



Ninorte Samarnon (L1) and English (L2) Segmental Phonemes: A Contrastive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study anchored on Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) delved into the differences and similarities that exist between the segmental phonemes of Ninorte Samarnon (NS) the vernacular spoken by the residents of Northern Samar in the Eastern Visayas Region, and English-their second language guided by Prator's Hierarchy of Difficulty. Specifically, this study attempted to 1) determine the hierarchy of difficulties in the phonological contrast between Ninorte Samarnon (L1) and English (L2), and 2) draw out implications for teaching the sound of English segmental phonemes to NS learners. The corpus of the study was derived from the set of utterances or sounds from native speakers of NS ESL speakers. The findings pointed out that all the four categories pertaining to the hierarchy of difficulty of the segmental contrast were found present. For those under the parallel category, since these sounds are found in the Ninorte-Samarnon and English language, these be given least emphasis in the teaching of speech sounds. However, for the reinterpreted, over differentiated both for split and new as well as underdifferentiated both coalesced and the case of an absent category since they have different realities under different environments, and are given new shape in English or even absent in the target language should be given emphasis in teaching.

The findings of this study carried out the notion that the resulting learning difficulty could be predicted by determining those areas in the NS (L1) that are different from English (L2) the target language. Pedagogical implications grounding on the difficulties may be recommended. Thus, the speech/language teachers need to focus their instruction taking into account the categories present in the target language

but are absent in the native toque, and those that are largely caused by language interference errors.

KEYWORDS: *Contrastive Analysis, Segmental Phonemes, Oral Communication*

1. INTRODUCTION

Every language is unique. No two languages are exactly the same. Since each language is peculiar to the other, difficulties in second or foreign language learning often arise due to the students' mother tongue interference which heavily affect their learning. Transfer and overgeneralization result from the fact that a learner uses what he already knows about the language in order to make sense of a new experience. It is his pervious knowledge of the second language that he uses overgeneralization. He also uses his tongue experiences as a means of organizing second language data in the case of transfer (Littlewood: 1984). Oftentimes, utterances produce in the second language (L2) suggest that a leaner is employing similar rule to that in the first language. It is therefore not strange that native speakers find it hard to learn and communicate with them in the target language. For instance, in the University of Eastern Philippines, a state university in Northern Samar, Ninorte Samarnon ESL speakers use their first language, then translate it word for word into English (L2) carrying over L1 linguistic features in their L2 utterances and sentences.

In second language learning, knowledge of the target language both its non-linguistic and linguistic features is of vital importance. Different languages have different characteristics. A bit serious when these linguistic differences such as the phonological features of the language may lead to communication

breakdown in terms of arriving at correct messages. These are common across languages, but there are also those which arise because such sound feature does not exist or has no corresponding sound in the target language. Incorrect pronunciation or utterances may create differences in thought processing that eventually results in poor communication. This, being taken into account in a contrastive analysis is essential for second language learning to be effective. In fact, the most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language carefully compared with a parallel description of the learner's native language (Fries: 1945). By contrastive analysis hierarchy of difficulties are predicted and described providing language teachers a framework or basis as to which of the linguistic aspects will they give more emphasis in teaching.

Contrastive analysis (CA) is concerned with the influence of the learners' native tongue in second language acquisition and such analysis is carried out by comparing the L1 of the ESL learners and the target language to identify potential language errors for the purpose of determining to which aspects or areas needs to be focused and those which do not in the context of second language learning (Gass et al; 2013). Thus, language learning is approached at determining the errors in the production of utterances to enable the language teachers to predict the errors and concentrate their teaching along such errors.

In the context of Ninorte Samarnon speakers, one of the features of English that is difficult to teach is its phonology. The sounds of English are too complex to a Ninorte-Samarnon such that oftentimes s/he fails to approximate English sounds, which in effect leads to confused ideas and communication problems. It is in this context, that this paper is deemed important so as to provide language teachers' inputs and insight relevant to the teaching of English sounds specifically on segmental phonemes among Ninorte-Samarnon as a second language learners of English.

