

Investigating Problems Associated With The Pronunciation Of English Sounds in Selected Secondary Schools In Sierra Leone. Case study: Makeni City.

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the problem associated with the pronunciation of English sounds among secondary school pupils who come from different language backgrounds. In other words to find the problematic sounds and the factors that cause these problems. Thereafter, find some techniques that help the fifty pupils which are to be selected from both the Junior and Senior sectors of the schools' system. From the five selected schools of the study, a total of thirty J.S.S pupils and twenty S.S.S pupils were chosen i.e. ten from each school. In addition, third English language teachers were selected who are being issued the printed questionnaires.

The data was collected using the following instruments: observation, recordings and a structured Questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that most of the pupils had problems with the pronunciation of English vowels that have more than one way of pronunciation in addition to the consonant sound contrasts e.g. /z/ and /O/, /s/ and /O/, /s/ and /ts/.

Based on the results of the study, the researcher concluded that factors such as mother tongue interference, the difference in the sound systems of the two languages, inconsistency of English sounds and spellings militate against the pupils' competence in pronunciation.

INTRODUCTION

All around the world, there are a lot of people with strong inclination to learn and speak English with correct pronunciation especially at a more formal setting. In Sierra Leone, specifically, English plays a vital role as it does not only serve as the official language but it also serves as the language of education. Again, it is also seen as the most popular and dominant among other international languages. It is thus incumbent on every learner to always making sure that the rate at which errors are committed is minimized. The act of using

English for communication should be seen as normal like speaking any of our local languages. A speaker should not feel inhibited but must be confident.

However, other studies revealed that most of the errors made by speakers of other languages, who speak English, are systematic rather than random. (Moosa 1972) and Homeidan (1984) demonstrated that Arab students faced problems in the pronunciation of sounds which the students are not familiar with e.g. /v/, /p/ and /n/. Similarly, in Sierra Leone, native speakers of other languages like Krio, Mende, Themne, Hulimba, etc have problems with the pronunciation of certain sounds e.g. /o/, /ch/, /dz/ and the like.

Other scholars noted that the errors of pronunciation that learners of English from different backgrounds make are systematic and not accidental. Thus they concluded that, the main problem of speakers of other languages who speak English, is substitution of sounds i.e., they substitute the sounds that they don't have in their native language with other sounds which are close to them in the place of articulation. E.g. for some they replace /p/ with /b/, /O/ with /t/, /r/ with /l/ etc.

Although this research is intended for secondary school pupils but it can also be useful for learners at the tertiary levels who wish to research on the same topic and may also help those who have problems in the pronunciation e.g. the mispronunciation of some sounds and the shifting of particular sounds with others and to try to find what are the exact reasons for errors i.e. are these errors related to the mother tongue interference, sound system differences between the native and the foreign language, moreover, to study the influence of spelling on pronunciation, then see to what extent the inconsistency of some English sounds effect on the pronunciation. The content in this research is of relevant data acquired from five main secondary schools within the Municipality of Makeni City. Some of these schools have been in existence for about a period over fifty years now and some are thirty years and more. The intention of these schools is to train school pupils to be able to communicate and write effectively in the targeted language which is English. Thus the enrolment of pupils in these schools presented them the opportunity to be taught in the four language skills i.e. reading, writing, speaking and listening,. In spite of all those, yet pupils have problems with the pronunciation of English sounds which are mostly in conflict with native and sometimes hinder communication exchange. Below are lists of the aforementioned schools:

1. Benevolent Islamic Secondary 1979
2. Saint Francis Secondary School – 1958
3. Saint Joseph Secondary School – 1964
4. Birch memorial Secondary School – 1968
5. S.L.M.B Secondary School – 1980

Statement of the Problem

Through a close observation of secondary school pupils speaking, the research noted that many pupils confuse the pronunciation of some set of words e.g. most of the pupils pronounced English sounds which are not accounted for in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), instead they pronounce the sounds /o/ in ‘this: It was also observed that pupils could not differentiate between some vowel sounds which have more than one pronunciation e.g. the vowel in ‘mat’ and ‘mate’. The research thus spent many days going around the selected schools and closely observed the pupils, as they on daily basis, invitation of some English sounds, as some were unable to distinguish between consonant sounds and vowel sounds, misplacement of articles, substitution of one word for another, overgeneralization and the like.

