

Contrasting English Phonology and Nigerian English Phonology

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ABSTRACT

The thrust of this work is the fact that phonology plays a vital role in language and communication both in local/native, national and international languages. It takes a look at the definition of phonology, the British English and Nigerian English Phonology at the segmental level because these two varieties of English belong to different linguistic sub-groups with distinct phonemic possibilities in their use of phonological processes or systems. It also considers vowels of English phonology, vowels of Nigerian phonology (monophthongs and diphthongs), consonants (place and manner of articulation), consonant clusters or the sound systems of the two languages. The similarities and dissimilarities of sounds in the two languages, problematic phonetic symbols/sounds, voiced consonants, voiceless consonants and plosive consonants in the two varieties are taken into consideration. Techniques and methodologies for teaching phonology provide keys as teachers. The discussion on this study includes the functions of the organs of speech like velum, vocal cords, the lungs, the teeth, the palate, the larynx and pharynx which make communication easier in humans. It concludes that the Federal Government through the ETF/TETFUND should provide well equipped language laboratories to all private, state owned and Federal tertiary institutions and Teachers of English, especially teachers of phonetics/phonology should be given adequate training in handling equipment/operation of the language laboratory.

Keywords: *English phonology, language, Nigerian English, linguistic*

INTRODUCTION

Phonology serves as lubrication for communication because it organizes human sounds and speech (Omachonu, 2010). Without organization of sounds in humans, there will not be organs of speech which help in easier production of sounds for communication. And without communication, human beings would be at logger heads with each other because of suspicion which would invariably create animosity and bitterness. There would not be globalization also as there will not be cross cultural ideas evidenced in local, national and international conferences, All African Games, Commonwealth, Olympic Games, cultural festivals at the local, national, regional and international levels. Phonology makes learning easier at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education (FGN, 2004; 1999).

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Azikiwe (1998) sees phonology as the “acoustic characteristics of speech, the sound aspect of language made up of the segmental phonemes which cover the vowels, semi-vowels and consonants; and the suprasegmental phonemes which include the stress pitch and juncture of the language”. Yule (1996) opines that “phonology is essentially the description of the systems and patterns of speech sounds in a language”. Ladefoged and Johnson (2011) say “phonology is the description of the systems and patterns of sounds that occur in a language”. Webster’s Universal Dictionary and Thesaurus (2010) defines phonology as “the study of speech sounds and their development; and of the sound systems of language”. Hornby (2010) explains that phonology is “the study of speech sounds of a particular language”. According to Omachonu (2010), “it is the study of the systems and patterns that form units in a language”. Phonology can be summed up to be the study of speech sounds in a particular language which covers both the segmental (consonants, consonant clusters, diphthongs, triphthongs (vowels) and suprasegmental) stress, rhythm and intonation patterns.

Table 1: Vowels of English Phonology (Monophthongs)

	Monophthong	Examples
1.	/i:/	feel /fi:l/, feed /fi:d/
2.	/i/	fit /fit/, bit /bit/
3.	/e/	bed /bed/, set /set/
4.	/æ/	cat /kæt/, man /mæn/
5.	/Ē/	cut /kĒt/, but /bĒt/
6.	/a:/	card /ka:d/, park /pa:k/
7.	/Ī/	not /nĪt/, lot /lĪt/
8.	/ĕ:/	lord /lĕ:d/, pork /pĕ:k/
9.	/u/	hood /hud/, look /luk/
10.	/u:/	food /fu:d/, zoo /zu:/
11.	/ç:/	girl /gç:l/, bird /bç:d/
12.	/ʔ/	about /ʔbʔut/, mother /mĒðʔ/

Source: Arnold and Gimson (1982:6)

Note: Arnold’s and Gimson’s work provides only eleven (11) monophthongs in English instead of twelve (12). The schwa sound /ʔ/ is missing.

