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Visual Inferential Elements in EFL Learning in Mbujimayi

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Abstract
The paper focuses on some inferential elements in EFL learning in Mbujimayi. More specifically, the study points out differences occurring in English sound production of /t/, /dʒ/, /ʒ/, /ð/, /v/, and /θ/ by Ciluba speaking learners. After discussing the findings obtained from observation and questionnaire, it has been discovered that the learners' prior linguistic knowledge justifies the errors they make in this regard, the linguistic patterns of the target language being unfamiliar to them. To remedy the issue, we suggest three things: (1) attention, implying that the teacher should work to make the learners recognize words so that they can be aware of them as useful language items. (2) Retrieval, standing for the process indicating that a word may be noticed by the learners and understood in the textual input to the task. (3) Generation, which implies requiring of the learners to use the wanted item in new contexts.

Key-words: Inferential elements, English as a Foreign Language, EFL Learning, Interference.

1. Introduction

This article is an investigation into inferential elements in EFL Learning in Mbujimayi. It discusses different types of inferential elements such as sounds, structures and lexicon. But our main study focuses on sounds production by learners of Mbujimayi in the classroom. As for data collection, we have used error analysis and contrastive study to point out differences occurring in English sound production of /t/ dʒ/ ʒ/ð/v and θ/ by Ciluba speaking learners. These techniques are triangulated to quantitative and qualitative approaches together with library research.

2. Some Language Aspects In EFL Learning

Language learning is an expansion of aspects correlated to the environment of both the teacher and the learners. To succeed this tremendous task, teachers must develop vocabulary (lexical items), syntax (word order), morphology (word form), phonology (sound production), semantics (word meaning), etc.

Kenneth (1972:2) asserts that: "The communicative aspects of language… goes on in our everyday lives as we talk, listen, read, and write". This means that one explores language aspects through creating a communicative event. He also adds that "the noises we call speaking are actually sounds waves that go through the air from one person's mouth to another person's ear. If the second person knows the language being spoken, and his hearing and other faculties are functioning normally, we say that understanding takes place". To put this otherwise, speaking and listening are the major skills to be developed in the early stage of learning. As the habit acquired in the native language will not fit the additional language, the teacher has to push learners to begin making conscious efforts to produce sounds of English in the classroom.

Here, this paper focuses mainly on sounds production as the most visual element pupils learning English interferes with. Newmark (cited in Corder 1981:99) asserts that "interference is simply the result of a performer being called upon to perform before he has learnt the new behaviour". That is, interference is the

incorrect production of what is known in L1 to be performed in L2, this results in error. Biselela (2021:10) says that ‘’interference affects all the levels of language, both speech and perception’’.

When the learner perceives the difference in pronunciation between his /her languages s/he already knows and the language s/he is learning, s/he is likely to determine accuracy of English pronunciation.

With regard to vocabulary, students’ vocabulary is still limited in the early stage of learning, they resort to items they are familiar to. For instance, the learner can say “I need an ancient catalogue” to mean the French “ancien” old/former (English).

Perfective tenses in French are incorrectly realized in English, as ‘Je suis venu’ which can be translated by some learners as “I am come”. As the internal structure of French is not the same as English. I am born to mean “Je suis né”. Also rendering sentences negative seem another type of visual inferential element related to grammar. For instance, ‘Kalonji kèèna uya to’, which can be rendered in English as ‘’Kalonji goes not”. As syntax and morphology are related to grammar, it is no worth discussing them again.

3. Methods

Concerning the collection and analysis of data, we have used questionnaires and observation to collect data; and the meta-cognitive methods which enabled us to evaluate Mbujimayi learners’ own learning. We visited some schools (Mulemba, Dibwa dya Buakane, Muanjadi, Mpokolo and Tuya Kumpala) to see how well learners use sounds, structures and utterances in the classroom. The questionnaire was submitted to the learners in the classroom whereas the observation was conducted into two ways: directly and indirectly. Moreover, students were allowed to work out questions for five hours, that is, one hour per question. As the conditions of the classroom do not fit for them to sit circular, they were in rows.

4. Results

This study comprises five schools as ‘a sample’ for the research of experience and credit of these schools. This is a stratified sample. As each school constitutes a stratum (group) and the questionnaire was based on reading and oral talk.

