

Mother-Tongue Interference In English Pronunciation Among Secondary School Students: An Action Research

Nitya Murali, Independent Researcher, Kerala, India

Abstract-- Mother-Tongue may affect a person's learning of a foreign language. The inability to articulate some unusual sounds in the English language can be perceived as a consequence of the person's being trained in another native language. For instance, those whose Mother-Tongue is Malayalam find it difficult to produce the phonetic sound /z/ in the English language as there is no /z/ sound in the Malayalam language. Likewise, there is a tendency to utter the sounds of the Malayalam language while producing English words. This study seeks to address the problems of students with their English pronunciation as an impact of their native language i.e., Malayalam. It was carried forth by following the methodology typically pertaining to an Action Research. On the basis of the criteria selected prior to the pre-test, activities to convey the correct pronunciation of the words were designed by the investigator. This action plan was implemented for remediating the errors in pronunciation among the students. Later, the pronunciation test was conducted again (post-test) to check the progress of the students and validate the efficiency of the action plan.

Index Terms-- Mother-Tongue, Interference, English Pronunciation, Secondary School Students

Phase I IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Man differs from other living organisms in the prospect of using a structured language for communication. Language systems have been subject to changes since time immemorial. Being an open system, a language welcomes new usages into its fold. Depending on the geographical boundaries, there are numerous languages. However, the need for a common language becomes predominant in all walks of life, especially in an era of globalization. In order to maintain the universality of a language, it becomes necessary for it to be standardized. That is, it must be decipherable by people around the globe who use the language; no matter to which nation or territory they belong. In the standardized version, the phonetic sounds are uttered in a way which can be perceived as such by the listeners. This implies the significance of a common phonetic system for a language.

India saw the advent of the English language in her land as a consequence of the long years of British colonization. Today, the language enjoys the status of a second language in India. The English language is treated as a tool to connect people from all corners of the world. The worldwide spread of English, its predominant use in diverse international economic and cultural arenas, and the dramatic expansion of electronic communication have allowed the language to achieve the status of an international language or a global lingua franca (Marlina, R., & Xu, Z., 2018).

One of the most prominent aspects which maintains the functionality of a language is its pronunciation. Understandable pronunciation is one of the basic requirements of learners' competence and it is also one of the most important features of language instruction. It may not be an easy task to imbibe the sound system of a foreign language intact. However, long years of exposure to the language demands a certain level of excellence in the articulation of the foreign language. Such is the case with the English language in India. The pronunciation of English language by the Indians have been categorized as various regional dialects. But, the language, when spoken to a native speaker, must be comprehensible. In a fast-growing socio-economic world, communication with people from different countries with different language backgrounds is inevitable. English, being the link language of the world, serves this purpose. Nevertheless, it becomes essential to converse in standardized English language in order for it to be perceived sensibly by the listeners. Thus, pronunciation of the English language plays a remarkable role in the effectiveness of communication in the present global scenario.

Being introduced at the pre-primary level of education system in India, English language is given utmost importance in the vocational practices and careers of Indian students. The supremacy of the language at the international level necessitates them to achieve competency in English language pronunciation. The goal of pronunciation instruction is not to ask learners to pronounce like native speakers; instead, intelligible pronunciation should be the real purpose of oral communication (Gilakjani, 2016).

Due to the variety of patterns in linguistic system, when a learner consciously begins the process of learning a second language or a foreign language, the distinctiveness of the second language in terms of its properties with that of the mother-tongue of the speaker inhibits the process of his/her acquisition of the second language disregarding his/her consciousness of the intrinsic differences between the two. This interference impels the learners of the second language to attempt to change the system of the target language in order to match it to their own language (Goswami, 2020).

While non-native speakers attempt to articulate the stranger sounds in target language, their Mother-Tongue may pop up uninvited. The production of sounds in a language is typically studied under the discipline of linguistics. Phonetics is the branch of linguistics which is concerned with the study of speech sounds in a language. According to Roach,

Phonetics is the scientific study of speech. It has a long history, going back certainly to well over two thousand years ago. The central concerns in phonetics are the discovery of how speech sounds are produced, how they are used in spoken language, how we can record speech sounds with written symbols and how we hear and recognize different sounds. (2009)

The aspect of pronunciation is, thus, primarily linked to the phonetics of a language. Different languages possess different systems of sounds and articulations. For instance, there are eight diphthongs in English Received Pronunciation, whereas Malayalam has only two, /aɪ/ and /aʊ/ (Syamala, 2010). Such differences yield certain errors in pronunciation while a person with Malayalam as Mother-Tongue seeks to produce words in English.

Mother-Tongue may affect a person's learning of a foreign language. The way in which Mother-Tongue of an individual interferes with the target language is evident from his/ her incorrect pronunciation of certain words of target language. The inability to articulate some unusual sounds in the English language can be perceived as a consequence of the person's being trained in another native language. For instance, those whose Mother-Tongue is Malayalam find it difficult to produce the phonetic sound /z/ in the English language as there is no /z/ sound in the Malayalam language. Likewise, there is a tendency to utter the sounds of the Malayalam language while producing English words. For instance, some people tend to introduce the Malayalam sound '□' in certain English words wherever 'r' is followed by an 's' like brothers, sisters, purse and so on; but there is no such sound in English. To an extent, such mispronunciation of English language can be attributed to the influence caused by the Mother-Tongue. Linguistic interference can lead to correct language production when the mother-tongue and the target language share many linguistic features. However, the transfer can result in errors when both languages differ (Rhalmi, 2014).

1.2. PROBLEM ANALYSIS

During the first phase of the school internship programme at St Thomas Higher Secondary School, Kadampanad, Kerala, the investigator, being a teacher-trainee dealing with the English subject in VIII-B, encountered a class of students who weren't pronouncing English words correctly. Besides, it was observed by the investigator that the majority of their English words were pronounced with a tinge of Malayalam. A detailed analysis of the situation made the investigator think about the role of Mother-Tongue in English language pronunciation among those students. The extent to which the Malayalam language influenced their English pronunciation was closely observable by the investigator. Improving the English pronunciation was felt as the need of the hour. The investigator attempted to solve the problem of mispronunciation due to Mother-Tongue interference by developing an appropriate action plan. As the second phase of school internship ensued, the investigator conducted a pronunciation test (pre-test) for the students of IX-B (the same class where the pronunciation problem was observed during the first phase). For this, certain criteria of pronunciation were selected beforehand and words belonging to those criteria were grouped. It was found that the majority of the students pronounced most of the words incorrectly. On the basis of the criteria selected prior to the pre-test, activities to convey the correct pronunciation of the words were designed by the investigator. This action plan was implemented for remediating the errors in pronunciation among the students. Later, the pronunciation test was conducted again (post-test) to check the progress of the students and validate the efficiency of the action plan.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Pronunciation plays a pivotal role in the communication of a language. The English language is bound to unique phonetic sounds, which may or may not resemble the sounds articulated in Malayalam language. Secondary school students, being accustomed to their Mother-Tongue tend to speak English in the way they speak Malayalam. This influence of Mother-Tongue impedes their correct pronunciation of English words. The personal experience of the investigator as a teacher-trainee of the English subject helped to realize the necessity of correcting the English pronunciation of the students by using suitable action plans. In the attempt, the investigator was confronted with the following questions:

- Do the secondary school students with Malayalam as their Mother-Tongue pronounce English words correctly?
- Are the secondary school students aware of the errors in their English pronunciation?
- Can the secondary school students' mispronunciation in English language be improved using an appropriate action plan?

