

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

THE INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH ORTHOGRAPHY ON PRONUNCIATION OF
GHANAIAN ESL LEARNERS: THE CASE OF JHS 2 LEARNERS OF TEBEREBE
M/A BASIC SCHOOL



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Faculty of Foreign Languages, submitted to the School of
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Master of Education
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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

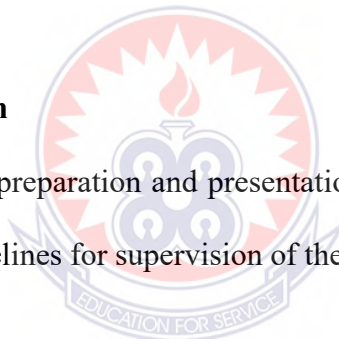
I, Gifty Dad Futukpor, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:

Date:

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.



Dr Sefa Owusu (**Supervisor**)

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

To my beloved husband and children



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In the first place, I am most grateful to God for bringing me this far in my academic life. His provision in health and wisdom has ensured the success of this research. My sincere gratitude also goes to my supervisor, Dr Sefa Owusu for his advice, guidance and contributions to the successful completion of this research. I would also like to appreciate my lecturers for their significant comments and contributions during lectures and presentation sessions, which have shaped this work. I am highly grateful to my course mates for their encouragements and constructive comments during the period of writing this project work. I exceptionally appreciate everyone who helped in diverse ways throughout this period of study; I am immensely grateful. Thank you.



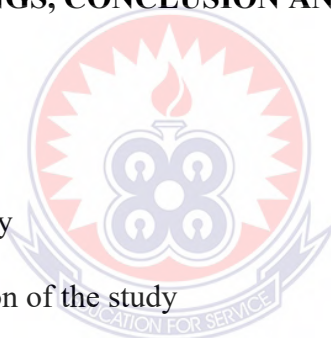
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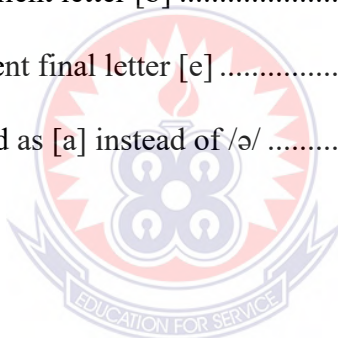


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ABSTRACT

Pronunciation ability is a crucial developmental skill for learners of English as a second language. This is because it has a significant impact on the performance of students in communication situations. Owing to this, it became necessary that the poor pronunciation abilities among junior high school students of Teberebe M/A basic school be investigated to ascertain the cause and propose possible measures to ameliorate the situation. It is against this backdrop that the research was conducted to ascertain how the orthography of English language contributes to the pronunciation challenges of the students and suggest measures that can be adopted by English language teachers in helping the students improve upon their pronunciation skills. The researcher employed interview of teachers and pronunciation activities of the students in obtaining the data. Using thematic analysis, the findings showed that the students articulate letters of the alphabet that are silent in words, and this creates mispronunciation. For instance, the letters [k] and [p] are articulated in the words *knife* and *psychology respectively*. The qualitative analysis also showed, regarding the research question two that teachers do not teach sound letter correspondence, and this makes the learners to lack the knowledge of the various sound-letter correspondences. The findings revealed that explicit teaching of the correspondence between sounds and their respective letter would help build the pronunciation skills of the junior high school students. The study recommended that English language teachers of the junior high schools should explicitly teach the correspondence between the sounds and the letters of the alphabet.



CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

English has become a global language and this has made the teaching and learning of the language a necessity, even for people who live in countries where the language is neither an official nor a native language. Undoubtedly, people crave to know and speak English because it has become a means of international communication and as a medium for accessing high and modern technology. The need for people to acquire or learn how to speak English has made people from countries that share borders with Ghana to move into the country to learn the language. In other words, a lot of people have recognised the need to learn and use English, either as a foreign language or an official language.

However, as indicated by Mahmud (2000) the teaching of English to learners from countries where English is assigned the status of a native language is becoming more difficult. These difficulties arise from the efforts and energy teachers have to put up in making their students overcome the problems they encounter in learning English as a second language, especially in the context they have found themselves, non-native speaking context. Research has shown that English as a second language learners, in their attempt to learn the English, encounter problems that are mostly attributable to the phonemic differences between the language systems of the two languages, the L1 of the learners and the target language, English. Thus, as pointed out by proponents of Contrastive Analysis, if it occurs that the two languages were exactly the same, there would be no much difficulties in the learning of the L2. Unfortunately, as observed by Mahmud (2018, p.3) “there are no languages that are the same. Even the same language may have several differences with regard to its use as might have been influenced by

dialects.” This observation about the learning of a second language has been emphasised by Ramelan (1985, p. 7) that “the degree of difficulty in learning is also determined by the degree of difference between the two languages. The greater the similarity between the L1 and the target language, the less difficult it will be for the learners to learn the target language”.

One of the core components of English Language is phonetics and phonology, and the importance of this aspect has made it one of the core or compulsory subjects for students learning English, even at the regular university system. As a core aspect of the teaching and learning of English, students are required to develop the knowledge of the articulation of speech sounds in the target language. Teachers of English as a second language, therefore need to adopt strategies and language teaching methods that can help their students obtain the skills needed for the articulation of sound, including vowels and consonants, and how these sounds are produced with different phonetic characteristics.

Supporting this observation, Roach (1987, p. 3) argues that “the theoretical material learned in phonetics and phonology is needed to understand the principles regulating the use of sounds in spoken English”. Hence, Mahmud (2018, p. 3) asserts that looking at the need for second language learners to develop the knowledge of English phonetics and phonology, “it cannot be denied that good pronunciation is the to key success in learning English”. It goes to implicate the need for English as a second language teachers go be meticulous in the selection and use of materials, course books, teaching methodology and skills so that their students will be able to develop mastery of the English phonetics and phonology, if they want their students to be consistent and accurate with their pronunciation of English words. Thus, as argued by Brown (1991, p. 1), learners of English as second language need to master the sound system and their

acceptable combinations as these have implication on their ability to pronounce English words correctly for effective communication. It has therefore become obvious that the inability of learners of English a second language to pronounce English words clearly constitute a great barrier to their aim of achieving success in speaking and understanding English. In this regard, English as a second language learners' ability to pronounce English words correctly and clearly becomes a hindrance to communication.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The phonetics and phonology of English is a staple part in taught programmes that are offered by universities and institutions where English is taught as a course. According to Ezza and Saadeh (2001), the course that teaches phonetics and phonology is differently named Phonetics, Phonetics and Phonology, Phonetics and Pronunciation, English Phonetics etc. According to Almihmadi (2012, p. 41), the principal objectives of teaching phonetics and phonology in a language course is for the learners to have a thorough understanding of the various phonetic concepts that are necessary to appreciate points of similarity and contrast between their L1 and L2, and to improve their command over sounds and pronunciation norms including intonation patterns of English, which they are learning as a second language.

According to Pardede (2019), pronunciation instruction has long been so neglected in the field of second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) teaching. On the lack of interest by teachers in teaching pronunciation to L2 students, Gilbert (1994, p. 38) asserts that it has become “something of an orphan in English programmes around the world” and, and in the year 2010, the same author intimates that “pronunciation continues to be the EFL/ESL orphan” (Gilbert, 2010, p. 1). On the negligence of teaching of phonetics and phonology towards the mastery of pronunciation in the classrooms of L2 learners, Celce-Murcia et al. (1996, p. 323) have

described pronunciation instruction as “suffering from the “Cinderella Syndrome— kept behind doors and out of sight” because it is the component of the SL/FL mostly excluded from all teaching programmes (Pardede, 2019). Nonetheless, the importance of teaching phonetics and phonology (pronunciation) instruction in the classrooms of L2 learners, especially in classrooms that are communicative-oriented cannot be overlooked. This is because, the justifiable and pressing objective of teaching pronunciation is not to acquire native-like or ‘perfect’ pronunciation but to produce a comprehensible and an intelligible speech (Gilakjani, 2012), in which intelligibility refers to “the extent to which a listener actually understands an utterance”, and comprehensibility is “a listener's perception of how difficult it is to understand an utterance” (Derwing & Munro, 2005, p. 385).

Owing to this, researchers and language teachers have developed different teaching paradigms for the teaching of English language to non-native speakers. Analysing these methods of teaching second language learners’ phonetics and phonology, Almihmadi (2012) has indicated that though most of these methods are commendable, they lack clear theoretical underpinnings, this could be blamed for the inability of English as second language learners to achieve mastery in pronunciation of English words. Thus, the lack of credible theoretical vigour on the methodology of teaching English sounds has led to the trial-and-error methodologies that have been experienced in the area of second language teaching. Following this Yilmaz (2008. P. 161) intimated that “learning theories are indispensable for effective and pedagogically meaningful instructional practices”. According to Almihmadi (2012, p. 41) “any form of teaching without theoretical grounding can easily lose focus and drift in opposing directions, thus confusing the learners”. It’s not surprising that in the context of learning English as second language out the community where it is spoken as a second language,

learners hardly achieve nativelike pronunciation mastery. The implication of these studies is that teaching of L2 sounds and orthography must be shaped and directed by sound teaching and learning theory.

In the work of Ngula (2011), it was established that spelling pronunciation, whereby words are pronounced based on how they are spelt, is a common phenomenon observable in Ghanaian English. According to the findings of Ngula (2011), Ghanaians pronounce English words based on how it has been spelt, even though there is no one-to-one correspondence between orthography and phonemes in English. Therefore, Ghanaians are influenced by the near one-to-one relationship between sounds in their native languages and spelling of native words in pronunciation of English words.

The current study therefore seeks to ascertain the influence of English orthography on the pronunciation of English words by junior high school students. It is worthy of note that pronunciation cannot be fully studied looking at the orthography of the language alone. In order to adequately ground the study in the literature, the study makes references to the sound system of English and not only the orthography. This is because the graphemes of the language are representations of phonemes in the language. In this regard, the supposed deviation between the phoneme-grapheme correspondence and how this results in pronunciation difficulties for learners of English in Teberebe M/A basic school in Tarkwa Nsuaem Municipality in Ghana is the objective the study aims to achieve.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The principal objective of the research is to determine the influence of English language orthography on the pronunciation of English words by junior high school students. Specifically, the study seeks to

- a. Assess the influence of English orthography on the acquisition pronunciation skills among learners in the junior high schools.
- b. Ascertain the strategies English language teachers use in teaching English orthography and sounds to English as a second language learners.

1.3 Research Questions

This thesis aims to provide answers to the following research questions by the end of the study.

- a. How does English language orthography influence the pronunciation of the junior high school learners?
- b. What strategies do English language teachers employ in teaching English orthography and sounds to junior high school learners?

1.4 Significance of the study

The study will be important for the stakeholders and researchers of second language learning, especially in the context of non-native countries. Regarding teachers of English as a second language, the findings of the current research will help them understand the nitty-gritty of the teaching of language sounds and the orthography. The study will reveal the methods the teachers employ in teaching the orthography and the sounds of the language, which will make other teachers who will read this work to learn and add the knowledge unto their existing knowledge about the teaching orthography and sounds of a second language. One of the main contributions of this research is that it will add to the theoretical rigour of Contrastive Analysis to the emerging field of phonetics and phonology pedagogy. Thus, the research finding will serve as evidence to the effectiveness of the Contrastive Analysis in the teaching and learning of English

sounds and orthography. By this, the research finding will offer an original scheme for teaching the orthography of English language and its sounds in the Ghanaian context. Moreover, the findings of the study will help teachers and learners in their teaching and learning activities and thereby improve upon their performance in the course of teaching and learning in the second language classroom. The findings of the study will help curriculum designers and course book writers to design appropriate curriculum and course books that meet the needs of the learners, and in turn helping them overcome the difficulties they face in learning English orthography and sounds, and eventually helps learners improve upon their pronunciation skills. one area of which the findings of this study is of great significance is the area of research. With the findings contextualised in the Ghanaian context, the current study's findings will help researchers with the real problems teachers encounter in teaching English sounds and their corresponding orthographical elements. As the study intends to reveal the impact of orthography on pronunciation, the current study will help the research community to determine areas of research regarding the teaching of language orthography and its impact on pronunciation. More specifically, the study will show the areas of concern in terms of orthography sound correspondence and the effect it has on L2 learners' pronunciation ability.