Table 1

	Number	Reading	Vocabulary	Grammar	Phonology
MULEMBA	20	+ +	++	- +	+ +
DIBUA DYA BUAKANE	18	+ +	++	+ -	+ -
MUANJADI	24	+ -	--	+ -	- -
TUYA KUMPALA	26	+ -	--	+ -	+ +
MPOKOLO	11	+ +	- +	+ -	- -

The horizontal column consists of aspects of the language in the classroom (reading, vocabulary, grammar and phonology). The column opposite to horizontal refers to schools investigated in and the number of learners for each school. The symbol (+) denotes errors highly noticed in each aspect, conversely, (-) denotes the low level of error. We have not preferred to use numbers in here for the simple reason of gradation.

5. DISCUSSION

The questionnaire session was conducted into two ways, amely a reading passage which allows us to check how well the learners pronounce some linguistic chunks such as /f;θ/, /d,v,ð/, /t,θ/.

A. Read this passage loudly:
   The father sends the teacher something for payment. My brother breathed in a specific way, and I thought he could die.
B. Tick the correct answer (a,b,c,d, or e) among the following.
   1) One of the following pairs has not the same consonant sound:

a) Teacher / Feather b) Think/ Father c) Both/Cough d)Brother/ Other e) There/ Oath

2. One of the following items contains the sound/t,θ/

a) Tea/ Think b) Think/Think c) That/oath d) other/live e) Life/something.

3. Which of the following items contains the sound /v/?

a) Photograph b) Either c) There d) Sugar e) Thirsty

4. The sound /t/ interferes with:

a) /θ/ b) /ð/ c) /d/ d) /tʃ/ e) /v/

As for the learners' answers, the table below sketches different ways words are read. Fifty learners were selected for this assessment.

Table 2

QUESTIONS	ANWSERS	FREQUENCIES	PERCENTS
1	a	26	52
	b	6	12
	c	5	10
	d	10	20
	e	3	6
2	a	10	20
	b	16	32
	c	12	24
	d	15	30
	e	3	6
3	a	35	70
	b	10	20
	c	2	4
	d	2	4
		1	2
4	a	10	20
	b	10	20
	c	20	40
	d	0	0
	e	10	20

Below are presented histograms showing each question as well as the answers frequencies which show how words are read by the pupils.

