SEGMENTAL ERRORS IN ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION OF NONNATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS

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ABSTRACT

The English language has very many cross-cultural varieties. Most of these varieties deviate from Inner Circle English or the NS (Native Speaker) variety. The non-native speaker varieties pervade all aspects of the language, namely phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics and pragmatics. Nonnative phonological deviations, however, are more prevalent and widespread than any other aspects of the language. Nonnative English pronunciations are considered as erroneous in comparison with Standard English pronunciations or those of the native speakers of English belonging to the Inner Circle English. Nonnative English Pronunciation errors manifest themselves in all of the major elements of pronunciation, i.e. phonemes, syllables, word stress, rhythm and intonation as well as the features of connected speech like assimilation, elision, linking, and weak forms. The purpose of the paper is to investigate segmental errors in English pronunciation of nonnative English speakers though originally the author's intention was to examine all the elements of English pronunciation which had to be curtailed because of the constraints of space. The paper now illustrates segmental (consonant and vowel) errors in English pronunciation of Arabic, African, French, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi English speakers, among others. The survey reveals that L1 or first language negative influence is the main cause of pronunciation errors of these people which is the root cause of syntactic, semantic and discourse errors as well. It also reveals that most segmental errors committed by most nonnative speakers representing varied speech communities are identical. The paper considers intelligibility as an important criterion for successful communication whereas wrong and unintelligible pronunciation is seen as the most cogent reason for communication failures. The paper argues against SAT (Speech Accommodation Theory) or, CAT (Communication Accommodation Theory), as later renamed, which propounds that the obstacles in communication posed by unintelligible pronunciation of the interlocutors gradually diminish when one speaker adjusts and accommodates to the pronunciation habits of the other. In other words, as the theory proposes, because of mutual respect and agreement, the interlocutors gradually get familiar with each other's phonological systems and slowly converge to the speech patterns of the people they are interacting with. This paper contradicts this view; instead, it argues that adjusting to deviations is not automatic; rather, a native speaker of English may have no intention to adapt or adjust to someone's language he/she finds incomprehensible resulting from unintelligible pronunciation; therefore, may cease to communicate with that person.

Key words: RP (Received Pronunciation), nonnative English pronunciation, vowels, consonants, intelligibility

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT: PRONUNCIATION, INTELLIGIBILITY AND RP (RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION)

Intelligible pronunciation plays a major role in successful oral communication the other components being syntax, vocabulary and discourse. Though all of these components interplay in creating meaning of spoken language, pronunciation alone may render speech unintelligible even when the others elements as above are accurate and appropriate. As a global language, English has evolved into a few native varieties within the Inner Circle and many other nonnative, localized varieties across the globe in the outer- and expanding circles as seen in figure 1 below. The Inner Circle comprises the native speakers of English whereas the outer circle comprises the nonnative English speaking people who use English as a Lingua Franca, and the third or expanding Circle which comprises the gradually emerging English speakers who use English for international business and communication.

Among the Inner Circle-or native speaker varieties of English pronunciations is a kind of pronunciation known as RP or Received Pronunciation which is a regional accent of the southeast of England, especially the London region, spoken by the upper class, educated society. As Gimson (1980, pp. 889-92) argues, RP is accepted as a social standard of pronunciation manifested in B.B.C and public-school pronunciation. RP is the most widely understood and the least prejudiced regional variety. It has been traditionally taught to foreigners and well documents in books of phonetics of British English, he adds. It, thus, represents, correct pronunciation alongside American pronunciation which is gaining ground as another correct standard. On the other hand, the nonnative localized varieties have evolved worldwide having their own standards as seen in figure 2 below.

Figure 1: Inner English Vs Outer and Expanding varieties
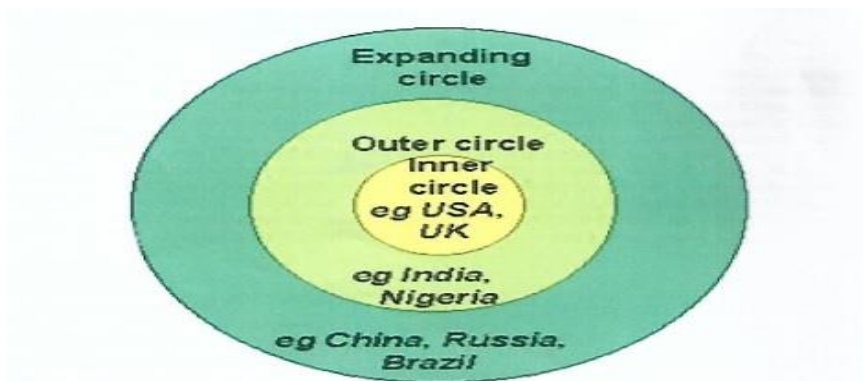
(From Syed, M. I. 2018, p. 23)

