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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

**THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE INTELLIGIBILITY
OF ASPECTS OF CONNECTED SPEECH AND LEVEL OF
EDUCATION: THE CASE OF FORM FIVE AND LEVEL
TWO STUDENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,
UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I**

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DEDICATION

To my beloved parents, Esther Enow Eyong and Aloysius Agomuo Ahiwe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my supervisor, Professor Aloysius Ngefac and all my lecturers especially those of the Department of English who took me through my academic life in the Higher Teacher Training College (ENS) Yaounde.

I also thank Colvis Niba Ngwa and Serges Essossomo who willingly provided me with useful materials for this work. My profound gratitude goes to my aunt, Pamela Ndip Iyok, my mother, Esther Enow Eyong, and my friends: Laurent Ateba Eyene and Roland Alandi who gave the moral and financial support needed to go through this endeavour.

My sincere thanks go out to all my friends and classmates in ENS for the solidarity that we exhibited in school to let us have a conducive atmosphere to study. For all who stood by me in one way or another in the realization of this work but whose names are not mentioned, I extend my sincere gratitude.

ABSTRACT

This work set out to examine the intelligibility of aspects of connected speech to students within a New English context, Cameroon. The work was based on the hypothesis that English speaking Cameroonian learners lack the zeal to learn Standard British English features. This can be caused by personal, psychological and pedagogical factors. Two theoretical frameworks were adopted for the study: Intelligibility and Error Analysis. The sample population consisted of 65 students subdivided into 25 undergraduate students and 40 secondary school students from Government Bilingual High School Etoug-Ebe and Government Bilingual Practicing High School Yaounde. In carrying out this study the following tools were used: tape recorder, language tests to check the students' level of intelligibility of connected speech, questionnaire that was aimed at knowing the students scale of preference in terms of subjects, the aspects of language that are problematic to them. The findings revealed that undergraduates faced lesser problems of intelligibility than Form Five students, as far as aspects of connected speech are concerned. This is probably because of their level of education.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce travail visait à examiner le niveau d'intelligibilité des aspects du langage accouplé chez les étudiants et les élèves dans un contexte comme le Cameroun où la langue Anglaise a vécu beaucoup de gauchissement et changement. Ce travail était fondé sur l'hypothèse que les apprenants Camerounais d'expression Anglaise manquent le zèle d'apprendre les traits de l'Anglais Britannique (Standard British English). Ceci peut-être causé par des facteurs personnels, psychologique et pédagogique. Nous avons fait usage de deux structures théorique dans ce travail: l'intelligibilité et l'analyse des erreurs. Il y avait en tout 65 personnes dont 25 étudiants de l'Université de Yaoundé 1 et 40 élèves du Lycée Bilingue d'Application et Lycée Bilingue d'Etoug-Ebe recueillis pour les données. Afin d'achever ce travail nous avons utilisé un magnétophone, des analyses de langue, un questionnaire qui avait pour objectif entre autre savoir les domaines où les apprenants avaient des difficultés. Le verdict à révéler que les étudiants avaient moins de difficulté de compréhension des aspects du langage accouplé par rapport aux élèves de Form Five. Ceci est probablement à cause de leur niveau d'étude.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this work, entitled “The Correlation between the Intelligibility of Aspects of connected Speech and Level of Education: The Case of Form Five and Level Two Students of the Department of English, University of Yaounde I”, was carried out by Cicilia Adama Ahiwe, under my academic supervision.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| CamE | Cameroon English |
| EA | Error Analysis |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| ELT | English Language Teaching |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| GBHS | Government Bilingual High School Etoug-Ebe |
| GBPHS | Government Bilingual Practising High School Yaounde |
| IPA | International Phonetic Alphabet |
| L1 | First language |
| L2 | Second Language |
| NNS | Non-Native Speakers |
| NS | Native Speakers |
| SBE | Standard British English |
| UY1 | University of Yaounde 1 |
| NL | Native Listener |
| NNL | Non-Native Listener |
| SLA | Second Language Acquisition |

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has witnessed the phenomenon of globalization. This is a relatively new phenomenon of multi-dimensional nature that puts variety of complex trends in the economic, social and cultural fabrics of all societies. Globalization has reduced the world to a global village where English serves as a Lingua Franca; the privilege language of social interactions. Today, there is no doubt that an unparalleled language, namely English, is encircling the world in such a way that for many the term globalization is crucially linked with the rise of this language (see Pennycook, 2010; Salverda, 2002). As Kachru (1990) rightly pointed out, English has “touched the lives of so many people, in so many cultures and continents, in so many functional roles, and with so much prestige”. Today, English is used on all seven continents, as an official or second language in more than 100 countries, and is used as an official language in more than 85% of international organizations. The language is used in all corners of the planet earth and Crystal (2003) stressed that “although the numbers are subject to change, English is used by nearly 2 billion speakers in varying degrees of competencies, and Non-Native speakers (NNSs) of English outnumber native speakers (NSs) by a ratio of 3:1”. Whatever the journey of English had been, it is obvious that “For better or worse, by choice or force, English has travelled to many parts of the world and has been used to serve various purposes. This phenomenon has created positive interactions as well as tensions between global and local forces and has had serious linguistic, ideological, sociocultural, political and pedagogical implications” Sharifian (2009). As it now serves as the common vehicle of communication among speakers with or without the same linguistic and cultural background, English is the language of air and maritime navigation, the language of the Internet, politics, business, sports, and international scientific exchange. One can denote the huge enthusiasm for learning English in virtually all societies and its increasing status in educational arena throughout the world.

What is worth pointing out is that in the new settings where English has been transplanted, the language has undergone some twists and turns. As Ngefac (2011) remarked, English in new ecologies “has evolved according to the ecological, cultural and sociolinguistic realities of such contexts”. The language has so undergone significant indigenization (and consequently) nativisation that features of Standard British English (SBE) tend to be unintelligible to most non-native speakers of English. Most aspects of connected speech that are the essential characteristics of SBE pose serious problems of understanding to most of them.

Research motivations

This research endeavour was motivated by a number of factors. First, it was motivated by the observation that although Standard British English (SBE) accent is the preferred pronunciation model that is officially promoted in the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry in the postcolonial Cameroon, aspects of connected speech like assimilation, elision and linking processes which are the essential features of SBE tend not to be understood by most learners of English. When such aspects are used by other non-native speakers in Cameroon, there is generally communication breakdown.

Another factor that motivated this research work was the paucity of empirical works on the issue at stake. In fact, the literature on the intelligibility of aspects of connected speech to Cameroon learners is very scanty. This means that very little is known on intelligibility and related issues in Cameroon. Only one book, as far as we are aware, is available (other works tackling the issue are some students' dissertations). As a new area of inquiry then, the researcher would like to contribute on her iota to the domain.