2. Objectives of the Study

While Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) cannot guarantee adequate feedback on transfer errors from L1 to L2, undeniably it can predict and explain difficulties caused by language interference, especially in phonological aspects of second language learning (Brown, 1994:200). This study delved into the differences and similarities that exist between the segmental phonemes of Ninorte Samarnon,(NS) the vernacular spoken by the residents of Northern Samar in the Eastern Visayas Region, and English-their

second language. Specifically, this study attempted to 1) determine the hierarchy of difficulties in the phonological contrast between Ninorte Samarnon (L1) and English (L2), and 2) draw out implications for teaching the sound of English segmental phonemes to NS learners.

3. Methodology

This is a qualitative study anchored on Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH). It analyzed a corpus of segmental phonemes looking into the similarities and differences between NS a L1 and English as L2 guided by Prator's Hierarchy of Difficulty of the phonological structures specifically along segmental phonemes. The corpus of the study was derived from the set of utterances or sounds from native speakers of NS ESL speakers.

4. Results and Discussion

Hierarchy of Difficulty between the Segmental Phonemes in NS and English

In a phonological contrast, the analysis is done by determining the hierarchy of difficulties – the basis of prediction of the relative difficulty of a given sound in a target language. Prator (1965) set these four categories, namely: parallel, reinterpreted, over differentiation, and under differentiation serve as the determining factor.

A set of phonemes is parallel when there is no difference or contrast between the native and the target language. The learner can simply transfer a sound from the native language to the target without any difficulty. In the case of Ninorte-Samarnon and English, these phonemes include the consonants /b/, /g/, /h/, /m/, /n/, /s/, /w/, and /j/. These phonemes – the least emphasize phonemes being parallel with those in L2 because they do not require preparation and reorientation of the tongue position and of the vocal cords need not be given emphasis in teaching.

A reinterpreted phoneme, the second category, is an item that exists in both the native and target language; however, in the target language it has a different sound under different environment. In NS and English phonological contrast, these are /p/, /t/, /k/, /l/, /r/, /č/, and /j/.

In the NS, /p/, /t/, and /k/ are never aspirated as in /t/ in *tapa* and *tapok* but in English the sound are both unaspirated and aspirated. These are unaspirated if found at the middle and final position in a word as in *temple*, *plot*, *top*, *rat*, *bottle*, *crown*, *cricket* but aspirated if found at the beginning of the word followed by a vowel sound as in *pound*, *town*,

kingdom. Another is the phoneme /l/ distinguished either as a) clear/l/ which occurs before vowels and before /j/ like light, love and million or as b) dark /l/ which occurs before all other consonants and found at the end of a word as in field, feel, and little. The rest of the phonemes /r/, /č/, /j/, /au/, and /a/ sound almost the same because of the close resemblance to their counterparts but slightly different in sound under different environment, hence they are given new shape in English. Therefore, these phonemes should also be stressed by providing some audio-lingual activities for fully distinguished differences in sound production.

A close observation among NS speakers speaking English evidently shows that they could hardly produce a number of vowel sounds and some consonants. It is because, in the hierarchy of difficulties, over differentiation ranks first. Under this are two sub-categories: split and new. A phoneme is said to be split if it has one particular sound in the native but has two or more in the target language.

In the NS basically there are only three vowels /a/, /I/ and /u/ while in English there are twelve vowels. The NS /a/ has /a/, /n/ and /æ/ the NS /I/, /I/, /e/ and /e/ and NS /u/ has 4 vowels /u/, /u/, /o/, and /ə/. These split vowels are hardly produced by NS speakers who either fall short or over differentiate these sounds due to mother tongue interference, L1 utterances negatively interfere with L2

Under the new category about seven contoids are absent in the NS, most of which are the fricatives /f/, /v/, /e/, /e/ /,š/, and /ž/. The non-existence of those phonemes in the native language adversely affects NS learner's acquisition and production of these sounds. Hence, similar to the split vowels, these new sounds must therefore be taught with utmost emphasis.

