

Cacoepy of Selected English Words among the Bakonzo

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Abstract: Mispronunciation or cacoepy is a common occurrence among L2 learners. Bakonzo have specific words they find difficult pronouncing because of their L1 structure, accent in pronunciation of words which cause interference in L2. This study looked at cacoepies in the English language among the Bakonzo. Qualitative methods were employed because the issue of pronunciation is sensitive and requires close observation of the subjects. The identified sound patterns were recorded, analysed and results were explained in tables. They showed that cacoepies were important elements in teaching pronunciation and need to be paid attention by the language teachers. It was recommended that teachers of language needed to understand the L1 of their students in order to help them overcome those cacoepies.

Keywords: cacoepy, English words, Bakonzo/ Lukonzo

1. INTRODUCTION

According to (Dictionary.com, 2021) cacoepy is a term which was first recorded in 1840-1845 as a translation from Greek of the word “kakopeia” meaning “faulty language”. It refers to incorrect pronunciation or mispronunciation. This mispronunciation is a result of interference from the learner’s L1. Research on the way L2 is processed in language production has shown that the properties of the first language (L1) modulate second language learners’ L2 processing. Traces of L1 phonological properties are reflected in L2 learners’ foreign language accent (Najamudin, 2017). Furthermore, other factors such as the age at which the L2 is acquired also affects the way L2 is processed. (Bell, J. M., Ben Hedia, S. & Plag, I. , 2021).

Research on L2 acquisition suggests that there is a progressive loss of acquisition capacity dependent on the age of optimal acquisition (Uswatun, 2019). Sometimes acquisition of L2 becomes very difficult (Islam, 2018). In the case of phonology, even early bilinguals have shown difficulties in the processing of some L2. (Chaira, 2015)

Interference refers to the errors in the learners’ use of foreign language that can be traced back to their mother tongue. The transfer is the influence that the learner’s L1 exerts over the acquisition of L2 as a result of the learner’s perceptions of what is transferable and their stage of acquisition of the L2. (Jan Volin & Radek Skarnitzl, 2018). Foreign accent is the inability of non-native language users to produce the target language with the phonetic accuracy required by native listeners for acceptance of native speech

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Qualitative research methods were employed through direct observation, face to face interviews, analytic induction, archival research and participating in discussions with Bakonzo students. Data was collected using both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included: naturalistic observation, observation field notes, one o one interviews. Secondary sources included: documents on L1 interference on L2. Data was coded, classified into themes, interpreted and conclusions were drawn after analysis of the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Words Bakonzo Find Difficult Pronouncing in English

1. Words that end with “ty”, “ry”, “nt”

L1 speakers of Rukonzo experience difficulties in articulating certain sounds that are alien to their mother tongue. This leads to production of sounds they deduce as being related to the word under study.

- i City [si-tee] many will pronounce it [si-teh]
- ii Treaty [tree-tee] many will pronounce it [tree-teh]
- iii Equity [eh-kwuh-tee] many will pronounce it [eh-kwuh-teh]
- iv Proximity [prok-si-muh-tee] many will pronounce it [prok-si-muh-teh]
- v Naivety [nai-ee-vuh-tee] many will pronounce it [nai-ee-vuh-teh]
- vi Calamity [kuh-la-muh-tee] many will pronounce it [kuh-la-muh-teh]
- vii Trinity [tri-nuh-tee] many will pronounce it [tri-nuh-teh]
- viii Exclamatory [uhk-skla-muh-tree] many will pronounce it [uhk-skla-muh-toh-ray]
- ix Laboratory [luh-bo-ruh-tree] many will pronounce it [luh-bo-ruh-toh-ray]
- x Mandatory [man-duh -tuh-ree] many will pronounce it [man-duh -toh-ray]
- xi Victory [vik-tuh-ree] many will pronounce it [vik-toh- ray]
- xii Twenty [twen-tee] many will pronounce it [twen-teh]
- xiii Century [sen-chuh-ree] many will pronounce it [sen-chuh-ray]

The sound /tee/ is not used in Rukonzo, so wherever that sound is found, a native speaker of Rukonzo will relate it to the nearest sound and in this case it becomes /teh/. This is the same case with sounds/ree/ which is brought to the closest sound /ray/.

