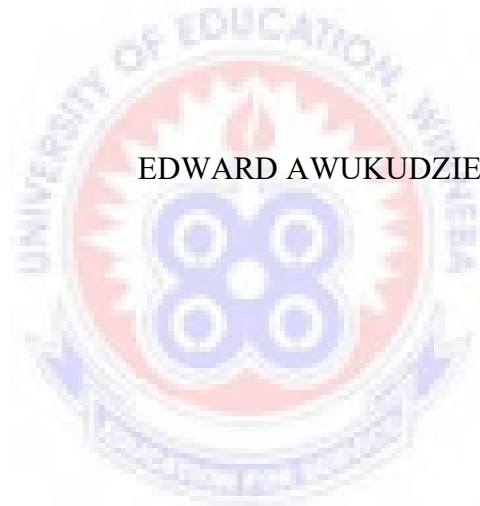UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

CAUSES OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION ERRORS AMONG SENIOR HIGH

SCHOOL STUDENTS. A CASE STUDY OF DABALA SENIOR HIGH

TECHNICAL SCHOOL

EDWARD AWUKUDZIE

2014

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EDWARD AWUKUDZIE

(8090080011)

A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS, THE FACULTY OF LANGUAGES, SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M. PHIL) IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
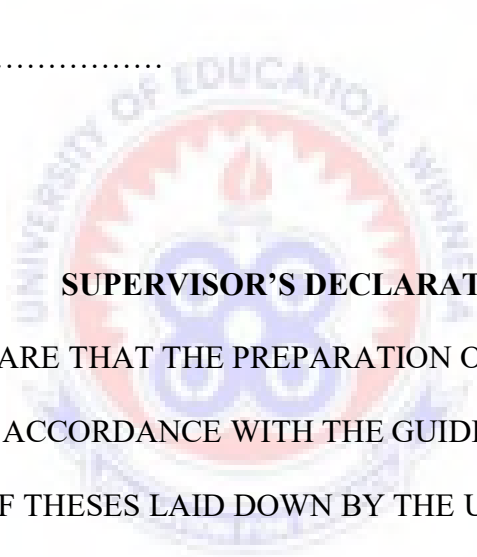
2014

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, EDWARD AWUKUDZIE HEREBY DECLARE THAT EXCEPT FOR

REFERENCES TO OTHER PEOPLE'S WORK WHICH HAVE DULY BEEN

ACKNOWLEDGED, THIS THESIS IS THE RESULT OF MY OWN WORK AND

IT HAS NEITHER IN WHOLE NOR IN PART BEEN PRESENTED

ELSEWHERE.

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE…………..................

DATE………………………….

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE PREPARATION OF THE THESES WAS

SUPERVISED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GUIDELINES AND

SUPERVISION OF THESES LAID DOWN BY THE UNIVERSITY OF

EDUCATION WINNEBA (UEW).

SUPERVISOR'S NAME: Dr, Charles Owu-Ewie

SUPERVISOR'S SIGNATURE-…………………….

DATE-…………………………

Dedication

I dedicate my work to my mother Cynthia Ablaga Afudego, my wife Miss Mercy

Aguadze, and lovely son Lambert S.K. Awukudzie for their support.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CA (Contrastive Analysis)
CRDD (Curriculum Research, and Development Division)
EA (Error Analysis)
EGE (Educated Ghanaian English)

ESL (English As A Second Language)

GE (Ghanaian English)

GES (Ghana Education Service)

JSS (Junior Secondary School)

L1 (Language 1)

L2 (Language 2)

NNS Non-native Speaker (of English)

NS Native Speaker (of English)

RP (Received Pronunciation)

SHS (Senior High School)

SSS (Senior Secondary School)

SL (Source Language)

TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

TL (Target Language)

Abstract

The research reported in this document investigated the causes of pronunciation errors among Senior High School students in the South Tongu district which is located in the Volta region of Ghana. In designing the research, a Case study of qualitative approach was employed, using Dabala SHS as a case study. A purposeful sampling technique was used in selecting two teachers and sixty students for interview. Observations and interviews were the strategies or instruments used for the collection of data which was codified for analysis and discussion. The findings of the research revealed that a number of factors influence students pronunciation which eventually led to poor pronunciation or pronunciation errors. Notable among them were: the L1 influence or transfer, the inter-lingual phenomena, lack of teachers with the expertise to teach pronunciation, and the absence of language laboratories and equipment for pronunciation teaching. In view of the above findings, it was recommended that language laboratories are constructed in all schools across all levels in the district to facilitate language teaching, materials and equipment for language teaching and learning should be provided to all schools, and finally, teachers of English pronunciation should be given a regular in-service training to equip them with the latest skills in language teaching methodology. It is believed that if the above recommendations are adhered to, they will go a long way to reduce the ever increasing pronunciation errors among Senior High School students in the South Tongu.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The teaching, learning and use of English as a second language in Ghana are very crucial to social and economic development; hence, it's teaching and learning at all the levels of education in this country.

According to C. R. D. D. (2008), **"**Language is a key issue in our existence. It is the very essence of our humanity and an important as well as effective tool for socialization. As individuals or members of a social group, our ability to function effectively and efficiently in almost all spheres of life depends fundamentally on our language skills." In Ghana, English is used as the official language and medium of instruction in our schools from upper primary school level to the tertiary levels. The need to study English is, therefore, crucial for students as well as all sectors of the population since it is the principal medium for teaching and learning, for official work and for international communication. The Senior High School is the second level of education in Ghana. At this stage, students would have been introduced to the basic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills must be improved considerably to give students the confidence as they communicate in the language. Another issue worthy of note at the Senior High School level is that students will begin to study some essential rules of language use (ibid).

According to C.R.D.D. (2008),"The general aims of teaching English as a subject at the Senior High School level are to:

1. Reinforce language skills and competencies acquired at the Junior High School level.

2. Develop further the language skills and competencies which were acquired at the Junior High School level.

3. Improve the communicative competence of students and give them the confidence to communicate.

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4. Generate in students the love for reading for pleasure and the development of creative potentials.

5. Raise students' level of proficiency in English usage and their ability to communicate with other users of English.

6. Prepare students to function effectively on their own

A. in offices and other work situations

B. in tertiary institutions

7. Develop in students human values for life.

8. Enable all Senior High School products to deal effectively with the accumulated knowledge of their chosen fields and be able to communicate such knowledge through the speaking and writing of English.

It is for the above rationales and general aims that interest in the variety of English spoken in Ghana has engaged the attention of language teachers and researchers for some time now – just as interest in different uses of languages at the global level have. But opinions are divided on it, for, some like Sey (1973), and Ahulu (1994), contend that forms that are different from native British standards are deviations, often influenced by transfer from learners' local languages or insufficient grasp of the English language rules, and so should be drilled out of learners, while others, including Grieve, (1964), Dolphyne and Norrish (1974), and Dolphyne (1988), perceive that the variety of English spoken in Ghana should be regarded as a regional modification of the native speaker model. Grieve, (1964) admits that … *specific Nigerian and Ghanaian varieties of English exist…*and advises that they are … *accurately described* …so that they can be used *…as a basis for either teaching or testing*. This advice seems not to have been taken seriously, since there is as yet no description of GE (Ghanaian English) to help the teacher or examiner. Until the GE is codified, the RP (Received Pronunciation) remains the standard for teachers, examiners, researchers, and other users of the English language.

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The rather interesting and laudable aims and objectives of teaching and learning English have become an illusion in senior high schools in the South Tongu District, since students hardly speak or read without committing pronunciation errors. What aggravated an already worst situation is that, the West African Examinations Council which is an examining body fails to test students' productive skill in the final SHS examination for oral English paper (3), contrary to what is stipulated in the English syllabus. This loop-hole on the part of the West AfricanExaminations Council does not encourage some of these students to take the study of pronunciation seriously. According to Volkoff and Golding, 'formal assessment, if sensitively andappropriately done, could actually help improve learners' confidence, which is often lower than the person's actual skills suggest'.(Volkoff and Golding 1998:27).

Koranteng, (2006) intimated that, in 1955 the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) instituted experimental tests in oral English, modelled on the McCallien tests, for the school certificate examinations for member states. Ghana presented her first batch of candidates in 1959 – a total of about 916 candidates from twenty-two of the fifty-nine secondary schools at the time. It has not been possible to get a copy of this paper but the 1963 paper which was alleged to have been modelled on the first and subsequent ones, bear a lot of semblance to the McCallien tests discussed. It tested candidates in the production of vowels and consonants, stress and intonation, as well as enunciation and also conversation skills. It is difficult to tell how the schools that presented candidates prepared them for the examination, but the results available show that the majority of the candidates failed the paper. This reflects a general trend. Over the years, not much attention was given to the teaching of spoken English, due, among other things, to feelings of incompetence to teach it on the part of many teachers teaching English. This was understandable as many schools had teachers teaching English with very limited linguistic knowledge of the English language. Teachers also complained of lack of time to teach spoken English, though the

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underlying reason was that because Oral English was not a requirement for admission into tertiary institutions, teachers, and indeed learners, by considered time spent teaching/learning it 'wasted'. The problems of large class sizes and inadequate teaching/learning materials did not encourage meaningful teaching of the subject. In the schools that taught it, only the segmental features were covered. Koranteng's (2006) observation that …*nobody really takes teaching spoken English seriously, the few who do, deal with it at the segmental level only*… is very true here. Often, even for those who teach it, they only hastily drill candidates for the examinations at the last minute and so the 'teaching' makes little impact on their general use of the language.

The educational system has changed significantly now. A ten-year primary / middle section with possible entry into secondary school anywhere from Primary six to Middle Form four, with a five-year secondary education, plus a two-year sixth form leading into tertiary education, has given way to a six-year primary plus a three-year junior secondary initial basic education. This is a terminal point though it could be followed by a three-year senior secondary programme – which may also be terminal. From this level, several avenues are open into tertiary education, teacher education, and other professional studies. The language policy from 1972 was that English was the medium of instruction from Year Four onwards, and that generally gave the basic school leaver nine years of English – the first three years of which he was supposed to be learning it so that it could become the medium of instruction later. From September 2002, however, a new policy of English- from -year -one was introduced. This policy, it is envisaged, will give the pupils more exposure to, and practice in the use of English while they are still very young. In the old system it was common to find very little English used in the primary – sometimes through to the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level. The causes or factors responsible for this state of affairs are beyond the scope of this work, though one can readily tell that because most of the teachers, especially in the rural areas are not trained for language teaching, they cannot

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surmount the peculiar problems of teaching a second language, often without basic teaching / learning materials, and so resort to the use of L_1 instead of helping pupils to master the English language.

Educationists, examiners, and researchers are yet to assess the impact of the new system on the learner, but the general belief is that the present educational system has not improved the situation in any significant way. Teachers confirm that the present JSS system provides a weak foundation in terms of spoken English. Much of the speech work planned for in the syllabus is not covered in the classroom. At the Senior Secondary School (SSS) level however, it is a compulsory part of the English language paper, and one would have thought it would help the teaching in some way. Instead it comes with its own limitations. The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) explains that since Oral English is now a compulsory part of an existing paper, a lot of logistics and personnel will be needed to organize the test nation-wide. Thus the test is now reduced to only the listening comprehension aspect leaving out the production part. And one wonders what exactly is tested in a spoken language test that only tests listening and writing, and not speaking! The primary concern of this research is therefore, to find out the causes of pronunciation errors that students of Senior High Schools who study English as a second language make in the course of speaking and reading.

It is generally observed that, students have poor pronunciation skills, hence, poor speaking and reading. This affects their general output in the English language, especially comprehension and the oral test conducted by the West African Examinations Council. This is a serious problem because students' inability to pronounce words accurately will affect their ability to communicate fluently. It is widely believed that students' inability to pronounce words accurately which eventually affect their ability to speak fluently is blameable on the approach to the teaching of this aspect of language (Breitkreutz, Derwing

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and Rossiter, 2002). It is for this reason thatI decided to find out the causes of poor

pronunciation among Senior High School students.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Pronunciation teaching is an important aspect of language teaching. A second

language learner needs sufficient instructions in pronunciation skills acquisition in order to

speak or read fluently in that language. Current observation reveals that though,

pronunciation teaching is part of the English syllabus, it is not given priority on the time-

table. Again, testing and evaluation of pronunciation do not encourage students to approach

the study of it seriously. For example, instead of the oral English test examining or testing

students' speaking and reading skills, it rather tests their listening skill. In other words,

students only go to the exams room to listen and tick what they feel are correct.

General observation reveals that, teachers of pronunciation (English) do not have the

confidence, or they are not professionals in pronunciation teaching.**(**MacDonald, 2002).

Further, earlier works on English pronunciation in Ghana have not actually described the

causes of English pronunciation errors, but have concentrated on the absence of specific RP

vowels and consonant phonemes in Educated Ghanaian English (EGE), Adjaye (1987:19).

Such differences …are first attributed to L1 transfer or under-differentiation, and spelling

… following Sey's (1973) treatment which talks of deviant pronunciations of vowels and

consonants as characteristic of the Ghanaian variety due among others to transfers from the

L1.

Adjaye reports that writing on English for African students, lists and describes the

RP phonemes, compares them with the Twi (and Yoruba) phonemes and suggests how

students can learn to produce the RP ones. Schachter (1974) mentions areas of similarities

between Twi and RP and suggests suitable Twi substitutes. Yankson (1971) makes a

contrastive analysis of English and Fante consonants and discusses the learning problems

for the Fante learner of English making his work not too different from the earlier two cited.

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All these works describe GE based on observations and deductions, concluding that any sounds the Ghanaian languages lack are non-existent in GE. All they do is to isolate areas of difficulty and suggest different means of helping students learn to produce RP. If all they do is pitch GE against RP and describe perceived differences as deviant, and no attempt has been made to describe the causes of the errors in English language as it is used in the Senior High Schools in Ghana, then, this is a serious omission in the system. Subsequently, it has not been established that any empirical research has been carried out in the South Tongu district on the causes of English pronunciation errors among Senior High School students. It is for the above gap/omission that I would like to fill by conducting an investigation to establish the causes of English pronunciation errors among Senior High School students.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to find out the causes of pronunciation errors among students of S.H.S in the South Tongu District, the effects of these errors on communication and how the problem can be reduced.

1.4 Research Design

The investigation into the phenomenon of pronunciation errors was carried out in the South Tongu district which is located in the Volta region. The district has three senior high schools. These schools combined, have a population size of about three thousand five hundred (3,500) students. In selecting both teachers and students for my interview, I used purposeful sampling technique. This technique was employed because the research topic required persons with the expertise and knowledge to provide the necessary information needed. In view of the above reasons, and the population of the school, I selected two teachers based on their expertise in language teaching for observation and interview. I selected a total of sixty students from the programmes (five programmes), and across all the levels (1- 4), and the selection of the students cut across gender. The initial plan was to carry out this research in two out of the three Senior High Schools in the district. I however,

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could not go by the initial plan due to financial constraint. I therefore chose Dabala Senior High Technical School for the study, because of convenience and proximity. Out of about eight hundred and sixty students, sixty boys and girls were sampled for interview. Six classes of about four hundred students across all the levels were observed for two weeks. Two teachers were also sampled out of five teachers from the department of English for observation and interview. I used observations and semi-structured interviews to collect my data for analysis. I chose interview as one of my instruments for data collection because it allows probing and posing of follow-up questions by the interviewer.

1.5 Research Question

This study answers three (3) fundamental questions:

1. What are the causes of poor pronunciation among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

2. What are the effects of such a problem among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

3. How can poor pronunciation be reduced among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

The above questions set the parameters within which I structured my interview questions. For example, questions were asked on:

(a) the causes of pronunciation errors,

(b) the effects of the errors on communication,

(c) the methods of teaching pronunciation

- role of teachers,

- role of students,

- role of educational planners, and

(d) the possible remedies to these problems.

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1.6 Significance of the Study

This study when successfully completed will help to provide solutions to the speaking and reading problems that students of senior high schools (S.H.S) in the South Tongu District face as a result of poor pronunciation skill. Again, language teachers, especially English teachers will heave a sigh of relief, since some of their pedagogical problems as well as lack of confidence in teaching pronunciation will be addressed. Students and other stake-holders will not be left out, since the findings and the suggested remedies will be of tremendous benefits to them.

1.7 Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitation: This research is limited to only the Senior High Schools in the South Tongu District. It looked at the causes of pronunciation errors, the methods used in teaching pronunciation and the effects on reading and speaking and what can be done to solve the problems. Dabala Senior High Technical School is used as the case study, and it has a population of about eight hundred students. A total of sixty students (boys and girls) and two teachers were sampled for the interview.

Limitation: Obviously, a research of this nature and magnitude involved a lot of money and time; this partially inhibited the early completion of the work in some way. Equipment for the data collection, such as, recording gadgets had also limited the fast and smooth recording of the investigation, because sometimes the gadgets run-out of battery in the middle of the observation or the interview session. In some cases, you will realized after the entire observation of about forty-five minutes that you had not recorded anything, and this had to be done again. Interviewees' dedication and commitment to interview sessions were limitations that drew back smooth and early completion of the research. For example, on two different occasions, I had to re-schedule the interview session to different days for both teachers and the students. It was therefore necessary for me to take care of some of the inconveniences in order to come out with valid research findings.

