

AN INTUITIVE-IMITATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING PRONUNCIATION OF INFLECTION IN ENGLISH WORDS

Lok Raj Sharma

Associate Professor, Department of English, Makawanpur Multiple Campus, Hetauda, Nepal

ABSTRACT

Language employs words, and words employ prefixes and suffixes. Suffixes can be class changing and class maintaining. The class maintaining suffixes are the foundation for inflection. A suffix is added to the end of the word. A word is physically realized when its phonetic segments are audibly pronounced. We can notice a recurring problem for the students in pronouncing the suffixes correctly. Wrong pronunciation of the suffixes often confuses the audience because they tend to hear the pronunciation of the root words differently. As a result, the pronunciation of root word with suffixes becomes intangible. The prime objective of this article is to teach the bachelor level students to pronounce the word inflection correctly. The writer has dealt with ‘-s’, ‘-es’ and ‘-ed’ that function as an inflection in the words by presenting some words to the students. This article is noteworthy to the teachers and the students who are interested in learning pronunciation.

KEYWORDS: *Consonant, English Words, Inflection, Pronunciation, Vowel*

Article History

Received: 10 Mar 2020 | Revised: 17 Jul 2020 | Accepted: 30 Jul 2020

INTRODUCTION

English language retains diverse words composed of prefixes and suffixes. In English words, there is not always corresponding relationship between spellings and their pronunciation. The same spelling has different pronunciations. The spelling ‘s’ is pronounced / s / in the word ‘cats’, / z / in the word ‘balls’, / ɪz / in the word ‘buses’ and / ʃ / in the word ‘sure’. Similarly, the same pronunciation can be realized by varied spellings. The pronunciation / f / can be realized through different spellings ‘f’, ‘ff’, ‘ph’ and ‘gh’ as in the words ‘fame’ ‘of’, ‘phone’ and ‘rough’. The same situation also takes place in the pronunciation of vowels. The spellings ‘ea’ is pronounced / e / in the word ‘head’ and / i: / in the word ‘beat’. Similarly, the pronunciation / i: / can be realized through different spellings ‘ea’, ‘ee’, ‘ie’ and ‘ei’ as in the words ‘heat’ ‘sheep’, ‘field’ and ‘receive’. Most of the students who use English as the second or the third language has realized that one of the difficulties in English language lies in its pronunciation. Inflection is the way of changing the ending or form of a word to show its grammatical functional in a sentence. The addition of the suffixes such as ‘s’, ‘es’, ‘ed’, ‘er/r’, ‘est/st’ etc. to a word without changing the part of speech of a word is called inflection. Such suffixes are differently pronounced based on the final sounds of the words. This creates problem for the students in pronouncing them correctly. This article attempts to avoid this problem in pronouncing the word inflection.

THEORETICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teaching is a complex task. Teaching pronunciation or speech of sounds of a foreign language is even a more difficult and challenging task. Reid (2016) expresses that “English pronunciation is very difficult for foreign learners and it is due to the fact that spelling and pronunciation are two different matters” (p.19). Teaching is intended to bring a noticeable change at the previous level of knowledge of students in the related subject matter. Mangal and Mangal (2012) assert that “the teacher plays a very dominant and authoritarian role in teaching. It is he who decides about the methodology for the presentation of the subject material before the learner” (p.156).

Pronunciation is the production of speech that is a significant aspect in English language for communicating and contacting people by using words. Each word has letters and each letter has a specific sound. Boyer (2002) asserts that “each speaker has his/her own way in saying words in his/her normal speech”(p. 1). Gilakjani (2011) views pronunciation as “the musical tones when the speech flows out smoothly. So, if there is any weakness in the rhythm, misunderstanding will occur. Pronunciation skills are related to musical skills” (p.74).

Inflection involves the suffixes that do not change the part of speech. Crystal (2008) affirms that “inflectional affixes signal grammatical relationships, such as plural, past tense, and possession , and do not change the grammatical class of the stem to which they are attached” (p.243).

