



Roles of Vowels: Existing in Our Daily Life

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Abstract. The vowel is a natural part of a language that carries information in grammar and lexicon. The vowel in every language is a must for learners. If we notice it carefully, we will recognize that there are so many details of vowels in our daily life that we might have concluded them as common phenomena that are hard to explain. In this essay, a brief analysis and discussion will be done to disclose these miserable phenomena made by vowels in our daily lives. Relevant areas include brand naming, learning ability, dialect, and the disabled. The whole research background is based on China and Chinese society.

Keywords: vowels · brand image · dialect · dyslexia · hearing impairment · second language acquisition

1 Introduction

The vowel, without it a word cannot be pronounced and is an important part of language learning, always has a close connection with the beginning learners. It will tell how we can divide words into syllables, which can help with pronunciation, spelling, reading, and writing. Vowels are necessary for the purpose [1].

Whereas after learning the starting phase—pronunciation acquisition, letter spelling, and memorizing of a language, the vowel is not paid attention to too much. Indeed, this part of language is royally academic and would be without too much attention if people use a certain language as a tool rather than research it. But the vowel has such a great role in our daily life which might be ignored by people. Our life and people's wisdom are filled with the shadow of the vowel. In this essay, we will have an illustration of the roles of vowels existing in our daily life or relating to people's lives.

The relevant roles of vowels are divided into 4 parts, which are vowel effects on business (children) brands, and images; vowel effects on dialects; vowel effects on impairment and dyslexia people; vowels affecting people planning to start a new language.

2 Vowels Effects in Four Aspects

Regarding the aspects that are caused by vowel effects, the effects of vowels would be illustrated in a few aspects of daily life which include products selling, human articulation, precisely local accent, disabled study, and academic areas. I will review the influence of vowels affecting these conditions respectively.

2.1 From the Selling Perspective

In this section, the effects of vowels would be detected by product selling, which has been shown that the different types of the position of vowels would have various customers' responses or affection reflecting on gender preference. For example, the front vowel and the back vowel (this would be distinguished from the position of the tip of the tongue) play an important role in brand personality perception. We will clarify it in the rest of the section. The back vowel will make consumers feel that the brand is stronger and has more masculine personality characteristics, while the front vowel will make consumers feel that the brand is more friendly, elegant, and sincere, and has more feminine personality characteristics [2, 3]. And the effect additionally can be illustrated that different types of vowels would cause the distinctive vision, which can be explained by an experiment one made by Sapir using 2 virtual words [MAL] [MIL] to represent 2 different sizes of desks and it turned out almost 80% participants would define [MAL] desk is bigger than [MIL] [4]. This can be ascribed to the frequency of the front vowel and back vowel, which means high frequency and low one have a tight connection with "large" and "small" [5]. Moreover, the brand image would be impacted by front vowels, middle vowels, and back vowels. Using DIOR, which aims at international high-class luxuries fitting in fashionable, energetic, and stylish current young people aesthetic, as a sample holds a front vowel /i/. Instead, ROLEX (i.e., a brand for watches) has /u/ and /ɔ/ that illustrate its image is steady and mature. There are still a number of examples that can demonstrate this phenomenon well.

The same principle also applies to the children part, which the concentration of this section will be placed on the vowel effects on products designed for children particularly, or the preference of a certain brand. Similar to [MAL] and [MIL], according to Wei the experiment draws a conclusion by using [miti] and [mutu] as a testing tool to ask a certain number of females and males, around 100 persons for each, the same age around 30 if they could choose one which is most probably the children product brands. This shows the front vowel word [miti] would fit children's brand more. And that is not difficult to notice some children aiming brands always use front vowels, such as /e/ in LEGO, /i/ in SNOOPY, /i/ in FISHER, /ae/ in BANDAI, etc. Most brand words use front vowels to make the sounds much shriller than back ones, which to match typical children's images and to be pronounced far more lovely than the average words preferred by children.

The other vowels effect could also be concluded for example, according to the experiments from Wei, vowels will influence customer's choosing preference, and a superimposed sound phenomenon that has a close connection with vowels exist. All of the results can indicate the vowel position and types will affect the brand image and target consumers, which can lead to a deep thought for market strategy and company market future.

2.2 From the Dialect Perspective

Dialect, the term "Topolect" is a political concept in the Chinese population, but it is actually a "local language", also known as "Vernacular", which refers to the language of a certain region that is different from the standard language, regardless of the kinship between languages [6]. As a branch of language, dialect itself does have vowels

and relevant elements. Vowel has a great influence on dialect and this reason could be ascribed to vowels themselves since the pronunciation of vowels contains little distinctive articulation manner which is unlike the consonants—dental or interdental, bilabials, or alveolars, which have such an identified feature to pronounced. The vowel is more like to be pronounced continuously without being interrupted, which means, the major point to distinguish them would be 3 dimensions—height, openness, and roundness, which are still less likely to be identified as easily as consonants. The result of this would lead to countless vowels theoretically that is the major point probably that in some dialects we don't understand a word even with a standard tone. In this section, the influence of vowels in dialect, using Chinese dialects as examples, the aspect will be discussed and reviewed.

Shanxi dialect has several sub-dialects, which shows the fancy of the Shanxi dialect thoroughly. As we mentioned, vowel changes influence dialect. Or precisely, Vowel heightening, vowel heightening is a side of the development of Chinese phonology side [7] and has changed vowels in dialects that cause the difference existing in the standard pronunciation and the changed one. For example, in Qin County (a county in Shanxi), the dialect there has such a feature (Vowel heightening) just talked about. In the Qin dialect, vowel heightening—tongue vowels have a new combination with consonants of the phonetic alphabets because of the existence of vowel heightening, which has changed the sound system [8]. This situation can be reflected directly by unable-identified pronunciation superficially, and a tone system changes academically. And because of this circumstance happens, the special Qin dialect has been strengthened. There are still more various situations of vowels that are making dialects special.

