

Poor English Pronunciation among Nigerian ESL Students; the ICT Solution

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Abstract

The incidence of poor English pronunciation among Nigerian Students is an embarrassing situation which has defied a myriad of solutions. Also, the move from Received Pronunciation to Estuary English globally complicated issues. In recent times however, research and deep rooted studies in linguistic science has shown that ICT, a strong characteristic of the digital age, can come to the rescue. This paper x-rays the causes of poor English pronunciation, problems associated with this issue, and the ability of the digital age approach to pronunciation problems, to be the final arbiter to give the desired results. The employment of ICT in Linguistic Sciences over the years has yielded interesting results. This paper thus discusses the various digital age techniques used to combat poor English pronunciation among Nigerian students, and the wonderful input this can give to linguistic pedagogy in the area of spoken English.

Keywords: Pronunciation, ICT, Digital Age, Screen Readers, Language Pedagogy

Introduction

The English language is the best studied and most sought after language in the world. It is a rule governed verbal behavior that has attained global proportions. "Effective communication processes among users of the language must be achieved by maintaining the morphology, syntax, semantics and phonological ideals of the language". (Jackson 1956). Anything short of this will stall the effective use of the language and strongly affect the competence and performance of the user. This, obviously, will make mutual intelligibility difficult for all involved in the use of the language. It is important to note that all aspects of the language are very useful and important. However, the oral rendition or the spoken word, where the sounds of language will be physically applied to bring out the correct lexical items and consequently form appropriate and grammatically acceptable syntactic structures is very important as it is the final part of the language use where communication between hearer and speaker takes place. "Misapplication of the rules governing the sound system of any language, particularly, the English language, will negate the very essence of communication and mutual intelligibility." Schane (1973). This misapplication is the root of poor pronunciation among users of a language, albeit, the English language. This paper intends to make a deep foray into the incidence of poor English pronunciation among Nigerian students and the possibility of digital applications coming to the rescue.

The Nigerian Student and the English Language

English is Nigeria's official mode of communication. As a matter of fact, it is Nigeria's Lingua Franca. As a result, students in Nigeria and many parts of Africa have to use this language as a means of communication and learning.

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To the Nigerian student, who has to learn under challenging circumstances, the English language is not a very easy medium of communication because the learner has to grapple with a lot of factors; his mother tongue, teacher-induced errors, apathy to language learning, peer group pressure, and many other factors. These phenomena has not placed the Nigerian student on a good pedestal to communicate in the English language.

Causes of Poor English Pronunciation among Esl Nigerian Students

1. The first major cause of poor pronunciation among Nigerian students is the environmental factor. Most of the time, the environment in which the students find themselves is usually linguistically illiterate. The environment does not care for the use of correct English grammar, how much more, correct English pronunciation. English is carelessly spoken without regard for rules. The environment most Nigerian students find themselves in has no regard for the use of Received Pronunciation. Different forms of Englishes are used by speakers; pidgin English, American English, what we may call Nigerian English, and a host of others. As a result, the sensibilities of these students are assuaged by these linguistic anomalies. A good example is the Warri, Benin, and Calabar environments in Nigeria where a student picks up wrong pronunciation of words in his environment like

Word	Received Pronunciation	Nigeria English Pronunciation from Warri Area
Change	/tʃeɪndʒ/	/ʃenʒ /
Church	/tʃɜ:tʃ/	/ʃɔʃ/
Joke	/dʒəʊk/	/ʒəʊk/ (warri) /jəʊk/ (calabar)
Jump	/dʒʌmp/	/ʒɔmp/ (warri) /jɔmp/ (calabar)

Wrong intonation tunes are also picked up by the students. Unconsciously, the students internalize these sounds and pronounce these words the way it is done in their immediate linguistic environment.

2. Another terrible cause of poor English pronunciation among Nigerian students is that there are sounds absent in our own languages in Nigeria, but present in Received Pronunciation. A good example is the /ʌ/ vowel sound. This sound is absent in most Nigerian languages like in the igbo sound system. As a result, words like

*Blood; /blʌd/
gun; /gʌn/
son; /sʌn/*

will not be easy for the student to pronounce. When the student attempts to pronounce these words, he will make mistakes. He will replace the /ʌ/ sound with the nearest sound to it in the sound inventory of his mother tongue. A good example is **blood** pronounced /blʌd/ which will be mispronounced /brɔd/. Love /lʌv/ will be /rɔv/.

