A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Phonological Skills Acquisition Among Teacher Trainees

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore phonological skills acquisition among teacher trainees from the sociolinguistic perspective. This is with emphasis on the views and attitudes of the teacher trainees towards the acquisition of a native-like accent. It also examines the phonological and phonemic awareness of the teacher trainees, so as to ascertain their levels of achievement in pronunciation. The study looks into the impact of teacher quality and teaching methods in pronunciation teaching. The descriptive survey research design and simple random sampling technique were adopted as forty NCE final year students of English aged between 18 to 25 were selected from the Department of English, Enugu State College of Education, Technical, Enugu State, Nigeria. The researchers collected data by administering a questionnaire to the respondents by hand. Anchoring on the theories of lateralization, fossilization, and atrophy the study reveals that the acquisition of a perfect native accent in a second language situation is a chimera or subterfuge. The study concludes that it is neither possible nor necessary; nor, in fact, even desirable to acquire a perfect native accent, for apart from other considerations, the amount of time and effort and the volume of exposure required to enable a non-native adult speaker to acquire a native accent in its totality are simply not available to anyone. There is no point, therefore, in expecting the impossible to happen.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, phonetics, phonology, accent, phonological awareness and phonemic awareness.

Introduction

The teaching of English as a foreign or second language has become more of scientific and technical in nature. It is nowadays more of a matter of technique than that of mastery over the subject. Every teacher of English is required to be constantly acquainted with the recent trends and techniques of English language teaching (Sahu, 2004).

Without a shadow of a doubt, every teacher in an English – medium institution is a model for the students in the class; the teacher's pronunciation, choice of words, phrases, idioms and sentences create the proper environment for learning English. Teachers, therefore, can teach the language or the subject only through their competence in the use of the language. Anchoring on this assertion, the concept of phonological skills, which Egwuogu (2008) describes as the ability to perceive, identify, recognize, pronounce and use the sounds of a language effectively and appropriately, is a sine qua non for sound language acquisition.

Phonological skills comprise both phonological awareness and phonemic awareness. Krishnaswamy and Krishnaswamy (2006) hazard that phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the spoken parts of sentences and words. Examples include: being able to identify words that rhyme, recognizing alliteration, segmenting a sentence into words, identifying the syllables in words, and blending and segmenting onset-rimes. On the other hand, phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. This includes blending sounds into words, segmenting words into sounds, and deleting and playing with the sounds in spoken words (Charlie, 2013).

Indubitably, linguists (for example Syal and Jindal, 2007) believe that the circumstances of the first language learning situation and the second language situation are completely at variance. While the L_1 learner has no previous linguistic exposure other than the L_1, L_2 learning comes when the L_1 has been acquired to an appreciable degree of efficiency. This simply means that phonological skills are acquired naturally in a first language situation (L_1), within the immediate environment through socialization, corrections and stabilization by close relatives, including parents and friends. However, in a second language situation, the learner has to be taught the skills formally.

Nevertheless, using the L_2 effectively puts enormous stress on the learners, despite being taught. The tendency of the learner when faced with L_2 tasks is to develop his/her own strategies by digressing into the L_1 for an outlet. In the bid to function effectively in the L_2 context, the L_2 learner transfers the L_1 acquisition and communicative strategies into the L_2 (Ngonebu, 2008). Linguists and educationalists have propounded various reasons for the

difficulties experienced by people in acquiring phonological skills in a second language situation. Selinker (1972) opines that the problem of difficulty of phonological skills acquisition in a second language situation is linked to bio-physical factors such as age, teacher factor, atrophy, fossilization, lateralization, etc. Sahu (2004), in his contribution, says that emotional and psychological factors are the main problems while Parker and Riley (2005) attribute the problem to socio-cultural, ethno-cultural, egocentric and egomaniacal factors. It is ad rem to categorically state that none of these studies has looked at the problem from the angle of the learners themselves as to examine what they themselves perceive as the problem that hinders their acquisition of phonological skills in a second language situation. This study, therefore, is an attempt to assess the perception and attitude of the learners towards acquisition of a native-like accent of English in a second language situation. It will examine the phonological skills of teacher-trainees in Enugu State College of Education (Technical), who has already received training in English pronunciation, and the impact of the phonetics and phonology lecturer on the phonological skills acquisition of the teacher trainees who are invariably the respondents.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to conduct a sociolinguistic analysis of phonological skills acquisition among teacher trainees. The specific objectives of the study are to:

i. assess whether teacher trainees in the Department of English have interest in acquiring a native-like accent
ii. assess the perception and attitude of teacher trainees in the Department of English towards a native-like accent.
iii. assess the impact of the teaching apparatuses – the teacher and the teaching methods – on the teacher trainees in the Department of English.
iv. assess the level of phonological skills of teacher trainees in the Department of English.

