

**Evaluation of Intelligibility Debate from the
Perspective of Pakistani English Language
Practitioners**



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In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

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FORWARDING SHEET

This thesis entitled **Evaluation of The Intelligibility Debate From the perspective of Pakistani English Language Practitioners** by Mrs. **Rehana Yasmin Anjum** Roll

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, whose prayers and untiring efforts have made me successful in life in achieving high goals. Their encouragement, unforgettable sacrifices and tedious struggle will remain a continuous source of delight and inspiration for me. May their prayers be always with me! Aameen!

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ABSTRACT

The English language came to the subcontinent through the British who ruled it for more than 100 years in the 17th century. Now the people of Pakistan and India are sandwiched between a more formal, sophisticated and literal English Language of the British and informal and casual English Language of the Americans. English is a lingua Franca which is acknowledged as a store house of knowledge and window onto world. At the start of the 21st century, most applied linguists were familiar with the fact that English is now spoken by a considerably greater number of non-native speakers than the native speakers. This incipient change in the status of English as an International language has opened a new vista of debate, namely, the intelligibility debate. It is assumed that English as an International Language has attained such a niche that its ownership by some group or some nation cannot be accepted as an authority, as it is connecting people across the globe through its mutual intelligibility trait. Those who can use it proficiently and even have command over its idiomatic use, whatever accent they may have must be acknowledged. The idea of following RP has been challenged by linguists like Jennifer Jenkins, Barbra Sieldhofer, Jonna Przedlacka, Katerzyna, etc and defended by Peter Trudgill and others insisting on the importance of a standard accent to be followed. This school says that every language has its own peculiar patterns which should be maintained while acquiring it otherwise that particular language will lose its peculiar flavor and identity and would gradually be lost like many other languages which could not resist simplification campaigns and eventually lost their originality. The current study explores this issue in Pakistani academic situation with a survey based on the views of students and teachers through a questionnaire. The results show that both groups are in favor of an eclectic approach that is approved worldwide to facilitate convenience and ease without compromising the minimum standard.

CHAPTER NO. 01**INTRODUCTION**

1.1	Importance of English	08
1.2	Current Status of English in Pakistan	09
1.3	English as Lingua Franca	11
1.4	Intelligibility Debate	14
1.5	Statement of the problem	13
1.6	Hypothesis	14
1.7	Rationale	14
1.8	Why the topic is selected?	15
1.9	Purpose of the study	15
1.10	Significance	17
1.11	Lingua Franca Core	18
1.12	Objectives	18
1.13	Delimitations of the study	19
1.14	Research Methodology	19
1.15	Population, sampling	20
1.15.1	Population	20
1.15.2	Sampling	20
1.16	Sampling Method	21
1.17	Instrument	21

1.18	Variables	22
1.18.1	Independent Variables	22
1.18.2	Dependent Variable	22
1.19	Data Collecting Method	23
1.20	Research Plan/Procedure	23
1.20.1	Step.01	23
1.20.2	Step.02	24

CHAPTER NO. 02

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	English as Lingua Franca	25
2.2	International English	26
2.3	ELF-A Contact Language	29
2.4	Lingua Franca Core (LFC)	29
2.5	Is ELF a Threat to Multilingualism?	33
2.6	ELF is not possession of anybody	35
2.7	Debate on LFC or Intelligibility Debate	36
2.7.1	Favor on LFC	36
2.7.2	Attack on LFC	37
2.8	Which Pronunciation Norm and Model?	39
2.9	Main Problem and solution	40

2.10	Jenefer Jenkin’s Compromise solution	40
2.11	Pedagogical Norms in LFC	41
2.12	Look on the other side	45
2.13	Some previous studies showing Problems in LFC	46
2.14	Inherent Difficulties of English Language Current Study	48
2.15	Is LFC non native? A Sting In the Tail	50
2.16	Why You RP? Why not?	50
2.18	Summing up the debate	50
2.19	PE-Pakistani English	50
2.20	Pedagogical Norms in PE- Pakistani English	52
2.21	Problems in PE	54
2.21.1	Vowel Reconstruction	54
2.21.2	Vowel Epenthesis	55
2.21.3	Syllable Onset cluster and phonotactics	56
2.21.4	Vowel Disappearance From Middle Syllables	56
2.22	Patterns In PE Pronunciation	57
2.23	Current Study	58
2.24	The Gap- Filling in the Gap	58

