THE PHONOLOGICAL INTERFERENCE OF PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE IN THE LEARNERS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRONUNCIATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERACTION[i]

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Abstract:

In this study, the researcher focused on the linguistic interference of the Portuguese language, the official language of Mozambique, in the learners' English pronunciation. The aim was to understand the phonological interference of the Portuguese language in the learners' English language pronunciation of words with phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ in CV3 at Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP. The interference may be positive transfer or negative transfer respectively. This study was based on a qualitative approach design, and the data were elicited from learners through reading drills. The instruments used to collect the data were observation by reading a list of words and a semi-structured interview guide sheet about factors affecting learners' pronunciation interference. Therefore, these instruments were used to describe what kinds of interference phenomena occur in the pronunciation of words with /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ syllable sounds of the English language. The data analysis showed that the learners of CV3 experienced pronunciation interference when they read the list of words because of their proactive knowledge of the Portuguese language, which portrays their identity in the world, so the meaning of the words interferes the interaction with other speakers. The main factor is: the difference in language features between English and Portuguese. In conclusion, all CV3 participant learners experienced interference of meaning when pronouncing English words with phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ due to the Portuguese language. Based on the findings, the researcher suggests that the learners should practice the pronunciation of these two sounds to be intelligible in their interaction with other competent speakers of the English language. Likewise, further researches on this topic should pay special attention to solve this pronunciation problem to enable comprehensible interaction amongst the speakers of the English language.

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[i] A INTERFERÊNCIA FONOLÓGICA DA LÍNGUA PORTUGUESA NA PRONÚNCIA DA LÍNGUA INGLESA DOS FORMANDOS: IMPLICAÇÕES NA INTERACÇÃO

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Resumo:

Neste estudo, o pesquisador centrou-se na interferência linguística da língua Portuguesa, língua oficial de Moçambique, na pronúncia da língua inglesa por parte dos formandos. O objectivo foi compreender a interferência fonológica da língua portuguesa na pronúncia de palavras com sílabas fonéticas /ʃən/ e /tʃər/ da língua inglesa por parte dos formandos do CV3 do Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP. A interferência pode ser transferência positiva ou transferência negativa, respectivamente. Este estudo baseou-se numa abordagem qualitativa e os dados foram recolhidos dos formandos através de exercícios de leitura. Os instrumentos utilizados para recolher os dados foram a observação através da leitura de uma lista de palavras e um guião de entrevista semi-estruturada sobre os factores que afectam a interferência na pronúncia dos formandos. Assim, estes instrumentos foram utilizados, com o objectivo de descrever que tipos de fenómenos de interferência ocorrem na pronúncia de palavras com os sons das sílabas /ʃən/ e /tʃər/ da língua inglesa. A análise dos dados demonstrou que os formandos do CV3 têm interferência da pronúncia quando lêem a lista de palavras devido ao seu conhecimento proactivo da língua portuguesa, que retrata a sua identidade no mundo, por isso, os significados das palavras sofrem interferência na interação com outros falantes. Este é o principal factor: a diferença de características linguísticas entre inglês e português. Concluindo, todos os formandos participantes, do CV3, apresentaram interferência de significado ao pronunciarem palavras em inglês com sons /ʃən/ e /tʃər/ devido à língua portuguesa. Com base nos resultados, o pesquisador sugere que os formandos pratiquem a pronúncia destes dois sons para serem inteligíveis na sua interação com outros falantes competentes desta língua. Do mesmo modo, sugere que futuras pesquisas sobre este tema prestem uma atenção especial a este fenómeno, a fim de resolver este problema da pronúncia para permitir que haja uma interação compreensível entre os falantes da língua inglesa.

Palavras-chave: fonologia, interferência, pronúncia, identidade, interação

1. Introduction

English language is used worldwide and it is in constant development. This language is known as lingua franca because of its so-called prestige in education and business communication internationally. Some companies, for instance in Mozambique, require that both spoken and written competence of English language should be indispensable elements that every candidate should have to apply for a certain job position in their companies.

Consequently, it is presumed that language has a discriminatory influence on people of the same country, people who share the same culture and tradition. Mozambique has many opportunities, but a great part of these opportunities is conditioned, one of which is the knowledge of the English language. Thus, the citizens, including the learners of Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP, have to learn the English language to be able to benefit from such opportunities available in the country.

It is important to clarify that the researcher only wanted to study the spoken language one can perform because the researcher agrees that "*Interference is one of those problems that majority learners are likely to face regardless of what languages they learn*" (Kambarova, 2022, p. 16).

Hence, the linguistic interference of the Portuguese language is related to the identity of Mozambican learners. Therefore, the researcher wanted to understand how the Portuguese language sounds interfere with the learning of the English language sounds. The interference of the Portuguese language, i.e. the national identity, in the learners' English language sound learning is certainly indispensable because this "*interference can be seen as a transfer that affects learning both negatively and positively*" (Denizer, 2017, p. 40) depending on the socio-cultural context where the learner is learning.

