

A Comparative Analysis Of English And Igbo Segmental Phonology: Some Notable Problems

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Abstract

It is an established linguistic reality that when two languages come in contact, there is a tendency that the mother tongues or L1 will certainly influence the second language in contact. For that reason, the work examines the comparative analysis of segmental phonology (vowel and consonant) of English and Igbo and identifies areas of similarities that facilitate easy pronunciation and the difference that occasion the transfer of the phonological features of Igbo to the articulation of English sounds by the Igbo speakers of English. An oral interview was conducted in the interference from the mother tongue poses a great deal of articulation problem to Igbo users of English. Moreover, the problems arise from teachers as well as the students. Efforts are made to proffer possible solutions to these problems.

Introduction

Like any other concept, language has many definitions. Atchison (1972) defines language as “a patterned system of arbitrary sound symbols, whose characteristic features of displacement, cultural transmission, productivity and duality are rare or absent in animal communication”. Roland (1977) defines language as “a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication”. The encyclopedia of English defined language as “a system of members of social group and participants in its culture communicate” the most widely accepted definition of language is, “a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a group of people cooperate; (Robbins in Esther, 1999). Because the definition points out that language is a system. Sounds join to form words according to a system. The letters **k, n, l, t**, join to form a meaningful word “Knit”. Words join to form sentences according to some system.

A sentence like cricket is a game of glorious uncertainties is acceptable but one cannot accept a string of words like: a game is of cricket glorious uncertainties. It is in this sense that language is said to be a system of system. Also because it uses “arbitrary” in a specialized, though legitimate way, language, therefore, is a systematic means of communication by the use of sounds or conventional symbols.

Language is a tool for communication among a particular set of people. It is used to reflect the world-views and culture of its users. Language performs varied functions in the society ranging from a tool of communication to providing unity among its users to being a pillar in human and societal development. In language, words are created to refer to objects to express ideas, thoughts and different aspects of human life. And so, the English language has played the role over the years for its many speakers as well as its non-native speakers. As a world language that has transported to a larger number of non-native speaking environments, English has had a burden of expressing the world-views of its diverse users, especially in a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual environment, such as Nigeria.

The advent of English language in Nigeria was via colonialism and missionary activities. The English language assumed the status and recognition it has today in Nigeria not because it is superior, but by accident of history. Accident in the sense that the primary aim of the British people was not to import the language. The British colonial experience in Nigeria provided an opportunity for the spread of English across the Nigeria society. According to Ogunbiyi (2004) English “came first as foreign language and later got promoted as the official language”. The speakers of various languages in Nigeria were coursed into opting for English to the detriment of their other tongue.

To this end, it was only the British language that was worthy of being called a language of the local health status. As a result, English was adopted to accommodate the world-views of the various indigenous Nigeria languages. This phenomenon has given the English language used in Nigeria a local colour that distinguishes it from native English variety used by the native speakers, especially in England. Awonusi (1985), Bangbose (1996) etc, discussed in detail those features which differentiate the varieties of English used in Nigeria from other forms of English. To them, these features are manifested at the lexico-semantic, morph-syntactic and phonological levels. They regarded these features as culminating as what is today accepted as Nigerians’. Many scholars’ researching into Nigeria variety of English has identified sub-varieties within the main variety. They have been divided according to criteria (Bangbose 1971), tiffen (1974), Ayodele (1984) and Awonusi (1985). Some have differentiated sub-varieties of Nigeria English, for Example, according to educational levels attained by the users, others according to regional or geographical boundaries which delineate the varieties as Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Tiv igala, etc. Awonusi (1985), for example, talk of Aerolectal variety (the apex variety after Received Pronunciations) Basilica and Mesolectal variety. These varieties, from whatever perspective can be identified at the levels of grammar, lexico-semantics and phonology.

Igbo is one of the four official languages of Nigeria and is a member of the Volta Niger branch of the Niger Congo family of languages. It is spoken by about eighteen million people in Nigeria. It is spoken in the southern Delta states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo as well as in the North-East of the delta state and in the south-East of the Rivers State. Igbo language is one of the many languages spoken in Nigeria. Since its independence, the main languages in Nigeria have been Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, also know by the word “wazobia”, i.e “wa” in Yoruba, “Zo” in Hausa, and “Bia” in Igbo, all meaning “to come”.

Igbo language is classified as Niger-Congo language and belongs to the Kwa Sub-group of languages spoken in sub-saharan Africa. It is estimated that some of these Kwa languages spoken roughly in the same locations as today for over four thousand (4,000) years. Main characteristics for Kwa languages are the tones and vowel harmony. Tones (also called contractive pitch are used to differentiate words that are written identically. For example, the same word in Igbo may have four different meanings depending on its pitch. For example “Akwa” can mean either weeping (high-high tone) cloth (high-low), egg (low-high) or bed (low-low). Akwa-cry, akwa-egg, akwa-bed. In tone languages, pitch is a property of words, but what is important is not absolute pitch but relative pitch. Igbo language makes use of two main tones: the high tone (such as U as in “Ulo”) is pronounced with the tongue bent towards the roof of the mouth. The low tone (such as in “aka”) is pronounced with the tongue flat and low in the mouth and the mouth a bit wider than for high tones.

Igbo is the main language of trade and commerce. Igbo is used in mass communication (radio and television) in the southern delta region. Although Igbo is taught at all levels in Eastern Nigerian Schools, English remains the principal literary language. Igbo is mainly a spoken and colloquial language. Today, reading and writing Igbo is not very wide spread. In many urban areas, Igbo is often replaced by Nigerian Pidgin English. Igbo speakers are typically bilingual in English.

There are approximately thirty (30) dialects, some of which are not mutually intelligible for the most part; however, differences are mostly lexical and phonological. Ethnologue lists the following dialects: Owerri (Isuama), Onitsha, Umuahia, Orlu, Ngwa, Afikpo, Nsa, Oguta, Aniocha, Eche, Egbema, Oka (AWKA) Bonny-Opobo, Mbaise, Nsukka, Ohuhu, Unwana. This probably explains the linguistic affinity between Igbo and other languages.

It is established linguistic fact that no two languages are exactly the same group (like English and German which belongs to the Germanic group of endo-European languages) and in spite of well known fact the language is universal, there are identifiable differences in the syntactic, morphological and phonological patterns. The result, for example is that a German who learns the English language has to reckon with problems caused by striking differences or disparities between the grammatical system of his language and that of English in the same way, any similarity in the sound system and structure of his language with the language learnt later should be capable of facilitating his learning process.

