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Phonological Variations in the Pronunciation of Inflectional [-ed] in Regular Verbs: A Study at the Elementary Level in Public Schools

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Abstract

The current study aimed to investigate how grammarians pronounce 'the Suffix-ed' with its allomorph's /t/, /d/, and /id/, and how is it pronounced in the Pakistani context. Grammarians claim three parameters of Suffix-ed in regular verbs: If the preceding consonant is unvoiced, the suffix-ed sound is changed to /t/ as in stopped |stopt|; If the preceding consonant is voiced, the suffix -ed is pronounced as /d/ as in slammed |slæmd|; and If the preceding consonant is /t/ or /d/, the suffix -ed is pronounced as /id/ as seen in wanted |'wɒnt.id|. These three allomorphs are affected by the voicing of the preceding consonants, causing difficulties for Pakistani English language learners. Selinker and Gas's model of Error Analysis was implemented to measure the competence level of the students. The study included 200 participants in grade 5 based on a purposive sampling technique from Government Primary School Nehang. An achievement test was conducted to collect data from the participants. SPSS was used to evaluate the data. The findings of the study revealed that if desired better performance from the students, well-versed teachers should be appointed in phonetics and phonology at the elementary level. This study will help policymakers to design such policies that help students and teachers improve pronunciation in the English language.

Keywords: Achievement Test, Allomorphs, English Language Learners, English Pronunciation, Phonological Change, the Suffix-ed.

Introduction

The process of pronouncing ensures that neither the speakers' nor the listeners' speech systems may block communication (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). Grammarians claim three parameters of the suffix -ed in the regular verb: if the preceding component is unvoiced, the suffix -ed sound is changed to /t/ as in stopped; If the preceding consonant is voiced, the suffix -ed is pronounced as /d/ as in bragged; and If the consonant is /t/ or /d/, the suffix -ed is pronounced as /id/ as seen in wanted. These three allomorphs are affected by the voicing of the preceding consonants, causing difficulties for Pakistani English language learners. Pronunciation is the source of

producing a word validly (Otlowski, 1998). Richards and Schmidt (2013) defined pronunciation as the method of producing certain sounds. According to Morley (1991), without absolute pronunciation abilities, a beginner would not be able to speak flawlessly. Morley also stated that comprehensible pronunciation is a crucial component of communication competency. Richards and Schmidt (2013) described the objectives of showing pronunciation are to produce English that is simple to comprehend and not confusing to the audience. In the natural sciences, According to Richards and Schmidt, teachers only assist students in mastering pronunciation. Teachers play the roles of a speech coach, a pronunciation coach, and a coach. The crucial task of the pronunciation coach is to monitor and direct changes in spoken English at two levels; (a) speech production and (b) speech performance. Fraser (2000) is of the view that for improvement in the efficiency of the students, their pronunciation, and courses teachers must be provided with proper resources. It is not very important for second learner to English pronunciation, but they concern with the methods in pronunciation instructions. García (2015) puts forward that for better pronunciation in a second Language learners must communicate with the second language in which they want to learn in this way they learn the target language and better understand it.

When learners have appropriate pronunciation and intonation in the target language, they are more likely to communicate effectively even when they make small vocabulary and grammar errors (Burns & Claire, 2003). Before Corder's proposal of the Error Analysis (EA) theory, the popular method of teaching a second language (L2) to non-native speakers was based on the Contrastive Analysis theory's behavioural tendency. This theory, developed by Lado, is used by applied linguists to predict and describe errors in students' first and second languages. Its inability to provide clues to learning difficulties caused by other factors within and during L2 learning necessitated the emergence of EA in applied linguistics. EA is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors that students make. It is based on a comparison of errors made in the Target Language (TL) and the TL itself. With Corder's article *The Significance of Learner Errors*, EA took a new direction.

Inflectional morphemes are distinguishing the words' form in grammatical categories and this is a study process that involves changes in affixation and vowel. There are two types of morphology; one is inflectional morphology and the other is derivational morphology which is also called word formation. There is a clear distinction between inflection and derivational morphology. Inflectional morphology deals with changes in the existing word forms and derivational morphology deals with the formation of completely new word forms. Both these morphology forms add affixes to the words but the main difference is that inflectional morphology changes the words' form but the word meanings remained the same. But the derivational morphology changes the words' category and creates a completely new word in the language (Aikhenvald, 2007).