Therefore, the researcher described the phonological analysis of the learners of Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP. These learners speak Portuguese in their daily conversation, and it is also used at school, most of the subjects are taught in the Portuguese language, but the learners have to learn the English language to be able to use it in their future profession, as well as for their personal and social purposes. Thus, between the Portuguese and English sound systems, most sounds are equal, but the learners tend to replace, add, and omit some English sounds when they are reading by using Portuguese sounds.

1.1. Background of the study

Linguistic interference is not a new topic in this field. There are previous studies conducted by different researchers worldwide, in different language contexts. Yet, the researcher brings forth a description of the Mozambican context, in IPN-APDD, which was never done before to show the impact of this phonological interference in interaction and, also, to help future researchers with background information to solve this problem of pronunciation interference in English language learning particularly in Mozambique.

As a matter of evidence, a study conducted by Aini et al (2022), at *Universitas Islam Majapahit*, in Indonesia, aimed at determining the types of phonological interference in students' pronunciation, the research indicates that Indonesian is the cause of phonological interference in the English language. Two factors contributed to interference, namely internal factors related to the language itself and external factors related to habits, learning at school, and language attitudes in learning English.

In addition, Riswanto (2022) researched about *the interference of EFL student's native language in students' English pronunciation* and discovered that the interferences occurred by the Kaurnese and Rejangnese students in pronouncing English sounds. Likewise, Chu & Lou (2022) researched the impact of negative transfer of mother tongue on College ESL Learners: at Zhejiang Yuexiu University as a Case Study. The research was conducted in Shaoxing, and the conclusion was that negative transfer of mother tongue is a major difficulty that every second language learner has to overcome, especially for those learners whose target language is quite different from their mother tongue.

In Mozambique, Gonçalves (2019) researched about the critical analysis of the use of communicative competence to improve teacher trainees' oral ability and teaching of English at the teacher training colleges in Zambézia. He found out that clear and several teaching activities

can help the teacher trainees to perform fluently and competently during and when they start teaching in the schools. He concluded that the goal of language learning is communication based on communicative competence. However, the studies mentioned above do not explore much about the implications of phonological interference for interaction between the speaker and the interlocutor of the message. Thus, studying the phonological interference of the Portuguese language in the Mozambican learners' English language pronunciation of words is fundamental to understanding how the English language is learned and developed in this country for interaction.

1.2. Statement of the problem

As highlighted previously in the introduction, language is in continuous development from generation to generation, as people grow and develop physically, economically, mentally, and emotionally the language is not left apart; on the contrary, language develops together with its speakers. The knowledge one acquires in the Portuguese language will interfere positively or negatively with the learning of the English language.

Therefore, during the presentations of English language group work in the academic year 2021 and 2022, at Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP, a Competence-Based Training (CBT) institute, the researcher, being the teacher and evaluator of such presentations, found out that the learners, enrolled in Vocational Course 3 (CV3) in Agro-livestock, were replacing, adding and omitting the English phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ by Portuguese sound combinations, for instance: /tion/, /ture/ and /twa/.

Contrary to that, at this level, the learners are expected to, in general, use the English language for social, personal and professional purposes according to the module of English: *MOHG023001* (Santos, 2015, p. 25) in force at this training institution. Awkwardly, the learners fail to pronounce *culture* /kʌltʃər/, *agriculture* /ˈægrɪˌkʌltʃər/ and *fertilization* /ˌfɜːtəlaɪˈzeɪʃən/; instead they do pronounce in the following way: *culture* /kulture/, *agriculture* /agrɪ.kul.ture/ and *fertilization* /fɜrtɪlɪzation/. So, it is important to ask the following question:

1.2.1. Research question

To what extent does the Portuguese language interfere with the learners' English language pronunciation of words with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ in VC3 of Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP?

1.3. Research objectives
- General objective:

To understand the phonological interference of the Portuguese language in the learners' English language pronunciation of words with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ in CV3 at Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP.
- Specific objectives:
1) To find out the reasons of interference of the Portuguese language in the learners' English language pronunciation of words with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ in CV3 at IPN-ADPP;

2) To describe, using the phonetic transcription, the sounds CV3 learners (mis)pronounce when reading words ending with these phonetic syllables;

3) To determine the impact of phonological interference of the Portuguese language in the learners' English language pronunciation in interaction.

1.4. Significance of the research

In professional terms, this research is relevant for the learners of Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP because it is going to help them to look back at their English language shortcomings regarding their (mis)pronunciation and they will prospect practices to allow them to be intelligible in their interaction to other speakers of English language.

Similarly, the linguists and readers will understand that interference happens when learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or any other language, and it can be understood because "*the general objective of the National Education System is to provide access to all people to get scientific knowledge and full development of their capacities*" (MINED, 2015, p. 25, the researcher's translation). Thus, in this study both the linguists and readers, in general, will have detailed information about the interference of the Portuguese language in the learners' pronunciation of English words with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ in the Mozambican context.