Research Questions

The primary research questions that the present study intends to answer are:

i. to what extent do teacher trainees in the Department of English show interest in acquiring a native-like accent?
ii. what are the attitude and perception of the teacher trainees in the department of English towards a native-like accent?
iii. what is the impact of the teaching apparatuses on the phonological skills of teacher trainees in the Department of English?
iv. what phonological skills do teacher trainees in the Department of English have?

Related Literature

English is learnt and used all over the world, not out of any imposition, but through the realization that it has certain inherent advantages. Today, the compulsions of learning English are no longer merely political, but scientific and technological. And no longer is English the language of Great Britain only, it is the language required by the world for greater understanding. Prasad (2008) says that it is the most international of languages.

The Concept of Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is the study of the effect of any and all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations and context on the way language is used, and the effects of language use on society (Charlie, 2013). Syal and Jindal (2007) opine that sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that deals with the explanation of the relation between language and society. Sociolinguistics differs from sociology of language in that the focus of sociolinguistics is the effect of society on language while the focus of the latter is on the effect of language on society. (Charlie, 2013). Sociolinguistics overlaps to a considerable degree with pragmatics. It is historically closely related to linguistic anthropology and the distinction between the two fields has even been questioned recently, says Ngonebu (2008). It also studies how language varieties differ between groups separated by certain social variables, for example, ethnicity, religion, status, gender, level of education, age etc. and how creation and adherence to these rules are used to categorize individuals in social or socioeconomic classes. Egwuogu (2008) affirms that sociolinguistics as a discipline is interested in speech behaviour of speakers of a language and the context in which speeches are made. It is also concerned with the different groups that use the speech and the entire gamut of relationships in terms of language attitudes and social status.

The Concepts of Phonetics and Phonology

Yule (1998) says that phonetics is the general study of the characteristics of speech sounds. For Ladefoged (1982), phonetics is concerned with describing the speech sounds that occur in the languages of the world. In the worlds of Anujeet (2011), it is the science that deals with the pronunciation and writing of sounds of speech. In our contribution, we add that phonetics is the branch of linguistics that studies speech sounds of languages and how the sounds combine with one another to form meaningful utterances. It comprises the study of the sounds of human speech or in the case of sign languages, the equivalent aspects of sign. Thus, it has branches like articulatory phonetics, auditory phonetics, acoustic phonetics, instrumental phonetics, experimental phonetics and forensic phonetics.

On the aspect of phonology, Clark et al (1990) posit that the term phonology is often associated with the study of the "higher" level of speech organization. Thus, phonology is

often said to be concerned with the organization of speech within specific languages, or with the systems and patterns of sounds that occur in particular languages. On this note, a general description of how vowel sounds can be made and perceived might be the province of phonetics while the analysis and description of the vowels of English might be assigned to phonology.

Akmajian et al (2010), assert that phonology is the subfield of linguistics that studies the structure and systematic patterning of sounds in human language. For Akmajian et al (2010), the term phonology is used in two ways. On the one hand, it refers to the description of the sounds of a particular language and the rules governing the distribution of those sounds. Thus, we can talk about the phonology of English, German, Igbo or any other language. On the other hand, it refers to that part of the general theory of human language that is concerned with the universal properties of natural language sound system (that is, properties reflected in many, if not all, human languages).

In our own view, we add that the knowledge of phonology helps us to know when to add or delete sounds or where we can change one sound into another. Also, the knowledge of phonology enables one to know the sounds that can occur at the initial position of words, medial positions and final positions, or sounds that can combine to form syllables. For instance, the vowel /ʊ/ scarcely occurs at the initial position of English words except in 'oops! /ʊps/, and the diphthong /ʊə/ may never be found at the initial position. The nasal consonant /ŋ/ cannot occur at the beginning of English words. All vowels can assume the medial position, but the vowels /ʊ /, /e/, /æ/ and /ʌ/ are hardly found at the final position in words. Again, there are no initial tetraphonemic consonant clusters in English. All these constitute the phonotactics of English.

