

تأثير تداخل اللغة الأم في أخطاء النطق للطلبة الليبيين في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية

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المختص :

العديد من المتعلمين لا يوجد لديهم اهتماماً بعملية نطق اللغة الإنجليزية وتعتبر في كثير من الأحيان مشكلة في المحادثة الشفهية، فهناك العديد من المشاكل مثل : الصوتيات التي تسبب صعوبة في الكتابة والنطق للمتعلم وعدم الثقة في اللغة أحياناً وعليه تعتبر الصوتيات من الأساسية المهمة في تعليم وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية التي قد تتأثر أحيانا باللغة الأم وتتأثر كثيراً بذلك وتداخل لغة الأم باللغة الأجنبية ، وتعتبر الخصائص التي تؤثر على تعليم لغة ثانية ، قد تعرقل المتعلم في توصيل رسالته للمتحدثين باللغة الأجنبية.

وهذه الورقة تعرض بعض الأسباب والمشكل التي تواجه المتعلمين الليبيين في النطق السليم في اللغة الإنجليزية وتعيق السامع في فهم رسالة المتعلم ، وبالتالي تؤثر على أدائه سلباً نتيجة للتداخل وتأثير اللغة الأم.

The Mother Tongue Interference Pronunciation Errors in Libyan EFL Students

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Introduction:

Many English learners do not pay much attention on studying English pronunciation, the results being that learners are shocked whenever they meet difficulties in oral communication. There are many other factors, such as prominent phonetics, which may weaken the learner's confidence both in speaking and listening. In the case of some senior students at the university, a reasonable accuracy in the pronunciation of individual sounds should certainly have been achieved, however, many students still fail to attain perfection.

As a teacher of English language for more than forty years at different levels in education system in Libyan, I have noticed that many students face various problems in their attempts to pronounce correct English words. They are influenced by their first language sounds when speaking or reading. Moreover, they encounter other difficulties such stress and intonation since they do not follow the target language's patterns. They pronounce English words and sentences as they are speaking Arabic and sound similar.

However, students vary in their way of pronunciation in English depending on how they are affected by their mother tongue. This paper examines the effect of first language on English pronunciation for Libya learners. Besides, it aims at answering the question: what are the major phonetic obstacles hindering proper English sound pronunciation?

Background of the Study:

Language may interact and effect the learning of each other on several levels. According to, Antrim (2008), pointed out that the interference of the first language (L1) in the acquisition of a second language (L2).

Pronunciation is one area of inference.

Moreover, research conducted by Zhang and Yin (2009) emphasizes that learners' L1 influences the pronunciation of the second language (L2). Their study illustrates that the L1 interference causes errors regarding stress, intonation and especially sounds. Both the phonological structure and phonetic characteristics of a speaker's NL influences his/her pronunciation of sounds in a foreign language. A speaker might mispronounce a sound in a foreign language (FL) because no comparable sound exists in the phonemic inventory of his NL. Arabic as an example lacks one of the stops found in English, the voiceless labial stop /p/. This cross language difference affects production of English language speech by Arab learners. Arabs need learning to produce English /p/, since the phoneme does not exist in their NL. Otherwise, the confusion between /p/ and /b/ is readily occurring (Flege & Port, 1981).

Therefore, NL phonetic and phonology are undoubtedly powerful influences on L2 learning. Al-Saidat (2010) points out, NL speakers have no difficulty in producing most words in their L1 because it is only one phonetic system that the speaker is exposed to all the time. Such, features play an important

role which results in a clash between the system of L1 and L2. As shown in Al-Saidat's study, English syllables are difficult to learn for Arab learners of English. His study found out that Arab learners have difficulties in particular English clusters rather than others. For example, the replacement of /teks /ɪ/ / t/ instead of /tekst/.

Concerning Libyan learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), the interference of the phonetic system of the Libyan Arabic variety (LAV) lies behind most of the phonetic obstacles they face. The vocalic system of LAV is limited compared to the English different vocalic qualities. This specific problem challenges many Libyan EFL learners to perfect the field of pronunciation. A prominent example is the confusion between /ɪ/ and /e/ sounds, words such as rest, sent, etc. are mispronounced with /ɪ/ instead of /e/. (Rakas, 2008).

Definitions of Pronunciation:

Pronunciation is how speakers of language pronounce the words of that language. The pronunciation of a language is how its words / letters are said correctly (Cambridge, 2009 & Oxford, 2005).

Pronunciation is the accepted way of speaking the words of language by its speakers. It refers to the way, which is widely understood and intelligible among people who use that language. However, Paulston and Bruder (1976:82-3) maintain that, "pronunciation for a beginning student include control of the segmental sounds, statement and question intonation, and stress and rhythm patterns for simple utterances. At intermediate and advanced levels pronunciation practice should concentrate on intonation patterns of complex sentences and contrastive stress patterns".

Elements of Pronunciation:

As illustrated in the definition of pronunciation, we can include within pronunciation the nation of segmental features and suprasegmental features. Obviously, these terms refer to the key elements of pronunciation.

