RESEARCH ARTICLE

A STUDY ON THE DIFFICULTIES IN PRONUNCIATION OF ESL LEARNERS

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Abstract

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In many ESL classes across the globe, English pronunciation is still not given enough attention. One of the primary reasons why it is overlooked is because there aren't many pronunciation techniques accessible to instructors in the context of the school setting. The purpose of this research is to identify the problems in English pronunciation that learners experience as a result of the presence of Mother Tongue (MT) interference in their speech. In this article, the survey technique was used to gather information from a variety of sources, including interviews, personal conversations over the phone, and meetings. The report also included suggestions and recommendations for reducing the pronunciation difficulties that ESL learners encounter. There were a total of 102 samples gathered through Google forms in India. The findings of the study are discussed in detail in the interpretation.

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Introduction:-
In the current world scenario, English pronunciation plays a very vital role in day to day life. The majority of world population understands English across the globe; this creates a link and mode of interaction between various countries of the world. According to the reports 1.35 billion people speak English out of 7.8 billion approximately. It is the first language of about 360 million people. Multi linguistic countries like India face problems with Speaking English because it is not the first language. So, teaching correct pronunciation is essential.

Environmental and cultural diversity affects English pronunciation a lot, for which many people tend to speak English according to their primary speaking language which results in continuous practice of wrong pronunciation. So, teaching phonetics is very important.

In India many people have to learn 2-3 languages due to the difference in the dialect; these regional dialects affect the pronunciation of people. The English language is not the same everywhere. A vivid example, if a person X is staying in Punjab, then Punjabi is the common language spoken in Punjab which is a dialect of Hindi and if that person shifts to Bihar, he needs to know Bhojpuri to maintain his basic requirements for interaction with the local people. A dialect is a form of a language that is associated with a particular country, region, or social group. When

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linguists use the term "dialect", it does not mean an unusual or inferior way of speaking; the word "dialect" does not have a negative meaning. A language can have both standard and nonstandard dialects. Everybody speaks a dialect of some kind. However, since many people have come to associate the term "dialect" with types of language that are not considered standard or desirable, it may be safer to use the term "variety" of a language instead of "dialect". Learning to pronounce words can be challenging, and it won't happen all at once. It takes time for learners to recognize new sounds and get used to produce them.

Review of Literature:-

Wong (1987) pointed out that even when the non-native speakers' vocabulary and grammar are excellent, if their pronunciation falls below a certain threshold level, they are unable to communicate effectively. Wong (1993) argues that the importance of pronunciation is even more distinct when the connection between pronunciation and listening comprehension is considered. Furthermore, Wong demonstrated that a lack of knowledge of pronunciation could even affect students' reading and spelling. Many teachers are not aware of the importance of pronunciation. Teachers pay enough attention to grammar and vocabulary in learning a foreign language and they help learners become skillful in listening and reading. Secondly, the majority of teachers think that pronunciation study is too difficult and monotonous for learners (Harmer, 2001).

English pronunciation is one of the most difficult skills to acquire and learners should spend lots of time to improve their pronunciation (Aliaga García, 2007; Martínez-Flor et al. 2006; Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2016). Understandable pronunciation is one of the basic requirements of learners' competence and it is also one of the most important features of language instruction. Good pronunciation leads to learning while bad pronunciation promotes to great difficulties in language teaching (Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2012).

The phonological process of a young learner is simplified by an adult covering substitution, assimilation, and syllable format. Furthermore, the substitution process is divided into fronting, stopping, vowel neutralization, gliding, and vocalization according to Chaer (2009). Similarly the assimilation is divided into voice, vowel and consonant harmony and the syllable is divided into cluster reduction, unvoiced syllable removal, final consonant removal and reduplication. Due to the impact of nasal sounds, some people tend to speak with incorrect pronunciation. Some of the sounds like {n} which is a nasal sound replaces the oral sound like {s} which creates a wrong pronunciation. This habit is basically developed in the young learners which needs to be sorted out before their teenage period; else this will affect them throughout their life. Generally, the sounds depend on pharynx, nasal cavity, oral cavity, lips and age. The grown up adult man tend to have deep voice due to the extension bulge outing called Adam's Glottal- The sound happens when the air flows through the glottis region.

