SECTION D: PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY

Variant Pronunciation Patterns of Selected English Content Words in Connected Speech by Anambra State English Language Teachers

Amarachi Okenmuo

Abstract

English language teachers serve as models to their students in the use of the language they teach. Previous studies on the pronunciation patterns of second language speakers of English other than the English teachers have been done, but no study seems to concentrate on the pronunciation patterns of English words by the English language teachers whom other speakers learn from. This study focuses of the pronunciation patterns of selected English words, mostly content words, realized by the Anambra State English language teachers (ASELT). A specially prepared passage containing selected target words was presented to fifty of the randomly selected teachers from the three districts of Anambra State. They read the passage and their renditions were recorded with an audiotape. The recordings were further played and replayed for correct transcription of sounds, analysis and discussion. The results of the analysis show that ASELT have varied pronunciation patterns for English words. For example, in 'interpret' four varieties in stress placement: in.tæ'pri:t, in'tɜ:prit, 'in.'tæ'prit, in'tæ'prit were realized.

Keywords: Pronunciation, English content words, speech, Anambra, teachers

Introduction

The spoken English language in Nigeria has been variously studied and categorized under varieties (Brosnaham, 1958; Banjo, 1971; Adenkunle, 1979; Udofot, 2003 among others). Using Udofot's categorization, it is observed that educated Nigerian speakers, including teachers of the English language, belong to the sophisticated variety. By extension, English language teachers are expected to exhibit features that place them under the sophisticated variety. However, there

seems to exist some disparity in the pronunciation patterns of words in connected speech by the English language teachers who participated in this study.

Pronouncing words the correct way plays an important role in communication, since serious mispronunciation can hamper intelligibility, (Mohammad, 2017). Morley (1991) as cited by Mohammad (2017, p. 488) holds that "intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communicative competence". A listener can entirely miss the intended right word a speaker wishes to communicate which s/he pronounces the wrong way. It is advised that second-language learners should work harder to improve their pronunciation of the target language (Mohammad, 2017). Tomasz (2011) in Mohammad (2017) suggests that instead of going for high sounding words, advanced vocabulary or complex grammatical structures, they should use simple words and constructions to pass their messages across. However, Mohammad, (2017)asserts that there is no such a thing as simple pronunciation as mispronouncing words could be problematic and could lure one's listeners into wrong encoding of the encrypted message even when the speaker speaks correct grammar with advanced vocabulary. Generally, there is a consensus that the influence of the learners' Mother Tongue (MT) appears and endures mostly in the area of pronunciation when compared to grammar and vocabulary. Mohammad, 2017 cites other research findings that support this view (Ingram & Park, 1998; Lin, 2001; Nosratinia&Zaker, 2014; Ohata, 2004; Ringborn, 1987; Sedighi, 2010; Thompson, 1991; Tsojon&Aji, 2014; Zhanmig, 2014).

The pronunciation of words entails the way the words sound when they are uttered—if they contain the right vowels or consonants, stressed or not, produced with different tones among other articulatory, auditory, and acoustic qualities.

Review

A number of studies have been conducted on the pronunciation patterns of words of English language by Nigerian users of the language. Mohammad (2017) reports that English words that contain the following: English vowels /ʌ/, /ɔ:/ and /ɜ:/ and consonants /f/, /v/, /θ/ and /ð/ are problematic for Hausa learners of English language. The results revealed that native speakers of Hausa face problems in pronouncing these sounds as such they replace the sounds with specific sounds available in the Hausa sound inventory. Theoretically, the findings, according to the researcher, lend support to the notion of negative transfer as all of the errors were the result of mother tongue interference. The findings are interpreted to have pedagogical implications for ESL teachers and syllabus designers in general and in Hausa-speaking communities, in particular.

Chitulu and Njemanze (2015) carried out a study on the poor English pronunciation of Nigerian students who use English language as a second language. They outlined a number of factors responsible for the poor pronunciation of English words among students as: some linguistically illiterate environment of which many other languages e.g., Nigerian Pidgin, American English, Nigerian English etc. are spoken alongside the English language and this

linguistic situation affects students; the phenomenon of ill-equipped teachers who are not truly grounded in English phonetics and phonology and mother tongue interference. As panacea to poor English pronunciation, Chitulu and Njemanze (2015) suggest that: 1. students should be taught correct English pronunciation at a time optimal for second language learning before they get into their adolescence stage.2. All teachers should be given appropriate training in English phonetics and phonology. This will go a long way to polish their pronunciation skills and consciously and unconsciously condition the English language users, especially students who listen to them to attempt to pronounce and speak more intelligibly. 3. The use of audio-visual aids and equipment in teaching English pronunciation will foster learning and the practical use of correct pronunciations. 4. The ministry of education should invest time and resources in promoting scholarly researches in the area of English phonetics and phonology, provide course materials for improved effectiveness and productivity and should also partner with the British Council, C4C and the USAID to sponsor researches that would help to bring the anomaly to an end.

Josiah, Bodunde, and Robert (2012) examined the pronunciation patterns of isolated English words by undergraduates in their final year. They reported that the number of the subjects who rightly pronounced the Standard British English (SBE) variant of the words appears low compared to those who could not do so. The same result also goes for words in connected speech as among the 12 words tested, only one item, 'all right', had 34 out of 65 respondents pronounce the SBE version.

There are other related works on spoken Nigerian English of which pronunciation patterns (Simo Bobda 2000;), stress placement patterns on words(Udofot, 1997; 2003), tone and intonation among others are explicated. Studies on differentiation ranges from Brosnahan, (1958); Banjo, (1971); Adenkunle(1979); Jibril, (1982); Odumuh, (1987); Fakuade, (1998); Eka, (2000); Udofot, (2004); Olaniyi, (2010). Acoustic analysis of spoken Nigerian English has recently continued to prevail (Olaniyi, 2010; Josiah,2011; Azidiegwu, 2019). The literature reviewed in this paper is not exhaustive. There are many more studies on the spoken Nigerian English that are not presented here.

Methodology

The data for this work are preexisting data collected for a Master's thesis on Analysis of stress placement in connected speech by selected Anambra State English language teachers (Azidiegwu, 2019).The data were collected from fifty Anambra State English language teachers, including males and females, residing in AnambraState. The geographical spread of the teachers extends to junior and senior secondary schools of both private and government schools in the three senatorial districts: Anambra North (16), Anambra South (17), and Anambra Central(17),since it is impossible to study the speech of all Anambra State English language teachers. The teachers were enjoined to read a short passage which was specially designed to elicit target data. The focus of this present work, however, was to analyse the various

pronunciation patterns of selected English content words by Anambra State English language teachers. To this end, some approaches were employed. The data previously audio-taped were listened to several times, written down and transcribed phonemically. For the reason of delimitation, placement of stress and phonemic realisations served as the scope of study. The data were presented in a tabular form for ease in analysis. The column for ASELT's stress placement mainly captures the placement of stress by the teachers and not phoneme realization, and vice versa. This was done to avoid confusion and mix up of data categorisation. The data were analysed perceptually, statistically, and descriptively.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework applied in this study is Contrastive Analysis. Doing a contrastive analysis of two different languages brings to the fore the similarities and differences of the languages as spoken by the users of the languages. Contrastive analysis (CA hereafter) is occupied with comparing the inherent properties of two or more languages to determine their areas of similarities and differences with their implication on language learning and teaching. Contrastive analysis theory, according to Al-khresheh (2016) has remained one of the most influential theories of second language acquisition using comparisons of languages to explain areas of difficulty for learners.

The initial proponents of CA believed that second language acquisition essentially involved the re-writing of first language (L1) habits where familiar L1 processes could be harnessed in accord with behaviourist procedures based on some learning principles and practices (Brown, 2006). Lado 1957, on the other hand, introduced the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and further strengthens his opinion by saying that language learners could be trained to acquire new phonological, morphological, syntactic habits most ideally if the L1 and the L2 could be systematically compared and contrasted in advance.

Underpinned by the already stated principles of CA, a comparison of the English spoken as a second language and English spoken as a first language is necessary. In this present research, therefore, the pronunciation patterns of selected words by Anambra State English language teachers and the Standard British English (SBE) were compared in the area of word pronunciations. The latter served as the control data while the former served as the experimental group. The differences in articulation are identified and discussed and these comparisons create a room for learners, especially ASELT, to know their areas of strength and the areas they should focus more on for greater intelligibility and passing on of phonetic/phonological knowledge.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Pronunciation Patterns of Selected English WordsinthePassage

S/No	English word/	SBE pronunciatio	No of syllab	ASELT's stress	No and % of	ASELT's phoneme	No and %

	Word class	n	les in a word	placement	Stress placement of ASELT	realisation	of Phoneme realisation by ASELT
1	Doing (verb)	'du:ɪŋ	2	i)**'du:'i:ŋ** ii)**'du:ɪŋ**	41(82%) 9(18%)	i)**du:i:ŋ** ii)**du:ɪŋ** iii) **du:wɪŋ**	41(82%) 8(16%) 1(2%)
2	Research (noun)	ri'sɜ: ʧ	2	**'risɜ: ʧ** **ri'sɜ: ʧ**	38(76%) 12(24%)	risa: **ʧ** rise **ʧ** risɜ: **ʧ**	25% 44% 31%
3	Herculean (adjective)	,hɜ:.kjə'li:.ən	4	**'he'ku:n** **hɜ:.'kjeli:n** **he'kuliæn** **'he'ku'liæn**	2(4%) 3(6%) 28(56%) 17(34%)	**heku:n** **hɜ:kjeli:n** **hekuliæn** **'he'ku'liæn**	2(4%) 3(6%) 28(56%) 17(34%)
4	Task (noun)	ta:sk	1	i)'te:sk ii)'ta:sk	11(22%) 39(78%)	i)te:sk ii)ta:sk	11(22%) 39(78%)

5	One (pronoun)	wʌn	1	i)'wæn ii)'wɒn	7(16%) 42(84%)	i)wæn ii)wɒn	7(16%) 42(84%)
6	Determined (verb)	dɪ'tɜ:min	3	**i)dıta:'min d** **ii) dɪ'ta:'mind** **iii) dɪ'tɜ:mind**	26(52%) 13(26%) 11(22%)	**i) di:ta:mi:nd** **ii) dɪ'ta:mind** **iii) dıtɜ:mind**	26(52%) 13(26%) 11(22%)
7	Carry (verb)	'kæri	2	**i)'ka'ri** **ii) 'kari**	33(66%) 17(34%)	**i)kari** **ii) keri**	39(78%) 11(22%)
8	Correctly (adverb)	kə'rekt.li	3	**i)kɔ:'rek'tli :** **ii)kɒ'rek.tli :**	37(74%) 13(26%)	**i)kɔ:rektli:** **ii)kɒrek.tli:** **ii)kɒrek.tli** **ii)kərek.tli**	37(74%) 9(18%) 3(6%) 1(2%)
9	Interpret (verb)	in'tɜ:prit	3	**i)in.te'pri:t** **ii) in'tɜ:prit** **iii) 'in.'tæ'prit**	32(64%) 11(22%) 5(10) 2(4%)	**i)in.tepri:t** **ii) intɜ:prit** **iii) in.ta:prıt**	30(60%) 11(22%) 9(18%)

				iv) in'tæ'prit			
10	Communicate (verb)	kə'mju:nikeit	4	**i)kɒmjuni'keit** **ii) kə'mjunikeit** **iii) 'kɒmjuni'keit**	31(62%) 12(24%) 7(14)	**i)kɒmu:ni:'ket** **ii) kemju:nikeit** **iii) kəmju:niket**	35(70%) 12(24%) 3(6%)
11	Colleagues (noun)	'kɒl.i:gz	2	**i) 'kɒl.i:gz** **ii) 'ko'li:gz** **iii) 'kɒ'le:giz**	25(50%) 23(46%) 2(4%)	**i) kɒl.i:gz** **ii) koli:gz** **iii)kɒle:giz**	25(50%) 23(46%) 2(4%)
12	Elicit (verb)	ɪ'lɪ.sɪt̨	3	**i) e'li:'si:t̨** **ii) ɪ:'li:sɪt** **iii) 'eli.sit̨**	39(78%) 8(16%) 3(6%)	**i) eli:si;t̨** **ii) i:li:sɪt** **iii) eli.sit̨**	39(78%) 8(16%) 3(6%)
13	Boycott (verb)	'bɔikət	2	**i) bɔi'kɔ:t** ii) **'bɔikət**	36(72%) 14(28%)	**i) bɔikɔ:t** ii) **bɔikt**	36(72%) 14(28%)
14	Journals (noun)	'ʤɜ:nəlz	2	**i) 'ʤɒna:lz**	44(88%)	**i) ʤona:lz**	44(88%)

				ii) ʤɒ'nælz	6(12)	**ii) ʤɒnəlz**	6(12%)
15	Biscuit (noun)	'biskit	2	i) **'bi;s'ki:t** ii) **bɪs'ki:t** iii) **'biskit**	46(92%) 17(34%) 4(8%)	**i) bi:ski:t** **ii) bɪski:t** **iii) bɪskit**	46(92%) 3(6%) 1(2%)
16	Supervisor (noun)	'su:pə.vai.zə	4	**i) su:pə.'vai.zɒ** ii)**'su:pə.vai.zɒ**	41(82%) 9(18%)	**i) su:pa:vai.zɒ** ii) **su:pɜ.vai.zɒ** **iii)su:pə.vai.zə**	41(82%) 8(16%) 1(2%)
17	Proofread (verb)	'pru:f.ri:d	2	i) **'pru:f.ri:d** ii) **pru:f'ri:d**	26(52%) 24(48%)	i)**pru:fri:d** ii)p**ru:frid**	26(52%) 24(48%)
18	Work (noun)	**'**wɜ:k	1	i) 'wɜ:k	50(100%)	i) wek ii)w**ɔ^{r}:k/ wɔ:k**	40(80%) 10(20%)
19	Professionalism (noun)	pre'feʃ.nᵊl.i.zᵊm	6	**prɒfeʃɒ'na:'li:zm** **'prɒfeʃɒ'na:'li zm**	37(74%) 12(24%)	**prɒfeʃɔ:na:li:zm** **prɒfeʃɒna:li:zm**	37(74%)

				iii) **prɒ'feʃ.nˡl.i.zˀm**	1(2%)	**prɒfeʃəna:li:zm**	12(24%) 1(2%)
20	Wardrobe (noun)	wɔ:.drəʊb	2	**'wɔ:.drəʊb** **wɔ:.d'rəʊb**	35(70%) 15(30%)	**wɔ:.drob** **wɔ:.d'rəʊb**	35(70%) 15(30%)

The table above shows twenty content words which the participants articulated in a connected speech. None of these words were produced the same way by all the participating English language teachers who serve as models to their secondary school students, and indeed to many other second language (L2) users of English languages in Anambra State and beyond. Comparing some of their pronunciations with that of SBE, one realizes that there are a lot of differences.

Variant Phoneme Realisation in Selected English Content Words

The first word on the table, 'doing', had variant realizations in its word phoneme content. Highest number of the teachers (82%) produced /**du:i:ŋ/** replacing the short /ɪ/ in the second syllable with a long /i:/.This was followed by15% of the teachers who realized /**du:ɪŋ/** and corresponded with the SBE realization. A few (3%) also inserted a semi vowel /w/ to initiate the second syllable. The word 'research' was realized as /ri:sa: ʧ/ (25%),/ri:seʧ/(44%),and /risɜ: ʧ/ (31%) and the last variant is same with SBE. The word 'herculean' posed a challenge to a majority of the teachers as it was pronounced as**'he'ku:n (4%), hɜ:.'kjeli:n (6%), he'kuliæn (56%), 'he'ku'liæn (**34%)**and** none was able to render the SBE variety. They realised /li:en/ instead of the SBE /li:ən/ and the remaining 4% of the teachers did not even pronounce the last syllable /li:en/, instead, they stopped at the second syllable /kje/ and added the coda /n/ as in /'he'ku:n/. They also stressed the two syllables. The word 'task' was rendered as /ta:sk/ by 38 teachers (76%) and/tesk/ by 12 teachers (24%), the second realization corresponding with SBE while 'carry' was realized as /ke:ri:/ and /ka:ri:/. There was no uniformity in the realization of 'determined' by the teachers. While some produced the first and last syllables of the word with a long /i:/, others realized the SBE version. The second syllable of the word was also variant as a few struggled to produce /ɜ:/ and this also applies to the second syllable of 'interpret' and in the production of 'work'. Only 11% of the teachers got the sound /ɜ:/ in 'interpret' correctly as the SBE has it. The remaining teachers either pronounced /e/ or /a:/.

The difficulty in pronouncing/ɜ:/ has been ascribed to the inexistence of the phoneme in the sound inventory of the ASELT's Mother Tongue (Awonusi, 2004). Pronouncing the schwa

sound in the first syllables of ‘correctly’ and ‘communicate’was also a challenge. None of the teachers produced a schwa sound in the first syllable of the word ‘correctly’, few teachers realized /ə/ in the last syllable of ‘journals’, second and last syllables of ‘supervisor’ as they are in SBE, instead many replaced it with /ɔ:/ and /a/, /e/ or /a:/ or /ɜ/ respectively, and only 3% produced /ə/ in the first syllable of communicate. This defies Udofot (2004) classification of regarding those who studied English language, and possibly teach it,as belonging to Sophisticated Variety. The /j/ in SBE /kə'mjunikeit/ was deleted and the diphthong /ei/ was reduced to /e/ in many of the participants’ rendition. The /ɪ/ in the last syllable of ‘interpret’, first and second syllables of ‘elicit’ and ‘biscuit’ and fifth syllable of ‘professionalism’, were realized in varieties/i:/, /i/ and /ɪ/. The /əʊ/ in wardrobe was realized in two ways: /o/ and /əʊ/. The differences in the realization of English phonemes by these Anambra State English language teachers greatly reveal the variant nature of English sounds students and other L2 speakers in Anambra state emulate or are taught.

Placement of Stress

In the placing of stress, it was observed that the participants placed stress on syllables of words which were not usually stressed in SBE, and this made their speeches to be predominantly characterised by strong syllables even when weak syllables were required. This contrasts with Roach (2008) who says that only one syllable of an English word should attract stress except in a case of emphasis.

In the first word on the table, ‘doing’, 82% of the participants placed stress on the two syllables of the word ‘*DOING*’ which gives a recurrence of adjacent strong syllables, and which is not in conformity with the SBE realization. In SBE, only the first syllable is stressed in the word, ‘*DOing*’. The replication of strong syllables is again observed in the following disyllabic words in the continuous speech of these teachers as they read the passage: ‘*carry*’ in unit 4 was realized as /'kæ'ri/ by66% of the participants; in the context of the utterance, the word ‘*research*’ belongs to the word class noun, but it is observed that 76% of the teachers produced the US verb form of the word /'ri.sɜ:ʧ/ by placing stress on the first syllable, instead of placing stress on thesecond syllable to derive the noun form. Only 24% of the participants stressed the second syllable realizing the SBE noun form of the word / ri'sɜ: ʧ/.

Roach (2004) says that one of the qualities of a stressed syllable is that the syllable is usually strong and has a higher quality than the unstressed syllable. The syllables of the word ‘*herculean’* received stress in variant forms by the teachers. The SBE realizes it as /,hɜ:.kjə'li:.ən; -'kju-/ in isolation placing stress either on the second syllable or second to the last syllable. In connected speech however, SBE places stress on the penultimate syllable of the word. Anambra State English language teachers on their part produced four varieties of the word in connected speech. The teachers, 56% of them, placed stress on the second and the last syllables; 34% of them stressed the three syllables realizing three strong syllables not associated with SBE stress

placement on words; 6% of the participants produced the SBE stress pattern while the remaining 4% did not pronouncethe word in full, yet stressed the syllables.

'*determined*' was produced by the teachers as /dɪta:'mind; dɪ'ta:'mind; dɪ'tɜ:mind/. /dɪta:'mind/ was produced by 52% of the participants by placing stress on the last syllables of the word which is different from SBE realization; /dɪ'tɜ:min;/ the second variety realised by26% of the teachers has stress placed on the second and last syllables, while 22% of the teachers produced /dɪ'tɜ:mind/ typical of SBE realization.

In word number 8, 74% of the participants realised /kɒ'rek'tli:/;/kɒ'rektli/ was realised by 26% of the participants. The three syllables of the word 'i:n'ta:'pri:t were stressed by 10% of the participants;64% of the teachers produced /intæ'pri:t/ stressing the last syllable and the remaining 4% of the teachers stressed the second and the last syllables producing /in'ta:'pri;t/;22%approximated to /in'tɜ:prit/ stressing the penultimate syllables and this correlates with the SBE placement of stress on the word.

In 10, the polysyllabic word 'communicate' was realised in three varieties by the participants. There was stress placement on the second syllable of '*communicate*'/kə'mjunikeit/by 24% of the participants typical of SBE stress placement. Though they were closest to SBE, there was a little variation in phoneme articulation as has been previously explained. /kɒmuni'keit; -ket/was realised by 62% of the teachers who placed stress on the last syllable of the word. The remaining 14% of the participants placed stress on the first and the last syllables realising /'kɒmuni'keit; -ket/. Again, the polysyllabic word '*supervisor*'/'su:pə.vaizə/ in unit 18 is realised by the SBE by placing stress on the first syllable. Conversely, 82% of the Anambra State English language teachers used for this study placed stress on the third syllable /-'vai-/ while the remaining 18% of the teachers realized the SBE variety.

In word number 11, two teachers did not realise the two syllables in the word '*colleagues*' /'kɒl.i:gz/, instead they inserted a third syllable /kɒ'le'gi:s/, as if they wanted to pronounce 'colleges', while reading the passage and they stressed the second and last syllables leaving the first unstressed./'kɒl.i:gz/ was reaslised by 50% of the participants while 46% of the participants realised /kɒ'li:gz/.

Elicit (in number12) is produced as /eli'ci:t/ by 78% of the participants giving a different stress placement from that of SBE that stress the second syllable of the word; 16% of the participants realised /e'licit/ and this corresponds with the SBE version; 6%realised /'elicit/.

In unit 11, *boycott* was realised as /bɔi'kɔ:t/ by 72% of the teachers. They placed stress on the second syllable contrasting the SBE speakers who place stress on the first syllable. The remaining 28% of the teachers however produced the SBE version by placing stress on the first syllable /'bɔikɒt/.

In word 14, *journals* received its stress in different syllables realised by different participants. 'journal' has its first syllable stressed by 88% of the participants which concurs with the SBE variety. The remaining 12% of the participants stressed both syllables of the word realizing a recurrence of strong syllables.

The first syllable of '*workshop*' was stressed by 86% which concurs with SBE while 14% of the participants stressed '-shop'; 52% of the participants stressed 'proof' in 'proofread' leaving the second syllable unstressed while 48% of the teachers stressed the second syllable leaving the first unstressed;70% of the teachers stressed the first syllable in '*wardrobe*' and did not stress the second syllable while the remaining30% of the teachers stressed the second syllable and did not stress the first syllable.

Finally, in the six-syllabic word 'professionalism' in number 21, 74% of the participants realised /prɒ.fe.ʃɒ'na:'li:.zm/ placing stress on the fourth and fifth syllables; 24% of the participants realised /'prɔ:.fe.ʃɒ'na:'li:.sim / placing stress on the first, fourth and fifth syllables. The other 2% placed stress only on the second syllable which is in accordance with the SBE realization /prə'feʃ.nᵊ·li.sm/.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyse and describe the pronunciation patterns of content words in connected speech by Anambra State English language teachers. From the renditions got from the teachers through their reading a prepared passage containing target data, it was revealed that the majority of the English language teachers had their stress placement of words and phoneme realisations far from the SBE, and may not be regarded as belonging to the Sophisticated variety as categorized by Udofot (2003). They realized adjacent stressed and strong syllables (SS). Example: The two syllables of 'doing' are stressed by 41 out of 50 teachers while the remaining teachers produced the SBE version. Also, in the realisation of English word phonemes, there were alterations: e.g., the schwa sound in the first syllable of 'correctly' was pronounced only by one teacher. The rest produced either /ɔ:/ or /ɒ/.

As those who are saddled with the responsibility of educating others on how to use the English language, there is need for these teachers to greatly improve in the knowledge and the use of the language, especially in the area of phonetics and phonology, as this area seems to continue to pose a challenge to both the teachers and their students.

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