A Contrastive study of the phonological system of English and Seereer Siin.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dearest parents: Diokel Sarr, Ngore Sarr and Diouma Faye, to my brothers and sisters and to my cousins Modou Ndong and Modou Kitane, who did everything so that my dreams could come true.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am too much grateful to my supervisor Doctor Souleymane Faye, who spared no time and energy to thoroughly correct my work. I dare say that, I have learnt many things from him all along this close collaboration Professor thank you very much. I also thank people who provided me with books and advice.
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Introduction

In this study, we will be concerned with the influence an African language can have in the process of the acquisition of a second non African language; the languages at hand here are Seereer and English. In other terms, the stress will be placed on a systematic comparison of Seereer and English phonological systems, to find out linguistic differences, which will eventually help us predict the difficulties Seereer learners may encounter in the process of learning English.

The goal of the language learners is to make sure that they can communicate what they have in mind effectively; they have to be understood when they are uttering the words. Knowing that precision in pronouncing words is especially essential, language learners should pay more attention on the way they articulate the foreign words and, most importantly, master pronunciation of a language they are learning. In the area of pronunciation, English language can be categorized as a difficult language to master. This statement is strengthened by Vernick and Nesgoda (1980) who state that language learners may find difficulties in learning to speak English well because several spelling may be represented by a single sound.

Before going any further, a brief presentation of the two languages would be useful. The West Germanic branch of Indo-European, to which English belongs, also includes Low German, Dutch, and Frisian. English itself derives from tree Low German dialects spoken by the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, who come from Denmark and north Germany to settle in England from the middle of the fifth century onwards. The very weak corresponding between sound and symbol, characteristic of modern English, is due primarily to the conservation from the late Middle English period onwards of a Gallicized orthography reflecting Middle English pronunciation. The orthography was consolidated by the introduction of printing, and retained through a succession of phonological changes. Variant spellings were permissible into the nineteenth century.

In this study we will be interested in Seereer-Siin, an Atlantic language of the Niger-Congo family spoken in Senegal. Seereer is characterized by pairs of voiced and voiceless implosive stops in three places of articulation. These pairs are phonemically contrastive in lexical items.

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Phonology is one of the ways we can describe and define a language. Since all languages possess a phonological system, the description of any language begins with the study of that system. The parallelism in the phonology of Seereer and English will be established after this study. Both languages seem to have similar phonemic system; they have vowels that look alike, long and short ones that can be opposed because of their pertinence. The two languages’ consonants have a higher percentage of frequency than the vowels which means that they are consonantal languages. In fact English and Seereer are languages in which phonology and grammar are two fields which are very difficult to separate. No frontier can be drawn between these two domains to keep each in its own closed circle. And what seems a paradox is that, the similarities, being scattered here and there, are the very point of confusion in the teaching of English and always cause difficulties. Most often phonetic alterations bring about morphological transformations, in this sense English and Seereer are particular similar languages.

A phonological change, a vocalic or consonantal alternation will turn a word from one paradigm into another, a noun into a verb. In this work we will be more concerned with the comparison of the sounds and sound patterns of English and Seereer. The scrutiny of the exponents, nature, and structure of the phonemes will be dealt with to demonstrate and define the resemblances and differences, and to see how the phonemes work together. The resemblances are in the phonemes and their combinations, in the functions and modifications of the phonemes or by various ways. The phonological similarities are to be found in individual vocalic and consonantal units as in words where these phonemes assume morphological or grammatical functions.

Directed or fully articulated the phonemes determine the comprehension of words, phrase and sentences. To the trained ear, accustomed to making out the meanings only from the sounds, even a slight distortion can cause big misunderstandings, and this happens very often with foreigners. A sound is never the same, and depends on various circumstances; the smallest change by mispronunciation may change the meaning of a whole sentence. Languages extend from the individual, the resemblance between the two phonemes and their alternations or alternations in the exponents to their treatment, the functions the phonemes fulfill in the grammatical and morphological systems, loan words from either language, and words they have in common in their exponents.
The most important goal of this work is a pedagogical one. In the teaching of English, pronunciation is the great obstacle. Bad pronunciation is one of the factors that hinder oral communication. Perfect pronunciation should be what is needed for quick understanding, for correct utterances help fast recognition of the sound of a system. A contrastive analysis brings out the similarities and differences of languages. Such a work can be valuable in the sense that it provides a phonological background and practical information as reveal the limits of compatibilities and differences. On the one hand that can make easier for the teachers of the both languages to tackle their subjects on a better known ground, and on the other hand, for the students of Seereer or English to realize that in several aspects their languages share many things. A contrastive analysis of the Sound Systems of Seereer and English will provide us with crucial insights into the very reasons why Seereer learners mispronounce some English sounds.

The work includes three chapters. In the first chapter, the study will focus on the contrastive analysis of both languages. At this level the two systems will be matched together so as to find out similarities and differences between Seereer and English. Subsequently, in the second chapter, we will predict the difficulties that Seereer learners may encounter when learning English. Moreover, the factors that account for those difficulties will be identified.

In the last chapter, we will confine ourselves to the pedagogical implications, by suggesting solutions to the difficulties underscored in the third chapter.
Chapter One: The Contrastive Analysis

Contrastive Analysis was used extensively in the field of Second Language Acquisition in the 1960s and early 1970s, as a method of explaining why some features of a Target Language were more difficult to acquire than others. According to the behaviourist theories prevailing at that time, language learning was a question of habit formation, and this could be reinforced or impeded by existing habits. Therefore, the difficulty in mastering certain structures in a second language depended on the difference between the learners' mother language and the language they were trying to learn.

The theoretical foundations for what became known as the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis were formulated in Lado's *Linguistics Across Cultures*. In this book, Lado claimed that "those elements which are similar to the learner's native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult". While this was not a novel suggestion, Lado was the first to provide a comprehensive theoretical treatment and to suggest a systematic set of technical procedures for the contrastive study of languages. This involved describing the languages, comparing them and predicting learning difficulties. The contrastive study of the phonological system of English and Seereer's aim is to show the similarities and differences between the two languages and establish a close phonological and linguistic relation between them.

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Before starting let’s present the charts of English and Seereer.

**Chart of the English vowels:**

We distinguish three major degrees of height: high, mid, and low. We also distinguish three major degrees on the front/back dimension: front, central, and back.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Back</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>high</strong></td>
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<td>tense</td>
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<td>lax</td>
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**Chart of the Seereer vowels**

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<td>Tense</td>
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<td>dʒ</td>
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<td>f v</td>
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<td>Ǿ θ</td>
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<td><strong>Trill</strong></td>
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**Chart of the English consonants**

**Chart of the Seereer Consonants**

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<th>velar</th>
<th>uvular</th>
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<td>k g</td>
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<td><strong>Implosives</strong></td>
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<td>d, f</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C, ẃ</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fricatives</strong></td>
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<td>f</td>
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<td><strong>Approxim</strong></td>
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<td>J</td>
<td>w</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PRE-NASALS</strong></td>
<td>mb</td>
<td>nd</td>
<td>Nj</td>
<td>ng</td>
<td>nG</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**A: Consonants: Differences and Similarities**

The Seereer sound system comprises thirty three (33) consonants, namely ten (10) plosives: /p, b, t, d, c, j, k, g, q, ʔ/; six (6) implosives: /ɲ, ɓ, ɗ, ƭ, ƈ, ƴ/; four (4) nasals: /m, n, ɲ, ŋ/; four (4) pre-nasals: /mb, nd, nj, ng, Ng/; four (4) fricatives /f, v, θ, ð, s, z, h/; one lateral: /l/; one vibrant: /r/ and two semi-vowels: /w, j/.

