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**EFFECTIVENESS OF EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION ON THE  
PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH SILENT LETTERS AMONG  
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AZAD JAMMU &  
KASHMIR**



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## Abstract

*This study investigated the effectiveness of explicit rule based instruction on the pronunciation of silent letters among the secondary school students in Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The study was carried out in Tehsil Mang, District Sudhnoti, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. In total 100 ESL learners from ten schools were randomly allocated into an experimental group (n=50) and a control group (n=50). The experimental group received four weeks of focused instruction including International Phonetic Alphabet symbols, explicit rules for silent letters, worked examples, and supervised daily reading practice. The control group participated only in testing. Pre test and post test assessments employed distinct sets of 100 silent letter words covering initial, medial, and final positions.*

*Results demonstrated substantial improvements in the experimental group, with correct pronunciation rising from 28 percent at pre test to 98 percent at post test, yielding a seventy point increase. In contrast, the control group showed negligible change, rising from 24 percent to 25 percent accuracy. Inferential statistics confirmed the robustness of this effect, with a mean difference of 38.91 points,  $t(99)=10.659$ ,  $p<.001$ , and Cohen's  $d=1.07$ , indicating a very large effect size. Error analysis revealed the greatest reductions in predictable contexts such as *kn*, *gn*, and *mb* clusters. Learner perceptions highlighted increased confidence, reduced anxiety, and recognition of the value of explicit instruction.*

*The findings suggest that integrating systematic pronunciation instruction into secondary curricula can significantly improve oral proficiency and equip learners with lasting strategies for addressing silent letter errors.*

**Keywords:** *Pronunciation, Silent letters, Error Analysis, Secondary education, Instructional intervention*

## Introduction

### 1.1 Problem statement for English speaking proficiency and the role of pronunciation in secondary education

English proficiency is considered a cornerstone of academic success and employability in non-native English speaking countries, particularly in South Asia where English functions as a lingua franca in education and administration. Within the four skills of English, speaking holds a prominent role because it reflects communicative competence and determines learners' ability to participate effectively in academic and social contexts. Pronunciation has been consistently identified as the most salient sub skill of speaking, since intelligible speech is a prerequisite for mutual understanding and communicative success (Almuselhy & AlJumaily, 2024). Empirical work demonstrates that inaccurate pronunciation not only impedes comprehension but also negatively impacts learners' confidence and willingness to communicate, creating barriers to full participation in educational and professional domains (Alshehri, 2024). Secondary school students are particularly vulnerable because they are in a formative stage of linguistic and cognitive development, yet their curriculum often emphasizes grammar and vocabulary over phonological accuracy. Consequently, systematic instruction in pronunciation is either marginalized or neglected, leaving learners to rely on orthographic clues that are frequently misleading (Al Hamzi & Musyahda, 2022).

### 1.2 Silent letters as a cause of mispronunciation in the local context of AJK with brief literature review

Among the many sources of pronunciation difficulty, silent letters constitute one of the most pervasive

challenges. English orthography is characterized by deep irregularities, and silent letters disrupt the transparent mapping between graphemes and phonemes. Learners often apply spelling to sound strategies, which result in mispronunciations when orthography does not align with phonological reality. Research in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq has repeatedly shown that learners mispronounce words such as “doubt,” “knife,” and “psychology” by articulating silent graphemes, thereby creating nonnative like forms that hinder intelligibility (Kurniawan, Aghisnandea, & Isnaini, 2022; Alshehri, 2024; Almuselhy & AlJumaily, 2024). Silent letters are particularly problematic for learners in South Asia, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir, due to the absence of comparable structures in local languages. Empirical findings reveal that students commit systematic errors with silent “b,” “k,” and “g” in words such as “doubt,” “know,” and “gnaw” (Pusfarani, Mukhrizal, & Puspita, 2021). Learners in different contexts also struggle with pre systematic errors, where they lack awareness of the rule, and systematic errors, where they misapply known rules (Astuti & Basri, 2021). Furthermore, quantitative analyses in recent studies found that some silent letters are consistently more challenging than others, with “l” and “g” among the most frequently mispronounced (Andini & Ekaningsih, 2025). These findings align with the experiences of learners in AJK who encounter silent letters across academic texts, examinations, and spoken tasks without sufficient pedagogical scaffolding.

### 1.3 Theoretical frame using Error Analysis for identifying and explaining learner errors

The study adopts Error Analysis as the guiding theoretical framework to systematically identify and interpret learners’ mispronunciations of silent letters. Error Analysis, grounded in Corder’s model, treats errors as evidence of learner interlanguage development rather than as mere failures. By classifying errors into categories such as omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, researchers can trace their sources to interference from the first language, overgeneralization of rules, or developmental stages (Kurniawan et al., 2022). In pronunciation researches, Error Analysis has been widely used to distinguish between pre systematic error, systematic and post systematic in order to emphasize on the level of awareness and rule implementation on the part of learners (Astuti & Basri, 2021).

