

**EFFECT OF MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE ON THE PHONETICS OF  
JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OVIA NORTH EAST LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT AREA, BENIN CITY**

**BY**

**JOAN ONYINYECHUKWU UGBOGU**

**EDU1903410**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

**BENIN CITY**

**JUNE, 2024**

**EFFECT OF MOTHER TONGUE INTERFERENCE ON THE PHONETICS OF  
JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OVIA NORTU EAST LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT AREA, BENIN CITY**

**BY**

**JOAN ONYINYECHUKWU UGBOGU**

**EDU1903410**

**A RESEARCH WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL  
FOUNDATIONS, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY,  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF  
BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (B. SC. ED) DEGREE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE.**

**JUNE, 2024**

## APPROVAL

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that this study has been carried out by Joan Onyinyechukwu Ugbogu in the Department of Educational Foundations/English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin city.

-----

Prof. (Mrs) R.J Musa.

Project Supervisor

-----

Date

## CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned hereby certify that this project was carried out by Joan Onyinyechukwu UGBOGU, a student of the Department of Educational Foundations and that it is adequate in scope and quality in partial fulfilment for Bachelor of Education Degree in English Language and Literature of the University of Benin, Benin city.

-----

Prof. (Mrs) R.J Musa.

Project Supervisor

-----

Date

-----

Dr. O. I. Nyorere.

Department Project Coordinator

-----

Date

-----

Dr. A. E. Osawaru.

HOD, Department of Educational Foundations

-----

Date

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to God Almighty for His grace in seeing me through this programme and also to my father, Late Mr Philip Ugbogu for his unconditional love to me throughout his life and also for teaching me to persevere against all odds.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researcher wishes to acknowledge and give her sincere gratitude to the Almighty God for his gifts of wisdom and knowledge in the arrangement of this work and also for the gift of life throughout the course of this study.

The researcher also wishes to express her profound gratitude to her supervisor, Prof. (Mrs) R. J Musa, for her suggestions and the patience she took in reading through this research and making necessary corrections. Her advice and supervision despite her busy schedule is worthy of appreciation. Also, to the Dean of the Faculty, Dr. O. K. Omorogiuwa, thank you for providing the necessities in the faculty in order for us to have a smooth academic session . The researcher also wishes to acknowledge the Head of the Department for his continuous support towards the students and his contributions to the growth and development of the Department which has made it easier for students in the department. Also to my lecturers, Dr. (Mrs) O.O Osawaru, Dr (Mrs) Pamela Omogrevia, Dr. Andrew Egbah, Prof. E. B. Adeleke and every other lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Department of English and Literature who guided and led me through all the way, God bless you.

The researcher also wishes to appreciate her parents, Late Mr Philip Ugbogu and Mrs Regina Ugbogu for their constant support, advice, encouragement and care throughout the course of this work and the programme in general. To my siblings, Mrs Siennar Nneka and her husband Mr Gift Siennar, Rev. Fr. Augustine Ugbogu and Ella Ugbogu, thank you for constantly being

there for me, for believing in me and supporting me, I really do not take these for granted. I also want to appreciate my friends, Nmesomma, Annabel, Ruth, Edwina, Obinna and Victoria for their mental and emotional support and their constant encouragement. Lastly, the researcher wishes to thank everyone who has been there for her, supported and encouraged her throughout the course of this programme. God bless you all.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>TITLE</b>	ii
<b>APPROVAL</b>	iii
<b>CERTIFICATION</b>	iv
<b>DEDICATION</b>	v
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	vi
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	viii
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	xi
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	1
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1
Background To The Study	1
Statement Of The Problem	3
Purpose Of The Study	5
Scope Of The Study	6
Significance Of The Study	6
Research Questions	7

Operational Definition Of Terms	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	9
<b>REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</b>	9
Status Of English Language In The Junior Secondary School Curriculum	9
Effects Of Bilingualism And English Proficiency Of Secondary School Students In Nigeria	14
Overview Of Linguistic Interference Of English Language With Nigerian Languages	18
Phonological Interference And Implication For L2 Learning	22
Summary Of The Reviewed Literature	26
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	28
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	28
Research Design	28
Population Of The Study	29
Sample And Sampling Techniques	29
Research Instrument	30
Validity Of The Instrument	31
Method Of Data Collection	31
Method Of Data Analysis	31

<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	33
<b>PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS</b>	33
Discussion Of Findings	43
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	46
<b>SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION</b>	46
Summary Of The Study	46
Conclusion	48
Recommendations	49
Suggestion For Future Study	50
REFERENCES	51
APPENDIX	54

## ABSTRACT

This study aimed at examining the effect of mother tongue Interference on the phonetics of Junior Secondary School Students, comprises of four research questions. The purpose of this study is to look into the influence of the mother tongue in the phonetics of students, in their pronunciation of vowel sounds, pronunciation of consonant sounds, intonations and stress pattern.

In the course of this study, the survey research design was adopted. The population of the study consists of 6154 students with a sample size of one hundred and twenty students and ten teachers. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Data from the questionnaire were presented in tables and were analyzed using simple percentages.

The findings of this study revealed that the mother tongue interference influence phonetics of Junior Secondary School Students in their pronunciation of vowel sounds, pronunciation of vowel sounds, pronunciation of consonant sounds, intonations and stress pattern and also their academic performances.

At the end of this study, it was recommended that to successfully enhance better learning of English language, there should be provision of ongoing professional development opportunities for English teachers, arrangement of opportunities for students to interact with native English speakers physically or through online platforms, encouragement of group discussions in English classes to promote active participation and improve communication skills, introduction of

students to various language learning strategies and discouragement of students from having conversations in their mother tongue.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Language is a body of works and set of methods combining them, understood by a community and used as a form of communication. It is the ability to communicate using words. Language is a natural gift which humans possess and it is a tool used to enhance communication and interaction. It is very important in the preservation of the culture of a group of people. An examination of the linguistic content of a particular speech community can provide information about the lifestyle and culture of a group of people.

The English language is a West-Germanic language of the Indo-European language family. It is originated in England and is the dominant language of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and various Island nations in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. It is also an official language of India, the Philippines, Singapore and many countries in Sub Saharan Africa including Nigeria. English is the first choice of foreign language in most other countries of the world and it is the status that has given it the position of a global Lingua-Franca. This is because by the late 18th century, the British Empire had spread English through its colonies and geo - political dominant. Commerce, science and technology, diplomacy and formal education all contributed to English becoming the first truly global language. Also, after the second world war, American companies were booming and began to train all over the world as did Great Britain in the previous century. It is estimated that about a

third of the world's population, some two billion people, now use English. Since English language is the national official language of the British colonies which Nigeria is one of, it has become our second language. In other words, our mother tongue exists before colonisation. This has compelled the teaching and learning of the language in our schools. Research and studies carried out by various linguist scholars however, have shown that Nigeria is a linguistically complex society with variety of languages spoken which is estimated to between 250 and 400. Hence, the interference of the various mother tongue is inescapable.

Although English is the official language and the language of classroom instructions in Nigerian schools, one basic problem of students to this Language is the interference of their mother tongue. This is because children in this part of the world are first introduced to their mother tongue, which they use to comprehend ideas, express themselves, communicate and interact with people. But as they grow and are sent to school, they realize that the language of instruction in school is English language. This greatly affects the academic performance of students in school because the language is foreign to them. Therefore, a student who finds it difficult to understand and struggles with the language may likely not do well academically not only in English language but in other subjects because English language is the only medium of classroom instruction in Nigerian schools. The poor level of achievement in many subject areas may be due to poor foundation in English language among secondary school students which can be linked with the conflict between mother tongue and English language. For this reason, learners struggle in between two languages mentally, socially, economically and educationally.

The presence of some English sounds in the mother tongue of the students also contribute to inability to produce English words which are phonologically correct. This is because there is a constant interference of their mother tongue in their expressions in English language. This in mind, students struggle with the English language not only phonologically but grammatically and syntactically. Although some parents have made English language the basic language of expression in their homes, this does not reduce the problem of language interference but has raised criticisms by traditionalists stating that it has caused a problem of accommodating a bonafide future generation without roots and cultures. According to research, the academic performance of students is worrisoy. It is pathetic to note that students' academic performance in the language in Nigeria has been really low due to poor level of achievement especially in public examinations in which English is not an exemption. To this effect, much emphasis is placed on the passing of English language at credit or distinction level in addition to other subjects to enable any candidate gain admission into any higher institution in Nigeria. Yet, this has not salvaged the situation. In actual sense, however, a student may have good knowledge of the English language and how to articulate the sounds after learning but will be unable to produce them in actual speech because of the interference of his mother tongue on the English language.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

English language is a generally accepted language which was introduced into Nigeria through colonialism and missionary activities. It is the official language of the country and also the accepted medium of instruction in schools. However, students find it difficult to speak and

understand the language because of the interference of their mother tongues. Syntactically, there is tendency for second users of English language to construct English sentences in accordance with their mother tongue structure rather than the structure of the English language. This is because the speakers will subconsciously follow the rules of their native language when speaking English language and students are also guilty of this. Also, some phonetic sounds found in English language do not exist in our local languages such as the voiced palate alveolar fricative/ʒ/ which occurs in words like casual,, usual, treasure, seizure the short vowel/ ʌ/ / in words like blood, cup, sun, plunge and the short vowel/ə/ which is seen in words like obey, water, doctor, etc. This makes it difficult for students to pronounce English words with those sounds correctly. Furthermore, where Language sentences are made, they are characteristically uttered with variation in pitch also referred to as intonation. This is also an area of difficulty for Nigerian speakers of English language whose languages originally have their own intonation different from that of English language.

Also, in schools many teachers pay more attention to grammar and vocabulary over pronunciation. This results in the students having very poor knowledge of the English Phonology and to this effect, there is easily an interference of their mother tongue when they speak in English. Over the years, there has been a dwindling performance of Junior Secondary School Students in oral English and in their external examination and an investigation into this by experts proved that most of the spelling errors and misuse of words in candidates' scripts are actually a carryover of their deficiencies from the spoken form to the written form.

The West African Examination Certificate (WAEC) chief examiner's report of 2018 also stated that students did poorly in English and that they merely translated their mother tongue into the English language. This contributed to the poor results in oral English. This is because the students' mother tongue constantly interferes with their speech in English language therefore, during the oral examinations, they translated the sounds using their mother tongue instead of English language. Adebayo (2008) also uses a survey design to examine the influence of mother tongue on performance of English language in the Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSCE) in Nigeria. He found that mother tongue influences the students' performance in English language in the examination. This is because English language is not used by students outside the school premises as a medium of communication, hence contributing to the low performance of students in the Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSCE). The preoccupation of this research therefore, is to find out how the mother tongue has interfered with the English language of Junior Secondary School Students in Ovia North East, Benin city, with it's major focus on Phonology.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research study is to examine the effect of mother tongue interference in the study of English language in junior secondary schools in Ovia North, Benin city, Nigeria. Specifically, the study will attempt to investigate:

- i. Effect of mother tongue in pronunciation of consonant sounds

ii. Effect of mother tongue in pronunciation of vowel sounds

iii. Effect of mother tongue in intonation and stress pattern

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This research is intended to study the effect of mother tongue Interference in the study of English language in junior secondary schools in Ovia North East, Benin city and how it affects the academic performance of students in English language. As such, it is concerned with the Phonological aspect of mother tongue interference, how it limits the performance of students in English language and how it affects their academic achievements.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The importance of the use of English language especially in students' performance in all the subjects in the school system cannot be overemphasized. It is hoped that with the successful completion of this research, many other researchers will be encouraged to research on those variables deeply so that the students, parents, teachers, administrators, curriculum planners as well as ministry of education will gain from the study. The study will be useful in the following aspects:

i) To reduce to the barest minimum, the interference of mother tongue in the learning of English language.

- ii) To equip the teachers on how to effectively improve the English Phonology of the students.
- iii) To inform the curriculum planners of the need to reduce interference through results on the research carried out.
- iv) To inform stakeholders on what must be done to discourage mother tongue Interference.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- i) Would mother tongue Interference have significant influence on the pronunciation of vowel sounds of Junior Secondary School Students?
- ii) Would mother tongue Interference have significant influence on the pronunciation of consonant sounds of Junior Secondary School Students?
- ii) Would mother tongue interference have significant influence on the intonation and stress pattern of Junior Secondary School Students?
- iv) Would mother tongue interference have a direct influence on the academic performance of the students?

## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS**

- i) Mother tongue: This is the first language that a child learns at infancy. It is assumed that this language is the indigenous native language of the parents that is transferred to the children. Mother tongue is the first indigenous native language that a child acquires at his mother's knees.

- ii) Phonology: The study of the way sounds function in languages including phonemes, syllable structure, stress, accent, intonation and which sounds are distinctive units within a language.
- iii) Bilingual society: This is a Linguistic community where more than one language is spoken.
- iv) L1: This is the first language that a child is exposed to in his or her childhood.
- v) L2 : This is the second language learnt by a child.
- vi) Interference : This is the variations or alterations which include errors or mistakes found in a learner's exploit of an unfamiliar language and is evident or can be linked to the first language or mother tongue. This occurs because a person's understanding of one language has a direct influence on his or her comprehension of an entirely different language.
- vii) Phonological interference: This is the inaccuracy in producing the sound of the target language brought on by transfers or influences from the first language.
- viii) Grammatical interference : This is the transfer of the grammatical system of one language into another.
- ix) Morpho-syntactic interference : This is a carryover of the analogizing process in L1 into the use of L2.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter presents reviews of related and relevant literature to the study of how mother tongue interference affects the performance of secondary school students generally. It discusses the concepts of bilingualism among students, linguistic and phonological interference of L1 on L2 and the status of the English language in the curriculum of secondary schools in Nigeria. The perception of how mother tongue influences the English language and overall academic performance of students and why it influences the L2 of the students are also presented.

### **STATUS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

English language is one of the compulsory subjects in the junior secondary school curriculum in Nigeria. It is listed as the core subject alongside mathematics and a Nigerian language which could be either Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa or any other language depending on the geographical location of the school. English language in the curriculum covers various aspects such as speech, grammar, reading comprehension and writing. This is to improve the fluency and understanding of English of the students. By covering these various language aspects, the students learn to speak and make long conversations fluently with the language, the grammatical and structural rules of the language thereby improving their production of sentences and more complex phrases,

enhances their understanding of the language so that they can efficiently decode messages sent, encode messages and also makes them efficient in not only speaking but also in writing.

Onwuka (2014) stated that curriculum is a total experience with which the school educates young people. Also Mkpa (2011), sees curriculum as a vehicle through which the school strives towards the achievement of educational goals; national, local government or even community schools. The content of English language in the curriculum consists of listening, speaking, reading and writing which are the four language skills. These skills consist of vocabulary, comprehension, summary, grammar, oral English, lexis and structure, essays and letter writing. The different schemes and topics for different classes are developed based on this content.

English language has been one of the core subjects in Nigeria secondary school curriculum. Kedkanok Klinubol (2010) expressed that the aim of English language curriculum is to broaden and deepen the language competence of students through basic education, develop the students' interest and confidence in the study of English language and also gain mastery of the subject matter, expand the students' knowledge on the understanding of various cultures in which English language is anchored, developing and preparing students for advanced studies.

At the junior secondary school level, students are expected to have learnt the basics and complexities of the English language. Each student is expected to pass English language in the junior secondary school certificate examination (JSCE) before he can move to the next level which is the senior secondary school. Any child who fails English at the junior secondary school

certificate examination will be asked to resit or repeat the examination as the case may be. When a student resits an examination, he or she retakes the paper within a short organized period of time. However, when a student repeats in Js3 class, he is not allowed to go to senior secondary with his mates. The status of English language in the curriculum of junior secondary schools is significant as it is the official national language and the medium of instruction in Nigerian schools. English language plays a dominant role in the education delivery at the secondary school level. It is not just a compulsory subject that a student must register for at jsce but a compulsory subject that must be passed. It dominates almost every activity that takes place in the secondary schools. It is a subject on the curriculum and also the major medium of instruction. Textbooks are written in English language, assessments and evaluations are also conducted in English. Inter-school debates and other academic competitions are organized in English language. Parents often employ the services of private English teachers for their children. Literature in English is also introduced to students in junior secondary school. Although it is not a compulsory subject like English language, it is important and useful in the acquisition of the language. It is a tool and rich resources for the teaching and learning of English language in junior secondary schools. It assists students to improve their grasp of English language and makes them competent and confident in the use of the language. It equips students with language and other soft skills needed for entry into the workforce. Also, contrary to what some people believe, it is not only a window opening into the culture of the target language and builds up cultural competence in students but also a tool for developing the oral and written skills of the students in the target

language. A good mastery of English language at this level is beloved to be a ticket to greatness in life as observed by Adegbiyu (1994) that " the learning of English is one of the major reasons why most people send their children to school and this should not be delayed. Its delay could be interpreted as an attempt of government to hold back their children from legitimate advance in civilization. In summary, the NPE provision for language in the curriculum clearly gives special recognition to the English language in Nigeria education system.

Regardless of the prominent and important position of the English language in the curriculum, students are still constantly faced with the problem of their mother tongue interference. Although measures have been taken by the educational sectors to raise students with near perfect English skills, their first language still influences their acquisition of English language. This is because according to Chaudron, where the second language is used as a medium of instruction, learners encounter problems because their task is threefold; they have to make sense of the instructional tasks presented in the second language, attain linguistic competence required for effective learning to take place and face the problem of mastering the content itself. Also, the report of UNESCO committee asserts that students learn quickly through their first language than an unfamiliar language. Therefore, even though English language is the medium of instruction in schools, students may still face problems of understanding and being fluent in the language leading to their subconscious use of their mother tongue at intervals. In order to reduce the high rate of mother tongue interference among students, native teachers of English argue that foreign language learning needs as much exposure to the L2 as possible

during classroom time. The question on why students mostly use their mother tongue in the classroom instead of English language can be pointed to the fact that they rely too much on their mother tongue hence leading to interference of their mother tongue when they try to communicate using English language. Therefore, no matter how good the students are at comprehending authentic reading and listening materials, they keep mentally switching from L2 to L1 and vice versa. According to Galina Kualiauskiene, the amount of L1 used by particular students may well have to do with differing learner styles and abilities. Following this fact, it is safe to say that the use of mother tongue also relates to the learner's identity. Also, N.J Ross asserts that if students are aware of the differences between English language and their mother tongue, language interference and intervention from their own languages are most likely to be reduced. In other words, to reach the full aim of the English language in the curriculum, teachers if English language have to exploit the language completely in order to compare grammar, vocabulary, word order and other language points in English and the students' mother tongue.

Conclusively, the English language has a very significant status in the junior secondary school in Nigeria. Students are taught skills for communication in the language and it is a basic requirement to move to the next level; senior secondary school. Since English is the official national language, students are not just taught to be able to express themselves fluently in the language but also to be prepared for the workforce and adulthood vigorously. This is seen in the different aspects of the language that is taught to the students. This is to make sure that they will no longer be inferiors in the language and they can excel in their communication skills in the

workforce. Since English is the official global language, students are prepared adequately in order to increase their competence in the language. Therefore, reducing the interference of their mother tongue to the barest minimum is one of the goals of the curriculum planners. This attempt is seen in the various structures of English language that is being taught in schools. Hence, students are not just prepared for school activities in the language but also to be able to take responsibility and provide a place for themselves in the highly competitive workforce when they go into society.

## **EFFECTS OF BILLINGUALISM AND ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NIGERIA**

Bilingualism refers to the coexistence of more than one language system within an individual as contrasted to monolingualism. In other words, Bilingual individuals are exposed to more than one language. Bloomfield identified bilinguals as somebody with "native like control of two languages". According to research carried out by linguistic scientists, when a bilingual person uses one language, the other is almost present at the same time. They can speak and communicate in more than one language. Nigerian students are bilingual because English language which is the official language and also the medium of instruction in schools is not our mother tongue. Students learn English language as a second language when they go to school. Although this has created a good amount of English proficient students, there is the

reoccurrence of their mother tongue interfering with the language. The mother tongue which is the first acquired language of the child tends to influence students' acquisition and performance of English language.

Most students in Nigeria are bilingual that is, they have their mother tongue and they also learn English language in school. Bilingualism, however has an impact on their academics. Their proficiency in English language plays a big role in their academic performance. Numerous students have shown that bilingualism can improve cognitive skills, enhance problem solving abilities and increase academic performance of students in a variety of subjects. Bilingualism has helped in providing social and cultural advantages that helps to improve performance of the students. They are able to communicate with a wider range of people, including those from different cultures and backgrounds, which teaches them to be open minded and it easier to understand new cultures and ideas

Even though there are lists of benefits, there are significant challenges that impact the academic performance of the students. One of the main challenges is language confusion or mixing which occurs due to the interference of the mother tongue. Language mixing leads to errors in grammar, syntax and vocabulary which then impacts academic performance. For example, a student may want to express himself and not find any suitable English word in his vocabulary for a particular expression. This could lead the student to subconsciously make use of words or expressions in his first language (mother tongue) to express himself in that situation.

Another example is when a student makes wrong use of a word in place of another. Since the students are not so familiar with English language, they often make the mistake of using one word or expression to symbolize another word wrongly. This happens often because the students tend to mistake English words especially those having the same vowels. For example, been for being, am for I'm or I am, taught for thought, etc. There is also the issue of code mixing. This involves the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes, words, phrases and clauses in the speech of a bilingual. According to Akindele and Adegbite (1999), it is a situation whereby two languages are used in a single sentence within major and minor consistent boundaries. Another challenge is the potential for temporary language loss or attrition which occurs due to the short time and opportunity that students are given to develop their proficiency in English language. Since English language is only studied for an hour or two daily in schools, the students do not really have enough time to study the language to the point of being efficient. One disadvantage is that when they go home, they go back to communicating in their mother tongue which most of the time is not English this, they do not get enough practice of English language. This often leads to the students forgetting new words learnt, grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions in English language when they are back to their school environment. These challenges serve as weaknesses in the English language proficiency of the students. According to American council on the teaching of foreign language (ACTFL, 2008), language proficiency is the ability of an individual to speak or perform in an acquired language.

Most secondary school students in Nigeria tend to find it difficult to express themselves fluently in English language even though it is the pivot on which the educational wheel of Nigeria rotates. This has caused more harm than good in relation to the academic performance and achievement of the students. The poor performance of students in English language at public examinations in recent times has been explained as a major cause of the decline in academic achievement and standard of education in Nigeria. As Malaeki and Zangani (2007) observe, having difficulty in fully grasping the contents and concepts of the various subjects of the curriculum taught in the target language (English language) seems to be one of the most serious problems that students who English as a foreign language face in their particular course of study. This is the same problem with Nigerian students who study English as a second language. This might be due to their weakness in English language, the medium of instruction, which may have negative consequences on their overall academic performance.

Proficiency in English play a dominant role in the academic achievements of secondary school students in Nigeria. If a particular student is poor in English language, it affects not just his test scores in the subject and communication skills but also his overall class performance in all subjects. This is because English is the medium of instruction in schools. Hence, if a student has a hard time understanding the language, he will find it hard to understand everything that is being taught in class because the medium of instruction is not familiar to him. This goes to show how significant English language is in the academic performance of students. While bilingualism may have it's disadvantage to students because of various factors, it is important to

note that the acquisition of English language as a second language is not just necessary but also important in the academic performance, communication skills, building of social relationships with people from different backgrounds and ultimately creating a stable network and identity for their careers and businesses in the future. According to Cummins (2000), students need to have control of formal language in order to do well in English exams. He also argues that language develops through authentic use. Corder(1981) acknowledges that errors in second language are as a result of mother tongue interference. He asserts that when a second language learner is under pressure, " the learner will borrow or substitute words from the mother tongue". He states further that the reason why learners borrow words is because their primary goal is communication not obedience to the grammatical rules of the language. According to Dulany and Burt (1977) second language learning difficulty was the result of interference from old habits in the learning of new habits. The old habits in this case refers to the first language while the learnt habits refer to the second language.

## **OVERVIEW OF LINGUISTIC INTERFERENCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE WITH NIGERIAN LANGUAGES**

Kachru (1992) classified the English language in terms of three concentric itn, Nigerian English belongs to the outer circle which Kachru defined as regions of the world that were formerly colonized by Britain and the United States, where English language was the language of Empire building. In this circle, there has been a development of different sub - varieties depending on the geographical, cultural and linguistic context of a particular society. According

to Kachru, elements such as phonology, grammar, lexic, idioms, code switching, code mixing, collocations, discourse and style and lack of homogeneity form the features used to identify the varieties. Philipson (1992) recognizes the existence of a variety of English language known as the Nigerian English. He described it as " the varieties of English spoken by educated Nigerians, no matter what their language, have enough features in common to mark off a general type, which may be called Nigerian English".

Aptly put, interference according to Benjamin Ohwodede is variations or alterations which include errors or mistakes found in a learner's exploitation of an unfamiliar language and is evident or can rather be linked to the first language or mother tongue. The linguistic interference of English language with Nigerian languages has been a case study for years with many scholars contributing and shedding light on this phenomenon. The interference can be seen in the accent or pronunciation, translation and use of structural models from Nigerian languages when Nigerians make use of English language. The constant association of English language and Nigerian languages is what has led to the creation of Nigerian English, a production of linguistic interference ( Bamgbose 1971, Adetugbo 1979, Akere 1982, Adeniran 1987). The Nigerian English emerged as a result of Nigerians' inability to produce sounds or become perfect in the mastery of English language. Although there are several reasons for this, the most significant and present reason is the interference of our mother tongue with the English language hence, producing many imperfect speakers of the language. The emergence of the Nigerian English has brought about the inclusion of native words into the standard English. According to Bamgbose

(1971), some of the common lexical forms of Nigerian English include borrowings. In other words, some words have been borrowed from the different native Nigerian languages into the English language. These words include 'buka, buba, danfo, gist, okada, akara', etc. Although these words are not English words, they have been borrowed and included to English use. Adegbija (2004) stated that " Non native speakers of English in Nigeria have adopted the language for home use and made it applicable to their numerous convenience, experience, nuances and sensibilities". In Nigeria, English is no longer considered as a foreign language because of its wide range of use. Therefore, when a speaker finds himself in situations where he cannot find the right expression for an idea, the compelling urge to express himself and communicate rises in him and this leads to him using expressions that belong to his own mother tongue. The constant interference of the English language with the Nigerian native languages has resulted to a locally based English which has gone through a process of "naturalization". Adegbija (2002) describes this situation as a "domestication of English language in Nigeria where people started expressing English language naturally in a way that reflects their socio - cultural norms without unnecessarily sounding bookish. Due to the multi - lingualism of Nigeria, English language has become the most spoken language in the country with different variations depending on factors as geographical location, social class, level of education, etc. Ayo Banjo states that " there are theoretically, as many geographical varieties of English in Nigeria as there are indigenous languages on which it has been superimposed ". In other words, as there are about

250 - 400 indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria, theoretically the statement implies that there are over 200 varieties of English spoken in Nigeria.

Apart from the inability to produce distinct English sounds, another factor responsible for the transfer of Nigerian languages sounds and expressions to English language according to Adetugbo (1977) is the desire by Nigerians to externalise thoughts peculiar to the Nigerian culture which according to him is the root of the problem. This is demonstrated in the writings of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, J.P Clark and others who have native-like competence in English but in their writings they make attempts to express manifestations of local culture in the English language. There seems to be some sort of problems in writing sentences in English, this is because in the area of meaning, what is said may not be sensible to the native speakers whereas it carries a lot of meaning for the local speaker. Writers like Achebe and Soyinka can be used as a case study because of their literal translation local proverbs and witticisms into English. These translations sound strangely simple because, although they are English in lexis and grammar, their meaning potential is alien to English. Hence, alien ideas which are presented in English are simply "clothed" in English lexical items with attempts to transfer native language structures into English. Also, as suggested by Kellerman, some items such as proverbs, catch phrases, slang expressions, idioms and inflectional morphology are language specific and are therefore non transferable. This is because sometimes the 'equivalent' in the English language does not satisfy the semantic constraints necessary for a complete understanding of what is said. Therefore, the speaker uses a form from his native language in order to fulfil certain structural semantic

requirements. This is why in the Nigerian English, the presence of some native words and expressions that are gotten from indigenous Nigerian languages is a constant occurrence even among speakers with near perfect English language. Several poems of Niyi Osundare and Wole Soyinka are replete with such expressions.

The importance of English in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized as it has become the most spoken language in Nigeria. To this effect, researchers have shown that a great percentage of Nigerian citizens have gradually become monolinguals in a country of multi lingualism. This is because English is not just the language used in schools but also the official language and the language used in trade and businesses. It has therefore become the first language of most citizens thereby causing a loss of heritage as youths, teenagers and children are no longer able to speak their mother. It is also the tie that binds people of different ethnicity together in order to maintain social relationships. A local variant of English was colored by the influence from local languages. Eventually, Nigerian speakers of the language constantly adopt their native languages in between the lines when they speak English. So, even though the English language is used in every aspect of life and constantly in Nigeria, it constantly comes in contact with Nigerian languages.

## **PHONOLOGICAL INTERFERENCE AND IMPLICATION FOR L2 LEARNING**

Phonological interference occurs when the pronunciation of a second language is influenced by the sound system of the first language which can lead to mispronunciation. Researchers have carried out different studies on second language learning (L2), proving that in

learning a second language one can be influenced by the phonology of the first language (mother tongue). The interference of L1 on L2 can lead to difficulties in L2 pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. According to Fatemi, Sobhani and Abdulhassan (2012), their investigation on the differences in consonant clusters orally in the first and second language proves that if the structures of the first and second language are different, learners will have difficulty in L2 pronunciation because they face unfamiliar Phonological rules. Hence, they end up using the Phonological rules of the first language to speak, learn and interpret the second language.

Asher (1986) states that as a child develops control of his native language, many aspects of perception and production becomes more and more fixed, he loses much of the flexibility he had to produce sounds that are not in the language around him and soon tends to hear all sounds in terms of the phonological system of his own language. In reality, every individual has his own way of speaking or interacting with other people and it can identify how they pronounce words. Mother tongue interference can be said to be one of the main reasons of speakers' incorrect phonological sounds pronunciation. This is because according to Stevens (1965), " In speaking a foreign language, we commonly use, not the sounds of that language, but those sounds of our mother tongue which we imagine to be equivalent to the sounds of the foreign language". In other words, when non native speakers of English speak or learn the language, when they come across sounds that are non existent in their native language, they end up producing the nearest similar sound that exists in their language. This also implies that apart from non existent sounds, most of the time, second language users often use the closest sound of their native language in

producing English words unless they make a conscious effort not to. It is therefore assumed that Nigerians commonly use the sounds of their languages when speaking in English especially for sounds not available in the native or indigenous languages. Each person speaks with an accent. Accent refers to the way a person speaks or pronounces words that identifies where he is from, regionally or socially. As wells (1982) points out, the description of accents is a form of phonological description. This involves the examination of vowel and consonant sounds, rhythms and prosodic features as well as the structural rules which relate the features to one another. The differences of pronunciation arises from variety of causes which include locality, early influences and social surroundings and also individual percularities. The interference therefore that occurs in learning English as a second language is usually caused by interaction of the speaker's first language. Phonological interference does not just occur because of the systemic difference that exists between the speaker's mother tongue (L1) and English language (L2). Other factors such as the level of the individual's interaction in and with the L1, his level of education and access to oral English lessons while in school. That is to say, the extent to which the individual speaks and interacts with his mother tongue plays a role in his ability to speak English language correctly. This will determine how much of his mother tongue will interfere with his English language. Also, the level to which a person has attained education is a factor that influences his mother tongue interference. A person who is well learned and has attained degrees in English will consciously make efforts to reduce his mother tongue interference as opposed to someone who is not as educated. The ability of schools to provide access to oral

English lessons for the students is also a factor that can determine Phonological interference of the students. Also, according to Tope Omoniyi, the phonological systems of the various indigenous languages are different from those of English and because English is learnt as a second language, what simply takes place is an adaptation of indigenous phonological systems for English speech sounds and pattern rather than an attempt to manage two phonological systems separately. Additionally, Honikman (1964) argues that the disposition of the organs of human speech and their composite action make different languages to have different articulatory settings. She therefore argues that when two languages have different settings, it is not completely possible to master one while maintaining the setting of another. The articulatory settings of many Nigerian languages does not include most of the sounds that are present in the standard English language. Therefore, even if when training, Nigerians master the discreet phonological sounds of the English language, they still find it impossible to speak like native speakers in connected speech when having informal conversations. What emerges instead is a distinct accent of English that is completely Nigerian (Jibril 1982, Awonusi 1985).

In summary, Phonological interference is used in reference to pronunciation inaccuracies of a speaker of a particular language when he comes in contact with another language. This occurs because a person's understanding of one language has a direct influence on his or her comprehension of an entirely different language (Benjamin Ohwodede). Therefore, when an individual comes in contact with another language, he will subconsciously make use of the phonological structures of his mother tongue in pronouncing words of the second language. This

makes him an imperfect speaker of the second language. This happens because physiologically, the only sounds he can produce are those sounds that are present and occur in his mother tongue. Otherwise, what he will produce will be the the nearest sound of his mother tongue in his attempt to produce a particular sound.

## **SUMMARY OF THE REVIEWED LITERATURE**

The review of literature in this chapter provides a comprehensive understanding on the influence of the mother tongue (L1) on English language (L2) and how it affects students' performance in school. It shows that English is a compulsory subject in school and occupies an influential position in the curriculum as not just the medium of instruction but also a core subject that students need to pass in order to move to the next level. This is why students who fail English language in the junior secondary school certificate examination (JSCE) are not promoted to senior secondary until they retake and pass the examination regardless of their grades in the other subjects. However, records have shown that despite this, students still struggle with learning English language and there is a constant interference of their mother tongue on their English language. This has contributed to their low input in not just English language but also other subjects of study because English language is the medium of instruction in schools. Hence, one major goal of curriculum planners and teachers is to reduce the interference of the students' mother tongue to the barest minimum.

In addition, the literature review addresses the concept of bilingualism and the importance of English proficiency in improving academic achievements of secondary school students in Nigeria. It explains how bilingualism serves as a major challenge to students in school because they already have a first language and so they subconsciously switch between their mother tongue and English language and also substitute words from their mother tongue when they are under pressure or fail to find the right word for an expression in their English vocabulary. Also, linguistic interference and how it comes in contact with Nigerian languages is looked into. The constant interference of English language and Nigerian languages is what has resulted to the concept of Nigerian English. This is because Nigerian speakers of the language often make use of expressions from their mother tongue and have constantly borrowed words and expressions from their mother tongue into the English language. Hence, the Nigerian English contains lots of native Nigerian words which have become standard Nigerian English. Although these words are not English words, they have been recognized by Nigerian speakers as part of the English language and are often used by both the educated and illiterate speakers of the language.

Phonological interference is also another constant phenomenon among Nigerian speakers of English language. Since English is learnt as a second language, speakers find it hard to produce English sounds that are not present in their mother tongue. Linguistic scientists have proven through research that the articulatory settings of Nigerians contributes to their inability to produce specific English sounds. The factors responsible for phonological interference varies and they range from the inability of a second language learner of English to produce sounds other

than those from his native language because his knowledge of sounds have become fixed and limited to those found in his mother tongue, the accent the speaker uses when he speaks, the level of the individual's interaction with his mother tongue, the difference in the phonological system of English language and the speaker's mother tongue. These factors all contribute to the constant interference of speakers' mother tongue with English language and their inability to articulate English sounds. This study seeks to examine how the interference of mother tongue influences the phonetics of junior secondary school students in Ovia North East, Benin city.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter deals with the methods and procedures the researcher will use in conducting the research. These include research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, research instruments, validity of the Instrument, reliability of the Instrument, method of data collection and method of data analysis.

#### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The survey design was employed in this study. A survey of the junior secondary schools in Ovia North East, Benin city was used to study the effect of mother tongue interference in the

phonology of junior secondary school students. The researcher carried out this survey by using questionnaires to determine the current status of the issue under study.

### **POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

The target population were students and English teachers in junior secondary schools in Ovia North East, Benin city. The population consists of twenty (20) junior secondary schools with a total number of six thousand, one hundred and fifty four students(6154) students in Ovia North East local government area which was chosen as a case study for this research work since the focus of the research work is on the effect of mother tongue interference on the phonetics of junior secondary school students in Ovia North East.

### **SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

The sample size of this study consists of a total of one hundred and twenty students in junior secondary school which will be used to represent the total number of junior secondary school students in the local government and ten English language teachers which were chosen from four secondary schools from the population. The schools were sampled through random sampling. This was done by writing the names of schools on a piece of paper, folding it and putting it in a bag. Afterwards, the researcher randomly selected four papers and the schools on it were used for the research. From these schools, thirty students were randomly chosen each from Jss1 to Jss3 and given the questionnaires to answer. Teachers were selected from schools using purposive sampling. This is when the choice of units depend on the subjective judgement of the

researcher. The English language teachers in the schools were selected because they were considered to have relevant information about how mother tongue influences the phonology of the students. The teachers and students were chosen randomly without any bias by the researcher. The students and teachers given the questionnaires were selected randomly by the researcher .

Target Group	Target Population	Sample Population	Sampling Procedure
Schools	20	4	Simple random
Teachers	37	10	Purposive Sampling
Students	6154	120	Simple random

## **RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

The main research Instrument used to collect data for this study was the questionnaire designed by the researcher. The choice of this instrument was prompted by its reliability and validity of the answers. This is so because of the interaction between the researcher and the respondents which could bias the responses to the questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two: section A and B. Section A covers the information relating to the bio-data of the respondents such as their gender,class and age while section B is made up of items which are necessary in finding out relevant information that will help in testing the research questions generated from this study. It has four parts with three questions each. The

questionnaire was structured in a tabular form with questions on one side and possible choices of opinions on the other side. The four point likert scale was used and the responses are divided into four: strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The respondents are expected to tick the column that corresponds to their responses.

### **VALIDITY OF THE INSTRUMENT**

The accuracy and validity of the Instrument used in this research was ascertained by presenting the questionnaire to the project supervisor and three other lecturers from the English and literature department for proper check and for amendments and corrections. Thereafter, their comments were used to modify the questionnaire before it was being administered for the study.

### **METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION**

The researcher personally distributes the questionnaires to the respondents. Items which needed clarification were explained to the respondents. To avoid bias responses, the respondents were not pre informed of the visit by the researcher.

### **METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The method of data analysis used in the project was descriptive statistics and simple percentages. The responses were analyzed according to their relevance to the research questions.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results and discusses the findings of the various data collected for this study. The final results were analyzed with the major aim of answering the research questions. It involves the use of statistical techniques to provide the basis for analyzing the research objectives listed in chapter one. Therefore, it is an important part of this study since it forms the basis for conclusion and recommendation.

#### Research Questions

Research question 1: Would mother tongue interference have a significant influence on the pronunciation of vowel sounds of Junior Secondary School Students?

