
Induced Errors in the Academic Writing: the implication of Phonological difficulties among HND 1 students of Kano State Polytechnic, Kano State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the induced errors in the academic writing that are due to the implication of phonological difficulties among HND 1 students of Kano State Polytechnic. The population of this work was one thousand seven hundred and fifty HND 1 students from five unit schools and the simple random sampling technique was employed whereby one hundred and seventy-five students were selected as a sample size of the study. Prepared written test on composition writing was adopted as the instrument of the study in which intense scrutiny marking skill was used to detect the lexical errors that are due to the implication of phonological problems. Similarly, Lacey and Luff's grounded analysis technique is employed in which the spelling errors observed are compared with the pronunciation problems identified on the pronunciation problems in English and some Nigerian languages. This research identified some spelling errors that are due to the phonological difficulties of some English phonemes among HND 1 students of Kano State Polytechnic such as labio-dental, fricative, voiceless consonant /f/ with bilabial, plosive, voiceless consonant /p/. And, labio-dental, fricative, voiceless consonant /f/ for labio-dental fricative voiced consonant /v/. It also discusses the impact of phonologically induced errors on the academic writing of ESL students.

Keywords: *Induced errors, Academic writing, Phonological, HND 1 students.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Most Nigerians learn English language as a second language after their indigenous language in Nigeria, and it is helpful for the social, political, and economic development of a Nigerian in the Nigerian society of today. It is believed that second language learning is normally for the extension of the communicative repertoire for coping with life's demands. Pronunciation is the primary medium through which man brings out his use of language to the attention of other people. It identifies the speaker's personality, dignity, and geographical origin.

It is believed that pronunciation is taken to be an indispensable component of the second or foreign language teaching programme because of the shift in the pedagogical principle from concern with linguistic form to communicative function. It is also a common observation that most people can acquire minimally second language pronunciation without formal writing. Again, when most second language learners' time is limited, other things like vocabulary command, or text-writing ability may be judged more important than near-native accent. Many linguists confirm that difficulties in learning the English language occur due to the fact that some of the English sounds do not exist in the mother tongue of the learners.

It is understood that Phonology is the study of the sound system of a language; it is concerned not with the physical properties of sounds, but rather with how they function in a particular language. Hyman (1975:157) asserts that: "the goal of Phonology is to study the properties of the sound system which speakers must learn or internalise in order to use them for the purpose of communication" Phonological errors are the breach of phonological rules in speech production. They are blocks that hinder the success of oral communication as they occur in ESL learners' processing, speaking, and decoding of oral composition. Most Phonologists classified the phonological errors into two:

1. Receptive error
2. Expressive error (Chomsky and Halle, 1968).

Chomsky and Halle (1968) further discuss: "Receptive error" as an error which occurs in the processing of messages in ESL learners' oral communication. For example,

- i. Teacher says: /heə(r)/ "hair" in an utterance
- ii. Student hears: /eə(r)/ "air"

This student processed "air" in place of "hair" without detecting the phoneme /h/ in the right word. Similarly, "Expressive error" is the inability to articulate some English phonemes, or proposition accurately as in Received Pronunciation. For example,

- iii. /bæt/ in place of /yat/
- iv. /bæd/ in place of /bɜ:d/

The examples (iii and iv) are cases that cause change in meaning, Roach (2010)

Similarly, the relationship between the spelling and pronunciation system of English is a complex and arbitrary issue that causes difficulty for learners of English as Second language particularly in academic writing. It is recognized that the complexities of English sound and spelling relations have historical sources as a result of changes introduced by scribes after the Norman conquest, and also the adopting of many loan words with foreign spellings and changes in phonological system. This causes disparities between written letters and sounds

articulated in the English language. For example, some sounds in some words are silent, and yet, active in writing _ words like, “lamb”, “womb” (here /b/ is silent). Osisanwo (2012) states that there is always a tendency for ESL learners to substitute a sound in L2 for a similar sound in L1, just like Hausa speakers in Nigeria substitute labio-dental, fricative, voiceless consonant /f/ with bilabial, plosive, voiceless consonant /p/, as in / pən / instead of / fən /. And Yoruba speakers substitute labio-dental, fricative, voiceless consonant /f/ for labio-dental fricative voiced consonant /v/ as in / fən / to / vən /. Other problematic consonants for many Nigerians are the dental sounds /ð/ and /θ/, which are often replaced by /z/ and /s/ or /t/.