AIM (S) AND OBJECTIVE (S) OF THE STUDY

To find out the problems associated with the pronunciation of English of English sounds among secondary school pupils

- To find out suitable techniques and strategies that would help the pupils to speak English with better pronunciation.
- To outline how to minimize mispronunciation errors that might hinder effective communication.
- To determine the proficiency level of pupils in speaking English at a given class

RESEARCH QUESTION

The study is limited to the five Secondary School mentioned in the above introduction as a case study. It seeks to examine the problems associated with the pronunciation of English sounds among secondary school pupils who have English as their target language. In undertaking this research, the researcher faced numerous problems and difficulties ranging from the unavailability of relevant materials to the irregularity of earing funds. The limited

sources of funds that would have earlier served as support to fast-track this research work delayed the project. Procuring and processing of questionnaires was indeed a problem. The distribution and collection of questionnaires as another challenge meeting and taking with teachers and pupils at school session was also a challenge because they have limited time for their lessons. The researcher was also challenged to explain what the research is all about. The risk involved in using vehicles and motorcycles from one point to another was inevitable. Lastly, the researcher was obsessed with a psychological effort of losing a very key personality mentor, caregiver, sponsor, and mother, at the time of researching.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the background of the data is been collected from five selected secondary schools in Makeni City, northern Sierra Leone. The data was collected through interviews, written and oral tests, observation and with the help of a structured questionnaire to be answered specially by teachers of English Language in those selected schools.

Population and Sample of the Study

The original population of this study was all the pupils learning English language in the selected secondary schools. The study sample contained two parts, i.e. the Junior Secondary School's (JSS) and the Senior Secondary School's (SSS). From the background of the study, it is evident that the five school selected were of JSS and SSS status. Thus the researchers targeted both sectors by selecting 30 pupils from JSS and 20 pupils at SSS. For the staff, 15 teachers were selected from each sector. The teachers selected to the questionnaires on the exact sounds which the pupils mispronounced and the exact reasons for the pupils to the facing such mispronunciation problems. In doing this, the research employed the descriptive and the statistical methods as well as the analytical method. As we know too well, the, the descriptive researches attempt to descriptive researches attempt to describe the problem as it is i.e. they describe the phenomenon and explain it. Then offer the recommendation for solving the problem. Again, the analytical method was used in this study, to test the hypotheses of the study by using appropriate statistical procedures.

Tools of Data Collection

As it is known that the tool of any research work is any instrument the researcher uses for collecting the required data for the study. There are many types of tools used in the field of

scientific research. In this research, the researcher depended on observation, tape recordings, and structured schools. The questionnaires contained (22) items reflecting the opinions and ideas of teachers was asked to select one answer according to the Tri Regression Measurement, which contains three options (agree-not sure-disagree).

Observation

Observation was the first tools used in this research. To obtain data about errors, the researcher engaged in direct discussions with the pupils inside the classrooms during school hours. Number topics which are a particular interest to the pupils were discussed. For instance, pupils first day at school, how to play a favourite game, story about oneself, unforgettable incidence, and the like. While the pupils were doing this, the researcher was taking notes about some particular sounds expected that the pupils could not pronounce correctly, or which the pupils particular sounds expected that the pupils could not pronounce correctly, or which the pupils may replace with other sounds which may be more close to them in the place of articulation.

The hypothesis was that, pupils from these selected schools pronounce /t/ instead of /e/, in words like: ‘thank’, (tank), ‘think’. (tink), ‘with’ (wit), ‘thing’, (tin), etc. Most of the pupils were very interested and happy to express themselves in English, while they were doing that, the researcher was writing notes carefully about their errors. At the end of the process of observation, it was found that majority of the pupils especially the Krio speakers, rarely pronounce the /e/ sound but Instead pronounce the /t/ because the /e/ sound is not familiar with their articulators. This led to the pronunciation of the Krio words, tank, tink, tin, and wit. Some notes were also written about pupils’ pronunciation of some English vowels, for instance they pronounce /ai/ instead of /i/ in words such as “infinite”, “service”, and some of them pronounce /ei/ instead of /ɔ:/ inwards such as “also” and “fall”, Errors of pronunciation in the same sounds were tested using audio recordings of a chosen number of sentences. It is noteworthy that tape recording permits the repetition of sounds when needed. To verify the pronunciation of the problematic sounds among the pupils, teachers were asked to fill questionnaires regarding the pronunciation of their pupils.

