

# SINDHI SPEAKERS HAVING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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## Abstract

*This study investigates the pronunciation problems while speaking English, faced by the speakers who have Sindhi as their first language. Fifteen university students were selected as research participants. The research has been conducted through the use of qualitative methods. Audio recordings have been used as the research instruments, while the data has been descriptively analyzed. The findings revealed that the Sindhi speakers having English as a second language face numerous pronunciation problems, such as incorrectly articulating longer words compared to shorter ones. The findings also revealed that these speakers replace longer vowels with shorter ones, as well as doing the opposite in some cases, also demonstrating confusion between the consonants such as /s/ and /z/. Problems while shifting from one vowel to another, in order to pronounce Diphthongs, were also observed, while it was claimed by the speakers themselves that in their opinion their native tongue, as well as the incorrect pronunciation demonstrated by their teachers are the primary reasons for their incorrect articulation of the English words.*

**Keywords:** Paper Bags, Plastic bags, Consumer Awareness, Environment

## INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is one of the two most important aspects of any language, the other being writing. A person acquires a language for the purpose of gaining a fine command on the writing, or to speak fluently and efficiently in that language (Raihana, 2024). Similarly, a person may intend to fluently speak his or her second language. English is a world language. Forged from the combination of French and the old language of the Anglo-Saxons, the English language is nowadays is known as the lingua franca of the world. It is a concern of many non-native speakers to speak the language well, so as to make their mark in the world. As English is a language spoken all over the world, it is extremely necessary for non-native speakers to speak it well, or with enough fluency to be accepted on an international level (Saeed et al., 2023).

There are several problems due to which non-native English speakers pronounce the English words incorrectly (Al-Rami, & Zrekat, 2023). This is particularly common among the people whose first language is Sindhi. For example, a non-native English speaker, having Sindhi as the first language may not pronounce the diphthongs correctly. An example is the diphthong /ei/. While a person who has English as his first language would pronounce the diphthong properly, with a proper glide of the tongue, a non-native speaker may not go through the glide correctly, or skip it all together. This study investigates the pronunciation problems while speaking English, faced by the people who have Sindhi as their first language.

As English is often the second or the third language of Sindhi speakers, the lack of correct pronunciation is very common among the speakers (Noor et al., 2024). This leads to various problems,

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such as anxiety, isolation, as well as ridicule. Sindhi speakers, due to incorrectly articulating English words are forced to go through various demographic and psychological problems. Moreover, because English is a world language, a certain fluency in writing and pronunciation is required on numerous occasions. Consequently, when certain speakers do not meet such requirements they tend to face a lot of problems (Walker, & Archer, 2024).

While studies related to the pronunciation problems encountered in native languages, such as Punjabi, Balochi, and Pashto, as well as foreign languages, such as French and Sudanese exist in great quantity, not many studies have explored the numerous problems which are faced by the Sindhi speakers (Bjørn, & Kilani, 2023). This study thus, will contribute to this area, as only a few studies on the Sindhi English speakers are there. Moreover, the studies existing in this subject matter are focused on problems such as anxiety, as well as demographic issues. While this study takes a glance at these problems, its primary focus is on the pronunciation problems, related to the area of phonetics which are faced by the Sindhi speakers while speaking English.

The purpose of conducting this study is to identify the various pronunciation problems faced by the Sindhi speakers.

### ***Pronunciation***

Pronunciation plays an important role in a language, and is equally important as grammar is (Sokyrka, 2023). A similar case is of the English language pronunciation, it being a problematic issue which one face's most commonly. Moreover, wrong pronunciation leads to awkward utterance of English word, which most of the time is difficult to understand. Interestingly enough, such problems are scene in teachers as well as students.

As Masruddin and Nasriandi (2022) say in their study, “mistakes students make are classified into three major groups, wrong stress, mispronunciation of words and, wrong stress and wrong pronunciation.” These problems lead students to incorrect pronunciations. As for the first one, students mostly stress on the first letter of the word which shows that they put stress where it is easy for them to articulate it. Moreover, in some cases they pronounce it without stress. In their mispronunciation the stress remains on the correct letter, however the vowels often tend to be mixed. However, in the incorrect use of stress and incorrect pronunciation, both of the mistakes are repeated at the same time. For example, while articulating the word dictionary the stress is on the first letter, yet the students put stress on the second syllable, pronouncing the ‘o’ letter as written in the spelling, which is the incorrect pronunciation.