The proper pronunciation of the vowel depends on the tongue positioning. "According to Scarcella and Oxford (1994), the monophthong is a type of vowel sound where the tongue is not changed from starting to end in articulation of a syllable, whereas diphthong is a vowel sound where the position of the tongue changes from one position to another." Teaching students before the age group of 12 makes them accent free in their speech. At this age it is difficult for the learners to learn phonetics because it demands the articulation knowledge from the learners, which can only possible by motivating them in an interesting way. Diverse social interactions play a vital role.

Xu Li Hua (1991) said that the Chinese learners were quite shy and they fear of making mistakes. Still some learners use the technique of listening to the words and trying to repeat it with exact sound by repeating it. There are no vowels and consonants in Chinese language so the learners don't know the exact sound, as a result of which they try to create the pronunciation of those words which are quite similar to that of vowels and consonants but not exact.

Research Objectives:-

The objectives of this study
1. To find the common pronunciation errors made by the ESL learners in India.
2. To explore and investigate the common pronunciation problems encountered by ESL learners in India.

Research Questions
Based on the consideration of the objectives, there are target research questions which will be discussed.
1. What are the common pronunciation errors committed by the ESL learners of India?
2. What are the factors affecting pronunciation of the learners of India?

3.   Are there any difficulties faced by the learners with regard to English pronunciation?

Research Methodology:-
The survey method was employed to study the objectives of this research. Making a survey among people helped the researchers to find out the common problems faced by different people of India belonging to different region. This survey was done through various mode of interaction on a personal basis of over 100 people across India. The tools that used to gather information for the survey include Google forms, personal calls and interaction among various people, and analysing the errors made by the ESL learners of India, by giving them a set of words to pronounce and then recording the required errors.

Results and Discussions of the Study:-
According to the findings of the study, the most often seen errors committed by people from Northern India are as follows:

Table I:- Errors from Northern Indian ESL Leraners.

1	Many people tend to confuse between {s} and {z}, when these letters come in middle or towards end of a word. Example- the pronunciation of word {please} is done as {plaize}
2	Some of the syllable like {n} and {m} are pronounced with combination of cluster of voices like {an}, {yam} etc. Example- {button} is pronounced like {butan}
3	Many people tend to stress on the incorrect syllable, which changes the pronunciation. It's because Hindi is syllable-timed language and in the other hand English is a stressed-timed language. Example- {photographer} is pronounced as {fotographer}
4	Many people find difficulty in finding the difference between {ship} and {sheep}. This problem arises due to the lack of knowledge regarding phonetics
5	Many people find it difficult to distinguish between {v} and {w} sound.

According to the findings of the study, the most often seen errors committed by ESL Leraners from Southern India are as follows:

Table II:- Errors from Southern Indian ESL Leraners.

1	The tendency to add syllable {u} at the end of every consonant in a word. Example- The word {pan} is pronounced as {panu}
2	They don't find any difference between {j} and {i} in the pronunciation.
3	Many people pronounce {east} as {yist}
4	Some people tend to add vowel {w} before back vowels.
5	They face difficulty in putting stress on correct word.

According to the findings of the study, the most often seen errors committed by people from Eastern India are as follows:

Table IIII:- Errors from Eastern Indian ESL Leraners.

1	Many of the people use {b} instead {v}, in some words. This tendency creates a dilemma in the mindset of the people regarding {v} sound. Example- {van} is pronounced as {ban}
2	Trying to use {o} and {au} in majority of the words due to the linguistic language.
3	Difficulty in {sch} sound. Example- The confusion between {see} and {sea},
4	Short monophthongs are produced as long monophthongs.
5	Stressing in right syllable as like South and North Indian people.

According to the findings of the study, the most often seen errors committed by people from Western India are as follows

Table IIV:- Errors from Western Indian ESL Leraners.

