

A Contrastive Analysis of Igbo and Hausa Grammatical Forms

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Abstract

The objectives of the study were to identify the phonological features of Hausa that interfere with Igbo pronunciation; how Hausa syntax and grammar influence the acquisition of Igbo language structure. The study was guided by three research questions and questionnaires were administered. The study adopted descriptive method for data analysis. The study revealed that the language of the immediate environment plays a significant role in students' performance. The findings indicate clearly that phonological and syntactical differences exist amongst Hausa learners which lead to errors affecting communication and academic performance. The findings indicate clearly that phonological and syntactical differences exist amongst Hausa learners, which led to errors affecting communication and academic performance. For instance, Hausa students struggling to pronounce Igbo sounds, such as gb, gh, gw e.t.c which do not exist in Hausa. Also, Hausa and Igbo have different grammatical structures. Hausa students find it challenging to understand and use Igbo grammatical features such as the subject-verb-object word order, among other factors. The study recommends that pronunciation should be adequately taught to the students. Improved teaching methods and acculturation among others should be employed while teaching. Students should also be given an opportunity to interact with each other in Igbo so that they can have good communication skills. Teachers as well should be competent for learners imitation.

1.1. Introduction

Language learning is a complex process influenced by various factors, including mother tongue interference. This phenomenon occurs when learner's native language affects their pronunciation, syntax, vocabulary and overall proficiency in a second language. This work examines the influence of mother tongue on Hausa students' learning Igbo as a second Language. Language according to Akindele (1999) is a system of symbol or vocal system by which human being communicate experience. It is the most powerful tool of learning. Every normal human being is endowed with or blessed with it. In other words, it is a unique gift by which feelings, thoughts and ideas could be expressed. Nigeria is a multilingual country in the sense that many languages are spoken in it. (Olagoke 1981, Aziza 1998) as cited by Oyewole (2017) opine that Nigeria is an example of speech community with more than 250 ethnic groups with an estimate of 400 languages. Also in Multilingual community like Nigeria, there are 1st, 2nd and even 3rd language learning. Because of this, there is bound to be interference between one language and the other.

According to Akijobi and Chukwu (2012), second language learners face overwhelming challenges in learning the second language. A second language always faces difficulties in learning because they have already achieved communicative competence in their native languages. Both Igbo and Hausa are major languages in Nigeria and they are recognised by both the government and the educational sectors, therefore studying them is pertinent. In fact

according to the (NPE), they are official languages. Although there are many researchers who have looked into the contrastive analysis of English Language (Foreign Language) and other indigenous languages but not much has been carried out between indigenous languages. There is a gap in research concerning mother tongue interference on indigenous languages like Hausa students studying Igbo as a second language and that is why the researcher embarked on this research. This research will go a long way in eliminating or at least reducing to the barest minimum the problem of mother tongue interference on spoken Igbo and also help the students in both speaking and writing examination.

Data for the study were gotten from the Hausa students learning Igbo in Federal College of Education, Yola and University of Maiduguri, Yola campuses. Hausa students learning Igbo face challenges due to mother tongue interferences; phonological differences between Hausa and Igbo learners lead to errors, affecting communication and academic performance. This study investigates the extent of mother tongue influence on Hausa students in Igbo language learning.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

- i. To identify the phonological features of Hausa that interferes with Igbo pronunciation among Hausa students.
- ii. To examine how Hausa syntax influences the learning of Igbo language structure among Hausa students.
- iii. To investigate strategies that can mitigate the influence of mother tongue (Hausa) on Igbo language learning among Hausa students.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework the researchers applied in this work is the theory of contrastive analysis. Contrastive Analysis was propounded by Charles C. Fries and Robert Lado in the 1950s. Charles was an American linguist who laid the foundation for Contrastive Analysis in his 1945 paper titled *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language*, while Robert was a Canadian-American linguist who expanded on Fries' work and published the influential book *Linguistics Across Cultures: Applied Linguistics for Language Teachers* in 1957. Their works focused on identifying the differences between languages and predicting areas where language learners might experience difficulty due to the influence of their native language. Their key principles are language transfer where learners transfer linguistic features, rules and patterns from their L₁ to their L₂. Their limitations are oversimplification, where critics argue that contrastive analysis oversimplifies the complex process of language acquisition, and limited predictive power as learners' errors can be influenced by various factors beyond L₁, L₂ differences.