Gun/gʌn/ will be /gɔn/ . Sun /sʌn/ will be /sɔn/, cup /kʌp/ will be /kɔp/ and gum /gʌm/ will be /gɔm/.

Also, in the Onitsha and Alor areas of the Nigerian linguistic environment, /l/ is pronounced /r/ and vice versa. So

Word	Received Pronunciation	Nigeria English Pronunciation from Onitsha and Alor Area
color	/'kʌl.ə r /	/'kɔrɔ/
liver	/'li:v.ə r /	/'ri:væ/
London	/'lʌn.dən /	/rɔn.dɔn /
Around	/ə'raʊnd/	/ælaʊnd/
Leader	/'li:.də r /	/'ri:.dæ /
Love	/lʌv/	/rɔ:v/
gun	/gʌn/	/gɔn/
sun	/sʌn/	/sɔn/
cup	/kʌp/	/kɔpu/
gum	/gʌm/	/gɔm/

In the Nigerian Yoruba linguistic environment, some sounds which are absent in their sound inventory pose serious problems for the Yoruba speaker of English as L2. A sound like /h/ is not present in the Yoruba language sound inventory, so when the Yoruba speaker or learner of English as L2 comes across a word containing that sound, he replaces it with the nearest sound to it. So the words

Word	Received Pronunciation	Nigeria English Pronunciation from Yoruba Area
humble	/'hʌm.bl/	/'ɔm.bl/.
Him	/hɪm/	/ɪm/
History	/'hɪs.t ə r.i/	/ɪs.tr.i/

What really happens is that the speaker takes the sound nearest in quality to the given sound from his inventory of sounds and replaces it with what he has on paper and then pronounces it.

Another sound that speakers of English as L2 in the Yoruba linguistic environment misplace with the other is /s/ and /ʃ/. The absence of /ʃ/ in some Yoruba dialects is the cause of this problem. So words like:

Word	Received Pronunciation	Nigeria English Pronunciation from Yoruba Area
Shoe	/ʃu:/	/su:/
Shine	/ʃaɪn	/saɪn/
Shower	/ʃaʊə /	/sæwæ /
Shop	/ʃɒp/	/sɒp/

3. The phenomenon of ill-equipped teachers also contributes immensely to poor English pronunciation in the Nigerian ESL situation. The dearth of teachers who are well versed in the knowledge of phonetics and phonology is a very strong impediment to good pronunciation among our students. These ill equipped teachers, who obviously are poor pronunciation models, and not even graduates of English, teach the much they know, and finally end up filling the linguistic repertoires of the students with teacher-induced errors. These teachers are poorly equipped for the following reasons.
 1. They have no in-depth knowledge of the phonetics and phonology of English.
 2. They do not listen to the BBC, CNN and other relevant media to get the most recent information on correct pronunciation from the native speakers.
 3. Most teachers of English phonetics in Nigeria are graduates of Philosophy, Igbo, linguistics, Yoruba Language, History, Religion, Mass Communication, e.t.c.
 4. Teachers do not use audio visual aids during oral English lessons.
 5. Its surprising that most teachers of phonetics do not have a copy of the pronouncing dictionary textbook. Only few of the qualified phonetics teachers have electronic copies of the pronunciation dictionary that can give correct transcription of words pronounced or voice them for the user to listen.
4. Mother tongue interference is another strong cause of poor English pronunciation among Nigerian students. The usual thing in Nigeria is for the child to acquire his mother tongue from birth due to association in his environment. In some environments, the child's only means of communication is that particular language or dialect which he uses all the time. By the time the child becomes a student and tries to learn phonetics or spoken English, the problem of interference from his mother tongue sets in. A case in point is in the Igbo society where the sounds /l/ and /r/ are used interchangeably. Such students will call London /'rɒndən /, right /latt/, problem /'plɒb.rəm/. There are also problems associated with mother tongue interference in the Hausa society where sounds like /f/ /p/ /v/ /b/, are so ingrained in the linguistic repertoire of the speaker or student that he pronounces words mixing and interchanging these sounds. E.g.

