

## **Negative Transfer of Zhangshu Dialect in Jiangxi Province to High School Students' Acquisition of English Pronunciation**

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### **Abstract**

*Affected by the negative transfer of Zhangshu dialect in Jiangxi Province, China, many English learners are prone to errors in the acquisition of English pronunciation. In order to correct students' wrong pronunciation and improve their pronunciation accuracy, this paper chose 30 senior high school students from Zhangshu Middle School to analyze their English pronunciation. The research results showed: (1) students were liable to confuse long monophthongs with the short ones and misread English vowels [æ] and [eə]; English consonants [θ], [ð], [tʃ] and [dʒ] were likely to be replaced by dialectal sounds [s], [ts], [tɕʰ] and [tɕ] respectively; English nasal [ŋ] in [iŋ] was also easy to be mispronounced. (2) At suprasegmental level, students tended to syllabicate the codas and stress each word in a sentence so that the rhythm featured dialectal characteristics. Also, their intonation was invariable due to the effect of Zhangshu dialect.*

**Key words:** Zhangshu dialect, senior high school students, negative transfer, English pronunciation

### **Introduction**

Speaking ability, closely connected with reading, listening and writing abilities, is of great significance in the acquisition of a foreign language. As we all know, pronunciation is among the important factors to gauge students' speaking ability. Therefore, mastering its pronunciation will help students to achieve better outcomes in overall language acquisition. However, in the course of second language acquisition, regional dialects will exert negative effects on the articulation of the target language. The author comes from Zhangshu, a city located in the middle of Jiangxi Province in China. Based on several years of observation, the author discovers many influences of the negative transfer of Zhangshu dialect on students' acquisition of English pronunciation in which a large quantity of errors are made at both segmental and suprasegmental levels. The mispronunciation will not only bring about misunderstandings in verbal communication but also hinder students' improvement of overall language skills.

This paper aims to raise the awareness of the effects of negative transfer of Zhangshu dialect to the acquisition of English pronunciation through investigation and analysis. In addition, this paper intends to provide some corresponding countermeasures to correct the bad pronunciation habits of Zhangshu students, improve their pronunciation accuracy, assist them in improving their oracy, and enlighten English teachers and learners in other areas. This study has guiding significance in practice. According to the research findings, strategies will be provided for Zhangshu EFL learners and teachers so as to discover the causes of the pronunciation errors and tackle the problems in time so that students can acquire English phonetic knowledge more efficiently and effectively and hence develop their spoken English. Meanwhile, this paper also brings inspiration and reference to EFL teachers and learners from other regions.

### **Related Studies on Negative Transfer of Mother Language to the Acquisition of English Pronunciation**

The phenomenon of negative transfer of mother language to the acquisition of English pronunciation has drawn much attention from scholars all around the world and quite a few studies relative to it have come out. For example, Katsumasa (1999) points out that Japanese EFL learners tend to substitute English vowels [u:] and [ʊ] with Japanese vowel [u] and they do not make a distinction between tense and lax vowels. Binturki (2008) analyzes the pronunciation errors of Saudi ESL learners, demonstrating that Saudi ESL speakers do have difficulty with the voiced inter-dental fricative [v] and to lesser extent, with [p] and [ɹ]. Keshavarz and Abubakar (2017) investigate the pronunciation problems of Hausa-speaking learners of English who face problems in pronouncing certain English vowels [ʌ], [ɔ] and [ɜ:] due to the nonexistence of such vowels in Hausa. Varol (2012) carries out a brief contrastive analysis of Turkish and English sound systems to identify the possible sources of transfer from Turkish. The study reveals that English inter-dental consonants [θ] and [ð]; velar approximants [w] and [ɹ] do not occur in Turkish and are thus replaced by Turkish sounds [t], [d], [v], and [r] respectively.

In China, multitudes of studies have also been conducted on negative transfer of various dialects to the acquisition of English pronunciation.