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1.8 Summary

The summary of chapter one looks at the general introduction of the study which includes the rationale for use of English language as a medium of instruction and communication in Ghana. It also looks at the general aims of teaching and learning English at the senior high schools in Ghana. Subsequently, the background to second language errors (in English) was looked at. Here, factors or phenomena that cause difficulties which eventually led to errors in English sounds production were discussed. (Koranteng 2006). I also considered other elements such as the statement of the problem which provided the exact issue or issues to be investigated, the purpose of the study which highlighted the focus of the investigation, the significance as well as the limitation and the delimitation of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

South Tongu District is located in the southern part of the Volta Region. It shares administrative boundaries with Ada East District which is in the Greater Accra Region in the Western part, Akatsi South District in the Eastern part, the Anlo District in the Southern part, and the North Tongu district in the Northern part. Sogakofe is its administrative capital. The inhabitants of the South Tongu District are predominantly farmers and traders. The district can boast of three Senior High Schools, out of which two are located in Sogakofe and the other one at Dabala. The catchment areas of these schools are their immediate communities which are all rural settlements. Students from these communities are not privileged to have quality education as a result of the rural nature of the schools. These schools lack infrastructure and equipment that usually do not attract teachers to these schools. General observation reveals that the majority of the students from these schools hardly spoke or read a sentence without pronunciation errors. This affects their performance in English comprehension and oral test of English examinations conducted by the West African Examinations council. These interesting revelations compel the researcher to establish the truth or otherwise of the observation through investigation into the;

1. causes of pronunciation errors,

2. the effect of these errors on communication, and

3. how to remedy the problems.

The researcher's work of findings can only be valid and acceptable when it is compared or linked to what the existing literatures say on pronunciation and pronunciation errors. I therefore reviewed the existing literatures by looking at the following:

1. Theoretical framework

2. Definitions of pronunciation,

3. Causes of pronunciation errors,

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4. Methods of teaching pronunciation, and

5. The effect of pronunciation errors on communication.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

A number of theories/approaches have been adopted and used to explain or describe the non-native varieties of English or the English spoken in the Outer and Expanding circles (Kachru 1983) depending on how a non-native variety is perceived in relation to native speaker varieties. These approaches have been elaborated by Bamgbose in Dakubu (1997:13-15). For example, *Contrastive Analysis* (CA), which sought to predict the errors that learners make by identifying the linguistic differences between their L1 and the target language. The underlying assumption of CA was that errors occurred primarily as a result of *interference* when the learner transferred native language 'habits' into the L2. Interference was believed to take place whenever the 'habits' of the native languages differed from those of the target language. CA gave way to Error Analysis (EA) as this assumption came to be challenged. Whereas CA looked at only the learner's native language and the target language (i.e. fully-formed languages), EA provided a methodology for investigating learner language. For this reason EA constitutes an appropriate starting point for the study of learner language and L2 acquisition.

This study is however, analysed on the basis of the Deviation approach. The Deviation approach sees …*non-native Englishes as imperfect varieties…* representing stages that learners have to pass through in the process of acquiring a new or Target Language (TL). The stages referred to as Interlanguage by Selinker,(1972), or Approximate Systems by Nemser, (quoted in Selinker, 1972) are viewed as a kind of continuum, which begins from native language (L_1) or Source Language (SL) and spans to Target Language (TL). The deviation approach assumes that as a learner is exposed more and more to the TL,

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he will leave behind his imperfections and get closer to the norm. This implies that learners should be exposed to more instruction, to speak like the native speaker. This approach sees an error as a deviation from the norms of the target language. This definition raises a number of questions, however. First, there is the question regarding which variety of the target language should serve as the norm. Using native speaker English, for instance, Quirk, (1990) lists … *American English, Australian English, British English … New Zealand English …* among others though he admits that only American and British English are the …*varieties that are institutionalised in the sense of being fully described and with defined standards observed by the institutions of state.*

The general practice, especially where classroom learners are concerned, is to select the standard written dialect as the norm. This, of course; is fundamentally wrong if the goal is to describe learners' oral production. Nor is it always possible to adopt the standard spoken variety as the norm. Some learners are exposed to varieties of the language which differ from the standard dialect. For example, in comparison with the norms of British or American standard written English the utterance "*She coped up with her problem very well*" is erroneous, but in comparison with norms of educated Zambian English such an utterance can be considered correct.

A second question concerns the distinction between *errors* and *mistakes* (Corder 1967). An error (in this technical sense) takes place when the deviation arises as a result of lack of knowledge. It represents a lack of competence. A mistake occurs when learners fail to perform their competence. That is, it is the result of processing problems that prevent learners from accessing their knowledge of a target language rule and cause them to fall back on some alternative, non-standard rule that they find easier to access. Mistakes, then, are performance phenomena and are, of course, regu1lar features of native-speaker speech, reflecting processing failures that arise as a result of competing plans, memory limitations,

and lack of automaticity. Corder argues that the Error Analysis (EA) should be restricted to the study of errors (i.e. mistakes should be eliminated from the analysis): However, apart from the problems of identification that this distinction raises, it also assumes that competence is homogeneous rather than variable. Thus, if learners sometimes use a correct target form and sometimes an incorrect, non-target form, it can- not necessarily be concluded that the learner 'knows' the target form and that the use of the non-target form represents a mistake. It is possible that the learner's knowledge of the target form is only partial; the learner may not have learnt all the contexts in which the form in question can be used. For example, a learner may have no difficulty in using the target language form in some linguistic contexts; *My sisters are older than me;* but produce an error in others; *My three sister are older than me.*

L2 learners are not alone in making errors. Children learning their first language (L1) also make 'errors'. They regularly produce utterances like the following:

*I goes see Auntie May. (=1 went to see Auntie May.)

*Eating ice cream. (= I want to eat an ice cream.)

*No writing in book. (= Don't write in the book.)

Also, even adult native speakers sometimes make 'errors'. For example, Bloom, (1970) says that they may sometimes omit a grammatical morpheme as in:

*My father live in Gloucester. (= My father lives in Gloucester,)

But it is probably true to say that these 'errors' are not generally thought of as errors in the same senses as those produced by L2 learners. Whereas L2 learners' errors are generally viewed as 'unwanted forms', (George, 1972), children's 'errors' are seen as 'transitional forms' and adult native speakers' errors as 'slips of the tongue'. Corder (1974) suggests the following steps in EA research:

1. Collection of a sample of learner language

2. Identification of errors

3. Description of errors

4. Explanation of errors

5. Evaluation of errors.

However, many studies do not include Step 5 and, in fact, the evaluation of learner errors has generally been handled as a separate issue, with its own methods of enquiry. Corder (1967) noted that errors could be significant in three ways: (1) they provided the teacher with information about how much the learner had learnt,

(2) they provided the researcher with evidence of how language was learnt, and

(3) they served as devices by which the learner discovered the rules of the target language. Whereas (1) reflects the traditional role of EA, (2) provides a new role that is of primary interest to the L2 researcher because it could shed light on (3)- the process of L2 acquisition. It should be noted, though, that many of the researchers who carried out error analyses in the 1970s continued to be concerned with language teaching. Indeed, the attempt to discover more about L2 acquisition through the study of errors was itself motivated by a desire to improve pedagogy.

This work looks at the causes of pronunciation errors as a result of how the articulation of sounds of English, called Ghanaian English deviates from RP. The work will codify and analyze data collected, and discuss the findings under the three thematic areas of this research. It also looks at how poor pronunciation features of GE affect communication, and how the errors could be reduced. RP is used here because it is the one variety of English that has been most described and is often set as the target for learning and teaching

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English to native and non-native speakers alike, since there is as yet no description of GE to help the teacher or examiner. Until the GE is codified, the RP remains the standard for teachers, examiners, researchers, and other users of the English language. Though it is claimed that learners hardly ever get there. This makes it clear that RP as the norm cannot be jettisoned in our quest to reach a standard.

2.2 Definitions of Pronunciation

Dolphyne (1989) intimated that pronunciation is that part of speech or communication that is intelligible to both the speaker and the listener. Besides, Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Godwin (1996), consider pronunciation as the ability to listen to and imitate rhythms, and sounds of the target language without the intervention of any explicit information. They again state that pronunciation is about the use of phonetic alphabets, articulatory descriptions, chart of the vocal apparatus, contrastive information, imitations, and production.

Further, Rodney (2002), views pronunciation as the role of individual sounds and sound segments, that is, features at the segmental level as well as supra-segmental features such as stress, rhythm, and intonation. From the above definitions, I can say that pronunciation includes the production of sounds from the target language sounds, segmental and supra-segmental which are intelligible to the listener.

2.3 Causes of Pronunciation Errors

A number of factors contribute to the errors that learners commit during pronunciation of English words in course of their reading and speech. Some of these factors are linked to wrong pronunciation of segmental and non-segmental features, as well as non-linguistic factors. This section therefore reviews earlier works on the causes of poor English pronunciation in relation to the research question one below.

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2.3.1 Segmental features

Previous attempts at 'describing' English pronunciation in Ghana have not actually described but have tended to concentrate on the absence of specific RP vowels and consonant phonemes in Educated Ghanaian English (EGE), notably the lack of opposition between RP /i:/ and /I/ as in 'sheep' vs. 'ship', says Harman (1931) – quoted in Adjaye (1987:19). Such differences …*are first attributed toL₁ interference or under-differentiation, and spelling* … following Sey's (1973) treatment which talks of deviant pronunciations of vowels and consonants as characteristic of the Ghanaian variety due among others to transfers from the L₁.

Adjaye reports that Harman, (1931) writing on English for African students, lists and describes the RP phonemes, compares them with the Twi (and Yoruba) phonemes and suggests how students can learn to produce the RP ones. Schachter (1974) cited in Koranteng, (1992), mentions areas of similarities between Twi and RP and suggests suitable Twi substitutes. Yankson (1971) makes a contrastive analysis of English and Fante consonants and discusses the learning problems for the Fante learner of English making his work not too different from the earlier two cited. All these works describe GE based on observations and deductions, concluding that any sounds the Ghanaian languages lack are non-existent in GE. All they do is isolate areas of difficulty and suggest different means of helping students learn to produce RP. But all three had problems in terms of a thorough scientific description. For instance, Harman does not even acknowledge the existence of /I/ and /ʊ/ as independent phonemes in Twi, and so concludes that /I/ and /ʊ/ are not sounds in GE, at least for Twi speakers of English. Schachter's only works with Twi learners of English and Yankson's only Fante learners and in the learning of English consonants only.

Sey's (1973) work, which Dolphyne& Norrish claim to be …*the first step towards the discovery of concrete and organized information on Ghanaian English…* devotes only an appendix to the discussion of pronunciation in GE, and… *only deals with the deviant*

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pronunciation of vowels and consonants, thus giving the wrong impression that these are the important features of EGE pronunciation… (Dolphyne& Norrish 1974: 90). But even though it exhibits a more objective discussion of EGE than the earlier works, Sey's does not present any detailed description of GE pronunciation and so it is no wonder he admits it himself that … *only a separate and thorough treatment can do the subject* (of EGE speech) *any justice…* (Sey, Ibid:143).

Adjaye (1987) cited in Koranteng (1992), investigates EGE pronunciation and presents an analytical description of it based on research data from the English pronunciation of thirty-eight Akan, Ewe and Ga speakers of English as a second language, selected from three of the four different stages of education as discussed in Sey (1973), namely; elementary, secondary / technical, and university and higher. She describes English as spoken by Ghanaians by examining the segmental and non-segmental and contextual features of the English they use, and concludes that it is evident from the data that there is an accent that can be labelled EGE with describable features… different from Akan, Ewe or Ga, all of which also differ from one another. For instance, she concludes that there is a tendency in GE to use only 20 of the 24 RP vowels, with the vowels /ə/, /ʌ/, /æ/ and /3:/ constantly replaced by /a/ or /ɛ/.

Gyasi (1991:27) and Asante (1996:134-5) re-echo Ghanaian use of English and identify the phenomenon of spelling pronunciation as one of its characteristic features which results in pronunciations such as [haʊsɪs] instead of /haʊsɪz/; [brɪnɣ] or [banɣ] for /brɪŋ or /bæŋ/ and the sounding of /b/ in *climb, tomb, comb*, etc, a phenomenon, Asante explains…*is the result of teaching English through the written medium…* Asante also identifies features such as syllable-timed instead of stress-timed rhythm, and the use of alveolar stops /t/ and /d/ for dental fricatives /T/ and /ð/.

The phenomenon of substituting alveolar stops for dental fricatives, for instance, had been commented on earlier by Adjaye (1987), and also by Gyasi(1991), who reports that

pairs like *thank* and *tank; those* and *dose; they* and *day; thin* and *tin* are rendered homophonous. The issue of the use of dentals is corroborated by Dako (in print), who in a research on dental use (in print) reports that Ghanaians tend to substitute /t/ or /d/ for dentals /T/ and /ð/, when initial or final, but she found female speakers a little more cautious with dental use than males, due among other things to female users' tendency to keep to standards. She used university students as her subjects.

Writing on …'the uniqueness of Ghanaian English pronunciation…' Bobda (2000) contrasts the English spoken in Ghana with that spoken in other West African countries, and claims that:

> *...the distinctiveness of GE involves the restructuring of RP / ℘/, /ə/, /ə:/and /æ/ with orthographic (er, re, or, our, ur), and shows for example that /a / and /ɛ/ are substituted for a wide range of RP segments.*

In other words, Bobda's claim is that the Ghanaian speaker uses the vowels /a/ and /ɛ/ in many words where RP will use /ʌ/, /ə:/ or /ə/. Thus *money* /mʌnI/ is [mani], *first* /fə:st/ is [fɛst], *murmur* /mə:mə/ is [mɛ:ma], and so on.

In addition to these works, Owusu Ansah(1991) in a paper: "Vowel Harmony in Ghanaian English", claims that the average Ghanaian exhibits a *backward* harmony tendency in English. Using 100 subjects in a 50 – item disyllabic and polysyllabic word list, he concludes that vowel harmony has become a feature of GE generally, and not just for speakers whose native languages exhibit the tendency. Thus the Ghanaian says [risi:v] for /rIsi:v/ (*receive);* [disi:v],for /dIsi:v/, (*deceive*) and [dike:] for /dIkei/ (*decay*). In these contexts, OwusuAnsah thinks there is a harmonization of vowels in the words because the strong /i:/ or /ei/ of the second syllable influences the /I/ of the weak initial syllable – due to the tendency to use vowels from the same advanced or neutral tongue root as dictated by the Vowel Harmony system.

Schachter (1974) and Sey (1973), talk of the tendency to devoice especially final voiced consonants as often found with speakers in stage 1 and 2 (Sey: 15-16) and illustrate with words like:

/konsi:f/   for   conceive,
/se:f/   for   save,
/si:f/   for   sieve,   and/ro:p/   for   robe.

This tendency, according to Sey, is traced to the general difficulty with final voiced consonants among Ghanaian speakers, as well as among some other non-native speakers of English. There is also the pronunciation confusion of –ing and –en (the present and the past participle) contrasts in certain English words. Sey says the phenomenon is widespread. Thus: *giving* / *given,* and *taking* / *taken* are confused as the following examples from Sey (Ibid :152) show:

> The Government has *taking* the trouble to have a few of these languages developed (instead of - *taken*). I am sure the writer is unaware of the … in-service training *giving* to new entrants (instead of - *given*). Many developments have been *taken* place (instead of - *taking*). Common people played their part by *given* cows and sheep. (for- *giving*).

Sey reports of instances of reduction of final consonant clusters in EGE especially in continuous speech, thus;

E.G.E. Pronunciation		E.G.E. Spelling	
/ krais /	for	Christ	
/ fɛ:s /	for	first	
/ las /	for	last (year)	
/ mis /	for	mist (alba)	
/ po:s /	for	post (office)	
/ pri:fɛt /	for	prefect	(Sey 1973:151)

Such pronunciations are attempts at reducing the complex consonant cluster structure in English by Ghanaian speakers whose own L_1 operate very simple consonant structures especially in coda position. On vowels, Sey reports that the common pronunciation differences are:

(i) The use of /a/ as a substitute for RP /æ/, /A:/ and /ə/, giving pronunciations like:
GE   RP

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kat	for	kæt	--	cat
salmén	for	sæmən	--	salmon
pam	for	pA:m	--	palm
hat /ha:t/	for	hA:t	--	heart
lɛta	for	letə	--	letter
alaʊ	for	əlAʊ	--	allow

<center>(Culled from Sey,1973:145).</center>

This is confirmed by Gyasi who reiterates that …*much work is done by the vowel* /a/ *in*

GE… and continues that in addition to its use in replacing /æ/, /A:/, and /ə/ as cited by Sey

… *it is heard where RP uses* / ʌ/ *as in* <u>cut</u> *and* <u>cup</u>,… also.

(ii) The use of /é/ for RP / ℘ / and /ʌ/; to yield pronunciations as:

/bés/, /sén/	instead of	/bʌs/, /sʌn/	for *bus, son*
/lév /, /dézin/	instead of	/lʌv/, /dʌzn/	for *love, dozen*

<div align="right">From Sey, Ibid</div>

Gyasi adds that the word *bus,* is interestingly pronounced as /bas/, by Twi speakers

but by Ga speakers as /bés/ and Fanti speakers as /bɛs/; *cup* and *but* are pronounced as /kap/

and /bat/ by Twi speakers, as /kép/ and /bét/ by Ga speakers, and as /kɛp/ and /bɛt/ by Fanti

speakers respectively, thus collaborating what Sey had intimated earlier (1973), that Fantes

use /ɛ/ for /ʌ/, when he said…*in some areas, particularly Cape Coast, RP* /ʌ/ *is very often*

pronounced /ɛ/.

