

19.

ETHNICITY REPRESENTATION IN E. E. SULE'S *MAKWALA*: A PHONOLOGICAL INTERFERENCE

Racheal Musa Dada,
Department of English,
IBB University, Lapai
racheal@ibbu.edu.ng

Aliyu Ibrahim Dantata,
Department of English,
IBB University, Lapai
aiidantata@gmail.com

Patience Ashesla Garba,
Department of Languages and Linguistics,
Nasarawa State University, Keffi
garbapatiencea@nsuk.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper investigates the representation of ethnicity in E.E. Sule's *Makwala* through the lens of phonological interference, examining how linguistic deviations from Standard English reflect underlying ethnic identities. Employing a socio-phonological approach, the study analyses selected character dialogue to identify segmental features such as substituting /p/ with /f/ that signal mother tongue influence, particularly from Hausa language. The spoken English of three characters from the novels are selected as data for this study. With the aim to examine the similarities and differences of English and Hausa phoneme, investigate how the phonemes of both languages facilitates learning by their similarities and how they constitute difficulty by their differences. These phonological markers are interpreted not merely as speech errors but as deliberate literary strategies for encoding cultural identity, social class, and regional affiliation. Lado (1957) and Fries (1945) model of Contrastive Analysis is the framework this study is hinged upon. The findings reveal that Sule's use of phonological interference serves as a narrative tool for highlighting ethnic diversity and exposing sociolinguistic tension in Nigeria's multilingual landscape. By foregrounding speech as a site of identity negotiation, the study contributes to broader discourses on language, ethnicity and representation in African literature.

Keywords: Ethnicity, E.E. Sule, *Makwala*, Phonology, Interference

Introduction

The vivid representation of ideas, events and experiences are what writers strive to achieve in their works. The ability of a literary writer to keep his audience engrossed to his work can only be accomplished through exhibiting great writing skills. The pictorial accuracy of capturing and narrating stories, especially of humans by writers comprises the ability of humans, which includes their spoken abilities of languages. Language is a universal phenomenon, which is primarily human and passed from a generation to another. Language is used to express ideas, feelings, and emotions by using signs, symbols or speech within a given society. Every society in a speech community has a way of communication, which could be through utterance or writing. The first language (L1) of an individual is referred to as his mother tongue. Such language is usually acquired by the speaker at a tender age in a speech community with little or no effort. Language Acquisition or First Language according to Malmkjaer (1991) "is the term most commonly used to describe the progress whereby children become speakers of their native language or languages". An individual can learn another language apart from his first language. This requires a lot of effort in speaking, reading and writing the language. Since humans are born with different cultural backgrounds, these differences affect many aspects of their lives and one of such aspects is language. In the learning journey of a language, humans are greatly interrupted by their mother tongue. This interruption is termed interference — a negative influence of an acquired first language over the

second language being learned Trask (1996) defines interference as “imperfection in the use of one language as a result of the influence of another language, such as a foreign accent in speaking a second language.” Interference can occur at various linguistic levels. It could be Semantic, Syntactic, Morphological or Phonological. When sounds of the first language are being transferred by the speaker to the second language (L2), especially if these sounds are not present in the language being learned, such transfer can be referred to as phonological interference. Many English language learners from different linguistic backgrounds encounter these challenges, although some of the challenges may differ according to the phonemes, they are having difficulty to pronounce. Dada (2023) says “the interference of the first language in the spoken English of the ESL speakers does not only give hint on the speakers’ identity but also projects the wealthy possession of their L1.” In this learning journey, accents and pronunciations are transferred in to the language being learned, resulting to negative interference in the target language. Crystal (2003) suggests that phonological interference occurs in three dimensions: sound addition, sound omission and sound replacement. This study is concerned with the third category of phonological interference, which is dominant in the Spoken English of Hausa in the novel. This type of category is identified by replacing the standard phonemes with the phonemes of the first language. For instance, some Hausa learners of English tend to replace the English consonants /f/ for /p/, /ð/ for /z/, /p/ for /f/. As in “friend” pronounced as “priend,” “this” pronounced as “zis” and “people” pronounced as “feofle”, as depicted by E. E. Sule in *Makwala*.