According to Almusharraf (2022) research, students who are exposed to the audios for learning English have more accurate pronunciation than those who are not familiarized with such learning methods. Moreover, these students show more interest in learning. Such students are driven more towards strategies in which there is the use of audios to teach English learners. When given the environment of native speakers with the help of audios, students tend and try to imitate the native English speakers, resulting in having no pronunciation problems.

However, pronunciation problems are not only restricted to the students. Some of the secondary school teachers are found to be lacking sufficient knowledge of English pronunciation, resulting in an outcome of not being able to pronounce the words correctly. Such teachers usually do not attend any pronunciation courses before joining the teaching profession (Majoka et al., 2007). Teachers themselves should also focus on their pronunciation, for if a teacher would incorrectly articulate a word, so will the students. Teachers are mostly focused on grammar and do not encourage class participation. Such teachers also use their own language, either Urdu or their mother tongue, and speaking in English is

usually the least priority for them. In addition to this, the speakers who use English as their second or third language face a number of other issues related to pronunciation as well.

### ***Anxiety and Other Psychological Issues***

A study conducted by Ahsan et al. (2020) reports that people who use English as their second language are passionate towards speaking; however most of them are subjected to having problems in correctly articulating their words. The study also discovers anxiety to be a major pronunciation problem. Non-native English speakers are often the target of scorn and ridicule because of their particular articulation style, consequently they are hesitant to speak up. The study also reports that most of the times the non-native English speakers face problems pronouncing the words because of the words being too lengthy to pronounce. Another study conducted on Pakistani English speakers by Ali et al.(2020) also discovers anxiety to be a major issue while speaking English. It was discovered through the study that the speakers are very conscious while speaking. Consequently, this makes them cautious while articulating their words, resulting in hesitance and incorrect pronunciation. The study also reports that Pakistani English speakers tend to encounter stress and feel panicked while trying to speak English. The study also discovers that most of the speakers are afraid of speaking English, consequently pronouncing the words incorrectly.

### ***Phonological Issues and Incorrect Pronunciations***

Akram and Qureshi (2014) state that pronunciation is a serious issue; however it is ignored; even though English teachers in Pakistan mostly produce incorrect sounds while teaching. For example, /p/, /k/, and /t/ sounds are usually pronounced with aspiration. However, these teachers pronounce the mentioned sounds without aspiration. Furthermore /r/ sound is usually not pronounced when there is no vowel at the end of it, however these teachers pronounce it. The Mother tongue, which is known as L1, also has a significant impact on learning a second language. (Florez, 1998; as cited in Akram & Qureshi, 2014) identifies that the first language is a kind of hurdle in learning the aspiration, intonation, and rhythm of the second language.

A study conducted by Riaz (2015) on the Punjabi English speakers of Pakistan reports that the amount of words which are incorrectly pronounced by the speakers is not a small one. The study reports a total of one hundred and ninety-five English words which are not pronounced correctly. For instance, according to the study, the word alarm /ə'la:m/, is pronounced as /ə'la:rəm/. Furthermore, words such as An /ænd/, acting /'æktɪŋ/, Apple /'æpl/, as well as Bomb /bɒm/, are pronounced as /ændə/, /'æktəŋ/, /'eɪpəl/, and /bʌmb/ respectively. For a complete list, see the references section.

### ***Demographic and Social Issues***

Age is another factor in learning a second language. As Chomsky in his Critical Period Hypothesis, explored that after the age of 12, another language cannot be acquired, particularly its pronunciation. Zahoor and Kausar (2018) examined that acquiring the pronunciation of a second language also depends upon matters of choice besides the barrier of age. Jabeen et al. (2011), as cited in Zahoor and Kausar (2018) analyzed that due to love-hate relationship of English people towards Pakistan is also a cause of preventing correct pronunciation of the English language.

Bell (1995) believes that most adult learners find it difficult to improve their phonetic and phonological productions due to the effect of their first language. Pronunciation of any non-native speaker of any language is promoted or Impeded by a number of factors including, among others, (i) age, (ii) mother tongue influence and (iii) personality. It was Lenneberg (1967) who proposed the Critical Period

Hypothesis (CPH), suggesting that there is a period of time when language learning is more successful than any other time in one's life. Age has been a hot issue in language acquisition and learning since it was introduced; it has received a fair amount of attention and research as a controversial factor. It may make adults find acquisition more difficult than children do and that they probably will not achieve native-like proficiency.

