

# Study of the Impact of Dialects on English Phonetic Acquisition in Sichuan and Chongqing

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**ABSTRACT.** *In order to explore the phenomenon of negative transfer of dialects to college students' English pronunciation learning in Sichuan-Chongqing area, this paper first analyses the characteristics of dialects in Sichuan-Chongqing area, then expounds the specific manifestations and causes of this phenomenon, including negative transfer of vowels and consonants, and finally puts forward some teaching suggestions.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Sichuan chongqing dialect; English phonetic learning; Negative transfer*

## 1. Introduction

In the process of human language learning, local dialect is the first language to be acquired, which has a profound impact on the learning of other languages. According to the cognitive structure transfer theory put forward by American psychologist Ausubel in 1968, dialects can produce positive and negative transfer effects on English pronunciation. For language learners, pronunciation learning is an important part of second language acquisition. However, in practice, the accuracy of new language pronunciation is often affected by the mother tongue or dialect. Learners unconsciously transfer one set of their mother tongue pronunciation to another language. The influence of the learner's mother tongue or dialect on second language acquisition is called transfer, and the positive influence is called positive transfer, whereas the negative transfer is called negative transfer.

Sichuan and Chongqing coexist in Sichuan Basin and are very similar in culture, life customs and language. Therefore, Sichuan and Chongqing are not only a regional concept, but also a cultural concept. Sichuan-Chongqing dialect refers to the main Chinese language that is prevalent in Sichuan, Chongqing and surrounding areas. It belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family and is a branch of the Southwest Mandarin of the Northern Chinese dialect, while English belongs to the Indo-European language family. They belong to different linguistic families, and there must be great differences in phonetics. Therefore, students in Sichuan and

Chongqing are often influenced by the habit of Sichuan and Chongqing dialects in the process of learning English pronunciation, and the phenomenon of negative language transfer occurs. In view of this, based on the theory of language transfer, this paper takes 80 freshmen from Sichuan and Chongqing as the research object, using questionnaire, voice test and other research methods. The purpose of this paper is to explore how the dialect in Sichuan and Chongqing affects college students' English pronunciation learning, and how to avoid the negative influence of dialect transfer in learning.

## 2. Characteristics of Dialects in Sichuan and Chongqing

Dialect pronunciation in different areas of Sichuan and Chongqing is not completely the same, but it has the following common characteristics. (1) most areas do not distinguish between flat tongue sound and crooked tongue sound. People are used to read the initials /zh/, /CH/, /SH/ of crooked tongue as /Z/, /C/, /S/, and /R/ of rolled tongue as /Z/, for example, knowledge (Zi SI), intelligence quotient (Zi sang), supermarket (Cao SI), support (Zi CI), cognition (ren SI). (2) when people confuse the nasal /N/ with the marginal /L/, they often misread the sound of the corresponding nasal /N/ as the marginal /L/. For example, milk (liu lai), South (lan fang), anger (lao lu). (3) in some areas, the consonants /w/ and /V/, /h/ and /F/ are easily confused. Such as vu, FA and Fu. (4) there is no distinction between the former and the latter. People will directly replace the former with the latter, such as Min Xin, DIN Lin and bin len. (5) in some areas, there are some changes in the pronunciation of individual finals. When the initial is /b/, /P/, /m/, /F/, the vowel of /ENG/ is usually /ong/ vowel, such as bong, mong, pong and Fong [3]. (5) Pronunciation loss. After comparing English vowels, consonants and Sichuan and Chongqing dialects, Ma Chuandong and Tan Lunhua put forward that some phonemes which are used longer in English are missing in Sichuan and Chongqing dialects, such as monosyllabic /E/, lingual /theta/. In Sichuan-Chongqing dialect, there are no corresponding initials and vowels. Therefore, in the process of English pronunciation learning, students in Sichuan-Chongqing area are apt to make mistakes in the replacement of similar Chinese pronunciation[1].

## 3. Reasons for the Negative Transfer of Dialects in Sichuan and Chongqing to College Students'english Phonetics Learning

### 3.1 Negative Transfer of Vowels

The influence of Sichuan and Chongqing dialects on the negative transfer of English vowel pronunciation is not high, only on the pronunciation of individual phonemes. In Sichuan-Chongqing dialect, the single vowel/e/, so the pronunciation of the single vowel/e/is often replaced by other pronunciations, such as Ke le-ko lo and he-hei peach. This also causes the students in Sichuan and Chongqing to fail to

grasp the vowel pronunciation correctly when learning English pronunciation, often replacing it with / I/. It is often confused with/e/[2].