1	Many people tend to substitute {z} with {dzh} while speaking.
2	Many people find it difficult to pronounce {v}.

3	The vowel coming at last of a word is expressed as long. But if it is followed by a combination of consonants then it is short. Example- {Sister}
4	Many speakers speak {good} as {gud} because they bring the {u} sound in {oo}.
5	Stressing in right syllable as like other region people.

Many individuals have difficulty distinguishing the following words:

Feel, fell, fill
1. The {ee} sound in feel is like see and we.
2. The {e} sound is a monosyllable in fell is like egg, better.
3. The {I} sound is also monosyllable in fill is like sick and miss. The pronunciation of this word is very sharp.

The luck and look while
1. {u} sound in luck is like bus, fun.
2. {Oo} in look is like book, cook and took. Here the word is pronounced in such a way, that the tongue should be in the lower base of the mouth.

Late and let
1. {A} sound in late is like name, take.
2. {E} sound in let is like pen, men.

Heart, hat, hot
1. {A} sound in hat is like cat.
2. {Ear} in heart is like dark. Here the word is pronounced slightly longer.
3. {O} sound in hot is like not

Bought, but, boat
1. {Ou} sound resembles {a} sound in bought is like call, saw
2. {U} sound in but is like cut, what
3. {Oa} sound in boat is like no, so.

Ice and eyes
1. {I} sound in ice is like guess, house
2. {Z} in eyes is like zoo, wise. The {Z} sound slightly comes towards the end.

Chair and Share
1. {Ch} sound in chair is like champion and which
2. {Sh} sound in share is like shoes, shirt (slightly sharp sound of sh)

Day and They
1. {D} sound in day like dog, did
2. {Th} sound in they is like then, mother

Following a discussion with students about English pronunciation, the researchers were able to see some of their attitudes about the language.
1. English will become easy, if vocabulary is learnt properly along with grammar.
2. Many students of India who belonged to unprivileged group didn't learn English from the kindergarten, so it becomes tough for them.
3. Many students said they are learning English, because it is a part of their curriculum and they need to pass this subject.
4. Some students said that English is an easy subject if it is taught properly.
5. Many student said that their teacher assign them a lot of homework for which they get frustrated and irritated. As a result their interest goes away.

1	Common Problem
2	Vivek and Bibek, Shout and sound
3	Lack of coherency due to frequent use of native language.
4	Confusing myself with the British & US english pronunciations
5	Dont know difference between words with either S,C or K in them
6	Not until I get a pretty long new word with some different fronountiation from its spelling
7	Words That Sound the Same (Homophones)
8	Differentiation between knew & new
9	Improper phonetics
10	Accent problem
11	Difficulty in Pronouncing s,sh in words
12	Vocabulary
13	Nothing in particular with some words, just in some particular words
14	Unaware about that word and silent letters and in that word
15	Vowel sounds
16	Congratulations
17	The letter R
18	american accent
19	Professional type
20	New large words
21	Chair, wicker
22	Words containing x and z
23	Lack of cultural exposure with English Citizens
24	Whether it is correct or not
25	Silent letters and derived words seems to be improperly pronounced by me
26	Enunciation of plosives
27	Due to the mother tongue influence speaking english language difficult and unfamiliar words
28	I used to mess up with the american and british pronuciation
29	It's difficult to speak English with rhythm and proper intonation.
30	Since English is a phonetic language, it is not easy to understand certain sounds of English
31	I couldn't speak with correct intonation and the pronouncing of words is something odd.
32	Intonation
33	Syllabification of words
34	C letter words
35	Spelling
36	Pronouncation of 's' sound
37	Pronunciation is not good
38	Grammar
39	Grammatical
40	Speak infront of people
41	Fear & Doubtful
42	The Accent
43	Dyleskshiya
44	Yes
45	MTI

Fig. 1 Common Problems.

The above excel sheet, which was generated from the Google form survey report, has a list of the most often encountered difficulties during the study process. Some have difficulties with the pronunciation of verbs, consonants, intonation, syllables of words, and other aspects of the language.