Table 2: Nigerian English Phonology

	Monophthong	Examples
1.	/i:/	see /bi:/, bee /bi:/
2.	/i/	pit /pit/, hit /hit/
3.	/e/	get /get/, pet /pet/
4.	/a/	can /kan/, fan /fan/
5.	/a:/	car /ka:/, far /fa:/
6.	/Ī/	pot /pĪt/, hot /hĪt/
7.	/ĕ:/	war /wĕ:/, law /lĕ:/
8.	/u/	book /buk/, look /luk/
9.	/u:/	coup /ku:/, cool /ku:l/
10.	/ç:/	shirt /ʔç:t/, flirt /flç:t/
11.	/ʔ/	ago /ʔgʔu/, bother /bĒðʔ/

Source: Odumuh (1997:39)

It would be observed that monophthong number four (No 4) /æ/ in the English phonology is completely missing in the Nigerian English phonology. While there are twelve (12) monophthongs in the English phonology, Nigerian English phonology has eleven (11). Also, the Nigerian English's monophthong number four (No 4) takes the place of English's /æ/ as "can" can be transcribed as "kan". The other English monophthong missing in Nigerian English phonology is monophthong No 5 /ɛ/ with words like "fun" or "sun".

Table 3: Diphthongs in English Phonology

	Diphthongs (Closing)	Examples
1	/ei/	take /teik/, day /dei/
2	/ai/	light /lait/, fight /fait/
3	/ɛi : /	coin /kɛ : n/, boil /bɛ : l/
4	/ʊu/	go /gʊu/, goat /gʊut/
5	/aʊ/	pear /pɑʊ/, fear /fɑʊ/
	Diphthongs (Centring)	
6	/iʊ/	deer /diʊ/, ear /iʊ/
7	/eʊ/	fair /feʊ/, pair /peʊ/
8	/uʊ/	poor /puʊ/, tour /tuʊ/

Source: Arnold and Gimson (1982) and Roach (2000)

Table 4: Closing Diphthongs in Nigerian English Phonology

	Diphthongs	Examples
1	/ei/	pay /pei/, rain /rein/
2	/ɛi/	soil /sɛil/, point /pɛint/
3	/ai/	height /hait/
4	/au/	house /haus/, cow /kau/
5	/ou/	bow /bou/, low /lou/

Centering Diphthong in Nigerian Phonology

	Diphthong	Examples
6	/iʊ/	year /jiʊ/, beer /biʊ/

Opening Diphthongs in Nigerian English Phonology

	Diphthongs	Examples
7	/uʊ/	casual /kæ3uʊl/, factual /fækt+uʊl/

Source: Odumuh (1997:38)

Compared to English diphthongs which are eight (8) in number, the diphthongs of Nigerian English are seven (7) in number. The missing English diphthong in the Nigerian English phonology is /eʊ/.

Table 5: Some Voiced Consonants in English Phonology

Consonant	Place of Articulation	Manner of Articulation
/b/	bilabial	plosive
/d/	alveolar	plosive
/g/	velar	plosive
/v/	labiodentals	fricative
/z/	post-alveolar	fricative
/ð/	dental	fricative
/ʒ/	glottal	fricative
/dʒ/	post-alveolar	affricate

Sources: Roach (2000:33-5) and Omachonu (2010:40)

Table 6: Some Voiced Consonants in Nigerian English Phonology

Consonant	Place of Articulation	Manner of Articulation
/b/	bilabial	plosive
/d/	alveolar	plosive
/g/	velar	plosive
/v/	labiodentals	fricative
/ð/	dental	fricative
/ʒ/	glottal	fricative
/dʒ/	post-alveolar	affricate

Sources: Odumuh (1997: 38-9), Ladefoged and Johnson (2011:70) and Saleh (2007:101)

The voiced consonants of both the English phonology and Nigerian English phonology are same. However, most Nigerian speakers of English including some speakers of the sophisticated variety produce the dental fricative /ð/ consonant as /d/ because of mother tongue interference and consonant substitution.

Table 7: Some Voiceless Consonants in English Phonology

Consonant	Place of Articulation	Manner of Articulation
/f/	labiodentals	fricative
/k/	velar	plosive
/s/	alveolar	fricative
/+ʔ/	glottal	fricative
/t+ʔ/	post-alveolar	affricate
/è/	dental	fricative
/t/	alveolar	plosive
/p/	bilabial	plosive

Sources: Roach (2000:32-5) and Jowitt (1996:6-7)

Table 8: Some Voiceless Consonants in Nigerian English Phonology

Consonant	Place of Articulation	Manner of Articulation
/f/	labiodentals	fricative
/k/	velar	plosive
/s/	alveolar	fricative
/+ʔ/	glottal	fricative
/t+ʔ/	post-alveolar	affricate
/è/	dental	affricate
/t/	alveolar	plosive
/p/	bilabial	plosive

Sources: Odumuh (1997:38-9) and Awonusi (2004:208-9)

The voiceless consonants of the Nigerian English phonology are not different from those of the English phonology but the challenge for most speakers of English in Nigeria is the substitution of dental affricate /t/ instead of the correct consonant sound of /è/ as in “think” /èink/ and not “tink” /tink/.

Table 9: Plosive Consonants in English Phonology

There are six (6) plosive consonants in the English phonology; they are: p t k b d g

Consonant	Place of Articulation	Manner of Articulation
/p/	bilabial	plosive
/t/	alveolar	plosive
/k/	velar	plosive
/b/	bilabial	plosive

/d/	alveolar	plosive
/g/	velar	plosive

Source: Saleh (2007:48)

Table 10: Plosive Consonants in Nigerian English Phonology

Consonant	Place of Articulation	Manner of Articulation
/p/	bilabial	plosive
/t/	alveolar	plosive
/k/	velar	plosive
/b/	bilabial	plosive
/d/	alveolar	plosive
/g/	velar	plosive

Sources: Odumuh (opcit) and Awonusi opcit

The plosive consonants from the two varieties of English have no differences.

Some Consonant Clusters in English Phonology and Nigerian English Phonology

Saleh (2007) identifies two and three consonant clusters. Two consonant clusters include: /bl/ /br/ /cl/ /cr/ /fl/ /fr/ /gl/ /gr/ as in “black”, “bread”, “class”, “cry”, “fly”, “fry”, “glass”, “grass”. Three consonant clusters include: /scr/ /str/ as in “scream” and “street”. These categories of consonant clusters are available in both varieties of English.

Functions of the Organs of Speech

Organs of speech aid in speech making and sound production. The following are some of the organs of speech.

The Tongue: Yule (1996) and Omachonu (2011) stress that this organ of speech “is the principal organ in the articulatory process, the most mobile and most active . . . because it has the greatest variety of movement”. Omachonu adds that the tongue has “three major parts – the front, the centre and the back, including the tip of the tongue”.

The Lips: Longman (2004) describes this organ of speech as “the edge of the mouth where the skin is red”. In addition, the lips are in the upper and lower parts of the mouth; they also help in speech production.

The Teeth: The teeth are divided into two parts – lower and upper teeth which are to the sides of the mouth. The teeth get in contact with the tongue to produce many sounds. The teeth can also be pressed together to produce labiodental fricative sounds of /f/ and /v/.

The Lungs: Omachonu (2011) reports that the lungs are ‘the power house for the production of speech sounds where the airflow that powers speech production is generated’.

The Vocal Cords: Roach (2000) states that “vocal cords are two thick flaps of muscles rather like a pair of lips”. These organs of speech help in the production of voiced and voiceless sounds.

The Velum: Omachonu (2011) explains that this organ of speech is beyond the hard palate and serves as the dividing line between two channels – the nasal cavity and oral cavity with the flap which controls the flow of air through the channels.

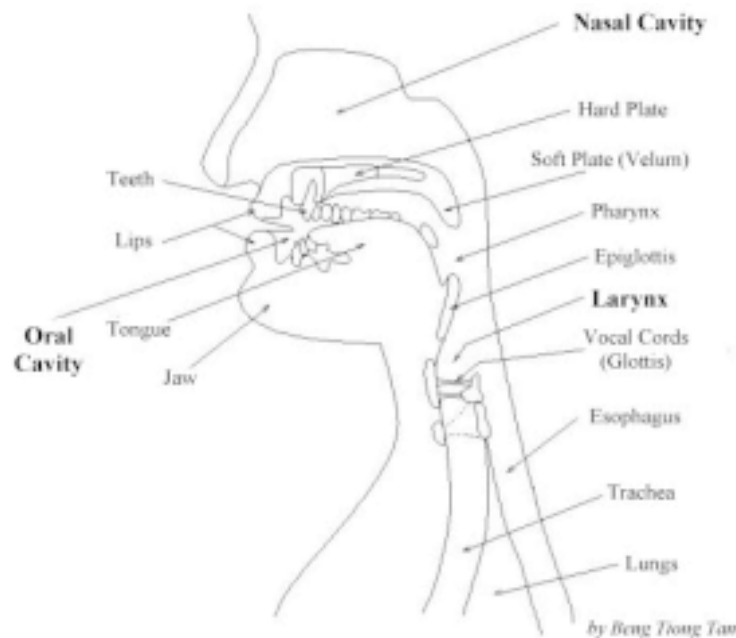
The Palate: Rischel, Gronnum, Gregersen, Basbèll (2009) are of the view that this organ of speech is responsible for the production of speech sounds like /p/, /t/ and /k/. It also contains the alveolar ridge which is responsible for realizing other sounds like /d/, /l/, /r/, /n/, /s/ and /z/.

Larynx and Pharynx: Omachonu (2011) highlights that:

These are very important structures or organs in the articulatory process along the vocal tract and it is noted as the first place where modification of sounds occurs or starts along the vocal tract.

On the other hand, Omachonu continues that “the pharynx is another crucial point along the vocal tract especially at its top end where it is divided into two channels: the oral cavity and the nasal cavity”.

Diagram of Organs of Speech



Source: Otagburuagu and Chukwuma (2002:247)

The contributions of the organs of speech in communication are immense. Each of the organs of speech contributes to the functionality of the other. The summary of the organs of speech are: the teeth, the tongue, the lips, nasals, larynx and pharynx, lungs, vocal cords, velum and the palate.

Techniques and Methodologies for Teaching Phonology

The effective teaching of phonology, especially in second language situation, hinges on the Bloomfieldian Structural Psychologists who emphasize on second language teaching and learning as based on drills and practice. To adopt this theory effectively, the issue of instructional materials comes to mind. Ikonta (2002) argues that the phonological syllabus

should contain teacher's model pronunciation, emphasis on correct articulatory movements, students' repetition, pointing out the different spelling in which the different sounds occur, eliciting such words from students, plenty of drills for practice, and in the sixth year, intensive practices in life-like speaking tasks (debates, formal speeches) would be employed to integrate all the various bits of the component.

In consonance with this, the audio lingual method of the Bloomfieldian Structural Psychologists puts emphasis on drills and practice in second language learning which can lead to fluency, articulation, competence and performance. The audio lingual method stresses on speech rather than writing; this is because repetition can enforce retention. In same development, Ezema (2002) and Okwudishu (1996) posit that other instructional materials for teaching languages include picture cards, photographs, radio sets, cassette recorders, mirrors, charts, recorded speeches, well constructed dialogue, language laboratory, speech organs, television, slides, telephone, filmstrips, motion pictures etc. These instructional materials will be simpler to learn as these materials will make learning real, retentive, lively and exciting.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Phonology, as an aspect of linguistics, bears the burden of how sounds are organized in any language. Phonology, like phonetics, plays a major role in speech production. In second language learning, phonology limits the mother tongue interference which brings so much distortion on most Nigeria's speakers of English. The teacher of English or phonology should be one who is always reading, searching and researching, trying to transcribe words/new words, listening to native and near-native speakers, listening to speakers of the sophisticated variety, listening to language programs on radio, watching language programs on television and educative drama in native English language. The teacher of English should also be one who uses conducive environment in the teaching of phonology. The instructional materials should be carefully chosen and graded according to the ability, age, level and competence of learners. Practice and constant drills should be continuous exercises. Diligence and commitment are sine qua non for the teacher of English/phonology.

- i The Federal Government through the ETF/TETFUND should provide equipped language laboratories to all private, state owned and Federal tertiary institutions.
- ii Teachers of English, especially teachers of phonetics/phonology should be given adequate training in handling equipment/operation of the language laboratory.
- iii Practical workshops should be organized quarterly for teachers of English/phonology.
- iv Teachers of English/phonology in the universities and other tertiary institutions should be sponsored to visit native English speaking countries for at least two months bi annually to acquire near-native variety which would help them to teach phonology with confidence and competence.

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