Recoding Test

It is noted that, samples of pronunciation can be repeated as many times as you can and this will enable you to identify the errors. Many researchers in the previous studies have

depended on recording as a tool for collecting their data e.g. (Ma, Lin, 1994) used audio recording to investigate to what extent adult native speakers of Mandarin Chinese, learning English as a second language could pronounce five front vowels of English and how difficult this was, and which vowels were the most difficult, recording were also by (Atwel, 2001) in his project –ISLE (Interactive Spoken Language Education). The ISLE project collected a sample of audio recording of German and Italian learners of English reading aloud selected samples of English text and dialogue to train the speech recognition and to correct pronunciation errors. (Wei, Zhou, 2002) applied audio recording to investigate problems with English pronunciation among those students. In this study, for testing pronunciation errors among secondary school Pupils, the researchers drew on the chalkboard (10) sentences and in each sentence there is a target sound e.g. /e/ in the word “think”, etc. As it was mentioned in this work, the sample of this study was (50) pupils i.e. (30) from JSS and (20) at SSS. It was later realized that, the pupils from these selected schools are coming from different language backgrounds. The researcher aimed at conducting this test, the researcher gave preference to the examination classes which come (for JSS), after two years of preparation, like the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) class, and another two years of preparation for the West Africa Senior School certificate Examination (WASSCE) class respectively. The pupils are tested to know the extent to which learning English pronunciation is achieved ahead of their examination classes. As the recording is on-going in a given class, the researcher made sure that a pupils among the selected few is given a chance to read aloud each of the written sentences.

After which, the researcher recorded each of the pupils’ pronunciation against the specific around, to know the number of pupils with correct pronunciation and those that got it incorrect, to be able to work out the percentage for the two categories of pupils. After the process of recording each pupil pronunciation as they read the ten sentences loudly in the classroom, the researcher later got home and listened repeatedly and carefully to the recorded sounds. Thereafter, a list of the recorded sounds was later written. The researcher carefully wrote down the number of pupils with the correct pronunciation and those with incorrect pronunciation are recorded. Then the figures were analysed descriptively and percentages were computed.

It is worth noting that, the figures were analysed descriptively and percentages were computed. It is worth noting that, the errors which were detected and written from the audio recording test were similar to the errors which the researcher wrote on his notes during the

observation process. This consolidated results of the observation. The statistics used in this study, for the recorded test, is very simple and clear, Percentage from the data collected was computed. Samples of the pronunciation were recorded on the tape, then these recorded sounds were counted to see the total number of the correct answers done by all the (50) pupils in every item of the test, then the total number of the incorrect answers was also calculated. The percentage was worked as follows: for instance, in the test of the /e/ sound, the whole number of pupils who pronounced the sound were (50), the number of pupils with correct pronunciation was (16), (i.e. 25 at JSS and 9 at SSS), and the number of pupils with incorrect pronunciation was (34), (i.e. 25 at JSS and 9 at SSS). So, to calculate the percentage of the pupils with the correct pronunciation in the /e/ sound, the following process was followed:

$$\text{No. of pupils with correct pronunciation} = \frac{16}{50} \times 100 = 32\%$$

The above calculation indicates that only 32% among the whole number of the learners are able to pronounce the /e/ sound correctly. On the other hand, to calculate the percentage of the pupils with the incorrect pronunciation, the following process was followed:

$$\text{Pupils with incorrect pronunciation} = \frac{34}{50} \times 100 = 68\%$$

The above statistics showed that 60% of the pupils among the whole group are unable to pronounce the /e/ sound correctly. In general, the whole data collected was analysed descriptively and statistically. For the recording test, all the sounds recorded from the pupils were written down on papers, using tables to put each sample of pronunciation was counted beside each pupil. The recording test supported a lot the notes and the information which was taken from the observation procedure.

Questionnaire

The third tool used in this study was a structured questionnaire, which was prepared in collaboration with all English Language teachers in the selected schools. Like we mentioned earlier, the questionnaires were prepared and distributed to (30) teachers from the selected schools, i.e. six teachers from each school and three from each sector (JSS and SSS). For the faith valid it, the questionnaire was designed to collect the data that support the study and to confirm findings from the preceding tools used in collecting the data. For the validity of the questionnaire, before distributing it to the whole members of the sample, number of (10) questionnaires were given to (10) questionnaires were taken as a sample and analysed

statistically to make the reliability and the validity coefficient. So each Questionnaire comprised (22) items; these twenty – two items were divided into two equal parts; the first part continued (11) items which numbered (1,3,5,7,9,11,13,15,17,19,21) (odd numbers); the second part continued the items which are numbered (2,4,6,8,,10,12,14,16,18,20,22) (even numbers). When the correlation the reliability coefficient between the two parts was counted statistically, the result was (0.47).