### **3.2 Negative Transfer of Consonants**

The negative transfer of Sichuan-Chongqing dialect is obvious in the process of students' English consonant learning, and the pronunciation of many consonants is negatively affected to a certain extent by the dialect. In the international phonetic alphabet, / R / is a frictional voiced consonant. When pronouncing, the tip of the tongue should be rolled up and the body of the tongue slightly concave. Since most Sichuan-Chongqing dialects do not distinguish between flat and warped tongues, this pronunciation habit has been transferred to English phonetics learning, which makes it difficult for students to master the voiced consonant/r/and often confused with another non-rolling voiced consonant/z/and mispronunciation of words beginning with/r/phoneme. In almost all areas of Sichuan and Chongqing, there is no distinction between nasal / N / and marginal / L /, which directly leads to students' habitual confusion of nasal / N / and lingual / L / in English pronunciation learning, especially the habitual reading of words beginning with nasal / N / into lingual / L /, for example, night / NAIT / into / lait /, nine / Nain / into / lain /.

Some students have been living in Sichuan and Chongqing areas where the initial consonants are confused with the initial consonants/w/and/v/,h/and/f/. The stereotyped pronunciation patterns have resulted in the negative transfer of consonants/w/,v/,h/and/f/in their English pronunciation learning. The more obvious negative transfer phenomena are manifested in/w/and/v/,f/and/v/two groups of consonants. / w / is a semivowel. When pronounced, the lips are slightly rounded and the upper teeth cannot touch the lower lip. And / F / and / V / are a group of clear and turbid pairs of frictional sounds. When pronouncing, the upper teeth touch the lower lip, and the airflow squeezes out from the gap between the lips and teeth, and the frictional sounds are formed. Because the pronunciation characteristics of the above four initials can not be distinguished in dialect, English students often pronounce very/veri/as/weri/, vest/vest/as/west/[3].

It is also a major feature of Sichuan and Chongqing dialects that there is no distinction between the front and back nasal sounds, which has a negative transfer to a large extent in the students' English pronunciation learning in this area. Long-term pronunciation habits make students in Sichuan and Chongqing use the front nasal sound directly when they encounter the words pronounced with the back nasal sound. As a result, it is more difficult to master the soft palate nasal consonant/droop/after the tongue, and it will also be directly replaced by the gingival nasal consonant/n/, which is easier to pronounce, thus confusing the relevant words, such as sing/si/, sin/, thing/theta/ and thin/theta in/etc. The pronunciation of several phonemes in the international phonetic alphabet is absent in Sichuan-Chongqing dialect, and there is no corresponding pronunciation, such as tongue/teeth/theta/. Therefore, students are apt to substitute similar pronunciation in dialect when learning such phonemes. Tooth/theta/is a pair of clear and turbid frictional consonants. When pronouncing, the upper teeth should touch the tip of the tongue gently, so that the airflow passes

through the narrow gap between the tip of the tongue and the upper teeth. The pronunciation is difficult and difficult to master. Many students simply substitute the plain tongue sounds / s /, / Z /, which are familiar with dialects. Thus, path / PA: θ / is incorrectly read as PA s s / PA: S /, think / θ ink / as sink / sink /, and mouth / Mau θ / as mouse / Maus / [4].

#### **4. Suggestions on College English Phonetics Teaching**

##### ***4.1 The Level of Pronunciation Standards of Teachers Determines the Level of English Pronunciation and Standardization of Students***

English pronunciation teachers must lay a solid foundation for their own English pronunciation, master the standard and pure voice tone, and have a high level of voice listening ability. In the specific teaching, the relevant Enlightenment English teachers should create a good English pronunciation environment according to the sound hardware provided by the school, and pay attention to enhancing the pronunciation level of College students. At the same time, teachers should consciously guide students to compare the pronunciation characteristics of Putonghua, local dialect and English pronunciation, strengthen the training purposefully, and gradually reduce the negative transfer impact of mother tongue or dialect on students' second language acquisition [5].

##### ***4.2 Students Should Conscientiously Distinguish the Differences between Sichuan Dialect and English Pronunciation***

Only by recognizing the differences between Sichuan dialect pronunciation and English pronunciation, can we effectively correct the pronunciation. In the specific learning process, first of all, standardize the pronunciation of the mother tongue, make a comparative analysis of the two languages, understand the similarities and differences, find out the missing phonemes in the dialect, carefully learn the key points such as the position of imitating the pronunciation, the tightness of the oral muscles, the mouth shape, etc., so as to fundamentally improve the pronunciation standard. Secondly, students should listen more, practice more and imitate more. Collect recordings of standard pronunciation in British and American countries and do more follow-up exercises. For example, follow-up video of standard pronunciation, participate in English activities such as English corners or speeches, and gradually improve English pronunciation level. Finally, we should master the relevant pronunciation theory, expand the English contact, and strengthen the learning of English standard pronunciation. Only in this way can we fundamentally reduce the negative influence of the dialects in Sichuan and Chongqing on the transfer of English pronunciation [6-8].

## 5. Conclusion

In a word, the negative transfer of dialects to college students' English pronunciation learning in Sichuan-Chongqing area is multifaceted. Teachers and students should attach great importance to the importance of pronunciation to students' English learning. From the perspective of language transfer, the differences between dialect pronunciation and English pronunciation can be found and adjusted in appropriate ways. Only in this way can students' English pronunciation in Sichuan dialect area be improved fundamentally.

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