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CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF CONSONANT SOUNDS OF ENGLISH AND FUR
LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to compare and contrast consonant sounds of English and Fur languages with a view to identify the areas of similarities and differences. The researcher has adopted contrastive methodology to conduct this study. He compares and contrasts consonant sounds of English and Fur languages. The results of the study revealed that English is made up of twenty-four consonant sounds while Fur has eighteen consonant sounds. Moreover, it demonstrates that English sounds /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /j/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, don not exist in Fur. However, the Fur consonant /ny/ doesn't have an equivalent in English. The differences in consonants production between two languages result in problems encountered by the Fur in learning English. In addition, English and Fur have some similar consonant sounds but they don't behave the same way in two languages. Luckily, there are many similar consonants in terms of articulation in both languages, which facilitate the process of learning for the Fur speakers learning English.

Keywords: consonant, sounds, articulation, language

INTRODUCTION

Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive Analysis means the comparison of two languages by paying attention to differences and similarities between languages being compared.

- It was first suggested by Whorf (1941) as contrastive linguistics, a comparative study which emphasizes on linguistic differences.
- The publication of Robert Lados' book (linguistics across cultures) in 1957 was the start of modern applied contrastive linguistics. In later studies the term contrastive linguistics changed to contrastive analysis

Contrastive analysis was used extensively in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) in the 1960s and early 1970s, as a method of explaining why some features of a target language were more difficult to acquire than others. According to the behaviourist theories prevailing at the time, language learning was a question of habit formation, and this could be reinforced or impeded by existing habits. Therefore, the difficulty in

Contrastive analysis (CA) is the systematic comparison of two or more languages, with the aim of describing their similarities and differences. CA has often been done for practical/pedagogical purposes. Contrastive analysis has two versions – (i) the strong version and (ii) the weak version. In the first version, that is, the strong version, the system of one language such as the grammar, phonology and lexicon is contrasted with the system of a second language in order to predict the difficulties a speaker of a second language confronts in learning the first language and thereby to construct reading materials to help him or her learn that language.

Contrastive Analysis can be conducted at different levels of linguistic analysis. The levels that are of major importance for language teachers are "contrastive lexicon, contrastive syntax, contrastive semantics and contrastive pragmatics, the latter including text studies some aspects of sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic perspective" (Jaszczolt, 1995:1).

CA is situated at the theoretical level when it is devoted solely to the comparison of the linguistic systems of two or more languages. It is situated at applied level when it provides linguistic data for the preparation of instructional material in second /foreign language teaching.

Pietri (1984:579) states that contrastive analysis as a "carrefour" or crossroads of disciplines. Sometimes it supplies descriptive data and some times it incorporates other sciences in its approach. It is generally agreed that it applied CA, three m disciplines converge: linguistics, psychology and pedagogy.

In linguistics, we compare languages in order to ascertain their similarities and their differences; in psychology, we compare the monolingual and the bilingual in order to discover the conflict inherent in first and second language acquisition and in pedagogy, we compare the elements acquired and the elements to be acquired in order to determine the problems of foreign language teaching (Pietri,198:3).

Contrastive Analysis has often been done for practical/pedagogical purposes. The aim has been to provide better descriptions and better teaching materials for language learners. There is more to CA than this, however. When we compare, we often see things more clearly.

Contrastive Analysis and Language Teaching

The background for CA, as applied to language teaching, is the assumption that the native language plays a crucial role in learning a second language. Mother tongue influence is sometimes very obvious, e.g. in the case of foreign accent. We can often recognize foreign speakers by their accent; an American speaking Fur language normally sounds quite different from a Frenchman or a German. Influence from the mother tongue is not just negative, however; learning a related language is much easier than learning one that is very different. These sorts of observations have probably always been made in language learning and in the contact between native and foreign speakers. When people have written textbooks for learners of foreign languages, there has regularly been an element of comparison between the native language and the foreign language to be learned. Bilingual dictionaries are of course also contrastive. But when we refer to CA, we think particularly of a systematic comparison of the mother tongue and the foreign language in order to describe similarities and differences, to identify points of difficulty which might lead to interference. The basic ideas are:

- Describe and compare the mother tongue / L1 / source language and the foreign language / L2 / target language.
- Predict points of difficulty.
- Use the results in order to improve teaching materials (Stig Johansson2008:10). This sort of approach was developed in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. Two prominent names were Charles Fries and Robert Lado, who explained the rationale for applied CA in this way:

The most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner. (Fries 1945: 9)

The plan of the study rests on the assumption that we can predict and describe the patterns which will cause difficulty in learning and those that will not cause difficulty (Lado 1957, Preface). We find a large number of contrastive studies in the 50s and 60s, both in the United States and in Europe, but gradually there was some

disenchantment with CA, perhaps because contrastive linguists had made exaggerated claims or because teachers had expected too much.

- Only part of the learning problems can be predicted. Many problems are shared, irrespective of the mother tongue.
- Predictions may vary depending upon the linguistic model.
There is a complicated relationship between difference and difficulty.
- The blinding-flash fallacy: a comparison of L1 and L2 implies that the whole of the two languages get in contact. But the meeting of the languages in the learner's mind depends upon the stage of learning.

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The importance of CA extends beyond individual languages. When we compare across a number of languages, we can also see more clearly what is characteristic of languages more generally. There is a lot of interest in universals of language – that is, what is characteristic of language in general. To study this, there is a need for language comparison.

The Statement of the Problem

Sudan is multilingual country which around 115 languages are spoken besides 500 dialects. Every language of the world has its own sound system. This is due to difference of linguistic backgrounds. It is clear that the phonetic differences in English and Fur consonant sounds create problems in the teaching and learning of English, the target language. This study attempts to find out the similarities and dissimilarities that exist between the two languages as well as the implications which this linguistic difference may have on the process of teaching and learning of English, the foreign language in Sudan. It is to be expected that speakers of the languages experience problems due to the fact that the phonetics constituents and phonological system of the two languages are slightly different in nature. In this situation, it is expected that contrastive analysis of English and Fur consonant sounds system will be of pedagogical benefit to the Fur learners of English as a foreign language in particular and the other Nilo-Saharan languages speakers in general. Because very few researches have been conducted on this area therefore, this study intends to address this issue deeply.

The Significance of the Study

This Study will benefit the students of language, especially those who are concerned with phonetics and the field of phonological analysis of language. It will provide them with an example of how different findings of the field can be exploited to examine a form of language in use. This will have a positive effect on the learners to master English language. The curriculum designers and text book writers will find roadmap in this study to design school curricula and syllabuses to reflect phonetics patterns of Nilo-Saharan languages particularly in Darfur region schools. Consequently, the study will serve as a source of further studies of this field.

Moreover, this study will shed lights on consonant sounds of both English and Fur languages, by analyzing the place of articulation and the manner of articulation the two languages. Therefore, the study guides teachers to focus on the areas of differences to improve learners' comprehending of the sound system of the target language (English).

The Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Identify the areas of similarities in the consonant sounds of the English and Fur languages;
2. Describe the differences between the English and Fur consonant sounds;
3. Point out the pedagogical implications of the similarities and differences in English and Fur phonetics.

The Questions of the Study

This study tries to answer the following questions:

1. How far do the English and Fur consonant sounds differ from one another?
2. To what extent do English and Fur consonant sounds have similarity with one another?
3. What are the pedagogical difficulties which the Fur learner of English will encounter with English

The Methodology of the Study

The researcher has adopted contrastive analysis methodology to conduct this study. He contrasts and compares some examples of consonant sounds of Fur and English Languages. The data will be collected from English phonetic books, text books of Fur language as well as related websites. Population of this study includes written and spoken sentences in both English and Fur languages.

The Hypotheses of the Study

This study hypothesizes the following:

1. The English and Fur consonant sounds differ from each other.
2. English and Fur consonant sounds have similarity with one another.
3. The pedagogical difficulties which the Fur learner of English will encounter with English phonetics.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

Every language has several aspects that can be studied. These aspects include phonology, syntax, semantics and morphology. However, this study sheds lights on the area of consonant sounds, which is a part of phonetics. It focuses only on comparing and contrasting of consonant sounds between Fur and English languages

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section is about constructions and analysis of consonant sounds of Fur and English languages in terms of place of articulation.

