Project plan essay

According to Nation and Newton (2009), phonological loop is ‘ the brain saying a word or phrase over and over to itself n order to keep it in the working memory or to help it move into long-term memory” (p. 75).

This also means that learners who have a stable and good pronunciation could store the words in the long-term memory because they can hold the words in the phonological loop (Ellis & Beaten, 1993). A good pronunciation comes from the correct production of phoneme sounds. Also, learners from different linguistics background exhibit different ways of pronouncing the English words.

Therefore, this research addresses two questions by taking into account the influence of the learners’ first language on their pronunciation: 1 . Does a learner’s Al influence the pronunciation (phonemes) of his or her AL (English)? 2. Does the pronunciation differ between the languages? Literature review A research conducted by James (2007) examined the relationship between learners interlingua (IL) and transfer of learning.

From this research has come an understanding that different constraints act on learning transfer.

The research found out three main points; Firstly, IL performance were learning transfer; secondly, IL performance may occur because of the constraints on learning transfer and the final finding was that research earners and theory should accommodate the research and theory on IL variation. The theory of interlingua was supported by Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CASH) where it was claimed that the “ principle barrier to

second language acquisition is the interference of the first language system with the second language system” (Brown, 2007, p. 248).

CASH also emphasized that the large amount of errors made by the AL learners is attributable to the negative transfers of the native language to the target language.

Arabs (2006) defined negative transfer as the error made during the transfer from a habitual behavior to a new behavior. In this case, the learners carry over what they already know in their first language to their AL. On the same ground, the Best Perpetual Assimilation Model (PAM) claimed that the articulation of Al phonemes influences the production of phonemes in L 2 (Best, 1995).

The model postulates that the difficulty in producing L 2 phonemes is associated with the similarities Of the phonetic-articulators Of 1 This means that listening to Q sounds is not a straightforward process of deciding whether an 12 sound is similar to or different from an Al but it involves discrimination between the two L 2 sounds form one another and also differentiating the L 2 sounds form Al sounds.

These findings help to explain the production of English phonemes of Japanese and Malay speakers.

In terms of the phoneme /B/, Smith (1994) claimed that “ IL stages of development were better seen in terms of continua rather than jumps from one discrete stage to another. Japanese learners for example, did not

suddenly appear to acquire /6/ in one fell swoop but acquired it first in one context and the another (p. 139).

In other words, Japanese speakers are found to have difficulty in pronouncing the phoneme B/ although it is not a constraint element in their phonological system. According to Yamaha and Tokomak (1 992), Japanese learner would have difficulty in producing /r/ and II/ sounds.

This is supported by Best and Strange (1992) claiming that the phonemes of ‘ r/ and ‘ l/ are regarded to be the same in the Japanese language. In this case, the speakers would not be able to distinguish the differences as proposed by PAM. On the other hand, the Malay language has a distinctive phonological system compared to English particularly in the vowel length. Assam Hajj Omar (1989) stated that Malay consists of only single consonant and there is no consonant cluster in its language system.

An instrumental study conducted by Wan Salons Salina Wan Nomad on Malay speakers of English noted that words with vowels such as /I:/, ‘ l/ , /u:/ and [o/ are said to be homophones. For instance; there is no length discrimination when the speakers pronounce the words pool/pull and cut/cart. Guardian (1997) found that the speakers of Malay produce the long /u:/ with shorter length and more marked lip rounding when they pronounce English words. Therefore, it is expected that the Malay speakers would pronounce English words with simple and static vowels.

Methodology The two participants for this research were randomly chosen from the university Of Togo and Togo polytechnic. One Of them was Japanese and the other was Malay.

Both were learning English as their Q. The Japanese speaker was a 25 year old girl from Hiroshima, Japan. She has been learning English since young where the speaker when through a very rigid teaching and learning process. During school days, the speaker had to learn the grammatical rules of English without much realization of the function of the rules.

There were also little exposure to the authentic materials and use of the language.

The speaker also claimed that learning English was mainly exam-oriented and they could pass through the exams with the memorization of the language rules alone. Also, the communicative competence was less emphasized as interactive activities were barely incorporated in the lessons. According to the speaker, the translation was encouraged in the classroom in the English language learning. The speaker was exposed to the correct speaking Of English when she came to New Zealand for the purpose of occupation.

She believes that her speaking skills improved drastically when she listened to the native speakers.

Gradually, she acquired new vocabularies and became more confident in using the language. The second speaker that was interviewed came from Malaysia. He is 21 years old and came to New Zealand a year ago to pursue his degree. The speaker has been learning English since he was five. As told by the speaker, the reason for him to learn English is because it is the second strongest language in his country.

The speaker claimed that he attempted to learn French as his third language and he is fairly competent in the language. Almost similar to the first participant, the learning of AL for this speaker had been a boring process.

The learning would be mainly focused on knowing the grammar rules with little application to the real context. More interestingly, pronunciation was less emphasized in his L 2 learning, therefore the speaker faces difficulty when communicating with the native speakers. However, the speaker claimed that he could write cohesive sentences and essays.

Also, the speaker has a very low motivation to improve on his AL pronunciation because he finds the process to be frustrating and unfruitful. Generally, the data Was collected before the Easter Break 2011 where both the participants were interviewed on two different days.

First of all, all the group members decided on the materials that would be used for the interview. A series of pictures about an accident scene was selected for the research. The reason for choosing the material was because it was believed to be suitable for intermediate level of L 2 proficiency. The task required the use of language produced in a real-life situation.

Also, the material was very lenient where the participants could describe the scene in their own interpretation with little control from the interviewers.

It also helped to make the participants to be comfortable in the interview. A semi-structured interview questions were designed as guidance for the interviewer to conduct the session. The questions began with some

introductory remarks and later into the picture task. The interview sessions were recorded using two voice recorders.

Then, the interviews were transcribed by the group members. The transcriptions were analyses under the obligatory occasion analysis in which the accuracy of the specific features used by the participants were examined.

In this case, the errors made by the participants were studied and categorized into different aspects of phonology; the consonant, the long vowel and final consonant cluster. Throughout the data analysis process, the experimenters were faced tit two problems which were identifying the categories of the phonological features to be analyses and interconnecting errors (an error could be categorized in more than one category).

The difficulties were solved by determining the errors that the participants made the most. Then, the experimenters sorted the errors into the categories that could be analyses.

Also, the assistance from the lecturer was sought during consultation sessions. Results Below is the result of the obligatory occasion analysis: Learners Consonant Final consonant cluster omission Long vowel co s OH Japanese 19 6 31 . 58 9 11.

11 23 17 69. 57 39 100 Malay 22 5 20. 00 15 3 29 17. 24 The error made by the participants were investigated based on three features; the pronunciation of phonemes ‘ r/ and /B/, the final consonant cluster omission and the long vowel sounds.

These features were selected by taking into account the participants' Al , Japanese and Malay.

It was expected that the analysis of these particular features could give justify the errors made by the participants due to the interference of their native languages. The Japanese participant made errors in producing the phoneme ' r/ almost throughout the conversation. The speaker has 31.

58% accuracy in producing honey /r/. Most of the time the ' r/ sound were substituted with /I/. Some Of the words that were inaccurately pronounced were; restaurant /ire's. Toronto/, recently/ ' RI:. Sans. Lie/, residents/ ' raze.

L. Dante/, really/ real. Lie/, try/trail/, front/from/ , brake /break/, problem / ' prop. Am/, worry/' war. I/, read /RI: d/, red/red/, tow- truck/Tao//track/, pronunciation Para ant . Is el.

Lana/, difference / ; ODL. AR . Ants/, different / ODL. AR.

Ant/, squirrel / ' skiver. Al/and front /front/. However, the speaker made several correct attempts in pronouncing /r/ in words such as Hiroshima / ' her. AU J I: mm, children / ' t;. Rene/ , driver / ' dear.

Vary/, drive / drawl/ and insurance fin P:. Rant s/. The data also showed that the speaker did not overuse any words with the phoneme /r/. The pronunciation of phoneme B/ where also recorded and it was found that the speaker has 1 1.

1% accuracy. She made errors in words such as thank /eink/, mouth/Mao?/ and think kick/. The was substituted with Is/ or /¶/ where the words were

produced as tint / ¶OK/, mouth /AMA¶ /, sink /slink/. Another feature that was analyses was the final consonant cluster.

The data proved that the speaker has 69. 57% accuracy. Some of the errors made were; ask/a: sky/, permanent / 3:. Ma.

ant/, just/do/SST/, residents / raze. L. Dante/, recently/’ RI:. Sans. Lie/ , first/ fig: SST/, couldn’t/’ kid. Ant/, didn’t/ TLD.

Ant/, just/d” SST/, doesn’t/ DMS. Ant/, different/ ODL. AR. Ant/, don’t/daunt/, object/ bob. 31st/, subject / ‘ Saab. Detect/, went/went/ and talk /to: k/.

The speaker, however, correctly pronounced the final consonant cluster in words such as accident/’ k. Sir. Dana/, front/front/, thank /9OK/, understand/. An. Dad SSTND/, help/help/, can’t/kNT/, left/left/ and think/kick/. Quite surprisingly, the speaker showed a hundred percent accuracy in the production of long vowels.

The Malay speaker, on the other hand, accurately pronounced /r/ sounds in his speaking. He correctly pronounced the words from/from/, French/ferret/, really/ real. Lie/, front/from/, wrong/ROR/, traffic/ tryf. K/, driver/’ drab. Vary/, drive/drear/, trying/ Tara.

10/, try/trail/, road/raid/, probably/’ prop. A. Blip/ and broken/’ beer. Kane/.

The accuracy of the phoneme / B / was 20% . The word that was analyses was think/kick/ produced by the speaker. The speaker made a correctly supplied / / for thing/; n/. For the final consonant cluster, the speaker omitted the final consonant for cold/koala/, found/fond/, accident/ k.

SSL. Dana/, front/from/, first/ if: SST/, child/tall/, want/wont/, find/ fallen/ and first/ Est/. He managed to pronounce French and help without omitting the final consonant.

The data showed that the speaker had difficulty in pronouncing long vowel sounds with the accuracy 17. 24%.

The words that were produced inaccurately were pharmacy/ FAA:. Ma. Is/, hard/ha: d/, before/ bal 6: r/, car/aka: r/, view/vs.:/, sure/Jar/, first / ‘ if: SST/, parking/’ pa:.

Key/, seek/ Is: k/, calling / ; k: y.. 110/and too/TU:/. Discussion From the analysis, it is visible that the Japanese speaker found it difficult to renounce phoneme ‘ r/ in the task given. This was an expected result to a certain extent due to the previous findings. The PAM could be referred to explain this result.

The model claims that English ‘ r/ and II,’ are hard to be distinguished. In fact, these phonemes are regard to be the same in the Japanese phonological system. Therefore, the Japanese speaker tended to substitute the phoneme ‘ r/ with II/ in most of the words. Sheldon and Strange (1982) said that the Japanese language has only one liquid phoneme, therefore the speaker has to learn an entirely new ‘ r/ in order to discriminate between ‘ r/ and /I/. However, the speaker seemed to be aware of the phoneme sound when she was found to accurately pronounce the phoneme in certain words.

Besides, the analysis also displayed that the Japanese speaker made errors in pronouncing phoneme /G/.

As claimed by Smith (1994), the Japanese speakers take time to acquire the phoneme / e/ for some reasons. At this point, it could be presumed that the speaker is still learning to master the / 6/ as she made an attempt in producing the phoneme. For the final consonant cluster, the speaker made many errors. This could be due to the limited attention given to the production of the word-final consonant luster in 1_2. The data showed that the speaker has 100% accuracy in producing long vowels in L 2.

This is because the language has long vowels In its system (Hiram, Whitehorse & Culling, 2007). Thus, the speaker was not faced any difficulty in long vowels. On the other hand, the Malay speaker has didst incentive accuracy level of the features compared to the Japanese speaker. Generally, the speaker showed 100% accuracy in the production of ‘ r/ as the phoneme exists in the Malay language and it is pronounced similarly to English. However, the phoneme /9/ was pronounced as /¶/ in many words. In Malay, the phoneme / 8/ does not exist; therefore the speaker changed the phoneme to the alveolar sound /t/.

According to Gomez and Reason (2002), the Malay language is a disyllabic language in which the words do not have consonant clusters in initial position syllable and final position syllable. This is supported by Assam Hajj Omar claiming that in the established rule of Malay phonology, “ syllable structure consists of only a single consonant as its onset and its coda”. Thus, this explains the omissions of final consonant in the consonant cluster by the speaker in this research. The speaker has difficulty o produce the long vowels in L 2.

Essentially, Malay has six pure vowels as opposed to 12 vowels on English. There is no length discrimination in the Malay vowels, thus long vowels are seen as produced the same as the short vowels (Guardian, 1997).

Conclusion On the whole, the research shows that the learners Al influences the pronunciation of phonemes in his or her AL. The research has at least 3 limitations in this research. One of them is the materials used where it encourages the repetition of words. The speaker tends to pronounce the same word incorrectly and this makes the data to be influenced by only one error.