CONSONANT SOUNDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Language is what makes us human. One of the distinctive features to differentiate us from animals is the use of language for expressing ideas, opinions, emotional states, information, past experiences, future plan, imaginations and so on. Sapir (1921) asserts that language is a “primarily human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols” (p.8). Nicholas (1982) views language to be social and “we are constantly involved in the process of social interaction” (p.56). This social interaction is possible because of language.

Every language has its own sound system. English has generally has twenty-four consonants and twenty vowel sounds. Crystal (2003) asserts that Consonants are “sounds made by a closure or narrowing in the vocal tract so that the airflow is either completely blocked, or so restricted that audible friction is produced” (p.103). It means consonant sounds are produced when there is an obstruction of the airflow somewhere in the vocal tract. This obstruction is the point of contact between an active articulator and a passive articulator. Articulators are the organs of speech which are involved in the production of speech sounds. The active articulator is the articulator that moves towards the passive articulator in the production of a speech sound. This articulator moves towards another articulator to form a closure of some type in the vocal tract. The lower lip and different parts of tongue are the active articulators. The passive articulator is the articulator that remains motionless in the production of a speech sound. Teeth, alveolar ridge, hard palate, soft palate etc are passive articulators. Sounds are called speech sounds because they are to be produced through organs of speech. Gimson (1990) asserts that speech is “a manifestation of language and spoken language is normally a continuum of sound” (p.44). Connor (2000) opines that “consonants are generally made by a definite interference of the vocal organs with the air stream, and so are easier to describe and understand” (p.24). Similar view is expressed by Verma and Krishnaswamy (1999) who consider a consonant as “a sound characterized by constriction accompanied by some measure of friction or closure followed by release” (p.35).

There are 24 consonant sounds of English. They are: / P/, / b /, /t/, /d/, /k /, /g/, / tʃ /, / dʒ /, / m /, / n /, /ŋ /, / f /, / v /, / θ /, / ð /, / s /, / z /, / ʃ /, / ʒ /, / h /, / r /, / j /, / w / and / l /.

The researcher presented certain consonant sounds on the white board every day, taught them to pronounce the sounds, presented some spellings which represent the sounds and noted the positions of the sounds. He presented the table of consonant sounds in this way:

Table 1: Consonant Sounds and their Positions in the Words

S.N.	Sound	Spellings	Initial Position	Medial Position	Final Position
1.	/ P/	p, pp	pat , pun	apple, apes	cap, up, help, hip
2.	/ b /	b, bb	bat, but	cabbage, rubs	rob, rub, rib
3.	/t/	t, tt, th, ed	tune, Thomas	cattle, cats,	but, hoped, heat
4.	/d/	d, dd	do, deed	lads, bladder	lad, glad, bad
5.	/k /	k, c, ck, ch, q, cc,	kid, can, chorus, quit	looks, locks, soccer	lake, luck, music, monarch
6.	/g/	g, gg, gh	go, get, ghost	leg, baggage	leg, mug, big
7.	/ tʃ /	ch, tch, tu,	child, chop, cello	benches, butcher, future	beach, match, bitch
8.	/ dʒ /	j, dge, g, ge, di, de	jug, gin, gentle	ages, soldier, grandeur	edge, large, merge
9.	/ m /	m, mm	man, meet, me	summon, comes, dams	sum, some, come
10.	/ n /	n, nn, gn	now, gnat	hand, manner	can, ban, lean
11.	/ ŋ /	n, ng	rank, tank, kings	sing, ring, king, spring
12.	/ f /	f, ff, ph, gh	fan, phone,	suffer, lift	leaf, staff, rough, off
13.	/ v /	v, f	van, vote	leaves, lives	love, live, of
14.	/ θ /	th	thin, thank	months, method	cloth, path, bath, faith
15.	/ ð /	th, the	that, this, there	mother, father	bathe, clothe, writhe
16.	/ s /	s, ss, sc, c	sun ,scene, centre	fast, bosses,	bus, glass , place
17.	/ z /	z, zz,s,x	zebra, zero, xylophone	puzzle, nuzzle	buzz, girls, topaz
18.	/ ʃ /	sh, s, ssio,tio, tia, , ch	she, sure, chef	worship, mission, initial, motion	wash, bush, brush
19.	/ ʒ /	Sio, sure, g	genre, jabot	division, measure	garage, beige, rouge
20.	/ h /	h, wh	home, how, who	behind, behave
21.	/ r /	r, rr, wr	rat, write	spring, carry	'r' is pronounced in connected speech if it is followed by a vowel sound as in 'car arrived'.
22.	/ j /	y, u, ew, ue	yes, yak	fuse, value, new
23.	/ w /	w, wh, qu	was, what	swim, queen
24.	/ l /	l, ll	love, like	girls, pulse, falls	tall, hall, real