Although, segments, the individual sounds of a language, play an important and inseparable part of describing pronunciation, it cannot work alone. There are several other aspects beyond those segments. At this stage, we should pay heed to the suprasegmentals. The most prominent features are stress, rhythm and intonation.

- **Stress:**

It refers to the prominence or emphasis with which we produce certain elements of the spoken language. Obviously, when we speak some syllables are pronounced louder than the others. In addition, stressed syllable is noticed to show higher pitch and longer duration of production. Stress is important at three levels.

First, word level: multisyllabic words one or more syllables that are stressed. Second, sentence level: the most important words tend to be stressed. Third, contrastive stress, the most important words carry greater stress. (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994)

- **Rhythm:**

There is a considerable similarity between language and music. They parallel to each other in terms of rhythm. In speech, syllables take the place of musical notes, which are determined by the stressed syllables.

For example, the sentence: "This is the second time I've ever eaten a pineapple" English speakers try to keep an equal time between the stressed syllables. The stress in English is regular and it is determined by its syllables. The result is that unstressed syllables become short. Rhythm helps us to find the most important words in continuous speech (Roach, 2001).

- **Intonation:**

Intonation is the change of pitch. It is crucial in converting the meaning of speech through stress with pauses and changes in speech or loudness. Intonation makes it easier for a listener to understand what a speaker is trying to convey. Moreover, intonation enables us to express feeling and emotions as we speak. For example, the same sentence can be said in different ways, which might be labeled "angry", "happy", "bored", and so on. There are five major patterns of tones can be identified:

1. A falling pattern: usually indicates that the speaker has finished.
2. A rising intonation: signals a question or continuation.
3. A fall-rise tone: signal definiteness combined with some qualification.
4. A rise-fall usually used to signal strong feelings, surprise, approval or disapproval.
5. A level tone: signal boredom or routine.

(Roach, 1983)

The importance of pronunciation:

Brown (2007) emphasizes clear compressible pronunciation is an essential factor of learning English language.

Most importantly, teachers should pay specific attention to learners at the beginning levels. They must be introduced to the significant sound system of English pronunciation. Then, pronunciation goals could be improved on the basis of the relevant features.

Brown (ibid) pointed out that if pronunciation errors become continuously difficult to overcome, English language learners can develop their skill of clear pronunciation clarity is nearly dependent on the learners' motivation. If some learners are not concerned about their pronunciation that will definitely affect their perception of the different language system.

Moreover, Al-Mutawa and Kailani support Brown's claims that beginners should do extensive practice and individual words repetition. At the advanced levels students are expected to deal with stress and intonation. Although, advanced learners are able to identify and discriminate English sounds, they should be involved in more difficult drills, such as living conversations and radio broadcast. They can listen to more English voices other than the teachers.

Distinction between Mistakes and Errors:

Since many SLA studies look at them as being completely different, it is important to draw a clear-cut distinction between errors and mistakes. Ellis (1997) asserts that errors reflect the gaps in a learner's knowledge; i.e. The learner does not know the correct form. As a result, errors can be identified as the learners' incorrect use of the language because of not recognizing its real structures. However, Ellis (ibid) considers mistakes as being related to gaps of performance. In other words, learners are able to recognize the correct form, yet, they commit mistakes because of a particular instance, which means that they know the correct structure. For example, native speakers do make mistakes. These can also be described as slips, which happen when they are not tired, under some kind of pressure, etc. Many linguists such as Douglas (1994) who states that, a mistake is an error in the production because it is a slip of the tongue also emphasize Ellis's point of view. Native speakers could perfectly correct or recognize such lapses. On the other hand,

errors are the result of interfering competence knowledge. For instance, some Arab learners make a number of pronunciation errors, as they pronounce the fricative sounds /θ/ and /ð/, respectively as /s/ and /z/. These errors are usually attributed to the mother tongue of the Arabic language background. Another distinctive study presents mistakes as a more general term than errors. Differently, Underhill (2005) argues that mistakes could be either slips or errors. He refers to mistakes as slips when learners have the ability of self-correction. Learners know how to correct themselves. On the contrary, errors mean that learners do not have the criteria of self-correction. Errors could be corrected by helping learners to overcome their problems. Consequently, we conclude that a mistake can be a slip or an error; meanwhile an error could be mistake but not a slip.

Different Teaching Methods to Deal with Pronunciation Errors:

Definitely, teaching pronunciation and dealing with different sources of pronunciation errors need more efforts than any other tasks. The reason is that pronunciation is not something the teacher can easily instill in learners. It is something they should have the desire to achieve.

Many pronunciation researchers agree that teacher is the initiator. Learners should have their choices, feelings and independence. They should always be encouraged to develop their autonomy. Undoubtedly, learners need to work on their own, at home and in the wider world (Larroy, 1995).

