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THE EFFECT OF THE PHONETIC VIDEOS ON SEGMENTAL FEATURES OF ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN PAKISTAN

PERVEEN AKHTER FARHAT<sup>1</sup>, HISHAM DZAKIRA *Ph.D*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph. D Candidate, College of Arts and Sciences, School of Languages, Civilization and Philosophy  
University Utara Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>College of Arts and Sciences, School of Languages, Civilization and Philosophy  
University Utara Malaysia

Email: <sup>1</sup>parveen607@yahoo.com<sup>2</sup>hisham@uum.edu.my



ABSTRACT

English pronunciation plays a vital role in communication. However, it is ignored, neglected and no attention is paid towards learning of this very basic skill in Pakistan. An experimental research was conducted through this study to find out the effect of computer (phonetic videos) on pronunciation. A sample of 24 out of 240 ESL learners of grade 10 belonged to Lahore city (Pakistan) was selected. A pronunciation test was developed for pre-test and posttest to check the pre-existed competency level of the learners. The voices of the participants were recorded by a voice recorder in pretest and posttest. For treatment learners were shown 3 phonetic videos, consisted of all vowel, monophthongs, diphthongs, consonant, voiced and unvoiced sounds. The duration of the experimentation was two weeks. The students' overall performance analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences SPSS version 18.0. The findings of the research indicate that the phonetic videos have significant improvement in recognition, production and articulation of the vowel and consonant sounds.

**Key words:** Pronunciation, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), phonetic videos, vowels, consonants, Pakistan

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1. INTRODUCTION

English is taught as a second language in many countries of the world. Different skills are involved in second language learning process i.e. vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation. However, in Pakistan speaking and especially pronunciation skills are not given appropriate attention in second language learning classrooms. Although, pronunciation plays a pivotal role in successful communication. Nevertheless, it is an ignored and neglected area in SLA (Derwing, 2010; Levis & Grant, 2003; Egwuogu, 2012; Hietanen, 2012; Shahazada, 2012). Burns and Claire (2003) signify that if a nonnative learner has good pronunciation, he can do better communication despite of having some minor inaccuracies in vocabulary and grammar. Researches indicate that the correct pronunciation does not only have positive effects on speaking (Cunningham, 1990) but also it enhances the abilities of reading and listening of the language. It has become a marginalized topic and an EFL/ESL orphan (Gilbert, 2013). Grammar, vocabulary

(Harmer, 1998) and receptive skills reading & writing are emphasized whereas productive skills listening, speaking and pronunciation are ignored at every level in Pakistan.

Morley (1991) expresses that learning a foreign language without pronunciation skill decreases the learner's ability to communicate. Kelly (2000) interprets that mispronunciation of the language may cause extremely problematic for a learner to communicate with speaker of another language community and this situation is very frustrating for the learner who may have good command over grammar or lexis and is having difficulty to understand or being understood by the native speaker. Furthermore, Derwing (2010) states that despite the fact that a valuable effort has been done by some researchers who encouraged teaching pronunciation in second language learning. On the other hand, pronunciation has always been neglected in many language programs. It is the most neglected area of English language learning in Pakistan. Zhang and Yin (2009) express that sometimes, learners generate habitual systematic pronunciation mistakes and they develop their own (fossilized) version of pronunciation. That is why; they mispronounce the words and generate confusion and misunderstanding for the listener. Standard pronunciation enhances the ability to communicate better and it must be focused at initial stage of English language learning (Javed& Ahmad, 2014 &Hietanen, 2012). However, unluckily it is neglected and no attention is paid to develop this very basic language skill in Pakistan (Habib, 2008).

Moreover, Kamyab (2008) explores that pronunciation is neglected because the purpose (of teachers or learners) is just to pass the exams. Learners are taught to examination point of view rather than to improve their oral abilities and pronunciation. Teacher performs all of the activities inside the class and students do not try to produce anything and they remained dumb and silent. It promotes DUMB ENGLISH (learners can understand English but can't speak (Zhang, 2009). Additionally, because of the complicated nature of English language having a non-phonemic and stress-timed features, it becomes very hard to get command in English pronunciation (Harmer, 2001). Teaching of micro-level pronunciation such as consonant, vowels and consonant clusters help learner to produce the sounds accurately (Morley, 1991). Lee (2008) suggested that to obtain the goal of oral skill, pronunciation should be the part of the English curriculum.