The writer’s depiction of the Hausa ethnic group in his novel could be associated with many reasons, some of which are,

1. The setting of the fiction is in Kano, north-west of Nigeria.
2. To showcase the rich cultural dominance of Hausa language among its people.
3. To portray the identity of Hausa language and the people in his work.

Synopsis of the Novel

Makwala is a fierce and sad story of two teenage friends, who aspire to become great in life. Jackson is a biracial boy, popularly called “Lebanese pikin”, whose biological father is not known to him. He was born and raised in a brothel by his mother, Martha, where she prostituted and took care of him with her prostitution gains. Ende, on the other hand, also grew up with just his father, Odula in the same intolerable slum with Jackson, and all efforts to make his father tell him about his mother always result to tension between them. Their dreams soon became shattered when Jackson began to disrespect and hate his mother’s choice of trade and Ende could not contain being mocked and insulted by his peers for being motherless. Nevertheless, the duo was not only greatly loved by their parents; Jackson became the desire of many. Kemi his neighbour, confessed of her priceless love to Jackson and the latter always got advances by the male gender. Ende kept being the loving and caring friend of Jackson, especially, when Jackson was raped by some group of boys in their neighbourhood. Jackson’s hatred for his mother enveloped him. It drove him to murder her. He subsequently became a vagabond and wandered into the arms of Yohanna who exposed him to the sodomy world.

Makwala by E. E. Sule is a tale of love, struggle, abuse, identity crisis, poverty, murder, survival, religious supremacy and so on.

Statement of the Problem

The novel, a fictitious narrative of a considerable length, is one of the genres of literature, which is being prescribed as part of the syllabus for students to read in schools, colleges, and universities. English being the language of instructions in Nigerian schools therefore becomes the language of literature in schools. Since

literature is concerned with capturing and recreating human experiences that have taken place, that is taking place or that would take place, it is pertinent that such events, experiences, ideas and actions should account for its proper representations to its audience. The spoken English of the Hausa characters in *Makwalaas* depicted by E. E. Sule has been found to be incomprehensible by the audience, thereby portraying a satirical theme towards the ethnic group thus, the need to do a contrastive analysis of English and Hausa languages to ascertain the similarities and differences between phonemes of the two languages.

Aim and Objectives of the Paper

The aim of this paper is to conduct a contrastive analysis of English and Hausa phonemes, as depicted in the spoken English of the characters in E. E. Sule's *Makwala*, so as to achieve the following objectives,

1. To examine the similarities and differences of English and Hausa phonemes.
2. To investigate how the phonemes of both languages facilitate learning by their similarities and how they constitute difficulty by their differences.

Methodology

The data for this research were collected from secondary sources. The data were gathered across the novel from three characters: Nasir, Mai Angwa, and the Habsih police. 19 utterances were gathered from the novel. 8 from Nasir, 7 from Mai Angwa and, 4 from Habsih police. The characters, whose spoken English made up the data, are from the North western Nigeria. Nasir is from Zamfara State, while Mai Angwa and The Habsih Police are from Kano state, as depicted by the writer. The data are presented in three categories and analysed according to their differences and similarities, to show why the spoken English of Hausa-English language learners is incomprehensible as a result of phoneme replacement.

Theoretical Frame work

This paper is hinged on the theory of Contrastive Analysis, a linguistic approach that aims to identify the differences and similarities between two or more languages. The theory was developed in the 1950s and 1960s by linguists Robert Lado and Charles Fries. The aim of contrastive analysis is to predict the errors that learners of a second language are likely to make based on the differences between their native language and the target language. The theory is hinged on the concept that language learning involves the transfer of knowledge from the native language to the target language. One of the key principles of Contrastive Analysis is that the differences between languages are more important than the similarities. Learners are more likely to make errors in areas, where the target language is different from their native language. For example, a Hausa English speaker may have difficulty pronouncing consonant cluster in English because the Hausa language does not recognise cluster. The Hausas insert vowel between consonants clusters before they can pronounce the word. For example: *sprite* and *school* would be pronounced as *sipirite* and *school* respectively. Contrastive analysis can be applied to different aspects of language, such as grammar, vocabulary. This idea is significant to this study since it intends to determine whether phonological differences between mother tongue and second language influence English performance in the situation under study. The study uses Contrastive Analysis methodologies to make a systematic comparison and contrast of the two languages.