**Table 1: Students responses on the influence of mother tongue interference on the pronunciation of vowel sounds**

S/N	Items	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
1	You find it difficult to identify words with vowel sounds	58	48.3%	27	22.5%	27	22=5%	8	6.7%
2	You find it difficult to pronounce some vowel sounds	59	49.2%	51	42.5%	8	6.7%	2	1.6%
3	You agree that knowledge of your mother tongue contributes to the difficulties you find in articulating vowel sounds	58	48.3%	49	40.8%	12	10%	1	0.83%

Above, table 1 shows the responses of students respondents on whether or not mother tongue interference would have significant influence on the pronunciation of vowel sounds of junior secondary school students. In item 1, 58 respondents which represents 45.3% strongly agreed, 27 respondents representing 22.5% agreed, 27 respondents representing 22.5% disagreed while eight respondents representing 6.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they find it difficult to identify words with vowel sounds. In item 2, 49.2% represented by 59 respondents strongly agreed, 51 respondents which represented 42.5% agreed, 8 respondents which represented 6.7% disagreed while 2 respondents which represented 1.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they find it difficult to pronounce some vowel sounds. In item 3, 58 respondents which represented 48.3% strongly agreed, 49 respondents which represented 40.8% agreed, 12 respondents which represented 10% disagreed while while 1 respondent which represented 0.83% strongly disagreed that knowledge of their mother tongue contributes to the difficulties they find in articulating vowel sounds From the results of this data, it is obtained that most students are faced with countless difficulties in identifying and articulating vowel sounds and these problems are as a result of their mother tongue interference.

**Table 2: Teachers response on the influence of mother tongue interference on the pronunciation of vowel sounds of Junior Secondary School Students**

S/N	Items	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
1	Students' mother tongue often influence their articulation of vowel sounds	3	30%	7	70%				
2	Students who speak English more fluently use vowels more correctly than those who are more fluent in their mother tongue	6	60%	4	40%				
3	More students find it difficult to articulate vowels in speech	6	60%	4	40%				

Table 2 shows that 3 respondents representing 30% strongly agree while 7 respondents representing 70% agree that students' mother tongue often influence their articulation of vowel sounds. In item 2, 6 respondents representing 60% of the respondents strongly agree while 4 respondents representing 40% agreed that students who speak English more fluently use vowels more correctly than those who are more fluent in their mother tongue. Item 3 shows that 6 respondents representing 60% strongly agree while 4 respondents representing 40% agree that more students find it difficult to articulate vowels in speech. This data further solidify the results obtained in table 6 that students face difficulties in their articulation of English vowel sounds as a result of the influence of their mother tongue.

**Research Question 2: Would mother tongue interference have a significant influence on the pronunciation of consonant sounds of Junior Secondary School Students?**

**Table 3: Students responses on the influence of mother tongue on the pronunciation of consonant sounds**

S/N	Items	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	D
4	There are some consonants that you find difficult to pronounce	64	53.3%	45	37.5%	9	7.5%	2	1.7%
5	You can fluently pronounce words with consonants that do not occur in your mother tongue	19	15.8%	20	16.7%	60	50%	21	17.5%
6	You often inter-switch between consonants in English language and your mother tongue	31	25.9%	63	52.5%	22	18.3%	4	3.3%

The data gotten from the respondents on table 3 shows that 64 respondents representing 53.3% strongly agreed, 45 respondents representing 37.5% agreed, 9 respondents representing 7.5% disagreed and 2 respondents representing 1.7% strongly disagreed that there are some consonants they find difficult to pronounce. In item 5, 19 respondents which makes up 15.8% strongly agreed, 20 respondents representing 16.7% agreed, 60 respondents representing 50% disagreed while 21 respondents representing 17.5% strongly disagreed that they can fluently pronounce words with consonant sounds that do not occur in their mother tongue. In item 6, 31 respondents representing 25.9% strongly agreed, 63 respondents representing 52.5% agreed, 22 respondents

representing 18.3% disagreed while 4 respondents representing 3.3% strongly disagreed that they often inter switch between consonants in English language and their mother tongue. This data proves that a majority of the students agree that there are some consonants that they find difficult to pronounce and inter switch between consonants in English language and their mother tongue. They also find it difficult to pronounce words with consonants that do not occur in their mother tongue

**Table 4: Teachers response on the influence of mother tongue interference on the pronunciation of consonant sounds of Junior Secondary School Students**

S/N	Items	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
4	Students often articulate the wrong consonants in speech	1	10%	8	80%	1	10%		
	Mother tongue influence contributes to the wrong use of consonants by students	3	30%	6	60%	1	10%		
	Most students cannot differentiate between similar consonant sounds	3	30%	5	50%	2	20%		

Table 4 shows that 1 respondent which represents 10% strongly agreed, 8 respondents representing 80% agreed and 1 respondent representing 10% disagreed that students often articulate the wrong consonants in speech. Item 5 shows that 3 respondents representing 30% strongly agreed, 6 respondents representing 60% agreed while one respondent representing 10% disagreed that mother tongue influence contributes to the wrong use of consonants by students

while in item 6, 3 respondents representing 30% strongly agreed, 5 respondents representing 50% agreed and 2 respondents representing 20% disagreed that most students cannot differentiate between similar consonant sounds. The teachers who were used as respondents for the study mostly agree according to this data that students often articulate the wrong consonants in speech, mother tongue influence contributes to the wrong use of consonants by students and most students cannot differentiate between similar consonant sounds.

**Research question 3: Would mother tongue interference have significant influence on the intonation and stress pattern of Junior secondary School Students?**

**Table 5: Students responses on the influence of mother tongue interference on the intonation and stress pattern**

S/N	Items	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
7	You often find it difficult to differentiate between words with falling and rising intonation	82	68.3%	29	24.2%	5	4.2%	4	3.3%
8	The prevalence of your mother tongue makes it hard for you to utilize stress patterns in English language	52	43.3%	57	47.5	10	8.3%	1	0.8%
9	Your mother tongue has an influence on your general articulation of English phonetic sounds	52	43.3%	56	46.7%	11	9.2%	1	0.8%

The data gotten from table 5 shows that 82 respondents representing 68.3% strongly agreed, 29 respondents representing 24.2% agreed, 5 respondents representing 4.2% disagreed and 4 respondents representing 3.3% strongly disagreed that they often find it difficult to differentiate between words with falling and rising intonation. In item 8, 52 respondents representing 43.3% strongly agreed, 57 respondents representing 47.5% agreed, 10 respondents representing 8.3% disagreed while 1 respondent representing 0.8% strongly disagreed that the prevalence of their mother tongue makes it difficult for them to utilize stress patterns in English language. In item 9, 52 respondents representing 43.3% strongly agreed, 56 respondents representing 46.7% agreed, 11 respondents representing 9.2% disagreed while 1 respondent representing 0.8% strongly disagreed that their mother tongue has an influence on their general articulation of English phonetic sounds. From the responses gotten in this section, we can clearly ascertain that with the high percentage of agreement that one of the major challenges students face in English language as a result of their mother tongue is that of intonation and stress patterns.

**Table 6: Teachers response on the influence of mother tongue interference on the intonation and stress pattern of Junior Secondary School Students**

S/N	Items	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
7	Students struggle with identification of intonations and stress patterns when they speak	3	30%	7	70%				
8	Students pay less attention to intonation and stress pattern that do not occur in their mother tongue	5	50%	5	50%				1.7%
9	Mother tongue interference is a major problem in the intonation and stress pattern of students in speech	5	50%	5	50%				

In table 6, 30% of the respondents represented by 3 respondents strongly agreed while 7 respondents representing 70% agrees that students struggle with identification of intonations and stress patterns when they speak. In item 8, 5 respondents representing 50% strongly agreed while 5 respondents representing 50% agreed that students pay less attention to intonation and stress patterns that do not occur in their mother tongue. In item 9, 5 respondents representing 50% strongly agreed while 5 respondents representing the other 50% agreed that mother tongue interference is a major problem in the intonation and stress patterns of students in speech. Similar to the students' respondents, there is also a high percentage of agreement by the teachers respondents that intonation and stress patterns of students are highly influenced by their mother tongue. In this section, there was no form of disagreements by the respondents.

Research question 4: Would mother tongue interference have a direct influence on the academic performance of students?