Word	Received Pronunciation	Nigeria English Pronunciation from Hausa Area
free	/fri:/	/pri:/
From	/frɒm/	/prɒm/
Forty-four	/'fɔ:r.tjfo:/	/pɔtipɔ:/
Voice	/vɔis/	/bɔ is/
fight	/fait/	/pait/
First	/'fɜ:st/	/'pest/
Female	/'fi:.meil/	/pimel/
Conduct	/kən'dʌktə/	/kwɔndɔktə/

Over the years, it has been discovered that some major causes of mother tongue interference among students and speakers of the English language are carry-overs from the initial language orthography, maybe from Igbo into English. Also, consonants not sounded in the mother tongue, but present in the English orthography prove very difficult for the speakers to pronounce. The student does not have those sounds in his repertoire or sound inventory. So he will have to learn how to pronounce them. This certainly will be difficult because according to Gimson; (1980), *“after early adolescence, it becomes increasingly difficult to acquire the pronunciation of a second language”*. Stevenson (1974) tells us that different psychologists agree that *“the best time to learn a language is before puberty when achievement of childhood bi-lingualism is possible”*¹¹. Outright ignorance on the part of the Nigerian ESL speaker concerning the correct pronunciation of most English Sounds and words have also led to the incidence of gross mispronunciation of very important English words with attendant consequences. Simple words like; pronunciation, vowel, Europe, almanac, liquor, ado, amoeba, listen, women, quasi, comb, bomb, pure, will be pronounced wrongly. See the table below:

Word	Received Pronunciation	Nigerian ESL Speaker Pronunciation
pronunciation	/prəˌnʌn t̩ .si'ei.f ə n/	/prɔnaunsieʃɔn/
singing	/'siŋ.ɪŋ/	/'siŋɪn/
vowel	/vaʊəl/	/vɔwəl/
Europe	/'jʊə.rəp/	/irɔp/
almanac	/'ɔ:l.mə.næk/	/'æl.mənak/
Liquor	/'lɪk.ə r /	/'lɪkwɔ: /
ado	/ə'du:/	/ædɔ/
amoeba	/ə'mi:.bə/	/æmuiba:/
listen	/'lis. ə n/	/listin/
Women	/wimin/	/wumen/
quasi	/kwei.zai-/	/kwasi/
comb	/kəʊm/	/kɔmb/
bomb	/bɒm/	/bɔmb/
pure	/pjʊə /	/piɔ/
champagne	/ʃæm'peɪn/	/tʃæm'pen/
Student	/'stju:.d ə nt/	/student/
brochure	/'brəʊ.ʃə r /	/'brɔkiɔ /
sachet	/'sæf.eɪ/	/'sætʃet/
forehead	/'fɔr.id/	/'fɔ:hed/
fiancé	/fi'ɑ: n .seɪ/	/fijans/
data	/'deɪ.tə/	/dætə/
curriculum	/kə'rik.jʊ.ləm/	/kɔrikɔləm/
sycophant	/'sɪk.ə.fənt	/'saɪk. ɔ.fənt/
plantain	/'plæn.tɪn/	/'plæn.ten/
vehicle	/'vi:.ɪ.kl/	/'vehɪkul/
bosom	/'bʊz. ə m/	/'bɔsɔm/
Category	/'kæt.ə.gri/	/'kætigɔri/

In the Nigerian ESL Environment, the voiceless inter-dental fricative sounds like /θ/ and /ð/ are also absent, so words like three /θri:/, thought/θɔ:t/ though /ðəʊ/ through /θru:/ will not be pronounced in the standard English received pronunciation version. Rather the Nigerian ESL speaker will as usual, replace it with the nearest sound to these sounds from the sound inventory in his local dialect. So we may have

Word	Received Pronunciation	Nigerian ESL Speaker Pronunciation
three	/θri:/	/tri:/
though	/ðəʊ/	/ðəʊ/
through	/θru:/	/tru:/
thirteen	/θɜ:'ti:n/	/tætin/
thirdly	/'θɜ:d.li/	/tedli/
they	/ðei/	/dei/
then	/ðen/	/den/

