

Differences between English and the Zhuang Language in Phoneme and Word Stress

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Abstract: The Zhuang language is the mother tongue of the Zhuang people that mainly live in Guangxi, China. It has two writing systems. One is called Sawndip based on Chinese characters. The other is called Standard Zhuang that is based on alphabets. Sawndip and Standard Zhuang share the same pronunciation, but they are completely different in form, and the later has been made as a teaching language in many primary and middle schools in Guangxi. Since the Reforming and Opening-up in 1980s, English has become a compulsory course for Chinese students including Zhuang students. Although both Standard Zhuang and English share the same alphabet, they belong to different language families. Negative transfer of the mother tongue in learning English has been a challenge for the Zhuang students. Employing Contrastive Analysis, this paper analyzes the differences between Standard Zhuang and RP in phoneme and word stress. It may help English teachers to teach and Zhuang students to learn English better. It may also help the foreigners to better understand the Zhuang language and culture.

Keywords: Zhuang Language; English; Phoneme; Word Stress

1. Introduction

Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (GZAR) is a province in the south-west of China, bordering with the north of Vietnam. There live the second largest ethnic group (or the largest ethnic minority) in China. The Zhuang people have a long history. "The Tai-speaking peoples nowadays known as the Zhuang, Bouyi (or Buyi), Dai are indigenous inhabitants of Southern China and South East Asia, who first came into contact with the Chinese during the Qin and Han Dynasty, some 2000 years ago." ^{[1][2][3]} The Zhuang

language – Vahcuengh, is the native language of the Zhuang ethnic group. It belongs to the northern and central Thai branches of the Kra-Dai language family, which is distinct from the Mandarin Chinese that belongs to the Sino-Tibetan branch of the India-Tibetan language family. Chinese linguists classify varieties of Zhuang language into two groups: northern Zhuang dialects and southern Zhuang dialects.

The Zhuang language has two writing systems corresponding to its pronunciation. The first writing system is a kind of phonogram called the ancient Zhuang character or Sawndip (literally translated as "raw, or immature scripts"), which was originated from Chinese characters in the Qin and Han dynasties (about 2000 years ago).^[4] It has been used to record folk songs, genealogy, operas, poems, scriptures. Though it has long been widely used among the Zhuang ethnic community, for various reasons, Sawndip has never been documented and standardized.

With the intention of standardizing and popularizing the Zhuang language, Sawcuengh – the second writing system, was created in 1955. It is a Romanized alphabetical writing system. Then a bilingual education system of Zhuang and Mandarin Chinese has been established and implemented in some primary and middle schools in GZAR since 1957.^[5] The Standard Zhuang is used most frequently in formal domains where written Zhuang was previously seldom used, such as newspapers, translations of communist literature and prose.^[6]

Since the 1980s, Zhuang ethnic group and its culture, language, status have attracted more and more interest of experts and scholars from both China and other countries. Zhang (1999) introduces, in detail, dialects and vernaculars spoken by the Zhuang people in his book "A Study of Zhuang Dialects".^[7] Wei & Qin (2006) illustrate systematically the Zhuang language in phonetic, lexical, syntactical and rhetorical level

in their work “An Introduction to Cuengh”.^[4] Wei & Qin (2008) compile a textbook called “A Course in Essential Zhuang” which has been used as a textbook for undergraduates.^[8] Bauer (2000) illustrated the principles of creating Zhuang characters in his article “The Chinese-based writing system of the Zhuang language”^[9] and also compared Zhuang and written Cantonese. “Mapping the Old Zhuang Character Script” by Holm (2013) presents for the first time a systematic overview of such a script, based on a survey of traditional texts in 45 locations among the Zhuang and related peoples in Guangxi, Guizhou, eastern Yunnan, and northern Vietnam.^[10] However, these prior researches are mainly on the Zhuang language itself, there are few studies in interlanguage between Zhuang and other language.

2. Objective

The objective of this paper is to distinguish the differences of phoneme and word stress between Standard Zhuang and RP. According to Contrastive Analysis, the knowledge of the differences between the mother tongue and the target language will help target language learners to predict language transfers that may occur in the process of learning the target language.

