

The Plastic Research on College English under the Humanistic Care Philosophy

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Abstract: Humanistic care philosophy improves the learning effect of college English in the educational process practice to some degree, but the recent researches find that affected by the mother tongue, foreign learners show up “fossilization” in their study process. In order to explore Chinese plasticity for mother tongue students’ foreign language phonetic learning, this paper uses the language testing method and selects 32 students majoring in English at our school as respondents to carry out eight-week phonetic training. The findings indicate that the accent problem of foreign learners still has the strong plasticity and this develops the positive role on correcting the phonetic problem of foreign language learners.

1. Introduction

“Time consumption and low efficiency” are main difficulties in English teaching at higher education. Expert proposes that the important reason for such a phenomenon is the shortage of humanistic care. As a result, on the basis of absorbing relevant educational theories, humanistic care philosophy is used to college English teaching[1]. However, recently, we find that most of foreign language learners will reach the “plateau period” in the process of improving language competence, showing the prominent language “fossilization” [2]. Due to dynamic features of interlanguage, the dispute about “fossilization” never stops, but in the phonetic sensing field, researchers transform concern and doubts of the fossilization into its reverse research—the plasticity research on fossilization.

For learners who regard Chinese as mother tongue and English as the second language, the fossilization is also inevitable. The fossilization has become the huge obstacle to improve foreign language competence of Chinese foreign language learners, especially for language learners in English major. As a result, how to avoid from the English language fossilization and fully develop “un-completion” and “plasticity” of students has become an extremely challenging topic in the foreign language teaching field.

In this paper, by using a natural class of freshmen in our English major as a research object, the author uses real-time phonetic listening and distinguishing experiment to study their language changes and phonetic sensing progress, tries to deeply comprehend the formative process of the interlanguage phonetics, and discusses whether listening and distinguishing capacity of target language phonetics has the capacity to enhance plasticity.

2. The experimental method

2.1. The phonetic test questions

Before starting the experiment, the phonetic level pretesting of respondents is conducted. The pretesting questions are modified from the phonetic training pretesting questions. The key is to inspect three phonetics /æ /-/e /, /i /-/i: / and /r / - /l /[3] in spoken English of students whose mother tongue is Chinese. The test questions include 25 minimum opposite pairs, such as words regarding /æ / and /e /: and /end, axe /ex and bad /bed, words regarding /i / - /i: /, including its /eats, dim /deem, did /heed and fills /feels. The situation of different positions of each phonetic in words are contained, such as rug with r in the prefix, ford in the middle, scour in suffix, and crime in

consonant. Moreover, these words conduct phonological competence after-testing in the phonetic training. In order to avoid from the testing effect, on the basis of reserving the pretesting questions, the after-testing questions add new words, such as fit/feet, tin/teen, and labor/label, and adjust the presentation sequence of words. New words don't show up in the phonetic training, either. Moreover, the difficulty degree is almost equal to pretesting questions. Respondents should complete the pronunciation test and audition test.

2.2. The experimental process

The experiment is lasting for eight weeks. In the first week of the term, respondents are conduct the English phonetic pretesting in class. Before the pronunciation test, test requirements are clearly elaborated to respondents. Moreover, everyone has 10min for preparation. Moreover, the test process records and numbers each student' reading. And it is the same in the audition test. After the end of after-testing, respondents conduct English phonetic training. The training design of the research organically combines cross-language migration with the multi-modal teaching mode under the guidance of humanistic care philosophy and uses voices, pictures, videos and audios to mobilize all kinds of language experience for foreign language learners, including phonetic description and analysis, listening exercise, phonetic imitation and communication training.

2.3. Data processing

In order to avoid scoring subjectivity, after the end of testing, twice recording sequence and test are disordered. Three teachers are responsible for scoring with the scoring standard as follows: 90-100, pronunciation (audition) standard, clearness and very close to the target language; 80-89, basically correct pronunciation (audition), fewer errors but no impacts on comprehension; 70-79, high frequency of some errors, but still can maintain communication; 60-69, unclear pronunciation (audition), more errors, and obstacles to comprehension; 60 below, more errors and serious impacts on comprehension. After the end of scoring, SPSS17.0 is used to do statistical analysis for twice phonetic scores.

3. Experimental results

3.1. The overall level comparison on respondents' English phonetics before and after the experiment

Table 1 shows that the phonetic score after the experiment is significantly higher than the result before the experiment($t=-2.18$, $p<0.01$). The average English score of students before the experiment is 75.38. The dispersion degree is also higher, indicating that students' average English phonetic level before the experiment is lower and the development is unbalanced. After the experiment, the average score is improved to 82.45, reducing the standard deviation. The dispersion degree is smaller, showing that after training, students' English phonetic level is generally improved.

Table 1 Comparison on English Phonetics Competence of Respondents before and after the Experiment

Items	Before experiment(M±SD)	After experiment(M±SD)	Mean value difference	t
Phonetic score	75.38±15.63	82.45±8.93	-7.08	-2.18*
Audition score	67.38±12.63	79.45±6.77	-3.94	-1.09*

3.2. Listening and distinguishing accuracy of respondents' vowels

According to different language background categories of pronouncers, Figure 1 marks listening and distinguishing accuracy statistics of respondents' different vowels before and after training. Respondents' vowel sensing results for Chinese people, Dutch and Americans are widely spreading in the diagonal direction, showing that the sensing accuracy is present in the positive correlation with the training duration. However, it seems that the upward trend of accuracy is irrelevant of

pronouncers' mother tongue background. The average value of sensing results is almost the same.