Solutions to Poor English Pronunciation among Nigerian Esl Students

1. The first solution to this problem as Gimson (1980) suggests, *is taking advantage of the mental plasticity of the young student*. The student should be taught correct pronunciation at a time optimal for second language learning; before late adolescence. This is because after this time, it will be difficult to learn pronunciation effectively.
2. Another effective solution to curbing the incidence of poor English pronunciation among our students is for the teachers to be given proper training in phonetics and phonology. All teachers in primary and secondary schools, teachers in tertiary institutions are not exempted. If students listen to correct pronunciation from all their teachers, unconsciously, they will internalize these correct sound patterns and pronunciation models and this problem of pronunciation would be reduced to the barest minimum.

I would recommend the establishment of a special course of instruction to teach English pronunciation and phonetics in the country. As a matter of fact, since English is our lingua franca, and we learn it in the universities and other tertiary institutions as GST 101 and 102 (The use of English I & II) , this researcher suggests that a pronunciation course, probably coded *English Pronunciation Methods (EPM 001)*, should be added to General Studies Courses and made a compulsory course in Nigerian universities, tertiary institutions and senior secondary schools. This will mean that every graduate from the university would have passed through the course satisfactorily. This will make correct pronunciation an order of the day among Nigerian speakers of English a L2.

3. As a panacea to poor English pronunciation, teachers should be encouraged to use different types of audio-visual aids and equipment to teach English phonetics in their classrooms. This particular point will be discussed in full detail as it is the crux of this paper. Talking and pronouncing dictionaries which are in electronic forms are included. Also, high quality materials, which are computer based and digitally propelled or driven with audio demonstrations for learners of English pronunciation both for self-access and for use in classes where the teacher needs support of this kind should be provided.
4. Pronunciation problems among students in this country may come to an end if the ministry of education invests time and resources in scholarly research in English phonetics and phonology at the higher levels. Training, retraining, and provision of course materials for improved effectiveness and productive research in English Pronunciation teaching at the secondary level should also be provided. Good ministries of education can partner with the British council, C4C and the USAID to sponsor these researches and bring this anomaly to an end.
5. Another good remedial step to solving the problem of pronunciation is that, while teaching pronunciation in the classroom, the teacher should be conscious of the students' needs. The students obviously would have different competency levels such as competency speed and styles" (Crystal 1986). The teacher should take this into cognizance as he teaches students. Different levels of attention will be given to the students depending on their rates of comprehension. More attention will be given to those who are slow to learn. The teacher would also conduct a students' needs analysis in the oral/spoken English class, with regard to pronunciation. After this, he/she would be able to develop appropriate and even materials to present in the class to reduce the learners' problem.

From Received Pronunciation to Estuary English; the Nigerian Esl Teacher & Learner

The term *Received Pronunciation* is usually credited to Daniel Jones. The word “received”, simply means “accepted” or “approved”. Received pronunciation is the standard accent of standard English in Great Britain, as spoken in the south of England. According to Catford (1977), “in the first edition of the English Pronouncing Dictionary by Daniel Jones in 1917, he named that accent public school pronunciation. However, in the second edition of his dictionary in 1926, he called the same accent “received pronunciation”. This pronunciation model was also known as Oxford English because it was traditionally the common speech of Oxford University. Received pronunciation is an accent (a form of pronunciation) and a register. It is not a dialect. It shows a great deal about the social and educational background of the person using the English Language. A speaker using Received Pronunciation will definitely speak Standard English. Received pronunciation is believed to be based on the southern accent of England. However, it has a lot of features in common with the early modern English dialect of the east midlands; a mixture of London speech with elements of east midlands, middle Essex, and Essex became known as received pronunciation. At this point, it is important to note that as is characteristic of any language, received pronunciation went to a state of flux. The Cambridge English pronouncing dictionary used the term “BBC Pronunciation” because they believe that at this point, the name, “*Received Pronunciation*” has become archaic (Daniel Jones 2003). And that BBC News presenters no longer suggest high social class and privilege to their listeners, a particular phonetician called Jack Windsor Lewis has criticized the term “Received Pronunciation” as “invidious, ridiculously archaic, parochial and question begging”. Even the international phonetic association in their handbook use the name “Standard Southern British” in place of “Received Pronunciation.” IPA Handbook (1999) states that Standard Southern British is the modern equivalent of what has been called “Received Pronunciation (RP)...” it is an accent of the South East of England which operates as a prestigious norm there and In other parts of the British isles and beyond. A.C. Gimson (1990) proposed conservative, general and advanced Received Pronunciation. It is this difficulty in accepting and defining RP that brought about the move from Received Pronunciation to Estuary English.