Table 3

QUESTION	ANWSERS	FREQUENCIES	PERCENTS
1	a	26	52
	b	6	12
	c	5	10
	d	10	20
	e	3	6

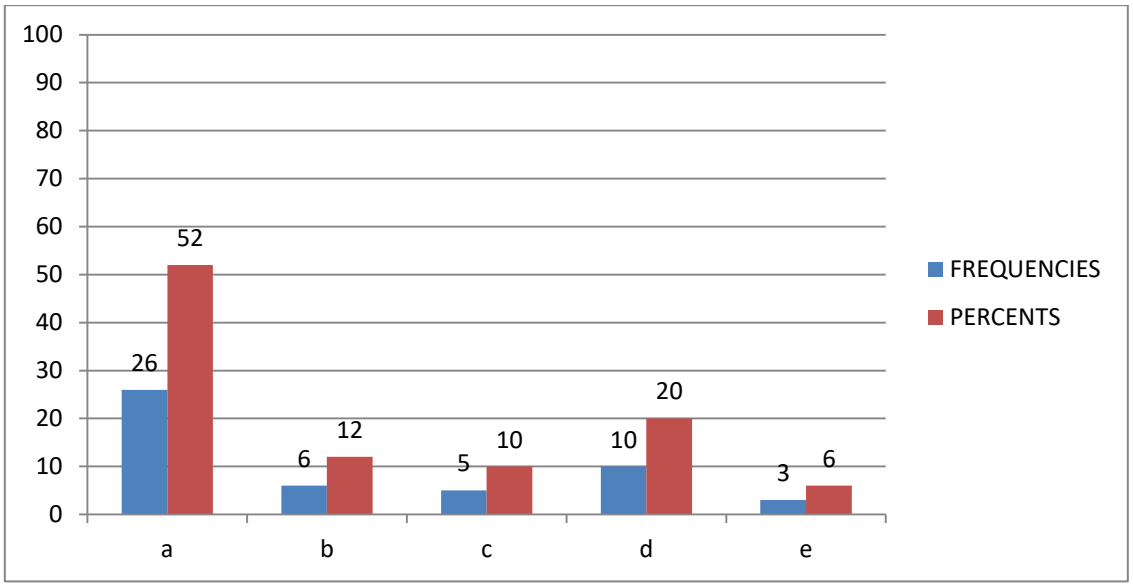


Table 4

QUESTION	ANWSERS	FREQUENCIES	PERCENTS
2	a	10	20
	b	16	32
	c	12	24
	d	15	30
	e	3	6

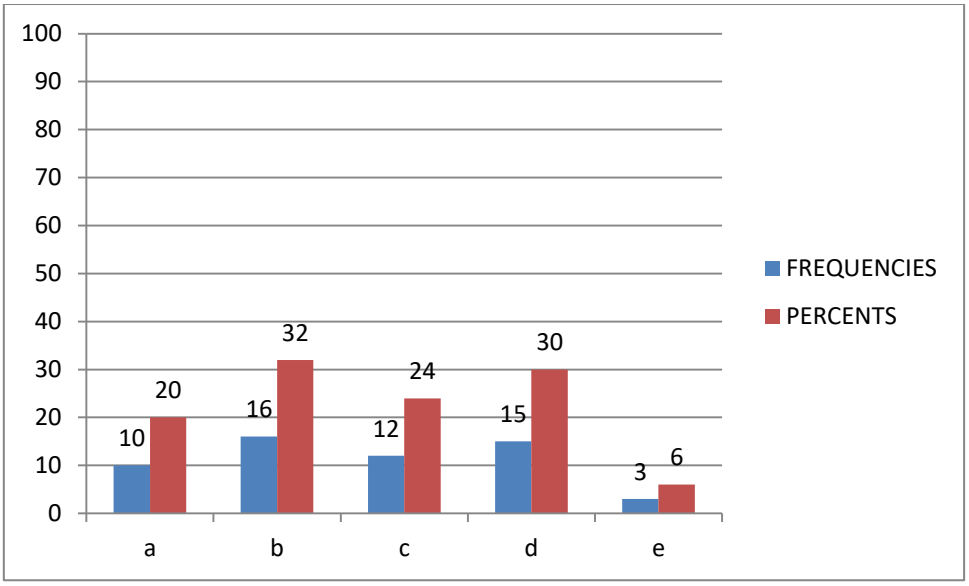


Table 5

QUESTION	ANWSERS	FREQUENCIES	PERCENTS
3	a	35	70
	b	10	20
	c	2	4
	d	2	4
	e	1	2

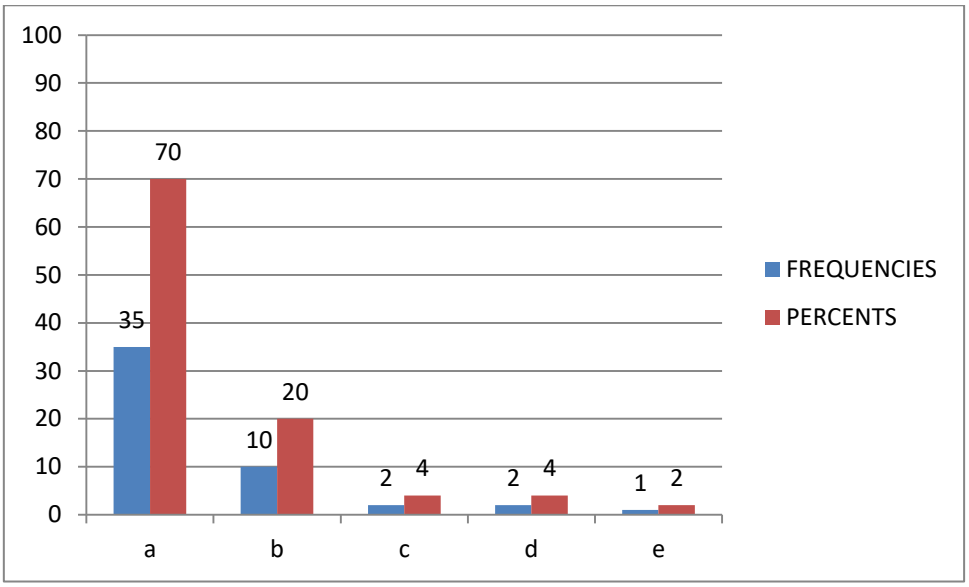
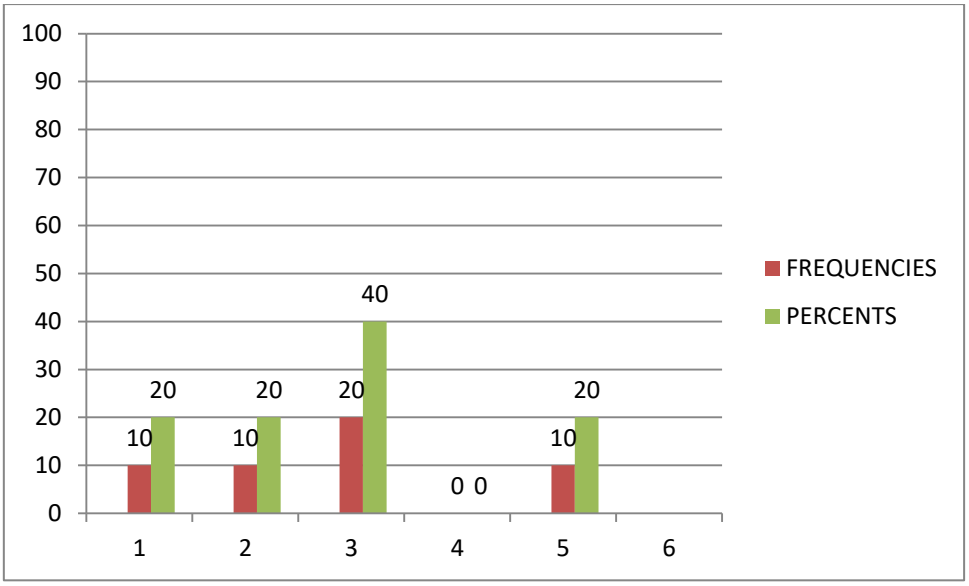


