

Pedagogical implication of Audio-Articulation Method to defossilize /e/ sound in English pronunciation of Bangladeshi EFL learners

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to show how to defossilize the English /e/ sound which is pronounced by the Bengali learners of English instead of /ei/ sound in such words like ape, make and day etc. This mispronunciation creates confusion among the native speakers of English and the Bengali learners' pronunciation loses comprehensibility to the listeners. The author, in his experience, observes that Phonological fossilization of /e/ sound in the Bengali speakers of English is the main cause of this mispronunciation and incomprehensibility level in them. The present study is a detail lesson plan to defossilize the problem causing /e/ sound by using Audio Articulation Method propounded by Mehmet Demirezen in the classroom practice. As a fossilized pronunciation error correction method, the audio articulation method can play a vital role in creating awareness of a fossilized sound among the EFL learners in Bangladesh. By applying different kinds of drills, such as, conversation drills, substitution drills, question-answer drills, repetition drills, language games etc in the class hour, the teachers can endeavor to defossilize the problem causing sounds among the students and both the teachers and learners in Bangladesh can be benefited through this practice.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is a significant aspect of verbal communication and it makes the communication more attractive and effective in our real-life perspective (Qader, 2020). Thus, it has an important social value (Gelvanovsky, 2002 as in Zhang, 2009). While learning the pronunciation of a second language, the learners often face different phonetic and phonological problems that definitely hinder their learning and ultimately prevent them from acquiring expected general proficiency in the oral and auditory skills of the target language (Maniruzzaman, 2006). Previous observations have demonstrated that L2 learners' inter-language systems often become fossilized and L2 learning process makes no further progress towards the TL (Kahraman, 2012; Smaoui & Rahal, 2016, 2020; as cited in Rahal, 2018). The author experience that Sound or phoneme of English language is mainly affected by the phonological fossilization of Bangla sound of the Bengali speakers. Phonological fossilization is the repetition of phonological errors which result from the incorrect acquisition of pronunciation of L2, usually affected by L1 (Wei, 2008). If the phonological errors are

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relatively permanent into a learner's foreign language competence, it can be considered as phonological fossilization (Brown, 2000 as in Senowarsito & Ardini, 2019). Specifically, it refers to incorrect linguistic forms which have become a habit of speech in a second language learner (Graham, 1981; Senowarsito & Ardini, 2019).

Mother tongue interference and lack of professional instruction are some of the causes that lead to the mispronunciation of sounds and later, these mispronounced sounds become fossilized in the speakers (Yakout^{1*} & Amel², 2019). The lack of appropriate method to defossilize sound in English speaking led Demirezen (2003, 2004) to develop a fossilization curing method entitled audio-articulation method to handle the mistake in class hour. The audio-articulation pronunciation curing method as a fossilization error corrector adopts that the fossilized sounds pedagogically designed by the teacher can be treated in class hour to practice and imitate the sounds of the target language.

Fossilized error in English pronunciation by the teachers and students is a prevailing phenomenon in Bangladesh. The distinct fossilized features of Bangla frequently intervene in their English speaking. The core sounds of English language, such vowels like, /ə/ei--->e, ei-->æ, ə--->æ, a:--->ʌ, i:--->æ, ə--->ɔ, a:--->æ, i:--->e, æ--->ʌ, ɔ:--->au, e--->ʌ/ and consonants like, /dʒ--->z, t--->tʃ, ʒ--->ʃ, s--->z, ð--->θ, t--->θ, s--->k, ʃ--->s, ʃ--->tʃ, t--->d, tʃ--->s, dʒ--->g, g--->gh, dʒ--->d, ʃ--->k, k--->s, g--->k, ʃ--->z/ (Bashiruddin, 2016. PP, 45-86) constitute the major fossilized mistake continuum for the Bangladeshi teachers, teacher trainees and students in learning and teaching English as a foreign language. According to Demirezen (2008), the core sounds are the sounds that are influenced by the mother-tongue association to the acquisition of some target language phonemes.

These “core sounds” of the English language are often confused with the Bangla sounds of the learners, and therefore L1 interference or native reaction get to be inseparable for the Bangladeshi teachers and students of English. (Amanullah, 2009. pp, 126-27) the English /ei/ phoneme in the words like age, Asia, April, is the commonest problem-causing core sound for almost all Bangladeshi learners of English and they articulate it as /e/ because of the predominance of Bangla vowel sound /এ/e/ which comes up as a fossilized pronunciation error for almost all Bengali speakers although there is also /ei/এই/ sound in Bengali language.

