

## Views of the teachers regarding the students' poor pronunciation in English language

Gulap Shahzada

*Institute of Education & Research  
University of Science & Technology, Bannu, Pakistan  
(Corresponding and Principal Author) [Gulap\\_786@yahoo.com](mailto:Gulap_786@yahoo.com)*

Dr. Umar Ali Khan

*Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan, Pakistan*

Arshad Mehmud

*NUML university Islamabad, Pakistan*

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**Abstract** *In fact correct pronunciation of any language gives very good impression to the listener and it is important in learning of a language. English is a language of international communication and it is the only widely spoken language in the world. It is a matter of great concern that the performance of our students in English pronunciation is very dismal. The study was designed to know the views of the teachers regarding the students' poor pronunciation. Population of the study was all government schools English teachers at secondary level in district Bannu. 100 English teachers at secondary level from different school of Bannu constituted sample of the study. Simple percentage was used as a statistical test for analysis of data. Results of the study revealed that our teachers have no knowledge of phonetics and phonology, we have limited institutions of teaching English as a language, and teachers do not use A.V aids during their English classes. It was recommended that teachers may be given proper training in pronunciation especially in Phonetics and Phonology; Special institution may be established across the country which teach English as subject such as NUML and teachers may be motivated to use different language equipments during their classes.*

**Key words:** *Pronunciation, language, communication, English, native, foreign*

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### Introduction

Language is a speech, through which human beings interact and communicate their ideas, thought, experiences. Language is a social phenomenon through which we exchange our thoughts and convey our motto. Language which is spoken by most of the people of the world is called international language. An international language is a linkage of the world.

English is a language which is spoken by the people mostly the entire world. English is a link between East and West, North and South.

English is one of the core subjects at school, more and more schools are teaching English to their pupils and English centers can be found popular in any city, especially big cities. However, many foreigners have commented many Pakistani speakers can speak English, but only a few have intelligible English pronunciation so that they can be understood easily in direct communication with foreigners. (Hinojosa & Bailey (1980) reported that up to a certain proficiency standard, the fault which most severely impairs the communication process in EFL learners is pronunciation, rather than vocabulary or grammar. Being able to speak or use another language besides one's mother tongue can be an interesting and challenging task as language learning seems to be an incremental and time-consuming process. Likewise, Rubin and Thompson (1994) wrote: "Language learning is a long process". As researchers and teachers have been working hard to find out effective teaching methods and approaches to language teaching. Brown (2007) noted that certain learners tended to be successful regardless of methods or

techniques of teaching; therefore, the importance of individual variation in language learning has been noticed. It seems that in addition to language teaching methodology, learning strategies can significantly enable learners to achieve a high level of success in learning another language. Fan (2003) reasoned that the notion of independent successful learners is closely linked to the increasing importance now attached to the learner-centered approach to language teaching, which is grounded in the assumption that language learners who have greater control of their learning will become more successful than those who do not. Therefore, as Fan stated, the learning strategies used by successful or good language learners have been the focus of attention among both teachers and researchers. Brown (2007) also observed that some people appear to be endowed with abilities to succeed in language learning, whereas others lack those abilities. Such observation has long been impetus for researchers to attempt to discern the qualities or strategies and techniques employed by good language learners.

Pronunciation teaching is a prominent factor in foreign language teaching. Since sounds play an important role in communication, foreign language teachers must attribute proper importance to teaching pronunciation in their classes. However, this fact is very much neglected by many foreign language teachers. It is evident that communication is a mutual relationship between the speaker and the hearer. This means that one must comprehend what he hears in the target language and must produce the sounds of the language he is trying to learn accurately. Unless he has sufficient knowledge of the sound patterns of the target language, he can neither encode a message to anybody nor decode the message sent by another person by learning the sounds of the target language within his mother tongue. Hence, pronunciation teaching is of great importance for successful oral communication to take place since it is an important ingredient of the communicative competence.

On the other hand, when students learn a second or foreign language, they face some overlaps because of the very different phoneme systems of both languages. So, when they try to speak a second language, they produce the sounds which are closest to the sounds and also exist in their mother tongue. For example, most Arab speakers pronounce the words *play* as *blay* and *cheap* as *sheep*. This kind of pronunciation problem creates a big hindrance in the process of communication amongst speakers. Moreover, it spoils the teaching and learning efforts in second language learning settings.