3. Methodology

Contrastive Analysis (CA) is a branch of applied linguistics. Johansson (2007:1) defined Contrastive Analysis as “The systematic comparison of two or more languages, with the aim of describing their similarities and differences”.^[11] Ellis (1966) said that while every language may have its individuality, all languages have enough in common for them to be employed and classified into types.^[12] Contrastive Analysis is founded on the assumption that languages can be compared.^[13] Candlin contended that comparative and contrastive description of the learner’s mother tongue and the target language seemed of greatest potential value to language teachers and learners.^[13]

The Zhuang language is the mother tongue of the Zhuang ethnic group. It is strange and mysterious to most people, whereas English is an international language that Zhuang students have to learn as a foreign. Although the two languages are of different language families, and have its own idiosyncrasies, they have enough in

common for comparing and contrasting. Therefore, we apply CA to the phoneme and word stress of the Standard Zhuang and English because “the phonology of a language is somehow ‘basic’ and metric priority in description”.^[13] The phonemes and word stress of the Standard Zhuang will be compared and contrasted to those of the Received Pronunciation of English (RP).

4. Literature Review

4.1 Script of Standard Zhuang

The first version of Standard Zhuang included “a mixture of Latin, modified Cyrillic and IPA letters”.^[14] In 1982, a simplified version was adopted, in which both “the Cyrillic and IPA letters were replaced by Latin letters” for better to learn and more convenient for printing and computer use.^{[4][14]}

According to Zhang (1999) and Wei & Qin (2008), the two dialect groups of the Zhuang language are classified according to their phonetic and morphological features.^{[7][8]} For instance, phonetically, the southern dialect has a set of aspirated initial consonants which are absent in the northern dialect; while the northern dialect has rhotic sounds which don’t exist independently in the southern dialect where the monophthong of rhotic sounds are usually categorized into [th], [h] and [kh] sounds, and the diphthongs into [l] and [n]. The southern dialect has [ts] and [tsh] sounds which are combined into [ts] or [ʔ] in the northern dialect. The northern dialect has [j] and [v] onsets, while the southern dialect hasn’t. For example, ‘canghyw’ (doctor) pronounces as /sa:ŋjw/ in the northern dialect, whereas /sa:ŋʒw/ in the southern dialect, and ‘youq’ (in) /jɔu/ in the northern dialect while /zɔh/ in the southern dialect.

4.2 Phonemes of Standard Zhuang

Standard Zhuang sets Wuming accent as its metric pronunciation and the lexis of the northern dialect as its fundamental vocabulary. It consists of 26 letters, which are categorized as:

Vowels: a, e, i, o, u, w

Consonants: b, p, d, t, g, k, f, v, m, n, c, s, l, r, y, h

Tone letters: z, j, x, q, h

There are 22 initial consonants which are categorized into five types of plosive, fricative, lateral approximant, and nasal consonants

according to the manner of articulation; and six kinds of bilabial, labiodental, alveolar, palatal, velar, glottal according to the place of articulation. Table 1 is the phonemes of the initial consonants of the Standard Zhuang with the combination of its manner and place of articulation.

Table 1. Phonemes of the Initial Consonants of the Standard Zhuang

Bilabial plosive	b [p], mb [ʔb], by [pj]
Alveolar plosive	d [t], nd [ʔd]
Velar plosive	g [k], gy [kj], gv [kv]
Glottal plosive	[ʔ]
Bilabial fricative	v [w]
Labiodental fricative	f [f]
Alveolar fricative	s [θ]
Palatal fricative	c [ɛ], y [j]
Velar fricative	r [ɣ]
Glottal fricative	h [h]
Alveolar lateral approximant	l [l]
Bilabial nasal	m [m], my [mj]
Alveolar nasal	n [n]
Palatal nasal	ny [ɲ]
Velar nasal	ng [ŋ], ngv [ŋv]

Standard Zhuang has six monophthong vowel sounds (MVS): a, o, e, i, u, w; 11 diphthong vowel sounds (DVS): ai, au, ae, aw, oi, ou, ei, eu, iu, ui, wi; and only one triphthong vowel sound (TVS): aeu. These vowel sounds can be followed by zero coda to form 18 rhymes. In addition, they can be followed by nasal coda and glottal coda to form rhymes. Therefore, there are altogether 108 rhymes. The vowels with glottal tone final are categorized into high-pitch group and low-pitch group. The high-pitch sounds are vowels followed by tone final “p, t, or k”, while the low-pitch sounds by “b, d, or g”. These tone finals are silent in the word. According to their realization, rhymes of the Standard Zhuang fall into two types: approximant and obstruent. Table 2 is the phonemes of vowel sounds of the Standard Zhuang.

