



A Comparison of Urdu and Punjabi First language Interference on English as Second Language

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ARTICLE INFO			ABSTRACT
Article History:			<i>This study examines errors in ESL students focusing on those who speak Urdu and Punjabi as their first languages. It uses Optimality Theory (OT) as a framework to explore the interaction between markedness and faithfulness constraints within OT. The study employs a mixed methods approach, including surveys and audio recordings from 30 participants (15 Urdu speakers and 15 Punjabi speakers). Three phonological factors are investigated; stress patterns, pronunciation of interdental /th/ and differentiation between bilabial /w/ and labiodental /v/. The data analysis, presented through bar graphs and interpreted using OT reveals nuanced patterns of errors. Notably Punjabi L1 speakers demonstrate a frequency of mistakes suggesting impact from their first language. This research significantly contributes to understanding the dynamics of language interference by shedding light on how phonological differences, among Urdu, Punjabi and English influence specific pronunciation errors. The findings hold educational ramifications for ESL teachers looking to upgrade language instructions custom-made to the phonological backgrounds of their students.</i>
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INTRODUCTION

There are numerous variables that add to the errors second language learners produce, especially in the area of enunciation and individual phonetic sounds. The distinctions between the learner's native language and the target language play an essential role in these phonological errors. Furthermore, there are aspects that add straight to pronunciation mistakes. Moreover, variations in the phonemic inventory of language, age and language transfer also have a significant role in the acquisition process. The following paper aims to analyze three common phonological errors in Pakistani ESL learners of varying first language backgrounds. (Urdu and Punjabi respectively) and whether one group has a higher frequency of these errors compared to the other. The errors as follows: substitution of V for

W, substitution of **Th** with **T/D** and incorrect word stress not only modifies pronunciation but also in the long term can lead to difficulties in the comprehension.

According to Derwing's (2003) research, most ESL learners aspire to become so proficient that they cannot be identified from native English speakers, which highlights an intriguing feature of learning English as a second language (ESL) acquisition. The association between self-image and ESL pronunciation, as demonstrated by the study's findings, emphasizes this effort. Over 50% of the participants in the study indicated that they thought respect was directly related to how well they could speak English. The study's focus on the relationship between self-perception and ESL pronunciation raises the possibility of a larger sociolinguistic component to language learning. Many ESL students strive to sound like speakers because they want to fit in and be acknowledged socially. Research suggests that individuals who can pronounce words well often perceive themselves as competent leading to increased confidence and self-assurance in various social settings.

Considering the global significance of English as a language, this phenomenon makes sense. In the present world, academic information and instruction are gatekeeper by English. Therefore, ESL students may view mastering English pronunciation as an essential first step toward greater opportunities in the classroom and at employment. Many people believe that language is the key to gaining access to further education, professional growth, and engagement in international debate. Derwing's research highlights the social and psychological aspects that are connected to ESL pronunciation. The goal of being indistinguishable from native English speakers is a reflection of sociocultural, personal, and linguistic goals. This study emphasizes the nuanced role that English ability plays in influencing both society opinions and individual self-image, while also providing insightful information about the complicated reasons behind ESL learners.

English, Urdu and Punjabi languages are quite different in their nature. The English language has twenty-six letters and 44 phonemes whereas Urdu has 64 phonemes of which ten are vowel phonemes whereas Punjabi consists of three tones and 10 vowel phonemes and are different to Urdu. All three languages are different in their nature. English language has cluster vowel and cluster consonant sounds whereas Urdu language doesn't have initial cluster consonants but they may occur rarely as final consonant clusters. In the case of Punjabi they rarely occur at all. Minor phonological differences such as this might confuse ESL learners and in turn make them make repetitive phonological errors such as analysed in this paper. The two groups Urdu and Punjabi speakers were analysed separately via a questionnaire and audio recordings to observe which language showed greater patterns of linguistic interference when acquiring English as a second language.

Research Objectives

- I. To analyze whether there first language interference plays a role in target language acquisition
- II. To explore how common phonological errors vary across two unique linguistic communities
- III. To identify the extent to which common phonological errors vary across two unique linguistic communities.

