

ERROR ANALYSIS OF IGALAPHONE FRENCH AND ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION OF FRICATIVE SOUNDS

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Abstract

The aim of this research work is to investigate the capacity of learners to orally and visually recognize and pronounce the fricative sounds of French and English correctly. The researchers focus on students of first year who have Igala cultural background to know their accuracy in identifying and pronouncing some fricative words. Qualitative method was employed in this research work. A descriptive study was conducted with 130 participants focusing on students. Certain oral tests and other research tools were utilized to collect data for the study. The researchers involve themselves to collect data by observing the respondents, recording their pronunciation and analyzing the error on their pronunciation based on theories of error analysis. The oral tests are divided into two categories, the first category is on French fricative and it is meant to test the French students while the second test is strictly to test the English learners on English fricative sounds. In the test, learners are to pronounce given fricative sounds while their performance is being noted. Finally, the study reveals several findings. Most learners do not have much problems pronouncing sounds like /f/, /s/, and /ʃ/, but find the sounds /v/, /θ/, /z/, /ʒ/, /θ/, /z/-/ʒ/, and /ʒ/ very difficult. The sounds the learners find easy to identify and pronounce are those found in the learners L1, while those they find difficult are those absent in the orthography of the learners' first language (L1).

Keywords: fricative sounds, pronunciation, sound recognition, French fricative, English fricative.

Introduction

Pronunciation plays a very crucial role in the teaching and learning of second language. It is regarded as a set of habits of sounds production. A variety of researches and studies have been done on pronunciation, its difficulties for foreign learners, its roles in language speaking or competences, influences of first language on the acquisition of second and foreign language, the interaction or difficulties in practicing the sound segments, and so on. (Lan and Khang, 2020; Gilakjani, 2012; Fouz-González, 2017). The habit of producing a sound is acquired by repeating it over and over again and by being corrected when it is pronounced wrongly. Learning to pronounce a second language means building up new

pronunciation habits and overcoming the bias of the first language. (Brannen, 2011) postulates that one predominant characteristic of second language (L2) speech is the presence of foreign accent. A major goal of researchers working in the domain of second language sound systems is to account for accented speech. The factors influencing second language production are many, and they interact in complex ways. One of the ways of detecting errors in foreign language acquisition is through pronunciation.

Errors are 'signals' that indicate an actual learning process taking place and that the learner has not yet mastered or shown a well-structured linguistic competence in the target language. (Richard 2002) refers to it as the use of a word,

speech act or grammatical items in such a way that it seems imperfect and significant of an incomplete learning. It is a systematic deviation which happens when a learner has not learnt something, and consistently gets it wrong. However, the attempts made to put the error into context have always gone hand in hand with either language learning and second-language acquisition processes, (Erdogan, 2005) postulates that error analysis enables teachers to find out the sources of errors and take pedagogical precautions towards them. Fricative sounds vary in numbers according to languages as a result of which errors of different degrees occur among foreign language learners.

Fricative sounds are sounds produced with partial closure of the organs of speech thereby allowing air to escape during pronunciation. (Ladefoged 2001) describe them as sounds produced by a turbulent airstream passing through a narrow constriction at some point along the length of the vocal tract. Unlike vowels, whose source is at the glottis, the source of fricative sounds is where a constriction occurs. Fricatives are articulatorily different from stops in that stops are made by blocking airflow completely in the oral cavity, while fricatives are made by forming a nearly complete obstruction of the vocal tract so that the airflow moves out through the narrow passage in the vocal tract due to "close approximation of two articulators", ((Cheon, 2005). Fricatives represent one of the later developing sound classes and are often produced incorrectly by most second language learners

Statement of the Research problem

Errors in language acquisition occur as a result of several factors. Among these factors are the differences in the elements of languages. The two major causes of error, coined by the error analysis approach, are the Interlingual error which is an error made by the Learner's Linguistic background and Native language interference, and the Intralingual error which is the error committed by the learners when they misuse some target language rules, Igala learners of French and English language commit several errors in the process of pronouncing the fricative sounds of the above-mentioned languages. Reasons for these

errors are the differences in the number of fricative sounds in the Mother Tongue (MT) of the learners and the target languages. Consequences of these errors among these groups of learners are lack of proper comprehension during conversation, giving of wrong and misleading report and instruction. If allowed to continue might lead to confusion. Over the years, a reasonable number of researches or studies on different aspects of Igala and English fricatives have been carried out. However, as far as combining these three languages is concerned, no research work has been done in this area. This is the gap that this study aims to fill.

Empirical frameworks

In a research work conducted by fauzi (2014) to find out the errors in pronouncing the fricative sound /f/ and /v/ of Sudanese students, his result showed that no errors were made on pronouncing /f/ because it is not changed into another sound but they did /v/ mostly because those substitute ones are similar to their L1 sounds. However, in the work of [Hakim Ramdani](#) on étude expérimentale sur la production des fricatives dentales anglaises /θ/ et /ð/ par les étudiants français de l'université de franche-comté, it was discovered that thai learners have much more difficulty in perceiving the labio-dental fricatives (/f/ and /v/). Indeed, this consonant cluster merges the most for thai learners. On the other hand, production errors are of the same order of magnitude than those of the other categories.

