

PDF - A STUDY OF THE PHONOLOGICAL USAGE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE BY L2 SPEAKERS IN SELECTED NIGERIAN SCHOOLS - researchcub.info

INDO" - refers to the fact that many of the daughter languages from earliest recorded times were spoken on the Indian Subcontinent and "**EUROPEAN**" - refers to the fact that from equally early times, most of the languages of Europe are descended from that common ancestor too.

From an anonymous 5th century chronicle we learn that in 441 - 442 the Germanic tribe of Saxons conquered Britain after prolonged harassment. Another version was given by a Celtic preacher and chronicler Gildas who says that the Saxons were invited to Britain to assist in protecting the Island from an invasion from the North, they were given lands and allowed to settle in the eastern part of Britain.

The authoritative Ecclesiastical History of the English People written in 731 by the English cleric and historian venerable Bede dates the first landing of the Germanic Wamosin Britain to the year 449. The Celts were the first settlers of Britain, they were subdued and eventually ruled and sheltered by the Romans. They were ruled by Romans for 400 years, Celts were defenseless, the languages spoken then was Angle-ish and the name of the country England comes from Angle-land. The Romans loose their grip on Angle-land territory because maintaining occupation forces is so expensive so the Romans were conquered by the barbaric Germanic tribe, they had influence on the English language. Celtic was the first Indo-European tongue spoken in England, it also has influence on English language.

The Vikings and Scandinavian influence on English was due to their attack and eventual conquest of England and their language too has an influence on English language.

Latin invaded and took over England and their language too overtook the Viking's influence on English language was prominent then too they all diffuse to make-up English language of today.

The four main dialects of old English language were Mercian, Kentish, Northumbrian and West Saxon which is collectively known as Anglian after

the process of unification of the diverse Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in 878 by -

Alfred the Great, there was a marked decline in the importance of regional

dialects. This is not because they stopped existing, regional dialects continued even after that time to this day, as evidence both by the existence of middle and modern English dialects later on, and by common sense people do not spontaneously develop new accents when there is a sudden change of political power.

There was a change in pronunciation that began in 1400, while modern English speakers can read Chaucer's poem with some difficulty, Chaucer's pronunciation would have been completely unintelligible to the modern ear. Vowel sounds began to move further to the front of the mouth and "te" letter "e" at the end of words became silent. Chaucer's 'lyf' pronounced leaf

became the modern life. In Middle English, name was pronounced 'nam-a',

five was pronounced 'feet' and 'down' was pronounced 'doon'. In linguistic terms, the shift was rather sudden, the major changes occurring within a century.

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English language is seen as a tree with stems of branches in which phonetics is a branch of it which consists of "Phonology".

The year 449 AD marks the origin of English language-Norse influence Rome later overtook England and ruled then for 400 years, the language of Christianity Latin has influence in the rise of English language. That period was the old English period which is non-existent today. The period was Beowulf's writing which is unreadable now. The first attempt made by Lord Alfred to standardize it failed. France later overtook England and French became their language.

In 1476 which was the year that printing press was introduced by William Caxton and Gutenberg brought about standardization of English language, writers have to choose new words in their writings.

In 1592 Richard Treatise proposed his treatise, where spellings and grammar became fixed. 1755 - A dictionary of English language was profounded by Daniel Jones.

The English Language is one of the exoglossic languages used in Nigeria. It wields so much influence on the Nigeria terrain that it dominates over the 300 local languages that are used in the country.

This influence of the English Language in the country can be attributed, to the influence of the colonial leaders and some other native speakers of English, who came into the country even before the colonial leaders e.g. Portuguese. These set of English Language speakers came into the country in the 17th century as missionaries, slave traders and adventurist, they include Irish and the Welsh and English Language (Pidgin) English serves as their means of communication with the illiterates population of African's then. However, the British rule was established in Nigeria in 1900 and led to the influx of many Briton's, who are believed to use the standard form of English Language into the country. Some came into the country as traders, some came as missionaries while some came in as government officials of British colonial rule in Nigeria. This led to the usage of English Language as our official language.

Nigeria is a vast and diverse country, a federation of twelve states then, it also occupies 924,000 square kilometers, (356,669 square miles) and has a population of about 70 million, comprising of 250 cultural and linguistic groups of which Yoruba, Hausa and Ibo they have different languages so English Language serves as the only common means of communication between them during the colonial rule and even after independence.

The pre-statutory system of the western type of education was the result of the activities of the Christian mission invented in 1842 in the coastal areas and gradually spread to the hinterland of the territory which later became the colony and protectorate of southern Nigeria.

The aim of English Language was mainly religious, it is mainly provided for the adults and children converts who had to learn to read the bible, the prayer book and the commentaries and to enhance them in singing hymns. A number of the children were sufficiently proficient in reading and writing to become teachers or catechist in the church, clerks and interpreters in the government service and the commercial houses.

At the proclamation of the protectorate of the Northern Nigeria in 1900, there was no school of the Western type in the territory except the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) school at Lokoja, which was then the headquarter of the Royal Niger Company and a station of the Niger Mission of the Church Missionary Society. There are three sources of the statutory system all of them introduced the colonial government.

First, there was Education Ordinance No. 3 of 1887 for the promotion of Education in the colony of Lagos, which was derived from the English system. The colony comprised of Lagos Island and its mainland Badagry, Epe, Lekki and Ikorodu territories corresponding to the present Lagos State.

The Ordinance gradually spread into Yoruba land, which the protectorate of Lagos. Next, there was the Education proclamation No. 19 of 1903 which was applicable to the Southern Nigeria, the territory which later became the province of Calabar, Owerri, Onitsha, Warri, Benin, Ogoja and the Owo District of Ondo Province. The proclamation was strongly influenced by the practices of the Presbyterian Mission Education System, with the background of the Scottish Educational System. Industrial Education and the District Primary School later emerged and known as the "Government School".

Finally, the Girourard-Visher System of the protectorate of Northern Nigeria emerged and was based on the system of the Sudan (Arabic).

English Language overshadowed that and it became the Language of the African elites even after independence, when Nigerians assumed the vantage of high ranking position as Officials in Government Parastatals, it still maintained its prestigious position as the Language of officialdom and the elitists.

One can attribute the influence of the English Language as the Second Language L₂, in Nigeria due to the fact that it serves as the only means of inter-tribal form of communication, between different tribes of Nigeria nation, with about 300 local dialects.

Apart from this afore-mentioned, it also serves some other functions e.g. technical functions in Nigeria, these includes its roles as the Language of Law, Education, Health, Mass Media and Government.

English Language from the Mid-Primary School through Secondary Schools and Universities functions as the language of instructions in both Government and Private Schools, while this occurs right from creche to kindergarten levels respectively.

Since the Nigerian child is exposed to the English Language early in life, one would expect that he will be proficient in its usage but contrary is the case. The situation is so bad that teacher's do not cease to lament about the mass failure of students in English Language as evidenced in their WAEC, NECO and JAMB results.

This now leads us to believe that the phonology of the Mother's tongue of Nigerian's children L₁, has influence over his English Language phonology (L₂ language).

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In this chapter, we would examine all the phonological theories because they are seen as foundation over which scholastic endeavors are built. It is regarded as tools for authenticating an academic exercise.

After this, we are going to examine the key term in the topic of this study that is the "Phoneme" from which the word "Phonological" is derived.

1.2.1 THE STRUCTURALIST THEORY

They are the first set of linguists to clearly define or identify the concepts of phonemes in any language. According to them, it is the first level on the hierarchy that makes up any language system. Bowel (1988) defined phonemes as the "units of sounds associated with meaning." In other words, they are those units of sounds that are combined to form words and morphemes, which are in their units of meaning. Fry (1975:1399) gives an insight into one of the major attributes of the phonological level, which is the fact that the phoneme inventory of a given language is a closed set. That is, no addition can be made to it, an individual after acquiring the whole of phonemic system in his language will have to

make do with it and form or coin any words he desires using the phonemes in his linguistic inventory. As a result of the above, we are going to have a cursory look at the phonemes of both "Cursory", because at this level it is expected that we are familiar with the phonemes of the two languages.

This theory was formulated by the linguist Roman Jakobson and it is the best known and most influential theory of phonological development. This theory represents the first attempt to explain the acquisition of phonemes on the basis of linguistics universal structural law that underlies every modification of language of individual or society. In this theory, the period of language development is divided into two stages which are:

- (i) Pre linguistic which is the babbling period during which the sounds composing the child's vocalization do not exhibit particular order of development and are not related to the production of the following period.
- (ii) The second is the stage of the acquisition of language proper during which the child follows a relatively universal sound and invariant order of gaining intentional control over the sounds of the surrounding adult's language.

This division is based on the widely accepted observation that during babbling, the vocalizations of most normal children exhibit a great quantity and diversity of sound production . (complex vowels, clicks, palatalized and

rounded consonants etc) but that as the child begins to acquire words, most of these sounds disappear and some of them re-appear only after a period of years. Thus, the phonetic richness of the babbling period gives way to phonological limitation (Jacobson (1971)). The second stage stands as the transition from the desire to communicate to the ability to communicate.

According to Jakobson, the different stages involved in the development of language are strictly regulated by an inherent universal hierarchy of structural laws which he called 'laws of irreversible solidarity.' According to him, this development proceeds from the simple and undifferentiated to the stratified and differentiated.

Unlike the behaviorist theory which lays emphasis on the need to reinforce the sounds made by children until it is perfected or equal to the adult's own production. This recognized the babbling stage whereby children make incomprehensible sounds as an important aspect of the child's phonological development.

1.2.2 THE BEHAVIORISTS THEORY

This is the theory of language development formulated by H.O. Mower in the late 1940. The theory has its origin in the contribution of psychoanalysis which relies on the effective relation between child and mother in the emergence of speech.

According to this theory, the first step in speech development is that the child attends to and identifies with the caretaker's vocalization, which is associated with primary reinforcement such as food and patting.

Winitz (1969:35-48) describes the process involved in speech development as propounded in this theory using three different stages:

- (i) During the first stage, the child's vocalization are said to occur most frequently shortly before feeding because of natural sounds associated with chewing, swallowing coupled with the principle of "fractional anticipatory goal response" that is, the child in anticipation makes the kind of sound he will make when he feeds and this response includes: making sounds with the vocal track.
- (ii) During the second developmental period, the vocalization of the mother and subsequently those of the child by the virtue of its similarity to the mother's acquire secondary reinforcing properties because the mother's vocalization occur in close with feeding or other reinforcement events.

(iii) The third period - begins when several of the child's utterances are identified by the parents as an approximation of a particular word. The parents reinforce these utterances and the child gradually refines his approximation until it matches the adult's form.

This theory has been of great importance in the field of language teaching and learning. Based on it, the environment is seen as exerting a major influence, since it provides the models with which the child imitates and the rewards that make learning take place. It also lay emphasis on reinforcement which encourages the learner, not only that, active responding practice and feedback are other actions that behaviorism lay emphasis on.

1.2.3 THE NATURALIST PHONOLOGY THEORY

This was formulated by Stampe (1969). The natural phonology of phonological development assumes a universal innate system of phonological processes - unlimited and unordered rules which in its most language innocent stage expresses the full set of restrictions of the human speech capacity. It proposes that the phonetic representatives of the child's

productions are the results of the application of this innate system to an abstract phonological representation. Succession revisions of this innate system occur with the learning of each phonetic opposition through linguistic experience with the standard (adult) language.

An important contribution of this theory is its attempt to show the role of acquisition in language learning. The main hypothesis is that, addition generalization and un-ordering processes which characterize language learning results directly from the failure of the child to exploit fully, the mechanisms for resolving contradictory processes. The resultant forms are thereby innovations, which are rejected by the standard that exert a conservative influence.

Applying this theory one can fully explain implicational laws such as those proposed of the innate system. Also while applying this process; it will no longer be necessary to posit that the child has a phonemic system of its own, distinct from the adults' system. Rather, one can assume that the child begins by producing modified version of the representations of the adult that it has internalized and that it is only by successive modifications of these forms through the various suppressions of processes that the 'correct' adult pronunciation is achieved.

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