



A Syntacto-Phonological Analysis of the English Language Spoken by National Diploma (ND) I Students in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria

Olowu Ayodeji¹ --- Akinkulore Susan Olajoke²

^{1,2}Department of Languages, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria

(✉ Corresponding Author)

ABSTRACT

In this research paper, a careful attempt was made to critically analyse some documented texts using some levels of language. The texts analysed were recorded from seminars organized for ND 1 students of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo. The levels of language used in the analysis include syntax and phonology. The major objective of this research paper was to bring to the fore some syntactical errors and incorrect phonological outputs with a view to correcting them.

Keywords: Analysis, Syntax, Phonology, Students, Language.

DOI: 10.20448/807.2.1.33.38

Citation | Olowu Ayodeji; Akinkulore Susan Olajoke (2016). A Syntacto-Phonological Analysis of the English Language Spoken By National Diploma (ND) I Students in Rufus Giwa Polytechnic Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria. Global Journal of Social Sciences Studies, 2(1): 33-38.

Copyright: This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/)

Funding : This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

History : **Received:** 26 May 2016/ **Revised:** 13 June 2016/ **Accepted:** 17 June 2016/ **Published:** 20 June 2016

Publisher: Online Science Publishing

1. INTRODUCTION

This research work is essentially concerned with the critical analysis of the English language spoken by ND1 students of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo. The level at which the ND 1 students speak English is worrisome. Majority of the students finds it painfully difficult to construct a sentence in English language without significant errors.

Worthy of note is the fact that most of the students at this stage, if not all, had passed O, Level English at credit level, one begins to wonder how they sailed through without significant improvement on their written and spoken English.

Seminar is an academic activity. Students taking Technical English in Polytechnic has Seminar presentation as one of the topics, this is meant to develop their knowledge. But on the contrary, the speech delivery objective of the seminar is usually given high premium while much attention is not given to sentence construction and pronunciation. We observe alarmingly that such an exercise is tantamount to putting something on nothing, therefore, teachers of English language at this level need not pretend that most graduates of secondary schools have not mastered the basics of English language.

Hence, a considerable effort is made in this paper to analytically consider some documented texts. Two levels of language are employed; syntax and phonology.

2. SYNTAX

Grammar is defined variously as the innate knowledge of a native speaker about the workings of his language, as a book embodying the morphological and syntactic conventions of a language: as an aggregate of descriptive statements about the systemic interrelationship of structures within a language and as linguistic purists' instructional imperatives about language usages (Tomori 1977); (Tomori 1997) and (Osisanwo 1999).

Grammar is also seen as the field of linguistics that covers the conventions governing the use of any given natural language (Wikipedia). It is defined by McArthur (1992) as a "set of rules and examples dealing with the syntax and morphology of a standard language". Grammar is divided into morphology and syntax.

Syntax derives from a Greek word which means "placing together". It usually refers to the level at which the linguist accounts for the way words are put together to form sentences (Lyons1970). Syntax is a logical combination of words to form sentences. We can usually understand what individual words mean, but there is a need to know they relate to one another. The issue of how words relate to one another is the focus of syntax. Lyons (1977) defines syntax as the "study of the interrelationships between elements of sentence structure, and of the rules governing the arrangement of sentences in sequences". Under syntactic analysis in this paper, an attempt will be made to account for the structure of the units of grammatical analysis that are larger than the word: phrases, clauses and sentences. Here we shall critically look at the syntactic rules which the speakers must have internalised for them to generate meaningful utterances in the language. An attempt will be made to look at the competence that is, the system of rules an individual masters unconsciously about his language since competence underlies actual performance.

We shall also account for the sentences of our documented texts. We shall point out the sentences types, the directness, shortness and looseness of the sentences. Some complex words that punctuate interpretation will be looked into. Other syntactic elements such as subject-verb agreement, grammatical incorrectness etc. will receive our attention.

3. PHONOLOGY

Phonology is a branch of linguistics that studies speech sounds; how they are combined and manipulated for communicative purpose (Yule, 2010). Essentially, phonology is concerned with the ways in which the sounds and prosodic features are used in natural language. It is the aspect of linguistics which is concerned with speech as a purposeful human activity. Generally phonology is concerned with the sound system of a language. In our phonological analysis in this paper, we shall critically and carefully look at the various phonological outputs of our documented texts. Considering the fact that our texts are spoken by ND 1 students at their seminars, we would expect a lot of shortcomings in their output. We shall consider these shortcomings in the areas of over-differentiation of phonemes, under-differentiation of phonemes and phonemic substitution. Also, all other wrong realizations of sounds and sub-standard phonological usages will be pointed out.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research paper, there has been an elicitation of data from field observation. Close attention is particularly paid to previously recorded tapes from seminars organized for ND 1 students. In this paper, only three texts are selected for critical analysis. The study is restricted to three texts for the purpose of detailed and thorough analysis at two levels of syntax and phonology. Hence, the texts are analysed from the framework of syntax and phonology.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

We shall attempt to critically analyse our documented texts using the levels of language earlier mentioned. These are syntactic and phonological analysis.

