

Second Language Interference on Pronunciation in Learning German as a Foreign Language

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When a second language or a foreign language is learnt, four skills of the target language should be improved. These skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. The native speaker acquires these four skills with ease. In the context of first language acquisition, the four skills are most often acquired in the order of listening first, speaking then reading and writing. A second or a foreign language learner has to acquire these skills with extra effort. Among these four skills when the attention is focused on speaking and listening, speech sounds (phonetics and phonology) are very important for a successful communication. When a foreign language is learnt it is influenced by the knowledge of either the mother tongue or a second language. Language interferences can either be positive or negative. English is taught as a second language in schools in Sri Lanka. German as a foreign language acquisition is needed for employment, education and other purposes. German and English two languages are linguistic siblings as they have the same roots. These both languages belong to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. Although they have the same roots some speech sounds show difference between English and German languages. This paper mainly focuses on common pronunciation errors done by the students due to English as a second language interference, who are following the foundations in language learning unit at beginners' level at university of Kelaniya. As the data collecting methods of this research oral tests of the first year students, class room observations, interviews with the German language lecturers at university of Kelaniya were conducted. Phonetic and phonological errors are categorized under pronunciation errors in language learning. Language learners commit pronunciation errors when they have to pronounce sounds that are not found in their mother tongue or second language. German and English both languages have the same alphabet apart from the umlauts (ä, ö, ü) and ß. Therefore, the students have the tendency to substitute the speech sounds of English with German speech sounds. As results of this study the students have the interference of written English when some consonants and consonant clusters are pronounced. As an example <z> [ts] or <zt> [tzt] pronounced as [z], the fricative [v] is pronounced as [w]. Therefore, the teachers of German as a foreign language should anticipate learners making more errors with sounds in foreign languages that are absent in their first or second language. They must identify the pronunciation difficulties of the bilingual language learners due to the influence of their second language and need to pay more attention when designing lessons at beginner' level. Teachers can do more phonetic exercises and listening exercises of the conversations of native speakers regularly in the classroom to overcome the second language interference on pronunciation in learning German as a foreign language.

Keywords: Learning German as A Foreign Language, Native Speaker, Phonetics and Phonology, Language Interference, Bilingual Learners

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