Also, Herman (2016) who carried out research to find out the difficulties in pronouncing the English labio-dental sounds of Indonesian students with the focuses on the labio-dental sounds /f/ and /v/. The result showed that most difficult position is the final one in sound /v/. The students were unable to pronounce the /f/ - voiceless and /v/ - voiced because they pronounce the same voice in words (in the Indonesian language). thus, the sound /v/ is substituted by /f/ when it is mispronounced.

Furthermore, in a research work done by Hillary Shitambasi Mulama titled 'difficultés liées à la prononciation du français au Kenya : le cas des apprenants des écoles secondaires des comtés de Nairobi et Bungoma' (difficulties related to French pronunciation in Kenya: the case of

secondary school learners in Nairobi and Bungoma counties), the result showed that the phonetic categories of errors included the substitution and faulty assimilation of sounds, nasalization difficulties, omission and insertion of sounds, pronunciation of silent letters, the use of sounds foreign to the French phonetic system, the discrepancy of sounds and finally difficulties related to liaison. Majority of errors included those related to the faulty realization of phonemes specific to French, spelling-phony confusion, spelling comparisons within the French lexicon as well as generalization of pronunciation rules. The second for its part included errors of articulation attributable to the similarity of spelling between French words and their similar words in English.

Theoretical framework:

This study is anchored on the linguistic tool of contrastive analysis (CA) as propounded by Fries in 1945 and reported in Unubi (2019). According to Unubi (2019), the chief objective of CA is to examine the differences that subsist between languages as well as the difficulty they pose to L2 learners under teaching and learning situation. Consequent upon this, Fries (1945) as quoted by Lado [1957] which was cited in (Unubi, 2019) declares that the most efficient materials are those based upon scientific description of the language to be learnt, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner. (Gass 2013) cited in (Arjumand 2021) reported that (CA) is concerned with the influence of the native language (NL) in second language acquisition. It is carried out by comparing the first language (L1) of the learners and the target language (TL) to identify potential errors for the primary purpose of sorting out which areas of the TL should be focused on and which areas do not need to be focused on in the context of second language learning. For better understanding, (LI) as referred to in this research work is Igala language while the (FL) are French and English languages. For decades, it has been observed that native language or Mother tongue (MT) has influence on the learning of foreign language. This influence

could be positive or negative. However, (Al-Khresheh 2016), notes that among language teaching professionals as well as linguists, there is broad-spectrum consensus that the first language shapes second language acquisition. It was noted that in learning a FL, the learner tended to bring with him the knowledge of the L1, and suggested that this should be taken into consideration in teaching the L2, (Arjumand 2021). Judging from the foregoing, it has become evident that no better framework fits this study than contrastive analysis (CA). The reasons are: (i) this study juxtapose the Igala fricative sounds and those of French and English to see the extent of differences and similarities between them. Also the study exposes the challenges that the differences in the fricative sounds of the three languages may pose to Igala learners of French and English languages.

Research methodology

This study titled error analysis of Igalaphone French and English pronunciation on fricative sounds resorts to both primary and secondary sources of data. In the secondary source, data was drawn or collected from the archive of existing works in French, English and Igala languages. The fricative sounds of the three languages are represented. The Igala fricative sounds were obtained from the works of linguists on Igala language from the library of Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa while others were retrieved from the internet. These include the works of Omachomu G and Unubi A. The English and French fricatives were also gotten from the e-library of Kogi State College of Education Ankpa and works of French and English researchers. The primary source of data comprises of a total population of two hundred, including teachers and students of French and English from the College of Education in Ankpa, Kogi State. It samples eighty (80) students from English department and fifty (50) students from French department. Two tests were administered on the respondents, this comprises of one each for both French and English learners. The tests were oral and pronunciation in nature.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data to be presented here are from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source involves the fricative sounds of the three languages involved in the study.

Table 1. French , English and Igala fricatives.

French fricatives	Word found	Meaning	English fricatives	Word found	Igala fricatives	Word found	meaning
f	fleur	flower	f	fan	f	efo	To draw or pull
v	vert	green	v	voice	-	-	-
s	sac	bag	s	sun	-	-	-
z	<u>z</u> èbre	zebra	z	zoo	-	-	-
ʃ	chat	cat	ʃ	shore	-	-	-
ʒ	jupe	skirt	ʒ	pleasure	-	-	-
ʁ	rare	rare	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	θ	thorn	-	-	-
-	-	-	ð	then	-	-	-

Sources: Igala fricatives from Unubi (2019). English fricatives from <https://www.mimicmethod.com/about/>

Analysis

From table 1 above, we see that French has seven (7) fricative sounds; English has eight (8) while Igala has only one. English, French and Igala all have the fricative sound /f/. This is the reason why students do not have problem pronouncing the sound. English and French have the sounds /f, v, s, z, ʃ and ʒ/ in common. They are however absent in Igala sound system. The sounds are substituted for other sounds that are present in Igala orthography. The sounds /f/ and /v/ are substituted for the bilabial stop /b/, thus English words like fan and voice are pronounced as pan /pan/ and boice /bois/ respectively. Similarly, the French words fleur (flower) and ‘vert’ (green) have their initial sounds /f/ and /v/ substituted for the bilabial plosive /b/.