Literature Review

Concept of Language Interference

Language according to Igbal Yasir (2016) is a way of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of arbitrarily produced symbols for physiological as well as psychological survival. Ike (2006) in his opinion says that language is learned, consciously, through the influence of the environment of domicile and a caregiver (who may be the child's mother, a nanny, a playmate or a teacher) all of which expose the child to the language in question and by so doing activate his otherwise dormant language mechanism. He a

also states that for actual communication by him to take place and make sense, it is certain to unarguably revolve around content /form/ use paradigm first expounded by Bloom and Lahey (1978). Here, content stands for events eliciting or are subject of communication, form for content of communication and use stands for style or language approach of communication.

Language learning refers to the conscious effort made by an individual to learn a language through formal instruction. It involves the acquisition of knowledge about the grammar, vocabulary and syntax of a language. It is deliberate and conscious in which an individual actively tries to learn a language (Salama2023). This means that the child first perceives and produces sounds (form) about events in his immediate environment (context) and interacts with other persons and objects in the context (use). Therefore, language proficiency is not an easy task hence learning an additional language is a difficult and complex endeavor. There exists not only the task of mastering the grammatical system of the language, but also the job of learning how to utilize this system approximately and effectively when actually community in real life situations. The basic element of language learning is the learner, the person learning the language.

Ndimele (2007) in his own view summarised the importance of language as the information role which is the most important way through which individual pass on information from one person to another. The second one is expressive role which is themeans by which one can express one's emotions, feelings or attitudes towards one's fellow being or a state of affairs. The third one is thephatic role which is the means of establishing contact or relationship like in greeting.The fourth one is the directive role. This means that language is used to influence the behaviour or attitude of other people.The fifth role is the ideational role. This is the means of using language to control or seek the compliance of the forces of nature as in belief, faith etc.e.g. in prayers, libation, incantation etc. The sixth role is performance role.Language brings about sudden change like in marriage, when the priest pronounce man and woman as husband and wife, imprisonment etc. Lastly, the ludic role where language is used for amusement or entertainment.

Lott (1983) defines interference as errors in the learner's use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue. In the context of language learning and linguistics, interference refers to a situation where a learner's native language L_1 or previously learned language influences their production or comprehension of a target language L_2 . There are two types of interferences. Positive interference which occurs when the learner's L_1 facilitates the learning of L_2 , often due to similarities between the two languages and negative interference which occurs when the learner's L_1 hinders the learning of L_2 , often due to differences or conflicting rules between the two languages.

Interference can occur at various levels. For instance, phonological interference which influences pronunciation, intonation, or sound pattern. Grammatical interference which influences sentence structure, verb conjugation, or grammatical rules. Lexical interference which influences vocabulary choice, word order or idiomatic expressions. Rahmi (2020) states that lexical interference can be various, it occurs as the transfer of morphemes of first language into target language or it can also occur, as the expand of first language's simple word, this expand existing the meaning to make a new word or it can occur as combination of both. Pragmatic interference thus influences communication styles, discourse patterns, or social norms.

Consequences of Interference can lead to language errors, learners may produce incorrect forms, sounds, or sentence structures and language fossilization where learners may persist in using incorrect forms or rules, even after instruction. Lastly, language learning difficulties in which interference can hinder the learning process, making it more challenging for learners to acquire the target language.

Mother Tongue Interference

Mother tongue on the other hand is defined by Ashworth (1992) as the language a child learns in early years of life and later turns into the means of thought and communication of the child. Ojo (2005) in the same vein defines mother tongue as the first language that a child picks up in his/her childhood. Mother tongue is acquired but not learned. According to Daniel and Arulappan (2020) mother tongue has greatest linguistic facilities and initiative knowledge. It helps the multilingual person to communicate effectively. The learner is required to have the basic skills namely speaking, reading, listening and writing (language proficiency). They further state that mother tongue is accountable for distinguishing the language ability of a person. Both conscious and unconscious methods are used for learning mother tongue. They cite Cummins (2001) who states that it is a healthy approach to learn the mother tongue along with the other languages to encourage the use of language by the children. Moreover, if a child has a stronger foundation of mother tongue, it prepares the child with the required skills that they need to learn the other languages. In other words, the strong foundation in the mother tongue leads to the transfer of their understanding in another new language. Children who have a strong foundation in their mother tongue often have better and deeper understanding about themselves and their place within the society. Kaka and Agban (2022) quotes Dulay, Burt, and Krashen, (1982) defines interference as the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language. Mother tongue interference is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that occurs as a result of language contact. It can also be known as linguistic interference, language transfer, cross linguistic influence and L₁ interference. This occurs when the features of one language tend to show up in the other language.