Literature Review

Nirwana and Suhono (2023) opine in their study of Buginese and Javanese phonological interference that there are only two of the three kinds of phonological interference by Crystal (2003). The researchers found one category of phonological interference, which was sound replacements of consonant sound {f}, from Buginese students. Sound addition and sound replacements of {ʃ}, {h} respectively, were two of the categories of

phonological interference found in Javanese students. They further established that there are two factors, which caused phonological interference in Buginese and Javanese students on Senior High School, which are from four factors that proposed by Weinreich (1979), these two factors are: Bilingualism background and disloyalty to target language.

Mahendra and Marantika (2020) reveal some phonological interference of pronouncing vowels in Pandalungan students. They found out that students have the habit of replacing vowels and rarely adding or omitting them. They mistakenly pronounced words as they are written. The study, however, is limited to the phonological interferences encountered from EFL reading, which comprises not only vowels or segmental aspect of phonology but also supra-segmental one, including word and sentence stresses and intonation, whereas only vowel is analysed Onyekachi and Ugwu (2018) compared the sound systems of the English Language and the Izzi dialect of the Igbo language and discovered some areas of similarities as well as areas of difference, which could pose difficulty for the Izzi speaker of the English Language. The vowels /i, e, u, ɔ, and a/ are similar in both systems while the difference includes a total absence of long vowels and diphthongs in the system of Izzi dialect. Similarities in consonant sounds of both systems are sounds like /p, b, d, t, g, v, ʃ, dʒ, l, w, h, s, and z/. However, some sounds, such as the dental fricatives /θ and ð/ and voiced palato-alveolar fricative sound /ʒ/, which exist in the English sound system is nonexistent in the Izzi dialect system. The English nasal velar sound /ŋ/ cannot be found in Izzi dialect system. Likewise, the Izzi consonant sounds /kw/ /gw/ /kp/ and /gb/ are lacking in the English sound system.

Saskiya and Tresnasari (2022) conducted research on Waseda Boys' Phonological Interference of Indonesian Food Names, is classified into consonant phoneme interference and vowel phoneme interference. The analysis on consonant phoneme interference is into: phoneme omission- the Japanese do not have words with consonant endings, the nature of the words is open syllabic. Therefore, the phoneme /k/ in Otsuka: /pempek/ = /pempe/. In phoneme change can be caused by learners, who cannot distinguish between the phoneme /g/ and /k/ when they are at the end of a word. This is because there are no consonant sound /g/ and /k/ in Japanese. In phoneme addition, the phonological interference in the word / pempek / is Yusuke's change of phoneme /m/ to phoneme /n/. E. g., Yusuke: / pempek / = / penpe /. The vowel phoneme interference includes subtraction, addition and change. In vowel change, this occurs because Tomohiro's foreign language skills like English, can affect him. In English /u/ usually has the sound of the /a/ which causes phonological interference in the word / martabak/ written by Tomohiro. E.g., Tomohiro: / martabak / = / martabuk/. Vowel reduction is caused because a native speaker is still heavily dominated by his mother tongue. In Japanese the /u / has the sound [u] in contrast to Indonesian where / u / is pronounced with round lips. While the shape of the phoneme /e/ sound in Japanese is faint and the shape of the lips is not rounded

Alfansyah et al. (2020) found that students make many mistakes in pronouncing English words, which is as a result of interference. The researchers grouped the interference into three categories: sound addition, sound omission and sound replacement. What is common with Indonesian learners is the addition of /k/ phoneme when pronouncing the word "know". Instead of saying / nəʊ / learners say / knəʊ /. Learners also tend to omit phonemes where they are supposed to be pronounced It usually occurs in pronunciation of diphthongs which are converted to short vowels. E.g., home / həʊm / pronounced as / hɒm /. Frequently, students replace the standard phoneme with another phoneme, for instance: /æ/ in "dad" / dæd/ replaced by /e / "ded".