Furthermore, it can be confirmed that consonants hold more lexical meanings while vowels tend to have more grammatical functions in identifying words and even in sentences [9]. But from my perspective, a vowel also has a function that can decorate a word or change the image superficially of a word which is likely to function as a consonant in dialect. Using “xin” in Taiyuan dialect, which means to find something, actually, if it is standardized correctly, as “xun” in mandarin. These two different pronunciations are made only by vowels. As can be seen, consonants don't change but the vowels, and this will cause confusion to the people, especially to who don't know the Taiyuan dialect well. Because its image—pronunciation has been changed while lexicon meaning doesn't change.

2.3 From the Physically Disabled Function Perspective

The vowels can be pronounced by different vocal section positions, according to the hard palate, soft palate, pharyngeal wall, cheek (medial side), and includes the engagement of the tongue. Because its pronunciation will use different mouth parts, people with hearing impaired students will suffer from this because the pronunciation manner of vowels will use them more frequently. For example, inflexibility of tongue position, which is a positive migration external condition when people start to learn English and to distinguish vowels in China, matters (always remains in the middle position) while the lower jaw, which is used less frequently in vowels, is used more that lead to incorrect pronunciation [10, 11].

The vision can be put into the languages of the world. Many languages around the globe will have some omission on vowels named omission of phonological elements, which will cause suffering for people who have dyslexia. For example, in Hebrew and Arabic, many vowels are not written, more precisely, in another word, Hebrew abjad will write down all consonants while using *matres lectionis* to represent the vowels [12].

More factors cause people with relevant diseases that can be discovered by vowel pronunciation. Researchers nowadays are also searching for ways to deal with these situations [13, 14]. One of the ways is in Chinese pronunciation, for people who are hearing impaired individuals or students in schools for the deaf are to imitate mouth shape in front of the mirror, which turns out have an obvious influence on vowels correction—The correct recognition rate of the unrounded labials /a/, /i/, /e/, which is significantly higher than that of the rounded labials /o/, /u/, /ü/, etc.

2.4 From the Second Language Acquisition Perspective

Learning languages has become a compulsory experience for students and people currently due to the development of education. At the beginning of learning a language, people start with letters that are composed of vowels and consonants. In this section, the topic of the effect of vowels will be discussed briefly. And several languages will be used to review this topic.

The first point is about the number of vowels which is quite different from a people's mother tone language. The language discussed here is the Thai language; if a Chinese decides to learn it, the vowels he will face are 3 times as much as Chinese and a feature in which the Thai language has former central vowels. And in the division of tongue position, which is relevant to vowels, Thai is divided into two types half-high and half-low types [15]. These factors mentioned above don't exist in Chinese. Thus, this situation causes trouble for new learners whose mother tongue language doesn't have such complex conditions as Chinese, English, Spanish, and so on.

The second point might be the existing form of vowels in certain languages which is quite different from major languages in the world, which not only cause problems to dyslexia but even normal learners. Abugida, Ethiopic scrip Amharic can be a good example for this, for the vowel and consonants have a certain combination which means vowels are attached to consonants which is like Table 1.

It is clear that letters tell people points [·] that mean vowels with attaching at different main bodies, just as the first line which is the shape of “n” means /b/. Only different positions of points and the main body will demonstrate the pronunciation of a letter. This is the problem, for people from English-speaking countries or a country with an alphabet language system with a clear division of consonants or vowels they tend to spend more energy on Abugida language than a language that can make people recognize more easily with apart consonants and vowels like Spanish, Italian, English and Chinese Phonetic Alphabets.

Table 1. The Amharic (Self-painted)

ባ ba	ቡ bu	ቢ bi	ቤ be
ታ ta	ቲ tu	ቲ ti	ቲ te
ማ ma	ሙ mu	ሚ mi	ሜ me

3 What Causes These Vowel Effects

The above paragraph has an overview thoroughly, it can be noticed that the special features of vowels have an influence on the things we touch. Just as content mentioned before—people have different feelings about vowels, which have shadows of gender, age brand images, with front vowels or the back ones; because of the dimensions of vowels, dialects are affected in some ways that make them more special; different vocal organs are the origination of vowels so that these features cause the tiresome to people who have relevant organ defects. The special of vowels, why vowels are unique, is that they carry more grammatical functions rather than lexicon meanings that are the main jobs of consonants, which means they cannot have too many changes in order to identify what is expressed. Hence, vowels tend to be more complex in form and pronunciation—we still have more examples, except for Abugida we mentioned, Abjad is a consonant phoneme script that only consonants on paper while readers have to think about and add vowels between every consonant by themselves to make complete and comprehended words and sentences. It leads to difficulties in second language acquisition.

4 Conclusion

To sum up, there are shadows of vowels in people’s real life, which can even have an academic discussion if people want to pick up these details and have deep thoughts about them. As an important part of language, it is neither far away from our daily life, nor the only field for linguists. There is something that can be found in the business area to search for the key to gaining market share. Due to the flexibility of vowels, the impact is placed on local communication and language study. Relevant to vowels vocal pronunciation organs can make researchers in the medical industry cure disabled children to have them catch up to the normal children in the world—more easily talk, study, live, etc.

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