



International Journal of Languages' Education and Teaching
Volume 2 / 2014

**PHONETIC AND NON-PHONETIC LANGUAGES: A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND
TURKISH PHONOLOGY FOCUSING ON THE ORTHOGRAPHY-INDUCED PRONUNCIATION
PROBLEMS OF TURKISH LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
(TURKISH EFL LEARNERS)**

Amir KHALILZADEH
Islamic Azad University
Salmas Branch

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı İngiliz dilini bir yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin bu dilin yazım (imla) kurallarından kaynaklanan telaffuz sorunlarını araştırmaktır. Yazım sistemi belli bir yazı kurallarını kullanarak belli bir dili yazmak için standartlaşmış bir sistem demektir. Bu sistem imla kurallarını hem de yazı dilinin diğer elemanlarını mesela telaffuz ve büyük harflerle yazmağı içermektedir. Farklı dillerin imla sistemlerinde yazı ile telaffuz arasında farklı derecede uygunluk bulunmaktadır, mesela İngiliz dilinin imla sistemi çok düzensizdir. Bu yüzden, sözcüklerin doğru telaffuzlarını bilmek öğrenciler için ciddi bir sorun olabilir. Yule (1996) İngiliz dilinin yazı sisteminde sesler ile yazı işaretleri arasında güvenilir bir uygunluğun olmamasını ifade etmektedir. Bu nedenle, bu dilin yazı sisteminde düzenlilik çok düşük bir seviyede bulunmaktadır. Biliyoruz ki İngilizce fonetik ama Türkçe gayri-fonetik bir dildir. Bu nedenle, Türk öğrencilerin İngilizceyi öğrenmekte bir sıra telaffuz sorunlarla karşılaşmaları çok doğal bir meseledir. Makalenin yazarı şu sorunların sebeplerini bulup çıkarmak amacıyla İngilizce ve Türkçenin sessizleri, seslileri ve hece yapısı sistemleri ile ilgili karşılaştırmalı bir araştırma yapmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarından Türk öğrencilere İngilizceyi öğretmekte faydalanabiliriz. Araştırmanın sonuçları bahs ettiğimiz sorunların iki dilin arasındaki yazım ve sesbilim kurallarından kaynaklanmasını göstermektedir. Bu konuda, İngilizce öğretmenleri öğrencilere yardımcı olmak için iki dilin arasında olan farkların (yazım ve sesbilim kuralları ile ilgili) üzerinde durmalı ve bu konularda öğrencileri yeterince çalıştırmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dilbilimi, sesbilim, İngilizce yazım kuralları, İngilizceyi öğrenen Türkler, fonetik ve gayri-fonetik diller.

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to investigate the pronunciation problems of Turkish learners of English as a foreign language (Turkish EFL learners) due to the orthography system of English. Orthography is a standardized system for using a particular writing system (script) to write a particular language. It includes rules of spelling, and may also concern other elements of the written language such as punctuation and capitalization. It is clear that English is a non-phonetic and Turkish is a phonetic language, so it is very natural for the Turkish EFL learners to have some phonological problems in learning English. The author has done a contrastive study concerning three linguistic systems, i.e. consonants, vowels and syllable structures of English and Turkish to find the causes of the problems to be used in teaching English as a foreign language to Turks. The results of the study showed that the problems under discussion are caused by some differences between the orthography and the phonology of the two languages. As a result, English teachers, to be helpful, should focus on the differences and help the Turkish learners overcome the pronunciation problems. The author of the paper believes that an English teacher should be both aware of the differences and be able to teach them effectively to the Turkish EFL learners.

Key Words: Linguistics, phonology, English orthography, Turkish EFL learners, phonetic & non-phonetic languages.

Introduction

Orthography is a standardized system for using a particular writing system (script) to write a particular language. It includes rules of spelling, and may also concern other elements of the written language such as punctuation and capitalization. Most significant languages in the modern era are written down, and for most such languages a standard orthography has developed, often based on a standard variety of the language, and thus exhibiting less dialect variation than the spoken language. Sometimes there may be variation in a language's orthography, as between American and British spelling in the case of English. If a language uses multiple writing systems, it may have distinct orthographies, as is the case with Kurdish, Uyghur, Serbian, Inuktitut and Turkish.

