

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PHONETICS TEACHING PRACTICES IN CBSE AND MP BOARD SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The teaching of phonetics plays a critical role in enhancing pronunciation, listening, and speaking skills in English language learners. However, pedagogical practices differ significantly across educational boards. This study aims to compare phonetics teaching practices in CBSE and MP Board-affiliated schools in Madhya Pradesh. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires and classroom observations involving 20 English language teachers and 100 students from both boards. The findings reveal considerable disparities in curriculum focus, teacher training, use of phonetic tools, and student engagement. CBSE schools generally demonstrated more systematic and technology-integrated phonetics instruction compared to MP Board schools. The study emphasizes the need for policy reforms, teacher training, and resource allocation in MP Board schools to bridge the pedagogical gap and promote effective phonetics learning.

Keywords: Phonetics, English Language Teaching, CBSE, MP Board, Pronunciation, Curriculum, Pedagogy

1. INTRODUCTION

English language learning has gained tremendous importance in the Indian educational system, particularly in the context of globalization and the growing demand for English proficiency in academic and professional spheres. Among the essential components of English language teaching (ELT), phonetics plays a pivotal role in developing the core skills of pronunciation, listening, and oral fluency. Mastery over phonetics not only aids in accurate articulation of sounds but also enhances comprehension, thereby making communication more effective and intelligible.

In India, English is taught in schools affiliated with various educational boards, each with differing curricular structures and pedagogical orientations. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) operates under the aegis of the national government and adopts a more holistic and integrated approach to language instruction. In contrast, the Madhya Pradesh Board of Secondary Education (MPBSE), governed by the state education department, often follows a more traditional curriculum, which may not adequately address modern linguistic pedagogy, particularly phonetics.

The disparities in teaching practices, teacher preparedness, and resource availability between these two boards raise important questions about the effectiveness of phonetics instruction across schools in Madhya Pradesh. While CBSE schools often incorporate phonetics through modern tools such as language labs, phonetic charts, and digital applications, MP Board schools tend to rely on textbook-driven and rote-based learning methods.

This study is undertaken to explore these differences through a systematic comparative analysis of phonetics teaching practices in CBSE and MP Board-affiliated schools. By examining curriculum design, teacher training, instructional methodologies, and student outcomes, the research seeks to identify gaps and propose actionable solutions for enhancing phonetics education. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on improving English language education in Indian schools, with a specific focus on phonetics as a foundational skill.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the curriculum structure related to phonetics in CBSE and MP Board schools.
2. To analyze the pedagogical strategies adopted by English language teachers for teaching phonetics.
3. To assess the availability and usage of teaching aids and technological tools in phonetics instruction.
4. To compare the training and qualification levels of English teachers in relation to phonetics.
5. To evaluate students' phonetic awareness and pronunciation proficiency across both boards.

3. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- H1: There is a significant difference in the phonetics curriculum content between CBSE and MP Board schools.
- H2: There is a significant difference in the phonetics teaching methodologies used by English teachers in CBSE and MP Board schools.
- H3: The level of teacher training in phonetics is significantly higher in CBSE schools than in MP Board schools.
- H4: Students of CBSE schools demonstrate significantly better phonetic skills and pronunciation than those of MP Board schools.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Crystal, D. (2008) in *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* explains that phonetics is the science of speech sounds and plays a key role in acquiring accurate pronunciation. He emphasizes the application of phonetics in ELT as a fundamental component for intelligible communication.

Gimson, A. C. (2014) in *Gimson's Pronunciation of English* discusses articulatory and acoustic phonetics, highlighting their relevance in second language acquisition. He asserts that explicit phonetic instruction improves students' phonological awareness and spoken fluency.

Pandey and Srivastava (2017) conducted a study titled "Teaching Phonetics in Indian Classrooms: A CBSE Model" and concluded that CBSE schools use more interactive and student-friendly phonetics teaching practices, such as audio-visual aids and phonetic transcription exercises.

Verma, N. (2019) in "Challenges in English Language Teaching in State Board Schools" identifies the lack of trained teachers and inadequate resources as major hindrances in implementing effective phonetics teaching in MP Board schools.

Jenkins, J. (2000) in *The Phonology of English as an International Language* introduces the concept of English as a Lingua Franca and stresses teaching core phonetic features to increase intelligibility among diverse speakers, a perspective useful for Indian classrooms.

Underhill, A. (2005) in *Sound Foundations* emphasizes the use of phonemic charts and the importance of kinesthetic learning in phonetics instruction. His approach has been widely adopted in CBSE curriculum but remains underutilized in MP Board settings.

Kachru, B. B. (1983) in *The Indianization of English* discusses the sociolinguistic context of English in India, indicating that regional influences affect pronunciation, hence necessitating focused phonetic education.

Bansal, R. K., & Harrison, J. B. (1983) in *Spoken English for India* present practical insights into teaching phonetics in the Indian context. Their work supports the inclusion of stress and intonation patterns in school syllabi.

Sethi, J., & Dhamija, P. V. (2006) in *A Course in Phonetics and Spoken English* provide a detailed pedagogical framework for teaching segmental and suprasegmental features, which is more aligned with CBSE's phonetics teaching methodology.

Rao, P. S. (2019) in his article "The Role of English Language Teaching: Importance of Phonetics in ESL Classroom" published in *Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching* highlights the challenges of teaching phonetics in overcrowded classrooms and the lack of teacher training in state-run schools.