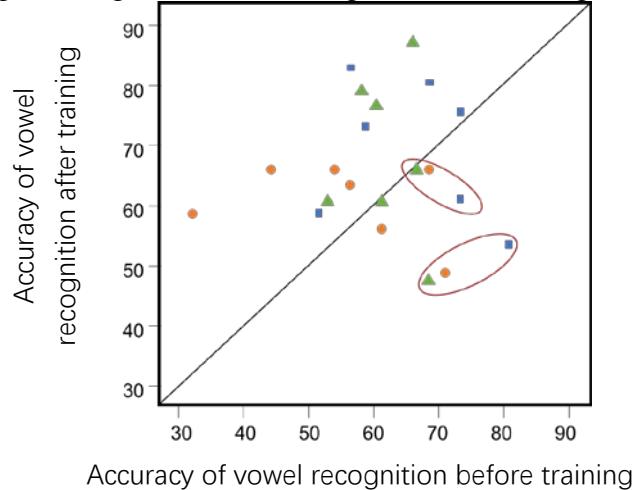


Figure 1 Listening and Distinguishing Accuracy of Respondents' Vowels

We use RM-ANOVA to inspect the sensing accuracy. According to comparison on results before and after training, vowels' testing categories and language background of Chinese, Dutch and American pronouncers are used to fix element variables. The training impact is $F=71.8(P<0.001)$. The test category impact is $F=2.8(P=0.198)$. The pronouncers' nationality impact is $F=18.0(P<0.01)$. It can be easily found that regardless of pronouncers' accent as Chinese, Dutch or American, training promotes students' listening and distinguishing progress of vowels.

3.3. Respondents' listening and distinguishing accuracy influence factors of vowels

By carefully reading students' score table, we are attracted by two pronouncers whose data are marked in oval of Figure 1. The listening and distinguishing results in the second test are relatively higher. The vowels' recognition of these two pronouncers is relatively weak. It is interesting that these two pronouncers are fellows. After the first test, their training attitude is positive. We find that these two pronouncers' vowel sensing result accuracy is relatively lower than other respondents. In general, when phonetic sensing is kept in the relatively stable state. The sensing of two pronouncers is lower than other respondents. We think the primary reason is attributed to too many accent impacts on their mother tongue system.

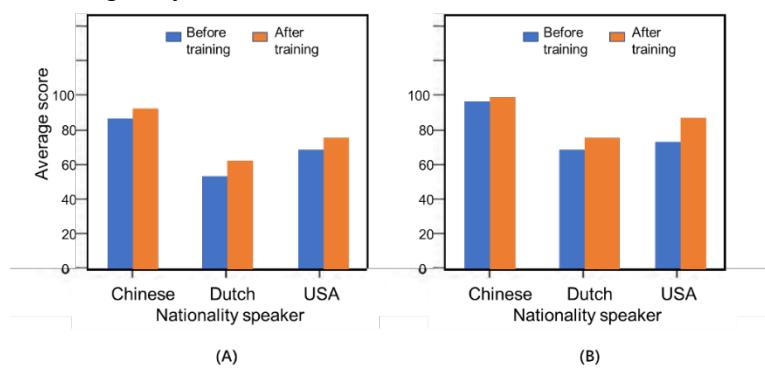


Figure 2 Listening and Distinguishing Accuracy after Removing Special Pronouncers before and after Training

Notes: A—all pronouncers ($N=32$); B-excluding two special pronouncers($N=30$)

4. Conclusions

In twice phonetic competence test, students' vowel pronunciation and audition after training are slightly improved, as shown in Table 1. After training, respondents' phonetic score is obviously improved. As shown in Figure 2, vowels' listening and distinguishing competence is improved by 30-80% of accuracy. We analyze the reasons in two aspects: To begin with, in the first test, their

phonetic competence is very poor. Pronouncers still have the improvement space for vowels' listening and distinguishing. Secondly, it has the high difficulty for Chinese learners to study English vowel system, because Chinese consonants have more quantity, while Chinese consonants are the same with English and have aspirated plosive and null VOT with syllable. In other words, vocal cords' vibration and blow-out time almost concur[4]. With regards to vowels, Chinese has a great difference by comparing with English. Relative to 12 pure vowels in English, Chinese has 6 pure vowels. Chinese excludes diphthong and /r/ vowel. Also, there is no long and short vowel concept in Chinese[5]. After training, respondents' listening and distinguishing for three accents can be improved.

However, differing from our prediction, students don't show up different effects for diverse language input. They spend lots of time watching English-speaking countries, such as BBC, CNN and original films. Also, Chinese learners are used to living in a small circle. They try to sit together in class, so they often listen to English with Chinese accent during the process.

Linguisticicians find that interlanguage is divided into transient fossilization and perpetual fossilization in accordance with its properties and characteristics. Such a difference shows the extremely important application value to foreign language teaching[6]. The research results prove the non-perpetual characteristics of phonetic fossilization from the positive perspective and certify plasticity of phonetic sensing. Since generation of phonetic fossilization is not inborn for learners, it is a gradually developed habit after years of English study, showing that under certain conditions, fossilization can be prevented or relieved. Relatively speaking, phonetic plasticity will be stood out. This research proves that the language input mode is present in positive correlation with plasticity of phonetic sensing.

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