Table 6

QUESTION	ANWSERS	FREQUENCIES	PERCENTS
4	a	10	20
	b	10	20
	c	20	40

	d e	0 10	0 20



Subandowo (2017:204) argues that "interference is effect that is given by process of the other language learning because of learners' language background". The influence of the learner's prior linguistic knowledge, allows us to prove which sounds the learners make errors in, and why. Most learners in Mbujimayi made errors in the production of the following sounds /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /tʃ/, /ð/, /θ/, /v/ and /d/.

/ʒ/— measure /'meʒeə/ learners produced /mezi/, /mezə/, /mezir/.

/dʒ/— judge, Jesus = /ʒyʒ/, /ʒesʌs/ instead of /dʒʌdʒ/ and /dʒizəs/.

/tʃ/ — Teacher /ti:tʃə/ ≠ /tʃi:tʃə/, /'tsitsə/, /'ti:tsə/

/ð/ — Brother /'brʌðə/ ≠ /brɔdə/, /'brɔvə/, /'brʌfə/

/θ/ — Think /θɪŋk/ ≠ /fink/, /tink/

/v/ and /d/ do not have any problem to be pronounced.

These errors are related to the unfamiliarity of learners to the linguistic patterns. This is supported by Baloto (1996) when he says "The foreign language teaching should always be linked to the environment of the learners". As teachers of English, we must foster the learners' experiences of words in order to increase their oral proficiency in EAL learning.

This is why we suggest the three processes for a study of a linguistic chunk, namely:

(1) Attention: Teach learners to recognize a word so that they can be aware of it as a useful language item. Moreover, the negotiation of meaning (i.e. communication) indicates that an item is noticed and that a learner has a gap in his/her knowledge.
(2) Retrieval: This process indicates that a word may be noticed by the leaners and understood in the textual input to the task. This strengthens remembrance.
(3) Generation: This can be either receptive or productive depending on the language users. It requires using the wanted item in new contexts.

6. Conclusion

This study has been based on how learners approach English as an additional language in Mbujimayi. The results have shown that sound production remains a dependent variable the learners interfere with, and both teachers and learners should rely on prior experience and knowledge to overcome this learning problem, especially in the classroom. The influence of prior known chunks is inevitable in this context as everything should be based the learners' background.

Sounds such as /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /tʃ/, /ð/, /θ/ are the main inferential elements learners encounter in the course of the learning process. To solve this plight, teachers should create more and more opportunities which allow learners to communicate and become aware of linguistic chunks.

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