

A Contrastive Study of Phonetic Variations in English and Chinese

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Abstract: sound change is an important content of language change, and it is common in both English and Chinese. The change of speech is one of the main aspects of the change of the language, and the change in the English language has a great influence on the English listening. English and Chinese are two different languages belonging to different language families, but they do have many similarities in the process of phonetic change. This paper makes a contrastive analysis of the phonetic changes between English and Chinese, and tries to find out the similarities and differences between them.

1. Introduction

Phonetics is the primary factor of language learning, the basis of foreign language teaching and the basis of spoken language learning. The key to the direct impact of English listening is that many learners often appear to communicate well with others, but some of the words can't be understood, and it is impossible to guess the meaning of some of these words, which are influenced by the speech flow of the speech change. According to the input and output theories of second language acquisition, speaking and listening are complementary to each other in the language learning process. This shows the importance of mastering pronunciation in foreign language learning. Due to the influence of the mother tongue (Chinese), most of the students in the process of learning English phonetics have difficulty in pronunciation, confusion or ambiguity. Rod Ellis, in his book second-language acquisition, argues that the mother tongue is one of the root causes of errors in the learning process of second language learners this effect of the mother tongue is its negative transfer to the second-language acquisition^[1].

English is a branch of the GERMANIC languages, with 21 middle vowels and 28 consonants, while Chinese is a branch of the Tibetan language, with 23 initial consonants and 24 finals. As far as tonal features are concerned, English belongs to intonation language, while Chinese belongs to tone language. For the character structure is concerned, English is pinyin characters, while Chinese is square characters. All these show that English and Chinese do not belong to the same series of languages, and they are quite different. However, there are similar or same usage rules between them, and there are also some phonetic rules. This paper tries to analyze and compare the differences between the two, so as to find the corresponding law between them.

2. The Meaning of Phonetic Change and Relevant Content

A Sound change is a change of phonetic. When people speak, instead of singling out individual syllables, they make up a natural stream of words^[3]. The sound change is the phonetic change that occurs when the phonemes are combined. This change is caused by the influence of adjacent phonemes or the speed, height, strength and other factors of speaking, called sound change. such as, in English(twice,twenty),in Chinese (le,xun,dou).In the process of speaking and reading, there are no syllables and sentences in the process of speaking and reading. In a continuous stream, some syllables have a change in pronunciation due to the mutual influence of the adjacent syllables or the need to express the affection. There are "soft-tone, variable-tone and child-to-child" in the expression of the phenomenon of the Chinese speech system.

1984 L.E. Henri chsen Overstatement Certification Now, English language flow will affect English as a second language learners' receipt of input. The study of the Chinese scholars, He

Jiyong, the investigation of the Tang and the Mei-mei, found that the phonetic change of the Chinese language has been severely impaired to the extent that the listening comprehension ability of the English subjects is completely lost; and the effect of the sound change of the former in the former is lower than that of those with poor comprehensive ability^[5].

3. The Emergence and Characteristics of Phonetic Variation in Phonological Change

3.1 The Generation of Phonetic Change

A phonetic change may occur either within a syllable or between syllables. The difference between inside and outside is called the phenomenon of different language streams. In the interior of a syllable, when consonants and vowels are combined as distinct morphemes, the coordinated activity of the parts of articulation produces a change called a coordinated change, which is common in both English and Chinese. For example, when the consonant and the pre-vowel synthesize syllable, in addition to retaining the original basic pronunciation action, the middle part of the tongue must also be slightly improved to the hard palate, which is called “Palatization” in phonetics, such as English he [hi], Se [si], Chinese “good [hao], son [zi]”.

In addition, a speech that occurs between a syllable and a syllable is called a “continuous tone”. Continuous speech changes into phrases. In the process of continuous delivery, sentences are affected by pronunciation, intonation and environment.

3.2 Character of the Stream Sound Change.

In all kinds of languages, there is a language, that is, there is a language, which has a strong regularity, but some of the regularity has the common characteristics, some have the particularity. The commonness comes from the identity of the structure and function of human vocal organs and the consistency of acoustic principles of speech analysis ^[4]. For example, the tonal pronunciation law of Chinese is not suitable for English, while the consonant of English is not suitable for Chinese.

4. The Main Forms of Phonological Change

The phonetic changes in English and Chinese are mainly divided into assimilation, alienation, weakening, shedding, stress, Intonation and tone change.

4.1 Assimilation

Assimilation refers to two different phonological adjoining (within syllables, phonological or lexical boundaries), one of which is influenced by the other and becomes the same or similar phoneme as it is. It is the most common phonological form in English and Chinese. Professor He Shane mentioned the “Assimilation means that a sound becomes the same as or similar to the adjacent sound under the influence of adjacent similar phonemes, and it is produced for the purpose of saving labor and fluent speech.” in his work in 1998.

Speech Assimilation can be divided into two dimensions, place assimilation and sound assimilation. The former is divided into intra-word assimilation and word-to-word assimilation, while the latter is divided into phonological assimilation and phonological variation assimilation. Assimilation occurs in the same word, that is, within the word assimilation, this kind of assimilation occurs in English, for example: [s, z, t, d], before [j], can be dissolved in [j], teacher-[, ti: t, and [r]], respectively, with [j]; and the plural forms of S, dogs- [d, and z] in English, while the consonants in Chinese are usually separated by the vowels, so there is no such assimilation within the syllable. The place that occurs at the junction of the two words is the assimilation of words. Phoneme assimilation between words can be divided into three types: phonological position assimilation, turbid assimilation and Consonant nasalization.