1.5 Delimitation of the study

There are different areas of the English language that English teachers in the junior high schools in the country teach their students to master. These aspects of the language include grammar, listening and speaking, literature and writing. Even though students at the junior high school level in Ghana might have challenges in some of these areas, and therefore they also require research, the current study is concerned with English language orthography and its impact on junior high school students' pronunciation. The

study is concerned with the teaching of English sounds and how they affect pronunciation performance. Regarding this, the current study's scope covers only pronunciation performance. It needs to be mentioned that, apart from the speech sounds which play crucial role in pronunciation, there are also supra-segmental features such as intonation and stress which also play important roles in speaking. However, the current study does not focus on supra-segmental features. Regarding the speech sounds in English, there are vowels and consonants as reflected in the consonantal and vowel letters of the orthography of the language. This study considers both vowel and consonant letters and the entire sounds in the language. In this regard, other linguistic elements including stress and intonation, which may affect pronunciation of English words are considered in the current study. Specifically, the study's scope covers only orthographical elements and their corresponding sounds in the language.

1.6. Limitations of the study

This research was done amidst difficulties that can never be ignored. Notable among them are, finance; the researcher was always on the internet seeking information to make the work rich. This had an impact on the researcher financially. The researcher had to buy food for some of the respondents who came to school on empty stomach in order to get them to be interviewed. Another problem was time. The researcher did not have enough time on her side since the researcher was teaching, writing lesson notes and undertaking the research at the same time

1.7 Organisation of the research

The research is sectionalised into five chapters. The current section, Chapter one, provides the introduction to the whole study. It gives the background to the study, the statement of the research problem, the objectives of the study, the research questions,

the significance of the study and the delimitation of the study. The next chapter, Chapter two presents the literature review of the study. It offers the issues presented by other researchers in their research findings. Chapter two also discusses Contrastive Analysis and its principles, which serve as the theoretical underpinning of the current study. Chapter three provides a discussion of the methodology of the study. The analysis of the data and the discussion of the findings are provided in chapter four. Chapter five is the final chapter of the work. It provides the summary of the findings, the conclusion of the study and some recommendations based on the findings.

1.8 Chapter conclusion.

In this chapter of the study, we have provided the general introduction of the research. We have discussed the background to the study and provided the research problem. The objectives and the research questions are also provided in this chapter. Other issues discussed in this chapter are the significance of the study and the delimitation of the study. In the next chapter, we present the review of the literature. We show the gap the current study seeks to fill as the findings of related researches are discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In second language acquisition and learning, good pronunciation skills are considered very prominent in learners' ability to speak the target language and understand others during conversations. To ensure this, accurate production of phonemes is very crucial. Burnkart (1988) emphasized that, in addition to grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation constitutes the mechanical elements of speaking skill. According to Pardede (2018, p. 143), "without appropriate pronunciation, one's mastery of grammatical rules and possession of rich vocabulary do not guarantee that he is able to speak effectively". Fraser (2000, p. 7) emphasises that "with good pronunciation, a speaker is intelligible despite his errors in other speaking subskills (vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics); with poor pronunciation, understanding a speaker will be very difficult, despite accuracy in other areas". Thornbury (2006, p. 185) concurs with Fraser by asserting that "faulty pronunciation is one of the most common causes of misunderstanding" during conversations. Pardede (2018) has observed that many L2 learners tend to disregard many aspects of pronunciation, such as sounds, intonation, pausing, linking and rhythm while speaking. For instances, most of the L2 learners fail to discriminate the pronunciation of *thanks* and *tanks*; *she* and *see*. They also did not use different intonation for *Can you see John?* and *Can you see, John?* Their pronunciation inaccuracy often causes their utterances to become unintelligible (Pardede, 2018, pp. 143-144).

The assertions of these researchers indicate that good pronunciation is needed for effective communication. In this regard second language teachers need to focus on how to improve the pronunciation of their students. This study therefore looks at the

oral performance of junior high school students of Teberebe M/A Junior High School, regarding the influence of English language orthography on their pronunciation of English words. Research has shown that in second language acquisition and learning, good pronunciation skill is considered very prominent in learners' ability to speak the target language and understand others during conversations. To ensure this, accurate production of L2 sounds is very crucial. Burnkart (1988) emphasized that, in addition to grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation constitutes the mechanical elements of speaking skill. According to Pardede (2018, p. 143), "without appropriate pronunciation, one's mastery of grammatical rules and possession of rich vocabulary do not guarantee that he is able to speak effectively." Fraser (2000, p. 7) emphasises that "with good pronunciation, a speaker is intelligible despite his errors in other speaking subskills (vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics); with poor pronunciation, understanding a speaker will be very difficult, despite accuracy in other areas". Thornbury (2006, p. 185) concurs with Fraser by asserting that "faulty pronunciation is one of the most common causes of misunderstanding" during conversations. Pardede (2018) has observed that many L2 learners tend to disregard many aspects of pronunciation, such as sounds, intonation, pausing, linking and rhythm while speaking. For instances, most of the L2 learners fail to discriminate the pronunciation of *thanks* and *tanks*; *she* and *see*. They also did not use different intonation for *Can you see John?* and *can you see, John?* Their pronunciation inaccuracy often causes their utterances to become ambiguous (Pardede, 2018, p. 143-144).

Regarding this, the current chapter presents the discussions in the literature. In section 2.1 the chapter presents the theoretical framework, in section 2.2, the empirical review is presented. Section 2.3 presents the conceptual framework for the study.

Section 2.4 discusses the need for explicit teaching of L2 Sounds to non-native learners. The conclusion of the chapter is presented in section 2.5.

2.1 Theoretical Review

In this section, the theoretical underpinning of the study is presented. Theories are formulated to explain, predict and understand phenomena, and in many cases to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions. The theoretical framework of a research, therefore, serves as the structure that can hold or support a theory of research study (Creswell, 2013). In this study, three theories have been adopted in the explanation of the data in the study. The current study is informed by the principles of Error Analysis, Contrastive Analysis and Distinctive feature theory. It has become necessary for these theories to be employed in the discussion of the data because of the methodology and approach the researcher adopts in conducting the study. It needs to be mentioned that in the literature, it has been noted that the native language of the learners of English plays a crucial role in the learning of English by influencing the acquisition and learning process. In order to understand the English sounds and how they are realised in the pronunciations of the students we need to make references to the orthography and sound system of the native language of the learners. Concerning the Distinctive feature theory, we need to provide a description of the sounds and feature changes they undergo in the pronunciations of the students.

The main purpose of this study is to identify and explain the pronunciation errors in the speech of junior high school students who are learning English as their second language. To make the study more revealing, the methodology and analysis of the data are grounded in the theoretical perspective of Error Analysis. The discussion presents arguments that reveal the significance of investigating errors for a better understanding of the notions of interlanguage and intra language errors of L2 learners through the

analysis of the pronunciations of the students. This section, therefore, discusses interlanguage hypothesis, the concept of error and the taxonomies for classifying and systematizing them.

2.1.1 Error Analysis

The field of second language acquisition and learning has witnessed a considerable amount of research. These research activities intend to offer explanation and account for the process of second language acquisition. The quest to understand the process of second language acquisition and learning has resulted in the advancement of Error Analysis (EA). Today, EA has become very instrumental in applied linguistic analysis due to its focus on both learner errors and the target language that is being learnt. Explaining the role EA has played in language research and learning process, especially in the non-native language learning context, Alotaibi, Wu and Alrabah (2018, p. 518) maintains that "...we now view language learning as a series of stages of interlanguages, and errors as positive evidence that learners are experimenting with linguistic rules in order to progress from one interlanguage stage to the next".

Also, EA is employed to explain the causes of avoidable pronunciation errors and elicit accurate conclusions and justifications. Suthakaran (2015) argued that EA is the most commonly used method in assessing the level of L2 learners' competence when it comes the study of wrongful use of linguistic elements in the target language. In this regard, there are studies, including Tahainneh (2010), Almahammed (2016), Alhysony (2012), Delije and koruti (2013), and Yousefi (2014), that have employed EA to examine the difficulties learners of English as second language face in using English to communicate. Wagner and Weitzman (2015) for instance differentiated two main errors: Errors of commission and errors of omission. Errors of commission consist of actions that were not warranted; anytime a learner applies a rule that is not required

at the context. With regard to the current study, we may say that in the course of pronouncing a word, the learner may insert a sound into the syllable structure of English words. On the other hand, errors of omission are construed as a situation whereby a learner fails to apply a rule when the context demands or warrants the rule's application; a learner's failure to actively do something right (Wagner & Weitzman, 2015). In the context of the current study, we may consider error of omission as learners' inability to actualise a sound segment in their pronunciation tasks. According to Alotaibi, Wu and Alrabah (2018, p. 518), these errors could be conditioned by either the pressure of the patterns of the learner's L1 on the target language, or to the inability of the learner to perfectly learn and apply new L2 patterns or rules. This implies that, there are certain errors that L2 learners commit which can be attributed to the teaching process of the language, whereby the teachers of the target language fail to teach the new L2 patterns or rules accurately for the learner to assimilate them.

Alotaibi, Wu and Alrabah (2018) proposed that teachers of English as a second language need to be aware of the commonest errors their students commit in the process of learning specific aspects of the target language, sound in words. It is the case that teachers of the L2 may not be aware of these errors. The teacher's knowledge of these errors that their students commit would offer them the opportunity to seek more effective pedagogical methods in teaching the sound orthography correlations. Lorincz and Gorden (2012, p.1) explain that "in order to determine what pedagogical methods are most effective, it is important to first understand what makes learning so difficult." It is in light of this call that the current study combines both contrastive analysis and error analysis to look at the situation of pronunciation errors from multifaceted perspective.

2.1.2 Interlanguage hypothesis and Second Language learners' errors

In the process of learning a new language, there are instances whereby the rules and structures in the native language of the learner tends to impede the learning process of the target language; the L1 makes it difficult for the learner to internalise the rules and structures in the L2. Due to this conflict, the learners develop a new language system which is not too different from the target language. Al-Khresheh (2015) explains that “the language of foreign language learners is itself a linguistic system which is independent of either L1 or L2, although influenced by both, so interlanguage can be described as a dynamic system moving in the direction of the second language” (p. 127). This means that the L1 sounds have the potential to influence the realisation of the L2 sounds in the speech of the learner. Prior to the conception of this idea by Selinker (1972), Corder (1967) had construed the idea and described as “transitional competence” which is a compound system that has a structurally intermediate status between the learner’s L1 and the L2. Corder (1967) explains further that the learner of a second language builds up an interlanguage that is unique to each individual learner; he refers to this individual language system “idiosyncratic dialect” (p. 162). Adding his view to the idea of interlanguage, Nemser (1971) points out that it is an autonomous system that keeps evolving towards the target language, the L2. Nemser (1971, p. 6), therefore, refers to this intermediate language the “approximate system”. Even though these two linguists have coined different terminologies to refer to the same phenomenon, they are in agreement with the idea that interlanguage is a dynamic and developing language system that occurs as an intermediate language system between the L1 of the learner and the target language.

In the current study, we want to hypothesis that the junior high school students have not mastered the target language, and are in the transition systems whereby they

have developed their idiosyncratic dialect of English that exhibits pronunciation inaccuracies. The goal of the current study is to ascertain the influence the orthography of English language has on this idiosyncratic dialect of the learners. Gargallo (2009, p.128) explains that the L2 learner depends on the L1 in the course of learning the L2 and this makes the learner prone to transferring elements from the L1 into the L2. At the time when the learner gains some level of awareness and knowledge of the L2 rules and structures, assimilation of the L2 rules tends to occur without the L2 learner having to rely on the L1. Concerning this, Gargallo (2009) explains that the interlanguage is “internally structured through a series of internal processes (strategies) and mechanisms that make it a dynamic system that is constantly adopting changes in terms of how language works” (Gargallo, 2009, p. 127). Based on this observation, we may argue that the learners of English as a second language in Ghana tend to develop some patterns on the orthography and the sound correlation of English. In this regard, the current study looks at how this established pattern in terms of the interlanguage of junior school learners is influenced by the orthography of the language.

On the weaknesses of interlanguage, Al-khresheh (2015) mentions that interlanguage hypothesis has a limited explanatory power. This, he attributed to the fact that the analysis of production of utterances does not provide solid information as to the specific stage in which learners are located. Al-khresheh (2015) argues further that it almost impossible to come out with a standardized criteria that could lead to a definitive conclusion about the stage the learners have reached in their interlanguage. Furthermore, interlanguage hypothesis seeks to provide a psycholinguistic explanation of the data, nevertheless, there are no methodologies to account for mental processes in a precise and concise way and for that reason, and all the assumptions made regarding these internal aspects never have an objective nature (p. 129).

Nonetheless, interlanguage hypothesis, in spite of the criticisms, has provided some significant level of contributions to the field of applied linguistics. Firstly, interlanguage has made L2 researchers to consider L2 learners as active participants in learning process of the L2. Additionally, from the teaching perspective, Interlanguage helps teachers to determine what an ESL learner knows at a particular point in time and what she/he should be taught. Finally, interlanguage has also contributed to changes in teaching methodology since it raised awareness on the fact that errors are a part of the learning process. Hence, the need for continuous supervision by the teachers was minimized (Richards, 1996; Rustipa, 2011; Al-khresheh, 2015).

