

The Influence of Regional Dialects on the Accuracy of College Students' English Pronunciation

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Abstract: This study focuses on exploring the potential impact of Chinese regional dialects on the accuracy of English pronunciation among college students. It aims to reveal the relationship and underlying mechanisms between dialects and English pronunciation. By systematically examining dialect characteristics and English standard pronunciation requirements, a theoretical model of dialect interference in English pronunciation is constructed and a corresponding analytical framework proposed. Empirical research findings indicate that dialects significantly impact college students' English pronunciation, reflected in aspects such as speech perception, pronunciation production, and memory. Specific phonetic features in dialects, such as tone and phoneme differences, can lead to confusion or deviation in English pronunciation. Additionally, the study finds significant differences in the degree and characteristics of dialects' influence on English pronunciation across regions, providing a basis for developing differentiated teaching strategies for English education. Based on these findings, the study proposes several recommendations, including strengthening the comparative analysis of dialect and English pronunciation differences, adopting targeted pronunciation training methods and techniques, and using modern educational technology to assist pronunciation teaching, aiming to effectively support the improvement of college students' English pronunciation accuracy.

Keywords: College students; accuracy of English pronunciation; regional dialects; speech features; theoretical model; empirical research; teaching suggestions.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of increasing globalization, the accuracy of English pronunciation is crucial for effective communication. Standard English pronunciation enhances personal language expression skills and is a key factor in expanding academic, professional, and cross-cultural exchange opportunities. For college students, who are in a critical stage of knowledge acquisition and skill development, precise English pronunciation is essential for their future participation in international competition and showcasing their overall quality.

China, with its vast geographical area and diverse ethnic cultures, has numerous dialect systems. These dialects exhibit significant differences in pronunciation habits and phonetic features compared to Mandarin, let alone standard English pronunciation. Such differences may affect college students' English pronunciation learning, making it more challenging for them to imitate and learn standard English pronunciation. For example, students from certain dialect regions may find it difficult to pronounce specific English phonemes, or their intonation may be influenced by their dialect, making it sound unnatural.

Exploring how regional dialects affect the accuracy of college students' English pronunciation is crucial. This can help students recognize potential problems in their pronunciation and provide English educators with targeted teaching strategies, thereby helping students overcome dialect-related pronunciation obstacles and improve their English pronunciation levels.

Several scholars have conducted in-depth research in this area. For example, Lin et al. (2014) pointed out that the phonetic characteristics of dialects can interfere with English learners' pronunciation, especially in terms of the number, quality, and articulation of vowels and consonants. Zhang (2017) and Liu (2021) found that learners influenced by dialects often have difficulty distinguishing certain similar phonemes or pronouncing specific phonemes accurately.

With the increasing frequency of international exchanges, the importance of standard English pronunciation in cross-cultural communication is becoming more prominent. Accurate pronunciation can reduce misunderstandings and improve communication efficiency in business negotiations, academic exchanges, and daily communication. For college students, good English pronunciation is a vital asset in their future careers, helping them stand out in fierce international competition.

Studying the influence of regional dialects on the accuracy of college students' English pronunciation is not only academically significant but also urgently needed in practice. By analyzing the relationship between dialects and English pronunciation, we can provide more precise and personalized guidance for English education, helping more college students master standard English pronunciation and laying a solid foundation for their future development. Moreover, this will promote the continuous improvement and innovation of the English education system to meet the new needs of talent cultivation in the context of globalization.

Despite the potential influence of dialects on students' English pronunciation, this does not mean that dialects are obstacles to English learning. On the contrary, with scientific teaching methods and students' active efforts, students from dialect regions can also master standard English pronunciation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is not to oppose dialects and English learning but to find more effective English pronunciation teaching methods through in-depth research, helping all students achieve higher levels of English pronunciation. This is not only responsible for the individual development of students but also an important contribution to enhancing the country's future international competitiveness.

II. THEORETICAL BASIS OF REGIONAL DIALECTS AND ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

China is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual country, with regional dialects showing unique characteristics, especially in phonetics. From the perspective of phonetics, different regional dialects vary in terms of initials, finals, and tones. These differences not only affect the intelligibility between dialects but also may interfere with learners' acquisition of a second language like English.

