



A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Ondo Dialectal Influence on English Pronunciation of Selected Indigenes in Communicative Situations

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Abstract

This article focuses on the phonological problems of Yoruba speakers of English as a second language. It results from the concern that there have been hindrances to the free flow of communication between the Ondo speakers of English and people from the other parts of the country bringing about communication controversy among them. The data was gathered with the usage of questionnaire and interview which is recorded on phone and analysed qualitatively based on Chomsky and Halle's (1968) Generative theory. It was discovered that the Ondo native speakers of English use sounds, stress, syllable, tone and rhythm of their mother tongue in place of those of the target language. Also, they suffer from direct transfer of some items in their mother tongue into what they say in English. In addition, people easily know where they come from through the intonation they use whenever they speak and it could be embarrassing. In conclusion, the study proffered solutions that would enhance better communication and easy learning of the English language by them, looking at the systems of the Ondo dialect in terms of increasing knowledge of the phonological problems which will influence further research in its relationship with English language.

Keywords: Communication, Interference, Intonation, Mother tongue, Second language.

1. Introduction

The complex nature of our society today has made man more socially and technologically sophisticated and as a result, more communication problems tend to emerge in language as a complex structure and this has drawn many people, even from various disciplines, into the area of linguistic research. It is also a linguistic fact that no two languages are exactly the same. It follows therefore that even when the two languages belong to the same group, there are noticeable differences in their phonological patterns. That is, rhythm, intonation, syllable-timing and stress-timing of the languages. This brings us to the problem of transfer of what is already known in one language into target language. This implies a process of carrying over and applying to one situation the knowledge and skills in another. Therefore, it is possible, that Yoruba native speakers of English language have to reckon with problems caused by the differences between the phonological system of Yoruba language and that of English. This is the case with the Yoruba language and English language. As a result of the language family, there would be many differences and hence, many problems for a Yoruba native speaker of English as a second language.

Most experts of English in Nigeria are aware of the fact that anyone who takes English as a second language has the tendency to use the sound, stress, syllable, tone and rhythm of his mother tongue in place of those of the target language. It is no gainsaying that attempt to formally analyse the structure of Yoruba language against that of the English language in the past, to bring out such difficulties encountered by Yoruba native speakers in such a way that the experts of English in Nigeria may have a better understanding of why Yoruba native speakers have such problems has not been widely known. Nigeria is a multilingual state with more than 400 languages spoken by the natives. Out of these numerous languages, Ondo has become recognized as a major one spoken in two local government areas in Ondo state. Such Local Government Areas are Ondo West and Ondo East Local Government Areas. However, English language enviably functions as a second language in Ondo state and seems to have quietly displaced or replaced the indigenous language. This has occurred with its attendant problems. Banjo (1996:74-75) asserts that in examining the nature of the use of English in Nigeria, it would be useful to continue to maintain the distinction between written English and spoken English. Many of the features of written English in Nigeria are of course, to be found in spoken English as well, but spoken English has its own peculiarities relating to phonological features. In line with this, the researcher in this study is particularly interested in the influence of the mother tongue as a problem while speaking English as a second language to Yoruba (Ondo) language native speakers.

This research is set to identify the problems of transfer and interference of intonation, stress, rhythm and pitch of the voice of an Ondo native speaker of English language. The study hopes to suggest solutions to this problem

of supra-segmental among the Ondo native speakers of English language, taking a look at transfer and interference as a contributing factor and considering the importance of English in the society today. English cuts across all the regions in the country. Likewise, it is the medium through which one speaks to people of another ethnic group. This research is set to identify the problems of transfer and interference of intonation, stress, rhythm and pitch of the voice of an Ondo native speaker of English language. The study hopes to suggest solutions to this problem of supra-segmental among the Ondo native speakers of English language, taking a look at transfer and interference as a contributing factor and considering the importance of English in the society today. English cuts across all the regions in the country. Likewise, it is the medium through which one speaks to people of another ethnic group.