The problem a speaker of second language learner can, have becomes compounded when the new language does not belong to the same group of this learner. This is the case where a bilingual substitutes his mother tongue speech sounds for those English that are absent in his mother tongue or which for obvious reasons, prove problematic to produce. This is the case with Igbo and English. Igbo belongs to the Kwa sub-groups while the English language belongs to the Germanic group. There is bound to be a lot differences and many problems for Igbo learners or speakers of English.

It is the opinion of renowned linguists like Jibril, that the phonological system of the mother tongue can have a far-reaching effect on the language learnt later and the problem is largely with the phonological system. These difficulties manifest according to Weinreich (1963) in the manner in which a speaker perceives and produces the sounds of one language which might be designated secondary in terms of another to be called primary with the result that the bilingual identifies a phoneme of the second language with that of the first and in producing it, subjects it to the phonetic rules of the primary language, Jibril (1980) pointed to these difficulties as the reduction of long vowels to short vowels, voicing of non-voiced consonants the substitution for alveolar fricatives for inter-dental fricatives, etc.

These inadequate phonemic differentiations and the substitution of phoneme have received little attention in the use of English segmental phonology by Igbo speakers of English. These occur among speakers or users of English because Igbo operates eight vowel system and twenty eight consonants compare to English's twenty four consonants and twenty vowels. Gimson (1980) shows that English has twelve pure vowels called monophthongs and eight diphthongs. Therefore, there are tendencies that the phonological features of Igbo English are bound to influence the production of multi-syllabic English words by both the average and the educated Igbo speakers' of English.

There is no disproving the linguistic fact that phonology of English and that of Igbo differ to an extent. It is apparent that certain phonological problems encountered by Igbo users or speakers of English are caused by sharing differences in the phonological system of two languages. Igbo speakers of features of their mother tongue to the target language (English). This research work therefore tends to account for these problems of mother tongue interference possible ways to solving the problems.

Research Questions

This research shall investigate the following questions:

- a) How many phonemes exist in the sound inventory of Igbo and that of English?
- b) To what extent are the English phonemes similar or different from Igbo English phonemes?
- c) To what extent do the similarities facilitate the learning or articulation of English sounds by Igbo Users of English?
- d) In what ways do the Igbo speakers experience socio-linguistic difficulties in the pronunciation of English sound consequent upon these disparities?

- e) What are the possible remedies to these sounds problems encountered by Igbo speakers of English?

Methodology

This work adopts a survey kind of research. The instrument for data collection is the use of unstructured interview. That is, it contained questions that were designed to gather relevant information about the problem areas in the production of English sounds by Igbo users of English. It shall be conducted via personal contact with the result eventually generalized.

Phonology of English

The term phonology is described as a branch of linguistics that is concerned with the study of speech sound with reference to their distribution and patterning. Hyman (1975) defined phonology as the study of the physical properties as well as the grammatical properties of sounds system of a specific language, which speakers must learn or internalize in order to used the language for the purpose of communication.

Gimson (1980) defined phonology as the concrete phonetic characteristics of the sounds used in a language and the functional phonemic behavior of these sounds are said to be concrete because they have to do with articulation, auditory and acoustic items.

Articulatory phonetics is the study of how speech sounds are made. Auditory phonetics on the other hand, is the perception of speech sounds via the ears. While acoustic phonetics deals with the physical properties of speech. Gimson further maintains that phonology is equally concerned with the combinatory possibility of phonemes is well as the nature and use of prosodic properties such as pitch, stress, and length, etc.

Katamba (1989:1) sees phonology as the branch of linguistics which investigates the ways in which sounds are used systematically in different language to form words and utterances. Adetugbo (1993) agrees that phonology is “a level of linguistic organization of significant sounds from which it provides rules not only of their phonetic realization but also their distribution; Adetugbo absents that phonology goes further than phonetics to the study of speech sounds as constituting a system in any language. Speech sounds are said to constitute a system because they are arranged, well organized and combined in an acceptable manner to form utterances.

George Yule (1916:pp 54) sees phonology as essentially the description of the systems and patterns of speech sounds in a language. In his view, Yule says phonology is concerned with the abstract or mental aspect of the sounder in a particular language. He further explains that phonology is all about the underlying design of speech sounds because it has to do with the abstract theory of what the speakers Know about the second system of their language.

Roach (2000:pp10) airs the same view and says phonology studies the abstract side of sound of a language. He is of the view that sounds are different from alphabet. In the light of this,

Roach posits that it is important to learn English pronunciation in terms of phonemes and not letters of English alphabet because it enhances good pronunciation.

Omachonu (2000:22) defined phonology as an aspect of the study of grammar which deals with the pattern system in which units of sounds are formed in a language. Omachonu asserts that a precise orthographic system must be determined by the accuracy and careful phonological analysis by the number of distinctive phonological units. He shows the relationship between phonetics and phonology by examining that phonology deals with the patterns and system that unit of sound forms in a language, whereas phonetics provides a universal pool of linguistic sounds from which phonology makes its choice. This assertion signifies studies all possible speech sounds, while phonology studies the way in which a language speaker systematically uses a selection of these sounds in order to express meanings. The goal of phonology, according to Omachonu and Ibrahim (2001), is therefore, to study the sound systems of a language by the speakers for the purpose of meaningful communication.

Wallwork in Kademi (2002:1) views phonology as the study of the ways in which speech sounds form systems and patterns in human languages. He further distinguishes it from phonetics in that while the later studies the actual sounds of a language, phonology deals with the way in which these sounds are used, put together and organized in a language .

Crystal (2005) says phonology “is the study of how we find order within the apparent chaos of speech sounds”. He further stresses that the aim of phonology is to discover the principle that govern the way sounds are organized in language and to explain the variations that occur. To crystal, “we begin by analyzing an individual language to determine which sound units are used and which patterns they form in the language’s sound system’. We then compare the properties different sound systems and work out hypothesis about the rules under the use of sound in particular group of languages.

Crystal asserts the phonologists make statements that apply to all languages. In view of the foregoing harnessed authorial definitions, view and comments, it is pertinent to note that phonological sounds are systematic patterns of rules or principles that govern the distribution of sound in a particular language.

