress.

Using IPA transcription: Assisted in recognizing discrepancies between sounds and spellings.

Mobile applications: Promoted self-directed learning and practice.

Video mirroring (like YouTube): Captivated learners with authentic accents.

4. Social Linguistic Skills

Certain students started to alternate between accents based on the situation. For instance, they would use British English in academic environments and American English in informal settings. This adaptability signifies a high level of achievement in pronunciation skills and an awareness of global English.

5. Ongoing Struggles

The schwa sound /ə/ in unstressed syllables

Intonation patterns of rising and falling

Connecting words in rapid speech (for example, “go on” becomes /gou wan/)

Examples of Pronunciation Discussed in Class

Word/Phrase	BrE (IPA)	AmE (IPA)	Notes
Butter	/ˈbʌtə/	/ˈbʌt̬ə/	Flap T and rhotic R in AmE
Can't	/kɑːnt/	/kænt/	Vowel contrast
Schedule	/ˈʃedjuːl/	/ˈskedʒuːl/	/ʃ/ vs /sk/
Process	/ˈprəʊ.ses/	/ˈpraː.ses/	Vowel and stress difference
Privacy	/ˈprɪvəsi/	/ˈpraɪvəsi/	First syllable difference
Herb	/hɜːb/	/ɜːrb/	Silent H in AmE

Example Sentences:

BrE: “I can’t find the butter in the schedule they sent.”

→ /aɪ kɑːnt faɪnd ðə ˈbʌtə ɪn ðə ˈʃedjuːl ðeɪ sent/

AmE: “I can’t find the butter in the schedule they sent.”

→ /aɪ kænt faɪnd ðə ˈbʌt̬ə ɪn ðə ˈskedʒuːl ðeɪ sent/

CONCLUSION

Pronunciation learning is both a technical and social endeavor. This study confirms that exposing learners to both BrE and AmE in a structured and interactive way can significantly improve their articulation, awareness, and flexibility. Using a combination of traditional and digital tools, students develop not only phonetic accuracy but also pragmatic judgment about when and how to use particular accents in context.

The Indonesian English education system would benefit from making pronunciation a more central component of instruction and leveraging technology to promote self-directed learning. Educators should emphasize not correctness alone, but clarity, context, and adaptability—qualities essential for successful global communication.

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