In spite of the criticisms against interlanguage, it is believed it would provide an insight into the analysis of the errors of pronunciation because it helps us to know how the learners are learning the language and what needs to be taught at their stage of learning process. At the junior high school level, the learners have been taught the orthography and phonemes of the language, which helps them in their pronunciation and reading activities. In this regard, if the students of junior high school still commit some pronunciation errors, then that could reveal how well they have learnt sound orthography correlation. This implies that despite the absence of objectivism of results and conclusions made from the interlanguage of students, it is the position of the current study that it reveals the pedagogical approaches that the teachers take in dealing with the teaching of English sound orthography correlations.

2.1.3 The importance of errors to understand interlanguage

In the framework of the interlanguage hypothesis, it has been noted that the formulation of statements regarding a learner's interlanguage is possible only through the analysis of learner errors. According Gargallo (2009, p.128) "the only observable data of interlanguage are the utterances produced by the students when they try to

formulate sentential sequences in the second language”. As a result of this, the corpus of written texts gathered from the L2 learners’ essays serve as means of gathering the information concerning the use of prepositions in their interlanguage.

As L2 researchers, we seek to understand the specific aspects of the output of the L2 learner that attests to the status of the learner, with regard to the learner’s interlanguage. Researchers have shown that through the analysis of the learner’s error, we are able to determine the level of the learner’s interlanguage. For instance, Corder (1967) explains that the learner’s errors show the learner’s level of knowledge of the target language at any point in its development. This has been considered to be the case, those errors present feasible evidence of the interlanguage system (p. 166) . Learner errors are essential for second language acquisition and learning researchers because it serves as explicit evidence in understanding what happens in the mind of the L2 learner. Corder (1971) argues that “there could be no reason to engage in Error Analysis unless it served to elucidate what and how a learner learns when he studies a second language” (p.58). As we mentioned before, in the development of interlanguage, learners employ a series of underlying psychological structures in their minds. These biological mechanisms go through different stages of maturity.

According to Selinker (cited in Gargallo, 2009), one of the proponents of EA believes that “in the mind of all students there are a set of latent psychological structures, which are activated when there is an attempt to learn an L2” (p.127-128). Gervilla (2005) emphasised this position by arguing that the L2 learners fall on these “mental processes to solve the specific problems that they may have when trying to express themselves in the second language and for assimilating and practicing their knowledge of the second language” (p.31). Gargallo (2009) maintains that the learners adopt strategies of acquisition, to enable them to add, change, reorganize and discard

hypotheses about L2 rules and structures, and how these rules and structures apply in the target language. The hypothesis is that all errors produced by second language learners are the product of a strategy (mental process) employed by the learner when using the second language. According to Gervilla (2005, p. 30) “when detecting an error, it is necessary to draw on the psychological mechanisms that motivate it.” This has conditioned the need to discuss the sources of learner errors in terms of the mental strategies the L2 learners adopt during the developmental stages of the interlanguage.

2.1.4 Interlanguage strategies causing errors in second language acquisition.

One of the strategies the learners of second languages employ in developing the interlanguage is interlingual transfer (also known as transfer errors). These errors are those that are produced by the interference of the L2 learner’s mother tongue (Brown, 2000, p.224). According to Ellis (1994), transfer refers to the “processes that lead to the incorporation of elements from one language into another” (p.201). It is “the influence that results from the similarities and differences between the second language and any other language that has been previously acquired” by the learner of the L2 (Ellis, 1994, p.301). The interlingual transference consists of two main forms. When it happens that the L1 of the L2 learner shares common linguistic features with the L2, the observable transferences become positive due to the fact that they are not conflictive with those features in the target language that is being learnt as a second language (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982, p. 97). For example, there are sounds in English that correspond to their letters in the orthography. Some of these sounds also exist in the native language. hence, they will be easier for the learners to learn them.

Negative transfer from L1 involves the use of the learner’s native language linguistic features or grammatical rules which do not exist or apply in the target language. When this happens, where a non-target like second language form or

structures surface, errors are committed. For instance, the consonant /p/ is corresponds to the letter /p/ in the orthography of most the Ghanaian languages. This means that the learners of English are likely to transfer this idea in the native language into English and try to actualize the letter /p/ in the word *psychology*, which would lead to pronunciation errors. This serves as an instance of negative transfer (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

Even though the current study is more focused on intralingual errors, reference may be made to interlingual errors when the need arises in the analysis. Thus, in the current study, errors are described as either interlingual or intralingual errors. Interlingual errors are errors that result from transfer from the mother tongue (Almahammed, 2016, p.45), while intralingual errors are developmental errors resulting from difficulties in the acquisition of the target language orthography sound correlation (Almahammed, 2016, p. 50). Many current studies indicate that errors committed in L2 can be attributed to both language transfer and developmental factors or intralingual interference (Bilal et al, 2013; Tahaineh, 2010). Hence this study seeks to determine the factuality of this assertion.

2.1.5 Steps in Error Analysis

The review, in the above sections, has provided the background of EA, the goal of this approach to the study of L2 learner outputs, the criticisms that have been levelled against it, and the justification for its continuous use among L2 language learning researchers. It is needful that we provide the steps that are followed in conducting EA investigation. Pit Corder, cited in Ellis (1994, p. 48), posit that in order for a comprehensive investigation into the observable errors in the L2 learners' output, the researcher needs to follow the under listed steps.

1. Collection of a sample of the learner's language

2. Identification of the errors
3. Description of the errors
4. Explanation of the errors

In Chapter Three, these steps are explained with regard to the data collection and analysis. The learners' oral output will be obtained for the error identification and description.

2.1.6 Differentiating Errors from Mistakes

Mistakes are deviations that prevail in the speech of language users in the course of interaction. That is, as one communicates with people, certain outputs may surface which may not be desirable by the speaker. Mistakes do occur during communication, not necessarily because the speaker lacks linguistic knowledge in the target language, but because the speaker is prone to encounter language problems in the process of communication, either through speech or writing (Gass, 2008). Mistakes, in this regard, do not indicate linguistic gaps or inadequate linguistic knowledge of the second language: they are observable in the output forms of native speakers as well. According to James (1998, p. 83), mistakes are deviances which are caused by distractions during communication or probable lapses of the organs of speech, such as the tongue or problems of the fingers whilst writing. Since mistakes are considered as a failure to utilize correctly a known linguistic system (L1 or L2), even native speakers of any language are prone to make mistakes while speaking (James, 1998). Even though both native speakers and L2 learners commit mistakes pertaining to language use, native speakers have the ability to correct themselves in a faster way, as they can identify their slips as soon as they listen to them (Brown, 2000, p. 205). The argument, therefore is that mistakes are self-corrected, and tend not to be consistent, even on the part of the L2 learners.

Errors, on the other hand, have been observed to be the consequences of learner's inability to develop full linguistic knowledge of the target language; they are not the product of linguistic performance. When errors occur in the linguistic performance of the L2 learner, they are not viewed as a product of performing the speech or writing act itself, but these are caused by L2 learner's lack of adequate development of the linguistic knowledge in the L2. Errors show linguistic ignorance of the second language. This means, native speakers do not commit errors, but mistakes, while L2 learners commit both errors and mistakes. Arguing for the essence of errors in second language learning, James (1998) establishes that they reflect the linguistic knowledge and lack of it, and these cannot be corrected by the learners (p. 79).

Gass (2008) and Selinker (1972) posit that errors are normal in the process of second language acquisition and learning contexts and thus, learners cannot be able to consider their errors as such. Only until a teacher or a native speaker tells them the reason why they have deviated from the language norm that they can realize that they were wrong. In this sense, there is a great difference between error and mistake, because in the latter the student is able to figure out the reason why his or her production is not well constructed so as to correct it without relying on someone else (Purwati, 2012, p. 37).

Is it possible to filter errors from mistakes in the analysis of deviances? The answer seems to be no. Although some Error Analysis studies have proposed a step in which the researcher corroborates if the deviances are errors or mistakes, the results are always biased. In this procedure, the authors of the exams are confronted with their exams again, and they must check them in order to identify sentences that are erroneous. However, James (1998) believes that "the test of auto-correction of mistakes is a problematic criterion to apply in practice" (p.79).

In this study make the learners undertake the pronunciation of the words in many contexts in order to ascertain the consistency of the pronunciation errors. A pronunciation error that is repeated more than once in the same task is considered an error and not a mistake.

2.1.7 Contrastive Analysis

This research employs Contrastive Analysis to unravel the segmental and orthographical variation between English and Ghanaian languages in order to ascertain the negative effects it has on the pronunciation of English words by junior high school students. As a theoretical foundation that underpins the analysis of linguistics data, Contrastive Analysis (CA) hypotheses were formulated in Lado's (1957) "Linguistics Across Cultures". According to Lado, elements in that target language which are similar to the native language of the learner would be simple learn and produce while those that show significant difference across the target and the native language of the learner would be difficult for him. The assumption of the theory is that areas of differences between the two languages would be difficult for the L2 learner to master, while areas of similarity would be less difficult for the learner. In this regard, the proponents of the theory propose the need for language teachers to describe the languages (native language and target language of the learner) by comparing them and predicting learning difficulties (areas of differences). Concerning this, Connor (1996) explains that Contrastive Analysis is the systematic study of two languages with the aim of identifying their structural differences and similarities. CA assumes that the level of difficulty L2 language learners encounter in mastering certain structures in the second language depends on the differences between the learners' native language and the target language they are trying to learn.

According to Al-khresheh (2013), CA was propounded by Charles Fries in 1945 as a fundamental component of foreign language teaching methodology. The theory suggests that in the course of learning second languages, the learners bring with them the already acquired L1 knowledge, and language teachers need to consider this in their teaching of L2 to second language learners (Bowers, 2002, p. 186). CA claims that the L2 learner transfers linguistic units of his L1 into the L2, and that results in errors. CA as a theory, therefore, proposes that the most effective materials for teaching a second language are characterised by “a scientific description of the language to be learnt, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner” (Al-khresheh, 2016, p. 331), which could be done by undertaking a comparative analysis of the learners’ L1 and the target language. Within the framework of CA, pedagogical materials need to be designed in a way that would tackle the target language in a systematic fashion based on the predicted difficulty of structures as derived from CA (Ammar & Nina, 2006). In the current study, CA is employed to explain some of the errors that occur in the learners’ outputs. It could be that the learners encounter challenges learning the correlation between the L2 orthography and the L2 sounds.

According to Lado (1957, p. 158) “the basic premise of CA hypothesis is that language learning can be more successful when the two languages – the native and the foreign – are similar”. However, the existence of negative transfer in the second language learning situation leads to erroneous production of L2 forms and results in deviations from the target language forms. Al-khresheh (2013) identifies four kinds of deviations that are caused by differences between a learner’s native language and second language he attempts to learn: overproduction, underproduction, misinterpretation and production. With overproduction, Al-khresheh (2016, p. 334)

explains that “learners produce a given L2 structure with much greater occurrence than natives speakers of L2 do.” This means that the learners make extreme use of what they supposed to be correct and acceptable; consequently, resulting in overuse of certain sounds. Concerning underproduction or avoidance, the learners hardly produce any of certain L2 sounds or they fail realise them at all. This means there are sound segments that the learners may not be able to actualise them in the speech. According to this kind of deviation, learners deliberately avoid certain L2 sounds. According to Al-khresheh (2016) unproduction is often caused by conscious avoidance of complex L2 sounds: usually, those that do not appear in the L1. With the third kind of error (misinterpretation) grounded in semantics, it has been observed that such an observable error in L2 learner’s production of L2 forms occurs when the learner’s L1 structures influence the interpretation of L2 messages. In the current study, the third kind of error is not considered. The fourth kind of error, production errors, may occur as the substitutions of one sound for the other because the learner does not master the production of the sound. For instance, *think* is pronounced as [fink] in Poland and [sink] in Egypt, *people* as [beoble] in Arabic, *love* as [laugh] in Saudi Arabia, *fish* as [fis] in Malaysia, and *thirty* as [dirty] in India (Al-khresheh, 2016, p 334).

Odlin (2003, p. 37) intimates that substitutions of sounds compose most forms of production errors. These errors explain the idea that various kinds of negative transfer errors occur in the speech of second language learners. These errors occur as the language learners attempt to fall back on their L1. As indicated by Odlin (2003), L2 learners do make use of their knowledge of the L1 to help them in learning and using the target language. He argues, however, that this kind of L1 knowledge becomes useful but limited to L2 structures that are quite similar to the L1 counterparts. It has been

pointed out that the influence of L1 transfer gradually reduces as learners get more experience and start mastering the target language (Al-khresheh, 2016).

