**SOME PHONOLOGICAL PROBEMS ENCOUNTERED BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE STUDY OF ENGLISH IN ENUGU EAST LOCAL GEVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE**

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**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY**

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**JULY 2018**

**TITLE PAGE**

**SOME PHONOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENGLISH IN ENUGU EAST LOCAL GORNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE**

**A PROJECT PRESNTED**

**BY**

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**U14/EDU/ELS/016**

**TO THE**

**DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION OF THE PROGRAMME ENGLISH AND LITRARY STUDIES, IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION OF GODFREY OKOYE UNVERSITY,**

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**JULY 2018**

**APPROVAL PAGE**

I, Obi Chidimma Rachael, a student in the Department of Arts and Social Science Education (English and Literary Studies Education), in Faculty of Education with Registration Number U14/EDU/ELS/016 has satisfactorily completed the requirements for the award of Degree in Bachelor of Arts in Education (B.A.Ed). The work embodied in this project is original and has not, to the best of my knowledge, been submitted or presented elsewhere.

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**DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to my mother for her relentless prayer, support and selfless sacrifice and to the memory of my father.

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**ABSTRACT**

This study was designed to find out some phonological problems secondary school students encounter in English. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design approach in which three questions were posed. The population of the study consisted of 13,605 from ten (10) secondary schools out of which five (5) schools were randomly selected for the study. From the five schools, random sampling was also used to select 160 students. The data was analyzed using mean score. Questionnaires of four- point ranting scale was used as an instrument for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using simple statics frequency distribution mean. The result showed that mother tongue impinges on pronunciation in English, incompetence of teacher influence pronunciation, and family background influence learners pronunciation in the study of English among secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: teachers should drill students on phonetics; teachers should endeavour to check students’ pronunciation and give compression or essay to students to read out in class; parents should encourage their children to listen to news; teachers should also endeavour to use stress pattern; and government should provide adequate facility for teaching phonetics for both students and teachers.

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**Background of the Study**

Any means of meaningful communication among humans is known as language. It is a very important means of communication which is key in every society. One cannot think of a society without language because it is a very important means of communication. Language sharpens people's thoughts, guides and controls their entire activity. "It is a carrier of civilization and culture" (Bolinger, 2011). In the case of the mother tongue, the child learns it easily due to a favorable linguistic environment and high level of exposure to the language. According to Bose (2010), "learning a second language requires conscious efforts to learn it and the exposure to the second language in most cases is limited." It is argued that, "A Majority of the students have favored classroom instruction for the second language acquisition" (James, 2012).

There are so many factors that affect the process of learning a second language: "attitude, self-confidence, motivation, duration of exposure to the language, classroom conditions, environment, mother tongue interference, family background, and availability of competent teachers"(Verghese, 2011).

"The successful acquisition of a second language seems to some extent, contingent upon learners' views of the language learning environment, the learning situation, and how they view the target language and its speakers" (Narayanan et al., 2013). Like the environment and attitude, teacher's competence is also a variable factor that affects the second language learning. In other words, what affects the second language is the environment where the learners finds himself, the knowledge the teacher has in the language and the attitude of the people who speak the English language. "He should be proficient in the language; his knowledge of, and expertise in methods and techniques of language teaching should be of a reasonably high standard" (Verghese, 2011).

**Statement of the Problem**

To learn English requires constant practice and patience. The kind of feeling that prevails among students is that it is not possible to achieve fluency or mastery in the English language. This kind of predetermined limited success approach prevents students from learning English effectively. Despite the importance of learning English, the following problems prevent students from learning English Language effectively: Environment, home background, mother tongue, and duration of exposure, attitude, classroom conditions, and availability of competence of teachers.

It is based on this background that the researcher intends to look at some phonological problems in learning English as a second language.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to examine some phonological problems encountered by secondary school students in the study of English as a secondary language. The specific objectives are:

1. to identify if mother tongue impinges on pronunciation in English

2. to identify if incompetence teachers influence students’ pronunciation in English

3. to identify if home background influence learners’ pronunciation in the study of English.

**Research Questions**

1. How does mother tongue impinge on pronunciation in English as a second language?

2. How does incompetence teacher influence students’ pronunciation in English?

3. How does home background influence learners’ pronunciation in the study of

English?

**Significance of the study**

The study will be significant to students, teachers, presenters and public speakers. In the light of this study, the study is relevant because it made attempt to reveal the problems and challenges faced in learning English.

The study will be helpful to presenters and public speakers because of the nature of their job. It will also help them to know their flaws in phonetic and how to work on it.

The findings of this study will also be useful to students and teachers because it will serve as tutelage on how teachers can work on the problems that affect the pronunciation of students.

The conclusion can be used both in the current issues concerning phonological problems as well as the formation of new strategies in enhancing students' performance in phonological problems in schools. The study is also relevant for future studies and can be used as a reference point for other studies.

**Scope of the Study**

This study is targeted at refocusing phonological problems encountered by secondary school in English. The study will also examine how mother tongue impinges on pronunciation in English, how incompetence of teachers influence students’ pronunciation in English, how family background influence learners’ pronunciation in the study of English language.

The study covered all the 10 secondary schools in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

**Introduction**

This chapter is on review of related Literature. To carry out a study of this magnitude, literature relevant to the study is relevant to give directions and appraisal of efforts already made in the area. This chapter is presented in the following outline:

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Phonology

The importance of phonetics and phonology to the pronunciation component

Phonological problems encountered by secondary school student in the study of English as a second language

Pronunciation of English language

Practical activities in Teaching Pronunciation

Five difficult Areas of Phonology

Theoretical Framework

Empirical Studies

Summary (of Literature review)

**Conceptual Framework**

Concept is an idea of how something is, or how something should be done. While conceptual framework; is an analytical tool with several variations and contexts. It is used to make conceptual distinctions and organize ideas. Strong conceptual frameworks capture something real and do this in a way that is easy to remember and apply.

**Concept of Phonology**

Phonology is the study of the sound systems that make up their entire sound system. Some languages share more similar sounds.

Hyman (1975:1) cited by Osinanwo (2010:3) asserted that, the goal of phonology is to study the properties of the sound system which speakers must learn and internalize in order to use their language for the purpose of communication. According to Oyebade (2014), phonology is the scientific study of the arbitrary vocal symbol used in human speech and the pattern into which these symbols produce intelligent, meaningful utterances. Phonology is “the study or description of the distinctive sound units (phonemes) of a language and their relationship to one another” Richards & Schmidt (2010: 433). This branch of linguistics is concerned with how phonemes and their allophones operate in different phonological systems. Akmajian et al. (2010:109), asserted that phonology is the subfield of linguistics that studies the structure and patterning of sound in human language.

Throughout history, the study of phonology has witnessed a paradigm shift with the introduction of distinctive features as the smallest units of phonological analysis instead of phonemes. Insofar as the teaching of pronunciation is concerned, this paradigm shift has resulted in two views, namely distinctive-feature analysis and structuralism analysis. In his seminal paper on the issue, (Prator, 2011) attempts to establish a hierarchy of priorities for the teaching of pronunciation. In his treatment, the author presents the two views: a distinctive-feature analysis uses distinctive features as the basic analytical unit while a structuralism analysis makes use of phonemes. For language teachers, (Prator, 2011), claims that the use of distinctive-feature analysis would be disappointing since those features were mainly developed for classificatory purposes to be used by Chomsky and his co-workers in their typologies (e.g. Chomsky & Halle (1986)). In view of this, (Prator, 2011), highlights the importance of going back to a structuralism analysis, as he states: *“I believe the phoneme is useful and that teachers of ESL should be familiar with the concept, particularly because it does provide considerable amount of guidance in deciding how to assign priorities in teaching pronunciation”* (p. 67). In the same vein, he goes further and justifies his claim in the following statement: *“since phonemic distinctions correlate with meaning, they are more important than allophonic distinctions to a student who is learning a language in order to be able to communicate meaning in it”*

**The Importance of Phonetics and Phonology to the Pronunciation Component**

For a long period of time, teachers have been concerned with finding the appropriate way of teaching the sounds of a foreign language, which are different from the native language without using the orthographic alphabet. Among the most useful solutions that have been suggested is the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). "The IPA aims to provide visually distinctive symbols for all speech sounds which are phonologically distinct in any language" (Trask, 2015). "Since its development, different versions of the IPA have been adopted by teachers to be included in textbooks for teaching pronunciation" (e.g. O’Connor, 2015).

In the same vein, phonetics has brought new insights to the teaching of pronunciation. Concerned with “the study of the physical properties of sounds and their place and manner of articulation in the vocal tract” (Broughton et. al. 2011: 50), phonetics forms a tool of paramount importance that is used in the teaching of pronunciation. For instance, in any description of the English sound system, speech sounds are categorized into consonants and vowels. Following (Haycraft, 2015), consonants can be described depending on the movements of the mouth during the articulation (bilabial, dental, alveolar, palatal, velar) or depending on the nature of the airstream, the place and movement of the tongue, and also whether the voice is used or not (voiced, voiceless, plosive, affricate, fricative, nasal, lateral). On the other hand, vowels are described mainly in terms of the position of the tongue and lip rounding. These detailed phonetic descriptions are not arbitrary since they are of paramount to the teaching of pronunciation. According to Haycraft (2015: 58), “Awareness of this is useful as many mistakes made by learners are due to slight differences in sound production”.

Phonological differences between languages- that is, the difference in the sounds that make up different language- have a major effect on how easy or hard it is for a person to learn a second language. It is far easier for a person to learn a new language with a similar phonology to his first language.

**Phonological Problems Encountered by Secondary School Students in English Language**

1. Mother tongue interference

Interference is the influence of one language, dialect or other linguistics features upon another’s phonology, grammar and vocabulary. In the course of using English as a second language, there is inter-lingual interference. That is, the influence of one language upon another’s phonology, grammar and vocabulary. The language which a group of people considered to be inhabitants of an area acquire in their early years and which normally becomes their natural instrument of thought and communication may interfere with the second language, and these interferences may manifest itself in any aspect of the language such as phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. When an Igbo man may say lead instead of read.

1. **Motivation and Exposure**

Brophy (2010), describes students’ motivation as the extent to which students will invest time, energy, and attention towards various tasks, goals, or activities. “Student’s motivation can affect current learning as well as the skills and strategies learnt previously” ( Schunk et al. 2012). Motivation is the strength that pushes the person to achieve a goal; if the learners do not have motivation, the learning process is harder. Motivation is the values, beliefs, and behaviours surrounding learning process. Some productive values and beliefs may lead to excitement, yet other values may lead to determined hard work. When we motivate our students we make them learn better than those who show interest.

1. **Attitude**

Researchers and studies indicate that students with positive attitudes towards learning English learn faster, and students who are genuinely open minded and interested in improving their pronunciation often improve it. Attitudes are created, and can be changed through family, teachers, peers and school. The attitude of the students is the strongest barrier found by them because they do not feel that learning English is important and most of them do not have perspective to future, they are living day by day.

1. **Home Background**

Wallwork (1885) reviewed in Okoli (2013) states that home background of the child decides more than anything the quality of his mastery of language, for this is where he/she experienced it most day in day out, and over the years of infancy and childhood. Home background plays a very crucial role in a child’s pronunciation. The child pronounces words the way the people around him do.

1. **Teachers incompetence**

For most learners, a teacher is the model of person. Most learners will believe that what their teachers do is the correct thing. The same perception may happen to most parents. Parents believe that teachers will teach a correct and right thing to their children. This is a conventional wisdom that teacher is perceived as the one who knows the knowledge of the subjects matters. However, one can imagine the impact of teacher’s incorrect pronunciation to the learners. Most teachers are incompete4nce in phonetic and whatever they teach the student is what they believe is correct.

**Problems which pose as a Challenge in Effective learning of English**

Often times, students studying English language are often faced with issues which pose challenge to them in effectively learning English as a second language.

English is considered one of the most difficult languages to learn. While there are many rules in the English language about how words are pronounced, there are also quite a few exceptions and areas where particular rules do not apply. Understanding these tricky areas will help you be more sensitive to the plight of foreign speakers who are trying to speak English.

Each learner has his own issues but the most common are the following:-

1. Lack of vocabulary.

2. Grammar.

3. Correct pronunciation.

4. Hesitation in speaking.

If we come to solution it will be easy to discuss it in the same sequence.

1. To improve vocabulary read an English language Newspaper and good literary books. Reading habit will improve not only your vocabulary but also the sense of making sentences.
2. Grammar is not essential to learn a language but it is very basic to correct one’s language. Therefore, a Grammar book will be very helpful during the learning process.
3. Listening an English channel will improve pronunciation skills. Some English cartoons are very helpful due to pace of speaking in them. Different characters speak very slowly and you can understand every word they speak and it makes easy for you to correct your pronunciation.
4. Speak& speak is the rule to address this issue. Whether you speak wrong or right but don't give up speaking will end shyness which is a big hurdle in learning any language.

The most common cause of the problems faced by a learner of the English language as a second language is existence of the inherent structure of their first language or mother tongue that they are exposed to since the first day. As such the problems that are faced by the students trying to learn the language are-

1. Understanding the grammar structure of the new language.

2. Pronunciations or the inability to understand or comprehend new words.

3. Most often students use the translation method to understand the second language, in this case English

4. Again they think of the reply in their mother tongue first and then form a reply by translating.

5. Vocabulary becomes a huge problem.

The above mentioned problems are just a few of other problems but in my opinion these are the major ones faced by students. The hardest for a teacher in this case is to actually create a new structure of the English grammar while trying not to dismantle the existing language structure of their mother tongue. The student should be able to use both the languages with ease. Again it is fairly easier in the case of children.

**Pronunciation of English Language**

In general terms, pronunciation is defined as “the manner in which speech sounds, especially connected sequences are articulated by individual speakers or by speakers generally” (Trask, 2015: 291). In the light of this definition, pronunciation is linked to the study of phonetics which involves the scientific study and description of speech sounds. From a more technical perspective, (Pennington & Richards, 2013: 208) define pronunciation according to language teachers, as follows:*“For most language teachers, pronunciation is largely identified with the articulation of individual sounds and, to a lesser extent, with the stress and intonation patterns of the target language.”* In this respect, the second definition does not limit pronunciation only to the way in which sounds are articulated but goes further to incorporate other articulatory aspects, namely stress and intonation patterns.

In addition to this definition, Pennington & Richards (2013) subdivided pronunciation into four major components which include:

* Segmental features: minimal units of sound defined in phonetic terms.
* Voice-setting features: General articulatory characteristics of stretches of speech.
* Prosodic features: involving the relative levels of stress and pitch within syllables, words, phrases and longer stretches of speech.

This decomposition of pronunciation into different components is motivated by one simple reason, namely to make the teaching of pronunciation an easy, manageable task.  
Throughout the history of language teaching, some teachers asked whether pronunciation could or needed to be taught and others dropped its teaching from their syllabi. However, with the rise of Audio-lingualism and the influence of Behaviorism, teachers started to adopt the “listen and repeat” approach. This approach focused on habit-formation whereby the teacher pronounced isolated words to the students to repeat and the more repetition/imitation was reinforced, the more students would become accurate. Later on, with the rise of the communicative movement in the 1970’s and 1980’s, the pronunciation component was given less attention due to the growing dissatisfaction with the traditional approaches to its teaching. Alternatively, in the late 1980’s with the rise of inter-language studies and the rapid growth in the study of phonology, the teaching of pronunciation regained the attention of teachers and applied linguists. While some of them still continue to adopt the traditional models of drilling and imitation, others have tried to design techniques and methods to integrate the teaching of pronunciation with other basic language skills.

**Practice and Repetition**

Worksheets are one of the most helpful tools for a person learning to speak English. A worksheet can provide graphic images of words and actions which can help the student understand the meaning of the word and help them pronounce words as they spell it out on the worksheet.

The teaching of pronunciation has witnessed remarkable changes throughout the history of language teaching and learning. As one of the most neglected aspects of English language teaching, pronunciation has gained attention only in the past half of the 20th century with the rise of Audio-lingualism and the Direct Method. Throughout history, teachers and applied linguists have been concerned with the difficulty of teaching this skill. In this respect, they have attempted to develop different methods and techniques with the reliance on other sub-disciplines such as phonetics, phonology and second language acquisition among others. Taking phonetics and phonology as a framework, teachers have tried to make use of the different components of these core disciplines in order to apply them to their classrooms. In this respect, this article will endeavor to highlight the importance of phonetics and phonology in the teaching of pronunciation. Therefore, it will start by defining and contextualizing the issue of teaching pronunciation. Second, the different components of the study of phonetics and phonology will be highlighted with their relevance to the teaching of pronunciation. Following on, some practical techniques and activities, which involve the use of phonetics and phonology in the teaching of pronunciation, will be presented.

**Practical Activities in Teaching Pronunciation**

There has been a great deal of debate on what techniques can be used to teach pronunciation effectively. One of the prominent debates centers on whether to teach pronunciation through imitation or through consciousness-raising. In this regard, (Jones, 2014), highlights the importance of habit-formation and imitation and its persistence in teaching pronunciation even after the rise of communicative language teaching. As he states:

*“Part of the reason for the focus on habit-formation in acquiring L2 phonology is the special characteristic of pronunciation, which, unlike other language skills, involves both cognitive and motor functions: few would deny that repeated practice of motor functions results in increased dexterity.”* (p. 180).

One of the prominent techniques used in the teaching of pronunciation is one that makes use of phonemes and minimal pairs. According to Cook (2011), the concepts of phoneme and minimal pair have proved useful in organizing materials for teaching pronunciation. Generally, students are presented with pairs of words like “car” / kaː/ versus “cow” / kaʊ/ or “bra” /braː/ versus “brow” /braʊ/. Then, they are asked whether they are different or not. This allows the teacher to build the whole phonemic inventory from scratch. Furthermore, for students, learning how to distinguish one phoneme from another becomes easy by distinguishing minimal pairs.  
Another application of the same technique is discussed in Bowen (2013). According to the latter, a contrast (or minimal pair) is illustrated, explained and then presented for identification by students. For instance, for the contrast [base/vase], two words will be presented, sometimes alike (base…base), and sometimes different (base…vase). Students will be asked to respond “same” or “different”. Furthermore, the words can also be given one at a time with instructions to raise the left arm if “base” is heard or the right arm if it is “vase”. In this way, the teacher can make use of several contrasts which can be practiced later by students.

**Five Difficult Areas of Phonology**

English is a difficult language to pronounce. Different individuals might find various parts of the [phonology](http://www.yourdictionary.com/phonology) of English complicated-if not near impossible-to grasp.

The areas that are considered to be the most complex or confusing are:

* Stress on words
* Vowel and consonant sounds
* Combined sounds
* Physical attributes
* Translation between languages

**Stress on Words**

In English a different stress is placed on words that are spelled exactly the same, depending upon the meaning that the speaker wishes to create. For example, with the word "record," there is a different stress based on whether we wish to refer to the noun of a piece of music media or to the verb for the actual act of registering or putting in writing a piece of information or saving a piece of music.

Therefore, English language learners cannot simply base the pronunciation of a word on what they see. They also need to learn to look for contextual clues around that word, in order to determine the correct way to pronounce it.

**Vowel and Consonant Sounds**

English language learners need to distinguish between vowels and consonants. After learning these most basic letter sounds, they also have to learn that these letters do not always make the same sound. For example:

* The vowel "a" makes a very different sound in the word "bake" than it does in the word "apple."
* Consonants can change a bit as well. A "t" in the word "tackle" is very different in sound from a "t" in the word "the."

The pronunciation of vowel and consonant sounds vary with the word in which they are used.

**Combined Sounds**

Sometimes when consonants come together, the pronunciation gets confusing. A non-native speaker would see "t" and "h" and want to pronounce those sounds separately. However, they come together to create a blended sound. Another example of this is when the letters "c" and "k" come together in words as a back, rack, pack, tackle, and so forth.

The person learning English would see these two letters as distinct, yet when people speak, he or she hears them as blended together into one sound which understandably can cause at least a bit of confusion.

**Physical Attributes**

The way in which people speak is, of course, related to physical properties of the mouth region. For example, there are some words which absolutely require speakers to put both of their lips together in order to produce the sound. The letters "b" and "p" are two such examples. While it seems natural to a native speaker, those who do not know how to say these sounds have to learn these processes which are entirely commonplace to the English speaker.

**Translation between Languages**

Often when you try to learn another language you look for a sound or word comparable in English upon which you can base your study off the word in the new language. However, this is not always possible when trying to learn English. For example, the sounds of "th" and "v" do not have any comparable measure in some languages. Therefore, you cannot teach these learners by saying "The sound is like this in your native language." You are not able to give them a basis for comparison.

**The relationship between classroom condition and student performance in English Language**

In terms of classroom procedures, Broughton et. al. (2014) advocates a “little and often” teaching sequence. As he describes it: “The teaching sequence must therefore be organized in terms of priorities and degrees of difficulty. The amount of time devoted to specifically pronunciation teaching depends on the larger priorities of the course in general” (p. 62). More specifically, pronunciation practice can be introduced into a lesson at any point where a significant problem is noticed. Broughton et. al. (2014) further presents some guidelines that can be followed in the teaching of pronunciation, chief of which are the following:

* Recognition practice should precede production practice.
* The sound to be heard and spoken should be clearly highlighted in short utterances.
* Students should be given the opportunity to hear the same things said by more than one voice as the model.
* The English sounds can be demonstrated in contrast with other English sounds or in contrast with sounds from the native language.

**Theoretical Framework**

The purpose of this section is to review theories on language learning.

They include:

Linguistic Theory

Language Acquisition

Linguistic Competence Theory

This study was guided by linguistic theory. The development of this theory can be traced back to the work of Noam Chomsky (1965).

Linguistic competence is the system of linguistic knowledge possessed by native speakers of a language. It is distinguished from linguistic performance, which is the way a language system is used in communication. Noam Chomsky introduced this concept in his elaboration of generative grammar, where it has been widely adopted and competence is the only level of language that is studied.

According to Chomsky, competence is the ideal language system that enables speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences in their language, and to distinguish grammatical sentences from ungrammatical sentences. This is unaffected by “grammatically irrelevant conditions” such as speech errors. In Chomsky’s view, competence can be studied independently of language use, which falls under “performance”, for example through introspection and grammaticality judgments by native speakers.

**Competence Versus Performance**

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech-community, who knows its (the speech community’s) language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of this language in actual performance.

Chomsky differentiates competence, which is an idealized capacity, from performance being the production of actual utterances. According to him, competence is the ideal speaker-hearer’s knowledge of his or her language and it is the ‘mental reality’ which is responsible for all those aspects of language use which can be characterized as ‘linguistic’. Chomsky argues that only under an idealized situation whereby the speaker-hearer is unaffected by grammatically irrelevant conditions such as memory limitations and distractions will performance be a direct reflection of competence. A sample of natural speech consisting of numerous false starts and other deviations will not provide such data. Therefore, he claims that a fundamental distinction has to be made between the competence and performance.

**Language Acquisition**

The Chomskyan view of language acquisition argues that humans have an innate ability – universal grammar – to acquire language. However, a list of universal aspects underlying all languages has been hard to identify.

Another view, held by scientists specializing in Language acquisition, such as Tomasello, argues that young children’s early language is concrete and item-based which implies that their speech is based on the lexicon items known to them from the environment and the language of their caretakers. In addition, children do not produce creative utterances about past experiences and future expectations because they have not had enough exposure to their target language to do so. Thus, this indicates that the exposure to language plays more of a role in a child’s linguistic competence than just their innate abilities.

**Empirical Studies**

This sub-section deals with review of the related empirical study.

Elif Nur Denzier (2017) conducted a study to find out whether mother tongue interferences in second-language learning, and if so, whether it affects the learners’ performance in four language skills, and also in which skill(s) it has the biggest effects. Data collection tool included a questionnaire by which participants were asked to rate the questions and tick-circle or write in the correct blank. The questionnaire was based on both quantitative and qualitative approaches with the help of 4-point Likert-scale questions and one open-ended question at the last part. The participants of the study were 20 volunteer students (15 females and 5 males) in Uludag University on whom the questionnaire was randomly applied. They ranged in age from 18 to 40 and the mean age was 23. Their mother tongue was Turkish, and they knew English as a foreign language. The questionnaire shows that mother tongue interferes with second language learning in some way.

Ucheoma (2008) conducted a study to investigate the impact of mother tongue Ikwewrre on the learning and proficiency of the target language. The research was carried out using the JSS one and JSS two students of some selected secondary schools in Emohua Local Government Area of River Stat, where Ikwere is an indigenous language and is mostly used in communication outside the classroom. Written composition/utterances of the students were the instrument for data collection.

The findings of the data analysis yielded categories viz, vowel harmony/ nasalization, phonemic differences, insertion of vowels between consonant clusters , wrong placement of stress, wrong use of tenses, omission/wrong use of rules of concord and wrong use of prepositions. From the results of the research, it was found that the mother tongue ‘Ikwere’ influences the learning and proficiency of the English language. These findings were discussed and thereafter, conclusion and recommendation were deduced.

Daniel (2010), conducted a study to investigate the effect of mother tongue on English language in some selected secondary schools in Ovia North East Local Government. The effect of mother tongue of the study includes students in some secondary schools in Ovia North East. However, a total of four secondary schools were selected, the students were drawn from each of the classes making a total of 100 students which constitute the sample size. The research instrument used includes: questionnaire, interview and participant observation. The data collected was analyzed using the sample percentages calculation; however, all of them were finding.

**Summary of Literature Review**

The literature review for the study focused on three main headings: conceptual framework, theoretical framework, empirical studies and summary of literature reviewed.

This section examined the concept of phonology. “Phonology means the study of the ways in which speech sounds form systems and patterns in a given language” Anayachukwu (2015)

Relating the above to pronunciation, there are problems that prohibit an effective learning of phonetics.

The major factors responsible for phonological problems among secondary school students were discussed which include: mother tongue interference, incompetence of teacher, and family background.

Under the theoretical framework, linguistic theory and language acquisition theory were discussed. Linguistic theory emphasis on competence and performance. Competence is the knowledge one has in a language while performance is the ability of the person to apply the knowledge he has in the language. From the above explanation, it implies that student who do not speak well and pronounce some words correctly in English lack competence and performance and their environment and caretaker also contributes to it.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**RESEARCH METHOD**

**Design of the Study**

The method adopted for this study is a survey design. The survey was used to gather data on some phonological problems encountered by secondary school students in English language. The study is focused on phonological problems. The researcher collected data from secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria.

**Area of the Study**

The area of the study is Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu. Its headquarters are in the town of Nkwo Nike. It has an area of 383 km2. There are ten public secondary schools in Enugu East. This area was chosen based on personal observation

**Population of the Study**

The population of the study consisted of 160 students from 5 secondary schools in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State. The total population of students was 13605

**Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

Random sampling technique was employed to select the sample for the study. Five secondary schools out of ten (10) secondary schools in Enugu East Local Government Area were sampled to give a fair representation of the schools in the local government area. Sixty (80) female and sixty five (80) male students were selected from the secondary schools in the study area. The students were selected from each of the five (5) sample public secondary schools which serves as the research respondents. Therefore, the sample size of female and male selected was 160.

**Instrument for Data Collection**

The standardized questionnaire “Some Phonological Problems Encountered by Secondary School Students in English as a Second Language was employed to get information from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: A and B. Questions in section A dwells on the bio-data of respondents – sex, gender, class. Section B comprises questions that relate to some phonological problems encountered by secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area.

**Reliability of Instrument**

To ascertain the consistency if instrument, the researcher adopted a test- retest reliability technique. One hundred and sixty (160) copies of the questionnaire were administered to secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State in two occasions within a week.

**Validation of Instrument**

The instrument for the study was subjected to face validity by experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument was critically looked at and corrected. Based on the corrections made by the experts and my supervisor, additions and subtractions were affected before the final draft of the instrument.

**Method of Data Collection**

The researcher personally administered the instrument with the instructions carefully read out and explained to the understanding of the students. They were given enough time to respond to the various questions after which the questionnaires were collected on the spot. However, out of 160 questionnaires that was given to the students, 152 returned the questionnaire while 8 did not return the questionnaire.

**Method of Data Analysis**

In analyzing data collected, mean score was used to achieve this. The responses from the respondents were compared to the number of items in the questionnaire for each research question.

Ʃ

Formula for mean: FX

N

Where Ʃ= Sum of

F = frequency

X = Nominal value

N = Total number of respondent

The mean was calculated by adding the nominal value of response mode thus:

Scale Nominal Value

SA = Strongly Agree 4

A = Agree 3

D = Disagree 2

SD = Strongly Disagree 1

Total 10

Average = 10 = 2.5

4

**Decision Rule**

Any score that was 2.5 and above was accepted, while any score that was below 2.5 was rejected. Therefore, 2.5 were the cut –off mean score for decision taken.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**4.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of data obtained from the administration of the instrument (questionnaire) of the study. The data were organized in three tables in relevance to the three research questions and analyzed by the use of mean score.

**Research Question 1:**

How does mother tongue impinges on pronunciation in English as a second language?

**Table 1:** Mean responses on how mother tongue impinges on pronunciation in Enugu East Local Government Area.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **ITEMS** | **SA**  **4** | **A**  **3** | **D**  **2** | **SD**  **1** | **N** | **X** | **DECISION** |
| 1. | Students substitute /ð/ and /Ø/ for /t/ | 62  248 | 70  210 | 20  40 | 0  0 | 152  496 | 3.3 | Agree |
| 2. | Some students substitute /r/ for /l/ | 27  108 | 110  350 | 12  24 | 3  3 | 152  465 | 3.1 | Agree |
| 3. | Mother tongue does not affect the pronunciation of plumber /plʌmƏ/ | 30  120 | 15  45 | 60  120 | 47  47 | 152  332 | 2.2 | Disagree |
| 4. | Mother tongue affects intonation | 92  368 | 40  120 | 13  26 | 7  7 | 152  521 | 3.4 | Agree |
| 5. | Mother tongue interfere in the pronunciation of lamb /læm/ | 55  220 | 89  267 | 6  12 | 2  2 | 152  521 | 3.4 | Agree |
| 6. | Some students substitute /tᶴ/ for /ᶴ/ | 42  168 | 84  252 | 26  78 | 0  0 | 152  498 | 3.3 | Agree |
| 7. | Mother tongue affects my accent | 80  320 | 50  150 | 15  30 | 7  7 | 152  507 | 3.3 | Agree |
|  | Total Mean Score |  |  |  |  |  | 21.9 |  |
|  | Grand Mean |  |  |  |  |  | 21.9  7  **=3.1** |  |

Data in table 1 shows that high mean scores were obtained from six (6) out of seven (7) items. Item 1 with mean response 3.3 accepted that students, substitute /ð/ and /Ø/ for /t/. Item 2 with means score of 3.1 also accepted that some students substitute /r/ for /l/. Item 3 with mean score of 2.2 did not accept that mother tongue does not affect the pronunciation of plumber /plʌmƏ/. Item 4 with the mean score of 3.4 accepted that mother tongue affects intonation. Item 5 with mean score of 3.3 accepted that mother tongue interfere in the pronunciation of lamb /læm/. Item 6 with mean score of 3.5 accepted that some students substitute /tᶴ/ for /ᶴ/. Item 7 with mean score of 3.3 also accepted that mother tongue affects one’s accent. Item 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 have mean score above 2.50, while item 3 have mean score below 2.50. this indicates that the respondents accepted in all the items that mother tongue impinge on pronunciation in English among secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State.

**Research Question 2:**

How does incompetence of teacher influence students’ pronunciation in English?

**Table 1:** Mean responses on how incompetence of teacher influences students’ pronunciation in English in Enugu East Local Government Area.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **ITEMS** | **SA**  **4** | **A**  **3** | **D**  **2** | **SD**  **1** | **N** | **X** | **DECISION** |
| 1. | Some of the teachers miss pronounce the word vision /viᶴn/, and genre. | 33  132 | 69  207 | 44  88 | 6  6 | 152  433 | 2.8 | Agree |
| 2. | Some of the teachers do not use stress pattern in pronunciation | 60  240 | 82  240 | 10  30 | -  - | 152  510 | 3.3 | Agree |
| 3. | Some of the teachers do not use tape- recorder aids to teach. | 98  392 | 54  162 | -  - | -  - | 152  554 | 3.6 | Agree |
| 4. | Some of the teachers do not drill us in phonetics | 80  320 | 34  136 | 30  60 | 8  8 | 152  524 | 3.4 | Agree |
| 5 | Some of my teacher are not good at phonetics | 20  80 | 69  207 | 50  100 | 13  13 | 152  400 | 2.6 | Agree |
| 6. | Most of the teachers do not check my pronunciation | 21  84 | 88  264 | 26  52 | 17  17 | 152  417 | 2.7 | Agree |
| 7. | Some of the teachers have mother tongue interference. | 37  148 | 61  183 | 50  100 | 4  4 | 152  435 | 32.8 | Agree |
|  | Total Mean Score |  |  |  |  |  | 21.2 |  |
|  | Grand Mean |  |  |  |  |  | 21.2  7  **=3.0** |  |

In table 2, item 1 with the mean response of 2.8 agreed that some of the teachers mispronounce the word vision /viᶴn/. Item 2 with mean response of 3.3 agreed that some of the teachers do not use stress pattern in pronunciation. Item 3 with the mean response of 3.6 agreed that many teachers do not use audio-visual aids to teach phonetics. Item 4 with the mean response of 3.4 agreed that some of my teachers do not drill us in phonetics. Item 5 with mean score of 2.6 agreed that some of the teachers are not good at phonetics. Item 6 with mean score of 2.7 agreed that most of the teachers do not check my pronunciation. Item 7 with mean score of 2.8 also agreed that some of the teachers have mother tongue interference. Item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 6, and 7 have their mean score above 2.5 and that indicates that the respondents agreed that incompetence of teachers affect the learning of English.

**Research Question 3:**

How does home background influence learner’s pronunciation in the study of English?

**Table 1:** Mean responses on how family background influence learner’s pronunciation in the study of English in Enugu East Local Government Area.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **ITEMS** | **SA**  **4** | **A**  **3** | **D**  **2** | **SD**  **1** | **N** | **X** | **DECISION** |
| 1. | Most parents speak Igbo often at home. | 100  400 | 49  147 | 3  6 | -  - | 152  553 | 3.6 | Agree |
| 2. | Most parents help in building up my pronunciation. | 10  40 | 50  150 | 30  60 | 62  62 | 152  312 | 2.0 | Disagree |
| 3. | Most parents mix English and Igbo when they speak. | 61  244 | 80  240 | 9  18 | 2  2 | 152  504 | 3.3 | Agree |
| 4. | Most parents do not pronounce some words correctly. | 60  240 | 26  78 | 50  100 | 16  16 | 152  434 | 2.8 | Agree |
| 5. | Most parents do not help in building up my pronunciation. | 72  288 | 60  180 | 2  4 | 18  18 | 152  490 | 3.2 | Agree |
| 6. | Most parents do not speak English at home. | 27  108 | 65  195 | 58  116 | 2  2 | 152  421 | 2.7 | Agree |
|  | Total Mean Score |  |  |  |  |  | 17.6 |  |
|  | Grand Mean |  |  |  |  |  | 17.6  6  **=2.9** |  |

In table 3, item 1 with mean score of 3.6 agreed that most parents speak Igbo often at home. Item 2 with mean score of 2.0 disagreed that some parents help in building up my pronunciation in English. Item 3 with mean score of 3.6 agreed that most parents mix English and Igbo when they speak. Item 4 with mean score of 2.8 agreed that most parents do not pronounce some words in English correctly. Item 5 with mean score of 3.2 also accepted that most parents do not help in building up my pronunciation in English. Item 6 with mean score of 2.7 agreed that most parents do not speak English at home. Item 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 have mean score above 2.5, while item 2 has mean score below 2.5. This indicates that respondents agreed that home background influence students pronunciation in English in Enugu East Local Government Area.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATION**

This chapter is concisely built on the discussion of the findings, conclusion, the implication of the study, recommendation, limitations of the study, suggestions for further study and summary of the study.

**Discussion of Findings**

It is important to note that discussion of the findings on some phonological problems encountered by secondary school students in the study of English as a second language in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State are done under the following guiding research questions

1. How does mother tongue impinge on pronunciation in English among secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State?
2. How does incompetence of teacher influence students’ pronunciation in English among secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State?
3. How does family background influence learners’ pronunciation in the study of English among secondary schools in Enugu East Local Government of Enugu State?

**Research question 1:**

**How does mother tongue impinge on pronunciation in English among secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State?**

Table 1 with item 1,2,3,4,5,6,7, dealt with research question 1. It was the opinion of the respondents that students substitute for /t/, some students substitute /r/ for /l/, mother tongue does not affect the pronunciation of plumber, mother tongue affects intonation, mother tongue interfere in the pronunciation of lamb, some students substitute // for //, mother tongue affects one’s accent are how are how mother tongue impinges on pronunciation in English among secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area.

**Research question 2:**

**How does incompetence of teacher influence students’ pronunciation in English?**

The finding revealed that incompetence of teacher affects pronunciation in English. It was of the opinion of the respondents that most teachers miss- pronounce the word vision, many teachers do not use stress pattern in pronunciation, many teachers do not use tape- recorder aids to teach, most teachers do not drill students in phonetics, most teachers are not good at phonetics, most teachers do not check students pronunciation, some teachers have mother tongue interference. The responses from item 1 to 7 agreed that incompetence of teacher affects students’ pronunciation in English among secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State.

**Research Question 3:**

**How does family background influence learners’ pronunciation in the study of English in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State?**

The result of the findings revealed that most parents speak Igbo often at home. It was also of the opinion of the respondents that most parents do not help in building up one’s pronunciation; many parents mix English and Igbo when they speak; some parents do not pronounce words correctly; most parents do not help in building up one’s pronunciation in English; many parents do not speak English at. The responses from item 1 to 6 reveal that family background influences students’ pronunciation in English among Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to find out some phonological problems encountered by secondary school students in the study of English as a second language in Enugu East Local Government area of Enugu State. From the analysis of the finding relating to the research questions, the following conclusions were drawn.

It was observed that observed that mother tongue impinges on pronunciation in English among secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area.

It was also observed that incompetence of teacher influence students pronunciation in English.

It was revealed that family background influences learners’ pronunciation in the study of English in Enugu East Local Government Area.

**Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study are of immense benefit to school teachers, students, parents, presenters, and the government. The findings of the study showed that mother tongue impinges on pronunciation in English among secondary school students. This implies that, for learners of English to improve on their pronunciation, they must identify the areas where they have flaws, listen to BBC News in order to build up their pronunciation, and they should also try to pronounce those consonant and vowel sounds that mother tongue affects in the presence of their friends

The finding of the study also showed that incompetence of teacher influence learners’ pronunciation. This means that, for teachers to work on their incompetence and to help learners of English on their pronunciation, they would have to use tape- recorder to teach phonetic, drill the student well on phonetics and phonology and also check the students’ pronunciation and correct them when they are wrong.

The finding of the study also revealed that family background influence learners’ pronunciation in the study of English. This implies that students learn a lot from their parents and the people they start speaking with at their early age are their parents. The students would tend to pronounce words the way their parents do. However, for students to improve on their pronunciation, parents should try to help them building up their pronunciation by correcting them when they pronounce the wrong words and communicate with them in English.

In addition, the government should provide language laboratory that has tape- recorder for students and teachers of English. This will help in smooth running of teaching phonetics and phonology.

Both the school and parents should work jointly to tackle phonological problems.

**Recommendations of the Study**

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher hereby made the following recommendations:

1. Teachers should drill students on phonetics.
2. Teachers should endeavour to check students’ pronunciation and give them

comprehension or essay to read in class.

1. Parents should encourage their children to listen to news.
2. Teachers should also endeavour to use stress pattern in pronunciation.
3. Government should provide adequate facility for teaching phonetics for both students and teachers.

Finally, if these recommendations are judiciously applied by parents and teachers, it will help to reduce the problems learners’ encounter in phonetics.

**Limitations of the Study**

The researcher encountered some challenges in the process of carrying out the study. They include the following:

1. Time factor was one of the limitations of the study.
2. Some of the respondents were reluctant in responding to the questionnaire.
3. Lack of finance was also a limitation factor to the study.

**Suggestion for Further Studies**

In view of the limitations to this study, the researcher suggests the following for further studies: Investigate the difficulty learners of English face in pronunciation.

**Summary of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to find out some phonological problems encountered by secondary school students in the study of English as a second language in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Three research questions were constructed to guide the study. Some published and unpublished works of earlier researchers were consulted. To obtain answers to the questions, twenty (20) item questionnaire was formulated on the research questions and was administered to one hundred and sixty (160) respondents upon whose responses data was collected and analyzed. The outcome of the analysis based on the responses of the respondents to the questionnaire item revealed that:

Mother tongue impinges on pronunciation in English in Enugu East Local Government Area. Incompetence of teacher influence students’ pronunciation in English in Enugu East Local Government Area.

Home background influence learners’ pronunciation in the study of English in Enugu East Local Government Area.

Therefore, it was concluded that all these problems are what secondary school students’ encounter in learning English in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State.

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**APPENDIX I**

Department of Arts and Social Sciences

Education

Godfrey Okoye University

Ugwuomu- Nike Enugu

Enugu State

June, 2018

Dear Respondent

I am a final year student in the above mentioned university. I am currently carrying out a research on “Some Phonological Problems Encountered by Secondary School Students in English as a Second Language in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State.

You are please requested to respond appropriately in the column or space provided below.

The information you may give in strictly for academic purpose only and will not be used against you in any form. Please, be honest in your responses since name are not needed.

Thanks.

Yours faithfully,

**Obi, Chidimma Rachael.**

**APPENDIX II**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

Questionnaire for Secondary School Students on knowledge, perception, attitude of secondary school students towards Phonological Problems Encountered by Secondary School Students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State.

**SECTION A:**

**Respondent Personal Data**

Please tick (√) in the appropriate option that best suits your opinion.

1. Sex: Male [ ] Female [ ]
2. Class of Student [ ]

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

**SECTION B:**

**Research Question 1: How does mother tongue impinges on pronunciation in English as a second language?**

**Table 1:** Responses of students Phonological Problems Encountered by Secondary School Students in English.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **ITEMS** | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** |
| 1. | Students substitute /ð/ and /Ø/ for /t/ |  |  |  |  |
| 2. | Some students substitute /r/ for /l/ |  |  |  |  |
| 3. | Mother tongue does not affect the pronunciation of plumber /plʌmƏ/ |  |  |  |  |
| 4. | Mother tongue affects intonation |  |  |  |  |
| 5. | Mother tongue interfere in the pronunciation of lamb /læm/ |  |  |  |  |
| 6. | Some students substitute /tᶴ/ for /ᶴ/ |  |  |  |  |
| 7. | Mother tongue affects my accent |  |  |  |  |

**Research Question 2: How does incompetence of teacher influence students’ pronunciation in English?**

**Table II:** Responses of students Phonological Problems Encountered by Secondary School Students in English.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **ITEMS** | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** |
| 1. | Some of the teachers miss pronounce the word vision /viᶴn/ and genre. |  |  |  |  |
| 2. | Some of the teachers do not use stress pattern in pronunciation |  |  |  |  |
| 3. | Some of the teachers do not use tape- recorder aids to teach. |  |  |  |  |
| 4. | Some of the teachers do not drill us in phonetics |  |  |  |  |
| 5. | The teacher is not good at phonetics |  |  |  |  |
| 6. | Most of the teachers do not check my pronunciation |  |  |  |  |
| 7. | Some of the teachers have mother tongue interference. |  |  |  |  |

**Research Question 3: How does home background influence learner’s pronunciation in the study of English?**

**Table III:** Responses of students Phonological Problems Encountered by Secondary School Students in English.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S/N** | **ITEMS** | **SA** | **A** | **D** | **SD** |
| 1. | Most parents speak Igbo often at home. |  |  |  |  |
| 2. | Most parents help in building up my pronunciation. |  |  |  |  |
| 3. | Most parents mix English and Igbo when they speak. |  |  |  |  |
| 4. | Most parents do not pronounce some words correctly. |  |  |  |  |
| 5. | Most parents do not help in building up my pronunciation. |  |  |  |  |
| 6. | Most parents do not speak English at home. |  |  |  |  |