

The Production and Perception of the Affricate /tʃ/ and the Fricative /ʃ/ by Igala ELS Users

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Abstract—A second language user is one who has his own language (L1) and probably mastered all there is to the sound system of his L1. The already existing language system makes second language learning difficult thereby resulting in what is called ‘errors’ as an effect of interference. Phonologically, it is a hard task learning a second language because each language has its unique phonology. This paper x-rayed the difficulties encountered by Igala L2 users with reference to the production and perception of the affricate /tʃ/ and the fricative /ʃ/. The study used carefully prepared sentences containing the two sounds under study to elicit data from the target population. The data were analyzed using frequency and percentage counts. From the analysis it was discovered that there exist production problems in the use of the affricate /tʃ/ and the fricative /ʃ/ by Igala users of English as a Second Language where /tʃ/ is substituted for /ʃ/ and vice versa. Conclusion drawn from the result was the need for Igala users to aspire for competence in their use of English as a second language particularly the phonological aspects because being proficient in any language begins with good understanding and correct usage of the sound systems thereby bringing about intelligibility.

Index Terms—English as a second language, Igala users of English, production problems, perception problems, language acquisition

I. INTRODUCTION

English Language as a global language has played a significant role in Nigeria since its introduction into the country as a result of colonization. The need for proficiency in it has been a scholarly issue for some time now and individuals continue to work towards proficiency in English language along with L1. The fact that each language is unique, with its phonology, has been a barrier to proficiency in L2 because there tend to be problems of interference in L2 learning. In comparative analysis of two different languages, one would no doubt confirm this assertion that no two languages have the same phonological structure. Igala users of L2 experience some level of difficulties particularly sounds as it relates to their use of English as a Second Language.

A Second Language, according to Akindele and Adegbite (1992) is “a language which is usually the sequentially second language of a bilingual person” (as cited in Onyema, 2002, p. 28). Second Language is used to refer to a language that is learned extensively in addition to the L1. This is confirmed by Ogunsiji’s (2004) view that “when a language is not only taught in the classroom as a school subject, but has its uses extended to other domains and used extensively, in addition to the L1, it has attained the status of a second language” (p. 9). A second language is used by a bilingual or multilingual person for the purpose of wider communication. Onyema (2002) maintains that English is a Second Language in Nigeria because it is the language in which bilingual Nigerians conduct their everyday activities, but share the role with their indigenous languages. Nigeria is a multilingual country with bilingual or multilingual individuals and as a result, L2 learners find it difficult to attain high level of proficiency. Igala users of English as a second language like some other Second Language users find it difficult to articulate certain sounds of English; therefore, this study is to investigate the production and perception problems of the affricate /tʃ/ and the fricative /ʃ/ by Igala users of English as a second language. This study will contribute to scholarship by adding to the existing literature on Error Analysis and phonological problems of a particular language user (Igala). It will help teachers of English language to know the appropriate approach to use when it comes to the teaching of the sounds of English language.

II. IGALA USERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The name Igala stands for the people, the land and the language hence; we have Igala people, Igala land and Igala language. Igala is a dominant language in Kogi State. It is spoken by over two million natives in nine Local Government areas of the State as well as some communities outside Kogi State which include, Ebu in Delta State, Olohi and Ifekwu in Edo State, Ogwungwu, Ojo, Iga in Enugu State, Odokpe, Njam, Inoma, Ala, Igbe Onugwu, Ode, Igbokenyi and Ila in Anambra State. Igala is located within the confluence of the Rivers Niger and Benue. Igala people are found east of the confluence of these rivers. Negedu (2003) historically explains that Igala language is one of the African languages as well as one of Nigeria's indigenous languages. It belongs to the Kwa subgroup of the Niger Congo language family as well as the West Benue-Congo languages in Nigeria. According to Omachonu (2011), Igala language has thirty (30) phonemic sounds made up of twenty three (23) consonants and seven (7) vowels thereby making it to exhibit two broad sound systems; the consonants and the vowels.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Corder (1971) proposes two justifications for the study of learners errors: the pedagogical justification, namely that a good understanding of the nature of error is necessary before a systematic means of eradicating them could be found, and the theoretical justification, which claims that "a study of learner's errors is part of the systematic study of the learner's language which is itself necessary for an understanding of the process of second language acquisition" (p.132). These justifications account for the significance of learner's errors as proposed by Corder. Errors are flawed side of a learner's speech or writing which is as a result of interference; learning strategies, communication strategies and overgeneralization. Interference here could be inter-lingual or intra-lingual and as Kadiri, Agbo and Ekwueme (2018) put it, "social and physiological factors could also be sources of errors in ESL, EFL and SLA." (p. 49). Errors are "systematic deviations from the native speaker's standard or acceptable usage" (Otagburuagu, 1997, p. 30). In the same vein, errors are seen as "deviant structure which is, therefore, a misrepresentation of acceptable linguistic forms" (Onuigbo, 1984, p. 98). From the two definitions of errors, one common feature is that errors could be deliberate or unintentional.