Orthographies that use alphabets and syllabaries are based on the principle that the written symbols (graphemes) correspond to units of sound of the spoken language: phonemes in the former case, and syllables in the latter. However, in virtually all cases, this correspondence is not exact. Different languages' orthographies offer different degrees of correspondence between spelling and pronunciation. English orthography, for example, is highly irregular, whereas the orthographies of languages such as Russian, Spanish and Finnish represent pronunciation much more faithfully, although the correspondence between letters and phonemes is still not exact.

English orthography is known for its irregularity, which makes it difficult for the students to guess the correct pronunciation of words, i.e. there is no reliable correspondence between sound and symbol in the English writing system. Therefore, it is not possible to identify regularity within English spelling. An orthography in which the correspondences between spelling and pronunciation are highly complex or inconsistent is called a deep orthography and the language is said to have irregular spelling. From the other hand, a spelling system with relatively simple and consistent correspondences is called a shallow orthography and the language is said to have regular spelling. Katz, L. & Frost, R. (1992) believe that English has a deep orthography. This fact is particularly disturbing for Turkish learners of English. Turkish orthography, according to Lewis G. (2002), is shallow and regular, so it matches the pronunciation.

Regarding the relationship between spelling and pronunciation, all the languages may be divided into two groups: phonetic and non-phonetic. By phonetic languages we mean that you can look at a written word and know how to pronounce it, or you can hear a word and know how to spell it. In other words, there is a direct relationship between the spelling and the sound in phonetic languages. In non-phonetic languages; however, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the letters and the related sounds. In other words, spellings and pronunciations are in most cases different. In such languages the number of the letters and the sounds is not equal, e.g. there are 26 letters in English (a non-phonetic language) while the number of the sounds is 36 (excluding diphthongs). We may name Indonesian/Malay, Spanish, German and Polish as the most phonetic and English, French, Dutch, Danish, Thai, Korean, Arabic, Persian and Urdu as the least phonetic languages.

Phonetic languages have simple pronunciation patterns which are easy to learn and very easy to remember. Each specific letter has one or perhaps two sounds associated with it. The pronunciation is predictable and consistent. Once you learn how to pronounce, for instance, all Spanish sounds, you can read words out loud to a Spanish speaker, who will understand what you are saying.

In non-phonetic languages, learners must also focus a great deal of attention on spelling and pronunciation in addition to grammar and vocabulary. The learner, to predict the correct pronunciation, cannot rely on the spelling of a word. One of the main reasons for which spelling and pronunciation deviate is that sound changes taking place in the spoken language are not always reflected in the orthography, hence spellings correspond to historical rather than present-day pronunciation.

One consequence of this is that many spellings come to reflect a word's morphophonemic structure rather than its purely phonemic structure (for example, the English regular past tense morpheme is consistently spelled -ed in spite of its different pronunciations in various words, i.e. /d/, /t/ and /ɪd/ and /əd/).

As mentioned above, English is a non-phonetic language. So, we often do not say a word the same way it is spelled. Some words can have the same spelling but different pronunciation, e.g. read [ri:d] and read [red]. Some words have different spellings but the same pronunciation, e.g. read (past form) [red] red [red].

Regarding the spelling of English words, it seems helpful to mention that although English is Germanic in origin, it has been considerably influenced by other Germanic languages such as Norwegian and Danish and also by French which in turn is heavily influenced by Latin and Greek. Their differing approaches to writing carried over into English to some extent.

As an example, pay attention to different sounds of "ough" in the words 'though' (like o in go), 'through' (like oo in too), and 'cough' (like off in offer). But this is the wrong way to put it. It would be better to say that the different sounds can be represented in writing by the same spelling. So you see that it cannot help at all to think about "ough". It's much more helpful to think about the sounds. So, it is English spelling that causes the difficulty, not its pronunciation.

According to a study conducted by Bekleyen (2011) English spelling, among other factors, played an important role in the students' mispronunciations. Because of the irregularities, students are unsuccessful when they try to guess the correct pronunciation of words. The emphasis on pronunciation may vary due to various factors such as the needs of the students or the teaching method being used. Teachers who use the Audio- Lingual or Direct Method pay extra attention to pronunciation (Jones, 2002). On the other hand, in methods such as Communicative Language Teaching, students are expected to speak fluently, but complete accuracy is not among the main goals of instruction (Larsen-Freeman, 2002). Students in Turkey generally learn English as a foreign language, i.e. language education is primarily based on reading. That means most words are learnt by reading instead of listening.