Common sound Problems		
Sh		
S		
ilm		
The words containing letters which are silent may trouble sometimes whilr speaking		
K,C,S		
sh		
hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia		
Vowel		
Consecutive words starting with "S".		
Apocalypse as apocalips, evil as avil		
No sound		
Er,is		
Gra		
R sound		
o sounds		
Vowel		
Others speaking in between		
Sh,v		
Involvement of accent 'o' in our speaking		
Words with x and z		
Sha		
Cu, jha, ingnya		
2 S		
The silent letters and consonants		
No sound troubles me		
H,s,b		
H sounds		
f sound		
/z/ /r/		
Sh sound, th sound, dh sound		
/v/, /w/, all vowels		
J, G, S,		
h, s, x sounds		
Exclusive		
Z ,s ,sh.		
Ph		
Haaa		
H		
No		
Speaking loudly		
Zz		
cha sound		
Schedule		
A		
Laterals		

Fig. 2:- Common Sound Problems.

The overview of typical sound issues shown in the preceding page is illustrative. The majority of them have difficulties pronouncing consonants such as "sh," vowel sounds such as "o" and "z," and other similar sounds.

3 words that you find difficult to pronunce
Pronunciation
Pronunciation, institution, restaurant
There can be anything while having a conversation with someone ar
if I want to use a new word so might remain doubtful about how to pr
ENCYCLOPEDIA DICTIONARY PICTURESQUE
not, knot, naught - pronounced - not
The word pronounciation
hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia, Istmus , Worcestershire
Choir , Brewery
Some words from s
Its the Words between a sentence at a Stretch. not any words as suc
Words ending with "tion"
Otorhinolaryngologist,choir, Worcestershire
The words with silent letters
Isthmus, Accede, Camaraderie
Procrastination, colonel, lieutenant
Aquarium as aqwarium and insulin as insulil
Till now no words
New words
Wednesday, honest , leisure
Isthumus, anemone, exception
Rural, colonel,Sixth
Sixth,Pronunciation, hours
Defibrillator
Pizza, Entree
Pseudo, Psychiatrist, Optometrist
Cardiac, Psychiatrist, Isthmus
Lieutenant, Volkswagen, Awful
Congratulations hydrological dehydration
Avacado pop zumba
grievance probability Adrenaline
Nothing as such
Cognizant ,quical
Know and now
Labuschane
Labuschagne
Isthmus, handkerchief, gobbledygook
Lopsided
George
contextualising, decontextualize, recontextualize
Infinitesimally
Installation . Consolations
Colonel,Penguin, Anemone
Words included in English from European origin

Level with 11 and liril
Conscience Environment Schedule
I don't face problems as such
Sheen,gist,hour
Schedule, cafe, dictionary

Fig. 3:- Difficult words – 1.

Schedule, cafe, dictionary
Memoir, chaos and entrepreneur
Heart
Cucumber, water, environment
dumb, choir, headache
Question, schedule, genre
Psalm, cafe, chemistry
French
Pronunciation, simultaneously, irritability
PEDAGOGY, QATAR, JUNG
Discussion, Extraordinary, Enthusiasm
Accept, Expect, Connection
Expert, postpaid, exclusive
The English sounds fa, sha should be pronounced consciously.
Any lengthy words
Situation
Entrepreneur, itenary,
Pronounce, entrepreneurs, Quoke
If ,was, that
opportunity,
r,s,sh
Long Words
Vowel sounds
Posthumous Ignominious Synchronize
Spinach Potato Tomato
Our- schedule- awesome
I have interst but little bit nervous
Terrible, Trouble, Tripple

Fig. 4:- Difficult words – 2.