The English language in Nigeria has assumed a status that has made it unarguably a veritable tool for a rapid development of the nation. It is by necessity as it is the only present solution to the problems of multilingualism in Nigeria. It is by the law, because the Federal Government has enacted a law adopting English language not only as a second language, but also as the official language of the nation. However, if someone does not make appropriate use of intonation in specific context, such a person will be misunderstood. According to Dairo (2006), tone, in tone languages is phonemic; that is, it is significant for meaning. This explains why utterances in a tone language like Yoruba, for instance, variation in pitch level on the only sound segment produces different words as shown below:

Ló	-	Transplant	-	acute (high)
Lọ	-	Go	-	mid (level)
Lò	-	Grind	-	low (grave)

Meanwhile, in English language, a word may be said in different ways, it still remains the same word. For example:

Go	-	(high)
Go	-	(mid)
Go	-	(low)

It must therefore be noted that the syllable is the domain of stress and tone and each of them is a feature of the syllable. No human being speaks in a monotone, hence there are variations in voice pitch. Stress or tone therefore is the pitch of the voice with which a syllable is said. The voice pitch could be ‘high’, ‘mid’, or ‘low’.

The research focuses on an ethnic group called ‘Ondo’ in Ondo metropolis of Ondo state. Two sets of people were interviewed. That is, people of different classes in the community such as; students and civil servants. However, since the Ondo dialect is being spoken by the indigenes of Ondo town, it is chosen as a model for the study. This research also assumed that the prominence (stress), intonation, rhythm, syllable and tone in whatever an Ondo native speaker of English language says is greatly influenced by the mother tongue and hardly can it be controlled. Also, that they are not conscious of the functions and importance of all the supra-segmental features while speaking. To further investigate this problem, the following hypotheses were made by the researcher:

1. The spoken English of civil servants in Ondo is greatly influenced by their local dialects.
2. The students write the way they speak English with influence of the local dialect.
3. There are significant cases of influence of local dialect on the spoken English of civil servants in Ondo.
4. The spoken English of students in Ondo carries much of the dialectical tone of their immediate environment.
5. The phonetics and phonology learnt by students in school reflects Ondo dialect in their speech and written works.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Nature of the English Language

Akindele and Adegbite (1999) say that Language is characterised by a set of vocal sounds which can be decoded. These are produced by the human organs of speech – lips, tongue, larynx, etc. The vocal sounds produced by the vocal organs are used in various systematic and rule-governed combinations. Language is thus a human phenomenon that has form which can be described in terms of the units of sound (phonemes), words, morphemes, phrases, sentences and paragraphs or discourse. The spread of English as an international language across the globe has continued over the centuries, leaving more varieties in its path. Like all languages of the world, English has continued to evolve and change with time, resulting in variations as used by different sets of people. For example, the medieval English is quite different from the one we speak and write today.

The English language is non-native to Africa and it originated from Britain as a result of the Anglo-Saxon invasion of the 15th century. Since then, ‘the speech community or speech fellowship of English language has continued to expand. It was initially England, later it became Great Britain (Akindele and Adegbite, 1999:57). The roles of English in Nigeria as a medium of communication include political activities, social and academic guidance from historical perspective and the duration of gradual transition to the present status of bilingualism and its democratization of languages in conformity with national unification. According to Banjo (1996), the English Language has become the most important language in the world today, and a substantial number of persons around the world speak English as a second language, and the fate of the language in such situation has also been the object of study during the last quarter of a century.

2.2. Suprasegmental Phonology Concept

Suprasegmental components of phonology as observed, cannot be broken up into discrete units of sounds like consonant and vowel. They function within larger units of utterances. The basis of operation for the suprasegmental features is the syllable many of which will combine to make up utterances.

Stress and intonation are also features under suprasegmental phonology. While stress is simply the energy or force with which sound is uttered, as will be discussed fully in this section, intonation is associated with the

constantly changing pitch of the human voice, in speech making. The pitch of the voice is usually described in terms of high and low (Dairo, 2006).

