
**PREDICTED AND ACTUAL PHONOLOGICAL ERRORS OF JUKUN LEARNERS
OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE****Yusuf Tsojon Ishaya,**Department of English & Literary Studies,
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quplong73@gmail.com**Abstract**

Predicted and actual errors are a major concern to language scholars particularly contrastive analysts who argue that possible areas of difficulties for the learners of a second language can be predicted and thereof emphasized to ensure proficiency. It is on this premise that this paper seeks to investigate predicted and actual phonological errors of Jukun learners of English and a second language. The paper adopts the arguments of psychological learning theories of transfer and interference as cited by Corder (1986) and Adegbite (2009) on negative transfer from MT to L2. It identifies possible causes of these errors among the learners and the specific English phonemes that they find difficult to articulate. The paper is motivated by the learners' communicative performance both within and outside classroom setting. Data /findings from the study reveal that most of the predicted errors actually manifest in the phonology of some Jukun English language users. And that these errors are due to some extent at least, to mother- tongue influence, non-existence of certain English phonemes in Jukun among others. The paper concludes that, in spite of the above, we cannot generalize the issue of mother tongue interference because even among the learners we still find a very great range of proficient users of Standard English Phonemes.

Keywords: Jukun, Standard English Phonemes, Predicted, Actual errors, English as a Second Language

Introduction

In contrastive analysis, predictive errors could be phonological, morphological, syntactic or semantic. Phonologically predicted errors manifest in wrong pronunciation and/or intonation as a result of poor knowledge or mastery of the segmental features (vowels and consonants) and the suprasegmental (stress, intonation, rhythm). But the concern here is

the segmental aspect. Predicted errors also manifest in reading and other forms of verbal discourse of learners. The errors need to be corrected if the learner must be competent in the target language (in this case, the English language). Bulgaria (2014) argues that, phonologically induced errors necessitate timely correction on the part of the teacher because vowel length, voiced and voiceless consonants, word stress, etc, in the case of English studied as a foreign language, may

have a meaning-differentiating function as in *live/leave*, *leave/leaf*, *exit (n) exit (v)*, and so on.

Pronunciation is a vital aspect of language learning because poor pronunciation distorts or mars the communication process. Therefore, good speaking requires good pronunciation, especially when one is communicating with people outside one's immediate linguistic environment or speech community using the L₂.

Phonological problems result when speaking or learning a second language because most people are used to hearing and making sounds which only exist in their mother-tongue or L1. Abubakar (2010) argues that, no matter the number of one's language phonemic inventory, when one tries to learn a foreign language, one is bound to have some difficulties in areas of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Of these four areas of difficulty, the most prominent one is phonology. A learner's first language interferes considerably in the learning of a foreign language.

The phonological behaviour of many learners of English across the globe does not reflect the phonological norm of Standard English even though these learners are aware of the phonemic distinctions of RP. Writing on English pronunciation among Nigerians, Jowitt (1991:69) says "all the phonemic distinctions of RP are perceptively real for the educated Nigerians user, but he produces what in many cases are distinctively Nigerian phonemic features.

Conceptual clarifications

Predicted errors are possible errors that would characterize second language learners. Prediction is a major aspect of contrastive analysis (the comparison of two or more languages so as to show in a systematic way the differences and similarities in their phonological, syntactic and lexical structures (Olagoke, 1983).

This paper sees predicted errors as wrong forms of English which Jukun learners are likely to manifest.

Adegbite (2009) defines actual errors as unwanted forms or deviations from the norms or the rules of a given language in phonology, grammar, lexis or usage. They are different forms of mistakes because Adegbite(2009) cites Corder(1973) that , mistakes are slips of the tongue or pen which even native speakers can make due to memory limitations, distractions or other physiological or psychological causes. Native speakers are assumed to know the rules of their language. Actual errors are real errors of individuals which can be described and classified linguistically so as to determine their learning problems. This paper sees them as the real errors of Jukun learners of English which prove the truthfulness or otherwise of the predicted errors.