(iii) The tendency to use /u:/ for both /ʊ/ and /u:/;

Thus: *good, book, push, cushion, woman, look* which should have /ʊ/

as well as: *food, true, rude, rubric*, etc. all have the /u:/ vowel in GE.

(iv) The replacing of /ɛ:/ for /ə:/ in words such as: *first, thirst, serve, stern, work, worst,*

burn, church.

(v) The lack of distinction in RP /i / and /I/ resulting in expressions such as:

sit	for	seat
live	for	leave
fillers	for	feelers

<center>32</center>

Hence, one hears: "People will not *seat* down"… instead of *sitdown*, and; "Before I take my *sit*"… instead of *myseat.* (From Sey ibid: 150)

Sey (as well as Harman, and Schachter) give various reasons for this lack of distinction phenomenon, including; from Sey (1973:148-149) issues such as:

> *the spelling system of both English and the L₁,*
> *the fact of having learnt English from books, and/or*
> *a generalization of some native English usage.*

On the diphthongs, Gyasi reports that the vowel /aI/, in words like …*shine, pine, fly…*presents no problems to GE speakers, but in words like…*gay, say* or *may…*there is a marked absence of diphthongization. What one hears is a lengthening of CV No.2 without any perceptible glide. The diphthong /éI/ as in …*boy, join,*… etc presents no difficulty, but /əʊ/, as in …*go, hold*, or *those*… is replaced by C V No.7 /o:/

2.3.2 Stress and intonation

Though Sey claims differences between RP and GE are …*more marked in sentence stress patterns and intonation…* his work is silent on this aspect of the pronunciation of English in Ghana. Gyasi however has this to say on word stress in Ghanaian use:

> *For a large number of words the correct stress patterns are used.*
> *For others, the stress patterns differ radically from those of RP. In*
> *cupboard, for instance, both parts receive equal stress so that one*
> *hears /kapbé:d/ instead of /kʌbəd/. Words pronounced with variant*
> *stress patterns include decorate (decoRAte); colleague*
> *(coLLEAGUE); premeditated (PREmediTAted); congratulate*
> *(congratuLATE); photographer (photoGRApher); investigate*
> *(investiGATE); confiscate (confisCATE); caprice (CAprais).* Gyasi
> (1991:28).

In an earlier study (Koranteng (1992)) this investigator attempted a statement of GE focusing on the non-segmental features and concluded among others that:

1. Ghanaian speakers do not pay attention to stressed and unstressed syllables in English and often give strong vowels to the latter. This way they have a longer duration than they are given in native English and the rhythm of the utterance is lost in GE.

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2. Ghanaian speakers give a lot of stress to pronouns which are not often stressed in RP. An example is the relative pronoun, as in:

Arthur is the man ⌣⌣who gave you those driving lessons.

Also pronouns in polar questions are stressed, for example:

Did ⌣⌣you see ….?

May ⌣⌣I use …?

Can ⌣⌣he come early? etc., giving the impression that a contrast is implied, though Ghanaian speakers do not have that in view.

Intonation in GE is the feature least researched, but Koranteng (1992) had this to say about intonation in Ghanaian use:

3. Ghanaian speakers do not make the distinction between Tune 1 and Tune 2 tags as required by these sentence types. For example:

They are not the same, are ⊂they?

You will play, won't ⊂you?

which should both carry Tune 1 tags were read with Tune 2 tags in her study.

4. Words in parenthesis in GE are stressed and often given the falling tune or a level one regardless of the tone in the main sentence. (Culled from Koranteng (1992: 101-104)

Studies into the phonology of GE, be it segmental or non – segmental, is not new, especially if it is assumed that statements on new Englishes in general and West African English in particular by scholars like Spencer (1971) Wells (1982), Plat, et al (1984), and Trudgill and Hannah (1985), also apply to Ghana. There are also direct statements on GE by Harman, (1931), (quoted in Adjaye, 1987) Schachter (1974), Grieve (1964), as well as Sey (1973), Adjaye (1987) Gyasi (1991), Koranteng (1992), Asante (1996), and Dako's and Owusu-Ansah's works quoted.

Some features indicated in the works cited above as particularities of GE are also shared by most non-native Englishes. These include the replacement of the apico dental fricatives /T/ and /ð/ by the stops and /t/ and /d/, or by neighbouring fricatives in West African English, (Spencer 1971) thus rendering pairs like *thank / tank*; *those /dose;they / day*; homophonous. Kachru (1983), Platt et al (1984), and Bailey and Görlach (eds) (1984), as well as Sey (1973), Dako (in print), all attest to this as a fact. It is reported that these dentals replaced by /t/ and /d/ as above, are rendered /s/ and /z/ in East African pronunciations (Hancock &Angogo 1984: 306).

Descriptions of NigE by Jibril (1986), Awonusi (1987, 1990, etc) as well as Banjo (1969), Bamgbose (1971, 1983, 1997), and on CamE by Bobda (1994) all point to this or that feature difference, as this work cites earlier. For instance, consonant features include the devoicing of final consonants in non-native Englishes, like Platt et al's (ibid: 40) report of final devoicing in words, including; *save, five, robe, bees, bags, dogs,* and Bailey and Görlack, (1984), as well as Kachru's (1986) report that there is a neutralization of the clear and dark /l/ distinction.

On noticeable varieties in the vowel system of English in the outer circle, Platt et al summarise the general tendencies in the rendition of vowels in the New Englishes as:

> *a tendency to shorten vowels;*
> *a lack of distinction between long and short vowels;*
> *a tendency to replace central vowels by either front or back vowels;*
> *a tendency to shorten diphthongs and to leave out the second element*
> *in a diphthong*
>
> (Quoted in Bobda 1992:37)

Koranteng (2006) intimated that most of these statements apply to GE, and as has been explained, the writers pitch the variety they consider against RP, describing perceived differences as deviant.

Looked at in this way, it is clear that none of these works describes GE using the parameters and / or with the thoroughness that RP is described, if all they do is pitch GE

against RP and describe perceived differences as deviant. No attempt has been made to describe the language as it is used in Ghana. This is a serious omission in the system since it is clear that there are not many who speak RP – not even native speakers of English do.

2.3.3 Linguistic factors

Sackeyfio, (1996) intimated that, the problems identified under linguistic factors stem from two main sources, (errors that stem from the first language of the learner, and errors that stem from second language itself.

1. L1 interference (First Language of the Learner).

Pronunciation errors have long been thought to be caused by the transfer of phonological aspects from the L1 to the L2. According to Dolphyne, a speaker's first language often affects the way he or she speaks a second language and this is why it is sometimes possible to tell which part of Ghana a speaker comes from, from his spoken English alone. (Dolphyne, 1999)

According to her, the interferences help the listener to tell which part of Ghana the speaker comes from. E.g. unemproyment is a plobrem (by the Asante speaker, for 'unemployment is a problem'),

He cot it (by the Ga speaker, (for 'he cut it')

Let him go (/e/ not /ɪ/ by the Ewe speaker for 'let')

It is my sue (by the Gurenne speaker, for 'it is my shoe') The above examples of utterances distinguish one Ghanaian English speaker from the other.

2. Second-language sources:

i. Sheer complexity problems

According to Sackeyfio (1996), some of the problems encountered by the Ghanaian learner stem from the fact that the affected features in English are s*o very complex, so difficult to explain, so defiant of analysis* that they are tough on his brain thereby leading to errors.

However, a significant portion of errors may be attributed to inter-language transfer. According toSelinker (1972), inter and intra speaker variables exist which may be attributed to the other recognised factors discussed below.

2.3.4 Inter-language transfer

When a language learner attempts to produce an L2 sound their relative success at approaching the target is reliant on their ability to disassociate their L2 utterance from their repertoire of L1 phonemes and allophones. Disassociation is often necessary because two languages may contain sounds which seem to be the same but are produced by differing articulatory motions. They are therefore acoustically different and may be perceived to be divergent from the target by the listener. While it is possible for adult speakers to learn to produce acoustically acceptable approximations of targets such as the troublesome /l/ and /r/ distinction over time (Flege, 1995) the level of success varies between individual speakers. It is a common remark that the more successful producers of near-native sounding pronunciation are *rare*, *gifted* or *talented*. Their success could be more reasonably attributed to their ability to disassociate phonological aspects of the L1 and L2 and thus minimize the transfer of phonological features from one language to the other. Assumptions regarding the variable success of learners' L2 also concern the relative difficulty different *nationalities* encounter in their production of acceptable English pronunciation. As discussed previously, a very useful observation to consider in the contrastive analysis of various language groups and their L2 English production is that nationalities with a vastly different phonetic inventory to that of English, often find it easier to learn to produce an acceptable phonetic target in the L2 than a nationality whose L1 contains contrasting sounds (Flege's Speech learning model 1987, 1995). For example, Japanese students have an advantage over Koreans when it comes to the production of English vowels. As Japanese only contains five simple monophthongal vowels to Korean's ten, Japanese English speakers only have five vowels to interfere with the twelve monophthongs present in (Australian) English.

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There are however some *universal* (inter-lingual) consistencies in vowel length. Low vowels are always longer than high vowels, and back vowels tend to be longer than front vowels. For this reason vowel duration is often regarded to be a *universal*. More of this phenomenon of universals and their significance to inter-language transfer is discussed below.

1. Avoidance

Avoidance is a general tendency for learners to avoid those aspects of production that they know to be problematic for them. (Schachter, 1974). Avoidance strategies may be employed at the grammatical as well as at the phonemic level. At the grammatical level an article (a/an, the) may be left out of the utterance when the student suspects an article is necessary and yet chooses to avoid using one rather than running the risk of selecting the wrong one. The source of misperception of the Korean speaker's message could easily be misdiagnosed as a deviance from the L2 target phonemes /æ/ and /p/. However, any English language teacher worth their salt would tell you that L2 learners of English often avoid articles because the internalisation of the rules for correct article use are almost an impossibility. In the example below (if the quotation is accurate) the Korean speaker has avoided the indefinite article *an* and has produced the grammatical utterance "Yes, I need adaptor" *not* "Yes I need *a dapter*." The speaker may have mispronounced /æ/ as something resembling /ɒ/ but this is unlikely, the Korean transfer strategy would produce something closer to /ɛ/ or /ʌ/. However, /p/ could easily be misperceived as /k/ over the telephone's narrow bandwidth. Yet, it is unlikely that *redundancy* would fail to intervene. The listener could have searched their mental lexicon for an appropriate word candidate (or asked for clarification) if the speaker had used the article and said *I need a dopter*. So clearly the salient source of this misunderstanding is grammatical avoidance, not phonemic error. At the phonemic level a typical example of avoidance is the avoidance of using words which contain *difficult to pronounce* phonemes such as /z/ for Koreans. Therefore, the speaker

may give a false impression of the extent of their phonemic pronunciation errors by avoiding the use of words such as *zoo*.

2. Over-generalisation and over-elaboration

Over- generalisation is described by Richards (1973) as the application of a newly learnt target language rule to an inappropriate form or context. For example, pitch, duration and intensity as features of stress being used too often to highlight every content word in an utterance. Over-elaboration is usually caused by exposure to language acquisition strategies that are heavily reliant on reading and writing, to the detriment of speaking. In an attempt to produce accurate target language utterances, the learner produces un-native like stilted and formal speech which may be syntactically accurate but unnatural (Tarone et. al, 1983).

3. Hypercorrection or overcompensation

This phenomenon can be found to occur after students have become aware of a negative transfer effect and arises from the strategy they employ to deal with this.(Wardhaugh, 1996). For example, Japanese does not possess the CV /si:/ (see) but does contain the CV /ʃi:/ (she), so the expected negative transfer effect is the production of /ʃi:/ (she) for the word *see*. A Japanese English learner may realise that the sounds /s/ and /ʃ/ must be distinguished before the vowel /i:/ in the L2 but has not learnt exactly when to do this. The learner therefore acquires the notion of /ʃ/ + /i:/ is not allowed in English and applies it even when it is necessary in the production of the word *she*. Thus the learner overcompensates and produces /si:/ instead of /ʃi:/.

4. Elision and epenthesis

Elision is the non-articulation of a sound and epenthesis is the addition of a sound to a word in the L2. Both are a negative transfer effect of phonotactic constraints in the L1. According to Curriculum Research and Development Division in Ghana, some speakers of English commit pronunciation errors such as:

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1. Dropping some consonants in the cluster. i.e. *"*pos"* instead of *"post"* *"*firs"* instead of *"first"*, "test" instead of "text".

2. Interchanging positions of consonants, i.e. *"*deks"* instead of *desk"* *"*aks"* instead of *"ask"*.

3. Inserting vowels into the cluster, i.e. *"*milik"* instead of *"milk"* *"*filim"* instead of *"film"*. *(C.R.D.D, 2008)*

5. Stylistic variation

Variations in style of speech occur according to psycholinguistic factors such as the situation, the context, the addressee(s) and the location (Bolinger, 1975). In the gathering of speech data, factors which may affect the authenticity of the data are: the self-consciousness felt by the subject and the pressure to perform in the situation of a studio recording; unfamiliarity with the context or lexis of the test sentences; the pressure to achieve a 'good result' for the addressee (the tester); and the artificial environment and discomforts associated with remaining still in a recording studio.

6. Letter to sound rule confusion

Learners of English, whose L1 contains a phonemic orthography, often learn to speak English through reading and writing and consequently attempt to interpret English pronunciation from the orthography. The inconsistent letter to sound rules of English lexis may result in mispronunciation, not because of an inability to produce the phonemes, but due to the interference of spelling.

2.3.5 Non-linguistic but explainable factors

(i) Pure Human Condition

Sackeyfio (1996) indicated that, the first non-linguistic factor that comes to mind is the purely human condition that Chomsky (1965) uses to draw attention to the differences between competence and performance. Chomsky as cited in Sackeyfio, says that a speaker's performance does not always reflect his competence because each time a

person speaks or writes, that is each time the language-user performs, his output may be adversely affected by such physical conditions as;

1. Memory limitation or forgetfulness

2. Tiredness,

3. Embarrassment

4. Hurry. The above human factors, according to Chomsky, affect the learner's speech production.

(ii) Social Mobility

According to Sackeyfio (1996), social mobility is one of the factors that contribute to children making pronunciation errors. She indicated for example that, when a Fanti child suddenly says;

My name is called kofi, we can conclude that either the child had had Twi-speaking English teacher some time ago in his early schooldays or that he had lived in a Twi-speaking area. Hence an error that occur in the English of a child may bear traces of varieties of Ghanaian-type English other than those errors that are normally associated with the child's own first language.

Dolphyne (1999) complemented the finding of Sackeyfio by saying that the environment also affects the learner's pronunciation. She says that, the Ghanaian child is surrounded by Ghanaian speakers of English, and will imitate their form of speech, even if teachers in school try to teach the 'correct' English pronunciation. She noted for example that, a Ga child growing up in Asante Region is likely to speak like an Asante child, and Asante child growing up in Accra may very well speak like a Ga because of the type of English he is exposed to. Teachers should therefore not always try to look for an explanation for a child's mispronunciation by reference to his or her first language. Sackeyfio indicated that, some errors are caused by a desperate attempt to communicate when the child has not acquired enough English ability to do so effectively. (Sackeyfio, 1996)

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2.3.6 The age of the learner

Some findings revealed that the age of the learner also affects his pronunciation of English words. According to Fraser, earlier researches revealed that, if we learn a second language in childhood, we generally learn tospeak it fluently and without a 'foreign accent'; if we learn inadulthood, though we may attain considerable fluency and versatility, it is very unlikely that we will ever attain a native accent. The exact cut off age differentiating these two scenarios is debated, and depends on a complex of factors. It was for some time accepted that the cut off age was around 13, and hypothesised that it had something to do with puberty. This link is now less accepted (Fraser, 2000).

Recent American researcher, Strange, (1995), presents evidence that learning a new language even after the age of 6 will leave one with a slight but noticeable non-native accent. The lack of attention to pronunciation teaching in otherwise authoritative texts has resulted in limited knowledge about how to integrate appropriate pronunciation instruction into second language classrooms. Reputable programs often use materials based on perceptions of successful practice, with little or no reference to research findings and without empirical evidence of improved outcomes (Breitkreutz, Derwing, &Rossiter, 2002). This situation thus creates a twofold problem: relatively little published research on pronunciation teaching and very little reliance on the research that does exist. It is well established that foreign accents are a normal consequence of second language learning. Numerous studies have shown that most people who acquire a second language after early childhood are likely to exhibit non-native patterns of pronunciation. The strength and nature of such accents vary with L1, with the age when the L2 learning began, with L1-L2 use and L2 experience, and with motivational factors (Piske, MacKay, & Flege, 2001). At the same time, native and non-native listeners are surprisingly adept at noticing when speech differs from their own variety. Flege, &Davidian, (1984), for instance, found that phonetically untrained listeners could identify non-native speakers on the basis of short samples of

speech, including phrases, words, individual segments, and even segment portions of about 30 milliseconds in length. Clearly, native listeners are extremely sensitive to non-native productions. Presumably they succeed at detecting foreign- accented speech by relying on multiple cues, such as segmental variations and prosodic factors. Munro, Derwing, and Burgess (2003) found that listeners could detect accentedness even in a single word presented backward. This finding suggests that, along with speech characteristics commonly noted in pronunciation texts, voice quality may help listeners to recognize NNSs, as proposed by Esling and Wong (1983).