Chiossi et al (2023) investigate the sensitivity of pupil temporal dynamics to multiple levels of auditory processing of phonological information. At the low-level, by analysing the possibility of detecting phonological discrimination in the absence of lexical context, and at the high level by directing attention to the phonological contrast in the presence of context and lack of complete acoustic information.

Yacoub and Ramirez (2023) reveal that Spanish all over the region of Latin America varies greatly. Factors like gender, age and socioeconomic backdrop can be responsible for phonological variations. They also submit that the retention or deletion of final / s / can be affected by the gender of the speaker. Many variants of the / s / articulation are exemplified due to the flexibility afforded by the last syllable environment. The sibilant [s] is more commonly produced by women while its weaker versions, like [h], are more common among men. In the three modes of communication (informal speaking, reading aloud, and impromptu conversation), men of all socio-economic background are more likely to minimize-/ s / in the word-final position than women.

The related literature reviews are all on phonological interferences of the learning processes of a second language. They also seek to identify the differences and similarities which hinder and aid learning processes of the learners. In the same manner, the current study examines the similarities and differences in the spoken English of Hausa characters as depicted in E.E. Sule's *Makwala*, which is the gap the current study seeks to bridge.

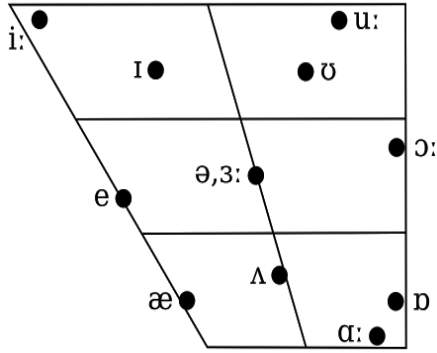
Data Presentation and Analysis

The data for this study are presented as collected from textbooks and the novel *Makwala*. The English consonant and vowel sounds are presented on a chart. The Hausa consonant and vowel sounds are also presented on a chart. The consonant sounds of both languages are further presented on a table with examples of words containing the each of the sounds. The data from the novel is presented as collected from the novel, indicating each character's spoken English and the page number against each utterance.

The English Consonant Chart

Place of articulation								
Manner of articulation	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Affricate					tʃdʒ			
Nasal	m			n	ɲ			
Lateral				l				
Approximant	w				r	j		

Jones, 2005



The English Pure Vowels

The Hausa Consonant Chart

	Bilabial	Palata- Lized Bilabial	Alve- olar	Retro Flex	Post Alveo lar	Pala tal	Velar	Labio Velar	Laba- Lized Velar	Palata lized velar	Glott ai	Palat Lized ottal
Stop	B		t d				k g		kw gw	kjgj	ʔ	ʔj
Implosive	ɓ			ɗ								
Ejectives			s'				ƙ		ƙ w	Ƙj		
Nasal	m		n			ɲ	ŋ					
Fricatives	ɸ	ɸj	s z		ʃ						h	
Affricates					tʃdʒ							
Laterals			l									
Trill /Roll			r									
Flap				ɾ								
Approximant						J		w				

