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THE ROLE OF PRONUNCIATION IN COMMUNICATION AND THE USE OF TARGETED PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the role of pronunciation in successful communication, focusing specifically on the challenging [v]-[w] pair for non-native speakers of English in Pakistan. The study aims to determine the possibility of Pakistani English speakers distinguishing between [v] and [w] through targeted practice, after the fossilization of these phonemes. Employing an experimental approach, the research engages the participants in focused pronunciation exercise using word pair, "viper" and "wiper." The study evaluates changes in participants' articulation, using formant frequency F 1 of [v] and [w] on software PRAAT. Analysis of the values informant frequency F1 before and after practice, revealed positive impact on pronunciation skills. Unlike prolonged exposure to native input, which does not resolve fossilized mispronunciation problem, targeted practice demonstrates significant improvement. In contrast to previous research, which found limited corrections in fossilized non-native pronunciation, this study focuses on the effectiveness of targeted practice in enhancing English pronunciation skill of Pakistani English speakers. The research recommends strategies for ESL learners, including teacher training, awareness among learners and teachers, emphasis on speaking skill, exposure to native input with classroom practice, syllabus revisions, and comprehensive examination system. These interventions are expected to address challenges arising from the neglect of pronunciation in early education and foster notable advancements in learners' English pronunciation abilities.

Keywords: Pronunciation, targeted practice, fossilization, PRAAT.

INTRODUCTION

Successful communication of English highly relies on pronunciation. This study aims to establish the inevitability of learning pronunciation of English language with a special focus on the distinct pronunciation of phonemes [v] and [w]. English [v]-[w] pair is a huge problem for non-native speakers of English in Pakistan. This research aims to evaluate if Pakistani speakers of English can learn a difference between [v] and [w] with a targeted practice with the help of native input of English after the incorrect fossilization of these phonemes.

The research also examines the impact of targeted pronunciation practice on refining the articulation of consonant phonemes, with a specific emphasis on the phonemes of [v] and [w]. Employing an experimental approach, the study centers around the practice of a randomly chosen pair of words, "viper" and "wiper," strategically designed to elicit and evaluate changes in participants' pronunciation. This refined focus on formant frequencies of both [v] and [w] phonemes aims to offer a profound understanding of the participants' phonetic development, providing insights into the specific challenges associated with the articulation of these consonants. PRAAT software used in this study examines the F1 values for both [v] and [w] phonemes before and after practice to detect positive changes in the manner of articulation of these phonemes. The results indicated that though native input for a long period of time may not have any positive impact on the pronunciation of nonnative speakers of English who initially learnt

English in Pakistan and later settled in England and received native English input for about six years (Sayed and Atta 2020), yet targeted practice can have a positive impact on the pronunciation skill of the English speakers in Pakistan. Sayed and Atta (2020) investigated the impact of native British English input on the fossilized nonnative pronunciation of adult Pakistani speakers, finding that even after extended exposure in England, those speakers did not efficiently correct the mispronunciation of [v] and [w] phonemes. On the other hand this study focuses on the targeted practice which is more likely to have a positive impact on the pronunciation skill. Unfortunately, English pronunciation is often overlooked in early education, resulting in persistent challenges, such as the mispronunciation of phonemes like [v]-[w], stemming from negative transfer. Despite the potential fossilization of incorrect pronunciation, this study demonstrates that targeted practice can still lead to notable improvements in learners.

The study suggests to enhance English pronunciation skill of ESL learners in Pakistan through targeted practice, including providing in-service training for teachers, raising awareness about significance of pronunciation, emphasizing speaking skill and exposure to native input, revising syllabi to incorporate structural, functional, and situational components, and developing examination systems that assess all four language skills.

Significance of the Study

If distinctions are ignored in pronunciation of similar phonemes, they can lead to misunderstanding, in such situations where words like 'wine' and 'vine' phoneme alike, and 'very' and 'wary' are easily confused. This study emphasizes why learning English pronunciation matters for effective communication. Focusing the adult

Pakistani learners, this research explored how learning the difference between [v] and [w] phonemes can make a difference. Research findings show that even an extended exposure in England to the native British English input, does not create a positive impact on the adult Pakistani speakers fossilized nonnative pronunciation of [v] and [w] phonemes. It gave rise to the question if the targeted practice can help change fossilized nonnative pronunciation or not. Hence the present research aims to find out whether targeted practice can effectively mitigate fossilized nonnative pronunciation or not. The findings of this study are expected to have practical implications for language educators, curriculum developers, and learners, offering insights into the effectiveness of targeted practice in correcting nonnative pronunciation. Beyond the classroom, the study contributes to the broader level on the importance of mastering English pronunciation for academic and professional success, particularly for those aspiring to pursue higher education abroad or secure employment in competitive markets where English proficiency is crucial. This research aims to bridge the gap in our understanding of how targeted practice can enhance the pronunciation skills of adult Pakistani learners, ultimately facilitating clearer communication and reducing potential barriers in academic and professional domains.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The aims of this research are:

- To investigate the importance of learning pronunciation of English.
- To evaluate the ability of Pakistani university students living in a hostel in Lahore, to learn correct pronunciation of English through targeted practice after the fossilization of nonnative pronunciation of labiodental fricative [v] and bilabial approximant [w] phonemes.
- To evaluate the difficulties faced by Pakistani university students living in a hostel in Lahore, to learn correct pronunciation of English through targeted practice after the fossilization of nonnative pronunciation of labiodental fricative [v] and bilabial approximant [w] phonemes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study will address the following questions:

1. What is the significance of learning English language pronunciation skill?
2. Can the Pakistani university students living in a hostel in Lahore, learn correct pronunciation of English through targeted practice after the fossilization of nonnative pronunciation of labiodental fricative [v] and bilabial approximant [w] phonemes?
3. What are the difficulties that Pakistani university students living in a hostel in Lahore, face to learn correct pronunciation of English through targeted practice after the fossilization of nonnative

pronunciation of labiodental fricative [v] and bilabial approximant [w] phonemes?