The above Excel spreadsheet details the specific pronunciation problems that individuals in India have while pronouncing certain terms.
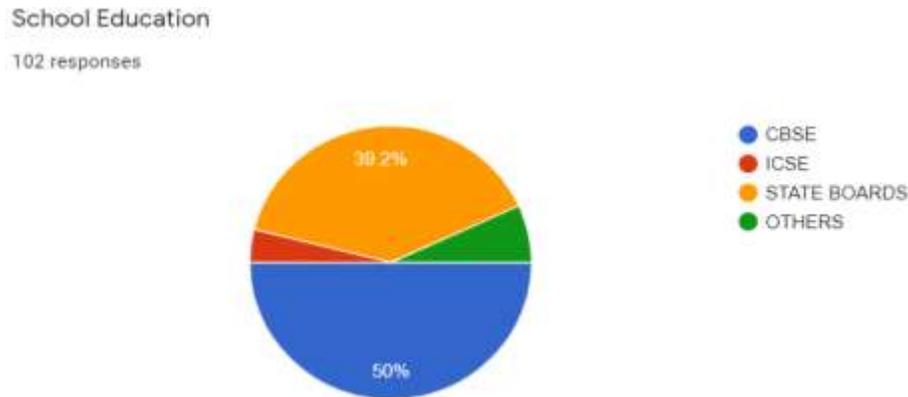
School Education

102 responses

Fig. 5:- Board of Education.

If state boards or others please specify
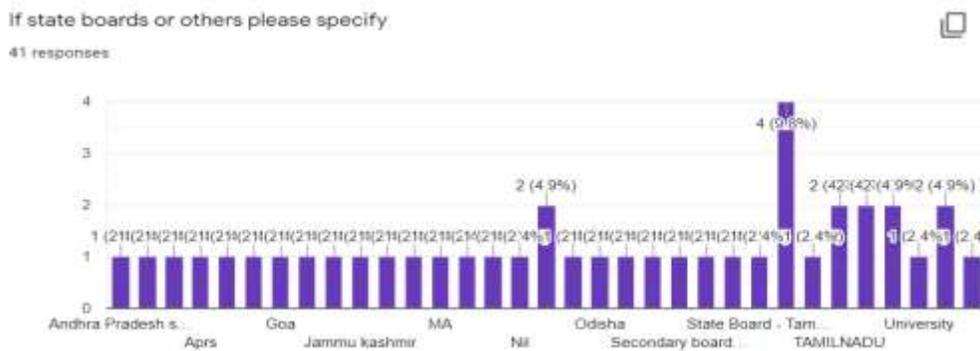
41 responses

Fig. 6:- Place of Education.

The pie chart and graph above depict the wide range of educational opportunities available to students in India. According to the answers collected, about 50 percent of children in India attend schools associated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), and 39.2 percent attend schools linked with state boards. The remaining 10.8 percent of the student body is made up of a mix of ICSE and other schools. After speaking with these participants, it was found that pronunciation problems are more prevalent among State Board students than among the general population. This is due to the fact that India is a multi-linguistic state in which each state has its own language, as opposed to other nations where there is a single language. As a result, some kids who are members of state boards are required to read their native language and pass class 7 in order to be eligible for a government position in their home state, and their parents compel them to do so. Furthermore, under the CBSE system, a kid is required to study three language papers till they reach the seventh grade, making Hindi the mandatory paper. With the exception of a few southern states, the vast majority of states adhere to these standards. Students are put under extra stress as a result of the above.
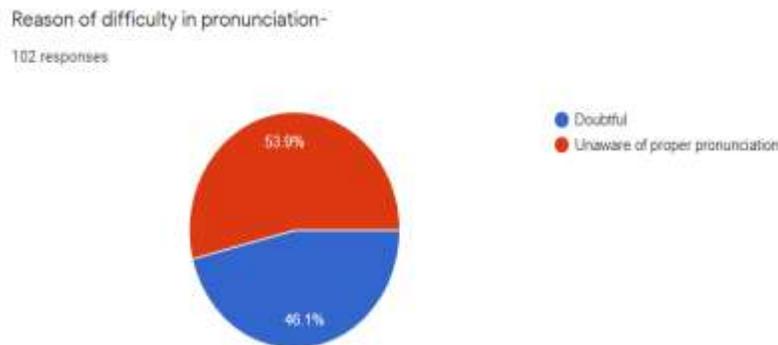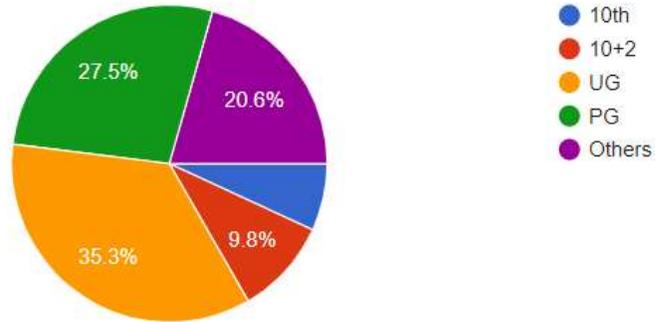
Reason of difficulty in pronunciation-

102 responses

Fig. 7:- Reason for difficulty.