1.5. Research delimitation

The field of this study is linguistics with a focus on phonological interference in interaction. The research was conducted at Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP, located in Nhamatanda district, Sofala province, in Mozambique. The researcher worked with a total of 20 learners of CV3 in Agro-livestock, in order to understand the phonological interference of the Portuguese language in the learners' English language pronunciation of words with phonetic syllable sounds /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ in this educational institution.

The researcher opted to work with these sound combinations or syllables because of the learners identified on point 1.2. statement of the problem. These learners constantly (mis)pronounced words with these two phonetic syllables herein discussed in class presentations and knowing that they have to interact with other speakers of the same language, it is noted that these two syllables are so essential for the improvement of these learners. However, this does not mean that other sounds are less important, but other sounds are irrelevant in this study because the learners could correctly pronounce them because they are similar to the Portuguese sounds.

Also, the researcher worked with these two phonetic syllables because he could not be able to cover all the 44 different sounds used when speaking the English language. Consequently, the research was delimited only to measure the phonological interference of Portuguese language in the learners' English language pronunciation of words with phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/, since the learners use Portuguese language at home, at school, and in the community.

1.6. Definition of key terms

Some terminologies used in this study are worthwhile pinpointing their meaning to give a clear understanding of them. The terminologies can be described as follows:

1) *Interference* is the error in the second language acquisition that is influenced by the first language of learners (Ellis cited by Putra, 2021, p.11). In fact, that is what is happening also when learning EFL pronunciation in the Mozambican context.

2) *Native language* is the first language a person learns from birth or during a critical period (Bloomfield cited by Putra, 2021, p.12). It is a language that people acquire at an early age due to the influence of their family or is the language of the region in which they live.

3) *Portuguese language* is the official language of Mozambique (Cigarros & Cuamba, 2021, p. 6-7).

4) *Pronunciation* is a knowledge used to pronounce words in a language (Hamer cited by Putra, 2021, p.12). It means that pronunciation is a way of uttering a word based on the rules such as rhythm, stress, intonation and pitch, in order to make communication understood or intelligible.

2. Literature Review

2.1. English language in Mozambique

Nhampoca (2015) says that "*Mozambique is an African country located in the southern part of the continent. As it is the case with most African countries, this country is multilingual and multicultural. These aspects provide the country with cultural and linguistic diversity*" (p. 83, the researcher's translation). It means that Mozambique is a linguistically rich, multilingual and multicultural country. Consequently, the people living therein inherit its cultural and linguistic diversity. Reite (2013) upholds that:

> "*Portuguese, declared the official language at independence in 1975, was the mother tongue of 1.2% of the Mozambican population and spoken by only 25% of the population. The majority of the population was multilingual, bilingual or monolingual in Bantu languages. Consequently, participation in society for three-quarters of the population was not possible in any field - administration, judicial processes, the political system, the school system or others. Today, Portuguese is spoken by about half the population, with about 10% having Portuguese as their mother tongue, which represents a considerable increase in 38 years.*" (p. 27-28, the researcher's translation)

The citation above is from 2013, about 10 years have passed and the situation is still changing in the country; possibly more than half of the population nowadays speak and have Portuguese as their mother tongue because this is the official language of the country. Unfortunately, many people supposedly do not speak local language to their parents.

On the one hand, Mozambique is linguistically heterogeneous and multilingual, where several languages coexist, namely, autochthonous languages (of Bantu root), spoken by the majority of the population, Portuguese (the official language), several foreign languages

(English, French) and also other languages of emigrants coming from the Asian continent and/or their descendants. The inclusion of English, for example, in the list of languages spoken in Mozambique is due to, on the other hand, its prestige in the country, justified by its privileged position in the labour market. This fact makes many citizens see English as a language that guarantees prosperity. In fact, the English language at the international level is considered as *lingua franca* (Cigarros & Cuamba, 2021, p. 6-7, the researcher's translation). It means that, in Mozambique English language is yet considered as a foreign language, also as a language of business and international communication. Subsequently, more than ever, the learners of this country need to learn to communicate using this international language.

Currently, the English language is taught in many teaching institutions of the country from primary level up to university level to allow learners to have access to the language and be able to communicate with other speakers from different contexts.

2.2. Communicative competence

Gonçalves (2019) stated, "*Hymes (1972) is the proponent of the communicative competence approach under the Sociolinguistics perspective, which later was framed under English language teaching by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983)*" (p. 54). In this case, learners of English language are required to use the language for various circumstances. Nevertheless, Bachman cited by Woods (2005) states that communicative language comprises "*two main forms of competence: linguistic competence and pragmatic competence*" (p.12). The difference is described below:

- *Linguistic competence* refers to knowledge of the language itself, defined in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure;
- *Pragmatic competence* is knowing how to use language to achieve communicative goals or intentions.