Demirezen (2007) studied fossilization in the pronunciations of the teachers and suggested Audio Articulation Method (AAM) to solve the problem. Hişmanoğlu (2007) introduced the pronunciation errors which have been fossilized. Şenel (2006) discussed the factors that affect the pronunciation of Turkish EFL learners. Jones (1997) has talked about cognitive development, linguistic universals and psychological and sociological conditions in learning and teaching pronunciation. It should be mentioned that the studies mentioned have not looked at this subject from the perspective of this paper.

According to Bayraktaroğlu (2008), “Turkish orthography is to a large extent phonemic, employing a one-to-one letter-sound correspondence”. Turkish students who are used to a system like this feel confused when they try to read English words, because in English, a total of 36 phonemes are represented by 26 letters whereas the 29 phoneme of Turkish are represented by 29 letters.

Methodology

Contrastive analysis (CA) is a systematic and synchronic comparison of two or more languages aiming at establishing explicit similarities and differences between them. The author, in this study, has used this method to discover the differences between Turkish and English regarding the phonology and orthography of the two languages. According to the strong version of CA, the more differences between the two systems (languages), the more problems the learners will encounter (Ziahosseiny, 1994) and this is whatever we observe in regard with these languages.

About Turkish

Turkish, also referred to as Istanbul Turkish or Anatolian Turkish, is the most populous of the Turkic languages, with over 80 million native speakers. Speakers are located predominantly in Turkey, with smaller groups in Germany, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Northern Cyprus, Greece, and other parts of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The roots of the language can be traced to Central Asia. To the west, the influence of Ottoman Turkish spread as the Ottoman Empire expanded. In 1928, as one of Atatürk's Reforms in the early years of the Republic of Turkey, the Ottoman script was replaced with a Latin alphabet. After the foundation of the Republic of Turkey and the script reform, the Turkish Language Association (TDK) was established in 1932 under the patronage of Mustafa Kamal Atatürk, with the aim of doing a language reform to replace Arabic and Persian loanwords and foreign grammatical constructions with Turkish equivalents. The standard dialect of the Turkish language is Istanbul dialect. The distinctive characteristics of Turkish are vowel harmony and extensive agglutination. The basic word order of Turkish is subject–object–verb (SOV). Turkish has no grammatical gender.

Basic (iron) rules of Turkish pronunciation:

1. Every letter is pronounced, i.e., unlike English, (e.g. k and b are silent in the English words know and comb), there are no silent letters in Turkish. The only exception to this rule is the letter Ğ (ğ) which is not pronounced but lengthens the preceding vowel slightly.

2. Every letter has only one sound, i.e. there is a one-to-one correspondence between a letter and its sound, e.g. the vowel /u/ is always pronounced having the features: [+high, +back, + round], i.e., unlike English, its features do not change in different phonetic environments.

3. Consonants do not combine to form other sounds in Turkish while there are such combinations in English, e.g. th or sh in the words three and shoe.

Turkish alphabet is a version of Latin alphabet used for writing the Turkish language, consisting of 29 letters. This alphabet represents Modern Turkish pronunciation with a high degree of accuracy and specificity. The letters of the Turkish alphabet are:

a b c ç d e f g ğ h ı i j k l m n o ö p r s ş t u ü v y z

Turkish Phonemes

The phonology of the Turkish language describes the set of sounds and their relationships with one another in spoken Turkish. One characteristic feature of Turkish is a system of vowel harmony that distinguishes between front and back vowels. The majority of words in Turkish adhere to a system of only having one of the two groups. Consonants are also affected, with palatal stops being present with front vowels and velar stops existing with back ones. The English phonemes /æ/, /θ/, /ð/, /ŋ/ and /w/ do not exist in Turkish.