2. Words with “nc” or “nk” and “nc” for example;

- i Incorrect [in-kuh-rekt] the nasal sound /kuh / is pronounced/goh/ as [in-goh-rekt]
- ii Anchor [ang-kuh] the nasal sound /kuh/ is pronounced /guh/ as [ang-guh]
- iii Tank [tangk] the blocked sound /ngk/ is pronounced /nguh/ as [tan-guh]
- iv Tanker [tang-kuh] the sound /kuh/ is pronounced /guh/ as [tang-guh]
- v Uncle [uhng-kl] the sound/kl/ is pronounced /gl/ as [uhng-gl]
- vi Cancer [kan-suh] the sound /an/ is lost and it is pronounced as [ku –suh]
- vii Council [kown-sl] the sound /own/ is replaced by /aa/and is pronounced [kaa-sl]
- viii Counsel [kown-sl] the sound /sl/ is replaced by /saw/and is pronounced [kaa-saw]
- ix Drink [dringk] the sound/k/ is replaced by /g/ and is pronounced [dringg]
- x Brink [bringk] the sound /k/ is replaced by /g/ and is pronounced [bringg]
- xi Shrink [shringk] the sound /k/is replaced by /g/ and is pronounced [shringg]

3. Words with “mp” for example;

- i Example [uhg-zaam-pl] the /amp/ sound is replaced by /bawl/ in [uhg-za-bawl]
- ii Compare [kuhm-peauh] is pronounced [kuhm –beuh] losing the plosive /p/
- iii Impaired [uhm-peuhd] is pronounced [uhm-beuhd] losing the plosive /p/ and is replaced by the bilabial /b/

- iv Incapacitate [in-kuh-pa-suh-tayt] is pronounced [in-guh-ba:-suh-tayt] where the /kuh/ sound is replaced by /guh/ and the /pa/ sound is replaced with the /ba:/ sound. Both /pa/ and /ba/ sounds are bilabial but the failure to pronounce the /pa/ sound is because of its non existence in Rukonzo.
- v Incapable [uhn-kay-puh-bl] is pronounced [uhn-gay-buh-bl] where the /kay/ is replaced by the /gay/ and /puh/ sound is replaced by /buh/ sounds they are familiar with in their L1
- vi Temple [tem-pl] is pronounced [tem-bl] here /p/ is also changed to /b/
- vii Computer [kuhm-pyoo-tuh] is pronounced [kuhm-byoo-tuh] the bilabial/p/ is replaced by the /b/ sound.
- viii Impeccable [uhm-peh-kuh-bl] is pronounced [uhm-beh-guh-bl] where the /p/ sound is replaced by /b/ and /k/ is replaced by /g/ because both /p/ and /k/ are alien sounds in their mother tongues.

4. Words with “nq” for example

Propinquity [pruh-ping-kwuh-tee] it is pronounced [pruh-bing-gwuh-teh] this word has all the three trouble sounds/p/,/k/,ee/ which are changed into /b/, /g/,/eh/ respectively.

These interferences require the teacher to know where the students are having difficulties and assign them individualized assistance.

B. Distinguishing Lukonzo Sounds

The unique sounds of Lukonzo in the table below did not have equivalents in English. L2 speakers settled for approximants sounds in the target language- English. This presented challenges for the Lukonzo native speaker trying to learn English as the L2. They had to put in more effort to create new sounds which were totally alien to their mother tongues. Many got discouraged after a few trials and gave up altogether choosing to pronounce the L2 words in a kind of pidgin version of English.