In fine, the description of sounds in isolation is phonetics while the description of sounds as part of a system is phonology.

The Concept of Accent

In English, there exists no single form of pronunciation which alone to the exclusion of all other forms, could be regarded as "the correct pronunciation". The reality is that, since this language is used as an official language in many countries of the world or spoken widely, it has developed a good many spoken forms, which we call accents. Thus, we have accents known as South African, General American, Educated Scottish, Educated Canadian and Educated Australian, just to mention only those that are regarded as standard. It must be noted that all these accents are taken as correct, acceptable and even respectable forms of pronunciation in the countries or regions where they are in use, for they are the accents

used by the well-educated people there, who speak English as their mother tongue or L_1 (Sethi and Dhamija, 1999). As against these, there are also many non-native accents of English, that is, accents of English employed by those whose native language or mother tongue is not English. Thus, we have Nigerian English, Ghanaian English, Indian English, etc. The common accent of English that is taught in Nigeria is the Received Pronunciation, says Awonusi (1999). Received Pronunciation is the sort of English used by educated native speakers of South-East England. This sort of English language is used by Londoners who have had university education. However, Roach (1983) argues that the name Received Pronunciation is old fashioned and misleading. He states, "the use of the word 'received' to mean 'accepted' or 'approved' is nowadays very rare, and the word if used in that sense seems to imply that other accents would not be acceptable or approved of. Since it is most familiar as the accent used by most announcers and newsreaders on BBC and British independent television broadcasting channels, a preferable name is BBC pronunciation". Still according to him, this should not be taken to mean that the BBC itself imposes an 'official' accent. Individual broadcasters all have their own personal characteristics, and an increasing number of broadcasters with Scottish, Welsh and Irish accents are employed. However, the accent described is typical of broadcasters with an English accent, and there is a useful degree of consistency in the broadcast speech of these speakers.

Notwithstanding, Sehi and Dhamija (1999) opine that Received Pronunciation can also be called Educated South-Eastern British English, King's English, Queen's English, Oxford English, BBC English, Public School English or Standard British English. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (6th edition) uses the term 'General British', which it says includes RP and a range of similar accents which are not strongly regional. Though, RP is principally used in South-East England, it is not a particular dialect of any region. According to Gimson (1980), it is the implicitly accepted social standard of pronunciation. It is also described as the easiest to understand by the widest circle of speakers of the English language. In that connection, RP is the choice we have made for this study.

The Concept of Phonological Skills

Stanovich (1986) defines phonological skill as the conscious access to the phonemic level of the speech stream and some ability to cognitively manipulate representations at that level. He asserts that phonological skills are divided into phonemic awareness and phonological awareness.

Blevins (2006) says that phonemic awareness is the understanding or insight that a word is made up of a series of discrete (separate) sounds. Each of these sounds is called a phoneme. This awareness includes the ability to pick out and manipulate sounds in spoken

words. A related term, often confused with phonemic awareness is phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is an umbrella term that includes phonemic awareness, or awareness of words at the phoneme level. It also includes an awareness of word units larger than the phoneme. Phonological awareness, according to Eldrege (1995) includes words within sentences, rhyming units within words, beginning and ending sounds within words, syllables within words, phonemes or sounds (phonemic awareness), and features of individual phonemes such as how the mouth, tongue, vocal cords and teeth are used to produce the sound.

According to Adams (1990), there are five basic types of phonemic awareness task or abilities. Each task includes activities that become progressively more complex. Although some of the tasks can be more accurately labeled phonological awareness tasks, the goal of most of them is to create awareness at the phoneme level.

Theoretical Orientation

This study is hinged on four theories namely: lateralization theory, fossilization theory, atrophy theory and distinctive feature theory. Many researchers have carried out studies on the phonological skills of language learners in an L_2 situation, and most of the studies tend to put across the fact that it is almost impossible for second language learners to acquire a perfect native-like accent. In that connection, lateralization theory proposed by Eric Lenneberg in 1967 is worth discussing in extenso.