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The work adopts certain assumptions of the psychological learning theories of transfer and interference. The assumptions are: that interference or transfer of features from the learners' L1 to the L2 is the major cause of difficulty and error in learning the L2. That where the L1 and L2 are similar, learning the L2 will not pose any problem as there will be facilitation, but where they are different, learning will be impeded. That is, negative transfer will result. Besides, interference theory predicts that if a learner is called upon to produce some L2 form which he has not learned, he will tend to produce erroneous form having its origin in his L1. In other words, the learner will transfer features of his L1 into the L2 Adegbite,2009.

The paper adopts the argument of Osuagwu (1997) cited in Ishaya and Yakubu (2014) that, word reduction, whether syncope (the

elision of a sound at the middle of a word) or apocope (the elision of a sound at the end of a word) is a feature of non-proficiency in the target language. The paper therefore tries to confirm the above assumptions and argument using secondary school Jukun students learning English as a second language. English as a second language in this paper is the status of English not as mother-tongue of the learners, but as a language that has several internal functions one of which is that, it is the medium of instruction in schools.

Data for the study were derived through reading test. Fifty Jukun learners of English who are secondary school students within Wukari metropolis were asked to read out certain English words so as to determine their phonological competence and also ascertain the predicted and actual phonological errors of the learners. The study also used participant observation. The fifty learners were observed in different linguistic domains that involved the English language.

Data collected were analysed bearing in

mind the topic of discourse. That is, the various errors identified were analysed the causes of the errors discussed. The analysis looked at the effect of L1 of the learners on their L2. Each actual error was considered according to the frequency of its occurrence. Besides, the percentage of the frequency of each error was calculated.

Phonology of Jukun Language:

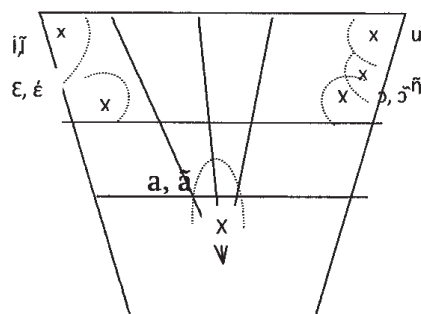
Jukun is one of the languages spoken in Nigeria. The term Jukun is generic because it has several dialects among which are Wanu, Kuteb, Nyifon, Kona, Ichen, Jibu, Wapan. The language is predominantly spoken in Wukari, Taraba State. However, it is spoken in Gombe, Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue States and even in the Republic of Cameroun and Chad.

In order to be able to predict and analyse phonological errors of Jukun learners of English, this paper adopts the Jukun consonant and vowel charts presented by Shimizu (1980) as well as the English consonant and vowel charts as shown below:

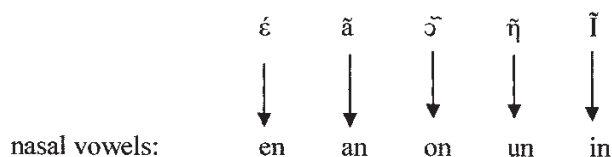
PHONEMIC CHART OF JUKUN CONSONANTS

	(1) Simple consonants (26 + 1)				(2) Labialized consonants (12)		(3) Palatalized consonants (9)			
	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	labio-velar	Labial	Alveolar	Velar	Labial	Velar
Plosive vl	p	t	c	k	kp	pw		kw	py	ky
vd	b	d	j	g	gb	bw		gw	by	gy
Affricate vl		ts					tsw			
Vd		dz					dzw			
Fricative vl	f	s	sh	h		fw	sw	hw	fy	hy
Vd	v	z	zh				zw		vy	
Nasal	m	n	ny	ŋ		mo		ŋw	my	ŋy
Tap		r								
Lateral		[l]								
Approximant			y		w					