Research Questions

- 1) How the first language interference play a role in target language acquisition?

- 2) How do three common phonological errors vary across two unique linguistic communities?
- 3) How and to what extent common phonological errors vary across two unique linguistic communities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nawaz et al. (2020) studied the stress patterns of ESL and EFL speakers who were native Urdu speakers in Pakistan. They observed that native Urdu ESL speakers placed wrong stress on syllables while speaking English. In fact, they stressed all the syllables in the words following the stress patterns of Urdu. S. Nawaz & et al. quantitatively analyzed the data and the Oxford English Dictionary 7th edition was used as a standard in order to compare the pronunciations of participants. This study highlighted the variations the native Urdu speakers made while English speaking in order to make the language teachers aware of phonological errors for pedagogic purposes. Moreover, the data could be used in order to help ESL and EFL students whose L1 is Urdu improve their English proficiency in the future.

Masood et al. (2020) analyzed the interference of Urdu as L1 in the English as L2 in Pakistani context. They collected data from eleven different Pakistani universities from the L1 Urdu speakers who were students of BS English first semester. After data collection they analyzed the data by employing *Contrastive technique* which was introduced by Ellis in 1985. The results of the study showed that four major types of errors were prevalent in the ESL speakers namely: article usage, subject-verb agreement, prepositions and the direct implications of Urdu words while speaking English. This study divided the syntactic errors in the above mentioned categories in order to highlight the problematic areas for ESL native Urdu speakers.

In 2018, another research study which is related to the use of articles, ‘the’, ‘an’, ‘a’ and ‘zero article’, was conducted by the Maqbool, Ghani and Khan 2018. They collected data from the BS English students who were enrolled in a communication skills course. The data was collected in form of the essays written by the students. After that a detailed analysis was conducted to analyze the mistakes related to the articles. It was concluded that the native Urdu speakers were more likely to use the articles in an erroneous way because of the absence of articles from their first language i.e. Urdu. It was also concluded that speakers of other languages possessing articles were less likely to make the mistakes while using articles in English unlikely ESL speakers with Urdu as L1.

Moreover, Chiappe and Siegel (1999) conducted a comparative research in order to observe and analyze the level of phonological awareness and reading acquisition in native English speakers and the ESL speakers of Punjabi language background. This paper discussed that the word recognition level was almost similar in both language groups irrespective of the fact that both the groups contained the poor and average readers as well. Moreover, the reading errors of the two groups were also similar in both groups, however, the average and poor students showed varied patterns of errors within each group. This paper concluded that the reading difficulties and errors are linked with the impaired phonological processes and as stated above the difference is because of the native language of a speaker.

Saville-Troike (2006) says that while learning the second language, two types of transfers occur: positive and negative. In the positive transfer, the rules and structures of L1 facilitate in learning of L2, but on the other hand in negative transfer (or interferes), several errors are produced because of the negative impact of L1 on L2. With the help of a negative transfer, one can analyze the impact of the L1 in learning a second language (Odlin, 1989).

Sinha, Banerjee, Sinha and Shastri (2009) in their study, reviewed the function and different roles of L1 in L2. By giving the shreds of evidence of cross-cultural studies in which students from various countries faced interference while learning L2: English, concluded that the phenomena of interference of L1 in L2 was universal. They also mentioned some reasons like the bad instructional method and lack of practice in acquiring the second language. Khan (2013) viewed this as an intellectual exile of turning back on native cultures in post-colonial paradigms.

The interference of L1 and L2 could occur because of exposure to the media industry as well. So, vocabulary teaching sometimes proved difficult because of interference of vocabulary (Erarslan & Hol, 2014). Pakistani advertisements were a combination of English and Urdu Words (Ali & Ullah, 2015).

