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Interference Features Assessment in Junior Secondary School Students Ekiti-speaking Standard Spoken Yorùbá in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Editor-in-Chief

Prof. Afolakemi Olasumbo Oredein
Department of Educational Management
Faculty of Arts & Education, Lead City University, Ibadan
E-mail: opefolake1@yahoo.com, a.oredein@lcu.edu.ng
Phone: (+234) 8055145060

Editorial Members

Prof. Opoola A. Oyedeji
Department of Curriculum Studies
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State
E-mail: opoolaoyedeji@yahoo.com
Phone: (+234) 8034483431

Prof. Donald Abidemi Odeleye
Department of Guidance and Counselling
Faculty of Arts & Education, Lead City University, Ibadan
E-mail: bodeleye@gmail.com
Phone: (+234) 80601162719

Dr. Anjola Robbin
Department of Performing Arts and Culture
Faculty of Arts & Education, Lead City University, Ibadan
E-mail: anjolaelyon@yahoo.com
Phone: (+234) 8039272638

Dr. Abiola Ojo
Department of Physical and Health Education
Faculty of Arts & Education, Lead City University, Ibadan
E-mail: biolaojo@yahoo.com
Phone: (+234) 8033250280

Dr. (Mrs) E. Adeloye
Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti
E-mail: remiadeloye@yahoo.com

Dr Yi Lin
University of Florida,
Jacksonville, FL 32224-7699, USA
Email: Yi.lin@unf.edu
Phone: (904) 620-2797

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Managing Editors

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Department of Performing Arts & Culture
Faculty of Arts & Education, Lead City University, Ibadan
E-mail: anjolaelyon@yahoo.com

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Department of Kinesiology, Sports Science & Health Education
Faculty of Arts & Education, Lead City University, Ibadan
E-mail: taiwosolake@gmail.com

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Department of Educational Management
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Email: joelbabalola2000@yahoo.co.uk Phone:+234 803518 8150,

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Associate Professor
Indira Ghandi National Open University, India
+919410320265, Email: shireeshsingh82@yahoo.com

Editorial Comment

The ***Journal of Capital Development in Behavioural Sciences*** is now out with its sixth volume! Our conviction that the journal will definitely continue to wax stronger is being further justified. This Volume Eight, Issue One also contains rich articles that have been well edited by our team of erudite scholar-reviewers, editors, as well as the obviously committed in-house editors at the prestigious College Press, Jericho, Ibadan which is the publishing arm of Lead City University and its subsidiaries. It is our assurance that you will find in the volume a fountain of well researched knowledge.

Thank you.

The Editorial Team

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Interference Features Assessment in Junior Secondary School Students Èkìtì-speaking Standard Spoken Yorùbá in Èkìtì State, Nigeria

[1]Surajudeen Adewale **BADRU**
walebadru4real@gmail.com
+234 806 614 9674

&

[2]Felicia Bimbo **BAMIDELE**
+234 812 599 3513

Corresponding Author: [1]Yorùbá Education Unit, Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ìlọrin, Ìlọrin, Nigeria

[2]Muslim Community High School, Ìgbẹ́tì, Òyọ́ State

Abstract

This study investigated the interference features in the standard spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school (jss) students in Èkìtì, Èkìtì State. Due to the multilingual nature of the Nigerian society, language usage problems that tend to occur include interference from the mother tongue and inadequate mastery of the rules of the standard Yorùbá language. Hence, the identification of features that interfere in the standard spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking Junior Secondary School Students necessitated this study. This study adopted a descriptive research design. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 100 jss Èkìtì-speaking students from five schools in Ìkọ̀lẹ́ Local Government Area in Èkìtì State. The instrument adopted for this study was a researcher-designed Test of Interference Features (TIF) which was administered to the participants to obtain data. The data were analysed using percentage and the t-test statistic. Findings of the study revealed that there were interference features in the standard spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking jss students. In other words, the Èkìtì dialect interferes with

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the standard spoken Yorùbá of the students. It was also revealed that there was no significant difference in the Yorùbá consonant sounds and Yorùbá vowel sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking male and female jss students. Among others, it was recommended that teachers of Yorùbá language should pay more attention to the various Yorùbá consonant sounds which tend to reflect interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of male and female Èkìtì-speaking jss students.

