A contrastive analysis of English and Igbo syllable structures and its teaching implications

Osondu C. Unegbu
Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil

Abstract
This work investigated the differences in the syllable structures of English and Igbo languages, and their pedagogic implications. This was achieved by administering an oral interview test on Twenty five (25) respondents randomly selected from Comprehensive Development Secondary School Owerri. A passage was given to them to read, and emphasis was on auditory perception of sounds in relation to the English syllable structure. From the passage, ten (10) tasks (words), which comprise initial and final consonant clusters of two to four, were singled out for observation. It was found out that consonant clusters, whether initial or final, present a major learning difficulty to Igbo secondary school learners in their internalization of the English syllable structure. This was evident from the result obtained which is 7%. It is interesting to note that as the clusters increase from two, three to four, so the level of difficulty in pronouncing the words. That is why number 6 task /stju:dnts/, which has the highest number of clusters (three initial and four final), constituted the highest level of difficulty. The behaviorist theoretical framework which emphasizes learning through habit formation brought about by imitation, reinforcement and repetition as propounded by scholars like Skinner, Corder, etc. was adopted. The research concluded that English language teachers in Igbo land and elsewhere should engage in a

Contrastive Linguistic Analysis (CLA) in order to improve on their teaching. Secondly, the Government and other stakeholders in education should encourage the production of pedagogical grammar books, which are based on a thorough CLA of the Native Languages (NLs) and the Target Languages (TLs). This will not only improve pedagogy, but help English as Second Language Learners (ESL) learners/teachers to overcome most teaching and learning difficulties.

1.0 Introduction

It is an established fact that when two different languages come in contact, the issue of interference, especially of the first language **(**L1**),** with the second language (L2), cannot be ruled out. This is further buttressed by Gass & Schachter (1989:54), who say that "the substantial difference between child language development and adult foreign language learning stems from the fact that in adults, the language acquisition device ceases to operate, and that knowledge of the first language and general problem solving serve as imperfect substitute". They also state that "knowledge of an existing language interferes with the acquisition of a subsequent language". This is described as "the LI Interference Hypothesis". This brings us to the theory of Contrastive Linguistic Analysis (CLA). According to Valdman (1966:35), "CLA is defined as "a scientific study of language which involves a systematic description of two languages, a contrasting of the languages and an analysis of the differences and similarities arising from the comparison and contrast".

In his own view, Fisiak (ed), (1981:1), defines contrastive linguistics as: "a sub-discipline of linguistics concerned with the comparison of two or more languages or sub-systems of linguistics, in order to determine both differences and similarities between them". He further made a distinction between theoretical and applied linguistic contrastive studies. According to him, theoretical Contrastive Studies

give an exhaustive account of the differences between two or more languages, provide an adequate model for their comparison, and determines how and which elements are comparable, thus defining such notions as congruence, equivalence and correspondence. On the other hand, applied contrastive studies are part of linguistics. It draws from the findings of theoretical contrastive studies to provide a framework for the comparison of languages, selecting whatever information is necessary for a specific purpose. For instance, teaching bilingual analysis, translation, etc. To this end, he suggests that one of the tasks of applied contrastive study is the identification of probable areas of difficulty in another language, where for example, a given category in the TL is not represented in the NL and interference is likely to occur. However, applied contrastive studies should not only deal with differences but also attach importance to similarities.

This will enable the learner not to waste time and energy guessing those similar forms. This is also done in the belief that both similarities and differences may be equally troublesome in learning another language. It is in this vein that a contrastive analysis of English and Igbo syllable structures becomes pertinent since the syllable structure, according to Katamba, (1989): "is at the heart of phonological representations. It is the unit in terms of which phonological systems are organized". Igbo is one of the three major languages in Nigeria and it has about 17 million speakers according to the 2006 National census. However, according to www.wikitravel.com, "Igbo (Asusu Igbo) is a Niger-Congo language spoken primarily in Nigeria. There are between 18-25 million Igbo speakers living primarily in south-eastern Nigeria in an area known as Igbo land. Igbo is a national language of Nigeria and is also recognised in Equatorial Guinea".