What is Estuary English?

This is a dialect of English widely spoken in South East England along the River Thames and its Estuary. John C. Wells (1994) defines Estuary English as “Standard English”, spoken with the accent of the south-east of England. The name “Estuary” comes from areas around the River Thames, particularly, its estuaries. Estuary English can be heard in London, Kent, south Essex and northern Surrey. This particular variety of English pronunciation came to public prominence when David Rosewarne (1984) agreed that “this variety of pronunciation may eventually replace received pronunciation in the south east. Researches here led to the discovery that Estuary English is not a single coherent form of English, rather, the reality behind the construct, according to Altendor (2003) “consists of some phonetic features of working-class London speech spreading at various rates socially into middle-class speech and geographically into other accents of south-eastern England”. David Crystal (1987) believes that Estuary English is widely encountered throughout the South and South East of England, particularly among the young.” Many consider it to be a working class accent, though it is not limited to the working class. In a debate that ensued due to a 1993 write up on Estuary English, a London businessman claimed that Received Pronunciation was perceived as unfriendly, so Estuary English was now preferred for commercial purposes. The implication of this for the Nigerian student of spoken English is that he/she has not finished grappling with the perceived complexities of Received Pronunciation and now, has to glide into Estuary English, so as to live up to the expectation of being current. The student at this point will be thrown off balance and will probably lose interest in the study of phonetics or pronunciation. It is therefore in the light of the above that the writer feels an arbiter, a *deus ex machina*, should be employed to put an end to the problem of pronunciation. ICT, a feature of the digital age now comes to the rescue.

The Digital Age and Pronunciation Problems

1. Jones and Fortescue (1987) are of the strong opinion that “in the 21st Century. Digital Technology has been employed by many disciplines to enhance their studies and solve problems. Thus, it will be proper, if pronunciation problems are subjected to digital solutions.

By digital solutions, we mean solutions to pronunciation problems that will come through products that will store, retrieve, manipulate, transfer or receive information electronically in a digital form. Examples are personal computers, digital television, e-mail, robots, the internet facility, e.t.c. Personal computers can be used in the teaching of pronunciation using the word processor/Microsoft word. To write letters, reports, data, calculations and the creation of forecasting models.

2. The application of personal computers to the teaching of phonetics and consequently, in solving pronunciation problems can be done through the presentation software known as Microsoft PowerPoint. This can be used in making presentations digitally, using a computer screen or a data projector.

Before now, teachers in English language used crude diagrams to represent the movement crucial parts of the vocal system during speech production. This of course, engendered slow understanding and even frustration on the part of the students. These diagrams can never fully illustrate what happens when speech is produced because, the diagrams in question are usually too small, too crude and except the teacher who drew them I s an artist, the real picture would be distorted. However, with the advent of wonderful ICT materials like the access point software, the modern teacher can flawlessly draw his or her diagrams using the computer and can take pictures and collate them in access point to produce mind arresting lecture materials that show even the tiniest details while teaching with the computer. This can be further enhanced by using projectors to teach them. The effect such method is bound to produce is just too good to be true as the students get to have a firsthand view of what happens, where it happens, and how it happens during speech production. Improvement in their study of the English language becomes surer, easier and simple. As if this is not enough, the teacher could go further to upload this to the internet where the students can download them any time they want for personal study. Using their telephones or any other digitally driven method. This presentation software can also help us publish in digital format, through E-mail or over the internet. The graphics software, an application of the traditional computer based technologies can come in handy to solve a multiplicity of pronunciation problems. Software like Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator; the Macromedia freehand and fireworks can create and edit images such as logos, drawings, or pictures for use in DTP websites or other publications.