Table 2. Phonemes of Vowel Sounds of the Standard Zhuang

Approximant MVS	a, o, e, i, u, w
Approximant DVS	ai, au, ae, aw, oi, ou, ei, eu, iu, ui, wi
Approximant TVS	aeu
Approximant vowels with nasal coda	am, an, ang; aem, aen, aeng; om, on, ong; oem, oen, oeng; em, en, eng; iem, ien, ieng; im, in, ing; uem, uen, ueng; um, un, ung; wen, wn, wng

High-pitch obstruent vowels with glottal coda	ap, at, ak; aep, aet, aek; op, ot, ok; oep, oet, oek; ep, et, ek; iep, iet, iek; ip, it, ik; uep, uet, uek; up, ut, uk; wet, wk; wt
Low-pitch obstruent vowels with glottal coda	ab, ad, ag; aeb, aed, aeg; ob, od, og; oeb, oed, oeg; eb, ed, eg; ieb, ied, ieg; ib, id, ig; ueb, ued, ueg; ub, ud, ug; wed, wg; wd

The syllable of standard Zhuang is composed of onset, rhyme and tone final. A simple word of the standard Zhuang is composed of at least two phonemes, for instance, “ra” (means “look for”) is composed of /r/ + /a/, “ok” (means “go out”) is made up of /o/ and the tone final ‘k’; and the most four phonemes, such as “mbanj” (means “village”) is composed of /mb/ + /a/ + /n/ + /j/. Some compound words of the standard Zhuang are composed of more than four phonemes. For example, “lauxbag” (means “turnip”) is composed of /l/ + /au/ + /x/ + /b/ + /a/ + /g/, “gihgaiva” (means “modernization”) is composed of /g/ + /i/ + /h/ + /g/ + /ai/ + /v/ + /a/. The standard Zhuang hasn’t one phoneme words as English words such as “a”, “I”, etc.

Besides, one consonant initial, the Standard Zhuang has six two-consonant initial clusters and one three-consonant initial cluster. For example:

/by/ in byaij (means “walk”), byai (means “end”), and bya (means “fish”), etc.

/gy/ in gyaiej (means “head”), gyaj (means “rice seedling”), and gyu (means “salt”), etc.

/gv/ in gvai (means “lovely”), gvej (means “cut”), and gya (means “melon”), etc.

/nd/ in ndei (means “good”), ndai (means “weed”), and nda (means “braces for carrying baby”), etc.

/mb/ in mbaj (means “butterfly”), mbanj (means “village”), and mbaw (means “leaf”)

/ngv/ in ngvaix (means “spot”), ngviz (means “marrow”), and ngvax (means “tile”), etc.

Though /ng/ and /ny/ is composed of two consonants, both pronounce as /ŋ/, which aren’t a consonant cluster phoneme. For instance, ngaeux (means “lotus”), ngwz (means “snake”), ngeih (means “two”), nyauh (means “shrimp”), nyangj (means “straw”), etc.

4.3 Tone – Word Stress of Standard Zhuang

Zhuang is a tone language. “While stress is assigned to multi-syllabic words in English, tone is assigned to monosyllable-based words or ‘word-syllables’ in Chinese”.^[15] Like Chinese,

word stress of Standard Zhuang is manifested by its tone. It has eight kinds of tone. The first is ended with zero tone final, the second tone with the tone final “z”, the third with “j”, the fourth with “x”, the fifth with “q”, the six with “h”, the seven with one of the high-pitch final: p, t, k, and the eighth with one of the low-pitch final: b, d, g. Each of these tone implies different value of the pitch. “From the perceptual point of view, all stressed syllables have one characteristic in common, and that is prominence, ... Prominence, then, is produced by main factors: (i) loudness, (ii) length, (iii) pitch and (iv) quality. Generally these four factors work together in combination, although syllables may sometimes be made prominent by means of only one or two of them.” [16]

The first tone to the six tone are of approximant sound, while the seventh and the eighth are of obstruent sounds of /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/ and /g/. Taking the sentence “Son mwngz hwnj max gvaq dah. (I teach you to ride a horse across the river.” as example, the tone of the approximant sound of the Standard Zhuang is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Tones of the Approximant Sounds of the Zhuang Language

5	5	5	5	5	5
4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	3	3
2	2	2	2	2	2
1	1	1	1	1	1
	—			—	

Son mwngz hwnj max gvaq dah.