Ogunsiji and Olanrewaju (2010) conducted a phonological contrastive study of English and Ibibio languages. The finding of their study reveals that English has more consonants than Ibibio language and that creates more errors as learners attempt to produce those sounds which are not found in Ibibio in English words. The findings show further that the voiced velar plosive /g/ is not part of the phonemic inventory of Ibibio language; therefore, native Ibibio speakers tend to substitute /k/ for /g/ in their pronunciation of English words that have the sound /g/. Ogunsiji and Olanrewaju (2010) observed further that the unavailability of the dental fricatives /ð/ and /θ/ in Ibibio language results in errors in pronunciation of English by Ibibio speakers, as they tend to produce /t/ instead of /θ/ and /d/ instead of /ð/ in English words that have these sounds. The researchers argue that because the voiced alveolar fricative, /z/ is absent in Ibibio language there is a tendency for the speakers of Ibibio to substitute /s/ for /z/ in their pronunciation of English words.

The current study employs contrastive analysis approach to explain how the orthography of the L1 of the students influences them in making pronunciation errors in the L2. Looking at the orthography of the native language of the students, it is predicted that because there is near one-to-one mapping with the sounds, that could have influenced the students into thinking similar situation occurs in English. This, according to Contrastive Analysis should have a negative implication on students' pronunciation of English words that contain sounds that have more than one letter in the orthography.

2.1.8 Distinctive feature theory

The Distinctive feature Theory is the next theory used in this study. This theory is utilized to analyse the phonological problems junior high school students commit as observable in their pronunciation of English words. According to Katamba (1989) “a useful approach to the problem of how segments of sounds are used in speech is to consider sounds from a functional point of view, to talk not in terms of individual physical sounds, but of family of sounds which count as the same in the language in question”. With the family of sounds construed as a phoneme, the various physically distinct sounds which count as executions of a given phoneme are the allophones or variants of that phoneme. A phoneme is conventionally represented by a letter symbol between slant lines. For instance, the infinitely physically diverse voiceless stops that can be made with contact between the tongue and the palate are grouped into two phonemes labelled /t/ and /k/, each of which has a range of allophones which differ slightly from each other depending on the phonological contexts (Roach, 2009; Yule, 2010).

The phoneme is a meaningful sound, capable of creating meaning difference between two words that form a minimal pair. For instance, the words *pan* and *ban* are similar in all regard except at their initial environment. This means that what is responsible for the meaning variation between these two almost identical words is the contrast observable in their initial environment. This means that the sound /p/ and /b/ are phonemes. However, a careful look at these sounds would reveal that /p/ and /b/ are similar in every aspect but their phonation types. While /p/ is produced with an opened glottis and therefore a voiceless sound, /b/ is articulated with a narrowed glottis, making it a voiced sound. This explains the idea that it is not the whole segmental difference that has occurred at the initial positions of the words *bit* and *pit* but the contrast in the

phonation type between /p/ and /b/. This idea informs the position of the distinctive feature theory.

There are four allotments of features, according to Schane (1973), used to explain the data used in this study.

a. Binary: This indicates the presence or absence of a feature. The symbols (+) is used if the feature is present, as in the case of describing the sound /p/ as –Voice and /b/ as +Voice.

b. Major class features: The major class features consist of three sets of features: syllabic, sonorants and consonantal. Sounds that are described as +Syllabic have the propensity to occupy the nucleus position of a syllable. Sonorants are sounds which are inherently voiced and their environment does not change their phonation type. Sounds regarded as +Sonorant include vowels, semivowels, nasals, and liquids. –Sonorant sounds are obstruents such as plosives, affricates and fricatives (Katamba, 1989). Another major class feature is consonantal, and this relates to the level of obstruction that occurs during the flow of the airstream. It is observed that consonants are produced with relatively higher obstruction of the airstream as compared to vowels. In this regard, all consonants are +Consonantal, whereas vowels are –Consonantal.

Manner of articulation features are another set of distinctive features that are used to describe speech sounds. It mainly relates to the stricture and releasing stage of the articulation of the sounds. These manner of articulation features comprise continuant, which is used to describe vowels, fricatives and approximants, delayed released, which describes affricates and strident, a feature that distinguishes fricative but /θ, ð/, and affricate. The other manner of articulation features are nasal and lateral (Katamba, 1989).

Beside the above-mentioned distinctive features, there are other features that concern the place of articulation. These place of articulation features are anterior (sounds articulated from alveolar to bilabial) and coronal, sounds articulated from alveolar region to the palatal ridge. The analysis of the data in this study employs distinctive features to explain some of the changes that occur to the English sounds, especially consonants, as they are produced by the students in their pronunciation tasks.

2.2 Empirical Review

In the literature, it has been noted that English as a second language teachers encounter difficulties in teaching pronunciation to non-native learners. Ramelan (1985, p.7) explained that differences in sound systems between English and the native language of the learners present significant difficulties to the non-native English learners. In this regard, the sounds the learner encounters in English may be new or strange because such sounds are non-existent in their native language, or even if they exist, have different distributions or variants.

In another study, Oktaberlina (2010) investigated the difficulties Indonesians face in learning English. The findings of the study indicated that Indonesians learners of English language find it challenging pronouncing English words because (1) some English sounds such as /v/, /ð/, and /θ/, do not exist in Indonesian sound system, and (2) there are differences in spelling systems of Indonesian and English. Basri (2010) pointed out that even though the differences in spelling systems and the absence of certain English sound segments in Indonesian language contributes greatly the pronunciation difficulties among the Indonesian learners of English, the impact of stress patterns of English cannot be over looked. The study established that Indonesian learners encounter different stress pattern which deviate from what exist in their L1. Basri (2010) explained that while in Indonesian language the stress pattern falls on the

penultimate syllable, English stress does not have a definite position in a word, as its position is determined by the weight of the syllable. According to Basri (2010), the complicated stress pattern in English, which is difficult to be predicted compounds the pronunciation difficulties of the Indonesian learners of the language.

In the current study, we are interested in the role of orthography in pronunciation errors of learners. Hence, the current study does not consider the effect of stress on pronunciation difficulties among the learners.

In another study Pardede (2006) investigated the difficulties L2 learners of English encounter in mastering English sounds. The study revealed that the learners encountered problems that had to do with producing English fricatives. The errors the research participants were recorded. The study showed that 89.8% of the participants committed errors in realising the sound /θ/. The percentage of the participants who could not accurately realise the sound /ʒ/ was 89.7%, while 76.2% failed to realise /ʃ/ correctly. The study showed further that 72.5% of the research participants could not realise /Δ/ correctly. The sound with the least failure of articulation was /z/ as it recorded 55% articulation failures. According to the findings of the study, such pronunciation inaccuracies could certainly cause misunderstanding in real communication. To overcome the problem, classroom action research using the explicit instruction in which the segmental elements of the target language are taught explicitly was planned. This approach was selected due to two reasons: (1) the instruction conducted by treating pronunciation incidentally as an integrated part of the speaking activities did not facilitate the students to master English pronunciation well; and (2) many current English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) studies of pronunciation teaching (e.g. Silveira, 2002; Couper, 2006; Saito, 2007; Kissling, 2013; Sturm, 2013) have confirmed the effectiveness of the explicit instruction on the

teaching of phonetics and phonology target languages. Venkatagiri and Levis (2007) posited that explicit instruction can help learners develop ‘phonological awareness’ (i.e., conscious knowledge of segmental and suprasegmentals), which might play a key role in the target language speech intelligibility. Hence, the current study seeks to ascertain the methodological strategies English language teachers in the junior high schools adopt in teaching English sounds and their corresponding orthographical letters. For instance, the literature has demonstrated that various innovations have been advanced, especially with the growth of ICT, in the teaching of phonetics and phonology of target languages. Thus, as Mompean et. al. (2011, p. 1) have explained, “entirely new forms of teaching interactions” are now possible. One of the areas in which these innovations have become prevalent in language teaching is phonetics and phonology, where innovations in teaching and learning pronunciations have been observed. For instance, in the early 1960s, computer-generated displays of English intonation contours in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to non-native learners was developed and used (cf. Vardanian, 1964). In a study conducted by Anderson (1960), deaf people were taught English intonation using technology. According to Almihmadi (2012), there is a striking drift in teaching paradigms towards adopting a more global and integrative form of teaching covering all the main areas of phonetics.

Mompean et. al. (2011, p. 2) review the trends in contemporary teaching of English phonetics and phonology and expressed the hope that these trends could lead to “a breakdown of the division between research and practice”. These, according to the researchers, fieldwork-like practices, in which students observe speech data and form hypotheses about the data is the first of these contemporary trends. In this regard Ashby (2007) and Ashby et. al. (2005b) was among the first to implement this method,

which shares characteristics with the constructivist approach to the concept of learning, whereby learning occurs by doing. The second innovation is the use of software to analyse speech. Concerning this, students of second languages make on-the-spot recordings of certain speech items, and then perform instant acoustic analysis of the items. For instance, Ashby et. al. (2005a) and Wilson (2008) have published research papers that have reported the use of acoustic software, such as Praat. Ashby et. al. (2005) intimates that the use of technology in the classroom of English as second language “can augment students’ learning experience, and break down unnecessary division between theory and practice”. In the current study, we look at the strategies teachers use in teaching English sounds. Particularly, the study seeks to find out if teachers of English language in the basic school employ any form of technology in their teaching activities in the classroom.

In another study, Wrembel (2001) provided an overview of the current innovations in the teaching of phonetics. Among the new teaching techniques, the researcher identified include drama techniques, voice setting techniques, and Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Critical to the study of Wrembel (2001) is her speculation that the main driving force for innovation in teaching of second languages is “a general tendency in foreign language teaching to embrace ... holistic approaches”. Almihmadi (2012) observes that traces of constructivism are scattered within the growing body of current literature on phonetics and phonology pedagogy. She therefore recommends that these traces be knitted together into an assembly of a paradigm. In this regard, a “whole-hearted embracement of the constructivist approach, where explicit teaching of sounds is practised in the classroom will make a big difference in students’ performance and learning outcomes (Almihmadi, 2012).

Recent studies have indicated that explicit teaching of sounds (linguistic forms) and their combinations is the best ways to help learners develop the awareness of a second language's pronunciation features. A study conducted by Couper (2006) in New Zealand showed that explicit pronunciation teaching helped Asian immigrant students notice the gap in their pronunciation and, consequently, improved their English pronunciation. In another study Saito (2007) researched on the explicit teaching as an approach in teaching English vowels /æ/ and /a/ by means of *PRAAT* software to native Japanese learners of English. The finding of the study showed that students instructed explicitly on the target sounds showed greater improvement in their pronunciation, whereas the students receiving implicit instruction only improved slightly. Agreeing with the other researchers, Sliveira (2002) has indicated that explicit teaching of phonetics and phonology is an effective means of solving the erroneous pronunciation of word-final consonants encountered by beginner Brazilian learners of English. Derwing and Munro (2005: 388) assert, that "just as students learning certain grammar points benefit from being explicitly instructed to notice the difference between their productions and those of L1 speakers, so students learning SL/FL pronunciation benefit from being explicitly taught phonological form as it helps them notice the difference".

With the adoption of the Constructivist approach which advocates an explicit teaching approach to the teaching and learning of English phonetics and phonology to non-native speakers, this study therefore aims to apply explicit teaching approach to the teaching of phonetics and phonology to the learners. Thus, it will look at how explicit teaching of this aspect can increase the learners' pronunciation skills and improve the pronunciation skills of the students participated in this study and motivate them to learn English. In this regard, the holistic and explicit that this study will adopt is envisaged to make learning of phonetics and phonology which directly affect pronunciation of

English words more interesting to the learners, and thereby involve themselves into the learning process in the classroom.

Wrongful pronunciation of words in the target language caused by the speaker's inability to articulate L2 speech sounds correctly hinders communication as the situation causes comprehension difficulty for listeners. Zimmermann (2004, p.29) explains, therefore, that "pronunciation is crucially important, as it is usually the first thing people notice about an English language learner's English". Citing cases whereby forms such as 'will', 'park' and 'sale' replaced with 'well', 'bark', and 'sell' respectively, Zimmermann (2004) argues that the listeners often get confused and struggle to comprehend the speech of L2 speakers of English. These examples mean that the pronunciation errors can affect other linguistic levels at the same time.

Setter and Jenkins (2005) have observed that, pronunciation needs to lose its isolated character and be treated pedagogically as part of communication and discourse. This would mean focusing on what will help a learner make meaning in communicative situations at the same time as learning about other aspects of language in general language teaching textbooks; pronunciation practice should be incorporated at the early stages of language learning as possible. In line with research conducted within the field of second language acquisition and learning, the notion of teachability of various pronunciation features should be taken into account (Setter & Jenkins, 2005). This assertion of the researchers is informed by the view that pronunciation plays a crucial role and contributes significantly to successful spoken communication by L2 learners, and therefore how second language learners may expect to be understood with poor pronunciation skills is rather outside the scope of theory and practice. In this regard, English as a second language teachers need to evaluate their own pronunciation skills and teaching methodologies so that they can improve the communicative skills of their

students. The onus is on the English language teacher to learn to listen to their students and address features of their speech which may make it difficult for communication to take place.