3. Warschauer and Healey (1998) suggest that there are some other aspects of digital communications that can aid the study of pronunciation. These relate primarily to the types of network and the ways of connecting to the internet. Let us look at two types of networks briefly; the internal network and the external network.
4. **Internal Network:** this type of network is called the local area network (LAN). It involves linking a number of hardware items (input and output devices and computer processors) together within an office building. The aim of LAN is to be able to share hardware facilities such as printers or scanners, software applications, and data. This type of network is of extreme necessity in the school environment, in the staff room, and library where teachers of pronunciation will come to have access to common data or programmes. The students can also make use of this facility.
5. **External Networks:** simply put, this is what we call the Wide Area Network (WAN). The internet is the ultimate Wide Area Network. It is a vast network of networks where information on any subject matter can be acquired.

Good teachers of pronunciation have been known to put this network to good use. Good material on the study of pronunciation can be got from the internet. Notes and lectures on pronunciation teaching related issues, opinions of very great scholars in pronunciation, even the actual pronunciation of the consonant and vowel sounds and words too can be heard on the internet. These sounds can be downloaded and used as models for pronunciation by both teachers and students.

6. Deep seated research into digital applications in the teaching of language, particularly, pronunciation, has shown that challenges in linguistics and language pedagogy have been reduced to the barest minimum. Soska in Sonia (2001) *provides a list of technologies that have been used with some success in language pedagogy*. The list includes
 - i. Customizing Template and Authoring Programs
 - ii. Compact Disc Read Only Memory (CD-ROM)
 - iii. Interactive video disc
 - iv. Digital Audio
 - v. Telecommunications

1. Customizing, Templates, & Authoring Programs

Here, we have computer programs that assist teachers to design their own software. Some of the software to be designed are simple templates perhaps to guide the teaching of pronunciation of particular consonant or vowel sound, or the templates could also be to test students knowledge or rate of comprehension of sounds in the classroom. Others are sophisticated programs using multimedia capability. These can perform wonders for the teacher in the pronunciation classroom. Teachers can also choose an authoring program that perfectly fits their technical skills and design it according to their teaching styles and the student's needs.

2. Compact Disc – Read Only Memory (CD ROM)

CD ROM discs play very valuable roles in the teaching of pronunciation. These CD ROM discs have very large storage capacities and can be utilized for a variety of media, including texts, graphics, video and audio. Some CD ROM discs have been known to store as much as 620-650 megabytes of information, the equivalent of a 20-volume encyclopedia and perhaps, more. The phonetics teacher teaching pronunciation can store lecture notes as texts in the CD ROM disc, as well as his graphic illustrations like diagrams of the oral cavity. Organs of speech, vowel and consonant charts. They can be stored here and retrieved at will. The advantage of the CD ROM over the tape recorder is that CD ROM discs resist time and manipulation, whereas the tape can wear out, destroying or losing any information stored in it. The CD ROM disc is very good. It can be used to access dictionaries of pronunciation, databases, interactive books and other digital products that will assist the teaching of pronunciation.

Interactive Videodisc: This is another digitally driven technological device capable of assisting the teacher of pronunciation.

The video disc is a very good medium to display visual information. Like the CD ROM, discs, they do not wear out with usage because they are read with a laser beam. The sound stored in a video disc is stored in two different tracks and can be played separately. Thus, it can offer two different languages, for the same content, so that the pronunciation of two languages can even be compared or listened to. The disc can also have one track for the student and another for the teacher. In this way, teacher and student can use the same disc to interact, where the teachers' instructions are seen and taken by the student and there is feedback, whereby the student gives back questions and assignments for correction. In some cases (level 111 video discs), the disc player is connected to a computer and controlled through a software program; thus offering maximum interactivity between teacher and students.

3. Digital Audio

This device is steps ahead of the traditional tape recorder program. In the digital audio program, the student in the pronunciation class listens to a word or phrase articulated or produced by a native speaker. He or she then repeats the word into the computer microphone and listens as the computer plays it back. The student makes rational comparisons between his own output and that of the native speaker, he or she continues to repeat this sound until a responsible semblance, a near replica to improve pronunciation and listening skills is arrived at. The double advantage of digital audio programs over the tape is the quality of sound and its durability which is very useful to the teacher and the student of pronunciation.