Research problem

Standard British English (SBE) is the variety of English that policy makers promote in the ELT enterprise in the postcolonial Cameroon to the detriment of Cameroon English, the local variety. In most English Language textbooks used for the teaching of English, aspects of SBE accent abound and are well elaborated. In fact, in all examinations that involve the testing of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and all aspects of language use, SBE is always the target. At the university level, there are lessons devoted to the discussion of SBE pronunciation (Introduction to Spoken English, English Prosody, (Segmental) Phonology etc). One would therefore expect learners to have a proper understanding of features of SBE which they are taught or at least have sufficient exposure to. This unfortunately is not the case: learners face serious difficulty with such features and tend not to understand them when they are used by other speakers of English. Definitely there is a problem.

Research questions

This research endeavour will be guided by a number of questions:

1. Which aspects of connected speech do learners mostly face problems in?
2. What implications do students' poor mastery of aspects of connected speech have on language teaching/learning and policy?

Research hypothesis

This research endeavour hypothesises that English speaking Cameroonian learners' problems of intelligibility of aspects of connected speech are due to personal and pedagogical factors. These include: students' laziness, students' lack of sufficient input in SBE phonology, students' negative attitude and lack of motivation to learn SBE features English to the detriment of Cameroon English.

The objectives of the study

The objectives of the present inquiry are threefold. First, the researcher intends to systematically identify the different aspects of connected speech that pose problems of intelligibility to English speaking Cameroonian learners. Second, the researcher intends to suggest some strategic measures to be taken in order to enhance students intelligibility of aspects of connected as effective communication depends on a good mastery of such aspects.

Significance of the study

The work will help one to know the aspects of connected speech that are more problematic to learners. That knowledge will be important as it will give insights into those aspects that generally lead to communication breakdown and that therefore deserve a special attention. As could be seen, knowledge of problematic aspects of connected speech will definitely re-orient the teaching process. Teachers will have a clear idea on what to focus on in the process of teaching.

Again, as it proposes a critical examination of the general principle underlying the method and approach used in the process of teaching English at the secondary level of education in Cameroon, this work will give a clearer picture of the scenario that takes place in the teaching of English in Cameroon and suggest a set of curricular and pedagogical changes in the postcolonial Cameroon's English language Teaching (ELT). The work will show the discrepancy that generally exists between what is generally officially prescribed or stated and the current practices in the classroom.

Scope of the study

Problems of intelligibility of native or standard forms of the language can occur at different levels of linguistic analysis in the English of L2 Cameroonian learners. However, the researcher, while keeping in mind the interrelationship between the different levels of linguistic analysis, will limit her analysis to the phonological level. This work, therefore,

excludes other levels of linguistic analysis like syntax, semantics, lexicology, graphology, pragmatics and the like. Focus will be on aspects of connected speech like assimilation, elision and linking processes (liaison and related phenomena) that mostly pose problems of understanding to learners.

The study is also limited in space. Consequently, the work will be conducted in the metropolitan town of Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon.

Structure of the work

This work consists of a General Introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. The general introduction gives preliminary information on the research topic. Chapter One is a survey of literature related to our topic as well as the theoretical considerations, which provides the framework for the study. In Chapter Two, the researcher describes in details the different methods she used in order to collect and analyse data, the target population, the sample size and the sampling techniques used. In Chapter Three, the researcher analyses her data. Finally, in the last part of the work (conclusion), the researcher overviews the entire research process, makes some recommendations and give some suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on two main aspects. First, it discusses the theoretical frameworks used in the analysis of the collected data. Second, it surveys the major works that are related to the present investigation.

1.1 Theoretical considerations

This study is out to investigate the intelligibility of aspects of connected speech to some English speaking Cameroonians. In a bid to guide our analysis, this study has been conducted from two theoretical standpoints; Error Analysis (EA) and intelligibility.

1.1.1 Error Analysis Framework

Error analysis, which was propounded by Corder (1967) is a technique of identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by someone or group of people learning a foreign language. Error analysis came to be in the field of Second Language Acquisition as a response to the shortcomings observed in Contrastive Analysis, which stipulates that learners make errors where the two language systems they are learning (that of their L1 and that of their L2) differ. For contrastive analysts, learners' errors originate from their first language. This view urged more research to be carried out in the field of SLA in order to have a clearer idea about the origin of learners' mistakes. After a diligent and meticulous investigation in this frame, Corder (1967) concluded that not all errors made by second language learners can be attributed to the interference of their L1 in the target language. He laid the foundation for another paradigm known as Error Analysis. In this framework, second language learners' errors are viewed as a natural, integral and important part of the language learning process.

There is a general consensus in the field of linguistics, especially second language acquisition, that Error analysis has offered a new impetus to the teaching and learning of the English language. In fact, Corder (1974:125) the ‘‘Father’’ of Error Analysis stipulates that:

The study of error is part of the investigation of the process of language learning. In this respect it resembles methodologically the study of the acquisition of the mother

tongue. It provides us with a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and may give us indications as to the learning process.

Errors are very important in the acquisition of a second language. This can be seen in three instances as pinpointed by Dulay (1982). First of all, he says errors help the teachers to know how much progress their learners are making. Secondly, they provide evidence to the researcher on how the second language is acquired and the various strategies used by the learner in learning. Lastly, errors are indispensable to the learner because the making of errors is an indication of learners' learning strategies. This actually means learning is taking place.

The committing of errors can be impeded through realizing the errors and working on them according to the feedbacks given. The steps followed by learners get researchers and language teachers realize that, if the errors of language learners in constructing the new language system are analysed carefully, the process of language acquisition shall be understood. This aspect has made the analysis of errors to become indispensable in the field of linguistics. This is because the field of language teaching is benefitting immensely from the findings made by linguists on error analysis. As indicated above, what a linguist looks for in understanding the language learning process contributes a lot to the questions of language teachers. Many teachers complain that their students are unable to use the linguistic forms that they are taught. Lengo (1995) opines that "this situation is due to the teacher's false impression that output should be an authentic representation of input." This belief ignores the function of intake, that is, the knowledge of language the students internalize. EA helps teachers to find out the sources of errors and take pedagogical precautions towards them.

With regard to the sources of errors in a learner's language, Taylor (1975) argues that each stage in the learners' development has its own errors. In this light, he notes that "whereas the intermediate learners rely on transfer, advanced learners rely, to a greater extent, on overgeneralization of target language rules." This may be the case of learners of the English language in Form Five who may tend to rely mostly on language transfer, while Level Two students may rely on overgeneralisation of target language rules. In this light, language transfer and overgeneralisation of some rules may lead to the unintelligibility of some aspects of connected speech in Standard British English which is the target variety for English language teaching in Cameroon. Whatever the case maybe, the interference of mother tongue features in the production of English sounds has been proven to be a major source of errors. Though errors may betray a learner's mastery of the rules of a language, they can be very instrumental in the advancement of a learner's proficiency if they are treated with

considerable attention. This is stressed by Selinker (1972: 138) who notes that errors are important in second language learning in that they help teachers to evaluate learners' progress, they provide evidence on the acquisition of a second language and the strategies involved in learning a new language to a researcher and, finally, they are devices used by the learners to learn.