The table shows that the consonant sound / ŋ / does not occur in the initial position of words; and / h /, / r /, / j / and / w / do not normally occur in the final position of words in isolation. Moreover, the same spelling may have multiple sounds. Crystal (2012) asserts that “English spelling is difficult, but it is not as chaotic as is often claimed. An explanatory perspective can make the learning of spelling easier”. Hockett (1958) assumes that “all languages are constantly undergoing slight changes- in pronunciation, in grammar, in vocabulary” (p.9).

ARTICULATION OF ENGLISH CONSONANTS / CLASSIFICATION OF CONSONANT SOUNDS

The consonant sounds can be described or classified in terms of their voice quality (voicing/ the state of glottis), the place of articulation and the manner of articulation.

Voicing

There are two types of consonants in terms of the voicing. They are voiced and voiceless consonants. The sounds which are produced with the vibration in the vocal cords are called the voiced consonants. There are 15 voiced consonants in English. They are: /b/, /d/, /g/, /dʒ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /v/, /ð/, /z/, /ʒ/, /r/, /j/, /w/ and /l/.

The sounds which are produced or articulated without any vibration in the vocal cords are called voiceless consonant sounds. There are 9 voiceless consonants in English. They are: /p/, /t/, /k/, /tʃ/, /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, and /h/.

The Place of Articulation

The place of articulation refers to the place where the sounds are articulated with the help of articulators. It shows the place where the active articulator meets the passive articulator during the production of sounds. There are 9 types of consonant sounds in English on the basis of the place of articulation. They are:

Bilabial

Bilabial consonants are produced by two lips. There are 4 bilabial consonants. They are /p/, /b/, /m/ and /w/ as in the words 'pot', 'book', 'man' and 'wax'.

Labio-Dental

Labio-dental consonants are produced by the lower lip against the upper front teeth. There are 2 labio-dental consonants. They are /f/ and /v/ as in the words 'fan' and 'vat'.

Dental

Dental sounds are articulated with the tip of the tongue against the upper front teeth. There are 2 dental consonants. They are /θ/ and /ð/ as in the words 'thin' and 'that'.

Alveolar

Alveolar sounds are produced with the tip or blade of the tongue against the teeth / alveolar ridge. There are 6 alveolar consonants. They are /t/, /d/, /n/, /l/, /s/ and /z/ as in the words 'time', 'dog', 'net', 'love', 'sit' and 'zebra'.

Post-Alveolar

The post-alveolar consonant is articulated with the tip of the tongue and the back part of the teeth-ridge. There is only one post-alveolar sound. It is /r/ as in the word 'rat'.

Palato-Alveolar

Palato-alveolar consonants are produced by the tip or blade of the tongue and the alveolar ridge. There are 4 palato-alveolar consonants. They are /tʃ/, /dʒ/, /ʃ/ and /, /ʒ/ as in the words 'chair', 'jam', 'ship' and 'genre'.