For instance, Zhou Lu et al. (2009) focus on the negative transfer of Cantonese and indicate that Cantonese students usually confuse [tʃ] with [ts], [f] with [v] and have trouble producing the sound [r]. Likewise, Guo Li et al. (2015) specifically make a contrastive study on sound systems of Nanchang dialect, Mandarin and Received Pronunciation (RP). Their findings are: the discrimination between short vowels and long vowels is indistinct; students always pronounce voiceless consonants as voiced, etc. Wu Rong (2011) conducts a research on the negative transfer of dialectal pronunciation of Nan county to English pronunciation with secondary vocational school students. Wu states that the fundamental elements of stress, weak form, linking, pausing, etc are disregarded in students' English communication. In addition, a specific investigation is dedicated to reviewing the studies on the effects of Chinese dialects on English phonetic acquisition from 1957 to 2013. The drawbacks of these studies and the corresponding causes are examined and the suggestions are also provided in the paper (Zhai Honghua et al, 2015).

From the literature mentioned above, it is concluded that much research has been done and considerable results have been achieved in the field of L1 transfer to the acquisition of English pronunciation. However, research about the negative transfer of Zhangshu dialect is far from sufficiently enough. Hence, an in-depth and profound study should be conducted so as to enrich the field of contrastive study between mother tongue and English as well as help local EFL students and teachers to reduce or even avert the negative influence.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Language Transfer Theory**

According to Odlin (1989), transfer is the influence arising from similarities and dissimilarities between target language and any other language that has been previously acquired (perhaps imperfectly). Language transfer, which is a kind of cross-linguistic influence, is among the crucial elements forming the learners' interlanguage and it can affect all linguistic subsystems including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, rhetoric and orthography (Odlin, 2001). In other words, learners' existing linguistic knowledge will exert an impact on acquiring a second language, during which the knowledge of L1 will be stimulated and thus have an influence. Furthermore, he emphasizes that not only the features of phonological categories and phonemes but also those of syllable structure could affect the interlanguage phonology (Odlin, 1989).

#### **Types of Transfer**

Generally speaking, language transfer can be classified into two categories: positive transfer and negative transfer. According to Odlin (2001), positive transfer refers to what is considered the effects that facilitate the language acquisition under the influence of cross-linguistic similitude; negative transfer, on the contrary, refers to any cross-linguistic influences which can give rise to errors, overproduction, underproduction, misinterpretation, and other effects that constitute a divergence between the behavior of native and non-native speakers of a language. Positive transfer happens when the previous knowledge promotes the learning of new knowledge while negative transfer occurs when previous knowledge interferes the acquisition of new knowledge.

#### **Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis**

Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, the core theory of language transfer, refers to the comparison of linguistic systems of two languages. In the book *linguistics across cultures*, Lado (1957), who proposes CAH writes, "...in the comparison between native and foreign language lies the key to ease or difficulty in foreign language learning." Then, "It is easy for learners to learn if the knowledge of target language is similar to that mother tongue; otherwise, it is quite difficult". Consequently, by means of predicting and studying the contrasts of the language structures between native and foreign language, the difficulty of learning the target language can be eased.

#### **Comparisons between Zhangshu Dialect and English**

##### **Phonetic System of Zhangshu Dialect**

According to Sun Yizhi (2007), there are 24 initials (consonants, known as “声母” in Chinese) and 43 finals (vowels, known as “韵母” in Chinese) which cover 7 simple finals, 18 compound finals and 18 nasal finals in Zhangshu dialect. It has five tones: the high and level tone, the rising tone, the fall-rise tone, the falling tone and the entering tone.

Initials: [p], [p<sup>h</sup>], [m], [v], [f], [t], [t<sup>h</sup>], [l], [ts], [tʂ<sup>h</sup>], [s], [tʃ], [tʃ<sup>h</sup>], [ʒ], [ʃ], [tɕ], [tɕ<sup>h</sup>], [ŋ], [ç], [k], [k<sup>h</sup>], [ŋ], [h], [ø].

Simple finals: [ɿ], [ʅ], [i], [u], [a], [o], [ɛ].

Compound finals: [ia], [ua], [io], [uo], [iɛ], [ue], [ai], [uai], [yai], [au], [ei], [ui], [ɔi], [uɔi], [ɛu], [iɛu], [əu], [iu].