A Statement of the Problem

For Pakistani students, the similarity in the production of [v] and [w] phonemes poses a significant challenge to effective communication in English. Despite the importance of mastering native English pronunciation for academic pursuits and professional success, Sayed and Atta's (2020) findings reveal that even after extended exposure in England, adult Pakistani speakers fail to correct the pronunciation of [v] and [w] phonemes. This raises the critical question of whether targeted practice can effectively mitigate fossilized nonnative pronunciation, creating a pronounced gap in our understanding. The current research study aims to address this gap by investigating Pakistani learners' ability to distinguish between [v] and [w] phonemes through targeted practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

N. R. Kobilova, (2022) conducted a qualitative research on the importance of pronunciation in English language communication and found two main reasons which lead to the acquisition of incorrect pronunciation. L2 children tend to speak in their L1 accent when they start learning English in the native environment, while in non-English-speaking countries, incorrect pronunciation input from teachers or grownups contribute to faulty pronunciation.

This research highlights the components of good pronunciation, including pitch, quality, pace, and volume. The researcher asserts that language skills are best learned through practical use, particularly by listening to native speakers.

The researcher discusses the complexity of vowel and consonant phonemes. It highlights the importance of understanding word stress and how it can change pronunciation based on the usage of a word as a noun, adjective, or verb. Intonation is also explored, noting its role in conveying information, grammar, attitude, and inquisitiveness in language.

The study categorizes intonations into four principal kinds, emphasizing their various purposes in communication. The study suggests that good pronunciation skills contribute to increased self-confidence, effective communication, and potential professional benefits. It acknowledges the complexity of English pronunciation but encourages learners to focus on improvement, as it can enhance self-esteem and possibly lead to better opportunities in the workplace.

Sayed and Atta (2020) conducted a research to determine if native British English input has any positive impact on the fossilized nonnative pronunciation of English on the adult Pakistani speakers of Saraiki. They conducted experiments on comprehension and production of native British English on Pakistani speakers of English who, after acquiring Pakistani English settled in England and received input from native speakers of English. The results indicated that the adult Pakistani speakers of English after the fossilization of incorrect pronunciation, do not become efficient in the pronunciation of [v] and [w] phonemes even after the input of native British English in England for a very long period of time, due to a perceptual assimilation of both the phonemes to their L1 labio-dental approximant [ʋ]. The findings suggested the importance of early, targeted input in addressing articulatory challenges, with implications for pedagogical practices in Pakistan. The research underscored the complexities adult learners face in overcoming perceptual assimilation and articulatory challenges, providing valuable insights for language educators and researchers.

S. U. Khan et al. (2021) conducted a research on the English pronunciation of the phonemes [v] and [w], by Khowar speakers in Pakistan. The study included ten undergraduate participants whose speech was analyzed through PRAAT software. Khowar speaking English learners demonstrated no difference in the production of [v] and [w], instead produced a phoneme similar to their native labio-dental approximant phoneme in Khowar language. This study aligned with the Speech Learning Model (SLM), positing that if learners fail to distinguish a phonetic distinction between L1 and L2 phonemes, they adopt equivalent phonemes from L1. The findings of this study also aligned with the Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM), where phonemes perceived as similar to L1 block L2 acquisition. The research highlighted that Khowar learners categorize [v] and [w] as a 'Single Category' (SC) type, reinforcing PAM's predictions. The researchers suggested to incorporate these distinctions into language teaching to enhance pronunciation accuracy. The research also provided insights into specific pronunciation challenges and

proposes a framework for addressing them, contributing to the broader discourse on effective language teaching methodologies.

Iqbal et al. (2021) conducted a study to investigate the impact of Pashto phonemes [p] and [w] on the pronunciation of English [f] and [v], focusing on the challenges encountered by Pashto speakers at the secondary level. Employing an experimental and quantitative approach, the research involves four experienced teachers and eight randomly selected students from Buner city in KPK. Pronunciation samples were recorded during classes, and an interview session with teachers elicited opinions on pronunciation difficulties. Observations indicated that teachers frequently mispronounced English phonemes, replacing them with Pashto phonemes. Results revealed that teachers and students tended to substitute [f] with [p] and [v] with [w], revealing the influence of their native language. Common reasons for mispronunciation included a lack of knowledge about English phonemes, inadequate training, and limited awareness of the target language's phonetics. The study recommended comprehensive training for teachers and the teaching of English as both a subject and a language at the secondary level. Additionally, it suggested incorporating English phonetics in textbooks and government involvement in training or hiring faculty with phonetic expertise.

M. Issa (2022) investigated the challenges faced by Balti speakers learning English as a Second Language, specifically focusing on the pronunciation of English labio-dental consonants [f] and [v]. The research adopts a quantitative approach, employing a sample of Balti-native students pursuing various academic courses at the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (UAJK). Random sampling was utilized to select 15 participants, and data were collected through recordings of English monosyllabic words containing labio-dental phonemes. Analysis of the recordings using PRAAT software revealed that Balti ESL learners encounter difficulties in accurately producing English labio-dental [f] and [v] due to the absence of these phonemes in the Balti language's phonemic inventory, leading to substitution patterns where [f] is replaced by the aspirated bilabial plosive [ph] and [p], while [v] is replaced by the Balti bilabial approximant [w]. The absence of [f] and [v] in the Balti language contributes to the challenges faced by learners. Despite the difficulties, a few participants demonstrated correct pronunciation through practice, exhibiting the potential for improvement with targeted instruction. This research underscored the importance of considering phonological differences between languages in ESL instruction. It recommended specific attention to English labio-dental phonemes [f] and [v] during teaching English to Balti speakers, suggesting targeted practice to enhance pronunciation. The study provides valuable insights into the phonological challenges faced by Balti ESL learners and offers practical suggestions for ESL instruction.

