

RESEARCH ARTICLE

VARIABLES RESPONSIBLE FOR SUB-STANDARD PRONUNCIATION AT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL IN PAKISTANI CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

This piece of study aims at finding factors responsible for poor pronunciation in Pakistan. Unfortunately in Pakistan, it is not the way as should be because of various reasons which affect pronunciation to a great level such as; unawareness of sounds of kids at primary level by teachers which later leads them to poor pronunciation and also at tertiary level which is of course a major factor resulting into unsatisfactory speaking. Whether phonology is taught or not but sounds introduction must be made necessary at any level. It is also seen that ignoring input from natives and not exposing to media result in coarse pronunciation where speakers cannot satisfy their needs of communication. It is aptly understood that input and authentic listening of speaking is the primary need of correct pronunciation, however, learning English as a second language on the ground of L1's sounds also deforms pronunciation to some extent

Keywords: Negligence of Teaching Sounds by Teachers at Primary.

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is the showcase of English language which makes speaking fascinating and attractive but due to the existence of some factors in the non-native English land, it loses the beauty and the very extension of these variables. As a result it turns into the habit of people. In Pakistan, there are a number of variables responsible for poor pronunciation for the number of issues. Among those some of them are environmental and some are individuals which afflict articulation. As English is taught and learned as a second language in Pakistan, learners as well as teachers practice English on the ground of L1 which causes many issues in grammar, understanding meaning (semantics) syntax and pronunciation. For the sub-standard pronunciation, the most responsible factor is the involvement of L1 speech sounds and ignoring teaching English phonology in its real manner by teachers from the very onset. Similarly the lack of exposure to native environment physically or mentally is also a key factor for Pakistani English speakers. Negligence of Input from media for adopting correct pronunciation is assumed very influential in case of unimpressive pronunciation in Pakistani context.

Review of the Related Literature

The studies of Dalton and Siedlhofer (2001) reveal that pronunciation means to produce sounds that are significant in nature, in two senses i.e. Sounds (letters) as a sign/signs of a particular language and the divertive usage of it to gain/grasp meanings in the dominion and utility of context. It is a matter of fact that every individual speaker produces pronunciation to demonstrate signs and language use in appropriate context with a meaning. To be more targeted, the question researchers of

linguistics investigate is about the pronunciation in the acquisition of Second Language that manifests standard pronunciation to have a welcome hold over the target language. Studies conducted by Fledge (1981) state that the native and non-native language speaker's pronunciation gives birth to foreign accent. Second Language Acquisition pronunciation research deals with foreign accent of the native speaker. It involves various factors that has impact on pronunciation (accent) when the pronunciation/accent of both the native speakers is compared. Dalton and Seidlhofer (2001) highlight the issue of imitating pronunciation (accent), as pronunciation instruction is visible within the social identity, which must be modified. Block (2007) is of the view that pronunciation (accent) mainly matters a lot which resists change in the language behavior and is always manifested in self-representation. Sifaki and Sougari (2005) are of the view that most of the non-native speakers, instead the choice in variety i.e. America vs. British English have their own pronunciation. The main focus of the learners in EFL setting is pronunciation accuracy translating into communicative competence. Mackey (2002) is of the view that language of international communication with its pre-requisite pronunciation differs from any other second or foreign language with respect to its teaching and learning. As a matter of fact a zealous heed has not been paid by teachers in Pakistan to find out a solution to this problem. The teaching of English is considered only in the frame of subject teaching and not focusing language. That's why when our graduate prepares to expose himself to the international level market in order to have good job, his expectations dust him due to his poor communicative competence and low standard pronunciation in English language. According to Harmer (2007) language is used for a purpose with a strong tie of communication between a speaker and listener transmitting the same taste of pronunciation needed for the message to clearly understand and when it is got, is found unambiguous. The reason for this outcast pronunciation is the distance of native speaker and our

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learners. If direct contact can't be made at least media is the main source to have this distance erased. For this purpose authentic and non-authentic materials should be brought in use to have standard pronunciation. According to Nunan (2003) learners of English must be provided with maximum time and opportunities in a proportion compatible with the situation and context to practice speaking in the classroom. Language class is a composed body of language games, songs, role play, simulation etc. When language becomes fun for the learners they assimilate every act, performance and word of the teacher and then through adaptation the reflection is observed in their behavior. In this regards Thornbury (2005) states that speaking involving pronunciation is a multi-sensory exercise due to the involvement of paralinguistic properties i.e. intonation, pitch variation, pauses, body language, postures, gestures, facial expressions, tempo and eye contact affecting the flow of conversation

Negligence of teaching sounds by teachers at primary level:

Pronunciation at gross root level at the age of three or four years plays important role in speech in the entire life of a speaker. Most of the times, in cases such as English as a second language the teachers or instructors at initial level in teaching English pronunciation are least concerned with kids standard utterances while instructing them for the basic units in rhymes where students are easy to gain what is taught to them. Most importantly, the manner and place of articulation are not usually on right direction which resultantly cause poor pronunciation; for instance the unit BA which is the combination of consonant {b} and vowel {a:} are from the two different classes of sounds in which one is Bilabial and the other is long vowel sound. Not even the names rather the functions must be introduced to students in order to articulate words in their appropriate manner. Similarly, the sound {p} bilabial stop and {f} labiodental fricative are interchangeably used in most of the areas in Pakistan because the very nuance is not taught at the gross root level while {r} light and dark are not commonly differentiated in Pakistan by English speakers. This drawback is traced back to first stage of teaching English at any level whether in childhood by a nursery teacher or in adulthood by an English language instructor but problem is the same which is the ignorance of sound nature in early stage of English acquisition, while some of the researchers argue that not only the teaching method which neglects teaching pronunciation and the nature of sounds rather the teachers and instructors themselves possess poor pronunciation who can't find out the differences between and among alike sounds which is transmitted into the reading and pronunciation of their kids and students.

Negligence of following Native speakers: Native speakers of a language are the accurate users of a language in every skill while non-natives have many mistakes in using that language but if someone listens to native speakers, he or she can gain accuracy. Pakistani English speakers have their local accent which is the blend of many accents and most words are spoken in regional style which is developed as accent now. This is rightly because of two main reasons: first is identity touch which keeps Pakistani speakers as a separate entity to have their own recognition across the world and the second which is major, is the negligence of listening to native speakers and to adopt their style. Not even style rather just to correct their pronunciation. Contrary to that, those who in some way try to copy natives have their spoken improved to a great extent. Their pronunciation has stress, pitch and intonation which are

determiners of English and to a very great level change the meaning of a word such as 'PRESENT as a noun which has stress on first syllable which means a gift or something available and verb PRE'SENT which puts stress on second syllable refers to presenting something. Conclusively, both words keep differences in articulation because of appropriate stress pattern and change the very meanings of these words. In either way, by copying natives or by learning rules of sounds articulation, one tries to get spoken improved genuinely.

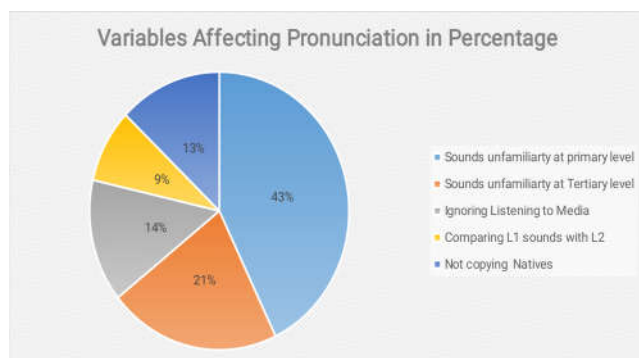
Avoiding Media: Media in general plays pivotal role in acquiring knowledge partly because it has made the world as a global language and more specifically plays vital role in second language acquisition. Since English has become a global language, it is the medium of electronic, social and print media and is admired by most population of world. It has of course positive role in improving every skill of English language but it particularly helps in improving spoken skills of a listener of the media. According to many English learners who have developed pronunciation said that they have followed watching movies and visualized English news channels for a long period of time. As per their improvement, they also came to know about accentual differences of various dialects and their pattern of usages. American English institute (Shergarh) students told that they improved pronunciation of both American and British English by subscribing YouTube channels which differentiate both accents sounds by nominating movies' scenes which is practical and visual for understanding. Similarly, Indian and African accents are known because watching movies as well as getting familiarity with their news channels let them know about their pronunciation/ accent.