Lateralization, in psycholinguistics, is the idea that cognitive functions reside in or are controlled by either the left or the right side of the brain. However, Lenneberg's theory of lateralization is related to the concept of the critical period hypothesis or sensitive period hypothesis. This hypothesis claims that there is an ideal time window to acquire language in a linguistically rich environment, after which further language acquisition becomes much more difficult and effortful. The critical period hypothesis was first proposed by Montreal neurologist Wilder Penfield and co-author Lamar Roberts in the 1959 book Speech and Brain Mechanisms, and was popularized by Eric Lenneberg in 1967 with Biological Foundations of Language. In the words of Egwuogu (2008), Lenneberg is of the view that it is not possible for anyone to master the pronunciation of L_2 sounds after puberty. He went further to argue that at this time, the brain has passed maturation and language development tends to freeze. It is important to state that Lenneberg's theory has been largely discredited since lateralization does not necessarily increase with age, and no definitive link between language learning ability and lateralization was ever determined.
Another argument on adult's phonological acquisition is the fossilization theory. Fossilization or the cessation of learning is recognized as a widespread phenomenon in

second language acquisition. Neufield (1977) avers that fossilizable linguistic phenomena are linguistic items, rules and subsystems which speakers of a particular native language will tend to keep in their interlanguage relative to a particular target language, no matter what the age of the learner or amount of explanation or instruction he receives in the target language. Denham and Lobeck (2013) concur with Neufield (1977) by stating vehemently that fossilization is inevitable to an adult L_2 learner because adult learners have been conditioned to an accent typical of their L_1 sounds. Incontrovertibly, fossilization is one of the most pervasive, yet least well understood phenomena in adult L_2 learning – despite the substantial research effort devoted to it. In a state of the art article, Han (2013) evaluates fossilization research conducted over the last forty years and points to the advances made in conceptualization and methodology, and discusses the emerging predictive and explanatory power of different theories.

Han (2013) advocates her Selective Fossilization Hypothesis (SFH) and by re-examining previous findings within her new framework arrives at four generalization:

a. Fossilization is selective
b. Fossilization effects the acquisition of the structures, encoding variable form, meaning and function (discourse pragmatics) relations.
c. Fossilization is inspired by an L_1 – relativised mind, induced or reinforced by L_2 input attributes.
d. Fossilization is most evident in spontaneous production in which the learner engages in manufacturing his own meaning and linguistic expression (Han, 2013)

It is important to clearly state that Scovel (1988) has requested to be shown someone who learned an L_2 after puberty and who speaks that L_2 with a perfect native-like pronunciation. He claimed that at best such a learner will attain what is described as 'Joseph Conrad phenomenon', a phenomenon in which the Polish author achieved a native-like competence in English syntax and lexis, but still retained his Polish accent.

Closely related to the fossilization theory is the atrophy theory which suggests that the nerves and muscles used for articulation and production of sounds have been atrophied in adult learners. In terms of semantics, atrophy is the partial or complete wasting away of a part of the body. It has to do with the reduction in size of a cell, organ or tissue after attaining its normal mature growth.

Egwuogu (2008) avers that the theories of fossilization and atrophy revolve around the issue of age and maturation as factors that hinder acquisition of phonological skills in adult learners of English in a second language situation.

It is imperative to also discuss distinctive feature theory. Crystal (1991) says that distinctive feature refers to a minimal contrastive unit recognized by some linguists as a means of explaining how the sound system of languages is organized. Fromkin et al (2007) opine that distinctive features are the phonetic properties of phonemes that account for their ability to contrast meanings in words, for example, voice, tense, etc. A distinctive feature comes about by distinguishing one phoneme from another, hence, one word from another. For example, /f/ in fan and /v/ in van differ from each other in voicing because /f/ is voiceless whereas /v/ is voiced. What separates the two words, therefore, is the phonetic property of voicing. In that connection, distinctive features are the building blocks of speech sounds.

Distinctive feature theory is a means by which Trubetzkoy (1939), Jackbson (1941) and other Prague School members challenged the earlier assumption that the phonemes of a language are not susceptible to further analysis. In that connection, the proponents of this theory argue that the phoneme stands the possibility of being analyzed into distinctive features.

The patterning of regularities in the English sound system offers substantial justification for the analysis of phonemes as distinctive feature clusters. A sound knowledge of distinctive features will help second language learners to develop their phonological skills which include both phonological and phonemic awareness.