**Table 7: Students responses on the influence of mother tongue interference on their academic performance**

S/N	Items	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
10	Use of mother tongue influences the way you write	52	43.3%	51	42.5%	14	11.7%	3	2.5%
11	Language you think in influence your writing in English	51	42.5%	55	45.8%	11	9.2%	3	2.5%
12	Students who use mother tongue perform more poorly than those who do not	66	55%	39	32.6%	10	8.3%	5	4.1%

Table 7 shows that 52 respondents representing 43.3% strongly agreed, 51 respondents representing 42.5% agreed, 14 respondents representing 11.7% disagreed while 3 respondents representing 2.5% strongly disagreed that mother tongue influences the way they speak. In item 11, 51 respondents representing 42.5% strongly agreed, 55 respondents representing 45.8% agreed, 11 respondents representing 9.2% disagreed while 3 respondents representing 2.5% strongly disagreed that the language they think in influence their writing in English. In item 12, 66 respondents representing 55% strongly agreed, 39 respondents representing 32.6% agreed, 10 respondents representing 8.3% disagreed while 5 respondents representing 4.1% strongly

disagreed that students who use mother perform more poorly than those who do not. From the findings on this section, we can ascertain that the academic achievements of students is highly influenced by their mother tongue.

**Table 8: Teachers responses on the influence of mother tongue interference on the academic performance of students**

S/N	Items	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
10	Use of mother tongue influences students performance in English language	6	60%	4	40%				
11	Students who are more fluent in English perform better than those who are more fluent in their mother tongue academically	5	50%	4	40%	1	10%		
12	Mother tongue influences students writing in English hence reduces their performance during examinations	9	90%			1	10%		

Table 8 above shows that 6 respondents representing 60% of the respondents strongly agreed while 4 respondents representing 40% agreed that the use of mother tongue influences students performance in English language. In item 11, 5 respondents representing 50% strongly agreed and 4 respondents representing 40% agreed that students who are more fluent in English perform better than those who are more fluent in their mother tongue academically. In item 12, 9 respondents representing 90% strongly agreed while 1 respondent representing 10% disagreed that mother tongue influences students writing in English hence reduces their academic

performance during examinations. The results gotten from this analysis further proves that mother tongue interference in students affect not just their fluency in English language but also their general academic performance.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

From the analysis of the data collected, the researcher was able to ascertain his findings on the research question 1 which indicates that Junior Secondary School Students have some difficulties in identifying and producing vowel sounds and this is linked to the interference of their mother tongue. Students who are more fluent in their mother tongue tend to face difficulties in articulating English vowel sounds. Hence, their mother tongue has a significant influence on their pronunciation of vowel sounds. This is evident in the percentage of strongly agree (SA) and agree (A) of the respondents ( teachers and students) across the various aspects of vowel pronunciation in the administered research Instrument (questionnaire). These findings confirm that one of the core reasons students fail to articulate or identify English vowel sounds is the constant presence of their mother tongue which in most cases is their first language (L1). This concurs with Corder (1981) who argues that errors in spoken English are as a result of mother tongue interference.

In research question 2, the researcher finds that a wide range of the students struggle with their English consonant sounds. Often times, they inter-switch between consonants in their mother tongue and English language. When the consonant does not occur in their language, they

find it hard to pronounce fluently in speech. The inability of students to identify, produce and differentiate between similar consonants in speech is highly related to the influence from their mother tongue. This is shown in the responses gotten from the questionnaire distributed to students and teachers. There is a high level of agreement across the questions on that section that students struggle with their consonant sounds and this is attributed to their mother tongue. These findings tend to agree with Asher (1986) who argues that students tend to hear and produce all speech sounds in terms of the phonological systems of their own language.

The findings from research question 3 shows that the intonation and stress pattern used by junior secondary school students in English speech production is that of their mother tongue. While speaking in English language, students are guilty of utilizing stress patterns and intonations of their mother tongue. Hence, they speak English like they are speaking their indigenous languages. They mix up the falling and rising intonations and cannot really figure out the stress pattern of words when they speak. The basic reason for this is the prevalence of their mother tongue over English language, therefore, in speech production, they will subconsciously follow their language rules instead of those of English language.

In research question 4, the academic performances of students are found to be influenced highly by their mother tongue. In the administered research Instrument, there is a higher percentage of agreement that the influence of mother tongue on the students can be tied directly to their academic performances. This section shows that students who are more fluent in their

mother tongue than in English language are likely to have lower academic achievements than those who are more fluent in English language. This is because when writing, the language you think and speak in will influence how they write during examinations. Hence, those who are more fluent in their mother tongue may find it difficult to express themselves in English language therefore leading to an underperformance in examinations. This is in agreement with Cummins (1964) that learners language of thought dictates their expression in writing.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

This chapter presents the summary and conclusions drawn from the findings of this study. Also, it presents recommendations and suggestions for further research

#### **SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

This study is an analysis on the effect of mother tongue interference on the phonetics of junior secondary school students in Ovia North East local government area, Benin city. The study was guided by four research questions which provided valuable insights into the effect of mother tongue interference on the phonetics of junior secondary school students in Ovia North East local government area, Benin city, the influence of mother tongue interference on the pronunciation of vowel and consonant sounds by students, intonations and stress patterns and how the interference of students' mother tongue have a direct influence on their academic performances. The population of this study consisted of the six thousand, one hundred and fifty four (6154) junior secondary school students in Ovia North East local government area Benin city and the simple random sampling technique was used to select one hundred and twenty (120) students and ten (10) English language teachers who were used as the sample of the population. A structured questionnaire was constructed to retrieve data from the respondents and the analysis was done based on the responses gotten from the questionnaires.

From the findings of this study, it was realized that a greater percentage of junior secondary school students find it difficult to pronounce vowel sounds especially those who are more fluent in their mother tongue which makes up a majority. Hence the mother tongue interference has a significant influence on the pronunciation of vowel sounds of junior secondary school students in Ovia North East local government area.

The study also brings to our knowledge that apart from vowel sounds, students also struggle with the English consonant sounds. Most of them are not able to pronounce words with consonant sounds that do not occur in their mother tongue, leading them to often inter-switch between consonants in their mother tongue and English language. This difficulty is because of the effect of their mother tongue in acquiring a new language. This shows that mother tongue interference has a significant influence on the pronunciation of consonant sounds of junior secondary school students in Ovia North East local government area, Benin city.

Also , from the findings of this study, it was known that the mother tongue interference of students plays a role in their articulation of intonations and stress patterns in English language. This makes them unable to differentiate between rising and falling intonations and utilize the various stress patterns when they speak. The study shows that mother tongue interference has a significant influence on the intonation and stress pattern of junior secondary school students in Ovia North East local government area, Benin city.

Apart from the difficulties in speech, this study confirms that students who use and are more fluent in their mother tongue than English language will have more difficulties in their academics than those who are more fluent in English language. Therefore, we are able to ascertain from the findings that the use of mother tongue by students influences not just their performances in English language but also their general academic achievements.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the findings of this research, it is evident that mother tongue interference has a huge influence on the phonetics of junior secondary school students in Ovia North East Benin city. This influence can be seen in their pronunciation of English vowel sounds, consonant sounds, stress pattern and intonation and also affects their overall academic performances.

Through this study, the various ways that mother tongue influences the phonetics of junior secondary school students is identified including: inability to identify and articulate vowel sounds which was attributed to the influence from their mother tongue, inability to pronounce consonants that do not occur in their mother tongue, inter-switching between consonants in English language and their mother tongue, inability to differentiate between similar consonant sounds, the influence of of their mother tongue in writing and their academic performances. In order to develop strategies to improve and address the issue of mother tongue interference on junior secondary school students, it is important to identify the various challenges that is brought by it.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. To successfully enhance better learning of English language, there should be provision of ongoing professional development opportunities for English teachers, allowing them to stay up to date with the latest teaching strategies and methodologies.
2. There should be arrangement of opportunities for students to interact with native English speakers physically or through online platforms.
3. Students should be introduced to various language learning strategies such as use of mnemonics and using different reading techniques.
4. Encouragement of group discussions in English classes to promote active participation and improve communication skills.
5. Students should be discouraged from having conversations in their mother tongue and the schools should come up with a reward-punishment system to encourage use of English and discourage use of mother tongue.

## **SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE STUDY**

Future researchers could explore the following areas;

1. A study should be carried out on the grammatical and Morpho-syntactic influence of mother tongue interference on students' academic performance.
2. Investigate how the language a person thinks in influences his performance of English.
3. Identify the general influence of mother tongue interference on students in secondary schools and afterwards.

## REFERENCES

- Adebayo, D.O. (2008). The impact of mother tongue on students' achievement in English language on junior secondary certificate examination in western Nigeria. Ibadan: University of Ibadan
- Adebija Efurosibina E.(2004). Multilingualism: A Nigerian case study. Publisher, Africa world press
- Adebija Efurosibina (2004). The domestication of English in Nigeria. A festschrift in honour of Abiodun Adetugbo. University of Lagos press
- Adeniran Adekunle (2013). Linguistic and sociolinguistic situation in Nigeria. Haytee press and publishing company
- Adetugbo, A. (1977). Nigerian English: Fact or fiction. Lagos notes & records, 6128-141
- Adetugbo, A. (1979). Nigerian English and communicative competencies. Ibadan African University press, pp167- 183
- Akere F. (1981). Sociology and linguistics: sociolinguistic consequences of language contact. English vs Nigerian languages. Linguistics, sociology.
- Akindele, F.& Adegbite, W.(1999). The sociology and politics of English language in Nigeria: An introduction. Obafemi Awolowo University press ltd, Nigeria
- American council in the teaching of foreign language (2008). ACTFL. American council on education.
- Asher, J. (1986). Learning another language through actions; the complete teacher's guidebook. expanded 3rd edition. Los Gatos, CA: Sky Oaks production, inc
- Asher, C. (1986). Literacy: teaching and learning language skills. National library of Australia
- Awonusi, V.O. (1990). Coming of age: English in Nigeria. Cambridge press
- Ayo Banjo (1985). The new Oxford course Nigeria: an overview of the English language in Nigeria. University press
- Bamgbose Ayo (1995). The English language in Group publishers.

- Bamgbose, A. (2000). Language and exclusion: The consequences of language policy in Africa. Munste Hamburg: Lit verlay
- Benjamin Ohwodede (2020). English phonetics and phonology; A primer
- Cohen, L. (2000). Research methods in education (5th Ed.) New York: Routledge Falmer
- Corder Pit Stephen (1981). Error analysis and interlanguage. Published online by Cambridge University press
- Cummins, J.P.(1981). Bilingualism and minority language children: language and literacy servers. Toronto: Oist press
- Falayaso, W. (1999). Prototype of National assessment for Nigeria. Ibadan: University of Ibadan
- Fatemi Sayyed Mohsen (2018). The psychological power of language. Taylor and Francis publishers
- Galina (2009). Role of mother tongue in learning English for specific purposes. Esp world, issue 1, volume 8
- Honikman (1964). Articulatory settings. In D. Abercrombie, D.B Fry, P.A.D Maccarthy, N.C scotte & J.L.M Trim (eds) in honour of Daniel Jones. London : longmin, pp 73-84
- International journal of English language teaching (2015). ELT journal
- Jibril, A. Munzali (2016). English and Nigerian languages. M & J grand orbit communications Nigeria, 908
- Lado, R. (1995). Linguistics across cultures. Michigan: University of Michigan press
- Macmillan, H. (1992). Educational research: fundamentals for consumers. Pearson/A and B
- McLaughlin, B. (1990). Second language acquisition in childhood. Erlbaum, Halsted press
- Mertens, D. (1998). Research methods in education and psychology. Sage publications, thousand oaks, California
- Mkpa, M.A. & Izuagba, A. C. (2003). Curriculum studies and innovation. Owerri: books, konsult

Onwuka UGA (1981). Curriculum development for Africa. Africana publishers.

Philipson Robert (1992). Linguistic imperialism. Oxford university press

Sobhani Rob (2012). Press 2 for English fix immigration. Caspian publishing, LLC

Stevens Peter (1965). Papers in language and language teaching. Oxford university press

Tope Omoniyi (2010). The sociology of language and religion. Palgrave Macmillan Wells John,  
C. (1982). Accents of English. Cambridge university press.

**APPENDIX**  
**STUDENTS QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS**  
**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**  
**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY**

Dear respondents

My name is Ugbogu Joan and I am a student of the above named institution. This questionnaire is designed to elicit responses on the effect of mother tongue Interference in the Phonology of Junior Secondary School Students. Your sincere opinion is highly needed for the success of this research. Your response will be treated with confidentiality. Thank you

**SECTION A**

SEX: MALE ( ) FEMALE ( )

CLASS: JS1( ) JS2 ( ) JS3 ( )

AGE : 9-11 ( ) 11-12( ) 12 ans above ( )

## SECTION B

Please kindly tick ( ) the column that corresponds to your response.

Key: Strongly agree (SA), agree ( A), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD)

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
	Would mother tongue Interference have significant influence on the pronunciation of vowel sounds of junior secondary school students?				
1	You find it difficult to identify words with vowel sounds				
2	You find it difficult to pronounce some vowel sounds				
3	You agree that knowledge of your mother tongue contributes to the difficulties you find in articulating vowel sounds				
	Would mother tongue interference have significant influence on the pronunciation of consonant sounds of junior secondary school students?				
4	There are some consonants that you find difficult to pronounce				
5	You can fluently pronounce words with consonant sounds that do not occur in your mother tongue				
6	You often inter-switch between consonants in English language and your mother tongue				
	Would mother tongue interference have significant influence on the intonation and stress pattern of Junior Secondary School Students?				
7	You often find it difficult to differentiate between words with rising and falling intonations				

8	The prevalence of your mother tongue makes it difficult for you to utilize stress patterns in English language				
9	Your mother tongue has an influence on your general articulation of English phonetic sounds				
	Would mother tongue interference have a direct influence on the academic performance of students?				
10	Use of mother tongue influences the way you write				
11	Language you think in influence your writing in English				
12	Students who use mother tongue perform poorly than those who do you				

**TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRE**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY**

Dear respondents

My name is Ugbogu Joan and I am a student of the above named institution. This questionnaire is designed to elicit responses on the effect of mother tongue interference in the Phonology of junior secondary school students. Your sincere opinion is highly needed for the success of this research. Your response will be treated with confidentiality. Thank you.

**SECTION A**

Sex: Male ( ) Female ( )

Duration of teaching: 1-5 years ( ) 6-10 years ( ) 10 years and above ( )

**SECTION B**

Please kindly tick ( ) the column that corresponds to your response

Keys: strongly agree (SA), agree (a), disagree (d), strongly disagree (SD)

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
	Would mother tongue interference have significant influence on the pronunciation of vowel sounds of junior secondary school students				
1	Students' mother tongue often influence their articulation of vowel sounds				
2	Students who speak English more fluently use vowels more correctly than those who are more fluent in their mother tongue				
3	More students find it difficult to articulate vowels in speech				
	Would mother tongue interference have significant influence on the pronunciation of consonant sounds of junior secondary school students				
4	Students often articulate the wrong consonants in speech				
5	Mother tongue influence contributes to the wrong use of consonants by students				
6	Most students cannot differentiate between similar consonant sounds				
	Would mother tongue interference have significant influence on the intonation and stress patterns of junior secondary school students				
7	Students struggle with identification of intonations and stress pattern when they speak				
8	Students pay less attention to intonation and stress pattern that do not occur in their mother tongue				
9	Mother tongue interference is a major problem in the intonation and stress pattern of students in speech				

	Would mother tongue interference have a direct influence on the academic performance of students				
10	Use of mother tongue influences students performance in English language				
11	Students who are more fluent in English perform better than those who are more fluent in their mother tongue academically				
12	Mother tongue influences students' writing in English hence reduces their academic performances during examinations				