Moreover, first language learning is complete as compared to second language learning in the sense that learners have no choice to leave certain aspects of L1 as they need it for their daily life communication. As far as the former is concerned, L1 learners have no difficulty in producing most words in their language after the age of puberty because it is only one linguistic system that the learner's mind tries to understand and he/she is exposed to the language all the time; whereas, in the learning of L2, L1 features play a kind of role which results in a clash between the system of L1 and that of L2. So it seems to be true that, as Odlin (1989: 112) puts it, 'there is no little doubt that native language phonetics and phonology are powerful influences on second Language pronunciation.' and Certain non-linguistic factors related to an individual's personality and learning goals, attitude towards the target language, native speakers and their Culture, and type of motivation, which are beyond the teacher's control, all have their role in the development of pronunciation skills. In addition, the degree of exposure to and use of the target language can support or impede pronunciation skills development. For example, learners who are outgoing and confident and get involved in interactions with native speakers are liable to practice their foreign language pronunciation (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992).

An appropriate research has not been conducted on the phonological issues faced by Sindhi ESL learners. Some books and articles are available as Jatoi's (1984) *Ilam Lisa ain Sindhi Zaban* (Linguistics and Sindhi Language), Allana's (1997) *Sindhi Sautiat* (Sindhi Phonology), *Sindhi Boliyan Jee Lisanne Geography* (Linguistic Geography of Sindhi language) and *Papers on Sindhi language and Linguistics*. A research paper, *Phonetic-Acoustic Study of Sindhi-Accented English for Better English Pronunciation* (Abbasi et al., 2017) is a study of Utaradi dialect that finds the phonological problems faced by the Uttaradi Sindhi people. The study finds that the Sindhi ESL mostly rely on orthography of English because of the non-availability of English language sounds in the Sindhi language. The articulatory knowledge of the vowels and consonants provides a clear picture and understanding of the process of production. A study conducted by Joyo (2019) finds out the phonological issues faced in pronouncing the English sounds by the Sindhi (Sahiti Dialect) speaking students and their difference with Received Pronunciation (RP).

### ***Cultural Differences***

Abbasi et al. (2017) stated that mispronunciation occurs because of the influence of cultural accents i.e., Sindhi-accented in Sindh, Punjabi-accented in Punjab, Pashto-accented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Because of the influence of cultural accents, learners of a second language mix the speech sounds of Urdu with English pronunciation noted by Ali et al. (2020), as cited in Abbasi et al, 2018). The wrong pronunciation is delivered by second language learners because Urdu is a syllable-timed language whereas English is a stress-timed language noted by Abbasi et al., 2017).

The study was conducted on the bases of the following questions:

1. What are the pronunciation problems faced by the Sindhi speakers while speaking English?
2. To what extent are Sindhi speakers accurate in their English pronunciation?
3. Which vowels and consonants are most difficult to pronounce for the Sindhi speakers while speaking English?

## METHODOLOGY

A total of fifteen university students were selected as the participants for this research. The method which has been used to conduct this research falls in to the qualitative category. According to Creswell (1994) "A qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting."

### *Population*

The data has been collected from the students of different universities. The universities from which the participants have been selected are; Sindh University Jamshoro, Sindhi Madarsatul Islam University, Shah Abdul Latif University, as well as Quaid-e-Azam University. All the students from which the data has been collected have studied, or are studying English as a subject, as well as studying other subjects in English.

### *Sampling*

The convenience sampling technique has been used for collecting the data. All the participants in the research were easily accessible to the researchers, and were selected on the bases of the choice and convenience of the researchers. A combination of relatives, friends and acquaintances were selected as the participants for the research.

### *Research Instruments*

The data for this study has been collected through the use of audio recordings. A paragraph containing more than one hundred and fifty words was sent to all the participants. The paragraph included consonants, vowels, as well as diphthongs. The participants were requested to record themselves as they read the paragraph. It was suggested to the participants to read the paragraph in a similar manner to how they would usually read. This was done so that the recordings of the participants would be according to their natural setting and environment. The recordings were descriptively analyzed, in order to get an insight to the various pronunciation problems which the Sindhi speakers face while speaking English. Some discussions were conducted with the participants as well, in which they were requested to explain the problems they particularly think is major in resulting to their incorrect pronunciations.

## DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 (a)  
*Transcription Analysis*

Word	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Degradation /degrə'deɪʃ(ə)n/	,di:grə'dəʃ(ə)n	,di:g'rədəʃ(ə)n	,di:grə'dəʃ(ə)n	,dɪgrəʃ(ə)n	,degrə'deɪʃ(ə)n
Lose /Lu:z/	Lu:z	lɔ:z	Lu:s	Lu:z	Lu:z
Depleting /dɪ'pli:tɪŋ/	dɪ'pli:tɪŋ	dɪ'plətɪŋ	dɪ'plɪtɪŋ	dɪ'plɪtɪŋ	dɪ'pli:tɪŋ
Air	eə(r)	eər	ɪə(r)	ɪə(r)	eə(r)

/eə(r)/					
Our	aʊr	aʊr	aʊr	'ar	aʊə(r)
/aʊə(r)/					
Are	a:r	a:r	a:r	ɑ:	ɑ:(r)
/ɑ:(r)/					
All	'ɑ:l	ɔ:l	ɔ:l	'ɑ:l	ɔ:l
/ɔ:l/					
Mentor	'mentɔ:(r)	'mentɔ:(r)	'mentɑ:r	mənɪtr	'mentɔ:(r)
/'mentɔ:(r)/					
Species	'spi:fɪ:z	'spi:fɪ:z	'spi:fɪ:z	'spi:fɪ:z	'spi:fɪ:z
/'spi:fɪ:z/					
Concrete	'knkri:t	'knkrət	'knkri:t	'knkri:t	'kɒŋkri:t
/'kɒŋkri:t/					
Wild	wɑɪld	wɑɪld	vɑɪld	wɑɪld	wɑɪld
/wɑɪld/					
Several	Severa:l	sev(ə)rəl	'sev(ə)rəl	'sev(ə)rəl	'sev(ə)rəl
/'sev(ə)rəl/					

Table 1 (b)  
Transcription Analysis

Word	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Degradation	ˌdi:grə'deɪf(ə)n	ˌdi:grə'dəf(ə)n	ˌdi:grə'dəf(ə)n	ˌdi:grə'dəf(ə)n	ˌdi:grə'dəf(ə)n
/ˌdegrə'deɪf(ə)n/					
Lose	lɔ:s	lɔ:s	lu:z	lɔ:s	lu:z
/Lu:z/					
Depleting	dɪ'plɪtɪŋ	dɪ'plətɪŋ	dɪ'plɪtɪŋ	dɪ'plɪtɪŋ	dɪ'plɪtɪŋ
/dɪ'plɪ:tɪŋ/					
Air	ɪə(r)	ɪə(r)	eə(r)	eə(r)	eə(r)
/eə(r)/					
Our	aʊr	aʊr	aʊr	aʊr	aʊr
/aʊə(r)/					
Are	ɑ:r	ɑ:r	ɑ:r	ɑ:r	ɑ:r
/ɑ:(r)/					
All	'ɑ:l	ɔ:l	'ɑ:l	'ɑ:l	ɔ:l
/ɔ:l/					
Mentor	'mentɔ:(r)	'mentɑ:r	'mentɔ:(r)	'mentɔ:(r)	'mentɑ:r
/'mentɔ:(r)/					
Species	'spi:fɪ:z	'spi:fɪ:z	'spi:fɪ:z	'spi:fɪ:z	'spi:fɪ:z
/'spi:fɪ:z/					
Concrete	'kɑ:n.kri'eɪt	'knkri:t	'knkri:t	'knkri:t	'knkri:t
/'kɒŋkri:t/					
Wild	wɑɪld	wɑɪld	wɑɪld	wɑɪld	wɑɪld
/wɑɪld/					

Several /'sev(ə)rəl/	'severel	'severel	'sev(ə)rəl	'severel	'severel
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Table 1 (c)