In the literature, different research works have been done on pronunciation of English words by Ghanaians. Some of these studies include Akpanglo-Nartey (2012), Ngula (2011), Adjaye (2005) and Bobda (2000). In all these studies, it has been revealed that there are differences between Ghanaian English and RP because of the way Ghanaians pronounce some of the English words. In the study of Akpanglo-Nartey (2012), it was reported that English vowels are realised differently by Ghanaians, and this different vowel realisations reflect the social variable distinct between males and female, even among educated Ghanaians. In the research of Adjaye (2005), which looked at the Ghanaian English in the contexts of segment and supra-segmental features, it was reported that the distinct characteristics observable about Ghanaian English is attributable to spelling of English words, analogy to native words, and negative interference from L1. In the work of Ngula (2011), it was established that spelling pronunciation, whereby words are pronounced based on how they are spelt, is a common phenomenon observable in Ghanaian English. According to the findings of Ngula (2011), Ghanaians pronounce English words based on how it has been spelt, even though there is no one-to-one correspondence between orthography and phonemes in English. Therefore, Ghanaians are influenced by the near one-to-one relationship between sounds in their native languages and spelling of native words in pronunciation of English words. Presenting an account of Ghanaian English, the research of Adika (2012) emphasised that these observable pronunciation variation in Ghanaian English makes the variety of English spoken in Ghana a variant with distinct characteristics from Standard English.

In other contexts, Bassetti (2017) has shown that adults who are learning to acquire a second language often do so through the combination of written and oral inputs, with the written inputs considered dominant in most cases. The study reported that the written form of words in the L2 that the learner wishes to acquire is more consistent than the oral input which is subject to far more variability. The written input therefore provides a strong anchor for the learners to acquire the L2. The written input enhances learning of the phonological forms of words in the new language, and also helps the learner make a perceptual discrimination of the L2 phonological contrasts (Escudero & Wanrooij 2010). Orthographic variations between the L1 and the L2 forms significantly affect the manner in which the L2 learners pronounce words in the second language. This means that, though the way of spelling words in the L1 does not always have an effect on pronunciation, Bassetti, Hayes-Harb and Escudero (2015) have shown that difference in the spelling systems between the L1 and L2 sometimes leads to non-nativelike pronunciation of L2 words. For instance, in a study that sought to ascertain the phonemic difference between Arabic and English and how that makes Arabic students learning English to mispronounce English words, Smith (2007, p. 97) intimates that the learners commit errors such as *It is a fery nice fillage*, where the absence of the voiced labiodental fricative in Arabic makes the learners mispronounce words with this sound by replacing it with its voiceless counterpart, /f/. Therefore, the native speakers of Arabic resort to the use of the sound that their language exhibits in its phonemic inventory, the voiceless /f/.

In a study conducted by Akteruzzaman (2016) on the pronunciation errors in the speech of Bangladesh college students, it prevailed that the students substitute the sounds that are in English but do not exist in their L1 with the closest counterparts that exist in their L1 and this results in mispronunciation of English words. For instance, the

sound /tʃ/ is replaced with /s/ when it occurs at the onset position of a syllable. The study revealed further that the voiced alveolar fricative /z/ is alternated with the voiced palatal affricate /dʒ/, while the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ is replaced by voiceless palatal affricate /tʃ/ (Akteruzzaman, 2016, p. 155-156).

According to Waya and Kwambeh (2014), the greatest challenge that confronts speakers of English as a second language is the sharp contrast between the native language of the people and English. These researchers assert that in the event whereby most of the features of a learner's first language exist in the second language, learning and speaking the second language become less enormous. Waya and Kwambeh (2014) observed further that, most Africans struggle in achieving mastery of pronouncing English words because the language differs, to a great extent, from most African languages. Highlighting the problematic areas of English language that learners are challenged to acquire, the phonological system of the language became prominent. It has been noticed that the phonological variation can be observed when it comes to the many segmental features of English language that are not available in the majority of the African languages and vice versa. Consequently, learners of English who speak these African languages as their L1 encounter numerous challenges in their attempt to speak English. These challenges eventually result in the observable errors in their verbal production of English words.

In a study conducted by Akteruzzaman (2016) on the pronunciation errors in the speech of Bangladesh college students, it prevailed that the students substitute the sounds that are in English but do not exist in their L1 with the closest counterparts that exist in their L1 and this results in mispronunciation of English words. For instance, the sound /tʃ/ is replaced with /s/ when it occurs at the onset position of a syllable. The study revealed further that the voiced alveolar fricative /z/ is alternated with the voiced

palatal affricate /dʒ/, while the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ is replaced by voiceless palatal affricate /tʃ/ (Akteruzzaman, 2016, pp 155-156).

On the communication challenges mispronunciation creates in the speech of L2 learners, research has demonstrated that when a speaker of a target language is unable to pronounce words correctly, it creates comprehension difficulty for the listeners and consequently affects intelligibility. Intelligibility is a criterion by which one judges the learner's communicative competence of the target language. Akteruzzaman (2016, p. 153) explains intelligibility by asserting that "it is comprehension that crosses the boundaries of native & non-native varieties of English, and any malfunction in this quality, may disturb the comprehensibility of an utterance". In this regard, it is required that attention is given on how to bring non-native speakers' pronunciation as close as possible to the native pronunciation by offering assistance via effective teaching and learning methods that enable the L2 learners of English to attain competence level that will reflect on their speech in terms of their ability to accurately pronounce words in their L2 oral communicative events (Akteruzzaman (2016).

Previous research in this field has documented the effects of orthography on the L2 speech production of learners of a number of languages. This effect of spelling on the verbal realisation of L2 words is consistent with the study of Zampini (1994) which revealed that L1 English speakers of L2 Spanish pronounced [b] or [v] in correspondence with letters and <v> respectively, although [v] is not the native-like realization of <v> (and <v> in Spanish, both represent the phoneme /b/, pronounced as [b] or [β] according to the phonological context). This means that the L1 English speakers realise [b] and [v] in their pronunciation of Spanish words based on the grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences of English, their L1. The researcher

envisages that this may be a contributing factor in most of the pronunciation errors observed in the speech of English learners of Spanish.

In another study of orthographic effect on L2 learning, Bassetti (2017) observed that L1 Italian speakers who are learning English language as their L2, in the pronunciation of words that have double consonants, tend to lengthen these consonants because they are doubled in the orthography. This makes the learners to prolong the production of the sound /t/ in the word *kitty* than that of the word *city*. The learners construe the double consonant letters to represent long consonants in their L1 orthography. In other words, the findings of these studies suggest that the orthography of the L1 of the learner of English as a second language may influence him or her to produce phonological categories which do not exist in the target language (the L2).

In a study that sought to ascertain the phonemic difference between Arabic and English and how that makes Arabic students learning English to mispronounce English words, Smith (2007, p. 197) intimate that the learners commit errors such as *It is a fery nice fillage*, where the absence of the voiced labiodental fricative in Arabic makes the learners to mispronounce words with this sound by replacing it with its voiceless counterpart, /f/. Therefore, the native speakers of Arabic resort to the use of the sound that their language exhibits in its phonemic inventory, the voiceless /f/.

The non-existed sounds in the native language of the learners themselves make it difficult for the learners to produce such sounds in the target language. This leads to erroneous pronunciation of L2 words that contain these sounds (Pallawa, 2013). According to Sha and Mandal (2014), the non-existence of some L2 sounds in the native language of the English learners causes the learners to replace such sounds with their closest counterparts in the native language. However, Anam (2018) argues that the level of proficiency of the learner in the target language plays a crucial role on the level and

severity of errors that are committed in the pronunciation of the target language words. In this regard, Islam (2004) has observed among the speakers of Bengali who are more proficient in English language that they commit less pronunciation errors when speaking English (Islam, 2004). Anjarsari (2015) concludes that the greater the variation between the phonological systems of L1 and L2 languages, the more phonic interference one can observe in the learner pronunciation of L2 words; language family has a significant role in L2 interference; the more similar sounds of the L2 and L1 languages does not mean there would be less interference; and there is an identical allophone and its distribution between L1 and L2. Thus, as Akpanglo-Nartey (2002) explains the closer two languages are to each other genetically and typologically, the quicker a speaker of one will learn the other. This implies that when the native and the target languages are related both genetically and typologically, learning becomes much easier and errors in learners' production of L2 forms become less probable. Akpanglo-Nartey (2002) further intimates that when there are more linguistic similarities between two languages the learning of one by the speakers of the other is facilitated. This means that, as argued by the proponents of Contrastive Analysis if a feature is common in both languages, learning one of these languages becomes easier for the speakers of the other language. For instance, the vowels /a/ and /i/ are found in the phonemic inventory of both English and Akan, and therefore it should be expected the Akan learner of English would not struggle pronouncing English words that have these sounds. This is consistent to the line of argument of Rivers (1964) cited in Kpeglo and Temadonku (2016, p. 331) that the "differences between two languages interfere when speakers set out to learn the other".

On the phonemic variation among native and target languages and the probable errors that learners commit, Tiono and Yostanto (2008) investigated the kinds of

phonological errors identifiable in the speech of English students. The study focused on some anterior sounds such as the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/, the voiceless and voiced dental fricatives /θ, ð/, and the palatal sounds: /ʒ/, /dʒ/, and /tʃ/. The analysis of the findings of the study has indicated that three main phonological errors are found in the speech of the learners with regard to the pronunciation of English words that have these consonants. The study of Tiono and Yostanto (2008) indicated, therefore that segmental substitution, segmental deletion, and segmental insertion are found in the pronunciation of English words that have these sounds by Indonesian English students.

In another study Putri (2012) sought to find out the influence of English affricates and fricatives on the pronunciation errors of Indonesian English as L2 learners. In her findings, Putri (2012) indicated that the L2 speakers of English have less than 70% pronunciation accuracy with regard to words that have fricatives and affricates when their pronunciation of words is compared to a dictionary. Accounting for the probable cause of these pronunciation errors in non-native speakers of English Putri (2012) intimates that the observable errors could be triggered by the phonemic inventory of English and Indonesian languages which do not show both languages have the same fricatives and affricates. Putri (2012) identified from the data that the speakers of Indonesian undertake some measures to enable them pronounce the English words that contain fricatives and affricates that are found in the phonemic inventory of Indonesian. These include segmental omission, insertion of sounds, in the case of some affricates and overgeneralisation of the applicability of some phonological rules (cf. Fauzi, 2014).

It has been argued, as observed from the above studies that in order for L2 learners to attain proficiency in the target language, accurate pronunciation of L2 words is crucial (Fauzi, 2014; Putri, 2012; Gilakjani, 2012). Accurate pronunciation of target

words has become necessary to enhance intelligible and comprehensibility of listeners. Concerning this, Gilakjani (2012) argues that even though there is nothing like precise pronunciation as the same speaker is likely to pronounce the same word differently at different times, the pronunciation of L2 words by learners need to fall within a reasonable standard to make their utterance meet the communication needs of their listeners.

The findings of the above studies conform to the findings of other researchers on the influence of the L1 on English as L2 learners' pronunciation of English words. Thus, results of some other studies have indicated L2 speakers adopt diverse approaches in dealing with English words that have sounds that do not exist in the mother tongue of English learners. According to Pallawa (2013), the absence of some English sounds in mother tongue of learners of English makes it difficult for the L2 learners to pronounce some English words correctly. According to Sha and Mandal (2014), in attempting to mitigate the pronunciation errors that are caused by the absence of English sounds in L1 of the learners, the learners replace these sounds with the closest counterparts in their L1.

On the difficulties associated with the learning of English phonology, Ramelan (1985, p. 7) notes that differences in sound systems between English and the native language of the learners present significant difficulties to the non-native English learners. In this regard, the sounds the learner encounters in English may be new or strange because such sounds are non-existence in their native language, or even if they exist, have different distributions or variants.

Commenting on the difficulties Indonesians face in learning English, Oktaberlina (2010, p. 388-389) explains that the Indonesians learning English find it challenging pronouncing English words because (1) some English sounds such as /v/, /ð/, and /θ/,

do not exist in Indonesian sound system (2) different spelling system of Indonesian and English.

