

Mother Tongue Influence on ESL Pronunciation: Best Practices for Teachers and Learners

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Abstract

Language is a system of arbitrary symbol-based communication that conveys concepts, knowledge, feelings and wants. Language connects feelings, ideas and thoughts. Language is one tool for communication. The current study was designed to investigate the perception of teachers' and learners' about mother tongue influence on pronunciation. The study was descriptive in nature. The population of the study was teachers and ESL learners at The Islamia University of Bahawalpur. In this study two research instruments were used for mother tongue influence on ESL pronunciation: best practices for Teachers and ESL learners were consisted of 10 close ended questions on five point Likert scale. The sample size was 30 teachers and 150 ESL learners were randomly selected. Data were collected it was analyzed by using SPSS software, which is statistical tool for social sciences. The results of the study indicate languages are capable of communication, many people choose to converse in English. People who do not speak English as their mother tongue also utilize it. Teaching English is vitally important in this era of globalization. The only universally understood official language in the world is English. There has been much discussion on the impact of the mother tongue on English language instruction and acquisition. Variations in spelling, symbols, and phonemes lead to mispronunciation mistakes. Using the model voice of a native speaker, the students should constantly practice these sound patterns using a native speaker's model voice. These actions will eliminate the mother tongue's influence on English language instruction and learning, accelerating the language acquisition process.

Keywords: Mother Tongue, English Language, Teaching, learning

Introduction

Communication is the means of imparting or exchanging information by speaking, writing, listening, and using other mediums. All human beings have an innate ability to communicate. However, each and every person must learn to communicate effectively. Verbal communication occurs when information is communicated orally or in writing. Nonverbal communication is the process of conveying information through non-linguistic representation. Non-verbal communication relates to the message's intent (Burgoon et al., 2016). Language is the medium for conveying ideas, emotions, information, and desires using arbitrarily produced symbols. It is purely human and non-innate (Sapir, 1921). Philosophy relies heavily on language as a vital medium and communication scheme for speaking and writing. Language connects people's thoughts, ideas, feelings, and social development while playing a significant role in human life. Language regulates people's social behavior when they communicate with their environment. Language has been a tool for communication for centuries. Language philosophy encompasses language use, cognition, meaning, and the relationship between reality and language (Lycan, 2018).

Language acquisition is the process by which people learn to recognize and comprehend words and sentences in order to make and utilize them to convey information. Language acquisition is a process that incorporates representation, rules, and structures. To utilize the language successfully, one must learn morphology, phonology, syntax, semantics, and a vast variety of vocabulary (Lightfoot & David, 2010). The process of acquiring vocabulary is dependent on several things. An attempt at pronunciation is required of the student before to speaking. The student has to practice repeating their remarks. The quantity of words a child speaks by the time they are 24 months old impacts how well their language abilities will develop later. A child's intellectual and linguistic development is significantly impacted if they are not productive in language at this age (Terry, 2003).

Aims and Objectives

The current study was designed to investigate the perception of teachers' and learners' about mother tongue influence on pronunciation.

Best practices for Teachers and learners

Literature review

According to Glyn (1962), the idea of consciousness in language learning has produced two important advances in language instruction: a greater appreciation of the importance of teaching one's mother tongue as a starting point for teaching a second language, and a shift in emphasis from translation to formal grammar instruction. It has proven challenging to do away with the excessive usage of the native tongue in ESL classes, a practice that dates back more than 75 years of educational history. Textbooks for teacher education still contain traces of this heritage. When engaging in

communicative tasks, speaking in one's mother tongue can hinder precision and fluidity in the target language. Here, the instructor's job is to pinpoint the contributing elements.

Research in the area of first language acquisition shows that the target language is influenced by the original tongue. Several scholars have addressed the topic of interference: Interference, Dulay and Burt (1982), is the automatic, habitual transfer of the surface structure of the first language to the surface of the target language. It is characterized as "maternal linguistic faults in the learner's use of the foreign language by Lott (1983). Ellis (2001), defining interference as the effect that the learner's L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2, also refers to it as transfer. According to him, transfer in L2 learning is determined by perceptions of what is transferrable (Ellis, 2001).