1.4. TECHNIQUES AND METHODS APPLIED

Research methodology is the strategy or architectural design by which the researcher maps out an approach to problem-finding or problem-solving (Buckley J.W. et al, 1976). According to Dawson (2019), "a research methodology is the primary principle that will guide the research." It becomes the general approach in conducting research on a topic and determines what research method is to be used. Research methods are the tools used to gather data (Dawson, 2019). These methods serve to help the researcher plan strategically to solve specific research problems. Action Research is a methodology, which means it provides a framework for approaching a piece of research. This framework encourages investigators to look at a practice, assess where change may be valuable, to research the issues and possible actions, to implement and evaluate action steps and to articulate learning from the process.

This study was carried forth by following the methodology typically pertaining to an Action Research. Action Research is the type of research in which the researcher works with a group of people to improve something in a certain environment. It is a common approach for research in organizational management, community development, education and agriculture (Dawson, 2019).

In schools, Action Research refers to a wide variety of evaluative, investigative, and analytical research methods designed to diagnose problems or weaknesses - whether organizational, academic, or instructional - and help educators develop practical solutions to address them quickly and efficiently. Action research may also be applied to programmes or educational techniques that are not necessarily experiencing any problems, but that educators simply want to learn more about and improve. The general goal is to create a simple, practical, repeatable process of iterative learning, evaluation, and improvement that leads to increasingly better results for schools, teachers, or programs.

Educational research provides a vast landscape of knowledge on topics related to teaching and learning, curriculum and assessment, students' cognitive and affective needs, cultural and socio-economic factors of schools, and many other factors considered viable to improving schools. Educational stakeholders rely on research to make decisions that ultimately affect the quality of schooling. Accordingly, the purpose of educational research is to engage in disciplined inquiry to generate knowledge on topics significant to the students, teachers, administrators, schools and other educational stakeholders.

Action research is a research method that aims to simultaneously investigate and solve an issue. In other words, as its name suggests, action research conducts research and takes action at the same time (George, 2023). Action research may also be called a cycle of action or cycle of inquiry, since it typically follows a predefined process that is repeated over time. Action research is an approach to educational research that is commonly used by educational practitioners and professionals to examine, and ultimately improve, their pedagogy and practice. In this way, action research represents an extension of the reflection and critical self-reflection that an educator employs on a daily basis in their classroom.

1.4.1. Characteristics of Action Research

An Action Research holds certain peculiar characteristic features which distinguishes it from other types of researches. Some of the characteristics are enlisted below.

- It is a scientific procedure for finding practical solutions to a current problem.
- It is the process of studying practical problems of education.
- It studies both the individual and the group problems.
- It uses methods that are appropriate to the participants at hand.
- It focuses on the improvement or modification of the current practices.

- It is grounded in real-life experiences.
- It develops new ways of interpreting the world.
- It takes into account only the problems felt by the investigator.

1.4.2. Steps in Action Research

There are different handbooks which explicate the applications of Action Research. The change proposed by Action Research can be applicable to the experimental group (here, the class being investigated). However, there is no one prescribed manner of conducting an Action Research. Based on the features of Action Research and the felt needs while addressing a problem, the suitable steps can be adopted.

Any Action Research is likely to proceed through the following steps:

- Identification of a problem to be studied
- Collection of data on the problem
- Organization, analysis and interpretation of the data
- Developing a plan to address the problem
- Implementation of the plan
- Evaluation of the results of the actions taken
- Identification of a new problem
- Repetition of the process

These steps validate the cyclic nature of an Action Research. McNiff and Whitehead suggested the steps of an Action Research in the form of a cycle (Martindale, 2021). The visual representation of the steps proposed by them is as follows:

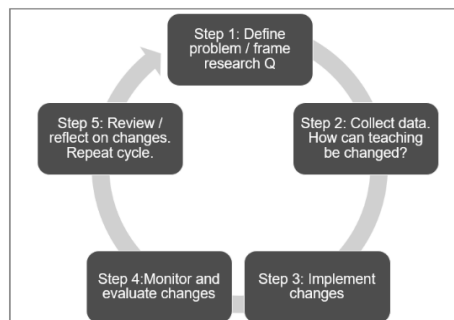


Figure 1.1. McNiff and Whitehead's Cycle of Action Research

Based on these steps, the investigator identified a particular problem with English pronunciation among the students of an experimental group and designed an action plan to improve their pronunciation. The action plan was designed with an aim to resolve the problem with utmost immediacy.

1.5. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The English language holds immense importance and is widely recognized as a global lingua franca for several reasons. It is used as a means of communication among people from different linguistic backgrounds. It facilitates effective communication in international business, diplomacy, academia, science, technology and entertainment. English serves as the language of international business and trade. Proficiency in English is often a prerequisite for academic and professional opportunities. In essence, the significance of the English language lies in its role as a unifying force in an increasingly interconnected world. It facilitates effective communication, cultural exchange, economic growth and personal development on a global scale.

The English language which is assumed as a foreign language is taught in an artificial environment and the influence of the Mother-Tongue is more than the other language (Kalia, 2023). Such interferences affect the standardized use of the English language. One of the major areas which gets affected by Mother-Tongue interference is the pronunciation. English pronunciation is of significant importance for several reasons. It is much needed for effective communication. Proper pronunciation helps listeners understand the words and phrases one uses. Good English pronunciation in professional and academic settings is likely to impact one's credibility. Accurate pronunciation can help an individual integrate better into English-speaking communities, both in his/her home country and abroad. It makes it easier to connect with others, build relationships and engage in social activities. When one can pronounce words correctly, one feels more confident while speaking. This confidence can lead to better overall language skills and a more positive attitude towards language learning.

Different languages have distinct sets of phonetic sounds, and some sounds in a person's native language might not exist in English or might be pronounced differently. This can lead to mispronunciation or difficulties in producing certain English sounds accurately. For non-native speakers learning English, accurate pronunciation is essential for achieving fluency and comprehensibility. It helps learners feel confident and comfortable while using the language. Teachers with accurate pronunciation set a good example for their students, making it easier for students to acquire correct pronunciation. Additionally, students who can understand and pronounce words correctly are more likely to engage actively in learning. Proper pronunciation respects the language and culture of English speakers. It shows that the language learner is making an effort to communicate in a way that aligns with established linguistic norms.

In summary, correct English pronunciation is vital for effective communication, professionalism, language learning, and various aspects of personal and professional growth. It enables clear and accurate information exchange and fosters better understanding among individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. Proficiency in English language enables the students to explore new arenas of knowledge. The ability to use English in such a way that it becomes comprehensible for the native speakers is a hallmark for winning a reputed career in a globalized world where English serves as the international language.

This study seeks to address the problems of students with their English pronunciation as an impact of their native language i.e., Malayalam. The necessity of proficiency in using the English language makes the study a relevant one in the current scenario of globalization. The English language, being a vehicle for technological advancement, offers manifold opportunities. It is, thus, suggestible to improve the English pronunciation of students so as to help them stay equipped with a good language proficiency, which is much needed for their career prospects.

Based on the problems identified by the investigator in the English pronunciation of the secondary school students of St Thomas Higher Secondary School, Kadampanad, whose mother-tongue is Malayalam, this study focused on providing an immediate solution to their problems. The study is thus entitled as Mother-Tongue Interference in English Pronunciation among Secondary School Students: An Action Research.