Rizvi, Sarwar, and Rehman's (2022) study focuses on the stress patterns that speakers of Urdu who are ESL and EFL display. Based on supra-segmental phonology, this study examines native Urdu speakers' propensity to stress words according to syllable rather than phoneme. The results show that Urdu speakers face difficulties in producing and understanding English when using this stress pattern. The study's assessment of the semantic changes in Urdu brought about by variations in stress patterns is one of its most noteworthy features. This emphasizes the connection, between meaning and stress patterns in language shedding light on how phonological variations can impact nuances. The study gains credibility by comparing the collected data with pronunciation guidelines found in the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary grounding the analysis in established sources. This approach enhances the validity of the study's findings. Provides a benchmark for assessing pronunciation accuracy.

Moreover the study goes beyond analysis by proposing strategies aimed at improving English skills for Urdu speakers. This proactive approach acknowledges the relevance of the research. Offers insightful information for both language learners and educators. It is expected that these recommended teaching methods will contribute to interventions fostering improved pronunciation and overall language proficiency among ESL and EFL students who speak Urdu. The research conducted by Rizvi, Sarwar and Rehman significantly advances our understanding of stress patterns experienced by Urdu speaking ESL and EFL individuals. By exploring changes in meaning contrasting with pronunciation sources and providing strategies this study enriches the field by offering practical tools, for language teaching and learning. The findings of this study can benefit both learners and educators as it encourages the Urdu speaking community to improve their pronunciation, with accuracy and nuance. Dhillon (2007) employed Optimality Theory as a framework to depict the stress patterns, in Punjabi language in a way. Dhillon came to the conclusion that morphology has no bearing on stress. Furthermore, the research indicates that by using the restrictions of optimality theory, a similar pattern of study might be utilized to assess the stress patterns of different languages. Finally, examples from other languages, such Hindi, were also utilized to highlight how words with tri- and dissyllabic syllabi exhibit comparable stress patterns.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a thorough mixed-method approach to analyze data in an effort to understand the subtleties of language acquisition. The main focus is on surveying postgraduate students with an emphasis on Applied Linguistics. Six carefully crafted items make up the questionnaire, which is intended to gather data on three important variables: bilabial /w/ articulation, interdental /th/ pronunciation, and syllabic stress patterns. The participants, who were L1 speakers of Punjabi and L1 speakers of Urdu who were learning

English as a second language, were asked to pronounce certain English terms and to provide comments that showed their pronunciation patterns.

Once the data was collected we conducted an analysis. We transformed the responses into bar charts using Microsoft Excel 2010. These charts help us better understand the patterns and tendencies, among participants, with language backgrounds. In the phase we interpreted the data using Optimality Theory (OT) as a framework. This decision adds depth to our study. Allows for a detailed exploration of how linguistic forms interact and emerge within the boundaries set by Optimality Theory.

Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical underpinning of this work is provided by the robust structure of Optimality Theory (OT). This entire perspective is offered by the linguistic framework, which states that markedness limitations and fidelity interact dynamically to generate language forms in a complicated way. These limitations, which impose markedness constraints on certain language forms and faithfulness constraints that ensure form preservation from input to output, are arranged hierarchically. In addition to providing a powerful lens through which to examine and interpret the observed linguistic phenomena, the adoption of Optimality Theory as the theoretical framework for this study allows for important insights into the intricate mechanics of language acquisition and pronunciation tendencies within a diverse linguistic landscape.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The structure of the paper is as follows; in the part of the discussion we will cover the aspects of optimality theory that are particularly important, for analyzing this specific case study. Following that overview, the next section describes two interacting error patterns in the phonology of Urdu L1 vs Punjabi L1 speakers without taking into account intralingual errors and ossification. An optimality theoretic account for phonological error in this regard has been prepared to analyse language constraints and how much they are being influenced by first language. The paper closes with a brief summary.

Interlingual language errors are mistakes which the native speakers make due to first language interference. Interlingual mistakes happen when the primary language structure, rules and functions interfere while learning of the second language. It has been widely acknowledged that adult learners seek aid from their first language and in doing so sometimes display internalized second language errors. The first language creates the severe interference patterns while learning the second language. The inexperienced ESL speakers begin to produce erroneous, incorrect and ungrammatical second language structures because of Interlingual impact of the primary language.