Ahmad (2011) studied the challenges Saudi students learning English as a foreign language are confronted with when pronouncing certain English consonant sounds. He randomly selected eight students for the study from a Saudi Arabian university. Recording samples of consonant sounds were taken from the research participants and four words selected for possible consonant sound problems using initial, medial, and final word positions. An English native speaker identified the problem sounds from the participants' speech recordings. The findings of the study conducted by Ahmad (2011), show that the participants had major difficulties in pronouncing specific consonant sounds such as /p/, /d/, /v/, /tʃ/, /ʒ/, and /ŋ/ because these sounds do not exist in their mother tongue. According to Ahmad (2011) and Saidat's (2010), when students speak a second or foreign language, they tend to substitute the sounds with their closest counterparts in Arabic, and this leads to pronunciation errors in the speech of the learners. Al Taha (1995) found that the most common speaking errors were English phonemes being replaced by Arabic phonemes. According to the researcher, these errors can in part be attributed to first language (L1) interference where certain sounds in English do not exist in Arabic. According to Na'ama (2011) the most frequent errors by Arab ESL learners occurred in their pronunciation of three and four-final-consonant cluster English words. These two types are usually not found in Arabic segmental features. According to Na'ama (2011), this is a major cause of interlingual phonological errors identifiable in the speech of Arabic English speakers.

In a study that aimed at investigating the influence of Arabic as L1 on the learning of English as a second language in Jordanian schools, and how this could

impact educational policy, Al-Zoubi and Abu-Eid (2014) revealed that 52% of the speech of English learners contain errors. This means that the percentage of total errors committed by the study sample in all areas exceeds the percentage error –free speech. The findings of the study indicated that the majority of the errors were due to negative transfer from Arabic to English. According to Al-Zoubi and Abu-Eid (2014), some learners are not able to form correct sentences due to transfer errors in the use of the *verb to be*, the use of *addition to* and the use of *passive voice*. These researchers were of the view that the observable errors in the Jordanian students’ speech, in all areas, are attributable to the “proactive inhibition where the old habits of learning got in the way of learning new habits as the learners tend to apply the structures of their L1 (Arabic) when they translate to English. The differences in the structures of the two languages cause the problems in translating sentences from Arabic to English, the L2. The findings in the study confirms the observation by Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) who assert that some of the errors committed by Arab students learning English as a foreign language are attributable to Arabic interference. This is in consonance with the assertion of Mahmoud (2000) that language learners’ L1 plays a crucial role on the learning of a second language. In other words, the errors that language learners commit in their attempt to speak the target language are caused by the differences between L1 and L2 are called transfer or interference errors (McLaughlin, 1987; Kharma & Hajjaj, 1989; Mahmoud, 2000). According to McLaughlin (1987), transfer from L1 to L2 is both a learning strategy and a communication strategy. As a learning strategy, transfer may be used by a language learner to help him formulate hypotheses about the new language he is learning; while as a communication strategy, the learner may use these transfers with the intention of testing formulated hypotheses. In this regard, Lightbown and Spada (2006) have indicated that error in language learning and knowledge of grammar

has become one of the most important aspects that indicate development of language learners' target language. Lighbown and Spada (2006) further intimate that second language learners are most of the time not aware of the errors they commit in their attempt to speak the target language, and therefore makes them unable to self-correct these errors.

Conclusion

From the review of the extant literature, the current study sought to find out how Junior High School students are challenged in pronunciation of English words by looking at the influence of the English orthography on their pronunciation errors. The study is informed by the literature in the sense that when there is lack of correspondence between the sounds and the letters of the orthography, the learners will struggle mastering pronunciation. Additionally, the literature has shown that when the L1 of the learners appears to have a consistent correlation between letters and sounds, that knowledge is likely to be transferred into the learning of the target language, which leads to pronunciation errors. Lastly, the literature shows that the strategy the teachers employ in teaching the sounds could be a contributing factor. Hence the current study seeks to ascertain the strategies teachers of English use in teaching English sounds and their corresponding letters of the orthography.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter contains the methodology the researcher employed in undertaking the study. The chapter contains the research approach, research design, population, sample, sampling techniques, instrumentation, validity and reliability, procedure for data collection, method of data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Approach

The study employed the qualitative research approach in exploring the influence of English language orthography on the pronunciation of junior high school learners in Ghana. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretative/theoretical frameworks that informs the study of research problems, addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Creswell (2013) asserts that qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry whereby the collection of data is done in a natural setting. Qualitative research obtains data from people and analyse it both inductively and deductively in an attempt to establish patterns or themes. Qualitative approach was useful for the current study because it enabled the researcher the opportunity to obtain data from the field where the participants experience the phenomenon being studied. additionally, it helped the researcher to gather data through interview in a very convenient manner.

3.2 Research Design

Research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches that provide specific directions for procedures in a research study (Creswell

& Creswell, 2017). A research design is the overall plan for data collection as the research seeks to provide an answer to the research question. In the current study, the researcher employed a case study design. Ary, Sorensen and Razavieh (2010) consider case study as the most appropriate format and orientation for school-based research. This conceptualisation is the view of the current researcher as the study seeks to ascertain the impact of orthography on pronunciation. The study is a school-based study, and as such, a case study design is considered appropriate. The case study design was appropriate for the study because it allowed the researcher the opportunity to record the voice of the research participants through interview in a flexible manner.

3.3 Population

Hayford (2013) defined population as a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we tend to generalize the results of the research. The population for this study consists of four junior high school English language teachers of Teberebe M/A Basic School in the Tarkwa Nsuem Municipal of Western Region of Ghana. This population comprised four teachers and 190 students.

3.4 Sample

The sample for the study comprised four English language teachers in the junior high school of Teberebe M/A Basic School and twenty form two students of Teberebe M/A Basic School. The researcher selected the four English language teachers because Teberebe M/A Basic School has only four English language teachers at the junior high level. Also, form two students were selected to participate in the study because students at this level have had enough exposure to the learning of English sounds and their

corresponding letters. Additionally, the form three students were not available at the time of the data collection process so they could not be part of the sample.

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Characteristics teacher participants

Number of Years Taught	Number of Respondents	School
4	2	Teberebe M/A Basic School
6	1	Teberebe M/A Basic School
8	1	Teberebe M/A Basic School

Source: field data (2022)

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of teachers by number of years taught. In the distribution, one of the teachers from Teberebe M/A Basic School has taught English language at the junior high level for 8 years, while another teacher had taught English language at the junior high school level for 6 years. The table shows that 2 of the English language teachers had taught English language at the junior high school level for 4 years.

Table 2: Respondents Demographic Characteristics by Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	School
		Teberebe M/A Basic School
Male	2	
Female	2	Teberebe M/A Basic School

Source: field data (2022)

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of respondents by gender. The table shows that the school has only four English language teachers. Two of the English language teachers are male teachers and the other two are females.

Table 3: Respondents Demographic Characteristics by Academic Qualification

Qualification	Number of Respondents	School
		Teberebe M/A Basic School
Diploma in Basic Education	2	Teberebe M/A Basic School
Bachelor's Degree (B. ED)	2	Teberebe M/A Basic School

Source: field data (2022)

Table 3 above describes the demographic characteristics of respondents by their professional qualification. It indicates that, 2 teachers of English language from Teberebe M/A Basic School had Diploma in Basic Education, while the other 2 teacher participant had Bachelor of Education degree.

Regarding the student participants, the researcher purposively sampled twenty form two students who took part in the study. The researcher randomly selected the students from both A and B classes. The table below captures the data on student participants.

Table 4: Student Respondents Demographic Characteristics by Gender

Gender	Number of Respondents	School
Male	10	Teberebe M/A Basic School
Female	10	Teberebe M/A Basic School

Source: field data (2022)

From Table 4, we observe that 10 of the student participants are males and ten are females.

Table 5: Student Respondents Demographic Characteristics by class

Males	Females	School
5 males	5 females	Teberebe M/A Basic School A
5 Males	5 females	Teberebe M/A Basic School B

Source: field data (2022)

From Table 5, we notice that five males and five females were selected from each class: Teberebe M/A Basic School A and Teberebe M/A Basic School B.

3.5 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the sample for the study. A small sample of teachers was selected because they are the only English language teachers in the school, and were in the best position to provide relevant information regarding the research questions. Avoke (2005) explains that with purposive sampling

technique, the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample based on the researcher's judgment of typicality. Similarly, Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) explained that in purposive sampling technique, the researcher uses his or her judgment to select a sample that is considered, based on prior information, appropriate in providing the needed data. It is for these reasons that the researcher in the current study employed purposive sampling in the selection of participants for this study.

3.6 Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data from the teacher respondents. The interview items probed into the key themes in the research questions, which include teacher strategies in teaching English sounds and their corresponding letters. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) postulated that semi structured interview is appropriate for a qualitative study because it can be conducted on phone, through the internet, face-to-face, and allows the interviewer the opportunity to probe questions for respondents to express their true feelings using an interview guide based on the research questions. A semi-structured interview guide allows the researcher the opportunity to work out some questions (aide memoire) in advance, free to modify them based upon his/her perception of what seems most appropriate. Since an aide memoire or guide is allowed in this type of interview, the questions were phrased, and allowed for probing and clarification of answers, on the key issues raised in the research questions. Focus group interview was used to gather data from teachers. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) defined focus groups as a form of group interviews which relies on the interaction among participants who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher. Focus group interview allows for merging the views of participants and stimulus to teachers who can express their comments or opinions in a less threatening and a more flexible

way (Cohen et al., 2000). Therefore, it is for the above reasons that semi structured interview guide was chosen to guide the data collection process for the study.

To deal with issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research, Guba and Lincoln (1994) proposed the following concepts: credibility; confirmability, accuracy, dependability and transferability. To ensure confirmability of the instrument, the interview items were given for peer review. The items were further presented to a lecturer for expert judgment, suggestions, and approval. Creswell and Poth (2018) posited that researchers consider validation in qualitative research to be an attempt to assess the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings. Creswell and Poth explained further that accuracy is a distinct strength of qualitative research in an account made through extensive time spent in the field, the closeness of the researcher to the participants in the study (creation of relationship), and a thick description of participants. The researcher in this case had a prolonged engagement with the teachers (four years). This prolonged stay in the research field opened up multiple opportunities for trust building and establishment of cordial and lasting relationship with the research participants. By virtue of the good rapport with the participants, the researcher could collect reliable data through in-depth interview with the participants; hence, ensuring trustworthiness of the data. After each interview session, the researcher played the audio recording for the respondents to listen to and agreed that what they heard was exactly what they said during the interview.

Transferability in qualitative research is synonymous to generalizability, or external validity in quantitative research. Transferability is established by providing evidence that the research findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and populations. Therefore, the findings of the study could be applicable in institutions of different environment, experiences and educational opportunities with

older students who have pronunciation challenges or those with difficulties establishing the relationship between the orthography and the sounds in the language.

3.7 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher sent a letter to headteacher of Teberebe M/A Basic School regarding the research. The letter stated the purpose of the study. The researcher was advised by the headteacher to send a copy of the letter to the Tarkwa Nsuaem Municipal Education office, since Teberebe M/A Basic School is within that district. So, the researcher wrote to the Director of education in the district for permission to carry out the study in Teberebe M/A Basic School. Both the education office and the headteacher wrote to the researcher permitting the research to take place in the school. Having read the permission letters from the education office, the school head agreed, and gave the green light for the commencement of the interview. An appointment was then made with the teachers for the interview. On the day of the interview, the researcher recorded the responses of the interviewees and then transcribed them for the analysis.

On the day of the interview, participants selected a convenient place within the school for the interview to be carried out. The interview began with greetings from the researcher and a self-introduction. The researcher encouraged the participants to feel free to express themselves since there were no correct or wrong answers. During the interview, participants were tape-recorded with their permission. The format for the interview was focus group. . The interview questions were asked from an interview guide and lasted for thirty minutes. The interview ended by assuring the participants that their identity in the study would remain anonymous and would not be disclosed without their consent. Finally, the researcher thanked the participants and the school head for their support and assured them that copies of the findings would be made available to them upon their request.