According to Elugbe (2000:171), intonation has to do with the use of pitch of the voice. That is to say, pitch is determined by the rate at which our vocal cords are vibrating. The experts can identify other psychological movements with the glottis to determine pitch. For the general users of English language, it is enough to confirm the role of the vibrating glottis in pitch. Unlike our languages, English does not make lexical use of pitch to change the meaning of individual words, rather, it employs pitch over the whole utterance. In this respect, we define an utterance as a stretch of speech preceded by silence or a pause. We should also consider pitch in terms of high and low, so that we create a range within which we study pitch. Osisanwo (2012) opines that several scholars have observed a marked difference in the prosody of suprasegmentals of SBE (Standard British English) and NE (Nigerian English). This has mostly been observed at the level of stress assignment, rhythm, among others.

2.3. Why is Suprasegmental Phonology a Problem

Suprasegmental phonology is a problem because of its technicality when a native speaker of English speaks, the mother tongue usually interfere with the English language, thereby bringing about linguistic interference. According to Adegbite et al. (1999:39), interference phenomena refers to those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occurs in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language. In other words, interference is a term which refers to a situation whereby two different languages overlap. In such a situation, the linguistic system of one of the languages is transferred into the other in the process of producing the latter which is the second or target language.

For instance, English and Yoruba can be regarded as two different languages that overlap. In an attempt by a Yoruba-English bilingual to speak the English language, the systems of the Yoruba language (phonology) are transferred into those of English. In interference, one of the two or more languages in use in a speech community is dominant. The features of the dominant language are transferred to the subordinate or target languages at the phonological level.

Phonic interference means the transfer of the rules and principles guiding the production of speech sound in the native language to the sound system of English language. This phenomenon can be realised at the phoneme, stress and intonation levels.

In English, the term, 'stress' is used in reference to the degree of prominence of individual syllables or single words (lexical stress). But every word is actually stressed when it occurs in a sentence: some lexical stresses are picked out of sentential stress- perhaps better called 'accent'.

2.4. Relationship between English and Nigerian Languages

The English language is non-native to Africa. Its incursion into West Africa was thus a momentous historical incident which has exerted tremendous influences on relations as well as the linguistic situation in the region. English has adapted to the social, literary, economic and political situations in Nigeria and it has become a part of the linguistic repertoire of Nigerians (Grieve, 1969). It is an alien language which thrives in a foreign linguistic and cultural environment in Nigeria; it remains a second language which is learnt as sequentially second by Nigerians who already possess their own mother tongue (L1). It is generally accepted by linguistics that in multi-lingual and second language situations, issues of language contact and interference are very common, since different languages have different features and ways.

Many Nigerian communities were already bilingual or multilingual in many local tongues before the incursion of English. It only helped to compound the linguistic situation a step further. Akindele et al. (2005), believe that the linguistic behaviour of members of Nigerian language/speech community is never that of absolute uniformity. Each dialect is set off from others in language by a complex set of features of pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary.

Nigerian speakers of English, dilute the English with their mother tongue, a very common occurrence among the better educated classes. Such a language contact situation results in interference between the mother tongue and English language. Such interference is obvious in lexical borrowings and in the mixture of English and vernacular expressions in speech. What happens is that patterns of the local languages, that is, the phonological, grammatical and the lexical patterns tend to be transferred into English language.

2.5. Yoruba Language System

According to Owolabi (1985:30) before the arrival of the British people, there was no way of learning how to read and write. All the primitive words that are written down now have been before. Such words are seen in songs, chants, and the history of the Yoruba forefathers. History shows that it was formerly believed that all the Yoruba tribes are from Oyo. When the Missionaries that came to preach the gospel of Christ discovered that the Yoruba tribe has a unified language, they named them Yoruba or *Yoòbá*. Some Yorubas that were colonised in Britain were returned back to Saro in Nigeria to oversee the affairs of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) were the first set of Christians. So, they returned home so as for them to preach and translate the bible for the people to have understanding of it. So, it was then compulsory for the reading and writing of Yoruba language to start. They decided and agreed to choose Bishop Ajayi Crowder who was among the freed slave to coordinate how Christianity will be established in Yoruba land. The 9th of January, 1844, was the day Bishop Ajayi Crowder first preached in Yoruba language and he later translated English language bible to Yoruba language. Though, several sojourners attempted it but they could not.