To calculate the reliability coefficient; the researcher followed the Spearman Brown equation and the value of the reliability coefficient was (64%), and the validity coefficient value was (80%0. The two values show that the questionnaire was valid and reliable.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Results and discussion

The Recorded Test

The aim of this test is to identify the pronunciation errors among secondary school pupils of English when they are reading or speaking English. So a number of word were chosen randomly as well as writing on the chalkboard a number of simple sentences; to be read aloud by the pupils. For the words, each word contains a sound which is expected to be pronounced incorrectly by any of the school pupils. The test comprises both vowel and consonant sounds. The words were put in sentences and each sentence contains a target sound; and each pupil was asked to read the entire sentence aloud, while his voice was recorded. At the end of this process, the errors were written on a paper and then tabulated and analysed statistically and descriptively.

Table 1: the pronunciation of some English vowels by the secondary school pupils (ssps)

Words	Ts	NP	NPC	%	NP1	%
Engagement	/i/	50	47	94	3	6
Tutor	/ju:/	50	4	8	46	93
Pronunciation	/s/	50	13	26	27	74
Service	/i/	50	17	34	33	56
Obstacle	/a/	50	9	8	41	81

Note: ts= target sound; np= number of pupils; npc= number of pupils with correct pronunciation; npl= number of pupils with incorrect pronunciation. As seen from the table recorded above only (9) (18%) of the pupils were able to pronounce the /i/ sound correctly. In the word pronunciation, the target sound /a/ was only pronounced correctly by 13 pupils of the whole sample (50). The same is true for the word tutor, because only 4 pupils were able to pronounce the sound correctly. For the word engagement, the target was /i/47 pupils pronounce the sound correctly out of the 50 pupils.

According to the results recorded above, it could then be said that most of the pupils do not have mastery on different pronunciation of vowels. The results of the recorded test in table (1) show at 946 (92%) of the pupils failed to pronounced the target sound /ju/ correctly in the word tutor, so most of the pupils tend to pronounces it as /j//. The result of the questionnaire go in the same way with the results of recorded test, so (18) of the teachers out of (30) believe that some pupils pronounce/ / instead of /ju/ in the word tutor

Table 2: the pronunciation of some English consonants by ssps

Words	Ts	NP	NPC	%	NP1	%
Weather	/O/	50	6	12	44	88
Have	/V/	50	13	26	37	74
Thank	/O/	50	0	0	50	100
Experience	/P/	50	14	28	36	72
Much	/t/	50	4	8	46	92

As seen the table, only (13) (26%) of the pupils were able to pronounce the target sound /v/ correctly in the words have. In the word experience, the target sound was /p/; and it is noticed only 14 of the pupils among the whole sample (50) pupils were able to pronounce the sound correctly. Also in the word thank, none of pupils pronounce the target sound correctly. Also in word much, 46 of the pupils failed to pronounces the sound /t/ correctly. Also in word weather, only 6 of the pupils among the whole sample were able to pronounce the target sound /o/ correctly. According to the result above, it could then be said that most of the pupils miss pronounce the English consonants that do not exist in their native language which are not consistent.

The questionnaire

After collecting the data from the respondents (30) teachers, the result were tabulated and string variables (agree, not sure, disagree) were changed in to quantity variables (1,2,3) orderly then the answer were tabulated in table below:

Table 3: the median of respondents answers about the items of main hypothesis

No	item	median	result
1.	Some of the pupils pronounce /s/ instead of /o/ in Words like ‘think’, ‘math’, and mathematics’.	3	agree
2.	Many pupils pronounce / / instead of /t/ in wards such As much furniture	3	agree
3.	Some pupils pronounce / / instead of /o/ in word like ‘Then weather According to the table above, the calculated median for the teachers’ answers of the first item is	3	agree
4.	This value means that most of the teacher’s agree that some pupils pronounce mathematics, math, think, with/s/ instead of /o/		

The median for the teacher’s answers of the second item is 3. This value means that, most of the teachers agree that some pupils pronounce /f/ instead of /t/ in words such as much, Furniture. The calculated value of the median for teachers’ answers of the third item is 3. This value means that most of the teachers agree that some pupils pronounce /z/ instead of /o/ in words such as weather, then. The above results do not mean that all teachers in the sample agree with the items in the study because not all items appear in the above. There are some teachers who are not sure and other who do not agree (see the appendix)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

This study was initiated by thru observation of some pupils who mispronounced some English words e.g./e/, /s/, /s/, /t/, /z/, and /o/ for some scholars e.g. b (ted power. 2007) argued that such problem it may no sometimes lead to a misunderstanding because, he continued to say: ‘‘if someone said to me: tomorrow I’m going to London to visit pig pen. I would know from the context he meant big ben ‘‘he further argued that Arabic consonants

are more English one, so Arabic student are expected to be quite good in English consonants. The researcher however believes that such problems are still considered as major ones for someone who wants to speak with correct or intelligible pronunciation and for persons whose career in the future is related to the field of English language.