Following the completion of the aforementioned study, it was discovered that there is little difference between the individuals who are unsure of their pronunciation and the ones who are completely ignorant of correct pronunciation. As a result, 53.9 percent of the population is unfamiliar with correct pronunciation, and 46.1 percent are doubtful.
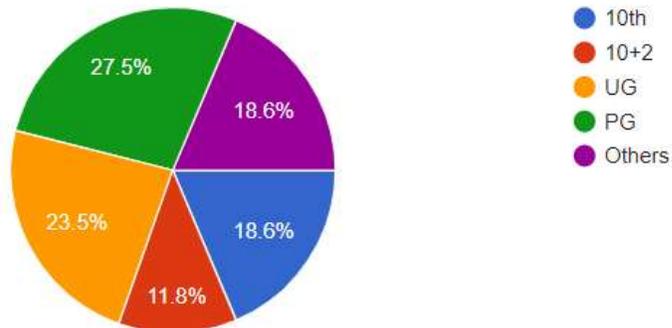

Fig. 8:- Father's Education.

Fig. 9:- Mother's Education.

According to the pie chart above, these 102 students who responded to the Google form had a variety of educational backgrounds. Following extensive interaction, researchers discovered that 80 percent of children, whose parents are highly qualified, do not have many pronunciation problems at all. Therefore, parent education is essential in the development of a student's pronunciation abilities.

Factors affecting the pronunciation
1. Mother tongue
2. Age of the learner
3. Psychological and attitude of the learner
4. Communication instruction required
5. Insufficient knowledge of phonetics.

As previously mentioned, the influence of the mother language on pronunciation is significant. Aside from that, the age of the individual who is studying it is also important to consider. Young learners have a tendency to pick up on this pronunciation skill set more quickly and clearly than older learners. One's psychological attitude toward learning how to pronounce words is very essential when it comes to learning how to pronounce words. Because

studying a language other than one's native tongue requires a high level of dedication and determination, as well as an interest in the subject matter. The more engaged and motivated we are, the simpler it will be to complete the task at hand. Instruction in proper pronunciation, as well as accurate pronunciation practice, are very important. Poor phonetic understanding is one of the most significant problems that may prevent a person from being properly pronouncing their name.

Suggestions and Recommendations of the study:-
The government should attempt to alter the current curriculum to teach three languages to children till they reach the seventh grade, as some states have done, as a remedy to the difficulties mentioned above, which are experienced by Indians from various areas. Furthermore, eliminating the need of passing the native language exam till class 7 in order to be eligible for a government employment in their home state is being considered. For this reason, it is preferable to allow students to concentrate on two language papers from the beginning rather than studying three languages until class 7 and then dropping one language paper in the 8th, 9th, and 10th grades.

In India's schools and universities, the vast majority of students communicate with one another in Hindi or their regional language of origin. Teachers should be on the lookout in these situations, since continuous communication in English will aid the kids in their growth and development.

Conclusions:-
According to the findings of the study, the general problems in pronunciation experienced by the people of India are associated with various geographical areas. Furthermore, the results of the research are based on an in-depth investigation of the most frequent pronunciation mistakes made by ESL learners. In addition, the current research offers a few suggestions for improving the productivity of correct pronunciation in English. The limitation is that it may not be correct in identifying the specific issue that each and every one is experiencing, but it may provide a broad analysis of the situation as a whole. The scope of this research may be broadened in the future to include the phonetic system and how to apply appropriate phonetics among Indians in order to improve their pronunciation.

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