Kaka and Agban (2022) also cites Skiba (1997) describing interference as the instances of deviation from the norm of either language which occur in speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with mother tongue than the other language. Bloomfield asserts mother tongue which is learnt by human is named native language. Children from a certain group of community, since they were born, have gradually learned to acquire a language from their mothers in a natural way. This is the so called mother tongue and this language is continuously passed across generations such a mother tongue is always affiliated with the culture which prevail in a certain community.

According to Oyewole (2017), the first language of a child is part of his personal and cultural identity. First language brings about reflection and learning of successful social patterns of acting and speaking. In teaching and learning process in Nigeria, the mother tongue of the child is of great importance. He further explains that a child learns best in his mother tongue and that it is natural to him as a mother's milk. Mother tongue is a way of promoting our culture.

Akindele and Adegbite (2005) in their own view, state that mother tongue is the language which the child learns from childhood in his communicative environment. They opine that the speaker manifests a high understanding of the rules of pronunciation, syntax, lexis and discourse.

In other words, it is on the mother tongue's linguistic basics of the speaker that all other languages are built.

Language Transfer, Acquisition and Learning

According to Abbas and Alghazo (2018), language transfer is a natural and unavoidable phenomenon that occurs when an individual learn a new language. It is as a result of the cognitive process of comparing the new language to the language(s) already known by the learner. Salama (2023) opines that language transfer refers to the influence of a speaker's first language L_1 on their second language L_2 acquisition. It occurs when a speaker applies the rules and structures of their L_1 , resulting in errors or interference in speaking and writing. As stated by Abbas and Alghazo (2018), if learners are L_1 and L_2 , they can use transfer to their advantage and facilitate the learning process.

Research has shown that language transfer can affect various aspects of L_2 acquisition, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and discourse. Romaine (1995) claims that during second language learning, transfer takes place at the phonology, morphology and syntax levels. Language transfer involves the process where learners apply knowledge, rules or features from their native language L_1 or previous learned language L_2 to a new language L_3 they are learning. Understanding language transfer helps teachers, researchers and learners to identify potential language difficulties.

Agbedo (2009) opines that the term, language acquisition is commonly used to describe the process whereby children become speakers and competent users of their native language. According to Ingram (1975) in Agbedo (2009), about who acquires language? the nativist answer to this question is: all human beings, by virtue of the inborn universals, and no sub-humans, for the same reason. Language acquisition is the natural, intuitive process of acquiring a language, typically one's native language. It is an unconscious process that occurs through exposure to language in a natural environment. Characteristics of language acquisition include implicit learning. Here, acquisition occurs without conscious awareness of language rules. Another is naturalistic setting where acquisition takes place in a natural environment, such as the home or community. Non formal instruction where acquisition occurs without formal teaching or instruction. And lastly, age related acquisition where acquisition is typically associated with childhood and adolescence.

Ike (2006) states that, language is acquire and as well learned. He is of the view that language learning is consciously through the influence of the environment of domicile and a caregiver (who may be the child's mother, nanny, a playmate or a teacher) all of which expose the child to the language in question and by so doing activate his otherwise docile or dormant language mechanism. Language learning, therefore, refers to the conscious and deliberate process of learning a new language, often in a formal educational setting. It involves intentional effort to acquire a new language, typically a second language L_2 or foreign language. Characteristics of language learning include explicit learning which means learning that involves conscious awareness of language rules and structures. Learning also takes place in a formal educational setting, such as a classroom, where learners make a deliberate effort to learn the new language. It is also age-independent that means learning can occur at any age in life.

Empirical Review

Ochagu and Agban (2022) work unmasked the negative influence that mother tongue influence poses to Nigeria speakers of the English language at the phonetic levels using Ikom learners of the English as a case study. Usually lexical items in Ikom do not permit consonant clusters as in English and this poses a problem to them when learning the English language. The objective of their study is to find out the kind of influence that mother tongue has on spoken English using the Ikom language as a case study. English is a second language for them and therefore inevitably poses problem of mother tongue interference. Descriptive and quantitative methods were employed. The findings revealed that, the mother tongue of Ikom learners/users of English negatively influences their spoken English, significantly in their articulation of English consonants, vowels and consonant clusters; and suprasegmental such as stress and intonation.