A series of problems have been identified with this approach. First, the problem often observed with this approach is that it pays too much attention to learners' errors. There is a danger in giving too much attention to learners' errors. This is because while errors, indeed, reveal a system at work, the classroom language teacher can become so preoccupied with noticing errors that the correct utterances in the Second Language go unnoticed. While the diminishing of errors is an important criterion for increasing language proficiency, the ultimate goal of second language learning is the attainment of communicative fluency. Language competence and performance are usually assessed in relation to four language skills which include: speaking, listening, writing and reading. The comprehension of language is as important as production. It happens that production lends itself to analysis and thus, becomes the prey of researchers, but comprehension data are equally important in developing and understanding the process of Second Language Acquisition. Consequently, the results of Error analysis in language teaching may be reversal because the teacher is likely to focus only on learners' errors, failing to notice and acknowledge the good utterances that they produce. Logically, when there is no positive reinforcement (encouragement), learners quickly lose motivation and may continuously feel that they do not know anything. The application of error analysis in a language class is also very likely to reduce learners' fluency in the language they are learning, considering they are very often cut short in their speech by the teacher who wishes to correct the mistake or error.

In spite of the above-mentioned problems related to error analysis, the model remains relevant to the present study in that if an aspect of connected speech is not understood by learners, it means that they are errors because they would obviously lead to unintelligibility. Consequently, such unintelligible segments would be viewed as errors. The reason is that Standard British English is the variety promoted throughout the English Language Teaching industry in Cameroon. Thus, it becomes important to use Error Analysis in a bid to determine the extent to which learners of English in the secondary school and the university in Cameroon master sounds in connected speech which is an aspect of standard British English pronunciation.

1.1.2 The Concept of Intelligibility

The concept of intelligibility has attracted the interest of many researchers over the past decades. In fact, Atechi (2006:1) notes that “with the emergence of non-native varieties of English across the globe, the concept of intelligibility has attracted the sustained attention of many international scholars.” Though intelligibility has occupied the nucleus of linguistic research for some time now, there seems to be no consensus among researchers as to what intelligibility is. This goes without saying that intelligibility has been viewed from wide-ranging perspectives. *The Longman Dictionary of Language* (1984:508) defines intelligibility as “that form of speech or language which is clear to the mind and can be understood without any problems.” Broadly speaking, this definition focuses on communication. In other words, it presupposes that we can talk of intelligibility only when the message has reached the interlocutor. The medium of transmission can be through speech or other paralinguistic elements such as gestures, grimaces, signs. However, paralinguistic elements are context-defined, for example, the colours of traffic lights have different meanings in different contexts.

Catford (1950:8), quoted in Brown (1989), holds that intelligibility depends on the effectiveness of an utterance. This effectiveness comes when the speaker’s intention is understood by the listener. Thus, Catford (*ibid*) posits that any discussion of intelligibility must also deal with the loss of intelligibility. This loss of intelligibility may take place at two levels. Firstly, a speaker may simply not be understood at all. Secondly, a listener may understand a speaker as having meant something different from what the speaker in fact intended. In this light, intelligibility failure may be caused by both the speaker and the listener. Thus, once an utterance does not fulfil its intended meaning, we talk of the loss of intelligibility because the utterance is not effective.

According to Kenworthy (1987), intelligibility is “being understood by a listener at a given time in a given situation.” In more practical terms, she holds that “the more words a speaker is able to identify accurately, the more intelligible the speech is.” Intelligibility, in this light, is defined in terms of the speaker and the listener in a particular speech interaction. This means that a speaker can be intelligible to one listener and not the other. Thus, this view brings in the notion of context which is very important as far as the study of intelligibility is concerned. For example, if a sound is substituted by a particular speaker and the listener hears another, then the speech is unintelligible. If, on the other hand, the substituted sound is still understood, then, we will say that the speech is intelligible. Thus, according to Kenworthy

(1987), intelligibility is not synonymous to native-like performance in a language. This is because the aim of intelligibility is usually to assess whether a message has been understood with regard to what the speaker actually means. So, when intelligibility is the goal in a conversation, the participants aim for something “close enough” and not the exact native pronunciation of the word. Thus, a foreign speaker may not articulate the exact feature of linkage or stress placement, yet will be understood by a native listener. Intelligibility therefore is judged by “counts of sameness”, that is, shared knowledge on a particular sound or word between the participants in a conversation.

Munro and Derwing (1995a), on their part, define intelligibility as “the extent to which an utterance produced by a native speaker (NS) or non-native speaker (NNS) is understood by a native listener (NL) or non-native listener (NNL).” This definition dwells so much on the NS/ NNS dichotomy. It is worth noting here that English studies have gone past the stage of the traditional definition of the native speaker. In fact, the distinction between native and non-native speaker may be considered archaic. After all, who defines a native speaker in a world where English has been adopted, adapted and nativised to suit context-specific realities? To rephrase this definition to suit the context of this study, we will look at intelligibility as the extent to which an utterance by a speaker is understood by a listener.

So far, we have looked at some views concerning what intelligibility should be. These views have revealed that the definition of intelligibility includes such notions as context and effectiveness. This is because for a particular speech to be intelligible, the speaker and the listener must put themselves in the same linguistic and/or situational context. This will make the speech to be “effective” because the listener will be able to understand what is said. Far from defining what intelligibility is, some scholars (Smith 1992; Munro and Derwing 1995a; Munro et al., 2006) have rather looked at intelligibility as a component within a complex set of ideas. According to Smith (1992), the term “intelligibility” has a very broad sense; consequently, he divides it into three categories namely: intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability.

1. Intelligibility which focuses on word/ utterance recognition.
2. Comprehensibility which focuses on word/ utterance meaning.
3. Interpretability which focuses on meaning behind word/ utterance.

These three categories, as Smith (1992) argues, constitute a continuum and should be looked at as different. He classifies it in order of importance, from the least to the most important.

Given that intelligibility entails understanding an utterance which can be achieved only through interpretation, this researcher shares Atechi's (2006: 43) view that, "this distinction seems not clear." This is because we cannot draw clear-cut lines on where one category ends and where another one begins. For instance, when a listener uses context and other clues to decode the speaker's message, we are dealing with aspects that go beyond simple word/utterance recognition.

Munro et al. (2006), still in the light of what should constitute intelligibility, contrasts intelligibility with comprehensibility and accentedness. According to the study, comprehensibility refers to the actual understanding of an utterance by a listener while accentedness refers to how closely the pronunciation approaches that of a NS. It is worthy to note here that accent is more of a factor that will influence intelligibility than a synonym of intelligibility. For example, Munro and Derwing (1995a) show that strong accented speech tends to be less intelligible than unaccented speech. Given that intelligibility and comprehensibility do not have any significant difference as discussed in Smith's (1992) classification, this study will simply regard them as overlapping terms. Thus, they will be used without any distinction in this study given that CamE speech is not accented compared to older varieties of English like RP. Though this classification may not be very relevant to this study given that all of the terms from Smith (1992) and Munro et al. (2006) seen above are based on intelligibility, it, however, gives us an in depth view of the concept of intelligibility and the intricacies there are in pinning it down to a single definition.