Educational phonetics and phonology have a significant role in teaching and learning pronunciation. Educational phonetics is widely used to defossilize the sounds in non-native speakers, even though linguistics like (Coppieters, 1989; Creo, 1990; Han, 2004; Lardiere, 1998; Mukattash, 1986; Selinker, 1972, 1993; Selinker and Lamendella, 1979; Valette, 1991

as in Lee, 2009) defined fossilization as a state of language learners' permanent learning cessation and fossilization has been used to explain a permanent end state of learners' inter language implying that learners never overcome this end state of inter language. (Lei et al., 2018) and many others proved that most wrongly pronounced sound elements which seem to be fossilized can in fact be de-fossilized. It is generally believed that learners with strong motivation, ample exposure to rich second language (L2) input, and plentiful opportunities for output will likely acquire a second language (Chen, 2009). Again, fossilization is changeable, difficult to eradicate and unpredictable (Creo, 1990).

For example, the pronunciation of /ei/, which is a narrow, closing diphthong is always mispronounced as /e/ by Bangladeshi teachers and students. This problem can be removed to a great extent by applying the audio-articulation method in the classroom (Demirezen 2003, 2004).

The application of the audio-articulation method will be evident in the following way where the problem causing sound like /ei/ phoneme will be treated, and steps will be taken to defossilize /e/ sound among the Bangladeshi EFL learners and teachers. This method also helps to communicate orally through pronunciation practices according to the demand of the context.

In English, both in Received Pronunciation and in General American, the IPA phonetic symbol /ei/ corresponds to the vowel sound in words like "face", "cake" and "play". This diphthong is informally called "long a" or the long sound of the letter a. In Australian English, this phoneme sounds [æɪ], which may be confused with /aɪ/. However /aɪ/ in Australian English sounds [aɛ]. In Estuary English there is a similar phenomenon: /ei/ sounds [ɛɪ] and /aɪ/ sounds [ɑɪ]. Phoneme /e/ (as in dress) in many dialects is very different from the beginning of /ei/. In IPA narrow notation [e] represents a sound that does not exist isolated in English, the "é" sound in French, as in beauté (beauty). In broad notation it doesn't matter if, for simplicity, we use /e/ for a different sounds (namely [ɛ] as in English dress or "ê" in French, as in bête (animal). (https://teflpedia.com/IPA_phoneme_/e%C9%AA/). In Bangla, as there is the vowel sound /ɔ/e/, the Bengali speakers of English often become confused between the sounds of /ei/ and /ɔ/e/. In most cases, the Bengali speakers pronounce /a/ phoneme as /e/ from the very beginning of their learning stage. It is because the young learners become habituated to pronounce this sound hearing from their teachers and seniors. Albiladi (2019) said, to teach a productive lesson in pronunciation, EFL teachers should provide students with a variety of different learning activities.

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The following classroom practice shows how to defossilize /e/ sound in English speaking of Bengali speakers by using Audio-articulation method in the classroom.

Starting the class with greeting

Teacher: Good morning students, how are you everybody?

Students: Thank you, Sir, we are fine. What about you?

T: Thank you, I am fine, too. Are you ready for the class?

SS: Yes, sir.

T: OK, thank you.

Review the topic discussed in the previous class.

T: What did we discuss in our previous class?

Ss: We practiced on the pronunciation of the /ei/ phoneme which is frequently mispronounced by us as /e/.

T: Well. (Turning to a student) **Rana**, can you give the definition of the /ei/ phoneme?

S: /ei/ is a diphthong sound which means it is a combination of two vowel sounds that are pronounced within the same syllable. The /ei/ sound is a combination of /e/ and /i/ or /i:/. Like vowels the diphthongs are all made through the mouth and are voiced which means that we vibrate our vocal chords to make the sound as heard in such words like take /teik/, way /wei/, same /seim/ and case /keis/.

(<https://www.englishlanguageclub.co.uk/e%C9%AA-sound/>)

T: Well. (Turning to another student) **Rafic**, can you give the definition of the /e/ phoneme?

Rafic: Yes, sir. The /e/ phoneme of the English language is a front half-close, high-mid- unrounded vowel, (Varshney, 2000 and Rajimwale, 1999) as heard in such words like elm, enter, et, get, they and stay.