4.4 Phonemes of English

English is an international language. It is also made up of a variety of dialects and accents, such as British English, American English, Australian English, and BBC accent (or R.P. Pronunciation), General American (GA), Scottish accent and so on. As it all known, the 26 letters of English falls into five vowels: a, e, i, o and u; twenty consonants: b, p, d, t, g, k, f, v, c, s, l, r, m, n, j, w, h, q, x and z, and one half-vowel-half-consonant – y. English has a large number of vowel sounds, of which seven are short vowels: [i], [e], [æ], [ɪ], [ɔ], [u] and [ə]; five long vowels: [i:], [ɜ:], [a:], [o:] and [u:]; eight diphthongs: [iə], [eə], [uə], [ei], [ai], [oi], [əu] and [au] and five triphthongs: [eɪə], [aɪə], [ɔɪə], [əuə] and [auə],

English has 24 consonant phonemes which can be categorized into six groups of plosive, fricative, affricative, nasal, lateral approximant and approximant according to the manner of

articulation, and eight groups of bilabial, labiodental, dental, alveolar, post-alveolar, palatal, velar and glottal phonemes according to the place of articulation. Table 4 is the phonemes of the consonants of English with the combination of its manner and place of the articulation.

Table 4. English Consonant Phonemes

Bilabial plosive	p b
Alveolar plosive	t /t/, d /d/
Velar plosive	k /k/, g /g/
Labiodental fricative	f /f/, v /v/
Dental fricative	θ /θ/, ð /ð/
Alveolar fricative	s /s/, z /z/
Post-alveolar fricative	ʃ /ʃ/, ʒ /ʒ/
Glottal fricative	h /h/
Post-alveolar affricative	ç /ç/, ʝ /ʝ/
Bilabial nasal	m /m/
Alveolar nasal	n /n/
Velar nasal	ŋ /ŋ/
Alveolar lateral approximant	l /l/
Bilabial approximant	w /w/
Post-alveolar approximant	r /r/
Palatal approximant	y /j/

The syllable is a very important unit of language. Phonetically, syllables of English can be categorized four types:

- i) Single vowel syllable – that is, a single vowel in isolation. E.g.: are /a:/, or /ɔ:/, err /ɜ:/ .
- ii) Syllable with an onset – they have one or more consonants preceding the centre of the syllable. E.g.: bar /ba:/, key /ki:/, true /tru:/, straw /stro:/.
- iii) Syllable without onset but with a coda – that is, they end with one or more consonants. E.g.: am /æm/, ought /ɔ:t/, asked /ɑ:skt/.
- iv) Syllable with both onset and coda. E.g.: ran /ræn/, sat /sæt/, thank /θæŋk/.

English syllable onsets fall into zero initial, two-consonant initial clusters and three-consonant initial clusters. Two-consonant initial clusters are of two sorts. One is composed of s followed by p, t, k, f, l, m, n, w or j, as in words: spin, stink, skin, sleep, smell, snail, swing, etc.. The other begins with one of a set of about fifteen consonants, followed by one of the set l, r, j. The first consonant in the cluster is called as the “initial consonant” and the second as the “post-initial”.

English syllable finals can be a zero coda, i.e., no final consonant, one consonant, two-consonant cluster and three-consonant cluster. Any consonant may be a final consonant except h, j, w. Two-consonant final clusters fall into

two types. One is a final consonant preceded by one of m, n, ŋ, l and s, which is called as pre-final consonant, as in words: ‘bump’ /b mp/, ‘bent’ /bent/, ‘bank’ /bæŋk/, ‘belt’ /belt/, ‘ask’ /a:sk/. The other is a final consonant followed by one of s, z, t, d and θ, which is called as post final consonant, as in words: ‘bets’ /bets/, ‘beds’ /bedz/, ‘backed’ /bækt/, ‘bagged’ /bægd/, ‘eighth’ /eitθ/. There are two types of three-consonant final cluster. One is pre-final plus final plus post-final.