A unique grouping of phonemes with no smaller significant pieces, such as the free-form pin or the bound form -s of pins. According to Booij (2007), morphemes are the morphological building blocks of words and are regarded as the smallest linguistic entities having grammatical significance. It follows that Morpheme is the smallest linguistic component concerned with grammatical meaning. According to Levin and Hovav (2007), morphemes are important building blocks for language. This indicates that a morpheme is a unit of word formation that can have several meanings. The writer deduces from the definition that the morpheme is the same as the original or base word. A morpheme can alternatively be explained as the smallest language unit with a distinct meaning. The smallest important unit of a language is called a morpheme (Meyer, 2015).

Words are comprised of morphemes. The morphemes which can genuinely remain solitary are called free morphemes while the morphemes, for example, - er and - s, which can't definitively remain solitary are called bound morphemes. Bound morphemes should be appended to free morphemes. Bound morphemes are likewise called attaches which can be arranged into prefixes, infix, and addition. English just has two sorts of bound morphemes in particular prefixes and additions. There are no infixes in English. Bound morphemes are arranged into two in particular derivational and inflectional morphemes. This research attempts to talk about derivational morphemes. These morphemes are convoluted so understanding what derivational morphemes are is significant. Morphemes are not used to make new words in the language, but it's used to show the features of the grammatical function of a word, it is also called a set of bound morphemes. It doesn't necessary that the inflectional morphemes are used to show words plural or singular or that the tense is past or it is comparative or possessive (Yule, 2006).

According to Parrott (2000), regular action words are those that exchange across structures while adhering to a set pattern. You must first be familiar with action words and action word tenses to understand regular action words. Because they predictably switch between tenses, regular verbs get their name. A verb's base form and present tense are interchangeable. Regular Verbs provide references to the action words that depend on the crucial illustration of enunciation or emphasis. In a word, emphasis generally suggests diversity to convey the tension, state of mind, number, orientation, etc. Regular verb tenses are formed by adding a predetermined suffix, such as -d, -ed, or -id to the present infinitive, especially the past tense forms, such as the simple past and past participle.

Oral Proficiency Test: Regular Verbs with /t/, /d/, and /id/ Sounds (Soanes, 2008)

/t/

Stopped, cooked, walked, stalked, fished, slapped, forced, mocked, focused, risked, chopped, discussed, announced, wished, dressed, practiced, coughed, helped, developed, knocked, snatched, stepped, punished, hushed, mixed, wrapped, locked, dropped, laughed, pressed, breathed, asked, talked, finished, danced, watched, looked, missed, rushed, hoped.

/d/

Agreed, killed, appeared, loved, filled, followed, allowed, listened, answered, lived, happened, jailed, realized, closed, saved, died, described, died, enjoyed, played, shared, showed, stayed, studied, tried, traveled, used, arrived, opened, believed, planned, called, performed, carried, pulled, changed, cleaned, rained, entered, worried.

/id/

Accepted, needed, attended, collected, contacted, counted, decided, demanded, rented, pretended, expected, flooded, included, invited, invented, landed, wasted, printed, respected, repeated.

Research Hypotheses

H₀ 1= Girls make no mistakes in pronouncing inflectional /t/ realization of 'ed' in regular verbs.

H₀ 2= Girls make no mistakes in pronouncing inflectional /d/ realization of 'ed' in regular verbs.

H₀ 3= Girls make no mistakes in pronouncing inflectional /id/ realization of 'ed' in regular verbs.

Literature Review

Parisuthikhan (2018) examined the difference between the English and Thai languages in her thesis, *The Development of -Ed Ending Verb Pronunciation of Ninth Grade Students Using -Ed Ending Uno Game Card* because the Thai and English languages differ greatly in sound, making it difficult to understand. The primary goal of this article was to improve ninth-grade students' pronunciation of -ed ending verbs. The result demonstrates that playing this card game helps

them improve their pronunciation. Participants also stated that this game was very beneficial to them and that it gave them confidence when speaking English.