T: Right. Students, now, let us read the following dialogue. Please give special attention to the bold words.

A campaign against drug

Ben: Did you **participate** in the **campaign against** drug yesterday?

Alen: Yes, but how did you know about the **campaign**?

Ben: From the **newspaper**.

Alen: Oh, we also **arranged** a **seminar** to **make** the people aware about the **danger** of **taking** drug.

Ben: Which **agency** did **arrange** for the **campaign**?

Alen: In fact, the **administration** of local government **arranged** for it.

Ben: Did you **stage** any **play**?

Alen: Yes, we **staged** a **play** highlighting the **consequence** of **taking** drug.

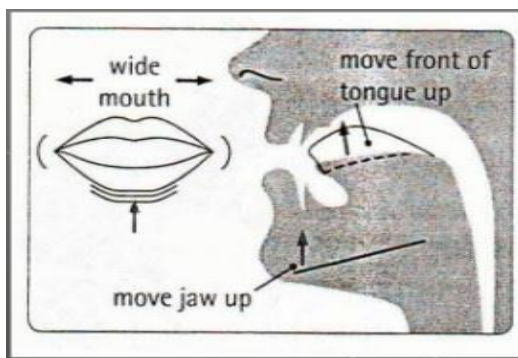
Ben: **Praiseworthy**, if the **men** like you come forward to **make** the people aware about the **danger** of **taking** drug, the **situation** would **change**.

Alen: **Certainly**, and the people would **concentrate** in productive work.

(The Teacher reads the dialogue several times in the class, and he observes that most of the Bangladeshi students can not differentiate between /e/ and /ei/ sounds and they have read the words in the boldfaces with /e/ phoneme)

T: Dear learners, it is evident from your speaking that you have mispronounced the English /ei/ diphthong in the words of boldfaces. Of course, there are words containing /e/ sound in the dialogue. Your /ei/ sound is influenced by the /e/ phoneme, which prevent you to pronounce it as the native speakers do. It is because, there is /e/ sound in Bengali language and it has been fossilized in you. We must consider this wrongly pronounced sound. So, we will study on it today.

Image of the place of articulation of vowel (diphthong) sound /ei/



<https://www.google.com/search?q=image+of+tongue+position+for+ei+sound>

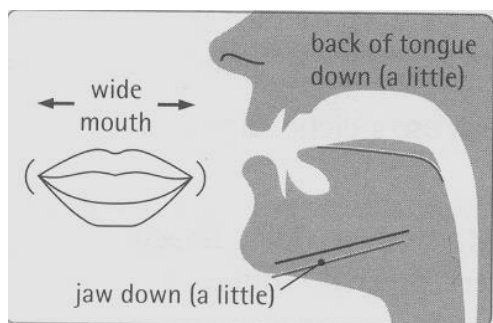
T: As English is a non phonetic language, there is no correspondence between graphemic and phonemic presentation. This is because spelling is often not phonetic especially the vowels and diphthongs. So we find the ei sound spelled many different ways. But it is often spelled with the letters “a”, as in the words: take /teik/, way /wei/, same /seim/, case /keis/ (<https://www.englishlanguageclub.co.uk/e%C9%AA-sound/>).

Now, we will study on the correct articulation and pronunciation of the English /ei/ phoneme, which is closing diphthong or falling diphthong. It is unrounded in the production of which our lips stretch as like as we smile but our mouth closes a little as we move to the /i:/ sound. /ei/ is found to be extensively used in places having consonant flanked by vowels on both sides e.g. /teik/ (take), /reit/ (rate) etc. (Bashiruddin, 1993). It is also audibly heard in such words as may /mei/, way /wei/, make /meik/, say /sei/, same /seim/, day /dei/.

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The confused phoneme is the /e/, which is front half-close, high-mid-unrounded vowel, as heard in such word Ed, get, med, Meg, met, peg, pep, bed. Let's now see the /ei/ and /e/ difference in detail by applying the **audio-articulation** pronunciation teaching method.

Image of the place of articulation of vowel sound /e/



<https://www.google.com/search?q=image+of+tongue+position+for+e+sound>

For pronouncing this vowel sound the front of the tongue is raised in the direction of the hard palate between high-mid and low-mid positions. The lips are drawn back, and the lower jaw is somewhat dropped. /e/ is described as high-mid-unrounded vowel (Rajimwale, 1999).