4. Telecommunications

This is a product of the digital age, that the whole world is enjoying today, especially developing nations who through it, have moved away from ignorance, and dearth of information, to an improved development indices. The telephone, fax, cell phones, and computer related communication technologies ensure the rapid transfer of information over large distances. More than these other technologies, the internet provides students with the opportunity to access vast amounts of information stored electronically. Teaching English as a second language in the 60s could only be described with one noun; hell! No matter how often the teacher repeated a word, the students were bound to want him or her to repeat the sound. And even after the teacher did that, the students still made mistakes in pronouncing the sounds as they could not learn to make intricate sounds of English language by just listening to the teachers for minutes. This can be blamed for the great number of English speakers in the world today, who speak the language observing fully, the grammatical ethics, while flouting virtually all the rules governing pronunciation. ICT can be said to be the only solution to this unfortunate situation. Instead of reciting words in front of a class till the teacher's voice goes croaky, the teacher could simply record the correct pronunciation of sounds using any of the numerous ICT Facilities which include the mobile phone, and disseminate same to the students.

This will allow them to repeatedly listen to the sounds in the comfort of their homes and internalize the correct pronunciation of words quite easily. They can also maintain electronic conversations with native speakers over knotty issues of pronunciation, through e-mail and chat rooms, or join list-servers to obtain information about new courses. What is more, they can join a distance program to improve their knowledge of phonetics and phonology.

Advantages of the Digital Approach (Ict) to the Teaching of Pronunciation

This paper will not be complete if this researcher does not mention some of the advantages inherent in the digital age approach to the teaching of English Pronunciation to the Nigerian student of ESL. These advantages will come as:

1. Motivation to the learning of pronunciation
 2. Collaborative learning
 3. Multi-sensorial stimuli
 4. Cultural understanding
1. A good teacher will understand the psychology of his/her students, as a result, he or she would know that students who use technology are likely to stay on a task for longer periods of time. Norum, K. (1997) makes us understand that "A teacher teaching with the projector and access point will hold the attention of his subjects from the beginning to the end. To some of the students, it is novel. So their interest will be captured and this will force them to concentrate and learn.
 2. Another beautiful advantage of the digital age approach to solving pronunciation problems in Nigeria is the collaborative learning opportunity it offers all learners.
The internet opens new horizons for the foreign language student by facilitating communication with native speakers through e-mail and audio-digital conferencing. Students can via the e-mail ask authorities on pronunciation relevant questions on areas that confuse them like stress intonation, and rhythm. Audio-digital conferencing session can also help the students ask and receive answers to what they hitherto knew nothing about and equally learn more.
 3. Multi-sensorial stimuli: a very important ingredient in comprehension by the student in a classroom is digitally stimulated. ICTs, particularly television and computer related technologies, have the capacity to diversify the delivery of information using visual, auditory, and kinesthetic stimuli. Students in a class will see the words on the screen, while hearing them as they are pronounced by a native speaker. Movement adds interest to the scene, bringing enjoyment to a process that may be slow and arduous.
 4. The last advantage we shall discuss here is cultural understanding. Radio, television, and the internet bridge a great deal of psychological and cultural distances. Students learning pronunciation in a class in Nigeria can get acquainted with the ways of life of people whose language they are learning to pronounce, or have learnt to pronounce. They can visit the distant places without leaving their homes. They see the landscapes, the people and their traditions, thus making learning the pronunciation of the language, a cultural experience.

Suggested Framework for Teaching Pronunciation Proper in the Nigerian Class; Speech Synthesis to the Rescue

At this stage, we have seen the immense benefits of the digital age applications in the study of pronunciation. Hence it is imperative that the government of the country, through the ministries of education, put strong measures in place to digitalize our educational system; especially language education, with special emphasis on pronunciation. The researcher intends to use this medium to suggest a framework for teaching pronunciation proper in the Nigerian class. This is just a humble suggestion. It is a recommendation that could yield monumental benefits to language pedagogy in the country if its adopted. Speech synthesis which is where this researcher is headed for is a step forward in the pronunciation classroom through ICT. Reyes and Villanueva (2005) (7) postulate that "screen readers are software products that use speech synthesis to make the text on the screen accessible to the visually impaired". This researcher proposes to apply this tool in the English pronunciation classroom. Screen readers like "Talkary" or "Read please", may be easily downloaded in free versions from the internet, installed in any computer, and used by the students or teachers wherever needed.