Keywords: Interference, Standard Yorùbá Language, Language Policy

Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation with different and distinct language families. Yorùbá language is one of the major Nigerian languages used as a medium of instruction during the first three years of primary education and offered as a subject at the upper classes of the primary school (FRN, 2013). It is the medium understood by speakers of the various dialects of the language and used by newscasters, newspaper editors and writers. It is equally used to write Yorùbá textbooks and to communicate with students during Yorùbá lessons (Ajíbóyè, 2000). Adébáyò (2007) observed that Yorùbá language contributes immensely to the preservation of some aspects of the Nigerian history, culture and literature. Yorùbá is one of the 515 languages spoken in Nigeria (Abubakre, 2001). The Federal Government of Nigeria recognises three major indigenous languages which are Hausa, Yorùbá and Igbo as the main languages of the country.

Yorùbá language is spoken by 30 million people spread over many states of Nigeria. These include: Èdó, Kwara, Èkìtì, Ògùn, Òndó, Lagos, Òsun and Kogí States (Fáladé, 2008). The varieties of Yorùbá language spoken in those States are called dialects, while there is a standard Yorùbá which is the acceptable language of education with full-fledged orthography and several textbooks. According to Adétúnjí (2008), the standard Yorùbá language is the language of the school, since it is this standard variety that is used as a medium of instruction.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria in 2008 provided for a national language policy. According to Ojáoyè (1992), effective language policy is crucial to the implementation of the educational system particularly in a multilingual setting where both the home and the school language are largely uncoordinated as the case in Nigeria. The FRN (2013) clearly stated her policy on language. The relevant portion of the policy which affects the study of the Nigerian languages in schools and colleges, states that "In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process, and as a means of preserving the people's culture; the Government consider it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should learn any of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue" p.9. The implication of this policy statement is that each of the three Nigerian languages in question will be used as a medium of instruction at the lower basic level of education and studied in schools and colleges as a second language.

Yusuf (1999) observed that interference may reflect itself in the intonation pattern, in the phonology or in grammatical structures. Language interference, also known as linguistic interference (Yusuf, 1999) is the effect of language learners' first language (FL) on their production of the Target Language (TL). The FL in this study is Èkìtì dialect, while TL is the standard Yorùbá (SY). The effect can be on any aspect or various categories of language: vocabulary, accent, intonation and spelling. Interference is the improper use of elements of one language. It is the negative use of linguistic elements of one language in another (Yusuf, 2002).

Ajíbóyè's (2000) conception of interference is that individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native languages and culture to the foreign languages and culture productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture. The Yorùbá dialects that interfere with the standard Yorùbá include the following among others Ìjèṣa, Ekiti, Òyó, Ìgbómìnà, Onìdó, Ìjèbú, Ìkálè, Òwò, Àkókó, Ègbá, Ègbado, Ifè, Òòkò and Ìyàgbà dialects (Adétugbò, 1973). Many students continue to have problem with it, particularly in the area of

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interference of local dialect with standard Yorùbá. The particular dialect of interest in this study is the Èkìtì which has been observed to interfere with the standard spoken Yorùbá language of students in Èkìtì State.

Olúmúyìwá (1990) investigated the influence of Èkìtì dialect on learners' spoken Yorùbá and found a difference in the number of vowel sounds of Èkìtì dialect and SY. He stressed that SY language has seven (7) oral vowels and five (5) nasalised vowels, while Èkìtì dialect has nine (9) oral and seven (7) nasalised vowels respectively. However, the mode of assimilation in the standard Yorùbá and Èkìtì dialect is the same.

The consonant sounds of Èkìtì dialects and that of the SY are not exactly the same. The consonant sounds of Èkìtì are twenty (20), while those of SY are eighteen (18) (Olúmúyìwá, 1990). Moreover, there are two consonant sounds /dz/ /kp/ present in Èkìtì dialect which are absent in standard Yorùbá sound inventory. According to Olúmúyìwá (1990), standard Yorùbá has seven (7) oral vowels, while Ekiti dialect has nine (9). Two of the Èkìtì dialect vowels not present in SY. They are: /i/ and /u/, while /ɛ/ is present in standard Yorùbá but absent in the nasal vowel sounds of Èkìtì dialect. The / i / and /u/ sounds interfere in the pronunciation of some parts of Ìpàwọ̀, Ilèmèje, Iyémorá and Ìtápají. For example:

/ì/ /ì/			
[ìsè]	"ìse"	-	Ìpawo
[ìdí]	"ìndin"	-	Ìtápáji
/u/,	/u/		
[ulé]	"ilé"	-	Ìjèsà-Ìsu
[usu]	"ixu"	-	Odè

The literature reviewed shows that the same trend of interference occurs in second language learning, whether the languages involved are different or are dialects of the same language.