Both competencies are useful because language does not occur without a social context of its production. People produce language so that other people also understand them and vice versa. Therefore, both competencies are relevant in this study because what is needed is for learners to use the English language for personal, social and professional purposes. Subsequently, the learners should know the language and be able to use it in any circumstance of their lives.

2.3. When does interference happen during language acquisition or learning?

According to Nor & Rashid (2018), "*L2 learners have already acquired at least one language, and the prior knowledge in the L1 may prove to be an advantage to them as they already have the idea of how language works. On the other hand, this knowledge might interfere with the learning of L2*" (p. 162-163), one example of this is when learners make incorrect guesses on L2. So, there are two important things to highlight besides interference:

- **Language acquisition** refers to the natural assimilation of languages, by meaning of intuition and subconscious learning, that is, language is a product of real interaction between people in environments of the target language and culture; and
- **Language learning** refers to the study of the language as a system with the objective of understanding the structures and producing knowledge about the language.

Linguistics is the study of the language (De Saussure, 2011, p. 59). So, discussing the form of the language (i.e. phonological) and the meaning of the language (semantics, i.e. the study of the meaning in language; and pragmatics, i.e. the study of the meaning in a social context) is fundamental because the sound learners pronounce, as the addresser, must be understood by the addressee.

Having found the interference of meaning in communication, there is one question about the source of this interference in communication: Why do learners experience interference when learning the English language? Darby & Sloutsky (2013) answering this question pinpoint the following:

1) *acquired knowledge may interfere with future learning, the process known as proactive interference (PI); in other words, the old information blocks out the new information.*

2) *acquired knowledge may attenuate memory for previously learned information, the process known as retroactive interference (RI); in other words, new information blocks out the old information.* (p. 2130)

Thus, PI and RI effects are particularly important to study in early development because doing so will help determine what factors benefit or detract from the aggregation of early knowledge. PI and RI will help to determine which information interferes with the other in the language learning context. This information will help to determine if the learners' official language, which the learners acquired first interferes or blocks their learning of English as a Foreign Language.

2.4. Theoretical framework

2.4.1. The interactionist approach (socio-cultural theory)

This theory best matches the researcher's topic and study because language is meant to be used in interaction to other people in the society. So, Vygotsky cited by Woyciechowski (2009) defends that the basic activities of the individual are "*the result of activities practiced according to the social habits of the culture in which the individual develops*" (p. 5), that is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where the learner can learn with the assistance and guidance of an adult person, in an authentic environment and with affinity among the participants.

Likewise, society and culture have an actual formative function because learning is the "*process by which knowledge circulates, is constructed and transformed within a community, a social group. In this perspective, learning for the individual is to participate in this collective process of co-construction of knowledge, it is to be part of a relationship with others who promote this co-construction*" (Lebrun cited by Batalhão, 2015, p. 25, the researcher's translation).

In the case of language learning, "*the ideal learning occurs in environments of the foreign language and culture when the learner is exposed to a level of interaction with the other culture*" (Vygotsky cited by Woyciechowski, 2009, p. 5). If the learner of the language is not exposed to the language he or she is learning, there will be no acquisition because the learner will have no one to interact with and will not have a glimpse of the culture.

The assistance of the teacher or an adult person to the learner of the language to accomplish a given task is known as scaffolding. The learners are instructed on how to use the

language for each purpose and they are the ones applying the language freely afterwards without assistance.

Rahimpour (2010) defends that, "*language acquisition depends on cognitive development and requires cognitive prerequisites or co-requisites. That is why cognition is seen as an underlying language skill. More specifically, children will not develop linguistic forms, before acquiring the cognitive bases for those forms*" (p. 189). In other words, cognitive bases determine the learner's linguistic development, more precisely, the sound pronunciation for this particular study.

2.5. The knowledge of discourse

The term *text* is restricted to written language, while *discourse* is restricted to spoken language. However, modern Linguistics has introduced a concept of text that includes every type of utterance (Juez, 2009, p. 6). Therefore, a text may be a magazine article, a television interview, a conversation or a cooking recipe, etc.

It means that currently, a text is about every type of utterance, i.e. written or spoken, so the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ of the English language are part of spoken utterances because these sounds are meant to communicate to interlocutors of the language when they are connected with other phonetic syllables; they should be deeply practiced to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the message in the context of its production.

Therefore, Bernárdez cited by Juez (2009), advocating about Discourse Analysis (DA), summarizes that:

- Language only exists in use and communication. It always fulfils certain functions in human interaction.
- Language use is necessarily social.
- Language is not autonomous. It shares some characteristics with other social and cognitive phenomena.
- The description of language must account for the real facts of language. It should not postulate hidden entities only motivated by the needs of the formal system utilized.
- Linguistic structures should be closely linked to the conditions of language use.
- Language is natural and necessarily vague and inaccurate; therefore, any prediction can only be probabilistic. (p. 11)

It means that the learners have to be exposed to the language they want to use in their future professions or careers because the linguistic structures they learn should be closely linked to the conditions of language use.