However, the present work is concerned not with the noticeability of an accent, but with its intelligibility. General observation suggests that it is those who start to learn English after their school years who are most likely to have serious difficulties in acquiring intelligible pronunciation, with the degree of difficulty increasing markedly with age. This difficulty has nothing to do with intelligence or level of education, or even with knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. A NNS university professor can have as much difficulty with pronunciation as anyone else. Many NNSs can read and write English at a higher level than their pronunciation would suggest. (The reverse situation of course can occur, depending on the person's English-learning history, but anecdotally seems to be less common among the learners studied during the present research - backed up by statistics (VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999) showing that reading and writing skills are generally at higher levels than speaking skills among immigrants to Australia. What is generally accepted among psycholinguists and phonologists who specialise in this area, is that the difficulty of learning to pronounce a foreign language is cognitive rather than physical, and that it has something to do with the way 'raw sound' is categorised or conceptualised in using speech Put more simply, if you want to change the way a learner pronounces words, you have to change the way they think about thecomponent sounds ofthose words. This goes not just for individual sounds, but for bigger elements of speech, such as syllables,

stress patterns and rhythm that need to be made very clearly. There are several 'facts' which are widely believed as part of the 'commonsense' view of accents and how to 'cure' an accent, but are actually quite erroneous (Beebe, 1987). Some of these erroneous ideas are so deeply ingrained that people find it very challenging to be presented with a different view.

2.3.7 Some common misconceptions about second language pronunciation

It is widely believed that pronunciation skills are related to musical skills. However no link between musical ability and pronunciation ability has been demonstrated, and there are large numbers of people who have one of these 'natural talents' but not both. Second language pronunciation is a cognitive skill, for which some people may have more natural aptitude and/or interest and motivation than others, but which everyone can learn to a certain degree if given appropriate opportunities. It is *not* the case that ESL learners are like the deaf, or like those with a speech pathology, and need similar help the superficial similarities of the difficulties these groups have with pronunciation stem from very different causes. In particular, deaf people, or those with a speech pathology, are or are becoming native speakers of English; they are not learning English pronunciation from a position of already having native speaker knowledge of the sound system of another language. The main problem that second language learners have with pronunciation has to do with their need to *change* a conceptual pattern appropriate for their first language that they have internalised in childhood. NSs who are deaf or have a speech pathology do not have this cognitive problem to overcome. It is *not* the case that learners are best helped if they are able to 'see' speech, whether in articulatory or acoustic form Learners need help in categorising or conceptualising sounds in a way appropriate to English (and very different from what they are used to doing for their native language). Simply seeing a speech wave or a diagram of the articulation of a sound, however 'animated' and the cause of foreign accent is cognitive, not physiological. Several 'commonsense facts' about second language pronunciation are incorrect Pronunciation ability is not related to musical talent.

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Second language pronunciation problems are different from problems of deafness or speech Pathologyhowever, accurate will not help them unless they are alsohelped tounderstand what features of the sound are significant, and givenappropriate ways of thinking about the sound so that they canreproduce it.

In fact it will be difficult for most learners, indeed for most teachers, to relate a speech wave8 or articulatory diagram to theauditory quality of the sounds for exactly the same reason that instruction in terms of the detailed physiology of required shouldermovements is unlikely to help an aspiring tennis player perfect her stroke (Fraser, 2000).

Since people generally think about sounds in terms of their auditory quality, rather than directly in terms of their articulation or acoustics, the key is to find ways of describing the auditory quality of sounds that makes sense to the learner. There is a major role for the use of computers in helping learners with pronunciation, but it is not the role of displaying speechwaves with no guidance as to how they should be read. It is *not* the case that learners have an accent primarily because they 'transfer' the sounds of the native language to English. The notion of 'transfer' as the 'cause' of accents and the key to helping learners with pronunciation has been seriously questioned by specialists for at least two decades (cf. Gass et al 1989, Bohn 1995, among others). Though there is some validity to the 'transfer' idea, it is only useful in an elaborated form which requires a good understanding of its limitations and ramifications. A simplistic idea that learners are transferring sounds from their native language to the new language is a hindrance rather than a help. It is unfortunate that so many teachers, as well as the general public, still hold so strongly to a simple notion of transfer. It is *not* the case that accent is caused by an inability of speakers of other languages to produce the sounds of English. This is not to say that there are not individual sounds in English, or more especially combinations of sounds, that are difficult for learners

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from different backgrounds to produce. It is to say that this difficulty is a relatively minor aspect of intelligibility, and certainly not the main cause of the accent.

Firstly, individual sounds are not in themselves very important to intelligibility. After all, many native speakers, or fluent NNSs, pronounce individual sounds differently from the norm, with no Many of the diagrams and animations used on computer disks are very far from accurate. The good thing is that since speakers have virtually no ability to conceptualise what goes on behind their tongue tip anyway, accurate or inaccurate information is about equally effective. 8 In fact, as any phonetician knows, speech waves are completely useless for comparison of a model with a learner's pronunciation, as they do not equate with relevant auditory aspects of pronunciation: two utterances which sound identical can have very different speech waves, and vice versa. To have a useful visual representation of speech, it is necessary to produce spectrograms (commonly but erroneously known as voiceprints), which require serious training to read properly. 'Seeing' speech doesn't help unless learners are also helped with cognitive aspect 'Transfer' is a useful notion – but only if its complexities are understood. A learner with good stress and intonation and poor pronunciation of, say, 'th', is very easy to understand.

Secondly, in many of the cases in which a learner seems to have trouble pronouncing a particular sound, it is easy to demonstrate that the learner commonly pronounces a perfectly acceptable version of the sound in another context. Consider for example a German learner of English who has difficulty with the 'v' sound in 'very' etc - and yet the sound of the German 'w' is virtually identical to English 'v'. The same goes for the classic case of 'r' and 'l': it is certainly not the case that learners cannot produce these sounds; in almost all cases, they can produce perfectly acceptable versions of both sounds. The problem is that they do not have concepts of them as separate sounds, but rather think of them as indistinguishable variants of a single sound. Another classic case is the English vowel sound of words like 'bird', 'term', with which Japanese and other learners often have

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a lot of difficulty: that difficulty is not in producing the sound, which they can easily do if thinking about it as a non-speech sound. The difficulty is in developing a concept of the sound that they can use as a vowel in words. As a final example, consider the notorious 'final consonant problem'. Even this is not primarily a problem of articulation. Consider a sentence like 'Put it back up' - bound to be difficult for speakers of languages like Thai which have a limited range of consonants in word final position. The difficulty such a learner has in imitating an English pronunciation of this sentence is caused by the *cognitive interpretation* of the relevant sounds as being 'word final'. The sentence as it is produced is a continuous flow of vowels and consonants. The pronunciation of the last three sounds of this sentence, '…ck up', is highly similar to that of the word 'cup' - and yet such a learner will have great difficulty with the former and little difficulty with the latter.(Fraser, 2000).

2.3.8 Pronunciation as cognition

Let us now consider the cognitive aspects of pronunciation a little further. Speech 'in itself' is continuous and unsegmented, as we hear when we listen to a language we do not know; speech as we hear it when we do know the language, is segmented into discrete units, of words, syllables and sounds (or letters, for the literate), and these segments are nameable according to the sound system and writing system of our native language. This segmented nature of speech is a product of our language-processing skills, not a property of speech itself. That is why a language you do not know seems to rush by in a continuous flow, whereas to its speakers, it is an orderly sequence of meaningful elements. What is interesting is that speakers of different languages do this segmentation and labelling of the continuous flow in quite radically Any more than English speakers have concepts of their initial and final 't' sounds as being 'separate sounds', though they are phonetically quite different, as we see below. The very fact that we have separate terms for 'r' and 'l' but not for these quite radically different 't' sounds, shows the problems for learners of using English-based descriptions of sounds. …but individual sounds are not very important to

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intelligibility. Often learners *can* say the difficult sound, if they *think* about it differently. Perception of words depends on categorisation of sounds in different ways, depending on the sound system and the writing system they have learned. Once one has been inducted into a language, it is extremely difficult to hear speech in that language as 'raw sound' any more. Rather, one hears it primarily in terms of the discrete units of the language one has learned - so much so that it is hard to imagine any other way of hearing it (Fraser, 2000). But indeed there often are very different ways of hearing the sounds of a language, which can seem very surprising to someone who has never made much of a study of this phenomenon. It is as if, when we use our mother tongue, we buy our efficiency in communication at the expense of a loss of sensitivity to other possible ways of hearing the sounds. Regaining that sensitivity can take years of work, and indeed is arguably impossible to fully accomplish. A very brief example might help to clarify this point. Consider a learner who has difficulty distinguishing the pronunciation of 'bat' and 'bad'. The most natural thing for an English speaker to do to help is to exaggerate the pronunciation difference by saying 'baddddd, duh, duh, duh', and 'battttt, tuh, tuh, tuh', then give the learner practice with 'd' and 't' in isolation and in a range of words and phrases. The problem is that in this kind of practice, the relevant sounds are isolated from the original words. In naming the letters, the English speaker changes their pronunciation in ways that are so natural as to be barely noticeable, even when it is pointed out. These changes are associated with the change of the letter in question from being word final to being word initial. What the NS does not notice is that the pronunciation of sounds like 'd' in English is quite different when they occur word initially and word finally. Even more importantly, the NS does not realise that the sounds 't' and 'd' when they occur word finally in English are virtually identical: the difference between words like 'bat' and 'bad' is not primarily a difference in the pronunciation of 't' and 'd' at all - it is a difference between a short vowel and a long vowel. The learner would have been much more helped by being encouraged to

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lengthen the vowel in 'bad' than to exaggerate the 'd' - especially if they already have a tendency to add 'extra' vowels to the ends of words. This is an isolated example, and should not be taken to imply a universal 'method' of teaching pronunciation. It is intended to give an example of how very 'obvious facts' about English can be mistaken, and misleading if imparted insensitively to learners. The point is that, though it is common to 'blame' writing or spelling for learners' misconceptions of the sounds in the new language, the categories of any writing system (though in the case of a language with a spelling system as irregular as English this can be hard to believe) are given primarily by the categories of the *sound* system of the language it represents. It is the sound system, even more than the writing system that affects the way speakers think about sounds. This is hard to explain briefly here, but is very important in understanding pronunciation. Though one may attempt to 'escape' the traps of English spelling, it is much more difficult to 'escape' the traps of the English sound system. English letter names and sounds tend to put the consonant first and follow it with a 'carrier' vowel, eg. 'bee, see, dee', 'buh, cuh, duh'. This is by no means universal, and it should not be assumed that a learner will automatically equate 'cuh, ah, tuh' with 'cat' in the way that seems so natural to English speakers. It is important also to do this without full explanation to the learner. Telling a learner, especially a beginner, that the 'd' at the end of 'bad' is like a 't' will make things more difficult, not easier. Learning a language imposes a particular way of categorizing sounds Small sound differences the NS doesn't even notice can cause confusion to the NNS. There is often a difference between what sounds are like, and how they are conceptualised. It is this difference in ways of conceptualising sounds that is at the heart of the problem of learning to pronounce a new language, much more so than inability to pronounce particular sounds. The problem in learning to pronounce a new language, then, has to do with the difficulty of reconceptualising sounds. Although it is not necessary for language learners to have detailed awareness of what goes on in speech perception and production, it is an advantage

for them to have a greater awareness of the way sounds can be conceptualised differently than a monolingual person. A minority of people can do this 'naturally'. Most need some help with this, even when in the 'luxurious' situation of being surrounded by the target language. Similar observations apply to the larger units of speech, such as syllables, stress patterns and rhythm, although demonstration of this is too complex for the present context.

2.3.9 Pronunciation as skill

Another factor that causes pronunciation error is the skill component. Because pronunciation is not just a knowing-that, but a knowing-how, it requires practice and skill development. Though children are used to practicing skills of many kinds, adults often find themselves unable or unwilling to do this, and need sensitive help.

2.3.10 Pronunciation as communication

Because speaking is much more than simply transferring information, people grow into particular manners or styles of speaking which are very much part of their personal identity. Just as most native speakers without a theatrical bent find it awkward to adopt a way of speaking different to their own natural style, so it can seem very 'false' to speak in a style appropriate to another language. This is not a problem if it results in a learner acquiring the new language 'with an accent and the correct pronunciation'. It is a problem if it results in the learner being unable to control the aspects of the new language which are actually information-bearing, as opposed to conveying personal style.*For example, Dolphyne (1999), intimated that social attitudes affect the way individuals pronounce words, and this result in poor pronunciation.* She says, "There is a tendency in Ghana for people to sneer at Ghanaians who tend to speak with an accent that is close to the English Received Pronunciation or ''BBC English''". Many people therefore feel they have to conform to the general pattern of speech used in the community. For example, she says, 'a Ghanaian who is aware that pho'tographer has stress on the second syllable may very well

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put the stress on the third syllable, that is, photo'grapher, because that is how most people say it Ghana.'

2.3.11 Poor teacher preparation/lack of confidence

Dolphyne (1999), Intimated that the teacher is the school child's "speech-model", and the child will try to imitate how the teacher speaks. She says for instance, if a teacher has a problem with the correct use of /r/ and /l/, or the use of the 'th' sounds /®/ and /ð/ in 'think' and 'that', the children will learn the teacher's mispronunciations. This greatly affects the pronunciation of the children in course of their education.

Again, many English as a second language (ESL) teachers have no formal preparation to teach pronunciation. Breitkreutz, Derwing and Rossiter (2002), for instance reported that 67% of ESL teachers surveyed in Canada had no training at all in pronunciation instruction. This phenomenon is not limited to North America; Burgess and Spencer (2000) also called for more pronunciation training for teachers in Britain.Macdonald (2002) cites several studies in Australia, indicating that many teachers do not teach pronunciation, "Because they lack confidence, skills and knowledge". The general lack of teacher preparation may partially explain the findings of another survey in which only 8 of 100 adult intermediate ESL learners indicated that they had received any pronunciation instruction, despite having been enrolled in ESL programmes for extended periods of time. Derwing and Rossiter (2002), intimated that**,** relying on experiences and intuitions, sometimes serves teachers well. Those who have strong observations skills and who are phonologically aware may address learner's needs satisfactorily. These same teachers may develop critical evaluation skills so that they gain a sense of what will and will not work for their students. Their intuitions may well be confirmed by research findings. However, expecting teachers to solely rely on intuitions is unrealistic and unfair.

Other aspects of pedagogy receive extensive attention in teacher preparation courses and materials, but in many instances, language two (L2) instructors are apparently left to

teach themselves how to address pronunciation with their students. The consequences of inadequate teacher preparation are many. In some instances, students simply do not receive any instruction, or they are directed to focus on the most salient characteristics of their accent, regardless of their influence on intelligibility. For example Derwing and Rossiter (2002) found that, of students who were able to identify any pronunciation problem in their own speech, 90% identified individual segment, with "th" as the overwhelmingly most frequent response.Another concern is that those untrained instructors who do choose to teach pronunciation may rely too heavily on pronunciation textbooks and software without regard for their own students problems. (Derwing and Rossiter, 2002:20). Again, another difficulty or problem caused by teachers' lack of knowledge of phonetics which leads to pronunciation errors, has been discussed by Wang and Munro (2004), who note that ESL learners sometimes experience pedagogical misdirection when they are taught the English /I:/ and /I/ distinction, for example 'beat' versus 'bit'. Hellen Brand & Clark, (2000), observed that North American English speakers distinguish between /I: / and /I/ primarily on the basis of vowel quality rather than on length. Yet other researcher "Bohn, 1995" reveals that learners of English from many language one (L1) background tend to perceive /I:/ and /I/ as short vowel with little or no difference in quality. This problem is reinforced by teachers who mistakenly tell students that the important distinction between these vowels is length. Wang and Munro (2004) show that with only a small amount of perceptual training, ESL learners who had received misleading instruction on this point could learn to focus more on the difference on vowel quality and to largely ignore length. Teachers of pronunciation who had no professional expertise may create difficulties for their learners, which result in errors. For example they may develop certain strategies that may not have any value, and may be counter-productive.

According to Sackeyfio (1996), rotten teaching methods also play a significant part in affecting learners' English word pronunciation adversely. She says, a teacher who

has gone through the mechanics of her full professional course in a reputable training college may, sometimes, dole out an awful lesson without realizing just how lousy it is. For instance, Usher (1995) claimed that the distinction between /b/ and /p/ should be taught to students as a difference in breathing, such that /b/ requires inhalation while /p/ requires exhalation. Another cause of pronunciation error is, the direction for motivated learners to turn is to self-access materials, especially computer disk. This market is also quite unregulated and there is certainly a degree of exploitation of learners, with many of these disks created by computer specialist with no expertise in any aspect of language teaching, Carey, (1998).

2.3.12 Some problems with pronunciation's marginalized status

Empirical studies are essential to improving our understanding of the relationship between accent and pronunciation teaching. However, the study of pronunciation has been marginalized within the field of applied linguistics. As a result, teachers are often left to rely on their own intuitions with little direction. Although some instructors can successfully assist their students under these conditions, many others are reluctant to teach pronunciation.