A native-speaker standard, therefore, is a universal standard which can be used and is understood by all English speakers, native or nonnative alike. RP pronunciation originated in England but is recognized across the globe as a failsafe variety for international communication in which intelligible pronunciation plays a significant role. This paper, therefore, considers most nonnative English pronunciations as deviants from RP which has a wider currency than any other varieties, which is well documented in English language dictionaries and is widely acceptable as a common variety. The RP can be considered the core variety, along with General American English, from which all other native English pronunciations e.g. Australian, Canadian, or New Zealand Standard pronunciations have evolved. In this regard, RP is more than just a standard; it is a universal norm having an edge over other native- and nonnative varieties alike, because it has a greater currency, is better documented; RP English dictionaries are more readily available than dictionaries of any other native-speaking pronunciations and which can be taught anywhere in non-native English contexts with the help of good English-to-English dictionary where listening opportunities to native English are sparse. In this regard, RP can be considered as a universal or core pronunciation standard regardless of where it is used or who use it. Arguably, it is a core pronunciation like the other core components of language, i.e. syntax, and morphology, and phonology (refer to figure 2 below), its being a core within a greater core, i.e. phonology itself.
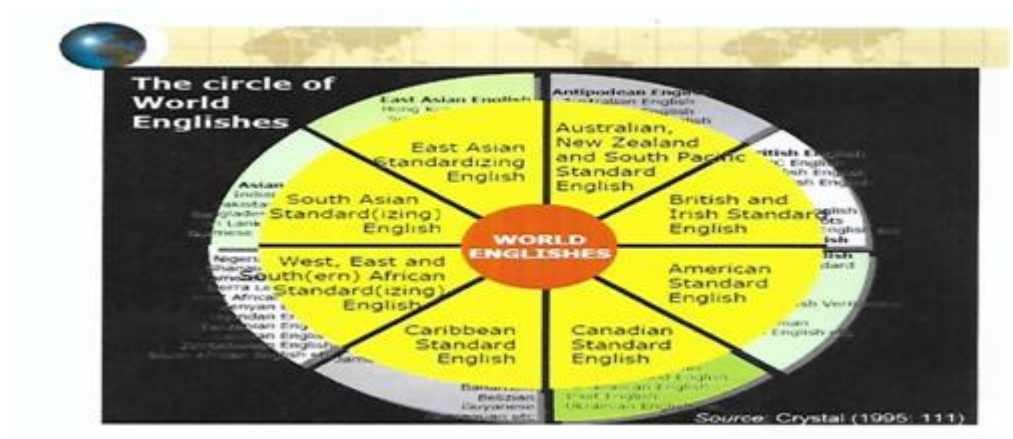
Figure 2
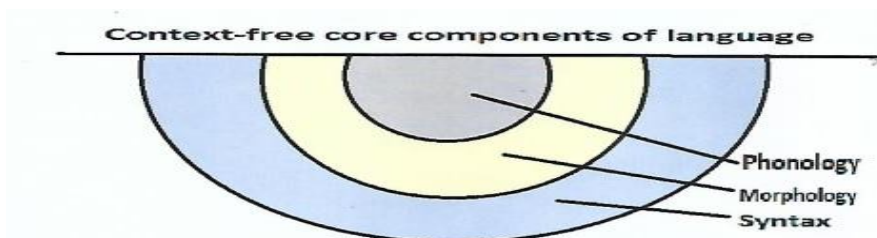
(From Syed, M. I, 2018, p. 26)

Most of the localized non-native phonological varieties of English, to the contrary, deviate from the RP with respect to the various aspects of its pronunciation (as seen in figure 4 below) and are likely to cause comprehension difficulty for RP speakers of English and even for those non-native speakers who understand and use Standard English pronunciation. Though the localized English pronunciations are good enough for a particular speech community, in wider communicative contexts where interaction takes place between a non-native speaker and a native speaker or when two competent speakers from two different contexts interact, pronunciation habits unique to either of the people with which the other is not familiar with, communication breakdowns or failures are very likely to occur. (See figure 3 below)

Figure 3: Locally Standardizing Englishes

(From Syed, M. I. 2018, p. 24)

Pronunciation skills, however, cover not only those in the segments but also the other hierarchically related elements as shown in figure 4 below, i.e. sounds or segments (consonants and vowels) as well as the supra-segmental or prosodic elements like stress, rhythm, and intonation a (see figure 4 below). There is clear evidence that Nonnative English speakers are prone to deviating from all of these aspects of pronunciation.

Figure 4: Elements of pronunciation
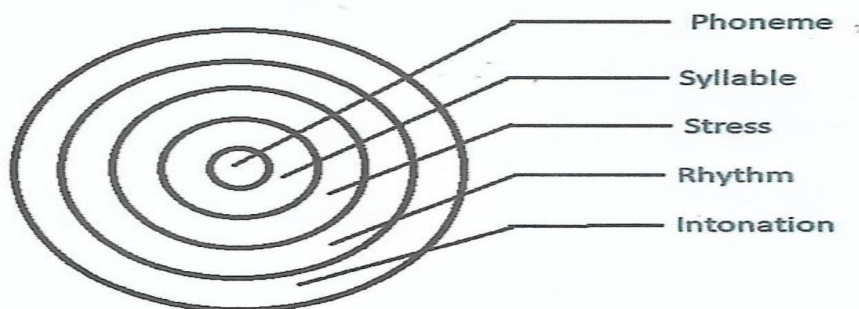
(From Syed, M.I. 2019. p. 33)

Besides these major elements of pronunciation, there also exist some other aspects of connected speech (Roach, 1991, p. 120) like weak forms, linking, assimilation and elision. The last two items on the list are present in highly fluent native-speaker English pronunciation non-observance of which may not constitute a weakness on part of the nonnative English speaker. Linking and weak forms, to the contrary, constitute important components of English pronunciation in that they play a very important role in the maintenance of rhythm in English. The following section gives an overview of all the major elements of English pronunciation before reporting deviations in segmental pronunciation.

PURPOSE AND DATA COLLECTION

First, the paper presents an overview of the elements of English pronunciation. Next, it examines segmental errors in the pronunciation of nonnative English speakers from diverse contexts like Bangladeshi English (Bengali), Indian English (Hindi), Pakistani English (Urdu), Brazilian English, Spanish English, French English, Italian English, Russian English, Chinese English, among others. The errors are justified as errors because they deviate from Standard English as manifested in RP (Received Pronunciation). Examples from study findings, explanations, and expert observations form the bases for evaluation of nonnative speaker pronunciation samples. The data collected are largely valid and reliable because they have been collected from authentic studies by researchers and pronunciation experts. The secondary purpose is to make nonnative English speakers aware of the differences between their respective first language pronunciations and Standard English pronunciation they are learning or using. It is believed that understanding the differences between the learner/user's first language and the second language being (English pronunciation, in this case) helps the learner/user notice them before being able to use the L2 features in communication. The final purpose is to contest the view that in spite of deviant pronunciation, communication success does not suffer because of mutual respect and adjustment and adaptation to pronunciation habits of the interlocutor not previously mutually shared.