Nasal finals: [an], [uan], [ɛn], [ien], [yɛn], [ɔn], [uɔn], [ən], [in], [un], [yn], [aŋ], [uaŋ], [ɔŋ], [iɔŋ], [uɔŋ], [oŋ], [ioŋ].

Syllables of Zhangshu dialect usually comprise initials, finals and tones. One syllable only has one initial in the front followed by one final which can be simple, compound or nasal. Also, Zhangshu dialect is a syllable-timed language, which means it is the syllables that form the rhythm. One syllable is often equivalent to one Chinese character. Therefore, each Chinese character occupies nearly the same amount of time.

In the process of speaking, though characters like modal particles are read without stress, the majority of them are stressed. Furthermore, Zhangshu dialect whose intonation barely changes, belongs to tone language, meaning each character has one of the five tones: the high and level tone, the rising tone, the fall-rise tone, the falling tone and the entering tone (Sun Yizhi, 2007).

**Table 1: Initials of Zhangshu Dialect**

Example words	布	步	门	午	飞	到	同	难	糟	仓	散	招
Sounds	p	p <sup>h</sup>	m	v	f	t	t <sup>h</sup>	l	ts	tɕ <sup>h</sup>	s	tʃ
Example words	昌	润	声	举	秋	女	修	贵	跪	硬	河	远
Sounds	tʃ <sup>h</sup>	ʒ	ʃ	tɕ	tɕ <sup>h</sup>	ŋ	ç	k	k <sup>h</sup>	ŋ	h	ø

**Table 2: Simple Finals of Zhangshu Dialect**

Example words	资	直	第	步	怕	而	色
Sounds	ɿ	ʅ	i	u	a	o	ɛ

**Table 3: Compound Finals of Zhangshu Dialect**

Example words	姐	瓜	约	过	铁	国	太	刮	缺
Sounds	ia	ua	io	uo	iɛ	ue	ai	uai	yai
Example words	到	背	桂	合	帅	潮	桥	手	流
Sounds	au	ei	ui	ɔi	uɔi	ɛu	iɛu	əu	iu

**Table 4: Nasal Finals of Zhangshu Dialect**

Example words	散	关	扇	连	缘	竿	短	蒸	林
Sounds	an	uan	ɛn	iɛn	yɛn	ɔn	uɔn	ən	in
Example words	温	运	声	横	仓	将	光	虫	胸
Sounds	un	yn	aŋ	uaŋ	ɔŋ	iɔŋ	uɔŋ	oŋ	ioŋ

### Phonetic System of English

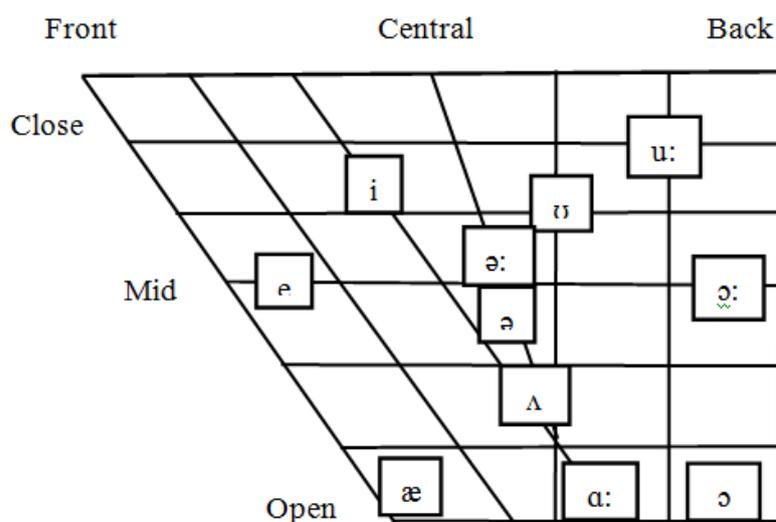
English, as the international language, is the official language of more than 70 countries. As it is widely used, there are sundry kinds of English accents, but only RP is adopted as the evaluation criterion in this paper. There are 44 phonemes in RP, including 20 vowel phonemes and 24 consonant phonemes. The most commonly used intonations comprise the rising tone, falling tone and fall-rise tone (Wang Guizhen, 2005).