A. Characteristics of Regional Dialects

Southern dialects, such as Minnan dialect, commonly exhibit features like entering tones and nasalization, which do not exist in English. For example, nasalization is a prominent feature in Minnan dialect, making it challenging for students from Minnan to accurately pronounce English phonemes (Lin et al., 2014). Similarly, the Jiangsu dialects significantly interfere with English pronunciation, particularly in vowels, consonants, and suprasegmental phonemes (Zhang, 2017).

Northern dialects, like the Harbin dialect, emphasize tonal changes and retroflex sounds. These characteristics significantly differ from standard English pronunciation, causing students from Harbin to face difficulties in achieving accurate pronunciation (Liu, 2021). Similar interference is observed in Shandong dialects, where students' English pronunciation often carries a strong regional accent (Yu, 2014).

In central and western regions, such as Hubei, dialects also influence English pronunciation. Differences in retroflex and apical sounds between Hubei dialect and Mandarin lead to inaccuracies and errors in English pronunciation among Hubei students (Cheng, 2020).

These dialectal characteristics shape individual pronunciation habits, inevitably affecting learners' English pronunciation. This influence is typically negative transfer from dialects to English pronunciation, causing learners to subconsciously apply their dialectal pronunciation habits to English, leading to non-standard or incorrect pronunciation. To reduce this negative transfer, English educators need to understand students' dialect backgrounds and design targeted teaching plans to help them overcome dialect-induced pronunciation barriers and improve their English pronunciation accuracy.

B. Requirements for Standard English Pronunciation

Standard English pronunciation, such as Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA), is an important goal for English learners. These standard pronunciations not only have clear phonetic norms but also require speakers to clearly and accurately pronounce each phoneme while mastering natural and fluent intonation. Additionally, standard English pronunciation involves certain phonetic variants and pronunciation rules, which non-native speakers need to learn and practice extensively.

In English pronunciation, clarity and accuracy are crucial. To achieve this, learners need to carefully distinguish the phonetic characteristics of each phoneme and continuously hone their pronunciation skills through practice. For example, the number, position, and manner of articulation of vowels and consonants require in-depth study and repeated practice by learners. Only in this way can they accurately express themselves in English communication and avoid misunderstandings or confusion due to unclear or incorrect pronunciation.

In addition to clarity and accuracy, standard English pronunciation also requires natural and fluent intonation. Intonation is an important part of English expression, conveying the speaker's emotions and attitudes and helping listeners better understand the speaker's meaning. Therefore, learners need to pay attention to the rise and fall of intonation when practicing English pronunciation, trying to imitate the intonation habits of native English speakers, making their English expression more idiomatic and natural.

Standard English pronunciation also involves certain phonetic variants and pronunciation rules. These variants and rules are complex parts of the English phonetic system but are also an important source of the charm of English pronunciation. Learners need to understand and adapt to these variants and rules in the process of mastering standard English pronunciation to better cope with the pronunciation needs of different occasions and different interlocutors.

The requirements for standard English pronunciation are multifaceted, including clarity, accuracy, natural and fluent intonation, and the mastery of phonetic variants and pronunciation rules. For non-native speakers, achieving these standards is not easy and requires a lot of effort and time to learn and practice. Through continuous learning and practice, learners can gradually improve their English pronunciation level, making their English expression more idiomatic, accurate, and natural.

C. Potential Influence of Dialects on English Pronunciation

The differences between regional dialects and standard English pronunciation often lead to confusion or deviations in learners' English pronunciation. This influence arises from specific phonetic features, intonation patterns, and rhythms in dialects that significantly differ from those in English.

Some phonemes present in dialects may not exist in English, or their articulation may differ from corresponding English phonemes. For instance, certain dialects may have unique consonants, vowels, or tones, causing difficulties for learners when they try to mimic English pronunciation. When learners attempt to imitate English pronunciation, they may unconsciously be influenced by their dialect pronunciation habits, resulting in inaccurate pronunciation. Additionally, the intonation patterns in dialects differ from those in English. English has a rich variation of intonation, whereas some dialects may have unique intonation patterns. These differences in intonation patterns can cause learners' English pronunciation to carry noticeable dialectal traces, affecting the naturalness and fluency of their pronunciation.

Besides phonemes and intonation, the rhythm of dialects can also impact English pronunciation. English rhythm emphasizes alternating stressed and unstressed syllables. Some dialects may focus more on tonal variation rather than the contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables. This difference in rhythm can cause learners to struggle with accurately producing English stress and rhythm, affecting listeners' comprehension and communication effectiveness.