The samples of wrong or deviant pronunciation habit with respect to the sounds produced by nonnative English speakers have been collected by pronunciation experts and to some extents by pronunciation enthusiasts and some are based on the author's own observation and experience collected from authentic speech of the people concerned, and have been reported and analyzed in order to understand the nature of the errors. The validity and reliability of the data, therefore, are unquestionable. The findings are followed by a discussion of the errors found, their pedagogical implications, and the overall significance of the paper.

Originally, the paper aimed at reporting nonnative English speakers' errors in all aspects of English pronunciation, i.e. from phonemes through stress and rhythm to intonation but because of constraints of space, the treatise is now restricted to the investigation of nonnative English segmental errors alone. The section below is an overview of the elements of pronunciation followed by an examination of segmental errors occurring in diverse nonnative English speaking contexts**.**

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ELEMENTS OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

ENGLISH SOUNDS

In the phonetic inventory of English, there are forty-four basic sounds with twenty four consonants and twenty vowels. The vowels are again divided into twelve pure vowels with seven short vowels and five long vowels. The diphthongs are English vowels which constitute gliding vowels made up of two vowel sounds. English consonant are distinct from one another on the basis of places or manners of articulation or both, and voicing which involves vibration of the vocal chords, e.g. /b/ as against /p/ (voiceless). Most English pronunciation errors are the result of wrong or deviant pronunciation of the sounds.

SYLLABLES AND STRESS

Syllables in English constitute the next component having these three structures: a syllable having a vowel phoneme only which is known as the minimum syllable (V); next, a syllable comprising a consonant and a vowel (CV) or a vowel and a consonant (VC); and then a syllable having a consonant on either side of the vowel (CVC). Syllables are of two types - stressed and unstressed, the stressed syllables being the basis for rhythm in English, a very important element of English pronunciation. In Bengali language, for example, a word may be broken down into its constituent syllables only for the purpose of spelling comfort but in English, in every multi-syllable word, there is a stressed syllable which determines the rhythmic pattern of an utterance.

RHYTHM

Rhythm is part and parcel of English pronunciation without which English pronunciation becomes flat like Bengali, for example, which is uncharacteristic of English. A rhythm unit comprises any number of unstressed syllables up to one stressed which occurs at regular intervals which give an utterance the quality of music. Unlike English, there are many languages, Bengali being one, in which every syllable is equally important resulting in the duration of an utterance varying according to the number of syllables in it. Such languages are known as syllable-timed languages, whereas English is referred to as a stress-timed language. The lack of rhythm in Bengali, poses comprehension difficulty for a native English speaker or any person who has got native-speaker fluency in English. Hindi speakers of English have a different problem. They, actually, are rather too rhythmic, that is, irrespective of how many stressed there are in an utterance, each and every syllable tends to be pronounced with stress on it as in this example: "Good morning. How are you brother? Almost all of the syllables in this utterance would be stressed or made prominent making it kind of "sing-song English". To sum up, rhythm is an essential feature of English speech. The following utterance further clarifies the meaning of rhythm: I'm going to the station by car. In this sentence, the bold parts indicate stressed syllables. Accordingly, the utterance is divided into three rhythm units with the beats rhythmically falling on the stressed syllables.

INTONATION

Intonation is a major suprasegmental or prosodic feature of English pronunciation which means the rise or fall of the pitch of the voice. Though English is not a tone language, intonation signals attitudes, feelings, and sometimes performs some grammatical functions as well. In the question 'You're coming, the 'Rising' tone would mean a question, but a falling tone may be misunderstood as a command. Conversely, for a Wh question e.g., 'How many brothers do you have ('Falling' tone on How)' would be the standard NS way of asking a question for information, but a 'Rising' tone would be inappropriate in this case. In Bengali culture, the mother tongue version of this sentence would usually take the 'Rising' tone and such a L1 habit is transferred to asking Wh questions in English as well, i.e., the use of the 'Rising' tone, instead of the 'Falling' tone. Such a deviation would be viewed abnormal in a Standard English situation. As mentioned earlier, intonation in English performs attitudinal functions including expressing questions politely. The 'fall-rise' tone in English is an indicator of politeness in asking questions like: 'Would you mind telling me where the post office is?' ('Fall-rise' tone) . The use of the 'fall-rise' tone to sound polite is unknown to many non-native varieties of English, Bengali included, and it may send a wrong signal about the speaker to the listener who understands and speaks Standard English about the speaker's sense of courtesy if the appropriate tone is not used. How the wrong intonation in English may startle or even frighten a listener is clear in this example: Once I met a colleague of mine as I was about to enter my office. At my sight, she shouted to greet me: "Mazhar Bhai (brother), how are you" in her piercingly high, shrilling voice using the 'rising tone'. I was taken by surprise; had anything gone wrong? In fact, that moment that day was just like any other moment, any other day, nothing special. One person was just greeting another but by using the wrong tone type which sent out a wrong signal making me misunderstood the person.

Besides the above components of English pronunciation, assimilation, elision, linking and weak forms also constitute the other important elements of speech. Roach (1985) terms these features as "Aspects of connected speech" which can be contested on the ground that speech is spoken discourse which is connected within itself anyway by means of discourse which may be a single word or even a semi-verbal sound like umm, err, aha or any other fillers or connectors for that matter. So, these features should better be referred to as features of speech or an utterance. Except for weak forms and linking, however, the others included on the list are the paraphernalia of very fluent native speakers of English non-maintenance or absence of which in nonnative speakers' English should not affect interaction. On the other hand, weak forms and linking are essential in that they are integral to English rhythm which, in turn, is integral to English speech the absence of which would make it unintelligible, incomprehensible and unacceptable. The following section describes and analyses segmental errors in English pronunciation of different nonnative English speakers.

PHONEMIC ERRORS IN VARIOUS ENGLISHES

BANGLADESHI (BENGALI) ENGLISH: In the following chart, both English and Bengali vowels are placed.

**Figure 5: English and Bengali vowels map**
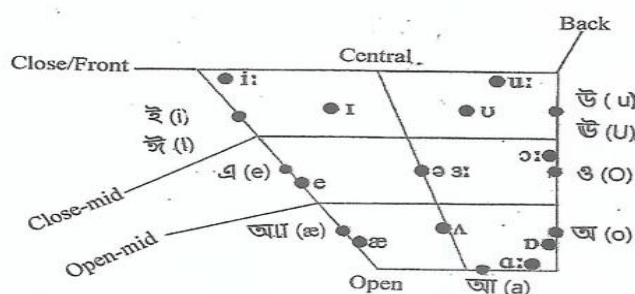
(Syed, M.1.2019, p. 28)

In English pronunciation, vowel length is important and is differentiated into short- and long vowels but if not, serious misunderstanding may occur because of meaning difference because of length difference. To Bengali speakers, vowel length does not matter though these two vowels, /আ/ (equivalent to /ɑ:/ in English) and /ঈ/ (equivalent to /i:/ in English) are theoretically available in Bengali. So, leave and live; heart and hut; or bird and bud have the same pronunciation. Other examples of wrong pronunciation as a mother tongue habit are ship for sheep, cut for cart or dip for deep. The long vowels in the English words, however, are also qualitatively different as seen in the vowel map above. Non-observance of vowel length may result in serious communication failure because meaning difference may occur because of length difference as in the examples above.

Another English vowel, the schwa /ə/, which is the shortest vowel in English) is particularly difficult for Bengali speakers of English to. The sound is mostly found in unstressed syllables in English like away (/əwei/), machine (/məʃtin/) and syllabic consonants like table (/teibəl/ or cattle (/kætl/ etc.

The gliding vowels or diphthongs are also often mispronounced by Bengali English speakers. In fact, in Bengali phonology, only two diphthong-like sounds are found, /ঐ/ and /ঔ/ though they do not quite manifest the properties of English diphthongs in that whereas in English diphthongs the first sound is considerably longer than the second, in these two Bengali diphthongs, they are of equal length. Another characteristic of English diphthongs is that whereas the second phoneme in a diphthong in Bengali completes its movement to the end, in English the movement of the phoneme is approximate (see figure 5 below, from Syed, 2019, p. 31).

Figure 6: English and Bengali diphthongs
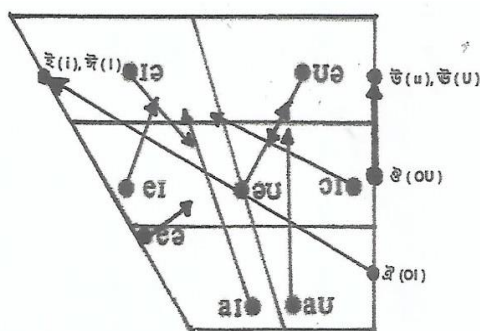
(From, Syed, M. I, 2019, p. 31)

Bengali speakers of English pronounce English diphthongs as monophthongs or pure vowels. Examples are: /kek/ (for cake /keik/), /mek/ for make /meik/, or /go/ for /gəʊ/ and so on. Bengali speakers of English rarely pronounce diphthongs correctly because they do not exist in the Bengali phonological system.

Examples of English consonantal errors which Bengali speakers usually commit are discussed next. The English plosives /p/, /t/, and /k/ are aspirated in the syllable-initial position, i.e. a glottal /h/ follows each of these sounds. In Bengali, the similar phonemes are /প/ (equivalent to /p/), /ট/ (equivalent to /t/) and /ক/ (equivalent to /k/) but none of these is aspirated in the similar position in Bengali. Although aspiration accounts for allophonic variations of these three plosives, lack of aspiration in the position concerned may lead to phonemic variations as well leading to semantic variations, i.e. an unaspirated /t/ sounds like voiced /d/, an unaspirated /p/ sounds like voiced /b/ or an unaspirated /k/ sounds like voiced /g/ to a native English speaker or someone who understands and speaks standard English as in these examples: pick without /p/ being aspirated may be perceived as beak, tin without /t/ being aspirated may be misunderstood as din, and /k/ without aspiration in kill may be misunderstood as gill.

Apart from the lack of aspiration in the above English plosives, there are other consonantal errors by made by Bangladeshi English speakers. One English sound which is generally mispronounced is the alveolar fricative /z/ which is replaced by the affricate /dʒ/ being equivalent to Bengali /জ/ or /য/. So words like zoo, Zebra, like Zone are heard pronounced, especially by non-standard dialect users, as /dʒu/, /dʒebrʌ/ and /dʒon/ (the vowel sound being a pure /o/ in the last word, unavailable in Standard English) respectively. Interestingly, the affricate /dʒ/, by contrast, is replaced by /z/ in words like January, joy, and Germany. /f/ and /v/ are labiodental fricatives but Bengali speakers pronounce them as bilabial plosives, i.e. as /ত/ and /প/ respectively. /ʒ/ does not exist in Bengali; instead, it is replaced by either /ʃ/ or /dʒ/. /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are palato-alveolar affricates but pronounced as palatal plosives (Based on Syed, 2017, pp. 167-168).

INDIAN (HINDI) ENGLISH: All Indian ethnic groups, e.g. North Indians, Bengali speaking West Bengal people, South Indians, Punjabis, and Hindi speaking people, commit similar errors in English pronunciation. The English plosives /p/, /t/, and /k/ are pronounced without aspiration in the syllable-initial position sounding as /b/, /d/, and /g/ respectively, e.g. bat for pat, den for ten, or gain for cane, but, interestingly, /b/, /d/, and /g/ are pronounced /p/, /t, and /k/ respectively in the word-final position in words like rope for robe, coat for code or pick for pig and the like. The English labiodental fricative /v/ sounds like /w/ at the start of a word, e.g. wary for very but this sound is substituted by /f/ at the end of the word, e.g. leafs for leaves. /ð/ sounds like /d/ at the start and end of a word, e.g. dose for those and breed for breathe whereas its voiceless counterpart /θ/ is pronounced /t/, e.g. ting for thing and wit for with. Both /t/ and /d/ offer another problem, that is, Hindi speakers of English curl the tongue tip backwards to pronounce these sounds, which, as a result, qualitatively differ from those produced by RP speakers of English. English /z/ sounds like /s/ e.g. soo for zoo, sebra for Zebra and sone for zone etc. The affricate /dʒ/ sounds like /tʃ/ at the end of the word, e.g. rich for ridge. English /r/ is also erroneously pronounced in that though it is a retroflex, in Hindi, the tongue is rolled further back in the mouth than it is for its English counterpart; it touches the alveolar ridge and thus it loses its quality as an approximant similar to Bengali, instead of touching the alveolar ridge, the contact is made between the tip of the tongue and the root of the front teeth. /w / sounds as /v/ at the start of a word as pronounced in Urdu. Consonant clusters, too, are difficult for Hindi speakers, so are wrongly pronounced; the last sound constituting a cluster is often left out like live for lived or wan for wants. Finally, /l/, an alveolar lateral, is pronounced as a dental plosive in English words, e.g., lake, lose in Indian English.

English vowels are mispronounced too. As in Bengali, vowel length does not matter in Indian English; as a result, /i/ and /i:/ or /ʊ/ and /u:/ are pronounced as the same causing serious comprehension difficulty for native English speakers because length is a distinctive feature causing meaning difference because of quantity difference, e.g. /lɪv/ and /li:v/ have different meanings as /pʊl/ and /pu:l/ or /fʊl/ or /fu:l/. In a similar manner, all English short and long vowels having the same place and manner of articulation (quality) are confusing because of wrong length (quantity) causing miscommunication between a native English speaker and a nonnative English speaker. This problem is present in Bengali speakers of English too as discussed above. There is a great confusion regarding the pronunciation of English /ɜ:/ and /ɑ:/. The first one is a mid-position central vowel whereas the second vowel is an open back vowel (see the vowel map on page 8). Heart may be mispronounced /hɜ:t/ instead of /hɑ:t/ or bird may be mispronounced as /bɑ:d/ instead of /bɜ:d/ or even /bʌd/ causing serious miscommunication disruption between speakers which is not uncommon among Bengali speakers of English, too. The /ə/, or schwa as it is called, a central short vowel is the most difficult English sound not only for Indian English speakers but also for many other nonnative speakers of English including Bengalis because of its unavailability in those languages and, therefore, its being replaced by similar sounds available in the respective native languages. Very often it is replaced by /ʌ/, an open-central short vowel; /ɑ:/, open back vowel; or /ɜ:/, a mid-position central vowel. As English vowels, English gliding vowels or diphthongs are also mispronounced by Hindi speakers of English. /ei/ is pronounced as /e/, e.g. wet for wait; or /əʊ/ is pronounced /o/ (not available in Standard English, e.g. wrote, boat, or road. In these words, the diphthong is replaced by a pure vowel /o/ which the closest substitute for the diphthong /əʊ/ not available in Indian English and many other Englishes (based on Indian English pronunciation errors @ http://englissshspeaklikenative.com/).

PAKISTANI (URDU) ENGLISH: Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, is similar to Hindi, so Urdu speaking people commit identical English pronunciation errors. Riaz (2015) found the following consonantal problems in Urdu speaking people's English: /w/ and /v/ are not differentiated, water, win, woman etc sound like voman, vater, and vin respectively. Stops, /p/, /t/, and /k/, like in Indian or Bangladeshi English, are not aspirated in the syllable-initial position. Consonant clusters are broken up with either /ə/ or /i/ introduced in front of words like school (/iskool/,) and station (/isteʃʌn/) (Khan, 2012). /ð/ and /θ/, dental fricatives, are difficult for Urdu speakers of English too; instead, they are pronounced /d/ and /t/ respectively, e.g. den for then and tink for think (Sabbir, 2013). /s/ sometimes is pronounced as /ʃ/ or remains silent, e.g. shtyle for style, or tation for station (Riaz, 2015). The vowel sounds which deviate from the norm or Standard or RP, are /ɑ:/ for /ɒ/ in words like copy, job, and top; /æ/ for /e/ in memory

and television; /ə/ for /ɜ:/, e.g. shut for shirt; /ɑ:/ for /ɔ:/ in words like torn and horn. Diphthongs are problematic too for Urdu speaking people as they are for speakers of many other languages including some Asian and European languages. The English diphthong /ei/ is pronounced as /e/, e.g. trening for training; /əʊ/ is changed to /ʊ/ e.g. mobile (Riaz, ibid). Finally, some Urdu speaking people have a tendency to pronounce the silent sounds represented by corresponding letters which appear in front of some words, e.g. knowledge, knife, or Tsunami (the last one is not an English word though).

ARABIC ENGLISH: of English have deviant English pronunciation mainly because of the influence of Arabic, their mother tongue. Standard Arabic spoken in Saudi Arabia has been the basis for the examination of English pronunciation errors though different accents (the vernacular) are spoken across the country. Ababneh (2018) observes that Saudi speakers of English sometimes confuse one vowel sound with another like /e/, /i/, /ei/, and /ɑi/ are confused with /i/, /e/, /æ/, /i/ or /e/ respectively. So, well may sound will, will may sound well, snake may sound snak and smile may sound smil or smel. Tushyeh (1996) found that Arabic speakers of English replace /p/ with /b/, /v/ with /f/, and /i/ with /e/. They pronounce blay for play, bicture for picture as /p/ is not available in Arabic. According to Abdulwahab (2015), the following English consonant sounds are also not available in Arabic: /ŋ/, /v/, /t/, and /d/; however, the last two sounds are available as dental sounds though. Ibrahim (1978) found that Arabic lacks consonant clusters; instead, the clusters are broken down as childiren for children and tiransilate for translate. Ababneh (2018) says that the replacement of consonant sounds occur as follows: /b/ for /p/ in words like cups (pronounced cubs) and pie (pronounced bie); /f/ for /v/ in words like very (pronounced as fery), and vanilla (pronounced as fanilla). Such replacements are the results of the unavailability of the sounds in question in Arabic and their being replaced by the closest equivalents available in it, as Ababneh (ibid) comments.