CHAPTER NO. 03

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overall Design of the Study	59
3.2 What Is Evaluation?	59
3.3 Research And Evaluations, Different Or Same?	60
3.4 Research Questions	60
3.5 Population and Delimitation	62
3.6 Sampling Method	62
3.7 Description of the Variables	63
3.7.1 Independent Variables	63
3.7.2 Dependent Variable	63
3.8 Participants / Sample	64
3.9 Data Collection Method	67
3.9.1 Cross Sectional Survey Method	68
3.9.2 Self-Reported Questionnaire	68
3.9.3 Interview Method	68
3.9.4 Classroom Observation Method	69
3.10 Data Collection Tools	69
3.10.1 Questionnaire (Students)	69
3.10.2 Questionnaire (Teachers)	71
3.10.3 Questionnaire (Professionals)	71
3.10.4 A General Survey	72
3.11 Data Collection Procedure	73

3.12	treatment of data	74
3.13	Data Analysis and Presentation	74

CHAPTER NO. 04

DATA COLLECTION & DATA ANALYSIS

4.1	Data Collection & Treatment	77
4.2	Procedure of Data collection –CIPP Evaluation Model	78
4.2.1	Context	78
4.2.3	Process	84
4.2.4	Product	88
4.3	Analysis Of The Questioners	94
4.4	Analysis of the Interview	131
4.5	Findings	132

CHAPTER NO. 05

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1	Findings & Result Discussion	142
5.2	Result Discussion with Analysis	156
5.3	Generalizations	165
5.4	Conclusion	171
5.5	Recommendations	173

5.6 Implications for the Further Research	174
Bibliography & References	177
Appendices	191

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	79
Table 4.2	80
Table 4.3	82
Table 4.4	84
Table 4.5	85
Table 4.6	87
Table 4.7	88
Table 4.8	89
Table 4.9	91
Table 4.10	93

ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Tables 4.3.1.1-10	95-104
Tables 4.3.2.1-10	105-114
Tables 4.3.3.1-10	115-124
Tables 4.3.4.1-6	125-131
Tables 4.4.1-10	132-135

CHAPTER NO.1

Introduction

1.1 Importance of English

A foreign language provides the key that unlocks the literary treasure house of the nation that speaks it and it is the only key that fits it. Language is a basic tool for communication. Man has always been fascinated about how this tool is acquired because if it becomes clear it can be helpful in learning L2. English is an international language and the progress in the fields of medicine, engineering, law, science, communication and personal life interaction among nations and individuals is done in this “Lingua Franca”. Among developing countries, Pakistan is at the top of the list, in its need of solving problems for its stability and prosperity by producing a generation that is well equipped with all the necessary arsenals for modern survival. English has become the main language for communication in Pakistan as well as throughout the world. Progress in life is measured in terms of one’s proficiency in English language.

In today’s Politics, English is used as an international language. It is the language of the multinational media. Its importance can also be measured with the fact that it is also one of the six official languages of U.N.O. English has become a world language, depending on the rapid spread of industry, science, technology and international trade. From Socio-Cultural point of view, English helps us in understanding Western culture and thoughts through its rich treasure of literature. All the modern research work has been preserved in this language. It enjoys the same status as Latin enjoyed in the past being, the language of *intelligentia*, opening new vistas of thought. Once English was the language of British isles but with the advent of industrialization and colonization it became the language of all those areas where these imperial colonizers went.

Although gone are the days of colonial mastership but even now the countries which were once a part of British regime have this legacy of their masters as their first or second official language. This is why it is now spoken by billions of people across the continents in various countries with different accents and proficiency levels. David Crystal (1997) has well studied when he tells us that English Language has become the language of most of the world and non native users of it have outnumbered native users by the ratio tree to one. David Crystal in his book, English as a Global Language.(1997) explained that how from the language of a leading colonial power of Nineteen seventies and eighties, English became the language of major industrial powers and then Economic powers of the world in twentieth century along with the USA. Not only this but it became the language of new technologies brought new linguistic opportunities, which left its marks on all walks of life i.e. the press, advertising, broadcasting, motion pictures, sound recording, transport and communications (Crystal, 1997, pp. 110-111). So it comfortably earned for itself a dominating place. The same thing had been pointed out by Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) that it has become the language of research and publications all over the world in all the universities and centers of learning in the whole world as the language of instructions. .(Flowerdew, J. &Peacock.M.2001, pp. 31-32).