1.6. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.6.1. Mother-Tongue:

Mother-Tongue refers to the first language that a person learns and speaks naturally. It is often the language that is spoken in the person's family and immediate community.

In this study, the language referred to by the term Mother-Tongue is Malayalam. Malayalam is the native language of the students constituting the sample.

1.6.2. Interference:

Interference is the state of intervening in an activity or process without permission or invitation. When a learner's native language affects the learning of a second/foreign language, it is called interference of Mother-Tongue (Thyab, 2016).

In the present study, the interference of Mother-Tongue while articulating English pronunciation is treated as a problem faced by the sample students.

1.6.3. English Pronunciation:

English is an Indo-European language belonging to the West Germanic branch. Pronunciation is the way in which words are spoken in a language. The pronunciation of English words varies significantly from the phonetic symbols of the language.

In this study, the ways in which words in the English language are pronounced by the students whose Mother-Tongue is Malayalam, are studied.

1.6.4. Secondary School Students:

Secondary school students in India are the students in the terminal stage of school education i.e., the students of standard VIII, IX and X. These students belong to the age group of 13-16 years.

In the present study, 26 students of IX-B at St Thomas High School, Kadampanad, whose mother-tongue is Malayalam, represent the secondary school students.

1.7. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study was carried out by the investigator on the basis of certain predetermined objectives. Some of those are listed below.

- To identify if the secondary school students whose mother-tongue is Malayalam are able to pronounce English correctly.
- To find out if the Mother-Tongue of the students interfere with their English pronunciation.
- To make students aware of their common errors in English pronunciation.

- To implement an action plan suitable for improving their English pronunciation.
- To familiarize the students with the key rules of English pronunciation.
- To analyse whether the implementation of an action plan could serve to improve the English pronunciation of the students.

1.8. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Review of Related Literature involves the systematic identification, location and analysis of documents containing information related to the research problem. These documents can include articles, abstracts, reviews, monographs, dissertations, other research reports, and electronic media (Shi, 2006). This section of a research study seeks to add to the relevance of the study by exploring the previous studies related to the same area. Review of Related Literature establishes a context which befits the present study by firmly grounding on the previous studies. The purpose of the study is justified with this attempt. Review of Related Literature typically includes a summary and critique of the previous studies, identification of the similarities and differences between the previous studies and the current study, and a discussion of the theoretical frameworks or models that underlie the research. This section comprises two areas viz., conceptual overview and related studies.

1.8.1. Conceptual Overview on Mother-Tongue Interference in English Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the way in which a word or a language is spoken. It refers to the correct or accepted way of saying words including the sounds, stress and intonation patterns that make up spoken language. Proper pronunciation is important for effective communication, as it helps others understand what one speaks more easily. Pronunciation involves all aspects of the oral production of segmentals- consonant and vowel sounds- and suprasegmentals including stress, rhythm, and intonation (Derwing and Munro, 2015). Students consider pronunciation to be an important feature in English learning (Pardede, 2018). Mother-tongue interference in English pronunciation refers to the influence of a person's native language (Mother-Tongue) on their pronunciation of English sounds, words, and intonation patterns. When someone learns a new language like English, they often carry over pronunciation patterns and sounds from their native language, which can lead to inaccuracies or difficulties in producing certain English sounds that might not exist in their native language. Overcoming Mother-Tongue interference requires practice, exposure and awareness of the differences between the sounds and pronunciation patterns of the native language and the target language (in this case, English).

Certainly, Malayalam, like any other language, can influence how speakers pronounce English words. Here are a few common examples of how Malayalam interference might affect English pronunciation:

1. /r/ sound is uttered in places where it must be silent like in the word 'garden.'
2. /i/ sound is wrongly pronounced as /e/ sound in words like 'market' and 'basket.'
3. /ei/ sound is mispronounced as /e/ sound in words like 'cake,' 'may' and 'bake' even when the prolonged 'e' sound is absent in English.
4. Initial /ə/ sound in English words is wrongly pronounced as /e/ sound or /æ/ sound like in the words 'allow' and 'assembly.'
5. Initial /i/ sound in English words like 'examination' is incorrectly pronounced as /e/ sound as an interference of Malayalam accent.
6. Due to the interference of Malayalam intonation, accent and spelling-based pronunciation, stress is placed on English sounds represented by letters that are repeated. For example, gemination of /l/ sound in the word 'brilliant.'
7. /əʊ/ sound in English is wrongly pronounced as /ɔ:/ sound in words like 'note.'
8. In Malayalam, there is no clear distinction between the English /v/ and /w/ sounds. These sounds may get mixed up due to the interference. For example, speakers tend to pronounce 'wery' instead of 'very' or 'vine' instead of 'wine.'
9. In Malayalam, there is no /z/ sound, which is present in English. So, the words with /z/ sound in English may be wrongly pronounced as closely resembling /s/ sound like in the word 'use.'
10. /ɪd/ sound at the end of a word after the letters 't' or 'd' is incorrectly pronounced as /ed/ sound like in the word 'guided.'

These ten areas of pronunciation are dealt with in this study. Certain activities are devised to improve English pronunciation by familiarizing students with the rules of pronunciation.

1.8.2. Studies Related to Mother-Tongue Interference in English Pronunciation

Many studies were conducted in the field of phonetics to analyse the influence of mother-tongue in pronunciation of the English language.

Talang-Rao, E. (2022), in his study, examined the problems faced by the second language speakers of English in speaking English. In this study the L₂ speakers belonged to different levels such as students, teachers, and professors (young and old; males and females). Rao has classified their mistakes made by the subjects into three categories namely vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. The study aimed at helping the second language speakers to improve their speaking skills and to solve their difficulties that pop up in everyday conversations in the use of English language, particularly in pronunciation. It was a qualitative study which used non-participant observation as its main instrument for gathering data. 46 members were selected as the sample for the study. Rao suggests including the mistakes and errors of the L₂ speakers in a syllabus and if needed in a remedial class to help and correct those who face challenges, to help them realize their problems and strive for better English.

J, Jehoson (2022) opined that Malayalam is a syllable-timed language and it determines the common tendency among native speakers of Malayalam to pronounce the English voiceless consonants as voiced consonants. To rectify this pronunciation error, Jiresh created a pronunciation practice material involving pair activity and peer evaluation. This study explains the rationale and relevance of the material and further discusses the process of learning while using the aforementioned material. It also analyses the merits and demerits of the material and explores the ways in which the material can be improved to optimise the learning process. The subjects for the study were 60 IELTS aspirants. Hundred words were provided to the subjects for practicing.

Thomas, A. (2021), in her study, focused on the influence of the Indian language, Malayalam on the Global language, English. Thomas opined that mother-tongue influence leads to grammatical, syntactical and pronunciation errors in the target language. This study also focused on how to tackle this universal problem and also hinted at some remedies which can be effectively utilized for learning the target language. It was a qualitative study which sought to explain the reasons behind incorrect pronunciation of English words by Keralites with Malayalam as their native language. Practicing the English language by speaking with people is suggested as one of the best remedies to improve English pronunciation. The study was concluded by the suggestion to respect the English language just like one respects the native language so as to learn it better.

