

# PROBLEMS FACED BY MARATHI LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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**Abstract-**The Marathi language has multiple pronunciations (allophones) for certain consonants (च, ज, झ and फ) like most of other languages e.g. Hindi, Urdu, Kashmiri etc. These are the pronunciations which have come from either Persian or English languages. In Hindi as an influence of Urdu and Arabic languages unlike Marathi, use of nuqta is observed to differentiate between the two sounds of the same consonants (e.g. چ and چھ)[1]. But in Marathi it is not possible to determine which pronunciation is to be used without knowing the word or the context as there is no differentiation made in the script. This pronunciation inconsistency is one of the most prominent difficulties for Marathi learners. This paper talks about the need of differentiation to be added in the Marathi script to help the Marathi language learners. We also have given the phonetic alphabets for Marathi language and tried to look at some anomalies in the literature.

**Keywords-** Multiple pronunciations in Marathi, Phonetic Alphabet Table for Marathi language, Marathi Affricates, Diacritical mark, Marathi fricatives.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Marathi is an indo Aryan language originated from Maharastri Prakrut [2,3]. It is very much known that Marathi language has 34 main consonants and two clusters of consonants those are being used in Marathi script. Apart from that there are four different pronunciations of the consonants (च, ज, झ and फ). So in all there are 40 consonants and only 36 alphabets as there are no alphabets for multiple pronunciations of 4 consonants. च, ज, झ have two pronunciations palatal and alveolar, words which have come from Sanskrit, Persian and English have palatal pronunciation [4]. But there are no different symbols for those sounds. So it becomes very difficult to know which sound is to be pronounced. As there are no particular rules for these pronunciations, no firm answer is available to sort this dilemma.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND OBSERVATIONS

Words with *ch cha chu choo chai cho chou* whether initial, final or middle be sounded as /ts/ in hats and every *chi chee che* as *tsh* in 'church' [5]. Exception to this rule is /tʃar/ even though *cha* is initial. The participle *che* is pronounced as *tse* and *tsen* in Kokan region [5]. The author also writes two techniques were used i.e diacritical mark and oblique case to differentiate two sounds of same consonant. *Ch* is pronounced as 'ts' and *j* as 'dz' before all vowels except i, e, ei, î and ê [6]. Words like /chara/ and /char/ even though they don't have above mentioned vowels first *ch* is /ts/ and second *ch* is /tʃ/. Author Damle [4] in his book also talks about the diacritical mark used. He gives some rules and exceptions for the rules for multiple pronunciations. च, ज, झ and फ are the allophones in Marathi language and the rule for phone च is, the place of articulation is dental if the phone च is followed by either /e/, /a/ or /A/ and palatal otherwise [7]. Lots of exception to this rule also. /f/ is the adopted pronunciation for /ph/ from English [8, 9]. There is no rule for pronouncing /f/ and /ph/. Below is the table showing the consonants which have multiple pronunciations.

**"Table 1.consonants having multiple pronunciations and their place of articulation [10]"**

Marathi consonants	Transcription of consonant	Place of articulation
च in /tsʌmtsʌ/ spoon	/ts/	Voiceless alveolar affricate
च in /tʃar/ four	/tʃ/	Voiceless Aspirated palatal affricate
ज in /zəg/ live life	/dz/	Voiced alveolar affricate
ज in /dʒəg/ world	/dʒ/	Voiced Aspirated palatal affricate
झ in /dzəblə/ shirt for kids	/dzʰ/	Aspirated alveolar affricate
झ in /dʒʰəbba/ kurti	/dʒʰ/	Aspirated palatal affricate
फ in /fo:n/ phone	/f/	Voiceless Post alveolar fricative
फ in /pʰələ/ fruits	/pʰ/	Voiceless bilabial plosive

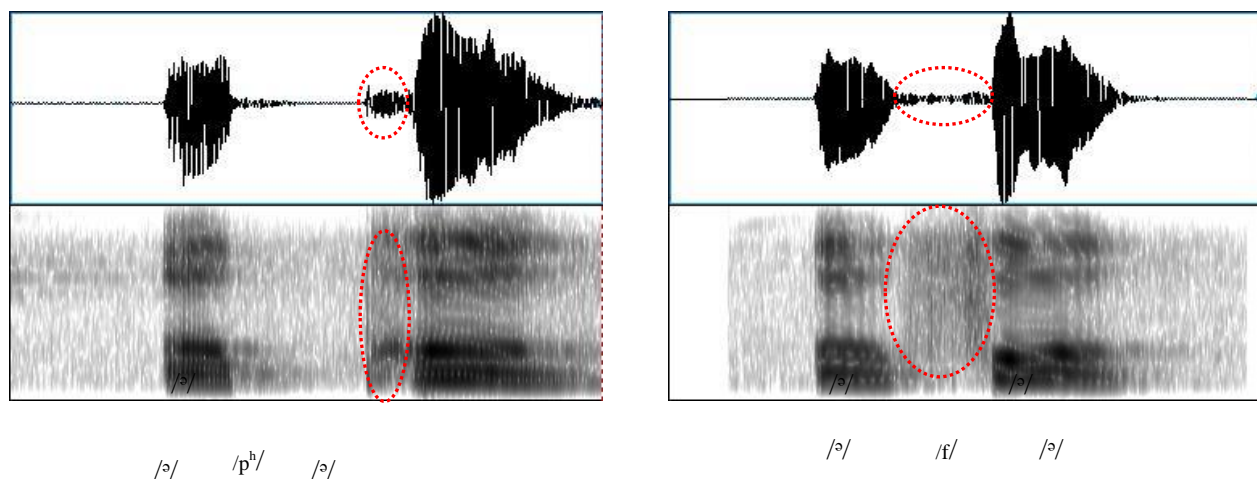
As stated above there are no certain rules for the multiple pronunciation of these consonants. To make this easy some diacritical marks should be added to clear the confusion regarding the pronunciation. For example if the first word in the table is asked to pronounce to a Non Maharashtrian person whose mother tongue is Hindi he will read it as /tʃʌmtʃa/ as in Hindi language च without *nuqta* is palatal.

**“Table 2. Phonetic Alphabet Table for Marathi Language”**

	Bilabial		Labiodental		Dental		Alveolar		Post alveolar		Retroflex		Palatal		Velar		Glottal	
	VL	V	VL	V	VL	V	VL	V	VL	V	VL	V	VL	V	VL	V	VL	V
Plosive	p	b			t	d					ʈ	ɖ			k	g		
Aspirated plosive	p <sup>h</sup>	b <sup>h</sup>			t <sup>h</sup>	d <sup>h</sup>					ʈ <sup>h</sup>	ɖ <sup>h</sup>			k <sup>h</sup>	g <sup>h</sup>		
Nasals		m				n						ɳ		j		ŋ		
Fricatives			f				s		ʃ		ʂ						h	
Affricates							ts	dz					tʃ	dʒ				
Aspirated affricates								dz <sup>h</sup>					tʃ <sup>h</sup>	dʒ <sup>h</sup>				
flap							r											
Approximants		v					l				ɭ		j					

### III. ANOMALIES IN THE LITERATURE

In the paper presented by Hemant A. Patil et al [11] showed that Gujarati and Marathi alphabet (i.e. [झ] and [ढ], respectively) can be transcribed phonetically as either fricative [f] or aspirated plosive [p<sup>h</sup>]. In case of Marathi language only bilabial aspirated plosive i.e. /p<sup>h</sup>/ = /ढ/ is observed. But because of the secondary language learning i.e. English or Parsian [2],[8],[9], Marathi language speakers pronounce /p<sup>h</sup>/ as /f/ which is post alveolar fricative. The difference between two pronunciations can be observed in following spectrograms i.e. Fig.1. Spectrograms were obtained using Praat software. In case of /p<sup>h</sup>/ which is found in Marathi, a sudden burst of air is seen and in case of /f/ turbulent air flow is seen. So in the pronunciation of words having /p<sup>h</sup>/ if we see sudden burst of air we transcribe it as /p<sup>h</sup>/ and if turbulent air flow is observed then we transcribe it as /f/. So it means that these two sounds are different and can be transcribed differently and /f/ is the wrong pronunciation of /p<sup>h</sup>/ [9]. But now a days sound /f/ is widely used by the Marathi speakers instead of /p<sup>h</sup>/, so if the place of articulation is alveolar and manner is frication we transcribe it as /f/ and if the place and manner of articulation are bilabial and plosive we transcribe it as /p<sup>h</sup>/.



**“Figure 1. Showing the difference between /f/ and /p<sup>h</sup>/**

In the same paper he said /f/ is transcribed for both झ and ढ, but these two consonants have different place of articulation. झ is alveolar fricative and ढ is retroflex fricative [8] and transcribed as /f/ and /ʂ/.

### IV. CONCLUSION

Firm decision should be taken by the state education Department to solve this multiple pronunciation issue so that there will not be any confusion regarding the pronunciations.

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