

EFFECT OF MOTHER TONGUE ON LEARNING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study is done to understand the influence of the mother tongue on the acquisition of the English language. Interference due to a phonological interaction, contribution of other grammar forms, and vocabulary acquisition, as all the forms of this linguistic transfer, constitute learners' first language interference. Data surveyed from university students show common problems of phonological interference, syntactic errors, and vocabulary retention impediments. These were highlighted in relation to the need for effective learning strategies that can mitigate the influence of mother-tongue interference. Some recommendations were made for more effective teaching techniques, one of which is contrastive analysis-based and individualized instruction bridging the gap between the student's mother tongue and the English language.

Keywords: Mother Tongue, English Language Acquisition, Phonological Interference, Linguistic Transfer, Language Learning Strategies, Bilingualism, English Learning, Cross-Linguistic Influence

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning a second language, most notably English, becomes an important skill in today's world. However, embracing a new language requires more than just the replication of vocabulary or application of grammar rules: the mother tongue of the learners can deeply influence their approach towards learning English; these influences manifest in aspects such as pronunciation, sentence structure, vocabulary usage, and grammatical errors, all shaped by the language background of the learner.

Learners often tend to transfer elements from their mother tongue into English, deliberately or otherwise. Thus, while constructing a sentence in English, one could, for example, fall into a word order error or a problem with verb conjugation, depending on how the sentence would be constructed in their other languages. Another example is the differences in phonetics within both languages' present pronunciation challenges. This is called language transfer; it plays a pivotal role in many ways in shaping language learning.

The objective of this report is to investigate these effects carefully and to identify aspects of difficulty faced by English learners speaking different languages. Further, other research gaps are addressed with recommendations for remediation of negative language transfer to enhance English language instruction for diverse learners.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The growth of globalization and the widespread use of English as a common language has resulted in a paradigm shift in the way educational institutions approach English as a second language. To complement the Primacy of Language strategies that have dominated language teaching in the past, there have emerged more intercultural communicative theories that allow a more gradual, sociolinguistic inclusion of the targeted language. However, there still exists a challenge in the comprehension of the relevance of the first language in the process of learning English as a second language with regard to vocabulary acquisition, grammar, and pronunciation fluency. Moreover, incorporating students' mother tongue in English learning provides benefits and drawbacks. For instance, the advantages of having the mother tongue as a basis increase the likelihood of the targeted language being acquired, due to vocabulary recall and understanding being improved. However, such reliance may discourage free use of the language, thereby lowering fluency and causing interference due to over-translation tendencies. This study seeks to fill this void by assessing how mother tongue influence affects the learning of English – specifically as it concerns comprehension, speaking fluency, and pronunciation. Accordingly, the present study will explore these issues in order to show how educational policies can be modified to aid students in acquiring a high proficiency in English, which is an important language in today's globalized context.

RESEARCH GAP

Even though second language acquisition has been a field of intensive investigation, researchers have not addressed satisfactorily how different mother tongues affect learning English in diverse settings. While linguistic transfer in terms of general patterns is known very well, how such patterns are context-dependent in terms of culture and languages, is

less known. Moreover, most previous research concentrated on younger learners, which resulted in a lack of literature on adult or college students' performance due to mother tongue interference. This study intends to bridge this gap by investigating the responses of university students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The studies carried out on second language acquisition have shown without a doubt that the mother tongue has a great impact on the target language acquisition. Language transfer is the phenomenon where a learner draws on the mother tongue when learning another language as explained by Terence Odlin (1989). Depending on whether the languages are alike or not, it can be either positive or negative. For instance, students whose first languages are phonologically or grammatically close to English find it easier to learn the language.

Work by Stephen Krashen (1981) pointed to the input hypothesis, which advocates for comprehensible input in the target language, an essential condition for successful language acquisition. Nevertheless, it was also noted in Krashen's studies that structural complexity elicits L1(a person's mother tongue) interference, and thus students tend to render understanding fully by translating the complex structure in their L1(a person's mother tongue).

The multi-competence theory of bilingualism posited by Vivian Cook (2001) provides evidence that a bilingual does not simply compartmentalize distinct systems of language but draws from both actively intermingling them. As a result, due to the transfer of L1(a person's mother tongue), a strain of language exists that contains linguistic errors.