Vera (2019) explains that good English pronunciation is essential because English is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. A descriptive, quantitative study was conducted at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador Esmeraldas Campus to analyse the most common pronunciation mistakes in the past tense of regular verbs that students of the second level of the English language have, with the techniques of observation and survey applied to 20 students and 3 English teachers of second grade general English. The findings revealed that the relationship between a foreign language and its mother tongue, in this case, Spanish, is extremely difficult because the two languages have many differences: for example, the Spanish language lacks many phonemes that exist in English.

Lin et al. (2020) investigated the growth of Mandarin phonological awareness (PA) and how it interacts with Pinyin in Chinese school-aged children who speak Mandarin. While onset-rime awareness is still increasing across grades, syllable awareness has already peaked by the second grade. While the ability to read Pinyin-written syllables remains constant throughout grades, the capacity to name Pinyin symbols declines with time. The results of linear regression showed a significant correlation between PA and Pinyin knowledge, and they also showed a bidirectional relationship between PA and Pinyin syllable reading. According to this study, Pinyin knowledge is vital to Mandarin PA development and exhibits characteristics of a non-alphabetic language. The development of literacy in Mandarin-speaking children has implications for theory and practise, which are examined.

Marchena et al. (2020) in *Language Teaching Techniques for Pronouncing the Past Tense Phonemes /t/, /d/, and /id/ in Regular Verbs* analysed the effects of drilling and colour reading language techniques on the pronunciation of past tense morphemes when reading aloud. The researcher recruits 12 young adults for this study and then applies these techniques to this group of people to determine the effects of these techniques on the loud pronunciation of past tense morphemes. Two data collection instruments were used: one was the identification of a tally sheet and the second was the questionnaire. Using these two techniques, qualitative and quantitative data were collected. This research is divided into three groups, and a pre-test is administered to identify errors before applying the techniques. The pretest results show that all three groups mispronounced and omitted the final-ed ending for the majority of verbs. The researchers then used colour coding and drilling to help the learner pronounce the regular past ten/d/ and /id/. The effectiveness of the colour siding and drilling techniques was demonstrated in post-test and pre-test comparisons.

Fitria (2020) states that the main purpose of this paper is to analyse the use of regular and irregular verbs, as well as how many students use regular and irregular verbs. And to find out what historical period is most commonly used by students in their essays. This is a qualitative study. In which 14 students' essays were examined, it was discovered that students used both past verbs, regular verbs, and irregular verbs. Regular verbs were used by 142 students (45.51%), while irregular verbs were used by 170 students (54.49%). As a result, the majority of the verbs in their essays were irregular. Customary verbs are words with changes that conform to typical standards, such as adding the letter -d or -ed to the action word first-structure/action word 1 (infinitive) to make it an action word structure second/action word 2 as Past tense. A few considerations should be made when shaping standard action words by adding the letter - ed postfix or -d in the essential action word/action word 1 as Infinitive. Sporadic action words are action words that change depending on the situation and do not conform to standard consistency. The antecedent tense irregular action words are not formed by combining

fundamental action words/action word 1 as infinitives with letters -d or -ed to form action word 2 as past tense. Through a vowel and consonant change, sporadic action words structure their previous tense (through) not generally. As a result, students/understudies should remember these structures. The results study show that the teachers who provided pronunciation instruction differed from one another, but standard teaching techniques were frequently used, and pronunciation instruction was deemed pragmatic and teacher-led. A strong emphasis was placed on phonemes at the segmental level, which is commonly thought to be difficult for LI Finnish-speaking learners (sibilants and affricates). Despite the emphasis on Suprasegmental characteristics of speech in the literature on teaching pronunciation, the observed teachers did not explicitly teach them.

Ottow-Henning & Keij (2021) investigated Children (2; 0-5; 0) in the Netherlands who have severe DLD and participate in specialised therapy groups. Speech sound abnormalities (SSDs) are typically treated in these groups through individual therapy. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of a phonological group intervention that has been included. 77% of the kids who attend the chosen groups have an SSD. They conclude that childcare specialists without formal expertise in speech-language pathology can be educated to effectively give a phonological group intervention to kids with (presumed) severe DLD and SSD. Additionally, these kids' phonological production abilities improve in a clinically significant way as a result of the phonological group intervention.