Palatal

The palatal consonant is articulated with the front of the tongue and the hard palate. There is only one palatal consonant. It is /j/ as in the word 'yes'.

Velar

Velar consonants are produced when the back of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate (velum). There are 3 velar consonants. They are /k/, /g/ and /ŋ/ as in the words 'kite', 'goat' and 'ring'.

Glottal

The glottal consonant is articulated in the glottis (vocal cords). There is only one glottal consonant. It is /h/ as in the word 'home'.

MANNER OF ARTICULATION

Manner of articulation refers to the way of producing speech sounds. The main ways of articulating consonants are as follows:

Plosive

Plosive consonants are articulated with the complete closure of articulators and the sudden release of the air. There are 6 plosive sounds. They are /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/ and /g/.

Affricate

Affricate consonants are produced with the complete closure of articulators and the slow release of the air. There are two affricate sounds. They are /tʃ/ and /dʒ/.

Fricative

Fricative consonants are produced with a stricture of close approximation of the articulators resulting in an audible friction. There are 9 fricative consonants. They are /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/ and /h/.

Nasal

Nasal consonants are articulated with complete oral closure resulting in passing out the air through the nose. There are 3 nasal sounds. They are /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/.

Lateral

The lateral consonant is produced with the partial closure of the tip of the tongue and the alveolar ridge at the centre of vocal tract and the air-stream passes out through the sides of the tongue. /l/ is only one lateral consonant in English.

Frictionless Continuant

The frictionless continuant sound is produced with open approximation of the tip of the tongue and the back part of the teeth ridge. /r/ is only one frictionless continuant sound.

Semi-Vowel

Semi-vowels are articulated with the open approximation of articulators. Speech sounds are produced like vowels but they function as consonants. There are 2 semi-vowels. They are /w/ and /j/.

VOWEL SOUNDS IN ENGLISH

Crystal (2003) asserts that vowels are “sounds articulated without a complete closure in the mouth or a degree of narrowing which would produce audible friction” (p.517). It means vowel sounds are produced with a friction of the airflow in the vocal tract. Therefore, they are voiced. Gimson (1990) assumes that speech is “a manifestation of language and spoken language is normally a continuum of sound” (p.44). Connor (2000) views that “vowels are made by voiced air passing through different mouth shapes; the differences in the shape of the mouth are caused by different positions of the tongue and of the lips” (p.79). Similar view is expressed by Verma and Krishnaswamy (1999) who consider a vowel as “a sound produced by the unobstructed passage of the airstream” (p.34).

There are 20 vowel sounds of English. They are: /ɪ/, /i:/, /e/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /ə/, /ɜ:/, /ɑ:/, /ɒ/, /ɔ:/, /ʊ/, /u:/, /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /əʊ/, /aʊ/, /ɪə/ and /ʊə/. The researcher presented certain vowel sounds on the white board every day, taught them to pronounce the sounds, presented some spellings which represent the sounds and noted the positions of the sounds. He presented the table of consonant sounds in this way:

Table 2: Vowel Sounds (Monophthongs) and their Formation in the Words

S.N.	Sounds	Spellings	Words
1.	/ɪ/	i, y, ui	big, pity, build
2.	/i:/	ee, ea, ie, ei	bee, sea, field, receive
3.	/e/	e, ea	pen, head, deaf
4.	/æ/	a	at, land, sad, pan
5.	/ʌ/	u, ou	cup, country
6.	/ə/	a, er, or, our,	ago, father, doctor, colour,
7.	/ɜ:/	ir, ur, wor	bird, burn, word
8.	/ɑ:/	a, al, as	after, calf, last
9.	/ɒ/	o, ou	hot, cough
10.	/ɔ:/	or, au, aw,	for, cause, draw
11.	/ʊ/	u, ould	put, could, would
12.	/u:/	oo, ue, ew	moon, blue, chew

The table shows that the same vowel sound can be realized through different spellings and the same spellings can form different vowel sounds. Crystal (2012) asserts that “English spelling is difficult, but it is not as chaotic as is often claimed. An explanatory perspective can make the learning of spelling easier”. Hockett (1958) opines all languages as “constantly undergoing slight changes- in pronunciation, in grammar, in vocabulary” (p.9).