The marginalization of pronunciation within applied linguistics an extensive, growing literature on L2 speech has been published in journals that focus on speech production and perception, for example, Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, Journal of Phonetics, and Language and Speech. Yet this work is rarely cited or interpreted in teacher-oriented publications. Researchers may not be aware of this literature in part because it is inaccessible to those without specialized knowledge of phonetics. Moreover, some of the research may not be perceived as practical because it has been carried out under strict laboratory conditions, so that it is not immediately clear how the findings apply to the classroom. However, the consequences of ignoring this important body of work are serious. Levis (1999), for instance, presents the disturbing observation that "present intonational

research is almost completely divorced from modern language teaching and is rarely reflected in teaching materials" (p. 37). This problem can be resolved only if applied linguists take responsibility for interpreting technical research for pedagogical specialists and incorporating pertinent findings into teacher training materials and student texts. Despite teachers' increased interest in pronunciation in recent years, as evidenced by the establishment of a TESOL interest section and a proliferation of pronunciation materials for learners, it remains a very marginalized topic in applied linguistics. Consider, for example, The Handbook of Second Language Acquisition (Doughty & Long, 2003), in which the authors do not mention pronunciation research. An informal survey of recent applied linguistics journals intended for teachers also reveals few papers on pronunciation, and an examination of many recent general ESL teacher texts shows only minimal attention to pronunciation, if any (a notable exception is Celce- Murcia, 2001). Nunan (1999), for instance, devotes only 2.5 pages to the topic, most of which is concerned with describing the critical period. Other teacher preparation books have even less information (e.g., Davies & Pearse, 2000; Hedge, 2000; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Willis, 1996). Although Harmer (2001) gives more attention to pronunciation than others do, he cites no research. In the past, traditional textbooks designed to prepare ESL teachers to teach pronunciation did not explicitly mention any research findings (e.g., English Language Services, 1966, 1967). In their comprehensive texts on pronunciation teaching, Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) and Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin (1996) introduced an important change to the field by including references to research that provide useful background information.

2.3.13 Lack of assessment tools

It is believed that the lack of assessment tools to measure learners' pronunciation could also affect their ability to pronounce words correctly. (Fraser, 2000). Fraser (2000), intimated that throughout his interview, he did not come across any assessment tool for assessing learners' performance. He said, 'due to my surprise at the lack of any standard

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tools for use specifically in assessing ESL pronunciation, it seems obvious that a range of assessment tools is necessary, as a diagnostic tool for deciding who needs pronunciation tuition, what kind and at what level, and for tracking the progress of learners through a course; and as a research tool for comparing the effectiveness of various methods or approaches to pronunciation teaching in various contexts.

According to Volkoff and Golding, For example, 'formal assessment, if sensitively and appropriately done, could actually help improve learners' confidence, which is often lower than the person's actual skills suggest (Volkoff and Golding 1998:27).

Finally, the lack of a standard for learners to emulate also leads to poor pronunciation. According to Dolphyne (1999), "There is no recognized standard "Received Pronunciation" for the English language in Ghana, and therefore young people tend to imitate their favourite broadcaster or some other role-model. She says for example that, many young people these days are saying /kauntri/ instead of /kšntri/ for "country" because that is how some highly placed individuals pronounce the word.

2.4 Method of Teaching Pronunciation

There are many reasons why the teaching of ESL pronunciation is currently less than optimally effective, and certainly it is wrong to blame anyone group, whether teachers, pronunciation specialists, oracademics. I believe it is possible to develop methods which are muchmore consistently effective than the ones in general use at the moment.

Second language pronunciation is a topic of great theoretical interest and practical relevance, which unfortunately has been out of fashion forsome decades. It seems likely that a few well-publicized interesting developments would help to swing this topic back into fashion among a range of people with relevant skills and interests, and put Ghana in a position to contribute impressively to worldwide developments in this area. A number of methods for pronunciation teaching have been reviewed below. For example:

2.4.1 Conversation

Conversation is considered one of the ways learners could be helped to overcome pronunciation difficulties. Willing (1993), Volkoff and Golden (1998) and Kendrick (1997) stated that what learners most want, and what will help them most is plenty of authentic conversation practice. Burns and Joyce (1997) supplemented expert guidance on how to understand and correct their mistakes. Teachers can help with strategies for how to initiate and maintain conversation with native speakers outside the classroom, but ultimately this is something that learners have to do themselves. They can be greatly helped or hindered in conversation by the attitudes of the native speakers with whom they interact. Native conversation, and not themselves awkward in cross culture communication are one of the biggest boons a learner can have.

2.4.2 Expert guidance

Essentially what learners need to do to pronounce a new language in a way that is easily intelligible to its native speakers to stop thinking about speech in terms of the categories of their first language (L1), and start thinking about it in terms of what are appropriate to the new language, if learners can do this, even though the exact realization of some of the sounds is likely to be a bit "foreign", their meaning will be evident. Learners are most helped by teachers who themselves appreciate and imaginatively explore what the sounds seem like to learners, gradually leading them to more appropriate ways of thinking about English pronunciation. Indeed, some of the most gifted teachers are probably some of those who are good at pronunciation and have openness to hearing sounds in different ways discussed above. But this in itself is not enough for teachers. It is also necessary to be able to articulate what one does. This requires understanding cross language as well as English phonetics and phonology, and of speech perception and production (psycholinguistics). It also requires an ability beyond simple reproduction of this knowledge in technical terms, which are unlikely to be meaningful to learners. Where a learner has difficulty in

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pronouncing specific sounds or sound sequence of English, they need appropriate descriptions of how to think about the sounds in terms they can understand and "lash on to". They need to be terms based on the way English speakers do. (Fraser, 2000:26).

2.4.3 Critical listening

Learners need ample opportunity to listen to their own speech and that of fellow learners in comparison with that of native speakers, and to learn to distinguish the aspects of learner pronunciation that make comprehension difficult for native speakers (NS). Listening to your own speech as you are speaking is very difficult. So is discussion of particular aspect of the pronunciation of a phrase, or sentence which has just disappeared into thin air. For this reason, it is essential for teachers and learners to work with recorded voices, so that the speech they are discussing is external to both of them and can be referred to objectively without distortion (of the "baddddnuh" type discussed above). Computer technology makes this type of recording and play back extremely easy. (Fraser, 2000:27).

2.4.4 Communicative method

We consider here some aspects of what isinvolved in a communicative approach to pronunciation. Note that one thing learners need is teachers with confidence to assure them that the communicative methods do fulfill their needs. Some learners, themselves subject to the erroneous but common beliefs discussed above, believe that what they need is instruction in the articulation of specific English sounds. Some teachers I interviewed justified a focus on articulation with reference to the learners' desire for this information. While there is nothing wrong with providing the information requested, lessons based mainly on articulation are unlikely to be effective.

Another factor is the need for practice. Personal identity issues are also relevant. Learners need a Communicative method, not details about the articulation of sounds. This will enhance their oral skills as far as pronunciation is concerned (ibid).

The above assertion has also been expressed by Morley. He intimated the need to shift from the earlier methods of teaching pronunciation, and use the communicative approach which will enhance learners' communicative skill. Morley, (1991) states the need for the integration of pronunciation exercises with oral communication, a shift from segmental to supra-segmentals, increased emphasis on individual learner needs, meaningful task based practices, development of new teacher strategies for the teaching and introduction of peer correction and group interaction.

2.5 Effects of Pronunciation Errors on Communication.

Pronunciation errors affect communication in different ways. Apart from causing intelligibility difficulties, they are also irritating to the ears of those who know the language very well. A few of these errors and their effects have been discussed below. The examples of kinds of pronunciation errors that result in serious misunderstandings are errors which have major mispronunciations of critical vowels or consonants. An example of this can be heard when one pronounces high frequency English words which are minimally different from each other, such as "**i**t" and "**ea**t"; "hi**t**" and "hi**d**"; "**r**ink" and "**l**ink".

Besides, incorrect pronunciation of sounds that require you to control the voicing or the aspiration of the sound (spoken with air/no air; spoken with vocal chord vibration/no vibration). Examples of this are "**f**erry" and "**v**ery", or "**s**ue" and "**z**oo", and using "h" appropriately.

Incorrect pronunciation of consonant clusters...a characteristic of English which just doesn't exist in many languages. Examples are "**spr**ay" and "conce**rned**". Also, pronouncing words with incorrect stress, for example saying "IMportant" instead of "imPORtant". This category includes the pervasive and all-important "schwa" sound, which is used to indicate unstressed syllables. It also includes the very important differences between languages that are syllable-timed, such as Spanish and Japanese, and languages that are stress-timed, such as English.

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Using your tongue, lips and mouth muscles in the patterns of your first language, which, when combined with incorrect vowel and consonant sounds, will leave your listener helplessly lost (Morley, 1991). Another effect that pronunciation errors are likely to have on communication is some sort of confusion of interlocutors. In this category, we find errors that might temporarily confuse, amuse, delight or annoy your listeners, but probably don't inhibit them from understanding you overall--they just might not *want* to listen to you very long if they find your sound to be uncomfortable, irritating monotonous, or difficult to follow. If you are a public speaker, you should get control of these issues also. These are incorrect pronunciations of "r", which are often transferred from one's first language.

Again, mispronunciations of the TH-sounds; often these are replacements by the closest sound you have in your first language, and also, neighbouring-vowel mispronunciations, for example, clear differentiation between the different vowel sounds in "fool", "fuel", "foot", "food", "full", "foal", and "fought".

In addition, misuse, or lack of use of weakened and contracted forms of speech. Skill is this area will not only make you more accessible as an English speaker, but will also give you surprising insights into the reasons why you can't understand American speakers in informal settings.

Lack of phrasal intonation. Americans don't listen to individual words or speak word-by-word. They speak in, and listen to, idea groups, and your intonation is like a series of sign-posts that give them auditory direction. Without the appropriate intonation, your listeners will quickly "fade away", since they will only be hearing to discrete words, one by one, which they must then "restring", like pearls scattered on a table, in order to understand what the over-arching "design" was meant to be.

Lack of understanding in the uses of tonic pitch in English also affects effective communication. Speakers of tonal languages, like Chinese, often mistakenly believe that English does not have different tones; in fact it has a wide range of tone, pitch and tonal

changes. Unlike tonal languages, however, tone is not used to change the definition of the word, but informs the listener of the speaker's attitude toward their topic, emphasizes grammatical contrastive structures, cues the listener to the speaker's conversational direction, and gives social and cultural signals.

Finally, using the sound resonance and mouth muscularity methods specific to your first language, rather than English causes a lot of confusion to your listeners (Morley, 1991).

2.6 Summary

This section is a summary of chapter two, which is basically about the review of existing literatures in relation to the research questions, the purpose of the study, and the research topic, and lend credence to it. In this chapter, I looked at the definitions of pronunciation by Dolphyne (1989), Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Godwin (1996), Rodney (2002). The chapter also looks at the Theoretical Framework of the research work, using the deviation approach as the basis, with reference to writers like Corder, (1967, 1974), Selinker, (1972) Quirk,(1990) and others.The causes of English pronunciation errors by writers like Yankson, (1971), Sey, (1973), Gyasi, (1991), Koranteng, (1992, 2006), Sackyfio, (1996), Dolphyne, (1999) and many more were reviewed. The various methods of teaching pronunciation were also reviewed. Finally, I reviewed some factors of pronunciation errors that affect communication in English.

CHAPTER 3

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A case study design of a qualitative approach is used for this study. A case study is preferred when "how", "who", "why" and "what" questions are being asked or when the investigator has little control over events or when focus is on contemporary phenomenon within a real life context. It allows an investigation to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real events (Burns, 2000: Ofori & Dampson, 2011). Qualitative research tends to be concerned with meaning. That is, they are interested in how people make sense of the world or how they experience events. They aimed to understand and be concerned with the quality and texture of experience rather than the identification of cause-effect relationship (Ofori&Dampson, 2011).

3.2 Population

The investigation into the phenomenon of pronunciation errors was carried out in the South Tongu district which is located in the Volta region. The district has three senior high schools. These schools combined, have a population size of about three thousand five hundred (3,500) students.

3.3 Sampling Techniques

In selecting both teachers and students for my interview, I used purposeful sampling technique. This technique was employed because the research topic required persons with the expertise and knowledge to provide the necessary information needed. In view of the above reasons, and the population of the school, I selected two teachers based on their expertise in language teaching for observation and interview. I selected ten students (5 boys and5 girls) from SHS one, a boy and a girl from each programme. Ten students were selected from SHS two (5 boys and 5 girls), a girl and a boy from each programme. Twenty students were selected from SHS three, (10 girls and 10 boys) 2 girls and 2 boys from each

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programme. Finally, twenty students were selected from SHS four (10 girls and 10 boys), 2 girls and 2 boys from each programme. A total of 30 girls and 30 boys were sampled across all the levels (1-4), and the selection of the students cut across gender. I selected the greater number of interviewees from the senior classes because of the assumption that, they might have had more tuition in the pronunciation lessons, so that they can contribute effectively during the interview session.

3.4 Sample Size

The initial plan was to carry out this research in two out of the three Senior High Schools in the district. I however, could not go by the initial plan due to financial constraint. I therefore chose Dabala senior high school for my case study, because of convenience and proximity. Out of about eight hundred and sixty students, sixty boys and girls were sampled from the five programmes taught in the school for interview. Six classes of about four hundred students across all the levels were observed for two weeks. Two teachers were also sampled out of five teachers from the department of English for observation and interview.

3.5 Data Collection Strategies

I used observations and semi-structured interviews to collect my data for analysis.

3.5.1 Interview

Asemi-structured interview refers to a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in general form an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequence of question (Ofori&Dampson, 2011). This strategy was used to collect data on the research question; 1. 2. and 3.

I conducted a collective interview or focus interviews for the students selected, and the interview session lasted for thirty (30) minutes for each group. On the part of the teachers, the interview session was on inter-personal bases, and lasted for thirty (30) minutes for each teacher.

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I chose interview as one of my instruments for data collection because it allows probing and posing of follow-up questions by the interviewer. Besides, itcan provide information about participants' internal meanings and ways of thinking. Again, closed-ended interviews provide exact information needed by researcher. Finally, it providesmoderately high measurement validity (i.e., high reliability and validity) for well-constructed and tested interview protocols.

3.5.2 Observation

Observation on the other hand, involves the use of one's senses to see, smell, touch, occasionally taste and listen to what is going on in a given social activity without necessarily coming into direct contact with those being studied and also involves noting and recording of facts, behaviour and events. Agyedu, Donkor, &Obeng (1999) Observation as an instrument was used to collect data on the following research questions; 1. 2. and 3.

From the definition of observation above, I considered it a necessary instrument to be used in my data collection because it makes the data valid and reliable.In the first place, it allows one to directly see what people do without having to rely on what they say they do. Again, it provides firsthand experience, especially if the observer participates in activities.

In addition, observation can provide relatively objective measurement of behaviour (especially for standardized observations). Subsequently, an observer may see things that escape the awareness of people in the setting. Furthermore, observation helps in understanding importance of contextual factors. Finally, itmay provide information on things people would otherwise be unwilling to talk about.

The observation session lasted for two weeks. Each teacher had a week of four periods, and a period was about forty-five minutes. Three of these periods were recorded for each week for analysis.

3.6 The Setting

Dabala Senior High Technical School was established on January 28, 1991. The school is situated along the Keta–Accra road in the South Tongu District of the Volta region. It is the only Secondary Technical School in the District. In terms of infrastructure, the school lags behind in classrooms, staff and students accommodation as compared to others in the District. Dabala Senior High Technical School is a day-school which has no facilities for boarding or lodging. It is a mixed school which offers courses in general arts, home economics, technical education, agricultural science, and business education. Dabala senior high school has a population of about eight hundred and sixty (860), with staff numerical strength of forty-seven (47), with the non-teaching staff inclusive. The school is comprised of students with mixed linguistic background. For example, there are Ga, Dangme, Akan, and Ewe speakers. There are students who speak different dialects of the Ewe language also found in the school.

3.7 Data Collection Protocol

In May, 2011, I discussed un-officially my intention to carry out an investigation into the phenomenon of poor English pronunciation among senior high school students in the South Tongu District with some teachers in the department of English at Dabala Senior High/Technical School. These teachers expressed their willingness to support me collect the data.

On the 20th of June, I met the headmaster on the same subject with an official letter seeking for permission and approval, which he gladly granted, giving me the green light to start my investigation. A copy of the letter was sent to the district directorate.
On the 27th of June, I started my observation which lasted for two weeks. Five groups of students numbering 10 from each group were interviewed after the observation.

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3.**8 Data Analysis and Presentation**

The data collected through interview and observation, was first of all codified using those that are relevant to the research questions. The analysed data were presented thematically in chapter four. I used the logical narration technique in the presentation of the data in 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3 (the discussion) through to 4.2.4 (summary of chapter four)

Finally, I tabulated the summary of the findings, and presented it based on the various research questions in chapter four.

3.9 Summary

This section is a summary of chapter three which is a presentation on the methods and methodology of the research. The chapter elaborates on the research design using Burns, (2000), Ofori & Dampson (2011) in defining qualitative research.