The composite formula for the Yoruba syllable structure can be expressed as (C) V (C) V and it is deduced from this composite formula that:

- a. All syllables end in vowels
- b. No two consonants are articulated consecutively
- c. It is possible to generate four permutations from the composite structure of the Yoruba syllable such as:
V-V - CV àánú = à+á+nú - sympathy
V- CV etí = e+tí - ear
CV- V díè = dí+è - few
CV-CV bàtà = bà+tà - shoe

All the Yoruba syllables are given equal prominence, e.g. À+BÁ+NI+KÁN+DÁ, A+DÉ+WÁ+LÉ, etc. Also, it is easy to determine syllable boundary in Yoruba Language since each syllable must contain a peak. For example; O+LÓ+DÙ+MA+RÈ, À+KÀN+DÉ, O+LÓ+RUN+KÒ+SE+BI, etc.

The paper intends to achieve that feat with the hope that after the other two major morphological processes in Yoruba, namely reduplication and compounding, must have been similarly described, immensely useful information would be available for the purpose of determining and formulating the best (contemporary) theory of word structure for the Yoruba language.

It has been noted that there are similarities in the place of articulation, manner of articulation and the state of the glottis in both English and Yoruba languages. Thus, Yoruba consonant chart is drawn below:

Table 1. English and Yoruba languages.

	Bilabial	Labio Dental	Alveola r	Palato Alveola r	Palatal	Velar	Labial Velar	Glottal
PLOSIVE	b p		t d			k g	p gb	
Fricative		f v	ʃ	s				h
Affricate				j				
Nasal	m		n					
Trill/Tap			r					
Lateral			l					
Approximant	w				y			

Source: Bamgbose (1990: 12)

2.6. Empirical Review

After the foregoing theoretical review, it seems reasonable to evaluate or review some earlier statements made by researchers of their attempt in capturing the facts of the problems of suprasegmental phonology among the Yoruba native speakers of English language.

Akindele et al. (2005), opine that interference of the L1 in English usage in West Africa occurs mainly at the level of phonology, as we do not always have one-to-one correspondence of sequential and supra-segmental features of English and the indigenous West African languages.

Osisanwo (2009:14) says that it could be deduced that every language has sound system. The sounds in this system are not without their properties and it becomes willy-nilly for every speaker to learn, master and internalize them to communicate better. He says it could be deduced that the term ‘phonology’ functionally make do with the abstract side of the sounds of a particular language. It deals with sound patterning and structuring.

Banjo (1996:112) says that in informal speech, and particularly among young speakers, it is fashionable to borrow certain sentence-markers from the indigenous languages into English. Three of such markers, borrowed from Yoruba are *se*, *abi*, and *sa*.

For example:

- i. Šé you are ready?
 You are ready? (Are you ready?)
- ii. You are ready àbí?
 (You are ready, aren’t you?)

Furthermore, countries in a hurry to develop their languages may find the French model more attractive than the English one, for the natural process may take an unconscionably long time. This is the rationale for the various metalanguage projects in Nigeria to cut down on unnecessary proliferations and channel the efforts to develop the vocabularies of the indigenous languages. But in the end, lexicography describes rather than legislates, and its only normative role consists in often categorizing items in terms of sociolects, distinguishing between formal, informal, slang and vulgar usage.

Adenuga (2006), also holds that the stress patterns of English words creates problems for Nigerian learners, especially where these stresses affect meanings like noun/verb forms of certain words. He further finds out that the student’s ‘first language’ has a lot to do with their learning of English language. He argues that the tendency is to transfer positive or negative with the features enhancing or inhibiting learning respectively. As Yoruba speakers relate the vocabulary and grammar, so it is applicable in the area of sound segments, intensity or loudness, pitch, stress, tone or (tune), intonation, foot, rhythm, syllable and syllabic structure.