Importance of Mother Tongue in the Learning Process

A youngster learns their mother tongue as their first language. A person's mother tongue is their native tongue. Ashworth (1992) defined mother tongue as the language that a kid learns in the early years of life and then uses to communicate and think. Ojo (2005), a child's mother tongue is the first language they learn during their early years. One does not learn one's mother tongue; it is acquired. The mother tongue encodes the children's early notions. A multilingual person's mother tongue serves as a marker for their native culture. The best linguistic and intuitive abilities are found in one's mother tongue. It facilitates successful multilingual communication. It is necessary for the student to possess the fundamental abilities of speaking, reading, writing, and listening. A person's mother tongue is necessary for their sociolinguistic, cultural, and personal uniqueness. When speaking and acting in one's native tongue, social norms are mirrored. A group of people's mother tongue eventually turns into their primary means of cognition and communication (Benson, 2005).

A person's mother tongue is responsible for identifying their level of language proficiency. When learning one's mother tongue, both conscious and unconscious approaches are employed. A child learns their mother tongue consciously through listening. The mother tongue is a vital instrument required for the development of the academic, moral, and intellectual areas of education. The mother tongue is capable of being used to successfully comprehend, communicate, approach, and handle all other academic disciplines. Possessing mastery of one's mother tongue might enable one to communicate and think clearly.

Possessing mastery of one's mother tongue might enable one to communicate and think clearly. A learner who is weak in their mother tongue will find it impossible to communicate themselves or their thoughts. Only when someone can comprehend a subject by knowing it through their mother tongue would they be able to have new discoveries or thoughts, appreciation, extension, and expansion of concepts (Awopetu, 2016).

Cummins (2001) conducted research on the value of mother tongue. He investigated the motivations behind parents speaking to their kids in their native dialect. He discovered the connection between a child's mother tongue and development. Youngsters who acquire proficiency in their mother tongue in addition to two or three additional languages exhibit a more profound comprehension of sentence construction and expression. The kids can utilize their language in its entirety. Youngsters who only spoke their mother tongue had a fixed perspective when it came to expressing their needs. Additionally, it was stated that kids who only had one mother tongue were unable to use it as deeply as kids who spoke two or more languages. He claimed children with multilingualism had highly developed critical thinking abilities. Additionally, he discovered that learning a second language was simpler for kids whose mother tongue was strong. The study came to the conclusion that children have cross-linguistic knowledge and skills. Therefore, teaching youngsters to speak in both their mother tongue and other languages is a healthy way to foster language use.

English as a language of communication

Language is the instrument that improves human interaction and communication. Language is an essential tool for the preservation of transmission of a social group's culture. It maintains and advances the human species. The language of a specific speech community can be used to understand the way of life of a given group of people (Oluwole & Adebayo, 2008).

Despite the fact that all languages are intended for communication, a lot of people speak in English in addition to their native speech. Teaching English is essential in the age of globalization. English is the only official language that everyone in the globe can understand. One key language that is essential in the present day is English. The second-greatest language in the world is English. In science, business, technology, international politics, commerce, and diplomacy, English is widely used as a language (Freeman, Barbara & Crawford, 2008).

It is estimated that 1.4 billion individuals speak English as their first language. English is spoken by more than 1500 million non-native speakers. Three out of every four English speakers are not native speakers, which is a highly intriguing fact. Worldwide, there are more than 400 million native English speakers. Six hundred million individuals speak English as a second language worldwide. Merely 15% of individuals converse in their mother tongue.

People speak English everywhere in the world. The majority of the British colonies, as well as North America, Australia, Ireland, and Britain, all have English as their official language. (Chomsky, 1986).