According to Suleyman and Behnaz (2023), English is becoming increasingly crucial in our contemporary society as a vital part of human connection. Mother tongue is also learned from birth. A learner therefore encounters mother tongue influence while learning or speaking a foreign language or a target language. They go on to say that Mother tongue influence is the impact of the usage of our mother tongue on second language which affects a person's thought process in a sense that he thinks in mother tongue and expresses in English (any language) or second language. Numerous studies have shown that mother tongue has a crucial role on second language, which could either be positive or negative.

Chukwuemeka (2023) cite the negative areas of phonological interference in classroom teaching and learning and identifies the ways of mitigating the effects of phonetic interference in teaching and learning. He observes that the students were affected by their native language's phonological patterns thereby causing difficulty in pronouncing words and sounds in the English language correctly which resulted in misinterpretation and lack of effective communication. The students were randomly selected from different schools in Damaturu metropolis whose mother tongue is Hausa. English consonant and vowel sounds were difficult for them to pronounce. For instance, they pronounce /p/ for /f/ as in pad for fad, cavity for cability etc.

Methodology

This study adopted a case study research design. According to Nworgu B. G (2018), case studies employ a variety of data gathering techniques such as questionnaire, observation and interview test etc. Case studies are useful in providing relevant background information, which may give rise to more extensive investigations. This study was carried out at Federal College of Education Yola and University of Maiduguri Yola campus all in Adamawa State.

The population consisted of Igbo Language L₂ learners in the two schools: F.C.E Yola which has 115 students and University of Maiduguri (Yola Campus) which has 75 students, all in Adamawa State. The total population of the students in both schools was 200 but 50 students were selected for sampling. The sampling technique employed to ensure that all the relevant features of the study population were adequately represented in the study was random sampling technique. Two schools were selected as samples. From these two schools, the target population was selected through disproportionate stratified random sampling as shown below:

	Male	Female	Total
F.C.E Yola	10	20	30
U.N.M (Yola campus)	7	13	20

The table reveals the distribution of the sampled population from the selected schools along gender line. A total of 50 students were sampled. Out of this number, 30 students were selected from among Hausa students who are studying Igbo at F.C.E Yola, both Males and Females, 20 from University of Maiduguri (Yola Campus) both males and females. Research questions were answered using descriptive methods to analyse the data.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Phonological Interference

Igbo letters of the alphabet:

a b c h d e f g gb gh gw h i j k kp kw l m n ñ nw ny o ọ p r s sh t u ụ v w y z.

Hausa letters of the alphabet:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p r s t u v w y z.

From the above alphabets, their difference is clear both in character and sounds. While pronouncing Igbo words, Hausa students tended to use the accent in their own alphabets for the Igbo. Also in Igbo alphabet, they have diphthongs but in Hausa, they do not have such characters influence their pronunciation. In the right of the above, some Igbo words were wrongly pronounced as shown:

Igbo Words	English Words	Hausa Students Pronunciation
ọchicha	Cockroach	ohiha
Egbe	Gun	Egwe
Agha	War	Aga
aghugho	Crafty	agugo
Akpa	Bag	akwa
Ohi	Stealing	ogi
añu	Bee	anu
añurị	Happy	anuri
Ofe	Soup	ope
agwọ	Snake	agwue.t.c

From the above observation, it is discovered that Hausa student did not pronounce the following letters in Igbo alphabets correctly. /tʃ/ in /ɔtʃitʃa/ is pronounced as /ɔhiha/, they cannot pronounce the /tʃ/ sound, /gb/ in egbe is pronounced as /egwe/. They cannot pronounce the /gb/ sound, /aɾa/ is pronounced as /aga/, /aɾughɔ/ is pronounced as /agugo/, they cannot pronounce the [ɾ/ sound. /kp/ in /akpa/ is pronounced as /akwa/, /h/ in /ohi/ is pronounced as /ogi/, /ɸ/ in /aɸu/ is pronounced as /anu/, also /f/ in /ofe/ is pronounced as /ope/. Therefore there is mother tongue interferences in the pronunciation of the following letters of Igbo: /tʃ/, /gb/, /ɾ/, /kp/, /ɸ/,

/ɔ/, /ʊ/ as a result of their non-existence in Hausa alphabets so they affected Hausa students studying Igbo as an alternative language.