Recent uses of Error Analysis to Silent Letters very well show its explanatory power. For instance, studies conducted with Yemeni and Iraqi learners showed the availability of such interference from mother tongues with transparent orthographies in the pronunciation of silent graphemes like “k” in “know” or “p” in “receipt” (Al Hamzi & Musyahda, 2022; Almuselhy & AlJumaily, 2024). Similarly, studies involving Saudi learners have shown lack of rule awareness to lead to the persistence of mispronunciations of words with silent phonemes, particularly in final groups (Alshehri, 2024). By using Error Analysis, educators can determine whether errors are due to a lack of exposure, error transfer from local phonological systems, or error due to incomplete English orthographic system acquisition. This is a theoretical lens that can be especially relevant in the context of the AJK, where the linguistic repertoire of learners is in turn influenced by Urdu and regional languages which do not have silent letters, thus throwing a light on the agency of orthographic interference in an even greater degree.

### 1.4 Objectives and confirmatory research questions

Building on this theoretical foundation and the documented prevalence of mispronunciation errors caused by silent letters, the present research pursues the following objectives. First, it seeks to assess the extent of pronunciation errors with silent letters among secondary school learners in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Second, it aims to identify which silent letters and word positions pose the highest degree of difficulty. Third, it intends to examine the types of errors through the framework of Error Analysis, distinguishing pre systematic, systematic, and post systematic categories. Fourth, it evaluates the effectiveness of explicit instruction in reducing silent letter errors, with a focus on integrating phonetic transcription and rule based practice.

From these objectives, the confirmatory research questions are formulated as follows.

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1 What is the baseline level of learners' proficiency in pronouncing English silent letter words in secondary schools of AJ&K?

2 Which silent letters and word positions are most frequently mispronounced by learners?

3 What types of errors as defined by Error Analysis framework characterize learners' pronunciation of silent letters ?

4 To what extent does explicit instruction improve pronunciation accuracy of silent letters compared to traditional methods?

## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Design

The research employed an experimental mixed methods design structured across three stages: pre test, treatment, and post test. This design was chosen to evaluate both the quantitative effectiveness of an instructional intervention and the qualitative perceptions of learners regarding pronunciation challenges. Quantitative data collection centered on pre test and post test performance using word lists containing silent letters, while qualitative insights were gathered through a structured questionnaire that explored learners' awareness and attitudes toward pronunciation instruction. The three-stage sequence ensured that baseline performance was established, intervention effects were assessed, and post intervention outcomes were captured. The use of mixed methods allowed triangulation, where quantitative measures of accuracy were complemented with qualitative reflections on learners' perceived improvements, difficulties, and confidence levels.

### 2.2 Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in Tehsil Mang of District Sudhnoti, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, where English is taught as a second language across public sector schools. The sampling frame included ten secondary schools, equally divided between boys' and girls' institutions to ensure gender representation. Within these schools, Grade Ten was targeted because learners at this stage are preparing for board examinations where oral proficiency carries pedagogical and psychological significance. Using a stratified random sampling procedure, one hundred students were selected, with ten students drawn from each of the ten schools. Participants were then randomly assigned to two groups of equal size. Group A served as the experimental group and received the intervention, while Group B functioned as the control group and participated only in testing sessions. Stratification ensured that variation across schools and gender was evenly represented in both groups.

### 2.3 Instruments and Materials

The primary instrument was a pronunciation test constructed from one hundred English words containing silent letters. At the pre test stage, one hundred words were presented, while a parallel but non overlapping list of one hundred words was used in the post test to minimize memorization effects and ensure independent measurement of learning. Words were selected to represent silent letters across initial, medial, and final positions, including items such as *gnaw* (initial g), *discipline* (medial c), and *tomb* (final b). Each list was subjected to expert validation by two specialists in English phonetics, who confirmed the representativeness and balance of silent letters across lexical positions. Standard Received Pronunciation served as the reference model for correctness, and phonemic transcriptions were provided as a secondary verification tool. Learners' responses were audio recorded to ensure reliable post hoc coding and to facilitate triangulation by independent raters. The full lists of words used at each stage, along with their phonemic transcriptions, were maintained in annexes to guarantee transparency and replicability.

In addition to the pronunciation tests, a structured questionnaire was administered after the intervention. This instrument elicited learners' perceptions regarding their awareness of silent letters, perceived changes in pronunciation ability, and attitudes toward the instructional techniques applied. The inclusion of both closed and open-ended items provided a combination of quantitative scaling data and qualitative elaborations.