The other type is one final plus two post finals. For example, ‘fifths’ /fifθs/, ‘next’ /nekst/, ‘lapsed’ /læpst/. The end final consonant is one of s, z, t, d and θ. Analogically, four-consonant cluster can be analyzed as making up of ‘a pre-final + final + post-final 1 + post-final 2’ and ‘no pre-final + final + post-final 1 + post-final 2 + post-final 3’, such as: ‘twelfths’ /twelfθs/, ‘prompts’ /prɒmpts/, ‘sixths’ /siksθs/, ‘texts’ /teksts/.

4.5 Word Stress of English

Unlike Zhuang language, English is a stress language. Besides those lexical monosyllabic words that generally stressed in phrases and sentences, the placement of stress is very important in a multi-syllabic word for it will decide the class and meaning of the word. For example:

export, /'ekspɔ:t/ n. ; /ɪk'spɔ:t/ v.

contract, /'kɒntrækt/ n. ; /kən'trækt/ v.

nation, /'neɪʃ(ə)n/ n. a country considered as a group of people with the same language, culture and history

nationality, /,næʃə'næləti/ n. : the legal right of belonging to a particular nation

It is acknowledged that English is not one of those languages where word stress can be decided simply in relation to the syllable of the word, as can be done in French (where the last syllable is usually stressed), Polish (where the syllable before the last – the penultimate syllable – is usually stressed) or Czech (where the first syllable is usually stressed).^[16] Though English word stress is a highly complex matter, there are some rules that learners can follow. Carr (2013:74-75) proposed end-based principle, rhythmic principle, derivative principle and stress clash avoidance principle for English word stress.^[17]

To sum up, a large amount of researches on phonetics and phonology of English and Chinese have been done respectively, as well as many

comparisons between English and Chinese. However, those researches on Zhuang language are much fewer, let alone the comparison between English and Zhuang language.

5. Findings

Through comparison and contrast of the phonemes and word stress between Standard Zhuang and RP, we can find the differences as following:

5.1 Differences of Phonemes

5.1.1 Differences of Vowel Phonemes

i) ‘W’ is a vowel letter in Standard Zhuang, while it is a consonant in English. ‘Y’ is a consonant in the former while a half-consonant-and-half-vowel in the latter. ‘H’ is a half-consonant-half-tone letter in the former while a consonant in the latter.

ii) Standard Zhuang has 6 monophthong vowels that are long sounds when they are used without a nasal or glottal final, while RP has 12 monophthong vowels, seven of which are short sounds and other five are long sounds.

iii) Standard Zhuang has eleven diphthong vowels and only one triphthong vowel, while RP has eight diphthong vowels and five triphthong vowels.

5.1.2 Differences of Consonant Phonemes

i) Among 20 consonant letters of Standard Zhuang, “z”, “j”, “x”, “q” and “h” are of tone letters which can only occurred at the end of the word except “h” that can be used as initial. These tone consonants only place at the end of the word after vowels or vowels with nasal coda. Moreover, the tone consonants are silent in the word, as in words: ‘naz’ [na:²] (field), ‘raemx’ [laem⁴] (water). These tone consonants imply different pitch levels.

ii) Vowels with glottal stop coda – p, t, k, b, d, g, indicate the pitch level of the word. They are silent at the end of the word, as in ‘dap’ [da:⁷] (accumulate), ‘mad’ [ma:⁸] (socks).

iii) In Standard Zhuang, the initial consonant - p, t, k, and θ (the pronunciation of s) are in-aspirated, while they are aspirated in English. Standard Zhuang has eight two-consonant initial clusters – by, my, ny, gy, mb, nd, ng and gv, and only one three-consonant initial cluster, that is, ngv; while the number of two-consonant initial clusters and three-consonant initial clusters is much larger and much more complex.

iv) As for final consonant of the word, besides tone finals that are silent in the word, Standard

Zhuang has only one two-consonant final cluster, that is, ng, as in ‘baihdoeng’ [baido:ŋ] (east). Besides one final consonants, English has two-consonant, three-consonant and even four-consonant final clusters, which all pronounce in the word.

v) Some consonants pronounce differently in Standard Zhuang and in RP. Table 5 is the different consonant phonemes of SZ and RP

Table 5. Different Consonant Phonemes of SZ and RP

Consonants	Pronunciation in SZ	Pronunciation in RP
v	[w]	[v]
r	[ɣ]	[r] or silent
s	[θ]	[s]
c	[ç]	[s] or [k]
mb	[ʔb]	[m]
nd	[ʔd]	[nd]