Moreover, the students struggle to pronounce the correct tones of the following words:

Igbo	Words	Hausa Pronunciation
eze	teeth	Ézè
ala	land	Àlá
akpì	scorpion	Àkpí
ọcha	white	Óchà
Deede	senior	Déèdè
eŋe	cloth	Èŋe
ọgụ	fight	Ógú
Aja	sacrifice	Àjá
ọka	maize	Óká
akwa	egg	Àkwà
ọnụ	mouth	Ònú
ọnya	trap	Ónyá
ọkụkọ	fowl	Òkùkò
íwé	anger	Íwē

From the above examples, it is observed that Hausa students mispronounce the above words thereby giving them another meaning as a result of mother tongue interference.

Hausa syntax interferes with Igbo language structure in the following ways:

Sentence

Igbo structure	S V O	Hausa structure	S O V	English
Audu gburu ewu S v o		Audu kuraya akwuya Audu ewu gburu		Audu killed goat
Binta siri ọkụkọ S v o		Binta kaza ta dafa Binta ọkụkọ siri		Binta cooks chicken
Ibrahim riri nri S v o		Ibrahim abinciya ci Ibrahim nri riri		Ibrahim eats food
Bala riri anụ S v o		Bala nam aya anụ riri Bala		Bala ate meat
ọ dị mma S v o		Yayis o se Mma ọ dị		It is good

From the examples above, it is observed that due to mother tongue interference, Hausa students do not adhere to the subject-verb object Igbo sentence structure. They change it to subject-object- verb structure.

Phrase structure

Igbo	Hausa	English
1) obere ugboala obara obara	Jaamo taka dam obara obara ugboala obere	small reddish car
2) nnukwu oke okpa ocha	ferikaza baba ocha oke okpa nnukwu	big white cock
3) ututu echi	Gobe de safe Echi ututu	Tomorrow morning
4) kutere mmiri	ruwa debo mmiri kutere	Fetches water

In the above phrases, in examples 1 and 2, Igbo adjectives follow the noun in each of the construction and that is the rule but in Hausa phrases, adjectives come before the nouns and this consequently affects the students while speaking and learning Igbo. Equally in example 3, in the adverbial phrase in Igbo, *ututu* comes before *echi* while in Hausa, the reverse is the case. In example 4, the verb *kutere* comes before the noun *mmiri* in Igbo while in Hausa the noun comes before the verb.

Findings and Conclusion

The findings suggest that Hausa Students studying Igbo as an alternative language experience significant mother tongue interferences, particularly in areas such as pronunciation, syntax and vocabulary. The results have implications for language teaching and learning highlighting the need for targeted instruction and support to address mother tongue interference. The findings inform the development of effective language teaching strategies and support services to enhance the language learning experience for Hausa students.

Hausa students experience significant mother tongue interference when studying Igbo as an alternative language such as phonological and syntactical interferences. Errors are common among Hausa students learning Igbo as in the following words /gb/ in egbe is pronounced as gwe /gh/ in aghugho is pronounced as agugo, /f/ in ofe is pronounced as ope, /h/ in anu (bee) is pronounced as anu (meat). Also, in the area of tones, it is also observed that some Igbo words are mispronounced as a result of Igbo being a tone language unlike Hausa that is toneless language like akwa (egg) is pronounced as akwa, eze (teeth) as eze, ala (land) as alaala, onu (mouth) as in onu etc.

Syntactically, Igbo use subject verb object structure while Hausa use subject object structure and this affects the students when speaking and writing Igbo. Some strategies were suggested to mitigate the influence of mother tongue on Hausa students among which is positive reinforcement to encourage learners to develop a positive attitude towards the Igbo language and culture. Language learning support materials be provided such as language learning guides and workshops to supplement instruction.

Recommendations

Applying these strategies during teaching and learning can mitigate mother tongue influence on Igbo language:

Phonological training:

Provision of explicit training on Igbo phonology using repetition of the affected Igbo alphabet especially using the alphabets to construct word and consequently pronouncing them repeatedly. For instance:

gb – as in gbagburu, gbara, gbaputa, agburu

gw as in gwuru, egwu, gwuputa, egwuregwu

kp as in kpatara, akpa, ikpa, akpukpo

nw as in nwuru, anwu, onwunwa, nwere

ñ as in anuri, ñu, añu, ñuru

f as in efe, efere, feputa, afufa

o as in agwo, oka, obogwu, ochicha

gh as in aghughu, ghota, nghogbu, nghota

Language immersion like acculturation programme where learners will be engaged in pricing goods with Igbo people in the market or engaged in a discussion class on a topic in Igbo to promote authentic language use.

Multimedia Resources: Utilizing multimedia resources such as videos, podcasts and language learning apps to supplement instruction. Provide teachers with training on language teaching methodologies and strategies to address mother tongue influence.

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