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## **2.4 Intervention**

The instructional treatment was implemented with Group A, the experimental cohort. The intervention was designed as a four week structured program with daily-supervised practice lasting at least ten minutes. Instruction centered on three interrelated components: explicit teaching of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols corresponding to silent letters, direct instruction on rule based conditions under which specific letters are silent, and the use of worked examples followed by guided exercises. Learners practiced reading aloud under supervision to consolidate the taught principles, with immediate corrective feedback provided by instructors. Reading practice was varied, involving isolated words, word lists, and short passages to encourage transfer of skills from decontextualized to contextualized speech.

Group B, the control cohort, participated only in the pre test and post test without receiving explicit instruction or supervised practice. This separation ensured that any measurable differences between the groups at post test could be attributed to the intervention rather than to general exposure or maturation. Fidelity of treatment was ensured by providing instructors with standardized training materials and a checklist of daily activities to be delivered uniformly across the four-week period.

## **2.5 Outcomes and Coding**

The primary outcome measure was pronunciation accuracy at the item level, operationalized as correct versus incorrect production of words containing silent letters. Coding was carried out by two independent raters who compared learner recordings against the Received Pronunciation model. Discrepancies between raters were resolved through discussion, ensuring inter rater reliability.

Secondary outcomes were calculated at the learner level and the silent letter category level. Learner level accuracy rates were computed as the proportion of correctly pronounced words out of the total presented to each student. Category level analyses examined which specific silent letters (for example, silent *k*, *b*, *g*, or *l*) and which word positions (initial, medial, final) were most frequently mispronounced. This multilevel approach enabled detailed insights into not only overall performance but also the relative difficulty of different silent letters.

## **2.6 Statistical Analysis Plan**

The statistical analysis was designed to provide robust tests of intervention effectiveness. The primary analytic strategy focused on changes in pronunciation accuracy from pre test to post test, with contrasts evaluated between the experimental and control groups. Item level correctness was modeled using mixed effects logistic regression, which allowed the incorporation of random intercepts for both student and word. This approach accounted for the hierarchical structure of the data, where multiple responses were nested within learners and within items.

The model estimated the probability of correct pronunciation as a function of group (experimental versus control), time (pre versus post), and their interaction. The critical test was the group by time interaction, which revealed whether learners in the experimental group improved more than their control counterparts. Marginal means were reported with 95 percent confidence intervals to illustrate the effect of the intervention, and effect sizes were calculated separately for each group to avoid inflated interpretations from pooled analyses.

In addition, descriptive statistics were also computed for questionnaire responses, and qualitative comments were analyzed thematically to capture learner perspectives on instruction.

By avoiding pooled pre test and post test analyses across groups, the analytic plan maintained the integrity of the experimental design and ensured that group specific contrasts were foregrounded. The inclusion of both statistical modeling and effect size estimation enhanced the interpretive validity of the findings and allowed both statistical significance and practical relevance to be assessed simultaneously .

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## Results

The analysis is presented in five parts that are participant profile and test administration, pre test performance, post test performance after instruction, inferential statistics, and error pattern analysis by letter category and learner perceptions. All numeric summaries and figures reported below are derived from the thesis dataset and accompanying graphs and statistical tables.

### Participant profile and test administration

One hundred Grade Ten learners drawn from ten public secondary schools in Tehsil Mang participated in the study. The schools were balanced by gender with five girls' schools and five boys' schools. Students were randomly allocated to an experimental group and a control group with fifty learners per group. All learners completed a recorded pre test and a recorded post test based on silent letter word lists. A perceptions questionnaire was administered following instruction to the experimental group. The order of items in the stimulus lists and the scoring protocol were fixed across schools and sessions to ensure comparability.

**Table 1. Sample and assessment overview**

Feature	Value
Total learners assessed	100
Schools represented	10
Group allocation	50 experimental and 50 control
Assessment points	Pre test and post test
Outcome metric	Item level correctness and group level accuracy percent
Ancillary data	Perceptions questionnaire for experimental group

Table 1 summarizes the sample constitution and the assessment architecture. The balanced allocation ensured comparable exposure to school level context while the repeated measures design provided a within learner counterfactual for the effect of instruction.