Anand S., Kumari S., et al (2021) studied the impact of Mother-Tongue (Hindi/Urdu) in the English language learning process. This study discussed the ways in which the younger generation can develop communicative skills in English. Survey questionnaires were used to collect data from 23 respondents. The researchers tried to describe, analyse and explain the errors made by the respondents in the light of certain theories of language acquisition and transfer. The results of the study showed that the impact of the native language is more negative than positive. On the basis of their findings, the researchers suggested that communicating more in English and engaging in activities that involve speaking, writing and reading in English will help to optimize the learning of the foreign languages and encourage the youth to get a better command of the language.

Reddivari, M. (2021), in her study, emphasized the importance of pronunciation with reference to some research studies and reviews. The study analysed various reasons for Mother-Tongue influence in English communication and suggested ways to overcome the problem. The results from the production and recognition test show that some students were able to produce and recognise some of the English vowels and consonant sounds while most of them could not. The findings of the study deduced that interference from the mother-tongue can result in students' inability to pronounce some of the English sounds which do not exist in the Ibibio sound system. Reddivari suggested that the students should be introduced to the English language in their formative years, while the government should create an enabling environment for studies viz., providing language laboratory centres in many communities in aid of the students for higher productivity.

Goswami, A. (2020), in her study, aimed to improve the status of English teaching-learning process compared to contemporary practices. The sample chosen for the study included 20 native speakers (10 male and 10 female students aged between 11-15 years of age) of Sylheti Bengali. A list of English words was given to the students to read out. The study finds out that the properties of Sylheti Bengali phonology interfere with the phonology of English. Due to this interference, Sylheti Bengali speakers commit many errors in their spoken English. The results of the comparative study of English and Sylheti Bengali sounds bring out the factors causing the errors committed by Sylheti Bengali speakers during their pronunciation of English words.

Noviyenty, L., & Irene Putri, M. (2020), in their study, attempted to investigate the forms of Rejang language interfering students' pronunciation of English words. It was a descriptive study in the field of English pronunciation elaborated in a qualitative way. Recorded interviews and pronunciation tests were the main

techniques of collecting data. Interview guide, validated pronunciation tests and document analysis were the instruments. There were 16 students in the IAIN (Institut Agama Islam Negeri) Curup college, Indonesia, who used Rejang language in daily communication and they were incorporated as the subjects of this study. The findings revealed that Rejang Language as the students' mother language at IAIN Curup interfered with their English pronunciation across the elements of consonants, vowels, and diphthongs.

Abraham, F. (2019) compared the pronunciation of English loan words in Malayalam with the real pronunciation in British English to show the drastic change. Abraham throws light on the mother-tongue influence of Malayalam in such English loan words. It was a qualitative study. Abraham opined that English is an unphonetic language. Upon contrasting and studying the pronunciation of the English loan words in Malayalam and British English, thirty-five major findings were made which were explained in the study. In total, one hundred and fifty words are used in the findings. The study made it clear that as every letter is in one-to-one correspondence with the sound in Indian languages, people in India read it accordingly. It was suggested that teaching English phonetics from the school level itself is one of the best ways to teach English pronunciation.

Jacob, R. (2017), in her study, focused on the segmental features of MalE (Malayali English) consonants. Through the study, Jacob attempted to facilitate a clear approach towards English Language Teaching. The study was an attempt to know how Malayalam-English consonants were different from British English R.P. (Received Pronunciation) by analysing its segmental features. 20 speakers whose L₁ was Malayalam were chosen as the subjects. Different sets of questionnaires were used to elicit the required data. The study found that the influence of the first language, in this case Malayalam, is inevitable in the speech of L₂ speakers. It was also concluded that slower speech rate and difference in the stress patterns make MalE different from R.P.

Raju, N., & Joshith, V.P. (2017) focused on the obstacles of learning L₂ in the Indian context and remedies to overcome the barriers to English language learning, and also explores the perspectives of future language classrooms. It was a qualitative study which listed the threats faced by students in learning the second language in their classrooms. Certain remedies to enhance the English language learning environment were also suggested. Some of those were enriching vocabulary through language activities, recruiting teachers with good English proficiency, providing technological assistance in second language learning and so on.

Thomas (2011) studied the impact of spelling-influenced pronunciation of Malayalam on the English pronunciation. The sample selected for the study was 400 undergraduate students. The members of the sample were required to pronounce selected words and sentences. The students' pronunciation was recorded by English teachers. Thus, through recorded pronunciation and participant observation, the data was collected and subjected to further study. The study made it clear that the impact of spelling on pronunciation in Malayali-English manifests in the pronunciation of silent letters, gemination of double letters, pronunciation of some words without stress shift, pronunciation of the phonologically conditioned plural (-es/-s) and past tense (-ed) morphemes and in the strong articulation of weak function class words.

All these studies are on the premise that the retrieval of information from memory can be influenced or disrupted by the presence of other information in memory. This alludes to the psychological theory of interference. Proactive interference is noticeable in the English pronunciation of the students with Malayalam as their mother-tongue since their already learned information interferes with the ability to learn and recall new information. Such an interference makes it more challenging to remember information accurately and can affect various aspects of memory, such as recall and recognition. This study deals with the proactive interference of mother-tongue in English pronunciation among the students of standard IX-B of St Thomas Higher Secondary School, Kadampanad. This problem is identified and the necessary plan of action is designed to solve the problem.

Phase II PLAN OF ACTION

2.1. ACTION HYPOTHESIS

A hypothesis is a logical supposition, a reasonable guess, and an educated conjecture. It provides a tentative explanation for a phenomenon under investigation (International Journal of Science and Research, 2022). It is an assumption which is proposed for the sake of argument so that it can be tested to see if it might be true. Generating a hypothesis thus enables an investigator to track the study in the most desirable direction; the investigator can work to resolve the problem at hand in a structured manner. In an Action Research, after the identification of a problem, the investigator seeks to formulate a hypothesis based on the research question. Such a hypothesis formulated in an Action Research is known as Action Hypothesis. An Action Hypothesis

can be stated in the declarative form, predictive form or question form. In the predictive form, an action hypothesis clearly predicting the expected outcome which would emerge after the implementation of the action plan is formulated. This can be stated using ‘if and then’ sentences.

The Action Hypothesis formulated for this study is-

English pronunciation activities among Secondary School Students can reduce Mother-Tongue Interference in English Pronunciation.

2.2. PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

In order to prove the predictions made in the Action Hypotheses, the investigators seek to test the action plans on a group of people. This group is believed to represent the common characteristics of a larger population. And the group is referred to as the sample. In other words, the sample in a study are the participants of that particular study. In an action research, they are the subjects on whom the action plans are applied. The data collected from the sample are analysed and the results are considered as the general norm applicable to the whole population.

2.2.1. Population

A population is the entire group that you want to draw conclusions about (Bhandari, 2023). In research, a population doesn't always refer to people. It can mean a group containing elements of anything the investigators want to study such as objects, events, organizations, countries, species, organisms, etc.

In the present study, the population encompasses all the secondary school students of St Thomas Higher Secondary School, Kadampanad, whose mother-tongue is Malayalam.

2.2.2. Sample

A sample is the specific group that you will collect data from. The size of the sample is always less than the total size of the population (Bhandari, 2023). A sample can be defined as a smaller and more manageable representation of a larger group. It is a subset of a larger population that contains characteristics of that population. A sample is used in statistical testing when the population size is too large for all members or observations to be included in the test. It is an unbiased subset of the population that best represents the whole data (Ravikiran, 2023).

