

INFLUENCE OF SINDHI (L1) ON ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH (L2) IN PRONOUNCING TRIPHTHONGS

Muhammad Ashraf Joyo ¹

Abstract

The present study is quantitative in nature that aims to analyze pronunciation problems of English triphthongs produced by Sindhi as L2 learners. The research provides empirical evidence to identify errors through acoustic analysis of triphthongs. Thirty male and female participants, studying in intermediate classes having Sindhi mother tongue (Sahiti Dialect), one of the Pakistani languages spoken in Province of Sindh were selected as a targeted population. The participants were given a list of English words consisting of triphthongs for recording their speech sample. The recording was analyzed and compared with the Received Pronunciation (RP) to find the difference between them. The study hypothesized that there is a lot of difference between Sindhi ESL learners and the native speakers in production of triphthongs. The obtained results of the study reveal that the respondents do not pronounce triphthongs as the native speakers do, instead they pronounce monophthongs that drag the sounds and sometimes add an extra syllable with the word. This issue is because of non-availability of triphthongs in Sindhi language (Allana, 1968.)

Key words: *Triphthongs, monophthongs, Sindhi, English, pronunciation.*

¹ Assistant Professor & PhD Scholar, University of Sindh, Jamshoro.

1. Introduction

The early history and culture of Sindh has been a mystery and almost unknown. The script found in the site of Mohenjo-Daro and from the other settlements of the Indus valley civilization is yet to be deciphered. The modern Sindhi language evolved over the period of 2500 years. This evolution period counts many foreign invasions i.e. Persians, Mooryans, Alexander the Great 329-324 B.C (Jennifer, 2006). The present Sindhi Language belongs to an Indian vernacular (Allana, 1998). It has been derived from Sanskrit. Professor Bherumal Advani, Mirza Quleech Baig, Dr. Gul Buxani and Dr. Trumpp supported this idea. The Sindhi Language has six dialects i.e. Utradi (Northern), Lassi, Lari, Tharili, Kachhi (spoken in India) and Sahiti. Sahiti dialect is the Standard dialect of the Sindhi language. Diphthongs and triphthongs do not exist in the Sindhi Language. Being a teacher of English I have been noticing the different pronunciation of the students which inspired me to research upon. Many language teachers ignore very important aspect while teaching and some do not possess sufficient learning of phonetics and phonology of L1 and L2. The training of English pronunciation is not just overlooked at primary, middle, secondary, higher secondary but even at college and university level particularly in rural Sindh. The study was carried out under the frame Contrastive Analysis (CA) by Lado (1957) in order to determine whether the triphthongs of English are problematic to Sindhi ESL learner.

English and Sindhi languages are quite different in their nature. The English language has twenty-six letters and 44 phonemes whereas Sindhi has 52 letters and 58 phonemes (Raza et al., 2004). Both languages are different in their nature. English language has cluster vowel and cluster consonant sounds whereas Sindhi language doesn't have cluster consonants or cluster vowels. English is a head-initial SVO whereas the Sindhi language is a head-final SOV.

2. Review of Literature

An adequate research has not been conducted on phonological issues faced by Sindhi ESL learners. Some books and articles are available as Jatoti's (1984) *Illam Lisan ain Sindhi Zaban* (Linguistics and Sindhi Language), Allana's (1997) *Sindhi Sautiat* (Sindhi Phonology), *Sindhi Bolia Jee Lisane Geograpy* (Linguistic Geograpy of Sindhi language) and *Papers on Sindhi language and Linguistics*.

Some research papers and theses have been written applying Praat software to assess the phonological performance of L2 speakers. A research paper, *Phonetic-Acoustic Study of Sindhi-Accented English for Better English Pronunciation* (Abbasi, 2012) is a study of Utradi dialect that finds the phonological problems

faced by the Utaradi 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.

Another thesis, *Acoustic Analysis of Sindhi Speech - A Pre-cursor for an ASR System* (PhD thesis from School of Engineering and Design University of Sussex, UK) (Keerio (2010)). The study finds all the Sindhi language sounds properties, their F1, F2 value, spectrogram etc and the difference among all the five Sindhi dialects spoken in Pakistan. The articulatory knowledge of the vowels and consonants provide a clear picture and understanding about the production process.