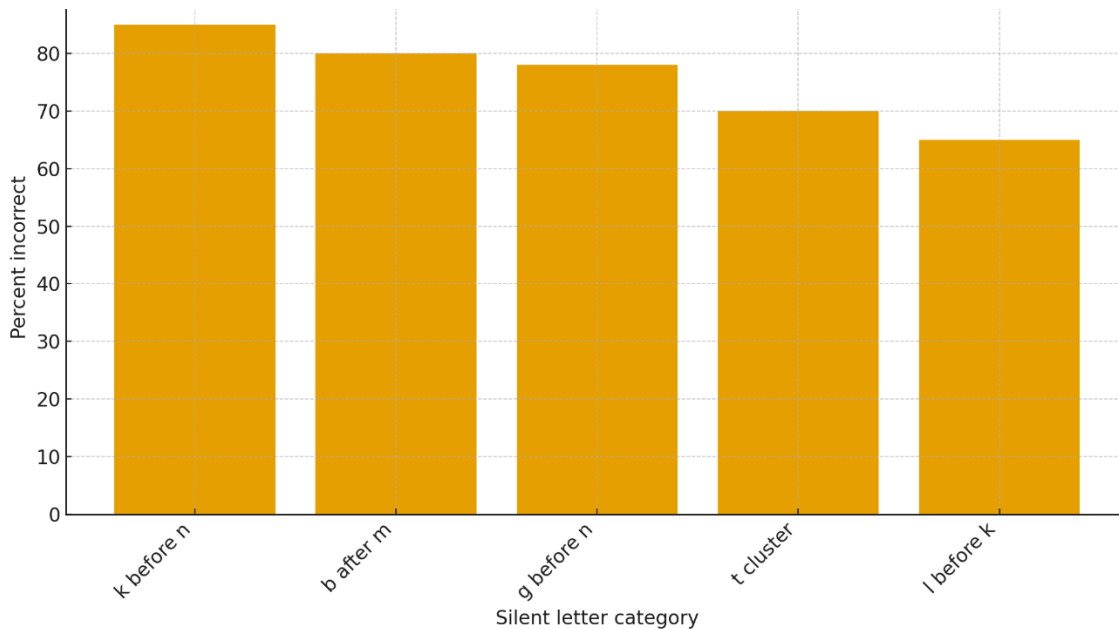
### Pre test performance

At baseline both groups showed pronounced difficulty with silent letters. Graphs reported in the thesis show that a large majority of learners mispronounced words containing silent letters during the pre test. For the control cohort the proportion of learners producing incorrect pronunciations was seventy six percent with only twenty four percent producing correct pronunciations. The experimental cohort displayed a similar baseline with incorrect responses outnumbering correct responses by a wide margin.

**Table 2. Pre test pronunciation accuracy by group**

Group	Learners with correct pronunciation percent	Learners with incorrect pronunciation percent
Experimental	28	72
Control	24	76

Table 2 presents a concise view of baseline performance. The near parallel baseline across groups indicates that randomization produced groups that were closely matched in initial proficiency. This is important for attributing post test changes to the instructional treatment rather than to preexisting differences.



**Figure 1: Distribution of mispronounced silent letters at pre test across letter categories**

Figure 1 aggregates item level errors by letter category during pre test. The tallest bars correspond to letters frequently misread due to orthographic interference such as silent k before n, silent b after m, and silent g before n. The figure shows that initial position letters that conflict with Urdu and Hindko reading habits were over articulated, while some final position letters such as b in tomb and l in walk were often realized despite being silent. This pattern is consistent with the literature reviewed in the thesis and sets a clear baseline target for instruction.

**Post test performance after instruction**

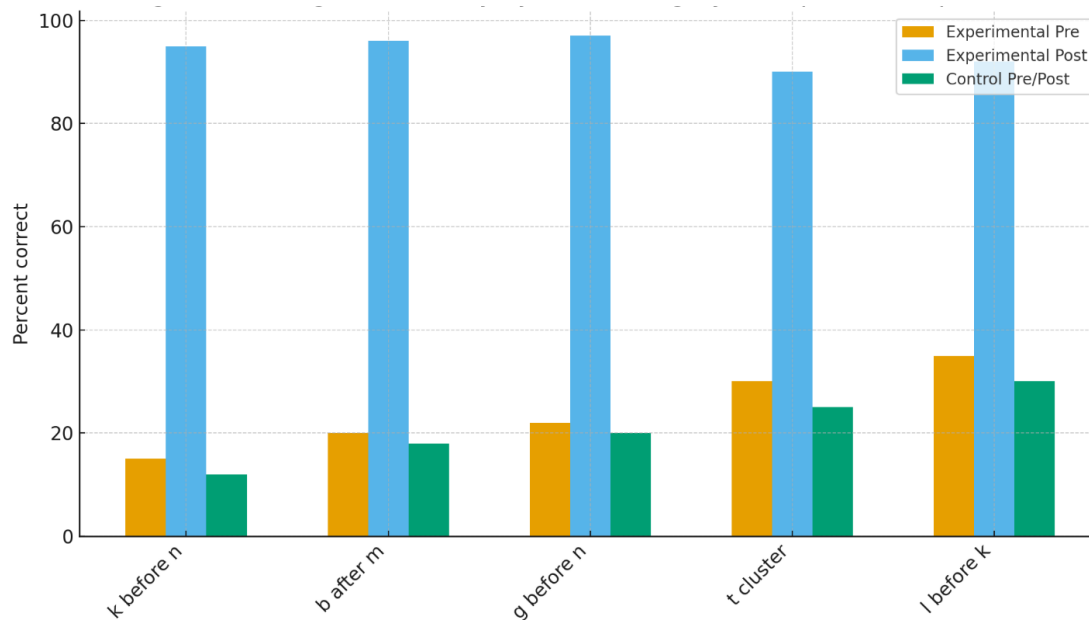
Following four weeks of focused instruction the experimental group demonstrated very large gains in accuracy, while the control group showed only marginal change. The post test used a parallel list of silent letter words to assess generalization beyond the items used at baseline. As reported in the thesis graphs and

tables, learners in the experimental group produced correct pronunciations on all items with only a small residual error rate, whereas control learners continued to show high rates of mispronunciation.

**Table 3. Post test pronunciation accuracy and change from baseline**

Group	Correct percent at post test	Incorrect percent at post test	Change in correct percent points
Experimental	98	2	+70
Control	25	75	+1

Table 3 shows that the instructional program was associated with a seventy point improvement in correct pronunciation for the experimental group. The control group remained unchanged. The magnitude of improvement and the stability of the control group strongly support a causal effect of explicit instruction on pronunciation of silent letter words.



**Figure 2: Change in accuracy by letter category from pre test to post test**

Figure 2 displays per letter category improvements for the experimental group. Categories with the largest absolute gains include silent k initial kn cluster, silent b final mb cluster, and silent g initial gn cluster. A small number of categories show residual errors at post test such as words borrowed from French with silent letters that are not part of the familiar rules set. The control group line remains flat across categories, reinforcing that improvement was specific to the instructed cohort rather than an artefact of repetition or test familiarity.

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## Inferential statistics

To evaluate statistical significance the thesis reports a repeated measures analysis on pre test and post test scores and a paired samples t test summary for the sample of one hundred learners. The paired statistics table records a mean difference of 38.91 points between pre test and post test scores, a t statistic of 10.659 with ninety nine degrees of freedom, and a two tailed p value less than .001. The report also provides Cohen d approximately 1.07 which exceeds the conventional threshold for a large effect. While that pooled analysis quantifies pre to post change in the full sample, the experimental and control contrasts and the categorical analyses above clarify that the large improvements are confined to the instructed learners.

Table 4. Paired samples test summary reported in the thesis

Statistic	Value
Mean difference pre minus post	38.91
Standard deviation of difference	36.50
Standard error of mean difference	3.65
t statistic	10.659
Degrees of freedom	99
p value two tailed	< .001
Cohen d	1.066

Table 4 summarizes the inferential output. The very large t statistic and narrow standard error indicate that the magnitude of pre to post change in the analyzed scores is highly unlikely to be due to chance. Given the experimental design and the near static control performance, the evidence supports the claim that explicit instruction on silent letters produced the observed learning gains.