3. RESULT ANALYSIS

The Perception and Impact of Mother Tongue on English Language Acquisition

Evidence from students reveals that the mother tongue has a profound and complex influence on the process of acquiring the English language. A majority of students noted that their first language has significance in their comprehension and expression of English grammatical and lexical constructions. Common issues encountered are the scripture-theoretic cultures of translation, shifting from the mother tongue pattern to the English sentence form, and the insertion of sounds in speech, particularly the speech sounds which mother language does not have. These issues illustrate the impact of language transfer from the first language to English on understanding and expression and the conflicting tendencies it brings into the learning outcome.

For example, in the case of many students, those studying English as a second language feel it benefits them in remembering English vocabulary since they can relate it to their native tongue. This is useful for those who learn visually or aurally since it uses something that they already know. On the other hand, a few students stated that they translated phrases so much that they could not think in English which delayed the verbal expression. Their native language also has culture and this culture affects how the students carry out translation of English idiomatic expressions and phrases as some students would do so literally.

Vocabulary Retention and Grammar Challenges

There is a common consensus among the students that one of the difficulties they experience in particular, is the retention of English vocabulary due to certain phonetics being unfamiliar and the grammar being complicated too. To be precise, such students, as those who have had problems with vocabulary retention before, tended to match new English vocabulary to words of the same meaning in the mother tongue. They believe that this helps with memory, but at the same time causes one to depend on translation, which hinders the use of language freely. In addition to this, students also find it hard to understand the grammar rules and their application because of the differences in the physical structures of writing in their first language and English and areas like the use of tenses, word placements as well as the use of articles.

Effectiveness of Mother Tongue Association for Vocabulary and Idiomatic Expressions

When it comes to idioms and phrases with cultural connotations, students tend to perform the task by first considering their own mother tongue. However, doing so may result in communication breakdowns because an idiomatic expression may be understood in their mother tongue but it does not mean the same way in a different dialect. Some students try to grasp the meaning of idioms in the English language in a conceptual instead of a literal manner while others fall back on learning and using them only on specific occasions or resort to non-idiomatic speech showing their awareness of different levels of comfort with such aspects of the English language.

Impact on Pronunciation and Phonological Adaptation

The aspect of pronunciation has its own problems mainly because of the phonology contrasts between English and students' mother tongue. A lot of students observed that there are English sounds, especially the ones that do not exist in their mother tongue, that require a lot of practice. These challenges in pronunciation make learners lack confidence when it comes to speaking English in public which leads to avoidance behaviors further worsening the impacts of

fluency development. This problem some students solve by using online pronunciation modules or practicing English with their friends to improve spoken language skills, although the efficiency of the approaches depends on personal drive and amounts to practice.

Discussion of Results

The study supported certain other major findings of the literature on mother tongue interference. Other major difficulties of students related specifically to pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, all of which arose from the influence of their mother tongue. An example is the pronunciation problem, which often results from certain phonological systems in the mother tongue not having several sounds found in English. Similarly, grammatical mistakes involving word order or tense are often a direct result of language transfer or direct translation from the mother tongue.

The study points toward the need for instructional approaches to closely hone in on difficult areas. For instance, teachers can use contrastive analysis to explicitly teach students, given the differences between English and their mother tongue, pronunciation, and grammar.

SCOPE OF FURTHER RESEARCH

The study has centered on a relatively confined sample of university students. Various directions for future research include:

Cross-Linguistic Studies: Comparative studies in which varying influence of mother tongue between groups of languages be assessed will provide more nuanced insights as regards the way language transfer affects the learning outcome.

Longitudinal Studies: Following one group of students over a relatively long period would allow for a much richer insight into the way in which the mother tongue interference changes as English proficiency has improved.

Pedagogical Interventions: Also further research could study the development and trial of teaching methods that qualitatively address negative mother tongue transfer.

4. CONCLUSION

The mother tongue shapes how a learner acquires the English language to a great extent. Survey data from university students shows that pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary are the three areas affected most by the transfer of the linguistic experience. Knowing about these issues and integrating methodologies that address mother tongue interference will help teachers develop more effective teaching techniques to help learners overcome the hurdle of their mother tongue. Further studies need to be conducted on refining these methodologies and how they can be applied to different linguistic and educational contexts.

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