PHONEMES

Phonemes have been described as the primary objects of phonologist. These accounts for the reason that American philologists persistently refer to it as ‘phonemic’ Jone (1967:31) define a phoneme as ‘a family of sounds of a given language, which are related in character and as such that no one of them occurs in the same surrounding as any other in words’.

Gimson (1980:49) defined phonemes as ‘ the smallest contrastive linguistic unit which may bring about a change in meaning’. This definition points to the fact and function of the word will

equally be change, for example, if the vowel sound /ʌ/ in the word “cut” is substituted for /D/ as in ‘cot’ the meaning will definitely change. Hence the two words are different phonemes.

To Gimson, the phonemes of a language can be established via discovering of minimal pairs. Minimal pairs as described by Oyeboade (1992), is a pair of words which differ in only one segment but also differ in meaning, in such a way that the segments difference may be reasonably held acoustically for the difference in meaning’ for example, the word “pin” and “bin” are differentiated by the change in the initial consonant element of the segment. Gimson posits that it is possible to consider merely one position in the word. Therefore, he suggests the possibility of phonemic opposition to be varied in word initial, medium as well as word final position.

Adetugbo (1993:104) describes phoneme as a minimal unit in the sound system of a language that keep utterances apart’. According to him, he stresses that the fact that phoneme is seen as a ‘minimal units of sounds’ may suggest (quite wrongly though), that phonemes are atomic and unanalyzable element. Adetugbo itemized by enumerating principles that are responsible for the establishment of phoneme. They include: the principle of contrast; the principle of complementary distribution; the principle of phonetic similarity and that allophone of the same phoneme may be in free variation.

Adetugbo explains further that principle of contrast states that if two sounds contrast, that is, if they can keep meaning apart and in case of /g/ and /b/ as in ‘get’ and ‘bet’ respectively, the sound are said to be significant and therefore, phonemic. The principle of complementary distribution, to Adetugbo, states that /t/ or /p/ sound in English is for instance aspirated in the initial position and unaspirated after an /s/ sound and unreleased when it occur finally in a syllable. These three allophones of /t/ or /p/ are said to be in complementary distribution, because one could not occupy the position of another. Furthermore, the principle of phonetic similarity says that allophone of the same phonemes must be phonetically similar. For example, both the aspirated and unaspirated /t/ is voiceless alveolar stop consonant. Adetugbo finally states that allophones of the same phoneme may sometime, be in free variation. That means, one can be substituted for another without any semantic change.

Yule, (1996) defined phonemes as the meaningful distinguishing sounds in a language. Yule explains that an essential property of phoneme is that it functions contrastively. In line with Adetugbo’s view, Yule says that this contrastive property is the basic operational test for determining the phonemes that exist in a language. To him, the phoneme is an abstract unit.

Omachonu (2000:39) explains that phonemes are the significant sounds of a language. He says the significant sound constitute differences in meaning of words. To confirm Gimson and adetugbo’s view, Omachonu and Ibrahim (2000) mention the principle that is used to establish phonemes which are minimal pairs, analogues environment and complementary distribution. Their principle of analogues environment corresponds with Adetugbo’s principles of phonetic

similarity. That is to say that if sounds occur in similar phonetic positions, they are said to occur in analogous environment.

Kademi (2002:3) examines that phonemes have been recognized as the primarily/ basic units of phonology. He asserts that 'it would be important to note that they cannot be strong together in any random order form words. They are certainly some phonological systems which determine which phoneme can begin a word and fellow each other. He agrees with Akinjobi that this presupposes the existence of phonological rules which manipulate phonological factures. To Kademi, a speaker of a language knows the rules because; he knows the grammar of his language even if he cannot consciously state them. Agreeing to the same view, frankly Rodman in Kademi (2002) eqally argue that the chief function of phonological rules in grammar is to provide phonetic information necessary for the pronunciation of utterances. This leads credence to assertion that phonology of a language includes rules which relate phonetic representation.

Akmaijian et al (2003), however argue that phonemes are not smallest units of phonological system because they are compared of similar feature of articulation. Therefore, a phoneme can be analyzed further into smaller phonological feature such as + or sonorant, syllabic strident, consonantal voice, etc. his analysis of phoneme is based on binary feature (+or -).

Nigeria English Phonology

Jibril (1882) carried out empirical investigation of Nigerian English phonology in a ph. D thesis, part of which was examined in Jibril (1986). Jibril is able to justify, on the basis of the analysis of his data, the reality, in general terms, of a Nigerian variety of spoken English. However, he classified Nigeria English into three main varieties based on educational and regional factors. His typology includes RP variety spoken by sophisticated speakers, Hausa English and southern Nigerian English. In addition to the three broad varieties, he also identifies what he called southern-influenced be the forerunners of an even more homogenous Nigerian accent.

Jibril shows, for example, that while the speaker of basic Hausa English employ as many as fifteen (15) vowels in his inventory, learning aside a number of more marginal one, the Yoruba, like the Igbo speaker employ eleven (11) also learning aside a number of marginal ones. Present in the Hausa inventory but absent from the southern ones are predictably, the ash and the central vowels.

In the consonant systems, Jibril draws attention to the variants operating in the three sub-systems, while demonstrating that these variants are more evident in the basis varieties than in the sophisticated ones. He considered some of the factors which might be the predisposing proximity to RP (British English) among Nigerians. These include sex, education, ethnicity, and speech training.

Bobda (1985) noted that it was due to the large surface of Nigeria that the country was colonized, administered and provided education under different circumstances, in different ways

by different groups of settlers. In the west, the Baptist and the Presbyterian Missionaries made use of English men, Germans, and freed slaves to teach English. In the East, land of the Igbo, the schools were run by priests, who were predominantly Irish and Scottish and their presence favored an influx accent. Awonusi in Bobda asserts that the colonial administration discouraged missionary education in Northern Nigeria at inception. It took upon itself the education in that part of the country and provided funding which the missionary did not always have and qualified teachers who were native speakers from English public school.

Onuigbo (2009:88) notes that in Nigeria, there are hundreds of native languages, each with peculiar phonological features, but there seem to be some problems which affect the teaching and learning of the English language in the second language situation. Onuigbo stresses that these problems are better examined at the level of vowel and consonant and also at the level of stress and intonation.

At the level of vowels and consonants certain English speech sounds constitute serious impediment for proper teaching and learning of English speech in Nigeria. These vowels / /, / ^ /, / /, and / / and consonant sounds / z /, / o /, and / / do not exist in many Nigeria languages and the phonological systems of these native languages tend to support these generalizations as we know the areas of the greatest problems.