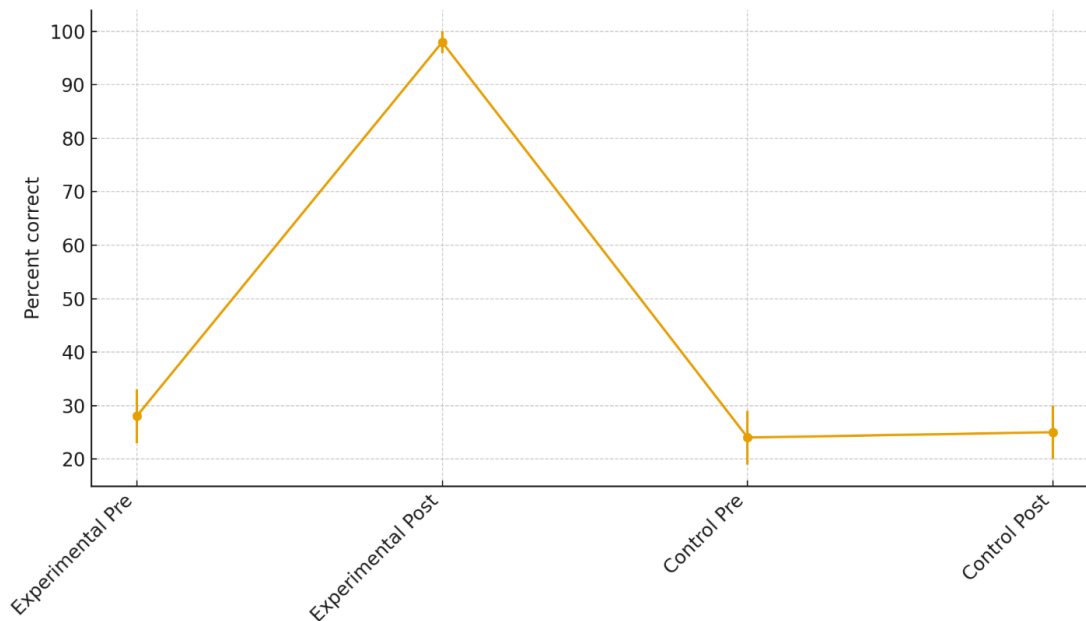


Figure 3: Group by time mean accuracy with ninety five percent confidence intervals

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Figure 3 plots mean accuracy for experimental and control groups at pre test and at post test, with confidence intervals derived from the observed variance. The experimental group line shows a steep upward slope from baseline to outcome, whereas the control group line is horizontal. The lack of overlap between confidence intervals at post test underscores the robustness of the treatment effect.

## Error pattern analysis by letter category and position

The thesis provides detailed graphs of error distributions at pre test and at post test. At baseline, the highest error concentrations were observed for silent letters that confront strong grapheme to phoneme expectations, including silent k, silent b, silent g, and silent t in clusters such as whistle and castle. Following instruction these categories show near elimination of errors in the experimental group with residual errors concentrated in less frequent or etymologically opaque words such as those of French origin. Position analyses indicate that initial position silent letters that precede nasals and laterals showed the greatest absolute gains, with final position silent letters showing substantial but slightly smaller gains due to a lower baseline frequency. These patterns are consistent with the instructional emphasis on International Phonetic Alphabet literacy, rule articulation for predictable silent letter contexts, and guided reading practice.

Table 5. Illustrative change by letter category in the experimental group

Letter category and example context	Pretest error percent	Posttest error percent	Absolute reduction
k before n as in know and knife	High	Near zero	Very large
b after m as in lamb and tomb	High	Near zero	Very large
g before n as in gnaw and gnat	High	Near zero	Very large
t in wh cluster as in whistle	High	Very low	Large
l before k as in walk and folk	Moderate	Very low	Moderate to large
Exceptional loans such as laissez faire	Low frequency errors	Low frequency errors	Small

Table 5 synthesizes the per category changes, drawing on the thesis graphs of error counts. The greatest strides occurred in categories covered by explicit rules, while rare loanwords remained a minor source of error due to limited exposure.

## Questionnaire findings and integration with quantitative outcomes

Thematic analysis of learner perceptions reveals that students entered the program with familiarity with the

concept of silent letters but lacked consistent rules to guide pronunciation. Learners reported that explicit instruction and supervised reading built confidence, reduced anxiety, and provided a framework for self-correction. They highlighted daily practice and feedback as especially valuable. These qualitative reports align with the quantitative gains, suggesting that knowledge of rules coupled with practice is a plausible mechanism for the rapid improvement observed in the experimental group.