To obtain the data from the students, the researcher printed ten sentences that contain words, which have specific sounds, including the dental fricatives (th). Some of the words contain the letters **ph**, **gh**, **ch**, and **c. b**. The sentences were given to the students to read. The words were written in isolation for the students to pronounce. The pronunciations of the words were recorded for transcription. Additionally, the researcher asked the students to use some of the words containing the peculiar letters/sounds to form their own sentences. These sentences were also recorded and the words with letters were transcribed by the researcher. It is envisaged that the students may not be familiar with some of the words that the researcher may provide to them in the sentences they were to read; hence the need for the students to select from the words any two of their choice to form their own sentences. The researcher explained the meanings of the various words that contain the letters to the students. This made the formation of the sentences with those words easier for the students. The researcher never pronounced the words for the students. It needs to be mentioned that, the words were selected from the reading books of the students. As explained by Geertz (1973) cited in Mayisela (2017), the social and cultural context of the phenomenon acts as “the natural laboratory” that offers the researcher a complete and broader understanding of the social context within which the phenomenon occurs. Thus, as the researcher made the students to choose any two words of their choice that contain specific letters to form their own sentences, the approach helped the researcher to appreciate the salient details of the pronunciation difficulty or otherwise of these words with the specific letters as the approach serve as a natural context with the students using words that they were familiar with.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data were analysed qualitatively using narrative themes from the interview data which was audio recorded and transcribed. Analysis of the interview data was guided by key themes that emerged from the data. The process started with transcribing all interviews and highlighting words and sentences that served as units for more detailed themes. After this, responses from each participant were played back several times. This was done to identify the various points of view reflected in the major themes in the research questions. In order to categorize each view expressed, each major theme was written down individually on pieces of paper and as the responses were played several times, the key words and phrases expressed were jotted down under each theme. The various views gathered were then compared according to the themes to reveal the concept map for connections. The various words, phrases and opinions that reflected on the research questions were finally categorized in relation to the themes that emerged. Lastly, verbatim expressions of the respondents were used in reporting the data with inferences from literature where necessary.

On the data from the students, the pronunciation deviations were noted for description using distinctive features. Based on the literature the analysis of the pronunciation deviations was explained using error analysis and contrastive analysis.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

A qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis dissemination of qualitative reports (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Some of the ethical issues to consider normally when undertaking a study include; privacy, confidentiality, sensitivity to cultural differences, gender, religious and anonymity (McCosker, Barnard & Gerber, 2001). Therefore, the researcher debriefed the participants where the general and specific objectives, physical and

emotional risk associated with the study were explained. In an easy-to-understand language, participants were assured that if they choose not to participate in the study, for whatever reason, they will suffer no negative consequences for withdrawal, or being forced to do so. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and were free to withdraw from the study if they felt so. Besides, they were not to use their own names as a way of ensuring anonymity. Also, the respondents were assured that the researcher would not report or discuss any confidential information obtained from them without their permission, and that their names and any trace that will lead to the revelation of their identities would be made anonymous. Lastly, guiding principles of research such as acknowledgement of sources of published information to avoid plagiarism were duly observed.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter of the research presents the data and findings from the analysis. The chapter consists of four main sections. The first section, 4.1, analyses the data on the effect of English orthography on the acquisition of pronunciation skills among learners in the public junior high schools of Ghana. Section 4.2 discusses the strategies English language teachers employ in teaching public junior high school students. In section 4.3, the chapter presents a discussion on the strategies that could be adopted to improve the teaching of English orthography. The chapter's conclusion is captured in section 4.4.

4.1 Effect of English Orthography on students' pronunciation.

Data shows there are numerous instances whereby learners of English in the junior high are influenced by the orthography of English language to mispronounce English words. In the orthography of English words, there are words that contain sounds that are not pronounced. This means that even though sounds are articulated in certain words, there are other words in the language that these sounds are spelled but they are silent in the pronunciation of those words. The learners, however, attempt to articulate these sounds to reflect their orthographical presentation in words, and by so doing end up mispronouncing the words. It worthy of note that these letters which are present in the spelling of words but tend to be silent in the pronunciation include both consonants and vowels.

4.2 Consonantal letters that are silent in certain English words

There are consonant letters which appear in the spelling of words, but in the pronunciation of these words, they are not articulated. Some of these consonants occur

at the onset position of words. The Table presents consonants that occur at the onset position of words but they are not actualised in the pronunciation of the words.

Table 6: Silent consonant at the onset position of words

Word	Received Pronunciation	Silent letter / ø /
psychology	/saɪkɒlədʒɪ/	[p] > / ø /
pneumonia	/nju:məʊniə/	[p] > / ø /
a. knife	/naɪf/	[k] > / ø /
b. write	/raɪt/	[w] > / ø /
c. writ	/rɪt/	[w] > / ø /
d. written	/rɪtən/	[w] > / ø /
e. wrap	/ræp/	[w] > / ø /
f. knight	/naɪf/	[k] > / ø /
g. gnaw	/naʊ/	[g] > / ø /
h. mnemonic	/nɪmɒnɪk/	[m] > / ø /
i. who	/hu:/	[w] > / ø /
j. know	/nəʊ/	[k] > / ø /
k. kneel	/ni:/	[k] > / ø /
l. knuckle	/nʌkl/	[k] > / ø /
m. knob	/nɒb/	[k] > / ø /

Source: Field data (2023)

From Table 6, we realise that the consonantal letters at the initial positions of the words are not mentioned or pronounced when native speakers of the language are reading or mentioning these words. However, because these letters are present in the

orthographical form of the words the learners tend to actualise them in the pronunciation of the words.

In the word *mnemonic*, we observe that initial letter [m] is silent, as shown in the transcription. It is also observed that this letter precedes the letter [n] at the initial position of the word. There are words in English that the arrangement of these letters has not changed but the letter [m] rather is articulated but the [n] is silent. In such words, however, the letters [m] and [n] occur at the final position of the root word. Table 7 below presents some of these words with the silent letter [n] at the final position, where the letter [n] follows the letter [m].

Table 7: Silent letter [n] at the word final position

words	Received Pronunciation	Silent letter
i. autumn	/ɔ:təm/	[n] > / ø /
ii. column	/kɒləm/	[n] > / ø /
iii. condemn	/kəndɛ:m/	[n] > / ø /
iv. damn	/dæm/	[n] > / ø /
v. hymn	/hɪm/	[n] > / ø /
vi. solemn	/sɒləm/	[n] > / ø /

Source: Field data (2023)

From Table 7, it is realised that final letter [n] of the words is not articulated in the pronunciation of the words. In the learning of the target language, English, the students attempt to articulate these letters because they appear in the spelling of the words. this makes their pronunciation wrong.

Another letter that creates pronunciation challenge for junior high school students as noted from the data is the letter [t]. It is the case that in the Received Pronunciation of

English words, there are certain words that contain the letter [t] in the middle of the words. In such words, the letter [t] is not articulated. However, because this letter is present in the orthography of the spelling, the students tend to articulate as a sound in the pronunciation of the words. Table 8 below presents some of the words that contain the silent letter [t].

Table 8: Words containing the silent letter [t]

Word	Received Pronunciation	Silent letter [t]
i. apostle	/əpɒsl/	[t] > / ø /
ii. castle	/kɑ:sl/	[t] > / ø /
iii. fasten	/fæsn/	[t] > / ø /
iv. listen	/lɪsn/	[t] > / ø /
v. often	/ɒfn/	[t] > / ø /
vi. bristle	/brɪsl/	[t] > / ø /
vii. hustle	/hʌsl/	[t] > / ø /

Source: Field data (2023).

From Table 8, it is observable that the letter [t] which appears in the words is not articulated in the Received Pronunciation of the words as shown in the transcription. However, due to the fact that in the orthographic presentation of the words, this letter is realised, the learners tend to pronounce these words by actualising the letter with a phonetic form. This leads to wrong pronunciation in the speech of the learners, especially when they are reading.

Another consonant that appears in words but speakers do not articulate in the pronunciation of words is the letter [b]. When the letter [b] occurs at the final position of certain words, it becomes silent. The silent [b] is often observed in words in which

it follows the letter [b] in spelling. In the following table i.e. Table 9, the words contain the letter [b], but the letter [b] is silent in the pronunciation of the words.

Table 9: Words containing the silent letter [b]

Words	Received Pronunciation	Silent [b]
i. comb	/kəʊm/	[b] > / ø /
ii. bomb	/bʌm/	[b] > / ø /
iii. dumb	/dʌm/	[b] > / ø /
iv. lamb	/læm/	[b] > / ø /
v. limb	/lɪm/	[b] > / ø /
vi. thumb	/θʌm/	[b] > / ø /
vii. tomb	/tʊm/	[b] > / ø /
viii. womb	/wʊm/	[b] > / ø /
ix. succumb	/sʌkʌm/	[b] > / ø /
x. climb	/klaɪm/	[b] > / ø /

Source: Field data (2023)

From Table 9, we realise that all the word end with the letter [b] in the orthography. However, in the pronunciation of these words, the letter [b] is silent. However, when the students are pronouncing words in the table above, they tend to articulate the letter [b] because it has appeared in the spelling of the words. This leads to mispronunciation of the words. Hence, the presence of the silent letter [b] in the orthography of the words creates pronunciation challenges for the learners of English as a Second Language as exemplified in Table 9. It needs to be mentioned that there are other words, including *subtle* and *debt* in which the letter [b] in the spelling is silent. In these words, the

learners find it difficult to pronounce them correctly because they often tend to articulate the letter [b].

There are different other consonants that are silent in the pronunciation of English word. These other consonants also occur at different positions of words. for instance, the letter [l] is silent in the pronunciation of the words *walk, should, talk, salmon, palm, could, balm* and *would*.

It is also observable in the Received Pronunciation of the words *descend, disciple, muscle, scene, scissors* and *conscious*, the letter [c] is not articulated. This silent letter in the words also create pronunciation difficulty for the learners, especially when they are reading, as they tend to articulate the letter [c] in the words.

The letter [g] is sometime silent at non-word final and non-word initial positions. In such words, the learners tend to articulate the letter in sound, and that creates pronunciation problem. Examples of words that contain the silent [g] include *bought, design, align, high, weight*, and *sight*.

4.3 Silent Vowel Letters in English

There are English words that contain silent vowels. these vowels appear in the orthography but they are not articulated in the pronunciation of the words. The learners tend to pronounce the words that contain these silent vowels by articulating the vowels. This leads wrong pronunciation of the words. Table 10 below captures some of the words with silent letter [e] at the final position.

Table 10: English word with silent final letter [e]

Words	Received Pronunciation	Silent [e]
i. rice	/raɪs/	[e] > / ø /
ii. ride	/raɪd/	[e] > / ø /
iii. awake	/əweɪ/	[e] > / ø /
iv. freeze	/fri:z/	[e] > / ø /
v. wave	/weɪv/	[e] > / ø /
vi. fame	/feɪm/	[e] > / ø /
vii. cube	/kju:b/	[e] > / ø /

Source: Field Data (2023)

From Table 10, we observe that the words end with the letter [e] in the orthographical form, however, the final vowel is not articulated in the pronunciation by native speakers. In the pronunciation of the learners, however, they tend to actualise these silent final vowel letter, and that results in mispronunciation of the words.

4.3.1 English words with vowel changes

There are words in the language that are spelt with certain letters but these letters are realised differently in the pronunciation of the words. For instance, when the vowel letter [a] occurs as the initial letter of words, it is often realised as [ə]. But because the letter the learners see in the orthography is [a], they tend to pronounce the words with the letter [a] articulated as /a/ instead of /ə/. Table 11 below captures some of the examples.

Table 11: the letter [a] is realised as [a] instead of /ə/

Words	Received Pronunciation	/ə/ changes to [a]
i. away	/əweɪ/	[a] > [a]
ii. above	/əbʌv/	[a] > [a]
iii. allow	/əlaʊ/	[a] > [a]
iv. appoint	/əpɔɪnt/	[a] > [a]
v. afar	/əfa:/	[a] > [a]
vi. appeal	/əpi:l/	[a] > [a]
vii. appear	/əpiə/	[a] > [a]
viii. abandon	/əbændən/	[a] > [a]
ix. affect	/əfɛ:kt/	[a] > [a]
x. anoint	/ənɔɪnt/	[a] > [a]

Source: Field data (2023)

In Table 11, we observe that the learners pronounce the words by realising the sound /ə/ as [a]. This error is triggered by the presence of the vowel letter [a] which begins the words. Usually, when the letter [a] begins a word, it is realised as a schwa /ə/ in the Received Pronunciation. In the pronunciation of the words by the learners in the classroom during English lesson, however, we observe that the letter [a] is realised as [a] which leads to mispronunciation of the words.

4.4 Strategies English language teachers use in teaching orthography and sounds correspondence.

The second research question sought to ascertain the strategies English language teachers employ in teaching the English sounds and their corresponding orthography to the students of the public junior high schools. To obtain the answers to the question,

the researcher interviewed teachers who teach English language to ascertain the strategies they use in teaching their students. The responses of the teachers are presented below.