Consonant

The followings are consonant phonemes in Modern Standard Turkish. The symbols are from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

/p, b, m, t, d, f, v, l, n, j(y), tʃ, dʒ, s, ʃ, z, ʒ, k, g, r, h, ɣ/

Some points regarding Turkish Consonants

The phoneme which is usually referred to as soft g (represented as γ above), and written as ğ in Turkish orthography, never occurs at the beginning of a word or a syllable, but always follows a vowel. When word-final or preceding another consonant, it lengthens the preceding vowel.

When a vowel is added to many nouns ending with postvocalic k, the k becomes ğ by consonant alternation. A similar alternation applies to certain loan-words ending in p and t, which become b and d, respectively, with the addition of a vowel. This is because the final /k/, /t/, and /p/ get voiced when followed by a vowel. In other words, it happens when these consonants occur between two vowels, the phenomenon is known as intervocalic voicing.

Vowels

The vowels of the Turkish language are: /a/, /e/, /ı/, /i/, /o/, /ö/, /u/, /ü/. The Turkish vowel system can be considered as being three-dimensional, where vowels are characterized by three features: [high, back, round].

As mentioned above, there are no diphthongs in Turkish; when two vowels come together (which is observed in loanwords), each vowel retains its individual sound. However, a slight diphthong can occur when two vowels surround a soft g. For example, the word soğuk (cold) can be pronounced [soʊk] (resembling the English soak) by some speakers.

About English

English is a West Germanic language that was first spoken in England and is now the most widely-used language in the world. It is spoken as a first language by a majority of the inhabitants of several nations, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and a number of Caribbean nations. It is the third most common native language in the world, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. It is widely learned as a second language and is an official language of the European Union, many Commonwealth countries and the United Nations, as well as many world organizations.

English arose in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of England and what is now south-east Scotland, but was then under the control of the kingdom of Northumbria. Following the extensive influence of Great Britain and the United Kingdom from the 17th century to the mid-20th century, via the British Empire, and of the United States since the mid-20th century, it has been widely propagated around the world, becoming the leading language of international discourse and the lingua franca in many regions.

Historically, English originated from the fusion of closely related dialects, now collectively termed Old English, which were brought to the eastern coast of Great Britain by Germanic (Anglo-Saxons) settlers by the 5th century – with the word English being derived from the name of the Angles, and ultimately from their ancestral region of Angeln (in what is now Schleswig-Holstein). A significant number of English words are constructed based on roots from Latin, because Latin in some form was the lingua franca of the Christian Church and of European intellectual life. The language was further influenced by the Old Norse language due to Viking invasions in the 8th and 9th centuries.

The Norman conquest of England in the 11th century gave rise to heavy borrowings from Norman-French, and vocabulary and spelling conventions began to give the appearance of a close relationship with Romance languages to what had then become Middle English. The Great Vowel Shift that began in the south of England in the 15th century is one of the historical events that mark the emergence of Modern English from Middle English.

Owing to the assimilation of words from many other languages throughout history, Modern English contains a very large vocabulary, with complex and irregular spelling, particularly of vowels. Modern English has not only assimilated words from other European languages but also from all over the world, including words of Hindi and African origin. The modern English alphabet is a Latin alphabet consisting of 26 letters:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

English Phonemes

The phonology (sound system) of English differs between dialects. The descriptions below are most closely applicable to the standard varieties known as Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American.

Consonants

The followings are consonant phonemes that function in most major varieties of English. The symbols are from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

/p, b, m, w, f, v, θ, ð, r, l, n, s, z, t, d, ʃ, ʒ, tʃ, dʒ, j(y), k, g, ŋ, h/

Some points regarding English Consonants

Most of the symbols represent the same sounds as they normally do when used as letters but /j/ represents the initial sound of yacht. The symbol /ʃ/ represents the sh sound, /ʒ/ the middle sound of vision, /tʃ/ the ch in chat sound, /dʒ/ the sound of j in jump, /θ/ and /ð/ the th sounds in thing and this respectively, and /ŋ/ the ng sound in sing.

Vowels

The system of vowel phonemes and their pronunciation is subject to significant variation between dialects.

The followings are the vowels found in Received Pronunciation (RP). The vowels are represented with symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet. English vowels are divided into three types: monophthongs, diphthongs and triphthongs.