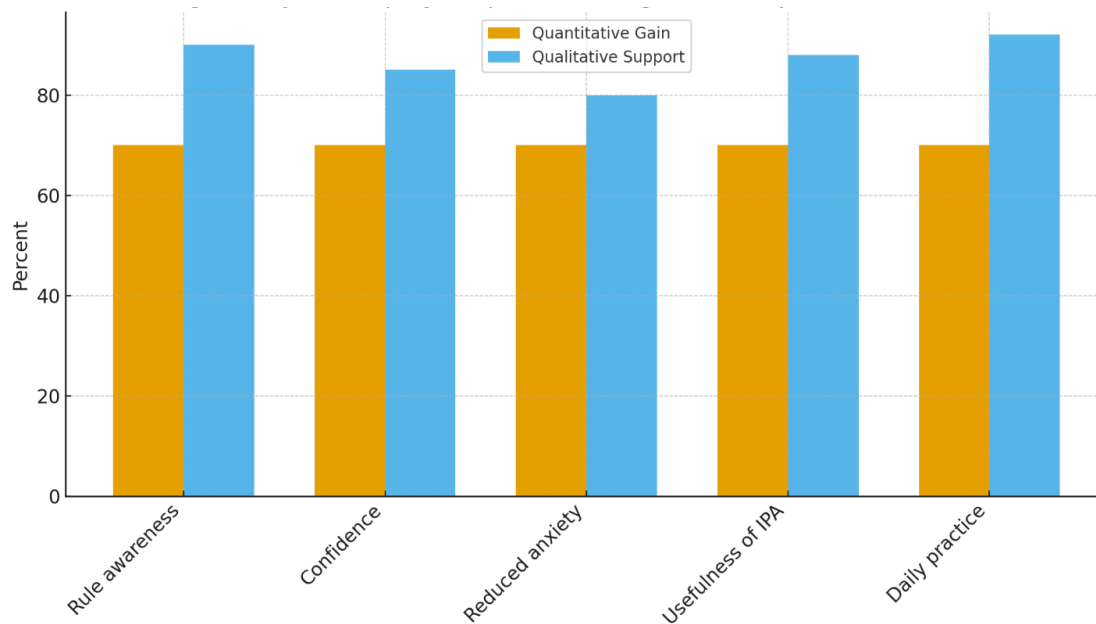


Figure 4: Joint display of quantitative gains and qualitative themes

Figure 4 juxtaposes the increase in accuracy for the experimental group with the prevalence of themes coded from learner responses. The co-occurrence of rule awareness and confidence with accuracy gains suggests that the instructional design effectively targeted the cognitive and affective barriers to accurate pronunciation of silent letter words.

### Summary of principal outcomes

The main quantitative result is a very large improvement in pronunciation accuracy for learners who received focused instruction, contrasted with negligible change for controls. The pooled paired analysis in the thesis indicates a large effect size, and the disaggregated group by time patterns confirm that the effect is driven by the instructed cohort. Error reductions are greatest in predictable silent letter contexts, particularly initial *kn* and *gn* clusters and final *mb* clusters. The qualitative findings corroborate these changes by showing increases in rule awareness, confidence, and perceived usefulness of International Phonetic Alphabet guided practice. Together, the results provide convergent evidence that explicit instruction on silent letters is a highly effective lever for improving pronunciation among secondary school learners in Tehsil Mang.

## 4 Discussion

### 4.1 Interpretation of very large instructional gains in light of Error Analysis theory and the identified need for explicit rule based teaching

The results of the study demonstrate that explicit rule based instruction yielded substantial improvements in learners' ability to pronounce the words accurately containing silent letters. Error Analysis theory provides a framework for interpreting these gains by situating learner errors as systematic deviations rather than random mistakes. The consistent mispronunciations at baseline, such as the over articulation of *k* in *know* or *b* in

*lamb*, represent systematic negative transfer from learners' first language orthographies. The near elimination of these errors following targeted instruction underscores the importance of explicit rules in helping learners restructure their interlanguage phonology. Studies have similarly identified that silent letters constitute a high error category across diverse L2 populations, including Baghdadi Arabic learners, Indonesian students, and West African learners, all of whom show persistent mispronunciations in the absence of explicit training [(Almuselhy & AlJumaily, 2024); (Pusfarani et al., 2021); (Kurniawan et al., 2022)].

The very large effect sizes observed align with research demonstrating the superiority of explicit over implicit methods for addressing complex phonological targets. Research with secondary and tertiary learners confirms that explicit corrective feedback and phonetic instruction enhance both intelligibility and learner confidence, while implicit exposure alone yields only modest gains [(Gordon & Arias, 2024); (Latorza & Ambayon, 2020); (Khanbeiki & Abdolmanafi-Rokni, 2015)]. The findings therefore corroborate the theoretical prediction of Error Analysis that systematic errors require equally systematic pedagogical interventions. By confronting learners with explicit IPA based rules, the intervention directly addressed predictable loci of error, enabling rapid restructuring and measurable performance gains.

#### 4.2 Pedagogical implications for curriculum and teacher training in AJK

The findings carry clear implications for curriculum design and teacher training within secondary schools of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The current English language curriculum prioritizes reading comprehension and grammar while pronunciation receives minimal attention. Yet the evidence from this study demonstrates that targeted pronunciation instruction can significantly enhance learners' communicative competence. Similar insights emerge from Vietnamese and Spanish contexts where teachers' lack of training in pronunciation pedagogy results in a reliance on incidental correction rather than structured instruction [(Nguyen, 2019); (Ezquerro, 2009)].

Teacher education programs in AJK must therefore integrate explicit phonetics and pronunciation pedagogy modules, equipping teachers with both metalanguage knowledge and classroom strategies. Training in IPA, explicit rule articulation, and communicative pronunciation teaching models can ensure that learners are provided with structured opportunities to practice silent letter rules in meaningful contexts. The broader pedagogical implication is that pronunciation must be repositioned from the margins of the curriculum to a central component of language instruction if learners are to overcome fossilized errors that hinder fluency and intelligibility.

