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FIRST LANGUAGE (L1) INTERFERENCE IN LEARNING ENGLISH PLOSIVE AND FRICATIVE SOUNDS AND PRONOUNCING ENGLISH CONSONANT CLUSTERS AMONG HAUSA LEARNERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT



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Learning English as a second language seems to be a daunting task to many students, especially to those who English language is not their first language. Hausa learners to be specific like other learners of English as a second language have their own distinctive problems when it comes to learning English language. This study investigates the difficulty face by Hausa speakers in pronouncing some English segmental phonemes and consonant clusters, specifically, it seeks 1. To identify the English fricative and plosive sounds that pose problem to Hausa learners of English language 2. To identify the source(s) of difficulties in producing English fricative and plosive sounds among Hausa learners of English language. 3. To find out why Hausa speakers do not pronounce English words with consonant clusters correctly. It is viewed that first language often interfere with the target language which leads to error in pronunciation (Waya & Kwambeh, 2003). This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, data was collected through pronunciation test involving thirty (30) participants from Universiti Putra Malaysia. Data analysis was done based on Comparative Analysis Hypothesis. The findings demonstrated that five (5) English fricatives (/θ/, /ð/, /f/, /v/, /z/) pose problems to the participants while other fricatives (/j/ (symbolised as /sh/)), /s/, /z/, /h/ were produced without hurdles.

Keywords: First language interference, English plosive and fricative sounds, English consonant clusters, Hausa learners.

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INTRODUCTON

One of the Chadic languages, Hausa is a language with about fifty two million speakers, spoken as a first language by about thirty-four million (34) people, as a second language by around eighteen (18) million people. The language is mainly spoken in Northern Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Burkina Faso Cameroun Central Africa Republic, Chad,

Congo, Eriteria, Germany, Ghana, Sudan and Togo (Frank, A.2010).

Native Speakers of Hausa Language

The Native speakers of Hausa are found mostly in the Northern part of Nigeria, Niger, and Chad. The language is essentially used as a language of trade across the larger part of West Africa which include countries like: Benin, Ghana, Cameroun,

Togo, Cote d'ivoire, Central Africa with countries like; Chad, CAR, Equatorial Guinea, North-western Sudan, particularly among Muslim populations. The language is also used by some of the international radio stations such as the BBC, Radio France Internationale, China Radio International, Voice of America, and Deutsche Welle, broadcast in Hausa. Hausa language is also taught at universities in most African countries and around the world (Jaggar, P. 2001).

Hausa Literature: The history of Hausa literature is a long one and from a much deeper root of history. In contemporary sense, the literature is not much broader but rather restrictive. Hausa people started creative writing around fourteenth century or long before then. That was the time when the Hausa accepted Islam as a religion. Then, Hausa people adopted Arabic script and mode of writing to write Hausa in what is popularly known as Ajami form of writing. The writing was used for scholarly works, communication, business and creativity up to the present time by millions of people especially those who never had any form of western education. Around 1960s and early 1970s Ajami was used by large number of people. With the rampant use of Roman script and some socio-historical impacts, the use of Ajami has declined in practice. One important thing is that all Nigerian currencies carry Ajami inscription and some number of commercial products like, Swan bottle water, cooking oil etc. Triumph and Alfijir newspapers are some of the newspapers that are wholly published in Ajami. In recent time, there was a call by some scholars for the revival of Ajami. It is indisputably true that Islam and Arabic civilizations have profound influence on Hausa language, culture and tradition. As in some languages, poetry was the earliest genre of creative writing in Hausa language. The use of poetry then was mainly for scholarship, enlightenment, mobilization, campaigns and revolutions. It worth noting that the peak of poetry usage was in relation to the Jihad of Usmanu Dan fodio in the 19th century. And other genres of literature were non-existent owing to the religious position which discouraged fictional stories in fear of making them to appear real and authentic except with the advent of British colonialist in the early 20th century.

The emergence of Hausa prose fiction started with the introduction of Roman scripts, renowned writers like Abubakar Imam and his colleagues under the guidance of Dr Rupert East realised the birth of what may be called modern Hausa literature. In 1933, the first set of Hausa novels were published and subsequently the second and third generation of Hausa novelist were emerged and eventually the fourth generation came into light in the Mid 1980s. Somehow controversial was the arrival of fourth generation of Hausa writers called (Soyayya) (Love Writers) or market literature while others call them millennium generation. Whatever their name is, it is true that these writers generate a lot of controversies more than their predecessors. They are levelled as immature, they lack wisdom, uneducated and corrupting the minds of youths Jaggar, (2001).

