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PATTERNS OF **INTONATION** AMONG NIGERIAN SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH: A SURVEY OF SELECTED GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

This article shows the use of international patterns when Nigerians speaks English. A total number of 30 samples were given a were given a written text to read and after this, each subject spoken the topic "The cost living in Nigeria." These were recorded and each of the recordings was subjected to an auditory anal s. To make the experiment reliable, it was subjected to a statistical analysis.

It w discovered that Nigerians make use of stress patterns though not like the native speakers, secondly, Nige n speakers of English speak it with a Nigerian rhythmic pattern which is peculiar to Nigerians.

INTRODUCTION

The English language is used in several countries either as a native language, a second language or a foreign language. As with other languages it is the spoken form which is most utilized. Because English is used in all the continents of the world and in a most every country to perform one function or the other, it has become an international language.

The English language was introduced into many countries through colonisation. Countries as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, India and Sri Lanka use it as a means of communication intra nationally, as well as internationally, In these geographical entities, the English language acts as the medium of instruction in schools, from the primary schools level up to the tertiary level.

Nigeria as nation has many indigenous languages whose total has been put at about hundred and ninety-four (Hansford et al, 1976). The truth is established that the English language has come to exist within this plurality of languages. Therefore, the English language has had to adapt itself to the language situation because the language are bound to have some effect on the kind of english being spoken in Nigeria.

Recently, the Nigerian Government has classified Nigerian languages into two categories viz: the major languages group which comprise Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The minor language group consists of languages like Efik, Igala, Tiv, Kanuri, Nupe, Edo, among other. The major languages are recognized as official language alongside the English language for use at the national level (Nigerian constitution, 1979, Chp. v, section 52). At the state level, the mother tongues or the languages of the immediate environment were also accorded recognition. These languages can be used by the media, in the state House of Assembly in each of the States. The awareness of the importance of Nigerian languages resulted in the establishment of language policy as an appendage to the educational policy in Nigeria. This policy states that within the first three years of primary education, the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate environment should be used as the medium of instruction while English would be used thereafter. In addition, one of the three major languages (Viz: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) is o be taught at the secondary school level in States where these languages are not mother tongues (National Policy on Education (NP), 1981, section 4:19, Subpara. 4).

The English language plays a significant role in Nigeria in that it is a basic requirement for all educational endeavours and for employments. It performs a major role in inter-ethic communication which is rather emphasized in the area of social communication at the national and international level. The English language is significant because of its use in several domains, namely government, the church, the market, home , school, etc.

English is important in Nigeria since it introduced the concept of certificate, for instance, a knowledge of English meant the acquisition of an educational proficiency certificate, Brosnahan (1958-99) notes that the knowledge of English "acts as the passport to the possibilities of white collar employment." In today's Nigeria, a credit pass in English is one of the criteria for admission into the university. In Nigeria's political arena, anyone who aspires to go into governance or government must obtain at least the West African School Certificate (WASC/WAEC) or what is now known as the Senior School certificate (SSC) to which English is central.

Since the official recognition of English as a medium of instruction in education, the emphasis has been "on the correct use of the language, both spoken and written." In spite of its history in Nigeria, the spoken from it does not exhibit characteristics that get close to native speakers performance and competence among so many Nigerian speakers (Banjo, 1971). That is to say, the spoken aspect of English has not shown any remarkable improvement in terms of pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation. Premised on the above, there are doubts whether the spoken from of English here is acceptable and intelligible to he native speakers and non-native speakers of English throughout the world.

The problem of speaking what is intelligible to speakers all over the world has been subject of research for quite sometime. Researchers such as: Banjo (1976); Ekong (1987) have investigated the spoken form of Nigerian English. In addition, Adetugbo (1987) asks whether in fact, there is any standard spoken English in Nigeria. A lot of work has been done on the segmental components of spoken Nigerian English. From some of the works done on the prosodic features (Tiffen, 1974; Jrbril, 1982; Eka, 1985; Mankinde, 1985, etc), it has been discovered that the non-segments pose a lot of problems for Nigerian speakers of English. Ayodele (1983: 106) affirms as follows:

> *The major problems are in the areas of stress and intonation. Most of the individual words are correctly stressed, but in full utterances, there are occasional confusions. The speakers can now use stresses for effect, e.g, for emphasis, but he might occasionally have problems using the correct intonations for the desired modes, e.g for doubt, surprise anxiety, etc.*

In addition, Banjo (199:12) agrees with other linguist like Adetugbo (1987), Makinde (1985), that in English phonology, the appropriate use of English stress and intonation is the final hurdle which the vast majority of speakers of English as a second language never manage to cross...