2.6. Pronunciation (phonetics and phonology)

The study of pronunciation consists of two major fields that should never be forgotten when talking about pronunciation, namely: phonetic and phonology.

A. Definition of Phonetic

O'grady, cited by Putra (2021) states that, "*phonetic is a linguistics branch that consists of the study of human speech sounds. It means that phonetics refers to how sounds are produced, perceived, and*

transmitted. Moreover, phonetic focuses on the production (articulatory), transmission (acoustic), and perception (auditive) of sounds" (p.34).

a. Stress

The stress, in phonetics, is intensity given to a syllable of speech by special effort in utterance, resulting in relative loudness. This emphasis in pronunciation may be merely phonetic (i.e., noticeable to the listener but not meaningful), we can mention to (Liberman and Prince cited by Parrales, 2019, p. 31).

b. Intonation

The intonation in phonetics, is the melodic pattern of an utterance. Intonation is primarily a matter of variation in the pitch level of the voice, but in such languages as English, stress and rhythm are also involved. Intonation conveys differences in expressive meaning (Parrales, 2019, p. 34).

B. Definition of phonology

Phonology is the linguistic branch that studies how sounds occur together with other sounds in a certain language. In another view, phonology is the explanation of a speech sound system and pattern in a language that refers to the abstract of language sounds rather than the actual physical articulation of speech sounds (Yule cited by Putra, 2021, p. 34).

2.7. Language interference concepts

Linguistic interference is when one language affects the use of another language. Kambarova (2022) defends that, *"In Linguistics, the term "interference" is recognised as the transfer of linguistic features between languages in the speech repertoire of a bilingual or multilingual individual, whether from first to second, second to first or many other relationships"* (p. 16). Likewise, Selinker cited by Putra (2021) emphasises that *"interference is a language deviation that occurs due to the influence of other languages. In short, first language interference is an effect that occurs due to the application of knowledge from first language to second language"* (p. 18).

Consequently, interference is the transfer of linguistic features between languages; this transfer can occur in any aspect of the language, such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and others. As advocated by Denizer (2017):

> *"Mother tongue interference can be seen as a transfer that affects learning both negatively and positively. […] there is high probability of cross-linguistic influence in second language acquisition and this influence may cause some errors, which are caused by the negative transfer. Manrique (2013) stated that mispronunciation and grammatical errors are the most common types of interference between the mother tongue and the target language."* (p. 40)

Mother tongue will influence on second language. This is language transfer. Transfer originally is a psychological term that refers to the effect of previous learning or skills on subsequent learning or skills. In second language acquisition, learners usually transfer the

pronunciation habits and rules of their mother tongue to the second language, which is the process of the brain processing new knowledge. The degree depends on how significant the similarities or differences are between the mother tongue and the second language (Zheng, 2018, p. 1479).

2.8. Phonological interference

According to Putra (2021), "*phonological interference refers to errors that happen when the language speaker produces and perceives the sound of a language. Interference happens when the learner identifies the sound from the first language system and applies it in the second language*" (p. 20). This means that one language can affect the pronunciation of phonetic sounds in another language because they have different phonetic systems.

Some indicators of phonological interference suggested by David, cited by Putra (2021), are shown in the following:

- **Sound addition.** The interference occurs due to the addition of sound when speaking a word so that it deviates from the standard rules of English.
- **Sound omission.** Phonological interference happens due to the omission of phonemes in a word.
- **Sound replacement.** Phonological interference occurs due to the replication of phonemes in a word (p. 21).

3. Material and Methods

3.1. Research design

The methodology of the present study was based on a qualitative approach. In this case, the researcher broadly used a qualitative approach because it has characteristics that allow the researcher to "*observe the problem and create a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon*" (Mills & Gay cited by Putra, 2021, p. 50).

In addition, Hughes cited by Linh (2014), says that a "*qualitative approach often raises the problem of subjectivity and lack of generalizability. However, it gives the respondents the freedom to express their own experience, thus suggesting new insights*" (p. 7). In other words, qualitative research is research to describe the data, developing a deep understanding and full description of data in the form of long reports and narratives as well as non-numerical data to get an accurate perspective in research focus. This approach best matches this study in linguistics because the idea was not just to collect data but to learn from the learners' experience, as well.

All the information collected is going to be presented on a graph. Thus, in this research, a qualitative approach is reflected in both data collection and data analysis, respectively.

3.2. Research setting

This study was conducted at Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP, a Competence-Based Training (CBT) institute located in Nhamatanda district, Sofala province, in Mozambique. Dean & Lisa cited by Putra (2021) defend that "*a common range is between 8 to 20 participants in a qualitative research*" (p. 51-52). Therefore, this study involved 20 learners (i.e. 8 females and 12

males) who were randomly selected to be participants and to whom the semi-structured interview guide sheet and sound check instrument test were applied.

