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## THE PROBLEMS OF PRONUNCIATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE FACED BY INDIANS

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**Abstract:** English language has become an important medium for executing all business and official formalities with respect to documentation and finalizing all activities. English language performs an important role as an official language. In the present age of industrialization, English is the language of business. In Countries like India, a person gets affected because of his mother tongue and faces problems in pronouncing right word in English. If you learn English language in your early childhood, our mother tongue doesn't influence pronunciation. Indians are also judged on the basis of their fluency in English language and right pronunciation. Wrong pronunciation of English words create lots of confusion and misunderstanding because there are so many words in English which have slight difference in sounds but have huge difference in meaning. **This can become a barrier in going abroad as well as settling down there. Poor pronunciation not only creates negative impression but it also creates confusion and misunderstanding. There are total 44 sounds in English. Alone single letter 'e' has three different sounds like in 'bet', 'fate', 'and elephant' and 'eager'. The ee sound is used with the middle portion of the mouth, the eh sound is used with the middle portion of the mouth and the er sound is used with the rear portion of the mouth. Language is created by human beings and whatever they require; they expand and pronounce the word in that way. English spelling does not indicate how a word should be pronounced because there are many letters in English words which remain silent.** There are different and multiple sounds of the letters of English Alphabet and sounds vary in terms of position of the mouth and intensity (low or high). Non-native speakers of English find difficulty in practicing the accent of the native speakers of English. Of course, this problem is vice versa. The first section of the paper emphasizes the importance of pronunciation in the life of Indians. The second section analyses various reasons for poor pronunciation of non-native speakers and how to overcome the problem.

**Keywords:** Official language-documentation- pronunciation -industrialization-lingua-Franca-accent, influence.

## I. INTRODUCTION:

English language has become an important medium for executing all business and official formalities with respect to documentation and finalizing all activities. English has to play an essential role as an official language. In the present age of industrialization, English is the language of business. English is not official language in our constitution but all official documents are executed in English language. It is extensively used in the fields of academics, managerial works, service sectors, public and private sectors, transport and aviation sectors. With the advent of industrialization and research in various fields, lots of information is stored on net in the medium of English language for the benefit of society. Its use is increasing extensively. To become progressive, it has now become indispensable in India as it is also related to one's standard of living and class.

In Countries like India, a person gets affected because of his mother tongue and faces problems in pronouncing right word in English. If you learn English language in your early childhood, our mother tongue doesn't influence pronunciation. Indians are also judged on the basis of their fluency in English language and right pronunciation. Wrong pronunciation of English words create lots of confusion and misunderstanding because there are so many words in English which have slight difference in sounds but have huge difference in meaning. **This can become a barrier in going abroad as well as settling down there. Poor pronunciation not only creates negative impression but it also creates confusion and misunderstanding. There are total 44 sounds in English. Alone single letter 'e' has three different sounds like in 'bet', 'fate', 'and elephant' and 'eager'. The 'ee' sound is used with the middle portion of the mouth, the 'eh' sound is used with the middle portion of the mouth and the 'er' sound is used with the rear portion of the mouth. Language is created by human beings and whatever they require; they expand and pronounce the word in that way. English spelling does not indicate how a word should be pronounced because there are many letters in English words which remain silent.** There are different and multiple sounds of the letters of English Alphabet and sounds vary in terms of position of the mouth and intensity (low or high). Non-native speakers of English find difficulty in practicing the accent of the native speakers of English. Of course, this problem is vice-versa. Non-native speakers face lots of problems due to wrong pronunciation of words like problems in settling abroad, problems in clarity during meetings and discussion, and they become butt of ridicule in public gatherings. The importance of pronunciation in communication cannot be underestimated. In fact it is as important as reading and listening skills. It is a well-known fact that there is a wide gap in the education level of Indian. Only half of the population in our country is not well educated and interaction in English language is not possible among them which lead to problem in learning English language.