KURDISH ENGLISH: Rahimpur and Dovaise (2011) found the following deviations from Standard English pronunciation: English unaspirated voiceless consonant are aspirated; /k/, /g/ and /t/ are palatalized; /v/ is substituted by / w/; /r/ pronounced as /ɽ /, a flap; and / ϴ/ / is replaced by either /s/ or /t/.

MALAYSIAN ENGLISH (ME), AFRICAN ENGLISH (AE), JAPANESE ENGLISH (JE), CHINESE ENGLISH (CE), GHANAIAN ENGLISH (GE), SINGAPORE-MALAYSIAN ENGLISH (SME), AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENGLISH (AFAME): Schneider (2003, pp. 56-57) found that in ME, the final stop is often replaced by a glottal stop /s/ as ba for back, be for bet or bed. Kachru and Smith (2008, p. 81) observe that some sounds in ME English are made homophonous like /ϴ/ and /t/; words are made homophonous like theme as team; or /ð / and /d/ homophonous in words like then and den. Kachru and Smith (ibid) also observe that in African English, /r/ and /l/ are not distinguishable. They also observe that in Chinese (CE), Ghanaian (GE) and Singapore-Malaysian English (SME) /ϴ/ is pronounced as /t/. They further observe that in the African-American Vernacular English, simplification of the final consonant cluster happens, e.g. left is pronounced as lef. This pronunciation habit, as they point out, also leads to the loss of past tense endings or the loss of plural markers in words like pick for picked or des for desks. Such pronunciation deviations are strongly likely to cause potential misunderstanding, they finally comment.

JAPANESE ENGLISH: Avery and Ehrlich (1992) point out that there are more consonants in English than in Japanese. They observe that these English fricatives and affricates do not exist in Japanese: /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, so naturally, in English words which contain any of the sounds would be difficult to pronounce for Japanese speakers of English leading to mispronunciation. On the other hand, as Ladefoged (1982) points out that a voiceless bilabial fricative /ɸ/ and a voiceless palatal fricative /Ç/ are present in the Japanese consonant inventory in words like Fujisann (Mt Fuji) and Hito (human) respectively which would be unfamiliar to an English speaker. With respect to Japanese vowels too, they are fewer in number than English vowels.

FRENCH ENGLISH: French 'r' is a voiced uvular fricative /ʁ/ made at the back of the mouth whereas English /r/ is an alveolar approximate made near the front of the mouth, so the French pronounce /r/ differently than the native English speakers. Many French vowels use rounded lips whereas the English use the neutral lip positions in the vowels highlighted in this sentence: The first thing I heard was a scream. The resulting sound would be very different from the corresponding English sound and is likely to confuse a native English speaker. The dental fricative /ð/ and /θ/ are not available in French so these sounds are replaced with /z/ and /s/ respectively, for example: 'we will see zem on Sursday. French has one close front vowel /i/ whereas English has one short /i/ and another long /i:/. French people often use the short vowel in words like sheep, feet or read. French does not have /ɑ:/, so /æ/ replaces this sound in words like: hat for heart, ham or harm and had for hard. Unlike English, French does not have diphthongs; diphthongs are replaced by monophthongs as /o/ is used in the highlighted parts in this utterance: Don't go (o) (not əʊ) to the show (o). Finally, Japanese speakers of English miss out the plosive sound at the beginning of English affricate in words like: chair, and Jack (Hudson, 2013).

SPANISH ENGLISH: Spanish English, too, suffers considerable interference from Spanish itself. Quite a number of English vowels and consonants are not available in Spanish. In Spanish, there is no difference between /i/ and /i:/, so sit and seat have the same pronunciation. Likewise, /ʊ/ and /u:/ have the same pronunciation; pool and pull have the same pronunciation. English /ɔ:/ and /ɒ/ have the same pronunciation in words like caught (pronounced cot) or fought (pronounced fot). The sound /d/ is pronounced /t/ so bird may be pronounced as bert. Unlike in English, /p/, /t/, and /k/ are not aspirated in the syllable-initial position as it happens in Bengali or Indian speakers of English. Sh is replaced by /s/ in word-final positions. Final /m/ is realized as /n/, e.g. drean instead of dream. /z/ is pronounced /s/ because /z/ does not exist in Spanish. An /st/ cluster is also changed to /s/ e.g. breakfast is reduced to breakfas. Such devoicing may occur also in case of /d/ like win in stead of wind (Skudder (2019). Other cases of deviant pronunciation of English sounds are because of the non-existence of /θ/, responsible for mispronunciation like tank for thank or dese for these; the non-existence of the English semi-vowel /j/ gives rise to mispronunciations like jail for Yale or jello for yellow; and the nonexistence of /ʃ/ leads to mispronunciations like chair for share or champoo for shampoo. Other wrong vowel pronunciations are also because of the difference in the phonetic inventories of the two languages. English diphthong /əʊ/ is unavailable in Spanish so mispronunciation occurs in words like go and toe. Whereas the diphthong /əʊ/ occurs in these words in

English, Spanish English speakers tend to use an /o/, a pure vowel in its place which is not available in RP or Standard English. Three more nonnative English segmental pronunciations, Italian; Chinese; and Russian, which deviate from the Standard, are examined below.