Teacher prepares a **corpus** on /ei/ and /e/ contrast in words consisting of word-initial, word-medial, and word-final positions. The teacher monitors the pronunciation of the words in the corpus through counsel. Further dealings are developed by applying this corpus.

Words containing /ei/ sound consisting of word initial, word medial and word final.

Word initial:

Able, age,
agency, Asia,
April, aim,
ancient, agent,
eh, eighteenth,
ace, angel,
eighth, ache,
acre, alien, ape,
ace, ache, aid,
aim, alienate,
amiable, apron,
aviation, ail,
acorn, aphid,
apple

Word-medial:

Make, take, wage, basically,
straight, sake, concentrate,
phrase, ratio, chamber,
evaluation, observation, plain,
escape, determination, cake,
variation, grateful, tail,
appreciation, relate, retain,
taxation, imagination, grace,
investigate, indication,
arrange, occupation,
obligation, baker, paint,
resignation, namely,
federation, tale, declaration,
discrimination, navy, generate,

Word Final:

May, way, say, every day, hey,
gay, Clay, prey, essay, tray,
doorway, highway, jay,
Day, away, today, pay, play
anyway, stay, survey, holiday,
railway, grey, display, bay,
delay, ray, hey, gay, clay,
essay, prey, pray, tray, convey,
array, jay, decay, spray, obey,
café, weigh, repay, dismay,
midday, assay, betray,
bouquet, relay, cray, nay,
sway, ashtray, reggae, pe, ley,
daresay, bae, tray, astray,
hooray, subway.

grade, naked, invasion, stake,
painful.

Words containing /e/ sound consisting of word initial, word medial and word final.

Word initial:

Egg, elephant,
eleven, empty,
enter, elevator,
engine, elbow,
envelop, exit,
eagle, empty, elk,
eggplant, enter,
elves, elf,

Word medial:

Deck, dress, helmet, hen,
ten, web, men, wet, sent,
bed, pen, bend, tent, fed,
ten, lend, vent, led, bet,
mend, went, red, get, rend,
best, wed, jet, send, lest,
beg, let, tend, nest, leg, met,
bent, pest, peg, net, dent,
rest, den, set, lent, test, hen,
vet, rent, vest.

Word Final:

He, be, we, me, re, ye, de, fe,
oe, ne, the, are, one, see, she,
use, age, due, eye, lee, fee, die,
ice, lie, tie, sue, ace, ore, eve,
ate, pie, owe, bye, ave, aye,
bye, toe, wee, doe, tee, dee,
awe, bee, roe, cue, dye, rye,
axe, ale, foe, rue, ole, gee, hue,
ape, pee, hoe, woe, ode, ire,
ere, nee, ewe,

Teacher gets the words in the corpus in form of chain drills, substitution drills, repetition drills, inflection drills, replacement drills, restatement drills, completion drills, transposition drills, expansion drills, contraction drills, transformation drills, integration drills, rejoinder drills, restoration drills, question-answer drills, and language games are of great help in this respect. In addition, listen and imitate technique with mirroring, tracking, and echoing (shadowing), developmental approximation drills, and explanation techniques are all practiced, repeated in form of exhortations without boring the students (Demirezen, 2005).

T selects some minimal pairs that are sincerely and sufficiently practiced in the classroom by the teacher within the class hour. Minimal pairs refer to pairs of words that have different meanings and vary in pronunciation in one sound only. In essence, minimal pairs allow teachers to target the problematic phoneme. Also, these types of activities show the student how a tiny, sometimes barely noticeable, change in pronunciation can actually change the meaning of what they are saying. For instance, the words (sheep, ship) and (cheap, chip) are minimal pairs. Therefore, using minimal pair activities in the classroom helps demonstrate the effects of individual sounds. Moreover, it helps students distinguish between problematic sounds such as /b/ and /v/ in words like /boat/ and /vote/. In addition, minimal pairs might help students

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develop their ability to recognize sound contrasts and produce these contrasts correctly. EFL teachers can use individual sound activities during listening/speaking classes, because this kind of activity helps students learn correct pronunciation. Having a correct pronunciation should be a target for all EFL classes (Albiladi, 2019).