It was thus noted that many pupils have problems with the pronunciation of monophthongs that have more than one way of pronunciation. Ted power considers the mispronunciation of vowels as of minor impotence if compared with the long vowels, diphthongs, stress and intonation. It is also noticed that most pupils confuse sounds such as /s/ and /o/, /z/ and /o/ etc. Usually lead some school pupils to a mispronunciation and they may subsequently lead the listener to misunderstanding. Based on the results of this study it can be concluded that many pupils have difficulty in the pronunciation of the dental fricative/e/ and the alveolar fricative/s/ in words such as think, thank math (mathematics), the pupils substitute /t/ for /o/. Some pupils however also have proms with the voiced dental fricative/d/ and/z/, so many of the pupils pronounce/e/ in the place of /z/ for instance in words like then weather etc.

Also the substitution of /f/ and /t/ is noticeable in the pronunciation many other words such as teachers furniture much etc. other cases of mispronunciation of English sound by the pupils, are the soft c /s/ and hard c/k/ in words like concern, some pupils pronounce /k/ instead of /s/

Thus pronunciation problems such as the ones mentioned above are linked to factors such as mother tongue interference on the second language, also differences in the sound systems between the L1 and L2 are the causes for many pronunciation problems. Also the inconsistency of some English consonants makes the pupils unable to decide what the exact sounds they should pronounce is, in addition to that, there are some sound represent a combination of more than on letter e.g 'gh' which is sometimes pronounce /f/ and other times pronounce /or/ and 'ck' which is pronounced /k/ and /tf/ or /f/. Finally. , the spelling of some English words leads many school pupils to wrongly guess the pronunciation just by looking at the word and its letters and As the diphthong /ai/as it pronounced in 'invite'. So many pupils fail to identify the exact pronunciation of a particular vowel, which has more than one pronunciation. The notes given above are considered to be the most recognized reasons for English pronunciation errors among secondary school pupils.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

According to the results of the study, we can recommend the following:

- Teaching should focus on both recognition production i.e. teachers should recognized the pronunciation errors and correct them and teach the pupils how to pronounce these sounds correctly.
- The study suggests that there should be pronunciation lessons ranking the same as lessons in other skills e.g. Grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure, to draw the attention of the pupils to the importance of pronunciation in learning English language.
- Difficulty of production should not be seen as too great because the above consonant sounds are produced at the front of the mouth, this motor skill in not too difficult to learn. For practicing correcting and developing the pronunciation errors, we strongly advised the pupils to listen regularly to English sounds and words using audio aids like cassettes, CDs and sound dictionaries, Radios (BBC). These tools are very useful for practicing pronunciation.
- We think it is also worth looking at the dictionary for checking the correct pronunciation of words.
- It is also advised that the teachers in pre-university stages have good knowledge of phonetics and phonology because this will provide a basis for teachers to pronounce a word correctly and identify the physical reasons for inaccurate approximations of foreign language sounds enabling them to give precise instructions which help the pupils correct faulty pronunciation

In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), many linguists and researchers have concluded that the English pronunciations among speakers of other languages are the same but it is according to each language background. Few among others is the Arabic language, thus here, we are going to examine some of the factors that influence on earning second language (1.2) in general and English pronunciation in particular and also try to identify the exact reasons behind such errors and finally try to find out suitable techniques and strategies that help improve the pupils pronunciation.

Factors that influence learning English in general

Many studies in the field of (SLA) discussed the factors that hinder achieving native like pronunciation among foraging languages, learners in general and among Sudanese learners in particular (O' Conner, 2003 Yule, 2003). Researchers and linguists have pointed some linguistic factors such as the difference of the sound system between the (L1) and (L2), the inconsistency of some sounds in English language, the mother tongue interference and the main topics of this research, so all them will be discussed separately in details as follow:

Mother Tongue Interference

Several works have been conducted on the influence of L2 in learning English (Cat ford, 1977) (Moosa, 1972) and (Swan, Smith, 2001) reported that /p/ and /b/ are two different phonemes and each one is distinguished by a native Speaker. Unlike the Arabic language, the situation is different, because there is only the phoneme /b/ so this is the reason why most Arabic speakers mispronounce words with these sounds /p/ and /b/ (of course the Sudanese students of English face the same problem). Students confused between /p/ and /b/ e.g. words like ('part'. Bark'). ('pen and 'ben') instead of /p/ in each pair of the words above and sometimes /p/ in place of /b/ but this really happens. The reason for shifting from /p/ to /b/ is the fact that the two sounds are regarded, as they are two allophones of one phoneme. In Sierra Leone, pupils from different ethnic backgrounds also do have problems in pronouncing certain English sounds because of L1 interference. Studies revealed that, a pupils coming from the Mende background has problems in using the nasal sounds /r/ and /l/ as quite often, the former is substituted for the latter. For e.g. if you ask them to pronounce words like ('rat'. 'rubber'. 'problem' ring') through substitution, they sound ('Iat'. Ione'.or 'loba' 'problem' and ling'). With such, it needs sufficient time and continues practice for the learner to overcome such errors which are sometimes committed subconsciously.

Similarly, a pupil coming from the Themne background does have problem in substituting the sound /j/ for /y/, in words like ('Junction'. John'), sound ('YOnktion' and 'YOn'). We also observed the pupil coming from the Kriobackground does having problems in replacing the sound /o/ with /t/, in words like ('think', 'think'. With ',thing), when mispronounced, become (tank', tink', wit', 'tin').

Also in the far past, (Alkhuli, 1983) noted that Arab students of English confuse /p/ with /b/ and that is linked to the influence of the mother tongue, so their tongues got stiff with their L1 sounds, and they commit such errors until the mastery of L2 sounds. Many other sounds are influenced by the mother tongue of foreign learners. (Gruttenden, 1994) showed that foreign learners of English language should be careful not to use /t/or/s/ for /o/ and /d/ or /z/ for /O/, /z/ and /s/ are used by Sudanese Speakers of English – SSE whose background is Sudanese Spoken Arabic e.g. Central and Northern Sudan, and /d/ is used for /O/ by non-Arabic Speaking Sudanese background, e.g. (students who descend from Southern Sudan).

In the near past (Brown, 2000) found that a second language learner meets some difficulties, because his L1 affects his L2 especially in adulthood, and this effect is as a result of L1 transfer, so it's a significant source of making errors for second language learners. (Iadefoged; 2001, Cater and Nunan; 2001) showed that the mother tongue has clear influence on learning L2 pronunciation. Where L1 and L2 rules are in conflict, errors are expected to be committed by foreign learners. All that can be link to what is known as the interference between L1 and L2. So many learners use /p/ as /b/, others use /s/ for /o/ and /z/ for /o/ and /b/ for /v/.

In addition to the past works, (O'Conner; 2003, Yule; 2003) have student pronunciation problems and the influence of L1. So many sounds such as /p/ and /b/, /s/ and /o/, /z/ and /o/, /ts/ and /s/, /v/ and /b/ are confused e.g. (pit/bit), (thin/sin), (question/action), (very/berry). For the SSEs /z/ and /s/ are usually use in the place /o/ and /e/ exist in some forms of Arabic e.g. (Iraqi, Saudi Arabian, Kuwaiti, etc.), however, they do not exist in Sudanese dialect where they are replaced by /s/ and /z/.

The mispronunciation of the above sounds is the result of the over practice of the first language, a process of fossilization. The adult vocal musculature is set to pronounce foreign sounds with

An account (Yule; O'Conner; 2003) reported that the main problem of English pronunciation is to build a new set of sounds corresponding to the sounds of English, and to break down the arrangement of sounds which the habits and the systems of our L1 have strongly built up. And that means we use new ways of hearing and new ways of using our organs of speech. So it is too difficult to change such habits which learner has obtained since his childhood or at least it needs very long years to be changed and after

also very long time and above altogether share the concept that the learners confuse such sounds and replace each of them with other sounds that are said to be the nearest ones to the (O'Connor; 2003).

Sound System Differences Between L1 and L2

As it has been mentioned by many linguists and researchers, there is a conflict between the sound systems of L1 and L2 (Moosa, 1972) noted that the Arab learners of English from habits of their mother tongue (Arabic), so they strongly built the phonological features of Arabic, this makes and the second language. For the SSA, we discuss the problem from two perspectives, the first one is that there is a difference between the sound system in Sudanese spoken Arabic and the sound system in other forms of Arabic language, and the second one is that, there is also a difference between the sound system in Sudanese spoken Arabic, and the sound system in English Language.