5. METHODOLOGY

- **Research Design:** Descriptive and comparative
- **Sample:** 10 CBSE schools and 10 MP Board schools across Bhopal and Indore districts
- **Participants:** 20 English teachers and 100 students (Grades 6 to 10)
- **Tools:** Structured questionnaire, observation checklist, informal interviews
- **Data Collection:** Visits to classrooms, teacher interviews, student surveys
- **Data Analysis:** Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Curriculum Coverage of Phonetics in CBSE and MP Board Schools

Phonetic Content Area	CBSE Schools (n=10)	MP Board Schools (n=10)
Phonemic Symbols Introduced	90%	30%
Word Stress & Intonation Taught	80%	20%

Syllable Structure Explained	70%	20%
Use of IPA Chart	100%	10%
Integration in Textbook	Strong	Minimal

The data in Table 1 clearly indicates that **CBSE schools provide more comprehensive coverage** of phonetics topics in their curriculum compared to MP Board schools. A significantly higher percentage of CBSE institutions introduce phonemic symbols, word stress, and syllable structure as part of English language instruction. Moreover, the use of the **International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)** and phonetics integration in textbooks is strongly evident in CBSE schools, while MP Board schools reflect minimal incorporation. This implies that the **CBSE curriculum is better aligned with global language teaching standards**.

Table 2: Teacher Training in Phonetics

Training Received	CBSE Teachers (n=10)	MP Board Teachers (n=10)
Formal Training in Phonetics	80%	30%
Use of Phonetics in Lesson Plans	90%	40%
Attendance in Workshops	70%	20%
Confidence in Teaching Phonetics	High (60%)	Low (70%)

Table 2 reveals that **CBSE teachers are better trained and more confident** in teaching phonetics than their MP Board counterparts. A majority (80%) of CBSE teachers have received formal training in phonetics and incorporate it regularly in lesson plans. In contrast, only 30% of MP Board teachers reported receiving similar training. Moreover, low confidence levels and lack of workshop participation among MP Board teachers highlight a **critical need for professional development and in-service training programs** in phonetics.

Table 3: Instructional Tools and Resources Used

Instructional Tools Used	CBSE Schools (%)	MP Board Schools (%)
Language Lab	60%	0%
Phonetic Software/Mobile Apps	50%	10%
Phoneme Flashcards/Charts	70%	20%
Audio Recordings/Pronunciation CDs	80%	30%

Table 3 demonstrates that CBSE schools are **far more resourceful and technologically equipped** for teaching phonetics. Tools such as language labs, mobile apps, and audio recordings are frequently used in CBSE classrooms, whereas MP Board schools primarily rely on basic and often outdated materials. This gap in resource utilization significantly **impacts the quality and engagement** of phonetics instruction, pointing toward infrastructural disadvantages faced by MP Board schools.

Table 4: Student Performance on Phonetics Assessment

Performance Indicator	CBSE Students (n=50)	MP Board Students (n=50)
Correct Pronunciation (avg %)	82%	56%
Word Stress Accuracy	78%	52%
Phoneme Identification	88%	60%
Intonation Usage in Reading	74%	47%

The performance data in Table 4 supports the earlier findings: **CBSE students outperform MP Board students** across all key phonetic competencies. Higher average scores in pronunciation, word stress, phoneme identification, and intonation usage suggest that the CBSE framework is more effective in developing phonetic skills. This result directly correlates with better training, curriculum, and resources observed in CBSE schools and highlights **inequities in learning outcomes** caused by differences in teaching practices.

Table 5: Student Attitudes Towards Phonetics Classes

Statement	Agree (CBSE)	Agree (MP Board)
“I enjoy learning correct pronunciation.”	85%	58%
“Phonetics helps me speak English more clearly.”	90%	65%
“Phonetics classes are engaging.”	75%	40%
“I wish we had more phonetics practice.”	82%	68%

According to Table 5, **students in CBSE schools exhibit a more positive attitude** towards phonetics classes. A larger proportion enjoy pronunciation practice, find phonetics beneficial for clarity in speaking, and consider the sessions engaging. In MP Board schools, student interest is relatively lower, likely due to less interactive and outdated teaching methods. However, a notable percentage of MP Board students still express a desire for more phonetics practice, indicating **latent interest and potential for improvement** if provided with better instruction.

The cumulative interpretation of these tables shows that **CBSE schools are clearly ahead in terms of curriculum, teacher readiness, use of resources, student performance, and attitudes** towards phonetics education. MP Board schools, on the other hand, face considerable gaps that stem from a lack of training, infrastructure, and curriculum innovation. The findings reinforce the need for **systematic educational reforms, capacity building, and policy interventions** to uplift phonetics teaching in MP Board schools and ensure equitable language education across boards.

T-Test Results Summary

Hypothesis	T-Statistic	Interpretation
H1: Curriculum	21.69	Significant difference in curriculum content
H2: Methodology	28.85	Significant difference in teaching methodologies
H3: Teacher Training	33.15	Significant difference in training levels
H4: Student Performance	53.72	Significant difference in student performance

All four hypotheses (**H1 to H4**) are statistically **proven** using the t-test. This indicate that the differences observed between CBSE and MP Board schools in terms of curriculum, methodology, training, and student performance are **highly significant** and not due to chance.

7. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that CBSE schools offer a more structured and effective approach to phonetics teaching compared to MP Board schools. To bridge this gap, there is an urgent need for curriculum revision, teacher training programs, and technological integration in MP Board schools. A standardized approach across boards can ensure equitable learning opportunities and improved English language proficiency among students in Madhya Pradesh.

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