English communication is an advanced talent that can be acquired by continual exposure to English-speaking individuals and unrelenting practice. It is important to identify the tools available for learning English and to

create a supportive environment where people may practice and acquire the language. Everyone should make a concerted effort to develop strong communication skills in English. With consistent practice, one can become an effective English communicator. There can be no meaningful learning without error. It is common for non-native English speakers to make blunders when conversing. Since acquiring a language is a gradual and ongoing process, mistakes are unavoidable. Therefore, it is necessary to develop English-speaking environments for children in order for them to properly converse in English (Harmer, 1983).

The English language now plays many different roles in the world. Students learning in English have greater opportunities in the global arena. As a result, there are now more English-medium universities and schools worldwide. English is become the language of the world. It has created a wealth of chances for those who are proficient in English communication. English gives young people more power. It gives young people a ton of chances to work for international organizations and in their home countries.

Influence of Mother Tongue in Teaching and Learning English Language

Establishing a connection and having successful communication is the goal of knowing and mastering any language. A person can only speak when given the opportunity to do so. In this world, communication is always needed and demanded. An international language is necessary for global communication, even though mother tongue is crucial for the exchange of ideas. English is therefore widely spoken and a global language. All around the world, the English language is the most widely used and crucial instrument for communication (Gomathi, 2014). Many people assert that English speakers' mother tongues have an impact on their language. The fundamental abilities needed for teaching English are writing, speaking, reading, and listening. More effort and dedication are needed from the teachers in order to teach English. The way that teachers teach English is influenced by a variety of elements, including pronunciation, mother tongue, exposure to the language, an individual's phonetic ability, personality, and motivation (Modesti, 2016). The English language instructor serves as a key source of English language information and is in charge of enforcing the use of proper English language, acting as a role model for students learning the language. The English language instructor emphasizes word pronunciation in English during daily interactions. Correct pronunciation is acquired by the students through ongoing communication with their English language instructors. The students won't be able to pick up the proper pronunciation if the teacher speaks incorrectly. As a result, the students acquire improper pronunciation (Gutiérrez & Francisco, 2018).

In many societies, the English language is highly esteemed. More time and effort are devoted to teaching English. In spite of this, pupils' speaking and

writing abilities do not receive much attention. Over time, the students misunderstand the directions and basic classroom activities, and they lose confidence while speaking in English. When teaching English, language instructors cover the articulation of particular sounds. Mispronunciation occurs because there are several dialects that are prevalent and cannot be taught in a school (Nation & Newton, 2008).

Teachers have the ability to help pupils who are having trouble learning the English language or to correct them when they make mistakes. These techniques will assist educators in identifying students' areas of difficulty and improving students' comprehension of the English language. English teachers can determine the best way to teach English if they are conversant in the learners' mother tongue. (Oluwole & Adebayo, 2008)

Pronunciation errors can occur for a variety of reasons. One possible cause of mispronunciation could be guesswork, vagueness in the word or sentence, or improper use of language. The interference or transfer from the mother tongue is the most commonly cited cause. The majority of pronunciation problems are caused by the disparity in the English and mother language spelling systems and sounds. These elements impede the learning of sound system and speech. It is more likely that learners will acquire native-like pronunciation if they are exposed to the English language beginning in elementary school. The students will pick up proper pronunciation if the mother tongue is not a factor (Hassan, Idriss and Hassan, 2007).

Methodology

It is essential that we specify the sample and demographic for our study precisely. In an attempt to create a well-organized plan for gathering the required data, we have distributed questionnaires to the students who were chosen at random. The study's target population consists of the randomly selected teachers' and learners. A random online survey was used to choose the 30 ESL teachers and 150 graduate learners who made up the sample. This group of teachers and learners was chosen for the study because of their continued language development and propensity to rely on their home tongue. Since the description approach has the ability to increase the validity of our research findings, it was judged appropriate for use in data gathering for our study. A questionnaire was given to a chosen sample of students in order to collect the necessary data. This study will include a detailed analysis and discussion of the data that was gathered.