In the present study, the sample consists of 26 students of standard IX-B studying at St Thomas Higher Secondary School, Kadampanad, following Kerala SCERT syllabus. Their mother-tongue is Malayalam and English is one of their subjects.

2.2.3. Strategy Adopted for the Study

The present study aims at improving the English pronunciation of the students by alleviating the influence of their mother-tongue in the process. The observation made during the first phase of school internship motivated the investigator to select the topic for this study. Areas of mother-tongue (Malayalam) influence while uttering certain words in English were predetermined by the investigator on the basis of the prior experience with the sample during the first phase of school internship. These areas of influence were listed down as some of the criteria for English pronunciation. Three words belonging to each criteria were selected from the course book of the English subject of standard IX. The words were chosen from the lesson ‘Learning the Game’ to ensure that those were appropriate to the students’ level of learning. A pre-test on pronunciation was conducted.

An action plan is a list of the steps or tasks that need to be completed to reach a goal or to complete a job (Frese, M., et al, 2007). In the present study, on the basis of the results obtained from the pre-test, an action plan was designed. The Action Plan was designed for a period of 12 days focusing mainly on ten criteria/ rules of English pronunciation. The strategies adopted on each day are presented in the table below.

Table 2.1.
Strategies Adopted in the Action Plan

Days	Strategies Adopted	Descriptions
Day 1	Orientation	A session on the importance of English Pronunciation
Day 2	Hunting the letter ‘r’	Activity to show that if the letter ‘r’ in a word comes after a vowel sound or at the end, it remains silent.
Day 3	Matching rhymes	Activity to teach that the ending letters ‘-et’ in polysyllabic words is pronounced as /ɪt/ and not /et/.

Day 4	Pronunciation grid	Activity to illustrate that there is no elongated /e/ sound in English; /eɪ/ sound is introduced.
Day 5	Word puzzle	Activity to show that the initial letter 'a' in most English words is not stressed; the 'schwa' (/ə/) sound is familiarized.
Day 6	Voicing emotions	Activity to illustrate that in the words with the initial unstressed letter 'E,' the letter is pronounced as /ɪ/ and not /e/.
Day 7	Reciting rhyme songs	Activity to show that the geminated letters in English words shouldn't be stressed.
Day 8	Emulating utterances	Activity to train students to pronounce /əʊ/ sound in certain English words.
Day 9	Silent mouthing	Activity to teach the difference between the sounds- /v/ and /w/.
Day 10	Brainstorming	Activity to teach the rule that whenever the letter 's' comes between two vowels, it must be pronounced as /z/ and not /s/.
Day 11	Raising for the odd	Activity to illustrate that the letters '-ed' which follows the letter 't' or the letter 'd' in an English word is pronounced as /ɪd/ and not /ed/.
Day 12	Review	Consolidation of the activities

The Action Plan consisted of certain strategies in the form of pronunciation activities which aimed to improve the English pronunciation of the students. Each activity aimed at training the students on each of the ten criteria which were set beforehand. These strategies were employed systematically to bring about an improvement in the English pronunciation of the students and to diminish the interference of their mother-tongue while pronouncing in English. The implementation of the action plan was followed by a post-test. In the post-test, the same list of words administered in the pre-test was used to test the pronunciation of the students. This could make the progress in their English pronunciation comparable and interpretable.

Phase III IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

After designing an Action Plan which aimed at the improvement of the English pronunciation among the subjects, the investigator decided to execute the plan. The Action Plan was implemented to make the students aware of the errors made by them in their English pronunciation, to make them analyse the extent to which their mother-tongue influenced their English pronunciation and to equip them with certain rules of English pronunciation so as to reduce the errors. A detailed description of the Action Plan is presented below.

3.1. DAY 1 – ORIENTATION

Objective : To familiarize the students with the need for improving English pronunciation
Strategy Adopted : An interactive session

As an initial step of the implementation of the Action Plan, the investigator addressed the students and created a general awareness among them regarding the significance of improving their pronunciation of the English language. Certain situations where mispronunciations lead to misinterpretations were discussed. The extent to which one's mother-tongue interferes with the pronunciation of a foreign/second language was also examined through discussions. In the session, it is hinted that since India was once a British colony and the English language was brought to the land by colonization, Indians follow British English as their Received Pronunciation. The unphonetic characteristic feature of the English language was highlighted. The lack of one-to-one correspondence between the letters and the phonetic sounds produced by the letters was demonstrated using the following examples-

- The letter 'c' is pronounced as /k/ in the word 'cat' while it is pronounced as /s/ in the word 'ceiling.'
- The letter 'g' is pronounced as /g/ in the word 'gun' while it is pronounced as /dʒ/ in the word 'giraffe.'
- The letter 'a' is pronounced as /æ/ in the word 'apple' while it is pronounced as /ɑ:/ in the word 'plant.'

3.2. DAY 2 – HUNTING THE LETTER 'R'

Objective : To show that if the letter 'r' in a word comes after a vowel sound or at the end, it remains silent
Strategy Adopted : Activity

Materials Required : Activity cards

The investigator distributes activity cards with the following activity-

Read the following passage and pick out the words in which the letter 'r' follows a vowel (a/e/i/o/u) and the words which end with the letter 'r.' List down the words in the space provided.

Stepping out of her garden, she wore a pair of slippers. The cart which pulled her off to the shore was cozy. At the shore, a turtle turned in her way. She admired the dirt on the turtle's back. The sheer glare of the receding sun, the chirping of the birds, the cheerful faces of the kids and the refreshed air made her day at the shore worth it!

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 15. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 16. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 17. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 18. _____ |

In English language, the words in which the 'r' sound comes after a vowel (a/e/i/o/u) sound are pronounced in such a way that the 'r' sound is kept silent. Now, try to pronounce the words listed above. Make sure that the 'r' sound is kept silent.

As the students complete the activity, teacher reconfirms the rule that the 'r' sound, if falls next to a vowel (a/e/i/o/u) or at the end of a word, usually remains silent while pronouncing the word.

3.3. DAY 3 – MATCHING RHYMES

Objective : To illustrate that the ending letters '-et' in polysyllabic words are pronounced as /ɪt/ and not /et/

Strategy Adopted : Activity

Materials Required : Chart, marker and slips of paper

The investigator displays a chart with two columns of words and assigns the students with the following activity-

Match the words on the left with their rhyming partners on the right by drawing lines.

Socket	Warden
Gun	Cute
List	Profit
Garden	Sun
Mute	Mist

The investigator makes it clear that the letters '-et' at the end of an English word with more than one syllable are pronounced as /ɪt/ and not /et/. Socket, thus, when pronounced ends in the same sound as the pronunciation of profit ends i.e., /ɪt/. After familiarizing students with this rule of English pronunciation, the investigator distributes slips of paper with a list of words and asks the students to pronounce the words.

Rocket	Goblet
Jacket	Comet
Target	Sonnet
Closet	Droplet

3.4. DAY 4 – PRONUNCIATION GRID

- Objective** : To acquaint the students with the /eɪ/ sound in English and show that there is no prolonged /e/ sound in English
- Strategy Adopted** : Activity
- Materials Required** : Activity cards

The investigator assigns the following activity by distributing activity cards.

