Analysis of the Impact of Bai Language on English Pronunciation

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Abstract: The Bai ethnic group in China speaks Bai as their native tongue. The Bai are an ethnic group with a rich history and culture. In Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, the Bai are particularly prevalent in the ethnic Bai villages of the county and lower counties, where they frequently utilize the Bai language for daily communication. However, because their daily language is the first language that native Bai children are exposed to after birth, they do not start learning Chinese until they are in kindergarten (under the instruction of Chinese teachers who have strong Bai characteristics), and they do not start learning English until middle school. For students of Bai, this means that they intuitively pick up the languages of Bai and Chinese from their surroundings, but English is learned later through official schooling.

The behaviorist theory holds that existing habits have an impact on the development of new ones. Children in Bai communities learn Bai as their first language, which conflicts with Mandarin and other languages. "Everyone generally receives new speech through the sounds of their own language phonologically (Sun,2004)." "People who study a foreign language like Chinese will unavoidably be influenced by their original tongue's pronunciation tendencies to some level, and they frequently unwittingly transfer such habits to their foreign language." Due to the lack of a language environment similar to that experienced when learning a native language, learners' native thinking that has been implanted in the brain when learning a foreign language may impede the efficient development of foreign language acquisition. When learners come into contact with foreign languages, their mother tongue system has been established and native thinking habits have been formed. Therefore, it is crucial for local students to learn English fluently to investigate the impact of the phonetics of Bai language on English pronunciation acquisition.

Keywords: Bai Language; English Pronunciation; Native Tongue

1. The phonology of English

There are 48 phonemes in English, including 20 vowels, 24 consonants, and 4 consonant conjunctions.

1.1. English Vowel

English vowels have 12 monograms and 8 diphthongs. There are three categories according to the position of the tongue, the height of the lower jaw (the opening and closing of the mouth), and the shape of the lips when pronounced.

Among the 12 monophonics, according to phonetic pronunciation, it can be divided into two categories: long vowels and short vowels; According to the difference between front, middle, posterior and high and low of the tongue, it can be divided into three categories: front vowel, central vowel and back vowel.

1.2. English Consonant

The pronunciation of consonants is characterized by some degree of obstruction of the airflow during pronunciation. There are 24 English consonants, including two semivowels. Consonants can be classified in different ways. According to the way in which they form obstruction when pronounced, they can be divided into plosives, fricatives, nasals, lateral tongues, glottis, and semivowels.

According to the obstruction organ part formed during pronunciation, it can be divided into bilabial, labiodental, etc.

According to whether the vocal cords vibrate during pronunciation, it can be divided into voiceless consonants and voiced consonants.

2. The phonology of Bai Language

2.1. Initials

There are 27 initials in the vernacular, arranged according to the places of articulation (Li,2013).

Introduction:

（1）No initial consonant clusters.

（2）Zero initial consonant with a slight glottal stop.

（3）There is a voicing between the plosive and the affricate, so, [b]、[d]、[dz]、[g] are as independent phonemes.

2.2. Vowel

There are 20 vowels in the Bai language, which are divided into two categories: single vowels and compound vowels. Among them, there are 8 single vowels and 12 compound vowels.

2.3. Syllable Type

By analyzing syllables from different angles, different types of syllables can be divided. The syllable types of Bai language can be analyzed from two aspects: the nature of syllable endings and the syllable structure types composed of meta-consonants.

(1) Open Syllable

The syllables of Bai language all end in vowels, and therefore belong to the open syllables in syllable types. Although white language also has nasal phonemes such as [m] [n] [ŋ], the position of these phonemes is fixed in the formation of syllables, only at the beginning of the syllable.

(2) Syllable Structure

From the perspective of syllable structure types composed of meta-consonants, there are four syllable structure types in the Bai language. In her research, Li Juan concluded that the syllable structure of the Bai language has the following characteristics: The syllable structure is simple, with only four structure types: Each syllable has vowels; vowels occupy an obvious advantage in the syllabic structure of the white language; no syllable has at least one vowel, at most two; Syllables can be without consonants but not without vowels and tones, and each syllable has a fixed tone.

3. Phonemic Comparison of English and Bai Languages

From the perspective of some basic phonological concepts, both English and Bai language have some common characteristics: have phonemes and syllables; Phonemes can be divided into vowels and consonants; There are also similarities in the formation of phonemic distinguishing features, but in terms of the social properties of phonology, the two languages also have many differences caused by their national characteristics.