According to our experience as ESL learners, we can say that student must be involved in investigating the new world of English Language pronunciation. However, there are some useful techniques that needed to deal with pronunciation problems. It is an attempt to present the most useful methods advised by several authors, or pronunciation improvement and correction. For instance, (ibid) invented a number of approaches to overcome pronunciation lapses.

- 1- One important activity is the pronunciation weeding. This activity is highly accepted to aid the students of English in errors correction. It introduces the topic of pronunciation errors with a metaphor of a garden. The teacher tells students that there may be some weeds, or say lapses, in their pronunciation. It would be a good idea to get rid of those weeds.

During this activity, students record themselves reading a text. Then, they compare their pronunciation with a recording by a native speaker. At this level, the teacher can ask the students to find out if there are any differences and where. Whether there are any particular sounds and words they notice are different and which ones.

In the text lesson, students prepare a list of 'weeds' they would like to get rid of. The teacher works with students on the aspects mentioned by them such as intonation, stress, specific sounds, etc. After a week or so, the teacher should have helped students with their problems concerning that text, and then move to another more difficult text. The point of this activity is to make students aware of their deficiencies. It aids to become more confident and self-dependent.

2- Another activity, which is presented by Laroy (ibid), is what you can or what you can't. This process mainly focuses on correcting the pronunciation of particular English sounds.

First, the teacher chooses a sound that his/her students find difficulty in pronouncing it.

Then, he asks them to pronounce the sounds they mispronounce. Then, he/she can ask them to say the words correctly, keeping in mind the differences between the sounds. Students should concentrate on the difficult sound / θ/, not having to worry about the rest often helps. After wards, they gradually work up to say the whole confidently.

Moreover, Underhill (2005) indicates that there is an essential approach to deal with pronunciation errors. In his view, he states that when learners make a mistake (a slip or an error), they can be helped by the 'unspoken messages' which means teachers should give learners indirect sign to help them know they committed a mistake. If they could not, then it would be an error. Therefore, teachers should make their involvement one degree more, i.e., teachers should give support to learners so they can correct themselves. Furthermore, teachers must invite a learner to repeat the mistake again, but more slowly. This may make them discover their mistakes and how that relates to the sounds, they hear. This may help them to trigger their correction if it was a slip, and if not, they certainly need to be given, some data they do not have. Furthermore, the correction would not be just catalectic but it would

be informative and instructive. In other words, teachers can be use a tape recorder to form the correct pronunciation.

The Effect of L1 on Pronunciation Errors in Learning ESL:

The study of second language acquisition is usually concerned with the difficulties that learners encounter in pronouncing the words in a foreign language, pronunciation errors arise when the sound system of two languages differ as O'connor, (1967) states:

our native language does not allow us to adapt the native like pronunciation of the other language. The habits of our own language are so strong that they are very difficult to break. In our own language, we have a fairly small number of sound units, which we put together in many different combinations to form the words, and sentences we use every day. In addition, as we get older we are dominated by this small number of units. Thus when we speak the second language, we commit many pronunciations errors, based on our knowledge of the mother tongue.

Ur (1996) maintains that second language learners do make pronunciation errors due mainly to two sources.

1. A particulate sound may not exist in the mother tongue, so that the learner is not able to form it. Therefore, learner tend to replace an equivalent it. For example, the substitution of /d/ or /z/ for the English 'th' /θ/ as in that.
2. The learners have the actual sounds, but not learnt the stress patterns of the word or groups of the words they are using an intonation from their mother tongue, which is inappropriate to the target language.

CONCLUSION

The main aim of conducting this paper was to investigate the effect of the first language on the pronunciation of Libyan EFL. Libyan learners suffer from the Arabic language affecting their attempts to perfect pronunciation of English words sentences due to the different sound systems.

In general, the vowel sounds of Arabic are simpler than those found in English. Arabic has three primary vowels, represented in English by /I/, /a/, and /u/. Including diphthongs, English has 22 vowels sounds compared to the

eight found in Arabic. To the untrained ear, many of these sound similar, and native Arabic speakers often misunderstand or misuse vowels. Since Arabic speakers new to English cannot discern these subtle differences ‘bet’ can become ‘bat’ or ‘ball’ may heard as ‘bell’.

Although, most consonants are shared between the two language, Arabic lacks equivalent to the English sounds represented by /p/, /v/, /g/ and /ng/ the final sound in the word ‘sing’. For Libyan students especially beginners mostly pronounce the sounds /t/ and /d/ instead of /θ/ and /ð/ respectively.

Additionally, there is no stress on stress on parts of speech in Arabic. All words are spoken in a regular manner with no emphasis. This rarely leads to misunderstandings when learning English but can cause many pronunciation problems. Without the proper stress on individual syllables, every word sounds monotone and contrived. Furthermore, it is evident that certain English syllables and intonation patterns are difficult to learn for Libyan learners of English.

Thus, my conclusion, must be that the most important interference from a first to a second language during the process of learning English by Libyan Students occurs at the level of sound units, syllable structures in addition to stress and intonation patterns.

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