The potential influence of regional dialects on English pronunciation cannot be ignored. To improve college students' English pronunciation accuracy, teachers need to consider learners' dialect backgrounds and systematically correct dialectal influences on pronunciation. Concurrently, learners must recognize the potential impact of dialects on their English pronunciation and actively adjust their pronunciation habits to align more closely with standard English.

III. THEORETICAL MODEL AND ANALYSIS

Before delving into the interference of dialects on English pronunciation, it is necessary to understand the theoretical model of dialect interference. This model, based on cognitive linguistics and phonetics, comprehensively reveals the potential impact of dialects on English pronunciation learning.

A. Theoretical Model of Dialect Interference

Speech perception is the initial stage of language learning, involving how individuals receive and understand sound signals. In a dialect environment, learners' speech perception is often influenced by the unique phonological structure of the dialect. For instance, certain phonemes in dialects may not exist in English, making it difficult for learners to accurately identify these phonemes when first encountering them. Additionally, dialectal features such as tone and stress patterns may interfere with learners' correct perception of English intonation.

Speech production is another key aspect of language learning, reflecting learners' ability to convert internal language knowledge into actual language output. However, dialectal pronunciation habits are often deeply ingrained, posing challenges for learners attempting to produce standard English phonemes. For example, the articulation manner in some dialects may differ significantly from English, requiring learners to undergo extensive practice and adjustment to adapt to English pronunciation norms.

Speech memory relates to whether learners can consistently and stably retain English pronunciation over time. Due to phonological differences between dialects and English, learners may face difficulties in memorizing English pronunciation. These differences may lead to confusion during the memorization process and potentially cause interference between dialectal and English pronunciation, affecting accuracy.

The interference of dialects on English pronunciation is a multi-level, multi-dimensional issue. It involves core language learning aspects such as speech perception, production, and memory, and is closely related to learners' dialect background and learning environment. Therefore, in English pronunciation teaching, educators should fully consider students' dialect backgrounds, develop targeted teaching strategies, and help students overcome dialect-induced interference to improve pronunciation accuracy. At the same time, learners should recognize the potential impact of dialects on English pronunciation and actively adjust and practice to continuously enhance their English pronunciation skills.

B. Mechanism Analysis of Dialect Influence on English Pronunciation

The influence of dialects on English pronunciation is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon. This study analyzes the mechanisms of dialect influence on English pronunciation from various perspectives, including auditory perception, pronunciation habits, and language memory.

Dialectal phonetic features significantly impact learners' auditory perception. Long-term exposure to specific dialect environments makes learners particularly sensitive to certain phonemes and sound changes, which may not exist or appear differently in English. Consequently, when learners attempt to discern similar phonemes in English, they may be confused by dialectal phonetic features, reducing their perceptual accuracy. For example, nasalization in southern dialects may cause learners to confuse nasal sounds in English.

Dialectal pronunciation habits also deeply influence learners' English pronunciation. Pronunciation habits are formed over a long period and are often deeply rooted. When learners try to imitate standard English pronunciation, they may unconsciously be constrained by dialectal habits, resulting in inaccurate or dialect-accented English phonemes. This issue is particularly common among learners from northern dialect regions, who may be influenced by dialectal habits in vowel and consonant articulation.

Phonological differences between dialects and English also pose challenges to learners' language memory. Because of these differences, learners may struggle to memorize English pronunciation accurately. The absence of certain phonemes in some dialects means learners lack a phonetic reference when memorizing these English sounds. Additionally, differences in intonation and rhythm patterns between dialects and English further complicate the memory process.

The mechanisms by which dialects influence English pronunciation are primarily reflected in auditory perception, pronunciation habits, and language memory. To mitigate the negative impact of dialects, learners must understand and recognize these mechanisms to make targeted improvements in their pronunciation. Simultaneously, English teachers should be aware of students' dialect backgrounds and adopt corresponding strategies to help them overcome pronunciation difficulties caused by dialects.

C. Validation and Discussion of the Theoretical Model

To validate the theoretical model of dialect interference in English pronunciation, this study employed a multi-faceted and systematic empirical research approach. The core of empirical research lies in scientific data collection and analysis,

providing robust support for the theoretical model and more accurately revealing the mechanisms of dialect influence on English pronunciation accuracy.

This study first collected extensive audio recordings from college students with various regional dialect backgrounds. The diversity of these samples provided a broad data foundation, making the analysis results more representative and convincing. During the recording process, strict control over recording environments and equipment ensured data accuracy and reliability.