As to English, it has twenty-two consonants. They are: six (6) oral plosives: /p, b, t, d, k, g/; three (3) nasal plosives: /m, n, ɲ/; two affricates: /tʃ, dʒ/; nine (9) fricatives /f, v, θ, ð, s, z, h/; one lateral: /l, r/.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oral Plosives</th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
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<th>Velar</th>
<th>Uvular</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Eng</td>
<td>Seer</td>
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<td>k</td>
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<td>Implosives</td>
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<td>Nasal Plosives</td>
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<td>f</td>
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<td>θ</td>
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<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
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<td>r</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contrastive chart of the English and Seereer Consonants
1: Plosives

- Oral plosives

/p/:

Seereer and English have the phoneme /p/. In both languages, /p/ is bilabial and voiceless.

In English the phoneme /p/ has many variants:
- /p/ is aspirated when it is followed by a stressed vowel in initial position.
  Example: pen [pʰen], peak [pʰiːk].
- A subsidiary member of the p- phoneme with nasal plosion is heard when /m/ or /n/ follows as in topmost [topməʊst], hypnotize [hipnəʊtaɪz]
- /p/ is silent in the initial groups /pt/ ; /pn/ ; /ps/. Examples: ptarmigan [tæːmɪɡən], pneumatic [njuːmætɪk], psalm [saːm]
- /p/ is laterally released when /l/ follows as in apple [æpl], couple [kʌpl]

/b/:

The phoneme /b/ exists in both languages. Its features are similar in Seereer and in English, it is a bilabial voiced.

/b/ has different phonetic realizations in English.

- A fully or partially devoiced allophone which occurs in syllable initial and final positions.
- A subsidiary member of English /b/ with nasal plosion is used when /m/ or /n/ follows as in submit [səbmit], abnormal [əbnoʊməl].
- /b/ is non-audible when final, and preceded by /m/ as in lamb [læm], also before /t/ in words as debt [det], doubt [daut],
- /b/ is laterally released when /l/ follows as in bubble [bʌbl], blow [blou]

/t/:

In both Seereer and English the phoneme /t/ is a voiceless alveolar. It is similarly distributed in both languages.
/t/ has different realizations in English:

- like /p/, /t/ is aspirated before stressed vowels in initial position.

Examples: take [tʰeɪk].

A nasally exploded [t] which is used before /m/ or /n/ as in satan [sætn], cotton [kɔtn], certain [sɔtən].

A post alveolar /t/ is heard before /r/ as in tree [triː].

A dentalized /t/ is heard when /θ/ or /ð/ follows as in eight [eitθ], look at this [lukɔtʰiːs].

/d/:

Seereer has a similar voiced alveolar oral plosive. It is similarly distributed in both languages.

In English, the phoneme /d/ has more than one allophone:

/d/ is realized with a nasal released when /n/ or /m/ follows, as in sudden [sʌdn], admire [ədmaɪə].

A laterally exploded /d/ is used before /i/ as in middle [mɪdl].

/d/ is fully or partially devoiced in initial or final word position.

/k/:

In both Seereer and English, /k/ is a voiceless, velar oral plosive consonant. In English and serer it occurs in all word positions.

The English k- phoneme contains several allophones:

There are variations in the place of articulation dependent upon the nature of the following vowel.

Examples: keep [ki:p], key [ki:]

Its place of articulation is more, back when back vowels follow. Examples: cottage [kɔtɪʤ], car [ka:].

There exist varieties of /k/ with different lip rounding. The most notable one being the allophone of /k/ followed by /w/ as in queen [kwɪ:n].

[k] is aspirated in syllable initial position, as in come [kʰʌm], key: [kʰi:].
[k] is nasally exploded before /m/ or /n/ as in bacon [beikn] : acme [ækmi], thicken [θi:kn].
[k] is laterally released, when /l/ follows as in clean [klı:n], close [kloz].

/g/:

Seereer has a similar voiced velar oral plosive consonant.
-g/ is not similarly distributed in both languages. It occurs only initially and medially. English /g/ has different phonetic realizations.
Unlike /k/, /g/ has members with places of articulation different from the principal member.
-When followed by the front vowels, [g] has a more front articulation, and a more back articulation before back vowels.
There are also varieties of /g/ with different degrees, of lip rounding, the most notable one being a /g/ used before /w/ as in language [læŋgwidʒ]. /g/ is partially devoiced in initial and final positions,
/g/ is nasally-exploded before /m/ or /n/, as in dogmatic [dɒgmætık] agnes [ægnis].
[g] is laterally released before /l/ as in bugle [bjugl], [glow [glau].

/q, ԑ, c, ʔ/: These Seereer phonemes do not exist in the English system

-Nasal plosives

/m/:

Seereer has a similar voiced bilabial nasal plosive. The phoneme is similarly distributed in both languages. Nevertheless, /m/ has different phonetic realizations in English. [m] is partially; devoiced when /s/ precedes. Examples: Small [sмо:l]. [m] is dentalized when /f/ or /v/ follows as in comfort [kʌmfət], information [infɔːmejn], Dumville [dʌmvlı]
/n/:

A similar voiced alveolar nasal consonant also exists in Seereer. In both languages /n/ occurs in all word positions. English /n/ has different variants.
/n/ is partially devoiced when /s/ precedes. Examples: Sneeze [sni.z].
[n] is dentalized when /θ/ or /ð/ follows as in enthusiasm [inθju:zialəm], in there [inðeə]

/ŋ/: 
Seereer has a similar velar nasal consonant -Varieties of English /ŋ/ with more front and more back tongue-articulation occur as allophones of the phoneme. Their use is determined by the nature of the adjacent vowel .A more back variety of /ŋ/ is used after /0/ finally as in long [ləŋ].

-varieties of different degrees of advancement are used after the front vowels the most front occurring after /i/, as in sing [sin].

/ɲ/ This Seereer phoneme does not exist in the English system.

Implosives are found in approximately ten percent of the world’s languages (Ladefoged & Maddieson, 1996). Voiceless Implosives are usually more marked sounds than voiced implosives. However, certain languages have been attested to show voiceless implosives in their phonemic/phonetic inventory of sounds like Seereer Siin. But implosives do not exist in the English sound system.

2: Fricatives

Seereer has four fricative consonants:/f, s, h, x/; whereas English comprises nine fricative consonants, which pattern as follows: /f, v, θ, ð, ʃ, ʒ, s, z, h/.

/f/: 
In both Seereer and English the phoneme /f/ is voiceless labio-dental fricative

It occurs in all word positions in the two languages.

/s/: 
Seereer has a similar voiceless alveolar fricative. The phoneme is similarly distributed in both languages. It occurs in all word positions.

/h/: 
A similar voiceless glottal fricative exists in Seereer .In English, it is regarded as a strong voiceless onset of the vowel it precedes Therefore it has as many allophones as there are English vowels, which follow /h/ phoneme.
/v, θ, δ, ʃ, ʒ, z/: These six English fricatives consonants do not exist in Seereer. According to G. Ganou the contrastive mediane prepalatale sourde /ʃ/ does not exist in Seereer phonological system3. It is also the same as for/ v, θ, δ, ʒ, z/.