RUSSIAN ENGLISH: Russian English has 5 to 6 vowels whereas Standard English has 20 vowels including diphthongs. In Russian, English /ɑ: / is pronounced as /ʌ/ in a word like heart (pronounced hut), barn is pronounced bun, and cart is pronounced cut like in Spanish English and in Bengali speakers' English. Also, /i/ and /i:/ are same in pronunciation, so feet is pronounced fit, read is pronounced rid, and scene is pronounced sin; there is no difference between short and long vowels whereas in Standard English, difference in vowel length causes meaning difference too. Vowel /æ/ is pronounced /e/, so man is pronounced men, pat is pronounced pet, and sand is send. Quantitative difference results in qualitative change and that, in turn, leads to meaning change which is very likely to disrupt communication between a speaker speaking Standard English and the other speaking such nonnative erroneous English. Besides English pure vowels, English gliding vowels or diphthongs are also mispronounced by Russians because they are not available in the Russian language. English /əʊ/ is replaced by /o/, a pure vowel not available in RP but exists in Scottish English, Bengali and many other languages. These are the few examples: /gəʊ/ (go) is /go/, /ələʊn(alone) is /ɑlon/, and /dəʊnt/ (don't) is /dont/ in Russian English. Another English diphthong which is mispronounced in Russian is /ei/ which is often replaced by /e/, so /plei/ (play) is /ple/, teik (take) is /tek/ and /mein/ (main) is /men/. As for the production of English consonants, Russian English is no less deviant. For example, whereas English /r/ is a retroflex, that is, the tongue is moved backwards for its production, in Russian English, the tongue is moved even further back making a trill as done by Spanish speakers of English which is difficult for English native speakers to produce. An example could be: Park mother's car there. /w/ and /v/ are confusing to Russians as they are to Hindi and Urdu speaking people; so weary, wild, and walk may sound veary, vild, and valk. English fricatives are problematic too. /h/ in these words how, happy, and Harry produced not at the throat but at the front of the mouth. /θ/, and /ð/ are substituted by /s/ and /z/ respectively. "I sink you're right" and "zose people are absent" are two examples. Like Spanish, Hindi and Bengali speakers of English, Russians, too, pronounce plosives /p/, /t/ and /k/ without aspiration in the syllable-initial position; as a result, the sounds are perceived as /b/, /d/, and /g/ respectively by RP speakers of English. Voiced consonants, like /d/, /g/, /z/, and /v/, on the other hand, become /t/, /k/, /s/ and /f/ respectively (Based on Russian speakers' English pronunciation errors @ http:// pronunciationstudio.com. russian-speakers-english-pronunciation-errors).

CHINESE ENGLISH: Chinese has a fewer vowel sounds than English, so it is difficult for Chinese speakers to pronounce the ones unfamiliar to them and often result in erroneous pronunciation. Chinese speakers use /æ/ and /e/ interchangeably without changing the meaning, so bad and bed or bat and bet may mean the same thing. It will not be hard to imagine what disaster might happen in communicating with others using two distinct phonemes to mean the same thing. Vowel length is not important in Chinese too like in the languages discussed earlier. English consonants /r/, /v/ and /θ/ are not available in Chinese; instead, /r/ and /v/ are replaced with /l/ and /w/ respectively in words like rice (pronounced lice), and very (pronounced wawy). /θ/, on the other hand, is pronounced /s/ as in mouth (pronounced mouse). In fact, except for /n/ and /ng/, words ending with consonants are rarely found in the Chinese language. Interestingly, the final consonant, if any, is followed by /ə/ e.g. /ænd + ə/, /kæt + ə/ etc. (Based on Pronunciation problems shared by most Chinese English speakers @ http://chatterize.com/pronunciation-problems-chinese-english-speakers).

ITALIAN ENGLISH: Italian speakers often miss /h/, so they pronounce these words without /h/: ouse for house, ow for how, orse for horse and ard for hard. Similar to Chinese speakers, Italians, too, add an /ə/ when a word ends in a consonant e.g. /laik + ə/, /lot + ə/ etc. Diphthongs, as in Spanish, do not occur in Italian; therefore /nəʊ/ (no), /gəʊ (go), and /səʊ (so) are pronounced as /no/, /go/ and /so/ respectively. As mentioned earlier, /o/ represents a pure vowel not available in RP. Unlike English /r/, in Italian, the tongue is rolled backwards creating a trill as in Spanish for its production. As in American English but unlike Standard British English, /r/ is pronounced after a vowel by the Italians. As in Spanish, in Italian too, /ð/ is pronounced /d/ and /θ/ is pronounced /t/; examples are: tink for think, tird for third, den for then, and dere for there (Based on Italian speakers' English pronunciation errors @ http://pronunciationstudio.com/italian-speakers-english-pronunciation-errors).

The above illustrate segmental errors in English as evident in nonnative speakers' English pronunciation. The illustrations, however, are not exhaustive but because of space limit, the paper could not include similar errors committed by other nonnative speakers of English.

DISCUSSION

The result of the investigation into nonnative English speakers' pronunciation indicates that vowel length is a big factor in pronouncing English words which have either long, short, or both short and long vowels in them. It has been found that speakers are confused about the quantity difference between short vowels and long vowels. In English pronunciation, the quantitative parameter of the vowel sounds plays an important role in that meaning difference occurs because of length difference. English gliding vowels or diphthongs are problematic too because in many world Englishes, there are no diphthongs; instead, they are replaced by monophthongs or pure vowels. In many languages, the diphthong /əʊ/ is generally pronounced as /o/ (a pure vowel) which is not available in English. This is a significant segmental error in nonnative English pronunciation. It has been also found that apart from quantitative differences, many nonnative English pronunciations significantly deviate from Standard English pronunciation qualitatively with respective to tongue height, tongue position and lip rounding.

As for English consonants, both place and manner are distinctive features of pronunciation but many nonnative English pronunciations deviate from these features rendering the pronunciations substandard. For example, affricates are a combination of a plosive and a fricative whereas in many languages (including Bengali) they are realized as plosives only. Some English consonants are not available in other languages; as a result, English pronunciation is negatively influenced. Because a sound is not

available in L1, the speaker finds it difficult to pronounce it or if a sound is not available in English, the speaker may try to replace it with whatever sound close to the English sound is available in the speaker's L1. For instance, /Ө/ and /ð/, two bilabial fricatives, unique to English pronunciation, are usually replaced by /t/ and /d/ respectively in Spanish, and by /থ/ and /দ/ (dental plosives) respectively in Bengali. /ʒ/, an English palatal fricative, also nasalized, is unavailable in many languages, and is substituted by /s/, /z, /dʒ/, or /ʃ/. Unavailability, therefore, of a sound in either the L1 of a speaker or in the L2 being learnt, is a significant reason for English segmental errors.