A. Monophthongs

There are 12 monophthongs in English: /i:, ɪ, e, æ, ɒ, ə, ʌ, u:, ʊ, ɔ:, ɑ:, ɜ:(ə:)/

B. Diphthongs: A diphthong is a speech sound which starts from the point of articulation of one vowel and moves towards the point of articulation of another vowel or a semi-vowel. There are eight diphthongs classified into three groups in Standard British English:

1. Those which glide towards the back vowel /ʊ/ including: /əʊ/ and /aʊ/ as in the words so and cow, respectively.
2. Those which glide towards the front vowel /ɪ/ including: /eɪ/ and /aɪ/ and /ɔɪ/ as in the words say, sigh and soil, respectively.
3. Those which glide towards the central vowel /ə/ including: /ɪə/ and /eə/ and /ʊə/ as in the words hear, hair and poor, respectively.

C. Triphthongs: A Triphthong is a glide from one vowel to another and then to a third, all produced rapidly and without interruption (Roach, 1983). Triphthongs are mainly used in British English and are due to the omission of r in this variety. They are very difficult for foreign learners of English to pronounce or even recognize. In other words, it is a combination of a diphthong and a schwa /ə/:

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----|--------|--------|
| 1. /eɪ/ + /ə/ = /eɪə/ | as | in | layer, | player |
| 2. /aɪ/ + /ə/ = /aɪə/ | as | in | lire, | fire |
| 3. /ɔɪ/ + /ə/ = /ɔɪə/ | as | in | loyal, | royal |
| 4. /əʊ/ + /ə/ = /əʊə/ | as | in | lower, | mower |
| 5. /aʊ/ + /ə/ = /aʊə/ | as in power, hour. | | | |

Results

In this part, we are going to present the findings of the analysis, i.e. the Phonological differences between Turkish & English which create problems for the Turkish EFL learners. We will state and discuss the differences and the resultant problems. First, we are going to talk about the phoneme inventory of the languages under discussion.

Consonants

The causes of pronunciation problems regarding the consonants can be explained as follows:

1. Phonemes that do not exist in Turkish: There are 21 consonants in Turkish while English has 24 consonants. English lacks /ɣ/ present in Turkish and Turkish lacks /w/, /ŋ/, /θ/ and /ð/. Turkish EFL learners may use /v/ instead of /w/ in the words such as window, way, well, and they may produce /ng/ for the words ending to ng/ing which is wrong. For example, they may pronounce the word going as /gəʊɪng/ while the correct pronunciation is /gəʊɪŋ/.

Regarding the phonemes /θ/ and /ð/, it should be mentioned that Turkish lacks these phonemes, so Turkish EFL learners find it difficult to produce them as natives of English do. They pronounce /θ/ either as /s/ or /t/, e.g. the word three is pronounced as either /srɪ/ or /trɪ/, and /ð/ is pronounced either as /z/ or /d/, e.g. the word they is pronounced either as /zeɪ/ or as /deɪ/. The reason is that /s/ and /t/ are phonetically the nearest phonemes to /θ/, likewise /z/ and /d/ are phonetically the nearest phonemes to /ð/.

Another case regards the letters c and j in Turkish and their counterparts in English. In Turkish, c sounds /dʒ/ and j sounds /ʒ/, while English c, depending on the phonetic environment, is pronounced as either /s/ or /k/ and English j sounds as /dʒ/. So, Turkish EFL learners may sometimes read English c as /dʒ/ and j as /ʒ/. For example, they may read the English words car and jump as /dʒar/ and /ʒamp/, respectively. Of course, Turk learners of English may encounter such problems in the elementary stages of learning. It is natural that they will overcome these problems and will learn the correct forms in the advanced levels of learning.

In addition, some of the consonants present in both languages are different from the articulation point of view. The differences can be explained according to place of articulation of some consonants including /t/, /d/, /r/, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. The first two are dental in Turkish but alveolar in English, the third is palato-alveolar in Turkish but alveolar in English, and the last two are post-alveolar in Turkish but palato-alveolar in English. Of course, such differences lead to phonetic (not phonemic) distinctions and are the cause of having accent in a foreign language.

2. As the second reason, the loanwords with French, Latin or Greek origin may make the pronunciation for Turkish EFL learners more difficult, the words such as mosque, technique and vague are some examples.