Minimal pairs:

/e/	/ei/	/e/	/ei/
Pen /pen/	Pain /pein/	Get /get/	Gate /geit/
Shed /ʃed/	Shade /ʃeid/	Fet /fet/	Fate /feit/
Tell /tel/	Tail /teil/	Bed /bed/	Bade /beid/
Wet /wet/	Wait /weit/	Bet /bet/	Bate /teit/
Test /test/	Taste /teist/	Den /den/	Dain /dein/
Pepper /peper/	Paper /peiper/	Fen /fen/	Fain /fein/
Let /let/	Late /leit/	Het /het/	Hate /heit/
Letter /leter/	Later /leiter/	Men /men/	Main /mein/
Ret /ret/	Rate /reit/	Net /net/	Nate /neit/
Jed /dʒed/	Jade /dʒeid/	Pet /pet/	pate /peit/
Tell /tel/	Tale /teil/	Ven /ven/	Vain /vein/

(Baker, 1996)

The teacher also highlights and discusses the unknown vocabulary from the corpus in the classroom within schedule time.

Vocabulary:

Hey /hei/: used to attract attention, to express surprise, interest, or annoyance, or to elicit agreement.

Make /Meik: form (something) by putting parts together or combining substances; creates.

Late /leit/: doing something or taking place after the expected, proper, or usual time.

Say /sei/: utter words so as to convey information, an opinion, a feeling or intention, or an instruction.

Afraid /ə' freid/: feeling fear or anxiety; frightened.

Waiting /' weitiŋ/: the action of staying where one is or delaying action until a particular time or event.

Mr Grey /grei/: name of a person.

Train /trem/: teach (a person or animal) a particular skill or type of behavior through practice and instruction over a period of time.

Eight-eight /eit/: equivalent to the product of two and four; one more than seven or two less than ten; 8.

May /meɪ/: expressing possibility / used to ask for or to give permission.

Timetable /'tɪmteɪb(ə)l/: a chart showing the departure and arrival times of trains, buses, or aircraft.

Station/'steɪʃ(ə)n/: a place on a railway line where trains regularly stop so that passengers can get on or off.

They /ðeɪ/: used to refer to two or more people or things previously mentioned or easily identified.

Ages /eɪdʒ/: the length of time that a person has lived or a thing has existed.

Baker/'beɪkə/: a person who makes bread and cakes, especially as a trade.
an oven used for a particular purpose.

April/'eɪpr(ɪ)l/: the fourth month of the year, in the northern hemisphere usually considered the second month of spring.

Railway /'reɪlweɪ/: a track made of steel rails along which trains run (Baker, 1996).

Tongue Twisters

Another activity that can be used to teach pronunciation is tongue-twisters. Tongue twisters are interesting ways to practice and contrast similar sounds and has fun at the same time (Lin, 1995). Teachers should motivate students to do their best and ignore their mistakes, because tongue-twisters are hard even for native speakers. EFL learners might have difficulty with tongue-twisters in the beginning but trying to say them will help enhance their pronunciation. Also, it might make the class more interesting and appealing, and this is important in order to encourage them to practice (Albiladi, 2019).

Teacher: read the following tongue twisters and mind the right articulation of the sounds /eɪ/.

1. The rain

The rain in Spain

The rain in Spain falls mainly
on the plane.

3. James

James paid

James paid for the apron.

2. Stay

Stay and play

Stay and play with the baby.

4. May

May baked

May baked a cake yesterday.

5. He sailed
He sailed eighty miles away
He sailed eighty miles away
from the bay.

6. The rain
The rain made
The rain made me late.

7. I won't stay
I won't stay unless we can
I won't stay unless we can
make him pay.

8. The favorite
The favorite went lame
The favorite went lame before the race.

9. A grape
A grape becomes a raisin
A grape becomes a raisin in its
old age.

10. A player
A player laid his ace
A player laid his ace face down on
the table.

11. He gained
He gained his greatest fame
He gained his greatest
fame in Asia

(<https://studfile.net/preview/5115193/page:5/>)

Some	more	tongue	twisters	of /e/ &	/ei/	sounds:
Brain,		trail,	gait,		late,	lake
Less,		digress,	confess,		friend,	fret
Enable,		maintain,	unveil,		address,	paycheck

They set sail as the rain fell and made a wet mess of
guests who came to watch whales and tell tales.

