AN INVESTIGATION INTO PRONUNCIATION PROBLEMS AMONG YORUBA-SPEAKING LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) DEGREE IN LINGUISTICS STUDIES.

NOVEMBER, 2022.

DECLARATION

I, WASIU ABEEBLAHI ALABI, hereby declare that the project work entitled "An Investigation into the Problems of Pronunciation among Yoruba-speaking Learners of English" is a record of an original work done by me, as a result of my research effort carried out in the Faculty of Arts, University of Benin under the supervision of Dr,Mrs. G.A Ikhimwin.

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WASIU ABEEBLAHI ALABI

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study was carried out by ABEEBLAHI ALABI WASIU Matric Number ART1701414 in the Department of Linguistics Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under my supervision.

Dr.Mrs, G.A Ikhimwin **Date**
(Project Supervisor)

Dr. M.S Agbo **Date**
(Head of Department)

External Examiner **Date**

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my Grand Mother.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My first fruit of gratitude goes to almighty God, the sustainer of life who in His divine mercy preserve my life till this moment. This project would not be possible if supervision did not exist. For that, I'm extremely grateful to Dr.(Mrs.)G.A Ikhimwin for her timely guidance, support and encouragement during this project.

I wish to extend my genuine appreciation to my special friends: Ribier, for all his support and words of advice; Francisco, for his encouragement; and Dhikrullah and Treasure for their most helpful assistance.

Finally, I would like to express my special thanks to all the members of my family especially to my foster father, my mother and my uncles for their financial and moral support. Without their love and support none of this would have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated pronunciation difficulties encountered by Yoruba-speaking learners of English with a view to determining the causes and types of error committed by Yoruba learners of English. The sample for this study were 10 Yoruba speakers of the Ibadan standard variety selected randomly. For gathering data, phonemic chart of English and Yoruba language were juxtaposed in which five consonant phonemes of English that are non-native to Yoruba language were selected and 15 words each containing the target phonemes were formed for the first four consonants while 24 words containing the target sound/phonemes were formed for the last consonant phoneme. The words were later given to our participants to pronounce and the pronunciations were recorded and transcribed according to how they were pronounced Data for this paper are analyzed using Dulay's surface strategy taxonomy (1982) this theory classified error into four types they are : (i) error of omission (ii) error of addition, (iii) error of misformation, (iv) error of misordering. In order to ascertain the types of error Dulay et al (1982) claimed that learners may commit error by adding an unnecessary linguistic unit or omit necessary items, they may also misform or misorder them. The findings of this research revealed that Yoruba-speaking learners of English mispronounced certain consonant phonemes of English and mother tongue interference is the major contributing factor to this problem.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 GENERAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study is aimed at investigating an aspect of Nigerian English with focus on Yoruba ESL learners, the major focus of my analysis will be on pronunciation errors committed by Yoruba speakers when pronouncing some consonant phonemes of English. Yoruba speakers find it difficult and challenging pronouncing correctly some English consonant sounds especially those that are not inherent in the Yoruba phonemic inventory.

Some words if not pronounced correctly can cause a change in meaning such as faith /feiθ/ pronounced as /feit/ fate, this will lead to misunderstanding. Szpyra-kozlowsk(2005) cited by Almuslimi(2020:3) claimed that " no matter how good someone's general command of foreign language is, if their pronunciation is poor, it might negatively influence the perception of such person. That does not mean a native-like pronunciation is sought in the process rather, it is fluency and appropriateness of speech to reach reasonable intelligibility.

Yoruba speakers rely on the knowledge of their native language, they are not aware that some English phonemes are distinct from the ones they use to replace them though they share some similarities with the target phonemes, the similarity might exist in manner of articulation, place of articulation or voicing but only one difference in either manner of articulation, place of articulation or voicing could result to a distinct phoneme. Hence the investigation into the problems of pronunciation is the basis for this research which will be done through the analysis of data sourced from randomly selected Yoruba speakers.

1.1. Yoruba language and people.

Yoruba is a member of the Benue-congo branch of the Niger Congo language family, it is spoken by about 30 million people most of whom live in South western Nigeria. The Yoruba tribe were immigrants from a place close to Egypt and had Arab influence in their former homeland. They migrated and settled in the present Ile-ife in Osun state,Nigeria, leaving a portion of settlements which turned out to be communities in Togo, Ghana, and the Benin republic as they progressed to their present destination Bamidele (2019:8).

Most Yoruba men are farmers others venture in trades such as woodcarving, blacksmithing, leatherworking, glassmaking, palmwine tapping and fishing. Among Yoruba women, Hairdressing, pottery, weaving, dyeing, trading and so on are practised.

The standard Yoruba is Oyo/Ibadan version, it is the literary from of the language learned at school, Yoruba has many dialects which can be grouped into three major geographical dialect areas, the dialects are slightly different in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. The three (3) major geographic areas of the dialects are:

(1) North west Yoruba

(2) South East Yoruba

(3) Central Yoruba.

Code-switching between Yoruba and English is a way of life for educated Yoruba-English bilinguals, they use Yoruba mainly in the family setting and in other informal setting such as village or tribal meeting.

1.2. Methodology/Theoretical Framework

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach which is exploratory in nature since our focus is to investigate pronunciation errors; to ascertain the causes of errors. For this reason a number of steps in regards data collection were taken, the steps are:

(i) The phonemic chart of English and Yoruba language were juxtaposed and consonant phonemes of English that are non- native of Yoruba sound system were selected.

(ii) 15 words each containing the target phonemes were forned.

(iii) The words were carefully apportioned to 10 Yoruba speakers to pronounce.

(iv) The pronunciations were recorded in which pronunciation errors were clearly manifested.

(v) The mispronounced phoneme/word(s) were later transcribed according to how it was pronounced.

1.2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework adopted in this research is surface startegy taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al (1982).Under surface strategy taxonomy "error" is classified into four types viz: Addition, omission, misformation and misordering.

(1) error of addition occurs when an unwanted or unnecessary items are inserted in a word or sentence.

(2) error of omission: This type of error occurs when learners unconsciously omit certain linguistic units that are required in a word or sentence.

(3) error of misformation occurs when the learners use or pronounce the wrong form of certain morphemes or phonemes different from the required one.

(4) error of misordering: This is indicated by incorrect placement of certain phonemes or morphemes.

The error committed by Yoruba speakers will be examined under various categories in order to determine the kind or type of error they committed in their pronunciation/utterance.

1.3. Motivation for the Study

The motivation for this study is inquisitively driven in order to unravel the mystery behind the pre-conceived notion I had over the years trying to discern the reasons why ESL learners, especially Yoruba speakers find it seemingly difficult to pronounce words naturally as native speakers of English do. From perceptual viewpoint I discovered that it easier to understand discourse in written form than its spoken variety when communicating with native speakers of English.

1.4 Problem of the Study

It is an undeniable fact that Yoruba speakers find it quite challenging to pronounce some English consonant phonemes correctly. In this study I have identified six consonant phonemes of English that are problematic for Yoruba ESL learners. They are : (i) the voiceless dental fricative [θ] (ii) the voiced dental

fricative [ð] (iii) voiced labio-dental fricative, [iv] voiced alveolar fricative [z], (v) the alveolar lateral approximant [l]

1.5 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The current study is aimed at

(1) identifying the commonly mispronounced consonant phonemes of English.

(2) finding out the reasons behind the mispronunciation of these sound segments.

(3) Proffering possible solutions that may help Yoruba speakers overcome pronunciation difficulties.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research will provide an insight into the investigation of pronunciation errors committed by Yoruba ESL learners as it adopts a unique theoretical framework to analysis data, it also provides solutions to Pronunciation problems, the analysis that is presented in this study will convey value information for future researches.

1.7. Research Questions

The study attempts to provide answers to the following questions

(1) What are the consonant phonemes of English that are commonly mispronounced by Yoruba speakers?

(2) What are the reasons behind the mispronunciation of these sound segments?

(3) What are the possible solutions that may help Yoruba ESL learners overcome pronunciation problems?.

1.8. Limitations of the Study

The study has two major limitations, they are:

(i) The sample frame of the study only include semi-educated Yoruba speakers (those that are not specially trained in English phonetics).

(ii) The study is limited to error committed in the pronunciations of consonant sounds.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the review of literature considered important to this study, the literature review is discussed under the following sub-headings:

(1) Conceptual review

(2) Empirical review

(3) Concern of the present study

2.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

This section discusses various concepts embedded in this study which include pronunciation, the concept of error analysis, language acquisition, English vs Yoruba sound system, and the effect of mother tongue on L2 acquisition.

2.1.1 PRONUNCIATION

Acquiring native-like fluency is what every ESL learners desire, in order to sound intelligible to the native speakers and other users if the target language; good pronunciation skill is required.

According to Dictionary.com "Pronunciation" is defined as the act or result of producing the sound of speech including articulation, stress, and intonation often with reference to some standard of correctness and acceptability. Pronunciation

plays a vital role in an individual's overall communication. In order to communicate effectively and intelligibly one can not only rely on grammar and vocabulary but also needs to develop a good pronunciation skill and always insist on correct pronunciation of sounds/words all the time. Learners who have good pronunciation are understood even if they commit errors in some other areas. However, with poor pronunciation, even if one uses correct grammar, one fails to communicate well or sound intelligible Almuslimi (2020:54).

Research has shown and tentatively asserted that good pronunciation gives a learner/communicator an edge to communicate effectively without the fear of being misunderstood.

2.1.2 ERROR ANALYSIS

Error analysis according to glottopedia is a branch of applied linguistics which is concerned with the compilation, study and analysis of errors made by second language learners and aims at investigating aspects of second language acquisition.

Stephen Pit Corder first used the term "Error Analysis" in the late 1970 and since then, it has received much attention. Corder's work tittled " The significance of learner's errors" in 1967 rekindled the interest of researchers and diverted their attention from the teaching perspectives to the learning perspective - and therefore from structuralism, behaviorism and contrastive analysis towards cognitive

psychology. In error analysis, the learning of second language or second language acquisition is regarded as being influenced by the learner's native language.

The primary concern of error analysis were to (i) to identify types of error (ii) and to establish error taxonomies.

Linguit Corder went further to outline the steps and procedures to follow in any typical error analysis research. They are:

(1).Collecting samples of learner's language

(2) Identifying the error.

(3) Describing the errors.

(4) Explaining the errors.

(5) evaluating and correcting the error.

Before the rise of error analysis approach, contrastive analysis had been instrumental in dealing with and analysing learner's error in the 1950s.This approach coincides with the concept of L1(mother tongue interference) and precisely the interlingual effect (Anefnaf Z.2017).

There have been two school of thought when it comes to error analysis and philosophy, according to Corder(1967) the first one linked the commitment of error to the teaching method, arguing that if the teaching method was accurate, error would not be committed in the first place. The second believe that we dwell in an imperfect world and that error correction is something real which the applied

linguistics cannot do without no matter what teaching approach they may use.

2.1.3 Error Analysis vs Contrastive Analysis

Gas and Selinker(2008) cited in Bamidele (2019) Error analysis is the type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the error learner's make. Contrastive analysis on the other hand is concerned with the study of pair of languages with the aim of discovering their structural similarities and differences Thayb A.(2016). Contrastive analysis was widely used in the 1960s and early 1970 to explain why some features in second language are more difficult to learn (Moran 2015) cited by Thayb A.(2016). The contrastive analysis viewpoint gave credence to the fact that the difficulties encountered when learning a second language could be depending on the degree of difference. Eric(2008) highlighted two weaknesses of this hypothesis. The first weakness was that contrastive analysis does not predict many of the errors the learners make in second language. Another weakness is that this hypothesis predict interference error where none arise. Similarly Lado(1957) cited in Thayb A.(2016) made it known that the item of a target language that are similar to the learner's first language will be easy for him or her to learn and those item of a second language that are different from the learner's first language will be difficult to acquire.

It is noted that Contrastive analysis comes in two versions (the strong version and the weak version). The strong version suggest that the number of error a learner of

a target language will face could be equated to the degree of differences between the L1 and the L2 while the weak version suggest that error a learner of a target language committed depends on the degree of interference. Thayb A.(2016:1-2). The two learning theory account for the causes of in L2 acquisition, as discussed earlier, contrastive analysis theory is used to explain learner's error base on similarities and differences between the target language and the native language of a learner. It was discovered that learners tend to depend on the knowledge of their native language when they come across target language items that are greatly different from their mother tongue.

The second theory used to account for learner's error is error analysis which investigate the learners' error in the target language with a view to determining the reasons for such errors and their causes. In second language acquisition error analysis studies the types and causes of language error based on;

(1) modality (the level of proficiency in speaking, writing, reading and listening).

(2) Linguistic levels (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and style).

(3) form (e.g Addition, omission,misformation).

(4) Type (systematic error/error in competence).

(5) Cause (e.g Interference, interlanguage)

(6) Norm vs system.

2.1.4 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Acquiring a second language can be interestingly vigorous, it might be cumbersome and seems uninteresting to the learner who had attained the age of puberty before they start learning their L2. Hedieh, N. and Yolanda, R. claimed that children acquire their first language without any former instructions and second language acquisition requires a conscious effort.

Hedieh, N. and Yolanda, R. went further to differentiate between language learning and language acquisition. For language acquisition, an individual acquire a language if they are submerged in an environment where the language is being used in all aspects of life. On the other hand a person learns a language if that language is used or taught in school/colleges, to them an illustrative case is when an English speaking person tries to learn Spanish by taking Spanish classes in a local community college in their town,that means the person is learning Spanish. If this person instead moves to Mexico where Spanish is the language of daily life, then they are acquiring the Spanish language. This is in line with American Speech-language Hearing Association claim, that "Anyone can learn a second language after a first language is already established, but it takes a lot of practice.

2.1.5 Stages in Second Language Acquisition

This involves all the stages a learner pass through when learning a second language.

These stages had been classified under various categories by scholars, some scholars the stages into 6 while others group them into 6 strata. Robert K & Ford K.(2008) grouped the stages into 6 strata in their work titled "Language acquisition: An overview". On the other hand Krashen and Terrel(1983) grouped the stages into 5 categories. The 6 categories according to Robertson K and Ford K are listed below.

1) Pre-production

2) Early production

3) Speech emergent

4) Beginning fluency.

5) Intermediate Fluency.

6) Advanced Fluency.

According to Krashen and Terrel (1983), the 5 stages includes:

1) Silency or receptive phase.

2) Early production.

3) Speech emergency

4) Intermediate Fluency

5) Continued Language development and fluency.

1). Pre-production: This is also known as the "silent period" when the students or

learners takes in the new language but does not speak it, this period lasts for about 6 weeks or longer depending on the individual.

2) Early production: At this stage, learner begins to speak using short words and sentences with due attention to listening and absorbing the new language.

3) Speech emergent: At this stage, learners become more frequent with words and sentences but still relies on context clues and familiar topics.

4) Beginning fluency: At this stage, speech is fairly fluent in social situations with minimal errors though new contexts and academic language are challenging, the individuals will struggle to express themselves due to gaps in vocabularies and appropriate phrases.

5) Intermediate fluency: Communication in second language is fluent, especially in social language situations, there are very few errors yet the individual is able to demonstrate higher order thinking skills in the second language.

6) Advanced fluency: At this stage, the learner possess a required Linguistic knowledge to communicate fluently in all contexts and can maneuver successfully in new contexts when exposed to new academic information.

2.1.6 The Critical Period Hypothesis

First language is unconsciously and effortlessly acquired in childhood, the acquisition of first language is believed to be quick and easy, this gave rise to various scholarly viewpoints in language acquisition research, the most popular

concept on language acquisition is "Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in 1959. Chomsky claimed that knowledge of language is innate, this claim was supported by Eric Lenneberg's critical period hypothesis. In his work published in 1967 tittled "Biological foundation of language". He stressed that human learn language easily and quickly until puberty, after puberty it is seemingly difficult to master the intricacies of natural language.

Many scholars and researchers in the field of zoology recognized the rise of critical period of development for a range of non-human (animal species) such as horses, ducklings, dogs and sheep. Lenneberg's critical period was tested and validated from a variety of sources, for instance, a child that does not have sufficient contact with human language; speaks no human language. This gave credence to the claim of critical period hypothesis which stated that a child can effortlessly acquire a language he is exposed to at childbirth but when the child is not exposed to any human language, no human language will be acquired. Another instance has it that individual born with hearing deficiency and were not exposed to a sign language until after puberty finds it difficult to acquire a native-like fluency. It was also discovered that individual who tried to learn second language after the age of puberty rarely command a level of competence comparable to one who acquire the language in childhood.

However, some scholars have rejected the claim that second language acquisition

is driven by innate knowledge. The Behaviorist B.F Skinner (1957) in his book tittled "Verbal behaviour" he claimed that all types of language behaviour were learned after childbirth through the same learning process used for all human learning.

2.1.7 MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE

ESL learners of English encounter difficulties pronouncing some English phonemes/words accurately, they often ignore some rules of English or mismatch phonetic units in their native language with that of English language. Learners committed pronunciation errors irrespective of their linguistic background, tentative results from researches stated that the causes of the problems is mother tongue interference.

Mother tongue interference refers to the influence of the native language of the learner on his or her acquisition of the target language, Thayb R.(2006). Studies have shown that interference occurs in 3 different dimensions: (i) phonological (ii) lexical and (iii) grammatical (Anyanwu 2022). A typical Yoruba learners of English might pronounce faith // as /feit/, Igbo speakers could commit error by pronouncing rice /rais/ as lice /laid/. Hausa speakers on the other hand commonly mispronounced fifty /fifti/ as /pipti/. These are all pronunciation errors committed as a result of mother tongue influence, this correspond with the assertion that ESL learners commit error in phonological level irrespective of the language they speak. Xhemaili and Mirvan(2013) claimed that Language transfer affects speakers or writers positively or negatively depending on the relevant unit structure of both their native and acquired language. Positive transfer occurs when the meaning/form of an item that is transferred is in line with the target language rules of acceptability and grammaticality.

Misrepresentation of the linguistic items of the target language is also known as Negative transfer which involves the transfer of linguistic items from the native

language of the learner to that of the target language (L2) which affects the proper mastery and correct usage of the L2.

2.1.7 Sound system of English and Yoruba

The sound systems of English and Yoruba language differ in many aspects. English has 44 sounds of which 24 are consonant sounds and 20 are vowel sounds in which 12 are pure vowels and 8 diphthongs. Yoruba in its sound inventory consist of 25 phonemes out of which 18 are consonant sounds and 7 are vowels.

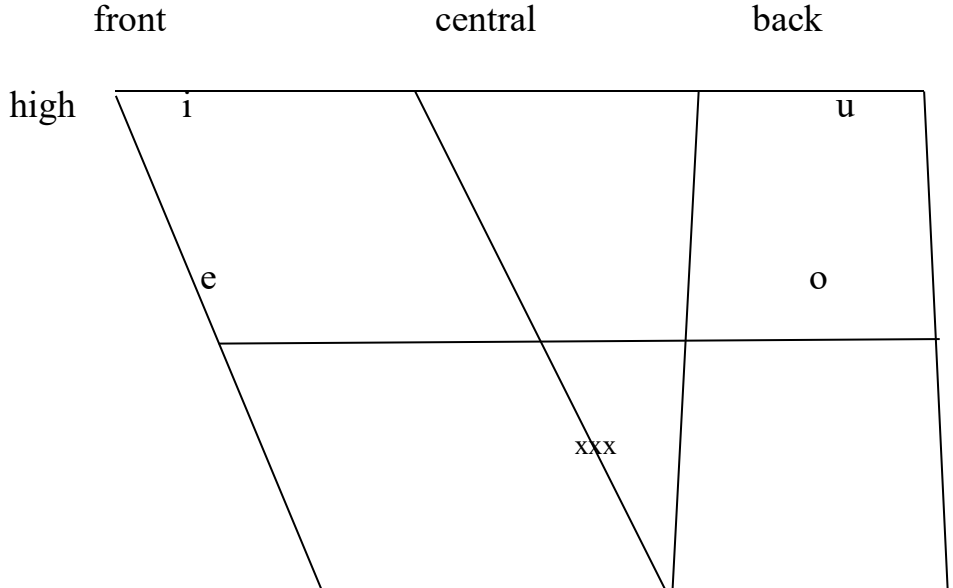
YORUBA CONSONANT CHART

MANNER OF ARTICULATION	Bilabial	alveolar	Labio-dental	Palato-alveolar	palatal	Velar	Labio-velar	glottal
Plosive	p b	t d				k g	kp gb	
Fricatives		S	f	ʃ				h

Nasal	m	n						
approximant		r			j		w	
Lateral Approximant		l						

Fig.2.0 (Adapted from Bamidele 2019:11)

YORUBA VOWEL CHARTS



mid ɛ ɔ

low a

fig.2.1

ENGLISH PHONEMIC CONSONANT CHART

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	dental	alveolar	Postal-alveolar	palatal	Velar	labio-velar glottal
Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Affricate								
Nasal	m			n				
Lateral approximant				l				
approximant						j		w

Fig.2.2

ENGLISH VOWEL CHART

Front central back

close i: u

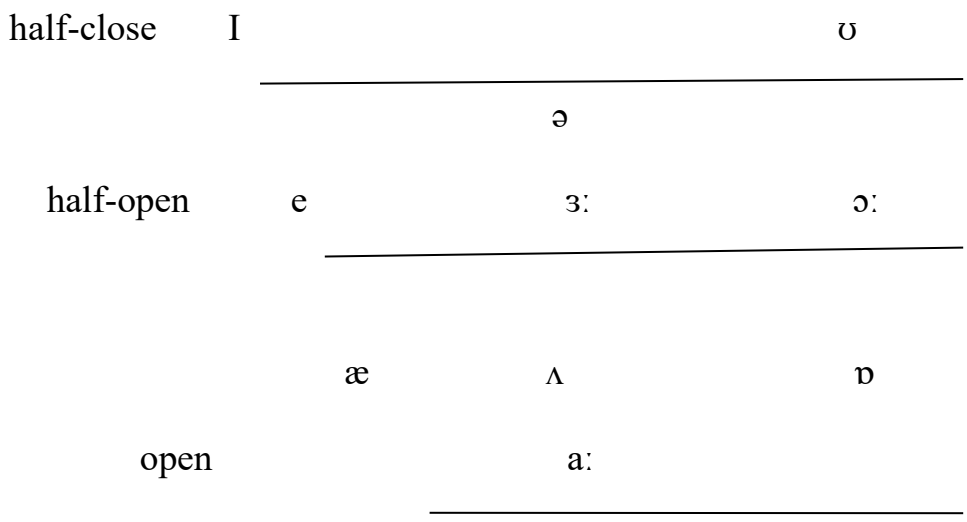


fig.2.3

Taken from

https://pdfslide.net/documents/the-vowel-chart-ftsaezfoneticavowelspdfenglish-phonetics-and-phonology-fernando.html?page=1

2.2 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

This section evaluates previous empirical studies conducted to investigate pronunciation problems.

2.2.1 Pronunciation Errors Committed by Indonesians

Yusriat (2019) investigated pronunciation errors committed by Education students of FKIP UMSU. In his work, he identified voiceless dental fricative [θ],voiced labio-dental fricative [v], voiceless palatal-alveolar fricative [tʃ] as problematic sounds for English Education students of FKIP UMSU. He went further to unravel the rationale behind the mispronunciation of these sound segments.

His study revealed that Education students of FKIP UMSU actually mispronounced certain English phonemes which are: the voiced dental fricative [ð], voiceless dental fricative [θ] and the voiced alveolar fricative [z], these sounds are replaced with the voiced bilabial plosive [d], voiceless bilabial plosive [p], and voiceless labio-dental fricative [f] respectively. His work also accounted for error committed in silent letters, the students pronounce sounds that are meant to be silent. Yusriat concluded that the difference in English sound system and Indonesian sound inventory is the reason for mispronunciation.

2.2.2 Pronunciation Error Committed by Hausa Speakers.

Keshavarz (2017) carried out a research that investigated pronunciation problems of Hausa ESL learners, in his work, he identified four English consonant sounds and three vowel sounds which are commonly mispronounced by Hausa-speaking learners of English. The problematic consonants are: the voiceless labio-dental fricative [f], voiced labio-dental fricative [v], voiceless dental fricative [θ,] and

voiced dental fricative [ð], the vowels are :[ʌ], [ɔ:] [ɜ:]. Keshavarz concluded that mispronunciation occurs as a result of mother tongue interference.

2.2.3 Pronunciation Errors Committed by Yoruba Speakers

Similarly Owolabi (2014) investigated errors committed by Yoruba speakers in pronouncing some vowel sounds of English, based on his findings he claimed that Yoruba people commit pronunciation errors as a result of transfer of their native language phonetic units into that of English language. He also noted that lack of one to one correspondence between sounds and letters in the English language creates a serious problem for Yoruba speakers.

2.3 Concern of the Present Study

The present study sets out to investigate common errors committed by Yoruba Esl learners especially in the pronunciation of some English consonant phonemes. The major concern of this study is to determine the sources, causes and types of error committed by Yoruba-speaking learners of English.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION

3.0 Commonly Mispronounced Consonant Phonemes

Yoruba speakers experience difficulties in pronouncing some English consonant

sounds. Mispronunciation occurs due to mother tongue interference or lack of the original Target sounds/phonemes in L1 phonemic inventory which may lead to unconscious replacement of the target sounds with suitably presumed phonemes in the learners' sound system.

This chapter presents these commonly mispronounced consonant phonemes of English with adequate data. I have identified six (5) problematic consonants, they are: Voiceless dental fricative [θ], voiced dental fricative [ð], voiceless labio-dental fricative [v],voiced alveolar fricativ [z] and lateral approximant [l].

3.1 Voiceless dental fricative [θ]

(1) Thought /θɔːt/ mispronounced as /tɔːt/

(2) Think /tɪŋk/ mispronounced as /tɪŋk/

(3) Thank /θaeŋk/ mispronounced as /taeŋk/

(4) Through /θruː/ mispronounced as /truː/

(5) Threat /θret/ mispronounced as /tret/

(6) Thrash /θraeʃ/ mispronounced as /traeʃ/

(7) Wrath /wrɒθ/ mispronounced as /wrɒt/

(8) Theme /θiːm/ mispronounced as /tiːm/

(9) Faith /feiθ/ mispronounced as /feit/

(10) Tooth /tuːθ/ mispronounced as /tuːt/

(11) Mouth /mauθ/ mispronounced as /maut/

(12) Myth /mɪθ/ mispronounced as /mɪt/

(13) Zenith /zenɪθ/ mispronounced as /zenith/

(14) Ruth /ruːθ/ mispronounced as /ruːt/

(15)Strength /streŋθ/ mispronounced as /streŋt/

3.2 Voiced Dental Fricative [ð]

The voiced dental fricative is another problematic sound which is commonly replaced with the voiced alveolar plosive [d]

(1) Other /ʌðə/ mispronounced as / ɒdæ/

(2) Within /wɪðɪn/ mispronounced as / wɪdɪn/

(3) Brother /brʌðə/ mispronounced as /brɒdæ/

(4) Them /ðem/ mispronounced as /dem/

(5) Lithesome /laiðsəm/ mispronounced as /laidsɒm/

(6) Mother /mʌðə/ mispronounced as /mɒdæ/

(7) Worthy /wɜːðɪ/ mispronounced as /wɒdɪ/

(8) Dither /dɪðə/ mispronounced as /dɪdæ/

(9) That /ðæt/ mispronounced as /dæt/

(10) Gather /gæðə/ mispronounced as /gædæ/

(11)Weather /weðə/ mispronounced as /wedæ/

(12)Bother /bɒðə / mispronounced as /bɒdæ/

(13) Hither /hɪðə mispronounced as /hɪðæ/

(14) Feather /feðæ/ mispronounced as /fedæ/

(15)Another /ənʌðə/ mispronounced as /ænɒdæ/

3.3 Voiced Labio-Dental Fricative [v]

This consonant phoneme is frequently mispronounced as /f/ Voiceless labio-dental fricative.

(1) Leave / liːv/ mispronounced as / liːf/

(2) Move /muːv/ mispronounced as /muf/

(3) Effective /ɪfektɪv/ mispronounced as /ɪfektɪf/

(4)Positive /pɒzɪtɪv/ mispronounced as /pɒzɪtɪv/

(5)Active /æktɪv/ mispronounced as /æktɪf/

(6) Believe /bɪliːv/ mispronounced as /bɪlɪf/

(7) Virus /vaɪrəs/ mispronounced as /faɪrɒs/

(8) Vote /vəut / mispronounced as /fəut/

(9) Valid /vælɪd/ mispronounced as /fælɪd/

(10) Verify /verɪfaɪ/ mispronounced as /ferɪfaɪ/

(11) Very /verɪ/ mispronounced as /ferɪ/

(12) Vivid /vɪvɪd/ mispronounced as /fɪfɪd/

(13) Veil /veil/ mispronounced as /feil/

(14) Five /faiv/ mispronounced as /faif/

(15) Value /vælu:/ mispronounced as /fælu:/

3.4 Voiced Alveolar Fricative [z]

The Voiced alveolar fricative [z] is often mispronounced as voiceless alveolar fricative [s] as in examples below.

(1) Position /pəzɪʃən/ mispronounced as /pəuzɪsɒn/

(2) Reason /ri:zən/ mispronounced as /ri:sən/

(3) Easy /i:zɪ/ mispronounced as /i:si/

(4) Busy /bɪzɪ/ mispronounced as /bɪsɪ/

(5) Zone /zəun/ mispronounced as /səun/

(6) Hazard /hæzəd/ mispronounced as /hæsæd/

(7) Propose /prəupəz/ mispronounced as /prəupəus/

(8) Blaze /bleiz/ mispronounced as /bleis/

(9) Zinc /ziŋk/ mispronounced as /siŋk/

(10) Zebra /zebrə/ mispronounced as /sebræ/

(11) Seize /si:z/ mispronounced as /si:s/

(12) Zip /zɪp/ mispronounced as /sɪp/

(13) Resign /rɪzain/ mispronounced as /rɪsain/

(14) Freeze /fri:z/ mispronounced as /fri:s/

(15) Zeal /zi:l/ mispronounced as /si:l/

3.5 The Alveolar Lateral Approximant [l]

The lateral approximant in English language has two variants and its usage depends on the position it occurs in word(s). It is realized as "Clear lateral approximant [l]" when occurring at word initial position and while it is realized as "Dark or velarized [ɬ] when occurring at word penultimate (before the last consonant sound) and word final position.
Velarized lateral approximant [ɬ] with examples as it occurs at word penultimate level.

(1) Belt /belt / [be ɬt] mispronounced as /bet/

(2) Milk /mɪlk/ [mi ɬk] mispronounced as / mɪk/

(3) Spelt /spelt/ mispronounced as /spet/

(4) Shield /ʃi:ld/ mispronounced as /ʃi:d/

(5) Culture /kʌltʃə/ mispronounced as /kɒʃɒ/

(6) Fault /fɔ:lt/ mispronounced as /fɔ:t/

(7) Help /help/ mispronounced as /hep/

(8) Field /fi:ld/ mispronounced as /fi:d/

(9) Bald /bɔ:ld/ mispronounced as / bɔ:d/

(10) Yield /ji:ld/ mispronounced as /ji:d/

(11) Fold /fəuld/ mispronounced as /fəud/

(12) Delt /delt/ mispronounced as /det/

(13) Spilt /spɪlt/ mispronounced as /spɪt/

(14) Jilt /dʒɪlt/ mispronounced as /dʒɪt/

(15) Vault /vɒlt/ mispronounced as /fɒt/

Dark or velarized [l] with examples at word final position

(1) Skill /skɪl / [ski ɬ] mispronounced as / skɪl/ [skil]

(2) Minimal /mɪnɪməl/ [minim ɬ] mispronounced as /mɪnɪmaː/

(3) Moral /mɑrəl/ mispronounced as /məuraː/

(4) Feel / f i : l / [f i : ɬ] mispronounced as/ f i : l / [f i : l]

(5) Skale/ s k e i l / [s k e i ɬ] mispronounced / s k e i l / [s k e i l]

(6) National /næʃənəl/ [næʃənəɬ] mispronounced as /næʃɒnaː/

(7) Optimal /ɒptɪməl/ [ɒptɪməɬ] mispronounced as /ɒptɪmaː/

(8) Meal /miːl/ [miːɬ] mispronounced as /mɪl / [miːɬ]

9.B a i l / b e i l / [b e i ɬ]mispronounced/ b e i l / [b e i l]

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.0. Introduction

This chapter covers the analysis of data using Dulay's surface strategy taxonomy (1982) and the results will be used to provide answers to the research questions.

4.1 Data set1: Analysis on voiceless dental fricative [θ]

Table 4.1

	RP variants	Mispronounced variants
Thought	/ θ ɔ : t /	/ t ɔ : t /
Think	/ t ɪ ŋ k /	/ t ɪ ŋ k /
Thank	/ θ æ ŋ k /	/ t æ ŋ k /
Through	/ θ r u : /	/ t r u : /
Threat	/ θ r e t /	/ t r e t /
Thrash	/ θ r æ ʃ /	/ t r æ ʃ /
Wrath	/ w r ɒ θ /	/ w r ɒ t /
Theme	/ θ i : m /	/ t i : m /
Faith	/ f e i θ /	/ f e i t /

Tooth	/tu:θ/	/tu:t/
Mouth	/mauθ/	/maut/
Myth	/mɪθ/	/mɪt/
Zenith	/zenɪθ/	/senɪt/
Ruth	/ru:θ/	/ru:t/
Strength	/streŋθ/	/strent/

From the table above, it can be seen that the most mistake made by our participants is the alternation of voiceless dental fricative [θ] with voiceless alveolar plosive[p]. The two phonemes are similar in voicing but different in manner and place of articulation.

4.0

Dulay's surface strategy taxonomy

Table 4.1.1

Types of Error	Validity & Justification
Error of Addition	X
Error of omission	X
Error of Misordering	X
Error of misformation	✓

The type of error exhibited in this data set is known as error of misformation which occurs when the learner(s) use the wrong form of phoneme as an alternative for the intended phonemes.

4.2 Data set 2: Analysis on voiced dental fricative [ð]

Table 4.2

	Rp variants	Mispronounced Variants
Other	/ ʌ ð ə /	/ ɒ d a : /
Within	/ w ɪ ð ɪ n /	/ w ɪ d ɪ n /
Brother	/ b r ʌ ð ə /	/ b r ɒ d a : /
Them	/ ð e m /	/ d e m /
Lithesome	/ l a i ð s ə m /	/ l a i d s ɒ m /
Mother	/ m ʌ ð ə /	/ m ɒ d ə /
Worthy	/ w ɜ : ð ɪ /	/ w ɔ : d ɪ /
Dither	/ d ɪ ð ə /	/ d ɪ d a : /
Gather	/ g æ ð ə /	/ g æ d a : /
Weather	/ w e ð ə /	/ w e d a : /

Bother	/ b ɒ ð ə /	/ b ɒ d a : /
Hither	/ h ɪ ð ə /	/ h ɪ d a : /
Father	/ f æ ð ə /	/ f æ d a : /
Another	/ ʌ n ə ð ə /	/ æ n ɒ d a : /
That	/ ð æ t /	/ d æ t /

From the table 4.2 above, it is observed that the voiced dental fricative [ð] was pronounced as voiced alveolar plosive [d], the two phonemes are similar in voicing but differ in manner and place of articulation.

Dulay's surface strategy taxonomy

Table 4.2.1

Types of Error	Validity & Justification
Error of Addition	X
Error of Omission	X
Error of Misordering	X
Error of Misformation	✓

The type of error committed in this set of data is error of misformation.

4.3 Data set 3: Analysis on voiced labio-dental fricative [v]

Table 4.3

	RP variants	Mispronounced variants
Leave	/ l i : v /	/ l i : f /
SsMove	/ m u : v /	/ m u : f /
Effective	/ ɪ f e k t ɪ v /	/ ɪ f e t ɪ f /
Positive	/ p ɒ z ɪ t ɪ v /	/ p ɒ s ɪ t ɪ f /
Active	/ æ k t ɪ v /	/ æ t ɪ f /

Believe	/ b ɪ l i : v /	/ b ɪ l i : f /
Virus	/ v a i r ə s /	/ f a i r ɒ s /
Vote	/ v ə u t /	/ f ə u t /
Valid	/ v æ l ɪ d /	/ f æ l ɪ d /
Verify	/ v e r ɪ f a i /	/ f e r ɪ f a i /
Vivid	/ v ɪ v ɪ d /	/ f ɪ f ɪ d /
Veil	/ v e i l /	/ f e i l /
Very	/ v e r ɪ /	/ f e r ɪ /
Five	/ f a i v /	/ f a i f /
Value	/ v æ l u : /	/ f æ l u : /

As shown in table 4.3 above, it is observed that the participants mispronounced voiced labio-dental fricative [v] as voiceless labio-dental fricative [f].The two phonemes are similar in manner and place of articulation but different in voicing.

Dulay's surface strategy taxonomy

Table 4.3.1

Types of Error	Validity & Justification
Error of Addition	X
Error of omission	X
Error of Misordering	X

Error of Misformation	✓

The type of error committed in this set of data is error of misformation which occurs when the appropriate phoneme "voiced labio-dental fricatives [v] were mispronounced as voiceless labio-dental fricatives [f].

4.4 Data set 4: Analysis on voiced alveolar plosive [z].

Table 4.4

	Rp variants	Mispronounced variants
Position	/pəzɪʃən/	/pəusɪʃɔn/
Reason	/rɪ:zən/	/ri:sɪn/
Easy	/i:zɪ/	/i:sɪ/
Busy	/bɪzɪ/	/bɪsɪ/
Zone	/zəun/	/səun/
Hazard	/hæzəd/	/hæsæd/
Propose	/prəupəz/	/prəupəus/
Blaze	/bleiz/	/bleis/

Zinc	/ z ɪ ŋ k /	/ s ɪ ŋ k /
Zebra	/ z e b r ə /	/ s e b r a : /
Seize	/ s i : z /	/ s i : s /
Zip	/ z ɪ p /	/ s ɪ p /
Resign	/ r ɪ z a i n /	/ r ɪ s a i n /
Freeze	/ f r i : z /	/ f r i : s /
Zeal	/ z i : l /	/ s i : l /

From the table above, it is observed that our participants committed error by alternating the voiced alveolar fricative [z] with the voiceless alveolar fricative [s]. The two phonemes are similar in manner and place of articulation.

Dulay's surface strategy taxonomy

Table 4.4.1

Types of Error	Validity & Justification
Error of Addition	X
Error of Omission	X
Error of Misordering	X
Error of Misformation	✓

The type of Error committed in this set of data is Error of misformation.

4.5 Data set 5: Analysis on lateral approximant [l]

Table 4.5

	RP variants	Mispronounced variants
Belt	/ b e l t /	/ b e t /
Milk	/ m ɪ l k /	/ m i : k /
Spelt	/ s p e l t /	/ s p e t /
Shield	/ ʃ i : l d /	/ ʃ i : d /
Melt	/ m e l t /	/ m e t /
Fault	/ f ɔ : l t /	/ f ɔ : t /
Help	/ h e l p /	/ h e p /
Field	/ f i : l d /	/ f i : d /
Bald	b ɔ : l d	/ b ɔ : d /
Yield	j i : l d	j i : d

In the table 4.5 above, it is observed that our participants unconsciously omit the penultimate sound which is the lateral approximant [l].

Dulay's surface strategy taxonomy

Table 4.5.1

Types of Error	Validity & Justification
Error of Addition	X
Error of Omission	X
Error of Misordering	X
Error of Misformation	✓

The velarized lateral approximant is unconsciously omitted, hence the type of error committed in this set of data is Error of omission

4.5.2 Data set 6: Analysis on velarized lateral approximant [l] at word final position

Table 4.5.2

	RP variants	Mispronounced variants
Feel	/fi:l/ [fi:ɬ]	/fi:l/ [fi:ɬ /]
Kill	/kɪl/ [kɪɬ]	/kɪl/ [kɪ ɬ]
Meal	/mi:l/ [mi:l]	/mi:l/ [mi:ɬ]
Bail	/beil/ [bei ɬ]	/beil/ [bei ɬ]
Scale	/skeil/ [skil ɬ]	/skeil/ [skei ɬ]
Minimal	/mɪnɪməl/	/mɪnɪma:/
Moral	/mɒrəl/	/məura:/
Optimal	/ɒptɪməl/	/ɒptɪma:/
National	/næʃənəl/	/næʃɒna:/

As shown in the table 4.5.2, clear lateral approximant [l] were pronounced where Dark or velarized lateral approximant [l] were required. In order to achieve intelligible pronunciation velarized lateral approximant is only and meant to be pronounced whenever lateral approximant occurs at word penultimate/final position while clear lateral approximant is only restricted to occur at word initial position.Our participants pronounced clear lateral approximant instead of velarized lateral approximant in example no 1-5 of the data. On the other hand velarized lateral approximants were completely omitted in no6-10 of the data.

Dulay's surface strategy taxonomy

Table 4.5.3

Types of Error	Validity & Justification	
Error of Addition	X	
Error of Omission	✓	
Error of Misordering	✓	
Error of Misformation	X	

Error of misordering was committed in the example no1-5 of the data,error of misordering occurs as a result of incorrect placement of certain phonemes in a word. Another type of error committed in this set of data is error of omission, this is exemplified in no6-10 of the data.

4.6 Answers to Research Questions

At this point, it is pertinent to revisit the overarching questions that I asked at the beginning of this research.

4.6.1 Question 1

What are the consonant phonemes of English that are often mispronounced by Yoruba ESL learners?

From the results of the data, the consonant phonemes of English that are commonly mispronounced are (i) voiceless dental fricative [θ], (ii) the voiced dental fricative [ð], (iii) voiced labio-dental fricative [v], (iv) voiced alveolar fricative [z] and the velarized lateral approximant [l]

4.6.2 Question 2

What are the rationale behind the mispronunciation of these sound segments?

(i) Differences in system of English and Yoruba language

(ii) Mother tongue influence which resulted to negative transfer whereby a learner replaces phonetic units in L1 with L2 phonemes.

4.6.3 Question 3

What are the possible solutions that may help Yoruba speakers overcome pronunciation problems?

(i) Practical pronunciation exercise: Learners should make use of electronic tools

such as pronunciation dictionary that will show them how a particular phoneme is pronounced.

(ii) Learners should listen to the native speakers of English in the media by watching British series/programmes.

(iii) Only competent phonetically trained teachers should be allowed to teach learners test of orals.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the summary of the study, major findings of the study, suggestions for further study and conclusion.

5.0 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The current study was conducted to investigate pronunciation error committed by Yoruba-speaking learners of English. For gathering data, five English consonant phonemes that are non-native to Yoruba sound system were selected and 15 words containing the target sound were formed and later given to 10 Yoruba speakers who were selected randomly as the sample for this study to pronounce and pronunciations were recorded and words were later transcribed according to how they were pronounced. In order to ascertain the sources, causes and types of error committed by Yoruba Esl learners, the data were analyzed using Dulay's surface strategy taxonomy (1982). The findings of the study will be revealed in the following part. An attempt was also made to provide answer to provide answers to three major research questions of the study.

5.1 FINDINGS YIELDED FROM THE STUDY

Results obtained from the analysis of data revealed that Yoruba speakers still find it difficult to pronounce some consonant phonemes of English correctly. The problematic sounds are :

(i) voiceless dental fricative [θ]

(ii) voiced dental fricative

(iii) voiced labio-dental fricative [v]

(iv) voiced alveolar fricative [z]

(v) (dark/velarized) lateral approximant

Mispronunciation of words at times leads to semantic distortion, a change in meaning may occur if words are not correctly pronounced when a certain phoneme is replaced with another phoneme which causes a change in meaning that set of words thereby constitute a minimal pair.

Minimal pairs gotten from the data are outlined below

5.1.1 RESULTS FROM DATA SET 1

It is observed that our participants mispronounced and replaced voiceless dental fricative [θ] with voiceless alveolar fricative [t]. This is error of misformation, some examples from the data constitute minimal pairs because it resulted to a change in meaning.

Examples as in:

(i) Thought /θɔːt/ mispronounced as taught / tɔːt/.
(ii) Theme / θiːm/ mispronounced as team /tiːm/
(iii) Faith / feiθ/ mispronounced as fate /feit/
(iv) Ruth /ruːθ/ mispronounced as root /ruːt/

5.1.2 RESULTS FROM DATA SET 2

In table 4.2. It can be seen that our participants mispronounced voiced dental fricative [ð] as voiced alveolar plosive, the type of error committed here is error of misformation. Although no minimal pair was recorded from the data but the words still sound unnatural and unintelligible to the native speakers.

5.1.3 RESULTS FROM DATA SET 3

In table 4.3. Our paticipants unconsciously alternate voiced labiodental fricative with its voiceless counterpart /f/ and this resulted to a change in meaning in some data, the type of error committed is error of misformation. The minimal pairs noticed from the data are:

(i) Very /veri/ mispronounced as ferry /feri/

(ii) Veil /veil/ mispronounced as fail /fei/

5.1.4 RESULTS FROM DATA SET 4

In table 4.4. It was discovered that our participants mispronounced voiced alveolar fricative /z/ as voiceless alveolar fricative /f/, this type of error is error of misformation. Minimal pairs gotten from this data are:

(i) Zone /zəun/ mispronounced as sown /səun/
(ii) Zink /ziŋk/ mispronounced as /siŋk/
(iii) Seize /siːz/ mispronounced as /siːs/
(iv) Zip /zip/ mispronounced as /sip

5.1.5 RESULTS FROM DATA SET 5

In table 4.5. our participants unconsciously omitted dark/velarized lateral approximants occurring as a penultimate consonant, the type of error committed here is error of omission. This resulted to a change in meaning, examples include the following:

(i) Fault /fɔːlt/ mispronounced as fought /fɔːt/

(ii) Belt /belt/ mispronounced as bet /bet/
(iii) Spilt /spilt/ mispronounced as /spit/
(iv) Field /fiːld/ mispronounced as /fiːd/

5.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The following areas are recommended for future research

(i)This research study only focused on pronunciation errors in the consonant system. An investigation into pronunciation difficulties in the vowel system is suggested for future research.

(ii) The study has investigated segmental unit of sounds other studies could investigate error occurring at supra-segmental level such as stress and intonation.

(iii)This research has covered limited problematic consonants other studies could widen the horizon to include those consonant phonemes that are not investigated here.

(iv)English words are not always pronounced the same way they are spelt, therefore an investigation about the influence of the spelling in pronunciation mastery is recommended for future research.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The study inspected the difficulties experienced by Yoruba-speaking learners of English in pronouncing specific consonant phonemes of English, the phonemes were: the voiceless dental fricative [θ], the voiced dental fricative [ð], voiced labio-dental fricative [v], voiced alveolar fricative [v] and the lateral approximant.
In conclusion, this study proved that mispronunciation of phonemes in a word may result to a change in meaning, for instance the word thought /θɔːt/ was pronounced as taught / tɔːt/. It was further established that error of misformation was the most type of error committed by the participants while error of omission and error of misordering occurred less frequently, errors of addition were not committed at all.

However in this research effort it is revealed that the interference from the mother tongue is the major contributing factor to pronunciation problems.

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