Trubetzkoy (1939, as cited in Rakas, 2008) said that the phonological system of a language is like a sieve through which everything that is said passes... Each person acquires the system of his mother tongue. But when he hears another language spoken he intuitively uses the familiar "phonological sieve" of his mother tongue to analyze what has been said. However, since this sieve is not suited for the foreign language, numerous mistakes and mispronunciations are the result. The sounds of the foreign language receive an incorrect phonological interpretation since they are strained through the "phonological sieve" of one's own mother tongue.

Pakistani students who are learning English as a Second/Foreign Language face different problems with every component of language such as reading, writing, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Most of the time, the other components are greatly emphasized in classroom teaching, while pronunciation is hardly touched upon. Consequently, the learners come up with faulty pronunciation which creates big obstacles in the process of communication. Though some studies have been conducted in the field of pronunciation, it has often focused on vowel pronunciation, phonological analysis of English phonetics and orthography, consonant clusters, stress intonation, patterns in spelling mistakes, and intonation analysis etc.

There have been many differences of opinion over the years about the role of pronunciation in language teaching and about how best to teach it. The grammar-translation method and reading-based approaches have viewed pronunciation as irrelevant. In the direct method, pronunciation is very important; however, the methodology is primitive: The teacher is ideally a native or near-native speaker of the target language presenting pronunciation inductively and correcting through modeling. In the audio-lingual

approach, pronunciation is likewise very important and there is a great emphasis on the traditional notions of pronunciation, minimal pairs, drills and short conversations (Celce Murcia and Goodwin 1991).

According to Morley (1991), "Intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communication competence". For this reason, teachers should incorporate pronunciation into their courses and expect students to do well in them. Teachers should pay attention to reassessing learner needs and learners' goals, instructional objectives, and learning / teaching methodologies. They should attach importance to current directions in language learning and teaching theory and pedagogy. They should be primarily concerned with how pronunciation fits into communicative language teaching. There should be emphasis on meaningful communication when teaching pronunciation to the students. Without adequate pronunciation skills, the learner's ability to communicate is severely limited. Morley (1991) states that not attending to a student's pronunciation needs, "is an abrogation of professional responsibility".

One empirical study suggests that there is a threshold level of pronunciation in English such that if a given nonnative speaker's pronunciation falls below this level, no matter how good his or her control of English grammar and vocabulary might be, he or she will not be able to communicate orally with native speakers of English (Celce-Murcia and Goodwin 1991).

Gilbert (1984) states that the skills of listening comprehension and pronunciation are interdependent: "If they cannot hear English well, they are cut off from the language. If they cannot be understood easily, they are cut off from conversation with native speakers." Nootboom (1983) also has suggested that speech production is affected by speech perception; the hearer has become an important factor in communication discourse. This shows the need to integrate pronunciation with communicative activities; to give the student situations to develop their pronunciation by listening and speaking. The current research and the current trend reversal in the thinking of pronunciation exhibits there is a consensus that a learner's pronunciation in a foreign language needs to be taught in parallel to the communicative practices for the learner to be able to communicate effectively with native speakers (Otlowski 1998).

In parallel to the emergence of autonomous language learning, many innovative pronunciation teachers have attempted to move towards autonomous pronunciation learning. Such teachers motivate their students to become autonomous learners. Since students cannot always find the chance to ask their language teacher for help in real life contexts, they should be stimulated to come to a stage where they can make their own decisions about their own pronunciation learning. Students can be actively involved in their own learning. If the teacher teaches the students how to transcribe words by using phonetic symbols, students become autonomous to some extent in that they may look up their monolingual dictionaries when not knowing how to pronounce a word in the target language. Moreover, motivating students to use computer-assisted pronunciation teaching programs can lead to autonomous pronunciation learning and hence may contribute to the improvement of the pronunciation of the students in the target language. However, it should not be forgotten that students are semi-autonomous pronunciation learners since it is the language teacher who selects the most appropriate computer-assisted pronunciation teaching program relevant to the needs and expectations of an individual student (Hismanoglu 2004).

### **Statement of the problems.**

The study was carried out to know the views of the teachers regarding the students' poor pronunciation in English language at secondary level.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To know the views of the teachers regarding the students' poor pronunciation in English language at secondary level.

- To find out causes of the students' poor pronunciation in English language.

### **Significance of the study**

Proper pronunciation means reproducing the sound of the word through speech in such a way that any fluent speaker of the language would effortlessly know and understand the message. Improper pronunciation causes a breakdown in communication and requires more effort to understand. The meaning between the words like effect and affect are easily confused if the pronunciation is not clear. Result of this study will be significant for all stake holders of Education such as students, teachers, and curriculum developers they will know different causes of poor pronunciation in English language and measures for improving the English pronunciation.