1.1.2.1 Intelligibility and Pronunciation

The upsurge of new Englishes has attracted sustained interest from many scholars. Most of these scholars are clear over the fact that we cannot use English identically in all the areas where it is adapted. Thus, listeners have to adapt to various varieties of English pronunciation if their target is intelligibility. O'Connor (1980:5), captures this in the statement:

In one sense, there are as many different kinds of English as there are speakers of it; no two people can speak exactly alike. We always hear differences between them and the pronunciation varies a great deal in different geographical areas. How do we decide what sort of English to use as model? This is not a question which cannot be decided in the same way for all foreign learners of English. If you live in a part of the world like India or west Africa, where there is a tradition of speaking English for general communication purposes, you should aim to acquire a good variety of the pronunciation of this area; such varieties as

Indian or African English and the like, are to be respected and used by all who will need their English mainly for purpose of communication with their fellows. It will be a mistake in such a context to use BBC English or anything of that sort.

This statement captures the fact that differences in speech and usage, ranging from individuals to regions, abound in the English language. This variation in speech and usage, therefore, points to the fact that there exist many kinds of pronunciations of English which are contextually and socially accepted as intelligible all over the world, most of which are clearly different from the native pronunciation. Pronunciation and intelligibility have also attracted scholarly attention (Simo Bobda 1991; Atechi 2006). These studies seem to echo O'Connor's (1980) standpoint that intelligible pronunciation should be the goal of pronunciation training because it is not in all contexts where people should strive for BBC English or anything of that sort. People should rather strive to uphold the variety to which they are exposed. In this light, Simo Bobda (1991:28) points out that:

A recurrent argument for the defence of localised and deviant features in pronunciation is that anything goes as long as we can communicate with the speakers of other Englishes. [However,] it happens that of all levels of linguistic analysis, pronunciation is the greatest source of intelligibility failures.

Thus, intelligible pronunciation is that which the message goes across. However, intelligible pronunciation becomes very difficult to define because intelligibility depends on the listeners (Kenworthy 1987) and the fact that different mother tongues will greatly define intelligible pronunciations (Jenkins 2000). To strike the balance, Abercrombie (1991: 93) puts forward the concept of "comfortable intelligibility" as a suitable goal for most learners. According to him, comfortably intelligible pronunciation is "pronunciation which can be understood with little or no conscious effort on the part of the listener." Thus, learners of English should be guided to speak in a way that their pronunciation will be intelligible to native and non-native speakers alike given that the English language has so evolved that is used as a language of international communication. Worthy of note here is the fact that the English language is spoken far more often between non-native speakers themselves than between non-native and native speakers. So, there is the need to investigate how comfortably intelligible aspects of connected speech are intelligible to language learners in Cameroon.

1.1.2.2 Factors that Affect Intelligibility

Intelligibility studies which have tackled native and non-native speech for NLs and>NNLs (Kenworthy 1987; Brown 1989; Derwing & Munro 2001; Bradlow & Bent 2003; Atechi 2006; etc) have revealed many factors which are likely to affect speech intelligibility. Though, many studies (Kenworthy 1987; Brown 1989; Ludwig 2012) talk of speaker and listener factors, it will be more appropriate to talk of factors that are likely to hinder or enhance intelligibility.

1.1.2.2.1 Factors that Hinder Intelligibility

Kenworthy (1987), notes that intelligibility does not only depend on “counts of sameness” but also on other aspects which may affect the intelligibility process. A person’s speech may be full of grammatical restructurings, self- corrections and hesitations. In this case, the listener will find it difficult to get what is being said. Speakers who hesitate in speech also tend to have pronunciation problems and may either be sandwiched between lack of confidence in pronunciation and limited knowledge of the subject matter. Frequent pauses and hesitations tend to make a speaker difficult to understand.

Another factor which may hinder intelligibility is the speech rate. When a speech is rapid, it is very likely to cause intelligibility problems (Derwing & Munro 2001). When someone is too fast in speech, the listener tends to think that if the speaker could just slow down a bit, he/she will easily understand what is being said. The issue of speed has, however, been seen to be less of an issue because two people or speakers may have the same speed of speech but one turns out more intelligible than the other (Atechi 2006: 47). This is because lexical words are very vital in bringing out the message. Thus, features like word and sentence stress, rhythm and intonation are also important elements in a discourse.

Idiosyncratic speech habits as well may affect intelligibility. This is because individuals or speech communities usually develop some “absurd” ways of speaking which are peculiar to them alone. This absurdity or idiosyncrasy in language use is likely to make the speech of an individual or that of a community quite unintelligible to listeners who are not familiar with such idiosyncrasies.

Accent, in addition, has been investigated by many researchers (Gumperz, 1982; Jenkins, 2000; Atechi, 2006) and proven to be a source of intelligibility problems. Most studies carried out on accent have reported that listeners have difficulties in understanding sound patterns that differ from sound patterns to which they are accustomed (Nya 2010: 27).

Unfamiliarity with a particular speech can cause serious intelligibility problems to listeners and equally mar communication. Other factors which have been proven to hinder intelligibility greatly are word frequency (Bradlow and Pisoni 1999) and noise given that communication entails two or more people talking and it is rare to find ideal places void of noise or some uncertainties that hinder clarity of a speech (Bradlow and Bent 2003 and Atechi 2006). Opposed to factors that militate against intelligibility are factors which enhance intelligibility. In fact, communication becomes very interesting when the listener makes use of these.

1.1.2.2.2 Factors that Enhance Intelligibility

Ideally, most studies on intelligibility are usually carried out with the informant and the researcher engaged in a face-to-face interaction. In other words, intelligibility studies are usually carried out on a one-to-one basis. However, there are usually situations where a particular speech is recorded and played to people over a considerable distance. Whatever the case, studies have proven that context, familiarity, and proficiency can help a listener considerably in getting what has been said.

Context can be helpful for a listener to decode a message, especially in a face-to-face interaction. Previous studies (Fry 1955; Bansal 1969; Jenkins 2002; Field 2003; Atechi, 2006) have shown the centrality of context in intelligibility studies. This is because context usually offers visual and auditory clues to the listener. Even if the listener is kilometres away, knowledge of linguistic rules can help the listener to bring out the speaker's message. In fact, Fry (1955:15), quoted in Atechi (2006: 48), suggests that intelligibility can be increased 12 to 14 times when a context is supplied. Thus, if a listener can understand the linguistic and the situational context of language use of a particular speaker, he/she can get meaning clues from them to understand the message. For example, the chances of a native speaker understanding the word 'mayor' pronounced [mejɔ] in CamE are very slim. But, if it is used in a sentence like: *The municipal councillors have elected him mayor*, the word 'mayor' is likely to be more intelligible because words like 'municipal, councillors and elected' provide contextual clues.