Methodology

The research adopts a survey research design. Through simple random sampling technique, forty NCE final year students of English aged between 18-25 years were selected from the Department of English, school of Arts, Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu State, Nigeria. They have all been taught speech work, and phonetics and phonology. The researchers collected the data by administering a questionnaire to the respondents by hand. Also, the respondents comprised students from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria namely Igbo (12 males, 12 females); Yoruba (4 males, 6 females) and Hausa (0 males, 12 females). The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A solicited demographic information while section B contained socio-phonological items soliciting information on students' perception and attitude towards acquisition of native-like accent, the impact of the teaching apparatuses – the teacher and the teaching method on the acquisition skills of the teacher trainees, and some of the items also sought to find out the actual phonological skills of the respondents. The researchers did the analysis using frequency counts and simple percentage.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The data collected through the questionnaire administered directly to the respondents were analyzed, and the general results are presented in tables. The researchers however, did the analysis according to the relatedness of items. The first five items on the questionnaire concentrated on the phonological background and perception of the respondents on the acquisition of a native-like accent. Items 6-12 were concerned with the attitude of the respondents towards acquiring a native-like accent while the rest of the items concentrated on the phonological skills of the respondents and the impact of the teaching apparatuses on the acquisition of these skills. Responses were accounted for according to sex and for easy and clear understanding, related items were analysed in separate tables to give rise to tables 2-4.

Table 1: General analysis of the perception, attitude and phonological skills of the respondents

S/N	Item	SA			
		M		F	
		F	%	F	%
1.	I have been taught English pronunciation	16	40	24	60
2.	After being taught English pronunciation, my pronunciation skills improved	8	20	16	40
3.	I speak English with my L_1 accent	10	25	14	35
4.	I speak English with a native-like accent	-	-	4	10
5.	I don't find it easy to alter my accent	8	20	12	30
6.	It is germane to acquire a native-like accent	2	5	8	20
7.	I feel proud to speak English like a native	-	-	8	20
8.	I want to speak English like a native	-	-	6	15
9.	I want to retain my identity as a Nigerian when speaking	8	20	4	10
10.	I want to sound internationally intelligible to other speakers of English	10	25	8	20
11.	I only want to achieve national acceptability	10	25	4	10
12.	I want to achieve both national acceptability and international intelligibility	10	25	10	25
13.	I can recognize sounds of English	16	40	24	60
14.	I can segment sounds of English	8	20	16	40
15.	I can perceive sounds of English	16	40	24	60
16.	I can isolate sounds of English	10	25	18	45

17.	I can detect rhymes in English	6	15	12	30
18.	I can manipulate sounds of English	4	10	10	25
19.	I can discriminate between sounds of English	4	10	6	15
20.	I can transcribe words in English	-	-	8	20
21.	My lecturer's accent has enhanced my pronunciation skills	-	-	6	15
22.	I understand more with phonology course books	6	15	8	20
23.	I understand more with audio visual aids	8	20	16	40
24.	I understand more with audio aids	4	10	6	15
25.	With additional teaching, I can acquire a native-like accent	-	-	8	20

A				**SD**				**D**			
M		**F**		**M**		**F**		**M**		**F**	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	10	4	10	2	5	2	5	2	5	2	5
4	10	4	10	-	-	4	10	6	15	2	5
-	-	4	10	14	35	10	25	2	5	6	15
2	5	6	15	2	5	4	10	4	10	4	10
4	10	8	10	-	-	6	15	4	10	8	20
-	-	6	15	6	15	6	15	8	20	4	10
4	10	12	30	8	20	2	5	4	10	6	15
4	10	6	15	-	-	8	20	4	10	6	15
4	10	12	30	-	-	4	10	2	5	4	10
4	10	8	20	-	-	4	10	2	5	4	10
6	15	12	30	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	15	6	15	-	-	-	-	2	5	2	5
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	10	4	10	-	-	-	-	2	5	2	5
4	10	6	15	2	5	2	5	4	10	4	10
6	15	8	20	4	10	4	10	2	5	2	5
4	10	6	15	2	5	8	20	6	15	4	10
6	15	8	20	6	15	4	10	4	10	4	10
4	10	10	25	4	10	2	5	8	20	6	15

4	10	10	25	2	5	2	5	4	10	4	10
6	15	6	15	-	-	-	-	2	5	2	5
6	15	6	15	2	5	4	10	4	10	8	20
4	10	10	25	4	10	2	5	8	20	4	10

KEY: SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, SD: Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree

Table 2: Phonological background and perception of the respondents on having a native-like accent

S/N	**Item**	**SA**			
		M		**F**	
		F	**%**	**F**	**%**
1.	I have been taught English pronunciation	16	40	24	60
2.	After being taught English pronunciation, my pronunciation skills improved	8	20	16	40
3.	I speak English with L_1 accent	10	25	14	35
4.	I speak English with native-like accent	-	-	4	10
5.	I don't find easy to alter my accent	8	20	12	60

A				**SD**				**D**			
M		**F**		**M**		**F**		**M**		**F**	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	10	4	10	2	5	2	5	2	5	2	5
4	10	3	10	-	-	4	10	6	15	2	5
-	-	4	10	14	35	10	25	2	5	6	15
2	5	6	15	2	5	4	10	4	10	4	10

Table 2 shows the responses of the subjects to items 1-5 in the questionnaire. From the results of data analysis, all the respondents (40% male and 60% female) have been taught English pronunciation and this helped their pronunciation skills. However, while 32 respondents representing 80% agreed that they still speak English with the L_1 accent despite being taught English pronunciation, only 8 female respondents representing 20% agreed that they could speak English with a native-like accent. Anyway, this is doubtful as they could not substantiate their claim practically in an informal oral test in which they were asked to say "boats float, goats don't" and "she is nearly in tears during this period". Nonetheless, a majority (60%) found it difficult to alter their voices. These analyses also show that none of the male learners claimed to speak English with a native-like accent. The

finding here tallies with the argument that adult L_2 learners (especially males) are incompatible with L_2 culture and that they have rigid linguistic ego in which they tend to establish their cultural, sociolingustic and ethnolinguistic identity by maintaining their accent (Neufield, 1977).

It is also in consonance with Scovel's (1988), Selinker's (1972) and Lenneberg's claims of fossilization, lateralization and atrophy as causes of difficulties in acquiring a native-like accent.

Table 3: Respondents' interest and attitude towards acquisition of a native-like accent

S/N	Item	SA			
		M		F	
		F	%	F	%
6.	It is germane to acquire a native-like accent	2	5	8	20
7.	I feel proud to speak English like a native	-	-	8	20
8.	I want to speak English like a native	-	-	6	15
9.	I want to retain my identity as a Nigerian when speaking	8	20	4	10
10.	I want to sound internationally intelligible to other speakers of English	10	25	8	20
11.	I only want to achieve national acceptability	10	25	4	10
12.	I want to achieve both national acceptability and international intelligibility	10	25	10	25

Table 3 shows the analysis of the data on items 6-12. These items focused on the attitudes of the subject on the acquisition of a native-like accent and phonological skills. As can be seen from the results of the data analysis, 22 respondents representing 55% agreed that it is necessary to acquire a native-like accent while 18 respondents representing 45% disagreed. Among those that said it is necessary, 16 of them representing 40% were females while 15% were males. This shows that the females are more interested in acquiring a native-like accent. This, according t Egwuogu (2008), is buttressed by the fact that males are not proud having a native-like accent and only four of them would want to acquire that competence as against 18 females representing 45% who would want to acquire such competence. On the achievement of national acceptability and international intelligibility in pronunciation, 34 respondents (14 males and 20 females) representing 85% indicated that they would want to achieve international intelligibility level while 36 subjects (16 males and 20 females) representing 90% would want to achieve national acceptability. However, 38 respondents (16 males and 22 females) agreed that they want to achieve both

intenaitonal intelligibility and national acceptability. This finding confirms the view of Baruah (2006) that our pronunciation should not be merely intelligible, but it should, at the same time, be acceptable to the social circle we belong to or aspire to belong to. It follows, therefore, that the concepts of international intelligibility and national acceptability must be taken care of in teaching pronunciation in Nigerian schools.