English approximants are problematic, too. The English phoneme /r/ is an approximant in the articulation of which the articulators do not come into contact with each other, but in many nonnative Englishes, it is produced with the tip of the tongue making a firm contact with the teeth as in Bengali, Hindi and some European Englishes. English semivowels (phonetically vowels but phonologically consonants) also cause problems. /j/ begins with /i;/, then moves on to the next sound available and /w/ begins with /u:/, then moves on to the next sound available. The muscles under the root of the tongue tense up while they are produced but in most nonnative pronunciations of these sounds, the muscles do not tense up leading to a qualitative deviation.

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS: The investigation into segmental errors in nonnative English speakers' English pronunciation has revealed that English segmental errors constitute both vowels and consonants and most of them can be generalized to errors from similar contexts. A few examples are: the /ə/, the most frequently English short vowel, is the most wrongly used short vowel occurring among nonnative English speakers. Vowel length is not important to them, so most short vowels have similar pronunciations as their counterparts. English /i/ is unlike any vowels in nonnative English because it is not available in the languages concerned. The diphthongs are wrongly pronounced in many languages; i.e., they are pronounced as pure vowels instead. The consonants are no less problematic. /ʒ/, for example, is wrongly pronounced by most nonnative speakers and is mostly substituted by /dʒ/, /z/ or by /ʃ/. The aspirated plosives /p/, /t/ and /k/ are not aspirated in the syllable-initial position or are wrongly aspirated. In many nonnative varieties of English pronunciation English consonant clusters, an intruding vowel sound is inserted before or after the consonant, e.g. iskool for 'school' or setreet for 'street'. As for the reasons for wrong pronunciation of English sounds, it has been found that in most cases, first language negative interference or transfer is the main problem in the acquisition of English sounds.

INTELLIGIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY: Kachru and Smith (2008: pp. 82-83) have the opinion that pronunciation differences have little negative impact on communication, because, as they think, people tend to adjust- and accommodate to the pronunciation habits of the other people they are communicating with. They refer to SAT (Speech Accommodation Theory) or CAT (Communication Accommodation Theory), as later rephrased, that miscommunication hardly ever occurs because of segmental deviations in the outer and Expanding Circle pronunciation varieties or the nonnative English varieties because interlocutors gradually get familiar with each other's phonological systems; therefore, misunderstanding resulting from mispronunciation gradually disappears as speakers accommodate and adjust to the pronunciation habits of others (Page 79).

But the question is "do they?" The truth is, in natural, real-life communication, the listener/speaker has little opportunity or willingness to alter his or her language and message in order to help the interlocutor by using simplified language, e.g. "motherese" (Ferguson, 1977) in Ellis (1985, pp103-131), or adjustments which parents make to their speech on the basis of the feedback they receive from their children, or by employing foreigner talk where native speakers slow down their speech, use heavier stress, increase their volume and exaggerate their intonation contours etc. (Hatch, 1983 in Ellis, 1985, p. 135) to help the interlocutor communicate comfortably.

In real-life interaction, such adaptations by native speakers rarely happen; instead, because of the nonnative speaker's unintelligible and incomprehensible pronunciation, the native English speaker may lose interest and stop communicating with someone who speaks incomprehensible English using unintelligible pronunciation.

PRONUNCIATION ERRORS IN THE PROSODIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH: Though the paper has not examined the suprasegmental or prosodic errors of English pronunciation in nonnative English speakers, it may not be unhelpful to leave a tip for learners on how to learn these features. As for improving English rhythm and intonation and the other aspects of English pronunciation like linking, weak forms, assimilation and elision etc., there seems to be no better alternative to listening to Standard English conversations, followed by intensive dialogue practice, reading aloud practice and free conversation practice with the teacher present while the activities are going on. For that to happen, the teacher himself/herself should try to acquire standard pronunciation of English, remembering that, as research confirms, it is never late to improve L2 pronunciation at any time in someone's life.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRONUNCIATION TEACHING AND LEARNING: It may be suggested that speakers become familiar with Standard English pronunciation or RP (Received Pronunciation) with its greater currency and acceptability in an international communication situation. If face-to-face contact with someone who speaks Standard English is not possible, pronunciation errors, especially segmental errors, can still be corrected by consulting a good English-to-English dictionary like the Oxford Advanced Dictionary, or the Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary or any other dictionary which uses the updated internationally recognized RP phonemic symbols as devised by IPA (International Phonetic Association). Instructors should teach their student how to use the dictionary for pronunciation learning. Above all, the best way of teaching English pronunciation would be to teach it in an integrated manner, i.e. teaching all its elements in a blended manner alongside teaching the other features of the language, i.e., grammar, writing, speaking, reading and vocabulary in context

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PAPER

The paper's significance lies in the systematic examination of segmental errors, i.e., first the vowels, then the diphthongs, and then the consonants in the pronunciation of nonnative English speakers collected from a wide variety of contexts. It would not only help experts and instructors from a particular speech community to understand how deviants their English pronunciation is within their own communities but also of other nonnative English speakers as well. Recommending RP as an international standard of English pronunciation is justifiable on the ground that speakers of English can find in it an internationally intelligible and acceptable variety which can be used for communicating across culturally varied English-speaking communities. The suggestion made for teachers, learners and users of English to use dictionaries in case listening materials are not available is pedagogically significant and pragmatic. The discovery of L1 influence being the main reason for pronunciation errors in nonnative English speakers' pronunciation is also pedagogically significant in that by comparing and contrasting the features of pronunciation of the first language of a person with those of English (the L2), will help the speaker notice them which, in turn, will help in their acquisition. Though the focus of the paper is on segmental errors, the presentation of an overview of the major segmental as well as the prosodic features of English pronunciation, i.e., stress, rhythm and intonation as given before the descriptions of segmental errors would definitely benefit those who need to know what components constitute English pronunciation and accord each element its relative importance. It has been rightly observed that of all the elements of English pronunciation, stress and rhythm are the two most unique and important features of English pronunciation, wrong use or no use of which is highly likely to cause serious comprehension difficulty and breakdown. Finally, it has been aptly recommended that pronunciation teaching take place in a blended manner.

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