These quotations succinctly emphasize the problem Nigerian speakers of English encounter is spoken English. For instance, to portray intonation, the speakers, due to incorrect intonation, fail to produce the appropriate emotions for each utterance. Most educated Nigerians speak the English language with misplacement of the prosopic elements. An analytic study of intonation and other prosodic elements in the English o Nigerian speakers is therefore considered worthwhile in order to show the recurring characteristics of the specific problems and prospects associated with them.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What stress patterns are shown by speakers of Nigerian English?

2. What are the types of intonation patterns used by them?

3. How well do Nigerian speakers use intonation tunes to show their attitudes (emotions)

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section gives an overview of the method by which the investigation was carried out.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population for this study comprised the students and staff of the University of Ibadan, during the 1995/96 academic session. they were selected by use or **randomization by balloting in six states of the federation.** The six states represents **each of the linguistic groups under study.**

STUDY SAMPLE

The study sample consisted of 30 subjects comprising undergraduates, graduate students, lecturers and administrative staff of the University of Ibadan. The ages ranged from 20 to 56 years, with a mean age of 38 years. The subjects were randomly drawn from the faculties of Agriculture, Arts, Education, Medicine, Science, Social Science, Technology and the student Affairs offices. There were 14 females and 16 males.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT AND DESIGN

Reading texts and short spontaneous speeches recorded on a tape recorder served as the research instruments. The reading texts were designed ad guided by related literature (Gimson 1975, 1980) to test intonation. Each subjects was required to discuss briefly "The cost of living in Nigeria". Following guidelines laidout by **Seilers (1988), the discussion was used also to test the** intonational performance and **competence of the subjects.**

PROCEDURE

The instrument was administered by the writer in the phonetics laboratory of the University of Ibadan. Each of the subjects was given prepared texts to read aloud after which he/she spoke spontaneously on the topic "The cost of living in Nigeria".

THE AUDITORY ANALYSIS

The type of analysis used was through listening. Based on the performance of two native speakers - a female and a male, the following findings were established. An assessment rating was worked out for the listening process and the total number of marks for scoring was 190 marks. Using the data collected, the auditory analysis was

applied and the results suggest how stress and intonation tunes are employed by Nigerian speakers of English. The following tables illustrate some of the patterns that have emerged through the sue of statistical evidence to substantiate the statements.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

What stress patterns are shown by speakers of Nigerian English?

TABLE 1:   STRESS PLACEMENT

LANGUAGE GROUP	NORMAL STRESS PLACEMENT	
	SCORE %	POSITION
Edo	17	2nd
Hausa	19	1st
Ibibio	17	2nd
Igbo	15	6th
Tiv	16	4th
Yoruba	16	4th
TOTAL	100	

Normal stress placement by subjects was examined under five categories: Noun stress, verb stress, Noun phrase stress, compound stress and shifting stress. The result shows that all the respondents stress all the item under noun stress correctly. Secondly. 9% of the verbs were correctly stressed while only 67% of items under noun-phrase received the correct stress. For compound stress, 63% were appropriately stressed but only 13% of the items were correctly stressed in the case of shifting stress.

A further comparative analysis of this feature by all the representations of the language groups (see table 1) reveals the following: the Hausa language group with 19% has the highest percentage of correctly stressed items followed by the Edo and Ibibio language groups, each of which has 17%. The fourth position is taken by the Yoruba and Tiv language groups, each of which has 16%. The Igbo language group came last with a score of 15%.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What are the types of intonation patterns used by Nigerian speakers of English?

In order to answer this research question texts II and III were used. The intonation tunes expected to be used are four: fall; rise; rise - fall; and fall-rise. These texts contains several examples of each of these patterns in varying number. There are 33 opportunities for falling, 9 for rising, 4 for rise-fall, and 2 for fall-rise tunes. That is 69% of the falling tune, 19% of the rising tune whereas the rise-fall and fall-rise have 8% and 4% respectively.

TABLE II: INTONATION TUNES

TUNES	% AVAILABLE	% USED
Falling	69	75
Rising	19	17
Rise-fall	8	5
Fall-rise	4	3
TOTAL	100	100

From the samples analysed the subjects predominantly made us of the falling tune. It was observed that even in place of other tunes, especially the rising tune, the falling tune is often used.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How well do Nigerian speakers use intonational tunes to show their attitudes (emotions)?

TEXT III of our research instrument has twelve items which request the subjects to use intonation to show their emotions. The attitudes and the tunes expected to be used are given in table III. The table also provides the percentage of the population that used the appropriate tune to show the mood.