Sani 2015

The Hausa vowel chart

	Front		Central	Back	
	Long	short		Long	short
High	ii	i		uu	u
Mid	ee	e	a	oo	o
Low					

Sani 2015

Table 1. English and Hausa Consonants

English Consonants	Examples	Hausa consonants	Examples	Gloss
P	Pit	-	-	-
B	Bat	b	Baya	Back
T	Tin	t	Tudu	Hill
D	Dog	d	Dare	Night
K	King	k	Kare	Dog
G	Goat	g	Raga	Net
F	Fan	Φ	Kumfa	
V	Van	-	-	-
Θ	Thin	-	-	-
Ð	Mother	-	-	-
S	Sun	S	Sikari	Sugar
Z	Zebra	Z	Zane	wrapper
ʃ	Shoe	Sh	Shanu	Cattle
ʒ	Leisure	-	-	-
h	Hit	H	Hayaki	Smoke
tʃ	Teacher	C	Ciyawa	Grass
dʒ	Jump	J	Jaki	donkey
m	Man	M	Mangwaro	Mango
n	Net	N	Nono	Sour milk
ŋ	Wing	Ɗ	Can	There
l	Lemon	L	Bulala	Whip
w	Wet	W	Wuka	Knife
r	Ring	R	Bara	begging
j	Student	Y	Yabo	Praise
-	-	ɓ	Tabarya	Pestle
-	-	fy [Φj]	Fyade	Raping
-	-	ɗ	Tadi	conversation
-	-	ɲ	Hanya	Road
-	-	ts [S']	Stintsiya	Broom
-	-	r [ɾ]	Ruwa	Water
-	-	ky [kj]	Kyau	Beauty
-	-	Kw	Kwari	Valley
-	-	Ƙ	Kaya	Thorn
-	-	ky [kj]	Kyalle	Piece of cloth
-	-	Kw	Kwaro	Insect
-	-	gy [gj]	Gyara	Repair
-	-	Gw	Gwani	Expert
-	-	, [ʔ]	ba'a	Joke

-	-	'y [ʔj]	'ya'ya	Children
---	---	---------	--------	----------

Nasir

Nasir is portrayed as one of the novel's most socially marginalised figures. Originally from Zamfara State, he is a homosexual, who thinks highly of himself and often says that all the girls in *Makwala* are jealous of him because men prefer him to them. He flees his home when the introduction of Sharia law threatens his existence and freedom. Seeking refuge, he relocates to Kano, where he reinvents himself as both a chef and a sex worker, navigating the fringes of society.

1. Your paza and pazapaza (69)
2. May Allah funish you (69)
3. Ah my good priend(87)
4. Your best pood (87)
5. Za rest girls are too jealous op me (205)
6. Zat boy (205)
7. Zose men (296)
8. ...gofment ...folic por sharia (296)
9. Gudu apternoon (97)

As earlier observed from the character Nasir in the novel, it is clear that Nasir's spoken English is accompanied by his mother tongue. The word *paza* is a mispronunciation of the English word "Father" / fɑ:ðə /. The labio-dental fricative voiceless sound / f / is changed to bilabial plosive voiceless sound / p / and the voiced dental fricative / ð / is converted to voiced alveolar fricative / z /.

Similarly, the word *funish* is also a mispronunciation of the English word "punish" / pʌnɪʃ /. The bilabial plosive voiceless sound is replaced with the labio-dental fricative voiceless sound. In the same manner, the word *priend* and *pood* are mispronunciations of the English words "friend" / frend / and "food" / fu:d / respectfully.

The word *za*, *zat* and *zose* are mispronunciations of the English words "the" / ði:/, "that" / ðæt / and "those" / ðəuz /.

The word *gofment* is a mispronunciation of the English word "government" / gʌv(ə)mənt /, the word *folic* is a mispronunciation for the English word "police" / pəlis / and *por* is replaced for the English word "for" / fɔ:/.

There is a vowel insertion in the word *gudu*, which is a mispronunciation for the word "good" / gu:d /. The word *apternoon* is also a mispronunciation for "afternoon" / a:ftənu:n /. The labio dental fricative voiceless sound / f / is replaced with bilabial plosive voiceless sound / p /.

Mai Angwa

Mai Angwa is the head or chief of Makwala community. He is responsible for settling of disputes, selling of lands, and ensuring a peaceful co-existence among the diverse ethnic groups of people in Makwala. However, he has been accused of selling land illegally, making empty promises, and being indifferent to the social vices and plight of the people in his community.