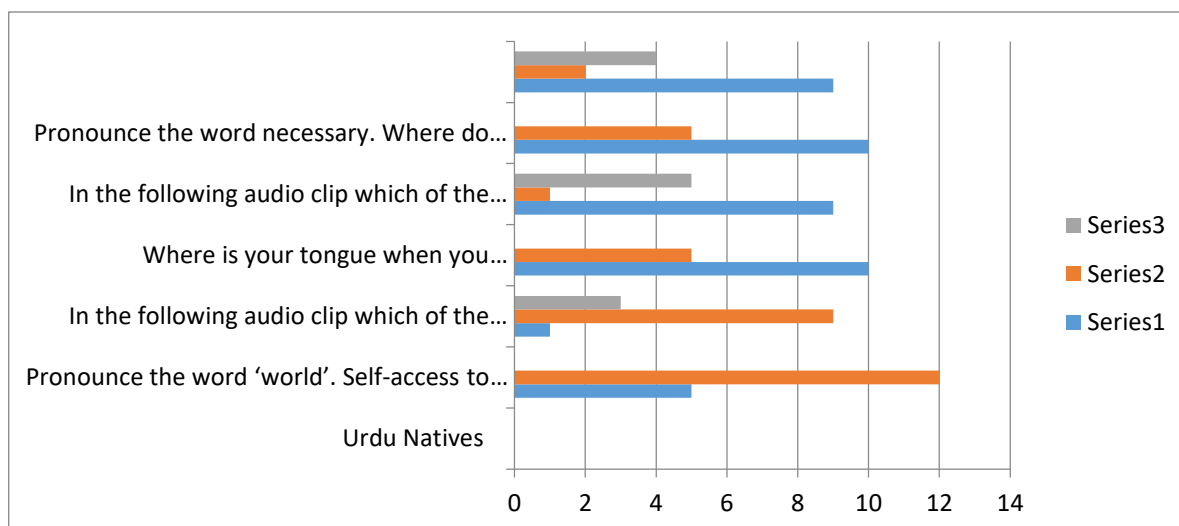


Figure 1: Response of Urdu Speakers

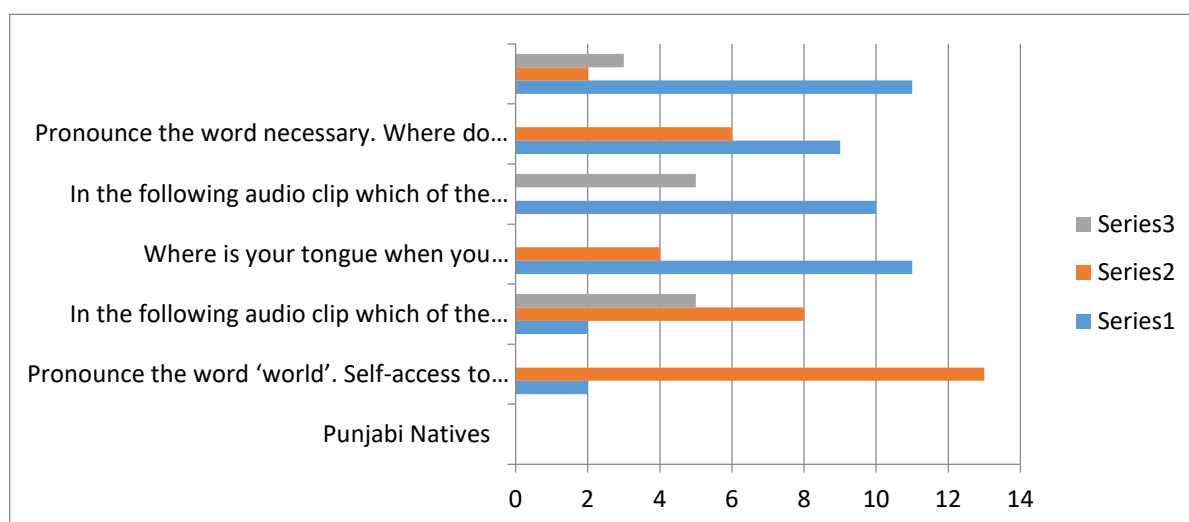


Figure 2: Response of Punjabi Speakers

Referring to the data the following can be observed. In the first question where the differentiation of bilabial and labiodental was involved those with Urdu as L1 performed significantly better than Punjabi L1 speakers with a 33 percent average in identifying a bilabial as different from a labiodental. Only 13.3 percent of Punjabi L1 speakers were able to do so, in comparison. Similarly in the second question Urdu L1 speakers averaged with a 60 percent in correct identification of bilabials whereas Punjabi L1 speakers had about 53.3 percent. The third question was concerned with pronunciation of the interdental *Th* and the Punjabi L1 speakers fared better with 73.3 percent correct answers whereas only 66.6 percent Urdu L1 speakers were able to pronounce the interdental. Moreover, 66.6 percent of Punjabi L1 speakers were able to identify the interdental *Th* whereas Urdu L1 speakers lagged behind with a percentage of 60. In questions regarding syllabic stress Punjabi speakers fared slightly better in placing first syllable stress on the word necessary. 40 percent of Punjabi L1 speakers were able to do so with success compared to a meagre 33 percent of Urdu L1 speakers. In identifying syllabic stress in the words photo and photographer it was found that both groups had a similar result of 13.3 percent. This low percentage indicated that both Urdu L1 and Punjabi L1 speakers had a problem identifying first syllable stress in the word photo compared to second syllable stress in the word photographer.

The objective of present study was to explore Phonological influence of L1 Punjabi and Urdu L1 on the learning of second language such as English in the specific area of interdental, bilabial pronunciation and identification and syllabic stress identification present in the second language. The researchers used various terms such as language transfer, cross linguistic influence, language mixing, and language interference to address the problems created by the mother tongue in the learning of target language. Moreover, the errors of Urdu and Punjabi L1 speakers were predicted using an Optimality constraints tableau and a contrastive analysis of Urdu L1 and Punjabi L1 speakers conducted to demonstrate which language showed more interference when it came to phonological errors. It was discovered at least in terms of stress in English a wide-ranging rule is that for two syllable words, nouns and adjectives have the stress on the first syllable, whereas verbs have stress on the second syllable. The Weight stress principle was also taken into account which states that stress automatically goes towards heavy syllables in a word. As per the