R. Metruk (2018) explored the mispronunciation of the consonants [v] and [w] in English by Slovak university students. Focusing on 40 students with a B2 level of English proficiency, the study investigated the extent of mispronunciation of the labiodental fricative [v] and the labial-velar approximant [w], aiming to identify which phoneme poses more challenges for the learners. The participants' spontaneous two-minute recorded speeches were analyzed by two native speakers of American English. The results indicated that both [v] and [w] were frequently mispronounced, with [v] being substituted for [w] and vice versa. The study suggested that the absence of [w] in the Slovak language contributes to its mispronunciation when it occurs in English words. Additionally, it is noted that some learners may use [w] for both [v] and [w], either due to hypercorrection or interlanguage generalization. The study emphasizes the need for careful attention to segmental features in English pronunciation instruction for Slovak learners, particularly for phonemes lacking counterparts in their native language. The study recommends further research on a broader sample, employing more assessors, and exploring additional contexts and consonant substitutions. It underscores the importance of addressing phoneme substitution issues in language instruction to enhance intelligibility in communication.

R. Ahmed (2020) explored the improvement in the comprehension and intelligibility of English language by teaching pronunciation as a compulsory skill in a six months English language course in the National University of Modern Languages. Through the class observation in the beginning of the course the researcher identified many pronunciation problems that the students were facing regarding production, reception, recognition

of speech as well as phonotectics, stress and intonation. Among the segmental pronunciation problems included the students' confusion between [v] and [w] which resulted in mispronunciation of unknown words such as vain and wane or visor and wiser. The Balochi speaking students had a problem in differentiating between /b/ and [v]. Students were given lessons of pronunciation with a goal of intelligibility with targeted exercises. Through a "loud reading" posttest positive changes were noticed. In the feedback survey questions after the posttest, students found among challenges in learning proper pronunciation, the stress patterns, diphthongs, and phoneme-spelling differences. They believed listening practice to be crucial for understanding language, correcting pronunciation and aiding comprehension of native English. Pronunciation practice was seen as an essential part for word understanding and correcting individual phoneme mispronunciations. Students reported successful improvement, enabling self-correction and improved enunciation despite occasional interference from their mother tongue. The research suggested that to improve pronunciation, correcting common mistakes like vowel reduction and unnecessary vowel lengthening should be focused, minor phoneme variations should be ignored, intonation and stress should be given importance; tongue twisters and minimal pairs should be a part of pronunciation exercises; pronunciation skill should be integrated into assessments; function words and phonetic transcription should be a part of pronunciation subskills (Jenkins, 2000; Gomes de Matos, 2002; Wells, 1996 cited in Ahmed 2020). This research concluded that teaching pronunciation through practice and effective communication methods may help students of diverse linguistic backgrounds speak English confidently (Jenkins, 2000 cited in Ahmed 2020).

Ahmad et al. (2022) conducted a literature review to find out pronunciation challenges among English learners. The study identified L2 influence as a significant factor affecting pronunciation. This study revealed variations in English vowel and consonant phonemes. Teacher training was found to be a crucial in mitigating pronunciation issues. Aligning with broader research this study emphasized the key role of teachers in enhancing pronunciation skill of the learners. The neglect of pronunciation in language education, with learners and teachers prioritizing vocabulary and grammar over pronunciation was highlighted. Remedial strategies proposed, include pronunciation drills and exposure to authentic materials. The literature also explores how L1 interference can be mitigated through consistent exposure to English. This research highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to pronunciation instruction, emphasizing teacher training and targeted strategies to enhance learners' pronunciation skills.

Mohammed & Idris (2020) studied the challenges faced by EFL learners in achieving proper pronunciation in spoken English at the tertiary level. Pronunciation's significance in teaching and learning is emphasized, with an analytical methodology employing a questionnaire for data collection. The study focuses on 100 tertiary-level students (18-22 years old) studying English as a foreign language, all native Arabic speakers with a 7-year English learning background.

Findings highlight pronunciation difficulties, including vowel recognition issues, mispronunciation of consonants, consonant clustering difficulty, stress placement challenges, and intonation and tone problems. Teaching techniques to minimize pronunciation difficulties are suggested, such as listening practice, imitation and repetition, and emphasizing teacher qualification.

In conclusion, correct pronunciation is essential for effective communication. Recommendations include highly trained teachers, utilization of audio-visual materials, a student-centered teaching approach, knowledge of learners' mother tongue, and diversified teaching responsibilities for pronunciation teachers. The study encourages further research and workshops to enhance understanding and awareness in this crucial area.

Hassan et al. (2023) conducted a quantitative study investigates factors contributing to the wrong pronunciation of English among undergraduate students in Pakistan. The research involves 72 undergraduate students from three government colleges in KPK, aged between 18 and 23, enrolled in the BS English program. The study employs a questionnaire and utilizes SPSS for data analysis. Findings indicate various factors influencing mispronunciation, such as weaknesses in phonetics and phonology, school teachers' wrong pronunciation, first language interference, military-related vocabulary, borrowed words, poor oral

fluency, limited exposure to native speakers, and avoidance of speaking English in the classroom. The study concludes with recommendations for students, emphasizing regular exposure to native speakers, utilization of multimedia resources, and the use of phonetic dictionaries. Additionally, the importance of phonetics and phonology knowledge, targeted practice of speech phonemes, avoiding generalization of English language rules, and regular use of standardized phonetic dictionaries are suggested for improved pronunciation. The study contributes insights for educators and policymakers to address pronunciation challenges among undergraduate English learners in Pakistan.

Research Methodology

This study employed one-group pretest-posttest design to analyze the acquisition of target sounds pronunciation by students before and after practice. Female university students living in a hostel of Lahore in Pakistan, comprise the population of this study. Purposive sampling technique was employed to encompass diverse linguistic backgrounds with a potential to contribute in the comprehensive knowledge of the variations in the production of target speech sounds of English. PRAAT software (Boersma & Weenink, 2019) was used to observe spectrogram and analyze acoustic property formant frequency F1 in order to determine the manner of articulation of the students for target sounds. This analysis aimed to identify the level of accuracy and the distinctive characteristics of both [v] and [w] sounds.

- [v] Sound formant frequency F1 represents temporal vocal tract resonance during the production of voiced labiodental fricative. Analysis of F1 values for [v] sound for the production of word containing it provides insights into its place of articulation.
- [w] Sound formant frequency F1is indicative of the configuration of vocal tract resonance during the production of voiced labio-velar approximant. Examination of F1 value of [w] sound yields valuable information about lip rounding, and other factors critical for accurate articulation of this sound.

Data Collection

A pretest was conducted without any preparatory exercises. The test included oral production of the words 'viper' and 'wiper,' which were recorded on PRAAT to capture students' baseline pronunciation, ensuring a comprehensive record of articulation without any exposure to preparatory exercises. The pretest was followed by a structured practice session designed to improve the pronunciation of the consonant sounds [v] and [w]. Exercises were carefully designed to improve the pronunciation of the target sounds.

After the practice session, participants repeated the pronunciation exercise in a posttest. It was recorded and analyzed on PRAAT. Comparing pre- and post-practice pronunciations through the posttest helped establish the impact of exercise on improvement.

Data Analysis

This quantitative survey involved a careful comparative analysis of formant frequencies F1 extracted from pretest and posttest recordings for each [v] and [w] sounds. To establish the correct pronunciation as well as the distinction between the pronunciations of [w] and [v] phonemes of English, the acoustic features of F1 frequencies of both the sounds were examined separately on PRAAT. The pretest and posttest values were compared for each sound and the improvement was noticed. The difference of pronunciation between the two sounds indicated the difference in the manner of articulation of the two sounds. Acoustic data was collected from pretest and posttest recordings and compared for the F1 values of the two phonemes. Consistency or variation in the patterns of F1 frequency for each sound was analyzed to assess improvement or changes over time between pretest and posttest.

Findings and Data Analysis

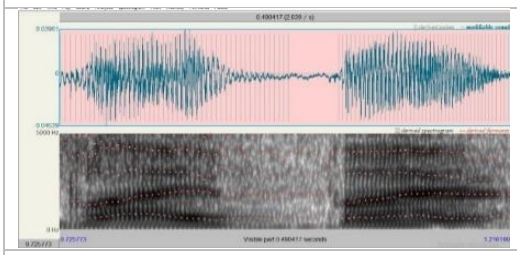
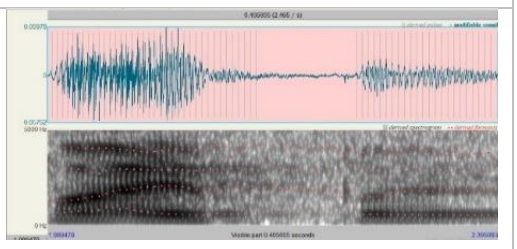
The key difference between the two phonemes is that [w] is a voiced bilabial approximant, while [v] is a voiced labiodental fricative. Formant frequency F1 is an acoustic feature that can be analyzed to differentiate between [w] and [v]. Formants are resonant frequencies in the phoneme spectrum that are associated with different speech phonemes.

For [v] F1 is approximately 700 due to the labiodental nature of the phoneme.

For [w] F1 tends to be lower than 300 as it is a bilabial phoneme.

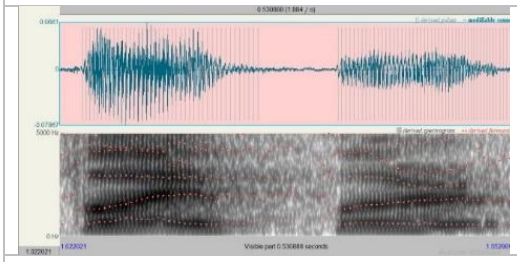
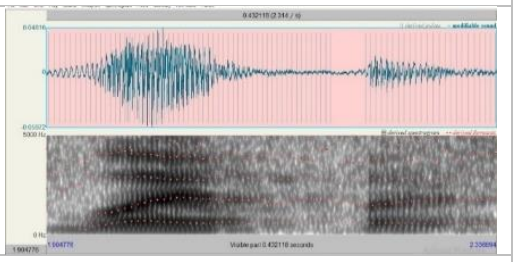
This research focused on the analysis of the F1 frequency of both phonemes to establish their correct pronunciation and to differentiate between

the place of articulation of [w] and [v] phonemes.

Figure1.	
Student I: Pretest	
	
Viper	Wiper
Formant Frequency F1	Formant Frequency F1
551.178Hz	547.108Hz

In the pretest, student I pronounced "viper" with an F1 value of 551.178Hz, while the word "wiper" yielded an F1 value of 547.108Hz. Generally, the F1 for [w] tends to be lower, given its bilabial nature. Conversely, for [v], the F1 is relatively higher due to the labiodental characteristics of the phoneme. The pretest results indicated that the student's manner of articulation for "wiper" and "viper" was almost the same as there is a very small difference in the frequency values. This suggested that the student did not pronounce both the words correctly, rather with an influence of labiodental approximant [ʋ].

It is noteworthy that during the pronunciation of [w], the lips should be rounded without the upper teeth touching the lower lip. Conversely, for [v], the upper teeth should touch the lower lip, resulting in discernible friction. The proximity of the student's F1 value for "viper" to the F1 value of “wiper” suggests a deviation from the correct pronunciation, indicating a deviant manner of articulation.

Figure 2	
Student I: Posttest	
	
Viper	Wiper
Formant Frequency F1	Formant Frequency F1
658.239 Hz	435.830 Hz

Improvement of pronunciation in the posttest was noticed. F1 frequency of "viper" increased from 651.001 Hz to 558.239 Hz. Changes in frequency F1 of [v] are typically associated with the position of articulators, especially the upper teeth and the lower lip. This increase in frequency F1 suggests improved precision in the articulation of [v], reflecting better control over phoneme placement that is a shift in the lip neutrality and air friction.