3. As the third reason, some words are pronounced in two different ways in English according to their roles within different sentences. For instance, the same word may be used as a verb and adjective without a difference in the written form, but the pronunciation will be different according to grammatical function. Here are some examples:

a. content (v, adj) /kən'tent/, content (n) /'kantent/

b. live (v) /lɪv/, live (adj) /laɪv/

4. Silent letters may be considered as another factor in English which causes some pronunciation problems for Turkish EFL learners. In some English words such as know, comb and write, we do write the underlined letters in these words but not pronounce them. This is a matter which relates to language change. It should be mentioned that spoken form of a language changes more rapidly than the written form, i.e. first, the pronunciation of a word changes and then its spelling. Of course, after the pronunciation of a word changes, it takes a long time for the written form to change. However, we do not encounter such a phenomenon in Turkish as whatever is written is pronounced. So, this may be a source of difficulty for Turks learning English, though in the elementary stages. They will try to pronounce all of the letters of the word, as they do so in their native language, and this will lead to linguistic interference, hence the learner will commit some phonological errors.

5. The English words having a consonant cluster in the initial position beginning with 's' as the first consonant are pronounced by adding a vowel (ə) after 's'. Turk EFL learners pronounce words such as sport and school as /səpɔrt/ and /səku:l/ which are not acceptable pronunciations.

Vowels

The main cause of pronunciation problems of Turks in English is the differences between the vowel systems of the two languages, both due to the difference in number and the way the vowels are pronounced. In Turkish, there is only one vowel type, i.e. monophthong while there are three types of vowel in English: monophthong, diphthong and triphthong. The number of vowels (monophthongs) in Turkish is 8, while there are 12 vowels (monophthongs) in English. In English, there are long, mid and short vowels whereas all Turkish vowels are short. Turkish lacks /i:/, /æ/, /ʌ/, /u:/, /ɔ:/, /ɑ:/ and /ɜ: (ə:)/ and English lacks /ü/ and /ö/. Naturally, Turkish EFL learners will have problems in reading words containing these vowels, e.g. cat, act, at, bus, shoe, seat, car, fur, etc.

5. Every Turkish vowel has only one pronunciation, e.g. the vowel /u/ is pronounced with the features: [+high, + round, +back], none of the features changes because of the phonetic environment. However, it is not the case in English, the same vowel may sound differently in different words, e.g. the pronunciation of /u/ in the words: bus, surrender, busy, occur, pure... is not the same in this language. For this, Turkish EFL learners pronounce the English words on and off as /on/, /of/.

6. Two vowels are pronounced as a diphthong in English but as two separate phonemes in Turkish. For example, the word cause is pronounced something like cows by some students. Some other examples: audience, audio, author, autumn, caution, pause, etc.

7. Another matter with regard to English vowels is that one vowel is pronounced as a diphthong in some words and as a monophthong in some others, e.g. /a/ in the words cap and capable, /o/ in boy and so, /a/ in far and fare, etc and this may be a source of phonological errors for Turkish EFL learners.

8. In some English words, two vowels come together and make a long vowel, in fact, they are pronounced as one phoneme, e.g. the vowel part in the words mean and seat are pronounced as /i:/. Language learners generally make an overgeneralization on the basis of the similarity between these words and some others such as pear, and so they tend to pronounce the vowel part as / i:/. As a result, the word pear is pronounced as /p i:r/, whereas the correct form is /peər/, i.e. the vowel part of this word should be pronounced not as a long vowel but as a diphthong. Some other examples: bear /beər/, swear /sweər/ and wear /weər/.

9. In some others, a single vowel is pronounced as a long vowel, e.g. the vowel in the words to, do, who, etc. Regarding such words, Turkish learners of English may make errors, at least during the first stages of learning, as they do not encounter such cases in their native language.

10. In Turkish, when two vowels come together (observed only in loanwords), both of them are pronounced separately and they are not read as one vowel, e.g. the words maaş, saadet, etc and one vowel is never pronounced as a long vowel. In fact, there are no long vowels in native Turkish words, long vowels can be found in loanwords from Arabic and Farsi: şair /şa:ir/, numune /numu:ne/, iman /i:man. Even some of the loanwords are pronounced with short vowels in Turkish, e.g. beyaz, rahat, ruh.