The use of computer regarding language learning as an assisting agent especially for teaching of pronunciation, is a novel idea. Morley (1994) argued that pronunciation teaching must not be restricted to some routine like activities and there must be use of some electronic devices for students as an entertaining or game like learning atmosphere. Tahereen (2015) postulates that visual images of the sounds and symbols could be used by the teachers as motivating agents for teaching pronunciation. CALL "provides electronic visual feedback (EVF) which can help meet this essential need by showing the exact features that learners produce and thereby drawing attention to changes that they need to make" (Lambacher, 1991, p.138).

However, the use of computer in Pakistan is restricted to sending and receiving e-mail, for World Wide Web browsing and writing papers only (Irshad&Ghani, 2011). Nevertheless, Laghos and Zaphiris (2009) opine that "the Internet and the World Wide Web have provided us with delivery methods that have created language learning opportunities that were unimaginable a few decades ago" (p.3). In addition to that, Hawkes, (2009) supports this idea of integrating technology into education by pointing out that advertisements, PowerPoint, video clips, music, songs, videos and websites are better options that could be employed during lessons. Nevertheless, keeping in mind the interest and level of the learners some other techniques could also be used such as, YouTube, some short clips of movies on the video-sharing website to get opinions of the learners.

Although, in developed countries, computers are being employed for language learning with remarkable results however, in Pakistan this field is still vacant and no worthwhile task is done so far. Moreover, there is a dire need to conduct researches in Pakistan on this neglected area of pronunciation and prevailing effect of computer to bridge the gap between these two different fields for better learning of pronunciation of the SLA learners. In this study 3 phonetic videos were used to teach vowel and consonant sounds to teach learners sounds of English language at secondary school level in Pakistan. Thus, the focus of this study is to highlight the effect of phonetic videos on pronunciation of segmental features of pronunciation i.e. vowels and consonant sounds at secondary school level in Pakistan.

## 2. Literature Review

Different studies have been conducted indicating the effective use of computer in educational setup. Likewise, a number of studies have also been carried out regarding usage of computer to enhance pronunciation skill. Levis (2007) opines that it is very ideal situation to learn pronunciation skills through computer because computer bestows the learner individual attention, repetitive drilling of listening exercises, automatic visual assistance, through which learners could imitate pronunciation model of native speakers.

Lee (2000) conducted a study on teaching pronunciation through CALL. She taught pronunciation for 50 hours by using pronunciation software. She finds that using a computer was helpful in teaching of English language pronunciation; this approach provided a new environment and media of learning for the students. The learners were excited and they enjoyed a lot when their learning pronunciation was shifted from traditional classroom to multimedia speech laboratory along with they got a new experience to deal with modern technology.

Harper (2004) used CALL to teach pronunciation and found that in his study there were signs of improvement among students in their pronunciation skill but the progress was not according to his expectation because of the shortage of the time. Students found it easier when they did practice the words in segmented order. Learners did work in pair form, using one computer for two students. They practised the sound spellings in the CALL format and then with each other. He states that the sound spelling had a positive effect on the students. Learners seemed to enjoy the procedure and there was an improvement despite of the fact that they had very short time.

Kumar and Madhavi (2012) have done study to assess the advantages of using Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) lab with different language learning software. The purpose was to obtain perception of the sample teachers on the use of the different language learning software and to get insight whether their students improved their pronunciation skills after that they were trained in CALL lab. The result that was obtained from the majority of engineering students showed accurate pronunciation practice, stress, intonation and rhythm after intermediate level. The duration was 50-70 instruction hours that the learners had to identify various speech sounds but accurate practice needed some more time. The teacher also needed formal training before teaching pronunciation classes.

Hardison (2004) adds that Computer Assisted Pronunciation Teaching (CAPT) is effective device as compared to other traditional classroom instruction. He used computer to teach prosody training and segmental accuracy to native English speakers of French. The duration was 3 weeks and he got significant improved results.