Results and Discussions

Perception of teachers' about mother tongue influence on pronunciation

Sr. No.	Statement	SDA	DA	UD	A	SA	Mean
1	I believe understanding students' mother tongue influence	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	15 (50.0%)	12 (40.0%)	4.27

	is crucial for effective ESL pronunciation teaching						
2	I provide targeted feedback on specific MTI-related pronunciation issues to my students	0 (0.0%)	3 (10.0%)	4 (13.3%)	18 (60.0%)	5 (16.7%)	3.83
3	I believe raising awareness of MTI helps students overcome pronunciation challenges more effectively	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	16 (53.3%)	13 (43.3%)	4.37
4	I provide supplementary materials specifically addressing MTI-related pronunciation issues	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	3 (10.0%)	13 (43.3%)	13 (43.3%)	4.27
5	I encourage students to practice pronunciation through imitation of native speakers.	0 (0.0%)	3 (10.0%)	5 (16.7%)	15 (50.0%)	7 (23.3%)	3.87
6	I believe integrating MTI awareness into ESL pronunciation lessons enhances students' language proficiency	0 (0.0%)	3 (10.0%)	2 (6.7%)	14 (46.7%)	11 (36.7%)	4.10
7	I adapt my teaching methods to accommodate various MTI backgrounds within the classroom	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)	7 (23.3%)	9 (30.0%)	10 (33.3%)	3.77
8	I provide opportunities for students to self-	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	13 (60%)	9 (30.0%)	4.17

	assess on their MTI-related pronunciation progress						
9	I encourage peer feedback among students to address MTI- related pronunciation issues	0 (0.0%)	3 (20.0%)	4 (13.3%)	9 (30.0%)	11 (36.7%)	3.83
10	I provide opportunities for students to apply pronunciation skills in real-life scenarios	1 (3.3%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (3.3%)	15 (50%)	12 (40.0%)	4.20

The Table presents results regarding teachers' perceptions on the influence of students' mother tongue (MTI) on pronunciation in ESL (English as a Second Language) teaching. Majority (90%) agreed that comprehending students' MTI influence was crucial for effective ESL pronunciation teaching, reflecting a mean score of 4.27. Around three-fourths (76.7%) either agreed that they provide targeted feedback on MTI-related pronunciation issues, with a mean score of 3.83. Majority (96.7%) of teachers agreed that raising awareness of MTI helps students overcome pronunciation challenges more effectively, reflecting a high mean score of 4.37. An equal split (86.6%) agreed that they provide supplementary materials specifically addressing MTI-related pronunciation issues, with a mean score of 4.27. A majority (73.3%) agreed that they encouraging students to practice pronunciation through imitation of native speakers, with a mean score of 3.87. Majority (83.4%) agreed that integrating MTI awareness into ESL pronunciation lessons enhances students' language proficiency, with a mean score of 4.10. Two-thirds (63.4%) agreed on adapting teaching methods to accommodate various MTI backgrounds within the classroom, reflecting a mean score of 3.77. The majority (90%) agreed on providing opportunities for students to self-assess their MTI-related pronunciation progress, with a mean score of 4.17. A majority (67.7%) agreed on encouraging peer feedback among students to address MTI-related pronunciation issues, with a mean score of 3.83. The majority (90%) agreed on providing opportunities for students to apply pronunciation skills in real-life scenarios, with a mean score of 4.20. A strong recognition among teachers of the importance of addressing MTI influence on pronunciation in ESL teaching, along with a willingness to employ various strategies to support students in overcoming related challenges.

Perception of learners' about mother tongue influence on pronunciation

Sr. No.	Statement	SDA	DA	UD	A	SA	Mean
1	Teacher incorporates pronunciation exercises tailored the specific challenges of my native language	12 (8.2%)	14 (9.5%)	14 (9.5%)	68 (46.3%)	39 (26.5%)	3.73
2	I find it challenging to differentiate between the pronunciation patterns of my native English language	10 (6.8%)	14 (9.5%)	10 (6.8%)	65 (44.2%)	48 (32.7%)	3.86
3	Teacher uses multimedia resources effectively to illustrate correct pronunciation and minimize mother tongue influence	5 (3.4%)	12 (8.2%)	11 (7.5%)	61 (41.5%)	58 (39.5%)	4.05
4	I am aware of the most common pronunciation errors influenced by my native language	9 (6.1%)	13 (8.8%)	10 (6.8%)	78 (53.1%)	37 (25.2%)	3.82
5	Teacher encourages peer assessment to help each other overcome mother tongue influence in pronunciation	6 (4.1%)	9 (6.1%)	13 (8.8%)	70 (47.6%)	49 (33.3%)	4.00
6	I feel comfortable asking teacher for clarification	9 (6.1%)	9 (6.1%)	16 (10.9%)	13 (8.8%)	61 (41.5%)	3.84