3.1. Contrast of Vowel Phonemes in English and Bai Language

In terms of phonemic analysis and classification, English divides segmented phonemes into vowels and consonants, Bai language has some similarities with Chinese: Theoretically, both languages can be classified like English, but in traditional Chinese phonology, there are different analysis methods according to Chinese characteristics. The analysis of phonology takes Chinese characters (representing a syllable) as a unit; usually it is divided into two parts: the front is called a consonant, the back is called a vowel, but the consonant is not equal to the consonant, except the zero consonant, such as in " 安 an", the" 爱 ai" consonant is added. Only the consonant located at the beginning of the word is called the consonant; the consonant located at the end is not called the consonant. Vowels are not necessarily equal to vowels.

There are similarities and differences between English and Bai vowel phonemes, and there are great differences between English and Bai because of different language families.

（1）There are 31 vowel phonemes in Bai language, but only 20 in English.

（2）It is difficult for both languages to find perfect phonemic equivalents in each other's phonemic systems. Only similar or similar phonemes, such as [ao] and [au], have great similarities. In English, different variations of the same phoneme are formed because of differences in individual pronunciation. So we can only say that similar phonemes to the Bai language can be found in English, or phonemic variants of some English vowels can be found. For example, [ao] and [au], although we find similar sounds in the second language, according to historical research, the Bai diphthongs [ao] were originally absent and were specifically used to spell modern Chinese loanwords. Therefore, due to the particularity of the Bai language's pronunciation, phonemes in Bai and English have appeared with seemingly similar but very different pronunciations.

Second, nasal vowels in the Bai language are not found in English vowel phonemes. But if we look at it from a higher perspective, by putting these phonemes in English words, we can easily find similarities in the differences between the two languages. So we say that all nasal vowels in the Bai language are simply absent in the English vowel phonemes, not that they are absent in English. This actually illustrates the problem that nasal vowels unique to the Bai language can have an impact on learning English nasalizations for our Bai-speaking English learners.

3.2. Contrast of Consonant Phonemes in English and Bai Language

English phonetician D. Jones believes that English contains 25 phonemes, 28 of which are consonants. Later, the contemporary American phonetician Gimson simplified it to believe that there are only 44 phonemes in English, of which 24 are consonants. The vernacular language has only 21 phonemes, and all of them are single consonants.

(1) From the phonemic system of English, we can clearly observe that English has more voiced sounds than Bai. Moreover, most voiced sounds in English appear in pairs, forming opposing phonemes. The opposition of these phonemes distinguishes the meaning of words, which not only makes it easy to learn sounds discriminatingly but also plays a role in distinguishing word meanings.

(2) There are 24 consonant phonemes in English, while only 21 in Bai language.

From the perspective of pronunciation, there are five consonants in Bai language, including bilabial, labial-toothed, tip-of-the-tongue, tongue-faced and root tongue; In English, there are bilabial, labial, alveola, posterior alveola, curl, palatal, soft palate, lesser, glottis and so on.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is a phenomena and an unavoidable reality that while learning a second language, the acquisition of the target speech system is impacted or interfered with by the native language (Han,2013). According to James Allan, the impact of native language structures on a second language's structure is far stronger than the influence of phonetics. As opposed to the cognitive parts of language behavior, the physiological aspects of language behavior are more resistant to change and adaptation, thus acquiring a whole new phonetic system requires learning new patterns of pronouncing and hearing. However, mastering pronunciation is the cornerstone of learning a foreign language, and teaching pronunciation is a crucial component of teaching a foreign language. The transfer of Bai pronunciation to English is evident in a variety of ways, and it has a significant influence on learners' ability to communicate in English, which is unquestionably a difficulty for English education.

Teachers should therefore fully understand the significance of teaching pronunciation, begin by continuously increasing their literacy in phonetic theory, and be familiar with and proficient in the distinctions between English, Chinese, and Bai language in the phonetic system. In order to maintain students' sensitivity to the differences between the two speech systems and prevent the detrimental effects of Bai language on English learning, we should not only place importance on theoretical teaching but also adopt appropriate practical teaching strategies according to the characteristics of the Bai language, create a good language learning environment, and design and carry out scientific and effective pronunciation training links.

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