Handelsman & Bat-el (2022) discovered that the top four constraints were semantic and that the cumulative weight of the semantic constraints was greater than that of the phonological constraints. Thus, in the relationship between phonology and semantics, word order was typically governed by semantic restrictions.

Research Methodology

The current study employed quantitative methods. Data was gathered using an oral proficiency test using read aloud technique (Kelly, 2000). Responses of the participants were recorded and compared with the pronunciation of the talking Dictionary (Meriam Online Dictionary, 2022) to check the reliability of the correct pronunciation. Marks were not awarded to the students and the name of the students and schools were kept hidden for the sake of confidentiality. The class teachers of both classes cooperated with the researcher in the conduction of the test. The test included three question types: The first question included 40 verbs with the /t/ allomorph; 40 verbs with the /d/ allomorph; and 20 verbs with the /id/ allomorph at the end. The study included 200 students from 5th grade at Government primary schools Sillanwaih have been chosen as a sample using the purposive sampling techniques. To collect and measure the competence level of participants, the present study implemented the Model of Error Analysis (Gass & Selinker, 2008). The model consists of six steps: i. Collecting data, ii. Identifying errors, iii. Classifying errors, iv. Quantifying errors, iv. Analysing errors, vi. Remediate. The data were analyzed in SPSS and presented in tabular and bar-chart formats. The Pearson Chi-square test and Cronbach Alpha were run in SPSS to ensure the validity and reliability of the data.

Data Analysis

Collecting data

Data was gathered using an oral proficiency test. The test included three question types: The first question included 40 verbs with the /t/ allomorph; 40 verbs with the /d/ allomorph; and 20 verbs with the /id/ allomorph at the end. The study included 200 students from 5th grade at government primary schools Sillanwaih have been chosen as a sample using the purposive sampling techniques.

Identify errors

The research team (the researcher and the class teacher) carefully listened to the recorded responses and identified errors by comparing the production of the talking dictionary using three parameters. Grammarians assert three parameters of the regular verb suffix -ed: i. If the preceding component is voiceless, the suffixed sound is changed to /t/, as in stopped. ii. If the preceding consonant is voiced, the suffix -ed is pronounced as /d/, as in bragged. iii. If the consonant is /t/ or /d/, the suffix -ed, as in wanted, is pronounced as /id/.

Table No.1 Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	100	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Female	100	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

In this study, two genders are involved: male and female. Males have a frequency of 100 in this table. Females outnumber males by a factor of a hundred. The total number of both sexes is 200. Males make up half of the population, and females make up half of the population as well. The overall gender percentage is 100. The valid percentage of males is 50, as is the valid percentage of females. Both genders have a total valid percentage of 100. The total number of males is 50, as is the total number of females. The combined percentage of both genders is 100.

Classify Errors

Table No.2 Gender * Errors Cross tabulation					
Count					
		Errors			Total
		t sound error	d sound error	id sound error	
Gender	Male	100	0	0	100
	Female	48	39	13	100
Total		148	39	13	200

After identifying the errors, the researcher classified them. There were 100 male and 100 female students in the class. Male students were having difficulty pronouncing the /t/ sound, so no one could pronounce the /t/ sound correctly. There were 100 students in total, and 100 of them were pronouncing the t sound incorrectly. The male students find the d sound interesting, and the verb for the /d/ sound is easy for them, so they make no mistakes with the d sound. The id sound was also simple for them, so they made no mistakes with it. They had no trouble with the id sound because it was simple for them.

There were 100 female students as well. 48 female students mispronounced the /t/ sound. The other 52 female students correctly pronounced the t sound. Female students did not have as much difficulty pronouncing the /t/ sound as male students did. 39 female students had difficulty pronouncing the d sound, so they cannot pronounce the d sound correctly. The other 61 students correctly pronounced the d sound. As a result, the majority of the female participants pronounced it correctly. The id sound was easy for male students to pronounce, but 13 female students pronounced it incorrectly. The other 87 female students correctly pronounced the id sound.