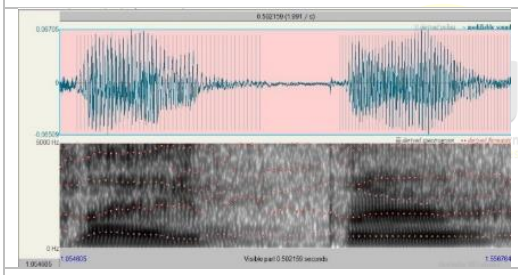
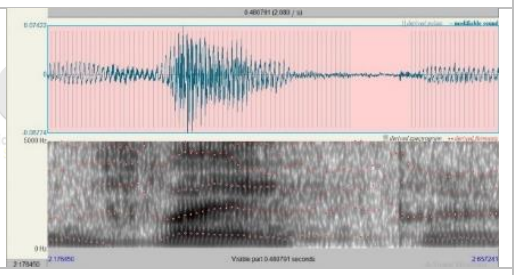
F1 frequency of "wiper" decreased from 547.062 Hz to 435.830 Hz. In the context of [w] phoneme, changes in F1 are linked to the degree of lip rounding. The reduction in F1 frequency implies a refinement in the production of the [w] phoneme, suggesting enhanced control over lip rounding and vocal tract shape. This posttest data underscores positive progress in the student's pronunciation

skills after practice.

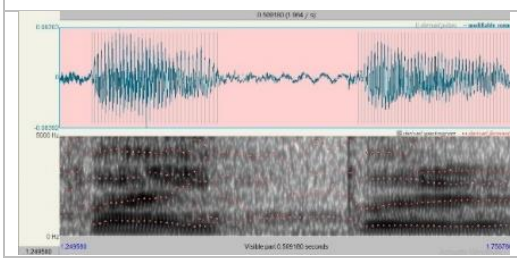
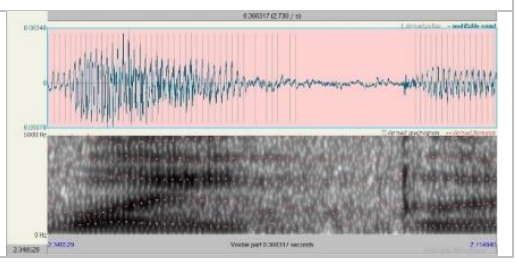
Comparative Analysis of Formant Frequency F1		
Words	Pretest	Posttest
Viper	551.178 Hz	647.108 Hz
Wiper	547.108 Hz	435.830 Hz
Distinction	004.070 Hz	211.278 Hz

Table 1

The notable difference in F1 values between "viper" and "wiper" indicates a comparatively clearer distinction in their pronunciation. The changes in formant frequencies observed from pre-test to post-test imply that the student made progress in pronouncing of both the phonemes [v] and [w]. The difference in F1 values signify potential improvement in shape of the lips, and other articulatory features associated with these consonant phonemes. These findings suggest progress in the student's pronunciation after practice.

Figure 3	
Student II: Pretest	
	
Viper	Wiper
Formant Frequency F1	Formant Frequency F1
529.785 Hz	526.192 Hz

For the word "Viper," formant frequency F 1 is 529.785 Hz which shows that the phoneme is produced with no friction and a slight contact between the lower lip and upper teeth. For "wiper," the formant frequency 526.192 Hz indicates that the phoneme [w] is produced with no lip rounding. The student's manner of articulation for "wiper" was almost the same as "viper" as there is a very small difference in the frequency values. This suggests that the student did not pronounce these phonemes correctly.

Figure 4	
Student II: Posttest	
	

Viper	Wiper
Formant Frequency F1	Formant Frequency F1
638.032 Hz	415.542 Hz

The formant frequency of the word "viper," increased from 529.785 Hz to 638.032 Hz. This rise in F1 indicates an improvement in the constriction and friction. These adjustments reflect a refinement in the way the [v] phoneme is articulated.

On the contrary there is a decrease in F1, frequency of "wiper," dropping from 526.192 Hz to 415.542 Hz. This decline in F1 for "wiper" suggests improvement in the lip rounding and position of other articulator in the articulation of the [w] phoneme.

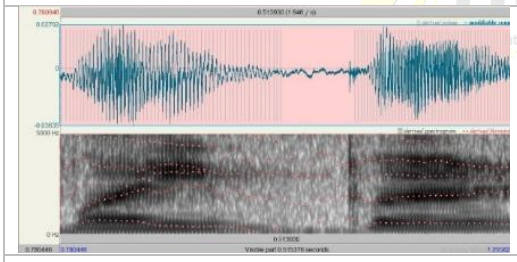
Comparative Analysis of Formant Frequency F1		
Words	Pretest	Posttest
Viper	529.785 Hz	638.032 Hz
Wiper	526.192 Hz	415.542 Hz
Distinction	003.593 Hz	222.490 Hz

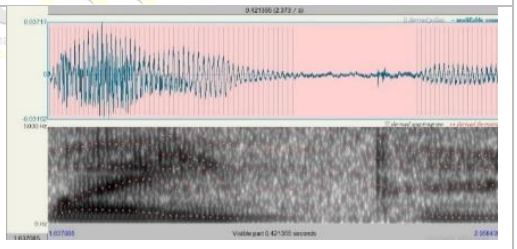
Table 2

The notable difference in F1 values between "viper" and "wiper" indicates an improved distinction in their pronunciation. The changes in formant frequencies observed from pre-test to post-test imply that the student has improved in pronouncing both "viper" and "wiper." These findings suggest that the student made some progress.

Figure 5

Student III: Pretest



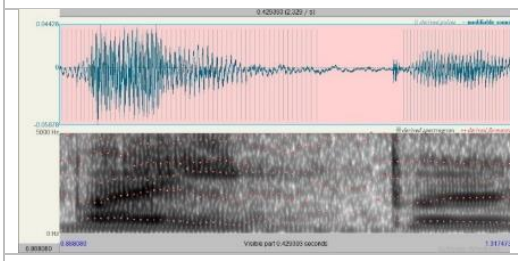


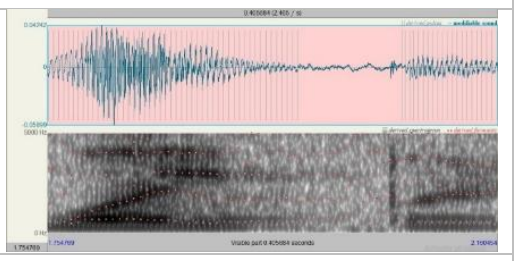
Viper	Wiper
Formant Frequency F1	Formant Frequency F1
522.050 Hz	521.541 Hz

In the pretest, F1 value for "viper" is 522.050 Hz, and for "wiper," it is 521.541 Hz. The proximity of F1 frequency between "viper" and "wiper" indicates a similarity in lip shape that is almost neutral and the presence of no friction in the production of [v] phoneme. This proximity in F1 frequencies highlights that the student is quite unfamiliar with the difference of articulation between "viper" and "wiper."