There are 12 monophthongs: [ɑ:], [ə:], [i:], [ɔ:], [u:], [ʌ], [ɪ], [ɒ], [ʊ], [ə], [e], [æ].

There are 8 diphthongs: [ei], [ai], [ɔi], [iə], [eə], [ʊə], [aʊ], [əʊ].

There are 24 consonants: [p], [b], [t], [d], [k], [g], [f], [v], [s], [z], [θ], [ð], [ʃ], [ʒ], [tʃ], [dʒ], [m], [n], [ŋ], [h], [l], [r], [j], [w].

**Table 5: English Vowels**



**Table 6: English consonants**

Place of articulation	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glotal
<b>Manner of articulation</b>								
<b>Stops</b>	p b			t d			k g	
<b>Fricatives</b>		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
<b>Affricatives</b>					tʃ dʒ			
<b>Nasals</b>	m			n			ŋ	
<b>Lateral</b>				l				
<b>Approximants</b>	w				r	j		

English syllable is a minimal unit of sound. English syllables are usually composed of onset (consonants), peak (vowels) and coda (consonants).

English is a stress-timed language and there are two types of stress: word stress and sentence stress. According to Wang Guizhen (2005), in word stress, three degrees of stress can be found: primary, secondary and zero or unstressed syllable. Stressed syllables take comparatively longer time, have a pitch change and have full vowel sounds. In contrast, unstressed syllables take shorter time and usually have reduced and unclear vowel sounds.

Also, many English words have strong forms and weak forms. Usually, notional words are read in strong forms while functional words are read in weak forms.

The stress in rhythm refers to the sentence stress. A rhythm unit is formed by a stressed syllable along with several unstressed syllables which may come before that stress and/or after it. In the rhythmic pattern of an English sentence, the intervals among stressed syllables take up roughly the same time, no matter how many unstressed syllables there are (Wang Guizhen, 2005). That is to say, the more unstressed syllables are in the unit, the more quickly we ought to read.

In English, intonation is used to convey feelings and attitudes. That is, in verbal communication, the rises and falls of the pitch also makes a difference in expressing meaning. Three intonations are commonly used in English: the falling tone, the rising tone and the fall-rise tone. Typically, declarative sentences, special questions and exclamatory sentences are read with the falling tone while general questions are read with the rising tone. As for alternative questions, the voice rises on the first alternative and falls on the second one. Likewise, in the sentence “where there is a will, there is a way”, the adverbial clause is read with the rising tone and the main clause is read with the falling tone.

### **Differences between Zhangshu Dialect and English**

In English, monophthongs can be divided into two categories: short monophthongs [ʌ], [ɪ], [ʊ], [ə], [e], [æ] and long monophthongs [ɑ:], [ɛ:], [i:], [ɔ:], [u:]. However, in Zhangshu dialect, there is no such division and all single vowels are short vowels. Besides, English monophthongs [æ] and [ə] are nonexistent in Zhangshu dialect.

English diphthongs, including [ei], [ai], [ɔi], [aʊ] and [əʊ], exist in Zhangshu dialect system, but the three sounds [iə], [eə] and [ʊə] do not. Thus, students might have trouble pronouncing such sounds as are mentioned above.

17 out of 24 English consonants including [p], [b], [t], [d], [k], [g], [f], [v], [s], [ʃ], [ʒ], [tʃ], [dʒ], [m], [ŋ], [h] and [l] sound quite similar to some of the initials in Zhangshu dialect, though some phonetic symbols are differentiated between the two phonetic systems. The other English consonants [z], [θ], [ð], [n], [r], [j] and [w] are absent in Zhangshu dialect, which might also lead to mispronunciation for Zhangshu EFL learners.

As for syllables, English onset actually equals to Chinese initial; English peak amounts to Chinese final; English coda is equivalent to the terminal consonant (there are only [n] and [ŋ] in Zhangshu dialect) of the nasal finals. So here lie the differences: there are various kinds of coda in English like [t], [g], [s] and so on; the onset and the coda can be consonant clusters like [pl], [ks] and [st] which are nonexistent in Zhangshu dialect; there are more closed syllables (syllables with coda) than open syllables (syllables without coda) in English.

