

CONSONANTS OF PAKISTANI ENGLISH: A STUDY OF /θ/& /ð/

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ABSTRACT

Pakistani English is assumed to be different from other accents and dialects of English on the basis of phonological variables. This research would investigate the consonants of Pakistani English with special focus on /θ/& /ð/. The aim of this research is to explore how Pakistani English is different from other varieties of English on the bases of differences in consonants. The sample of this investigation consists of postgraduate students (both male and female comprising age group 23-30 years selected from Department of English University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus. The scope of this study would be limited to the English speech community of Pakistan. The data is collected through word list recordings. This research would be beneficial for the English speech community of Pakistan.

Keywords: Dialects of English, consonants, Pakistani English

INTRODUCTION

Language change is the most common phenomenon of the present time. Language change occurs because of phonetic, phonological, morphological, semantic and syntactic variation. Any of these variations cause the creation of a new variety of language. These changes are the product of interaction of two languages. “English is used as native language and non-native standard language, in ex-colonies of the British Empire” (Mesthrie, 2008). English language is used across the globe as lingua franca. English language was introduced in the subcontinent in 17th century. English is also enjoying the status of official language of Pakistan. Pakistani English have at least four distinct varieties, named as, anglicized Pakistani English, acrolect, mesolect and basilect (Rehman, 1999). The existent study endeavor that Pakistani English should be addressed as acceptable dialect of English. This study concentrated on phonological variables in pronunciation. Pakistani English is theorizing to have different consonants causing great variation in pronunciation. The aim of this research is to explore, how consonants in Pakistani English pronounced differently and how they contribute in the formation of Pakistani English as a different variety of English language. This study focuses at examining the consonants on scientific grounds. The sample of this research is 23-30 years age group, postgraduate Pakistani students, from the English department of university of Lahore, both male and female. The corpus for this study comes from personal observations, reading of word-lists.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main question related to this study is:

1. Are consonants in Pakistani English different from the consonants of other varieties of English, with special reference to Received Pronunciation (RP)?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

English is the language of business and arts. It is the language of international trade. New researches related to science and technologies are also coming out in English. To quote the economist “English is the world standard language. It is the intrinsic Part of the global communication revolution” (21 December 1996, p 39). The communiqué for the launch of the British Council’s English 2000 project in 1995 summarized the position of English: “World-wide, there are over 1,400 million people living in countries where English has official status. One out five of the world population speaks English to some level of competence. Demand from the other four fifths is increasing.....English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science and technology, diplomacy, sports, international competitions, pop music and advertising” (as cited in Graddol, 1997, p.2)

English language was emerged due to migration in the fifth century. Graddol (1997) wrote about the spread of English: “First was the colonial expansion of Britain which resulted in settlements of English speakers in many parts of the world. This has provided a diasporic base for the language which is probably a key Factor in the adoption of a language as a lingua franca. In the 20th century the role of the US has been more important than that of Britain and has helped ensure that the language is not only at the forefront of scientific and technical knowledge but also leads consumer culture”(p.14).

English has been a flexible language. At the initial stages, it borrowed from Latin and Celtic then from Scandinavian and French, and recently from other languages spoken in the British colonies. (Burchfield, 1985)

English is considered lingua franca and now Asians are also sharing it with the rest of the world. Asia has a few major languages of the world regarding their native speakers, Hindi, Chinese, and Urdu etc. (McArthur, 2002)

Pakistani English (PE)

Not much research is available on Pakistani English phonology, but it can be observed that it shared some common characteristics with other Asian Englishes. Bilal, Mahmood & Saleem (2001a, 2011b, 2011c) and Bilal et al (2011) have highlighted some of the features of vowels of Pakistani English. Some of the phonological features of Pakistani English are narrated by Hickey, Mahboob and Ahmar.(Ahmar and Mahboob (2010).

- a. Like other Asian varieties (except Philippines English), PE is rhotic.
- b. PE is syllable-timed and shares this quality with other Asian varieties of English.
- c. PE tends to use spellings as guide to pronunciation.
- d. PE speakers do not distinguish between /v/ and /w/.
- e. PE do not aspire stops in word initial positions due to the influence of Urdu which has different phonemes.

There has been considerable regional variation in the realization of Fricative consonants sounds.

- I. The fricatives /θ/, /ð/are replaced by plosive /th/, /d/ and /dh/. (Garesh, 2006)
- II. /θ/, /ð/ is almost missing and replaced by dental plosives /t/, /th/ and /d/.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Participants

The participants were conscripted amid the students of postgraduate, from the English department of university of Lahore. Amid 20 participants 10 were male and 10 were female, all with Punjabi as their first language and consist of the age group from 23-30. The selection yardstick includes that participants should have been expose to English for at least 16 year in their educational career.