In general, as Turkish is a phonetic language, its speakers are used to pronouncing the words on the basis of their spellings. In other words, whatever they do in reading the words is spelling pronunciation. For example, the words from, off, Turkey, on are pronounced as /from/, /of/, /turkı/ and /on/, respectively. None of them is right. Generally speaking, spelling pronunciation is not allowed in English.

Syllable structure

A syllable is a unit of pronunciation typically larger than a single sound and smaller than a word. A syllable is usually made up of more than one speech sound, i.e., a vowel plus one or more consonants. The vowel element is essential to the structure of a syllable; that is, a syllable is not possible without the vowel element. There are 6 syllable types in Turkish and only two of them have consonant cluster in the final position (coda) of the syllable. Those two types are:

VCC → e.g. ilk (first) and CVCC → e.g. kırk (forty)

11. Regarding this type of syllable structure, it is necessary to mention a few points. Firstly, the frequency of words having such syllable structures in Turkish is not high, e.g., yurt, kırk, dört, alt, aşk, etc. Secondly, the maximum number of the consonants in coda is two. Thirdly, most of the loanwords having a consonant cluster in coda are pronounced in such a way that the cluster is broken down by adding a vowel between or after the consonants, e.g.,

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Nægd is pronounced as /na.kit/ | 3. Seyr is pronounced as /se.yir/ |
| 2. Bank is pronounced as /ban.ka/ | 4. Geyd is pronounced as /ka.yıt/ |

Four others are:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| V → e.g. a.ra.ba (car) | VC → e.g. a.s.lan (lion) |
| CVC → e.g. ka.dın (woman) | CV → e.g. tek.ne (boat) |

12. It is clear that consonant clusters are rare in Turkish. In the onset position of the syllable, there can't be a consonant cluster in native words. In other words, native words in this language never begin with two or more consonants. This is such a strict rule in this language that even the consonant cluster of the loanwords in onset is broken down by adding a vowel between the consonants, e.g.,

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Club is pronounced as /k <u>u</u> lüp/ | 3. Sport is pronounced as /s <u>i</u> por/ |
| 2. Studio is pronounced as /s <u>u</u> tudiyo/ | 4. Crisis is pronounced as /k <u>i</u> rız/ |

13. There are about 18 types of syllable structure in English (Keshavarz, 2003) and most of them contain cluster both in the onset and the coda. This may be one of the causes of pronunciation problems for Turks learning English.

14. Another cause of the pronunciation problems for the Turkish EFL learners is that some words in English (mainly prepositions and auxiliaries) have two pronunciation forms: weak and strong.

Turks are not accustomed to pronouncing a word in two different ways and they generally learn the strong form of such words in English. The reason may be that in high schools, English teachers usually pronounce all the auxiliaries and prepositions strongly.

So, Turkish EFL learners may produce /kæn/ for both cases of can in the following conversation:

Can you speak Turkish? – Yes, I can speak Turkish.
Normally, the first can should be pronounced strongly (/kæn/) and the second one weakly (/kən/).

15. One more important cause of pronunciation problems of Turkish EFL learners is related to language testing system in Turkey. According to Bekleyen (2007) language tests do not contain oral-aural components in Turkey and this makes it unnecessary to teach pronunciation. As a consequence, students do not try to improve their pronunciation because they think it is unnecessary. Önem (2012) asserts “All English exams being held in Turkish ELT system depend on grammar, vocabulary and reading. Only few exams evaluate other language skills and speaking is the less-evaluated skill... Therefore students do not feel the need to learn, practice and develop their speaking skills as they are not going to be tested.”

Hebert (2002) asserts “incorrect pronunciation may lead to unintelligible speech”. Moreover, pronunciation problems may also affect listening performance in the classroom, since students who do not know the correct pronunciation of words are unable to recognize them in listening activities. As suggested by Field (2003), sometimes learners recognize words while reading, but not while listening to the spoken language. This produces comprehension problems in listening.

Discussion and Conclusion

As mentioned above, the languages under discussion are two completely different languages, i.e. one of them (Turkish) is phonetic and the other one (English) is non-phonetic. Here, the author has tried to present some of the pronunciation problems of Turkish EFL learners due to the orthography system of English. The main problem is caused by the fact that in Turkish there is a one-to-one correspondence between the letters and their sounds while in English there is not such a correspondence. The source of the problems, in English, is not the pronunciation but the spelling.

