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TABLE DES MATIERES

THE PERCEPTION OF ENGLISH VOWELS BY BAULE KODE-ENGLISH BILINGUALS

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Abstract

The present study focuses on the perception of a foreign language that is English by baule kode (a languge poken in Cote d'Ivoire) speakers. The objective of this work is to analyse how do kode speakers perceive and produce the different English vowels sounds. Speech is natural. It is also a systematically organized activity that intends to convey meaning. The current paper shows that kode speakers perceive English vowels as those which exist in kode. This perception is the result of a structuring inadequate information imposed by selective habit from their native language perception.

Key words: dialect; foreign language; perception; production;

Introduction

This article is a study of language. It undertakes a linguistic analysis of language perception and production. Besides, it is a research in applied linguistics which is closely concerned with the application of the perception theory to the individual social and psychological life. It deals specially with the perception of an aspect of English as a foreign language.

The perception of English vowels by a baule kode- language learner is a research focusing on the possible effects of direct and indirect environment factors on the perception and production of English vowels in the speech of kode- speaker. In other words, can the kode vowesl hepl the kode – English speaker to identify and articulate better english vowel or words?

The objective of my work is to understand through an interlanguage study, whether the density of the vowel system of a language ''A'' helps perceive vowels in a language ''B''. In other words, the large or small number of vowel in kode, plays a significant role in the perception of English (as foreign language) vowels.

Sociolinguistic background of English and Baule Kode

1.1- Sociolinguistic background of English

English, is an Indo-European language from Germanic group. It is an international classical language used for official purposes such as broadcasting, diplomacy, trade and communication in general. English has gained in importance today is used as native language, second language and as foreign language. In Côte d'Ivoire, English is a foreign language.

Certainly because of that dominant importance in the world, this Indo-European language has been the object of several studies, of which some were of historical, linguistic and grammatical perspectives. It is important to notes that linguistically, English is an intonation language with a stress-timed harmony.

1.2- Sociolinguistic background of Baule Kode

The baule people, who are about 5.520.000 census INS 2014 live in a V-shaped savannah area of the central Côte d'Ivoire. Although they are often considered a matrilineal people who arrived recently in Côte d'Ivoire, (Etienne (1971), chauveau (1975), Weiskel (1974) emphasize that the baule society tends to be cognatic and that historically, society results from a number of waves of migration from the east over centuries migration in the mid-18th century around 1750[8]. The term baule is used for people and also for the language they speak.

The language spoken by the baule people is related genetically to the languages spoken in eastern Côte d'Ivoire (nzema, aboure), Ghana (akan, ahanta) and northern togo (chokossi). The classification (stewart 1971) considers the baule language to belong to the tano sub-group of the volta-comoe group of Western Kwa languages.

The baule language has several sub-groups, or dialects. The dialect kode, described in this study, is one of the sub-groups of baule. The kode people inhabit the northwestern part of the baule region and they have a patriarchal system contrary to the other baule who have a matriarchal system. The kode is spoken in 110 villages in the Béoumi region. The building of the kossou dam fostered the settelment of some kode inthe area of San-Pédro, in the southern part of Cote d'Ivoire.

The most striking difference among the varieties of baule spoken by these different groups is the difference in the tonal system. A comparative analysis of tonal systems (Timyan 1975) shows that the tonal system of the kode dialect is very different from those of other dialects. Other differences

[8] B. K. K. Akissi., L'univers des noms et prenoms Baoulé en Côte d'Ivoire, 2001. P. 15

include : differences in lexical items ; differences in the shape of some grammatical morphemes (kode : specifier **–ni** ; other dialects specifier **–n**) ; the use of **l** and **w** in some words in the central and western dialects where the eastern dialects use **d** and **b**.

1- Data collection

This work is conducted within an empirical framework. As we are comforted in that way by (Clark et Yallop) stressing that any scientific or theoretical investigation of any aspect of speech must be empirical. In other words, it must be based on observation. Then empirical standards are more obvious in respect of articulation and acoustic.