Shimizu(1980)Jukun vowel chart



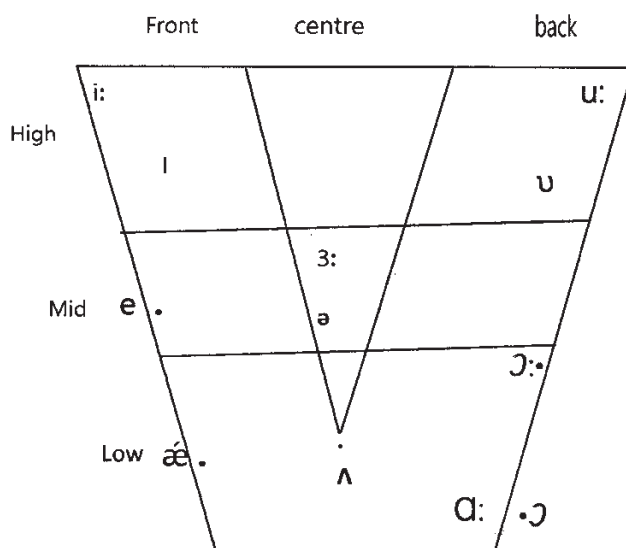
Each of these vowels shows the variation in its quality which is determined acoustically within the range demarcated by a broken line (Shimizu, 1980).



ENGLISH CONSONANT CHART

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Potato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Lateral				l				
Trill				r				
Approximant	w					j		

ENGLISH VOWEL CHART (PURE VOWELS)



Data analysis and findings:

The predicted phonological features are described as errors based on their comparison with Standard English forms and usage.

The errors are predicted according to the frequency of their occurrences among the

selected Jukun learners of English as L₂. They are found in the written and spoken English of people in the study population not idiosyncratic errors (errors peculiar to an individual and characterizing his idiosyncratic dialect) Jowitt (1991).

This paper predicts that, among Jukun learners of English there is the phonological

problem called spelling pronunciation which entails wrong pronouncing of words due to the nature of their spelling which is a common feature of most non-native speakers of English. This will lead to negative transfer from their L1 to the L2 which is English. Jukun learners of English will mispronounce words with *ure* or *ous* ending. This is because the schwa/ / is non-existent in the language. The learners under study are likely to have problem with consonant clusters particularly clusters of three or more consonants in word final since this is not a feature of Jukun orthography. In the consonant chart of the Jukun language there are no equivalents for the English phonemes /O/ and /ð/. This is likely to be a problem to Jukun learners of English.

Forty-six of the learners which represented 92% of the sample used in the study exhibited the problem of spelling pronunciation. They pronounce most English words and phonemes without must reference to the RP. They assume as Eyisi (2007) argues, a one to one correspondence between spelling and pronunciation which is inappropriate. Eyisi (2007) puts it as follows: 'orthography is no longer a direct

reflection of how words should be pronounced, phonetics does the magic. Furthermore, one's ability to analyse a word into its individual sound does not depend on the knowledge of how the word is spelt. For instance, both *not* and *knot* have each three sounds even though the first sound in *knot* is represented by two letters *kn*. One's ability to analyze this correctly depends on one's sound knowledge of (English) phonetics'.

Similarly, Jowitt (1991) observes that deprived of consistently reliable guidance from teachers,(learners of English generally or pupils) unconsciously relied on MT models as indeed many of their teachers did; and assuming that there was a perfect correspondence between sound and spelling, they used orthography as their guide to pronunciation. Unofficial inter-language norms therefore determined usage.

Suffice it to say that in English, there exists an anomalous (irregular) relationship between sound and spelling which contrasts with most Nigerian languages including Jukun. The Jukun language like most Nigerian languages is a tonal language and most of its words are pronounced the way they are spelt as shown below:

Word	Jukun phonetic form	Gloss
aban	/aban/	stone
akyi	/akyi/	food
ji	/ji/	eat
we	/wε/	wear
mbya	/mbya/	look

In each of the above cases, the pronunciation follows the same pattern as the spelling. But this is not the case with English spelling which in a vast majority of cases in highly deceptive particularly to the Jukun learner of English. The pronunciations of the learners are a direct transfer of features of the L1 (Jukun) into English (L2) which of course is

wrong. In Jukun, there tends to be a one to one correspondence between the spelling and pronunciation of most words. Therefore, the examples given above confirm the argument raised by Adegbite (2009) that negative transfer impedes learning of L2.

