

A PHONEMIC CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF TIV AND ENGLISH SEGMENTALS

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ABSTRACT

A contrastive approach enables one to examine the differences that exist between languages and the obvious challenges poses to the learner of a target language. It is then that possible right approaches to overcoming possible challenges would be employed. This paper delves into a contrastive analysis of the Tiv and English languages with particular reference to the segmental features of both languages. The study shows that Tiv language has more phonemic consonants than English language. However, both languages exhibit equal number of vowels except that there are some vowels. Those in Tiv which are not found in English are /a/ and /o/. The ones in English that are not present in Tiv are /ð/ and /æ/. Also, tone plays an important role in the use of vowels in Tiv, such that a vowel sound can give different meanings to different words and can only be distinguish in orthographic form through tone marking. English language does not mark vowel differences in tone but intonation. A study of this nature charts the way forward into providing remedial measures to Tiv learners of English as L2 or target language.

Keywords: Contrastive analysis, phonemic, segmental, second language, First language, Tiv

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges of language acquisitions is the sharp differences that exist between one's first language (L1) and the target language (TL). If all the features of one's first language are inherently found in the target language, the task of acquiring the target language would be less enormous. The English language in particular differs to a great extent from most African languages. There are some challenges in learning and acquiring English as a foreign language.

The basic phonological differences can be noticed in the many segmental features of the English language that are completely absent in most African languages and vice versa. Learners of English from such African languages encounter a number of challenges acquiring the English language. This usually gives rise to errors emanating from the difficulties encountered at the initial learning level.

The Tiv language spoken by the Tiv people in Nigeria is deeply affected by this phenomenon. There are certain consonant sounds in English that are completely absent in Tiv language, which pose a serious problem in the learning of the English language by Tiv learners. There are also several other differences that make the learning of the English language a clumsy task. This paper tends to undertake a contrastive study of the segmental features of the two languages, examining the consonantal phonemes and the vowels that exist in both languages in order to ascertain their phonological differences, the presence or otherwise of some segmental features in either languages and suggest a way of approaching the task of acquiring the English language.

The study therefore draws the comparative analysis of both the English and Tiv segmental. This is done using a contrastive approach propounded by Robert Lado.

Theoretical Framework

This study makes use of contrastive analysis theory to analyze the differences between the segmental features of both English and Tiv languages and determine their adverse effects on the English language learning task of the Tiv learner of English. The theoretical foundation for what became known as the contrastive analyses hypotheses were formulated in Lado's "Linguistics Across Cultures" (1957). In his words these elements which are similar to (the learner's) native language will be simple for him and those elements that are different will be difficult for him" Even though, not the first

to make this kind of suggestion, Lado was the first person to provide a comprehensive theoretical treatment and to suggest a systematic set of technical procedures for the contrastive study of languages. This involved describing the languages (using structuralist linguistics), comparing them and predicting learning difficulties. In his attempt to define contrastive analyses, "Connor (1996) asserts that contrastive analyses is the systematic study of a pair of languages with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities" He adds that contrastive analyses was used extensively in the field of second language acquisition in the 1960s and 1970s as a method of explaining while some features of the target language were more difficult to acquire than others. The behaviourist theories at the time considered language learning as a question of habit formation and this could be reinforced or impeded by existing habits. This implies that the difficulty in mastering certain structures in the second language depended on the differences between the learner's mother tongue (MT) and the language they are trying to learn. Contrastive analysis can therefore, be viewed as the branch of contrastive linguistics which refers to the systematic analyses of two languages put together in order to identify their similarities and dissimilarities with a view to detecting the errors that the second language learner is bound to make in his acquisition of the second language. It is considered on, phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels. For the purpose of this study, the phonological contrast of Tiv and English would be made to establish those areas where the segmental features of Tiv and those of English share common differences, where they are the same and the possible challenges caused the learner by those dissimilarities.

Empirical Studies

Ogunsiji and Olanrewaju (2010) carried out a phonological contrastive study of the English and Ibibio languages. In their study, they observed that English has more consonants than Ibibio language. On the same subject, Imoh (1985) identifies 13 phonemic consonants in Ibibio while Essien (1990) locates 15. Other findings indicatd that:

the voiced velar plosive /g/ is absent in Ibibio language therefore, the Ibibio users of English will tend to substitute /k/ for /g/.

with the absence of the dental fricatives /ð/ and /θ/ in Ibibio language, the Ibibio learner of English will tend to produce /t/ instead of /θ/ and /d/ instead of /ð/

/z/ is also absent in Ibibio language and as such, there is every tendency for the speaker to substitute /s/ for /z/.