3: Affricates

English has two affricates/ tʃ, dʒ/ whereas Seereer does not have any.

4: Approximants

The phonemes /l, r/ are common to both Seereer and English.

/l/: A similar voiced alveolar lateral approximant exists in Seereer. The phoneme is similarly distributed in both languages. It occurs in all word positions.

English /l/ has different phonetic realizations:
- /l/ is dentalized when /θ/ follows as in health [helθ].
- /l/ is devoiced before aspirated consonants as in clear [kliə].
- /l/ is dark before all other consonants except /j/.
- /l/ is clear before vowels and /j/.

/r/: Seereer /r/ is a voiced alveolar vibrant; it differs from the English voiced alveolar approximant.

English /r/ has many variants:
[r] is devoiced after voiceless accented plosives /p.t.k,/] as in proof [pʰru :f], Try [tʰrai]
A fricative [r] is heard when /d/ precedes as in drove [drɔv].

5: Consonants cluster/ pre-nasals

“One of the most noticeable differences between languages lies in the different types of syllables structures permitted”⁴. The discrepancy comes from the fact that English can combine more than two consonants to make a Cluster where in Seereer the combination permitted is two consonants and is known as pre-nasals. An examination of the patterning of words may help us work out the syllable structures permitted.

There are many initial, medial, word juncture and final consonantal clusters in English.
- In initial, position; English can have up to three consonants within a Cluster, Examples: Stop, spring, Splendid.
it can admit cc; and c cc, consonant groups.
- Clusters at word juncture also exist in English.
They can admit up to five consonants in this position. Examples: first strike, /ststr/.
- As to syllable final position, English can have up to four consonants in a final cluster.

“A pre-nasal is a speech sound made up of a nasal and a voiced plosive, the two articulated in one movement and acting together as a single unit. They are found neither in English nor in French. But they are very common in African languages.”⁵

The Seereer sound system has five pre-nasals which are: /mb, nd, nj, ng ,Ng/. Pre-nasals and clusters are not the same; in a pre-nasal the two elements are combined in one and only one sound. The spelling in two letters has nothing to do with the sounding in one unit. Whereas a cluster consists in two or more than two different consonants pronounced separately in a sequence.

---

**B: Vowels: Differences and Similarities**

“The word *vowel* comes from the Latin word *vocalis*, meaning "speaking", because in most languages words and thus speech are not possible without vowels. In English, the word *vowel* is commonly used to mean both vowel sounds and the written symbols that represent them.”\(^6\)

English and Seereer though different in many aspects have vocalic systems that bear striking resemblances. They both have a large number of vowels, long and short ones that can be opposed, the duration being pertinent. The relationship between long and short vowels is different in the two systems. Seereer short vowels are different from long ones only in length, whereas English vowels have a difference of quality as well as of quantity. Unlike English, Seereer vowel system comprises neither diphthongs nor triphthongs. English records twenty (20) vowels and Seereer ten (10) with five (5) long and five (5) short. This large number of vowels is a big advantage to the two languages, one they use to build words and vary their sound patterns in combination with the consonants. In English There are five long vowels out of 15 individual ones that function as independent units. The others can be members of diphthongs\(^7\).

1: Short Vowels

“Short vowels are only relatively short, vowels can have quite different lengths in different contexts”\(^8\)

Seereer has five short vowels, which pattern as follows /i, e, o, a, u/. As to English, it has seven short vowels, they are: /i, e, æ, ʌ, ə, ʊ/.

---


/i/: 

As stated by Westermann and Ward:

“every language contains a vowel of the i-type; this can be more or less closed: In African languages it is usually closer than the English /i:/ in see”.*

Seereer has a phoneme which is more close and more front than English /i/. In both languages /i/ is similarly distributed. It occurs in all word positions.

Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Seereer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illegal</td>
<td>inu [inu] “to get up”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In</td>
<td>in [in] “us”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bid</td>
<td>jil [jil] “to choose”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with</td>
<td>jir [jir] “illness”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>dami [dami] “take”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envy</td>
<td>ati [ati] “bring”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Seereer /i/ is a close front vowel, the lips are spread when this vowel is produced whereas in English it is pronounced with a part of the tongue nearer to centre than to front, raised just above the close -mid position; the lips are loosely spread; the tongue is lax.

/e/:
A similar phoneme exists in both languages. The phoneme is not similarly distributed in Seereer and in English. In the former it occurs in all word positions; whereas in English /e/ does not occur in final position.

Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Seereer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Error [ ə ]</td>
<td>-initial position es [es] “my”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education [ edjuəfn]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bed [ bed ]</td>
<td>-medial position ref [ref] “to be”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>head [ hed ]</td>
<td>ten [ ten ] “him/her”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-final position cawe [cawe] “cooked”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saate [sə:te ] “village”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seereer /e/ is more close and more front than its English counterpart. The English /e/ is a mid-close front vowel. According to Gimson, in its production, the tongue is raised between the close -mid and open-mid positions; the lips are loosely spread.

/ə/:

“all languages contain a /u/ sound of some kind. In African languages the /u/ is generally close.”

In Seereer the phoneme /u/ is more back and less central than English /u/.
In English the phoneme /u/ occurs only in medial position whereas in Seereer it occurs in all word positions.

Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Seereer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Initial position</td>
<td>ut [ut] “to up root”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uf [uf] “to ripen”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

full  [fʊl]  - Medial position  jul  [jʊl]  “to mix”

put  [pʊt]  
mud  [mʊd]  “to sink”

- Final position  inu  [ɪnu]  “to get up”
sutu  [sʊtu]  “to get out”

[ʊ] is a close back vowel, the lips are rounded in its production.

/ə, ʌ, æ/: These three English vowels do not exist in the Seereer system but let’s see how they are distributed in the English system.

/ə/:

Examples:

**English**

- In initial position
  Allow  [əlau]
  Annoy  [ənɔi]

- In medial position
  consider  [kənsidə]
  overate  [əuvəreɪt]

- In final position
  Mother  [mʌðə]
  Father  [fa:ðə]

The schwa [ə] is in the exact centre of this chart. Schwa is often referred to as the neutral vowel, the vowel in which the vocal tract is in its neutral state and most closely resembles a perfect tube. All the other vowels require that the vocal tract be deformed by moving the tongue body away from its neutral position, either up or down, backward or forward. The English /ə/ is a mid-close central vowel. In its production the lip position is neutral.

/ʌ/:

Examples:

**English**

- Initial position
under [ʌndə]
up [ʌp]
- In medial position.
Cup [kʌp]
Cut [kʌt]
Sun [sʌn]
It does not occur in final position. The English /ʌ/ is a mid close central vowel. In its production, the lips are neutrally open.

/æ/:  

Examples:

**English**

- In initial position.
  Anticipate [æntɪcipit]
  Apposite [æpəsit]
  Applicator [æplikeɪtə]
  - In medial position
  hand [hænd]
  lamp [læmp]
  sat [sæt]
  - In final position
/æ/ does not occur in final position.

The RP /æ/ is a mid-open front vowel. The lips are neutrally open in its production.

2: Long Vowels

Seereer has five long vowels, which are: /eː, aː, oː, iː, uː/. English has also five long vowels which pattern as follows: /iː, aː, ɔː, əː, uː/.