Regarding stress and rhythm, English is in marked contrast to Zhangshu dialect as the usage of stresses as well as the types of language they belong to greatly differ: the former is the stress-timed language while the latter the syllable-timed language. Also, intonation serves as a critical factor in English but in Chinese it is the tones that matter. Hence, such differences mentioned above might hinder students' English pronunciation from being correct.

### **The Study**

#### **Research Questions**

The research questions of this paper are listed as follows:

- (1) Does Zhangshu dialect have a negative impact on senior high school students' acquisition of English pronunciation?
- (2) If it does, what is the negative transfer of Zhangshu dialect to senior high school students' acquisition of English pronunciation?

#### **Subjects**

The subjects of the research are all students from Zhangshu Middle School. The author randomly chose 35 students in a class to participate in the research and sorted out 30 valid samples. The criteria of selecting the participants are: firstly, subjects should be senior high school students for they have been learning English for at least 7 years so that pronunciation errors out of ignorance can be avoided. Secondly, the subjects should be native speakers of Zhangshu dialect and often communicate in it in their daily life.

#### **Instruments**

To select valid samples, a perception test is designed to collect data while a 2-minute interview is designed to test students' proficiency of Zhangshu dialect. An iPad is used to record students' pronunciation.

There are two parts in the perception test (see Appendix A): the first part is 56-word-reading; the second part is 10-sentence-reading. The first part is designed to test the negative transfer on vowels, consonants and syllables while the second part on stress, rhythm and intonation. In order to ensure the reliability and validity, the vowels and consonants as well as the sentences that are predicted to be mispronounced appear at least five times in the test.

### Procedure

In the process of data collection, students go into a quiet teachers' office one by one. They have 60 seconds to preview the test before they start reading and their voices are recorded in the iPad. Their recordings are then rated by the author who scored 7 out of 9 in IELTS (International English Language Testing System). The author's supervisor will also provide support in the process of rating if necessary. While listening to the recordings, the author will compare them with the RP carefully, count the pronunciation errors and then calculate the error rate. The error rate of each sound is calculated in this way: error rate of pronunciation = sum of the times of errors of the target sound by 30 subjects / (the number of times this sound appears in the word list\*30). For example, English vowel [æ] appears in the list 6 times and it is mispronounced by Zhangshu students (30 valid samples) 159 times. So the error rate of [æ] is:  $159 / (6*30) = 88.33\%$ . Details of each error are presented in Appendix B.

### Results and Discussion

#### Negative Transfer at Segmental Level

##### Negative Transfer on Vowels

The error rate of reciprocal substitutions between short and long monophthongs reaches 86.67%, which indicates that most Zhangshu EFL learners cannot distinguish the corresponding short monophthongs from long monophthongs in pairs, such as [ɔ:] and [ɒ]. In the sound system of Zhangshu dialect, there is not such contrast in the length of pronunciation. All single finals are read in short and equal time. Furthermore, the difference also lies in the tensity of the speech muscles. For example, in English, [ɔ:], [i:] and [u:] are called tense vowels while [ɒ], [ɪ] and [ʊ] are called lax vowels. But in Zhangshu dialect, the discrimination between lax and tense vowels is blurred. Therefore, a large quantity of Zhangshu EFL students are insensitive to the difference and usually replace long monophthongs with the short ones, such as “beat” and “bit” are both pronounced as [bit]; “dark” and “duck” are both pronounced as [dʌk] with great strength.

The error rate of English vowel [æ] is as high as 88.33%. When Students read the words “map”, “bag” and “marry”, they are most likely to substitute the [æ] sound with [ɛ] or [a] in Zhangshu dialect. The substitution mainly results from the fact that Zhangshu dialect does not contain such English front vowel [æ]. To pronounce [æ] right, one's tongue needs to be flat and the lower jaw should be wide open. Nevertheless, lack of enough attention and practice, most students' pronunciation of [æ] is deeply affected by the way they utter [ɛ] and [a].