Table 3: Vowel Sounds (Diphthongs) and their Formation in the Words

S.N.	Sounds	Spellings	Words
1.	/eɪ/	ai, ay, a-e	pain, day, make, pane
2.	/aɪ/	ie, y, uy, igh	die, by, buy, high
3.	/ɔɪ/	Oi, oy, awi	soil, toy, drawing
4.	/əʊ/	O, oa, ow, ou	old, boat, blow, soul
5.	/aʊ/	ou, ow	Out, about, cow, how
6.	/ɪə/	ear, eer, ier	hear, deer, fierce
7.	/eə/	air, are, ear	air, fair, care, share, bear, tear
8.	/ʊə/	oor, our, ure	moor, tour, cure, sure

TEACHING MATERIALS AND TEACHING APPROACH

The teaching materials are suffixes that work as inflection in the words. The suffixes involved in this article are: ‘-s’, ‘es’, and ‘ed’.

According to Celce-Murica et al. (1996, cited in Lee, 2008), there are three main approaches to teaching pronunciation including “the intuitive-imitative approach, the analytic-linguistic approach, and the integrative approach” (p.2). In the intuitive-imitative approach, Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2010) highlight “a student ability to listen to and imitate the rhythms and sounds of the target language will give rise to the development of an acceptable threshold of pronunciation without the intervention of any explicit information” (p.984). Particular technologies, such as audio-tapes, videos, computer-based programs, and websites, are used today for this approach. Meanwhile, in the analytic-linguistic approach, explicit intervention of pronunciation pedagogy is emphasized. The learners are provided with explicit information on pronunciation using phonetic alphabet, articulatory descriptions, and vocal charts. The explicit information can be presented in different interactive speech software and websites (Lee, 2008). In the integrative approach, according to Lee (2008) “pronunciation is viewed as an integral component of communication, rather than an isolated drill and practice sub-skill” (p.1), Lee also mentions that learners practice pronunciation within meaningful task-based activities, and pronunciation is taught to meet L2 learners’ particular needs. The present study has adopted intuitive-imitative approach to teaching pronunciation.

The Intuitive- Imitative Approach

This approach depends on the learner’s ability to listen to and imitate the rhythms and sounds of the target language without the intervention of any explicit information. It presupposes the availability, validity and reliability of good models to listen to.

Steps to follow for Teaching Pronunciation of Inflection

- Presenting the words with suffixes
- Listening to the teacher how he / she pronounces the words with suffixes
- Following the teacher (Drilling)
- Pronouncing the words individually
- Drawing the conclusion / Rules

Pronunciation of Final ‘-s’ and ‘es’

Presentation No. 1

Caps /kæps /	beats /bi:ts/	books /bʊks/
Laughs /lɑ:fs/	months /mʌnθs/	cat’s /kæts/

Conclusion

/p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/ and /h/ are voiceless consonants. The suffix ‘s’ is pronounced /s/ after voiceless consonants other than /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/ and /h/.

Presentation No. 2

Verbs /vɜ:bz/	builds /bɪldz/	bags /bægz/
Lives /lɪvz/	rams /ræmz/	pens /penz/
Kings /kɪŋz/	balls /bɔ:lz/	clothes /kəʊðz/
Man's /mænz/		

Conclusion

/b/, /d/, /g/, /dʒ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /v/, /ð/, /z/, /ʒ/, /r/, /j/, /w/ and /l/ are voiced consonants. The suffix 's' is pronounced /z/ after voiced consonants other than /dʒ/, /z/, /ʒ/, /r/, /j/, and /w/. We should tell our students that sounds /r/, /j/, and /w/ do not occur at the end of the words, but letters may occur and they work as vowel sounds.

