

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF PHONOLOGICAL INTERFERENCE IN THE ENGLISH OF SLOVAKS

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In this study we will discuss phonological errors and their causes on the basis of the language performance of Slovak students learning English as a foreign language. The errors are shown to be of different quality and distribution in the three language skills – perception, production and perception/production, which has implications for second language teaching methods. CA of Slovak and English phonemes is used in EA and a standpoint is taken on the two phenomena as well as on IL. Interferential and non-interferential errors are characterized.

INTRODUCTION

As is generally known, CA can either be theoretical with the goal of analysing two language systems on either language level, or it can be applied when it is of pedagogical relevance in foreign language teaching. EA is a component of CA in the sense that EA uses CA for describing and explaining the manifestation of and reasons for errors in the language performance of learners of a foreign language. Theoretical and applied CA and EA are closely interwoven, since the results of evaluation of empirical data collected through EA are the ultimate touchstone of any contrastive theory. This does not imply, however, that all errors are 'contrastive.'

Literature on CA and EA has grown immensely and it is beyond the scope of this study to give a full account of it. A comprehensive bibliography can be found at the end of J. Fisiak's article "Present trends in contrastive linguistics" (1983: 28-38). There are also many articles on the subject in AILA Proceedings and two of the latest anthologies in the field of CA, EA, and IL studies have been edited by D. Nehls (1988 and 1991).

The term IL is widely used by applied CA researchers who understand IL as being the present state of knowledge of the learner's foreign language which is the result of his/her gradual building up of an L2 rule