Observe the words in the grid carefully. Identify the series of words which have similar sounds in between (not at the beginning or at the end) when pronounced. You may focus on the vowel sound. The series can be horizontally, vertically or diagonally placed in the grid. That is, the line thus identified must have five words. The series of words are to be written in the space provided below the grid.

Same	Man	Back	Guy	Mast
Camp	Lane	Dance	Joy	Cake
Gamble	Chance	Main	Boy	Caste
Sample	Cancer	Diary	Lay	Last
Bamboo	Wander	Bank	Toy	Taste

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

You may pronounce the words in the series aloud.

The investigator presents her version by pronouncing the words in the diagonal series from top left corner to the bottom right corner of the grid. Thus, it is illustrated that the words ‘Same,’ ‘Lane,’ ‘Main,’ ‘Lay’ and ‘Taste’ are pronounced in such a way that the vowel sound is the same in each word. The phonetic transcriptions of these words are:

- Same : /seɪm/
- Lane : /leɪn/
- Main : /meɪn/
- Lay : /leɪ/
- Taste : /teɪst/

In this way, investigator familiarizes the students with the /eɪ/ sound in English.

3.5. DAY 5 – WORD PUZZLE

- Objective** : To show that the initial letter ‘a’ in most English words is not stressed
- Strategy Adopted** : Activity
- Materials Required** : Chart and marker

The investigator presents a word puzzle on a chart. Students are asked to identify the words which begin with the letter ‘a.’ After listing down the words, students are asked to pronounce those without stressing the initial ‘a’ sound.

A	C	B	X	A	A
G	B	O	L	B	C
O	L	O	B	U	R
A	N	A	V	S	O
G	A	P	A	E	S
A	G	A	I	N	S

The words 'Above,' 'Ago,' 'Along,' 'Abuse,' 'Across' and 'Again' are identified and pronounced as directed. The investigator summarizes the activity by highlighting that in most of the English words, the initial 'a' sound is not stressed. The 'ə' (schwa) sound in the English phonetics is, thus, introduced.

3.6. DAY 6 – VOICING EMOTIONS

Objective : To illustrate that in the words with the initial unstressed letter 'E,' the letter is pronounced as

/ɪ/ and not /e/

Strategy Adopted : Activity

Materials Required : Five cards

The investigator displays five cards, each of which consists of a word written on it. Then words shown on the cards are-

- Examination
- Expansion
- Elicit
- Extreme
- Excite

The investigator pronounces each word. Students are asked to emulate the pronunciation by adding an emotion to it. Teacher provides them with options to choose from; they may utter the word by expressing happiness, disappointment, shyness, anger or jealousy. Likewise, each word is pronounced by attaching five different emotions to it. Students are, thus, familiarized with the way in which words beginning with unstressed 'E' are pronounced.

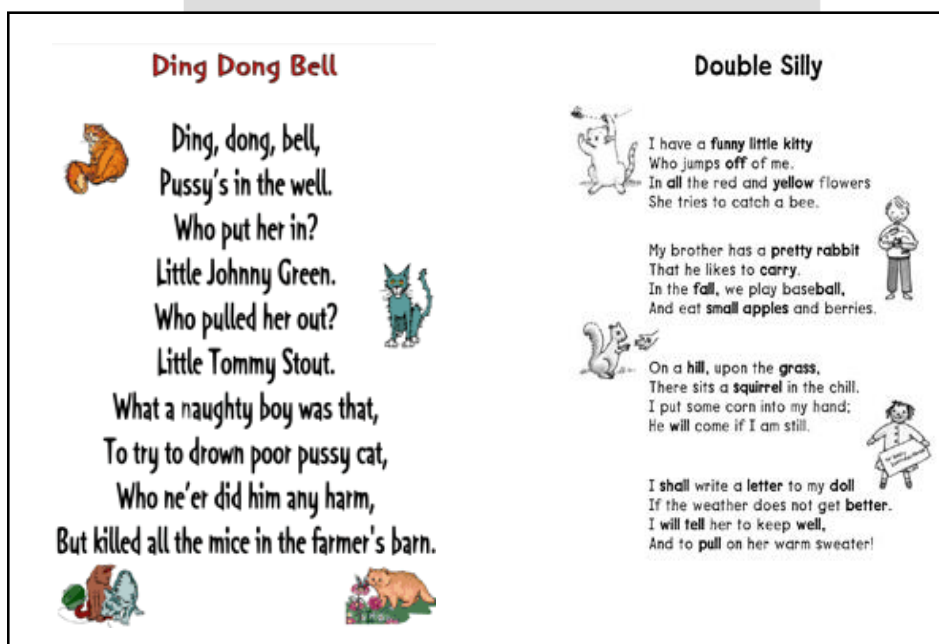
3.7. DAY 7 – RECITING RHYME SONGS

Objective : To illustrate that the geminated letters in English words shouldn't be stressed like in Malayalam

Strategy Adopted : Activity

Materials Required : Sheets of paper with rhyme songs

The investigator distributes sheets of paper consisting of selected nursery rhymes. The rhymes consist of words with geminated (repeated letters together) letters. The investigator asks randomly selected students to recite the rhymes aloud. Students are asked not to stress the sound of the double-letters. This rule of English pronunciation is, thus, made clear. The rhymes chosen for the purpose are given below.



3.8. DAY 8 – EMULATING UTTERANCES

Objective : To train the students to pronounce /əʊ/ sound in certain English words

Strategy Adopted : Activity

Materials Required : Videos featuring pronunciations of certain English words

The investigator illustrates the correct pronunciation of /əʊ/ sound in certain words like 'Close,' 'Stone,' 'Home,' 'Joke' and 'Boat' by presenting videos in which these words are articulated. Students are asked to emulate the pronunciations heard in the videos. Such vocal drills help them better pronounce words with the similar sound of /əʊ/.

3.9. DAY 9 – SILENT MOUTHING

Objective : To familiarize the students with the difference between the pronunciation of the English letters-

'v' and 'w'

Strategy Adopted : Activity

Materials Required : Pictures

The investigator shows the pictures of few objects (Watch; Window; Wheel; Van; Vegetables). As a picture is displayed, investigator moves her lips to name the object without articulating any sound. This silent mouthing helps the students to guess the exact position of lips while pronouncing the /w/ sound and distinguish it from the /v/ sound in English phonetics. Further examples are elicited from the students.

3.10. DAY 10 – BRAINSTORMING

Objective : To familiarize the students with the rule that whenever the letter 's' comes between two vowels

in an English word, it must be pronounced as /z/ and not /s/

Strategy Adopted : Activity

Materials Required : Flashcards

The investigator states a rule of pronunciation that when the letter 's' comes in between two vowel sounds, it should be pronounced as /z/. Examples to illustrate the same are shown using flashcards. Words shown are 'Blouse,' 'House,' 'Cousin,' 'Reason' and 'Amusing.' The investigator employs brainstorming strategy to elicit active responses from the students by asking them to give further examples for the same.

3.11. DAY 11 – RAISING FOR THE ODD

Objective : To illustrate that the letters '-ed' which follows the letter 't' or the letter 'd' in an English word

is pronounced as /ɪd/ and not /ed/

Strategy Adopted : Activity

The investigator utters a list of words and asks the students to listen carefully. They are supposed to raise their hands if they hear an oddly pronounced ending sound. That is, the word pronounced in a different way while compared to the previous words are to be pointed by the students. The words uttered by the investigator are-

Posted
Batted
Wanted
Landed
Mended
Bonded
Spoiled

Teacher consolidates that if the letters '-ed' follow 't' or 'd' in an English word, then it will be pronounced as /ɪd/ and not /ed/.