Onuigbo examines that the problems arise from the fact that most learners tend to simplify the interference problem through some modification in the system of the target language. At the level of vowel, he posits that there could be vowel modification or outright exchange of the target segment with the native segment. At the consonant level, Onuigbo explains that the learners also tend to exchange the problem segment in the phonological system of the native language.

More so, many Nigerian languages do not allow consonant clusters at the beginning and at the end of the syllable. Nigerian learners of English speech therefore, engage in cluster simplifications by deleting some of the consonants in the cluster or by introducing an intrusive vowel to simple and otherwise complex segment. Other, as argued by Onuigbo are problems of phonology resulting from difference between the long and short vowels in English as well as the difference between voiced and voiceless consonants in English. These occur because many Nigerian languages lack the contrast between one vowel and the other in terms of length.

Onuigbo further stresses a crucial point on the stress and intonation aspect of Nigeria English phonology. To him for many Nigerian languages, every word or syllable seems to be stressed because words are most often articulated with some measure of prominence. For this obvious reason, learners of Nigerian English tend to give equal prominence contrary to what is obtained in proper English speech and because of stress and intonation in English, and its characteristics accent, many Nigeria speakers of English as a second language tend to speak with funny accent that make their speech inaccessible and sometime impede intelligibility.

1.1 Mother Tongue Interference

Mother tongue is seen as a language which a group of people considered to as inhabitants of an area acquired in the early years and which eventually become their natural instrument of thought and communication, Awoniye (1978) in Oluwole (2008). Mother tongues are the first language that a person acquires. The person is defined as a native speaker of the first language.

Although one may also be a native speaker of more than one language that is to say if all the languages were learned or acquired with formal education, such as through cultural immersion before puberty. Often a child acquire the basis of the first language from family (Wikipedia, 2007).

On the other hand, when speaker who have acquired the habits of one language want to learn a second language, there is the tendency for the speech habits of their first language to interfere in their efforts at learning and using the second language. Weinreich (1953), stresses that those instances of derivations from the norms of their familiarity with more than one language, that is, as a result of language contact, will be referred to as interference phenomenon. with regards' to this type of contact situation, Weinreich suggests that the differences and similarities between languages in contact must be exhaustively stated for every domain, phonic, grammatical and lexical, as a pre-requisite to an analysis of interference.

Mario (1978) defined interference to be the influences exerted by grammatical system of the first language on that of the second language in violation of the later normative grammar. From Smith (1979), he uses the interference to mean the same thing as 'negative transfer'. To him, negative transfer pertains to difficulties in using the target language, which are attributed to mother tongue interference. He used 'positive transfer' to imply the ease or facilitation in learning L2 resulting from similarities, between the L1 and L2.

Rather than equating interference with negative transfer as 'the influence resulting from similarities and difference between target language and any other language that has been previously acquire. What Odlin's definition implies is that any language (whether mother tongue or not) which had acquired previously is capable of causing transfer for interference with range of phenomenon, including positive transfer and negative transfer (including order-generalization, production and misinterpretation).

Also interesting in Odlin's findings is his identification of non-structural factors I transfer, personality (such as anxiety and empathy) and cognitive abilities or aptitudes given the fact that individuals vary dramatically in their second language abilities, even when their exposure and motivation seem comparable. Odlin further identifies areas where language transfer emanates namely; transfer occurs in both informal and formal contact; transfer occurs among children as well as among adult; language distance is a factor that affect the likely hood of language; and transfer can sometimes involve unusual structures .

Adetugbo (1997) affirms that second language speakers of English have a number of difficulties in the pronunciation of English utterances. Adetugbo explains that these difficulties arise mainly from interferences of the second patterns of their native languages on the second system of English. This, to him, stems from the fact that most Nigerian languages do not have English sound. The nearest to these sounds in the speakers native language are this substituted for them. He equally attributed some of these difficulties to differences in the orthographic properties of second users of English from the English orthography.

Igboanusi (2002) agrees that mother tongue interference is located at different levels namely: levels of sound, grammar and lexis. He posits that each language has different set of phonemes, different stress and intonation. The learner transfers the sound of his language (or nearest equivalents) and the intonation system of the language, which he is learning, hence accounting for the reason that most non-native of English speaks it with difficult accent. Igboanusi further asserts that the phonological interference lies in the irregularities of English spelling in which case, many speakers produce words as they are spelt. This implies that Nigerian language have comparatively regular correspondence between sounds and letters.

Maisamari (2002) assents that the phenomenon of interference is the transfer effects of the mastery of element of the mother tongue into the used and expression of English. This impedes intelligibility in communication as it would be limited to those who speak or understand the mother tongue. He suggests, therefore, that effort should be made to over-come this problem in order not to cause distortion in communication.

Olajire (2004) argues that the structural assumption that language learning consists of learning a set of habit implies that, the habits of L 1 interfere with the learning of L2 or of subsequent language, in order words, the native language has a primary influences on the learning of L2. His position is that the effects of a previously learnt language on the one learnt later is appearing in the area of sound system with vowel as the area of greatest difficulties for most Nigeria learners of English. This, to him is because the Nigerian languages have little number of vowels as opposed to English that has twelve pure vowel and eight diphthongs.

In the same vein, Onuigbo (2009) posits that interference from the mother tongue is clearly a major source of difficult in second language learning. To him adults learn the target language against the background fo their mother tongues in which they have attained a reasonable degree of proficiency or competency, there is, therefore, the inevitable tendency to transfer the ingrained native languages attributes to those of the target language attributes to those of the target language, thereby hindering effective mastery of the pronunciation of the new language.

Al-harbi (2010) examines that the first language interference has a long history in second language learning. Al-Harbi says ‘the transfer of patterns from native language is undoubtedly one of the major sources of errors in learners. He explains further that one of the factors influencing

learning process is interference or transfer which may be seen as the use of a native language patterns or rules which lead to an error or inappropriate form in the target language.

In this regards, it is evident that transfer s do not only occur at the grammatical or lexical level alone, but also occur that the sound system of English language. And learners of English must strive hard to get rid of their difficulties at all levels.