Figure 6

Student III: Posttest





Viper	Wiper
Formant Frequency F1	Formant Frequency F1
625.056 Hz	417.531 Hz

It is evident in the post-test that there is a slight increase in F1 value of "viper", rising from 522.050 Hz to 625.056 Hz. This change suggests slight adjustment of the articulator of the [v] consonant. The formant frequency for "wiper" decreased from 521.541 Hz to 417.531 Hz hinting at an improved lip rounding.

Comparative Analysis Of Formant Frequency F1

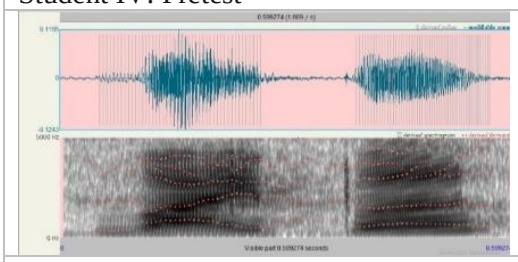
Words	PRETEST	POSTTEST
Viper	522.050 HZ	625.056 HZ
Wiper	521.541 HZ	417.531 HZ
Distinction	000.509 HZ	208.525 HZ

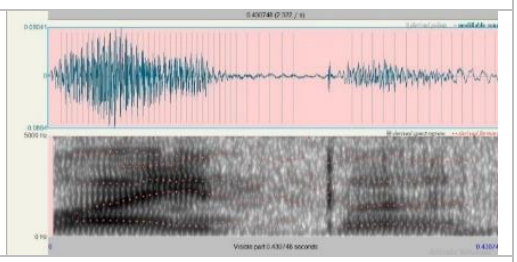
Table 3

The post-test compared to the pre-test, exhibit small increase (003.006 Hz) in F1 value of [v] phoneme i.e., from 522.050 Hz to 625.056 Hz and a decrease (104.010) in the formant frequency of [w] from 521.541 Hz to 417.531 Hz. This adjustment indicates a slight shift in the articulation of the [v] and [w] consonants, suggesting alterations in the manner of articulation during the pronunciation of both phonemes. The observed changes in formant frequencies from pre-test to post-test indicate that the student has made effort to improve the pronunciation of both [v] and [w]. While the distinction of pronunciation increased from 000.509 Hz to 208.525 Hz. The increased difference in the formant frequency F1 values suggest potential improvements in the articulation of these consonant phonemes, reflecting progress in the distinguished pronunciation of the two phonemes.

Figure 7

Student IV: Pretest





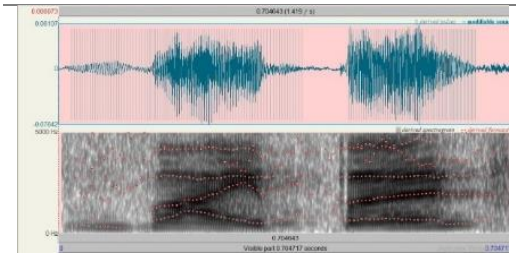
Viper	Wiper

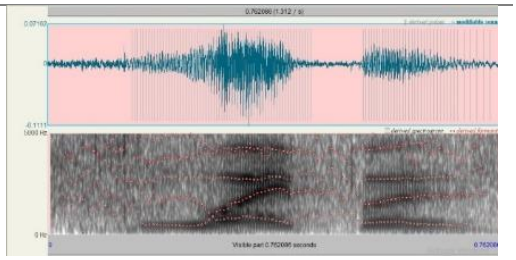
Formant Frequency F 1	Formant Frequency F1
523.706 Hz	510.629 Hz

As mentioned earlier, in the context of [v] phoneme, F1 frequency provides insights into the characteristics such as lip position and labiodental constriction. The F1 frequency of “viper” in the posttest is 523.706 Hz which suggests a specific configuration of the vocal tract during the pronunciation of the [v] phoneme in "viper," where the upper teeth mildly touch the lower lip, creating no friction. F1 frequencies of [w] phoneme, are commonly associated with lip rounding. The provided frequency of 510.629 Hz for F1 in "wiper" indicates neutral lip position during the production of the [w] phoneme.

Figure 8

Student VI: Posttest





Viper	Wiper
Formant frequency F 1	Formant frequency F 1
627.557	409.831

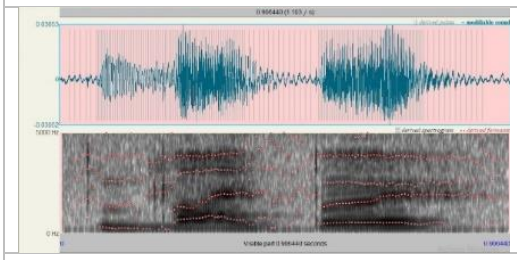
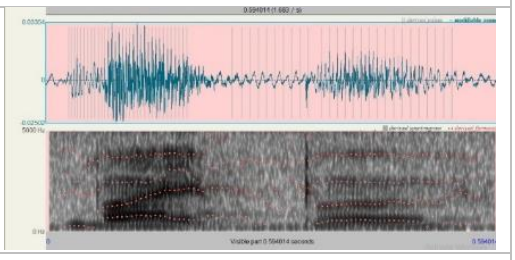
In the words with labiodental fricative [v], the formant frequency F1 typically exhibits higher values, while bilabial approximant [w] tends to have lower F1 values. After practice, F1 value of [v] phoneme in "viper," is relatively higher. The minor increase in F1 from 523.706 Hz to 627.557 Hz for the [v] phoneme, suggests a slight enhancement in the pronunciation of [v] consonant. For the [w] phoneme in "wiper," the F1 value exhibits a minor decrease from 510.629 Hz to 409.831 Hz after practice. This decrease in formant frequency F1, indicates an improvement in the pronunciation of the [w] consonant. The posttest values reflect a better production of the bilabial approximant [w].