1.2 Current Status of English in Pakistan

The British who ruled the subcontinent for more than 100 years in the 17th century brought this English Language with them. Now the people of Pakistan and India are sandwiched between a more formal, sophisticated and literal English Language of the British and informal and casual English Language of the Americans. Due to the current dominance of English in all walks of life, the need to learn it has changed the objectives of education all over the world and their

educational systems. Pakistan is no exception. The learners in Pakistan need to learn it for many reasons but the most important are these two reasons :

- a) To acquire higher education in different fields.
- b) To get good jobs.

In order to achieve the above mentioned goals, they are required to get proficiency in all the four basic language skills, to use English in an effective way. But the text books in use are insufficient in fulfilling the above requirement. Moreover, our existing examination system is basically a test of memory instead of a real test of talent. The students are asked to vomit in just three hours what they have learnt round the whole year. We take English as a Subject not as a Language. Our examination system has not been designed to test these integrated skills. As a result the text books are composed in such a way as in tune with this system which finally results in rote learning. Owing to these reasons, methodology adopted by teachers automatically becomes faulty that de motivates the students and results in poor learning.

Syed Ashraf Hussain Hashmi, in his book, *Problems and Principles of English Language teaching in Pakistan* (1986) has, very aptly, remarked about the current situation of curriculum and its results saying, “Very little serious realistic thinking has been paid on the problem of teaching languages in Pakistan. It requires the head of Philosopher, the eyes of a Scientist, the heart of a patriot, the hands of a soldier, the nerves of a politician and the analysis of an educationist which unfortunately is lacking.” (Hashmi, 1986, p.23).

1.3 English as Lingua Franca

English is a Lingua Franca. A lingua Franca is a language that comes from an entirely different cultural background and is taken over by the people whose first language is some other but they use it as a language of contact and utility. Allan Firth(1996) has defined a lingua franca in a very apt way, ‘a contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication’ (Firth 1996, cited in Seidlhofer 2004: 211). ELF has become a very popular term along with EIL(English as an International Language) and WE(world Englishes) Now a days, in this globalized world of ours English has become a symbol of immense political, social, and economic power, as Kachru (2005) reinforces its importance by adding that it is ‘a communicative tool of immense power’. The usage of this tool is very important in deciding the fate of its users. This is what Anne Pakir once commented that ‘how this tool is used in the outer circle is a concern”. (Pakir,2003). English is enormously used as an international as well as an intra-national lingua franca. This has made the real difference as with changing needs of its users it has to adapt itself. We have to concentrate on its different varieties which are becoming increasingly popular all over the world. If we focus on international English (IE), world Englishes (WE), and English as a lingua Franca (ELF) different varieties we can easily see that these are constructs, paradigms and movements which are based on clearly utilitarian purposes.

Crystal (2003) tells us that English is the first language of only 25% of its speakers across the world the rest of the speakers are non-natives .So ELF (English as Lingua Franca) is different from EFL (English as a foreign language).EFL deals with the goal is to be able to interact with native speakers or attain native speaker like accent and competence. ELF is altogether different. Although this is a newly emerging movement or paradigm usually known as English lingua

franca (ELF) or lingua franca English (LFE) yet is hotly discussed in the Expanding Circle of English. A very popular topic of research among applied linguists. Most of its research and discussions are currently led by European researchers like Barbra Seidlhofer (2004), Jenifer Jenkins and others. Researches in this area claim to be more rewarding as they provide assistance in attaining proficiency in use and acquisition by NNS across the world.

1.4 Intelligibility Debate

English is a lingua Franca which is acknowledged as a store house of knowledge and window onto world. It was clearly acknowledged in the beginning of the 21st century, by most applied linguists that English is now being spoken by a greater number of non-native speakers than the native speakers. This dramatic change in the status of English as an International language opened a new vista of debate, namely, the intelligibility debate. It is assumed that English as an International Language has attained such a niche that its ownership by some group or some nation cannot be accepted as an authority. It is connecting people across the globe through its mutual intelligibility trait. Those who can use it proficiently and even have command over its idiomatic use, whatever accent they may have, must be acknowledged. The idea of following RP has been challenged by linguists like Jennifer Jenkins(2000), Barbra Sielhofe(2004)), Jonna Przedlack Katerzyna, etc and defended by Peter Trudgill (2005) and others insisting on the importance of a standard accent to be followed. This school says that every language has its own peculiar patterns which should be maintained while acquiring it otherwise that particular language will lose its peculiar flavour and identity and would gradually be lost like many other languages which could not resist simplification campaigns and eventually lost their originality.