Delivery methods for CALL include the use of individual computers at home or in the classroom, classroom sets of computer, language labs into which computer functions have been incorporated, online instruction through the WWW and distance and networked learning through the use of email, blogs, wikies, online social networking and other interactive WWW sites and services (Beatty, 2010, p.8).

Furthermore, 21<sup>st</sup> century is an era of modern inventions, technology and digitalization. Recently researchers, scholars and L2 teachers are trying to investigate new methodologies and innovative learning strategies through which L2 learners could communicate effectively and purposefully. "Many researchers, in search of the best way to acquire a foreign/second language, now use CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) in language classrooms to find out its effects on language learning" (Kilickaya, 2007, p.3). Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin & Griner (1996) denote that the electronic devices supply students an entertaining or game like learning atmosphere.

### 2.1. International Phonetics Alphabets (IPA)

International Phonetics Alphabets/Association (IPA) consists of vowel and consonant sounds. These vowels and consonants are designed and placed in the chart in a specific sequential series.

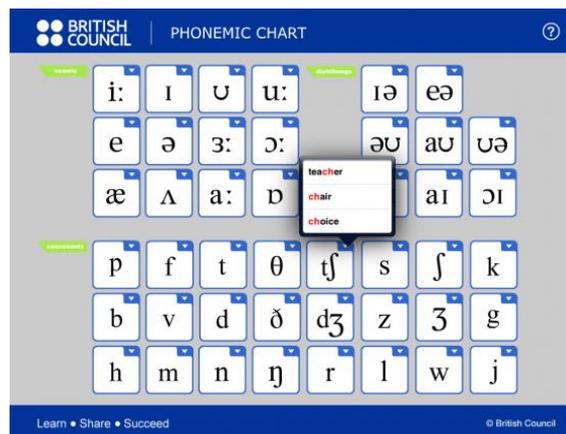


Figure 1: IPA Phonemic Chart

[www.bing.com/images/search?q=American+Phonetic+Alphabets&view](http://www.bing.com/images/search?q=American+Phonetic+Alphabets&view)

The chart (figure 1) is displaying 44 sounds of English Phonetics. First portion (left side) indicates 12 vowels (monophthongs) and second part (right side) is related to 8 vowels sound (diphthongs) and the last three rows (in the lower portion) exhibit 24 consonants sounds. Underhill, (2005) points out that these forty four sounds are exhibited on the chart indicating their relationship to each other. The International Phonetic Alphabet is used with slight modifications approximately in all English language dictionaries. It is utilized for segmental features of pronunciation. However, as suprasegmental features are concerned, it does not provide any description about the prosody features i.e. intonation or rhythm as well as except mark indicate to stress, there is no any agreed upon criteria about the writing of prosody speech. (Skandera& Burleigh, 2005, p.8).

### 3. Methods and Materials

#### 3.1. Design of the Study

The study was designed as an experimental research and it comes under pre-test, posttest, experimental, control group design. The participants were selected randomly by using table of random numbers. The focus of the study was to find out the effects of phonetic videos on the pronunciation of English language learners at secondary school level in Pakistan. An experimental research was conducted to prove the hypotheses supposed for this research.

#### 3.2. Participants

The population of this study was an entire high school of Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. The participants were the students of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. 24 students (all boys) from Pride Public High School Lahore, Punjab (Pakistan) were selected by using table of random numbers. According to this design there were two groups comprising 12 students in each group, experimental group and control group. 24 participants out of 240 were selected by using table of random numbers and were divided in to two groups by odd and even numbers (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2012, p.262). The ages of the participants were ranged from 14 to 16 years. Native languages of the participants were Urdu and Punjabi. Although, they were studying English for 10 years in school however, they did not have any knowledge about the pronunciation sounds. They were familiar with only 26 letters. Permission was gotten by school administration to take the experimental group to language lab, where this group (experimental group) was taught vowel and consonant sounds by using phonemic chart with the help of computer (showing phonetic videos) in a language laboratory whereas, the control group was taught vowel and consonant sounds by the teacher in traditional classroom with the help of white board and board marker. The training lasted for 2 weeks 5 hours per week. Three phonetic videos were used to teach experimental group, which were downloaded free from internet before the initiation of the actual research. Finally, both groups were post-tested and then findings were analyzed by using SPSS.