Comparative analysis of Formant Frequency F1		
Words	Pretest	Posttest
Viper	523.706 Hz	627.557 Hz
Wiper	510.629 Hz	409.831 Hz
Distinction	013.77 Hz	217.726 Hz

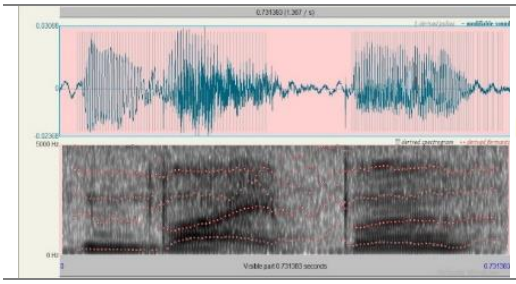
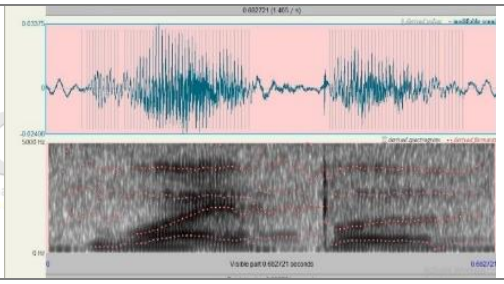
Table 4

Following practice, there was an increase in F1 value of [v] in the "viper," from 523.706 Hz to 627.557 Hz with an increase, suggesting an enhancement in the pronunciation of the /v/ consonant. For the /w/ phoneme in "wiper," there is an decrease in the formant frequency F1, suggesting

a slight improvement in the pronunciation of this phoneme. The difference of F1 values for [v] and [w] between pretest 013.77 Hz and posttest 217.726 Hz indicating an improvement in the distinction of the /w/ consonant.

Figure 9	
Student V: Pretest	
	
Viper	Wiper
Formant frequency F 1	Formant frequency F 1
550.178 Hz	531.140

The F1 value of 550.178 Hz for "viper" obtained from pretest falls within a moderate range of correct pronunciation of the [v] consonant. Conversely, the F1 value of 531.140 Hz for "wiper" is higher than the expected range for bilabial approximant [w]. It suggests the mispronunciation of both words.

Figure 10	
Student V: Posttest	
	
Viper	Wiper
Formant frequency F 1	Formant frequency F 1
663.149 Hz	439.701 Hz

The F1 value for "viper" increased from 550.178 Hz (pretest) to 663.149 Hz (post-test). This increase in F1 suggests a move towards a more obstructed airflow, enhancing the production of [v] consonant. On the other hand, the F1 value of [w] in "wiper" with a slight decrease from 531.140 Hz (pretest) to 439.701 Hz (post-test) was noticed. This F1 value indicates improvement in the post-test. The minimal change in F1 value for "wiper" suggests an improvement in the quality of articulation of the bilabial approximant.

Comparative analysis of Formant Frequency F1		
Words	Pretest	Posttest
viper	**5**50.178 Hz	663.149 Hz
wiper	531.140 Hz	439.701 Hz
Distinction	029.038 Hz	224.448 Hz

Table 5

The observed changes in F1 for both "viper" and "wiper" indicate an improvement in the pronunciation of the [v] and [w] consonants. The increase of 112.971 Hz in F1 for "viper" shows

enhancement in the pronunciation of labiodental fricative [v]. The decrease of 91.44 Hz in the frequency of [w] indicates positive change in its articulation. The difference of frequencies between [v] and [w] indicates a better distinction in the articulation of these phonemes. This detailed analysis of formant frequencies provides valuable insights into the specific manner of articulation employed by the speaker in articulating these phonemes.

Discussion

A detailed study of the literature showed that a very small number of research studies have been conducted on the pronunciation of [v]-[w] phonemes of English. Past research Studies revealed that Pakistani English (Khalid, 2011; Mahboob & Ahmar, 2004; Rahman, 1990, 1991 cited in Ahmad 2020) does not differentiate between [v] and [w] phonemes. Very little research on the acquisition of the native pronunciation of English has been conducted in Pakistan. It is an under-researched area (Hassan, 2023). Phonology is studied less as compared to other areas of language (Mischler, 2008 cited in Hassan 2023).

Ahmad (2020) asserts pronunciation of English language is the most neglected skill which has been considered “The "Cinderella" of Language teaching and learning (Kelly, 1969; Dalton, 1997 cited in Ahmed, 2020). There has been a hyped discussion on whether or not it should be a part of learning and teaching language (Ahmed 2020). The idea of following British English has been challenged by linguists like Jennifer Jenkins, Barbra Sieldhofer, Jonna Przedlacka, Katerzyna, etc., and defended by Peter Trudgill and others of this school that insist on the importance of a standard accent (Anjum, 2016). Peter Trudgill and his followers suggest that each language has its own special patterns. If these patterns are not maintained while learning the language, it could lose its unique identity and characteristics (Anjum, 2016). This has happened to many languages in the past when they underwent efforts to simplify, it lead to a loss of originality (Anjum, 2016).

Learners in Pakistan study English either to acquire higher education in different fields or to get good jobs (Anjum 2016.) In today’s globalized world English has become a symbol of immense political, social, and economic power. It is ‘a communicative tool of immense power’ (Kachru, cited in Anjum, 2016) and no language other than English and Urdu is commonly understood in Pakistan (Mansoor, 1993 cited in Raza, 2008), therefore English with its controversial position enjoys ‘higher status’ and plays a vital role in all major domains of power which as a result motivates the adults well aware of the linguistic utility in socially prestigious networks to learn it for a better future in the emerging market (Mansoor, 2005; haq, 1993; Rehman 1999 cited in Raza, 2008.) Improving pronunciation will boost self-esteem, facilitate communication, and possibly lead to a better job or at least more respect in the workplace according to Prashant (2018). With the expertise of good pronunciation, speakers are able to gain self-confidence to speak English (Prashant 2018).