Quantifying Errors

Table No.3 Errors					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	t sound error	148	74.0	74.0	74.0
	d sound error	39	19.5	19.5	93.5
	id sound error	13	6.5	6.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

There were 148 errors committed by both genders in the /t/ sound. The male students committed 100 errors, while the females committed 48. We discovered 39 errors committed by female students in d sound. The male students made no mistakes with the t sound. So, in id sound, we discovered a total of 13 errors committed by female students. So the /t/ sound error rate was 74.0 percent. The total number of d-sound errors was 93.5.

Evaluating data

Table No.4 Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	70.270 ^a	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	90.753	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	60.163	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	200		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have an expected count of less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.50.

The study tested the following hypotheses.

H₀ 1= Girls make no mistakes in pronouncing inflectional /t/ realization of 'ed' in regular verbs
 According to the researchers, girls did not make mistakes in pronouncing /t/ realisation of 'ed' in regular verbs but when the research results were different. During the study, 100 female students were tested, and it was discovered that 48 of them incorrectly produced the /t/ sound realisation of 'ed' in regular verbs. As a result, this hypothesis is rejected because female students made pronunciation errors.

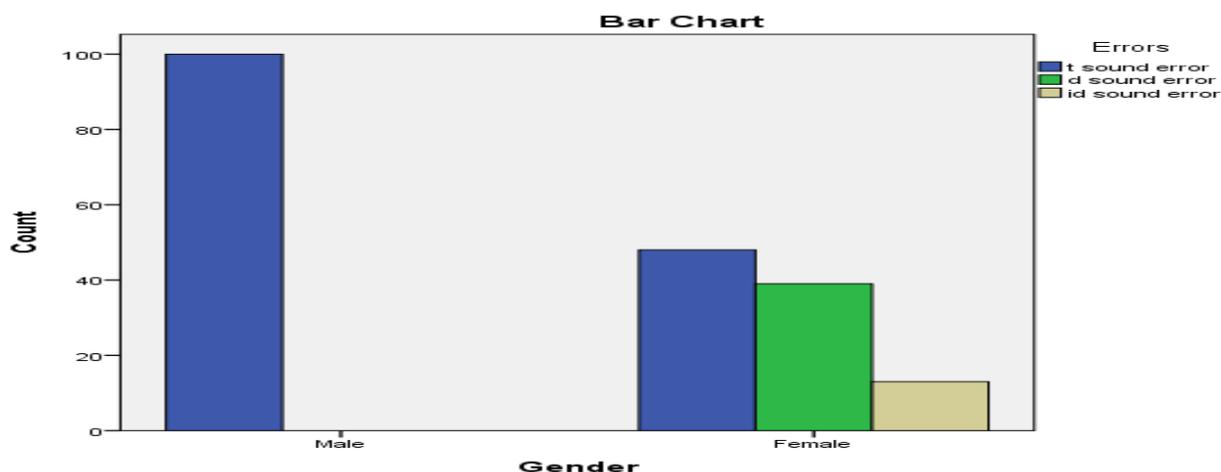
H₀ 2= Girls make no mistakes in pronouncing inflectional /d/ realization of 'ed' in regular verbs
 According to this hypothesis, girls did not make errors in pronouncing /d/ realisation of 'ed' in regular verbs, but researchers proved this hypothesis incorrect. During the experiment, 39 females pronounced the /d/ sound incorrectly. The /d/ was mispronounced by 39 females out of 100, contradicting the second hypothesis. This hypothesis was rejected because the results showed that girls made a mistake in the pronunciation of the / sound realisation of 'ed' in regular verbs.

H₀ 3= Girls make no mistakes in pronouncing inflectional /id/ realization of 'ed' in regular verbs
 The third hypothesis claims that girls did not make errors in their pronunciation of inflection /id/ realization of 'ed' in regular verbs, but when this hypothesis was tested, the results were different. A total of 100 female students were recruited for the study, and 39 of them mispronounced the /id/ sound. Because 39 students made pronunciation errors, the third hypothesis is also rejected. So, in the end, it is proven that female students made mistakes in pronunciation and that among all sounds, there is a percentage of female students who pronounced the words incorrectly. As a result, all three hypotheses are rejected in this manner.
P value is .000 which is less than .05. P value < .05 shows that there is a strong relationship between the participants and the mistakes.

Findings

Participants had difficulty pronouncing the sounds /t/, /d/, and /id/. It is difficult to pronounce English as a foreign language for Pakistani speakers.