Table 4: Analysis of Respondents' Phonological Skills

13.	I can recognize sounds of English	16	40	24	60
14.	I can segment sounds of English	8	20	16	40
15.	I can perceive sounds of English	16	40	24	60
16.	I can isolate sounds of English	10	25	18	45
17.	I can detect rhymes in English	6	15	12	30
18.	I can manipulate sounds of English	4	10	10	25
19.	I can discriminate between sounds of English	4	10	6	15
20.	I can transcribe words in English	-	-	8	20
21.	My lecturer's accent has enhanced my pronunciation skills	-	-	6	15
22.	I understand more with phonology course books	6	15	8	20
23.	I understand more with audio visual aids	8	20	16	40
24.	I understand more with audio aids	4	10	6	15
25.	With additional teaching, I can acquire a native-like accent	-	-	8	20

-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	15	6	15	-	-	-	-	2	5	2	5
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	10	4	10	-	-	-	-	2	5	2	5
4	10	6	15	2	5	2	5	4	10	4	10
6	15	8	20	4	10	4	10	2	5	2	5
4	10	6	15	2	5	8	20	6	15	4	10
6	15	8	20	6	15	4	10	4	10	4	10
4	10	10	25	4	10	2	5	8	20	6	15
4	10	10	25	2	5	2	5	4	10	4	10
6	15	6	15	-	-	-	-	2	5	2	5
6	15	6	15	2	5	4	10	4	10	8	20
4	10	10	25	4	10	2	5	8	20	4	10

Table 4 shows the analysis of respondents' phonological skills. The results of the data analysis revealed that all the 40 respondents can recognize and perceive English sounds, 36 of them representing 90% can segment and isolate English sounds, but while 24 respondents representing 60% can manipulate English sounds. Also, only 22 respondents representing 55% can transcribe. This shows that the subjects have a moderate level of proficiency in listening and pronunciation skills, manipulation of the sounds to form words and transcription of words are problems to them. This confirms Charlie's (2013) asseveration that adults vary in their pronunciation and reception of L_2 sounds.

Items 20-25 on the same table solicited information on the impact of the teaching apparatuses on the subjects. The results of the data analysis revealed that 20 respondents representing 50% agreed that the teacher's competence in pronunciation (represented by his accent) enhanced their pronunciation skill. This confirms the assertion that teachers' experience and competence are determinant factors in phonological skills acquisition (Baruah, 2006).

In addition, on the effectiveness of the teaching methods (use of audio and audio visual aids), 36 respondents representing 90% and 22 respondents representing 55% agreed that they could understand pronunciation instructions more while 22 respondents also representing 55% (comprising 18 females and 4 males) agreed that with more instructions, they can acquire more skills in pronunciation.

Conclusion

The study investigated phonological skills acquisition among teacher trainees from the sociolinguistic perspective, and with emphasis on their views and attitude towards the acquisition of a native-like accent – Received Pronunciation. It also looked into the phonological and phonemic awareness of the participants, so as to ascertain their levels of achievement in pronunciation. Also, the study examined the impact of teacher quality and teaching methods in pronunciation teaching. The results of the data analyzed established that adult teacher trainees, especially the male students were not interested in acquiring a native-like accent. Most of the participants do not want to discard their L_1 accents, which they believe are part of their cultures and linguistic pride.

Nevertheless, they agreed that in learning English pronunciation, they would want to achieve international intelligibility and national acceptability, which may not necessarily imply a native-like accent, but a mastery of the sounds for decoding and encoding of messages in the context of English as an international language. According to Baruah (2006), it is neither possible nor necessary to speak like the native speaker of English.

Indeed, since English is often regarded as "a Nigerian language", it is natural that we should have our own distinctive way of speaking it. And there is nothing to be ashamed of. A pronunciation, so long as it fulfills the criterion of intelligibility, is neither superior nor inferior; it is the people speaking it who make it so.

The implication of this is, therefore, that in the teaching and learning of English pronunciation in an L_2 situation, efforts should be made to achieve international acceptability and national intelligibility. Acquisition of a native-like accent in a second language situation is a chimera or subterfuge because of fossilization, lateralization, atrophy, sociolinguistic and ethno-cultural pride. The essential thing, as stated by Baruah (2006), is to maintain the crucial sound contrast through which a language works. To achieve this, it may not be necessary to learn some of the finer contrasts used in RP. The sounds which do not play a crucial role in differentiating meaning can be legitimately ignored. Emphasis should also be placed on assimilation, elision and other non-segmental features which can impede understanding of utterances. Depreciating the undue emphasis given on the acquisition of good pronunciation, Newmark (2010) says "it is more important to speak a language fluently and say a lot of things in it than to have a marvelous pronunciation, but not know what to say".

In fine, for students to acquire international intelligibility and national acceptability, qualified and experienced teachers should be employed to teach pronunciation courses, and language laboratories that are fully equipped with audio and audio visual materials should be put in place.

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