The purposeful sampling technique used was clearly stated, spelling out reasons for the choice of the technique. The population and the sample size were stated, explaining how the sampling of sixty students and two teachers were arrived at. The data collection strategies used were interview and observation; the definitions of Agyedu, Donkor, &Obeng (1999) and Tylor, & Buku. (2006) were used to explain the strategies.

The chapter also talks about the setting; it gives a brief history and a description of the research environment. The data collection protocol outlined with dates, the various stages of the research work. Finally, the data analysis and presentation techniques such as codification and the use of logical narration for the discussion and presentation of the data were explained.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

The materials analysed came mostly from recorded responses of the sixty-two interviewees whose responses were analysed in full. In addition, there were also allusions made to features of observation especially those that fit into the scope of the research topic, to support discussions. The interview was on the topic: Causes of pronunciation errors among Senior High School students. A case study of Dabala Senior High Technical School. Students of different levels (years) were interviewed. There was gender balance, thirty female and thirty-two male. The students' ages ranged between 15 and 24 years.

4.1.1 Analysis of data

This chapter contains the analyses of data collected through interviews and observations that were carried out. The data answer the following research questions:

1. What are the causes of poor pronunciation among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

2. What are the effects of such a problem among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

3. How can poor pronunciation be reduced among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

These findings were summarized, tabulated, and presented as part of chapter four, in tables 1, 2, and 3, and were discussed dispassionately, and without any biases towards any category of participant in the subsequent pages under 4.2.1, 4.2.2, and 4.2.3.

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Research Question 1.

What are the Causes of Pronunciation Errors among Students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

There were interesting findings that emerged from the interviews and the observations conducted for both teachers and students. Among these findings was the issue of the language 1 (L1) transfer or influence on the second language (ESL) pronunciation, and others which are discussed below.

(a). L1 Influence/Transfer

When asked whether students sometimes commit pronunciation errors in their speech or reading, all the respondents replied in the affirmative. When asked what they think the causes were, the respondents said that certain L1 sounds influence the pronunciation of some of the second language learners, especially (ESL) students.

Some respondents made reference to the speakers of the Anlo dialect of the Ewe language who usually use the palato-alveolar affricate /tʃ/ sound in place of the alveolar plosive /t/. A respondent to the interview said that, "I would say that some speakers of the Ewe language have a peculiar problems pronouncing certain English words. This I would term 'dialectal barrier or problem'. For instance, the typical Anlos do not have the alveolar sound /t/ in their language, for that matter use the palato-alveolar affricate sound instead". For example, the word "teacher" is pronounced as / tʃi:tʃə(r)/ instead of /ti:tʃə(r)/.

In relation to the issue of L1 influence, a number of examples were identified through observation, which arerelated to L1 influence. During my observation, I noticed in most of the classesthat, the teacher used some Ewe sounds in the articulation of some English words. For example, he used /o/ in place of /əʊ/. That is, the word "notorious" was pronounced as /notoriəs/, instead of /nəʊte:riəs/. He pronounced "look" as /lok/, instead of /lʊk/, "book" was pronounced as /bok/, instead of /bʊk/.

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The teacher again pronounced "pull" as /pol/, instead of /pʊl/. The sound /o/ was used for "pot" in place of /ɔ/.   The finding corroborates Takahashi (1987) when he concluded from an analysis of their studies that, "Those less marked phonetic or phonological characteristics of L1 are harder to unlearn. That is, those characteristics which are acquired early in L1 acquisition and are important (yet commonly occurring) characteristics of L1 are easily carried over in the production of the L2 phonological system and remain persistently as the L2 learner's foreign accent".

Again, the observations corroborated Selinker's finding that, "Learners of English, whose L1 contains a phonemic orthography, often learn to speak English through reading and writing and consequently attempt to interpret English pronunciation from the orthography. The inconsistent letter to sound rules of English lexis may result in mispronunciation, not because of an inability to produce the phonemes, but due to the interference of spelling" (Selinker, 1972)

The error of /e/ and /ei/ interchange, was also observed as an L1 interference phenomena. For example, during my observation, I heard both teachers and students pronounce the word "pen" as /pein/, while the word "pain" was pronounced as /pɛn/. This finding corroborated earlier findings on L1 transfer phenomena (Flege's Speech learning model 1987, 1995). According to Flege, when a language learner attempts to produce an L2 sound their relative success at approaching the target is reliant on their ability to disassociate their L2 utterance from their repertoire of L1 phonemes and allophones. Disassociation is often necessary because two languages may contain sounds which seem to be the same but are produced by differing articulatory motions. They are therefore acoustically different and may be perceived to be divergent from the target by the listener. (Flege, 1995)

Another L1 interference identified during my observation was that, most students produced the dental fricative sounds /θ / and /ð/ as alveolar sounds /t/ and /d/ respectively. For example, "thermal" was pronounced as /termal/ and "that" as /dat/. The above observations which are the result of L1 transfer, corroborated the findings by Gyasi, (1991), who reports that pairs like *thank* and *tank; those* and *dose; they* and *day; thin* and *tin* are rendered homophonous.

The issue of the use of dentals confirmed the findings by Dako (in print), who is a researcher on dental use, reports that Ghanaians tend to substitute /t/ or /d/ for dentals /T/ and /ð/, when initial or final, but she found female speakers a little more cautious with dental use than males, due among other things to female users' tendency to keep to standards. She used university students as her subjects.

Ewe and English sound conflict

The Ewe and English sound conflict is considered as another L1 transfer phenomena which most a times result in pronunciation errors. The respondents claim there are some English sounds that conflict with Ewe sounds during articulation. For example, an interviewee (teacher) hinted that, "there are some Ewe sounds that are not directly in English, and there are some English sounds that are not directly in Ewe". According to him, this sometimes leads to sound conflict.

When asked whether the conflict of English and Ewe sounds affect pronunciation in anyway. The interviewee responded in the affirmative. The interviewee said that, "yes, if you are not aware of such sounds that are not directly seen in the English language, if you are not aware of them, you might be tempted to use them in teaching English pronunciation and that may affect the correct pronunciation of the English word". I identified during my observation that, what the respondent (teacher) said reflected in his teaching when he used some Ewe sounds in the articulation of some English words. He used /o/ in place of /əʊ/.

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For example, the word "no" was pronounced as /no/ instead of /nəʊ/. Again, the word "notorious" was pronounced as /notoriəs/, instead of /neʊteriəs/.

It was again observed that some students and the teacher pronounced the word "look" as /lok/, instead of /lʊk/, "pull" as /pol/, instead of /pʊl/, "book" was pronounced as /bok/, instead of /bʊk/. The sound /o/ was used in place of /ɔ/. For example, the word "pot" was pronounced as /pot/ instead of /pɔt/. This is as a result of the Ewe and English sound conflict, or the L1 influence.

(b) Lack of proper training and confidence

The respondents made up of a teacher, mentioned poor teacher preparation and lack of confidence on part of the teacher as one of the causes of pronunciation errors. They said that lack of confidence or proper training for language teachers affect pronunciation teaching, and may cause pronunciation errors. During the interviews with teachers, one of them admitted that he was not properly trained to handle English language in general. He said, "I would say I find it difficult teaching English pronunciation because, as someone who majored in the Ewe language, and then doing a little in English, I need to do a lot of research to get information so that I can teach wellin the classroom". Another respondent (teacher) also confirms that teachers who teach pronunciation are not properly trained to teach this aspect. He said that, "frankly speaking, teachers of the language who are on the field, are not properly or thoroughly taken through oral work, as to equip them with the requisite skills to enable them deliver efficiently in the classroom. So, there is a lacking mechanism also there". This reflected in the way the teacher presented the oral lesson. My observation of lessons of the above teacher and other teachers revealed that, some teachers were either not properly trained, or do not have confidence to teach oral English. For example,I observed that a teacher asked students how the word vehicle should be pronounced. He agreed with students when they said it is pronounced as /vehikel/ instead of /vi:kl/. Again, the word "English" was pronounced wrongly by students. Instead of the

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teacher correcting it, he accepted it and used it the same way as /ingliʃ/, instead of /e✦gliʃ/.
This finding is in line with the findings of Dolphyne (1999), when she intimated that the
teacher is the school child's "speech-model", and the child will try to imitate how the
teacher speaks. She says for instance, if a teacher has a problem with the correct use of /r/
and /l/, or the use of the 'th' sounds /θ/ and /ð/ in 'think' and 'that', the children will learn
the teacher's mispronunciations.

 Another observation of an oral English lesson revealed some weakness in the training of
teachers, or their confidence level. For example, the teacher accepted the word "boy" as a
disyllabic word, instead of it as a monosyllabic word.

 Further observation revealed that, instead of teaching 'stress' the teacher digressed to the
teaching of syllabification. He asked students to show syllable boundaries for different
words. He stress different syllable for the word commission / kə'miʃən/ to indicate different
uses instead of the second syllable for both nominal and verbal use of the word.

 Teachers/students inability to distinguish the use of the rising/ the falling tune in speech
was another observation made. For example, I heard a teacher and students used the falling
intonation in greetings, and vice versa for other speeches or sentences. The finding above
agrees with the findings of Koranteng, when she says 'this general tendency to stress almost
all syllables in an utterance results in utterances taking longer to say than in RP; wrongly
giving the impression of emphasis, and also rendering nuances of meaning occasioned by
comparisons and contrasts a nullity in New Englishes.' (Koranteng, 1992)

 The above findingscorroborated the findings of Wang and Munro (2004), who note
that ESL learners sometimes experience pedagogical misdirection when they are taught the
English /I:/ and /I/ distinction, for example 'beat' versus 'bit'. Hellen Brand and Clark
(2000), observed that North American English speakers distinguish between /I:/ and /I/
primarily on the basses of vowel quality rather than on length. Yet another researcher

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"Bohn, 1995" reveals that learners of English from many language one (L1) background tend to perceive /I:/ and /I/ as short vowel with little or no difference in quality.

MacDonald and other researchers in their studies established that, many English as a second language (ESL) teachers have no formal preparation to teach pronunciation. Breitkreutz, Derwing and Rossiter (2002), for instance reported that 67% of ESL teachers surveyed in Canada had no training at all in pronunciation instruction. This phenomenon is not limited to North America; Burgess and Spencer (2000) also called for more pronunciation training for teachers in Britain. Macdonald (2002) cites several studies in Australia, indicating that many teachers do not teach pronunciation, "Because they lack confidence, skills and knowledge".

(c) Attitude of students towards oral lessons/lack of interest

The respondents mentioned lack of interest and attitude of students as one of the causes of poor pronunciation. They mentioned lack of attention during lessons, refusal to use dictionaries, and refusal to read their oral English lesson notes among others as examples. There was a clear manifestation of lack of interest in the oral English lessons as students mentioned during the interview session. For example, a respondent said "it is like, we ourselves are not serious, when a teacher pronounces a word, we just joke and lough. We are not serious". A teacher who was interviewed also said". The fear of being mocked for pronouncing words wrongly discourages students from participating in oral work", hence, their laxity in class. He went ahead to say that, "students, when they come to school instead of using the English language as a language which is normally used in the school, they prefer to speak in their various dialects. So, the practical aspect where may be the student has to hear the proper way a particular word is pronounced is not there. So they don't have the occasion to hear or listen to someone speak with the correct pronunciation. So, when you go to the class and you pronounced a word, it becomes new to them, because they have not heard it before". My observation of lessons corroborated the finding when

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the teacher shouted "quiet!","quiet!", to indicate lack of attention from students during lesson, and to draw their attention to the lesson.

(d) Lack of reading

Students' attitude towards reading featured prominently as one of the causes of pronunciation errors, when different groups of students were met for the interview. They claim they don't read wide enough to enable them acquire very good pronunciation skills, hence, their poor pronunciation skills. For example, an interviewee said "some of us, we have not been reading our oral English notes". Again, another interviewee said that, "they don't teach us again, we the final years, because of that we also relaxed".

(e) Refusal to use dictionaries

Another factor that bothered on students' attitude towards the oral English has to do with their refusal to use the dictionary. Students themselves confessed that they don't use dictionaries at their leisure time, let alone use it during lessons, to enable them familiarize themselves with how some words are described phonetically for articulation. For example, a respondent said "We are not referring to our dictionaries".

(f) The use of pidgin English

The persistent use of the Pidgin English is identified as one of the causes of poor pronunciation. When asked to mention other causes of pronunciation errors, the respondents mentioned the use of Pidgin English as one of the causes of poor pronunciation. They said Pidgin English affects pronunciation, and leads to wrong spelling of words. For example, a respondent said "I think we use Pidgin English and vernacular, and must be abolished". This was corroborated during observation, when a student couldn't pronounce the word 'following' properly because of his persistent use of the Pidgin English.

(g) Lack of assessment of productive skill

Both teachers and students interviewed were unanimous on the issue of the West African Examinations Council's (WAEC) inability to assess students' productive skills in

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the oral paper3. When asked whether the nature of the oral English questions set by WAEC also affects pronunciation, the respondents said 'yes'. When asked how the nature of the questions affects pronunciation, they responded by saying that, WAEC does not set questions that test students' productive skills. This they think could be associated with the students' poor pronunciation, since there is nothing atstake to compel them to take the oral lesson seriously or practice it. A respondent (teacher) agreed to the perception that, the West African Examinations Council also contributes to the poor performance of students. He said that, "yes, I agree because the way WAEC sets the English language (oral English) questions, they don't actually put in measures to ensure the correct pronunciation of words into the setting of the examinations, because if they were to be examining students in this kind of pronunciation in the final examinations, students will take more interest in trying to read widely and always speak English so that even when they are wrong someone will hear their mistakes or whatever they are saying which is wrong, and correct them. So that at the end of the day, they can speak just like, or close to the native speaker". Another respondent, also a teacher, said that the failure of WAEC to test students' productive skills in the final examination also contributes to their poor pronunciation. He said that, "it happens like that, because once they get to know that they are not going to do anything like production, or pronouncing certain words that they might be asked to pronounce in the examination situation, they are discouraged or feel reluctant to learn the best or correct way of pronouncing words". Other respondents also claimed that, there were no internal assessment of their oral ability before the final examination is conducted by WAEC, this they claim affects their ability to pronounce words correctly, and their performance in the final examination conducted by WAEC. I observed that some teachers hardly give students class exercises on oral English. Some students confined in me that, examinations for oral English are only written when students are in their final year. The finding above agrees with the findings of Fraser, (2000) in her studies when she said, 'While the reasons people

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have for opposing the objective assessment of learners' pronunciation are appreciated, it is really impossible to improve a system that allows no proper benchmarking or analysis.

With an appropriate assessment tool, an early priority would be a set of benchmarking studies, to provide answers to such questions as 'which is the best way to pronounce a word? Or, which is the best method for pronunciation teaching?'.

(h)   Lack of text materials

As captured in the responses of the interviewees, absence of text materials affect greatly teaching and learning, and was mentioned as one of the causes of pronunciation errors. According to the respondents, materials such as "oral English textbooks", recorded materials such as "native speakers' voice", oral English cassette etc. were not available for use by both teachers and students, and they result to the purchase of any oral English material regardless of its quality. These, they claim affect greatly their oral performance. This finding corroborates the findings of Careywhen she established that, 'another cause of pronunciation errors is the direction for motivated learners to turn is to self-access materials, especially computer disk. This market is also quite unregulated and there is certainly a degree of exploitation of learners, with many of these disks created by computer specialist with no expertise in any aspect of language teaching, (Carey, 1998). Other critical issue raised during the interview session for both teachers and students was the issue of the 'roles of teachers, students, and the educational planners' in the teaching and the learning process.

(i)The role of the teacher

When questions were asked on the roles teachers play in the teaching of oral English, the respondents said that they use activity method and conversation in teaching. Respondents who are students said that teachers do not practicalise their teaching. When asked to explain what they said, they said that teachers do not use learning / teaching materials in teaching, they just teach the theory.

During a separate interview session held with the teachers, they both said that they use 'activity, drills, and group' methods. It has however been observed that, they used in most cases the 'lecture method', with a little of the 'drills'. The communicative approach to the teaching of oral English was completely missing. The absence of communicative method, from my perspective, will to a large extent affect the learners' ability to communicate effectively without pronunciation errors. Again, respondents (students) said 'they teach theory, not practical", that is, teachers do not practicalise their teaching by way of using learning and teaching materials "they don't use learning-teaching materials". I observed that learning/teaching materials were not available for both teachers and learners use. So teachers teach without teaching/learning materials. The above findings corroborate the findings of some researchers cited below, who said that, lack of effectiveness of pronunciation teaching methods and materials can lead to poor pronunciation. For example, ESL teachers vary widely in the methods they use to teach pronunciation. Some believe strongly in the 'old school' methods of drilling sounds, words and dialogues (Baker 1981). Some prefer to give instruction in the phonological rules of English, including stress placement, spelling to sound rules, intonation patterns, etc, according to range of different methods (eg. Zawadski 1996, Kenworthy 1987, Bowen and Marks 1992, Carter and McCarthy 1997, Celce-Murcia et al 1996, Rogerson and Gilbert 1990).however, the findings contradicted the findings of Morley, (1991), when he states the need for the integration of pronunciation exercises with oral communication, a shift from segmental to supra-segmentals, increased emphasis on individual learner needs, meaningful task based practices, development of new teacher strategies for the teaching and introduction of peer correction and group interaction.