Familiarity and exposure to a particular type of accent, topic or speech event can greatly enhance intelligibility on the part of the listener. According to Munro et al. (2006), an accented utterance, which is unfamiliar to and significantly differs from the listener's native patterns of oral production, requires a greater processing effort on the part of the listener. On the other hand, Bent and Bradlow (2003) reported that non-native English listeners find

English spoken with a familiar accent more intelligible than native speech. In other words, they suggested that speakers from a particular L1 background might have a benefit in understanding accented speech from speakers with whom they share the same language background. They called this effect the “Interlanguage speech intelligibility benefit” (ISIB). Thus, people find it easier listening to the speech of their fellow countrymen or people with whom they share a similar L1.

Finally, another factor which is likely to boost intelligibility is a speaker’s proficiency in a given language. Smith (1992), quoted in Atechi (2006:49), observes that language proficiency is another listener factor to take into consideration when it comes to comprehensibility. This is probably why we always take seriously into consideration the level of education of the subjects we use in investigations. However, scholars are still to agree on the basic level of education that qualifies a person or speaker to be called a speaker of an educated variety of English, especially when it comes to the new Englishes.

1.1.2.3 Intelligibility Testing

A series of tests have been developed to investigate intelligibility. Kenworthy (1987), holds that the best way of testing intelligibility is through ‘impressionistic’ or ‘subjective’ assessments. In such assessments, a listener is asked to listen to a particular speaker and say how easy or difficult it is to understand. She sees this method as not only accurate but also very reliable and, therefore, holds that “one does need complicated tests and procedures to assess the intelligibility of non- native speakers” (p. 20). Thus, informants simply need to listen to a speech read aloud to them and say whether it is intelligible or not. This method of reading aloud seems to be very good, but the concern that arises here is the person to read the passage. This is because studies, especially in the new Englishes, have revealed that the speech of most people is induced by spelling pronunciations, speech interference and many other phenomena which will make the credibility of the test reading questionable. Taking this into consideration, she posits that intelligibility testing can be done through spontaneous speech and a reading passage. However, this still poses a number of problems, the most pertinent being what a non-native speaker who wants to study the intelligibility of native speech to other non-native speakers do to if he/she cannot assemble the speakers and the listeners in a single place. Probably, it is due to such considerations that recent research on intelligibility (Atechi 2006; Nya 2010; Ludwig 2012 and Yung 2014) has tended to use tape recorders to record the speech of particular speakers. Tape recorders are advantageous in a number of ways: first, they assure accuracy and secondly, they enable a researcher to test a

particular speech pattern over long distances without having to carry the speakers of that variety along.

With the increasing spread and use of the English language across the globe, it is worth noting that intelligibility studies have gone beyond mere word recognition. Thus, most studies on the intelligibility of English (Bansal 1969; Tiffen 1974; Brown 1977; Atechi 2006) have gone beyond word recognition. Bansal (1969:55), quoted in Brown (1989), used the following method:

Each sentence was played back separately, and the listener asked to repeat or write the sentence. Each word was played back separately and the listener asked to repeat it or write it down. When a listener's own pronunciation made it somewhat doubtful what word he meant, he was asked to write the words, instead of saying them.

Thus, to test the intelligibility of Indian English, Bansal (1969), designed different tests which involved connected speech, passage reading, sentences and some word lists which came in to supplement the test. This was recorded and then played to listeners who were supposed to repeat and then write down what they had heard.

Still in the light of intelligibility testing, Tiffen (1974), in investigating the intelligibility of Nigerian English drew up a test which was made up of connected speech, reading of passages and some words and sentences. The listeners were supposed to write down what they heard and to respond to a passage read to them. Atechi (2006) designed five tests which included connected speech, phonemic contrast elicitation, passage reading, and nucleus placement in words and sentences in his investigation of the intelligibility of native and non-native Englishes. He achieves this by having the texts meant for the non-native listeners read by native speakers and that meant for the native listeners read by non-native speakers.

Other intelligibility studies have revealed a good number of intelligibility testing methods some of which are: doze procedure test (Smith & Rafiqzad 1979), close tests (Nelson 1982), and translation from target language (TL) to L1 and vice versa. Thus, to test the intelligibility of connected speech to the informants under study, a series of tests have been designed. These tests include a dictation passage which will be read out to the informants and a passage for students to read. In the course of reading, we would determine the extent to which the informants make use of connected speech.

1.2 Review of Related Literature

This section overviews some major investigations that have been carried out on intelligibility and related issues. This review will help the reader to see the state of the art and to see the contribution of this work to the existing body of knowledge.

As a general remark, works on intelligibility are of different nature. There are some that focused on the major factors that affect intelligibility. Others have laid emphasis on the intelligibility of some non-native Englishes to both native and non-native users. Yet, some others (though very limited in number) have focused on the intelligibility of aspects of segments and suprasegments as well as aspects of connected speech. Although the literature on intelligibility is abundant and diversified, we will quickly overview some works only.

To begin with, some researchers have investigated some factors that affect Intelligibility. There are the studies indicated that speakers with different L1 backgrounds differ from speaker to speaker in terms of the intelligibility of their speech (Gallego 1990; Zielinski 2006a). In Gallego's study with Korean, Italian and Hindi ITAs, he attributed the perceived unintelligibility of the Korean TA to the linguistic distance between English and Korean. Gallego measured intelligibility of the three international TA's by calculating the number of communication breakdowns identified by native English speakers and rater judgments on the nature of each communication breakdown. He suggested the reason American listeners found the Korean TA less intelligible than the Italian TA regardless of the similar deviations in oral English proficiency of the two TAs was that Italian is more similar to English.

In her investigation, Zielinski (2006a) suggested that particular phonological errors differ depending on different L1 backgrounds. Zielinski investigated which non-standard phonological features contribute to listeners' reduced intelligibility with Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese speakers of English. Three Australian English speakers listened to 177 different speech excerpts produced by the speakers' which discusses the educational system in one's own culture. She then linked specific non-standard features in the speech signals and the difficulties experienced by a listener. The sites of reduced intelligibility identified in the listeners' verbal reports were analysed to determine the non-standard features that contributed to reduced intelligibility. The findings from this study show that the influence of L1 background was apparent. Zielinski's major focus was to find whether English listeners' strategies relied on the syllable stress pattern and segments in strong syllables, and she found

that both non-standard syllable stress patterns and non-standard segments were important in contributing to intelligibility. However, the phonological errors identified were different depending on the speaker's L1 background. The Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese speakers had different problems in producing different consonants and vowels in different syllable positions.