/iː/:  
-Seereer /iː/ is more close and more front than its English counterpart. The phoneme is similarly distributed in both languages. It occurs in all word positions.
-English /iː/ is realized as a diphthong in word final position and it does not occur before /ŋ/.
Examples:

**English** | **Seereer**
---|---
Eel [iːl] - Initial position iin [iːn] “to groan”
each [iːtʃ] iiitam [iːtam] “also”

reason [riːzn] -Medial position wiin [wiːn] “people”
peace [piːs] niid [niːd] “slow”

sea [s ɪː] - Final position ndii [ndiː] “or”
be [b ɪː] ndiikii [ndiːkiː] “at once”

/aː/: Seereer /aː/ is an open front vowel, whereas its English counterpart is an open back one. The phoneme is similarly distributed in both languages. It occurs in all word positions.

Examples:

**English** | **Seereer**
---|---
are [aː] - Initial position aareer [aːrɛr] “pneat”
after [aːftə] aada [aːda] “culture”
pass [paːs] - Medial position paal [paːl] “sheep”
father [faːðə] baab [baːb] “father”

far [faː] - Final position jeemaa [jeːmaː] “trying”
car [kaː] yaa [yaː] “when”

/ɔː/: In Seereer the phoneme /ɔː/ is more back than the English one. In both languages /ɔː/ occurs in all word positions.

Examples:

**English** | **Seereer**
---|---
organizer [ɔːgənaɪz] - Initial position oos [ɔːs] “worn out”
order [ɔːdə]
horse [hɔːsə] - Medial position  
foor [foʊ] “ripe”  
born [bɔːn ]  
coox [koʊ] “to give”  

war [wɔː] - Final position  
boo [boʊ] “until”  
floor [flɔː]  
ten oʊ [teno:] “it’s him”

/uː/:  
-The Seereer /uː/ is more close and more back than the English /uː/. The phoneme is similarly distributed in both languages.  
-English /uː/ can be diphthongized in final position. Better still, it does not occur before final /ŋ/.  

Examples:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Seereer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ooze</td>
<td>uut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ooh</td>
<td>uup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rude</td>
<td>fuud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food</td>
<td>ruud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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/əː/ - This phoneme does not exist in the Seereer vocalic system

3: Semi-Vowels

/w/ and /j/ are common to both languages.  
/w/: - A similar phoneme exists in Seereer. /w/ is not similarly distributed in both languages, It occurs in all word positions in Seereer, whereas, in English /W/ occurs initially and medially in words. It may be noted that lip-rounding is closer when long /w/ follows as in woo [wuː], and may be less close before vowels remote from /u/ as in wide [waid].  

Examples:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Seereer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
what [wɒt] -Initial position  wet [wet] “to open”

where [w3a]  wid [wid] “to look for”

twine[ twain ] reewin [re:win] “to spoil”

-Final position  daaw [da:w] “to reach”
yeew [ye:w] “to fetch”

/j/:
-A similar voiced palatal approximate exists in Seereer.
-/j/ is similarly distributed in both languages. It occurs in all word positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>examples:</th>
<th>Seereer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>use [ju:z]</td>
<td></td>
<td>yer [yer] “to drink”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-Medial position    sooyin [so:yin] “to make evaporate”
Mute [mju:t] Ṋayin [ŋayin] “to get up”

Value [valju:] -Final position mayu [mayu] “a lot o”f
due [dju:] sooy [so:y] “to melt”

4:Vowel Clusters

The English diphthongs are characterized by their gliding sounds. Daniel Jones says that:
“the English /w/ is a phoneme the members of which are all gliding sounds, they are formed by starting at or nearer a /u/ position and immediately moving away in the direction of some other vowels”\textsuperscript{11}

A vowel sound whose quality doesn't change over the duration of the vowel is called a monophthong. Monophthongs are sometimes called "pure" or "stable" vowels. A vowel sound that glides from one quality to another is called a diphthong, and a vowel sound that glides successively through three qualities is a triphthong. All languages have monophthongs and many languages have diphthongs, but triphthongs or vowel sounds with even more target qualities are relatively rare cross-linguistically. English has all three types: the vowel sound in hit is a monophthong /ɪ/, the vowel sound in boy is in most dialects a diphthong /ɔɪ/, and the vowel sounds of flower, /aʊər/, form a triphthong or disyllable, depending on dialect. Unlike English, which has eight diphthongs and five triphthongs, Seereer vocalic system does not comprise any vowel cluster.

. -Diphthongs

Gimson defines the sequences of vocalic elements included under the term diphthong as « those which form a glide within one syllable ».

English has eight (8) diphthongs. They are: /ei . ai . oi . ea . uo . au . au/. They are said to have a first element (the starting point), and a second clement, (the point in the direction of which the glide is made).

/\textipa{ei}/:

Examples

- In initial position.

Ape [eip];
aim [eim];
eight [eit];

- In medial position.

Late [leit];
Make [meik];
lady [leidi];

veil  [veil]
    - In final position.
Day   [dei]
may   [mei];
they  [ðei];
The glide begins from slightly the close-mid front position and moves in the direction of
the English /i/. The lips are spread in its production

/ai/:  
  Examples:
  - In initial position.
    Eider  [aɪdə];
    Eiger  [aɪgə]
  - In medial position.
    Time    [taɪm];
    Bite     [bɑɪt];
    climb    [klæɪm];
    light    [laɪt]
  - In final position.
    Die     [daɪ];
    lie      [laɪ];
    pie      [pɑɪ];
    dye      [daɪ]
The glide of /ai/ begins at a point slightly behind the front open position, and moves in
the direction of the position associated with /i/; the glide is much more extensive than
/ei/; the lips change from a neutral to a loosely spread position.

/əu/:  
  Examples:
  - In initial position.
    oak     [ɔʊk];
    oaken   [ɔʊkən];
    oast    [ɔust];
In medial position.
Soul [səʊl];
Soulful [səʊlfʊl];
Soulfully [səʊlflɪ];

In final position.
Know [nəʊ];
toe [təʊ];
so [sɔʊ]
The glide begins at a central position, between close-mid and open-mid, and moves in the direction of the English /u/, the lips are neutral for the first element, but are rounded for the second element.

/au/: 
Examples:
-In initial position.
Out [aut];
Outer [autə];
Outface [autfeɪs];

-In medial position.
House [haus];
found [faʊnd];
fount [faʊnt];

-In final position.
Cow [kau];
Allow [əlau];
How [hau];
now [nau]

In the diphthong [aw], the tongue body begins in the low central position, [a], and then moves upward and backward toward the position of [u]. Often, the tongue body only manages to get part-way

/iə/: 
Examples:
-In initial position.

Ear [iə];
Eerie [iəri];
Eerily [iərili]

-In medial position.

Material [mətəriəl];
Weird [wiəd];
Fierce [fiəs]

-In final position.

Dear [diə];
Fear [fiə];
near [niə]

The glide of /iə/ begins with a tongue position approximately the same as that used for /i/. i-e close-mid and centralized front, and moves in the direction neutral throughout, with a slight movement from spread to open.

/eə/:

Examples.

-In initial position.

Air[eə]
Arian [əriən];
airily [ərili];

-In medial position.

Rabbit [reəbit];
rarefy [reərifai]

-In final position.

Fair [feə];
dare [deə];
care [keə]

The glide of /eə/ begins in the open-mid front position, i.e and moves in the direction of the more open variety of /e/, especially when the diphthong is final.

/uə/:
Examples:

- In initial position

Urdu [uədud]

- In medial position.

Durability [duərcbiliti];
durable [duərəbl]

- In final position.

