The Contrastive Analysis of English and Kurdish Intonation Patterns and its Effect on Kurdish-Speaking Students

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Abstract
This paper is an attempt to compare and contrast the Kurdish and English intonation patterns and to know how English intonation may influence by the students' first language (Kurdish language). To do so, the data was collected through speech recording and interview from twenty Kurd advance language learners studying in an English institute in Javanrud. As a result of data analysis, using the Praat software (a computer program designed to analyze speech sounds), there were no influences from Kurdish intonation system to the learners' English intonation patterns. Also, series of interviews have been conducted, through which the Kurdish-speaking learners believed that there are no or very little differences between their own language intonation patterns and the English ones. I tried to consider the effect of Sorani Kurdish which is spoken in a large area of Iran and Iraq, namely, Kermanshah. So as to see whether there are differences between this kind of Kurdish and English intonation patterns. The selected feature between the two languages was defined briefly and then compared and contrasted together. These differences in the learners’ mother tongue and the Kurdish language may lead second language learners to fossilize pronunciation and intonation patterns. Equally important, we need to assist the students with specific first languages such as Kurdish and Turkish to articulate the English pronunciation and intonation patterns. I asked the participants to three falling-raising sentences, one Yes/No question, one If-clause sentence and one tag-question asking for information. And also two raising-falling sentences, one Wh-question and one tag-question asking for confirmation. In fact there were no great differences between the Kurdish-speaking students' intonation patterns and the Persian-speaking students'. It seemed that the differences derived from the individuals' pronunciation and knowledge of English intonation patterns and not from the Kurdish language intonation system.

Keywords: Kurdish language, Persian language, English intonation pattern, Contrastive analysis

1. Introduction
The effect of first language always make the EFL students face many challenges in learning the second language, finding the areas of difficulty in any aspect of first and second languages can help us to overcome such barriers in second language learning.

Despite the many criticisms geared at the contrastive analysis, the two basic aspects of it have survived: L1 is a major factor in L2 learning and important insights can be gained from the comparison and contrast of two languages (Fallahi, 1991) advocated the application of CA for English programs which seem to be a matter of great importance in Iran because the L1 interference is quite noticeable in an EFL environment. Thus, I tried to compare and contrast the
English and Kurdish intonation patterns. Equally important, it is believed that the pronunciation problems of Iranian students lie in differences between the two languages and especially these differences are found in phonetic features (vowel and consonant) rather than supra-segmental features specially intonation. Kurdish language, therefore exercises which are based on careful contrastive analysis is the best for teaching the pronunciation.

Literature review:

The Kurdish language is spoken almost by forty million people living mainly in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Kurdish is a member of the Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European languages and there are two ideas about origin of this language. Some Arab and Persian scholars mostly believe that Kurdish is a language belonging to the branch of modern Persian. On the other hand, some other scholars believe that Kurdish is a language whose source is Avestan. They assert that at one time Avestan must have been spoken in Kurdistan. The first classification of the Kurdish is divided into four dialects of Kurmanji, Goran, Lur, Kalhor and the southern dialect of Kurdish includes the Kurdish of Kermanshah which is the language of the participants of this study. Kurdish is a written language. It is written as it pronounced. Its orthography is based on Arabic script. Diacritic marks and dots are used to represented consonants and vowels not found in Arabic. All phonemes are represented by full letters, except for[i], which is not represented at all.

Most of the works on Kurdish during the nineteen century, whether grammar or vocabularies, were comparative in nature, seeking to relate Kurdish to other Indo-European languages but very few of them had focused on features such as intonation. During the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century Kurdish had variously been compared and contrasted with Persian and Arabic. At first these comparisons aimed at establishing a standard alphabet for the Kurdish language by finding the sounds which are presented in Kurdish. Later the same approach was adopted by the Kurdish scholars who tried to elaborate on grammar and finally they focused on the Kurdish supra-segmental features. Among the factors that contribute to the prominence which perceived in a stressed syllable, pitch and length produce strong effect in English while in Kurdish length has no prominent role and the strongest effect is made by loudness and pitch. Furthermore, while Kurdish is syllable-timed language (there is no strong pattern of stress and syllables maintain their quality), English is a stressed-timed language (stress occurs at the regular intervals) and also it should be mentioned that there are CV, CVC, CVCC, CCV, CCVC and CCVCC syllable structures in all Kurdish dialects, specially spoken in the western parts of Iran. Any Kurdish word is more than one syllable is pronounced with one of its syllables being stressed and the rest are unstressed, for some words a change in the position of stress results in a change either in the meaning of that word or a change in its grammatical status: barzi( you are tall) versus barzi(height). In a word the stress generally falls on the last syllable. Some morphemes, however, take stress. Thus, word stress is essentially morphological, a characteristic that is present in most Iranian languages e.g. Persian. To summarize as Rahimpour (2010) pointed out it can be said that in Kurdish: 1. Most of the words have their stress. 2. Stem-final vowels are regularly stressed: hatin (they come) versus hatin (to come). 3. Some suffixes however, are stressed, so when they attached to other words they cause a shift in stress. For instance, definite suffix akac.g.minal (child) versus minalaka (the child). 4. Negative prefixes on verbs are stressed: cum (I want) versus nacum (I didn't want). But in the case of stress in English, it is very difficult to predict the place of stress in an English word and it is best
to treat stress placement as a property of the individual word, to be learned when the word itself is learned. Generally in English word the stress falls on the strong syllable (one with a long vowel or a diphthong as its peak or with one or more consonants follow the peak). It also seems that in English there is a tendency to place stress near the beginning of the word (unlike Kurdish that it is usually at the end of the word). In compounds and phrases stress tends to fall on the head nouns. It should be noted that in English (like Kurdish) it is often the new information within a sentence that takes the sentence stress.