Munro and Derwing (1995) and Derwing and Munro (1997) present strikingly different findings in regard to the factors that contribute to intelligibility. Both of the studies were conducted to measure accentedness, perceived comprehensibility, and intelligibility of L2 speakers by using self-ratings and listeners' orthographic transcription accuracy rate. The differences in the later study were proficiency level, a variety of L1 background, and accent familiarity rating. Munro and Derwing (1995) found that segmental errors, intonation, grammar, and the length of utterance were found to be related with the listener's perception on accentedness. They also found that not segmental errors but non-standard intonation and ungrammatical phrases affected perceived comprehensibility. Meanwhile, Derwing and Munro (1997) noted that none of the segmental errors, intonation, grammar, and the length of utterance were found to be significantly correlated with accentedness. The different results of the two studies implied that participants' different proficiency levels may have caused inconsistent results. It is possible that since the errors of intermediate speakers were spread out in all different areas, listeners may have had a harder time in rating intermediate speakers than in rating advanced speakers.

In the same line of thought, Derwing and Rossiter (2003) also suggest that their findings of the superiority of prosodic factors in improving intelligibility may be confined to the intermediate level which was the only proficiency level they studied with. The authors found that teaching suprasegmentals had more positive impact on listener's rating of comprehensibility than teaching segmentals to ESL students. Their study presents several interesting threads in regard to proficiency levels. First, the paradoxical results found in the Segmental group are insightful for this study. An assumption can be made that proficiency levels may be related with the inverse relationship between fluency and sentence complexity. Their study also confirmed Lennon (1990) who said learners' fluency developed conversely to the development of sentence complexity. Thus, these studies imply that since the availability of learners' attention resources may be limited, most L2 learners cannot pay the same amount of attention to every component of language ability. Second, the study showed that phonological errors (substitution, omission, and insertion of consonants and vowels) and

filled pauses accounted for a majority of the errors perceived for intermediate L2 speakers. The findings from these studies show that different oral proficiency levels have different distributions of pronunciation errors which are more salient.

Beinhoff (2014) critically examined how German and Spanish learners of English at different proficiency levels perceive accentedness and intelligibility of Spanish non-native accents in English. The study was based on rating tasks, structured interviews and transcriptions in response to short narratives, and aimed to find out what kind of influence listeners' first language (L1) backgrounds (i.e. German and Spanish) and their levels of proficiency in the second language (L2; i.e. English) have on how accentedness and intelligibility are perceived. Results showed that L2 proficiency levels and L1 background significantly influence how intelligibility and accentedness are rated. In addition, our results suggest that perceived intelligibility is influenced by factors such as familiarity with the relevant accent while actual comprehensibility seems to be less affected by this aspect.

Another striking contribution on intelligibility is Jenkins (2002). In fact, the author proposes a set of core phonological features which consist of segmental features mainly. She claimed that segmental features play a more significant role than suprasegmental features for different L1 speakers of English to communicate in English successfully. Jenkins suggests that pronunciation priorities should be based on shifting views from English as a Second Language (NS-NNS communication) to English as an International Language (NNS-NNS communication), arguing for setting up mutual international intelligibility as a main goal of pronunciation instruction. She claims that pedagogical priorities should be determined by teachability and intelligibility. From the analyses of various data sets obtained from different L1 speakers' miscommunications occurred in social settings, Jenkins claims that 'certain pronunciation deviations, particularly in consonant sounds, vowel length and the placing of tonic stress (sentence prominence) render a NNS's pronunciation unintelligible to an NNS interlocutor', and that 'when this happens context and co-text do not provide help in clarifying meaning' (2002: 91). More specifically, her proposals for key pronunciation features include certain consonants in word initial positions (e.g., allophonic phonemic variations, voiceless stops, consonant clusters), accurate vowel quantity (e.g., shortening and lengthening vowels), and consistent vowel quality within a regional variation. In her view, sentence prominence (nuclear stress in her term) is the only important suprasegmental factor. Word stress, pitch movement, and rhythmic properties (stress-timed rhythm in her term) are not important or are unteachable.

The other major contributions in the domain are mostly on the intelligibility of non-native Englishes to both native speakers and non-native speakers. Jung (2010), for instance examined the pronunciations of English which are difficult or different from one's first language, as well as to explore which factors are crucial for communication with people from other cultures when English is used as one of the World Englishes. The finding reveals that, in order to attain intelligibility, one must overcome such factors as pronunciation, stress, intonation, and the vowel and consonant sounds of English. In order to achieve comprehensibility, there are other factors predominate such as grammatical, cultural, socio-linguistic and pragmatic aspects. Thus, in order to avoid intelligibility and comprehensibility problems, EFL/ESL students should learn all the common varieties of English used between native speakers and non-native speakers (NSs-NNSs) and between two non-native speakers (NNSs-NNSs). Likewise, students should consider and respect different situations and different cultural backgrounds to establish successful intelligibility and comprehensibility.

Other works based on a number of experiments reported a number of intelligibility failure. In 1945 and 1947 Egan and Fry, respectively, quoted in Atechi (2006) conducted research into the use of articulation tests in measuring intelligibility. The experiments showed that there was a considerable degree of intelligibility failure when native speakers listened to non-native speakers.

One of the surveys on intelligibility reported by Tiffen (1974) is Elanani's (1968) study on the intelligibility of Jordanian English to British listeners. The aim of the study was to determine the linguistic variables causing interference in Jordanian use of English and to examine the points at which intelligibility breakdowns recur in the process of speech. To Atechi (ibid), it can be said that that piece of work reflects the conventional wisdom of the time, with native speakers being used to judge the intelligibility of non-native speakers. He used 15 Jordanians and a handful of British listeners. Tiffen (1974), quoted in Atechi equally remarks that the study suffers from methodological drawbacks, for recordings were done in Jordanian classrooms with not much attention paid to a number of factors, which could mire the exercise. The results of the findings show that defective pronunciation and inadequate language selection on the part of the speakers play a major role in communication breakdown.

Atechi (2006) measured the intelligibility of Cameroon English speakers to British and American English speakers and vice versa and analysed the major causes of intelligibility failure when speakers of these varieties of English interact. The author focused on segmental and suprasegmental aspects. The findings reveal that non-native Englishes are simply

different but not deficient as the first major works on the issue reported. In actual fact, there is effective communication between non-native and native users of the language. Problems of intelligibility between the two groups of speakers are minute.

Worth noting is the fact that this study is not new in the testing of sounds in connected speech to learners of English language in Cameroon. Recently, Yung (2014) assessed the intelligibility of sounds in company to Form Five students in Some Schools in the metropolitan town of Yaounde. The researcher collected her data in some selected secondary schools (20 students each from GBPHS, Yaounde, EHS and GBHS, Etoug-Ebe) and 40 English teachers from the above-mentioned schools. Her findings revealed that the intelligibility of sounds in company to Form Five students is significantly low. The present study builds up from these findings of Yung (2014). This is because she found out that the intelligibility of sounds in company was significantly low and teachers had very little mastery of it. Given that SBE still continues to be the target for ELT in Cameroon, there is the need to investigate whether when students move up to the university, the degree of intelligibility of segmental features increases or remains the same. It is in this light that this study sets out to investigate the correlation between the intelligibility of sounds in company and level of education.