*Transcription Analysis*

Word	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15
Degradation / ,degrə'deɪʃ(ə)n/	,di:grə'dəʃ(ə)n	,di:grə'dəʃ(ə)n	,di:ga:(r)dəʃ(ə)n	,deg.rə'ʃən	,di:grə'dəʃ(ə)n
Lose /Lu:z/	lɔ:s	Lu:z	Lu:z	lɔ:z	lɔ:s
Depleting /di'pli:tɪŋ/	di'pli:tɪŋ	di'pɪltɪŋ	di'pli:tɪŋ	di'pentlɪŋ	di'pli:tɪŋ
Air /eə(r)/	eə(r)	eə(r)	ɪə(r)	ɪə(r)	ɪə(r)
Our /aʊə(r)/	aʊə	aʊr	aʊr	aʊr	aʊə
Are /ɑ:(r)/	ɑ:(r)	ɑ:r	ɑ:r	ɑ:(r)	ɑ:r
All /ɔ:l/	'ɑ:l	'ɑ:l	ɔ:l	ɔ:l	'ɑ:l
Mentor /'mentɔ:(r)/	'men.tər	'metɔɪ	'mentɔ:(r)	'metɔɪ	'men.tər
Species /'spi:ʃi:z/	Speisi:z	'spi:ʃi:z	'spi:ʃi:z	'spi:ʃi:z	'spi:ʃi:z
Concrete /'kɒŋkri:t/	'kɑ:n.kri'et	'kɒn.sət	'kɑ:n.kri'et	'kɑ:nkreit	'kɑ:n.kri:jet
Wild /waɪld/	wɪld	waɪld	waɪld	waɪld	wɪld
Several /'sev(ə)rəl/	'sivr.əl	'severel	seivr.əl	seivr.əl	seivr.əl

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the analysis of transcribed words, as shown in Table 1 and Table 2, reveal several key differences in the pronunciation of Sindhi speakers of English as a second language. Firstly, there is a clear difference in the pronunciation of longer and shorter words, such as "degradation" / ,di:grə'dəʃ(ə)n/ and "concrete" /'kɒŋkri:t/ as opposed to shorter words such as "all" /ɔ:l/, "our" /aʊə(r)/, "are" /ɑ:(r)/, "lose" /lu:z/, "air" /eə(r)/, and "wild" /waɪld/. Secondly, there are differences in vowel pronunciation in several words. Thirdly, there are differences in consonant pronunciation, and lastly, there are differences in diphthong pronunciation.

***Longer and Shorter Words***

A major difference can be seen in the pronunciation of longer and shorter words by Sindhi speakers, whose second language is English. The results indicate that they find it difficult to pronounce longer words, and often fail to achieve proper pronunciation. For example, the word "degradation" was pronounced as / ,di:grə'dəʃ(ə)n/ and the word "depleting" /di'pɪltɪŋ/ which is not the correct pronunciation.

On the other hand, shorter words such as "are" /ɑ:(r)/, "all" /ɔ:l/, "wild" /waɪld/, and "our" /aʊə(r)/ were noticeably pronounced correctly. Additionally, it was observed that longer words were pronounced in a way that was easy for the speakers to articulate.

### ***Vowels and Consonants***

In vowel pronunciation, it was noticed that Sindhi speakers lacked knowledge of when to pronounce longer or shorter vowels, often mispronouncing shorter vowels as longer or vice versa. They also mispronounced one vowel as another, as in the words "depleting," "lose," and "degradation." Furthermore, when pronouncing the word "concrete," they were unable to produce the /ŋ/ sound, instead pronouncing it with a simple /n/ sound.

In consonant pronunciation, there was confusion between the /s/ and /z/ sounds in the word "lose," with speakers unsure of whether to pronounce it with an /s/ or /z/.

### ***Diphthongs***

The results also revealed that Sindhi speakers found it difficult to shift from one vowel to another and struggled to pronounce diphthongs, particularly in longer words. For example, in the word "degradation" /,degrə'deɪf(ə)n/, they pronounced it /,di:grə'dəf(ə)n/ and were unable to produce the /ei/ sound, instead pronouncing it as /ə/. However, it was noted that if the diphthong was at the beginning of a word, such as "our" /aʊə(r)/ (which is a triphthong), it was easier to pronounce.

### ***Some Other Problems Faced While Speaking English***

According to the Sindhi speakers themselves, the major challenge they face when speaking English is the influence of their mother tongue. They stated that the articulation of their first language (Sindhi) is difficult to change and thus, it is challenging to articulate words in English. Additionally, they cited a lack of emphasis on pronunciation by teachers as another significant cause for incorrect pronunciations. Furthermore, they reported that they often follow the pronunciations of their teachers, which they now recognize as incorrect.

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, the Sindhi speakers who speak English as a second or third language face several problems related to pronunciation. Through the data analysis, the study explains that the Sindhi speakers face problems while pronouncing English words which are longer and have more syllables. These speakers also have problems while pronouncing vowels, and often replace shorter vowels with longer ones. Moreover, a few consonants, such as /s/ and /z/ also tend to confuse the Sindhi speakers. In addition, these speakers also tend to face difficulties while articulating the Diphthongs. Lastly, it has been admitted by these speakers that their own native tongue, as well as incorrect pronunciations of their teachers are also major problems that prohibit them from correctly articulating English words.

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