Material

Selection of Words

In order to restrict the potential range of speech data, it was decided to limit the study to the analysis of Fricative consonants i.e. /th/. It was decided world list should be made to elicit the require consonants rather than free speech. Word list consist of voiced and unvoiced fricative consonants.

/Th/ θ (unvoiced)

- Initial (th at the beginning of the word)
Thread, Thunder, Think
- Middle (th in the middle of the word)
Birthday, Nothing, Bathroom
- Final (th at the end of the word)
Earth, Math, Teeth

/Th/ ð (voiced)

- Initial (th at the beginning of the world)
Those, That
- Middle (thin the middle of the word)
Brother, Mother
- Final (th at the end of the word)
Smooth, Clothe

The aim of choosing these words was to reach the conclusion about the realization of consonants. "The foregoing consonants have more realization overall than vowels". (Hillenbrand et al., 2001, Roeder, 2009)

Recordings

Words were recorded using BlackBerry 8520 in a blaring free atmosphere. The recordings were transcribed.

Procedure

Total number of participants is 20 (10 male and 10 female). Every participant was requested to speak 15 words with /th/ (θ and ð) context.

Word list was given to students for reading. Then these words were transcribed. Transcriptions were made. Total consonants taken for analysis were two. /th/ voices and unvoiced. 15 words were taken having th sound voiced and unvoiced. Transcription shows the variation in pronunciation of these sounds by the Pakistani students. Common variations

were use of /th/, /d/ sounds instead of /th/ /ð/ voiced and /θ/ unvoiced. Consonants sounds in RP are:

		Place of Articulation														
		Bilabial		Labio-dental		Inter-dental		Alveolar		Alveo-palatal		Palatal	Velar	Glottal		
Manner of Articulation	Stop	p	b					t	d					k	g	ʔ
	Fricative			f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ					h
	Affricate									tʃ	dʒ					
	Nasal		m						n						ŋ	
	Lateral Approximant								l							
	Retroflex Approximant								ɻ							
	Glide		ɹ	w										j		
			State of the Glottis													
Voiceless					Voiced											

Transcriptions of words show some common variations in pronunciation of consonant /th/ sound. These are as follows:

Table 1. Unvoiced θ

Words	RP	Pronunciation by Pakistani students
Thread	/θred/	/θrɛd/
Thunder	/θændər/	/θændər/
Think	/θɪŋk/	/θɪŋk/
Birthday	/bərθde/	/bərthde/, /bərɔde/
Nothing	/nəθɪŋ/	/nəθɪŋ/
Bathroom	/bæθrum/	/bæθrum/
Earth	/ɛrθ/	/ɛrθ/
Math	/mæθ/	/mæθ/
Teeth	/tiθ/	/tiθ/

Table 2. Voiced ð

Those	/ðoz/	/doz/
That	/ðæt/	/dæt/
Brother	/brəðər/	/brədər/
Mother	/məðər/	/mədər/
Smooth	/smuð/	/Smud/
Clothe	/kloð/	/Kloth/, /klod/

Statistical Analysis

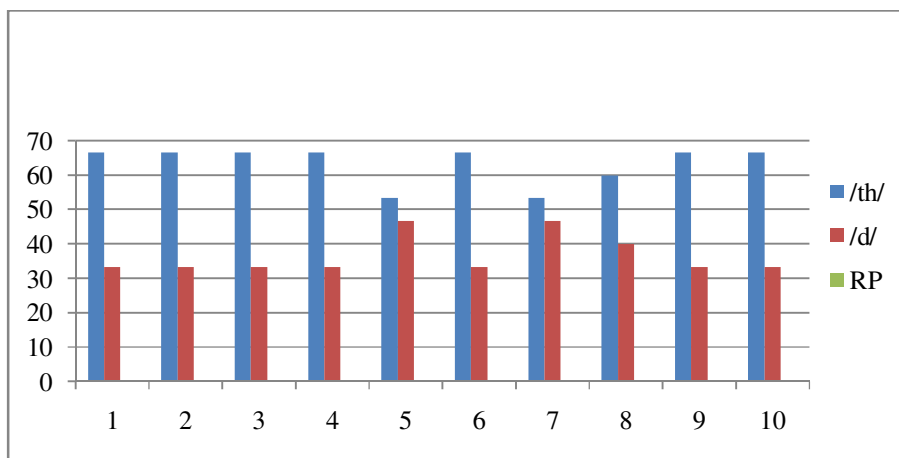
The data were submitted to statics analysis using computer software SPSS.

Analysis

Analysis of consonants is done by transcription of words, recorded by reading of word list. Male and female voices are discussed separately. Then the comparison between PE and RP is made bringing out the differences and similarities.

Female voices

The female speakers use /th/ and /d/ sound instead of /θ/ and /ð/ sounds. Data is shown in the form of graph. Graph shows the ratio of use of /th/, /d/ and RP. Use of /th/ and /d/ sound is most frequent.