However, in terms of intonation in both Kurdish and English and in most other Indo-European languages, some syntactic information is conveyed about the mood of speaker. Throughout every syllable in a normal conversational utterance, the pitch is going up and down. The intonation of a sentence is the pattern of pitch changes that occurs and the part of the sentence over which a particular pattern extends which is called an intonation phrase. And because this study focused on differences between Kurdish and English intonation patterns and as we know that pitch is most prominent factor in production of intonation. Thus, we need to discuss the analysis of pitch. Therefore, it is important to know what we mean by this term. Ladefoged (2003) stated that pitch is an auditory property, something that is heard. It is not an acoustic property but an aspect of sound wave that can be measured. From a practical point of view when discussing the pitch of a voice, it can be said that to be the rate at which vocal fold pluses recur and thus the fundamental frequency of the sound wave. Tone and intonation are manifested by pitch. It is possible to measure the pitch of the recorded sound, and also we can measure the fundamental frequency of the sound wave as well, which is the acoustic relation to pitch. The first step is to transfer the recordings to be analyzed onto a computer. The variation of pitch creates information and the normal pitch of the speaker is called mid. The pitch higher than normal is called high and the lower than normal is named low. The high pitch is usually on the stronger stress. Some authors refer to the four or five different tones: fall, rise, slight rise, fall followed by rise and rise followed by fall. Yarmohammadi (1996) presented that an utterance may start with one of these levels and terminates with another or with the same level. This process creates intonation contour. An intonation contour is a pattern of pitch variation over the syllables of an utterance ending with one of these falling, rising terminals that can be shown by # or //. The numbers and bars provide a frame for comparing and contrasting intonation in Kurdish and English. In terms of intonation in Kurdish, there are some examples, (231#) 1) Simple statements e.g. awanhatin(they came) 2) Interrogative sentences with the question word in the middle of the sentence e.g. aw key cu? (When did he go?). (31#) 1) Declarative sentences with the strong stress on the first syllable e.g. nabe?Awanbizanin (they shouldn't know). 2) Interrogative sentences with question word at the beginning of the sentence e.g. boxwayanhatin? (Why did they themselves come?). (233///) 1) a question introduced by some particles like ?axo a near equivalent for auxiliary (in function) in inverted questions in English e.g. garaktabici? (do you want to go). 21/// this pattern can be seen in these utterances: 1) an affirmative sentence composed of two clauses e.g. ?agar ?aw saw ?axafe( he works during the day and sleeps at nights).2) Sentences with yana or choices questions e.g. azadnan ?axwayana? (Is azad eating or not?). And also in terms of English intonation the concise treatment of English has been adopted from Yarmohammadi (1996). (231#) 1) declarative simple sentences e.g. He went home. 2) declarative sentences containing auxiliary and reporting verbs followed by complements e.g. I don't know if it was dr. Jahonson.3) Interrogative sentences containing question word e.g. where did you
get the lemon juice? (233/\) this pattern is used in: 1) a question with a statement word order e.g. He went home? 2) a question with a subject-auxiliary inversion e.g. Did he go home? (31\) it can be seen in: 1) an affirmative sentence composed of two clauses e.g. I will get some for you/ if you want me to. (33/\) this pattern is used in: tag questions asking for information e.g. He went home, didn't he?