(j) The roles of the students

When asked the role students play in the learning/teaching process of oral English, the respondents said their role was to encourage one another to practice among themselves.

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Other respondents said that students do not practice, for the fear of been mocked. It came to light during the interview with students that their role was to participate actively in the teaching process. However, it was observed that, only a few of the learners participated actively in the lesson, while the majority sat idle. They also claimed that their role was to encourage one another to practice among themselves. However, my two weeks observation revealed something to the contrary. I did not hear any of them practice, or encourage the other to practice.

(k)   The role of educational planners

When questions were posted on the role of the educational planners, some respondents said they were not taught oral English at the basic school, because there was no English teacher. When asked whose responsibility it was to provide teachers, respondents said that it was the responsibility of the ministry of education and the Ghana Education Service 'GES', both have the responsibility to train and provide quality teachers who have the expertise to teach oral English at all levels, including the basic school level. Ironically, the majority of students interviewed said they have had no tuition in oral English at their basic school level education. For example, a respondent said, "they didn't teach us oral English at the JHS".When asked further whether some other factors affect pronunciation, the respondents (students) mentioned The absence of language laboratory affects their pronunciation and spelling skills. The respondents stated that, lack of equipment like recording gadgets; tapes with native speaker's voice on them also affect their pronunciation.

It is gathered from the interviews conducted that, the ministry of education as a major educational policy maker and planner, has the responsibility to provide all the above mentioned facility and materials for teaching and learning. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. I observed students rely on lecture notes from teachers, while teachers also rely on the teaching syllabus, their own intuition, and other sources. The above factors contribute to the errors that students commit during pronunciation.

4.2.2 Research Question 2.

What are the Effects of such a Problem among Students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

This section provides answers to the research question2, and literatures that corroborate the data which are discussed below

(a)   It affects performance in an examination

When asked whether there are effects of pronunciation errors, respondents said 'yes'. When asked to mention some of these effects, respondents said poor pronunciation affects students' performance in examination, because they spell words wrongly.The respondents again said that poor pronunciation affect performance in examination because, it makes them choose the wrong answers.

Respondents (both students and teachers) intimated that, poor pronunciation or pronunciation errors affect learners' performance in examination. They admitted that poor pronunciation may lead to wrong spelling which eventually will lead to bad sentence construction in examinations and tests. A respondent who was a teacher said that, "pronunciation errors will affect students' academic performance in terms of correct spelling of words". Again, a respondent said, "pronunciation errors make us choose the wrong answers during the examination". I realised during my observation that a particular class performed poorly in their oral English exercises, andin a dictation test conducted for them. The above observation confirms the response interviewees gave that 'poor pronunciation affects performance in examination'.

(b) Embarrassment to students

When asked if there are other effects of pronunciation errors, respondents replied that they get embarrassed and disappointed when they make mistakes, and their attention was drawn to their mistakes. Some respondents said poor pronunciation does not make

students live freely among their peers who do not understand their language, hence, difficulty in communication as students further their education.

They said that, as students in the Senior High School, they feel very bad when people (especially those who are not students) point out their pronunciation errors to them. They claim this keep them out of public speech. For example, some respondents said, "We get embarrassed when people criticize our pronunciation", and another respondent said, "Sir please, we are disappointed when we pronounced a word wrongly, and we get to know of our pronunciation errors". Again, a respondent who was a teacher said that, the problems students go through as a result of poor pronunciation sometimes keep them away from others who do not understand their L1. He said that, "since they have this problem, it is difficult for them to live freely among people who do not understand their L1, and communication becomes difficult as they climb the academic ladder".On the issue of students getting embarrassed when they commit errors, I observed in one of the classes, when a student was laughed at when she pronounced the word 'cucumber' as /kukumba/. The finding above is a confirmation of what was said during the interview held with both students and teachers.

(c) Wrong pronunciation is irritating to the listener

Another effect worth mentioning is the admission by interviewees that poor pronunciation or pronunciation errors irritate the addressee, and, can sometimes lead to misunderstanding. The respondents said poor pronunciation is irritating, when people speak with wrong pronunciation, it does not sound well in the ears of the addressee. For example, a respondent said that, "when people have pronunciation problem, they speak with the wrong pronunciation, and it doesn't sound well in the ears when they communicate".

I observed that some students, who are speakers of Anlo dialect of the Ewe language, use some sounds that interfere with others sounds. For instance, the interchange of /e/ with /ei/ irritates and sometimes affects communication. For example, the word "pen"

is pronounced as /pein/, while word "pain" is pronounced as /pen/. The above finding

corroborated the findings of Morley when he established that, 'confusion of interlocutors

can also affect learners' communication'. He said, 'In this category, we find errors that

might temporarily confuse, amuse, delight or annoy your listeners, but probably don't

inhibit them from understanding you overall-they just might not *want* to listen to you very

long if they find your sound to be uncomfortable, irritating monotonous, or difficult to

follow. (Morley, 1991).

(d). Poor pronunciation leads to wrong information

When asked whether poor pronunciation can lead to wrong information, the

respondents replied in the affirmative. They said that wrong pronunciation hinders

understanding as far as communication is concerned, and wrong pronunciation also makes

speakers or listeners given wrong information.Interviewees identified 'wrong information'

as one of the most serious effects that poor pronunciation can have on communication. A

respondent said that, "since they have these pronunciation errors, it hinders understanding

or makes understanding difficult as far as communication is concerned". Another

interviewee said that, "wrong pronunciation make us give wrong information to our

listeners". A typical example gathered during observation was that a Ga student who has

problem with the /h/ sound, wanted his colleague to heat his soup for him, but ended up in

saying 'eat my soup for me'.

It is true that, wrong use of intonation affects communication. For instance, during

my observation, I realized that students and teachers' inability to distinguish the use of the

rising /the falling intonation in sentences inhibited the meaning of what they intended to

say. For example, the teacher and students used the falling intonation in greetings, and vice

versa for other words. The above finding is in line with the findings of Morley. He said,

'using your tongue, lips and mouth muscles in the patterns of your first language, which,

when combined with incorrect vowel and consonant sounds, will leave your listener helplessly lost' (Morley, 1991).

(e). Get discouraged when people criticise their pronunciation

Finally, students are discouraged when people, especially teachers who are supposed to correct their pronunciation errors, rather criticise their pronunciation. Some of the respondents said poor pronunciation discourages students from speaking, because of the fear that they would make errors, and people will laugh at them. A respondent said that, "we fear that when we make errors others would criticize our pronunciation, or laugh at us". It became clear during my observation that what respondent said was true. I noticed that most students refused to answer questions when they were called to do so, because they do not want to be laughed at.

4.2.3 Research Question 3

How can Poor Pronunciation be Reduced among Students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

This section provides the following data as responses to the research question 3, which corroborate some literatures, and are discussed below.

(a) Students should participate in oral lessons, and be encouraged to listen to one another as they communicate

When asked whether they think there can be solutions to the problems, all the respondents agreed there could be solutions. When the respondents were asked to mention some of the solutions, some of them stated that there is the need for students to listen to one another as they communicate, and correct each other's mistakes. Also, students should participate in all oral English lessons. It came to light during the interview with a student that their role was to participate actively in the teaching and learning process. However, I observed that, only a few of the learners participated actively in the lesson, while the majority sat idle and disturbed others. For example, the teacher shouted "quiet!, "quiet!" to

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indicate lack of attention from students during the lesson, and to draw their attention to it. They also claimed that their role was to encourage one another to practice among themselves. However, my two weeks observation revealed something to the contrary. I did not hear any of them practice, or encourage the other to practice. This they claimed was because, "we fear that when we make errors others would criticize our pronunciation, or laugh at us". As a temporal measure to curtail the ever increasing poor pronunciation of the English words, some respondents suggested that, "students should be encouraged to listen to one another as they communicate, and correct themselves instantly as they make errors, so that such a mistake is not repeated in their next production".

(b) Provision of language laboratory

When asked to mention other possible remedies, some of the respondents said language laboratory should be constructed and equipped with modern gadgets to enable them improve their pronunciation and spelling. Other respondents suggested that language laboratories should be constructed at all levels of study across the country. It is gathered from the interviews conducted that, the ministry of education as a major educational policy maker and planner, has the responsibility to provide audio cassettes for oral English teaching and learning. Unfortunately, this has not been the case, students rely on lecture notes from teachers, while teachers also rely on the teaching syllabus, their own intuition, and other sources.

Besides, the absence of a language laboratory also hinders student's ability to produce words correctly. It was therefore suggested by the interviewees that, "a language laboratory equipped with the necessary machines and equipment, was a necessary tool that would help in the reduction of the pronunciation errors". A teacher who was interviewed suggested that, "in my view, language laboratories should be established in all schools across all levels to enhance language teaching". They claimed that, with the availability of a language laboratory, the individual learner will have the opportunity to produce, listen to,

and assess his own pronunciation, and pass judgment as to whether, he has come out with the correct pronunciation or not. This they said will urge learners to try hard to attain perfection in their articulation.

(c)   Training of teachers in oral works and regular in-service training for teachers

When asked how the problem of poor teacher preparation and lack of confidence could be remedied, some respondents suggested that teacher training institutions should make oral works compulsory for all teacher trainees. Again, the Ghana Education Service should conduct regular in-service training for English language teachers. Other respondents said that GES should supply oral English teachers to all schools. It is believed that, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service, both have the responsibility to train and provide quality teachers who have the expertise to teach oral English at all levels; including the basic school level. Ironically, the majority of students interviewed said they have had no tuition in oral English at their basic school level education because of the absence of trained teachers. For example, a respondent said that, "we did not learn oral English in the Junior High School, because we don't have teachers to teach us".

Furthermore, an interviewee (teacher) admitted that the sort of training given them in English which was their second area was not sufficient enough to equip them with the necessary skills and confidence required to teach the oral English. It was therefore suggested by the respondents that, "teachers should be trained in oral work at all levels, and regular in-service training is organized for those who are already teaching". Another respondent to the interview suggested that, "GES should provide us with qualified teachers to teach oral English". As indicated by respondents above, my observation confirms that, teachers who teach oral English were Ghanaian language teachers.

(d)   Time allocation for oral English on the time-table

On the issue of time allocation for oral English, all the respondents said that more time should be allocated to English language, sothat oral English could also get some

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periods on the time-table. The issue featured prominently as one of the causes of poor pronunciation among Senior High School students in Dabala. It was suggested by a teacher who was interviewed that, "more periods should be allocated for English so as to make allowance for oral English also to get a slot on the time-table. In relation to the issue of time allocation for oral English, I observed that no time was allocated to oral English on the time-table. English language as a subject was allocated only 40 minutes to take care of all the aspects of the language. Teachers therefore, use their own discretion in determining which aspect to give priority when teaching. This corroborates the suggestion that sufficient time should be allocated to English language, so that oral English can also get some periods on the time-table.

(e) WAEC should test students' productive skill

When the respondents were asked whether there was the need for WAEC to re-introduce the aspect of the oral English that tests students productive skills, all the respondents agreed. They said the re-introduction would force students to take oral lesson serious. They claim the partial assessment of final year students in the oral English paper3 was considered a factor that contributed somehow, to the poor pronunciation of SHS students. The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) ceased to assess students' productive skill or ability in the final year oral English paper3, something they were doing before the start of the Senior Secondary School (SSS) concept.   It was suggested by the respondents therefore that, "the WAEC must re-introduce the practical section, and test students' productive skills in oral English paper".

(f) Provision of learning / teaching materials and equipment

All the respondents suggested that GESshould provide learning/teaching materials and equipment such as, books in oral English. Others mentioned the provision of tapes with native speaker's voice, modern library furnished with books and other reading materials.During a separate interview session held with the teachers on the methods they

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use in teaching oral English, they both said that they use 'activity, drills, and group methods', which are all practical oriented methods. It has however been identified during observation that, they used in most cases the 'lecture method', with a little of the 'drills'. The communicative approach to the teaching of oral English was completely missing. Some respondents to the interview said "they teach theory, not practical", that is, teachers do not practicalise their teaching by way of using learning and teaching materials "they don't use learning-teaching materials".

When asked how the problem could be remedied, the respondents suggested that, as a possible remedy to their pronunciation problem, there was the need for the Ghana Education Service (GES) to provide learning/teaching equipment for use by both teachers and students. They believe that the provision of the equipment will help reduce their pronunciation errors. For example, a respondent said that, "it is the responsibility of the GES to provide to schools audio cassettes on oral English and other equipment to enhance teaching and learning".Some respondents believe that the absence of recorded cassettes for practical teaching and testing is one of the causes of their inability to pronounce words correctly. In view of that, they suggested the use of oral English cassette which contains the native speakers' voice which will serve as a model to teach and test them (students) regularly. For example, a respondent said that, "we want to hear the voice of the owners of the language, so that we can also use it to correct our pronunciation errors or mistakes". Another respondent suggested that a well-equipped library should be provided to enhance their study. For example. She said "we need a well-equipped library to help us learn the oral English very well".My two weeks observation reveals that, there is no language laboratory in the school. The school's library is also not stocked with relevant books to encourage students to study and use oral English.This confirms the suggestion that "A language laboratory equipped with the necessary machines and equipment, was a necessary tool for correct pronunciation of English words.

My observation again reveals that there were inadequate or no learning/teaching materials and equipment in the school for teaching and learning of oral English. The finding corroborates the responses of the interviewees and their suggestion that "It is the responsibility of the GES to provide to schools audio cassettes on Oral English and other equipment to enhance teaching and learning".

(g). Regular oral tests before final oral paper

When asked how the problem of poor performance, and lack of testing in oral English could be improved, some respondents said that there should be regular tests and examinations before WAEC examinations are conducted, so that they can be familiar with the nature of the oral English questions. They said that GES in collaboration with the school authorities should ensure that, there is constant examination in oral English before the final oral paper is conducted by WAEC. According to them, this will prepare them adequately for the final examination. During the interview with students, one of them suggested that, "teachers should not wait for us to reach the final year before they test or conduct examination for us in oral English. They should start from form one before we reach form three".Some respondents believe that the absence of recorded cassettes for practical teaching and testing is one of the causes of their inability to pronounce words correctly. In view of that, they suggested the use of oral English cassette which contains the native speakers' voice which will serve as a model to teach and test them (students) regularly. For example, a respondent said that, "we want to hear the voice of the owners of the language, so that we can also use it to correct our pronunciation errors". Another respondent suggested that a well-equipped library should be provided to enhance their study. For example, she said "We need a well-equipped library to help us learn the oral English very well".

(h)   Avoidance of the use of pidgin and vernacular

Finally, when asked how the problem of the use of pidgin English can be remedied, some of the respondents said that the school's by-laws should be enforced to abolish the use of Pidgin English. Other respondents said that the use of vernacular should also be abolished. It is clear that respondents identified the use of the local languages coupled with the Pidgin English, as one of the causes of poor pronunciation. They claimed that, this affects the standard pronunciation of the English words. The respondents however suggested that, 'the use of vernacular coupled with the use of the Pidgin English should be discouraged". Students should be encouraged to speak English (Standard English) in their everyday activities. Interviewees were unanimous in suggesting that, "the school's by-laws should be enforced to ensure that vernacular speaking is abolished".

4.2.4   Summary

Chapter four is an analysis of the responses of interviewees (teachers and students), and the findings of the observations. These include the introduction of the analyses of the responses and the discussions on the various thematic areas, such as: the causes of pronunciation errors, the effects of poor pronunciation, and the possible reduction of the problems. The responses of the interviewees provided answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the causes of poor pronunciation among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

2. What are the effects of such a problem among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School? And,

 3. How can poor pronunciation be reduced among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

The tables below provide the summary of the findings.

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Table 1: Causes of Pronunciation Errors

Question: What are the causes of pronunciation errors?

Responses

(a) **L1 Influence or Interference** : "I would say that some speakers of the Ewe language have peculiar problems pronouncing certain English words. This I would term 'dialectal barrier or problem'. For instance, the typical Anlos do not have the alveolar sound /t/ in their language, for that matter use the palato-alveolar affricate sound instead". For example, the word "teacher" is pronounced as /tʃi:tʃə(r)/ instead of /ti:tʃə(r)/ It was observed that the teacher used some Ewe sounds in the articulation of some English words. For example, /o/ instead of /əʊ/. That is, the word "notorious" is pronounced as /notoriəs/, instead of /nəʊte:riəs/, "look" is pronounced as /lok/, instead of /lʊk/; "pull" as /pol/, instead of /pʊl/. The sound /o/ is used for "pot" instead of /ɔ/. For instance, "book" is pronounced as /bok/, instead of /bʊk/. The error of /e/ interchanged with /ei/ was also observed as an L1 interference phenomena. For example, the word "pen" is pronounced as /pein/, while the word "pain" is pronounced as /pɛn/. "There are some Ewe sounds that are not directly in English, and there are some English sounds that are not directly in Ewe". "Yes, if you are not aware of such sounds that are not directly seen in the English language, if you are not aware of them, you might be tempted to use them in teaching English pronunciation and that may affect the correct pronunciation of the English word". Students produced the dental fricative sounds /θ/ and /ð/ as alveolar sounds /t/ and /d/ respectively. For example, "thermal" was pronounced as /termal/ and "that" as /dat/.

(b) **Lack of Proper Training and Confidence:** "I would say I find it difficult teaching English pronunciation because, as someone who majored in the Ewe language, and then doing a little in English, I need to do a lot of research to get information so that I can teach well in the classroom".