1.3 Unexplored Dimensions

As shown by the review above, the concept of intelligibility has received significant attention. Researchers have investigated a number of issues in relation to it. However, most of these studies on intelligibility have focused on segmental and suprasegmental forms. Even Yung (2014) which investigated the intelligibility of sounds in company focused only on a single class of informants. Consequently, it did not give a true image of the intelligibility of connected speech along the educational ladder. This study differs from previous studies on intelligibility in the existing literature in that it considers both secondary school and university students. Worth noting is the fact that aspects of sounds in company are taught in the university. Thus, in the informants from both the secondary school and university, we intend to find out whether the low scores reported in Yung (2014) came as a result of the fact that they had not been taught (Form Five students) or whether it is a difficult concept, as the findings from Level Two students will show. Such findings would contribute its own quota to the complex notion of sounds in company and its acquisition along the educational ladder.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher focuses on the methodology used in this study. In it, she describes in details the context of research, the population of the study, the sample size, the sampling technique adopted, and the different methods of data collection and analysis.

2.1 Context of Study

The study was carried out in Yaounde, the capital city of Cameroon. The informants were undergraduate students of the English department of the University of Yaounde I, and secondary school students taken from; Government Bilingual Practising High School (GBPHS Yaounde) and Government Bilingual High School (GBHS Etoug-Ebe). Yaounde was chosen because it is a settler town where people from various linguistic backgrounds come and settle. Another fact is the researcher's familiarity with the town and some of the teachers of these schools. Also, the choice of the sample population in this restricted setting is because of the proximity of the researcher.

2.2 Population of Study

The students retained for the study were undergraduate students taken from the English department of the University of Yaounde I and secondary school students. Taking into consideration the fact that these students have been taught English from form one. As such, they have learnt the language for more than four years and have been exposed to the structure and pronunciation of the English language. The total number of students used for the study was 65 students; 25 from the university and 40 from various secondary schools in Yaounde.

2.2.1 University Students

The students were level two students of the department of English in the University of Yaounde I. The reason for this choice is the fact that they have specialized in English language. They were 25 students and their ages ranged between 18years and 24years. They were from different linguistic background such as the South West, North West, West, East, and Centre regions and they comprised both male and female as can be seen in the distribution below.

Table 1: Distribution of sample population (University Students)

| Region | N° of Boys | N° of Girls | N° of Students |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| South West | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| North West | 2 | 9 | 11 |
| West | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| East | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Centre | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 4 | 21 | 25 |

2.2.2 Secondary School Students

The students were chosen strictly from form five in some selected schools in Yaounde. The reason for this choice is that form five students have been studying English for a considerable number of years as such, have been exposed to both the structure and pronunciation of the language. They were 40 students aged between 14 and 18 years, both male and female. The informants were distributed as such; 20 students from GBPHS Yaounde and 20 from GBHS Etoug-Ebe. The selection did not entail ethnic origin as seen in the distribution below.

Table 2: Distribution of sample population (Secondary School Students)

| SCHOOL | N° of Boys | N° of Girls | N° of Students |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| GBPHS Yaounde | 6 | 14 | 20 |
| GBHS Etoug-Ebe | 8 | 12 | 20 |
| TOTAL | 14 | 26 | 40 |

The above mentioned distribution of students according to different schools was based on the availability and willingness of students from these selected schools to provide the necessary information sought.

2.3 Sample size and sample technique

The respondents were chosen both from the Science and the Arts sections. This was because both sections study English. The researcher selected the students at random in order to avoid the issue of bias. As such, not only best students were retained for the collection of data. The gender was not specified, the reason for the respondents mixed gender.

2.4 Methods of data collection

The data was both from a written and spoken source. There was a dictation exercise and a reading aloud exercise meant to test their language. The instruments used in collecting the data for this work consisted of a tape recorder, language tests with a focus on specific segments, the use of questionnaires, and observation.

2.4.1 Questionnaire

This was the first instrument used to carry out data. This questionnaire was designed students of both levels of education. It comprised of seven questions which sought to know, among others, the informants' age, their interest in the language, the areas where they face difficulties in English (grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and pronunciation), and the skills in which they face difficulties (listening, reading, writing, and speaking). Most of the questions required the respondents to tick while others needed justification. The options were classified as yes or no. This was purposely to know the reason for the poor intelligibility of an interlocutor's speech and equally their poor level of communication in English.

2.4.2 Observations

The researcher attends some lessons to watch the way teachers teach. This is to check whether the teachers actually pay attention to some aspects of connected speech in the course of teaching. It was equally to know where the problem lies as concerns intelligibility.

2.4.3 Language Tests

A number of language tests were used in order to collect data for this study. In total, the researcher used two tests. Which are; dictation exercise and reading aloud exercise.

2.4.3.1 Dictation exercise

A dictation exercise was given to the students which comprised of words and sentences. The test was designed to test the intelligibility of some aspects of sounds in connected speech such as assimilation, elision, and linking processes. A total of 20 sentence and segments

constituting the whole test, were read by the researcher for students to write down what they heard because we are testing speech comprehensibility. This method was used by researchers like Bansal, 1969; Tiffen, 1974; Atechi, 2006. It was termed the “write down what you hear method” and it was very effective in the contexts of their use. These researchers found out that this was the best method of testing intelligibility. After this, the data collected were analysed in the following way.

2.4.3.2 Reading aloud exercise

A tape recorder was used to record the speech of all the 65 respondents. The informants read some segments of connected speech. The informants read aloud a list of sentences and words which was recorded by the researcher. These words were categorized under coalescent, progressive and regressive assimilation; historical and contextual elision; and linking processes. The segments used for the language test involved either one or two sounds. The material was read by the respondents and recorded by the researcher.

2.4.4 Difficulties Encountered

In the course of data collection some difficulties were encountered. These difficulties were encountered at the level of the administration of the questionnaire and the recording of informants’ speech. One of the difficulties encountered was the nonchalant attitude of the students. They were impatient since it was administered during break and they wanted to go for break. In administering the questionnaire some of the informants wanted money, food to motivate them. Some students considered the activity a game of mockery. Most often, students did not give the information required. They instead directed their own questions to the researcher. Thus, most of the questionnaire comprised questions like: “don’t ask me”, “why ask?” However, it made the researcher to reprint and re-administers the questionnaire in order to improve on the responses. But an effort was made to convince them fill in the questionnaire. The researcher had to sacrifice some money to buy the students a bit of chewable just to make them fill in the questionnaire.

In recording the informants’ speech, a difficulty was encountered because the informants’ attitude changed the moment they saw the tape recorder. Some of them took out time to rehearse the sentences before they could allow their speech to be recorded. Others claimed they were shy as such did not take part in the exercise. The researcher surmounted this by just bearing with them since they did not know what was being tested.