The alveolar fricative sounds /s/ and /z/ are another group of sound that that Igala learners find difficult to pronounce as a result of their absence in Igala sound. The palatal sound /ʃ/ is used for the sound /s/ while the palatal affricate /dʒ/ is substituted for the sound /z/. Thus the English words sun and zoo would be pronounced as /ʃɔn/ and /dʒu/ respectively. The /ʁ/ sound is present only in French and absent in both English and Igala. It is a velar fricative sound. Similarly, the dental fricative sounds /θ/ and /ð/ are present only in English and absent in French and Igala sound system. Both English and French learners of Igala background ethnic origin find the sounds difficult to pronounce. They are substituted for the alveolar stop /t/ and /d/ respectively.

Table 2: the students' ability to pronounce the French fricative sounds

Fricative sound	Number correct answers	of percentage	Number of wrong answers	percentage
f	50	100	0	0
v	36	72	14	28
s	36	72	14	28
z	26	52	24	48
ʃ	30	60	20	40
ʒ	10	20	40	80
ʒ	43	86	7	14

Source: field work

Table 3: students' ability to pronounce the English fricative sounds

Fricative sound	Number correct answers	of percentage	Number of wrong answers	percentage
f	80	100	0	0
v	60	75	20	25
s	65	81	15	19
z	55	69	25	31
ʃ	45	56	35	44
ʒ	5	6	75	94
θ	5	6	75	94
/ ð	4	5	76	95

Source: field work

Analyzing the data

Table 2: From table 2 above, it is clear that /f/ sound does not give any problem to our respondents. They all could pronounce the sounds

correctly. However, 35 out of the 50 respondents were able to pronounce the /v/ sound. This represents 72%. The /s/ sound has the same result as the /v/ sound. The /z/ sound however gave more

problems to the learners than the first three sounds. 26 respondents (52%) were able to pronounce it correctly while 24 (48%) of the respondents pronounced it wrongly. 30 respondents (60%) were able to pronounce the /ʃ/ correctly, the rest 20 students got it wrongly pronounced. The /z/ sound gave the students more problem than any other sound. 40 students (80%) got it wrongly pronounced. Finally, the /ʒ/ sound didn't give them much trouble as 43 (86%) respondents were able to pronounce it rightly.

Table 3: The table three (3) above shows that English language has the highest number of fricative sounds, total of eight. Igala learners of English language have no problem with the pronunciation of the sound /f/. Out of the 80 respondents, all were able to pronounce the sound correctly. That is a 100% performance. This is as a result of the availability of the sound in Igala orthography. The sound /v/ however poses a little challenge to the students as 20 of them representing 25% were not able to pronounce it correctly. The sound was substituted for the bilabial plosive /b/. the alveolar sounds /s/ and /z/ are fricative sounds which Igala learners find very difficult to pronounce. The sound was substituted for the palatal sounds /ʃ and ʒ respectively. Out of the 80 students observed, 15 (19%) and 25 (31%) were unable to pronounce the sounds correctly. The respondents also found the sounds /ʃ/ and /z/ difficult. The percentage of wrong pronunciation is high at 44 and 94 respectively. The dental fricatives are the most difficult sounds for the learners and respondents. Only 5 (6%) and 4 (5%) students were able to pronounce the /θ/ and /ð/ sounds correctly respectively. The reason for this high failure rate is not far fetched. The sound is totally absent in Igala sound system. The /θ/ is substituted for the alveolar plosive /t/ while /ð/ is substituted for /d/.

Research Findings

From the data collected, presented and analysed above, the following are the findings of this research:

- I. French has a total of seven fricative sounds; English language has eight while Igala has one.
- II. The three languages in the research work all have the fricative sound /f/.
- III. The velar sound /g/ is common only in French fricative and absent in both English and Igala.
- IV. Likewise, only English language has the dental fricative /θ/ and /ð/.
- V. Igala learners of French and English languages commits more errors in sounds that are absent in Igala orthography. The errors are more in the dental fricative sounds.
- VI. Errors in sounds that are available in Igala orthography are minimal. Example of such sounds which gave students less trouble are /f, v, s/.
- VII. Respondents substituted English and French fricatives for sounds nearest to such in Igala orthography if such sound is absent. Examples are /t/ for /θ/, /d/ for /ð/, /dʒ/ for /z/.

Conclusion

In this work, the researchers have made an attempt on the subject matter. They were able to give comprehensive definition and explanation to the key words, these include pronunciation, error, error analysis and fricative sound. They use the framework of contrastive analysis as a tool to compare the fricative sounds of French, English and Igala languages. From the data collected, presented and analyzed, it is a fact that there are differences and similarities in the fricative sounds of French, English and Igala languages. The differences in the fricative sound are responsible for the errors committed by the learners. The existing differences noticed from the study have posed pronunciation difficulties to the learners of French and English as foreign language who are of Igala ethnic nationality. The learners are therefore advised to work on themselves to enable them to overcome the difficulty.

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