Error Analysis (EA) is a theory of interlanguage proposed by S.P. Corder in 1971. It is used to describe the actual errors of second language users in line with Ogbulogo's view that "Error Analysis depends on the actual errors made by learners, with the aim of identifying a pattern for them" (2005, p. 5). It came as a result of the laborious and minimal results of contrastive analysis (CA). Second language learners of language (any language) commit errors in the process which is significant to the learning process; hence, Corder talks about the significance of learner's errors. What usually translates to errors is the fact that the learners try to use the code/rules acquired in their L1 to produce L2 which as earlier mentioned, is interference. A close look at Onuigbo's (1990) view that "in first language learning, the learner is highly motivated and surrounded by an environment that encourages and at the same time enhances learning but L2 learners lack this", it is evident that L2 errors (be it expressive or receptive) cannot be avoided easily as far as L2 acquisition is concerned. Onuigbo and Eyisi (2008) as cited in Kadiri et al. (2018) confirm this when they say "the presence of errors is a welcome development in the process of learning a language" (p.49), thus, the importance of learner's errors. The procedures of error analysis which are elaborated in five stages as presented by Corder are:

- i. Selection of a corpus of language;
- ii. Identification of errors in the corpus;
- iii. Classification of the identified errors;
- iv. Explanation of the psycholinguistic causes of the errors; and
- v. Evaluation of the errors (gravity ranking).

Following these five stages, it is important to say that complete error analysis begins with selecting a language sample, identification, classification, description and correction of the errors so identified. This study therefore, adopts Corder's Error Analysis as the parameter to account for the production and perception of the affricate /tʃ/ and the fricative /ʃ/ among Igala users of English as a second language. This theory is deemed appropriate for this study because the study involves the collection of a corpus of language (data), identification of errors in the data, classification of the errors identified, explanation and evaluation of the errors of a group of language (L2) users with a unique L1.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The population for this study is made up of one hundred and thirty four (134) participants from the nine Local Government areas where Igala is spoken in Kogi State. Fifteen (15) participants were randomly selected from Ankpa, Idah, Omala, Odolu, Bassa, Dekina, Ofu, Olamaboro and Ibaji local government areas respectively. The participants were given specially prepared test tool of six simple sentences that contain the affricate /tʃ/ and the fricative /ʃ/ in order to find out how Igala users perceive the sounds as well as how they pronounce the sounds. For the production and perception tests, the researchers listened and observed as the participants read each sentence. The participants were equally asked to transcribe only the words in bold letters (words that contain the sounds under study) according to their (participant's) production and perception. The study adopts a descriptive survey method. All the slips were returned.

V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is anchored on the following questions:

- i . How do Igala users of English Produce the affricate /tʃ/ and /ʃ/?
- ii . What is the perception of /tʃ/ and /ʃ/ sounds among Igala users of English?

VI. ATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

From the data collected, the researchers present the following results using percentage tables. Where S=sounds, W=words, RP=right or Received Pronunciation, WP=wrong pronunciation, %=percentage, n=population. The tables represent each Local Government and the production problems.

The following analysis answers research question i. **How do Igala Users of English produce /tʃ/ and /ʃ/ sounds in words?**

TABLE 1
ANKPA

S	W	RP	%	WP	%	Total (n)	Total %
/tʃ/	Teacher	5	33	10	67	15	100
	church	1	7	14	93	15	100
	chief	4	27	11	73	15	100
/ʃ/	ship	2	13	13	87	15	100
	special	2	13	13	87	15	100
	dish	4	27	11	73	15	100

The table above shows the total number of participants from Ankpa LGA and the percentages in their right and wrong productions of the words with the sounds under study. The words are drawn from the six sentences (see Appendix). This table presents 33% right and 67% wrong production of ‘teacher’, 7% right and 93% wrong production of ‘church’, 27% right and 73% wrong production of ‘chief’, 13% wrong production and 87% right production of ‘ship’, 13% right and 87% wrong production of ‘special’, 27% right and 73% wrong production of ‘dish’.

TABLE 2
OMALA

S	W	RP	%	WP	%	Total (n)	Total %
/tʃ/	Teacher	4	27	11	73	15	100
	church	1	7	14	93	15	100
	chief	1	7	14	93	15	100
/ʃ/	ship	1	7	14	93	15	100
	special	5	33	10	67	15	100
	dish	2	13	13	87	15	100

Table 2 shows that Omala has ‘church, chief, and ship’ on 93% wrong production and 7% right production. ‘Teacher’ has 27% right production and 73 wrong production; ‘special’ has 33% right production and 67% wrong production while ‘dish’ has 13% right production and 87% wrong production.

TABLE 3
OFU

S	W	RP	%	WP	%	Total (n)	Total %
/tʃ/	Teacher	3	20	12	80	15	100
	Church	7	47	8	53	15	100
	Chief	6	40	9	60	15	100
/ʃ/	Ship	2	13	13	87	15	100
	Special	5	33	10	67	15	100
	Dish	5	33	10	67	15	100

This table presents 20% right and 80% wrong production of teacher, 47% right and 53% wrong production of church, 40% right and 60% wrong production of chief, 13% wrong production and 87% right production of ship, 33% right and 67% wrong production of special, 33% right and 67% wrong production of dish respectively.

TABLE 4
OLAMABORO

S	W	RP	%	WP	%	Total (n)	Total %
/tʃ/	Teacher	2	13	13	87	15	100
	church	6	40	9	60	15	100
	Chief	2	13	13	87	15	100
/ʃ/	Ship	7	47	8	53	15	100
	special	6	40	9	60	15	100
	Dish	6	40	9	60	15	100

Table 4 presents 13% right and 87% wrong production of teacher, 40% right and 60% wrong production of church, 13% right and 87% wrong production of chief, 47% wrong production and 53% right production of ship, 40% right and 60% wrong production of special, 40% right and 60% wrong production of dish respectively.

TABLE 5
ODOLU

S	W	RP	%	WP	%	Total (n)	Total %
/tʃ/	Teacher	1	7	14	93	15	100
	church	2	13	13	87	15	100
	chief	4	27	11	73	15	100
/ʃ/	ship	3	20	12	80	15	100
	special	3	20	12	80	15	100
	dish	3	20	12	80	15	100

This table presents 7% right and 93% wrong production of teacher, 13% right and 87% wrong production of church, 27% right and 73% wrong production of chief, 20% wrong production and 80% right production of ship, 20% right and 80% wrong production of special, 20% right and 80% wrong production of dish respectively.

TABLE 6
BASSA

S	W	RP	%	WP	%	Total (n)	Total %
/tʃ/	Teacher	4	27	11	73	15	100
	church	4	27	11	73	15	100
	chief	4	27	11	73	15	100
/ʃ/	ship	2	13	13	87	15	100
	special	4	27	11	73	15	100
	dish	6	40	9	60	15	100

From this table, Bassa has 27% right and 73% wrong production of 'teacher', 27% right and 73% wrong production of church, 27% right and 73% wrong production of 'chief', 13% wrong production and 87% right production of 'ship', 27% right and 73% wrong production of 'special', 40% right and 60% wrong production of 'dish' respectively.

TABLE 7
IBAJI

S	W	RP	%	WP	%	Total (n)	Total %
/tʃ/	Teacher	7	47	8	53	15	100
	church	5	33	10	67	15	100
	chief	5	33	10	67	15	100
/ʃ/	ship	1	7	14	93	15	100
	special	3	20	12	80	15	100
	dish	6	40	9	60	15	100

This table presents 47% right and 53% wrong production of 'teacher', 33% right and 67% wrong production of 'church', 33% right and 67% wrong production of 'chief', 93% wrong production and 7% right production of 'ship', 20% right and 80% wrong production of 'special', 40% right and 60% wrong production of 'dish' respectively.

TABLE 8
DEKINA

S	W	RP	%	WP	%	Total (n)	Total %
/tʃ/	Teacher	4	27	11	73	15	100
	Church	2	13	13	87	15	100
	Chief	3	20	12	80	15	100
/ʃ/	Ship	1	7	14	93	15	100
	Special	3	20	12	80	15	100
	Dish	3	20	12	80	15	100

This table presents 27% right and 73% wrong production of 'teacher', 13% right and 87% wrong production of 'church', 20% right and 80% wrong production of 'chief', 93% wrong production and 7% right production of 'ship', 20% right and 80% wrong production of 'special', 20% right and 80% wrong production of 'dish' respectively.

TABLE 9
IDAH

S	W	RP	%	WP	%	Total (n)	Total %
/tʃ/	Teacher	1	7	14	93	15	100
	church	4	27	11	73	15	100
	Chief	5	33	10	67	15	100
/ʃ/	Ship	7	47	8	53	15	100
	special	6	40	9	60	15	100
	Dish	1	7	14	93	15	100

This table presents 7% right and 93% wrong production of ‘teacher’, 27% right and 73% wrong production of ‘church’, 33% right and 67% wrong production of ‘chief’, 53% wrong production and 47% right production of ‘ship’, 40% right and 60% wrong production of ‘special’, 7% right and 93% wrong production of ‘dish’ respectively.

TABLE 10
SUMMARY OF RESULT

S	W	RP	%	WP	%	Total (n)	Total %
/tʃ/	Teacher	31	23	104	77	135	100
	Church	36	27	99	73	135	100
	Chief	34	25	101	75	135	100
/ʃ/	Ship	26	19	109	81	135	100
	special	37	27	98	73	135	100
	Dish	36	27	99	73	135	100

Summarily, 77% produced ‘teacher’ wrongly out of the total respondents of 134. 23% rightly produced it. 73% wrongly and 27% rightly produced ‘church’, 25% rightly and 75% wrongly produced ‘chief’, 19% rightly and 81% wrongly produced ‘ship’, 27% rightly and 73% produced ‘special’, 27% rightly and 73% produced ‘dish’ respectively. The wrong production is a problem which arises as a result of substitution of the sounds under study.

TABLE 11
PERCEPTION TEST IN RESPONSE TO RESEARCH QUESTION II

S	Words	Produced as	Perceived as
/tʃ/	teacher/ti:tʃə/	Teasher /tiʃə/	Teacher /ti:tʃə/
	church /tʃʌtʃ/	Shursh /ʃɔ:ʃ/	Church /tʃʌtʃ/
	chief /tʃi:f/	Shief /ʃi:f/	Chief /tʃi:f/
/ʃ/	ship /ʃip/	Chip /tʃip/	Ship /ʃip/
	special /speʃl/	Spechial/spetʃal/	Special /speʃl/
	dish /diʃ/	Dich /diʃ/	Dish /diʃ/

VII. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Igala speakers of English as a Second Language face difficulty in the production of the affricate /tʃ/ and the fricative /ʃ/ because Igala phonetic alphabet does not have /ʃ/ and as a result, they substitute /tʃ/ for /ʃ/ wherever it appears in a word in order to simplify the production. Hence, the following pronunciations:

- Teacher-----teasher*
- Dish-----dich*
- Ship----- chip*
- Special-----spechial*
- Chief-----shief*
- Church----shursh*

To them, /ʃ/ is close to /tʃ/ which they have in their L1. Hence, Igala users of English Language substitute /tʃ/ for /ʃ/ and /ʃ/ for /tʃ/ wherever they appear in words. The wrong productions of words with these sounds under study, suggest pidgin and Akeredolu-Ale (2005) as cited in Awolabi (2012) says such suggestion carry a stigma.

The findings from the data show that Igala speakers of English as L2 have production problems and not perception problems of the sounds under study. It was observed that problem, in the form of errors, occur due to language differences. In languages where there exist production problems, the problems do not translate to wrong perception of the sounds just as Awolabi (2012, 1111) puts it “ even when there seems to be an obvious case of wrong articulation, the linguistic environment of the mispronounced sound gives adequate context cue to the intended meaning” therefore, Igala speakers have the right perception of the sounds as the data reveal that all the words with the affricate /tʃ/ have the right perception as well the words with the fricative /ʃ/. Hence, we have the following perceptions:

- Teacher-----teacher
- Church-----church
- Chief-----chief
- Ship-----ship

Special-----special

Dish-----dish

However, Igala users of English Language as a Second Language are only caught up in the web of language difference and interference from their L1 and these affect the right production of the sounds under study.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Speech is an important aspect of human communication. This accounts for the reason speaking is a primary language skill. It demands correct and appropriate sound articulation. Wrong articulation or application of rules leads to errors which hinder the flow of communication and intelligibility. So far, this study discussed the production and perception problems of Igala speakers of English particularly the affricate /tʃ/ and the fricative /ʃ/. We discovered that Igala speakers of English as a Second Language have production problems and not perception problems. They mispronounce the words in the test sentences (see Appendix) written in bold letters, which when the words are used out of context or in isolation, leads to misunderstanding. The analysis reveals that they substitute the sounds interchangeably but perceive the sounds correctly; hence, there are no perception problems. As for the production problems, it can be tackled with intensive oral drills and training in aural perception.

Following the view of Awonusi (2004, p. 204), that deviation from the ‘standard’ is acceptable because “a monolithic form of English” no longer exist and that the language is now coloured by the nuances of host communities of contact, leading to domestication; many will argue that errors in English language are not what linguists should bother about since they are acceptable but it is still very important to emphasize right usages that can measure up to international intelligibility.

APPENDIX

A copy of the sentences administered to the respondents. The words in bold letters are used to test production and perception of /tʃ/ and /ʃ/

1. They helped themselves from a large **dish** of pasta.
2. There is a growing need for qualified **teachers** of English language.
3. The meeting will hold in the **church** at 3 o’clock.
4. **Chief** Ogbe is a good man.
5. There is something **special** about this place.
6. There are two restaurants on board **ship**.

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Discourse Analysis.

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