The ways the perception and production interact with environment are to be clarified by submitting groups of individuals to cross-selectional and longitudinal investigation. The selection of subjects leads to the choice of six kode individual learners with different social and psycholinguist characteristics. They were submitted to listen to a short text five times. Listening and speaking performances are collected and compared. Then, subjects are asked to identify the similarities and differences between vowels of their own language and English vowels.

We will compare the discriminability of a given acoustic difference under two conditions:

1- When a set of stimuli are variations of the same phonetic environment.
2- When this set of stimuli are from different phonetic categories, for instance [a] and [ɛ̰].

Vowels production occur under two aspects. They occur either in context or in isolation.

In the text, the commons vowels to English and kode are : /a, e, o, i, u, ɔ/. English test execution is from Luisa Diogo (Advocate for Africa by Mark Malloch BROWN, Administrator, United Nations Development Program. Time April 26. 2004 Special issue p46 the Time 100).The kode test execution is an extract from Timyan (1978).

3- Theoretical framework for the study

One of the two descriptive linguistic tasks is to compare and describe languages, and to sum up from them patterns which seem of interest and significance. Then, linguists try with difficulty

to define language.[9]They agree yet that languages are more distinct from dialects, that is they are different kind of speech. Whereas dialects are merely varieties of languages. With the learning process, it arises some criteria that are relative matter of the intelligibility. The matters that intelligibility depends on are the intelligence and background of the informant. Does English possess common vowels with kode that can be easily perceived by kode subject ?

It is important to note that phonologically information that ensures intelligibility speech is contained in the band of frequencies between 300HZ and 3,500HZ[10]. Speech intelligibility also deals with acoustic signals that are frequency time and intensity, and is related to the performance of the human auditory system. So in our everyday perception of normal speech, we are attending to the totality of complex signal encoding target language.

Any human research or activity requires theoretical framework. In this respect of that many theories and models have been developed about speech; and mainly speech perception. For, though theory and model refer both to knowledge they produce to themselves, model is more or less a formal construction intended to copy reality in some aspects. The mechanism that arises from its making of, are often considered as a proper explanation to described facts by the model. Thus a theoretical model of English vowels perception by kode students is elaborated in order to understand the given perceptual scheme. As formal purview, it allows only to explain experimental facts and to understand mechanisms in relation with itself.

Investigation into speech perception await developmental and verification of comprehensive explanation model or theory. We will deal with those constructed from essentially phonetic and phonological ones. That is, the motor theories and the bell's one.

The motor theory's models used in our case are the synthesized analysis model and the passive and the active speech models. This motor theory deals with the phonetically based models of perception. And it hypothesizes that human decodes the perceived acoustic signal with the same linguistic percept.

[9] -the word has been so variously used both by laymen and linguists that there is no agreed meaning. But they admitted that languages are different kind of speech

[10] -Telecommunication system tested the speech intelligibility between the band of frequencies 300hz and 3.500hz. (Clark and Colin)

Bell's theory is preserved in general in the ''generative'' theory. Chomsky and Halle (1968) are the tenants of this theory. It deals with the articulatory theory that is related to the position and height of the point of constriction of the tongue.

The problem underlying this study arises from a preliminary attempt to compare English and baule, with specificity on dialectal kode variety vowels, and how the first ones are perceived by kode students.

4- Inventory of English and baule kode vowels

4.1- Inventory of English vowels

English vowels have different qualities and they are produced with variations.

1. The height of the tongue ;
2. The position (front or back) of the highest part of the tongue ;
3. The position of the lips
4. The openness of the nasal passage ;
5. The shape of the upper surface
6. The tenseness of the muscles of the tongue ;
7. Various phenomena in the pharynx and larynx

Many phoneticians and linguists have used different framework for the classification of vowels. Differences are more evident than significant. English vowels cannot be specified by written description, but only by oral transmission.such a proposal is suggested by Dianel Jones and replies by Peter Roch (2000), that is the vowels triangle drawn as a trapezoid. English has 12 pure vowel (7 short and 5long), 8 diphthongs and 5 triphthongs. These vowels are:

4.1.1- Short vowels

[ɪ] pig /pɪg/

[ə] an / ən/

[æ] cat /kæt/

[ʊ] book /bʊk/

[ʌ] duck /dʌk/

[e] bed /bed/

[ɒ] dog /dɒg/

The long vowels are the following:

[iː] see / siː /

[ɔː] born / bɔːn/

[ɜː] girl /gɜːl/

[ɑː] car / kɑː /

[uː] moon /muːn/

4.1.2- Diphthongs

Diphthongs are sounds which consist of a movement or glide from one vowel to another. A vowel which remains constant and does not glide is called a pure vowel. In terms of length, diphthongs are similar to the long vowels. Perhaps the most important thing to remember about all the diphthongs is that the first part is much longer and stronger than the second part.

ɪə example words: 'beard', 'fierce'

eə example words: 'aired', 'scarce'

ʊə example words: 'moored', 'lure'

eɪ example words: 'paid', 'face'

aɪ example words: 'tide', 'nice'

ɔɪ example words: 'void', 'voice'

əʊ example words: 'load', 'home'

aʊ example words: 'loud', 'house'

4.2- Inventory of English kode vowels

Kode vowels occur at the peaks of syllable – one vowel per syllable- and are tone carrying. They are not noticeably lengthened when occurring with contour tone. Germinate vowels occur, each with its own ton. For example :

/ka¯a`/ ' a small bit contrasts with /kạ¯/ small

place of articulation	front	back
height of the tongue	Nonlabiales	Labiales
closed oral nasal	i i̧	u u̧
Mid-closed	e	o
Mid-open oral nasal	ɛ ɛ̧	ɔ ɔ̧
Open oral nasal	a a̧	

Source : Tymian 1976, p 30

The kode language has 12 vowels with seven orales (i, u, e, o, ɛ, ɔ, a) and five nasals (ạ , i̧, u̧, ɛ, ɔ̧).

Example : oral vowels oral vowels

/pɔpɔ/ 'soft' / bɔ̧/ 'smell'

/di / 'eat' / s i̧/ 'fire'

/sa/ 'hand' / sạ/ 'bite'

/ bo/ 'forest'

/fɛ/ 'sweet' / fɛ̧/ 'be white'

/wu/ 'die' / wu̧/ ' husband'

/je/ ' tooth'

The analysis of English and kode dialectal variety vowels presents some difficulties. As a matter of fact, English vocalism includes a large part of kode vowels. However, there are some groups of English vowels that do not exist in kode.

English has four groups of vowels that are short vowels, long vowels, diphthongs and triphthongs. And also, kode vowels system has group that lacks in the English vowel systemthe nasal vowels.

5- Results and analysis

5.1- results

In general, speakers seem not to meet difficulties in this categorization task. In the same way, for vowels that do not belong to their vowels system. They can propose few different vowels for the same stimulus (figure) and choose a preferential category for each stimulus (figure).

Vowels identification percentage are represented in this table below.

			i	e	a	ɔ	o	U
vowels perception	English vowels	i	55	25				
		e	30	50				
		a		40	60			
						60	20	
		o				4	96	
		u					2	98
	kode vowels	i	80		20			
		e		90				
		a			97	3		
						96		
		o					97	
		u						100

Figure 1 : vowels identification percentage : (vowels presented in the two languages by subject from an English text)

			i	e	a	ɔ	o	u
vowels perception	English vowels	i						
		e						
		a						
		o						
		u						
	kode vowels	i	87	13				
		e		60				
		a			98			
						81	19	
		o					82	
		u					6	94

Figure 2 : common vowels identification percentage : (vowels presented to the two languages by subject from a kode corpus)

However, results in tables show that a problem remains, that is in the figure 2 where subjects have to identify vowels from an English text, the identification percentage is less than that from the kode text. They show a light difficulty to identify English vowels from an English text. Whereas from the same text they can identify kode vowels.

There is a problem when categorizing the three half open vowels /æ/, /ɔ/, /ɛ/ that the presence is usually contextual. Additionally, they have difficulty with nasal vowels identification.

5.2- Analysis

We can see a good match between acoustic and perceptive results:

1/ relating to English vowels classification which takes into account: front vowels, central and back vowels according to the part of the tongue. And the vowels rose where there are close, half-close, half-open vowels according to the degree of raising which takes place

2/ Relating to the realization space that characterizes essentially English vocal system: that is the opposition between tense and lax vowels and also the opposition between pure vowels and diphthongs. Then subjects are able to produce categories of separate vowels and have noproblem to categorize vowels. But, in return English vowels production shows a very important overlapping between categories. And the results show that they meet difficulties in categorization task.

Like English vocal system, the kode has also a system that squares with it vocal system. It is mainly characterized by root position. Then the position is front/ raised and the root is back/ unraised. In kode there is only one central vowels, which is /a/.[2]

The results of the experiments show that kode subjects succeed in categorizing stimuli that are out of their native vocal system. Thus, the perception plan seems to be more broad than the production plan. That suggests that we can explain these results by noticing that less there are vowels in a system, more categorization is easy. However, these results have to be proved by further behavioural experiments.

We cannot deduce that kode speakers easy categorization is due to broad perception plans rather than a limited choice of categories.

In other respect, the minor categorization difficulty of English text cannot be due only to the important number of vowels. For some subjects, the same English texts are categorized more easily. Event they categorize English vowels from kode text.

Some works have shown that a vocal system possesses, in general a secondary system of tokens (Valee, Schwartz and al.). So kode listener use duration as a secondary token to distinguish vowels. But, this token is not use in our experiment.

In conclusion, English has a vocal system with strong density and equally endowed with a system of secondary tokens. On the contrary, the density of kode system is more weak. And its features lay on tone. It comes out that production does not seem to be affected by density. In return, vocal

systems perception would be quite in accordance with density. But equally in accordance with tokens systems that define each system.

5.3 Stress and tone

For phonetics, stress is the force or energy used in the articulation of a syllable. That is, stress in other words, is the prominence features involved in speech production. Then stressing is different from syntagmatic feature. They assume the sequence of at least two elements that they distinguish on the perceptive plan by their duration, height and, or their intensity.

Indeed, we are faced to two languages that have not the same prosodic features. However, a feature seems common to them. So, the stressing place in the same word can have different meaning. Mainly when we take for instance the English word permit (n) /ˈpɜ:mɪt/ ‘’authorization’’ ; and to permit (v) /pəˈmɪt/. Also the kode word bo /bo/ ‘’to break’’ and bo /bo/ ‘’forest’’. In the same way the kode word ’to espouse’’ and ’foot’’.

These examples leads us to the different kind of stress. Thus, according to Timyan’s (1978) works, it has been shown that kode is a language with a three tones system. That is phonetically and also phonologically

Examples: /kpaa/ ‘’good , well’’

/kpaa/ ‘’contract’’

In this example the gliding of the stress in the same word affects its first meaning. So though having a weak accentuation, the three tones, high, medium and low play an important role in kode language.

Contrary to kode in which the stress is located on only one vowel, English is a language with several stress levels and locations. And these stresses are perceived on syllables according to the number of syllable that compose the word. That is most studies of English agree that vowels of word, short phrases and sentences are differentiated by relative degree of stress or loudness. We have strong, half-strong, and weak or in other words ‘’high’’, mid and low. However, Jones (1932) notes that in connected speech only two degrees of stress need be stressed. Because no one is convinced about the number of levels of stress that can be perceived when single words or short

phrases are uttered. Thus from this point of view, kode and English have a common point about stress levels that are assigned to a word and that related to a function of phonemic structure of the word. Its syntactic function whether it can be a noun or a verb and the constituents structure of the derived phrase marker.

CONCLUSION

This work aimed at providing in the light of perception theories, and on the basis of phonetic and phonology elements that can allow the kode subjects to perceive English vowels. Element(words and sentence) have been added in order to make a comparison between English and kode vowels. From the linguistic perception and the phonetic and phonologic system, we can easily study other systems of any language. However, we admit that the analysis remains to be improved. In other respect, bad perception is the result of structuring inadequate information element imposed by selective habit own to our native language perception.

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