2.7. Theoretical Framework

In this section, the researcher reviewed the concept of the Supra-segmental as an aspect of phonological concept, its origin, types and extent as well as its consequences. The framework of this study is based on Chomsky and Halle’s (1968) Generative theory, that is, the position that the Ondo native speaker of English finds it difficult to speak without the interference of the mother tongue in the area of intonation, syllable, stress, pitch, tone,

rhythm, foot, etc. It is a case where the linguistic system of one language is transferred into the other in the process of producing the latter which is the second or target language (Akindele et.al., 2005). In an attempt by an Ondo English bilingual to speak or learn the English Language, the systems of Yoruba language: intonation, syllable, stress pitch, tone, rhythm, foot manifest in their speech performance.

The aims and objectives of learning English in ESL countries, according to Olagoke (1985), should be to acquire almost the same degree of competence and proficiency in the use of English, though this is hardly attainable. Since the focus of this study is on identifying areas of difficulties, (if at all they exist), encountered by Ondo learners of English as a second language, the study therefore aims at improving the communicative competence of Ondo speakers of English via utilising their perceived hindrance of mother tongue interference positively to acquire necessary skill in the English language.

Olagoke (1985), observes that contrastive and error analysis and inter-language have implications for teaching of English as a second language, since each of them is concerned with the attempt to understand and explain the nature of the learner’s performance in the second language and account for why they speak and write the way they do. Therefore, the following framework is essential to this study:

- a. That in learning a second language, the primary cause of difficulty and error is interference or transfer or features from the learner’s mother tongue to the language that is being learnt.
- b. That where there are similarities between the first language and the target language, learning will not present problem as their will be facilitation or “positive” transfer but where there are differences, learning will be difficult or impeded for the Ondo native speaker in his/her performance.
- c. That they should be conscious of the intonation, stress, syllable, foot, tone, etc that are involved in the speech they make.

By and large, it behoves on the teachers of English language to ensure that their students are well taught, not only the basic structural rules of the language, but also, the use of sentences in performance, the act of communication appropriately in different social situations. It becomes obvious that Ondo native speaker as a learner of English as a second language should endeavour to learn the phonetics and phonology of the language on its own. Hence, having the correct pronunciation of sounds, using the right tone and putting stress on the right syllable.

3. Methodology

The population of the study is stated with the sample area and subject definition. Also, the method used for data collection and analysis to ascertain the suprasegmental problems encountered by the indigenes of some parts of Ondo State who are speakers of English as a second language is also discussed. The research design adopted is the case- study research design. This type of descriptive research is purposely chosen because of the nature of the study and the limitation of the researcher. The population consists of indigenous civil servants and students from Ondo township in Ondo State. To elicit the needed information, questionnaire and interview were used. Copies of the questionnaire with questions grouped into three Sections A, B and C were given to the civil servants and students to fill while oral interview was conducted with five (5) people representing each field.

Section A of the questionnaire asked for information on the Bio-Data of the respondents. Section B contains 20 items of questions requesting for response on suprasegmental problems faced by them while using English as a second language to which the respondents could respond by marking ‘x’ in the given bracket that tallies with their choice of response to the given question. The options provided were ‘Agree’ or ‘Disagree’. Section c is the section where each respondent is required to make his or her personal comments and suggestions on problems encountered in his/her use of English as a second language and suggest ways of checking the problems.

Also, five (5) people representing each of the groups were interviewed, asking for their opinions about the subject matter. This is to elicit verbal responses from the research subject directly for the purpose of recording the intonation, rhythm and stress in the speech of the respondents through a phone recorder. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire on respondents in the selected Areas. The questionnaire copies were filled and collected back the same day while interviews were conducted on the following day. So, two hundred (200) respondents were involved for each of the research instruments one hundred and ninety five (195) filled the questionnaire copies while five (5) respondent verbally.

The respondents’ bio data were analysed using simple percentage. This was determined by dividing the frequency of each category in the table by the total number of frequency and then multiplying the answer by one hundred (100).

4. Analysis and Findings

One hundred and ninety five (195) questionnaires were distributed and five interviews were conducted; one hundred and eighty five (185) questionnaires were properly filled and retrieved back from respondent. Ten questionnaires were discarded by the researcher as a result of incomplete filling. This however gave a response rate of 98%.