Our Pakistani students are also lack in oral proficiency for which the negative influence of first language is considered to be one of the major reasons. Anjum (2016) associates the learners’ perceptions that native accent increases social prestige, with the colonial thought but if we look at the other side of the coin we can say that social prestige can also be a result of knowledge that she acknowledges about English by declaring it to be ‘a store house of knowledge.’ Hence it can be said that a person with an excellent knowledge of language is already standing at the threshold of knowledge. The knowledge of language also includes the expertise in pronunciation. As it is very important for successful communication.

Prashant (2018) asserts that effective communication is immensely important, so it is inevitable to choose first to work on problems that significantly hinder communication. For the better communication he claims, we need correct pronunciation, because pronunciation affects very much the understanding of the meanings of the words. There is no doubt that knowledge of language structure and material is essential in communication but being able to pronounce proper words and understanding them is also important for communication. Correct pronunciation is a basis for efficient communication in English and plays an important role in English speaking to express ideas. Pronunciation of an utterance communicates more than the sum of its parts i.e., its sematic content. Speakers of the any language with good command on pronunciation leaves impact on us as listeners. It is the pronunciation that invokes feeling in the perception of the listeners. Pronunciation helps in

communication the ideas and thoughts more effectively. This is the reason good pronunciation can contribute a lot to leave a good first impression (Prashant 2018).

But the fact is that pronunciation is extremely important. In many cases, misunderstanding in communication is caused by the mispronouncing of words or the improper intonation. Good pronunciation skill can give you more self-confidence when we speak in front of many the public. So, it has become more and more obvious that pronunciation cannot be underestimated. And it is very much clear that communication is nothing but the correct pronunciation. Lack of pronunciation can result in a failure to convey the message and can cause trouble in communication (Prashant 2018).

Second language, children listen to wrong phonemes and tones spoken by their teachers and grownups in their environment and tend to pick up faulty pronunciation. This happens mainly due to their lack of sufficient exposure to the right variety of the language. Good pronunciation considers pitch, quality, pace, and volume of pronunciation. Message should be conveyed in proper manner and loud enough and properly intoned (Prashant 2018).

On building awareness and concern for pronunciation, learner needs to develop concern for pronunciation (Joanne and Kenworthy, 1987 cited in Ahmed, 2020). They must recognize that poor unintelligible speech will make their attempts at conversing frustrating and unpleasant both for themselves and for their listeners". For many people, goal of learning English also includes pronunciation as a must, i.e. for those learners who will want to be able to interact with both native speakers and non-native speakers of English. The learner of English language will definitely wish to apply it by participating in communication wherever English is used (John Wells, 1999). The learner's personal aim is mostly higher than just passing examination. With this in mind, learning pronunciation of English is synonymous to better communication skills.

The research studies conducted in Pakistan to explore the correct pronunciation of [v] and [w] phonemes the context of Pakistani students of English show that Pakistanis do not pronounce these phonemes correctly due to the negative transfer of their first language. The learners of English cannot usually distinguish between the pronunciation of [v] and [w], as English learners receive non-native input in their institutions from the teachers who themselves cannot distinguish between these two consonants (Syed, 2015 cited in). ESL learners in Pakistan face difficulties in pronouncing the English labio-dental consonant phonemes [v] and bilabial approximant [w]. Studies on Pashto, Saraiki, Balochi, Balti, knowar and Slovak L1 speakers have observed that the learners tend to replace these phonemes with the similar phonemes in their L1.

There are several challenges that English learners in Pakistan face in achieving proper pronunciation. L2 influence was identified as a significant factor affecting pronunciation, with variations observed in both vowel and consonant phonemes. Ahmad et al. (2022) highlighted the crucial role of teacher training in mitigating pronunciation issues, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to pronunciation instruction. The neglect of pronunciation in language education, where learners and teachers prioritize vocabulary and grammar, are notable. Remedial strategies proposed by researchers include pronunciation drills and exposure to authentic materials. Mohammed & Idris (2020) identified challenges such as vowel recognition issues, consonant mispronunciation, clustering difficulties, stress placement challenges, and intonation problems. Hassan et al. (2023) contribute a quantitative study on factors influencing mispronunciation among undergraduate students in Pakistan indicate various factors, including weaknesses in phonetics and phonology, wrong pronunciation by school teachers, first language interference, and limited exposure to native speakers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored why learning English pronunciation matters for effective communication in today's connected world. It is very important for the students to master native English pronunciation if they are aspiring to seek higher education in some foreign country or want to secure a good job in the market. All the prestigious institutions expect an in depth knowledge and practice of English language including pronunciation from the teachers of English. Apart from this almost all the job interviews in diverse fields in both public and private sectors, are conducted in English. Hence it is inevitable for the students of English to master

native English pronunciation as the lack of it may result in creating a trouble in communicating intended meaning resulting in misunderstanding, as proper pronunciation communicates more than what is contained in the words alone.

The pronunciation of English is not taught to the students at an early stage which results in the mispronunciation of [v]-[w] phoneme as a result of negative transfer. Incorrect pronunciation is fossilized. The present study showed that even after the fossilization of the pronunciation of target language with the influence of first language learners can still improve with targeted practice.

Following recommendations are made in the light of the above discussion:

- Teachers should be given in service trainings on the pronunciation skill of English.
- Awareness on the importance of pronunciation should be given to both teachers and students with special reference to the impact mispronunciation creates on the meaning.
- In language teaching special emphasis must be given to speaking skill, and native English input because the more the learners speak, and receive native input, the more they pronounce correctly.
- Our syllabus should be revised thoroughly. It should be divided into structural and functional part, where there is also some space for situational syllabus. In this kind of syllabus, the teachers will be forced to teach the skills and students will be compelled to learn.
- Our examination system should be developed in such a way as to test all the four skills, not only reading and writing.
- Practice and focused instruction should be provided to ESL learners to help them accurately pronounce English labio-dental phonemes.

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