4.2 Alienation

Two identical and similar phonemes, one of which for some reason becomes different from it.

Generally speaking, when two or more similar or identical sounds are read together, one of them becomes different or different from the other. The main reason is that pronunciation in order to save effort and avoid mouthful. Alienation of English usually occurs within words, not between words. Such as “spend” “/p/,” “school” “/k/” in English, and The transformation of Chinese is a typical dissimilation phenomenon, such as when the two upper-sound words (three-sound) are connected together, the previous word is to become a positive-level (two-sound), such as a “a tiger, an exhibition”; and, as in the Chinese, the “Granny”.

4.3 Weakening

In the process of pronunciation, the pronunciation of some phonemes will become weaker, which is relatively less clear, which is caused by light pronunciation or faster speech speed. A weakening of a vowel, meaning that the vowel in one word is not to be emphasized for reasons such as fast speech or in a secondary position in a sentence, which can not be a complete and standard pronunciation, but becomes a phenomenon of other vowels that are weaker in intensity, this phenomenon is weakening, for example, the soft sound in Chinese is a typical weakening phenomenon.

The weakening of vowels and consonants is common in both English and Chinese, but the forms of vowels and consonants are not the same. The weakening of vowels is manifested in the weakening of pronunciation, that is, the weakening of complex vowels into unit sounds and the weakening of other units into central vowels. Such as “[pa][pa]--[paba]”, today [tə,de],sunday[,sʌn,dei].The weakening of consonants is manifested in the decrease of pronunciation resistance, that is to say, the weakening of consonants in Qing Dynasty is turbid consonant, plug and erase sound, but the parts and forms of weakening are different in English and Chinese. The weakening of consonants in Chinese results from the first consonants of soft syllables, such as “[hǎo de]” in Chinese. In addition to the weak syllables in the word, the weakening of English consonants is more common at the end of the word, such as cake[keɪk],cap[kæp].

Many of the words in English are in the form of two or more different pronunciation, a dictionary, or a few weak tones of the word which are generally not marked by the weakening of the vowel, but the actual hearing of the people is always the subject of the change of the weak sound, Rather than the standard pronunciation on the book. So sometimes some students complain that teachers and foreign languages are different, but more often do not realize that the teacher teaches the standard words, monosyllabic, and in the text listening or other listening materials hear is filtered by the phenomenon of weak reading in the context.

4.4 Shedding

When the attenuation is further strengthened, some phonemes are lost, or some speech is omitted in the process of rapid pronunciation, and the speech units with different sizes often disappear in the speech stream, which forms a drop-off. Vowels in weak syllables often fall off as a result of weakening, which is the same in English and Chinese. For example, the Chinese “[xiao men]” → [xiao mn] can be said as [xiao mn], and the English word happen[hæ p n]→[hæ pn] ,I am→ I’ m.

4.5 Stress

In phonetics, stress is a phenomenon in which a certain syllable is pronounced prominently in a connected syllable. Stress is expressed by increasing the intensity of the tone and by changing the pitch. Sentence stress refers to the emphasis on one or some words in a sentence according to different communication needs. It is characterized by more forceful pronunciation, louder volume and longer time. In all kinds of languages, in a specific environment, stress also often has a means of expressing the meaning of the speaker. For example:

Husband: Honey, i have to take part in a meeting this weekend.

Wife: So you have planed.

The “have” should not be reread as stress, but there is an accent in it, and the implication is: “I thought you wouldn’t have an arrangement”.

4.6 Intonation and Tone Change

In the same sentence, there will be differences in intonation between different meanings, which is also a common phenomenon, and it must also arouse the attention of phonetics and language learning, such as “you are right.; you are right?” The former lowered the tone to say “you are right”, while the latter expressed doubts about the upward tone. “are you right?”

When the syllable is issued continuously, the tone value of some syllables will be affected by the tone of the following tone, thus changing the phenomenon. Also known as concatenated tone change, that is, the method of tone change is used to deal with the combination of words and syllables. The program of changing tone in all tonal languages is an active form, but in some ways it is also a common combination of tones in language.

Chinese is a tonal language, and each syllable has a fixed tone that distinguishes the meaning of the word from the meaning of the word. However, in the stream, due to the influence of the tone of adjacent syllables, the tuning values of some syllables will change. For example, the two voices are connected, the first one becomes like Yangping, example: [dǎng wěi],[měi hǎo], [lǐ xiǎng].

English is not a tonal language, its words do not have a fixed tone of meaning, of course, there is no tone change problem at the word level. Therefore, when native English speakers learn Chinese, the problem of tone change, especially continuous tone change, is a big difficulty. Changes in the tone of words such as “ [xiàn zhì] - [xián zhì] “ and “ [lǎo gōng] - [láo gōng] “ are often ironic

5. The Inspirations of the Analysis of the Phonetic Change

Based on the above comparison and analysis of the phonetic changes between Chinese and English, especially the phonetic changes between Chinese and English, this paper finds out the similarities and differences between the two languages, obtains some regular knowledge, and obtains some experiences in English teaching and English learning. First, the learner must master the scientific pronunciation method to understand the similarities and differences of each phoneme. In addition, the teacher should give the students some guidance on the methods of oral training, listening and training, and the law of some English voice should be explained. In the end, students are asked to read, read, and read more, and at the same time, the teacher guides the students to learn the assimilation, dissimilation, weak reading and so on of the English, and the continuous reading, stress and rhythm of the sentences, so as to better master the law of English learning.

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