Hausa Dialects: As one of the major languages in Nigeria, Hausa language has its different dialects. These dialects are: the Eastern dialects, which include; Kananci spoken in Kano, Bausanchi spoken in Bauchi, Dauranchi in Daura, Gudduranci in Katagum and Misau also in Bauchi and part of Borno and Hadejanci in Hadejia. Western dialects comprises sakkwatanci in Sokoto, Kutebanci in taraba, Katsinanci in Katsina, Arewanci in Gobir, Adar, Kebbi and Zamfara and Kurhuwanci in Kurfi Niger state. But Katsina is Transitional between Eastern and Western dialects. Among these dialects, Kano dialect (Kananci is assumed to be the standard dialect, which BBC, Deutsche Welle, Radio France Internationale and voice of America among others deliver their international services.

The North western to eastern dialects are some that lost tonality, these are spoken in the Northernmost Sahel and Mid-Saharan regions in west and central Niger in Tillaberi, Tahoua, Dosso, Maradi, Agadez and Zinder regions with slightly different grammatical and lexical structures because of contact with Tuareg and Zarma groups and cultural changes. These dialects have the quality of being non-tonal or pitch accent dialects Paul (1996).

Hausa Phonology: Hausa language like any other language has its phonological sounds and this will highlight the position of the language among world languages. Hausa language has twenty four

consonant sounds, (Hayes, B. 1990). These are: /b/, /ɸ/, /c/, /d/, /d/, /f/, /g/, /h/, /j/, /k/, /k/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /r/, /r/, /s/, /sh/, /t/, /ts/, /w/, /y/ /'y/ /z/.

Hausa language has 5 phonetic vowel sounds which are both single and long giving a total of ten (10) vowel phonemes generally called monophthongs and joint vowel sounds that are called Diphthongs giving a total number of fourteen (14) vowel phonemes.

Single Vowels: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/. **Long vowels:** /aa/, /ee/, /ii/, /oo/, and /uu/. The **diphthongs** are: /ai/, /au/, /iu/ and /ui/.

Problem statement

Hausa speakers find it difficult to pronounce some English segmental phonemes. Their first language at times interfere with the target language which leads to error in pronunciation (Waya & kwambeh, 2003).

Objectives of the study: The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the English fricative and plosive sounds that pose problem to Hausa learners of English language
2. To identify the source(s) of difficulties in producing English fricative and plosive sounds among the Hausa learners of English language
3. To find out why Hausa speakers do not pronounce English words with consonant clusters correctly

Research Questions: The study also aims to answer the following questions:

1. Which among the English fricative and plosive sounds pose problem to Hausa learners of English language?
2. What are the sources of difficulties for Hausa speakers while producing English fricative and plosive sounds?
3. Why do Hausa speakers pronounce English words with consonant clusters incorrectly?

Literature Review

Status of English language in Nigeria and Africa

It is obvious that English language is spoken in tandem with other local languages competitively in most African countries. This is apparently true of countries like Nigeria where English language is a

lingua franca and also second language. Nigeria is a country with many diverse parts and different local languages that are spoken relatively different number of speakers Isa (2011). In Nigeria English is used either as an official or a second language by most of its population and a significant number of people in Nigeria use indigenous languages as a means of communication. So English language can be called an exoglossic where it competes with other local languages (Mohammed, 2011). Countries like Nigeria Sierra Leone and Ghana can be cited as examples where English can be called an exoglossic language. The position English language in Nigeria is different because majority of the population use it as a medium of communication especially in the south-south and south-eastern part of the country. Southern and Western (Igbo and Yoruba region) parts of Nigeria are considered as early bilinguals while Northern (Hausa region) part of Nigeria is considered as late bilinguals. In schools, English language is used as a medium of instruction and it is used for inter-ethnic communication. If a Yoruba man meets a Hausa man for instance, English language can be used as a means of communication between them (Isa, 2011).