Through these screen readers, we will provide our students with tools to:

- (i). Check the pronunciation of words
- (ii). Record their own voices
- (iii). Train speed and
- (iv). Compare themselves to native speakers.

By doing this, the students will find the learning of pronunciation very easy.

To apply this tool in the English as a second language pronunciation classroom, the researcher is suggesting the following steps:

STEP 1: Teachers should download the voiced versions of the English phonemes from the internet. They can also buy CD-Roms containing the phonemes of the English language. The students should be made to learn these sounds very well.

Step 2: Selection of Necessary Material:

The second step here is for a number of students to select a text to work with. It could be a page in Thomas Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Or any other novel or text of their choice. Now, the teachers/ trainers/ authorities will record the voice of the students and keep it for comparison. This is the starting point. The students together with the teacher will analyze their pronunciation of words. Intonation and speed. This may last for a month or two. The students would be provided with calendars where they would record their practice for the period of training. Each time they practice, each student would tick his calendar to mark date and number of times practiced.

STEP 3: The teacher/trainer should guide the students to download a free version of Read please so that they could have screen reader software in their personal computers. With this software, they will have the opportunity of listening to any text typed on their screens as many times as they wish. The texts could be listened to at different speeds, different voices and different accents.

STEP 4: The teachers would assist or make the students type the given text, maybe chapter 1 of *Thomas Hardy's Far from the Maddening Crowd* in his or her computer and they should listen to it as many times as each one of them would need to master it.

STEP 5: After a month or two of the desired period of this training, the students voices should be recorded again, while reading aloud their selected text.

Their voices would be recorded once more, loud enough for everyone to hear. This would provide the teacher and trainers with reading samples which would be compared with the previous samples taken at the beginning of the training period. To carry out this task, the teachers should use a very good digital voice recorder like the Olympus digital voice recorder which allows teachers and trainers to record the students voices as they read aloud and then the audio files can be transferred to the computers since the software is compatible with Microsoft Windows. The teachers should carefully and professionally analyze the reading samples taken after training period. The performance of the students should be observed and correctional changes cum suggestions made where possible. The teacher may notice improvement in the pronunciation of the students; at different levels, maybe 10%, 20%, of 35% improvement based on learners' IQ and commitment. He could also notice very poor performance, whichever way, he or she should deal with the students as necessary.

STEP 6: Finally, based on the performance of the students, we can proceed to step 6. Those students who performed dismally should repeat the training. While those who performed well above average would be subjected to further training. They would be passed through training to improve their phonic features like intonation, tone, rhythm, and speed. The sixth level will run like this, the teacher/trainer should search the internet for real audio files of Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Maddening Crowd*. Here, they will find the entire story read aloud by a native speaker. Then the students should be provided with the web addresses where they can download the audio files of the selected text and install it in their computers or laptops. In addition, MP4s, could be provided for the students so that they could download the audio files into it and have access to it at any time they deem fit. After this significant training, success will inevitably be achieved.

Conclusion

Throughout the course this work, the researcher, has tried to discuss the factors engendering poorer English pronunciation and the frustrations that this brings to the teacher and learner of eNGLISH pronunciation among Nigerian ESL speakers. The researcher believes that if these problems are critically evaluated and looked into, and seen as challenge to good pronunciation that can be surmounted, then the problem of correct pronunciation would have been solved to a large extent in Nigeria. A very strong and recurrent belief in this part of the world is that policy makers in the Department of Education do not implement valuable recommendations neither do they provide necessary materials recommended by researchers and experts. This researcher wants to believe that, this is a myth and not a reality, as implementing the recommendations of experts in this area of study, will put a final stop to the problems of pronunciation among ESL users in Nigeria. Finally, the ICT solutions to pronunciation problems proffered in this research work is strongly believed to be able to provide the much desired panacea to pronunciation problems among ESL users in Nigeria, therefore the researcher is looking forward to seeing the recommendations and findings of this paper put into action. By so doing, this problem of poor pronunciation among English as a Second Language users in the most populated nation in black Africa (Nigeria) would have been brought to the barest minimum.

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