Detailed acoustic analysis was conducted on these pronunciation samples. Using professional phonetic analysis software, acoustic features such as pitch, duration, and intensity were extracted for quantitative comparative research. These acoustic features provided objective evaluation criteria for pronunciation quality, helping to precisely explore the influence of dialects on English pronunciation.

The study particularly focused on the correlation between dialect characteristics and English pronunciation features. Comparative analysis revealed that certain specific phonetic features in dialects significantly impacted college students' English pronunciation. For instance, unique phonemes or intonation patterns in certain regional dialects could cause similar deviations in learners' English pronunciation. These findings further confirmed the validity of the theoretical model of dialect interference in English pronunciation.

To gain deeper insights into the mechanisms of dialect influence, teaching experiments involving intervention were designed. By incorporating targeted pronunciation training addressing dialectal features into the teaching process, significant improvements in learners' English pronunciation accuracy were observed. This result further validated that dialect-induced pronunciation interference could be mitigated through targeted teaching interventions.

Overall, the research findings indicate that dialects significantly influence the accuracy of college students' English pronunciation, with these influences exhibiting regional variability and patterns. This conclusion not only enhances our understanding of the relationship between dialects and English pronunciation but also provides valuable insights for English education practice. Future English education should focus more on the influence of regional dialects on learners' pronunciation and develop targeted teaching strategies to help learners overcome dialect-induced pronunciation barriers and improve English pronunciation accuracy.

D. Theoretical Findings and Interpretation

The in-depth exploration of the influence of regional dialects on the accuracy of college students' English pronunciation yielded several significant findings, which are extensively explained below.

Firstly, the study confirmed that dialects indeed play a crucial role in English pronunciation learning, influencing pronunciation across multiple dimensions. This complexity arises from the fundamental differences in phonemes, intonation, and pronunciation habits between dialects and standard English. For example, some regional dialects lack specific English phonemes, such as /θ/ and /ð/, making it challenging for learners to accurately articulate these sounds. Additionally, dialectal intonation and rhythm patterns often contrast sharply with those of English, affecting the naturalness and fluency of learners' pronunciation.

Secondly, the study revealed that the degree and characteristics of dialect influence on English pronunciation vary significantly across regions. This variability is due to the unique phonetic features and pronunciation habits of each dialect. For instance, learners from southern dialect regions might struggle more with certain phonemes, while those from northern dialect regions may face challenges related to intonation patterns. These regional characteristics shape learners' English pronunciation patterns, leading to distinct pronunciation profiles among learners from different dialect backgrounds.

Thirdly, the study found that targeted teaching interventions and practice could significantly reduce the negative impact of dialects on English pronunciation. This finding has important practical implications, providing an effective strategy for addressing dialect-induced pronunciation challenges. Specifically, teachers can design specialized pronunciation exercises to help learners correct dialect-induced deviations and gradually master standard English pronunciation. Teachers can also develop personalized teaching plans based on learners' dialect backgrounds to enhance teaching effectiveness and learning efficiency.

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These theoretical findings and interpretations not only elucidate the deep-seated impact of dialects on English pronunciation but also offer practical strategies for mitigating this impact. These insights provide new perspectives for understanding the relationship between dialects and English pronunciation and offer valuable references for English education practice.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study comprehensively employed theoretical analysis and empirical research methods to explore the significant influence of regional dialects on the accuracy of college students' English pronunciation. The findings underscore the critical role of dialects in English pronunciation learning, emphasizing the need for addressing dialectal interference in educational contexts.

A. Research Summary

Through detailed data analysis and case studies, the research revealed that the impact of dialects on English pronunciation accuracy is multifaceted and complex, varying significantly across different regions. These regional variations reflect the individualized and localized nature of language learning. For instance, learners from certain dialect regions may struggle with specific phonemes, while those from other regions may face challenges with intonation or rhythm.

Theoretical exploration also achieved notable results. By constructing a theoretical model of dialect interference in English pronunciation, the study not only explained the underlying mechanisms but also provided a solid foundation for subsequent empirical research. This model offers valuable insights for educators to develop targeted teaching strategies to address dialectal interference.

Practically, the study's findings offer significant guidance. By analyzing the phenomenon of dialectal interference, English teachers and educational institutions can more accurately identify pronunciation challenges faced by learners and develop more precise teaching strategies and support plans. Learners themselves can also use these insights to adjust their pronunciation habits and overcome dialect-related obstacles.