Contrastive Analysis (CA)

The need to take the problems of mother tongue interferences gave to what is today known as contrastive Analysis. As the name implies, the emphasis is on the contrastive or difference between learner's mother tongue and the language to be learnt. Friday (2003), according to Weinreich contrastive analysis (CA), is devoted to the examination of language and how it differs from one another, or more specifically it examines how a pair of contrasted system exhibits similar or different traits. Weinreich explain that it is for this reason that contrastive linguistic grew out of the ample evidence that when learning a foreign language, we tend to transfer our native language system in the process to the target language (IT). This evidence of the transfer of a first language to the second language is really significant in the area of sound system.

Some contrastive analysts that the most effective materials to be used in the teaching of a second language are those that are based upon a scientific description of a language, to be learnt, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learners' that count for the reason that Lado (1957.1) supports this approach by saying that text books should be graded as to the grammatical structure, pronunciation and vocabulary only after the comparison of the language have been done.

Richards in Anasiudu (2003), posits that 'interference from the mother tongue is clearly a major source of difficulty in second language learning, and contrastive analysis has proved valuable in locating areas of inter-language whatever aspect namely sound system, structure, lexicon, etc of the two languages involved and then find out in what manner they are similar or different with the view to predicting the difficulties which learners of the language are likely to encounter. He stresses that with contrastive analysis, we can draw a scale of hierarchy of difficulties for the second language learner.

Onuigbo (2009), posists that contrastive analysis is one of the theoretical approaches for the analysis of the problems of second language teaching and learning. Onuigbo explains that although this theoretical procedure is an age long one, it is still current and therefore reliable in projecting necessary data for the teaching and learning of a second language.

A critical look at contrastive analysis, alloy in Onuigbo distinguishes four stages in the anal sis, firstly, two languages, L1 nd L2 are taken and formal descriptions of the structural sits of these languages are written. At this stage he explain that emphasis is laid on equivalent description of the structural system which means that, if the language is described trans-formatically, must

follow the same model of description in order to obtain reliable result: secondly sub-sets of equal level are selected from the description of the first language and the second language. Thirdly, the two subsets selected from the L1 and L2 are contrasted. And fourthly, predications of difficulties for the second language learner are made on the basis of the contrast.

Hence, the view so far examined can be summarized that the current emphasis on contrastive analysis is on communicative language teaching. But the actual values of contrastive analysis lies in the realization that learning and language.

Error Analysis

Error analysis is another important theoretical procedure in handling the difficulties in learning a second language and the error that may result from it Error analysis, according to Onuigbo (2009) is however, remarkably different from contrastive analysis in a number of ways. In the first place, error analysis does not usually involve the comparison of native language and the target language, and no predication are therefore, made of the possible error. Secondly Error Analysis examines every error committed the second language learners. He explains that the error could be inter-language or inter-language error. It is true that whenever errors are mentioned one tends to get an impression of a negative transfer or development in the process of learning but in actual sense the manifestation of errors is an indication that learning is taking place. Because the process making mistakes and correcting the mistakes ensure acquisition of knowledge that is to say, it is the determination to identify the slips of the tongue, mistakes and errors and correcting them in order to avoid a re-occurrence that gives rise to proper learning and acquisition of knowledge.

The population investigated in this research work is twenty-five Igbo secondary school leavers, thirty (30) Igbo University undergraduates within Madonna University Okija, thirty-five (35) Igbo University Graduates within Imo state and ten (10) Igbo selected teachers including lecturers and professors within Owerri Imo state Nigeria. Which amount for the total number of one hundred Igbo speakers investigated in this research work.

Instrument for Data Collection

This research work presents unstructured or unorganized interview for data collection or gathering. This refers to a form of interview that is designed to collect important or relevant data or fact about the difficult areas in the production of English sounds. In this research work, one hundred (100) Igbo speakers of English were interviewed based on their ability to pronounce or articulate some of the English words spelt out for them. Emphasis placed on some English phonemes with the view to finding out whether; they are correctly or incorrectly articulated. And this is done through personal interview or oral interview. The results were eventually generalized and analyzed in chapter four. This instrument is beneficial or helpful because it gave reason for examination of poor performance areas of Igbo learners of English. That is, the error the Igbo learner of English maker during the pronunciation of English sounds.

Method of Data Analysis

The method employed in analyzing data in this research work is contrastive analysis, which refers to the study and comparison of two languages or which deals with the systematic study of a pair of language with a view to identifying their differences and similarities. That is, the phonological features of English and Igbo are compared in order to identify difficulties in the production of sounds or phonemes of the two languages.

Analysis of Data

one hundred (100) Igbo respondents were interviewed and they are divided into four levels under studies. Twenty-five (25) Igbo respondents were allotted to secondary school leavers, thirty (30) to university undergraduates, while thirty-five Igbo respondents were allotted University graduates and finally ten (10) were allotted to some selected teachers including lecturers and professors of Igbo speaking of English.

Question 1: Kindly pronounce the following words: three, thread, bath-room, wealth and health.

Academic level	Responses	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Secondary school leavers	Correct	3	12%
	Incorrect	22	88%
	Total	25	100%
University Undergraduates	Correct	9	30%
	Incorrect	21	70%
	Total	30	100%
University graduates	Correct	10	29%
	Incorrect	25	71%
	Total	35	100%
Teachers	Correct	4	40%
	Incorrect	6	60%
	Total	10	100%
Total	Correct	26	26%
	Incorrect	74	74%
	Grand Total	100	100%

This table indicates that twenty-six (26) respondents offered correct pronunciation representing 26% of the population while seventy-four (74) did not pronounce correctly, thereby representing 74% of the population. The substituted the sound /o/ for /t/.

Question 2: pronounce these words below: birder, circle girdle, purse.

Academic level	Respondents	Number of respondents	Percentage
Secondary school leavers	Correct	5	20%
	Incorrect	20	80%
	Total	25	100%
University Undergraduates	Correct	7	23%
	Incorrect	23	77%
	Total	30	100%
University graduates	Correct	12	34%
	Incorrect	23	66%
	Total	35	100%
Teachers	Correct	3	30%
	Incorrect	7	70%
	Total	10	100%
Total	Correct	27	27%
	Incorrect	73	73%
	Grand total	100	100%

The table signifies that twenty-seven (27) respondents were able to give correct articulation of the words amounting 27%, while seventy-three (73) could not correctly pronounce the words. That amount to 73% of the population. They substituted the English sound /z:/ for /e/ sound as well as /D/ sound.