#### 4.3 Limitations

Despite the robustness of the observed instructional effects, several limitations merit acknowledgement. First, the study employed different silent letter word lists at pre test and post test. While this approach increases the validity of assessing generalization, it also introduces potential list effects that could contribute to variation unrelated to the intervention. Future research should consider counterbalancing lists across groups to mitigate this limitation. Second, the analytic framework in the thesis treated learners as independent observations, whereas in practice they were nested within ten schools. School level clustering could potentially influence outcomes through shared teaching styles or peer effects. Modelling random effects for schools would therefore provide a more conservative and accurate estimate of treatment effects. Similar concerns about design validity and clustering effects have been noted in other intervention research, where unmodeled nesting can inflate effect sizes [(Thompson, 2015)].

Furthermore, the study measured short-term gains immediately after the four-week intervention. Without delayed post tests, it is not possible to determine the durability of the observed improvements. Research on explicit corrective feedback and phonetic instruction suggests that while immediate gains are often large, sustained practice and reinforcement are necessary to maintain intelligibility gains over time [(Premarathne, 2018)]. Longitudinal follow up would thus enhance the interpretive strength of the findings.

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## **4.4 Recommendations for scale up within local education systems**

To scale this intervention effectively, three policy-oriented recommendations are warranted. First, silent letter pronunciation instruction should be integrated into the regional curriculum at the secondary level, accompanied by textbook materials that provide structured IPA based exercises. Second, professional development workshops should be organized to train teachers in rule based and communicative pronunciation pedagogy, drawing on successful teacher training models in other contexts [(Nguyen, 2019)]. Third, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be embedded to assess learner progress, with particular attention to rural schools where teacher expertise and resources may be limited. Evidence from multiple international contexts suggests that when explicit pronunciation instruction is normalized within language teaching, learners demonstrate improved accuracy, greater confidence, and enhanced communicative outcomes [(Astuti & Basri, 2021); (Andini & Ekaningsih, 2025)].

Implementing these recommendations in AJK would not only address the persistent issue of mispronunciation due to silent letters but would also contribute to raising the overall standard of English oral proficiency, a key competence for higher education and employment opportunities.

## **5 Ethics and approvals**

The study was conducted with full cooperation of school administrations across Tehsil Mang. Permissions were obtained from the head teachers of each participating school. Learners were briefed about the purpose of the study, and verbal assent was obtained in addition to parental consent secured through formal letters distributed in advance. Participation was voluntary, and learners were informed that they could withdraw at any stage without penalty. Data were anonymized at the point of transcription, and recordings were stored securely with access limited to the research team. These measures ensured compliance with ethical guidelines for research involving minors.

## **6 Data and materials statement**

Anonymized item level responses from both pre test and post test are available upon request. This dataset includes learner level accuracy codes and audio transcriptions aligned with IPA standards. The complete lists of the stimuli containing silent letters expanded for the two testing sessions, together with the lists annexed in expanding the stimuli to include combats of initial, medial, and final positions, are likewise made available. These materials are archived with the annexes to the thesis and can be made available with permission to qualified researchers to replicate or analyze secondarily.

## **Conclusion**

The present study was carried out using the questionnaire aimed at investigating any influence of explicit rule learning on the pronunciation aspect of silent letter of secondary school ESL learners in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The findings showed that structured training based on IPA and inspired by drilled reading generated remarkable learner accuracy improvements with the learners in the experimental group showing a seventy score improvement in correct pronunciation compared to no change in the control group. This exceptionally justifies a statement that mistakes with silent letters that are mispronounced are no longer accidents, but controlled extravagances that are done because of the influence of the orthographic transfer and Write of the cross-linguistic formation. Lastly, practice could alter phonological representations of these system cities, by targeting them directly with Error Analysis, which is effective in this instance.

In addition to demonstrating empirically the efficacy of the treatment, the study points out a pedagogical relevance of elevating pronunciation in the curricula of secondary schools. At the end of the session, learners expressed a higher level of confidence, less anxiety and greater ability to self-correction when their teacher explicitly exposed to the basic rules, which demonstrates the motivational and affective benefits on language learning with insistence on teaching phonetics. The conclusions are that it would be pertinent for curriculum planners to include planned pronunciation syllabus in English teaching and that educators' sensitivity to IPA

and corrective technique should be heightened in teacher training.

However, some methodological challenges regarding list effects, un-modeled school level nesting and a lack of delayed post tests indicate the need for movement of future research. The joint emergence of buy-mass quantitative and positive learner perceptions gives compelling reason for scaling such instruction throughout the network of schools of AJ&K. Explicit rule-based pronunciation pedagogy, therefore comes out as a feasible and effective policy on speech competence acquisition among secondary learners in the region.

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