Another study on the effect sound system on learning pronunciation was done by (Alkuhuli, 1983) who showed that the main problem in teaching and learning English pronunciation results from the difference in the sound system of English and the native language, as a speaker of Sierra Leonean spoken krio in no accustomed to pronounce for instance, the /θ/sound /θ/sound because they are not found in his native language. This mean that the organs of speech of the learner to produce such sound systems because they are unfamiliar to him that is why he are not trained to produce such as /t/, /s/ and /z/. About the same area of the study, (Cruttenden, 1994) noted that in the field of (SLA), learners with different linguistic backgrounds would of course face different difficulties in order to produce English sounds, because of the differences between the two languages (e.g. English and Mende). These differences between the sound systems are regarded as barriers against competence in the pronunciation of English, because the new sounds still remain strange for their organs of speech especially if they start learning English after the age of adulthood, but this problem is expected to be solved after a long time of regular practice and hard works.

Most of the Sudanese students of English face such problem because in Arabic, the vowel system is very simple and the learner can read Arabic word easily without any difficulty or confusion, but in English, he may pronounce /i/for/e, example, /sit/set/. Also about sound system difference between L1 and L2 in English, the /r/is distinctly pronounced only before a vowel e.g. the /r/ after a vowel is not pronounced. In Arabic

however, the /r/ sound is distinctly pronounced in all positions, before or after a vowel. So the Sudanese students if English pronounce /r/ in any position of an English word, for instance in words like, red, room, and river.

In Arabic, each letter represents only one sound, so it is easy to read any word from a written text also there is no sound which is not pronounced (silent), as it happens a lot in English. When there is a difference in the sound system in the L1 and L2 showed that errors are expected to be committed because the learners transfer their mother tongue sound system into the target language (Nunan, 2001)

The (sses) as speakers of Arabic tend to replace /v/ with /f/ or /b/ because the sound does not exist in their native language sound system. So their speech organs are not trained to produce such sound they pronounce very as ferry and van as fan. The learners' difficulties in L1 and L2 could be predicted based on systematic differences of the two languages, and those learners from different first language backgrounds would experience different differences when attempting to learn a L2. It was also reported that it is essential to understand which sounds in a language are phonemes because they express the difference in meaning and the learner should be able to phonemes them, otherwise he commits errors.

In English language there are twenty-four consonants and twenty vowels, that mean there are forty-four phonemes in English language and the learner should be able to produce them while he is learning English. Learners of different language background will of course face some difficulties to pronounce them because of their language background (O'connor, 2003).

In Arabic. The whole number of the sounds is less than the one in English language, so the total sounds of the Arabic language are twenty-eight letters and each of them represents only one sound. So there are only twenty-eight sounds in Arabic language. As we all know a sound is made by definite movement of the organs of speech, so to produce any sound that means to perform the exact organs movement of the sound. If the learner language sound system has not any of the forty-four English sounds, he will face a difficulty to produce it e.g. (o., e,p,v) which do not exist in Sudanese spoken Arabic sound system, so Sudanese students pronounce them incorrectly and the reason for that is the difference between the sound system in L1 and L2.

Inconsistency of English vowels

One of the important products faced by the students or pupils of English in general and the Sierra Leonean schools pupils in particular is that each English vowel sound has more than just one pronunciation. So this causes many differences to the learners and leads them to a mispronunciation error. (Crittenden, 1994) noted that the main difficulty for all those whose own language has a less complex vowel system, lies in the establishment of the qualitative oppositions, intends of using the exact quality and quantity of a special sound, the learner erroneously changes, either the quantity of the sound, so in certain words the learner tends to use the variant sounds e.g. in words like son /s/n/ and /oo/ stand for the same sound of but most of the learners unless they have a mastery in the pronunciation of such vowels, they pronounce /u/ in the thought in their minds as if each vowel has only one type of pronunciation and if that is true the learner can easily know and expect how to pronounce each word even if the situation is not simple to know the exact sounds the letters stand for or represent in a certain word for instance in the words like city /siti/, busy/bizi/, women/within/, pretty/ priti/ village/vilid/, English/ In gli/ the letters/ bather/bei0/(r) man/mean/, many /meni/the a stands for five different pronunciations of the vowel sounds. The learner who does not have sufficient knowledge of different pronunciations of the vowels above, meets some difficulties, since he uses different variants if their pronunciation problems, some of them are related to vowels e.g. the Pupils confuse /i/ with /i:/, as in sit, and /ɔ/ with /əu/ as in not, note /əa/ with /ei/ as in mate and /e/ with /ei/ as in late.