Phonological Problems faced by Sindhi Speaking Students in Speaking English at College Level at District Naushahro Feroze, Sindh (Joyo, 2012) an M. Phil thesis from NUML, Islamabad. This study 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).

The present research is an attempt to find out the difference between the Sindhi (Sahiti Dialect) learners of ESL and native English speakers and the issues occur in pronouncing English triphthongs. The Sindhi learners of ESL substitute their own sounds (epenthetic) for triphthongs discussed below.

3. Diphthongs and Triphthongs

Roach (1983) identifies a diphthong as a movement of glide from one vowel to another and a triphthong is a glide from one vowel to another and then to a third. The Sindhi language speakers only pronounce eight vowel and two diphthongs (Allana, 1967). We know that there are eight vowel sounds in the Sindhi language (Jatoi, 1967) as the majority of Indo-Aryan languages do not have diphthongs. For Pakistani English speaker, Rehman (1990) writes even if they are rightly educated, tend to substitute monophthongs in the place of diphthongs. Ernest Trump in his book, 'Grammar of the Sindhi Language', published in 1872, contended that there is no diphthong sound in Sindhi; the two vowels /aɪ/, and /aʊ/ are approximately articulated as a-i and a-u (Trump, 1872).

4. Research Questions

Q.No.1 Do the Sindhi speaking students deviate from the native speakers (RP Standard) in pronouncing triphthongs of English?

Q.NO.2 How does the Sindh language differ from the English language in triphthongs?

5. Research Methodology

The research is quantitative in nature. The total participants were thirty; fifteen were selected from each college i.e. Govt. (Boy) Mehran Degree College Moro, and Govt. (Girls) Degree College Moro, Sindh. All the participants had Sindhi mother tongue (Sahiti Dialect) and were belonging to district Naushahro Feroze, Sindh.

The participants were given 23 words consisting of triphthongs for reading out. The voice of the respondents was recorded through a sensitive mike in a sound proof room. Later on every respondent's recorded data was analyzed and written in their own transcription and RP to compare and contrast to figure out the deviation between them.

6. Analysis of Data

6.1 English Triphthongs

/eɪə/, /aɪə/, /ɔɪə/, /əʊə/, and /ɑʊə/

Roach (1983) writes that the most complex English sounds of vowel type are triphthongs. They can be difficult to pronounce and difficult to recognize by non native English speakers. They do not exist in Sindhi consequently are alien for the Sindhi ESL learners. The native speakers pronounce triphthongs quickly, and are very difficult to understand all the three sounds in a whole for Sindhi speaking students. They usually drag a triphthong and pronounce it in three parts.

The words used in the research show that the Sindhi ESL learners mispronounce five triphthongs of the English language. They use epenthetic /jʌ/ instead of single /ə/ with the words entirely, liar, tire, fire and flower.

Table-1

Words consisting of triphthongs, phonetic transcription of the Sindhi Speaking Students with the Received Pronunciation (RP)

Word	English (RP)	Substitution
<i>Entirely</i>	/eɪə/	/e:jʌ/
<i>Liar</i>	/aɪə/	/ɑ:jʌ/