The error rate of English diphthong [eə] is up to 77.92%. Although vowel [ə] is commonly seen in English words, the diphthong [eə] cannot be found in Zhangshu dialect. As a consequence, a large number of students replace [ə] with the dialectal sound [o]. For instance, when they read the words “where”, “there” and “chair”, diphthong [eə] will be mispronounced as [eo].

##### Negative Transfer on Consonants

The error rates of English consonants [θ] and [ð] are 89.44% and 88.89% respectively. The correct way to produce the two sounds is to protrude your tongue a little bit between your teeth. Because of the absence of these two sounds in Zhangshu dialect, multitudes of the participants are unaware of how to correctly pronounce them and therefore simply pronounce the dialectal sounds [s] and [ts] instead. For instance, the words “think” and “south” will be uttered like [sink] and [saus] while the [ð] sound in “there” and “mother” will be replaced by [ts] instead.

The error rates of English consonants [tʃ] and [dʒ] are about 43.89% and 28%. Under the influence of the dialect, students tend to substitute them with [te<sup>h</sup>] (resembles “q” in Pinyin) and [tɕ] (resembles “j” in Pinyin) respectively. For example, when pronouncing English words like “change”, “children” and “chat”, students will utter them like “qiàn jī” or “quàn jǔ”, “qiū jǔn” and “qiè tǐ” or “què tǐ” in Pinyin while words like “just”, “jeep” and “jog” are pronounced like “juà sǐ tǐ” or “juè sǐ tǐ”, “jù pǔ” or “jì pǔ” and “ji ò gě” in Pinyin.

The error rate of [ŋ] in [in] is up to 72.67%. Without the sound [in] in the pronunciation system of Zhangshu, many of the participants have trouble making the sound, so they simply replace [in] with [in] which exists in Zhangshu dialect. For example, the pronunciation of the word “doing” is usually replaced by ['du:in]. As for some participants, even though they do pronounce the [ŋ] sound in [in], the pronunciation is still far from correct, for they utter like “ing” in Pinyin of Putonghua with one's mouth less open.

#### Negative Transfer at Suprasegmental Level

### **Negative Transfer on Syllables**

The contrast of syllables between the two languages results in great pronouncing difficulty for Zhangshu students who are accustomed to using Huduyin (a sound pronounced by adding a vowel to a consonant) rather than the original sound of the Chinese initial. For example, when they read the Chinese consonant [g], they usually utter it like “gē” (哥) in Pinyin.

Consequently, the error ratio of the coda is 35.05%. The result shows that under the influence of Huduyin, students are liable to add [ə] to coda like [t], [k], [g] and [d] and add [ʊ] to [p] and [m], which sounds like a new syllable is created and the pronunciation is prolonged. This accounts for the phenomena that a certain number of students misread the word “bit” as [bitə], “food” as [fʊdə], “nap” as [næpʊ] and “room” as [rʊmʊ]. In the research, the author also discovers that the participants misread the coda [v] as “wǔ” in Pinyin, partly because of the Huduyin and partly because there is no such final in Zhangshu dialect and thus negative transfer is enacted.

### **Negative Transfer on Stress and Rhythm**

The error rate of stress and rhythm in the test reaches 85.33%. Considering the complicated rules of word stress and sentence stress in English, it is rather difficult for Zhangshu students to master English rhythm when stress is placed to most of the syllables (or characters) in Zhangshu dialect. Additionally, the fact that English is a stress-timed language whereas Zhangshu dialect is a syllable-timed language also serves as a negative element. These factors explain why most of the participants read the English sentences dialectally, placing stress on each word without possible pauses or linking and pronouncing each word one by one without using weak forms.

### **Negative Transfer on Intonation**

As is discussed above, intonation is barely used in Zhangshu dialect which is a tone dialect. As a result, Zhangshu students are usually neglectful of the intonation when they speak

English, so their speech is usually flat and plain without variation of the pitch. What’s more, contrary to the invariance of the Chinese tones, the usage of English intonation is not stationary but varies from context to context which also has a negative impact on students’ mastery of English intonation. The error rate of the intonation part is 83.33%.