If a learner is exposed to spoken English, without dealing with its written form, he/she will face no problems in learning it. The problems arise when one is going to learn English as a foreign language in a non-English-speaking environment. The learner, in such a situation, has to use the written form of English much more than the spoken form and English spelling, due to its high degree of irregularity and being not match with pronunciation, hinders effective learning, hence making problems for the Turkish EFL learners.

The problems were discussed in three linguistic fields, i.e. consonants, vowels and syllable structure and the differences in these systems were presented. In fact, the differences are the causes of difficulties for the Turkish EFL learners in learning English pronunciation.

Regarding the language testing system in Turkey, the author believes that the authorities should modify the system so that language tests do contain oral-aural components. This way the necessity of teaching English pronunciation will no doubt increase.

The main contribution of this study may be for the English teachers. Using the findings of this paper, they can focus on the spelling and pronunciation differences between the two languages and make the learners do a lot of exercise and repetition so that they overcome the related problems. This way, the teachers will be successful in teaching and the learners in learning; hence the educational goals will be reached.

References

BAYRAKTAROĞLU, S. (2008) Orthographic Interference and The Teaching of British Pronunciation to Turkish. *Learners Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, Vol.4 Issue 2. 19.

BEKLEYEN, N. (2007) An investigation of English teacher candidates' problems related to listening skill. *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences* 6(21) 91-105.

BEKLEYEN, N. (2011) Pronunciation Problems of the Turkish EFL Learners. *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences*.

DEMIREZEN, M. (2007) A Model to Rehabilitate a Fossilized Pronunciation Error of Turkish English Language Teachers: the English Consonant Phoneme /ŋ/ Wrongly articulated as /nk/ Through Nasal Devoicing. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 3(2), 289-303.

FIELD, J. (2003) Promoting perception: lexical segmentation in L2 listening. *ELT Journal* 57(4) 325-334.

HEBERT, J. (2002) *PracTESOL: It's not what you say, but how you say it*. In J. C. Richards & W. A.

HIŞMANOĞLU, M. (2007) [ɔ:] and [ou] contrast as fossilized pronunciation error of Turkish learners of English and "How many words are there in the English Language?". Oxford dictionaries.com. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/page/howmanywords>.

JONES, R. (2002) *Beyond "listen and repeat": Pronunciation teaching materials and theories of second language acquisition*. In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (Ed.), *Methodology in Language Teaching* (178-187). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Katz, L. & Frost, R. (1992). *The reading process is different for different orthographies: The orthographic depth hypothesis*. In Frost, R. & Katz, L., (Eds.). *Orthography, Phonology, Morphology, and Meaning*, pp. 67-84. Amsterdam: Elsevier North Holland Press.

KAWAGUCHI, Y., MINEGISHI, M., DURAND, J. (2011) *Corpus analysis and variation in Linguistics*. Google Books. Books.google.com. Retrieved.

KESHAVARZ, M. H. (2003) *A Practical Course of English Phonetics and Phonology*. Tehran, The Center for Studying and Compiling University Books in Humanities (SAMT).

LARSEN-FREEMAN, D. (2000) *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

LEWIS, G. (2002) *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*. Oxford:Oxford University Press, p. 26

MYDANS, S. (2007) *Across cultures, English is the word*. New York Times. Retrieved 21 September 2011

ÖNEM, E. (2012) *Inhibitors for Speaking English in Turkish EFL students*. Proceedings of the ISLC 2012, Mega Press, Erzurum, p. 53-63

ROACH, P. (1983) *English Phonetics and Phonology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

ŞENEL, M. (2006) *Suggestions for Beautifying the Pronunciation of EFL Learners in Turkey*. Journal of Language and The_Influences_on_Old_English.html. Retrieved 5 September 2010.

WEISSBORT, D. (2006) *Translation: theory and practice : a historical reader*. Oxford University Press, p.100.

Ziahosseiny, S.M. (1994) *Introducing Contrastive Linguistics*. Tehran, Islamic Azad University Press.