1. Feryfery good woman (205)
2.prom somewhere (314)
3. I've reforted to ze local gofment chairman (314)
4. We'll bring zis to the notice of ze governor (314)
5. Innocent feofle (314)

6. Zis is evil. (314)
7. Zat's why mallam Odula we're camfainingpor...(314)
8. zat will underflay sharia since many hyfocritical feofle affear to be haffy with sharia. (314)

In the second set of datum, the word *fery* is a misspelling of the word “very” /veri/. The labio-dental fricative voiced sound /v/ is replaced with the voiceless sound /f/.

The word *prom* is a mispronunciation of the word “from” / from /. The labio-dental fricative voiceless sound / f / is changed to bilabial plosive voiceless sound /p/.

The words *reforted*, *ze* and *gofnment* are all mispronunciations of the English words “reported” / ripɔ:tɪd /, the /ði:/ and government / ɡʌvənmənt /. The bilabial plosive voiceless sound in the word *reforted* is replaced by labio-dental fricative voiceless sound. Also the dental fricative voiced sound /ð/ in the word “the” is replaced with the alveolar fricative voiced sound / z / and the long vowel / i: / is replaced also with the short vowel /e /. Labio-dental fricative voiced sound /v/ is replaced by its voiceless counterpart / f / in the word *gofnment*.

Dental fricative voiced sound / ð / is replaced with the alveolar fricative voiced sound in words like *zis* and *zat* which are the mispronunciation of the English words for “this” / ðɪz / and “that” / ðæt / respectfully.

The word *feofle* is also a mispronunciation of the English word “people” / pi:pəl /. The bilabial plosive voiceless sound / p / is replaced with the labio dental fricative voiceless sound /f/.

Similarly, in words like *camfaining*, *underflay*, *hyfocritical*, *affear* and *haffy*, all the bilabial plosive voiceless sounds / p / are replaced with labio dental fricative voiceless sound /f/. These are mispronunciations of the English words “campaigning” / kəmpeɪnɪŋ /, “underplay” / ʌndəpleɪ/, “hypocritical” / hipəkritikəl/, “appear” /əpiə/ and “happy” / hæpi /.

Habsihpolice

The Habsih are Islamic religion police in the state, who are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that everyone complies with the Sharia law. They intrude into people's home and privacy at any time to arrest whosoever refuses to comply with the law.

1. All must comfly (201)
2. Makwala must comfly (201)
3. You keef quiet! (230)
4. I say keef quiet (230)

The last set of datum has the words *comfly* and *keefas* mispronunciations of the English words “comply” /kəmplaɪ / and “keep” /ki:p / respectfully. The bilabial plosive voiceless sounds / p / in both words are replaced with labio dental fricative voiceless sound / f /.

Findings and Conclusion

We can deduce from the study that the three characters in the novel are all Hausa language natives, learning English language as a second language. The characters, Nasir is from Zamfara but resides in Kano state. Mai Angwa and the Habsih police are both indigenes of Kano state, where the novel was set. The spoken English of the characters reveals the interference of their mother tongue in their spoken English language. This as a result, makes their speech unintelligible and incomprehensible in their learning journey. The study reveals that the English language has forty-four phonemes (44) and the Hausa language has-forty three (43) phonemes. There are some phonemes in English language that are not present in the Hausa sound system and some that are present in Hausa but not present in the English language. . This of course poses difficulty for the Hausa second

language learners. The bilabial plosive voiceless sound / p /, labio-dental fricative voiced sound / v /, dental fricative voiced sound / ð /, dental fricative voiceless sound /θ/ and palatal-alveolar fricative voiced sounds are not present in the Hausa sound system. Therefore, the Hausa-English language learners tend to replace these sounds with phonemes that are present in the Hausa language. The dental fricative sound /ð/ is replaced by alveolar fricative voiced sound /z/, the dental fricative voiceless sound is mostly replaced by alveolar plosive voiceless sound / t /, labio dental fricative voiced sound /v/ and bilabial plosive voiceless sound /p/ are replaced with labio-dental fricative voiceless sound /f/ while the palatal-alveolar fricative voiced sound /ʒ/ is mostly replaced by its voiceless counterpart /ʃ/.