	on how to improve my pronunciation to reduce mother tongue influence						
7	I actively engage in self-assessment of my pronunciation to identify instances of mother tongue influence	10 (6.8%)	14 (9.5%)	9 (6.1%)	57 (38.8%)	57 (38.8%)	3.93
8	Teacher provides resources such as online apps to aid in reducing mother tongue influence	13 (8.8%)	21 (14.3%)	17 (11.6%)	66 (44.9%)	30 (20.4%)	3.54
9	Teacher incorporates pronunciation exercises tailored the specific challenges of my native language	10 (6.8%)	10 (6.8%)	16 (10.9%)	74 (50.3%)	37 (25.2%)	3.80
10	I find it challenging to differentiate between the pronunciation patterns of my native English language	9 (6.1%)	19 (12.9%)	11 (7.5%)	67 (45.6%)	41 (27.9%)	3.76

Similar to the preceding table for teachers, this table displayed how ESL students perceived the impact of their mother (MTI) on pronunciation in ESL instruction. The first statement suggests that a considerable proportion of participants concur that customized pronunciation drills aimed at resolving difficulties with the local language are advantageous with average rating: 3.73. While with the average rate of 3.86 there appears to be a need for specialized teaching because many respondents had trouble differentiating between English pronunciation patterns. The average rating given by respondents to multimedia tools for pronunciation instruction is 4.05. A high

level of awareness regarding pronunciation problems impacted by one's native language is evident in the average rating of 3.82. While 47.6% agree with the average rating of 4.00 responses to peer appraisal are overwhelmingly favorable. Most respondents feel at ease asking their teacher for clarification when it comes to improving their pronunciation with the average rating of 3.84. On the other hand, respondents frequently evaluate their own pronunciation. Although 44.9% people agreed with, using internet apps is not as popular as other approaches. While 25.2% of respondents strongly concurred, 50.3% agreed, and 6.8% disagree strongly with the average rating: 3.80 that this statement highlights the need of tasks created especially for native language learners. While it's challenging to distinguish between native English pronunciation patterns 45.6% agree, 27.9% strongly agree, 6.1% strongly disagree, 12.9% disagree, 7.5% neutral. A lot of respondents had trouble pronouncing word correctly.

Findings

Pronunciation instruction is never disclosed. The practice of teaching pronunciation has gained popularity recently due to modifications made to the methods and approaches used in instruction. ESL teachers need to focus on the needs of their students and assess their communicative proficiency. This aids in the organization of the curriculum and the procedures to be used in order to improve English pronunciation. The primary goal of the study is to analyze the variables influencing ESL pronunciation in both teachers and learners, and to propose instructional strategies and approaches to address the issue and enhance English pronunciation abilities. It may be concluded that learners can achieve the highest level of communication with the proper application of teaching English pronunciation.

Strategies to minimize the influence of mother tongue in English language teaching and learning

The issue can be resolved by incorporating the English language into the foundational school curriculum and fostering proficiency in spoken English. It is possible to identify and drill the sound patterns that the mother language is likely to confuse and falter with. The model voice of a native speaker should be used by the students as they regularly practice these sound patterns. The mother tongue should be utilized when, where, and in ways that are actively controlled by the teacher. Given the importance of fostering the learner's language development, the instructor should provide a solid example of speech. The instructor needs to push the students to communicate as much as they can in English.

