

Effects of Intonation Variants on the Language of Wider Communication in A Multi-Lingual Environment

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Abstract: *Intonation is the various degrees of manipulations given to tone of the voice. It is another aspect of linguistic manipulation at the prosodic level. While stress and phrasing consider emphasis on segments, that is the prominence given to linguistic segment on prosody, intonation is the manipulation of pitch contour in an utterance which reveals different moods of a speaker. This paper investigates different uses of tones in English language and draws a comparison with a local language (Yoruba language- South West of Nigeria). It is a series of pedagogical explorations with the aim of locating major areas of linguistic problems confronting a learner of second language in a multi-lingual environment.*

One hundred and twenty students constituted the sample for the work out of the population of 10800 students of J.S. S class in Ekiti state. Analysis of variance was used to determine the variations among the groups of the local dialects of Yoruba language while t-test was applied to determine the variations that exist between Received Pronunciations (RP) model of English language and that of the dialect of a local language (Yoruba).

The result of the investigation revealed that there was a kind of homogeneity among the dialects of Yoruba language while a remarkable difference was observed between the way the tones in English language are applied and the way the local users of the language applied the tones in their various expressions in English language. It is therefore recommended that the teaching of the tone application in English must be given adequate attention in order to promote global mutual intelligibility among the users of English language.

Key words: *Intonation, pedagogical,*

1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The common core that characterizes the language of man made necessary adaptations and adjustments possible. Language pedagogy builds on these facts to develop users of language of international status. Mono-linguistic society cannot be readily cited in the world. Even where one language is embraced, some dialects of such a language deviate from the standard of it. Therefore, different units of language components must be studied in order to assist the second language learner of a language acquire the tools of the target language without much problem.

In Nigeria situations, using the tools of English language effectively cannot be compromised. A Nigerian who desires to make progress in all aspects of life must strive to perfect his skills in the use of the language. English language is the language of unity and international relations. It is the window of the land to other progressive societies. A local language that will not be endangered has to grow with it or go into extinction. More importantly, the speaking skills of it must be learnt seriously and adequately perfected. On the note of pragmatics, speaking skills remain the language utility skills that really build up the speaker's language performance. Error in speech is transferred into writing. A Language one cannot speak with good understanding cannot be read nor written with good understanding as well. Listening becomes useless when the spoken words are not understood. Life becomes frustrating when you have an idea that cannot be correctly articulated.

Perhaps the problem of mass failure in Nigerian schools emanates from the students' inability to express themselves in simple English language. It is not because children in our schools are dullard but, maybe, they have problem with the language of instructions. It is an obvious fact that the local languages cannot carry the burden of the modern society. All the aspects of life in the modern society are global. Science and technology cannot be limited and restricted to what the local

language can cope with. Language can limit development. If language is seen as foreign, then there is a problem of linguistic integration. To the best of my knowledge, language is God's creation. There is no authorship to any language. Pure global English was not owned by the British people. The concept of the native speaker of a language of wider communication should be discountenanced. Nigeria with many nations becomes a nation through the adoption of English language. Nigeria is a nation with the presence of English language and without the language Nigeria remains a land with different several nations along the line of different (about 680) languages spoken in the enclave.

This paper does not recognise the Standard English along the line of British English, American English, Australia English etc. but the model of communication that promotes mutual intelligibility anywhere in the world where the language is been used as a tool of communication. It is, to the writer, very absurd and ridiculous to imitate the linguistic colour of a Briton, or forcing the linguistic garments of an American on a Nigerian. No two individual can speak exactly the same way. Nations are recognised by special unique language cultures. We only recognise the common core peculiar to the spoken language of man. This is nurtured through linguistics cultivation to reach a point of mutual understanding in the stream of communication. There is an element of domestication in this process (Adegbija, 2004). In an attempt to reach Global mutual intelligibility, there is a compromise about the tenor and the texture of voice and tone. The compromise disregards regional linguistic colouration that promotes ambiguities but focuses on those elements that must be clearly understood for free flow of ideas in the communication process.