Isa (2011) also adds that the updated constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria stressed the continuous use of English language in business and debate in the national and state house of assemblies. And other levels and arms of government. English language is also used in the mass media, commerce and international transaction.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Studies were conducted on the pronunciation problems resulted from the use of mother tongue on English pronunciation in different languages of the world. For instance Balouch (2013) conducted a study on Arabic interference towards learning L2: An analysis of English spelling used by Arabic speakers at undergraduate level. The finding highlights that there is a replacement of /b/ with /p/ and occasionally /p/ with /b/ sound by Arabic learners of English language. The replacement was as a result of their native language's interference. They do not have /p/ consonant sound in their L1 so the Arabic learners often replace it with the one that

is closer to the one available in their L1. The replacement occurs like this: if /p/ appears at the beginning or initial part of the word vowel /o/ then /p/ sound will be used to replace /b/ sound. And if /p/ sound occurs at the beginning before the sound /r/ but in polysyllabic words then /b/ sound will be used to replace. If /p/ sound appears after /m/ sound in the middle of a word then /b/ sound replacement occurs. The substitution of these sounds /p/ and /b/ or /p/ with /b/ mostly occur in nouns.

Another study on pronunciation problems was carried out by Tsorjan and Aji (2014) among Jukun English speakers the study specifically focuses on Jukun which have many dialects that includes: Jibu, Kona, Nyfon, Wanu, and Wapan. Sample for this study included one hundred educated native speakers of Jukun and they were given some English words to read. The study found that Jukun speakers of English language experience pronunciation problems owing to the influence of mother tongue. For instance, in pronouncing a word that has four consonant clusters in a final position of a word, they face difficulties as such kind of words are not available in Wapan example, exempts, tempts etc. this may result to dropping of the final consonant. The study also noticed that there is a pronunciation problem with the cluster of two consonants that appear at final position of a word. For instance, payment and mankind. They drop the final /d/ sound in both words. Additionally, the finding also observed that the Jukun speakers also have problem in pronouncing words with /θ/ and /ð/ sounds so they make the vowel at the centre /a/ more open.

More studies were conducted on Hausa native speakers' pronunciation (Aliyu, 2011) conducted a study on the role of the ESL teacher on students pronunciation of / ð / and / θ / sounds in some selected secondary schools in Bauchi state. Interview was used as a means of data collection for the teachers while students were given reading tasks alongside observation. The study revealed that teachers who are supposed to be the students, role model, contribute negatively towards students' pronunciation as well as students' peer groups.

Another study was carried out by Mohammed (2011) on the influence of mother

tongue on the spoken English of some students in Government Girls' Secondary School Nguru, Yobe State. Using interview as an instrument of data collection, the study observed that L2 learners of English language do not have the ability and effective skills like the native speakers, the manifestation of pronunciation errors were noticed from the learners. These errors are supposed to be corrected by their English language teachers to acquire native like speakers' proficiency. In the study a table that consisted of words that have problematic sounds in different categories were given to the students for pronunciation test

Similar study was carried out by Mohammed (2011) also on the interference of mother tongue in second language acquisition among Hausa learners of English language. There are some sounds that the study identified that are either absent totally in the Hausa sound system but share free variation or complementary distribution with other English sound phonemes. These sounds tend to be problematic when learning English standard pronunciation by Hausa learners of English. For instance, there is the substitution of voiced // with /z/ and the voiceless / ð / with /s/ or /t/ and consonant sound /v/ with /b/.

This study therefore, seeks to identify the consonant sounds and consonant clusters that give difficulty to Hausa speakers of English language as a second language. The technique chooses for this study to collect data will include a list of words and sentences containing English problematic consonants and consonant clusters.

Methodology

Research design: qualitative descriptive approach

Method of data collection: pronunciation test

Participants: thirty (30) post graduate students in Universiti Putra Malaysia. The subjects of this study were the native speakers of Hausa language currently studying at Universiti Putra Malaysia. All are post graduate students of 25-40 years of age. The samples were 27 males and 3 females. The selection was based on the availability and convenience. This is because most of the students from Northern Nigeria that speak Hausa are males and this may be because of religious reasons that most parents and husbands do not allow their

female children and wives to go far for studies. The participants were not gathered in one place, but the researchers looked for them from different parts of the school, including: the libraries, food courts, classes, mosques and shops.

The participants were informed about the rationale of the study, although, it was stated on the pronunciation test paper. The participants were also told to feel at ease before reading the pronunciation test. The voice transcription was done with the advice of Dr Murtala Dan Gulla a linguistic lecturer at the Universiti of Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Instrumentation: fifteen (15) sentences and thirty words (30) were given to the participants to read while the researchers recorded on their cell phones

Ethical considerations: to avoid bias, the researchers did not intervene while the participants were reading the sentences and pronouncing the words. And the participants' identities were not required in the process of collecting the data and the recorded data will not be shared with anyone apart from the course lecturer, to ensure confidentiality.