We weighed the hay, painted the sleigh, played a
game, and caught a train before it rained in May

(http://thesmallguidesite.com/tonguetwister_ei.html)

Visual Aids

EFL teachers can use visual aids and pictures to teach pronunciation. Visual aids are useful tools that can help increase students' awareness of the production of sounds (Lin, 1995). These visuals help teachers demonstrate the differences in articulation of English sounds. Teachers can provide students with charts and graphs that show the correct way to pronounce words. If students see how the correct pronunciation occurs, they are more likely to pronounce most of the sounds correctly. Generally speaking, visuals and pictures are preferred methods in learning. Many students prefer to see rather than read or listen. Therefore, if EFL students are exposed to different visuals that illustrate the different positions of tongue or teeth during pronunciation, they will be better able to produce the sounds correctly (Fraser & Perth, 1999 as in Albiladi, 2019).

The teacher shows the visual image of the following animate and inanimate things in the class and utters their names with correct pronunciation of /e/ and /ei/ sound. The students see the picture and at the same time hear the sounds and become aware of the wrongly pronounced sounds. In this way, the defossilization of /e/ sound will be easier and they will pronounce /ei/ sound correctly.

Eighth, ape, ace, apron, aviation, ail, acorn, apple. cake, tail, railway, grey, pray, tray, spray, café, weigh, dismay, bouquet, Egg, elephant, .eleven, elevator, engine, elbow, envelop, exit, eagle, empty, eggplant, ear, deck, dress, helmet, hen, ten, web, men, bed, pen, bend, tent, ten, vent, led, bet, red, jet, beg, nest, leg, pest, peg, net, den, set, lent, test, hen, vet, vest.

Practice with sentences in contextual clues:

At the railway station:

(Mr Grey is waiting at the railway station for a train)

Mr Grey: Hey! This train is late! I have been waiting here for ages.

Porter: Which train, sir?

Mr Grey: The 8.18 to Baker Street.

Porter: The 8.18? I am afraid you have made a mistake, sir.

Mr Grey: A mistake? My timetable says: Baker street train - 8.18.

Porter: Oh no, sir. The Baker street train leaves at 8.08

Mr Grey: At 8.08?

Porter: You see, sir, they changed the timetable at the end of April. It is the first of May today.

Mr Grey: Changed it? May I see the new timetable? What does it say?

Porter: It says: Baker Street train -8.08.

Mr Grey: Hm! So the train is not late. I am late.

I am afraid you have made a mistake, sir (Baker, 1996).

Recognition drills:

Following sentences/phrases contain /e/ and /ei/ phonemes. There is no word with boldfaces in the sentences. The students find out /e/ and /ei/ phoneme from the sentences without the help of teacher. The students read the sentences and the teacher listens and observes their pronunciation. He can realize if there is any change in their pronunciation. At the end, he himself read the sentences with correct pronunciation. In this way, fossilized pronunciation errors can be removed.

A mistake? The eight? Today?, By plane way?, Going away? To Spain? She is eighty-eight?

It is the eighth of April.

The eighth?

It is the eighth of May.

Yes, it is Mrs Grey's birth day today.

Yes, she is eighty eight.

Yes. And she is going away for holiday.

That is right. And she is going by plane.

Well, it is a bit dangerous at her age, but she wants to go to Spain.

(Baker, 1996)

2. DISCUSSION

The main target of this article is to teach how to defossilize /e/ sound and to articulate /ei/ sound correctly by the tertiary level students of Bangladesh. From the author's fifteen years experience in teaching, he has observed that the English pronunciation of Bangladeshi learners contains phonological fossilization of Bangla sound. Due to this phonological fossilization, they have difficulties in case of articulating and producing English phoneme correctly. That is why; he endeavors to produce this empirical and innovative lesson plan. A properly constructed lesson plan is essential to make the class effective and enjoyable to the students. A pragmatic and contextualized lesson plan helps the learners to actively participate in the class through exhortation. As Audio Articulation Method is a new method in Bangladesh, a well organized lesson plan is very much needed to apply this method to handle the phonological errors in English pronunciation of Bangladeshi learners. This method has introduced different kind of drills which are very much helpful to defossilize the problem causing Bangla sounds in the pronunciation of Bengali students in class hour. By practicing these drills, listening to the teacher's pronunciation and imitating his activities, the students will be able to produce comprehensible sound of English and their pronunciation will be intelligible to the listeners.

3. CONCLUSION

In fine, it can be said that both the Audio articulation method and the teachers are the great facilitators to defossilize Bangla sounds in English pronunciation of Bangladeshi EFL learners. The teachers are the instructors and if they use the tool (Audio articulation method) in the pedagogically designed lesson plan and give corrective feedback to phonological fossilization in English speaking of the students in the classroom, fossilized pronunciation errors will be defossilized to a great extent.

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