The speakers use /th/ and /d/ sound instead of /θ/ and /ð/ sounds. Three different tables show the statistical analysis of /th/, /d/ and RP. Each table gives detail about frequency, percent, valid percent and cumulative percent. Statistical analysis show following data:

Table 3. Female /th/

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	53.33	1	10.0	10.0
	60.00	1	10.0	20.0
	66.66	8	80.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. Female /d/

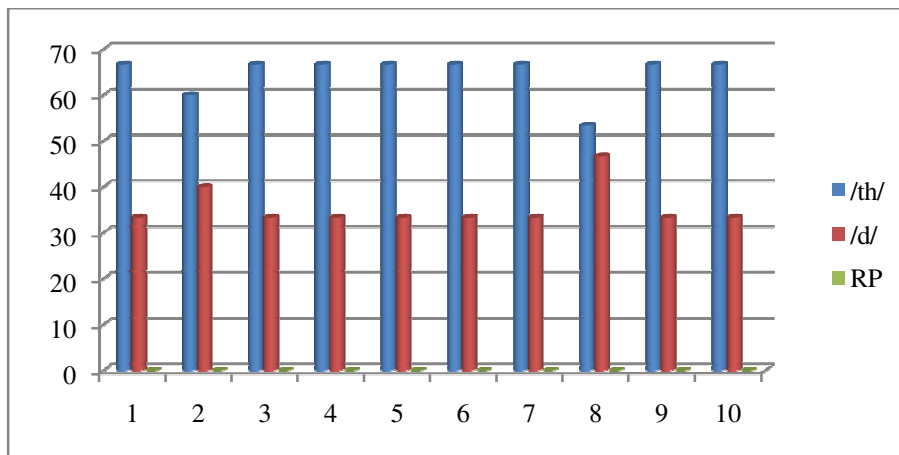
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	33.33	8	80.0	80.0
	40.00	1	10.0	90.0
	46.66	1	10.0	100.0
Total	10	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Female RP

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	.00	10	100.0	100.0

Male voices

The male speakers use /th/ and /d/ sound instead of /θ/ and /ð/ sounds. Data is shown in the form of graph. Graph shows the ratio of use of /th/, /d/ and RP. Use of /th/ and /d/ sound is most frequent.



Three different tables show the statistical analysis of /th/, /d/ and RP. Each table gives detail about frequency, percent, valid percent and cumulative percent. Statistical analysis show following data:

Table 6. Male /th/

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
	53.33	2	20.0	20.0
	60.00	1	10.0	30.0
Valid	66.66	7	70.0	100.0
Total		10	100.0	100.0

Table 7. Male /d/

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
	33.33	7	70.0	70.0
	40.00	1	10.0	80.0
Valid	46.33	1	10.0	90.0
	46.66	1	10.0	100.0

Table 8. Male RP

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	.00	10	100.0	100.0

DISCUSSION

Female speakers

The comparison was made between the Pakistani female speakers and RP female speakers about the realization of consonants. This comparison showed distinct features of Pakistani English. The RP speakers pronounce words differently. /th/ voiced and unvoiced has specific sounds transcribed as /θ/ and /ð/. While the Pakistani English speakers pronounce /th/ voiced and unvoiced as /th/ and /d/.

Male speakers

Trend of Male speakers of PE remained similar to that of female speakers of PE. The influence of Punjabi consonant system is also observable on both male and female speakers of PE pronunciation.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions are drawn on the basis of analysis made above that the consonants in PE are realized differently as compared to RP. English is an international language with great number of non-native speakers of English. English is often used in a lingua franca context.

“The importance of English can and should not be undetermined. It is and will remain the most important international language for some time to come. Being a true global lingua franca and a language of both knowledge and trade, English must be taught as a subject and promoted as a mean for acquiring specialized skills and new knowledge. Ideally, every Pakistani should be able to read, write and converse in English”. (khalique, 2006, para, 37)

Many local Englishes (e.g. Pakistani variety of English) are emerging. McKay (2003) reflected: “English is an international language and it belongs to its users, cultural content and their sense of the appropriate use of English that should inform language pedagogy”. (p. 13 as cited in caine, 2008, para 13)

We found Pakistani speakers pronounce English consonants in a different manner as compare to RP. One important advantage of this research is that it would be a channel and guidepost for future researches. It might convince and appear as a motivation for the local researchers to further boost the research to such a level as to make PE a recognizable international variety of English.

Limitations of the study are because of number of participants and the terms of investigation. The participants were confining to Punjabi L speakers of Sargodha city. Finding of the study may not extend to English L2 speakers from other L1 backgrounds. The empirical state of study does not speculate real-life communication situations. Go through these exemplary notes in mind, I at the same time suggest that this kind of empirical study does provide some important Insights and some valid pedagogical possibilities in the teaching and learning of intelligible pronunciation.

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