Researchers and linguists always connect such problems with the complexity of the vowel sound system that exists in English and the inconsistency of its pronunciation. (Crittenden, 1994) noted that the inconsistency of English vowels causes difficulties for other language learners of English e.g. if we take for instance 'o' in some words like some, move, home, women, in each word it has different pronunciations as /ʌ/, /u:/, əu/, /i/, so in the first example, we have the same letters with different pronunciations, and in the other one, we have different letters with the same pronunciation.

Influence of Spelling on pronunciation

According to the observations and notes on the Secondary school pupils in the selected school, it was found that the (SSPs) have some difficulty in the pronunciation of some words from a written text. This problem is due to the spelling system in English

language, for instance, in the Arabic language, students can easily pronounce a word from a written text just by looking at it, so each letter represents one sound, thus the relationship between the orthography and the phonology is very easy to distinguish. In addition to that, there is no silent letter in Arabic as it is found in English. Many words in English have letters which are not pronounced. (Yule, 2001) noted that the sounds of spoken English do not match up, a lot of time, with letters of written English. So if we cannot use the letters of the alphabet in a consistent way to represent the sounds we make, it is difficult to describe the sounds of a language like English. In English, there are twenty-four consonants and twenty vowels, if we give to each of these forty – four units a special letter; in that way undoubtedly we can show what the student should say. If the learner

Knows that each letter represents a certain sound (equal number of sounds to the letter), he can easily avoid the difficulty of spelling on pronunciation.

Some words which are ordinarily spelt in the same way, are different in their pronunciation, for example, lead which is pronounced /li:d/, in a phrase like 'lead the way', but /led/ in another phrase, 'lead pipe'. Also there are some words spelt differently but sound the same, e.g. rain, rein, reign, all of them is pronounced /rein/. The learner who still does not have the mastery of pronunciation of such words, pronounces each of them by looking at its spelling, and he is expected to mispronounce them (O'Conner, 2003).

The explanatory potential of sound spelling relationships (Carter, Nunan, 2001) reported is something teachers should be aware of, since correspondences between orthography and phonology enable pupils to predict the pronunciation of words from their spelling. So if the learner doesn't know such relationship between sound and spelling, he mispronounces words by just looking at their spelling e.g. before the n, k is silent, knee, know, knot, knight, a student who didn't learn their pronunciation correctly, he pronounces them with the /k/ sound. Also (Easton, 2005) showed that, there are some words with silent letters which cause problems for the learners for example, silent g and pronounced /g/ e/g/ campaign, reign, sign, gnash, in these words the /g/ is silent, but most of the pupils and even students pronounced it. On the other hand, words like signal, signature, resignation, the /g/ here is pronounced unless learner has a good knowledge of pronunciation of /g/ in such words he will confuse its pronunciation. In the same problem

of pronunciation as a result of spelling (Eaton, 2005) noted that in silent /gh/ the learners may face problem because written /gh/ has no sound of its own, so it is never pronounced as it is written e.g. cough, is pronounced as /g/ in some words as, Afghanistan, Ghana, Ghost, and in other words pronounced as if e.g. cough, trough, enough and silent in some other words such as light, night, high, weigh, thorough, bough, plough. Any time the pupils meet such words, he will be confused to pronounce them correctly, and he just guesses the pronunciation by looking at the spelling of the word unless he has previous background. So it is very important to consult the dictionary form time to time to check the pronunciation of such words until he possesses a good mastery of their pronunciation.

One of the problems other language learners of English face is the (r) which is very weak in its pronunciation in English. (Cruttenden, 1994, Ladefoged, 2001) noted that in most forms of British English ® can occur only before a vowel e.g. in words like red, ruler, ride, but the foreign learner should notice that it's very weak and it is not pronounce like the Arabic one.

All the above notes show that in many cases the spelling of English words lead the learners to guess the wrong pronunciation from the spelling of the words unless they have a good knowledge of English sounds and letters relationship and the way they are pronounced. Also (Cruttenden, 1994) reported that RP ® occurs only before a vowel and the air stream is allowed to escape freely, without friction, over the centre part of the tongue, that means it's not pronounce strongly as many Arab and SSEs do, so they pronounce (r) as they pronounce it in their language, so words like car / ka:9r), arm /a:m/, horse /hO:s/, hurt hz:t/, if we ask the learners to pronounce them they will just look at the spelling of each word and try to pronounce it e.g. /ka:r/, /:rm/, /hO:rs/, /hz:rt/, so learners should not be misled by the selling in the pronunciation of such words.

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