Data analysis: Comparative Analysis Hypothesis was employed in analysing the data collected. The focus of this theory is the idea of interference which often comes from first language as the main barrier to second language learning, and the strong claim of predicting errors and difficulties of second language learners (Keshavarz, 2012).

Results and Discussion

1. Which among the English fricative and plosive sounds pose problem to Hausa speakers of English language?

To answer the above question, the tables below are used to explain. From the tables, the mark [x] is used to show there is a problem in pronouncing the English sound, and the mark [tick] is used to indicate that the participants did not have any problem in pronouncing the English sound.

From the fifteen (15) English sounds, the result shows that Hausa speakers have problem mostly in pronouncing words with fricative sounds: /θ/ /ð/ /f/ /v/ / ʒ /

RESULTS

Table 1 on English fricative and plosive sounds

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
θ	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	X
ð	x	x	✓	✓	x	X	✓	x	x	X
f	x	✓	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	✓
V	x	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓
ʒ	x	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓

	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15	P16	P17	P18	P19	P20
θ	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
ð	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓
f	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X
V	x	x	x	✓	x	x	x	x	x	✓
ʒ	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	x	✓

	P21	P22	P23	P24	P25	P26	P27	P28	P29	P30
θ	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓
ð	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
f	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	✓
V	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X
ʒ	x	✓	x	✓	✓	x	x	✓	x	X

2. What are the sources of difficulties for Hausa speakers while producing English fricative and plosive sounds?

To answer the above question, contrastive analysis of the sounds of the languages was employed. Only then can we explore the source of difficulties.

Table 2

English fricatives			Hausa fricatives		
	Description	symbol		Description	Symbol
1	Dental fricative	θ °	1	Dental fricatives	- -
2	Lavio-dental fricatives	f v	2	- -	- -
3	Alveolar fricatives	s z	3	Alveolar fricatives	s z
4	Post-alveolar fricatives	ʃ ʒ	4	Post-alveolar fricatives	sh -
5	Glottal fricative	h	5	Glottal fricative	H
			6	Bilabial fricatives	ɸ -

Comparison of English and Hausa plosive sounds

Table 3

English Plosives			Hausa Plosives		
	Description	Symbols		Description	Symbols
1	Bilabial Plosive	p b	1	Bilabial Plosive	- B
2	Alveolar Plosive	t d	2	Alveolar Plosive	t d
3	Velar Plosive	k g	3	Velar Plosive	k g
			4	Palatalized glottal Plosive	?j
			5	Labialized Velar Plosive	kw gw
			6	Palatalized Velar Plosive	kj gj
			7	Bilabial Implosive	- ɓ
			8	Retroflex Implosive	- ɗ
			9	Alveolar Ejective	s' -
			10	Velar Ejective	k -
			11	Labialises Velar Ejective	k'w -
			12	Palatalised Velar Ejective	k'j

The table below shows the total number of participants for the study. They are thirty in number, and /cc/ represents consonant clusters. There are fifteen consonant clusters in the fifteen sentences constructed. The participants read the sentences aloud while the researchers recorded their voices. In the transcription of the data, two alphabets were

used: [N] to indicate there is no insertion between the consonant clusters in the word pronounced and [Y] to show yes there is insertion between the consonant clusters in the word pronounced. While [D] points out that the participants pronounced the word totally different from the one presented.

Table 4 Consonant clusters

	C/C	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC	CC
Participant 1	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Participant 2	D	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Participant 3	D	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y
Participant 4	D	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N

Participant 5	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Participant 6	D	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Participant 7	D	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Participant 8	D	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Participant 9	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
Participant 10	D	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Participant 11	D	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Participant 12	D	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Participant 13	D	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Participant 14	D	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Participant 15	D	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Participant 16	D	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Participant 17	D	Y	Y	Y	N	D	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Participant 18	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Participant 19	D	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Participant 20	D	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Participant 21	D	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Participant 22	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Participant 23	D	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Participant 24	D	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Participant 25	D	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Participant 26	D	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
Participant 27	D	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N

Participant 28	D	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
Participant 29	D	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
Participant 30	D	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y

Findings and Discussions

Based on the comparative analysis of these languages, we can deduce that English and Hausa share similar fricatives and plosives, but English has more fricatives compared to Hausa. On the contrary, Hausa has higher number of fricatives than English. While English language has both dental and labiodental fricatives, Hausa language does not have any. Also, English language has voiced post or palato-alveolar fricative, but it is absent in Hausa language. The Hausa plosives also includes implosives and ejectives unlike English that has only pulmonic Roach (2009).

Although our subjects are all postgraduate students which are exposed to native-like pronunciation and were so conscious in reading the text given, many of them found it difficult to produce the sounds as accurate as possible. Had it been they were subconscious in their normal and natural use of language, the problems in sound production might be more noticeable. Accordingly, we discovered that 5 English fricatives (/θ/, /ʃ/, /f/, /v/, /ʒ/) pose problems to the participants while other fricatives (/ʃ/ (symbolised as /sh/)), /s/, /z/, /h/ were produced without hurdles. For instance, /θ/ is substituted with the sound of /t/. /ʃ/ is substituted with /d/. /v/ is changed with /b/. /ʒ/ is replaced with /dʒ/ which symbolised as /j/. All the sounds that were substituted with, are available in Hausa sounds. Hausa language has voiceless palato-alveolar fricative /ʃ/ which is symbolised as /sh/. However, in respect to voiceless bilabial plosive /ɸ/, it is articulated the same way with bilabial plosives, that is, through upper lip and lower lip. This sound does not occur in English, but is available in Hausa language Jagar (2001). Thus, the sound symbolised by /f/ in English is produced by placing the upper front teeth against the lower lip. When they become apart, the sound is formed. This means, in producing this sound, the lips move close

to each other. Other dialects of Hausa sometimes their lips become attached together by producing /p/. Therefore, Hausa sound orthographically written ‘f’ is not produced like English ‘f’. In Hausa ‘f’ is a bilabial sound which symbolised as /ɸ/. Hence, the constriction of the lips to some Hausa speaker is so tight that ‘f’ sound very much like English ‘p’ eg fara=grasshopper, fili=open place. In terms of English plosive sounds, the result has shown that none of the participants found all the six (/p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/) problematic.

Therefore, it is noticeable at this juncture that those English fricative sounds which are similar to that of Hausa in all respects are easier to pronounce (Jagger, 2001). While those English fricatives that are different or are not available in Hausa language pose more problems to Hausa speakers. Hence, this finding coincides with various studies which show that sounds of the target language that are not in learners’ first language tend to be difficult to pronounce. We can conclude that the source of this problem is that sounds are in short supply in speakers’ L1. This is obvious if we consider the findings (plosives used by the participants).

It has been observed that Hausa language has no consonant clusters. As a result, Hausa speakers pronounce most English words that have consonant clusters the same as Hausa words, that is, by insertion. Studies have shown that in studies of production and second language acquisition, it is generally assumed that when speakers produce a vowel between the consonants in a sequence that is phonotactically an error in the native language, it is a result of the phonological insertion of a vowel (e.g., Tarone 1987; Broselow and Finer 1991, Hancin-Bhatt and Bhatt 1998; Davidson, Jusczyk, and Smolensky, 2003). For instance, Tarone (1987) carried out a study on Korean speakers learning English and found that Korean speakers learning

English repaired [stop+liquid] clusters by inserting a schwa between the two consonants and the same problem occurs to Hausa speakers.

Conclusion

The study aimed at identifying some pronunciation problem that Hausa speakers of English language face. Pronunciation test was used as an instrument of data collection. Results from the study have shown that Hausa speakers experience some problems with some English sounds. The problems mainly occur as a result of the absence of these sounds in their native language. The sample of the study were thirty (30) post graduate students from university Putra Malaysia. The study has found that there are five (5) English fricative sounds that pose problem to the participants.

Also the study revealed that English consonant clusters are another aspects that cause problem to the participants and this is because Hausa language has no consonant clusters. Out of 450 instances in the pronunciation of consonant clusters, there were 177 instances of insertions from the participants and 247 instances showed there were no insertions while 26 instances showed a totally different pronunciation of the word presented.

The study concluded that whether the occurrence of the problems from both consonant sounds and consonant clusters were not overwhelming, the fact still remains that problems are present. And one of the limitations of the study is that the study was conducted within short period of time and with very limited number of participants. The study therefore, recommends that more study should be conducted within this area with sufficient time and the number of participants should be significant and the number of words for the pronunciation test should be more in number.

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