 "Frankly speaking, teachers of the language who are on the field, are not properly or thoroughly taken through oral works, as to equip them with the requisite skills to enable deliver efficiently in the classroom. So, there is a lacking mechanism also there". The teacher asked students how the word vehicle should be pronounced. He agree with students when they said it is pronounced as /vehikel/ instead of /vi:kl/. Again, the word "English" was pronounced wrongly by students. Instead of the teacher correcting it, he accepted it and used it the same way as /ingliʃ/, instead of /eŋgliʃ/. The teacher accepted the word "boy" as a disyllabic word, instead of it as a monosyllabic word. Instead of teaching 'stress' the teacher digressed to the teaching of syllabification. He asked students to show syllable boundaries for different words. The teacher stress different syllable for the word commission / kə'miʃən/ to indicate different uses instead of the second syllable for both nominal and verbal use of the word. Inability to distinguish the use of the rising/ the falling tune in sentences, For example, the teacher and students used the falling intonation in greetings, and vice versa for other words.

Table 1: Causes of Pronunciation Errors (cont.)

Responses

(c) Attitude of Students Towards Oral Lessons/Lack of Interest: "It is like, we ourselves are not serious, when a teacher pronounces a word and we just joke and laugh. We are not serious".

Lack of attention from students during observation of lesson e.g. the teacher shouted quiet!, quiet!, to draw their attention to the lesson.

"The fear of being mocked for pronouncing words wrongly discourages students from participating in oral work, hence, their laxity in class".

"Students, when they come to school instead of using the English language as a language which is normally used in the school, they prefer to speak in their various dialects. So, the practical aspect where may be the student has to hear the proper way a particular word is pronounced is not there. So they don't have the occasion to hear or listen to someone speak with the correct pronunciation. So, when you go to the class and you pronounced a word, it becomes new to them, because they have not heard it before".

"Some of us, we have not been reading our oral English notes". "They don't teach us again, we the final years, because of that we also relaxed".

"We are not referring to our dictionaries".

(d) The Use of Pidgin English: "I think we use Pidgin English and vernacular, and must be abolished"

(e) Lack of Assessment of Productive Skill: "Yes, I agree because the way WAEC sets the English language (oral English) question, they don't actually put in measures to ensure the correct pronunciation of words into the setting of the examinations , because if they were to be examining students in this kind of pronunciation in the final examinations, students will take more interest in trying to read widely and always speak English, so that even when they are wrong someone will hear their mistakes or whatever they are saying which is wrong, and correct them. So that at the end of the day, they can speak just like, or close to the native speaker".

"It happens like that, because once they get to know that they are not going to do anything like production, or pronouncing certain words that they might be asked to pronounce in the examination situation, they are discouraged or feel reluctant to learn the best or correct way of pronouncing words".

(f) The Roles of the Teacher: "They teach theory, not practical". "They don't use learning-teaching materials".

(g) The Roles of the Students: "We are to encourage one another to practise among ourselves".

(h) The Role of Educational Planners: "They didn't teach us oral English at the JHS because there was no oral English teacher".

(i) Lack of T/L Materials. Materials such as oral English cassette etc. were not available for use by both teachers and students, and they result to the purchase of any oral English material regardless of its quality. Teachers used, in most cases, the 'lecture method', with a little of the 'drills'.

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Table 2: Effect of Pronunciation Errors

Question: What are the effects of pronunciation errors on communication?

Responses

(a) It Affects Performance in an Examination: "Pronunciation errors will affect students' academic performance in terms of correct spelling of words".

 "Pronunciation errors make us choose the wrong answers during the examination". I observed that students scored low marks in exercises and tests conducted for them.

(b) Embarrassment: "We get embarrassed when people criticised our pronunciation".

"Sir please, we are disappointed when we pronounced a word wrongly, and we get to know of our pronunciation mistakes".

"Since they have this problem, it is difficult for them to live freely among people who do not understand their L1, and communication becomes difficult as they climb the academic ladder". I observed in one of the classes, when a student was laughed at when she pronounced the word 'cucumber' as /kukumba/.

(c) It Is Irritating to Hear People Speak with the Wrong Pronunciation: "When people have pronunciation problem, they speak with the wrong pronunciation, and it doesn't sound well in the ears when they communicate".I observed that some students who are speakers of Anlo dialect of the Ewe language, use some sounds that interfere with others sounds. For instance, the interchange of /e/ with /ei/ irritates.

(d) Poor Pronunciation Leads to Wrong Information: "Since they have these pronunciation errors, it hinders understanding or makes understanding difficult as far as communication is concerned".

 "Wrong pronunciation makes us give wrong information to our listeners".during my observation, I realized that students and teachers' inability to distinguish the use of the rising/the falling tune in sentences inhibited the meaning of what they intended to say.

(e) Get Discouraged when People Criticise their Pronunciation: "We fear that when we make mistakes others would criticise our pronunciation, or laugh at us". I observed that students refused to answer questions when they were called to do so, because they do not want to be laughed at.

Table 3: Suggested Remedies

Question: What are some of the possible remedies to these problems?

Responses

(a) **Students Should Participate in Oral Lessons:** "Students should participate in oral lessons, and be encouraged to listen to one another as they communicate."

"Students should be encouraged to listen to one another as they communicate, and correct themselves instantly as they make mistake, so that such a mistake is not repeated in their next production". I observed that students do not participate in lessons, nor correct one another when they make mistakes.

(b) **Provision of Language Laboratory:** "A language laboratory equipped with the necessary machines and equipment, was a necessary tool that would help in the reduction of the pronunciation errors".

"In my view, language laboratories should be established in all schools   across all levels to enhance language teaching". There was no language   laboratory in the school during my observation

(c) **Training of Teachers in Oral Works and Regular In-service Training for Teachers:** "Teachers should be trained in oral work at all levels, and regular in-service training is organised for those who are already teaching".

"GES should provide us with qualified teachers to teach oral English". I observed that, teachers who were teaching oral English were Ghanaian language teachers.

(d) **Time Allocation for Oral English on the Time-table:** "More periods should be allocated for English so as to make allowance for oral English also to get a slot on the time-table". There was no provision for oral English on the time-table.

(e) **WAEC Should Test Students' Productive Skill:** "The WAEC must re-introduce the practical section, and test students' productive skills in oral English paper".

(f) **Provision of Learning/Teaching Materials and Equipment: "**It is the responsibility of the GES to provide to schools audio cassettes on Oral English and other equipment to enhance teaching and learning".

"We want to hear the voice of the owners of the language, so that we can also use it to correct our pronunciation errors or mistakes". My observation reveals that there were no learning/teaching materials.

(g) **Regular Oral Tests before Final Oral Paper:** "Teachers should not wait for us to reach the final year before they test or conduct examination for us in oral English. They should start from form one before we reach form three". I observed that teachers hardly give exercises or conduct tests on oral English.

(h) **Avoidance of the Use of Pidgin English and Vernacular:** "The school's by-laws should be enforced to ensure that vernacular speaking is abolished".

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION; SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The research reported here comprises of the introductory chapter which deals with the background to the study, the rationale for it, and how I propose to do it. Chapter two discusses the existing literatures relevant to the research topic. The chapter also discusses what has already been done by the few people who have ventured into the area of the description of the phonology of Ghanaian English as a field of study. Chapter three takes a brief look at the methodology for data collection and analysis and presentation for this work. Chapter four, present an analysis of the data. The final chapter (5) deals with the general summary of the findings and also suggests areas for further research in pronunciation.

The research had its origin in the observation that many learners of English as a second language have major difficulties with English pronunciation, often even after years of English lessons, with concomitant major disadvantages in all areas of life, notably in communication.

This observation, combined with the observation that many English language teachers have major problems in teaching pronunciation, prompted me to carry an investigation into the phenomena of "causes of pronunciation errors among Senior High School students" to establish the truth or otherwise of it.

The research involved a case study based on observation and a semi-formal interview with teachers, and students of Dabala Senior High Technical School which is located in the South Tongu District. The research sought to find out the following:

1. What are the causes of poor pronunciation among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

2. What are the effects of such a problem among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

 3. How can poor pronunciation be reduced among students in Dabala Senior High Technical School?

In designing the research, a Case study of qualitative approach was employed, using Dabala SHS as a case study. A purposeful sampling technique was used in selecting two teachers and sixty students for interview, and there was two weeks observation for both teachers and students on pronunciation.

In conducting the research, it became clear from the findings that the situation is a very complex one, with:

1. The widespread lack of confidence and lack of proper training of general ESL teachers in teaching pronunciation.

2. The general lack of interest and lackadaisical attitudes of students toward pronunciation lessons.

3. The absence of quality learning and teaching materials for pronunciation teaching, and

4. L1 transfer or influence; issues playing a major role. So, the report also includes a discussion on the effects of the errors on students of Dabala Senior High Technical School, and the suggestions to reduce the poor pronunciation.

While it is true that methods used for teaching pronunciation are in need of improvement, it is also true that current practices (teacher training and placement of teachers) are leading to a situation in which, even if pronunciation teaching methods were maximally effective, it would be difficult or learners to access teachers who had the ability to help them. The bulk of the study reports the findings of the research, provides necessary background about pronunciation, and makes a series of recommendations.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study in to the phenomena of "causes of pronunciation errors among SHS students", revealed very interesting findings from the data collected on the "causes of pronunciation errors, the effect of poor pronunciation, and the possible reductions to poor pronunciation ", which when considered seriously, will be of tremendous benefit to stake-holders.

Causes of pronunciation errors

The following have been established as some of the factors that cause pronunciation errors:

(a)   L1 transfer or interference which resulted in most of the students pronunciation errors.

(b)   Lack of proper training for language teachers which is product of lack of confidence on the part of those who decided to teach.

(c)   Lack of professional language teachers with the expertise to teach pronunciation.

(d)   Lack of equipment and language teaching/learning materials.

(e)   Lack of assessment of learners productive skills.

(f)   The use of old-fashioned methods in teaching pronunciation.

(g)   The general lack of interest and lackadaisical attitudes of students toward pronunciation lessons.

Effects of poor pronunciation

In case of the effects or pronunciation errors on communication, it was established from the findings that, poor pronunciation or pronunciation errors affects students in many ways. Notable among them are that:

a. Affects students' performance in tests or examinations

b. Students get embarrassed when they spoke or pronounced words wrongly

c. Errors irritate when people spoke with the wrong pronunciation

d. Poor pronunciation leads to wrong information.

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e. Students get discouraged when criticized for wrong pronunciation.

Suggested remedies to problems

In order to curtail the ever increasing pronunciation errors among SHS students, some

remedies were suggested. They are:

 a. Provision of learning/teaching materials and equipment

b. Training of teachers in oral works, and regular in-service training for teachers

c. Regular class tests and examinations for learners before final WASSCE

d. Time Allocation for Oral English on the Time-table

e. WAEC Should Test Students' Productive Skill

f. Provision of a well-equipped language laboratory at all levels of education

g. Students participation in oral English lessons must be encouraged

h. Avoidance of the Use of Pidgin and Vernacular.

I hope I have shown that the situation for ESL learners with respect to getting the help they

need with pronunciation is rather serious: certainly, my interviews revealed widespread

acknowledgment of the problems outlined above. I hope also that the complexity of the

situation is apparent from the account given. Although my research findings do not reveal

entirely new things, the research report has confirmed some of the earlier findings on the

causes, effects, and the remedies of pronunciation errors. The outcome of the research,

therefore, is expected to help in finding the causes of poor pronunciation of English words

among SHS students, which will inform the classroom teacher on how to handle

instructions on English pronunciation. The textbook writer, the language planner and

syllabus writer, as well as examiner will each be better guided in their portrayal of English

pronunciation. It is in this regard that this work must be seen as significant, in as much as it

contributes to the search for the reduction of poor English pronunciation. Finally, the work

has given a fresh perspective to earlier investigations into the causes of English

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pronunciation errors, and has contributed to existing body of knowledge, since the work is the first of its kind to be conducted in the South Tongu district.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

This section presents recommendations for a range of initiatives which might help to improve the situation. As part of the solutions or remedies to the pronunciation errors among Senior High School students, the following were recommended.

1. ESL teachers need to be provided with courses and materials to help them improve their effectiveness in teaching pronunciation. They also need to be better supported in the context of the many demands that the changing system is placing upon them.

2. There is a need for high quality, effective materials, especially computer-based materials with audio demonstrations, for learners of ESL pronunciation, both for self assessment and for use in classes where the teacher needs support of this kind.

3. There is the need for language, laboratories to be established in schools at all levels. This will enhance the students productive skills from the basic level up to the higher level.

4. Finally, it is recommended that regular class tests and assignments are conducted for students of English pronunciation to measure learners' proficiency in pronunciation, and diagnose areas of need for them.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Studies

It is recommended that further studies into 'Pronunciation' should consider:

➢   The type of errors students make during communication in the English language.

➢   The need for increased scholarly research on ESL pronunciation and ESL pronunciation teaching and for a more systematic approach to resolving debates about the relative effectiveness of methods and materials.

➢   In particular, there is an urgent need for development of a range of assessment tools to measure learners' proficiency in pronunciation, and diagnose areas of need for them.

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Without such a tool it is virtually impossible to compare or demonstrate the effectiveness of methods or materials.

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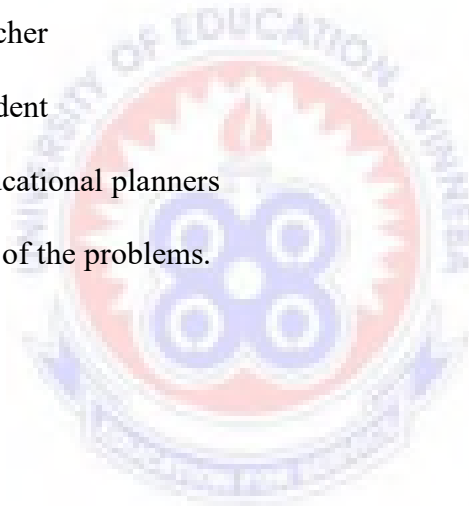
APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

In collecting data for analysis, a semi structured interview method was employed.

Therefore, an interview guide was designed to guide the researcher as to which areas his

questions cover.

Below is the interview guide:

1.   Causes of pronunciation errors.

2.   Effects of poor pronunciation.

3.   Methods of teaching pronunciation

a.   The role of the teacher

b.   The role of the student

c.   The role of the educational planners

4.   Possible reduction of the problems.

APPENDIX B

Observation Guide

In collecting data for analysis, observation as an instrument was employed.

Therefore, an observation guide was designed to guide the researcher as to which areas his focus should be during observation.

Below is the observation guide:

1. Causes of pronunciation errors.

2. Effects of poor pronunciation.

3. Methods of teaching pronunciation

    a. The role of the teacher

    b. The role of the student

    c. The role of the educational planners

4. Possible remedies to the problems.
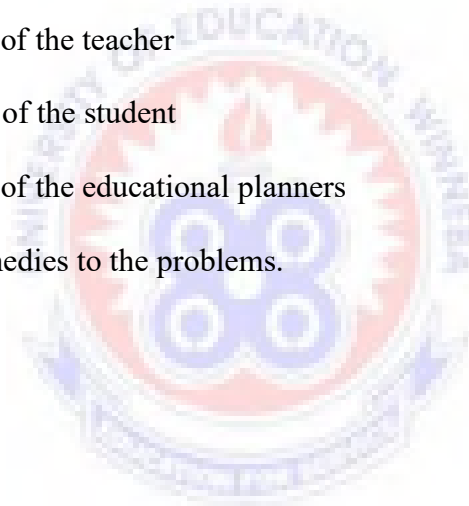
APPENDIX C

University of Education of Winneba

P. O. Box 25

Winneba.

20th June, 2011

The Headmaster

Dabala Senior High Technical School

Dabala

Dear Sir,

A REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY-OUT A RESEARCH AT DABALA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL – AWUKUDZIE EDWARD

I wish to inform you that I am a graduate student who is pursuing a Master of

Philosophy degree in the discipline of Applied Linguistics. As a partial requirement

for the fulfillment of the award of Master of Philosophy degree, individual graduate

students are required to present a report on a well-researched topic.

It is in fulfillment of this requirement that I would like to investigate the phenomena

of 'causes of English pronunciation errors among Senior High School Students',

using Dabala SHS as a case study. I therefore, humbly request your permission and

approval to undertake this study.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

Awukudzie Edward

cc: The District Director

Ghana Education Service

Sogakofe

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DABALA SENIOR HIGH TECH. SCHOOL

(GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE)

Our Ref: **GES/VR/DST/TP/AE**

Your Ref:

P.O. BOX 51

Dabala , V/R

Tel.0245383997 / 0302952792

21st June, 2011

MR EDWARD AWUKUDZIE

P. O. BOX 25

WINNEBA

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY-OUT

A RESEARCH AT DASTECH

With reference to the subject matter captured above, I wish to permit you to carry-out your proposed research work at DASTECH.

Kindly see Mr. Ablana, the Assistant (Academic) to introduce you to the students and the Head of the Department that you would use for the work.

Thank you for your interest in our school.

C.F.K. NYADUDZI

HEADMASTER

Cc:

1. Mr. Ablana, Asst. Academic

2. Mr. Eho, Asst. Administration

3. Mr. Doe, HOD General Arts