All participants of this study were Mozambican. They all speak the same official language, i.e., Portuguese; and most of them started to have contact with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in grade 6. There are two particular cases, namely: one learner started learning English in grade 7 and another one in grade 1 of the National Education System of Mozambique. All twenty participants were current learners of Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP at the moment this study was in progress and lived on the school premises. They were all attending CV3 during this academic year.

3.3. Object of the study

The object of this study is the learners' English language pronunciation, which is interfered with their official language (Portuguese) when pronouncing words with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ of the English language.

3.4. Data collection method

To find out the answer to the research question, the researcher used two instruments. The data were collected by observation and semi-structured interview guide sheet. Both instruments were conducted at Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP. According to Creswell, cited by Putra (2021), "*observation means monitoring and recording data or information which appears in the object of research systematically*" (p. 53).

As a matter of evidence, the researcher asked the learners, one by one in a separate classroom, to read English words ending with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/, respectively. The words in the list of reading drills were taken from the Cambridge School Dictionary (2008). Consequently, the data were collected by recording the results of the participants' pronunciation as they were reading out loud the list of words.

Additionally, the researcher wrote the phonetic transcription of the data collected for each sound the participant produced and special attention was given to the phonetic syllables at stake in this study. Thus, the researcher started by identifying the (mis)pronounced sounds, with special focus again on /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ syllables, and then, he compared each participant's pronunciation with the standard phonetic transcription from the Cambridge School Dictionary (2008), in order to find out the participants' blunders in pronouncing English words.

Furthermore, the researcher asked the participants to answer a semi-structured interview guide sheet in order to gather the data and find out if the participants were motivated to learn English language. The questions of the semi-structured interview guide sheet were taken, re-edited and translated from the thesis of Putra (2021, p. 57-58).

3.5. Research instrument

The data collection tool was a semi-structured interview guide sheet, which was designed to identify the participants' motivation towards learning the English language. Also, the researcher wanted to know if the participants were aware that there was a difference between English language pronunciation and Portuguese language pronunciation.

Besides that, another instrument was used for sound check observation. The researcher wanted to find out the probable interference of the Portuguese language in the English language pronunciation of words ending with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/; that is the reason that took the researcher to record the participants' pronunciation while reading the list of words. Thus, the researcher used the recorded sounds to write the phonetic transcription of the participants' pronunciation and compared the sounds to the standard phonetic transcription from the Cambridge School Dictionary (2008).

The phonetic transcription helped to describe how words with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ are pronounced in CV3 at Instituto Politécnico de Nahmatanda-ADPP. Therefore, from the results of the comparison, the researcher used four questions, namely: *most of the time – sometimes – seldom – never* (Denizer, 2017, p. 43) just to measure each participants' pronunciation scale (interfered or not interfered), and then, determine if the participants' English language pronunciation is or is not interfered by the Portuguese language in this teaching institution.

3.6. Research procedure

The semi-structured interview guide sheet was implemented throughout the week (from the 12th to the 16th of December of 2022) and included 20 participants after the lunch break. The researcher applied the semi-structured interview guide sheet individually. The researcher provided the semi-structured interview guide sheet to the 20 participants who were learners of Instituto Politécnico de Nahmatanda-ADPP, attending CV3 in the academic year 2022:

- First, the researcher asked the participants to fill out the semi-structured interview guide sheet based on their personal understanding;
- Second, the researcher asked them to read the list of words ending with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ from the sound check instrument test while the researcher was recording them;
- Third, the researcher had to write the phonetic transcription of each participant's pronunciation; and
- Finally, with the aid of the four questions, the researcher could check and determine if the Portuguese language interferes in the learners' English language pronunciation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Result of the percentage of pronunciation interference from the participants

The percentage of all participants of this study, who were recorded when reading the list of words and then described phonetically (through phonetic transcription) are indicated in the graph below to show linguistic interference of the Portuguese language in the learners' English language pronunciation of words with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/.

It is important to highlight that the researcher only used four questions that were also used by Denizer (2017) to check each participant's pronunciation scale in this study.