The Hausa consonants /b, fy, [Φj],d, n, ts, [S'], r, [t], ky, [kj], kw, K, ky, [kj], Kw, gy, [gj], gw, , [?], 'y, [ʔ] / are not present in the English sound system.

The vowels / a, e, i, o and u / are present in both languages. The Hausa sound system also has the long vowels as / ii, ee, oo, and uu / which are equally present in the English sound system. However, the vowels / ə, ə:, ʌ, a: / are not represented in the Hausa phonemes.

The study also reveals the lack of principle in the replacement of phonemes by the characters in the novel. Hausa as a language does not have the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/ as a native phoneme. Instead, it has / b / and in most dialects, /f/ is more commonly used. As a result, Hausa speakers may find it difficult to perceive and produce /p/ accurately in English. When they encounter /p/ they may substitute it with a more familiar sound /f/.

Likewise, some Hausa speakers, particularly those from rural or less English-exposed backgrounds, as portrayed by the author in the novel, may over-generalise this pattern, reversing the substitution that is, using /p/ where /f/ is expected, especially in fast or casual speech. The Hausa substitution of /f/ for /p/ is not a random error but a systematic outcome of **phonological gaps, markedness constraints, perceptual filtering, and sociolinguistic stabilisation**. The interchange of /f/ and /p/ among Hausa speakers of English is a result of **phonological inventory gaps, markedness, and perceptual transfer**. Hausa phonology lacks the voiceless bilabial plosive /p/, but it has its voiced counterpart /b/ and the voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ (Newman, 2000).

According to **contrastive phonology**, when L2 learners face sounds absent in their L1, they substitute them with the closest equivalent available in their phonological system (Odlin, 1989). Thus, Hausa learners map English /p/ onto /f/, yielding forms such as “*fefar*” for “*paper*” (Jibril, 1982). From the standpoint of **distinctive feature theory**, /p/ and /f/ share several features: both are [-voice], [+anterior], and [+obstruent]. The primary difference lies in **manner of articulation**, with /p/ realised as a plosive and /f/ as a fricative (Jakobson, Fant, & Halle, 1951). This closeness in feature specification explains why Hausa speakers neutralise the plosive–fricative contrast, treating them as interchangeable. In terms of **markedness theory**, /p/ is considered more marked than /f/, given its lower frequency across world languages (Maddieson, 1984). Languages are more likely to lack /p/ than /f/, which may explain why Hausa has /f/ but not /p/. For Hausa speakers acquiring English, this markedness asymmetry makes /p/ harder to acquire and easier to replace with /f/. Furthermore, the issue is not only articulatory but also **perceptual**. Flege’s (1995) **Speech Learning Model** suggests that L2 learners perceive new sounds through the “filter” of their L1 categories. Hausa speakers may fail to perceive a distinct contrast between /p/ and /f/, categorising them as allophones of a single L1 sound. This perceptual assimilation results in consistent substitution and occasional **hypercorrection**, where learners produce “*pish*” for “*fish*” in an attempt to differentiate the two (Gut, 2004).

In English, /p/ and /f/ are distinct phonemes and can change the meaning of a word (pet and fit). If a speaker's native phonology does not require them to make this distinction frequently, the articulatory habits from Hausa may override the finer contrasts of English pronunciation. In Hausa, this clear contrast between /p/ and /f/ is not phonemically functional in the same way. So, Hausa speakers may not be attuned to the importance of maintaining the distinction, leading to confusion or merging of the two sounds, when speaking English. Some Hausa speakers learn English in environments where English is not the dominant spoken language and where pronunciation may be modelled by other non-native speakers. This means the incorrect pronunciation can be reinforced and fossilised over time.

