

Comparative Study of English Phonic Sounds and Punjabi Muharni: A Linguistic Approach for Classroom Teaching

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Abstract

This article explores the phonetic structures of English and Punjabi, focusing on English phonics and the traditional Punjabi “Muharni”. Through a comparative analysis, it highlights similarities and differences in sound patterns, pronunciation, and articulation. The study aims to support bilingual learners by building bridges between native phonology (Punjabi) and second language acquisition (English). Practical classroom strategies are discussed for using Punjabi Muharni as a scaffold for teaching English phonics effectively.

Keywords: English Phonics, Punjabi Muharni, Phonological Awareness, Bilingual Education, Pronunciation, ESL

1. Introduction

Language learning at the foundational level is deeply rooted in phonological awareness. English phonics instruction, which emphasizes the relationship between letters and sounds, plays a crucial role in reading and pronunciation. In Punjabi, Muharni (a traditional oral recitation of Gurmukhi alphabets with sounds) serves a similar function, building early sound recognition and articulation. This study compares the two systems and explores how Punjabi-speaking learners can benefit from phonics instruction rooted in familiar phonetic structures.

2. Theoretical Framework

Phonemic awareness, a subset of phonological awareness, is essential in early literacy. Research shows that learners transfer phonological knowledge from their first language (L1) to their second language (L2). This transfer can be either facilitative or inhibitive depending on the degree of overlap between the two languages. The Comparative Analysis Hypothesis and the Interdependence Hypothesis support the idea that skills in L1 can positively influence L2 learning when approached strategically.

3. Phonic Structure of English vs Punjabi Muharni

- **English Phonics:** English consists of 44 phonemes represented by 26 letters, including short/long vowels, digraphs (e.g., /ch/, /sh/), blends, and diphthongs.
- **Punjabi Muharni:** The Gurmukhi script has 35 consonants (Vianjan) and 3 vowel holders (Lagā Mātras), forming a predictable and highly phonetic system.

Key Differences:

- English is non-phonetic in many cases (e.g., “knight”, “though”), whereas Punjabi is largely phonetic.
- English uses multiple letters for single sounds; Punjabi uses one-to-one sound-symbol correspondence.

4. Classroom Implications

- Teachers can draw parallels between familiar Punjabi sounds and English phonemes (e.g., /p/ in Punjabi “pagg” and English “pen”).
- Using Muharni as a warm-up activity can prepare students for English phoneme recognition.
- Visual charts linking English and Punjabi sound examples can reinforce learning.
- Emphasizing articulation and mouth movements familiar in Punjabi can ease English pronunciation challenges.

5. Findings and Observations

- Students who practiced Muharni were quicker in identifying and producing English sounds.
- They showed improved confidence in oral reading and spelling.
- Bilingual phonetic anchoring reduced confusion between similar sounds (e.g., /t/ vs /t/).

6. Conclusion

The comparison between English phonics and Punjabi Muharni reveals that linguistic bridges enhance bilingual learners’ phonological skills. By respecting native language structures while introducing English phonics, educators can create inclusive and effective learning environments. Future studies should explore structured bilingual phonics programs for early learners in multilingual regions.

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I have been constantly involved in coming up with newer activities for imparting education to the underprivileged students and overall Contributions for societal development. With ideas to improve the quality of education and making learning easy for the students, I

recently came up with a highly innovative teaching method to teach
The future of our country is the young children. The creative methods
that are being used include a new type of Jolly Phonics Technique
using English sound mnemonics (using 44 sounds – Phonemes and
Graphemes, which have been recreated by me, help my students
learn the language in a better way and has further made English
learning is fun and exciting for them. I have also been awarded for my
efforts in teaching and preparing pedagogy techniques by the
Government of Punjab.

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