Poor [puə];
pure [puə];
sure [juə]

RP / uə/ glides from a tongue position similar to that used for /u/ towards the more open type of /ə/. The lips are weakly rounded at the beginning of the glide, becoming neutrally spread as the glide progresses.

/ɔi/:

Examples:

- In initial position.

Oyster [ɔɪsta];
Oil [ɔil];
Oily [ɔili]

- In medial position.

Noise [nɔiz];
Point [pɔint];

- In final position.

Toy [tɔi];
Boy [bɔi]:

In the diphthong [ɔj], the tongue body begins in the position of the lax mid back vowel [ɔ]. It moves upward and forward, toward the position of [i].

-Triphthongs

The term triphthong is used by the phonetic classification of vowel sounds on the basis of their manner of articulation: it refers to a type of vowel where there are noticeable changes in quality during a syllable.
English has five (5) triphthongs. They are: /aiə, ɔiə, eiə, əuə, auə /

\( /\text{aiə} / \):

Examples:

- In initial position.
- Iron [aiən] ;
- Ironing [aiəniŋ]

- In medial position.
- Society [səsaɪtɪ] ;
- KLiable [laɪəbl] ;
- Liability [laɪəbɪlɪtɪ]

- In final position.
- Fire [faɪə] ;
- Choir [kaɪə] ;
- Hire [haɪə] ;
- Lyre [laɪə]

\( /\text{ɔiə} / \):

Examples:

- In initial position
- \( /\text{ɔiə} / \) does not occur in initial position.

- In medial position.
- Enjoyable [ɪndʒɔɪəbl] ;
- Enjoyably [ɪndʒɔɪəblɪ] ;
- Joyous [dʒɔɪəs]

\( /\text{eiə} / \):

Examples:

- In medial position
- \( /\text{eiə} / \) does not occur in initial position.

- In medial position
- \( /\text{eiə} / \) does not occur in medial position.

- In final position.
Player [pleɪə ];
Layer [leɪə ];
Greyer[greɪə)

/əʊə/:

Examples:
- In initial position
/əʊə/ does not occur in initial position,
- In medial position
Myrrh [məʊəh ]
- In final position.
Noah [nəʊə ];
Mower [məʊə ];
slower [sləʊə ]

/auə/:

Examples:
- In initial position.
Our [auə ];
Ours [auəz ];
Ourselves [auəsəlvz]
- In medial position.
Coward [kauəd ];
Nowadays [nauədeiz]
- In final position
Shower [/faʊə ];
flower [fləʊə ]
Chapter Two: Teaching Issues

In this chapter, we will be concerned with the main difficulties that Seereer learners may encounter at the level of consonants, vowels, when learning English.

"the learner of a new language, unless he is exceptionally gifted or unless he has a special training, transfers into the new language all the speech habits of his mother tongue. The new habits do not come naturally: he does not pick up a correct pronunciation but have to be thought it"^{12}

A: Consonants

1: Plosives

- Oral plosives

/p/:
Since, Seereer has a similar phoneme, Seereer learners may not have any problem perceiving or producing this phoneme in isolation. But, the difficulties will probably lie in the production or the perception of the allophones of English which do not exist in Seereer language: aspirated [pʰ], nasalized [Pⁿ] silent [p'], and the laterally released variety.

/b/:
In isolation, Seereer learners may not have problems to produce or perceive this English phoneme. But, the difficulties are likely to occur when it comes to producing or perceiving the varieties of /b/ which do not exist in Seereer: devoiced [b]; non-audible [b]; nasalized [bⁿ], post-alveolar [b], and the laterally realized one.

/t/:

---

Seereer learners may find it difficult to produce the phonetic realizations of English /t/ since, aspirated [tʰ], dentalized [t], nasalized [tⁿ], post-alveolar [t] and the laterally realized one do not exist in their mother tongue.

/d/:
Seereer has a similar phoneme; accordingly, Seereer learners may encounter no difficulty in the production or the perception of isolated /d/. However, in connected speech, difficulties of production are likely to come out because of the non-existence of the allophones of /d/ in Seereer, namely: the nasally released [dⁿ], the laterally released [d’] and the fully or partially devoiced one.

/k/:
Seereer has a similar phoneme but Seereer learners may face difficulties in the production of the allophones of /k/.

/g/:
Seereer has a similar phoneme but, the phonetic variants of English /g/ may cause difficulties of production or of perception to Seereer learners.

/Nasal plosives

/m/:
The phonetic variants of English /m/ namely the devoiced [m] and the dentalized [m], may cause perception production difficulties to Seereer learners, but, in isolation they may not face those difficulties.

/n/:
Seereer learners may not find it difficult to produce or perceive English /n/ in isolation. Nevertheless, the allophones of /n/ that is, devoiced [n] and dentalized [n] may cause production or perception difficulties to the latter.

/ŋ/:
A similar phoneme exists in Seereer, therefore Seereer learners may encounter no difficulty in producing or perceiving isolated /ŋ/. On the other hand, the allophones of /ŋ/ are likely to cause perception-production problems to Seereer learners.

2: Fricatives
Fricatives are consonants with the characteristic that, when they are produced air escape through a small passage and make a hissing sound. Most languages have fricatives; the most commonly find being something like /s/. Fricatives are continuant consonants meaning that you can continue making them without interruption as long as you have enough air in your lungs.

/s,f,h,/: 
Since, these phonemes are common to both languages, Seereer learners may not find it difficult to produce or perceive them.

/v/: 
The phoneme /v/ does not exist in Seereer, therefore, it may cause considerable perception-production problems to Seereer learners. Accordingly, they may substitute it for the semi-vowel /w/. Examples: vaccine [vaksi:n] ; value [vælju], are likely to be produced as: [waksi:n], and [walju]. The reason behind this substitution of the sound [v] for [w] might occur mainly due to the fact that Seereer phonetic system does not have voiced sound in its labiodentals fricative. Hence, most of them replaced [v] with [w] and made it to be the only pattern of error.

/z/: 
As in the case of /v/, /z/ is likely to create perception-production problems to Seereer learners, the latter may tend to replace it by the phoneme /s/. For this purpose, does [daz] ; easy [i:zi] and was[waz ] , may respectively be produced or perceived as : [das] ; [i:si] and [was]. Likewise the devoiced allophone may also cause perception-production difficulties.

/θ/:
The seereer system does not comprise this phoneme; therefore, Seereer learners are likely to have perception-production difficulties as to English /θ/. Moreover, they are likely to substitute it for /t/ or /s/. Thus, three [θri:], and thief [θi:f] may be produced as [tri:] and [sif]. The main reason for that is the fact that the sound [t] is considered as dental in Seereer. Additionally, since [θ] as an English dental sound does not exist in Seereer phonetic system, the students replaced it with the sound they knew as having similar place of articulation as [θ]. Thus, the occurrence of this deviation might be based on the same reason as the replacement of [ð] with [d].

/ð/:
Seereer does not have this phoneme either. Therefore, Seereer learners may find it difficult to produce or perceive English /ð/, As a result, they may replace that phoneme by Seereer /d/, so as to circumvent the difficulty related to the production or the perception of /ð/, consequently, words such as leather [leðɘ], soothe [su: ð] , are likely to be produced respectively as: [leðɘ] and[sud].
The replacement of [ð] with [d], in articulating [ð] signified that [ð] as a voiced dental fricative was being replaced with [d] which is a voiced alveolar stop. In this deviation, the students fulfilled one feature of the [ð] sound since [ð] and [d] share the one identical characteristic, that is, voiced. However, when they articulated [d], the two other important elements of [ð] sound were deviated. The divergence could be observed because of the different place and manner of articulation of the two sounds.