Teacher 1: *I teach the sounds of the language but I don't really teach them with their corresponding letters. Sometimes, when the students are reading and they struggle to pronounce a word, I tend to explain by pointing out the sound in that word; so that I can help the student to articulate it. As the sound is articulated correctly, the student can then pronounce the word. For instance, I remember in one of my classes, a student was struggling to pronounce the word cough. So, I used the opportunity to explain to the students that the **gh** letters represent the sound /f/. The student then went on to pronounce the word. I don't really teach the individual sounds and their corresponding orthographical representations. I write the sounds and the words in which we find those sounds. The students are made to pronounce the words after the sounds I want to emphasis in the words have been taught.*

Teacher 2: *I don't teach the sounds and their corresponding letters of the alphabet separately. I teach the individual sounds and how they are articulated by modelling it to the students to repeat after me. I however, try occasionally to draw the students' attention to the mis-match between the sounds and their corresponding letters of the orthography. Honestly, I don't teach the sounds with the corresponding letters as a topic. Usually, I let my students know that certain letters represent more than one sound and certain sounds may be represented by more than one letter of the orthography. There are words that you just need to memorise the sounds that are used because the letters are not consistent with the sounds they represent. Even though it looks quite simple with the consonants, the vowels look more problematic. In as much as I try to*

teach the sounds, I don't devote my lessons for teaching the correspondence between the sounds and the letters of the orthography.

Teacher 3: *I write the words on the board and write the sounds I want to teach beside them. there are times too that I write the sounds and provide examples of words that contain these sounds. Then I help the students to articulate the sound. When I realise that they have been able to properly articulate the sound, then I make them attempt pronouncing the words. I must confess that I don't possibly list all the sounds and the letters they represent. In this regard, I am sure it is not the letters that may represent a specific sound that I manage to teach the students. There are sounds that as hard as you try, the students wouldn't be able to articulate, even I the teacher, I am sure I am not a master in articulating all the sounds.*

Teacher 4: *I teach the sounds, but I don't teach the letters of the orthography. I believe the students know the letters already. However, the problem they face is the ability to recognise the kind of sounds certain letters represent in the spelling or written texts. There are instances where it becomes difficult for the students to determine the sound a letter in a particular represents. This situation often triggers mispronunciation of words. In teaching the students, I write the sounds and give examples of words that contain the sounds. I pronounce the words by emphasising on the particular sound I want them to know, then I make them pronounce the words after me, paying attention to the articulation of that particular sound in the word. Most of the time, we cannot teach all the corresponding sounds with their orthographical letters. We have to bear in mind that some of the realisations of the sounds in pronunciations are phonologically conditioned. Are we going to teach phonological processes to the students at this level? What I do is to give them explanation and try to generalise it. For instance, I taught my*

students that they should articulate the letter s as z when it occurs between two vowels, 'buses' 'phrases' and 'houses'.

From the responses of the teachers, it is deduced that English language teachers in the public junior high schools do not explicitly teach sound English sounds and their corresponding orthography. However, they teach the sounds explicitly. The teachers explained that in the course of teaching the sounds, they highlight some of the letters that represent the sounds in the orthography. This means that while the sounds are explicitly taught to the students at the junior high school classrooms, the letters of the alphabet are not explicitly taught. As indicated by the teachers, the sounds are taught with words in which the sounds can be found used to illustrate the sounds. The responses of the teachers showed that as the words are given, the letters that represent the sounds are also made known to the students.

4.5 Using explicit teaching in improving students' knowledge of sound-letter correspondence

Based on the assertions of the teachers on the implicit teaching of the correspondence between the sounds and their letters of the alphabet, the researcher sought from the teachers how they think teachers should approach this aspect of the English language to improve pronunciation abilities of their students. According to the teachers, if the effort is made to deliberately teach the sound-letter correspondence to the students, it will help build their pronunciation skills. According to the teachers, when the sounds are being taught to the students, teachers should try as much as possible to list all the letters of the orthography that may represent the sounds, and possibly provide the actual words that contain these letters and their corresponding sounds. The implication of the suggestion of the teachers is that explicit teaching of the sounds and their corresponding letters will make the students memorise the various contexts that a phonological process

may trigger a sound change, and may develop the ability to pronounce words correctly.

In their explanation, some of the teachers indicated that

we have to make time to list all the letters that may represent specific sounds and teach the students. If we devote time in doing this, the students will master the various context of the appearance of the sounds and this may lead to improvement in pronunciation.

Another teacher also explained that

some of the words that contain the letters and their corresponding sounds could be written in the form of a minimal pair so that the students would see the difference clearly. As this pairs are taught, the students will appreciate the differences between the pair of words regarding their letters and sounds. One of the teachers also explained that the use of the explicit strategy will significantly improve the learners' perception and articulation of the sounds.

The finding of the study is in congruent with Tuan's (2012) study of the effectiveness of the minimal pair approach in teaching sound recognition and pronunciation of words in English to English as a Second Language learners. According to the findings of Tuan (2012) as students who are taught pronunciation using explicit teaching mechanism like the minimal pair approach are able to improve their pronunciation skills. This is because explicit teaching is an effective teaching and learning strategy for pronunciation of discrete sounds in the target language. In this regard, and as revealed in the responses of the teacher participants explicit teaching approach to the teaching of sounds and their corresponding letters raises English as a Second Language learners' awareness with regard to appropriate articulation of English sounds, especially during oral communication, and enhances their motivation to give consideration to correct articulation of segments in words. The findings of the current study are in agreement

with report of Hayes-Harb (2007) that using minimal pairs in the teaching of L2 the acquisition of phonemes among adult English language learners is effective. The findings of the current study are consistent with the findings of Hayes-Harb (2007), as the analysis of the study indicated that the perception of the study participants in acquiring the target language phonemes will increase significantly if teachers adopt explicit teaching approach like the minimal pair approach.

4.6 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented the data, the result of the analysis and discussion of the findings. On the influence of the orthography on the pronunciation of English words, the study revealed that the lack of correspondence between the letters of the orthography and the sounds of the English contribute greatly to the mispronunciation of words by junior high school students. The findings showed that some sounds have two letters representing them, while some letters represent more than one sound, and this creates confusion in the learning of the sounds and their corresponding letters of the orthography. The analysis showed that there are English words that begin with consonant letters, but these initial consonants are silent. For instance, the letter [k] in the words *knife*, *knight* and *knit* is not articulated in the pronunciation of the words. The findings show various consonantal letters at different positions of words which are silent when those words are pronounced. However, for the fact that these letters are explicit in the orthography of the words, the students tend to articulate them, leading to wrongful pronunciation of the words.

Concerning the strategies the teachers of English language adopt in teaching the sounds and their corresponding letters, the analysis of the result showed that the teachers do not employ explicit teaching strategy in teaching the correspondence between the sounds and the letters. The analysis showed that the teachers teach the

sounds explicitly but only mention the letters on rare occasions to illustrate a point. Regarding how to make the learning of the correspondence between English sounds and the letters that represent them orthographically, the findings of the current study revealed that teachers need to adopt explicit teaching strategy. According to the findings, the teachers should write the letters that represent the sounds for the students to learn them. The teachers could even adopt a minimal pair approach as a way of bringing contrast to illustrate the sounds to the students.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the findings. The study sought to achieve two main objectives: to identify the influence of English orthography on the acquisition of pronunciation skills by junior high school students and to ascertain the strategies English language teachers use in teaching English orthography to their students. In order for the objectives of the study to be achieved, the researcher sampled 20 students and four teachers who teach English language as participants for the study. The instruments employed in the data collection was interview. The teachers were interviewed on the how they teach the correspondence between English orthography and sounds to the students, and how the observable lack of correspondence between sounds and letters of orthography creates pronunciation difficulties for the students. The students were also made to read sentences and pronounce words for recording and transcription. The analysis of the data was based on qualitative research paradigm. With this chapter being the final section of the work, it is sectionalised into four: summary of findings in section 5.1, conclusion of the study in section 5.2, pedagogical implication in section 5.3 and recommendation in section 5.

5.1 Summary of findings

The study revealed that the orthography of English language plays a significant role in the acquisition of phonemes in the language by junior high school students. According to the study, there are inconsistencies regarding letters of the alphabet and the sounds they represent. For instance, the study showed that there are initial consonant letters of words that are silent. For instance, in the word psychology, the initial letter

[p] is not articulated. Other examples include [k] in *knife, night, knowledge* and *knew*. There findings have demonstrated that there are also letters of the alphabet which are silent at various positions in English words. the analysis showed that the final letter [b] in *comb, climb, dumb*, among others is not articulated in the pronunciation of the words. The letter [b] has also been revealed to be silent in certain words, including *debt*, and *subtle*. The letter [t] in the words *hustle, listen, fasten* and *often* is also silent. The study also demonstrated with examples, how the orthography of vowels also created pronunciation difficulties for learners. For instance, it is shown that the letter [a] is often realised as /ə/ but the students articulate it as [a] by the students. For instance, in the pronunciation of the words, *above, away, afar*, and *anoint*, the students articulated the final letter [a] as [a] instead of /ə/. The analysis also revealed that there are words in English which have silent final letter. However, because these letters appear in the orthography of the words, the learners tend to actualise them, leading to pronunciation errors. For instance, in the pronunciation of the words *cube, freeze, wave, fame* and *importance* the final letter [e] is silent, but the students tend to articulate it.

Regarding the strategies the teachers of English language employ in teaching their students, the findings showed that the correspondence between English sounds and the letters of orthography that represent these sounds are not explicitly taught. According to the findings, teachers of English only mention some of the letters that represent the sounds, or the sounds a particular letter represents when teaching the sounds. Thus, the correspondence between the sounds and the letters are passively taught. The findings showed that teachers could adopt explicit teaching technique in helping the students master the sounds and their corresponding letters of the orthography. It has been indicated that teachers of English can even use minimal pair strategy by writing words that contain the sounds and similar words that they form

minimal pairs with as a way of making the students realise the contrast between the sounds and the letters in different contextual positions.

5.2 Conclusion of the study

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the lack of correspondence between the letters of the English orthography and the sounds they represent creates confusion in the minds of the students which makes them struggle to master the acquisition of English sounds. It is concluded that this mis-match causes pronunciation errors among the students in speaking English. It is also concluded that the lack of correspondence between the sounds and the letters of the orthography is not the only cause of their inability to master pronunciation, but also the unavailability of certain English sounds in the phonemic inventory of the mother tongue of the students. On how to improve the acquisition of English sounds by the students, the study concludes that teachers need to adopt explicit teaching strategies such as the minimal pair approach in teaching the sounds and their corresponding letters of the alphabet. The study further concluded that the use of the minimal pairs in teaching the learners would enhance their sensitivity in identifying phonemic contrasts in the English language. This is because, in findings in the literature, for instance Tajima (2002) reported after using the minimal pair strategy in teaching Japanese learners of English observed that the approach greatly reduced the difficulty that confronts Japanese speakers in pronouncing English words with the sounds /r/ and /l/ when communicating in English language. Regarding this, the current study concluded that the use of minimal pairs as an intervention strategy in teaching pronunciation of words containing the dental fricatives would provide the means by which the English language teacher can differentiate between sounds to their students. Levis and Cortes (2008) establish that

the minimal pair strategy helps L2 learners of languages to identify and contrast sounds in the words of the L2 language.

5.3 Pedagogical implication of the study

English is one of the subjects taught in the junior high schools. In the curriculum of English, phonetics and phonology has been given adequate relevance to ensure that the students learn pronunciation and develop speaking skills. However, the observation based on students' oral performance and the attitudes of some English language teachers, where they feel reluctant in the teaching of speaking and listening component of the syllabus means that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. In this regard, this research which has brought out an aspect of students speaking problem, with regard to English language, is in the right direction. The study revealed that learners of English struggle with the pronunciations of certain English words because such words contain sounds which do not have consistent letters in the orthography. Additionally, some of these sounds do not occur in the phonemic inventory of the mother tongue of the students. This means teachers who teach listening and speaking as an aspect of the English language curriculum can help their students by looking for the sound contrasts between the L1 of their students and that of English and explicitly teach their students the articulation of such sounds, as well as how they pattern with other sounds. The study has shown the effectiveness of explicit teaching strategy in teaching the students English sounds and their corresponding letters. This means when teachers adopt the explicit teaching strategy in teaching their students, their speaking performance will be enhanced. Instead of teaching the letters and their corresponding sounds passively, teachers need to consciously teach their students the various English sounds and the letters that represent them in the orthography.

5.4 Recommendations

The study has shown that identifiable pronunciation deviations in the speech of junior high school students are triggered by the mis-match between the sounds and the letters of the orthography. Regarding this, it is recommended that teachers adopt an explicit teaching strategy like the use of the minimal pair to teach the sounds and their corresponding letters. This will make the students recognise when should a particular letter be articulated as a particular sound. This will also make it clear to the students the contrasts between the various realisations of a particular sound as it occurs in the orthography. It was also established that the pronunciation challenges are sometimes caused by the unavailability of certain English sounds in the mother tongue of the students. Hence teachers need to draw the attention of their students to these sounds and employ explicit strategies in teaching them to their students.

It is recommended that further studies be done with more data that will encompass students from different parts of the country to ensure external validity of the findings of the current study. It is recommended that further studies encompass English vowels which are not available in L1 as well. It is also suggested that the minimal pair strategy be looked at with other components of the teaching of English language to strengthen the argument in favour of its effectiveness.

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