### **Countermeasures**

In this paper, the negative transfer of Zhangshu dialect to the acquisition of English pronunciation has been analyzed. The following are some countermeasures for Zhangshu EFL teachers and learners to tackle the problems.

Firstly, English teachers should disseminate the systematic knowledge of phonetics. Based on the results of the research, for the specific sound [æ], for example, students can pronounce it correctly in words like “back” but not in words like “map”. This indicates that students just mechanically “copy” the sound they hear without knowing its phonetic symbol and/or the rules of pronunciation. Moreover, since the college entrance exam excludes oral speaking part, many English teachers in Zhangshu ignore the teaching of phonetics, failing which, however, students’ English comprehensive abilities will be largely limited in the long run. Therefore, the systematic teaching of English pronunciation should be put on agenda.

Secondly, teachers should compare the two language systems and summarize their pronunciation similarities and differences to predict the possible phonetic errors of students. Under the dialectal interference, many of the students fail to realize their phonetic errors. Thus, it is imperative for Zhangshu EFL teachers to guide students and point out the contrasts so that students will be conscious about the influence of negative transfer of Zhangshu dialect and will try to minimize it.

Thirdly, teachers should repeatedly help students to rectify their mispronunciation and reform their habits of pronunciation. Lack of guidance and practice, plenty of students have been speaking English incorrectly for years. Given the impossibility to exterminate their wrong pronunciation the first time they receive help, teachers should be patient enough to point out their errors and remind them of the correct pronunciation time and time again until students can fully grasp it.

Fourthly, students should be exposed to English environment more often. From the interview, the author is informed that Zhangshu dialect does not negatively affect English pronunciation from the perspectives of quite a few participants. It actually implies that multiple students seldom listen to English materials and thus cannot tell the influence of negative transfer. For students, therefore, it is high time that they get access to more native English resources. Additionally, time permitting, teachers can also organize some dubbing competitions to develop students’ ability of imitation as well as stimulate students’ interest in English.

## Conclusion

In this paper, under the theory of language transfer, the author finds that Zhangshu students' English pronunciation is indeed negatively influenced by Zhangshu dialect at both segmental and suprasegmental levels. The findings of the research are listed as follows. At segmental level, students have great difficulty in distinguishing long monophthongs from short monophthongs. Additionally, students cannot pronounce vowels [æ] and [eə] correctly and consonants [θ], [ð], [tʃ] and [dʒ] are often replaced by dialectal [s], [ts], [tɕ<sup>h</sup>] and [tɕ] respectively. As for [ŋ] in [in], students always misread it or replace [in] with [in] of Zhangshu dialect. At suprasegmental level, students are likely to mispronounce the codas like [t], [k], [g], [d], [p], [m] and [v]. With the influence of Huduyin, students tend to prolong the pronunciation by adding a vowel to the coda, which sounds like a new syllable is created. Furthermore, be it notional or functional, each word of a sentence is stressed while weak forms, linking and pausing are all neglected. Last but not least, Zhangshu students usually overlook the usage of intonation so there is no variation of intonation in their speech.

The major implication of the study is that both Zhangshu students and teachers should seriously take into consideration the impact of the negative transfer of Zhangshu dialect. For teachers, they should concentrate more on diffusing the basic knowledge of phonetics and rectifying students' phonetic errors. For students, they should learn to capitalize on various authentic English materials and try to imitate native speakers as much as possible in order to get rid of their inaccurate pronunciation.

The author admits that there are some limitations in this paper. Firstly, the author does not compare the sound systems of Putonghua and English; Putonghua and Zhangshu dialect, for Putonghua is also an important factor worthy of serious consideration. Secondly, this paper is devoid of a thorough discussion on some respects, for example, the negative transfer to English diphthongs, which entails further complete and exhaustive research to be conducted. Thirdly, many of the English teachers in Zhangshu, especially in rural areas, are no experts in English pronunciation. Some of their pronunciation is also erroneous. Considering this factor, it is rather difficult to tell whether the negative transfer stems from the dialect itself or from their teachers.

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