In a similar vein, the absence of /dʒ/ in Ibibio will certainly lead to difficulty in pronouncing words like 'jump' and 'join'.

In vowels too, the findings revealed that there are more vowels in English than in Ibibio language. Whereas English has 20 vowels, Ibibio language has 14. According to the studies, the vowels that have major problems are /i/, /a/, /ʌ/, /ɛ/.

Due to the differences in the vowels of the two languages, the studies posed the following predictions:

(1)

- a. I-I e.g beat, bit,-/bit/
- b. æ-a e.g. cash, cast,-/ka/, /kast/
- c. E-e e.g. kettle,-/ketu/

In Tiv language too, Udu (2009) attempted a rundown of the Tiv phonemes but never done a comprehensive contrastive analysis of the Tiv phonemes and those of another language. It is this research gap that this work intends to fill.

Consonantal phonemes

There are twenty four consonants in English as shown on the below:

Table 1

Manner of articulation	State of the glottis	Place of articulation	
Plosive	Voiceless	Bilabial Alveolar Velar Bilabial	
	voices		
	P		
	t		
Fricative	f	Labio-dental Dental Alveolar Palato alveolar Glottal	
	θ		
	S		
	j		
	h		
Affricate	tʃ	Palato alveolar	
Lateral		R	Alveolar
Liquid		r	Alveolar
Approximants		J	Dental
		W	Bilabial
Nasal		M	Bilabial
		n	Alveolar
		ŋ	Velar

Below is the Tiv Consonant chart:

From these charts, it will be observed that Tiv language has more phonemic consonants than English language. Udu (2009) realizes 33 phonemic consonants in Tiv language.

Comparative Analysis

The two languages are compared with the view in identifying the similarities and differences.

Below is a contrastive analysis of Tiv and English languages:

The two dental fricatives /ð/and /θ/ are absent in Tiv language. The plosive/t/ and /d/ are substituted for them since dental fricative are not familiar to them.

Whereas the lateral approximant/l/ and tap /r/ are distinctively used in English, in Tiv, they are used interchangeably without causing any change in meaning. For example, 'lice' and 'rice' are two different words in English while 'lwam' and 'rwam' mean the same

(food) in Tiv language. Transfer of the first language habit is hereby, obvious and detrimental to second language learning.

Table 2

manner of articulation	state of the glottis	place of articulation	
Plosive	Voiceless	Bilabial Alveolar Velar Labial velar palatalized velar	
	voiced		
	P		
	t		
	k		
Pre-nasalized plosive		Bilabial Alveolar	
Fricative	f	Labio dental Alveolar Palato alveolar Velar Glottal	
	S		
	j		
	ɣ		
	h		
Affricate	Ts	Alveolar	
pre nasalized affricate		Palate alveolar Alveolar	
Nasal		Bilabial Alveolar Palatal Velar	
Tap		R	Alveolar
Lateral		L	Alveolar
Approximant	J	Palatal Labial velar labialized Velar	
	w		
	kw		

The following consonants in Tiv are not found in English at all: /kp/-kposo (different), /gb/-gbenda (road), /gw/-gwar, (string) /kw/-kwase, (woman) /ts/-tso,(canoe) /ɣ/-kwagh (something),/ɲ/-nyor (enter),/g/ gyar (fence), /kj/-kyagh (vessel)

Apart from the above, the allophonic variants of English like aspiration, devoiced sound, and laterally released sound seem to be absent in Tiv language.