TABLE III: INTERNATIONAL TUNES AND ATTITUDES

ITEM	TYPE OF ATTITUDE	RIGHT-TUNE	CORRECT NUMBER	% OF POPULATION
1.	Surprise	Fall	30	100
2.	Excitement	Rise-fall	15	50
3.	Obligation	Fall	30	100
4.	Courtesy	Fall	30	100
5.	Defensive	Fall	25	83
6.	Regret	Fall	30	100
7.	Anxiety	Fall	30	100
8.	Enthusiasm	Fall-rise	24	80
9.	Command	Fall	30	100
10.	Emphasis	Fall	25	83
11.	Polite request	Rise	15	50
12	Request	Fall/Rise	30	100

The table above shows that all the subjects used the correct tune to show the attitudes of courtesy, anxiety, command, request, regret, surprise and obligation. 83% of them used the right tune which marks the attitudes of defence and emphasis while 80% identify the mood of enthusiasm with the correct tune. However, only 50% demonstrate the emotion of excitement rightly (with the correct tune) and another 50% of them make use of the proper tune for polite request.

This analysis becomes better substantiated when we observe the total number of readings made by the subjects on Text III.

The percentage of the rightly made readings are affirmed in table iv.

TABLE IV: PERCENTAGE OF CURRENT READING

	No.	%
Right readings	291	80.83
Wrong readings	69	19.17
TOTAL	360	100

A look at the table above proves that 80.83% of the reading produced for the different attitudes displayed the correct intonations.

Furthermore, in examining each spontaneous speech, the following areas constituted the principles viz: Accuracy, Appropriacy, Capability, Speed and Competence.

The scores were assigned as shown below:

1.   Accuracy:

5   -   very accurate
4   -   accurate
3   -   average
2   -   below average
1   -   not accurate

2.   Appropriacy:

5   -   very appropriate
4   appropriate
3   -   average
2   -   below average
1   -   not appropriate

3.   Capability:

5   -   very capable
4   capable
3   -   average
2   below average

4. Speed - words per minute (WPM)

110	-	100	-	very fast	- 5
90	-	99	-	fast	- 4
80	-	89	-	normal - 3	-
70	-	79	-	slow	- 2
60	-	69	-	very slow	- 1

5. Competence:

25	-	20	very competent
15	-	19	competent
10	-	14	fairly competent
5	-	9	incompetent
0	-	4	very incompetent

These standard were applied in analysing the spontaneous speech auditory. In order to accept out findings, four assessors from the faculties of Arts and Education were asked to listen to the tape recordings and assess the use of intonation patterns of the six linguistic groups used in this research. The overall score given by the assessors is reflected in table V below; each speaker represents a language group.

TABLE V: ASSESSOR'S SCORES

SPEA-KERS	ASSESS. 1	ASSESS. 2	ASSESS. 3	ASSESS. 4	TOTAL	MEAN SCORE	POSI-TION
20	187 1st	169 1st	175 2nd	74 6th	605	151	1st
30	181 2nd	162 2nd	158 5th	92 2nd	593	148	2nd
28	168 3rd	150 5th	176 1st	92 2nd	586	147	3rd
7	147 6th	155 3rd	164 3rd	98 1st	564	141	4th
27	148 5th	155 3rd	164 3rd	86 4th	5533	138	5th
4	155 4th	140 6th	156 6th	82 5th	533	133	6th

This table represents a numerical summary of the ratings of four independent assessors who listened to the six language groups that constitute out sample. To make ratings easy, numbers were assigned to each language group. The ratings of all the four assessors were added and the mean score were found for each group.

We used the mean score in order to resolve the discrepancy among the independent assessors' scores. The mean score therefore, represents the rating of all the assessors. The findings show that the Yoruba language group represented by (speaker 20) has the higher score followed by the Hausa language group (speaker 30). The third is Igbo (speaker 28). The fourth - Ibibio (speaker 7) while Tiv (speaker 27) and the Edo language group (speaker 4) came fifth and sixth respectively.

CONCLUSION

This research has illustrated the language situation in Nigeria with some indigenous languages competing with English for the first position. However, English still maintains its dominant position since it is the language of administration, education and legal activities, therefore, there is the need for Nigerians to have a good command of spoken English.

From the analysis carried out, the intonation patterns of spoken English in Nigeria is influenced by their mother tongue. For instance, it is shown that the samples made use of a lot of falling tunes in their utterances even when other types of tunes were required. Secondly, every syllable is stressed as shown in the spontaneous speeches because of the influence of the mother tongue where very syllable is given prominence. The Nigerian speakers speaks English with an even stress and rhythm as if a metronome were very rapidly ticking off each syllable. From these observations, there is remarkable degrees of homogeneity in the intonation of Nigerian speakers of English.

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