2. LITERATURE

Different authorities in the various aspects of linguistics anchor their submissions on the fact that intonation is the contour of the voice which reveals different mood of the speaker. According to Carroll (2004) 'intonation refers to the use of pitch to signify different meanings' as the mood is revealed in the series of **intonational** contour employed by the speaker of a language. The manipulations and the contour applications within three tonal segments (rise, fall and flat) are structured in the communication model to enhance clear meaning. The applications follow the forms of sentence in the speech, the tones for declarative, imperative, interrogative, subjunctive and infinitive outputs.

Quirk (2003) says that intonation is the way in which the level of voice changes in order to add meanings to communication. Finnegan (2004) considers intonation as an important tool for making information structure in English. This may be less important in some other languages like French, Chinese and some African languages. Azikwe (1998) believes that Intonation is the tune of the language. It is the use of pitch that is, the rise and fall of the voice when we speak (Amayo 1986).

WAEC (1992) and NTI (2000, 2001, 2004) test of orals recognise the following use of tone in the stream of pragmatic prosody as demonstrated in the following different forms of sentence:

Is the wound still hurting?' His mother asked sympathetically (rising question, rising-tag) 'Have you visited Jos?' The receptionist asked courteously (rising question, rising-tag) 'Would you lend me a hand, please?' she requested softly (rising tone followed by a rising tag.) Will the principal return today?' She inquired. (Rising question followed by rising tag) Living with us are my uncle, my niece, my nephew and my cousin. (Fall, fall, fall, fall or rise, rise, rise, fall.) She SLAPPED him, she didn't PUNCH HIM. (Contrastive stress on slapped and optionally on punch) I asked for FOOD not WATER. (Emphatic stress and contrastive pitch on 'food' and 'water') My pen is RED not black. (Contrastive stress on 'red') If your result is good, I shall send you abroad (rising, falling) "Bring it back here", His mother shouted. (High fall, low level tag.)

The examples supplied above from two examination bodies, it discovered that statements of different sorts require the appropriate intonation for proper and accurate expressions of ideas and desires. Inappropriate applications of tone make the tool of expression inadequate and deficient and on the final notes, absurd and nonsensical.

The considerations of the examples above reveal among many other models of tone application, five basic ways of demonstrating the use of intonation in English language according to the yearly Grade Two certificate examinations as conducted by the National Teachers' Institute (NTI). These suggest that:

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1. Polar questions, that is, questions that are introduced with dummy auxiliary verbs (do, does and did), primary auxiliary verbs (has, have and had) and modal auxiliary verbs (will, would, can, could etc.) are realised with the rising tone as demonstrated in the examples labelled 1abcd . Wh-how questions (which are not included in the examples) are realised with falling tone.
2. When items are listed on a list, either of the tones could be applied but when rising tone is used, the last item receives falling tone.
3. Tone two is used to draw contrast and make emphasis.
4. When a subordinate adverbial clause introduces a statement within a complex sentence structure, such a subordinate adverbial clause is realised with rising tone while the succeeding main clause receives falling tone.
5. Emotional expressions of anger, order or command is initiated with a rising tone and ends with a falling tone (i.e. High Fall).

The foregoing illustrations suggest as viewed by Finnegan (2004) that some languages including English depends on syntactic structures such as active and passive voices etc. to convey pragmatic information. Therefore, it is quite obvious that different languages employ different strategies to encode pragmatic information. Carroll (2004) agrees with the idea of intonation being controlled by some structural linguistic considerations. According to him, intonation rises at the end of yes/no questions but not the same with wh-questions. This also aligns with the earlier examples supplied to demonstrate the use of intonation in English language.

Intonation exhibits the concept of pragmatics in human language. Holmes (2008) holds the belief that understanding the meaning of each word on the axis of chain that is the syntagmatic axis does not rule out the danger of ambiguity. Good understanding of the code of communication depends on the context of discuss. Situation affects the mood as reflected in the use of intonation. Holmes says that the following statement will be realized differently by a teacher and police officer:

I can hear someone talking.

One can imagine how a teacher in the classroom will realize this and a police officer who is given a statement in a criminal case.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are acute language diversities in Nigeria which create linguistics frictions. This kind of linguistic background of a typical Nigerian student therefore reflects different speech habits as a result of the multi lingual nature of the society. The results of students in their final WAEC and NECO examinations reveal woeful performance in the language as a school subject. English language remains the subject the students fail most in the school examinations. These problems might be caused as a result of linguistic interference. The negative linguistic interference affects communication competence of the users of the language at the speaking skill level. Deficiency in speaking skills has bad effect in the reading and writing of the language. For the Nigerians who use English as a second language to be mutually intelligible with other users of the language the world over, correct intonation of the language must be learnt.

The globally acceptable intonation norms of the language need to be learnt by Nigerians because most Nigerians local languages do not recognise the intonation structure of English language. The ignorance of the application of correct intonation pattern makes the users of English as second language sound queer, absurd and ridiculous. Students' consciousness of their deficiency in the use of the language really generates a kind of phobia, the problem which draws them away from using the language confidently in their daily communication.

4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study is a series of pedagogical survey of speaking skills in English language. It aims at locating points of linguistic variations between a local language and English as a language of wider-communication in Nigeria. The focus is on the use of intonation as an aspect of supra-

segmental features in English language. Different uses of tone one and tone two are investigated in order to practically identify the similarities and differences between the structures of local language (the language of identity L1) and English language (the language of unity L2). In order to enhance the growth of the language of instruction for a dynamic united language community in a heterogeneous language society like Nigeria, there is need to streamline the language approach and language teaching and learning models which must be consistent with the global model of it. This also must be constantly evaluated in order to build up mature users of the language in our language territory.

5. THE METHODOLOGY

The design of the research is descriptive of a survey type. The existing language norms were investigated through which relevant data were collected for analysis. This helped to evaluate the language habits of the respondents in order to suggest the appropriate pedagogical approach to the language teaching in our schools.

The population consisted all the students in the junior secondary school in Ekiti State with the figure of 108,870 students. The sample size for the study was 120 students selected through stratified random sampling. This was carefully selected to adequately represent the entire population. Ekiti State was divided into four zones and a sample of 30 items was taken from each zone.

The instrument used was achievement test. This was originally designed and produced by West African Examination Council (WAEC) for the senior certificate examinations. The National Teachers’ Institute (NTI) used the same pattern of instrument to discover the proficiency of teachers in training in the use of English language before awarding teachers’ Grade Two certificate.

The researcher personally administered the instrument on the respondents. It was a face - to - face exercise whereby the students read the different sentences presented to them and instant assessment was made according to the prepared scheme of Grading. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate the relationship among Ekiti dialect of Yoruba language while the t-test was used to determine the variations that exist between the Received Pronunciation model and the speakers of the language with Yoruba dialect background.

6. RESEARCH QUESTION

Will there be any difference between students’ dialectal backgrounds and their ability to use tone one and tone two correctly in English language?

7. HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant difference between students’ dialectal background and their abilities to use tone one and tone two correctly in English language.

8. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The hypothesis raised on the topic of consideration suggests that: There is no significant difference between students’ dialectal backgrounds and their abilities to use tone one and tone two correctly in English language.

Tab1. *Test on intonation*

Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD	t-value	DF	t-table	L/S
Ekiti dialects	120	1.7167	0.945	211.84	119	1.98	P<0.05
RP	120	20.000	0.000				

Decision: *Reject H0 There is significant difference*

According to the analysis above, it was established that there were significant differences at all levels between students with Ekiti dialectal background and the RP Model in the intonation manipulations in English language. This confirms the fact that there are no two human languages

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that embrace the same speech structures. The common cores notwithstanding, the unique linguistic peculiarity of a language creates a language boundary and a distinction for a speech community.

Table 2

Source	DF	sum of Sq	mean sq	F. ratio	F. table	L/S
Between the group	3	4.7000	1.5667	1.7875	2.68	P<0.05
With the group	116	101.6667	0.8764			
Total	119	106.3667				

Decision: *There is no significant difference among the groups*

The results of yearly tests conducted by NTI reveal that, Nigerian students, especially in the south-west, use falling tone in most cases where rising tone is required. For this reason, most candidates in the examinations realise the statements that involve listing of items correctly (check item two in the examples cited earlier). Polar questions are realised with falling tone instead of rising tone and the tone is flat where contrast is expected to be drawn. Falling tone is often used to realise adverbial clause that introduces a complex sentence where rising tone is required. This breaks the accepted standard rhythm and betrays the expected mood of the speaker.

The previously acquired linguistic tools cannot be disrecognized as this has greater influence on the learning of the second or first language. Most often than not in Yoruba language, flat tone characterizes the speech habits of the speakers. No tone is assigned to the different sentence forms (declarative, imperative, interrogative, subjunctive and infinitive). Mood of aggression manifests not in pitch but in loudness (volume of voice becoming more vibrating). This linguistic features control the language behaviour of a Yoruba person who learns English as a second language.

9. CONCLUSION

As a result of this research, it is observed that the poor performance of student may be due to poor treatment given to the pragmatics. It is quite evident that language cannot be taught in abstraction. A level of speaker's understanding of a language can only be measured through the performance. The first bus top of performance is located in the speaking skills. It was discovered that students who responded to the test administered in the course of the work were grossly deficient in the speaking skills. In oral composition, some had good and brilliant ideas but they lacked the ability to articulate them. The communicative competence was far below average.

The students failed to apply the correct intonation because the use of intonation in Yoruba language does not follow a rigid pattern or convention like that of English. The tone in most cases in flat. The expressions of mood as occurred in different situations and contents may largely depend on volume (loudness) of voice not the pitch of it as obtainable in English language.

10. RECOMMENDATION

Though language substances are natural, the infinite variations cannot be denied. The pragmatic nature of human language calls for practical approach to its teaching. If language is natural, then it must be nurtured. Natural phenomenon requires nurture---cultivation and care .Therefore a serious attention must be given to the productive skills in language pedagogy. Receptive skills of listening and reading may be the bye-products of the speaking and writing skills (although this may be subject to debate and argument). The structural parts of speaking skills must be made explicit. The segmental – the concept of sound system as treated in consonants and vowels must be emphasized. Different characteristics of each family of sounds and their contrastive analysis must be identified. Stress components and 'intonational' structures must be given attention including the para-linguistic advances. All these must be made practical in all their pedagogical considerations.

In language acquisition process, it is the available models to the child that controls his ability to use the language in the ways that conform with the acceptable language norms in the society. Therefore, good models are required for the learners to imitate and form acceptable language

habits that will make him relevant to his language community. This is a challenge to teachers who appears before the students. Poor precepts and poor language performance may be contagious. The ultimate results are failure in the use of the language. The consequence of this may be grave considering the utility value of English language in any Nigeria. Government must encourage the teachers by making available necessary learning tools especially those that cannot be improvised. A well-equipped language laboratory will make the teaching of speaking skills exciting and a result oriented adventure.

One major error in our schools today is the idea that correct impeccable language delivery belongs to the language teachers. All qualified teachers employed to teach in our schools should have the command of the language. In as much as the language is used to teach their various subjects, they are expected to use it well. If they fail to do this, language teachers may be frustrated. The linguistic standard the language teacher builds will be pull down by other colleagues who use the language to teach the same sets of students in a perverted form. There should be a form of legislation that anyone who desires to take up teaching as a job must pass practical oral English at credit level as oral English is recommended to be taken as separate subject at all levels which will be made compulsory for all students.

The positive development in the field of information communication technology must be used to enhance better language teaching at all levels. All teaching helps and teaching accessories that can promote practical language activity in the classroom must be made available and utilized appropriately. Radio, tape recorder, slides etc. can be used to realize the goals of language teaching in our schools

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