Chart No.1



The errors analysis in the Bar Chart No.1 shows that 74.00% /t/ allophone, 10.50%, and 6.50% errors were found by the researcher in the oral proficiency test. It means that t-sound errors were huge in number that need special attention on the part of the teachers.

Regarding the error of /t/ allophone, 24% out of 74% errors were made by the male participants which rejected the first hypothesis that girls make no mistakes in pronouncing inflectional /t/ realization of 'ed' in regular verbs. Regarding the error of /d/ and /id/ allophones girls made 10.50% and 6.50% respectively while the boys made no mistake in these allophones. Again both the second and third hypotheses were rejected that Girls make no mistakes in pronouncing inflectional /t/ realization of 'ed' in regular verbs and Girls make no mistakes in pronouncing inflectional /id/ realization of 'ed' in regular verbs. The study was delimited to only 200 participants from only two schools: one of the girls and the second of the boys. The limitation of the study is that the recording of the participants could have been shown in spectrograms for a better understanding of the frequencies of the voices.

Remediating the Errors

The steps for correcting the errors are as follows.

- i. Trained teachers of Phonetics and Phonology should be allocated.
- ii. A teacher should teach pronunciation to the students at three levels: Phonemic level, word level, and sentence level.
- iii. A teacher should use multimedia to teach proper pronunciation.
- iv. A teacher should arrange classroom activities that create interest in the study but also ease the teacher to convey his message.
- v. Teachers should be offered refresher courses to improve their pronunciation.

Discussion

Errors inform the teacher about the extent to which students have progressed and what still needs to be learned (Azevedo & Corder, 1983). Teachers, according to Erdogan, can benefit from error analysis findings in a variety of ways (Erdoğan, 2005) EA can assist teachers in systematically identifying specific and common language problems that students have, allowing them to focus more attention on these types of errors. Such insight into language learning problems is beneficial to teachers because it provides information on common language learning problems that can be used to create effective teaching materials. Furthermore, by being able to

predict errors to some extent, teachers can be better equipped to assist students in minimising or overcoming their learning difficulties.

Parisuthikhan (2018) proposed that playing card techniques help the student improve pronunciation. The participants enjoyed the activities and stated that this game was very beneficial to them and that it gave them confidence when speaking English. Vera (2019) revealed that the relationship between a foreign language and its mother tongue, in this case, Spanish, is extremely difficult because the two languages have many differences: for example, the Spanish language lacks many phonemes that exist in English. Lin et al. (2020) showed a significant correlation between PA and Pinyin knowledge, and they also showed a bidirectional relationship between PA and Pinyin syllable reading. Marchena et al. (2020) compared the results of the pretest and posttest and found discovered that colour coding and drilling help the learner pronounce the regular past ten/d/ and /ld/. The effectiveness of the colour siding and drilling techniques was demonstrated in post-test and pre-test comparisons. Handelsman & Bat-el (2022) discovered that the top four constraints were semantic and that the cumulative weight of the semantic constraints was greater than that of the phonological constraints. Thus, in the relationship between phonology and semantics, word order was typically governed by the semantic restrictions.

The current study focused on phonological changes in the production of the suffix -ed in regular verbs. The error analysis will be a good invitation to English language teachers, particularly those who are interested in and knowledgeable about pronunciation.

Conclusion

The objectives of the study were to discover the realizations of inflectional 'ed' and to analyse the realizations of inflectional 'ed' in regular verbs at Elementary Level. The first objective was achieved by the use of an oral proficiency test. The researcher asked two hundred participants to read aloud the one hundred (100) words by using the read-aloud technique. The participant's level of competence was evaluated under the second goal by comparing the recorded sounds to the accurate pronunciation provided by the Meriam Online Dictionary. According to the study's findings, none of the three hypotheses about the realisation of the suffix-ed in regular verbs were true. As the English language is the international language as well as the language of technology and in Pakistan, it is taught as English as a Second Language (ESL). Therefore, for ESL learners, pronunciation becomes very important. For that purpose, it is essential to know about the rules and regulations of the Pronunciation of the English language for a better understanding and the language of native speakers. As this study addresses pronunciation rules, it will be beneficial for teachers as well as English language learners.

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