Moreover, phonological errors influence spelling mistake in ESL learners’ essays and letters for evaluation. Wilkins, (1972) argues that inability to master phonetic distinctions may lead to misinterpretation of thought, and misinterpretation of oral, or written discourse; and inaccurate pronunciation leads to spelling mistake and redundancy in a discourse. Consequently, Little, (1995) identifies the following affects of phonologically induced errors in ESL students’ compositions for academic purpose:

- i. It causes reading difficulties, discomfort, and confusion to examiners.
- ii. It destroys the grammatical structure of the composition, as it leads to the misuse of word class in a sentence. For example, ‘different’ in place of ‘difference’, vice versa. In context, 1a. “The different is clear”. In place of, 1b. “The difference is clear”.
- iii. It distorts the context of the written discourse and generates comprehension difficulties.
- iv. It reduces the quality of essays and letters from academic writing to casual writing
- v. It reduces valuable marks under the content, organisation, expression, and mechanical accuracy (COEMA) in ESL learners’ academic writing.

This prompted the desire to undertake this study to fill in the gap left by previous researches that is to identify the influence of Phonological difficulties to spelling errors in Higher National Diploma I ESL students’ academic writing of Kano State Polytechnic.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It is observed that many scholars that include Bamgbose (1971), Banjo (2004), Jowitt (1991), Salami (2001), Akande (2004), Udofot (2004), Goswami, Ziegler and Richards (2005), Aliyu (2006), Osisanwo (2012) Njeru (2013), Bdliya (2015), and Sadiq (2017) investigated problems in phonology and its related topics such as, the phonological difficulties, phonological transfers, Phonological and Orthographical relations. Again, other researchers that include Mustapha (2017), Ubale (2011), and Muhammad (2017) have examined the effect of lexical errors in composition writings for knowledge and evaluation of ESL students of Polytechnic. However, the above researches left a gap of induced errors in the academic writing that are due to the implication of phonological difficulties among ESL HND 1 learners in Kano State Polytechnic. This instigates the desire to investigate the induced errors in the academic writing that are due to the implications of phonological problems among the HNDI students of Kano State Polytechnic.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to investigate induced errors in the academic writing of HND 1 students of Kano State Polytechnic that are due to the implication of phonological difficulties.

It is also the objective of this study to reveal the spelling mistakes that are related to individual native language speakers' pronunciation problems in Nigeria. Lie wise, the study will discuss the impact of phonologically induced errors in the academic writing of HND 1 students.

Theoretical frame work

This research hinges on the phonological theory of Choroleeva (2015) which adopts the Phonological and Orthographical rules as a model of analysis. This theory argues that phonologically induced errors are manifested in wrong pronunciation and/or intonation of English phonemes to convey meaning. The study also indicates that native language interference and inadequate knowledge of phonological rules of English are the causes of phonologically induced errors in the academic writing of ESL learners. The theory confirms that teachers of English should correct and discourage phonologically induced errors in the writing of their students. It indicates the value of prosodic elements in speech communication to convey meaning. The study also encourages the study of phonology to ESL learners, as it equips them with adequate knowledge of phonemes, their roles in communication, as well as their relationship with letters. Phonology facilitates ESL learners to have a good command of English sounds and their features. Phonology assists English language Teacher to establish the priorities of pronunciation practice in classroom and outside the classroom. English as a second language learners get difficulty in the realisation of some English RP phonemes such as fricatives, lax and central vowels that lead them to the pronunciation problems of some words in their oral discourse. This may lead the audience to misunderstand or misperceive the structure and content of the message, thus, the receiver may wrongly interpret the message or get difficulty to interpret the discourse, (ibid).

This theory is relevant to this research because the aim and objective of this work is to investigate the phonologically induced errors in the academic writing of ESL HND I students at Kano State Polytechnic. It is also the objective of this study to reveal the spelling mistakes that are related to individual native language speakers' pronunciation problems in Nigeria.

2.0 METHODOLOGY OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This study is descriptive research and the population of the study is one thousand seven hundred and fifty HND 1 students from five unit schools of Kano State Polytechnic. The simple random sampling technique will be employed to select one hundred and seventy-five students as a sample size of the study. Prepared written test on composition writing will be the instrument of the study in which intense scrutiny marking skill will be used to detect the lexical errors. This research will employ Lacey and Luff (2001) grounded analysis technique in which the identified spelling errors will be compared with Bdliya's (2015) study to identify spelling errors that are due to pronunciation difficulty of some English phonemes among the HND I English as a second language learners. Again, descriptive linguistics analysis procedure will be used for the analysis of the qualitative data collected from the subjects of the research.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This is the presentation of the data collected from 175 out of 1,750 HND I students' written test of Kano State Polytechnic which comprises five units schools:

1. School of Environmental Studies, Gwarzo
2. School of General Studies, Kano

3. School of Management Studies, Kano
4. School of Rural Technology and Entrepreneurship development, Rano
5. School of Technology, Kano

This research employs Lacey and Luff (2001) grounded analysis technique in which the identified spelling errors will be compared with Bdliya's (2015) study to identify spelling errors that are due to pronunciation difficulty of some English phonemes among the HND I English as a second language learners. Again, descriptive linguistics analysis procedure is used for the analysis of the qualitative data collected from the subjects of the research as follows,

MISSPELT WORD	INTENDED WORD
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- | | |
|-------------------|-------|
| 1. br <u>a</u> ye | bribe |
|-------------------|-------|

In context:

1. Your sister tell me you brave the police officer.
- 1b. Your sister tells me that you bribe the police officer.

In sentence (1) above the writer misspelt the word to brave instead of bribe.

Which changes the meaning of the sentence that is corrected in sentence (1b).

MISSPELT WORD	INTENDED WORD
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- | | |
|------------------|--------|
| 2. p <u>e</u> bo | favour |
|------------------|--------|

In context:

- 2a. Sir, we need your pebo.
- b. We need your favour.

In (2a) the writer used pebo in place of favour which is wrong. It is corrected in (2b)

MISSPELT WORD	INTENDED WORD
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- | | |
|--------------------|--------|
| 3. im <u>fo</u> rm | inform |
|--------------------|--------|

In context:

- 3a. I write this letter to you to imform you....
- 3b. Iwrite this letter to inform you...

In (3a) above the student wrongly spell inform to imform, as it is corrected in (3b)

MISSPELT WORD	INTENDED WORD
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- | | |
|--------------------|---------|
| 4. not <u>i</u> ng | nothing |
|--------------------|---------|

In context:

4a. He said noting.

4b. He said nothing.

In (4a) above the writer spelt “noting” for nothing which is wrong. It is corrected in (4b).

MISSPELT WORD	INTENDED WORD
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5. you <u>s</u>	youth
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In context:

5a. Drug abuse among the Nigeria yous.....

5b. Drug abuse among the Nigerian youth.....

The noun phrase (5a) above indicates that the writer substitutes (th) letter with (s) that spelt the word “youth” wrong.

MISSPELT WORD	INTENDED WORD
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6. re <u>d</u> er	rather
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In context:

6a. We all knon that debetter is nothing reder to see some argument.

6b. We all know that the better is nothing rather to read some argument.

In (6a) above the student wrongly spelt “th” with “d” letter as in “the” and “rather”

MISSPELT WORD	INTENDED WORD
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7. crout <u>d</u> crude	crude oil
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In context:

7a. Nigeria is a country which is bless with crout oil cocoa....

b. Nigeria is a country which is blessed with crude oil, cocoa....

In (7a) above the writer misspelt the word “crude” by substituting the letter (d) with (t) letter.

MISSPELT WORD	INTENDED WORD
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8. fa <u>z</u> a	father
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In Context:

8a. Her faza contribut ten thousand naira only to me

b. Her father contributed ten thousand naira only to me.

In sentence (8a) above the student wrongly spelt the word “father” by substituting the letter “th” with “z”.

MISSPELT WORD

INTENDED WORD

9. shek

check

In Context:

9a. The police officer shek all the goods in the bus.

b. The police officer checked all the goods in the bus.

In sentence (9a) above the student wrote the word “checked” wrongly by substituting the letter (ch) with (s) letter.

MISSPELT WORD

INTENDED WORD

10. sow

show

In Context:

10a. They sow me their award

b. They show me their award.

In (10a) above the writer misspelt the word “show” by substituting the letter (sh) with (s).

MISSPELT WORD

INTENDED WORD

11. moch

much

In context:

11a. How moch did you buy the mattress?

b. How much did you buy the mattress?

In sentence (11a) above the student wrote the word “much” wrongly by changing the letter (u) with (o).

MISSPELT WORD

INTENDED WORD

12. joney

journey

In context:

12a. My joney to Gyambu is the longest joney I ever made

b. My journey to Gyambu is the longest journey I ever made.

In (12a) above the writer wrote the word “journey” wrongly by changing the letters(our) to (o) which is corrected in sentence (b)

MISSPELT WORD

INTENDED WORD

13. bot

boat

In context:

13a. The passengers boarded the bot around 8:00 pm.

b. The passengers boarded the boat around 8:00pm.

In sentence (13a) above the student misspelt the word “boat” by substituting the letters (oa) with (o) letter that is corrected in sentence (b).

3.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study observed some spelling errors in the essays and letters written by HND 1 students of Kano State Polytechnic such as “brabe” in place of “brave”, “foot” for “food”, “sow” for “show”, “bat” for “but” and many more. This causes change in meaning of word and sentence at large. It could also confuse the reader of the text to misinterpret the message. Similarly, this research compares the spelling mistakes identified in the students’ academic writing with the Bdliya’s (2015) study on the pronunciation difficulties among some Nigerian ESL learners that proved the induced errors in the academic writing is usually due to the phonological difficulties and related to speakers of native languages in Nigeria. It is indicated that ESL Hausa speakers have the problem in production system of labio dental fricative voiced sounds /v/ and /f/ as a result they usually substitute them with bilabial plosive voiceless consonants /b/ and /p/ as in, “brabe” for “brave”. This stimulates Hausa speakers to spell the word wrongly in their English composition writing like “The boy is brabe” instead of “The boy is brave”. It is again revealed that the Yoruba and Igbo speakers have difficulties in the pronunciation process of voiced interdental fricative /ð/ and voiceless interdental fricative/θ/ as in “dat” for “that”, and “tree” for “three” which leads them to spell the word “three” as “tree” in their essays for knowledge and evaluation like “Joseph has tree cars” instead of “Joseph has three cars”. It is identified that ESL Ijaw speakers have difficulties in the production system of voiceless plato-alveolar fricative/ ʃ / which they normally substitute it with voiceless alveolar fricative/ s / as in “mifn” to “misin”. This leads them to spell the word “mission” to “misin” in their academic writing such as “My misin is to be a good teacher” in place of “My mission is to be a good teacher”.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This research identifies the spelling errors in some of the HND 1 academic writing that are due to the implication of phonological difficulties in the production process of some consonant and vowel sounds of English language such as /v/, /f/, /ð/, /θ/, /ʃ/ and many more. The work examines the categories of phonological difficulties among the ESL native language speakers in Nigeria and its influence to spelling mistakes in their academic writing. The study also observed that these phonologically induced errors cause reading difficulties, discomfort, and confusion to examiners. They destroy the grammatical structure of the composition, as they lead to the misuse of word class in a sentence. They distort the content of the written discourse and generate comprehension difficulties. They reduce valuable marks under the content, organisation, expression, and mechanical accuracy (COEMA) in ESL learners’ academic writing.

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