### **Research methodology**

#### **Population**

English teachers of secondary level schools in District Bannu constituted population of the study.

#### **Sample**

From 50 government secondary schools, from each school 2 English teachers altogether 100 English teachers at secondary level were selected as a sample of the study.

#### **Delimitation of the study**

This study confined to 50 government secondary schools of district Bannu

#### **Research instrument.**

A questionnaire consisted 20 statements was developed with the help of language and research experts.

#### **Collection of the data.**

The researcher personally visited the sample schools and administered the questionnaire to the subjects.

#### **Data analysis**

The data was collected by the researcher through survey method. It was arranged and tabulated analyzed using appropriate statistical tests such as mean and percentages. Conclusions were drawn in the light of the objectives of the study. Recommendation and suggestions were given on the basis of the findings for the improvement of the students' performance in pronunciation of English language.

### **Findings**

- 1- Table1 shows that 20% teachers are strongly agree, 10 % agree, 5% some what agree, 30% disagree, and 45 % strongly disagree to the statement that "I have special training in English pronunciation".

- 2- 30% teachers are strongly agree, 20% are agree, 30% are disagree and 30% are strongly disagree to the statement that "our teachers have knowledge of good pronunciation".
- 3- 10% teachers are strongly agree, 5% are agree, 2% are somewhat agree, 50% are disagree and 32% are disagree to the statement "I know about phonetics and phonology".
- 4- 4% teachers are strongly agree, 15% teachers are agree, 2% teachers are somewhat agree, 49% teachers are disagree, 30% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "I use dictionary of phonetics system for improvement of my pronunciation".
- 5- 46% teachers are strongly agree, 33% are agree, 1% teachers are somewhat agree, 17% teachers are disagree and 3% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "I am very serious for learning correct pronunciation".
- 6- 30% teachers are strongly agree, 23% teachers are agree, 37% teachers are agree and 10% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "I put extra stress on learning correct pronunciation".
- 7- 7% teachers are strongly disagree, 9% teachers are agree, 3% teachers are somewhat agree, 51% teachers are disagree and 30% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "I listen to the BBC, CNN, Voice of America for information and correct pronunciation".
- 8- 2% teachers are strongly agree, 13% teachers are agree, 5% teachers are somewhat agree, 43% teachers are disagree and 37% teachers strongly disagree to the statement that "I watch English dramas, films, documentaries for learning English and correct pronunciation".
- 9- 19% teachers are strongly agree, 31% teachers are agree, 1% teachers are somewhat agree, 32% teachers are disagree and 27% teachers strongly disagree to the statement that "I speak English with my colleague and students in order to improve my pronunciation and speaking".
- 10- 23% teachers are strongly agree, 26% teachers are strongly agree, 3% teachers are somewhat agree, 20% teachers are disagree and 28% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "I read English newspaper or book loudly for improving my pronunciation".
- 11- 8% teachers are agree, 11% teachers are strongly agree, 6% teachers are somewhat agree, 22% teachers are disagree and 53% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "I use talking dictionary for improving my pronunciation".
- 12- 39% teachers are strongly agree, 5% teachers are agree, 11% teachers are somewhat agree, 15% teachers are disagree, 30% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "English is a difficult language to be learned".
- 13- 16% teachers are strongly agree, 19% teachers are agree, 1% teachers are somewhat agree, 33% teachers are disagree and 31% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "Our mother tongue is a hurdle in learning correct pronunciation".
- 14- 38% teachers are strongly agree, 24% teachers are agree, 2% teachers are somewhat agree, 29% teachers are disagree and 7% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "We should start learning English language earlier".
- 15- 50% teachers are strongly agree, 30% teachers are agree, 14% teachers are disagree and 6% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "We have limited institutions of teaching English as a language".
- 16- 35% teachers are a strongly agree, 25% teachers are strongly agree, 20% teachers are disagree and 20 teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "The institutions throughout Pakistan equally concentrate on pronunciation of English language".
- 17- 7% teachers are strongly agree, 12% teachers are agree, 41% teachers are disagree and 40% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that "I use AV aids (tape recorder, gramophone, etc. during English class).

- 18- 33% teachers are strongly agree, 27% teachers are agree, 21% teachers are disagree and 19% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that " It is very important to learn the correct pronunciation of English language".
- 19- 36% teachers are strongly agree, 25% teachers are agree, 14% teachers are disagree and 25% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that " Pronunciation is taught at all the schools in Pakistan".
- 20- 22% teachers are strongly agree, 30% teachers are agree, 3% teachers are somewhat agree, 16% teachers are disagree and 29% teachers are strongly disagree to the statement that " The syllabus of English throughout Pakistan covers the aspect of learning pronunciation of English language.