In the present age of globalization, English is the only lingual-franca for the entire world. Students and teachers also encounter various problems in learning English language. Knowledge of phonetics, speech organs, place of articulation and manner of articulation play an important role in learning English language. You may have good knowledge of a topic but if your pronunciation is incorrect, you may create confusion and misinterpretation during explanation of that particular topic. A person who has been speaking Hindi language for 20 years, it is difficult for him to become master in the use of second language because mother tongue may influence and hamper in learning English language. When the sentence construction and patters of encoding sign and symbols in a proper structure are different of the two languages, lots of difficulties occur while learning that language. It's difficult to learn English language because it has stress, intonation and rhythm features which are missing in Hindi language and in different countries; English language is spoken in different styles and accent. Different linguists have encountered variety of problems while teaching English language. Some are of the opinion that mastering its vocabulary is the real difficulty of learning the English language because there exist multiple meaning of a word and same sound words have different meaning which is also large in number. Some others say that mastering the sound system is the real problem as it has different and many sounds for the same one vowel.

Mother tongue influence is one of the current problems in foreign language teaching. In India, many learners of English as a second language have problems with pronunciation. According to Brown, (1994) there are several factors that affect learner's pronunciation, i.e. Native language, Age, experience, innate phonetic ability, identity, language ego, motivation, and concern for good pronunciation. Studies tell that native language interference is the main influential factor in affecting the learner's pronunciation. Bose (2005) stated that most of the pronunciation errors are due to the interference of mother tongue: language learners use the sounds of their mother tongue instead of those of their target language. (Ladefoged, 2001; Carter & Nunan, 2001) mentioned that mother tongue has clear influence on learning (L2) second language pronunciation. Where L1 and L2 rules are in conflict, errors are expected to be committed by foreign learners.

The learning of English language is also difficult because of non-scientific way of pronouncing words. Some words are pronounced with silent letters and some are pronounced in an entirely different way like 'Volkswagen'. Some learners face difficulty because of high status associated with this language. They feel nervousness and lose confidence as they want to speak error free English. They are scared of criticism and humiliation if they are found speaking wrong English language. The problem is further aggravated due to the status level associated with this language. The tongue of the student speaking Hindi has different system of phonology and when they speak English words, they get affected by this regional accent. There are some unique features in the spoken aspect of English, especially when it comes to put stress on certain syllables in English words like 'photograph' and 'photographer'.

In the word photograph, we speak first syllable longer and louder and in the word photographer we speak second syllable longer and louder. The unique feature of putting stress on certain syllables in English words makes it a unique language and that is why is called musical language. How and where to put stress needs proper guidance from a teacher. Therefore a teacher must have a good knowledge of mother tongue as well as of English Phonetics to guide students to pronounce words articulately.

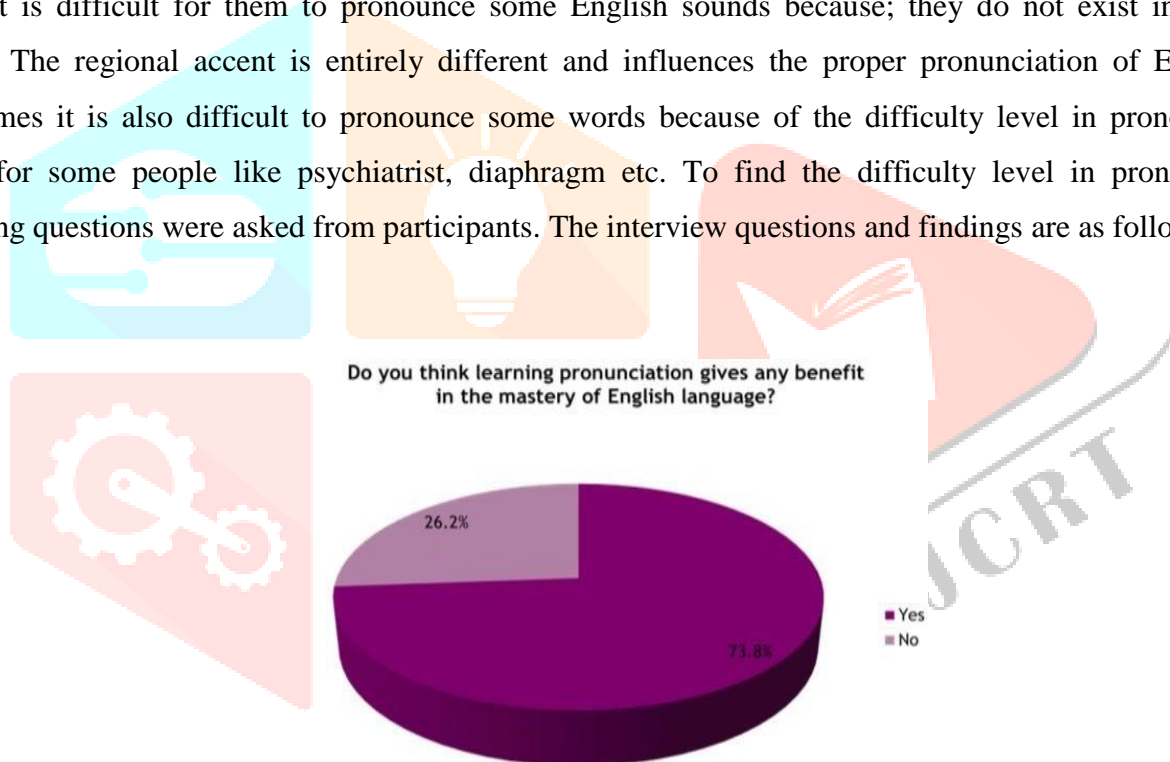
The intonation also plays an important role in the correct pronunciation of English words. The right combination of rising and falling tone in a sentence makes the sentences meaningful and comprehensible. So the teacher should know the difference between two languages and knowledge of these differences should be defined clearly to the students to get good command over the second language. English is spoken in more than two accents internationally: American English and British English. In addition to these countries, English is also spoken in South Africa, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. But In India we follow British RP (Received Pronunciation) and it is also followed and recognized worldwide. In India we may have English speakers from all the states. People from Bengal and Bihar, for instance, pronounce /v/ instead of /b/ and /b/ instead of /v/. Instead of 'Savitri' they pronounce 'Sabitri' and instead of 'subah', they pronounce 'suvah'. Some people from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh pronounce /s/ instead of /ʃ/. They pronounce 'Mahesh' as 'Mahes'. Some people from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana pronounce /ʃ/ instead of /s/. They pronounce "Saswat" (/s/) as "Sashwat" (/ʃ/); "Sani" (/s/) as "Shani" (/ʃ/) and "Gahnsyam" (/s/) as "Ghanshyam" (/ʃ/)---. People from Assam, 'situation' as "/(sɪtʃueɪsən)" instead of "(sɪtʃueɪʃn)"; 'facial' "/'feɪʃ(ə)l/" as '/'feɪs(ə)l/'; 'progression' "/prə'gref.ən/" as "/prə'gres.ən/" ----. It is difficult to get perfection in pronunciation but with practice this can be tried out. In the above examples mother tongue influence on English language is clearly shows in the form of incorrect pronunciation.

## II. SOUND SYSTEM OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

In English the same words is pronounced in two different ways as verbs and nouns. In nouns the stress is placed on first syllable and in verbs, stress is placed on second syllable. The single letter 'e' has four different sounds in English language. In English there are total 26 alphabets but there are 44 sounds of these 26 alphabets. It means same letter has more than one sound. The sounds which we use for pronunciation are not useful in writing. We have silent letters also in English which we do not use in pronunciation.