Underdifferentiation has two sub-categories: coalesced and absent. As to coalesced, two items or sounds in the native phoneme appears both as non-word initial and word initial such as *sungaw*, *bungaw*, *kurong*, and *ngilo* respectively but appears only in one phonemic reality that of a non-word initial in English like singer, monkey, along but never in the initial position.

The underdifferentiated absent category refers to a sound present in the native language but in a

phonological contrast, it could be noted that final glottal vowels are present in NS but are absent in English such as the final sound in *lata*, *nati* and *tamu*. The presence of these phonemic realities in NS may negatively interfere in the learner's production and acquisition of English vowels, thus a careful distinction of these sounds with the English vowels should be considered in the teaching of English sounds.

Implications for Teaching the Sound of English Segmental Phonemes to NS Speakers

As shown in the table below, all the four categories pertaining to the hierarchy of difficulty of the segmental contrast were found present. For those under the parallel category, since these sounds are found in the Ninorte-Samaron and English language, these may not be given more or of least emphasis in the teaching of speech sounds.

However, for the reinterpreted, overdifferentiation both for split and new as well as underdifferentiation both coalesced and the case of an absent category as reflected in the given matrix, since they have different realities under different environments, and are given new shape in English or even absent in the target language these should be given emphasis in teaching. Ashour's (2017) contrastive analysis between English and Arabic pronunciation systems have indicated a similar finding that the difference in the pronunciation systems between the L1 and L2 caused learners to face difficulties.

The finding of this study carried out the notion that the resulting learning difficulty could be predicted by determining those areas in the NS (L1) that are different from the English (L2) the target language. In this context, if teachers made a comparison of the foreign language with the native one of the learners, they would know the real problems and in this way could provide avenue for teaching them such speech sounds (Lado:1957).

In a summary, the foregoing discussion is shown through a matrix of the phonological contrast between the NS (L1) and English (L2) and their implications for teaching the sound of English Segmental Phonemes to NS speakers, as follows.

Table 1: A Matrix of the Phonological Contrast between Ninorte Samarnon (NS) and English Segmental Phonemes

Categories	Language		Sample				Teaching/ Learning Implications
I. PARALLEL	NS	English	NS		English		<p>Since these sounds are found in the Ninorte-Samarnon and English language, these may not be given more emphasis in the teaching of speech sounds. (least phonemes)</p>
	1+	1+	/b/	baka labad tahob gab-i	/b/	book globe tub good	
			/g/	lugar kalag hulta	/g/	faggot bug happy	
			/h/	bahalina baraha	/h/	cohesive abhor	
			m/	manoy tamsi gutom nanay	/m/	money tomorrow wisdom	
			/n/	nano kugon sadto	/n/	note tiny won	
			/s/	kusina bug-os	/s/	same wisdom kiss	
			/w/	wati buwas away	/w/	worry away how	
II. REINTERPRETED			/y/	yana ayaw	/y/	young beyond	<p>These phonemes are present in both NS and English. However since they have different realities under different environments, and are given new shape in English, these should be given emphasis in teaching</p>
			/p/	tapa tapok pana pila pala	/p/	temple plot top pound pin put	
			/k/	kaon kadto kuto	/k/	crown cricket kingdom kiss king light love million field feel little	
			/r/	relo waray lugar	/r/	ring roar bearer folklore	
			/j/	dyipni dyambol dyos	/j/	gerber jean rouge	

			/a/	ay! baybay lus-ay	/a/	fridge dungeon I by thigh eye buy toy boil turmoil	
			/ /	oy! kahoy baboy	/ /		
			/au/	aw! awto sabaw ampaw	/au/	out about doubt crown coward	
III. OVERDIFFEREN- TIATION A. Split	1	2 or more	/a/	atay baktin kaha	/a/	another car star	Since these phonemes have only one sound in the native language (NS) but there are two or more in the target language, these should be given more emphasis in speech/ language teaching.
					/ /	among but cut apple man bat	
			/I/	itay hain pinakbit	/I/	fit list sing beat feet see	
					/e/	day reign vain	
					/ /	said bet says	
			/ /		/ /	pull took put	
					/u/	pool rude youth	
					/o/	go boat tone	
					/ /	call office saw	
B. NEW	0	1	/f/	none	/f/	fall giraffe sniff	Since these phonemes are not found in the native language (NS) but present in the target language, these should be
			/v/	none	/v/	vain	

						event eve	given utmost emphasis in language/ speech instruction.
			/o/	none	/o/	thin wealth methane that	
			/ /	none	/n/	weather clothe	
			/š/	none	/š/	sky bushes dish	
			/z/	none	/z/	zoo brises bees	
			/ž/	none	/ž/	quizzes pleasure boxes	
			/n/	ngadto ngilo ngo-ngo	/n/	none	
			/n/	sangaw bungaw kurong lintong	/n/	singer monkey prolong along	
			/ /	bata lata muta	/ /	none	
			/ /	buti nati linti	/ /	none	
B. Absent	1	0	/ /	sakon tapu tamu	/ /	none	These final glottal vowels are present in NS language but are absent in target language, these may negatively interfere in the learner's production of English vowels, thus these should also be given emphasis in speech/ language teaching.
			/ /		/ /		

5. Conclusions

Oral communication has been considered a potent means of conveying oneself to others, thus, developing communication skills is every language learner's duty and more importantly every language teacher's task being input providers

Based on the discussion, it could be gleaned that Contrastive Analysis using Prator's Hierarchy of Difficulty in these categories: parallel, reinterpreted, overdifferentiation and underdifferentiation have been found useful to predict NS (L1) learners' errors in pronunciation/speech production in English (L2). Henceforth, the CAH results especially along reinterpreted, overdifferentiation split and new, underdifferentiation coalesced and absent cases may

draw out pedagogical implications grounding on the hierarchy of difficulties, speech/language teachers need to focus their instruction taking into account the categories present in the target language but are absent in the native tongue, and those that are largely caused by language interference errors.

6. Recommendations

Every language has its own linguistic and non-linguistic features that are entirely unique in itself. In L2 learning knowledge acquisition in both languages that of the first or native (NS) in the case of Ninorte Samaron learners and the target language (English) become essentially indispensable in speech instruction. For L2 learning to become effective, this

phonological contrastive analysis is proposed for two relevant concerns.

First the learner, apart from teachers' inputs must instill in him/herself that drive and passion to improve his/her spoken communication skills by raising his/her consciousness in terms of looking into the similarities and differences in sounds of these two languages – L1 and L2 usually English known as the lingua franca of the world.

Second, ESL teachers teaching speech must: 1) dwell on phonological contrast as their basis of coming-up with teaching strategies and approaches; 2) pay attention to the areas in which interference commonly occurs such as carrying over L1, speech habits to the L2 languages use; 3) prioritize language teaching techniques on absent categories in the target language by preparing adequate instructional materials and sufficient drills focused on auditory discrimination and oral speech production; and 4) carefully find out which sound in the first language (NS) resemble the problem sound in the target language and allow students to approximate these foreign or unfamiliar sounds as distinguished from the native language. This will eventually offer them opportunity to express their ideas accurately and fluently via spoken English.

While the CAH yielded findings along predicting difficulties in the target language, still a more exhaustive study involving a comprehensive corpus is likewise recommended to gain more empirical

evidence on the role of L1 in L2 acquisition and learning.

7. Literature Cited

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