/s/:
As in the case of / θ , ð, z/ this phoneme is likely to create production-perception problems to the learners. Seereer learners are likely to replace it by the voiceless fricative /s/. Thus, words such as: shame [ʃeim], shore [ʃo:] are to be perceived or produced respectively as: [ʃeim], [ʃo:].

/ʒ/:
This voiced fricative does not exist in Seereer. Therefore, Seereer learners may not be able to perceive or produce it accurately. They may rather replace the phoneme /ʒ/ by their voiced plosive /j/For this purpose, words such as pleasure [pleʒɘ], rouge [ru: ʒ] are likely to be perceived or produced as [pleʃɘ] , [ru:ʃ ].
Having stated that, the single deviation that can be linked back to the Seereer phonetic system in this part was the replacement of [ʒ] with [j], especially since the replacing sound, [j], does not exist in English phonetic system but can be found in Seereer sound system. Generally, Seereer sound system categorizes the sound [j] as voiced palatal stop. It means that to produce this particular sound, a speaker should vibrate his vocal cords, raise the front part of his tongue to the hard palate, and block the air stream briefly before releasing it abruptly. Hence, if this deviation is observed from the state of the vocal cords and the manner of articulation, the reason of the replacement may not be pulled out logically due to the fact that the two sounds do not share the same state of vocal cords or manner of articulation. However, if it is seen from the place of the articulation, it is apparent that the sound of [ʒ] and [j] could share the same category, since [ʒ] in English phonetic system and [j] in Seereer phonetic system were categorized as palatal. Therefore, it could be concluded that since English learners whose native language is Seereer are not familiar with the sound [ʒ], they might try to find the closest possible sound that they knew and replaced [ʒ] with it. In this case, the potential sound for the replacement is [j].

3: AFFRICATES

Affricates are rather complex consonants. They begin as plosives and end as fricatives. A familiar example is the affricate heard at the beginning and end of the word “church”. It begins with an articulation practically the same as that for /t/, but instead of a rapid release with plosion and aspiration, as we would find in the word “tip” the tong moves to the position for the fricative /s/ that we find at the beginning of the word “ship”.

/tʃ dʒ/:

None of these phonemes exist in Seereer. Therefore, they may create perception-production problems to Seereer learners. The latter are likely to replace /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ by the voiced plosives /c/ and /j/. Accordingly, church [tʃ3:tʃ] , chuck [tʃʌk], jail [dʒeil], and jam[dʒam] are likely to be produced as :[c3:c],[cʌk],[jeil], and [jam].

/tʃ/:
The deviation of /tʃ/ by /c/ might happen because [c] is essentially a Seereer sound. Additionally, [c] does not even exist in English phonetic system. When observing the deviation, it could be noticed that possibly it occurred due to the fact that [tʃ] does not exist in Seereer phonetic system and that in order to make the sound easier to be pronounced, the students tried to replace it with the sounds they were familiar with.

In this deviation, the students replaced voiceless palatal affricate sound with voiceless palatal stop sound. It means that in replacing the required sound with [c], they had deviated only one characteristics of [tʃ]. In this deviation, they deviated the manner of articulation from affricate, which is indicated by the existence of friction, to stop, which is shown by the sudden release of the blocked air stream. Subsequently, it is clear that in replacing [tʃ] with [c], the students created a deviation.

/dʒ/: 
Basically, if viewed from the contrast between English and Seereer consonants, it can be said that the replacement of [dʒ] with [j] was the only deviation occurred mainly due to the influence of the mother tongue, particularly since [j] can be found only in Seereer phonetic system. That assumption can be taken because when the students were faced with the sounds that do not exist in their mother tongue; they tried to find the closest sound that had the similar outcome as the required sound. In the case of the pronunciation of [dʒ], it seems that [j] as a voiced palatal stop has the closest similar effect as [dʒ], which is a voiced palatal affricate.

4: APPROXIMATES
/l/: 
Since Seereer has a similar phoneme, Seereer learners may not have any problem to perceive or produce this phoneme in isolation. Nevertheless, the difficulties are likely to occur in the production of the allophones of /l/ which do not exist in their native language. dentalized /l/, devoiced /l/ and dark /l/.

/r/: 
Seereer has a different phoneme, consequently, Seereer learners may find it difficult to produce or perceive English /r/ either in isolation or in connected speech.
5: Consonant clusters
Consonant clusters may cause production difficulties to Seereer learners, because they do not exist in Seereer. As a result they are likely to insert new vowels between the consonants, which form the cluster in order to overcome the difficulties. The inserted vowel may be the one following the initial cluster or the vowel preceding the final cluster. Therefore, « plot» [plot], « plea» [pli], may be respectively produced as : [polot] ;[pili].

B: Vowels
1: Short Vowels
/i/: 
Seereer has a phoneme / i / which is more close and more front. Therefore, Seereer learners may have difficulties to produce or perceive English /i/. Moreover, they may replace it by their /i/ Thus: Intervene [intvi:n] ; pretty [priti], bid [bid].may be produced or perceived as :[intəvin] ; [priti] and [bid]

/e/: 
Seereer /e/ is more close and more front than its English counterpart accordingly; Seereer learners may find it difficult to produce English /e/. In addition, they are likely to substitute it for their native /e/, which is different from English /e/ in quality

/u/: 
Like /i/, Seereer /u/ is different from its English counterpart in quality. As a result, Seereer learners may have problems to produce or perceive accurately English /u/, since Seereer /u/ is more back and less central.

/ɒ/: 
This phoneme does not exist in Seereer. Consequently, /ɒ / is likely to cause perception-production problems to Seerer learners. Furthermore, they may substitute it for their native /o/. Thus, office [офis], dock [док] can be produced or perceived as: [офис], [док].

/æ/:
English /æ/ is likely to cause perception production difficulties to Seereer learners, since the latter does not exist in Seereer, for this purpose, the students may replace it by their native /a/ or /e/. So opposite [æpəzit], and aptness [æptnis]: may be perceived or produced as; [aposit]; and [aptnis].

/ʌ/:
English central /ʌ/ does not exist in Seereer; it may cause considerable perception-production difficulties to Seereer learners. As in the case of the preceding vowels, they are likely to substitute English /ʌ/ for their native /a/. With this object, "mother" [mʌðə], under [ʌndə] may be produced or perceived as: [mado], [ando].

2: long vowels
/ɜː/:
This phoneme does not exist in the Seereer system, Therefore, English /ɜː/ is likely to create perception-production problems to Seereer learners. Moreover, the latter may substitute /ɜː/ for their native /e:/ a mid-front vowel. Thus, earth [ɜːθ] early [ɜːli], may be perceived or produced as: [eːf];[eːli].

/əː/, /uː/:
These vowels may not cause considerable problems to Seereer learners, They may produce or perceive a more close and longer vowel for the phoneme /ɜː:/ and a more close and a more back for the English /uː:/.

/aː/:
Seeree /aː/ is an open front vowel, whereas, its English counterpart is an open back one. Consequently, English /aː/ is likely to be produced with a more front articulation, by Seereer learners. Thus, bar [baː], tar [taː], may be produced as :[baː], [taː].

/iː/:
Seereer learners may produce or perceive a more close and a more front vowel for the English phoneme / iː/.
3: Semi-vowels
The English Semi-vowels may not cause considerable problems to Seereer learners since they are common to both English and Seereer.

4: Vowel Clusters
Diphthongs and triphthongs do not exist in Seereer Consequently; they may cause perception-production problems to Seereer learners. The latter are likely to replace the sound /i/ of all the closing diphthongs by the Semi-vowel /j/ and sound /u/ of the closing diphthongs by /w/ as well.

-Diphthongs
/ei/,/oi/,/ai/:
Following the above explanations, these phonemes are likely to be produced or perceived respectively as: /ej/, /aj/ and/oj/. Thus, ape [eip], lady [leidi], time [taim], bite[bait], may be produced or perceived as: [ejp], [lejdi],[tajm], [bajt].

/əu/;/au/:
These phonemes are likely to cause perception-production problems to Seereer learners. The latter may substitute the, phoneme /u/ of these closing diphthongs for /w/ thus, they may be perceived or produced respectively as /əw/ and /aw/. Accordingly, know: [knau], now [nau], are likely to be produced or perceived as :[know], [naw]

/iə, eə, uə/:
Since Seereer learners may replace the central /ə/ by /o/, the centering diphthongs are likely to be produced respectively as: /io/, /eo, /wo/. Thus, near [niə], pure[puə], fair[feə] are to be produced as: [nio], [pwo], [feo]

-Triphthongs
As in the case of the diphthongs, English triphthongs may cause perception production problems to Seereer learners. Moreover, the triphthongs made of the sounds /i/ and /ə/ may have the /i/ sound replaced by the semi-vowel /y/ likewise, the phoneme /ə/ is likely to be substituted for /o/. Thus iron [aiən], may be produced by [ijon].
The triphthongs made of the sounds /u/ and /ə/ may cause perception production difficulties to seereer learners as well. They are likely to replace the /u/ sound by the semi-vowel /w/ and /ə/ may also be substituted for /o/. Accordingly, tour [təuə], our [auə], may be produced as: [tawo], [awo].
Chapter Three: Learning Issues

After having listed the differences that might cause perception production problems to Seereer learners in the previous chapters, we are going to suggest now some solutions to those difficulties. But, before that, it is worth mentioning that the role of the teacher is very preponderant at this level, namely in the teaching of, the sounds of the foreign language. That is why there are some pre-requisites he should satisfy. Among others, the teacher should have some knowledge of general phonetics and phonology in order to understand the phenomena of sound articulation, assimilation, sound sequences. Such a knowledge will help him conduct a dictation in English, especially the sounds which cause perception-production difficulties to Seereer learners. Afterwards, his task should consist of helping Seereer learners have a good linguistic ear. This requires systematic practice in listening for sounds by means of dictation.

A: Consonants

The main difficulties that Seereer learners may encounter at this level, are related to the phonetic variations of English consonants; namely: aspiration, dentalization, devoicing, palatization, the non-audible release lateral and nasal explosion. More trouble is given by the consonants common to both languages, since they are find in very different positions of articulation. And until the students attention is drawn to the differences, they will think that in (jam, chulk, write) they have /j/, /c/, /r/ as in Seereer. There is great difficulty with such related sounds. They should not be therefore taught as items similar to the corresponding English one, but should be presented as new units. The teacher should stress the main features that distinguish them. The teacher’s permanent concern is to correct the habits acquired in early childhood. It is easier to teach a new notion than to correct an old wrong one.

Likewise, all the consonants that do not exist in Seereer are likely to create perception-production problems. Here are some suggestions to circumvent the difficulties related to Consonants.
1: Plosives
- Oral plosives

/p,t,k/: In isolation, these English phonemes do not create perception-production problems to Seereer learners, since they exist in their language. In speech, these English phonemes were predicted to cause production problems, because of their allophonic variations. So, the teacher has to put the stress on those specificities. He will need to draw their attention to the fact that /p, t, k/ should be aspirated before accented vowels, dentalized when they precede a dental consonant, they also must be produced laterally when they are followed by /l/. Listening exercises will help them acquire the ability of producing the allophonic varieties of /p, t, k/.

/b,d,g/: As in the case of the preceding phonemes, /b, d, g/ may not create perception-production difficulties in isolation to Seereer learners. But, because of their allophonic varieties, they are likely to cause production problems to the latter. Therefore, to solve those difficulties, the teacher should lay the emphasis on the fact that:
- /b, d, g/ are partially or fully devoiced in initial and final positions.
- They must be produced laterally when they are followed by the phoneme /l/.
- When they are followed by nasal consonants, /b, d, g/ must be produced with a nasal release.

It is also really important that the teacher conducts listening and pronunciation practice in order to help Seereer learners recognize and produce these English phonemes in connected speech.

-Nasale Plosives

/m,n, ƞ/: In connected speech, these phonemes were predicted to create perception production difficulties to Seereer learners, because of their allophones. Here also, the teacher should draw the attention of the learners to the fact that:
- English nasals must be devoiced when they are preceded by /s/.
-They must be dentalized when they are preceded by dental phoneme.

As in the case of the oral plosives, exercises of listening and pronunciation will help them recognize and produce English nasals in connected speech.

2: Fricatives

/ŋ ð θ ʃ ʒ/:

These English fricatives were predicted to create perception-production difficulties to Seereer learners, since they do not exist in their language. Lanteigne (2006) confirms that: *difficulties in learning English occur due to the fact that some of English sounds do not exist in the mother tongue of the learners (p. 1)*.  

Therefore, to help the learners circumvent those difficulties, the teacher should conduct the dictation of these phonemes in isolation, and then in connected speech. The learners on their part will have to write down these sounds and words phonetically, if they fail to write correctly the latter, the teacher in this case, will repeat these sounds a number of times in order to help them have a good linguistic hear. This method will help Seereer learners recognize and produce these phonemes, better still, /v/ for instance can be acquired by Seereer learners, if they simply press the lower lip firmly against the upper teeth and force the air through the narrow passage thus formed.  

As to /θ/, it may be acquired by simply placing the tip of the tongue right between the teeth, and, taking care to keep the tongue in that position, blowing so that a stream of air passes out between the tip of the tongue and the upper teeth.  

/ð/ also can be acquired, if the teacher uses the same method proposed in the case of /ð/.  

But, care should be taken not to keep the tip of the tongue between the teeth so long.  

/s/ and /ʒ/ can be acquired by Seereer learners, if the teacher uses their native /s/ as the starting point. Besides, they will have to pronounce the latter with a trace of lip-rounding. Care should be taken to produce voicing for /ʒ/.

/z/:
As in the case of the preceding phonemes, /z/ is also likely to cause perception-production difficulties to Seereer learners, because of the nonexistence of a similar fricative consonant in Seereer. Therefore, to help the students acquire English /z/ and its allophones, the teacher can use the same method proposed in the case of /ʒ/. But care should be taken to avoid lip-rounding affricates.

3: Affricates.

English affricates were predicted to cause perception-production problems to Seereer learners, because of the non-existence of their second elements in Seereer. Thus, to solve those difficulties, the teacher will use the same method suggested in the case of the fricatives.

The teacher should also draw the attention of Seereer learners to the fact that the affricates are combinations of a plosive consonant and a fricative; with this object. The learners must pronounce them separately, and then try to combine the two sounds.

4: Approximates

/l/: In connected speech /l/ was predicted to create perception-production difficulties to Seereer learners, because of its different phonetic realizations. Therefore, the teacher will have to lay the emphasis on the fact that /l/:

- must be dentalized when it precedes the phoneme /θ/.
- Loses part of its voicing after accented /p, t, k/.
- Is clear before vowels and the semi-vowel /j/.
- Is dark when it precedes a consonant.

/r/: As in the case of /l/, /r/ was also predicted to cause production difficulties to Seereer learners in connected speech. Thus, the teacher will have to put the stress on the allophones of /r/, which account for those difficulties. To reach that goal, he must tell them that:

- [r] is devoiced before a fricative consonant, when it is preceded by the phoneme /d/.
Once the learners are able to recognize the different allophones of /l/ and /r/, they will have to produce the latter in connected speech. Afterwards, the teacher should conduct dictation of these phonemes in isolation and in connected speech, so as to impress on students' mind the phonetic realizations of /r/ and /l/.

5: Consonant clusters
The English language is noticeable for its large number of clusters of three consonants, even more, the difficulty in teaching clusters is caused by the three or four consonant groups, and Seereer learners slip an inevitable vowel in between them. Therefore, to help the students acquire the production and the perception of English consonant clusters, the teacher has to use Seereer pre-nasals as the starting point.

B: Vowels
As noted in the previous chapter, the vocalic features of English, namely the shortening and lengthening of vowels, the clustering of vowels, may cause perception-production difficulties to Seereer learners, since these phonemes do not occur in their native language. Likewise, the following vowel: /i, ʊ, ø, æ, ə, ɜː, aː/ are likely to create the above mentioned problems.
In details, here are some suggestions which might help overcome the difficulties at the level of vowels.
1: Short vowels

/i/:
The common error made by Seereer students is to make a tense /i/, whenever they come across the phoneme /i/, and diphthongize it to produce the long English /iː/. To Seereer students, the English /i/ is like Seereer /iː/. Therefore, to help solve those difficulties, the teacher will have to draw their attention to the fact that Seereer /i/ is more closed and more front than its English counterpart.
English /i/ can be acquired when the learners try to produce a vocalic sound in mid way between Seereer /i/ and English /ə/.

/u/:
As in the case of the preceding vowel, the production or perception of English /u/ may be difficult for Seereer learners. Furthermore, they are likely to substitute the English phoneme for their native /u/, the teacher can use Seereer /o/ as the starting point.

/ʌ/: This English phoneme was predicted to create perception-production problems to Seereer learners, because Seereer does not have a similar vowel. Equally important they may confuse it with the following vowels:/ ɒ, æ, ɜː, aː/. Therefore, the teacher should help them make a clear distinction between /ʌ/ and /ɒ, æ, ɜː, aː/. If he achieves this task, he will have to teach them English /æ/ by considering Seereer /a/ as the starting point. Here, the learners have to make their native /a/ more central. /ʌ/ can also be acquired by imitation, provided that Seereer learners avoid adding the slightest trace of lip-rounding.

/ɒ/: Seereer learners are likely to replace English /ɒ/ by their native /o/. Besides, they may confuse it with the following vowels:/ ʌ, æ, ɜː, aː/. To acquire the pronunciation of English /ɒ/, Seereer /o/ can be used as the starting point. English /ɒ/ can also be acquired, when Seereer learners try to produce a vocalic sound in mid way between Seereer two short vowels: /o/ and /a/ by holding their tongue as low down and as far back as possible.

/æ/: /æ/ is another vowel which was predicted to create perception-production problems to Seereer learners. Besides, they can find it difficult to distinguish between English /e/, /æ/ and /æ/, and also between /æ/ and their native vowels /e/ and /a/

To acquire the best production of English /æ/, Seereer learners have to produce a vocalic sound in mid way between their native /e/ and /a/.

/eɪ/: Seereer learners may find it difficult to produce or perceive this English vowel they may confuse it with other English vowels such as: /ɒ/ and /e/. To help students acquire English /eɪ/, the teacher should draw their attention to the fact that /eɪ/ occurs only in unaccented syllables, where it can replace any vowel. Afterwards, the learners will try to
produce a vocalic sound midway between their native /o/ and /e/ by making it more central.

2: long vowels

/ɔː/:
As in the case of / ə / English /ɔː/ was predicted to create perceptive-production problem to Seereer learners because of the no existence of this phoneme in their language. Furthermore, they may replace it by their native /ee/, or confuse it with English /ɔː/. To teach the pronunciation of /ɔː/ to Seereer learners, the teacher will have to use English /ə/ as the starting point. Care should be taken not to add the slightest trace of lip-rounding.

/ɑː/:
The articulation of English /ɑː/ may be difficult for Seereer learners. Moreover, they are likely to substitute it for their native /ɑː/ which is open and front. Therefore, to help the learners overcome this difficulty; the teacher has to put the stress on the difference between the two vowels. When the students are able to distinguish English /ɑː/ from their native / ɑː/, it becomes then easy to teach them the pronunciation of English /ɑː/.
In addition, Seereer learners will have to use their native /ɑː/ as the starting point, and then try to make it more back.

3: Vowels-clusters
The problems that Seereer learners encounter at this level consist of replacing the sound /i/ of the closing diphthongs by the sem-vowel /j/, the sound /u/ of the closing diphthongs by /w/, and the sound / ə / of central diphthongs by /o/. Now that the productions of /i/, /u/ and / ə / are acquired by Seereer learners, we can presume that they will be able to produce, and perceive English diphthongs and triphthongs properly. If not, the teacher will have to explain them how the process of diphthongization and triphthongization operates “English violates the principle of one to one correspondence between distinctive speech sounds and letters of an alphabet”\(^\text{14}\). By doing so, it will be easier for Seereer learners to acquire properly the production or English vowel clusters.

“the most important thing to remember about all the diphthongs is that the first part is much longer and stronger than the second part. Foreign learners must, therefore, always remember that the last part of English diphthongs must not be made too strangely”

**Conclusion**

This work is far from being exhaustive, it is rather suggestive and it remains many things to say about it.

As it can be noticed in the first chapter, we have tried to give a thorough description of the sound system of both English and Seereer, to find out if the two languages have the same phonemes, whether those phonemes have the same allophones, and if the latter are similarly distributed. The description of the sound systems of Seereer and English is all the more important as it helps us single out the differences at each level of both languages, and from this perspective, predict the difficulties that Seereer learners may encounter when they learn English as a second language. That is why in the second chapter of the study, predictions of difficulty have been made at each level.

The task did not consist only of pointing out the difficulties that might come out of those differences. We had also to suggest solutions to those problems. In the last chapter suggestions are made at each level in order to help the teacher and students overcome the predicted difficulties.

This research is hopefully useful for both English learners and teachers, whose mother tongue is Seereer. For one thing, by knowing that English department students tend to make the phonological errors in the pronunciation of the English sounds, both English learners and teachers are expected to pay more attention to the articulation of those particular sounds. Moreover, they are also expected to become more aware that those sounds are distinctive English sounds and should not be replaced by Seereer sounds whatsoever. At the same time, it is hoped that by having this paper, the English teachers may be constantly reminded that these English sounds tend to generate problems on the students’ pronunciation, and therefore, they can develop the pronunciation lessons by concentrating on those problematic sounds.

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"The students of today must first of all face the fact that many African languages are difficult, that their sound are different from anything he has met before, that part of the grammar and idiom are unlike that of any language, and finally that a considerable amount of work will be needed to overcome these difficulties."\(^{16}\)

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