Statement of the Problem

In Èkìtì Local Government Area (LGA) of Èkìtì State, Èkìtì dialect is the main medium of interaction among the indigenes and more

specifically, among the secondary school students, especially outside the classroom. In the junior secondary schools in the Local Government Area, SY is the medium of instruction during Yorùbá language lessons. Over the years, the researchers have observed that dialects influence learners' spoken standard Yorùbá ability in Èkìtì State.

The poor performance of students in Yorùbá language has become worrisome because these students have had several years of continuing contact with the language. The poor performance phenomenon has led researchers to investigate its causes and other related studies. There have been several works in this area of study. For instance, Abubakre (2001) attempted to ascertain how the mother tongue interferes in the learning of Yorùbá word pronunciation. Owóyelé (2002) analysed errors in the written English of Yorùbá secondary school students in Oyo and Osun States of Nigeria, while Adébáyọ̀ (2010) studied the pronunciation problems of Yorùbá-speaking junior secondary school students of Arabic in Ilorin. The studies cited have offered nothing directly regarding the interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of students who are native speakers of Èkìtì. This created a researchable gap, part of which this study addressed by focusing on interference features in the standard spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students in Èkìtì LGA of Èkìtì State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate interference features in the standard spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students in Èkìtì Local Government Area of Èkìtì State. Specifically, this study examined:

1. the Yorùbá consonant sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students;
2. the Yorùbá vowel sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students;

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3. whether there is a significant difference in the Yorùbá consonant sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of male and female Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students; and
4. whether there is a significant difference in the Yorùbá vowel sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the course of this study.

1. Which of the Yorùbá consonant sounds reflect interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students?
2. Which of the Yorùbá vowel sounds reflect interference features in the standard spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant gender difference in the Yorùbá consonant sounds which reflect interference features in junior secondary school students' Èkìtì-speaking standard Yorùbá.
2. There is no significant gender difference in the Yorùbá vowel sounds which reflect interference features in junior secondary school students' Èkìtì-speaking standard Yorùbá.

Methodology

In this study the descriptive survey research design was employed. The population comprised all junior secondary school students in Èkìtì State. The target population comprised the junior secondary school students of Yorùbá in Ikòlé, Èkìtì LGA. A multi-stage sampling technique was used for this study to select one hundred (100) Junior Secondary Schools Yoruba students that constituted the respondents. A researcher-designed test of interference features (TIF) was used as an instrument for data collection. The test was made up of 20 pictures of 20 different objects. Each of the

pictures was purposively selected to trigger the names of the objects depicted by the pictures. The first sound of each word representing the name of a particular object is a consonant sound resulting in a total of the 18 standard Yorùbá consonant sounds. Respondents were instructed to pronounce the name of the objects depicted by the pictures. This enabled the researcher to determine the correctness or otherwise of the pronunciation of specific sounds. The responses were used to determine the interference features in the students' pronunciation of the standard Yorùbá consonant sounds, short and long vowel sounds and syllable structures. The students' responses were recorded using a tape recorder. The recorded responses were transcribed for analysis. The instrument was validated by two measurement and evaluation experts. The test-re-test method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument and the correlation co-efficient yielded 0.62.

Results

Two research questions were generated which were answered using the percentage. The two research hypotheses formulated for this study were tested using the t-test statistic, at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question One

Which of the Yorùbá consonant sounds reflect interference features in the standard spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students?

In order to examine the Yorùbá consonant sounds which reflect interference features in the standard spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking JSS students, responses on the items were subjected to percentage analysis. The summary statistics is presented in Table 1.

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Table 4: Yorùbá vowel sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken Standard Yorùbá of the students (No. of students = 100)

S/N	Yorùbá Consonant Sound	No. of Correct pronunciation	Percentage of Correct pronunciation	No. of wrong pronunciation	Percentage of wrong pronunciation
1.	A	85	85	15	15
2.	E	65	65	35	35
3.	I	94	94	6	6
4.	Ị	76	76	24	24
5.	O	84	84	16	16
6.	Ọ	91	91	9	9
7.	U	52	52	48	48

(Field Work, 2019)

Table 4 shows the percentage of correct and wrong pronunciations of the Yorùbá vowel sounds by students. The table shows that the /u/ sound attracted the highest percentage of wrong pronunciation (48%), while the /i/ sound attracted the highest percentage of correct pronunciation (94%). This shows that there is a minimal vowel interference features from the Èkìtì dialect in the students' spoken standard Yorùbá.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant gender difference in the Yorùbá consonant sounds which reflect interference features in junior secondary school students' Èkìtì-speaking standard Yorùbá.