Overall, this study deepened our understanding of the relationship between dialects and English pronunciation, providing valuable references and implications for English education practice. Future research in this field is expected to continue to deepen, contributing more wisdom to enhancing the accuracy of English pronunciation among learners and their cross-cultural communication abilities.

B. Implications for English Education

The analysis of the impact of regional dialects on the accuracy of college students' English pronunciation provides valuable implications for English education. Educators must consider the dialect environment of students and the pronunciation challenges it may pose when designing and implementing English teaching plans.

Educators need to enhance their understanding of the relationship between dialects and English pronunciation. Different regional dialects have distinct characteristics that may significantly differ from standard English in phonetics and intonation. Therefore, educators should fully understand these differences to accurately diagnose students' pronunciation problems and develop feasible teaching plans to help them overcome dialect-induced pronunciation obstacles.

The teaching process should emphasize developing students' phonetic perception abilities. Phonetic perception is the foundation of language learning, crucial for accurately identifying and imitating English phonemes. Educators can use modern technological tools, such as phonetic analysis software and online pronunciation tutorials, to assist students in enhancing their phonetic perception abilities. These tools allow students to better understand their pronunciation issues, identify problems, and make targeted improvements under the guidance of teachers.

Cultivating good pronunciation habits is also essential. Dialectal pronunciation habits are often deep-rooted and challenging to change. However, with sustained effort and proper guidance, students can gradually adjust their pronunciation to align more closely with standard English. To achieve this goal, educators need to patiently and meticulously guide students through pronunciation practice, promptly correct errors, and provide positive encouragement and support.

Providing a variety of pronunciation practice materials and feedback mechanisms is another effective way to help students improve their English pronunciation accuracy. Educators can prepare various forms of practice materials, such as reading

exercises, dialogue practice, and role-playing, to stimulate students' learning interest and meet their individual needs. Regular tests and evaluations enable educators to monitor students' pronunciation progress and provide specific improvement suggestions.

This study's findings reveal the influence of dialects on English pronunciation accuracy and offer valuable implications for English education. By enhancing understanding of the relationship between dialects and English pronunciation, developing students' phonetic perception and pronunciation habits, and providing diverse practice materials and feedback, educators can help students better master standard English pronunciation and improve their international competitiveness.

C. Implications for English Education

Future research on the impact of dialects on English pronunciation can be deepened from multiple dimensions.

Further exploration of the specific mechanisms of dialectal influence on English pronunciation is needed. Although this study has preliminarily examined how dialects affect English pronunciation, many details remain to be thoroughly analyzed. For instance, examining whether learners from different dialect regions share common pronunciation difficulties and identifying which dialect features most readily cause English pronunciation errors. Additionally, individual differences among learners, such as age, gender, and language learning experience, may modulate the extent of dialectal influence. Future research can construct a more refined model to comprehensively consider the complex relationships between dialects, individual differences, and English pronunciation accuracy.

With rapid technological advancements, new technologies are increasingly applied in education. Speech recognition and synthesis technologies provide unprecedented convenience for English teaching. These technologies can more accurately analyze learners' pronunciation issues and offer personalized feedback and guidance. Future research can explore how to effectively integrate these technologies into English pronunciation teaching to enhance its specificity and effectiveness. For example, designing a pronunciation evaluation system based on speech recognition technology to automatically detect and correct learners' pronunciation errors, or using speech synthesis technology to provide learners with standard English pronunciation demonstrations for better imitation and practice.

In the context of increasing globalization, cross-cultural communication is becoming more frequent. Learners from different cultural backgrounds may face different pronunciation challenges. Future research can focus on the impact of dialects on English pronunciation in cross-cultural contexts, exploring commonalities and differences among learners from different backgrounds, and developing more effective teaching strategies accordingly. Additionally, examining whether dialectal influence on English pronunciation causes misunderstandings or communication barriers in cross-cultural exchanges and exploring corresponding countermeasures.

Future research on the impact of dialects on English pronunciation can be deepened from multiple angles, including delving into the influence mechanisms, leveraging new technologies to improve teaching methods, and focusing on pronunciation issues in cross-cultural contexts. These studies will help us more comprehensively understand the relationship between dialects and English pronunciation and provide more scientific and effective guidance for English education.

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