5.2 Differences of Word Stress

Standard Zhuang and English are of different language family, pattern and function of word stress are different. In the former, pattern of word stress is manifested by the tone consonant occurred at the end of the word. Hence, the stress symbol is overt. It is the word formation but not the stress of the word to determine the meaning of the word. For example, ‘son’ [θo:n] (to teach) ends with zero tone final, indicating the first tone, while ‘song’ [θo:ŋ] which also ends with zero tone final but means ‘two, double’. Both ‘Maj’ and ‘naj’ end with the tone final j, indicating the third tone, the former means ‘to grow’ while the latter means ‘face’. Most Zhuang words are of singular syllable. In addition to the formation, its meaning is determined by the tone of the word. For example, “daez” ends with the second tone “z”, and means “river bank”; while “daej” ends with the third tone “j”, and means “cry”; “daeh” ends with the sixth tone “h”, and means “pocket” or “move”. “gihgaiva” has three stress symbols: the sixth tone “h” at the end of “gih”, the first zero tone at the end of “gai” and the first zero tone at the end of “va”. “gozgiz” contains two tone symbols “z”es indicating the second tone.

In English, the stress symbol is covert, and its place is not fixed. Stress is an important element to determine the meaning and class of the word. English word stress seems random, there is, actually, a set of complex rules to follow, such as four principles proposed by Roach. English word stress falls on syllable. The singular syllabic words may be stressed in sentence for

the sake of the rhythm instead of meaning. Stress of the double-syllabic word will determine its meaning. For example, “record” /rekɔ:d/ n. a thing constituting a piece of evidence about the past, /ri'kɔ:d/ v. set down in writing or some other permanent form for later reference.

6. Discussion

It is acknowledged that the mother tongue will influence second language learners or foreign language learners on various levels. One crucial feature of foreign language learning is that the learner has a tendency to apply rules and forms of the mother tongue into the foreign language. This phenomenon is called “language transfer”. Lado (1957:2) states that “Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture.”^[18] Chomsky (1965) proposed linguistic universals which “can be employed to predict which differences will entail difficulties, and which will not”^[19].

Owing to linguistic universals, we can predict some mother tongue transfers occurring to Zhuang natives in the process of learning English at phonetic level, such as sound substitution and difficulty in distinguish word stress. Bell (1981:178) claims, sound substitution is “the most straightforward form of interference”.^[20] Therefore, we can predict that sound substitution may occur in the process of Zhuang students’ English learning. For example, Zhuang people do not aspirate initial voiceless plosives [p], [t] and [k] as the English do, so that those phonemes more often than not tend to sound to English native speakers as their voiced correspondence, [b], [d] and [g]. This may affect intelligibility. Tone letters are silent in final position in Standard Zhuang, so again, they may substitute silent sound for [t], [k], [p], [d], [g] and [b] respectively. Wei (2009) states that it is a prominent feature that Zhuang students can not pronounce most of the consonants in English correctly.^[21] For instance, ‘too’ /tu:/ may be read as /du:/ (do). ‘Rose’ /rəʊz/ may be read as /ləʊ/ (low).

It is difficult for Zhuang natives to distinguish stress of English words. As a result, failure may occur in oral communication. For example, ‘concert’ may be read as /'kɒnsət/ in the sentence “They started meeting regularly to concert their parliamentary tactics”. In addition, changeable

word stress makes remembering English words more difficult.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we briefly introduced the mother tongue of the Zhuang ethnic group. Then we made a brief description to phoneme and word stress of the Standard Zhuang and English respectively, which is one of the two steps for Contrastive Analysis; the other step is juxtaposition for comparison. By employing Contrastive Analysis, we realize the object of the study. Three differences of vowel phoneme and five differences of consonant between the two language are summarized.

Word stress of the Standard Zhuang is manifested by tone, which is different for that of English. Word stress of the Standard Zhuang is overt, meaning that learners can know it from the appearance of the word, while that of English is covert, meaning that learners cannot directly know it from the appearance of the word. Then we discuss two mother tongue transfers, namely sound substitution and difficulty in distinguish word stress, may occurred to the Zhuang natives in their English learning.

Acknowledgments

This paper is supported by National philosophy and Social Science Foundation of China (No. 22BXW010).

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