Unawareness of Phonology at tertiary level: Phonology is the study of sounds of a particular language which differentiates between sounds and letters as well as teaches manner, place of articulation, stress and intonation level. In English, there are 26 letters and double of that are the sounds which are 45. There is a huge gap between sounds and letters so the learners of English should know sounds more than letters in order to improve oral as well as accentual skills. In other case, it leads to poor learning. In Pakistan, tertiary level students are unaware of sounds of English, particularly long and short, consonants and vowels, stressed and unstressed, voiced and unvoiced as well as intonation at sentence level. Most of university level students articulate each word stressed in a sentence and do not keep difference between Function and Content words. Normally, speakers pronounce words the same which is quite different at global level. A speaker of English will pronounce content word stressed while function which are grammatical words unstressed. More specifically, manner and place of articulation play vital role in the beauty of pronunciation such as bilabial, labiodental, fricative, affricative are the classes of sounds and their exact pronunciation brings charm in speaking. Due to these necessary steps, speakers spoil their speaking skills particularly in Pakistan.

Comparing L1 sounds with L2: Languages have much difference within their sound system and their comparison can happen in a few cases not in many. Most of the times, English is learned as L2 on the base of L1 particularly in Asia which is a source of quick learning but like Grammar Translation Method (GTM) it has many disadvantages while matching their aspects for learning. Here by comparing one sound of both the languages cannot fulfill its exact pronouncing criteria

such as: the Allophones; which have same meanings but different pronunciation in various places and those Allophones being compared with Urdu and Pashtu sounds will have bad effect on their speakers' accents. In Urdu the sound {Th} in a word 'Baath' has non-aspirated TH while in SAATH the last {TH} is aspirated when pronounced by an Urdu speaker. For Urdu speaker the end sounds are different in the case of speaking (articulating) while in English we have all {TH} aspirated always which by comparing will lose the charm of the English accent. Similarly, native Pashtu speakers who have {Th} non-aspirated will pronounce the word {Think} as non-aspirated Think. So, lastly it is revealed that one has to learn the rules of any skills in its own rules of a language which by comparing with L1 may not have unsatisfactory result.

Method and Procedure: For the purpose to differentiate between good and poor speakers, the researcher collected data from two various groups of students at tertiary level aging between 20 and 22 to judge their reasons of standard and substandard pronunciation. Those who were taught Phonics at initial level were good enough both at manner and place of articulation. They had a slight issue in stress and intonation pattern which is not judged here, while those who had poor pronunciation had not been taught Phonics and they could not differentiate between slight identical sounds. As compared to Phones aware students, the unaware were less proficient in pronouncing English word.



Statistical analysis: From the displayed statistical data, the most responsible factor for the poor pronunciation is Sounds unfamiliarity at Primary level which is due to negligence of sounds by teachers at grass root level who from the very start are not taught sounds differences and their proper manner and place of articulation. This factor disturbs students' pronunciation greatly which is 43% double than that of Sounds unfamiliarity at tertiary level which is 21%, however this also leaves great impact on the articulation of students' speaking. Similarly, ignoring listening and consulting media for correction

pronunciation is comparatively lesser than that of sounds unfamiliarity both at tertiary and primary level which is 14%. This also affects the form of pupils' pronunciation. Likewise, Not copying Natives is too a considerable factor for affecting pronunciation of Pakistani speakers which is 13% almost equal to that of Ignoring listening to media which keep similar contribution in deforming pronunciation. Last but not the least is Comparing L1 sounds with L2 which is 9% the least amount contributing in rough pronunciation of students in Pakistan. This is also a factor least responsible for poor articulation of students' speaking in Pakistan.

Conclusion

Pronunciation is the display of English language and it impresses interlocutors when it is spoken correctly in all respects. Unfortunately in Pakistan, it is not the way as should be because of various reasons which affect pronunciation to a great level for instance; unawareness of sounds of kids at primary level by teachers which later leads them to poor pronunciation and also at tertiary level which is of course a major factor resulting into unsatisfactory speaking. Whether phonology is taught or not but sounds introduction must be made necessary at any level. It is also seen that ignoring input from natives and not exposing to media result in coarse pronunciation where speakers cannot satisfy his needs of communication. It is aptly understood that input and authentic listening of speaking is the primary need of correct pronunciation, however, learning English as a second language on the ground of L1's sounds also deform pronunciation to some extent.

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