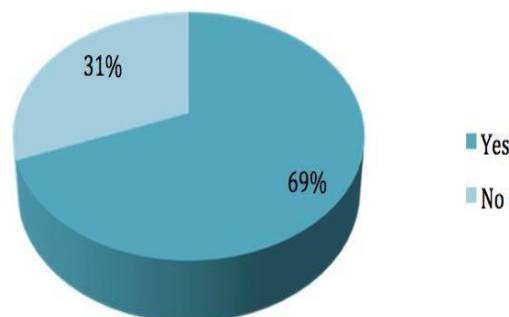
### a) Influence of mother tongue

The difference in the sound system of English language with mother tongue creates problems in mapping the sound system of our mother tongue to that of English. In fact, the two are different systems. Because of the differences in the sound system of two languages, adequate time is required to practice the pronunciation of English words. The mother tongue influences when English sounds are produced, though they are not quite the same. It is difficult for them to pronounce some English sounds because; they do not exist in their mother tongue. The regional accent is entirely different and influences the proper pronunciation of English words. Sometimes it is also difficult to pronounce some words because of the difficulty level in pronouncing those words for some people like psychiatrist, diaphragm etc. To find the difficulty level in pronunciation, the following questions were asked from participants. The interview questions and findings are as follows:



**Result from question 1**

Do you think learning pronunciation is as important as learning other skills ?



### Result from question2

#### **b) No training centers available for improving Listening skills**

Almost total neglect of listening skills is another factor for the problems of pronunciation of English. It has been observed that learning of English language has focused only in improving speaking skills. But to learn a language, it is required to be proficient in all the skills that are listening, reading, speaking and writing. There are no training centers for improving listening skills.

#### **c) Relation between sound and spelling:--**

In English the same words is pronounced in two different ways as verbs and nouns. In nouns the stress is placed on first syllable and in verbs, stress is placed on second syllable. The single letter 'e' has four different sounds in English language. In English there are total 26 alphabets but there are 44 sounds of these 26 alphabets. It means same letter has more than one sound. The reason is that the letters in English Alphabet that are useful for us in writing do not always indicate the same sounds in pronunciation. The letters in English Alphabet are inadequate to represent the pronunciation of English words unambiguously.

Let's observe some instances:

**A)** The same letter(s) stand (s) for many different sounds as'—

i) The letter “a” stands for different sounds in the words '—

Tat /tæt/                      woman /womən/

Salt /sɔ:lt/                      gate /get/

Fast /fɑ:st/                      vintage /'vin.tɪdʒ/

ii) The letters “ough” stand for different sounds in the following words:

**Rough** /rʌf/                      **Plough** /plɑʊ/

**bought** /bɔ:t/                      caught /kɔ:t/

iii) The letters “th” stand for different sounds in the following words:

**Thief** = /θi:f/

iv) The letter “ch” stands for different sounds in the words'—

**Character** /'kær.ək.tər/

**Chapter** /'tʃæp.tər/

**Epoch** /'i:.pɒk/

**Moustache** /mə'stɑ:ʃ/

v) The letter “s” stands for different sounds in the words '—

**Supper** /'sʌp.ər/                      **usher** /'ʌʃ.ər/

**Division** /di'viʒ.ən/                      **sure** /ʃɔ:r/

vi) The letter “g” stands for different sounds in the words '—

**Sign** /saɪn/                      **signature** /'sig.nə.tʃər/

**Beige** /beɪʒ/                      **eight** /eit/

**B)** The number of sounds in an English word may not be equal.

WORD	NO. OF LETTERS	NO. OF SOUNDS
found	5	4
train	5	4
phone	5	3
tax	3	3
thigh	5	3

### III. Conclusion:

If the second language like English language is learnt in early childhood, then it is easy to get perfection in attaining good pronunciation skills. They should practice and learn correct speaking during their day to day interaction. When the teacher also guides and provides right platform for practice, then the learners acquire correct skills in spoken English. To get command over a language, one need to be proficient in the use of all the four skills of a language that is reading, writing, speaking and listening. The interaction with native speaker, listening to audios will help to practice sound patterns and emulate a model voice. The practice can be done in a digital language lab which will help to eradicate mother tongue influence completely. This practice will not only help in improving pronunciation but it will also increase in new and varied vocabulary stock. The visualization of the position of mouth during the articulation of any word also helps in understanding the sound system and sound pattern. If one practices above strategies, it will sure shot increase ones proficiency in the language.

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