6. SYNTACTICAL ANALYSIS

Text A

I want to speak on graduates unemployment in the country, although some students have graduated many years ago, yet they have not got a job. And the country leaders are claimed to have created more employments these recent years. My brother, we are deceive ourselves often.

Text B

Education is the best legacy they say. These days now, university education do not guarantee good jobs. For one reason or the other, the government has failed in the education sector. There are no equipments and training materials in our universities and polytechnics. Students don't receive enough training before graduation. If you send your child to school in this country, that your child may not be well equipped to face the challenges of the labour market. Hence, much deserve to be said on education in this country.

TEXT C.

Now, at the present time, one thing stands out and that is proliferation of crimes in the country. The entire country is bastardized, truncated and going nowhere. If you go school, in this country is problem. Because you may not get a job after graduation. The major reason why there are a lot of unemployment graduates is that our leaders are bad.

In text A, the first sentence is unnecessarily long. It would have been better if it were broken into two sentences. The first sentence would have ended with 'country'. Hence, we would have one simple sentence and one complex sentence. The expression "although some students have graduated many years ago, yet they have not got a job" is faulty. The subordinating conjunction 'although' introduces a subordinate clause and 'yet' another subordinator introduces another subordinate clause. Hence, if the whole sentence is broken into two, and the first sentence ends with 'country', we would be left with two undefined subordinate clauses. Either the first subordinator 'although' or the second subordinator 'yet' will have to go. The whole sentence will now read "although some students have graduated many years ago, they have not got a job".

The other part of the text “and the country leaders are claimed....” is also syntactically faulty. This quoted part is ambiguous. The question is “who is claiming to have created more employments”? Are the country leaders claiming that? or some people are attesting that the country leaders have not created more employments. The sentence would have been better if it reads “the country leaders are claiming.. ” to show that the claim is from the country leaders or “some people claimed that the country leaders have” to show clearly that the claim is not from the country leaders but from some people.

In text B, the structure “university education do not ...” is not proper. The word “education” is singular; hence the auxiliary verb ‘does’ would have been appropriate. Also the use of “for one reason or the other” is not appropriate in the context. “for one reason or another should have been more appropriate. The reason is that it refers to more than two reasons. The plural form of the word ‘equipment’ does not carry the ‘s’ inflectional morpheme. The plural morpheme is derived through suppletion. Hence, we would have equipment +θ = equipment (plural morpheme). In other word it retains its original shape even if it is in plural form. The phrase “that your child...” is grammatically faulty. ‘That’ and ‘your’ are both regular determinants and two regular determinants do not follow immediately each other in a clause structure. The expression would have been ‘that child of yours ...’

Also in this text, the following structure is syntactically faulty. ‘Much deserve to be said on’. This fault comes from the fact that the use of ‘deserve’ disobeys the rule of subject-verb agreement. The use of ‘deserve’ depicts the action of the singular indefinite pronoun (subject) ‘much’ and so should have been used in its singular form (i.e with the morpheme – s). In the first place, a better word could have been substituted for ‘deserve’.

In text C, one can see some clusters of words and phrases that are irrelevant as they either contradict or repeat what has been earlier stated. Thus, the phrase “at the present time” is redundant beside ‘now’ as both are semantically synonymous. The juxtaposition of ‘reason’ and ‘why’ is quite ungrammatical. These two words cannot be placed together in a clause structure.

The sentence, “the entire country is bastardized, truncated and going nowhere” is an unfortunate one. The speaker only engaged in banding together irrelevant and inappropriate adjectives. The word ‘truncated’ is completely out of order. The words ‘bastardized’ and ‘truncated’ are complex words that punctuate interpretations. ‘Going nowhere’ as used exhibits an amateurish command of English.

The structure ‘if you go school in this country is problem’ is syntactically incorrect. It looks more of a Pidgin English than Standard English. There is an omission of the ‘to’ infinitive before ‘go’. ‘In the country is problem’ is also semantically unproductive. Even though, the analysis done so far are by no means exhaustive but they could go a long way to assist students to unlearn wrong syntactic habit rampant among students of higher institution. We only hope that the students can improve on their use of English through their courses in English.

7. PHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Table of Text A

Word	Wrong Realization	Correct Realization
Graduate	/grædʊeits/	/grædʒueits/
Country	/kɒntri/	/kʌntri/
Created	/kreited/	/kreitid
Often	/ɔftn/	/ɔfn/
This	/dis/	/θis/

Table of Text B

Word	Wrong Realization	Correct Realization
Education	/edʊkeiɪn/	/edʒukeiɪn/
These	/dis/	/θi:s/
University	/junivæsiti/	/junivɜ:səti/
Guarantee	/ga:rənti:/	/gwærənti:/
Students	/stjudents/	/stju:dnts/

Table of Text C

Word	Wrong Realization	Correct Realization
Thing	/tin/	/θin/
Problem	/prəblem/	/prɒblem/
Country	/kɒntri/	/kʌntri/
Graduation	/grædueiɪn/	/grædʒueiɪn/

In Text A, there is a wrong realization of the word 'graduates' – the word was pronounced /grædʊeits/ instead of /grædʒueits/. The word 'country' was also realised as /kɒntri/. The correct pronunciation should be /kʌntri/. Some other mispronounced words are 'created' - /kreitid/ not /kreited/; 'often' - /ɔfn/ not /ɔftn/; 'this' - /θis/ not /dis/. It is commonplace to hear most Nigerian speakers of English to substitute the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ with the alveolar plosives /t/ and /d/ as in the case of 'the' /d/ instead of /θ/ or /ð/ as the case may be.

In text B, there are a lot of mispronounced words. 'Education' was realised as /edʊkeiɪn/ instead of /edʒukeiɪn/. 'these' was realised as /dis/ instead of /θi:s/. 'university' was wrongly realized as /junivæsiti/ instead of /junivɜ:səti/. There are also wrong realization of 'guarantee' and 'students'. 'guarantee' should be realized as /gwærənti:/ and not /ga:rənti/ while 'students' is realized /stju:dnts/ and not /stjudents/.

In text C, the dental fricative /θ/ is substituted with the alveolar plosive /t/ in the articulation of 'thing'. The correct articulation should be

/θɪŋ/ but what we heard was /tɪŋ/. The word 'problem' should be realized as /prɒblem/ but the speaker pronounced it as /prəblem/. The wrong realization of 'country' and 'graduation' have been earlier explained in our analysis. The correct realization should be /kʌntri/ and /grædʒueiɪn/ respectively.

As we can see the speakers of these texts substituted some phonemes available in their dialects for those that they cannot articulate in English. Such phonemes include /ð/, /ʌ/, /ʊð/, /l/ etc. meanwhile we also see over-differentiation of phonemes and under-differentiation of phonemes in the analysis we have done so far.

Generally, the realization of sounds in all these texts is far from the Received Pronunciation (RP). The phonological output of all these documented text is poor, substandard and grossly faulty. It is highly unexpected of students of higher institution.

However, it is a well known fact that virtually all Nigerian languages are tone languages and are syllable – timed, while our target language (English) is non-tonal and stress-timed. Most Nigerian languages make use of lots of inflections that largely contribute to their intonation patterns, which are most often carried over to English.

Hence all the speakers of our texts are LI speakers of Nigerian languages. There is an overriding tendency that their articulatory organs have been conditioned to the use of these languages which have different pronunciation patterns from English.

8. CONCLUSION

So far in this research paper, we have analysed our documented texts both syntactically and phonologically. Under syntactic analysis, there has been a highlight on few syntactic errors. Those errors have been promptly corrected. Also, the general phonological output of these texts has not been encouraging. Emphases have been placed on some wrong phonological articulations and these also have been generously corrected.

In all, this paper would serve as a gauge to measure the capacity of our students in the command of the English language. I suggest we still need to do a lot more to give our students a good grounding in the English language.

REFERENCES

- Lyons, J. (1970). Chomsky. London: Fontana.
- Lyons, J. (1977). Semantics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malmkjaer, K. (1991). The Linguistics Encyclopedia. London: Routledge.
- Mcarthur T. (1992). The Oxford Companion to English Language. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Osisanwo, W. (1999). An Introductory Analytical Grammar of English. Apapa: Femolous-Fetup.
- Tomori, S.H.O (1977). The Morphology and Syntax of Present-Day English – An Introduction, Ibadan: Heineman press
- Tomori, S.H.O (1997). "Syntax". In Yusuf (ed.) Introduction to Linguistics. Ijebu-Ode: Shebiotimo Publications. Pp 6-8.
- Yule, G. (2010). The Study of Language (Fourth Edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Online Science Publishing is not responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability, etc. caused in relation to/arising out of the use of the content. Any queries should be directed to the corresponding author of the article.