Forty-six (92%) out of the fifty Jukun learners of English selected, wrongly pronounced the

under mentioned English words given by Ishaya and Yakubu (2014). There are deviations from RP norm as certain peculiar phonological rules of English are not observed.

Word	RP from	Jukun form
1. doctor	/dɒkt /	/d̥ k̥t /
2. territory	/tɛrɪtəri/	/t̥ r̥itor̥i/
3. listen	/lɪsn/	/l̥ɪst̥ɪn/
4. tomb	/tu:m/	/t̥ mb/
5. plumber	/plʌm̩ /	/pl̥ m̥ba/
6. coup	/ku:/	/kup/
7. sachet	/sæç /	/s̥aç̥ t̥/sac̥ɛt̥/
8. pastor	/pa:st /	/p̥ast̥ /
9. precious	/preʃ s/	/p̥r̥ sh̥ s/
10. wrestle	/r̥ s̥l/	/r̥ st̥ul/

In the above, we observe that some RP phonemes are realized differently in Jukun. The phonemes are identified below:

Word R P P h o n e m e s
Jukun realization

doctor / /, / / ➔
pronunciation of the voiceless alveolar consonant /t/ and the insertion of the high front lax vowel /ɪ/ in place of the letter 'e' which is dropped in RP pronunciation.

tomb /u:/ ➔ / /
back lax Jukun vowel.

plumber /ʌ/, / / ➔ / /, /a/.

The / / is used to replace /ʌ/ and /a/ to replace / /. Also, there is retention of /b/ which is silent in RP.

coup /u:/ ➔ / u /
which is also a long (tense) back vowel. Besides, the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ is retained.

Sachet / / ➔ / /,
/ / ➔ /t /
or /c/ Jukun equivalent. It is pronounced as this because in Jukun the sequence ch-is realized as /c/ which is a voiceless palatal plosive.

Pastor /a:,,/ / ➔ /a:,,/ /

Precious / / ➔ / /,
/sh/ is the Jukun equivalent for / /.

Wrestle ➔ Retention of the voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ and the insertion of the back vowel /u/ which is an epenthetic element.

From the above, it is evident that conflation or replacement of phonemes, insertion of epenthetic sounds and the retention of certain phonemes which are normally dropped in English are elements of mispronunciation among Jukun learners of English.

The study also discovered that certain English phonemes tend to be dropped when

Jukun learners of English pronounce certain English words. This is far from what is technically referred to as elision: the omission

of a sound segment which would be present in the deliberate pronunciation of a word in isolation (Yule, 1991). Both consonant and vowel tend to be dropped when such learners pronounce certain English words particularly those at the end of words (apocope) such as /t/, /d/, /l/, /n/. At times

such learners reduce English words by dropping sounds or phonemes medially (syncope) Osuagwu (1997).

The paper discovered the above features in the pronunciation of forty-eight (96%) Jukun learners used in the study as we find below:

Word	RP Form	Jukun form
radical	/rædikl/	/radika/
moon	/mu:n/	/mu/
land	/lənd/	/lan/
band	/bænd/	/ban/
remedial	/rɪmɪ:dɪəl/	/rɪmɪdɪa/
employment	/ɪmˌplɪ m̩ nt/	/ɪmˌplɪ ɪm̩ n/
eatable	/i:t̩ bəl/	/ɪt̩ bu/
commend	/k̩ mɛnd/	/k̩ mɛn/
afternoon	/ɑ:ft̩ nu:n/	/aftanu/

In *moon*, /n/ is dropped, in *radical* the phoneme /i/ is dropped. We also observe the final dropping of the voiced alveolar fricative /d/ in *land* and *band*. The voiced alveolar lateral /l/ is again dropped finally in *remedial* and *eatable*. In addition, the long (tense) English monophthong /i:/ in *eatable* is reduced to a lax monophthong /ɪ/ in Jukun and /l/ is replaced with a high back vowel /u/. In *commend*, the voiced alveolar fricative /d/ is dropped and the schwa or weak vowel /ə/ in English is conflated to / / in Jukun pronunciation. The nasal consonant /n/ in *afternoon* is dropped in the Jukun pronunciation. And the tense vowels /ɑ:/ and /u/ and the schwa /ə/ are conflated to /a/, /u/

and /a/ respectively. The phonological errors above are traced to transfer from their L1 to the L2 because in Jukun, the phonemes /l/, /t/ and /d/ rarely appear in word final. The

transfer is therefore negative, and it impedes the students' learning of English as a second language.

This study agrees with Ishaya and Yakubu (2014) that they use the Jukun back vowel / / to replace such ending. Forty-six (92%) of the learners used exhibited this problem as evident in the following pronunciations or words.

Word	Jukun form
Callous	/kəl s/
future	/fʊç / or /fuch /
nature	/n̩ ç / or /n̩ ch /
pompous	/p mp s/
mature	/maç / or /mach /

This study observed that forty-four (88%) of the learners could not perfectly pronounce words such as *exempts*, *prompts*, *tempt*s, *pre-empt*s. Similarly, they could not articulate two consonant clusters in word final as in *statement*, *mankind*, *readable*. They produced ridiculous phonetic structures such as /ʃt̩ tmen/, *mankain*/ and /rɪd̩ bu/. This is

because consonant cluster whether initial, medial or final, is not a common feature of Jukun words.

This study observed that such learners could pronounce words such as *thank, think, the, these, truth, cloth, brother* and *another*, but may not be able to use the correct form as shown below:

Word	Jukun form
thank	/tank/
think	/tink/
the	/de/
these	/dis/
truth	/trut/
cloth	/kɫ t/
brother	/broda/
another	/anoda/

This confirms the assumption that where phonemes of the two languages do not have variant forms learners will not find learning the target language an easy enterprise. Besides, it will result to wrong substitution of phonemes of the L2 as we find above. Jukun learners of English articulate certain RP phonemes with ease whether such phonemes occur in isolation or in connected speech (sequence) because such phonemes exist in their language. This confirms one of the assumptions contained in the psychological learning theories of transfer and interference that, where there are similarities between L₁ and L₂ learning will not present any problem as there will be facilitation, but where there are differences, learning will be difficult or impeded, that is, there will be negative transfer (Adegbite, 2009). Examples of RP phonemes and their Jukun equivalents are as follows:

RP Consonant	Jukun Equivalent
/p/ /b/	/p/ /b/
/t/ /d/	/t/ /d/
/k/ /g/	/k /g/
/f/ /v/	/f/ /v/
/m/ /n/ / /	/m/ /n/ / /
/ / / /	/sh/ /zh
/t / /d /	/c/ /j/
/r/	/r/
/ / /	/ / /
/j / /w/	/y/ /w/
/h/	/h/
/θ/ / /	-
RP vowels	Jukun equivalents
/i/ / i:/	/ɪ/ / ɪ/
/ / /	/ / /
/æ/ /a:/	/a/ /ä/
/ / / /:/	/ / / /:/
/u/ /	/u/

Shimizu (1980) Conclusion

This paper concludes that phonology constitutes an area of problem for most

Jukun learners of English because of MT interference, non-existence of certain

Standard English phonemes in Jukun, among others. However, we cannot generalize the issue of mother-tongue interference because even among the learners we still find a very great range of proficient users of Standard English phonemes.

This paper agrees with Jowitt (1991) that since English in a world language, acquiring the accent that is easily understood and acceptable internationally should be the focus of oral English teaching in Nigerian secondary schools. Teachers of English should always predict and identify

phonological problems of learners and tackle them appropriately. The teachers must also be versed in phonology and employ appropriate teaching methods so as to simplify this seemingly complex aspect of the English language.

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