3.12. DAY 12 – REVIEW

Objective : To help the students consolidate the English pronunciation rules discussed so far

Strategy Adopted : Activity

The investigator writes a few English words on the blackboard and asks randomly selected students to pronounce the words. It is ensured that all the ten rules of English pronunciation covered in the previous classes are included in the list of words written on the blackboard.

Through this activity, the investigator analyses whether the students were capable of applying English pronunciation rules appropriately. Each word in the list was concerned with one of the ten rules of English

Girls	Market	Cake	Assembly	Exact	Tummy	No	Water	Business	Planted
-------	--------	------	----------	-------	-------	----	-------	----------	---------

pronunciation. Hence, ten words for ten rules were to be listed. The words listed on the board are given below.

This action plan was implemented systematically within the duration of 12 days. After the implementation of the action plan, a post-test was administered to the students to check for their improvement in English pronunciation and the effectiveness of the action plan.

Phase IV OBSERVATION, COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1. Observation of Data

This study was carried out as a consequence of the observation made by the investigator during the first phase of school internship programme. It was noted that majority of the students in the class pronounced English words by adding a tinge of their mother-tongue (Malayalam). Being a teacher-trainee dealing with the English subject, the investigator keenly inquired the cause for the incorrect English pronunciation of the students. The investigator decided to work on possible strategies to improve the students' pronunciation in the English language.

During the second phase of school internship programme, the investigator set off with a pre-test on English pronunciation, administered to 26 students of standard IX-B at St Thomas Higher Secondary School, Kadampanad. 30 words picked from their English course book were included in the test. Ten basic rules of English pronunciation were listed by the investigator. Three words belonging to each of these ten rules were the items included in the test. Each correct response carried one score. It was found that no student in the class could score above 10. The investigator designed an Action Plan by incorporating certain interesting activities to convey the ten rules of English pronunciation.

In each session, the investigator taught one rule of pronunciation. It was observed that the students showed good interest in familiarizing themselves with the rules. The positive reinforcements given by the investigator motivated them to imbibe the rules in a better way. The investigator observed each of the 26 students in the class while they worked on the activities. It was ensured that each one of them participated actively in the activities. After the implementation of the Action Plan, the investigator conducted a post-test. It was found that the students scored better for the post-test. This implied that their English pronunciation was improved after their being introduced to the Action Plan.

4.2. Collection of Data

The investigator conducted the pre-test on English pronunciation among the 26 students in a class. Each of them was called upon (in the order of their roll numbers) to a separate room. The personalized environment could help the students to focus clearly on their test. As soon as a student stepped into the room, the investigator directed him/her to get seated on a chair neatly placed at one side of a table; the investigator remained in a chair on the opposite side of the table. After interacting with the student pleasantly, the investigator produced a list consisting of 30 words printed on it. The student was supposed to pronounce the words one after the other by pausing between every two words. The investigator used a mobile phone to record the pronunciation of the students. Also, the correct and incorrect responses were recorded on the tool. It took four days for this process of collecting data from the 26 sample students to get finished. The time taken by the students to complete the pronunciation test varied. After the implementation of the Action Plan, a post-test with the same items of pronunciation was administered to the same sample of students. The same procedure was followed for the post-test. Again, it took four days for collecting the responses from the sample.

4.3. Analysis of Data

Data analysis is defined as a process of cleansing, transforming and modelling data to discover useful information for business decision-making (Johnson, 2023). It is a process of converting the complex data into interpretable forms to draw conclusions from it.

In the present study, two tests (a pre-test and a post-test) were administered to the sample to test their pronunciation in the English language. The sample consisted of 26 students. The tool for pronunciation test consisted of 30 words. Each correct pronunciation of a word carried one score while the incorrect pronunciation carried zero score. Each student's total score was, thus, calculated by simple addition. A student's score in pre-test was compared with his/her score in post-test to draw conclusions about the progress in his/her pronunciation and the effectiveness of the Action Plan implemented.

4.3.1. Analysis of the Data (Pre-Test)

Typically, pre-tests are administered prior to a course to determine knowledge baseline of the sample (Berry, 2008). Pre-tests help an investigator to locate the exact level at which the sample stands in terms of the concerned field of study. In an Action Research, the investigator may design the Action Plan in accordance with the results of the pre-test.

In this study, a pre-test was administered to the 26 students of standard IX-B at St Thomas Higher Secondary School, Kadampanad. It was to find out the pronunciation errors committed by the students in the English language. The extent to which mother-tongue interfered with their English pronunciation could also be understood. For this, a list of 30 words chosen from the lesson "Learning the Game" in their English course book were given as test items for pronunciation. It was found that the students' responses weren't consistent and so they were probably unaware of English pronunciation rules. That is, among the three words that fell under a particular pronunciation rule, the students could correctly pronounce one word and incorrectly pronounce the rest two; there was no such case where all the three words were pronounced correctly. From this, it was evident to the investigator that their correctness in the pronunciation of a word was either accidental or based on their limited knowledge about that word's pronunciation. So, the investigator decided to familiarize the students with the basic rules of English pronunciation. Thus, the results of the pre-test motivated the investigator to design an Action Plan to remediate the English pronunciation errors of the students.

4.3.2. Analysis of the Data (Post-Test)

A post-test is an assessment measure given to participants after they have received treatment as part of a research study. In the case of an Action Research, post-tests aim at analysing the progress of the sample after the implementation of the Action Plan. The Action Plan was implemented as 12 sessions, one session for each of the 12 days. The students' growing interest was evident from their attitude towards the activities assigned in the classroom. Majority of the students were thrilled to complete the activity in a time-bound manner. The reinforcements provided for the performances motivated them to participate in further activities with good interest. On each day, students appeared to be curious to learn a rule concerned with English pronunciation. The orientation on the importance of English pronunciation was effective as the students contributed various examples to differentiate between the phonetic systems of Malayalam and English. The activity to show that if the letter 'r' in a word comes after a vowel sound or at the end, it remains silent, was undertaken by the students interestingly. Activity to teach that the ending letters '-et' in polysyllabic words is pronounced as /ɪt/ and not /et/ enhanced the curiosity of the students. They were eager to match the words on the chart. Students were thrilled to encounter the /eɪ/ sound in English phonetics. Activity to illustrate that in the words with the initial unstressed letter 'E,' the letter is pronounced as /ɪ/ and not /e/ was the most entertaining activity employed. Students actively participated in the activity because it demanded them to express their emotions vividly. When it was taught that the geminated letters are not to be stressed in English, students started giving more examples associated with the rule. Students found it amusing to pronounce the /əʊ/ sound in certain English words. Their attempts to emulate the native-like pronunciation were quite impressive. The students provided a feedback that the difference between /v/ and /w/ sounds in English was easily comprehensible from the illustration provided in the classroom. Students found it difficult to articulate /z/ sound in English words. But, gradual drills helped them produce the /z/ sound whenever the letter 's' fell between two vowels. The activity to illustrate that the letters '-ed' which follows the letter 't' or the letter 'd' in an English word is pronounced as /ɪd/ and not /ed/ was clearly presented using suitable examples. Students also contributed certain words as examples. In the last session, all the activities were consolidated. Students were, thus, able to grasp a generalized idea about the rules of English pronunciation.