Table1. *Distinct Lukonzo Sounds*

S/N	LUKONZO WORD	Lukonzo sound	Distinction	English Translation
1	<u>Kutse</u>	/tse/	There is no equivalent sound in English	Or
2	<u>Omwatsi</u>	/tsi/	There is no equivalent sound in English	News
3	<u>Wasingya</u>	/njah/	/g/ sound is pronounced as /j/	Thank you
4	<u>Erithoghotya</u>	/woh/, /teuh/	/th/ sound is pronounced as /w/ There is no equivalent sound in English for /teuh/	Destroying completely
5	<u>Amaghetse</u>	/ye/ , /teah/	/gh/ is pronounced /y/	Water
6	<u>Eritsumbya</u>	/mbeuh/	There is no equivalent sound in English	Thanking someone for cooking
7	<u>Omungyakyangyaky</u>	/njiah/, /njiah/	/ngy/ is pronounced /nji/ the /g/ is pronounced /j/	Morning
8	<u>Olhwimbo</u>	/luwee/	/lh/ is pronounced /lu/	A song
9	<u>Olhwanzo</u>	/nzoh/	There is no equivalent sound in English	Love
10	<u>Enzwangya</u>	/nzwah/	There is no equivalent sound in English	Original/cradle
11	<u>Eritsweka</u>	/tswa/	There is no equivalent sound in English	Extinction
12	<u>Eritsuka</u>	/tsoo/	There is no equivalent sound in English	Beginning
13	<u>Erihwika</u>	/lwih/	There is no equivalent sound in English	Letting go
14	<u>Erihwalha</u>	/lwah/	There is no equivalent sound in English	Being sick

15	Emighulhu	/wuh/	/gh/ is pronounced as /w/	Times
16	Embitha	/tah/	/th/ is pronounced as /t/ and the /h/ is silent.	Secret
17	embaghane	/ghah/	There is no equivalent sound in English	Difference
18	Olhulisiryo	/ryaw/	There is no equivalent sound in English	Grazing field
19	Obuyiketherwa	/te/	/th/ is pronounced as /t/ and the /h/ is silent	Trust
20	erithulhughanya	/nya/	There is no equivalent sound in English	Spreading

C. Common Lukonzo Words with Unique Pronunciations

In table 2 below common words used in day to day interactions in Lukonzo were identified. These words had similar sounds like those in table 1 above. Lukonzo as a language contains numerous sounds which a child was taught to perfect right from childhood. After a child had learnt to pronounce the various nasal, fricative sounds, it was an uphill task for them trying to master another language especially English which was totally different from their native tongue. This is in conformity with the speech learning model of (James Emil Flege, & Ocke -Schwen Bohn, 2021).

Table2. Juxtaposition of Lukonzo and English words

S/N	Lukonzo Word	English Translation
1	Amajani	Tea
2	Ebyalya	Food
3	Eryogha	Bathing
4	Eryambalha	Dressing up
5	Ghenda	Go
6	Ikalha	Sit
7	Thwalha	Take
8	thibitha	Run
9	anguha	Hurry
10	Ekyi?	What?
11	Idi?	When?
12	Inga	Yes
13	Eyih	No
14	mwanithu	dear
15	obuthuku	time
16	Enzira	pathway
17	omwira	friend
18	omwanze	beloved
19	esahani	plate
20	erithendekero	School
21	Ekalamu	Pen
22	Ekyithabu	A book
23	Ekyithumbi	A chair/seat
24	Olhuyi	A door
25	Omuyi	Home
26	Engebe	Life
27	ekyithiri	Basket
28	obukyi	Honey
29	esyombulho	Money
30	embido	A jerrycan
31	obwimiri	Bearing witness

When the words in Lukonzo in table 2 are juxtaposed with their meanings in English the difference is like night and day. This means that students of English L2 have to learn a whole new set of spelling and meaning and pronunciations for every word even the common words they will have to use daily while speaking English.

4. CONCLUSION

It is the teacher's responsibility to identify the phonological and syntactic properties which are likely to affect his students' production of L2. This should be done to ensure that the interference is addressed in a friendly setting, minimised, or averted for the students.

Mispronunciations will always be part and parcel of L2. Learners should be made aware of this fact before they are introduced to L2 or during the process of learning L2 to enable them prepare for the challenges ahead and develop tenacity to persevere through the tough syntactic, phonological, and semantic sessions.

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