Although one can rightly say that Igbo is not in imminent trait of endangerment, however, it is noteworthy to stress that in the face of the current globalization process and the egalitarian nature of the Igbos, the best way to prevent the Igbo language (and many others in Nigeria) from endangerment is to continue to research on it. Therefore, doing a

Contrastive Analysis of English and Igbo syllable structures will be of immense benefit to Igbo ESL speakers.

1.1 Theoretical framework

Before the 1960's, the field of language learning was dominated by the behaviorists' ideas. These include learning through habit formation brought about by imitation, reinforcement and repetition. This idea also dominated until the mid-1960's when studies in L2 learning became prominent. The behaviorists believe that the L2 learner is already a language carrier, so his L1 may inhibit or facilitate his L2 learning. In the view of Skinner, (quoted from Susan and Jacquelyn (1989:25): "learning is nothing more than operant conditioning, in principle, no different from learning to tie one's shoe-lace or to avoid touching a burning object". In essence, the Behaviorists believe that the task of L2 learning is overcoming the difficulties in L1 and L2 systems. They believe in using intensive techniques like drills and repetitions to change learner's behaviors towards a desired goal. Some of the proponents of this theory are: Skinner (1957), Corder, 1971:147-160), Robert, etc.

2.0 The syllable

The syllable can, in general terms be defined as a combination of consonants and vowels. In essence, every natural language must contain a syllable structure, which must involve a vowel sound and also a consonant sound. This is supported by Katamba (1989), who says that: "the rhyme is always obligatorily present in all syllable structures in all languages. What vary from language to language are the elements that can be part of the rhyme". (N:B the rhyme is the vowel). Also Akere (1987:16) defines the syllable as: "an intermediate level of phonological organization, that is, intermediate between individual segmental units (consonants and vowels), and their combinations into words". He further describes the syllable as serving the basic structure for the organization of segmental units into combinable patterns. It also serves as the locus of operation for supra-segmental (prosodic) features, such as stress and pitch in many languages, Akere (1987:16).

Furthermore, Adetugbo (1993:69) opines that the syllable is: "a unit of pronunciation larger than a single sound but smaller than a word, but a single sound like any of the vowels can constitute a syllable". He gave examples of the syllabic consonants which can constitute a syllable as: / m, n, I & r /. Further definitions of the syllable are given in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 14* (1975:75) which says that: "vowels and consonants can be considered to be the segments of which speech is composed. Together, they form the syllable, which in turn makes up utterances". The above definitions show that the syllable is present in every natural language and even determines how sounds can be described. The syllable may not have a unified acceptable definition, but its existence in natural languages cannot be denied. Whichever way it is looked at, the syllable is part and parcel of every natural language and constitutes the basis upon which speech is produced in languages.

2.1 The English syllable structure

The syllable structure can be viewed as the organization of segmental sounds and the permissible sequence that these sounds enter within a single syllable. In view of this, Adetugbo (1993:72), says that: "the English Language operates a syllable structure usually specified as: C^{0-3} V C^{0-4}". This specification implies that the English syllable has an onset made up of no consonant or a maximum of three consonants, an obligatory vowel as the peak, and a coda, made up of no consonant or a maximum of up to four consonants. It can equally be simplified thus: CCCVCCCC, N.B: (C=consonant while V=vowel).

From the above, it is clear that consonant clusters both at the initial and final peripheries of the syllable are normal parts of the English syllable structure. It should be noted that this is one of the major differences between the syllable structure of English and many African languages (Igbo inclusive). Therefore the English syllable structure above indicates that the permissible cluster patterns are: (a) Two-consonant clusters (CC), which can occur at both the initial and final peripheries of the syllable, (b) three-consonant clusters (CCC), which can occur at both the initial and final peripheries of the syllable, (c) four-