Whereas, the fricative alveolar consonants /s/ and /z/ can appear at the initial, middle and final positions of a word in English, in Tiv language, they can occur only at the middle and final positions. No Tiv word ends in either /s/ or /z/

So the contrast between the consonants of English and Tiv is summarized with the following predictions:

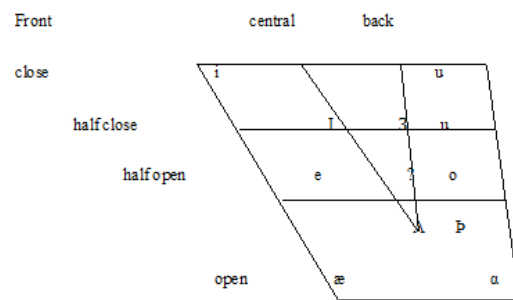
- θ – t e.g./θin/ - /tin/
- ð – d e.g./ðeir/ -/dear/
- r – l e.g./fry/ - /fly/

In Tiv there are many consonants that occur in restricted environments. Such consonants as /s/,/z/,/ɣ/ can never appear in word final position except in the initial and mid positions while the velar fricative /ɣ/ cannot occur at the word initial position except at the final and mid positions.

Contrastive Analysis of Vocalic Phonemes

There are twenty vowels in English as shown on the table below:

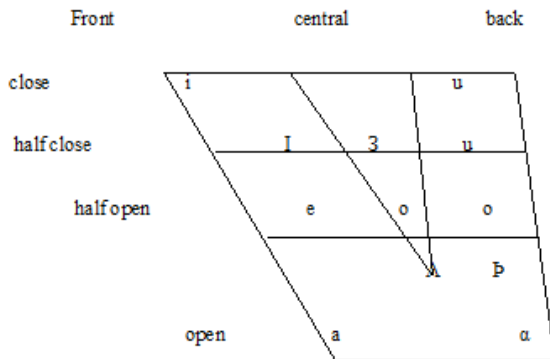
Table3



c. ð - the, ten /ðe/ /ten/

There are eight diphthongs in English language which are - /ie/, /ei/, /ue/, /oi/, /ai/, /au/, /eð/, /eu

Table 4



There are also eight diphthongs in Tiv language which include - /ua/, /ei/, /io/, /ue/, /ia/, /ae/, /ou/, /ie/.

These charts and the accompanying diphthongs show that we have equal number of vowels in both languages except that there are some vowels in Tiv that are not found in English and vice versa. In Tiv, /a/ and /o/ vowels are not found in English while /ð/ and /æ/ are not present in Tiv.

Tone plays an important role in the use of Tiv vowels in that one Tiv vowel sound can give different meanings to different words which can only be distinguished in writing through the use of tone marking. Such a situation cannot be found in English language. i.e:

- | | | |
|-----|------|-----------|
| (2) | Tór | pistle |
| | Tōr | roof |
| | Tòr | king |
| (3) | kpér | yesterday |
| | Kpèr | net |

Another contrast is that vowel length can be tense and lax in English, e.g heat /hIt/, hut/hAt/ whereas in Tiv, it is lexical e.g - ma-drink, maa-build

Also, there is free variation in English which can be seen in pronunciation e.g data/deita/, /data/. In Tiv, orthographically, there is free variation but it may be dialectal.

Due to the differences in the vowels of the two languages, the following predictions are made:

- (4) a. i - I e.g. heat, hit - hit
b. æ - a e.g. man, mat - /man/, /mat/

Summary of Findings

It can be deduced from the above analysis that phonologically, Tiv language differs to a large extent from English language. Due to the differences in the consonants vowels that exists between the two languages, there are certain predictions of errors that the Tiv learner of English is bound to make as captured in above. As for consonants, there are more consonants in Tiv language than we have in English but we have the same number of vowels in both languages, the only difference been that there are some vowels in English that are not in Tiv just as there are some in Tiv that are not in English.

Recommendation

Teachers of phonology or oral English must bear in mind the linguistic background of their students and take care of those phonological differences. Since students understand areas of similarity better than areas of differences, emphasis must be laid on those areas of differences with a view to forestalling errors.

Conclusion

This paper compared and contrasted the consonantal vocalic segmental of both English and Tiv languages, ascertaining some areas of difficulty where the Tiv learner of English is bound to have challenges. This is done by drawing out the possible predictions of the second language learner. This analysis also shows that the challenge of interference is quite obvious where these two languages. The paper also ascertain that the Tiv consonants are more in number than the English consonants while the English vowels are the same in number with those of Tiv, with slight differences in quality. It is therefore obvious that there exist both phonological differences and similarities and the differences do account for the possible errors committed the Tiv learner of English.

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