Question 3: How do you pronounce these words: Ball, Book, food, fate?

Academic level	Responses	Number of respondents	Percentage
Secondary school leavers	Correct	6	24%
	Incorrect	19	76%
	Total	25	100%
University undergraduates	Correct	11	37%
	Incorrect	19	63%
	Total	30	100%
University graduates	Correct	12	34%
	Incorrect	23	66%
	Total	35	100%
Teachers	Correct	2	20%
	Incorrect	8	80%
	Total	10	100%
Total	Correct	31	31%
	Incorrect	69	69%
	Grand total	100	100%

From the table, it clearly indicates that 31 respondents pronounced correctly representing 31%, while 69 mispronounced the words representing 69% of the population. They tend to insert vowel sound at the end of the words. This is done based on the fact that consonant clusters are not permissible in Igbo language unlike in English language.

Question 4: Articulate these words below: Appraise, accountable, acredict.

Academic level	Responses	Number of respondents	Percentage
Secondary school leavers	Correct	2	8%
	Incorrect	23	92%
	Total	25	100%
University undergraduates	Correct	9	30%
	Incorrect	21	70%
	Total	30	100%
University graduates	Correct	13	37%
	Incorrect	22	63%
	Total	35	100%
Teachers	Correct	4	40%
	Incorrect	6	60%
	Total	10	100%
Total	Correct	28	28%
	Incorrect	72	72%
	Grand total	100	100%

In the pronunciation of those words, emphasis was placed on /a/ instead of /e/sound. The table indicates that 28 respondents gave correct pronunciation representing 28% and 72 offered incorrect pronunciation representing 72% of the population.

Question 5: How are the following words pronounced? Jungle, Judge, john and joy.

Academic level	Responses	Number of respondents	Percentage
Secondary scholl leavers	Correct	0	
	Incorrect	25	100%
	Total	25	100%
University undergraduates	Correct	7	23%
	Incorrect	23	77%
	Total	30	100%
University graduates	Correct	9	30%
	Incorrect	26	70%

	Total	35	100%
Teachers	Correct	3	30%
	Incorrect	7	70%
	Total	10	100%
Total	Correct	25	25%
	Incorrect	75	75%
	Grand total	100	100%

From the table, 25 respondents representing 25% pronounced correctly. While 75% respondents did not pronounce correctly, representing 75% of the total population. There is a higher substitution of the English sound /dz/ for /j/ sound.

Question 6: how are these English words below pronounced? State, place, gate.

Academic level	Responses	Number of respondent	Percentage
Secondary school Leavers	Correct	1	4%
	Incorrect	24	96%
	Total	25	100%
University undergraduates	Correct	4	13%
	Incorrect	26	87%
	Total	30	100%
University undergraduates	Correct	15	43%
	Incorrect	20	57%
	Total	35	100%
Teachers	Correct	5	50%
	Incorrect	5	50%
	Total	10	100%
Total	Correct	17	17%
	Incorrect	83	81%
	Grand total	100	100%

The number of respondents that pronounced the words correctly is 17 representing 17% while the number of respondents with pronunciation is 83% of the population. They rather substituted the sound is 83 amounting to 83% of the sound /ei/ for /e/ sound.

Question 7: how do you pronounce this word? Then, that and there.

Academic level	Responses	Number of respondents	Percentage
Secondary school leavers	Correct	1	4%
	Incorrect	24	96%

	Total	25	100%
University undergraduates	Correct	9	30%
	Incorrect	21	70%
	Total	30	100%
University graduates	Correct	15	43%
	Incorrect	20	57%
	Total	35	100%
Teachers	Correct	6	60%
	Incorrect	4	40%
	Total	10	100%
Total	Correct	31	31%
	Incorrect	69	69%
	Grand total	100	100%

The table shows that 31 respondents pronounced correctly amounting to 31%, while 69 respondents mispronounced representing 69 of the population. It is therefore established that the phoneme /D/ is substituted for /d/ phoneme.

Question 8: please pronounce these English words below: Go, gold, goat and old

Academic level	Responses	Number of respondents	Percentage
Secondary school leavers	Correct	0	8%
	Incorrect	25	100%
	Total	25	100%
University undergraduates	Correct	3	10%
	Incorrect	27	90%
	Total	30	100%
University graduates	Correct	9	26%
	Incorrect	26	74%
	Total	35	100%
Teachers	Correct	4	40%
	Incorrect	6	60%
	Total	10	100%
Total	Correct	16	16%
	Incorrect	84	84%
	Grand total	100	100%

The above table shows that the number of respondents that pronounced correctly is 16 representing 16%. But the number of incorrect pronunciation that led to the substitution of the sound /D/ for /au/ in the above words is 84 amounting to 84% of the population.

Comparison between English and Igbo Consonants sounds.

As Igbo examined in earlier chapters, the English language has forty-four phonemes out of which twenty-four are consonant sounds while Igbo has thirty-six sounds out of which twenty-eight are consonant sounds. The consonant chart of English and Igbo are show below.

English consonant chart.

Place of articulation

Manner of articulation	Bilabia l	Labio - dental s	Dental s	Alveola r	Post Alveola r	Plato Alveola r	Palat a	Vela r	Glotta l
Plosives	P b			t d				K g	
Fricatives		F v		S z					h
Affricatives						n			
Nasals	m			n				N	
Approxima nt				l	r				
Semi-vowel	W						j		

Igbo consonant chart

	Bilabial	Labio- dentals	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labialized velar	Glottal
Stops plosives	P b		T d		K g	Kw gw	
Fricatives	Kp gb						
Affricatives		F v	S z		Gh		H
Nasal	M		N	Ny		N w	
Roll			R				
Lateral			l				
Approximant							
Semi-vowel				Y		W	

Comparing the two consonant charts above, it is apparent that there are instances of differences and similarities between them. The two English dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ are absent in Igbo. Hence users of English substitute them with the voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ and /d/.

In words like; ‘thought’ thank, brother’ and ‘that’, the dental fricatives or sounds are replaced with the voiceless alveolar plosive sound /t/ and /d/. Igbo has no voiced palatal alveolar sounds as /s/, /z/ /ts/ and /dz/.thus they feel that the voiceless alveolar sound /s/, should serve as the applicable to English voiced alveolar sound /z/.

The Igbo sounds /gb/, /ny/ /kw/ do not exists in English sound. Also the English sounds /ʌ/, z: /e/, /o/, does not exist in Igbo. The tendency of for the sound language learner to pronounce their equivalents. For example, the Igbo speaker or learner will pronounce ‘with’ as /wit/, ‘there’ as /dia/ etc. other examples are contain below.

Bank /baenk/ is pronounced as /ba:nk/

Around /draund/ is pronounced as /a:raund/

Cup /k^p/ is pronounced as /kop/

Earth /z:O/ is pronounced as /et/

Faith /feiO/ is pronounced as /fet/

Can /kaen/ is pronounced as /ka:n/

Sun /S^n/ is pronounced as /son/

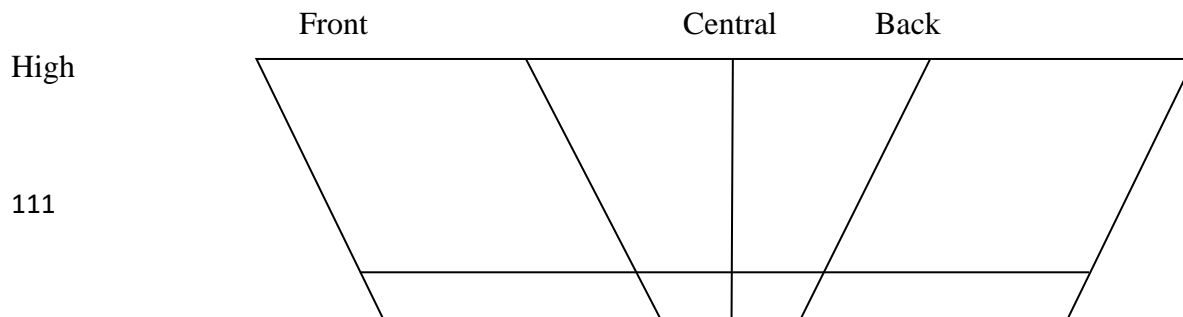
Journey /dz:ni/ is pronounced as /jo:ni/

However, a consonant that exhibits similar qualities or characteristics do not pose a greater deal of threat to Igbo speakers of English. Those consonant sounds are; /p/, /b/, /h/, /r/, /i/, /w/, /j/, /k/ and /n/. the reason is that they are inherent in them.

1.1.1 Comparison between English and Igbo vowel sound.

English has a total number of twenty vowels among which twelve are monothongs or pure vowels and eight diphthongs. It also has triphthongs such as /a I e/ and /a u e/. in contrast, Igbo has only eight vowels in their vowel inventory. They are shown and contrasted below.

English vowel charts



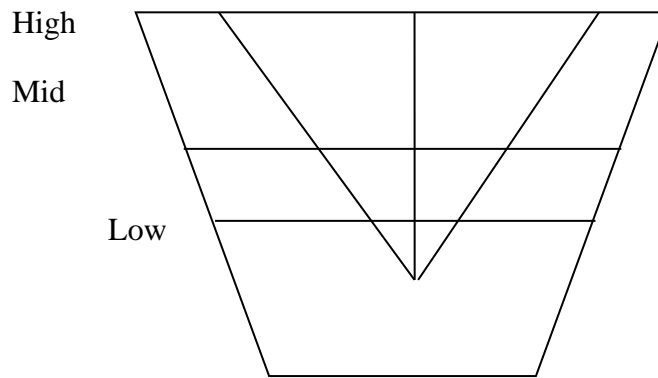
////////

Mid

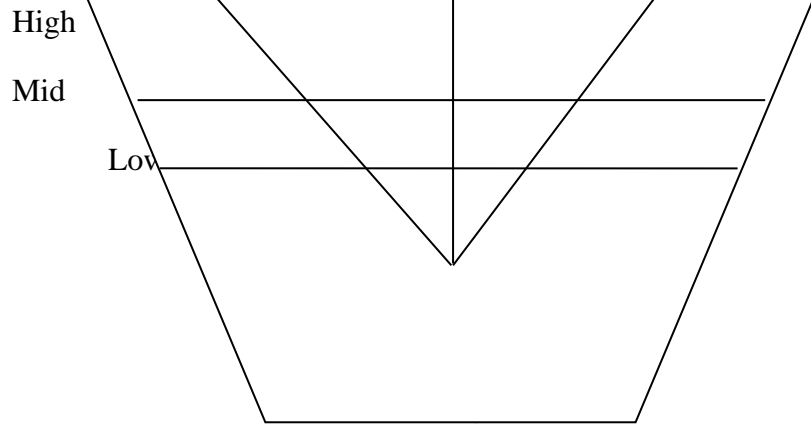
Low

Monothongs

Front Central Back

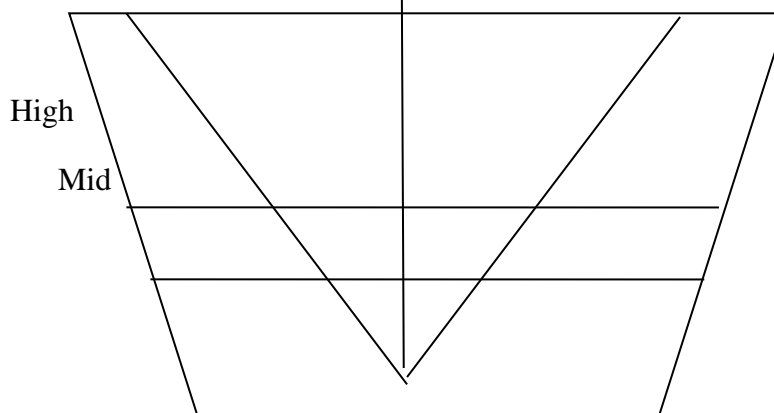


Front Central Back



Igbo Vowel Chart

Front Central Back



Low

The striking difference between English and Igbo vowel sounds is the absence of the English central vowels like /ʌ/, /z: and /e/ in Igbo vowel system. For that reason, Igbo English tend articulate /o/in substitution for /ʌ/, also /z:/ is realized as /e/ and English sound /d/ pronounced as /a/ by Igbo speakers of English as exemplified in the words below: circle, is realized as /se:ki/ by the Igbo speakers instead fo /sz:kl/. Appraise is realized as /aprez/, instead of /&preiz/,

- Come is realized as /kDm/ instead of /k^m/.
- Jungle is realized as /jongulu/ instead of /d^ngl/
- Cousin is realized as /kzn/ instead of /K^n/ etc

The charts show that Igbo does not have the rising diphthongs such as /ei/, /au/, /di/ /av/, /ai/ and the centering diphthongs such as /ie/, /ue/ and /ea/.igbo speakers of English substitute them for the equivalence monthongal phonemes in their chart. The most difficult of them is the low font rising diphthongs /ai/ which, from the available data under analysis possess a great deal of difficulty to Igbo users of English. They replace it with the Igbo high front unrounded vowel /I/. Examples are illustrated in the following words; ‘primate’, is realized as /primet/ instead of /praimit/. ‘Indict’, is realized as /indict/ instead of /indait/.

Another instance of difficulty posed by English diphthongs to Igbo speakers of English is the substitution of the English mid central rising diphthong /au/ with the Igbo mid high back rounded vowel /o/. Hence words such as; Go /gaeu/ is pronounced as /go/

Goat /geut/ is pronounced as /got/

Coast /keush/ is pronounced as /kost/

Coach /keuts/ is pronounced as /ksts/

However, there are areas of similarities in the English and Igbo vowel phoneme both English and Igbo language share similar vowel sounds such as: /I/, /a;/, /D/, /u/ and /e/. these similarities go a long way in facilitating easy pronunciation of English sounds where ever there appear. And so, Igbo speakers of English will face no problem when pronouncing such English words or sound.

However, the Igbo language has the syllable structure CVCV, while English has the structure $C^{0-3} VC^{04}$. as a result, there is no consonant clustering of Igbo words while clusters are permissible in English. The tendency is for the Igbo speakers of English to insert vowel sounds to break open English clusters. As such Igbo speakers of English will produce ‘class’, as kulas, ‘ball’ as bolu and ‘cry’ as kurai etc (anyadiegwu 2008:86).

Also the English language is stress-timed consequently; the Igbo speakers of English will find the supra-segmental features problematic. Stress pattern will be misapplied. Examples are:

- Joseph is realized as jos’eph
- ‘madam is realized as Ma’dam
- Petrol is realized as pe’trol.

In all, it is important to say, that the absence of some notable English sounds in the sound system of Igbo, because the mispronunciation of some English words by Igbo speakers of English. And the similar sounds in both languages facilitate proper articulation of English sounds without unnecessary deviation from the standard norms.

Findings

Shows that Igbo lack the central vowels such as /z:/, /e/, and /^/. In addition to these vowels, English has diphthongs, which are lacking in Igbo. They include: /ei/, /ai/, /au/, /ie/, /eu/, /ae/, /ue/.

These English vowels which are lacking in Igbo will create pronunciation difficulties for the Igbo learners of English and, probably, the Igbo learners of English will adopt some ways of realizing them by using corresponding vowels. The likely Igbo realization of some of these English vowels are as follows: in Igbo /i/ is realized as /I:/ which corresponds to both English /I:/ and the result is that the word ‘fit’ may be pronounced the same way as ‘feet’ by the Igbo learners of English.

Igbo lack /a/ and /a:/ at the phoneme level, and as a result, the words ‘cat’ and ‘cart’, “fat” and “fart” “mat” and “mart” may not be distinguished’

The vowel sound /^/ does not occur in Igbo. The alternative is usually for learners to use neighboring vowels such as /D/ in words like “love’ brother”, “mother”, money etc. the vowel /D/ is absent in Ibo with the result that learners will use /O/ to neutralize the distinction. Between the words such as “shot”, and “short” etc.

Again, the vowel /e/ and /z:/ do not occur in Igbo. In English /e/ occurs only in ‘unstressed’ syllables and can be regarded as end product of stress-timing that entails vowel reduction.

Again, the vowel /O/ and /z:/ do not occur in Igbo. In English /e/ occurs only in ‘unstressed’ syllables and be regarded as end product of stress- timing that entails vowel reduction.

At the consonantal level, Igbo pronunciation will influence the pronunciation of English consonant sounds in cases where English consonant sounds are absent in Igbo. This affects mainly the fricatives. The dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ are discovered as problematic consonant sounds for Igbo learners of English which do not occur in Igbo. From the findings, the tendency is for Igbo speakers to realize them as /t/ and /d/, so the words such as ‘bat’ and ‘bath’ ‘dart’ and ‘that’ will be realized without effort to show their disparities.

The consonant sound /z/ is lacking in Igbo and so creates pronunciation difficulties for Igbo speakers or learners of English. The result is that the word ‘measure’/meze/ may be pronounced with /dz/. Like /med/.

Also the consonant sounds /ts/ and /dz/ do not occur in word final position in Igbo with the result that the learner will likely pronounce it with the sound /i/ in the word final position in such words as ‘church’ /tʃ:ʃ/ and judge /dʒ:ʒ/

1.2 conclusion

In conclusion the difficulties encountered by Igbo speakers or learners of English at the segmental phonology have to some extent been described in this research work. Consequently, it is obvious to say that Igbo users of English mother tongue interference on some English sounds that are absent from their own phonological system.

It is because of the negative attitudes of Igbo learners of English towards English phonology as well as poor teaching methods adopted by teachers in teaching the English sounds to the Igbo learners of the English language.

Recommendations

One of the ways of suggesting solution to the interference problem encountered by the Igbo users of English at the level of segmental phonology is that there should be an early introduction of oral English at the primary school level with trained teachers that would take care of it. This will form a basis upon which Igbo learners would excel in their future spoken English.

Also the government should provide language laboratory for both secondary and tertiary institutions, especially in Igbo land. And also the various schools should ensure that facilities available in the laboratories are well utilized in teaching the sounds of English language. The government should ensure that only professional trained and qualified language teachers are engaged in teaching English sounds.

It is obvious to suggest and point out that pronunciation in the real sense cannot be separated from listening practice. In this way, imitation remains the basic techniques used by adults in their attempt to master the phonological system of the target language. We must therefore imitate the production of English uttered on English films, on the radio, particularly the British Broad

casting corporation (BBC), on English tapes, records and the model provided by speakers of the language.

It is necessary to emphasize that we must not imitate silently. Improvement and proficiency in pronunciation of English sounds which sounds generate international intelligibility is only achieved by imitating and practicing the speech. This therefore, calls for extensive reading and daily practices. Igbo learners of English must read well. Works not just on oral English or pronunciation, but also vocabulary in order to avert the increasing differences between English and Igbo sounds.

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