Centre for research in the Urdu language processing claims that “Urdu establishes a stress distinction involving weight of syllable. Hence Urdu can be termed as quantity sensitive language” (Nayyar, 2017) However, it is noted that “Affixation seems to have stress assigning and stress removing property. As in the word, ‘af.riḍ=’ .yar’, stress must be assigned to syllable ‘ yar ’ according to the algorithm (as this syllable has a moraic weight of 2), but as syllable ‘yar’ is a suffix hence stress shifts to the left. It is observed that in Urdu affix is treated separate from the root. Root has separate stress and affix may or may not bear stress.”

Since the current paper is not exhaustive list of stress in Urdu it can be concluded that stress in Urdu is syllable timed and stress patterns are extremely different from the stress timed English language. Hence it is leading to suprasegmental phonological errors while pronouncing English words. Similarly “Punjabi exhibits a three-way distinction in syllable weight with monomoraic light syllables, bimoraic heavy syllables, and trimoraic superheavy syllables. Punjabi also possesses a left-dominant stress system, requiring the construction of moraic trochees. Foot construction is from right to left and degenerate feet are permitted.” (Dhillon, 2007) It can be observed that in terms of stress Urdu and Punjabi are vastly different from the stress patterns exhibited by English. Therefore, phonological error in terms of first syllable stress and stress timing in general can be expected. In terms of the other two phonological errors i.e. identification and pronunciation of interdental Th and bilabial W the error patterns can be predicted using an optimality theory tableau where the markedness and faithfulness concerns are charted respectively.

Concerning Optimality theory the constraints are expected to be finite, universal, and violable and are of two major types: markedness and faithfulness. Markedness constraints demonstrate a ban on typologically marked features, sounds, or sound sequences and are expressed wholly in terms of output phonetic properties. An example is as follows, a number of languages exclude affricates from their phonetic inventories—such as French, Cairene Arabic, and Finnish (Maddieson, 1984). This banning on affricates can be credited to the markedness constraint *AFFR. Therefore the constraint specifies that only affricates are not allowed to come about; it, however, does not specify how the ban should be resolved. The other type of constraint, faithfulness, stresses minimal distinctiveness between the input and output representations of a word. The faithfulness constraint ID [manner] exemplifies the clash that sometimes develops between constraints and they are fixed by positioning the constraints in order of significance.

Looking at the collected data, it is clear that /th/ sound in English, Urdu and Punjabi is not same as the place of articulation in English is different than that of Punjabi and Urdu. So we

can say that English /th/ is not present in both Urdu and Punjabi hence the speakers replaced that sound with Urdu and Punjabi similar sounds with English /th/ which is a dental fricative with respect to place and manner of the articulation, however, in Punjabi and Urdu /th/ sound is a bit stronger and is produced as palatal sound. Now coming towards the /w/ and /v/ sounds, there is a clear distinction present in the English language as /w/ is semi-vowel and a bilabial sound however, in Urdu and Punjabi /w/ does not exist that is why the speakers of Punjabi and Urdu replaced /w/ with /v/ sound which is labiodental sound.

This study explores interlingual mistakes in Punjabi, Urdu, and English linguistic situations. Examining further phonological faults such as ossification, over-rationalization, and intralingual errors is purposefully excluded. The main objective is to investigate how learning English, the second language (L2), is impacted by learning Urdu and Punjabi, the first language (L1). This research scrutinizes the /w/ and /v/ contrast and /th/ sound pronunciation of the syllabic stress patterns. Theoretical framework that seizes and remarks interlanguage inaccuracy is given and employed by the Optimality Theory. Theory of optimality is involved in a theoretical framework which offers to represent the relationship and its out-turn of linguistic limitation on the language acquisition. Three English language acquisition phenomena provided by Theoretical Basis given by optimality theory are not only the one seized through it but also its compresence these language events. This research study discovers possible errors as well as provides understanding of L2 acquisition difficulties from Punjabi and Urdu languages. This study upon the errors of interlanguage has outcomes of deepening our knowledge of language transfer with guidance of how to teach language, which in result has broadened our way to learn successfully more second language learning techniques.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, all the processes involved in second language learning are inspected through this study. Phonological errors executed by Pakistani ESL learners are discussed meticulously in this study whose native languages are Urdu and Punjabi. This study delves into phonology by considering its three common errors and what medium are affected by first language interaction i.e., exposure, mispronunciation and, word substitution. The literature review provides a comprehensive summary of previous studies, emphasizing sociolinguistic aspects of ESL pronunciation. Dervin's research highlights the relationship between accent, identity, and social acceptance. The importance of English is also emphasized around the world as a means to educational and career prospects as ESL students must have native-like pronunciation, research questions and objectives that determine how it affects the course of study. The literature review provides a comprehensive summary of previous studies, emphasizing sociolinguistic aspects of ESL pronunciation. Dervin's research highlights the relationship between accent, identity, and social acceptance. The importance of English is also emphasized around the world as a means to educational and career prospects as ESL students must have native-like pronunciation, research questions and objectives that determine how it affects the course of study. Questionnaires and recording are used in this study of mix-method research to reach participant's discourse. Optimal theory which is a theoretical framework is used in this study to elucidate the findings which has given the understanding of language acquisition in its multiplex insights. More insights are provided in the discussion examination of data where differences between phonological errors of Punjabi and Urdu Language are discussed.

This Research study enlightens our previous knowledge by adding more insights to the phonological difficulties that ESL learners face during the learning of Urdu and Punjabi languages. The result of this study is compatible with the previous research studies illustrating how first language has multiple effects on ESL learners' performance. This study

deep in into the optimality theoretical framework and provided us a lens through which the readers can examine language learning difficulties. To conclude, this language has a great impact of the knowledge on the importance consideration of the first language when learning ESL vocabulary, chiefly with the languages that has peculiar characteristics. This study can be helpful in practical daily life of ESL learners who are learning Punjabi and Urdu languages by highlighting their phonological errors and evolving some of the specific instructional strategies for ESL learners.

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