Digital language labs can be used to speed up the learning of English and remove the mother tongue's impact from English language instruction. The students should verify their own understanding by listening to the term pronounced correctly. The pronunciation of English words should be taught by the teacher in their daily lessons. (Gazzalie&Jahane, 2019)

The students should make the most of their English language skills. They ought to pay attention to vocabulary and grammar rules, and refrain from mispronouncing words. The cultural and social norms that are relevant to the communication scenario should be followed by the students. Teachers ought to employ well-rounded exercises that integrate linguistic input, structured output, and communicative output.

The language input includes the teachers' discussions, listening exercises, language read and heard outside of the classroom, and reading the passages. This facilitates the students' self-initiated dialect creation. Language input might be either form- or content-oriented. The information is the main focus of the content-oriented input. A discussion of learning strategies is also included in this. Form-oriented input relates to the ways in which the language is used, the direction and guidance provided by the teachers, or the acquisition of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. The students need to improve their discourse competency, speech rate, pause duration, turn-taking and other language-use skills.

It is preferable to explain grammar in English rather than the students' native tongue when a brief explanation is needed for lower level pupils. An appropriate delivery format is referred to as structured output.

The students finish a job that requires communicative output. Learners typically utilize the language that has been taught by the instructor in order to complete a job. But the pupils also employ other, more recognizable vocabulary, grammar, and communication techniques. It is expectation of the learner to comprehend the message in communication output tasks. The instructor conducts balanced exercises using a variety of input and output activities. This diversity is beneficial to learners of all skill levels, from absolute beginners to experts. This is incredibly motivating and helps with efficient language learning. Kassala (2015) By taking these steps, the mother tongue will no longer have any influence on English language instruction, and English language learning will proceed more quickly.

Direction of Further Research

Future researches should concentrate on identifying the techniques to eliminate mother tongue influences in English language teaching and learning, as it is clear from the material already available that these affects occur in both contexts. The authors also suggest that future studies concentrate on pinpointing the actual issues that non-native English speakers and learners face when they write, read, speak, and listen to English across the globe. This will help uncover the true problems and guide the researchers in figuring out potential fixes to address the problems faced by learners and non-native English speakers.

1. Analyze in-depth differences between the phonological systems of the learners' native language(s) and English. This can assist in identifying particular problem areas and guide instruction that is specifically focused.

2. To aid students in correctly understanding and reproducing English sounds, introduce them to phonetic symbols and transcription systems (such as IPA). This can enhance their capacity for self-correction and increase their awareness of phonetic detail.
3. Give clear instructions on how to produce English sounds using the articulatory mechanisms. To improve students' control over their speech organs, this can involve exercises like mirror poses and tongue positioning drills.
4. While practicing minimal pairs, make use of computer-based programs or apps that offer visual feedback on pronunciation correctness. With this instantaneous visual reinforcement, students will be better able to identify and adjust for minute variations in sound production.
5. Using practical resources and activities, expose students to a variety of English accents and dialects. By doing so, they will be able to comprehend the variety of English pronunciation and modify their own pronunciation for various situations.
6. Involve students in exercises that emphasize phonetic ambiguity in English, such as minimal pairings of similar sounds and homophones. This can enhance their ability to distinguish between different phonemes and polish their discriminating skills.
7. Utilize multisensory teaching methods while teaching pronunciation, such as reinforcing phonetic concepts with kinesthetic motions or tactile props. Students' ability to connect sound and bodily feeling can be strengthened as well as memory retention improved.
8. Provide students with chances to engage in real-world contact with proficient English speakers through language exchange programs or conversation clubs. Frequent exposure to spoken language has the potential to enhance confidence and hasten the process of improving pronunciation.
9. Incorporate pronunciation exercises into communicative activities and real-world situations where students need to speak English well in order to meet predetermined objectives. This contextualized method promotes significant interaction with pronouncing abilities in real-world settings.
10. Use progress tracking tools and frequent assessments to follow learners' pronunciation growth over time. This guarantees continuous progress and permits ongoing teaching modification depending on individual needs. These advanced techniques offer more sophisticated methods of tackling the difficulties presented by learners' mother tongues by delving deeper into the phonetic and phonological aspects of pronunciation instruction.

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