Graph 1: Percentage of the participants' pronunciation interference
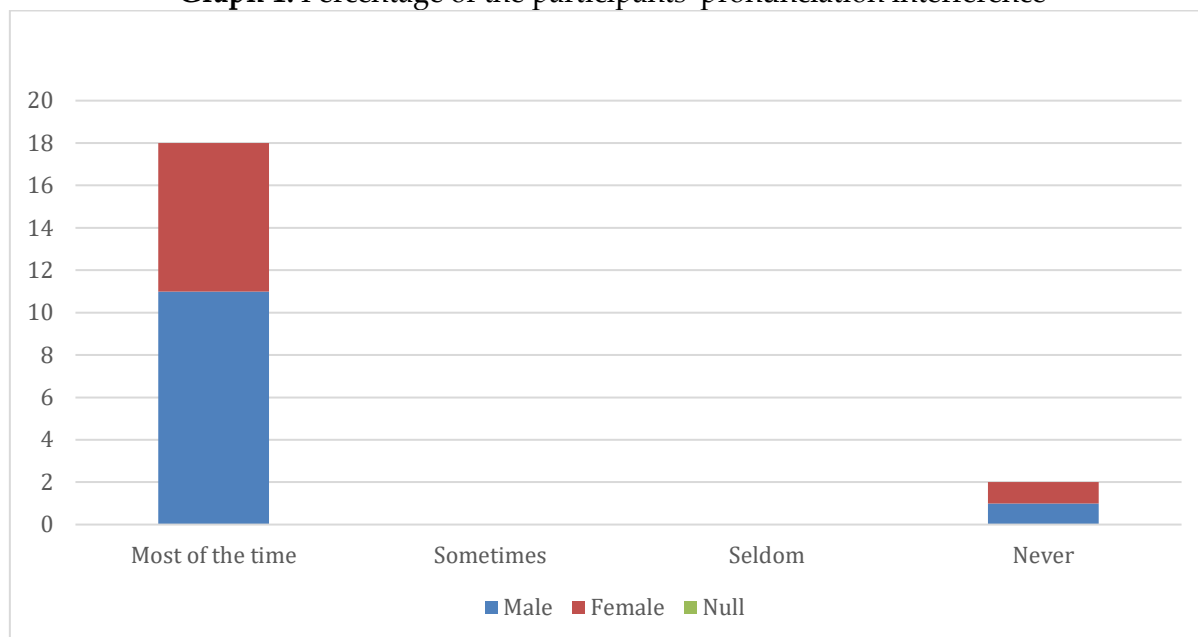
From the graph above, the researcher could see that 90% of the participants, that is, 11 males and 7 females showed interference of the Portuguese language 'Most of the time' when reading the list of words from the instrument of sound check observation and 10% of the participants, that is, 1 male and 1 female did not show any signs of interference while regarding the focused phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ at stake in this study.

Therefore, these data allowed the researcher to agree with the fact that the Portuguese language, though being the national identity of the participants, has indeed interference on the learning of the English language pronunciation as the case of the participants of Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADPP clearly shows that from the 20 participants, 90% of the participant experienced interference when reading the list of words ending with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/; and 10% did not experience any interference according to the data collected.

For instance, one of the participants said that "*Sim, pois ajuda a comunicar-se melhor.* 'Yes, because it helps to better communicate.' (The researcher's translation)" another participant said that "*Sim. Para poder interagir com os estrangeiros.* 'Yes. To be able to interact with the foreigners.' (The researcher's translation)" and, in addition, a participant said "*Sim é importante porque é uma língua internacional.* 'Yes, it is important because it is an international language.' (The researcher's translation)".

4.2 The difference of language features between English and Portuguese language
The researcher asked the question 5. What is the reason why English pronunciation considered being difficult to learn? and 6. What is the difference between English pronunciation and Portuguese pronunciation? to find out what is the opinion of the participants about the challenges of learning English pronunciation and also to ensure if they are aware of the difference between English pronunciation and Portuguese pronunciation.

For instance, a participant said "*A pronúncia portuguesa lê-se aquilo que está escrito enquanto Inglesa não se prouncia exatamente o que está escrito.* 'Portuguese pronunciation is read what is written while the English pronunciation is not exactly what is written.'" (The researcher's translation).

Another participant said that "*A diferença de pronúncia inglesa e portuguesa; inglesa tem muitas regras para pronunciar a palavra enquanto portuguesa não existe regaras para pronunciar palavras.* 'The difference in English and Portuguese pronunciation; English has many rules to pronounce the word while Portuguese has no rules to pronounce words.'" (The researcher's translation) and a final example, a participant said that "*O inglês possui sons que não existem no repositório do Português como o temido som do th.* 'English has sounds that do not exist in the Portuguese repository such as the feared th.'" (The researcher's translation).

4.2. Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher understood that there is interference of the Portuguese language when reading the list of words ending with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ of English language. The results show that the interference is basically on sound addition, sound omission, and sound replacement, respectively. So, this has negative implications in interaction because it creates miscommunication amongst the speakers.

According to Rahimpour (2010) "*human mind is equipped with cognitive systems*" (p. 190), which seeks to explain three principal aspects of learning: 1) how knowledge is initially represented, 2) how the ability of this knowledge develops, and 3) how new knowledge is integrated into the learner's existing cognitive system. Therefore, the results of this study showed that the Portuguese language is part of the learners' existing cognitive system and it interferes negatively with the pronunciation of words, such as: culture, agriculture and puncture that have the phonetic syllable /tʃər/ and words such as irrigation, station and location with phonetic syllable /ʃən/. Nevertheless, this interference affects the meaning of the words in the context of using the language.