Presentation No. 3

Cows /kaʊz/	buys /baɪz/	plays /pleɪz/
Ears /ɪəz/	boys /bɔɪz/	shows /ʃəʊz/
Bees /bi:z/	cars /kɑ:z/	cow's /kaʊz/

Conclusion

Vowels are also voiced sounds. The spellings 'w' and 'y' at the end of the words do not work as the consonant sounds. They work as vowel sounds. The spelling 'r' at the end of word in isolation remains silent.

Presentation No. 4

Matches /mætʃɪz/	buses /bʌsɪz/
Bushes /bʊʃɪz/	judges /dʒʌdʒɪz/
Garages /gærɑ:ʒɪz/	buzzes /bʌzɪz/

Conclusion

The spellings 'es' is pronounced /ɪz/ after the consonant sounds /dʒ/, /z/, /ʒ/, /s/, /ʃ/ and /tʃ/.

Pronunciation of Final 'ed'**Presentation No. 5**

Rubbed /rʌbd/	begged /beɡd/	lived /lɪvd/
Summed /sʌmd/	banned /bænd/	ringed /rɪŋd/
Called /kɔ:ld/	judged /dʒʌdʒd/	breezed /brɪzd/
Garaged /gærɑ:ʒd/		

Conclusion

/b/, /d/, /g/, /dʒ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /v/, /ð/, /z/, /ʒ/, /r/, /j/, /w/ and /l/ are voiced consonants. The suffix 'ed' is pronounced /d/ after voiced consonants other than /d/.

Presentation No. 6

Rowed /k <u>au</u> d/ (noise)	lied /b <u>ai</u> d/
Played /pl <u>ei</u> d/	sawed /s <u>o:</u> d/ (cut)
Employed /impl <u>ɔ:</u> d/	showed /ʃ <u>ə</u> d/

Conclusion

The spelling 'ed' is pronounced /d/ after vowel sounds.

Presentation No. 7

Helped /hel <u>p</u> t/	looked /l <u>ʊ</u> kt/
Laughed /l <u>ɑ:</u> ft/	missed /m <u>ɪ</u> st/
Pushed /p <u>ʊ</u> ʃt/	watched /w <u>ɔ:</u> tʃt/

Conclusion

/t/, /k/, /f/, /θ/, /s/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/ and /h/ are voiceless consonants. The suffix 'ed' is pronounced /t/ after voiceless consonants other than /t/.

Presentation No. 8

Wanted /wɒn <u>t</u> d/	fainted /feɪn <u>t</u> d/
Needed /ni: <u>d</u> d/	heeded /hi: <u>d</u> d/

Conclusion

The spelling 'ed' is pronounced /ɪd / after /d/ and /t/.

The article writer requests the teachers to presents as many words as it is possible to teach the students the pronunciation of suffixes that belong to the word inflection. They need to encourage their students to pronounce such words again and again to develop confidence in them.

EXPECTED RESULT

The article writer, as an English teacher, believes that this article will be able to supply the students and teachers with the basic concept of the consonant sound and vowel sounds of English. It will make it easier for the teachers to teach the pronunciation of inflection to some extent. The article writer expects the teachers and students will notice the pronunciation of each and every word while consulting the English Dictionary. The understanding of pronunciation will develop their personality in speaking.

CONCLUSIONS

This article concludes that teaching English pronunciation is not an easy task. It is difficult because there is not always corresponding relationship between spellings and their sounds or pronunciation. A spelling can produce multiple sounds,

and similarly the same sound can be realized by multiple spellings. There are different approaches to teaching pronunciation, but a very common and easily applicable approach is the Intuitive - Imitative Approach. It requires a trained teacher and attentive students for effective teaching-learning activities. The pronunciation of inflection is such a minor topic that even English teachers do not consider it seriously and intelligibly. This article will make them contemplate that a small mistake in pronunciation makes our utterance intangible.

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