#### 3.3 Instrumentation for data collection

##### 3.3.1 Pronunciation test

A teacher made pronunciation test was conducted as pretest and posttest on both groups to compare the proficiency level of learners. The pronunciation test was comprised of IPA means all 44 sounds i.e. single

vowel sounds (monophthongs) double (diphthongs), short, long vowel sounds consonant (voiced & unvoiced) sounds. For treatment all these 44 sounds (IPA) were taught to the learners. Learners were totally ignorant about these sounds before given treatment. They have learnt English alphabets from grade 1-10; however, they did not have awareness of the phonetic sounds. Even teachers' knowledge about English sounds was not sufficient enough to train their learners.

**3.3.2 Procedure**

Since the purpose was to find out the effect of phonetic videos on pronunciation of English language learners at secondary school level in Pakistan. The material for both experimental group and control group was same. Furthermore, same material was also used in pretest and posttest. However, for treatment some additional words and phrases were employed for the learners so that they could comprehend sounds more clearly. The study was lasted for two weeks 5 hours per week 1 hour in one session. Total duration of the study was 10 hours. The pronunciation test was in written form and it was assigned by the researcher to experimental group and control group as pretest. Students were asked to pronounce the words consisting of all 44 vowel and consonant sounds and their voices were recorded by a voice recorder. Pronunciation of the participants was judged on 1-5-point likert scale. Voices of the students were recorded, transcribed and marked according to likert scale 1-5 points (1=bad, 2=quite good, 3=good, 4=very good, 5=excellent). After performing pretest learners were shown phonetic videos of a native speaker. They watched the videos, then did practice of the sounds on daily bases. Finally after two weeks there was a posttest. The sequence of the words in posttest was same as in pretest. However as treatment there was some additional practice of more words and phrases to identify the sounds.

Sebestova (2007) used this scale 1-5 points for data analysis of production of sounds, stress and intonation. As a treatment, experimental group was shown phonetic videos through computer to teach vowel monophthongs, diphthongs, triphthongs and consonants sounds to the learners. However, the control group was treated by traditional method, giving them instruction i.e. by lecture method with the help of white board and board marker as it is the routine of Pakistani traditional classrooms to teach second/foreign language. Participants were given treatment for two weeks, 5 hours per week means 10 hours per each group.

Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu, (2011) have performed their research on Turkish EFL learners. They taught English theoretical phonetics to the students in both the control group and the experimental group by using Roach's book named Phonetics. Learners were taught, vowel chart, monophthongs, diphthongs and triphthongs and classification of vowel according to height, position of the tongue, tongue frontness, tenses/laxness of vocal cords. The duration of the study was two weeks. The purpose of the study was to emphasize the importance of internet-based pronunciation lessons. The researchers performed pretest and posttest and got the positive findings of teaching pronunciation through internet.

**3.4. Findings and discussion**

Data was collected from the participants of Pride Public High School Lahore, Punjab (Pakistan) and it was analyzed by using quantitative data inferential statistics. For this current study the data was analyzed through the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences SPSS (version 18.0) to obtain means, variance and standard deviation. After completion of treatment, posttest was conducted. The values of posttest showed a significant difference from pretest. Table 1.1 shows that the means of the posttest of control group and experimental group 141.16 and 170.41 respectively which is significantly different. Whereas, in means of pretest both groups show rather similar values, very slight difference as 74.25 for experimental group and 70.50 for control group, it means the sample was having homogeneity characteristics in pretest.

Table 1.1: Descriptive Analysis of Groups' statistics

Mean	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Pronunciation Ex Group Pre	12	74.25		
Co Group Pre	12	70.50		
Pronunciation Ex Group Po	12	170.41	21.42	6.18
Co Group Po	12	141.16	13.31	3.84

Nevertheless, after treatment the large difference between the results suggests that the treatment was effective in improving learners' pronunciation skill especially the vowel and consonant sounds. The standard deviations for the control group and experimental group were 13.31 and 21.42 respectively

Table 1.2: Independent Sample T-test

Levene's Test For Equality of Variances									
95% Confidence Interval of the Differences									
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig	Mean	Std. Error	Lower	Upper
Pronunciation									
Equal Variance Assumed	3.305	.083	4.016	22	.001	29.25000	7.28249	14.14703	44.35297