4.1. Background Information of Respondents

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

Age group	Frequency	Percentage %
14 – 25 years	35	17.5%
26 – 30 years	43	21.5%
31 – 35 years	51	25.5%
36 year and above	71	35.5%
Total	200	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

The table above presents the distribution of respondents by age group. According to result of analysis, 35 respondents are between 14 years old and 25 years of age, 43 respondents are between 26 and 30 years, 51 respondents are between 31 and 35 years and 71 respondents are 36 years and above. The percentages were 17.5%, 21.5%, 25.5% and 35.5% respectively.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Gender		
Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	80	40%
Female	120	60%
Total	200	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents by gender. According to result of analysis, 80 respondents are male while 120 respondents are female. The percentages were 40% and 60% respectively. Respondents showed mixed responses to languages they speak. That is, parents and children speak the combination of the languages under study, that is, English, Yoruba, Ondo Dialect with a few parents. For instance, respondents interviewed, indicated that they do speak English but speak English with Ondo intonation reflecting in their speeches.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents’ Occupation		
Occupation	Frequency	Percentage %
Civil Servant	120	60%
Student	80	40%
Total	200	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents by occupation. According to result of analysis, 120 respondents are civil servants while 80 respondents are students. The percentages were 60% and 40% respectively.

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents by students’ type of School		
Type of School	Frequency	Percentage %
Public	48	60%
Private	32	40%
Total	80	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

Table 5 presents the distribution of respondents by students’ type of school. According to result of analysis, 48 respondents attend public schools and 32 respondents attend private schools. The percentages were 60% and 40% respectively.

4.2. Presentation of Respondents’ Responses

Table 6. There are significant cases of mother-tongue transference in my spoken English.		
Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	143	77.3%
Disagree	42	22.7%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

In Table 6, 143 respondents agreed and 42 respondents disagreed with the question ‘there are significant cases of mother tongue transference in my spoken English’. The percentage revealed 77.3% and 22.7% respectively.

Table 7. There are significant cases of transfer of items in my mother tongue into what I say and write in English language.		
Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	137	74.1%
Disagree	48	25.9%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

In Table 7, 137 respondents agreed and 48 respondents disagreed with the question ‘there are significant cases of transfer of items in my mother tongue into what I say and write in English language’. The percentage revealed 74.1% and 25.9% respectively.

Table 8. There are significant cases where I get confused in the use of the sound in my dialect and English language.		
Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	130	70.2%
Disagree	55	29.7%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

In Table 8, 130 respondents agreed and 55 respondents disagreed with the question ‘there are significant cases where I get confused in the use of the sound in my dialect and English language’. The percentage revealed 70.2% and 29.7% respectively.

Table 9. There are significant cases of relationship at the level of intonation, stress and rhythm interference, in what I say or write in English language.

Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	56	30.3%
Disagree	129	69.7%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025.

In Table 9, 56 respondents agreed and 129 respondents disagreed with the question ‘there are significant cases of relationship at the level of intonation, stress and rhythm interference, in what I say or write in English language’. The percentage revealed 30.3% and 69.7% respectively.

Table 10. There are significant cases of translation from my mother tongue into what I say or write in English.

Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	116	62.7%
Disagree	69	37.3%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

In Table 10, 116 respondents agreed and 69 respondents disagreed with the question ‘there are significant cases of translation from my mother tongue into what I say or write in English.’ The percentage revealed 62.7% and 37.3% respectively.

Table 11. There are cases of outright transfer of words from my mother tongue into my spoken English.

Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	117	63.2%
Disagree	68	36.8%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

In Table 11, 117 respondents agreed and 68 respondents disagreed with the question ‘there are cases of outright transfer of words from my mother tongue into my spoken English’. The percentage revealed 63.2% and 36.8% respectively.

Table 12. There are significant cases of direct borrowing of items from my mother tongue in my written essays as I learn to write in English language.

Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	120	64.8%
Disagree	65	35.2%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

Table 12 shows that 120 respondents agreed and 65 respondents disagreed with the question ‘there are significant cases of direct borrowing of items from my mother tongue in my written essays as I learn to write in English language’. The percentage revealed 64.8% and 35.2% respectively.

Table 13. There are significant cases where I find it difficult to distinguish between the use of homophones (two words with the same sounds, different meaning) in my mother tongue and in my spoken and written English.

Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	132	71.4%
Disagree	53	28.6%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

In Table 13, 132 respondents agreed and 53 respondents disagreed with the question ‘there are significant cases where I find it difficult to distinguish between the use of homophones (two words with the same sounds, different meaning) in my mother tongue and in my spoken and written English’. The percentage revealed 71.4% and 28.6% respectively.

Table 14: The absence of long vowel sounds in my mother tongue hinders my smooth learning of long vowel sounds in English language.

Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	63	34.1%
Disagree	122	65.9%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

Table 14 shows that 63 respondents agreed and 122 respondents disagreed with the question ‘the absence of long vowel sounds in my mother tongue hinders my smooth learning of long vowel sounds in English language’. The percentage revealed 34.1% and 65.9% respectively.

Table 15. The significant cases where I make conflicting use of the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ and the Palato alveolar affricates - /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ any time I write in English language (because they are absent in mother tongue).

Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	122	65.9%
Disagree	63	34.1%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

In Table 15, 122 respondents agreed with the statement and 63 respondents disagreed with the statement, ‘the significant cases where I make conflicting use of the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ and the Palato alveolar affricates - /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ any time I write in English language (because they are absent in mother tongue)’. The percentage revealed 65.9% and 34.1% respectively.

Table 16: There are significant cases where I confuse the use of the fricatives /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/ and the affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ when I speak in English (because they are absent in my mother tongue).

Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	93	50.3%
Disagree	92	49.7%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

Table 16 above shows that 93 respondents agreed and 92 respondents disagreed with the question ‘there are significant cases where I confuse the use of the fricatives /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /h/ and the affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ when I speak in English (because they are absent in my mother tongue)’. The percentage revealed 50.3% and 49.7% respectively.

Table 17. There are significant cases of mispronunciation when the words I pronounce end with vowel sounds.

Alternative	Frequency	Percentage %
Agree	116	62.7%
Disagree	69	37.3%
Total	185	100%

Source: Researcher’s survey 2025

In Table 17, 116 respondents agreed and 69 respondents disagreed with the question ‘there are significant cases of mispronunciation when the words I pronounce end with vowel sounds’. The percentage reveals 62.7% and 37.3% respectively.

4.3. Interpretation of Interview Responses

Five (5) interviews were conducted through the interview guide questions on various categories of people and the foregoing is the interpretation.

Interview 1: For the civil servant who is an NCE holder, his occupation is teaching, just because he likes teaching and he believes that there is interference of his mother tongue on his English, he believes that staying in home town could bring about the interference of mother tongue, he has a problem of notification base on the English he speaks, pronouncing of word was okay by him.

Interview 2: For another civil servant who is a grade 2 teacher, she believes that there is interference of his mother tongue on her spoken English due to the fact that she speaks more of her dialect. She also noticed that people do complain whenever she travels and when she speaks in English, she is always embarrassed because the dialectical tone of her home town reflect in her English when she travelled to Lagos last year. And she believes that all pronunciation is okay.

Interview 3: Another civil servant who has bachelor’s degree as her educational qualification, she is a secretary to English, Head of Department. She believes that there is interference of her mother tongue on her English due to the fact that she speaks her dialect and she believes that all pronunciation is okay.

Interview 4: For the student who attends Adeyemi Federal University of Education, he believes there is interference of his mother tongue on his English, because he stays with his parent who speaks Ondo dialect. According to him, he does not see the interference as a problem but he was embarrassed in Lagos last year when he went on holiday. He believed that the pronunciation was okay.