Figure 1: Roach’s Chart of English consonant sounds (1991,p.62)

Place of articulation	bilabial	Labio-dental	dental	alveolar	Palato-alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
Stops	P b			t d			k g	
Affricate					ʃ ʒ			h
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	tʃ dʒ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Lateral				l				
approximant	w				r	j		

Figure 2: Lojenga and Waag’s Chart of Fur language consonant sounds(2004,p.4).

	bilabial	alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
stops vl.	p	t		k g	
stops vd.	b	d	j [dʒ]		
fricatives vl.		s			(h)
fricatives vd.		z			
sonorants nasal	m	n	ny	ŋ	
sonorants oral	w	l, r	y		

places of Articulation English vs Fur

Bilabial

English /p/, /b/, /m/, /w/

Fur /p/, /b/, /m/, /w/

These sounds are not problematic because they exist in both languages as well as sharing the same characteristics of articulation consequently, the Fur speakers could not face any difficulty of pronunciation when learning English language.

Labio-dental

English /f/, /v/

Fur = = = =

These two sounds /f/, /v/ are English labio-dental sounds which do not exist in Fur, therefore, Fur speakers face pronunciation problems when they learn English.

Dental

English /θ/ /ð/

Fur = = = =

English has two dental sounds whereas, Fur lacks them, they pose pronunciation problems to Fur speakers of English learning.

Alveolar

English /t/, /d/, /s/, /z/, /n/, /l/

Fur /t/, /d/, /s/, /z/, /n/, /l/, /r/

As can be seen above the English alveolar sounds are similar to Fur ones, they almost have the same characteristics of production except Fur /r/ is definitely alveolar sound whereas, its English counterpart is palato-alveolar, therefore, most of Fur tend to pronounce it as they pronounce the Fur/r/. So, it arouses a little problem of pronunciation for Fur Speakers.

Palato- alveolar

English /ʒ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/

Fur /j/(dʒ)

English has four palate-alveolar sounds but Fur has only one. Therefore, they are problematic to Fur speakers when they learn English.

Palatal

English /j/

Fur /y/, /ny/

/j/ is English palatal sound which is identical to Fur /y/, however, Fur has another palatal sound whereas English lacks it.

Velar

English /k/, /g/, /ŋ/

Fur /k/, /g/, /ŋ/

According to the above sounds there are three English velar sounds which are equivalent to Fur, so they do not offer any pronunciation problems to Fur speakers.

Glottal

English /h/

Fur /h/

English /h/ is as same as Fur one, so it does not lead to pronunciation problems.

Findings

An analysis of English and Fur consonant sounds system has revealed that;there are similarities and differences between english and Fur consonant sounds

Differences

- There are 24 consonant sounds in English whereas, Fur has eightenn consonant sounds.
- English has two labio-dental sounds /f/, /v/ but Fur lacks such sounds.
- There are two dental sounds /ð/, /θ/ which don't exist in Fur language.
- There are four palate-alveolar sounds /ʒ/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/,meanwhile, Fur has only one /j/(dʒ).
- There are two palatal sounds whereas, English has one sound.

Similarities

- Both languages have almost the same bilabial sounds /p/, /b/,/m/, /w/ which share the same pronunciation features.
- Palatal consonant /j/ in english is as the same as in Fur/y/.
- English has three velar sounds /k/, /g/, /ŋ/ which are equivalent to Fur /k/, /g/,/ŋ/.
- Glottal sound /h/ exists in both languages, and it shares almost the characteristics.

Conclusion

This paper has done a contrastive analysis of the consonants sounds of English and Fur languages. The analysis began with comparing and contrasting of the consonant sounds of both languages. In the light of contrastive analysis (CA) the pronunciation difficulties for the learners of Fur language were predicted based on the differences in the consonant sounds of the languages. There are errors arising from interference, interlanguage phenomenon, unproficiency of first language(L1) before learning (L2) moreover, the errors are due to linguistic differences between two languages, English belongs to Indo-European language family, whereas, Fur belongs to Nilo-Saharan family. The tutors should be acquainted with the results of CA for both languages, it enables them to teach accurate pronunciation to the foreign language learners in general and Fur learners in particular consequently, the pronunciation problems can be solved, the Fur learners of English will become proficient in English.

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