Hence, the researcher is aware that the learners also experience positive transfer because some phonetic sounds are similar to the Portuguese language, but the gap is left because of the negative implication of the (mis)pronounced phonetic syllable. In addition, Bernárdez cited by Juez (2009) advocates so vividly that:

- Language only exists in use and communication. It always fulfils certain functions in human interaction.
- Language use is necessarily social.
- Language is not autonomous. It shares some characteristics with other social and cognitive phenomena.
- […]
- Linguistic structures should be closely linked to the conditions of language use. (p. 11)

In this case, the sounds of English language should be understood in the context of the audience or society of speakers of English language. Also, it is not enough from this study to determine whether this problem is of all Mozambican institutions, but the results of this study conducted in Nhamatanda show that the knowledge of Portuguese language learners acquired

interferes with their learning of English language in IPN-ADPP; this process is known as proactive interference, that is, the learners' knowledge about Portuguese language blocks out the learning of English language (Darby & Sloutsky, 2013, p. 2130).

In fact, Portuguese is a language that the learners use in this country, and it portrays the learners' identity to the world, but this identity is not meant to compromise the meaning of words when the learner addresses the message to the addressees on the contrary, the message should reach the other users of the language and be understood in that social context.

To this end, there are positive aspects that can be found in the first language learned, which are similar in English language, also with lots of practice can be bettered as Skinner cited by Putra (2021) defended that "*acquisition of a second language is formed by habits*" (p. 15), i.e. the learners learn from repetition or through practice. These ideas remain valid nowadays because if the learners do not practice the language they learn, how will they be sure that their message is going to be "*accepted*" (Juez, 2009, p.6) by other speakers in their interaction?

Above all, the word is ideological and it is the product of social interaction. According to Brandão (2004) "*the word becomes an arena of struggle of voices that, situated in different positions, want to be heard by other voices*" (p. 9, the researcher's translation). Therefore, the privileged place for the manifestation of ideology portrays the different ways of meaning reality according to the voices and points of view of those who use it. However, if learners mispronounce words due to their proactive knowledge, the addressees may also understand different meanings based on their social context or, at worst, not understand anything that has been said at all.

5. Recommendations

5.1 English learners of IPN-ADPP and other institutions

Interference in language learning happens naturally due to a negative or positive transfer of the first language learned in the learning process. Therefore, pronunciation is very important to learn or acquire otherwise because pronunciation is used to avoid misunderstandings between speakers of the language. Consequently, as English learners and future professionals and leaders of Mozambique or other countries, good pronunciation should be a must for the learners of this era because the way the learners pronounce the English language will determine their ability to use this language and the opportunities they can get whether in government or private sector. However, the learners are suggested to listen more to English audio-visual resources, read more books to enrich their vocabulary and language use and practice more speaking in order to improve their pronunciation.

5.2 Linguists and teachers of English

Linguists and teachers of English can use the results of this research to obtain information regarding the phonological interference of the Portuguese language in the learners' English language pronunciation learning, especially in the learning of phonetic sounds, and also to understand the challenges of the learners when reading, i.e. the learners replace, omit and add sounds. So, teachers of English and linguists can give appropriate solutions to solve this problem in further research. The researcher proposes the use of the communicative competence approach

in ELT classrooms, it can be done through drills, for instance, word stress, and listing activities to improve the learners' skills.

5.3 The future researchers

The future researchers are suggested to work with different institutions and find out a methodology in ELT classes to counter this type of interference in the learners of IPN-ADPP or any other Mozambican teaching institute to avoid misunderstandings in interaction.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher assumed that there is interference of meaning in the participants' English language pronunciation of words with the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/. Therefore, such interference has a negative impact on communication. In other words, one learner may say something, and the listener (addressee) may understand something else or, in the worst case, not understand what the speaker means.

Likewise, the official language of Mozambique (Portuguese) interferes with the learning of the phonetic syllables /ʃən/ and /tʃər/ of the English language at *Instituto Politécnico de Nhamatanda-ADP*, that is because most of the learners use Portuguese language in their everyday conversation, so negative transfer can be seen in their pronunciation, this validates the idea of proactive interference, that is, the existing knowledge students have of Portuguese language blocks the learning of the English language pronunciation. The details are in the following two aspects.

With the help of the Cambridge School Dictionary (2008), it was possible to compare the pronunciation of the participants with the standard pronunciation in the dictionary. Thus, the researcher used phonetic transcription as a tool to identify and describe all phenomena happening with the participants. Consequently, the researcher found out that there are occurrences of sound addition, sound omission, and sound replacement when the participants pronounce English words in the given list. This interference happens because the sounds of the English language are very different from the sounds of the Portuguese language.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare. The author agrees with the contents of this paper and there is no financial interest to report. Therefore, the author certifies that the submission is original work and it is not under review at any other publication.

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