In order to determine the significant difference in the Yorùbá consonant sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of male and female Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students, the scores of respondents were categorised and analysed using the t-test statistical tool. The result is shown in Table 5.

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Table 5: t-test Analysis of Yorùbá consonant sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of male and female Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students

Respondents	Number of cases	Mean	SD	Df	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value	Decision
Male	45	12.47	5.16	99	.328	2.314	Not Rejected
Female	55	16.09	7.93				

(P<0.05)

From Table 5, the calculated t-value (.328) is less than the critical t-value (2.314) at .05 level of significance and for 99 degrees of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there was no significant difference in the Yorùbá consonant sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of male and female Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant gender difference in the Yorùbá vowel sounds which reflect interference features in junior secondary school students' Èkìtì-speaking standard Yorùbá.

In order to determine the significant difference in the Yorùbá vowel sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of male and female Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students, the score of respondents was categorized and analysed using t-test statistical tool. The result is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: t-test Analysis Yorùbá vowel sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of male and female Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students

Respondents	Number of cases	Mean	SD	Df	Calculated t-value	Critical t-value	Decision
Male	45	9.54	4.03	99	1.118	2.314	Not Rejected
Female	55	13.18	6.17				

(P<0.05)

Based on the results in Table 6, the calculated t-value (1.118) is less than the critical t-value (2.314) at the .05 level of significance and for 99 degree of freedom. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there was no significant difference in the Yorùbá vowel sounds which reflected interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of male and female Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students.

Discussion of Results

The first finding of this study revealed that eight (8) consonant sounds reflected interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students. The finding conforms to that of Ikúsẹ̀mí's (2018) who also reported that eight (8) consonant sounds reflected interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of Àwórì-speaking senior secondary school students. However, the finding of the study negates that of Adétọ̀nà's (2019) who found that only six (6) consonant sounds reflected interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of Èkó-speaking basic school pupils. The second finding indicated that the /u/ and /e/ vowel sounds attracted highest wrong and correct pronunciations respectively. The finding was similar to that of Ikúsẹ̀mí's (2018) submission that all the Yorùbá vowel sounds constituted minimal interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of Àwórì-speaking students.

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The third finding revealed that there was no significant difference in the Yorùbá consonant sounds which reflected interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of male and female Ekiti-speaking junior secondary school students. The finding corroborates that of Ikusemi's (2018) and Adétòná's (2019) who found no significance influence of gender on the consonant sounds that reflected interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of Àwórì-speaking senior secondary school students and Èkó-speaking basic school pupils respectively. The fourth finding revealed that there was no significant difference in the Yorùbá vowel sounds that reflected interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of male and female Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students. This finding negates Adétòná's (2019) submission that there was a significance in the vowel sounds that reflected interference features in the spoken standard Yorùbá of Èkó-speaking male and female basic school pupils.

Conclusion

Findings of this study revealed that eight (8) Yorùbá consonant sounds reflect interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students. These are:

/p/;/k/;/g/;/kp/;/gb/;/s/;/h/;/dz/. It was also found that one Yorùbá vowel sound reflects an interference feature in the spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students, this is /u/. The outcome of this study showed that there was no significant difference in the Yorùbá consonant sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking male and female junior secondary school students. The finding of this study also revealed that there was no significant difference in Yorùbá vowel sounds which reflect interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of Èkìtì-speaking male and female junior secondary school students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers of Yorùbá language should pay more attention to the various Yorùbá consonant sounds which tend to reflect interference features in the spoken Yorùbá of the Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students.
2. Èkìtì-speaking junior secondary school students should be sensitised by their teachers to the Yorùbá long and short vowels because of their phonemic significance and values.
3. Textbook writers and syllabus designers should pay better attention to sound selection, grading and presentation when writing and designing Yorùbá language textbooks in future.
4. More textbooks should be produced, especially in the area of Yorùbá phonology.

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