consonant clusters (CCCC), which can occur only at the final periphery of the syllable and only in a limited number of English words. Akere (1987:20), has given a list of seven permissible four-consonant clusters in syllable final position as: mulcts /-Ikts/, glimpsed /-mpst/, tempts /-mpts/, texts /-ksts/, twelfths /-Ifθs/, thousandths /-ntθs/'. Also see Allen, (1965:118), for more lists of four consonant clusters. The example given above by Adetugho, shows that the rhyme is the 'head' constituent, i.e. the only obligatory constituent in the syllable. Thus, it is possible for a well-formed English syllable to contain no onset (as in ever). But it is not possible for a well-formed syllable to exist without a rhyme. Typically, the nucleus slot in the rhyme is occupied by a vowel. But occasionally, a syllabic consonant like /I, n, m/, may fill the position. Furthermore, in English as in most other languages, words are made up of either a single syllable or a succession of two or more syllables. A word that is made up of only one syllable is 'monosyllabic', e.g. 'car', 'go', 'see', while one that is made up of two syllables is 'disyllabic', e.g. 'peo-ple', 'stu-dent', 'mar-ket'. Those that have three syllables are called 'trisyllabic', e.g. 'im-por-tant', 'ha-ppi-ness', 're-li-gion'. Those that consist of more than three syllables are 'polysyllabic', e.g. 'com-po-si-tion', 'exa-mi-na-tion', 'di-ver-si-fi-ca-tion', and 'com-part-men-ta-li-za-tion'. It should also be noted that the syllable structure of English makes room for the three stress types, namely: primary ('), secondary (,) and unstressed syllable (which has no mark). In English, all content words like verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs are stressed, while grammatical words like articles, pronouns, conjunctions and auxiliaries are unstressed in connected speech.

Lastly, English uses stress to distinguish the grammatical classes of some words, e.g. between nouns and verbs ('import-im'port) and adjectives and verbs ('absent-ab'sent). Thus, according to Adetugbo, (1993:75), 'English is a stress-timed language, and Igbo is a register-tone language'. This difference has its base in the difference in the syllable structure of both languages.

2.2 The Igbo syllable structure

Emenanjo (1978:1) gives the Igbo syllable structure as follows (C)T

S

(Where: C = consonant; () indicates optionality; T = Tone and S = syllabic).

From the above formula, we can see that the syllabic is the only tone-bearing unit in the language. In Igbo, the syllabic is either a vowel or the syllabic nasal. The above structure also indicates that a consonant may or may not start an Igbo syllable. This gives rise to the CV or V, CV structure of the Igbo syllable.

Examples are CV =ga (go) VCV = ego (money)

The "T" shows that Igbo is a tone language and it is only one of the eight vowels, namely: /a, e, i, Ị, o, Ọ, u, Ụ./ Or any of the three syllabic nasals /m,n/ that can form the tone. Also Igbo is an open syllable language, as according to Emenanjo (1976:4): "there is no consonant at the end of the Igbo syllable". Furthermore, Emenanjo (1976:3) made the following statement on the issue of consonant clusters in Igbo: "studies that have been carried out on different dialects of Igbo by Armstrong (1967), Green and Igwe (1963), Emenanjo (1971: 1975) and Williamson (1972), among others, confirm that there are no clear-cut cases of consonant clusters in Igbo". So cases like: "bia" (come) /b^{h}ịa/ and "gwa" (tell) / g^{h}wa/ i.e. both cases of a slide immediately followed by a C, i.e. (consonant), can be analysed as either a sequence of consonant plus an underlying vowel, or as examples of secondary articulation involving palatalization and labialization respectively.

The Syllabic Nasal: Emenanjo (1976:3) says: "coming at the end of a word or utterance, the syllabic nasal is written and pronounced 'm' but preceding a consonant, it is homorganic with it". Examples of this can be given as follows: nwa m (my child) nye m (give me) wetara m (bring for me). While those that precede a consonant are 'mpe' (small) 'nkita' (dog) 'mgba' (wrestling) 'njo' (evil), e.t.c. However, Emenanjo

(1976:2), has pointed out two restrictions on the syllable structure of Igbo, which are:

1. In a (C) T
   S
   'S" is always a vowel and never a syllabic nasal.
2. In a (C) T
   S

there can be only one consonant in (C) position as according to him," there do not seem to be clear-cut cases of consonant clusters in Igbo." So in view of the restriction in (2), the semi vowels call for explanations. Examples of such are: gwa (tell), bia (come), nwa (child), gbuo (kill), nwaa (try) etc. He concludes that since there are no known cases of consonant clusters in Igbo, it should therefore be treated as either a case of consonant plus vowels, as they are unit phonemes (1976:4), and also as a case of secondary articulation involving palatalization and labialization.

Furthermore, Oluikpe (1979:176) gives a more simplified
Igbo syllable structure as: 1.VCV = ala (earth), ulo (house)

2. CV = ji (yam), taa (today) etc.
3. VCVCV = ufodu (some) osisi (tree) etc.
3. NCV = mma (knife) mkpa (need), nkwa (dance) etc.

Also, Igboanusi (2002:49) gives the
Igbo syllable structure as: CVV =gaa,
which means (go), VCV =aka (hand),
CVCV =weta (bring), CVCVVCV = zutara (bought for somebody, examples mine).

The above two examples are much simplified and easier to understand. They all confirm that Igbo syllable structure do not end in a consonant coda, and therefore are open. This is why the Igbo language can be rightly described as a CV language. It also accounts for the vowel lengthening in Igbo language. To buttress this, Stephen (1974:253) says:

"in languages with an open syllable, vowels lengthen when not followed by a cluster or word final consonant". Some examples are: 'bia ebe a' (i.e. come here), 'gaa oso oso' (go quick quick), gbaa (run a race), etc.

Coming to the tone in Igbo syllable structure, Ogbalu et. al (ed) (1975:95) say: "Igbo is a tone language, that is, a language having lexical, significant contrastive but relevant pitch on each syllable". He gave the two basic tones as: "the high tone and the low tone". The third tone, called by some linguists as the "down step tone", and also by others as the "mid-tone", is not a basic tone in Igbo as it is in Yoruba.

Still on the tonality of Igbo syllable, Green and Igwe (1963:6) define a tone language as: "one in which contrastive pitch levels do not merely form the intonation tune of a sentence, as for instance, in English, but enter as distinctive factors into the lexical elements of the language, and in some languages, (of which Igbo is one), into the grammar as well". They also said that: "when one vowel follows another, it constitutes a separate syllable". This becomes pertinent when the tonology of the language is examined and it is seen that the two vowels carry distinct tonemes. Therefore, this accounts for the classification of vowels in Igbo words like: 'ebe' (place), 'nwoke' (man) etc. as separate syllables, as in VCV, and CVCV, respectively. More examples of this are: òké (rat), òkè (share), óké (male),àkwá (egg), ákwà (cloth), àkwà (bed) and ákwá (cry).

3.0 Research design

This research will be carried out at Comprehensive Development Secondary School, Owerri in Imo State. 25 (twenty five) male and female students of the school were randomly selected ranging from SS1-SS3. Data will be obtained from a formal source by giving the respondents a passage to read and emphasis will be on auditory perception of sounds in relation to the English syllable structures.

3.1 Sampling technique

A one-page written passage was administered on the respondents. Ten (10) words were selected from this passage, which

contained consonant clusters, ranging from two to four consonants, both initial and final. The words show the typical English syllable structure. Two versions of the passage were prepared, one of which was the one used by the researcher to score the students which had the ten words underlined, while the one given to the respondents to read was not underlined. The passages are:

3.1.1 The benefits of co-education

(a) Co-education systematically and naturally gives practical and balanced orientation to the young boys and girls. The teachers always teach the mixed students not to be excited about their fellow students because they will soon be in positions to marry and live together in the large society. So there is no basis for their separate training while in schools because of some extreme religious teachings, be it Christian or any other. This is nonsense.

Male and female students from mixed schools easily adjust themselves having acquired exposure and mutual understanding. Co-education therefore promotes unity among people practically between men and women. In fact, the rights of women in the society emanate from the orientation received from co-educational institutions. Co-education enables thousands of boys and girls to achieve a healthy social upbringing.

(b) Co-education systematically and naturally gives practical and balanced orientation to the young boys and girls. The teachers always teach the mixed students not to be excited about their fellow students because they will soon be in positions to marry and live together in the large society. So there is no basis for their separate training while in schools because of some extreme religious teachings, be it Christianity or any other. This is nonsense.

Male and female students from mixed schools easily adjust themselves having acquired exposure and mutual understanding. Co-education therefore promotes unity among people practically between men and women. In fact, the rights of women in the society emanates from the orientation received from co-educational institutions. Co-education enables thousands of boys and girls to achieve a healthy social upbringing.

4.0 Raw scores of respondents from comprehensive development secondary school

S/no	**Name, Age and Class of respondent**	**Tasks**	**Scores Per Task= 10 Marks**									**Total Scores= 100 Marks**
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
		sist∂mætikli	nætʃreli	præktikli	ɔ:ri∂nteiʃn	Mikst	stju:dnts	kristʃ∂n	susucu	bitwi:n	θauzndz	
1	Ebere Edekeobi. 14 yrs. SS 1 B	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	05	00	05
2	Ihekwoaba Collins. 16 yrs. SS 2 D	00	00	00	05	00	00	00	00	00	00	05
3	Eguzoro Chiadikaobi	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	05	00	05

	16yrs. SS 2 D											
4	Chibuike Emereonye. 18 yrs. SS 2 C	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
5	Ngozi Ekwomama 18 yrs. SS 3 E	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	10	00	10
6	Ogadi lhenakwe. 16 yrs. SS 1 J	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
7	Stanley Ofurum. 18 yrs. SS 2 C	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
8	Isaac Ogbonaya. 19 yrs. SS 2 C	10	05	10	05	00	00	00	00	00	05	35
9	Kalu Chibunna. 16 yrs. SS 2 B	00	00	00	00	00	00	05	00	00	00	05
10	Nberu Cynthia 16 yrs. SS 2 D	00	00	05	05	00	00	00	00	00	00	10
11	Ugochukwu Smart 17 yrs. SS 2 C	00	00	10	05	00	00	00	00	05	00	20
1	Igboanug	00	00	05	05	00	00	00	00	05	00	15

2	Chiamaka. 17.yrs. SS 2 C											
13	Igwe Chinwendu 18 yrs. SS 2 C	00	00	00	05	00	00	00	00	00	00	05
14	Onwuchekwa Edit 19 yrs.SS 2 C	00	00	00	00	00	0	00	00	05	00	05
15	Iherigwo Augusta. 17 yrs. SS 2 C	00	00	10	05	00	00	00	00	00	00	15
16	Anyanwu Chinonso 16. Yrs SS 2D	00	00	05	05	05	00	00	00	00	00	15
17	Akubuiro Loveth. 16 Yrs. SS 2 D	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	05	00	00	05
18	Blessing Emmanuel 16 Yrs SS 2 C	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
19	Uzoegbu Modesta 17 Yrs. SS 2 E	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
20	Nnadi Cynthia 16 Yrs. SS 2 C	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
21	Uchehara lkechukwu	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	05	05

	17 Yrs. SS 2C											
22	Obidike Chinenyenwa 16 Yrs. SS 2 C	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	05	00	05
23	Odunze Kelechi 16 Yrs. SS 2 C	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
24	Dickson Faith. 16 Yrs. SS 2 B	00	00	00	00	00	00	05	00	00	00	05
25	Ofurum Queen. 15 Yrs.SS 2 D	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	05	00	00	05

4.1 Analysis and findings of raw scores of respondents from comprehensive development secondary school

4.1.1 Analysis

From the scores in the table above, the first respondent scored only 05 marks as all the insertions from task 1 to 7 were present. In fact, she could not pronounce the clusters of tasks 2 & 3. The 05 marks were scored from task 9 since the insertion of / u / was not pronounced. Her reading was not fluent. The same goes to the 2nd respondent. The insertions of / a: /, / כ:/ and / a: / were pronounced in tasks 1-3. But the insertion of / i / on task 4 was not very clear and he scored the only 05 marks on this. He committed the expected errors of insertions and omissions in the remaining tasks. No 3 respondent also committed all the errors of vowel insertions and consonant omissions. Insertion of /a:/ / כ:/, /a:/ and / i / in tasks 1, 2, 3 and 4. and the omission of / k / in task 5. For task 6 / stju: dnts /, it is interesting to know that of all the 25

respondents tested from Comprehensive Development Secondary School, no one scored full marks i.e. (10). Number 6 task presented the most difficult problem to the students. It is the only task with the maximum number of clusters permitted by the syllable structure of English (a minimum of no consonant initial or a maximum of three, an obligatory vowel, and a minimum of no consonant final, or a maximum of four).

The 4th respondent committed all the errors of consonant omissions and vowel insertions and scored zero. In fact, his pronunciation was so poor that he could not pronounce the clusters of task 1 and stopped at /-tik/ instead of /-tikli/. He is not fluent in reading. All the expected errors of insertions and omissions were present. The omission of / k / in task number 5 was clear. He scored the only full marks of 10 on task number 9 / bitwi:n / as there was no insertion of / u /. The 6th respondent, scored zero as he committed all the expected errors of vowel insertions and consonant omissions. On task one, he stopped at /-tik/ as he could not pronounce the cluster. The same goes for number 7 respondent. He scored zero and was actually poor in reading. Number 8 respondent was the best out of the 25 respondents. He scored 35 marks. There was no insertion of / a: / in tasks 1, and 3. And in task 2, the insertion of / כ: / was not pronounced. In tasks 4 & 10, the insertions were mild, and he scored 05 marks each.

Respondent number 9 was poor in reading as all the errors of vowel insertions and consonant omissions were present. His only 05 marks were scored on task number 7. Although there was an omission of /ʃ / in the cluster /-stj/, (which was general with all the respondents), he did not insert /ia/ in the syllable. Number 10 respondent scored 10 marks, which she got from tasks 3 & 4 respectively, while number 11 respondent inserted the / a: / vowel in task 1 and / D: / in task 2 but task 3 was pronounced correctly and he scored 10 marks. There was an omission of / k / in task 5 and in 6 & 7, all the clusters were omitted. / e / was inserted in task 8, but the insertion of / u: / in task 9 was not clear and 05 marks was awarded. / a: / was inserted in task 10 with the omission of the clusters in / -zndz /. This respondent scored a total of 20 marks and he is fluent in reading.

For respondent number 12, she could not get full marks on any of the tasks. She scored zero on tasks 1 & 2. In tasks 3 & 4, the insertions were not clear while there was an omission of / /k/s & / j / and an insertion of / e / in tasks 5 & 6 respectively. /ʃ / was omitted in task 7 and /e/ was inserted in 8, while the insertion of / u: / in 9 was not clear. She scored zero for inserting / a: / in task 10. Her reading was fluent. A total of 15 marks were scored.

Number 13 respondent committed the expected errors of vowel insertions in tasks 1-3. The only 05 marks were scored from task 4, as the insertion was not pronounced. The errors were pronounced in all the remaining tasks. Number 14 scored the only 05 marks on task 9, while number 15 scored 10 marks on task 3 and 05 marks on 4. The 16th respondent scored 05 marks each on tasks 3,4,5 as the insertions or omissions were not clear, while number 17 obtained the only 05 marks from task 8 as the insertion of /e/ was not pronounced. This respondent had difficulty in pronouncing consonant clusters and was not fluent in reading. The same goes for respondent number 18 who obtained no marks in all the tasks and had difficulty with the clusters. Number 19 could not pronounce the clusters /-kIi/ in task 1 and also scored no marks from any of the tasks. The same goes for number 20 who had difficulty with the clusters and could not pronounce task 2 / nætʃreli / apart from inserting / כ: /. She scored zero. Number 21 respondent committed all the errors of vowel insertions and consonant omissions from tasks 1-9. The only 05 marks was scored on task 10 where the insertion of / a: / was not clear. Number 22 respondent obtained the same 05 marks. Although she was fast and more fluent than the others, but the clusters were omitted. The 05 marks were obtained from task number 9 as the vowel insertion was not clear. Number 23 was not fluent and found it difficult to pronounce the double consonant clusters on tasks 1 & 2 and scored Zero.

Lastly, respondents number 24 and 25 scored 05 marks each. Number 24 scored the 05 marks on task 7 where /ʃ / was omitted but there was no insertion of / ia /, while number 25 scored her 05 marks on

task 9 because the insertion of / u: / was not clear. Her reading was fluent and fast.

4.1.2 Findings

It is interesting to know that due to the lack of consonant clusters in Igbo syllable structure, the Igbo learners will naturally insert any vowel (even when that vowel is not a known English vowel), to make it pronounceable. For instance, the insertion of / ia / in task number 7 by almost all the respondents. This is so because among the eight (8) diphthongs of English, /ia / is not one of them instead there is / ai /. This means that the learners have devised this unknown diphthong on their own in their bid to escape from the difficulty of pronouncing the clusters. The implication is that this omission and insertion syndrome can only be stopped among Igbo secondary school learners through the application of the right linguistic method like contrastive analysis, error analysis, etc.

5. 0 Implications of the study

5.1 For the teacher

From the results obtained and analyzed, it is very clear that lack of proper application of linguistic approach in teaching is a major cause of Igbo students' inability to master the correct form of spoken English, especially at the secondary school level. This is because the students are a reflection of the level of teaching and also of their teachers.

Moreover, the result is a clear manifestation that the teachers and a large percentage of Igbo people speak like that, since the errors are widespread among the students. The teachers of English language at the secondary schools therefore, have the utmost need to re-examine and re-validate their teaching method so as to be more productive.

5.2 For the students

The results of the study have shown that many Igbo secondary school students do not approximate closely to native patterns of English pronunciation. The students are not actually drilled on how and why to

avoid such errors. It also confirms that most Igbo teachers of English only teach oral English theoretically and the students pass out without mastering the correct pronunciation of many English words. The teaching is hardly accompanied with tape recorded materials or textbooks written with the appropriate explication of the students' mother tongue and the target language, with a view to finding sources of error/interference. This makes the students to become helpless and vulnerable, especially, during external examinations like JAMB, WAEC, NECO, SSCE examinations. The only option left to them is to resort to malpractice. Some students also get discouraged from studying English at the higher level.

5.3 For the textbook writers

The benefits of a Contrastive Analysis (CA) grammar book will be invaluable not only to the teachers and students but to those outside the classroom, i.e. education stakeholders.

In many scholarly papers like Briere, (1968:168), the implications of CA for the textbook writer and the usefulness of CA grammar book to the teacher, the learner, the materials writer and the translator have been enumerated. According to Briere, such materials will assist the teacher in systematizing and explaining his pedagogical experience, and thus enable him to use it for a better advantage. It may be conceived as a kind of reference book for the teacher which may be of the same importance to a dictionary, or a descriptive grammar of the target language. Furthermore, it may prove particularly useful to the teacher who does not know the native language of his students. The contrastive grammar book will also help the teacher to explain the most essential structural differences between the two languages to his students in a clear and systematic way. However, such a CA grammar book will only be beneficial to those teachers who believe in CA and who can see its expediency in certain circumstances.

For the Learner: s/he will benefit immensely from a CA grammar book, mainly as a reference book for language learning. This kind of book can only be useful to such learners who base their learning

on a cognitive approach and intellectual analysis. That is, for the serious-minded learner.

The materials writers: Those who engage in material writing, will find in a CA grammar a readily made inventory of at least some of the special tasks and problems in English language. The person(s) involved in the preparation of syllabus and organization of a language course, will find it expedient to use. Also, some types of language test can be based on such a grammar book.

The translator: The language translator will also benefit from a contrastive grammar book by using it as a reference point. It will help him to solve some translation problems and also, inexperienced translators will find it valuable. They can use it to upgrade their knowledge about the language to be translated, and have a good preparation for the work. Therefore, a CA-based grammar book will not only facilitate pedagogy but assist in the learning and more understanding of the languages involved.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is expedient to make the following recommendations that may help in improving teaching and learning:

* Teachers should be re-trained to validate and improve on their knowledge. This will enable many teachers to come to terms with the current linguistic approach to the language they teach. The re-training could be in the form of a sandwich program that may take place during the long vacation.

  It is unfortunate that most English language teachers make little or no effort to upgrade their knowledge. Somebody who graduated 20 years ago may not know the current changes that have taken place if there is no effort made to catch up with current trends. Such teachers become stumbling blocks to learning and their effort at teaching becomes counterproductive.

Although, not all linguists accept CA as the major solution to errors, all believe that there is transfer and interference of Mother Tongue (MT) to the Target Language (TL). To this end, the values of CA cannot be overlooked especially at the secondary school level, where much of the developmental errors occur.

* The government should look into this issue with a view to alleviating the problems of improper teaching at this level. Linguists should be contracted by the government from all the recognizable linguistic backgrounds, (at least those that are likely to have effect on teaching and learning). These linguists should produce books on a CA of their native Language (NL) with the TL. This will go a long way in helping to facilitate pedagogy. Teachers, who are not from the same linguistic backgrounds as the students will find it invaluable and so will the students. Also those involved in the preparation of teaching materials like the syllabus writers will find it expedient, especially those that set examinations like WAEC, NECO etc., will not have to make the same mistakes hitherto being made. The questions will now be set for the entire students from different linguistic backgrounds with equal justification. This is because now there is already made books for the students to use which indicates most or all the sources of errors. This will complement the efforts of the teachers and also encourage most of them to engage in some kind of CA in their teaching. It will also give them the 'directionality of difficulty' when teaching so that those items that are similar to their student's native language should not be given greater attention to the detriment of the more difficult ones. This CA grammar book will not only be restricted to the area of Oral English (since the interference errors are pervasive), it should cover all aspects of the language.

Definitely, this type of exercise will involve a lot of money, manpower resources, but it is a worthwhile sacrifice for there to be progress in the learning of the TL.

1. Linguists should take up the challenge and produce books based on a CA of their native languages with the TL. This will not only

improve on their academic standing but also be of benefit to many in the teaching and learning process.

2. The teachers of English in our secondary schools should task themselves to engage in some kind of CA especially when they encounter some persistent errors among their learners. Even if it is not on a full scale, a little application of CA will help the teachers and students to overcome most errors.

7.0 Conclusion

This work has been able to establish the fact that consonant clustering, both initial and final, is a major learning problem to Igbo secondary school learners in their internalization of English syllable structure. The results obtained from the school that was used as sample, are awful. This only buttresses the fact that faulty teaching is the bane of students' correct internalization of English syllable structure. The findings from this study, although conducted in Igbo land, are not restricted to that part of Nigeria in terms of their applications. The researcher believes that if the same research project was conducted in other places, similar, if not worse results could be obtained. This calls for a more viable, innovative and efficient teaching method in teaching English language in our secondary schools. Teachers should always bear in mind the inherent differences in the structures of the NL and that of the TL. These differences are not only restricted to the syllable, but in all areas of the language.

References

Akere, F. 1987. *An Introductory Phonetic and Phonological Description*. Lagos, Nigeria: University of Lagos.

Adetugbo, A. 1983. *English Phonetics. A Course Text. Nigeria*: Department of English, University of Lagos.

Allen, H. B. 1965. *Teaching English as a Second Language*. U.S.A.: M.C. Graw & Hill.

Breiere, E. J. 1968: A psycholinguistic Study of Phonological Interference. The Hague: Morton.

Emenanjo, N. 1987. *Elements of Modern Igbo Grammar*. Ibadan, Nigeria: University Press Ltd.

Emenanjo, N. 1976. Igbo Art and Music. A Seminar Paper Presented at the UNN. Published by The Society For Promoting Igbo Language & Culture.

Fisiak, J.C 1981, ed. *Contrastive Linguistics and the Language Teacher*. Britain: Pergamon Press Ltd.

Gass, S. M. & Schacter, J. 1989. *Linguistic Perspectives in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Green, M. M. & Igwe, G. E. 1963. *A Descriptive Grammar of Igbo*. Berlin: Akademic, Verlay GMBH.

Igboanusi, H. 2002. *Igbo English in the Nigerian Novel*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Enicrowfit Publishers.

KATAMBA, F. 1989. *An Introduction to Phonology*. New York, USA: Longman Inc.

Ndimele, O. 2003. *Globalization & the Vanishing Voices of Africa. Any Glimmer of Hope at this Turbulent Sea*? in Topical Issues in Sociolinguistics: the Institute for Nigerian Languages. Aba & Port-Harcourt, Nigeria.

Ogbalu, F.C. et. al 1975. *Igbo Language and Culture*. Nigeria: Oxford University Press.

Oluikpe, B.O. 1979: *Igbo Transformational Syntax*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Africana Educational Publishers Limited.

Stephen, R.A. 1974. *The Organization of Phonology*. London: Academic Press Inc.

Valdman, A. 1966. *Trends in Language Teaching*. Indiana, USA: McGraw-Hill.

www.wikitravel.com, retrieved 10th April, 2016