In this study, a post-test was administered to the students after familiarizing them with the rules of English pronunciation through certain interesting activities. It was found that all the students improved their pronunciation in the English language. Each one of the students scored high when compared to the scores for the pre-test. Also, it was found that most of them could pronounce correctly all the three words that fell under a particular pronunciation rule; this clearly showed their successful learning of that particular pronunciation rule. There was a visible change in the students' attitude towards English pronunciation. Their interest to learn the English language in all its essence was clearly seen. Their wish to free their English pronunciation from the interference of their mother-tongue i.e., Malayalam, was also evidently noticed by the investigator. The results of the post-test indicates that the systematically planned interventions turned out to be effective in improving the English language pronunciation of the sample students. The scores attained by each student for the pre-test and the post-test are shown in the table given below. The data can be compared and analysed to interpret the progress of the students in their English pronunciation.

Table 4.1. Scores of Students in Pre-Test and Post-Test

Sl. No.	Names of the students	Marks Obtained	
		Pre-Test	Post-Test
1.	Aaron	5	11
2.	Abhijith S.	5	11
3.	Adwaith B.	8	18
4.	Akshay	10	17
5.	Alan	5	14
6.	Albin S. Johnson	3	21
7.	Aleena A.	6	15
8.	Ancy	7	17
9.	Anjana Krishna R.	3	18
10.	Ashbin	3	13
11.	Basil Binu Joy	6	20
12.	Christy	6	19
13.	Cino Varghese	2	18
14.	Denny	6	14
15.	Gouri Krishna R.	5	14
16.	Joel Luke Libu	3	12
17.	J.S. Malavika	6	17
18.	Liya A.G.	6	22
19.	Riya A.G.	3	16
20.	Riya Biju	3	12
21.	Shine B.	4	7
22.	Shijo	4	20
23.	Sneha	2	19
24.	Soumya Das	6	17
25.	Vaiga Sudheesh	7	23
26.	Vaishnav Sudheesh	4	19

On the basis of the action hypothesis, the action plan was developed with an aim to improve the English pronunciation of the sample students. The results of the pre-test and the post-test were analysed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Action Plan. The data obtained may be interpreted as follows:

Table 4.2. Average Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Average of the scores obtained in the pre-test	4.92
Average of the scores obtained in the post-test	16.30

Based on the scores of the students in the pre-test and the post-test, it can be concluded that-

- In the pre-test, all the students could score less than 10 out of 30. The average of the scores was calculated as 4.92. A need for an Action Plan to improve the English pronunciation of the students was clearly felt.

- In the post-test, majority of the students scored above 10 out of 30. The average of the scores was calculated as 16.30. This shows a general progress in the students' pronunciation in the English language. The interference of their mother-tongue while pronouncing in English was diminished.
- Each student scored high for the post-test when compared to their respective score for the pre-test. This shows a specific progress in each student's English pronunciation.
- The Action Plan implemented was effective in familiarizing the students with certain English pronunciation rules.

Phase V REFLECTION, SHARING AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Reflection and Sharing

This Action Research aimed at improving the English pronunciation of the 26 students of standard IX-B at St Thomas Higher Secondary School, Kadampanad. The study was carried out by the investigator on the basis of the pre-test administered during the second phase of school internship programme. Since the students scored low in the pre-test and the interference of their mother-tongue (Malayalam) was evidently felt in their English pronunciation, the investigator designed an Action Plan to improve their English pronunciation. For this, the investigator adopted certain interesting activities and systematically implemented those in the class to familiarize students with some basic rules of English pronunciation. Then, a post-test was administered. It was observed by the investigator that the students scored high for the post-test when compared to the pre-test. This progress could be attributed to the effectiveness of the Action Plan implemented. The investigator could successfully achieve the predetermined objectives of the study and the action hypothesis was justified. In other words, through the Action Research, the investigator could solve the problem of mother-tongue interference in English pronunciation among the selected sample of students.

5.2. Conclusion

English, being the link language of the world, helps in the communication between people from different countries with different language backgrounds. Among the various aspects of a language, pronunciation plays a vital role in communication because only good pronunciation can make the language comprehensible to the listener. In other words, effective communication in a language becomes possible only with good pronunciation. The correct pronunciation is a basis for efficient communication in English as in any other language. Proper pronunciation can be defined as a reproduction of language sounds so that the intended message is efficiently passed and understood by a fluent speaker. Standardized version of the English pronunciation is necessary for using the language appropriately in communication. Mother-tongue interference while speaking in English language acts as a barrier to proper communication. So, it is mandatory to expel mother-tongue interference from English pronunciation. With the help of well-designed strategies incorporating interesting activities (as is presented in the Action Plan of this study), the mother-tongue interference in the English pronunciation can be diminished and the English pronunciation can be improved.

5.3. Educational Implications

Good English pronunciation serves better in maintaining social relationships with people from different language backgrounds. The proficiency in English pronunciation helps a student to carry out academic tasks in a better way. Some of the educational implications of this study are listed below.

- Since English is one of the subjects of the Indian schools, such a study and the associated Action Plan helps the students to improve their conversation skills in the English language.
- The sub-skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are intertwined and integrated in the English language. However, the skills of speaking and reading are predominantly improved by the Action Plan discussed in this study.
- An improvisation in the English pronunciation equips a student with the ability to converse with peers more effectively. It makes them prepared for the advanced studies.
- Career-oriented studies can also be undertaken easily with good English pronunciation skills.
- The interference of mother-tongue in the English pronunciation can be minimized using well-planned activities. This reduction in the mother-tongue interference helps them develop their English pronunciation, to a greater extent.

- Knowledge of English pronunciation rules helps students not only to produce correct pronunciation but also to understand the English language used by native speakers. This opens new opportunities in the current globalized world!

5.4. Suggestions

Difficulties in English pronunciation by non-native speakers of the language are very natural. Most of the Indian students face the problem with English pronunciation, especially due to their being accustomed to a different native language. If these problems are neglected, it may create further difficulties in the academic life of the students.

- An English teacher plays a crucial role in remediating the English pronunciation errors among his/her students. Regular practice exercises help in improving the English pronunciation of the students.
- Good exposure to the language is also helpful in the process. It is suggestible to create an English language rich environment to improve the students' pronunciation skills.
- It is also suggestible to familiarize the students with the basic pronunciation rules in the English language.
- Activity-oriented sessions on English pronunciation, if implemented systematically, serves good in improving the student's English pronunciation.

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APPENDIX**Tool used for Pronunciation Test****Pronunciation Test**

Name of the Student :
Standard :

Total Score : 30

<u>S.No.</u>	<u>Words</u>	<u>Correct Pronunciation</u>	<u>Incorrect Pronunciation</u>
1.	Personal		
2.	Cricket		
3.	Play		
4.	Accompany		
5.	Eleven		
6.	Immense		
7.	Note		
8.	Batted		
9.	Result		
10.	Wet		
11.	Start		
12.	Pocket		
13.	Game		
14.	Agree		
15.	Exhaust		
16.	Lesson		
17.	Delighted		
18.	Added		
19.	Coach		
20.	Physical		
21.	Use		
22.	Watch		
23.	Owe		
24.	Day		
25.	Extension		
26.	Ticket		
27.	Assure		
28.	Remark		
29.	World		
30.	Embarrassment		

Marks Scored: