Problems of Phonemic Realization by Students in Selected Secondary Schools in Yenagoa Metropolis

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Abstract: This research focused on the problem of phonemic realization by students in selected secondary schools in Yenagoa metropolis. Specifically, the study identified the influences of student's mother tongue in the phonemic realization in their academic performance and the concept of phonemics realization. Phoneme are often said to be realized by speech sounds. The different sounds that can realize a particular phoneme are called its allophones. Phoneme means the smallest significant, distinctive and contrastive units of a sound, phonemic realization is the actualization of phonemic sound in the speaker utterance. The researcher's method was on oral interviews and personal observation and data got were analyzed. The findings show that student should be expose to phonemics as to realize and use them accordingly, Constant teaching of phonemics in classroom should be done thrice in a week for the student, for a better academic performance, that is to say that wrong use of phonemics negatively affects the students' academic performance. The researcher concludes that most of the students are not properly taught the correct phoneme, despite English is used as the language of instruction and as subject of study in school. This study also adds to the existing literature advocating for a standard pronunciation of English phonemic by its assessment of the classroom to identify a factor for the reproduction of phonemic error.

Keywords: Phoneme, Phonemics, Mother tongue, Language Learning, Language Acquisition, Realization, Classroom, Performance.

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INTRODUCTION

A phoneme refers to a unit of sound that is produced during speech and is considered to be the smallest unit of sound in a language. It is an auditory and articulatory representation of a speech sound that is distinct from other sounds in the same language. Within the field of linguistics, a phoneme is defined as the most basic unit of speech that serves to differentiate one word from another. For instance, the

phoneme /p/ in the word "tap" is responsible for distinguishing it from other words such as "tab," "tag," and "tan." English language phonetics may exhibit multiple variants of a sound, known as allophones, which function as a singular sound. For instance, the phonetic variations of the 'p' sound in words such as "pat", "spat", and "tap" are discernible, yet do not hold any semantic significance in the English language.

In linguistic discourse, speech is commonly characterized by the use of phonemes. Phonemes are the fundamental units of sound that carry distinct, meaningful information in a given language. In the English language, for instance, the word "cat" comprises three phonemes: /k/, /æ/, and /t/. Similarly, the sounds /p/, /l/, and /r/ are also distinct phonemes in English. Substituting one phoneme for another can result in words with distinct meanings. The phonemes 'royal' and 'loyal's' are typically denoted by two forward slashes in linguistic analysis. Students in Bayelsa state who are learning the phonemes /r/ and /l/ encounter two challenges in determining the appropriate sounds to utilize. According to Rowland (2014), the acoustic invariance is absent in the sound pattern of phonemes.

Phonemes exhibit significant variability in their pronunciation, which is manifested in the form of phones. Students may speak with diverse accents, varying pitches of voice, and different rates of speech. According to Waldrop's research in 1998, it has been discovered that the word "the" can be pronounced in different ways.

An additional challenge arises from the fact that students are not presented with phonemes in a systematic sequence of distinct and separate sounds. Conversely, the aforementioned sounds "the"exhibit a phenomenon known as co-articulation, wherein they overlap and interact. As an illustration, the phoneme /p/ exhibits distinct pronunciation variations in words such as "my pet" and "your pet". It has been observed that various languages employ distinct sets of phonemes. The word 'languages' encompasses approximately 600 consonant sounds and 200 vowel sounds. However, most languages utilize 20 to 37 or more phonemes, as per Maddleson's research in 1984. One of the challenges encountered by students is the identification of phonemes utilized in their native language.

Phonemes possess a finite set of discernible attributes, known as distinctive features, which delineate their manner and place of articulation, degree of voicing, and tongue height in the oral cavity. Several conventional values for the manner of articulation include vowel phonemes such as /ow/, /iu/, and /ah/, as well as glide phonemes like /w/ and /y/. Additionally, lateral phonemes such as /l/ and retroflex phonemes like /r/ are also commonly used. The phonemes /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/, as well as the affricates /tʃ / and /ʃ /. Additionally, the plosives /p/, /t/, /k/, /b/, /d/, and /g/ are also included in this category. Diphthongs are phonetic units that comprises two distinct vowel sounds that merge together to form a single phoneme.

The specification of the place of articulation is determined by the positioning of the tongue tip in relation to the palate. The place of articulation for consonant sounds encompasses a range of values, including bilabial, dental, palatal, alveolar, dorsal, palato-alveolar, labio-dental, uvular, labial and velar. Meanwhile, values for vowel sounds are categorized as front, middle, and back, as noted by Funmi (2003). The phonemic differentiation between certain consonants, such as the /ʃ / in "sheep" and the /sh/ in "ship," can be discerned based on the vertical position of the tongue within the oral cavity. Additionally, the voiced or unvoiced nature of a given phoneme, such as the consonants /z/ and /b/ versus /s/ and /p/, can be determined by the degree of voicing present.

The words sin /sin/ and sing /siŋ/ are phonetically distinct due to the substitution of the phoneme /n/ with /ŋ/. Similarly, the words pit and /pet/, /l/ and /e/, and lip and /lap/ are differentiated by the substitution of distinct phonemes. A pair of words that contrast in meaning due to the difference of a single phoneme is referred to as a minimal pair. In the event that two sequences in a different language differ only in the pronunciation of the final sounds /n/ and /ŋ/, and are perceived to have the same meaning, then these two sounds are considered to be phonetic variants of a single phoneme in that particular language. Phonemes, which can be distinguished by the use of minimal pairs such as "bat" and "pat," or "tab" and "tap," are

represented using slashes, such as /p/ and /b/. Linguists utilize square brackets [pʰ] to denote the pronunciation of a sound, specifically an aspirated /p/ in the word "pat".

There exist divergent perspectives regarding the precise definition of phonemes and the appropriate approach to phonemic (or phonematic) analysis of a particular language. In linguistic studies, a phoneme is commonly understood as a theoretical construct representing a group of speech sounds (known as phones) that are perceived as interchangeable within a particular language. The phoneme /k/ is represented by two distinct sounds in English words such as kill and skill, which are known as distributional variants. Allophones of a phoneme refer to speech sounds that exhibit variation but do not result in a significant alteration in meaning. Allophonic variation can be either conditioned or free. In the former case, a specific phoneme is produced as a particular allophone in specific phonological contexts. In the latter case, the variation is unrestricted and may differ among speakers or dialects. Phonemes are commonly regarded as an abstract underlying representation for word segments, whereas speech sounds comprise the corresponding phonetic realization.

Statement of the Problem

The mispronunciation of phonemes by a majority of students in the Yenagoa metropolis is a notable concern, as it has persisted over time and has resulted in the incorrect articulation of Standard English. Despite being taught the correct form of phonemes by their teachers, students in the Yenagoa metropolis continue to struggle with pronunciation due to interference from their mother tongue. This persistent issue poses a significant challenge and raises concerns about the lack of attention given to the problem of phonemic realization in the area and its impact on English pronunciation among students. The student encounters difficulty in accurately articulating phonemic sounds, which presents a significant obstacle. Second language learners may perceive articulation defects as a distinct phonemic realization without fully comprehending the contextual factors at play. The utilization of the mother tongue by students in the classroom can limit the learner's ability to promptly recognize and accurately pronounce the appropriate phonemes. Additionally, some teachers may lack sufficient linguistic expertise, which can result in interference between the first language (L1) and the second language (L2), ultimately leading to inadequate English phoneme usage and negatively impacting the academic performance of learners in the classroom.

In the academic setting, it has been observed that students tend to utilize their native language as a primary mode of communication within the classroom. This practice, however, has been found to impede the early acquisition of phonemic awareness, ultimately resulting in a negative impact on their academic performance. Insufficient scholarly inquiry has been conducted regarding the issue of phonemic realization within the Yenagoa metropolis. The objective of this study is to address the identified issue or bridge the current gap by utilizing phonemic tools to improve English pronunciation. The primary issue under investigation pertains to the prevalent use of the mother tongue by students during classroom interactions, which subsequently restricts their exposure to the early development of phonemes and adversely impacts their academic performance.

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of students' mother tongue, on their phonemic realization?
2. What is the students phonemic realization on their academic performance?
3. How does phonemic realization promotes the learning of English in Bayelsa state?
4. What is the influence of the level of discipline on the students phonemic realization?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study are observational learning theory or classroom learning situation and error analysis. First and foremost, the child born in a family first learn the language of the

mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment. Eka (2005) suggested that the child is exposed to formal rules in the classroom, the degree of proficiency comes from the learning environment.

The researcher used observational learning theory which involves language learning process to analyze its method. Albert Bandura (1980) an educational psychologist discovered a model or behavioral analysis. He opined that learning takes place through watching, imitating other people, he further stated that people learn from one another or each other through watching. The observational theory is used in the classroom situation, and it is used to improve the learning process.

Languages and studies have been mostly influenced by three major theories namely: behaviorism, social learning theory and observational learning theory. In the observational learning theory, the targeted behavior is watched with keen interest, memorized and mimicness, it is most common in children as they mimic the adult. Sarem (2014). Barth, Caina and Sullo (2011) explained that Bandura's method on social observational theory varies in different areas of interest which is closely related to the study. We are all aware that observation plays a critical role in determining how and what children learn from adults. Bandura (1980) opined that observation and model plays a major role in the learning process that the child learns from imitation. Students always mimic their teacher in school and those that are knowledgeable. They learn demonstrations and gesticulation from their teachers. According to Itardism (2010) that various sounds can be accepted and not accepted in a speech community.

The observational learning theory is a form of social learning through because it happens with the observations of other people's behaviour which occurs in different forms and processes. The students always imitate the models because he/she believes the teachers who is a model has good features, such as intelligence, talents, good works, spoken ability and clear accent which the students find attractive. Bandura (1986). He also observed that when the model is appreciated by his outstanding performance, the learners is also rewarded. According to him, learning by observation involves different processes which includes: retention, attention, production and motivation.

Barth, Cain, Caine and Sullo (2011) explained that observational learning theory as described as social cognitive theory (SCT) and the characteristic of the learner behavior is manifested as the same from the model. The child could be seen as a bridge between behaviorist and cognitive learning theories. The observational theory is related to Vygotsky (1985) social development theory and cognitive theories, the theory complement to Bandura's theory on social learning and a major component of situated learning theory as well, Bandura (1986) was called Ibibo doll experiment. Fryling Johnson, and Haye (2011) said that the theory conducted by Bandura and other scholars set the process for social cognitive learning perspective. The researchers in their work or experiment observed that people who succeeded were those who verbal described every actions of the model when tested for behavioral change at latter stage.

The researchers, Barth, Caine, and Sullo (2011) in their model explained, the complex communication of the individual and the individual's behavior, attitude and the society in which he/she lives. They called the relationship between the elements "reciprocal determinism". In addition, Fryling, Johnson and Haye (2011) Bandura et al, noted that learning may be influenced by verbal processes, they believed that learning form observation comes through input – out cognitive model.

Observational learning theory (OBL) involves through the following learning stages.

Attention: The student or child learn from the high knowledgeable person in the classroom.

Retention: The student not just only learn but has the potential to remember what was learnt in the environment or the classroom.

Reproduction: The students imitate what was observed and should be able to produce what as imitated from the teacher.

Motivation: The child will perform better if motivated, for reproduction to be more effective, reinforcement should be used in the classroom to improve teaching and learning.

Reinforcement: The child should be encouraged for a better academic performance.

The observational learning theory is very important to the teacher because it will enable the teacher to produce a good lesson plan and incorporate what is expected of the child in class, the teacher serves as the functional element in language learning because language is a concept. The theory will be used to describe the students' oriented phonemic realization, with the overall objective of the model which is learning and production.

The process of error analysis involves the systematic documentation of errors that occur in a learner's language. This method aims to identify whether the errors are consistent and can be explained by underlying factors. According to Richard J and colleagues (2022), an error can be defined as the utilization of a word, speech act, or grammatical element in a manner that appears flawed and indicative of an inadequate level of learning.

According to Norris (1983), error can be defined as a consistent deviation that occurs when a learner has not acquired a particular skill or knowledge and consistently produces incorrect responses. Nevertheless, contextualizing the error has typically been closely associated with either language learning or second language acquisition processes.

According to Hendrickson's (1987) assertion, errors serve as indicators of an ongoing learning process, suggesting that the learner has not yet attained a proficient level of linguistic competence in the target language. The utilization of error analysis as a means of examining the acquisition of a second language was initially introduced during the 1960s. Corder's seminar paper titled "The Significance of Learner's Error" (1967) redirected the focus of researchers from a teaching-oriented approach to a learning-oriented approach. Consequently, this shift moved away from contrastive analysis, behaviorism, and structuralism and towards cognitive psychology.

Corder's theory suggests that second language learners engage in a process of hypothesis formation and testing, similar to that observed in first language acquisition. This process involves the learner making educated guesses about the target language and subsequently evaluating the accuracy of these hypotheses. This phenomenon occurs in a non-random fashion, as it adheres to the learner's inherent syllabus, thereby resulting in inevitable errors. The term "transitional competence" was coined by the individual in question, and has since gained widespread acceptance as a commonly used concept, now referred to as "interlanguage." According to Selinker's (1972) theory, language learners develop a unique and evolving understanding of the target language. As per the perspective presented, errors serve as an indication of active language acquisition on the part of the learner. This is because such errors arise when the learner's hypotheses are put to the test and found to be ineffective. The process of language learning in error analysis is considered to be impacted by various factors, including the learner's first language, interlanguage, and the target language. Therefore, the three aforementioned language systems exert an impact on the types of errors that a learner produces.

The principal objectives of error analysis encompassed the identification of error types and patterns, the establishment of error taxonomies, and the identification of common difficulties in second language acquisition. The intended outcome of this approach was to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the processes involved in second language acquisition. Additionally, the results of error analysis were intended to be utilized for the revision of language learning theories and to aid in the evaluation and enhancement of language teaching practices. The significance of error analysis in the advancement of the interlanguage hypothesis cannot be overstated.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discussed the method and procedure, it revealed the Research design, population of the study, sampling technique, research instrument, and method of data collection, method of data analysis, validity of the instrument and reliability of the instrument.

Research Design: This research work adopted a descriptive design, the design used for this study is survey and descriptive research design used in form of an interview with the respondents, descriptive design also used for an observation from the respondents selected.

These designs gave the researcher the information needed for the study on the students English on their academic performance in a second language situation.

Population of the Study: The population for this study comprises the Ten (10) secondary schools, own by Government within Yenagoa metropolis, from 10 schools, 665 students in J. S. S. I, and a total number of thirty (30) teachers, used for this study.

Sample and Sampling Techniques: The sample size used for this research is from the population of the study, which consist of 665 students in J.S.S. I, and 30 teachers in public schools in Bayelsa state. A purposeful technique was adopted to get the important data. From the whole population 10 schools were randomly selected, A cross section of J.S.S I students were used for the study, 10 (ten) English teachers, each per school and total of two hundred (200) students, twenty for each school out of the six hundred and fifty-five (655) students. The sample for this study was arranged as to give enough information on the aim of the study as shown in table 1 of the study below.

Method of Data Collection: The method used for the collection of data from the ten (10) secondary schools in Yenagoa, metropolis, was an interview for the 200 students from J.S.S. I and all the 10 teachers selected for the study, oral text tool on pronunciation was given to the students and teachers during class as stipulated in their timetable. Pronounced words were recorded using mp3 voice recorder, the researcher went back to the student and teachers after an interval of one week. The lesson class on English language was limited to only pronunciation to identify the phonemic realization that was changed, the altered words were selected out.

The researcher listened the recorded audio right and wrong pronunciation from the students and teachers. He also transcribed the words he perceived into phonemic properties, using Daniel Jones English pronouncing Dictionary for the transcription of the letters observing the distinctive features of sounds. These perceived phonemes were contrasted with received Pronunciation method of data analysis.

The data collected from the (10) ten schools for this research were analyzed employing charts and tables, they were interpreted and percentage was calculated by the researcher to indicate the correlation between the teacher and the students on their academic performance.

Data Presentation

The data were presented in tables with an inclusion of a bar chart showing the level of performance for the students and teachers, the performances on articulation were also presented.

Research Question: What is the influence of students' mother tongue on their phonemic realization?

Table 4.1:

Phoneme	Word	Received pronunciation (RP)	Student's performance per school									
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
/tʃ/	Church	/tʃ'ɜːtʃ/	/sDs/	/tʃ'ɜːtʃ/	/sous/	/sDs/		/tʃ'ɜːtʃ/	/sous/	/sous/	/sush/	/tʃ'ɜːtʃ/
/dʒ/	Manage	/mænidʒ/	/manis/	/mænis/	/manis/	/mænidʒ/	/maneidʒ/	/mænidʒ/	/manis/	/maneidʒ/	/mænidʒ/	/manis/
/f/	Fish	/fl: ʃ/	/fis/	/fis/	/fl:ʃ/	/fis/	/fl:ʃ/	/fise/	/fl:ʃ/	/fl:ʃ/	/fl:ʃ/	/fl:ʃ/
/dʒ/	Jump	/dˌʌm/	/dˌʌm/	/dʒʌm/	/zump/	/jump/	/dʒʌm/	/dʒʌm/	/zump/	/dˌʌm/	/zump/	/dʒʌm/
/dʒ/	Lodge	/lDdʒ/	/loss/	/lose/	/lDdʒ/	/lDdʒ/	/lDdʒ/	/lose/	/lose/	/lDdʒ/	/lDdʒ/	/lDdʒ/
*/f/	effort	/efət/	/evDt/	/efet/	/efDt/	/evət/	/evDt/	/efet/	evDt/	evDt/	/efet/	/evDt/
*/b/	debt	/det/	/det/	/det	/det	/det	/debt/	/det/	/det	/debt/	/det	/debt/
*/v/	cassava	/kəsaːvə/	/kasava/	/kasava/	/kasava/	/kasava/	/kasafa/	/kəsava/	/kasafa/	/kasafa/	/kasava/	/kasafa/
*/g/	magnet	/mægnlt/	/mæknet/	/mægnet/	/mægnrt/	/mæknet/	/mæknet/	/mægnet/	/mægnlt/	/mæknet/	/mægnet/	/mæknet/
*/k/	week	/wr:k/	/wlg/	/wr:k/	/wl:k/	/wlg/	/wlg/	/wl:k/	/wlg/	/wlg/	/wr:k/	/wlg/
*/ŋ/	bank	/bank/	/baŋk/	/bank/	/bank/	/bank/	/bank/	/bank/	/bank/	/bank/	/bank/	/bank/
*/h/	behind	/blhand/	/blamd/	/blamd/	/blhamd/	/blhamd/	/blamd/	/blhamd/	/blamd/	/blamd/	/blamd/	/blamd/
*/l/	blow	/bləʊ/	/blD/	/bləʊ/	/bləʊ/	/blD/	/blD/	/blD/	/brD/	/blD/	/bləʊ/	/blD/
*/d/	hand	/hænd/	/hæn/	/han/	/hæn/	/hæn/	/hæn/	/han/	/hæn/	/hand/	/han/	/hæn/

Phoneme	Word		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
*/z/	zoo	/zʊː/	/sʊ/	/zʊ/	/zʊː/	/sʊ/	/sʊ/	/zʊː/	/sʊ/	/zʊ/	/zʊ/	/sʊ/
*/tʃ/	starchy	/staːtʃl/	/stadʒl/	/stadʒl/	/staːtʃl/	/stadʒl/	/stadʒl/	/stedʒl/	/statʃl/	/stædʒl/	/stadʒl/	/stadʒl/
*/ð/	gather	/gæð/	/kada/	/gada/	/gada/	/gada/	/gaða/	/gaða/	/gada/	/gada/	/gada/	/gaða/
*/dʒ/	jews	/dʒʊːz/	/jus/	/dʒʊːz/	/dʒʊːz/	/jʊs/	/jʊːz/	/dʒʊz/	/jʊːz/	/jʊs/	/dʒʊːz/	/jʊːz/
*/ʃ/	shouting	/ʃaʊtlŋ/	/ʃaʊtlŋ/	/ʃaʊtlŋ/	/ʃaʊtlŋ/	/ʃaʊtlŋ/	/ʃaʊtlŋ/	/ʃaʊtlŋ/	/Saʊtlŋ/	/ʃaʊtlŋ/	/ʃaʊtlŋ/	/ʃaʊtlŋ/
*/r/	ruler	/rʊːlə/	/rʊːlə/	/lula/	/rʊːlə/	/rʊːlə/	/rʊːlə/	/rʊːlə/	/lula/	/rʊːlə/	/lula/	/rʊːlə/
**/aʊə/	power	/paʊə/	/paː/	/paʊə/	/paʊə/	/pa.wa/	/pawa/	/paʊə/	/paː/	/pawa/	/paʊə/	/pawa/
***/ɜː/	verse	/vɜːs/	/ves/	/vɜːs/	/ves/	/ves/	/ves/	/vels/	/vels/	/vels/	/vɜːs/	/ves/
**/ɔː/	born	/bɔːn/	/bɔːn/	/ben/	/bɔːn/	/ben/	/bɔːn/	/bɔn/	/bæn/	/bɔːn/	/ben/	/bɔːn/
**/aː/	hard	/haːd/	/hæd/	/hæd/	/haːd/	/had/	/hæd/	/haːd/	/had/	/had/	/hæd/	/hæd/
**/æ/	cap	/kæp/	/kap/	/kæp/	/kæp/	/kap/	/kæp/	/kap/	/kæp/	/kap/	/kæp/	/kap/
**/əʊ/	plosive	/pləʊslv/	/plʊslv/	/pləʊslv/	/pləʊslv/	/plʊslv/	/plʊslv/	/pləʊslv/	/plʊslv/	/plʊslv/	/pləʊslv/	/plʊslv/
**/lə/	here	/hlə/	/eə/	/heə/	/heə/	/eə/	/heə/	/heə/	/heə/	/eə/	/heə/	/heə/
***/ə/	about	/aboʊt/	/əbaʊt/	/əbaʊt/	/əbaʊt/	/æbaʊt/	/əbaʊt/	/əbaʊt/	/æbaʊt/	/æbaʊt/	/əbaʊt/	/əbaʊt/
**/h/	honour	/ˈɒnə/	/hɒnÐ/	/hɒnÐ/	/ˈɒnə/	/hɒnÐ/	/hɒnÐ/	/ˈɒnə/	/hɒnÐ/	/hɒnÐ/	/hɒnÐ/	/hɒnÐ/
**/el/	play	/plet/	/ple/	/pleI/	/pleI/	/ple/	/ple/	/pleI/	/ple/	/ple/	/pleI/	/ple/
**/r:/	people	/pr:p'l/	/pʊːp'l/	/plpl/	/pl:pl/	/pl:pl/	/pr:pl/	/pr:pl/	/pjʊp'/	/plpl/	/plpl/	/pr:pl/
**/ʊː/	goose	/gʊːs/	/gʊs/	/gʊs/	/gʊːs/	/gʊs/	/gʊs/	/gʊːs/	/gʊs/	/gʊːs/	/gʊːs/	/gʊs/
***/ʌ/	son	/sʌn/	/sʌn/	/son/	/son/	/son/	/son/	/son/	/son/	/son/	/sʌn/	/son/
Correctly pronounced			8	18	10	8	6	21	4	7	16	8
Wrongly pronounced			24	14	22	25	26	11	28	25	16	8
No of words = 32			32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32

*consonant 20

**monophthongs diphthongs and triphthongs 20

***central vowel 3

Question 2

What is the student's phonemic realization on their academic performance?

Table 4.2 Students Realization of Monophthongs, Diphthong and Triptongs

Student Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Average	Percentage
No of wrongly pronounced vowel	10	11	2	3	10	8	6	9	2	4	65	6.5	54.2
No of correctly pronounced	2	1	10	9	2	4	6	3	10	8	55	5.5	45.8
Total No of vowels 12													

Table 4.3 Students Consonants Realizations

Student Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Average	Percentage
No of wrongly pronounced consonants	12	13	9	14	11	15	12	17	14	8	125	12.5	62.2
No of correctly pronounced consonants	8	7	9	6	9	5	8	3	9	12	76	7.6	37.8
Total No of consonants 20													

Table 4.4 Students Performance on Central Vowels

| Student Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	total	Average	Percentage
No of wrongly pronounced vowel	2	2	1	1	2	4	3	2	2	1	20	2	54.1
No of correctly pronounced xv	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	1	2	17	1.7	45.9
Total No of vowels 3													
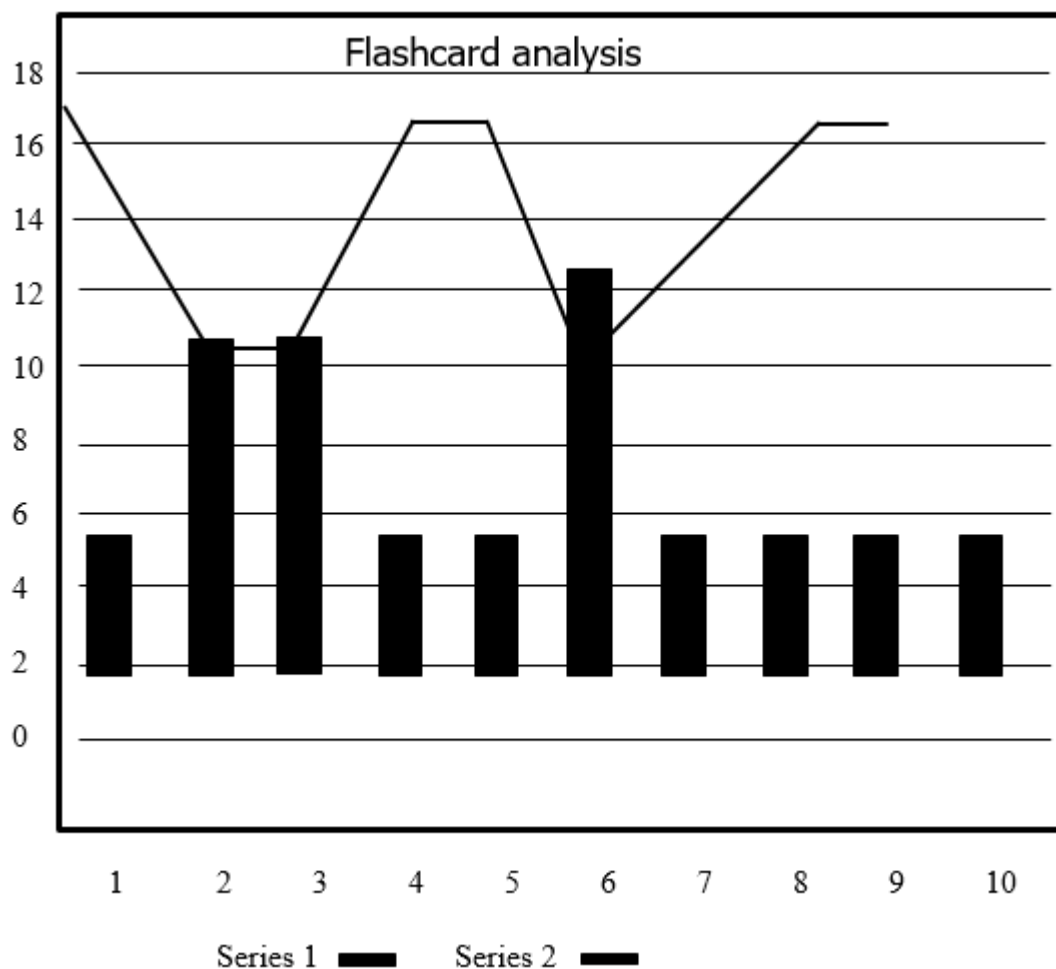
Figure 4.1: A bar chart indicating flashcard analysis
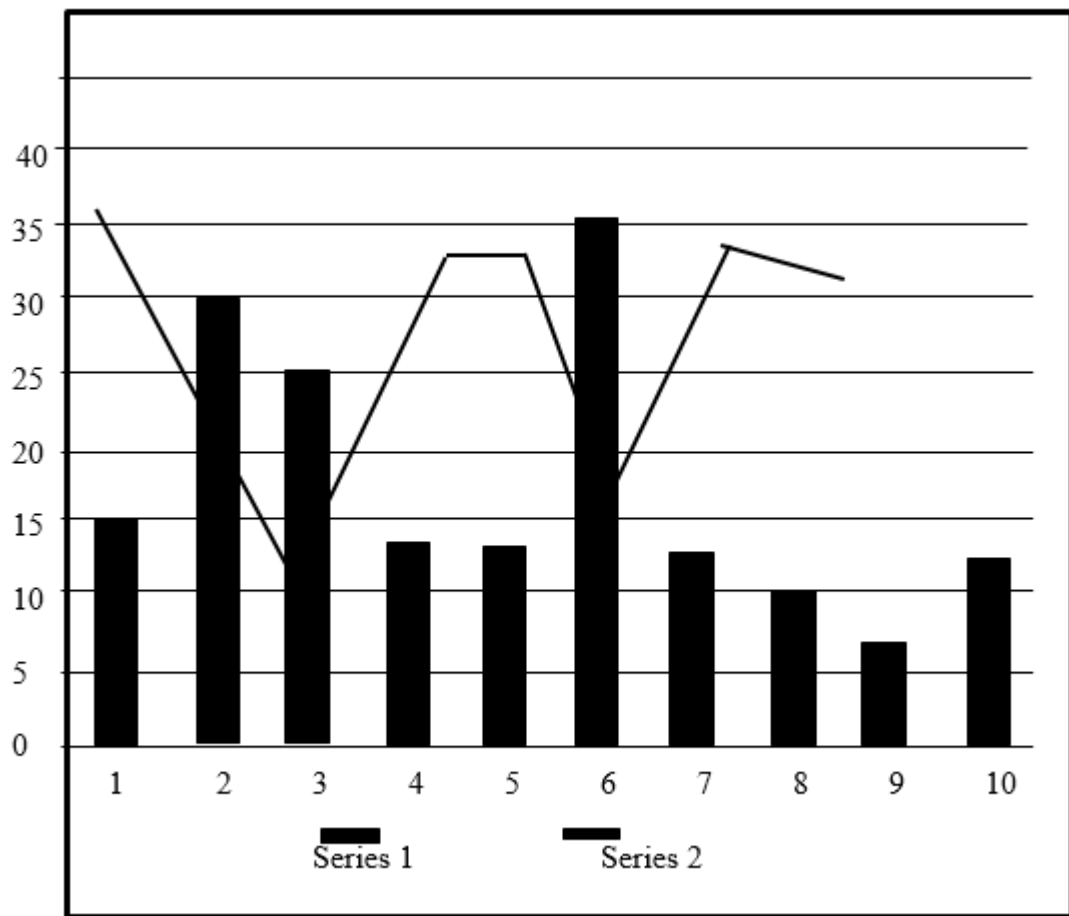
Figure 4.2: A bar chart indicating student's pronunciation

Table 4.5

Phoneme	Word	Received pronunciation (RP)		Teachers' performance per school									
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
/tʃ/	church	/tʃɜːtʃ/	/tʃɜːtʃ/	/tʃɜːtʃ/	/sous/	/tʃɜːtʃ/	/tʃɜːtʃ/	/tʃɜːtʃ/	/tʃɜːtʃ/	/tʃɜːtʃ/	/sush/	/tʃɜːtʃ/
/dʒ/	manage	/mænidʒ/	/manis/	/mænidʒ/	/mænidʒ/	/mænidʒ/	/mænidʒ/	/mænidʒ/	/mænidʒ/	/mænidʒ/	/mænidʒ/	/manis/
/f/	fish	/flːʃ/	/flːʃ/	/flːʃ/	/flːʃ/	/fis/	/flːʃ/	/fise/	/flːʃ/	/flːʃ/	/flːʃ/	/flːʃ/
*/f/	effort	/efət/	/evDt/	/efDt/	/efet/	/evət/	/evD/	/efet/	evDt/	evDt/	/efet/	/efDt/
**/r/	people	/prːpl/	/prːpl/	/prːpl/	/prːpl/	/prːpl/	/prːpl/	/peːpl/	/pjʊːpʼ/	/prːpl/	/peːpl/	/plpl/
**/lə/	here	/hlə/	/hlə/	/heə/	/heə/	/eə/	/hlə/	/lə/	/heə/	/hlə/	/lə/	/heə/
***/ə/	about	/aboʊt/	/aboʊt/	/əbaʊl/	/əbaʊt/	/aboʊt/	/aboʊt/	/əbaʊt/	/aboʊt/	/aboʊt/	/əbaʊt/	/əbaʊl/
/dʒ/	Jump	/dʒʌm/	/jump/	/dʒʌm/	/dʒʌm/	/jump/	/dʒʌm/	/dʒʌm/	/zump/	/dʒʌm/	/zump/	/dʒʌm/
/dʒ/	lodge	/lDdʒ/	/loss/	/lose/	/lDdʒ/	/lDdʒ/	/lDdʒ/	/lose/	/lDdʒ/	/lDdʒ/	/lDdʒ/	/lDdʒ/
*/y/	cassava	/kəsaːvə/	/kəsaːvə/	/kəsaːvə/	/kasava/	/kəsaːvə/	/kasafa/	/kəsava/	/kasafa/	/kasafa/	/kəsava/	/kasava/
*/l/	blow	/bləʊ/	/blʊ/	/blD/	/bləʊ/	/blD/	/bləʊ/	/blD/	/bləʊ/	/blD/	/blD/	/blD/
***/ɜː/	verse	/vɜːs/	/vɜːs/	/vɜːs/	/vɜːs/	/ves/	/ves/	/vers/	/vers/	/vers/	/vers/	/ɜːs/
**/ɔː/	born	/bɔːn/	/bɔːn/	/ben/	/bɔːn/	/bɔːn/	/bɔːn/	/bðn/	/bɔːn/	/bɔːn/	/bðn/	/ben/
*/ɜ/	gather	/gæðð/	/kada/	/gæðð/	/gada/	/gæðð/	/gaôa/	/gada/	/gaoa/	/gada/	/gaôa/	/gada/
***/ʌ/	son	/sʌn/	/sʌn/	/sʌn/	/sʌn/	/sʌn/	/son/	/son/	/son/	/son/	/son/	/sʌn/
**/æ/	Cap	/kæp/	/kap/	/kæp/	/kap/	/kæp/	/kæp/	/kæp/	/kæp/	/kap/	/kæp/	/kæp/
*/ɑʊð/	power	/paʊə/	/paː/	/paʊə/	/paʊə/	/paʊə/	/paʊə/	/paʊə/	/paː/	/pawa/	/paʊə/	/paː/
**/dʒ/	jews	/dʒʊːz/	/jus/	//dʒʊːz/	/dʒʊːz/	/dʒʊːz/	/jʊːz/	/dʒʊs/	/jʊːz/	/jʊs/	/dʒʊs/	/dʒʊːz/
*/d/	hand	/hænd/	/han/	/han/	/haːn/	/hæn/	/hæn/	/han/	/hæn/	/hand/	/han/	/han/
2	Correctly pronounced		9	10	8	12	11	10	6	7	10	8
	Wrongly pronounced		10	9	11	7	8	9	13	14	9	11
	No of words = 19		19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19

*consonant 20

**monophthongs diphthongs and triphthongs 12

Table 4.6 Demographic features of teachers showing teachers discipline and their language/first language.

S/N	Teachers	Discipline	First language
1.	B. Ed	English language	Epie
2.	B. A	English and literary studies	Izon
3.	NCE	Adult education	Izon
4.	B. Ed	English Education	Ogbia
5.	NCE	Christian Religious Studies/Sociology	Ogbia
6.	NCE	Primary Education Studies	Nembe
7.	NCE	Sociology/Political Science	Nembe
8.	B. A	History	Nembe
9.	NCE	Sociology	Epie
10.	B.Ed	Political Science	Brass

Table 4.7 Teacher Realization of Central Vowels

Student Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Average	Percentage
No of wrongly pronounced vowel (xvv)	2	3	1	2	3	3	1	0	3	2	20	2	64.5
No of correctly pronounced vowel (xvv)	1	0	2	1	0	1	2	3	0	1	11	1.1	35.5
Total No of vowel 3													

Data Analysis

Table 4:1 indicates the level of the performance of the students on the pronunciation exercise. The student pronunciation is matched against the pronunciation standard (RP) required. The students were given thirty five words, on records. The different pronunciation presented were showed according to the table to explain the effect of the table's pronunciation on the students.

In table 4:1, 13 words were correctly pronounced (22) words were wrongly pronounced. The information in detail can also be seen in table as presented. Table 4.1:6 indicates the average, and percentage of the student's pronunciation of the central consonant 125 words were wrongly pronounced, while 76 were correctly pronounced, in table 4:1 a total number of 24 marks as were given on recording the realization of all the students equals to twenty-four (24) phonemes and the average performance is calculated at 62.2 showing a percentage of 37.8, correctly pronounced consonants. Table 4:1.5 shows the average and percentage performance of the students and the correct realization of monothongs, diphthongs and tripthongs, indicating the average and performance of the students in the classroom.

In Table (6) phonemes were given and marked as the realization of the students' performers in the classroom, thirteen (13) phonemes and the average performance is calculated 5.5 showing a percentage of 45.8 correctly pronounced monothongs, diphthongs and triphthongs. In table 4.1:5 the average and

percentage rate of correctly pronounced central vowels are calculated from the data in table 4:1.5, the realization of all students' phonemes indicating an average performance of 1.7 with a percentage of 45.9 correctly pronounced central vowels.

Research Question 3

How phonemic realization promotes the learning of English in Bayelsa state.

From the oral text and the recorded pronunciation, it is crystal clear that Bayelsa state students in J.S.S. I unconsciously rely on the mother – tongue interference of the second language (L1 interfering with L2) with the believed that there is a correspondence between the two languages, L1 has great influence on the students in Bayelsa state. Secondly, the students are confuse of the orthography as their guide to pronunciation. However, through the phonemic realization. It becomes clear that all the phonemic distinction of RP are real and necessary for Bayelsa state students in J.S.S I to critically listen to a series of minimal pairs, since the confusion of /tʃ / & /ʃ / ʃ / and /ʃ / arises from the fact that students in Bayelsa state produce /ʃ / as against the RP /tʃ / /D/ and /ʌ/. It will be very important to be taught on the features of phonemes of English, for instance, there is a phonemic distribution between /ɜ:/ and /e/. A sound knowledge of phonemes of English will help the Bayelsa state student's speakers to know the differences between their phonemic categories /tʃ/ /S/ /ɜ:/ and /e/.

The students should realize that phonemes are not impose on them, the differences in the consonants and vowel patterns of English and Ijaw, Nembe, Ogbia and Epie explain why it is difficult for Bayelsa state student to fluently produce basic English sounds, especially in a stretch. Hence, an understanding of the influence of one phonemic on the other helps in understanding the phonemes which enhance fluency in the production of English sounds, furthermore. English is stress-timed, thus, phonemes recognize the contrast in syllable pitches, if Bayelsa state students are introduce to English phonemes from the outset, they will do better in their academic performance in their secondary schools.

Research Question 4

What is the impart of the level of discipline on the student's phonemic realization.

The variant pronunciation recorded during the class were presented against the RP for each word on the pronunciation test, the students disciplines themselves to learn the variant phonemes of the English language, thirty two (32) words containing phonemes to be verified were presented to them in classroom, student 1 pronounced 8 phonemes correctly, student 8 pronounced 8 phonemes correctly, student 3 pronounced 10 phonemes correctly, student 4 pronounced 8 correctly, student 5, pronounced 26 words correctly out of the 32 words, while student 6 pronounced 11 correctly.

Discussion of Findings

From this study, the transcribed forms are recorded from the classroom making the pronunciation interesting, the lesson comprises the researcher, teacher and students. It is obvious that students are expose to using the form of what is perceived than what is prescribed, they listen to their teachers in classroom and use it as perceived. The respondents for the study were keenly observed to unconsciously pronounce the phoneme sounds with a different or closely related sounds to the target phoneme, where there is existing gap, thus, continuous use of the phoneme shows that they are not aware of the knowledge gap. These forms are used in this study to emphasize the existence of sound changes as form of phonemic alteration and substitution.

The Importance of Phonemic Awareness to Students Performance in the Classroom

This concept, phonemic awareness is very relevance for competence in academic performance and identification, thus, the phoneme is the smallest, in the analyses of linguistics, it is a basic tool to linguistic competence and reference. It is clear from the study conducted that a greater number of students and teacher do not have knowledge of phonemic skills. It is reflected in their results performance

as presented in the data from the words given to the students in the class, they performed below expectation on phonemes and their attitude towards achieving phonemic competence.

Ekpe (2010) noted that incompetent users of the language in a second language situation train learners. The continuous error in the classroom among students will clearly credit the advancement of linguistic deviations in the second language which is the L1.

Nevertheless, the role of English in Nigeria as second, the first language (mother-tongue) will be a limiting factor to higher achievement of English language in Nigeria because the child first acquire it before learning the L2.

The clear implications of poor phonemic illiteracy and incompetency is realized in the pronunciation. It is also obvious that teachers who studied English language and other related courses have a better knowledge of the correct articulation of the phonemes, first language also influence the poor performance of student in the phonemic realization. It is also obvious that if the teacher is not good at phonemes, it will definitely affect the students.

Phonemic Realization and Implication

Vowel Alteration

In this study, the vowel features were altered by substitution and there is reduction of some vowel sounds. There is alteration, in vowel sound duration and glide value, just as consonants, there are alternative in monophthongs, diphthongs and triphthongs. The study observed a reduction in the long vowel quality of monophthongs, and incorrect production of /l:/ and /æ/, some student produced /had/ /hæd/ for /ha:d/ /pipl/ /pjupl/ /pu:pl/ for /pl:pl/.

The error in the articulation of these vowel sounds by the students is due to mother-tongue interference and incompetency of some teachers. It shows that these realizations of the phonemes have not been mastered by student to a situation where it can be produced without extra efforts by the teacher.

Vowel Substitution

Pronunciation of central vowels /ɜ:/ /ʌ/ and /ð/ causes a great challenge as observed from the study, in the process of pronunciation, there are changes and substitution of vowel central, vowel sounds have central, back and front (Eka 2000). It is clear from the analysis of the data that the sound /ʌ/ is realized as /D/ back vowel and front vowel sounds /e/ and /æ / as in son /sDn/ and /sen/ for /sʌn/ while /ɜ:/ is articulated as the diphthong /ei/ in verse /ves/ for /vɜ:/ for /verse/ for /vɜ:s/. It is also believed that /ð/ becomes a front vowel /æ/ and produce as /æ/ in about ðbðut for /ðbuut/ from the study, only few students and teacher were able to articulate these phonemes correctly. While most students and teachers substituted them with related vowel sounds a great number of students and teachers from the analysis of these vowel sounds, do not have the right phonemic forms, these show the poor articulation of phonological articulations by the students within the schools in Yenagoa metropolis. Udofor (2007) observed this occurrence as a characteristic of the English used by English as second language users, this reflect the situation of students in Yenagoa metropolis, over the period, students are exposed to this kind of forms in the classroom, they were taught how to know the received pronunciations as in /about/ for /ðbut/ /Fl:ʃ / fish, people /pl:pl/. From the analysis, the students' performance is 54.1 while the teacher is 45.9 an implication of the teacher's limitation of the student realizations to the poor articulation of central vowel among students of ESL in the area. The segmental phonology of English in this study as observed were grouped into vowel substitution vowel alteration, insertion and omission and consonants substitution, these as identified influenced students' phonemic development in the classroom

Consonants Substitution, Insertion/Omission

Consonants phonemes also pose much challenge to Bayelsa students in J.S.S 1. It is obvious that consonants as Jowitt (1991) noted are less capable of allophonic variation than vowel, but this

consideration seems to have made linguists to not pay much attention to nonstandard pronunciation of some consonants. Hence, the present researcher discussion with the test respondents or participants that most of them could not obviously note where certain consonants were realized wrongly in the classroom /i/ is realized as /dʒ/ /s/ for /tʃ/ /S/ is also realized for /ʃ/ /S/ for /ʒ/ /d/ for /ð/, /e/ is realized for /ɜ:/ and /l:/.

The students also find it difficult to differentiate between / ʒ / from /z/ so that /z/ is often used in place of / ʒ / while /m/ /n/ /ŋ/ used for final position of word, especially in the realizations of them. Also, when /ŋ/ occurs at the end of a syllable carrying primary accent, Bayelsa students' speakers may likely introduce a subsequent /g/ so "hang" /hæŋ/ is clearly pronounced as /hang/.

Conclusion

Drawing from aim and objectives of the study and the results of the finding, the study reaches the following conclusions. The phonemic realization of the students is a reflection of the existence phonemic output in the Yenagoa metropolis, English language is used as second language, where most of the students are not properly taught the correct phonemes, despite English is use as the language of instruction and as subject of study in schools.

Deviation and error in phonemes among Bayelsa State students result in lack of confidence in speech performance, comprehension deficiency and impaired reading ability. The students are much aware of these differences and similarities in the various phonemes of English and their native phonemes but seem to show an unwillingness to learn how to remedy the situation.

The demographic features an added advantage to the performance of each student and teacher based on the training and retraining they have received on the language. The English language teachers have knowledge of it's properties in real realization as result do not know the alteration in their production of phonemes. The learners are influenced by the environment, they speak more of their mother tongue or Pidgin English in the classroom, this poses a great challenge in learning the second language.

Recommendations

After a critical analysis, the following recommendations are made by the researcher.

➢ Students should expose to phonemes as to realize and use them accordingly. Constant teaching of phonemes in classroom should be done thrice in a week for the students for better academic performance. The government should provide teaching materials for secondary schools, especial Yenagoa metropolis.

➢ The government should employ experts in English language for secondary schools. The substitution of phonemes should be reduced in classroom delivery; hence, the students must be attentive and listen to the sound patterns or structures and should acquire a standard model for frequent practice of the phonemes.

➢ It is also very important for schools to provide necessary materials such as video tapes, audio on phonics, Daniel Jones dictionary and oxford dictionary etc. for easy access on self-improvement on phonemes. This is due to the fact that the phoneme is not only affecting the spoken form but also in the written form as people mix these phonemes in terms of writing. It is also recommended that language of the classroom should be English alone and individual should not be allowed to speak his or her native language in the classroom.

➢ Teachers should be aware that they serve as role models of language environment and as such should be seen as a task to improve themselves. Training and retraining of teachers should be carried out on phonics to expose them to correct form of English phonemes. Education planners should redesign and restructures the teaching methods and activities of the learner to create necessary emphasis for the application of phonemic skills in classroom teaching and learning.

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