It is interesting to know that in Persian language, there are sixteen intonation patterns which are as following: Declarative statements with a falling intonation (H* L-L5%). Interrogative statements with rising intonation (H* L-H %) and the rest patterns are as following: H* H-L %, H* H-H %, L+H* L-L %, L+H* L-H %, L+H* H-L %, L+H* H-H %, L* L-L %, L* L-H %, L* H-L %, L* H-H %, L*+H L-L %, L*+H L-H %, L*+H H-L %, L*+H H-H %. While in English there is also a single syllable that stands out because it carries the major pitch change, this syllable is called tonic syllable which represents the greatest overall pitch change. The tonic accent usually occurs on the last stressed syllable in tone group but it may occur earlier, if some word requires emphasis, for instance, " we know the new mayor" if we want to emphasize that we know the new mayor but not the old one, then we can make a new tonic syllable. In English language, statements wh-questions, all subordinate clauses except if-clause and some tag-questions asked for confirmation are pronounced with rising- falling intonation patterns and Yes/No questions, if-clauses, exclamations and some tag-questions asked for information are pronounced with a falling-rising intonation.

Methodology:

The data was collected through speech recording and series of interviews from the twenty advance EFL learners from an English institute in Javanrud. The collected data was analyzed by the Praat software, a very sensitive computer program, designed to analyze speech sound and intonation patterns. The participants were asked to say three falling-raising sentences as following, one Yes/No question (Are often busy?), one If-clause ( If he knew it, he would help her.) and a tag-question asking for information (It hasn’t been very cold this winter, has it?) and also three raising-falling sentences, two Wh-question ( Where is Jhon?) (Where did he study last night?). And a tag-question asking for confirmation (Jhon hasn’t left, has he?). As a result of the data analysis which is presented in one of the samples of recorded sounds in graphs A1, it is noticeable that both falling and raising intonation were pronounced correctly. Hence, it is quite clear that, there might be no influence of Kurdish language in the participants’ pronunciation of English mentioned intonation patterns.
A1, the first part of the graph which is divided by red line demonstrate raising intonation and the next half presents the falling intonation. All other samples are presented in appendix A.

It seems as if the differences only exist in the phonetic features such as consonant and vowel. Furthermore, as a result of the conducted interviews, the participants believed that the Kurdish phonetic system assist the Kurd language learners to have more native-like American pronunciation. Hence, there is no influence from the Kurdish language on the English intonation system.

Generally, there are some minor differences between English and Persian intonation system. Soltani (2007) stated that, in Persian, we have free words but in English there fix words. For instance, Anhakojaraftand? or Kojaraftandanha? Another difference is that in English the sound level changes just in vowel while in Persian sound changes in major structures. However, according to the Kurdish participants, there are no great differences between the Kurdish and Persian intonation systems. Thus, as a result of the data analysis, there were not major influences from the students' first language (Kurdish) on their English intonation patterns. However, it seems that it might be the individuals' speech characteristics and their knowledge of English intonation system that affect the way they pronounced sentences. Furthermore, Ladefoged (2006) mentioned, considering intonation in terms of tunes that apply over whole sentences or phrases, but there are numbers of ways in which intonation can be described. It is possible to describe the intonation in terms of a sequence of high (H) and low (L) target pitches. When people talk, they aim to make either a high or low pitch on a stressed syllable and move upward and downward as they go into or come away from the target. One system for presenting pitch changes of this kind is known as TOBI, standing for tone and break indices. In this system target tones (H* and L*) are typically written on a line and a tier above the segmental symbols that represent stressed syllables. A high tone, H can be preceded by a closely attached low pitch, written L+H* so that the listeners hears a sharply rising pitch, similarly L* can be followed by a closely attached high pitch L*+H so that the listener hears a scoop upwards in pitch after the low pitch at the beginning of the stressed syllable. Not surprisingly, there is no exact TOBI system designed for Kurdish language and it makes the investigation difficult. Another point that should be mentioned about English intonation is that pitch in most sentences has a tendency to drift down. For instance, mary's, brother, fifty peanuts, if you say this sentence with stresses on alternate words, you will find that there is an H* pitch accent.
on each of the stressed syllables, but each of these high pitches is usually a little a lower than the preceding high pitch. This phenomenon is known as downdrift as Ladefoged (2006) pointed out.

Conclusion:

Finally, the compare and contrast of intonation across Kurdish and English reveals more similarities than differences. Intonation has the same function in the two languages" it conveys linguistic information about the syntactic structure of a sequence, whether it is question or a statement, whether it is a simple sentence or it has embedding parts and so on. Rahimpour (2010) mentioned that in both Kurdish and English the level of pitch in beginning and ending a sentence is much more important. Hence, it should be noted that not all differences cause problems as the participants of this study believed that these differences in their first language do not have a major effects in their English pronunciation of intonation patterns.

References:

Appendix A: