



**THE SOUND SYSTEMS OF ENGLISH, YORUBA AND IGBO: A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSES AND THEIR INTERFERENCE IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

BY

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**ABSTRACT**

Every language of the world has its peculiar sound systems which make them differ both in spelling and pronunciation from other languages. And often times these sound patterns have a way of influencing the L2 teaching, learning and acquisition. As such, this research aims at the contrastive studies of the sound systems of English and the Nigerian Indigenous languages of Yoruba and Igbo. Through qualitative design, primary data were gathered through interviews, observations and focus group discussions and host of other secondary sources were employed. Based on articulatory theory, data gathered were geared towards answering the following questions; what are the similarities and dissimilarities of speech sounds of English and the two Nigerian Indigenous languages (Yoruba and Igbo)? What are their influences on L2 teaching, learning and acquisition? It was observed from the work that two (Yoruba and Igbo) out of the three languages came from the same language family but with unequal number of speech sounds while English is from Indo-European language family and has its own unique sound system. Hence, their areas of convergences and divergences, from whence; both their positive and negative influences on L2 acquisition were spotted. This work also provided solutions to where negative interference applies.

**KEYWORDS:** Contrastive Study, L2, Acquisition, Learning, teaching, Languages, interference

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Contrastive Analysis is the systematic study of a pair of languages with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities with regard to second language learning, teaching and acquisition. Historically it has been used to establish language genealogies. **Contrastive Analysis and Second Language Acquisition:** Contrastive Analysis was used extensively in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in the 1960s and early 1970s, as a method of explaining why some features of a Target Language were more difficult to acquire than others. According to the behaviourist theories prevailing at the time, language learning was a question of habit formation, and this could be reinforced or impeded by existing habits. Therefore, the difficulty in mastering certain structures in a second language (L2) depends on the difference between the learners' mother language (L1) and the language they are trying to learn. In Nigeria, Speakers of different languages come in contact everyday in such areas as business, office, market, school and law courts. There is a need for one to learn an additional indigenous or foreign language apart from one's mother tongue, that is, an Igbo man, for instance, to speak, read, write and interact with an Hausa, Yoruba or English man and vice versa. Our interest in this paper is on the English speakers learning Yoruba and Igbo and vice versa. It is pertinent to note that, contrastively, English learners of Nigerian indigenous languages, and vice versa, should ordinarily experience language learning problems bordering on interference as a result of differences between their sound systems. The problem could make it difficult for the English learners of Yoruba and Igbo to achieve success in their language learning process, the same thing goes to Yoruba and Igbo learners of English. In order to assist L2 learners, this paper discusses the consonant and vowel systems of standard English and the two Nigerian Languages (Yoruba and Igbo) predicting the problem areas and proffering solutions which would help them to mitigate the intending challenges they would ordinarily face during the course of the L2 acquisition.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

**Phonetics** is the study of speech sounds. The science of phonetics aims to describe all the sounds of all the world's languages:

- **Acoustic phonetics:** focuses on the physical properties of the sounds of language
- **Auditory phonetics:** focuses on how listeners perceive the sounds of language
- **Articulatory phonetics:** focuses on how the vocal tract produces the sounds of language

NOTE: Spelling, or **orthography**, does not consistently represent the sounds of language

• Some problems with ordinary spelling:

- 1. The same sound may be represented by many letters or combination of letters: *he, people, key, believe, seize, machine, Caesar, seas, see, amoeba*
- 2. The same letter may represent a variety of sounds: *father village badly made many*
- 3. A combination of letters may represent a single sound: *shoot, character, Thomas, either, physics, rough, coat, deal.*
- 4. Some letters in a word may not be pronounced at all: *autumn, sword, resign, pterodactyl, lamb, corps, psychology, write, knot.*

### ARTICULATORY PHONETICS

- Most speech sounds are produced by pushing air through the vocal cords
- **Glottis** = the opening between the vocal cords
- **Larynx** = 'voice box'
- **Pharynx** = tubular part of the throat above the larynx
- **Oral cavity** = mouth
- **Nasal cavity** = nose and the passages connecting it to the throat and sinuses

### CONSONANTS: PLACE OF ARTICULATION

- Consonants are sounds produced with some restriction or closure in the vocal tract
- Consonants are classified based in part (place of articulation) and where in the vocal tract the airflow is being restricted (the **manner of articulation**)
- The major places of articulation are: bilabial, labiodental, interdental, alveolar, palatal, velar, uvular, and glottal
- **Bilabials:** [p] [b] [m] – Produced by bringing both lips together
- **Labiodentals:** [f] [v] – Produced by touching the bottom lip to the upper teeth
- **Interdentals** [θ] [ð] – Produced by putting the tip of the tongue between the teeth
- **Alveolars:** [t] [d] [n] [s] [z] [l] [r] – All of these are produced by raising the tongue to the **alveolar ridge** in some way

- [t, d, n]: produced by the tip of the tongue touching the alveolar ridge (or just in front of it)
- [s, z]: produced with the sides of the front of the tongue raised but the tip lowered to allow air to escape
- [l]: the tongue tip is raised while the rest of the tongue remains down so air can escape over the sides of the tongue (thus [l] is a **lateral** sound)
- [r]: air escapes through the **central** part of the mouth; either the tip of the tongue is curled back behind the alveolar ridge or the top of the tongue is bunched up behind the alveolar ridge
- **Palatals**: [ʃ] [ʒ] [tʃ] [dʒ][j] – Produced by raising the front part of the tongue to the palate
- **Velars**: [k] [g] [ŋ] – Produced by raising the back of the tongue to the soft palate or velum
- **Uvulars**: [ʀ] [q] [ɢ] – Produced by raising the back of the tongue to the uvular
- **Glottals**: [h] [ʔ] – Produced by restricting the airflow through the open glottis ([h]) or by stopping the air completely at the glottis (a **glottal stop**: [ʔ])

### CONSONANTS: MANNER OF ARTICULATION

- The **manner of articulation** is the way the airstream is affected as it flows from the lungs and out of the mouth and nose
- **Voiceless** sounds are those produced with the vocal cords apart so the air flows freely through the glottis
- **Voiced** sounds are those produced when the vocal cords are together and vibrate as air passes through
- **Oral sounds** are those produced with the velum raised to prevent air from escaping out the nose
- **Nasal sounds** are those produced with the velum lowered to allow air to escape out the nose
- So far we have three ways of classifying sounds based on **phonetic features**: by voicing, by place of articulation, and by nasalization
  - [p] is a voiceless, bilabial, oral sound
  - [n] is a voiced, alveolar, nasal sound
- **Stops**: [p] [b] [m] [t] [d] [n] [k] [g] [ŋ] [tʃ][dʒ] [ʔ] – Produced by completely stopping the air flow in the oral cavity for a fraction of a second
- All other sounds are **continuants**, meaning that the airflow is continuous through the oral cavity
- **Fricatives**: [f] [v] [θ] [ð] [s] [z] [ʃ] [ʒ] [x] [χ] [h] – Produced by severely obstructing the airflow so as to cause friction

- **Affricates:** [tʃ] [dʒ] – Produced by a stop closure that is released with a lot of friction
- **Liquids:** [l] [r] – Produced by causing some obstruction of the airstream in the mouth, but not enough to cause any real friction
- **Glides:** [j] [w] – Produced with very little obstruction of the airstream and are always followed by a vowel
- **Approximants:** [w] [j] [r] [l] – Sometimes liquids and glides are put together into one category because the articulators approximate a frictional closeness but do not actually cause friction
- **Trills and flaps:** [r]\*[ɾ]
  - Trills are produced by rapidly vibrating an articulator
  - Flaps are produced by a flick of the tongue against the alveolar ridge
- **Clicks:**
  - Produced by moving air in the mouth between various articulators – The disapproving sound *tsk* in English is a consonant in Zulu and some other southern African languages
  - The lateral click used to encourage a horse in English is a consonant in Xhosa

## VOWELS

- Vowels are classified by how high or low the tongue is, if the tongue is in the front or back of the mouth, and whether or not the lips are rounded
- **High** vowels: [i] [ɪ] [u] [ʊ]
- **Mid** vowels: [e] [ɛ] [o] [ə] [ʌ] [ɔ]
- **Low** vowels: [a] [ɑ]
- **Front** vowels: [i] [ɪ] [e] [ɛ] [a]
- **Central** vowels: [ə] [ʌ]
- **Back** vowels: [u] [ʊ] [o] [ɔ] [ɑ]
- **Round** vowels: [u] [ʊ] [o] [ɔ]
  - Produced by rounding the lips
  - English has only back round vowels, but other languages such as French and Swedish have front round vowels
- **Diphthongs:** [aɪ] [aʊ] [ɔɪ]
  - A sequence of two vowel sounds (as opposed to the **monophthongs** we have looked at so far)

• **Nasalization:**

- Vowels can also be pronounced with a lowered velum, allowing air to pass through the nose
- In English, speakers nasalize vowels before a nasal sound, such as in the words *beam*, *bean*, and *bingo*

• **Tense vowels:** – Are produced with greater tension in the tongue

- May occur at the end of words

• **Lax vowels:** – Are produced with less tongue tension

- May not occur at the end of words

**3.0 ENGLISH SOUND SYSTEMS**

English language belong to the Indo-European language family and according to Greg (2015) in his book titled “*The Phonemes of Spoken English: in Dictionary of the British English Spelling System (online)*” the Standard British English or Received Pronunciation has 44 speech sounds, Of these, 24 are consonant sounds, and 20 are vowel sounds.

From the fact that there are many more speech sounds in Received Pronunciation than the 26 letters of the English alphabet, it is fairly clear that some sounds have no predominant one-letter spelling. But for clarity, the representation of each sound is paramount and to actualize this, the representations will be based on symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

**24 CONSONANT SOUNDS OF ENGLISH**

- /p/---- Pin    /b/----- bed    /t/---- tin    /d/---- den    /k/---- kit    /g/----get
- /tʃ/---- church    /dʒ/----- Jane    /m/---- map    /n/--- net    /ŋ/---- bang    /f/---- fat
- /v/----vine    /θ/----- thing    /ð/-----this    /s/--- set    /z/---- zip    /ʃ/---- shoe
- /ʒ/---- vision    /h/---- hip    /r/---- rule    /l/---look    /j/---- yam    /w/---- wet

According to Anagbogu, et al., (2010), the following chart shows the place and manner of articulations of English Speech Sounds.

**FIGURE 1; ENGLISH CONSONANT CHART**

	<b>Bilabial</b>	<b>Labio-dental</b>	<b>Dental</b>	<b>Alveolar</b>	<b>Palato-alveolar( Post-alveolar)</b>	<b>Palatal</b>	<b>Labiovela r</b>	<b>Velar</b>	<b>Glottal</b>
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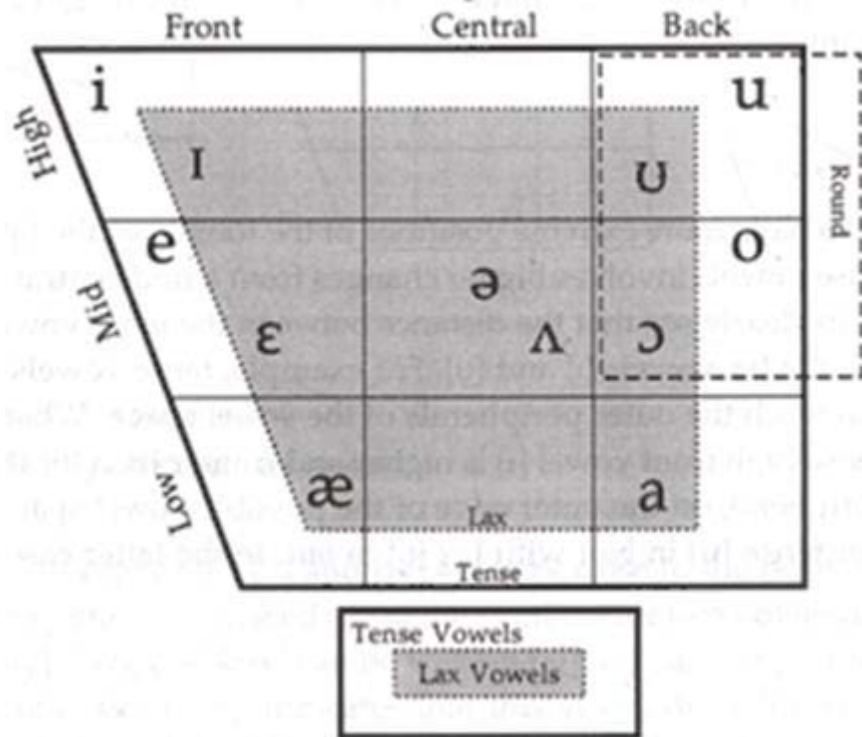
<b>Unvoiced V)</b> <b>Voiced(+V)</b>	(- -V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V		-V +V	-V +V
<b>Stops (Plosives)</b>	p b			t d					k g	
<b>Fricatives</b>		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ					h
<b>Affricatives</b>					tʃ dʒ					
<b>Nasals</b>	M			n					ŋ	
<b>Lateral</b>				l						
<b>Roll</b>				r						
<b>Approximant</b>						j	w			

### VOWEL SOUNDS OF ENGLISH

As stated above, the English vowel sounds are 20 and can be grouped into, for example, whether the vowel is a short one, a long one, or a diphthong. The long and short vowels are all monophthongs. English Vowels are therefore basically made up of the single vowels called monophthongs or pure vowels and the diphthongs otherwise known as impure or gliding vowels.

**FIGURE 2: ENGLISH VOWEL CHART (LONG AND SHORT)**

(Mihaliček 2011:759)



**Long Vowels (5)** → /i/, /u/, /ɜ/, /ɔ/, /ɑ/

Vowels	Words
/i/	See, sea, be, key
/u/	Food, wood, moon, group
/ɜ/	Girl, bird, first, nurse
/ɔ/	Court, jaw, horse, law
/ɑ/	Car, far, pass, half, Calm

**Short Vowels (7)** → /æ/, /e/, /ɒ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, /ə/, /ɪ/

Vowels	Words
/æ/	Mat, fan, hat, bag
/e/	Ten, pen, set, pet, dead
/ɒ/	Dog, cot, cough, lodge
/ʌ/	son, sun, love, country
/ʊ/	Put, push, book, should, would
/ə/	Doctor, above, about, alone, together
/ɪ/	Sin, pin, tin, syntax

**ENGLISH DIPHTHONGS (8)** → /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /əʊ/, /ɔə/, /ɪə/, /aʊ/, /ɔɪ/, /ɛə/

Vowel	Words
/eɪ/	Day, ape, pay, lady, play



/ai/	<b>Tight, fight, try, fry, die</b>
/əʊ/	<b>Home, so, soap, road, toe</b>
/ʊə/	<b>Sure, poor, tour,</b>
/iə/	<b>Ear, pear, dear, here, year</b>
/aʊ/	<b>Cow, shout, house, mouth, out</b>
/ɔi/	<b>Toy, boy, foil, oil, noise, coil</b>
εə/	<b>Care, fare, rare, air, pair, chair</b>

### 3.1 YORUBA SPEECH SOUNDS

Yoruba is a tonal language whose many varieties are spoken across West Africa with about 20 million native speakers. It is spoken natively in Nigeria as well as the neighboring countries of the Republic of Benin, Togo, Sierra Leone and Ghana. Yoruba is considered to be one of the four official languages of Nigeria (Campbell, 1991 p.1471).

Specifically, the Yoruba language is classified as a member of the Benue-Congo subgroup of languages, part of the Niger-Congo language family (Campbell, 1991, p.1471).

Yoruba's sound system is used to create many words that can form infinite linguistic patterns. In this system there are three sets of sounds that make up Yoruba words: consonants, vowels and tone (Lawal, 2004, p.454). Although some speech sounds in Yoruba are universal; there are in fact some that are not found in English. Yoruba has 19 basic consonants with 12 vowel phones. As a tonal language, it uses different pitch patterns to distinguish individual words or grammatical forms of words.

## YORUBA CONSONANT CHART

		Place of Articulation						
		Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labio-velar	Glottal	
Manner of Articulation	Stop	Voiceless		t		k	kɔ	
		Voiced	b	d		g	gb	
	Affricate	Voiced			ɖ			
	Fricative	Voiceless	f	s	ʃ			h
	Nasal	Voiced	m	n		ŋ		
	Liquid	Voiced		l r				
	Glide	Voiced			j		w	

## YORUBA VOWEL CHARTS

SHORT	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK	LONG	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
HIGH	I		U	HIGH	ĩ		ũ
MID	E		O	MID			
	ɛ		ɔ		ẽ		õ
LOW		A		LOW		ã	

### 3.2 SIMILARITIES BETWEEN YORUBA AND ENGLISH SOUND SYSTEMS

There are some similar sounds between the two charts. In English and Yoruba the stops are produced the same way. For some consonants, the air from the lungs is completely stopped from going out but this is only for a brief moment. In addition, the voiced liquid [r] is equivalent to the retroflex approximant [ɻ] in the English consonant chart. Also, the nasals in Yoruba are produced similarly to the nasals in English. The air from the lungs is passing out through the nose instead of the mouth. With similar sounds compared to English, one can say that the Yoruba consonants would be an interesting section to study in the Yoruba sound system.

In Figure 7, the oral vowels on the left are produced when air passes out through the mouth only. These oral vowels are: [a], [e], [ɛ], [i], [o], [ɔ], [u]. Compared to Figure 2, these seven oral vowels correspond roughly to the following vowels of standard English: [i] as in “Pete”, [e] as in “bait”, [ɛ] as in “bet”, [a] as in “bott”, [ɔ] as in “bought”, [o] as in “boat”, and [u] as in “boot” (Lawal 2004:420). Also, in Figure 7 on the right, there are nasal vowels: [ĩ], [ẽ], [ã], [õ], and [ũ] and note the nasalization of the vowels is not at all caused by a preceding nasal consonant. In fact, these vowels may be produced after oral consonants (Lawal 2004:454).

(1) Examples: ikin, iyen, ikan, ibon, ikun (Lawal 2004:455).

- a. [ĩ] [ikĩ] ‘palm nuts’
- b. [ẽ] [iẽ] ‘that one’
- c. [ã] [ikã] ‘white ants’
- d. [õ] [ibõ] ‘gun’
- e. [ũ] [ikũ] ‘type of squirrel’

On the phonetic vowel chart in Figure 7, the position of these nasal vowels is roughly equivalent to the corresponding places of the oral vowels. Compared to Figure 2, these nasal vowels are in fact similar in pronunciation to the following vowels in English (Lawal 2004:454).

(2) The examples below illustrate the similarity (Lawal 2004:455).

- a. [ĩ] in “mean”
- b. [ẽ] in “them”
- c. [ã] in “mom”
- d. [õ] in “dawn”
- e. [ũ] in “moon”

### 3.3 DISSIMILARITIES BETWEEN YORUBA AND ENGLISH SOUND SYSTEMS

Compared to the English Consonant Chart in **Figure 1**, some sounds are similar to the Yoruba Consonant Chart while others are completely not found in the English Consonant Chart. For instance, Yoruba has a place of articulation that doesn’t exist in the English Consonant Chart in **Figure 6**, called labiovelars. Labiovelars are produced with your two lips as well as the back of the tongue. The sounds [g̠b̠] and [k̠p̠] are two sounds that are unfamiliar to English speech. These two sounds are an example of double articulations in which two sounds are pronounced at the same time. For instance, in [g̠b̠] the sounds [g] and [b] are combined. In [k̠p̠] the sounds [k] and [p] are combined. In these examples below, the lips are pressed firmly together, and the back of

the tongue is simultaneously made to touch the rear of the roof of the mouth to form the labio-velars (Awobuluyi 1979:89).

- (3) a. [g̃b̃] = [g̃b̃á] ‘sweep’
- b. [k̃p̃] = [k̃p̃a] ‘kill’

Also, diphthongs aren't even present in Figure 7 compared to Figure 3; none of the vowels in Yoruba are made with two components to make a complex vowel such as a diphthong (Awobuluyi 1979:52).

Also none of the English vowel sound is nasalized as portrayed in the Yoruba vowel chart in Figure 7, the following are samples;

- a. [ĩ] [ikĩ] ‘palm nuts’
- b. [ẽ] [ijẽ] ‘that one’
- c. [ã] [ikã] ‘white ants’
- d. [õ] [ibõ] ‘gun’
- e. [ũ] [ikũ] ‘type of squirrel’

### 3.4 INFLUENCES ON SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) LEARNING AND ACQUISITION

As observed, it is possible that there would be pronunciation difficulties to be encountered by the Yoruba Learners of English and vice versa due to the presence of some unique sounds and features peculiar to the both languages. For instance, the Labio-velar stops (/kp/, /gb/) that are unfamiliar with English Speakers would definitely constitute a strenuous pronunciation exercise to the English learner of Yoruba. He or she may resolve to employ his Mother Tongue (MT) or First Language (L1) to enhance the pronunciation of some of these sounds and such is inimical to the Target Language (TL) or Second Language (SL).

Also, as observed in the vowel system of Yoruba, the Nasal Vowels→ [ĩ], [ẽ], [ã], [õ], and [ũ] will be very difficult for an English speaker to adapt because such do not exist in the English sound system. The same thing goes to a Yoruba learner of English as he or she would tend to transfer the nasal vowels of his first language to the learning and pronunciation of the English vowels.

To prevent these pronunciation errors from occurring, therefore, the English learners of Yoruba should be taught to produce and master those Yoruba sounds that they are not familiar with. The same should be done with the Yoruba learners of English concerning those English sounds that

they are not familiar with. The teacher should devote time to teaching their students such sounds, explaining the phonetics of those sounds, especially the articulatory processes involved in their production, as well as drills, would likely go a long way in enhancing learning.

It is not expected that those similar sounds found in both languages would constitute a problem for the English learners of Yoruba and vice versa. What the learners must do is to positively transfer the habit of the production of these sounds into their TL. The teacher has a role here in ensuring that there is proper pronunciation of each segment, in line with the sound system of the target language (TL) in question.

### 3.5 IGBO SOUND SYSTEMS

Igbo language is one of the largest spoken languages in West Africa; it is spoken by over 20 million people in Nigeria and belongs to the Benue-Congo group of the Niger-Congo language family.

The standard Igbo has thirty-six speech sounds comprising twenty-eight consonants and eight vowels.

#### IGBO CONSONANTS

Standard Igbo twenty-eight consonants are listed below:

/p, b, t, d, k, g, kp, gb, kw, gw, m, n, ɲ, ŋ, ŋ<sup>w</sup>, w, f, v, s, z, ʃ, tʃ, dʒ, ɣ, l, r, j, w /

#### CONSONANT CHART

We present below the consonant chart of the Igbo language showing all the twenty-eight consonants of the language.

PLACE→ MANNER↓	Bilabia l	Labio- dental	Alveola r	Post- alveola r	Palatal	Velar	Labial Velar	Labiali z ed velar	Glottal
Unvoiced (-V) Voiced(+V)	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V
Plosives	p b		t d			k g	kp gb	kw gw	
Fricatives		f v	s z	ʃ					

<b>Affricates</b>				tʃ	dʒ		ɣ			h
<b>Nasals</b>	M		N		ɲ	ŋ			ŋ <sup>w</sup>	
<b>Lateral</b>			L							
<b>Trill</b>			R							
<b>Approximant</b>					j				W	

**Igbo consonant chart** (Adapted from Eme and Odinye,2008:28)

### IGBO VOWELS

There are eight vowel sounds in standard Igbo. The vowels, their phonetic description and examples of Igbo words where they occur are shown below:

**a /a/** → open front unrounded vowel= áká ‘hand’, àkwá ‘egg’, àlà ‘land’

**e /e/** → half-open front unrounded = éké ‘python’, égbé ‘kite’, éféré ‘plate’

**i /i/** → close front unrounded vowel= ìtè ‘pot’, ìsé ‘five’, ìrì ‘ten’

**ɪ /ɪ/** → half-close front unrounded vowel Igbà ‘wooden drum’, \_lkpà ‘to weave’

**o /o/** → half-close back rounded vowel = òròmá ‘orange’, ótù ‘one’, ólú ‘neck’

**ɔ /ɔ/** → half-open back rounded vowel = ọkụ ‘fire’, ọkụkọ ‘fowl’, ọnu ‘mouth’

**u /u/** → close back rounded vowel = ùgwù ‘honor’, élú ‘up’, ùdó ‘peace’

**ʊ /ʊ/** → half-close back rounded = ụsụ ‘bat’, ázụ ‘fish’, ányị ‘meat’

### CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND IGBO SPEECH SOUNDS

As observed from the data above, the Igbo Sound system contains 36 speech sounds, 28 consonants and 8 vowels unlike in English where we have 44 speech sounds, comprising of 24 consonants and 20 vowels. Because of these irregularities in number, one would definitely want to know their point of resemblance and divergence. Firstly, it is pertinent to note that both Igbo and English are from different language family, Niger-Congo and Indo European Language families respectively and hence their divergences. The Igbo sound system has a number of speech sounds that are not present in the English Sound System. For instance, the voiceless and voiced Labial-velar plosives (/kp/→akpa (bag) /gb/→egbe (gun)) do not have any English

counterparts. Also the voiceless and voiced labialized-velar plosives (/kw/→akwa (cry) /gw/→egwu (dance)) have no counterpart in the English sound system. Also the voiced velar affricate (/ɣ/→ agha (war)) of the Igbo sound system doesn't exist in English sound system. The voiced palatal nasal (/ɲ/→anya (eyes)) and the voiced labialized-velar nasal (/ŋ<sup>w</sup>/→onwa (moon)) are also not in the English sound system.

On the other hand, the voiceless and voiced dental fricatives (/θ/→thing / ð/→father) of English have no place in the Igbo sound system. Also the voiced post-alveolar fricative (/ʒ/→leisure) has no place in the Igbo Sound system.

As observed from the points of divergences above, it is likely that the English learners of Igbo would be making some pronunciation errors due to the unfamiliar sounds peculiar to the language. For instance, the Igbo sounds (/kp/,/gb//kw//gw//ɣ//ɲ//ŋ<sup>w</sup>) would all pose some pronunciation difficulties for a Foreign learner of the language as he or she may likely transfer his/her L1 habits in the process of articulation.

Also the English sounds →/ θ/ / ð/ /ʒ/ would constitute some difficulties as well since such sounds do not exist in the Igbo sound system as Igbo learners of English may tend to pronounce some sounds inaccurately, for instance “thing” as “tin” thereby rendering another meaning in the target language.

As also observed, the numerous vowels in the English sound system would amount to some pronunciation errors for an Igbo learner of English as the Igbo sound system unlike English has only 8 vowels. Such English vowel sounds as→ (/ʌ/,/ə/,/æ/ ) would constitute problems for Igbo learners of English as they will not know when and how to use such sounds if not properly guided.

There are no such vowels as diphthongs in the Igbo sound system and this contributes to some of the problems faced by Igbo Learners of English as this affects their pronunciation and spelling abilities in the second language.

Therefore, to curtail these pronunciation errors from occurring, the English learners of Igbo should be taught to produce and master those Igbo sounds that they are not familiar with. The same should be done with the Igbo learners of English concerning those English sounds that they are not familiar with. The teacher should devote time to teaching their students such sounds, explaining the phonetics of those sounds, especially the articulatory processes involved in their production, as well as drills, would likely go a long way in enhancing learning.

It is not expected that those similar sounds found in both languages would constitute a problem for the English learners of Igbo and vice versa. What the learners must do is to positively transfer the habit of the production of these sounds into their TL. The teacher has a role here in ensuring that there is proper pronunciation of each segment, in line with the sound system of the target language (TL) in question.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

This work wholesomely examined the similarities and differences with regard to the sound systems of English and the two Nigerian languages (Yoruba and Igbo) and how they interfere in the L2 teaching, learning and acquisition. It was discovered that some of the unfamiliar sounds in the sound systems of these languages pose some major challenges both in pronunciation and spelling of the target languages (second language). This work also suggests that Second Language teachers should put greater efforts in guiding L2 learners through with those unfamiliar sounds in the target languages. And learners should also make it a great deal to transfer their First Language habits where necessary in their L2 acquisition as these will enhance the general learning processes.

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