Interview 5: For another student, she believes that there is interference of his mother tongue on his spoken English due to the fact that he speaks more of his dialect and now everyone wants to speak English. He noted that he communicates with his class mates in the local dialect most of the time but some of his mates do not understand that language so he speaks English in which he is not too fluent in. He, however said that due to the fact that the world is a changed place, and English had become an official language in the country, the change is necessary but it is not a bad thing to speak English the way people know how to speak it, either mixed with local dialects or not.

5. Summary of Findings

- 1. The spoken English of civil servants in Ondo is greatly influenced by their local dialects.
- 2. The students write the way they speak English with influence of the local dialect.
- 3. The phonetics and phonology learnt by Students in School reflects Ondo dialect in their speech and written works.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

In examining the suprasegmental aspect of the speech performance of the communication standard of the Ondo native speakers of English language, three hypothesis were formulated. Such were: (1) there are significant cases of

mother tongue interference in the spoken English of Ondo speakers as there are significant cases of transfer of direct borrowing of items from my mother tongue in the written essays as they learn to write in English language. The spoken English of civil servants in Ondo is also greatly influenced by their local dialect.

The results from the respondents revealed that for the first hypothesis it could be deduced that interview questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 12 reflect agreement with the statement that the spoken English of civil servant in Ondo is greatly influenced by their local dialect. Also, responses to questions 4, 9, 10 and 11 reflect disagreement with the above statement, we can easily conclude that since five answers were positive, the spoken English of civil servants in Ondo is greatly influenced by their local dialect.

For the second hypothesis answers to interview questions 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 show agreement with the statement that students write the way they speak English with the influence of the local dialect. Also, responses to questions 2, 4, 7 reflects disagreement with the same statement, we can conclude that since nine answers were positive, the students write the way they speak English with influence of their local dialect.

As regards the third hypothesis, responses to question 1 and 2 showed agreement with the statement that the phonetics and phonology training of students in school reflects in the performance of Ondo users of English, we can conclude that since two answers were positive, we then conclude that the phonetics and phonology training of students in schools does not reflect in the performance of Ondo users of English.

The study therefore proffered solutions that would enhance better communication and easy learning of the English language by them, looking at the systems of the Ondo dialect in terms of increasing knowledge of the phonological problems which will influence further research in its relationship with English language.

7. Recommendations

This study assumes that the correct perception of the problem of suprasegmental aspect as regards interference of mother tongue features in the performance of Ondo speakers of English will lead to the making concerted efforts to maximize the indigenes chances of overcoming this seemingly stubborn problem. This problem is better handled by experts within the language industry. Here, workshops and seminars should be organised involving civil servants and students who speak their dialects often but taken English language as a second language and books on phonetics and phonology should be stocked in public libraries in Ondo town for the populace to read.

There should also be concerted effort by language policy makers to increase the development of spoken words in both indigenous languages and English language to help indigenes in comparative analyses of both languages. The issue here is that of provision of raw linguistic data in both mother tongue and the second language. Akindele and Adegbite (2005), opine that much of the data the learner is exposed to cannot be described as raw but artificial. Government should employ more skilled teachers to schools so as to make the students improve their spoken English, most especially, teachers who specialise in phonetics and phonology. Oral English should be taken as the most important aspect of English language in schools.

Furthermore, our educational programmes should emphasize listening and speaking both in mother tongue and English language giving room for proficiency in both and they should be made to know the major causes of dialectal interference when they speak English.

Parents should be speak English language with their children from childhood, this will make the children to get acquainted with the intonation, stress, rhythm and the sounds produced while speaking and they should be ready to correct them anytime they make mistakes. Also, parents should always speak good and correct English with their wards and endeavour to put them in good schools.

Second language users should be conscious of the suprasegmental features whenever they speak and endeavour to learn oral aspect of English for this will help making the intonation, stress, rhythm and sound when they speak. Children should be exposed to other languages apart from their mother tongue and English language for this will broaden their level of experience.

All said and done, the fact remains that the recommendations made here, may not be the exact solutions to the problems of dialectal interference judging from the fact that varied opinions continue to flow on the problems of suprasegmental phonology. It is thus the belief of this researcher that if they are well applied, they will help to reduce the rate at which the mother tongue interferes with English language when Ondo native speakers of English speak.

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