Compared findings of both groups (experimental and control) in the T-test show (table 1.2) that the *t* value is 4.016 (*t*=4.016) whereas degree of freedom is 22 (*df*=22). The main findings of the level of significant was evaluated as .001 which is less than  $p < .05$  a remarkable difference indicated by experimental group and control group and which was a result of innovative treatment on experimental group. Learners of experimental group were very excited. They were taken to the language lab for teaching phonetic sounds. Whereas, the learners of control group performed this activity willingly or sometimes unwillingly because of boring nature of sounds. There was less motivation by the control group as compared to experimental group.

On the bases of the mentioned-above findings it could be infer that the computer can be used to enhance the pronunciation of second language learners. However, teachers do not want to use computer thinking that it in this way, teachers' value will be diminished in language classroom. On the other hand, Brierley and Kemble (1991) as cited Gündüz (1995) assert that the computer is not risk for the teacher. Teachers should not need to feel threat about their presence and authority in the class. Dickinson (1994) maintains the status of the teacher and interprets that in this system the learner becomes autonomous whether working independently on the computer or managing his/her studies by himself/herself without the help of the teacher. Teacher should not be worried about the fact that they will lose their job and place. They were authoritative in the past and are authority in the present and will retain this place in future also in general teaching and language teaching as well.

Furthermore, shifting the control centre from the authoritarian teacher to the need-based learner and accepting the humble role of a facilitator/moderator instead of being a veritable dictator does not come easy for the traditionally clad chalk-talk teacher (Ravichandran, 2000, p 4).

So, the computer assisted language learning program is threat free. Students will never become so autonomous and independent that they do not need their teacher at all in classroom. If CALL is available to facilitate teacher in second language learning then teacher can utilize this extra time to make learning environment more and more attractive and fascinating.

**3.5. Conclusion**

Pronunciation is very important component of speaking skill of English language. However, it has always been neglected. Resultantly, Pakistani learners are not competent users of English language even after learning English for years. Pronunciation barriers are the main cause of their lack of enthusiasm. However, this problem could be lessened to a greater extent, if the learners are taught pronunciation by using computer, showing them native models of pronunciation. Moreover, 21<sup>st</sup> century is lucky enough regarding modern technology and digitization. So, it could be said, that the non-native learners of modern era have better chances to improve their pronunciation skill through the effective use of digital technology. There is a need to direct the attention of the teachers to realize the importance of pronunciation skill and teachers must also update them regarding modern technologies because it is a need of hour.

**3.6. Suggestions and recommendations**

1. Teaching pronunciation is indispensable for language students. If learners of second language have good pronunciation skill, they will be more confident to communicate and to use that language in daily routine and they will be able to overcome their chronic disease of hesitation.

2. The gap between computer lab and language pedagogy should be bridged. As computer lab is specified with the mathematics and science subjects language teachers never use computer lab for teaching purpose. So, language teachers must utilize the modern and advanced technology to improve language especially pronunciation.
3. Language games must be employed in second language learning. These games can motivate learners to do practice phonetic sounds. A part from, a sense of freedom and enjoyment will be developed among the learners. They will learn the language in a joyful environment rather than in a sensation of dull, boring and monotonous learning atmosphere.
4. Advancement in the technology should be considered as blessing for language learning procedure. Language teachers, especially English language teachers should be equipped with the computer knowledge and with full command over internet. Steps should be taken to use the computer for language teaching at school level to improve the learners' pronunciation.
5. Government/policy designers should take steps to make the computer assisted language learning (CALL) as a call of the day that is required for future generation.. There should be assessment of speaking skill during exam. If there will be speaking test then the direction of the teaching English language would be changed automatically and dramatically. Speaking and pronunciation must be compulsory part of the teaching procedure and evaluation.
6. As this study has limitation in population, sample size and regarding time and resource constraints; however, further studies should be conducted on large scale and in broader exposure to investigate the pronunciation problems and their digital solutions. This direction of digitalized learning would open the new vistas of knowledge for effective learning environment to improve pronunciation skill of English language learners.

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