<i>Loyal</i>	/ɔɪə/	/ɑ:jʌ/
<i>Hour</i>	/əʊə/	/ʌwə/
<i>Flower</i>	/ɑʊə/	/ɑ:ɔ:ʌ/

Table-2

Word	Phonetic Transcription of the SSS	RP
Entirely	/e:ntɑ:jərli:/	/ɪntaɪərlɪ/,
Tired	/tɑ:jɑrd/	/tɑɪəd/,
Liar	/lɑ:jɑr/	/laɪə(r)/
Fire	/fa:jɑr/	/faɪə(r)/
Diana	/da:ya:na:/	/dɑɪənə/
Dialogue	/dæ:lɑ:wɑr/	/dɑɪəlɒg/
Flower	/flɑ:wɑr/	/flɑʊə(r)/
Power	/pa:wɑr/	/paʊə(r)
Hour	/hʌwə(r)/	/aʊə(r)/
Shower	/ʃɑ:wɑr/	/ʃaʊə(r)/
Sour	/so:ʌr/	/saʊə(r)
Mower	/mo:wɑr/	/məʊə(r)
Lower	/lo:wɑr/	/ləʊə(r)/
Slower	/slɔ:ʌr/	/sləʊə(r)
Mayer	/me:ʌr/	/meɪər/
Player	/ple:ʌr/	/pleɪə(r),
Layer	/le:jʌr/	/leɪə(r)/,
Newer	/nju:ʌr/	/nju:ə(r)/
Newel	/nɪju:ʌl/	/nju:əl/
Royal	/ra:jʌl/	/rɔɪəl/
Loyal	/lɑ:jʌl/	/lɔɪəl/
Oasis	/o:e:sis/	/əʊeɪsɪs/
Radio	/re:di:ɔ:/	/reɪdɪəʊ/.

7. Discussion

As noted in the paper that the study analyses the Sindhi ESL learners' production of triphthongs. During the analysis it is assumed that the Sindhi speaking students

produce three monophthongs instead of a triphthong consequently the actual sound of native speakers is dragged. One syllabic word becomes two syllabic, two syllabic becomes three syllabic and three syllabic becomes four syllabic as liar [lɪɑːjʌr] which is actually /lɪɑː(r)/, Lower [lɔ:wʌr] which is /lɔːʊə(r)/ and Flower [fla:wʌr] which is /flɔːʊə(r)/ respectively according to RP.

Due to addition of an epenthetic syllable shown in table-1 & 2 as /jʌ/ instead of single /ə/ vowel with the words entirely, tired, liar, fire, flower etc. deviation occurring gets unintelligible to the foreigners and native English Speakers.

8. Conclusion

The researcher has found that the Sindhi ESL learners pronounce English triphthongs using their own L1 monophthongs. Thus, drag the native sound which adds an epenthetic vowel and sometimes a consonant with the triphthong. This situation makes their pronunciation sometimes unintelligible for foreigners and even for native English speakers. Most of the students have no idea of English phonetic vowel sounds because the teachers of English language either do not have command over phonetics and phonology or they do not prefer to teach their students. Consequently, their students rely on the visual (orthographic) form of the words during reading and speaking.

9. Recommendations

The Sindhi speaking students need phonetic awareness of English from primary to the university level. Thus, Phonetics and Phonology should be introduced to all level to improve their English pronunciation.

References

- Allana, G. A. (1997), *Sindhi Bolo Jee Linsani Geography*, Hyderabad: S.G.A Indus Press.
- Allana, G. A. (1997), *Sindhi Sautiat*. Hyderabad: Adbiat Publication Hyderabad Sindhi
- Allana, G. A. (1968), *Origin and Ancestry of Sindhi Language* (unpublished).
- Amna, L. (2003), Phonemic Inventory of Siraiiki Language and Acoustic Analysis of Voiced Implosives. Center for Research in Urdu Language Processing (CRULP), pp. 89-97.

Bloomfield L. (1961), *Language*, George Allen Unwin Ltd.

IPA. (1999), *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association: A guide to the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jatoi, A.N. (1984), *Ilm Lisan Ain Sindhi Zaban*, Hyderabad: S.G.A Indus Press Hyderabad.

Jennifer, S. C. (2006), The Sindhi language. In K. Brown (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (2 ed., Vol. 11, pp. 384-386). Oxford: Elsevier.

Khawaja, M., & Najmi, N. (2007), Segmentation of Sindhi Speech using Formants. *IEEE International Conference on Signal Processing and Communications*. ICSPC, (pp. 796-799).

Lass, R. (1985), *Phonology: An Introduction to basic Concepts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Cambridge.

Pall, T. (1981), *Pronunciation Skill*: Macmillan Longman.

Padgett, J. (2008), Glides, vowels, and features. *Lingua*, Vol. 118 (12), pp. 1937-1955.

Rahman, T. (1999), *Pakistani English: The Linguistic Description of Non-Native Variety of English*. Islamabad: National Institute of Pakistan Studies Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Raza, S., Agha, F. Z., & Usman, R. (2004), Phonemic inventory of Sindhi and acoustic analysis of voiced implosives. Center for Research in Urdu language Processing (CRULP).