This study has demonstrated that phonological interference in *Makwala* functions beyond mere linguistic deviation; it operates as a deliberate narrative technique for representing ethnicity and social realities. E. E. Sule's use of non-standard English, shaped by mother tongue influence, captures the multicultural texture of Nigerian society and foregrounds the intersection of language, identity and power. By embedding ethnic phonological patterns within character speech, Sule not only enhances the authenticity of his narrative voice but also critiques the sociolinguistic hierarchies that persist in postcolonial Nigeria. The paper affirms the value of phonological analysis in literary studies and calls for further exploration of how language varieties reflect and shape ethnic consciousness in African Literature.

References

- Alfansyah, E., Rahmat, H., and Ribahan, R. (2020). Phonological interference in pronouncing English sounds among Lombok's senior high school students. *ELITE Journal*, 5(2), pp. 485-496
- Awa, O. & Ugwu, N. (2018). Contrastive study of the phonological systems of the English language and Igbo dialect of the Igbo language. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 6(7), 1-9.
- Chiossi, J.S.C., Patou, F., Ng, E. H. N., Faulkner, K. F., and Lyxell, B. (2023). Phonological discrimination and contrast detection in pupilometry. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1232262>
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dada, R. M. (2023). Identification of phonological problems among Gbari speakers of English: A contrastive analysis. *ISEAKOZI: Journal of Nigerian Languages and Linguistics*. Ibadan: Mestak Publishers
- Flege, J. E. (1995). Second language speech learning: Theory, findings, and problems. In W. Strange (Ed), *Speech perception and linguistic experience: Issues in cross-language research* (pp. 233–277). Timonium, MD: York Press.
- Fries, C.C. (1945) *Teaching and learning English as a second language*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press
- Gut, U. (2004). Nigerian English: Phonology. In B. Kortmann & E. Schneider (Eds), *A handbook of varieties of English: Vol. 1. Phonology* (pp. 813–829). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Jakobson, R., Fant, G., & Halle, M. (1951). *Preliminaries to speech analysis: The distinctive features and their correlates*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Jibril, M. (1982). Phonological variation in Nigerian English. *English World-Wide*, 3(1), 47–74.
- Jajo-Yacoub, K., and Ramirez, M. (2023). Phonological differences across varieties of Latin American Spanish. *Canadian Journal for the Academic Mind*, 1 (1). <https://doi.org/10.25071/2817-5344/48>
- Jones, D (2011) *Cambridge English pronouncing dictionary*. Cambridge University Press.

- Lado, R (1957). *Linguistics across cultures: Applied linguistics for language teachers*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press
- Maddieson, I. (1984). *Patterns of sounds*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ma hendra, M.W. and Marantika I. M. Y. (2020).The phonological interference in EFL Reading. *Journal of English Language Literature and Teaching*.Vol. 5, no. 1. Malmkjaer, K. (Ed). (1991). *The linguistics encyclopedia*. Routledge.
- Newman, P. (2000). *The Hausa language: An encyclopedic reference grammar*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press
- Nirwana, N. and Suhono, S., (2023). Phonological interference in English pronunciation produced by students.At senior high school (A case study of Buginese and Japanese students), *Anglophile Journal*, 3 (1).Pp 1 -13 <https://dx.doi.org/10.51278/anglophile.v3i1>
- Odlin, T. (1989).*Language transfer: Cross-linguistic influence in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Onyekachi, A. and Ugwu N.G. (2018). Contrastive study of the phonological system of the English language and Izzi dialect of the Igbo language. *International Journal of the English Language Teaching*. Vol. 6, No. 7 pp 1-9.
- Sani, M.A.Z (2015). *An introductory phonology of Hausa*. Usman Al-Amin Publishers: Kano.
- Saskiya, R., and Tresnasari, N. (2022).Waseda boy's phonological interference of Indonesian food names in Nihongomantappuvlogs. IZUMI, 11(2), 208-215. <https://doi.org/10.14710/izumi.11.2.208-215>
- Sule, E.E. (2018). *Makwala*. Parresia Publishing Ltd.
- Trask, R.L.(1996). *A Dictionary of Phonetics and Phonology*. Routledge.
- Weinreich, U. 1979. *Language in Contact. Findings and Problems*. New York. <http://library.lol/main/FDEDF6F75A7668CCE664C09C8D333C70>