## Conclusions

The following conclusion were drawn on the basis of findings of the study

- 1- Teachers have no knowledge of phonetics and phonology.
- 2- Teachers do not listen to the BBC, CNN and Voice of America for information and correct pronunciation.
- 3- Teachers do not watch, English drama, films and documentaries for learning English and correct pronunciation.
- 4- There are limited institutions of teaching English as a language in Pakistan.
- 5- Teachers do not use AV aids during their English classes.
- 6- Teachers do not use the dictionary of phonetics system for improving of pronunciation.
- 7- Teachers are very serious for learning correct pronunciation.

## Recommendations and Suggestions

- Teachers may be given proper training in pronunciation especially in Phonetics and Phonology.
- Teachers may be motivated to listen to the different news channels and to watch English programmes in order to improve their English.
- Special institution may be established in the country which teach English as subject such as NUML.
- Teachers may be encouraged to use different types of AV aids and equipments during their classes.
- Teachers may be encouraged to use different talking and pronunciation dictionaries.
- Like other English language skills or sub skills courses, such as reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary etc., English pronunciation is very important for EFL learners to develop their communicative efficiency. It is one of the basic skills required for the students in their English language learning.
- While teaching pronunciation in the classroom, the teacher should be conscious about the students' needs. The students may have different competency levels such as learning speed and styles. The teacher should give proper attention to the students and their special needs and problems. The teacher should also conduct a students' needs analysis regarding pronunciation. According to the needs of the learners, the teacher should develop some appropriate materials and strategies to present in the class to reduce the learners' problem.
- There is a need for the creation of language guidelines for multilingual workplaces, not be implemented by workplace trainers - *not* (emphatically), to teach or assess ESL pronunciation, which should be done by specialists, but to encourage interaction between

native and non-native speakers and create opportunities for the informal conversation practice which is such an important component of learning pronunciation.

- English teachers need to be provided with courses and materials to help them improve their effectiveness in teaching pronunciation. They also need to be better supported in the context of the many demands that the changing system is placing upon them.
- There is a need for high quality, effective materials, especially computer-based materials with audio demonstrations, for learners of English pronunciation, both for self access and for use in classes where the teacher needs support of this kind.
- There is a great need for increased scholarly research on English pronunciation teaching and for a more systematic approach to resolving debates about the relative effectiveness of methods and materials.

**Table 1. Causes of poor English language pronunciation at secondary level**  
Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), somewhat agree (SWA), Disagree (DA), strongly disagree (SDA)

S.No	Statement	SA	A	SWA	DA	SDA
1	I have special training in English pronunciation.	20%	10%	5%	30%	45%
2	Our teachers have knowledge of good pronunciation.	30%	20%	0%	30%	30%
3	I know about phonetics and phonology.	10%	5%	2%	50%	32%
4	I use the dictionary of phonetics system for improvement of my pronunciation.	4%	15%	2%	49%	30%
5	I am very serious for learning correct pronunciation.	46%	33%	1%	17%	3%
6	I put extra stress on learning correct pronunciation of the students.	30%	23%	0%	37%	10%
7	I listen to the B.B.C, C.N.N, voice of America for information and correct pronunciation.	7%	9%	3%	51%	30%
8	I watch English dramas, films, documentaries for learning English and correct pronunciation.	2%	13%	5%	43%	37%
9	I speak English with my colleagues and students in order to improve my pronunciation and speaking.	19%	31%	1%	32%	27%
10	I read newspaper loudly or English book for improving my pronunciation.	23%	26%	3%	20%	28%
11	I use talking dictionary for improving my pronunciation.	8%	11%	6%	22%	53%
12	English is a difficult language to be learned.	39%	5%	11%	15%	30%
13	Our mother tongue is a hurdle in learning correct pronunciation	16%	19%	1%	33%	31%
14	We should start learning English language earlier.	38%	24%	2%	29%	7%
15	We have limited institutions of teaching English as a language.	50%	30%	0%	14%	6%
16	The institutions throughout Pakistan equally concentrate on pronunciation of English language.	35%	25%	0%	20%	20%
17	I use A.V aids (tap recorder, gramophone etc) during English class.	7%	12%	0%	41%	40%
18	It is very important to learn the correct pronunciation of English language.	33%	27%	0%	21%	19%
19	Pronunciation is taught at all the schools in Pakistan.	36%	25%	0%	14%	25%
20	The syllabus of English throughout Pakistan covers the aspect of learning pronunciation of English	22%	30%	3%	16%	29%

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