The administration also made things difficult for the researcher to collect data from their institutions. They made sure that before any researcher carries out a research in their institution, he/she had to greet all the discipline masters of the school. Greeting implied giving something which will enable them have lunch. In addition to this, the researcher had to write an application which the principal had to approve before allowing the researcher into the class. This was to ask for the principal's permission to administer the questionnaire. However, despite the numerous difficulties faced, the researcher surmounted it and managed her way out. This is seen in the fact that she got credible material which was analysed to meet the aims of this study.

2.4.5 Method of Data Analysis

The method used in analysing the collected data was the percentage count. The informants' responses were documented and presented on tables and charts for clarification.

The first concern was to analyse students' conception of English, and the areas in which they face difficulties. Then their perceptions were represented in a table and figures.

Test on intelligibility based on specific segments were conducted to assess the intelligibility of some aspects of connected speech to informants. The recorded speech was listened to and the informants' pronunciation was transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The scores were written down- as correct answer (CA) or wrong answer (WA)- based on the ability for the informant to read the group of sentences correctly. The answers given by the respondents on the test were calculated and their percentages (%) put and the mean of each answer is given at the end of the table. The percentage count procedure was used in order to calculate the frequency of responses to particular questions given by the secondary school informants (Z%) was derived from the number of responses to the questions (Q) per the total number of scores (T) and the quotient was multiplied by a hundred. The same procedure is done with the responses of undergraduate student then a comparative analysis of data is done.

$$Z\% = \frac{Q}{T} \times 100$$

Following the above mentioned method of data analysis, the data collected were quantitatively analysed for subsequent interpretation. The analysis was carried out with reference to intelligibility and Error analysis frameworks. The next chapter focuses on presentation of findings, analysis of data, and discussion of findings.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis, and discussion of findings. The analysis of findings takes into consideration the research questions evoked in the earlier part of the study. Thus, the data are presented in tables with the various percentages calculated according to the tests that were given. The analysis is done in a comparative way. That is, comparing the results of undergraduate students (Level 2) to that of secondary school students (Form 5).

3.1 Analysis of the questionnaire

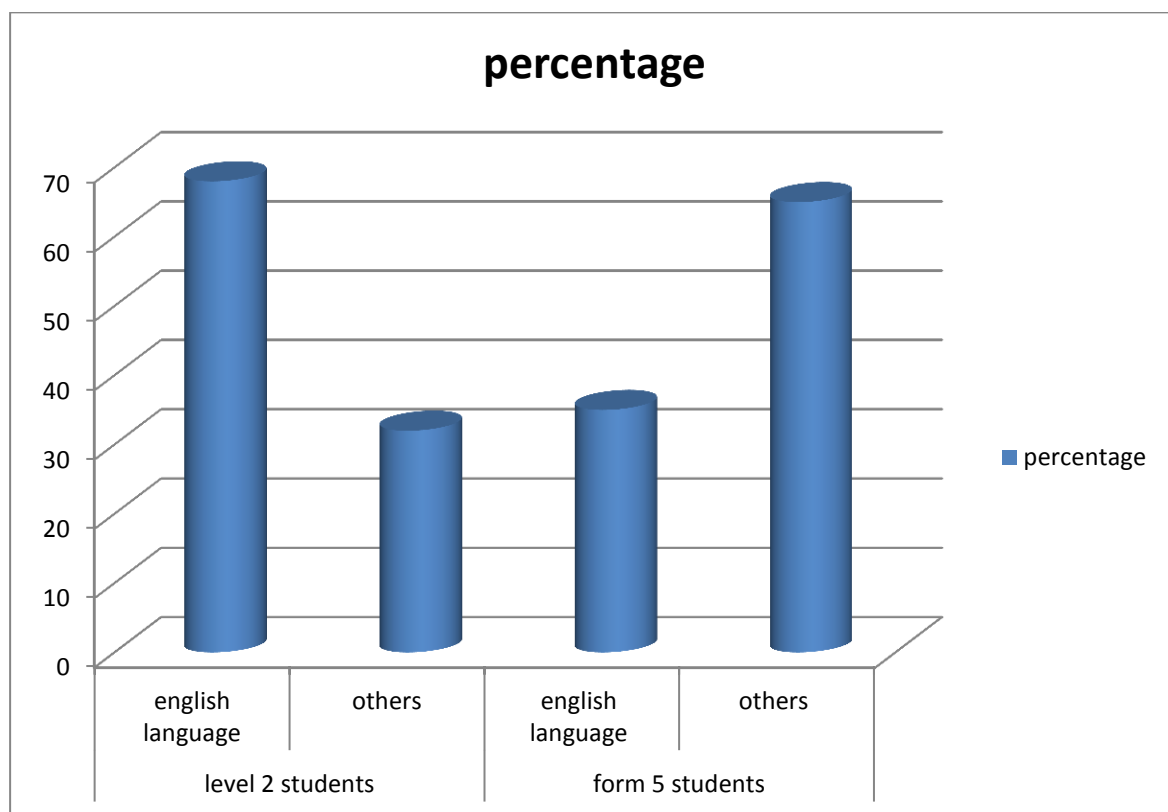
In this section, the researcher presents and analyses the results of the questionnaires she administered to secondary school students and undergraduates (Level 2 students) of the English department of the University of Yaounde 1. The need for administering a questionnaire was to know their scale of preference with regards to other subjects and to elicit their areas of difficulties as far as English is concerned. With regards to this, the researcher sought to know their level of comprehensibility of one's speech. This is because they have been studying English for more than four years.

Table 3: Students' preferences of subject

| Level of education | Respondent's answer | Number of occurrence | Percentage |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Level Two Students | English language | 17 | 68% |
| | Others | 8 | 32% |
| TOTAL | | 25 | 100% |
| Form Five students | English language | 14 | 35% |
| | Others | 26 | 65% |
| TOTAL | | 40 | 100% |

The above table shows that 17 (68%) prefer English at the undergraduate level as opposed to 14 (35%) who prefer it at the secondary level. Only, 8 (32%) students prefer other subjects at the undergraduate level compared to 26 (65%) students who prefer other subjects at the secondary level. This result can be well explained using a diagram. The diagram below gives a clear illustration of the findings.

Figure 1: Showing the percentages of students' preference in terms of subjects.



The above diagram shows that 68% of the undergraduates preferred English while 32% settled for other subjects. While Form only 35% showed their likeness of English and 65% did not show any preference of the subject at the secondary level. The researcher continued by asking questions related to the students' level of understanding of English.

Table 4: Frequency of students' understanding of English

| Level of education | Respondents' answers | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Level 2 students | Yes | 25 | 100% |
| | No | 0 | 0% |
| TOTAL | | 25 | 100% |
| Form 5 students | Yes | 40 | 100% |
| | No | 0 | 0% |
| TOTAL | | 40 | 100% |

From the above results, it can be said that all the informants say they understand English. This is seen as 100% of the informant's said they understood English. After having elicited the

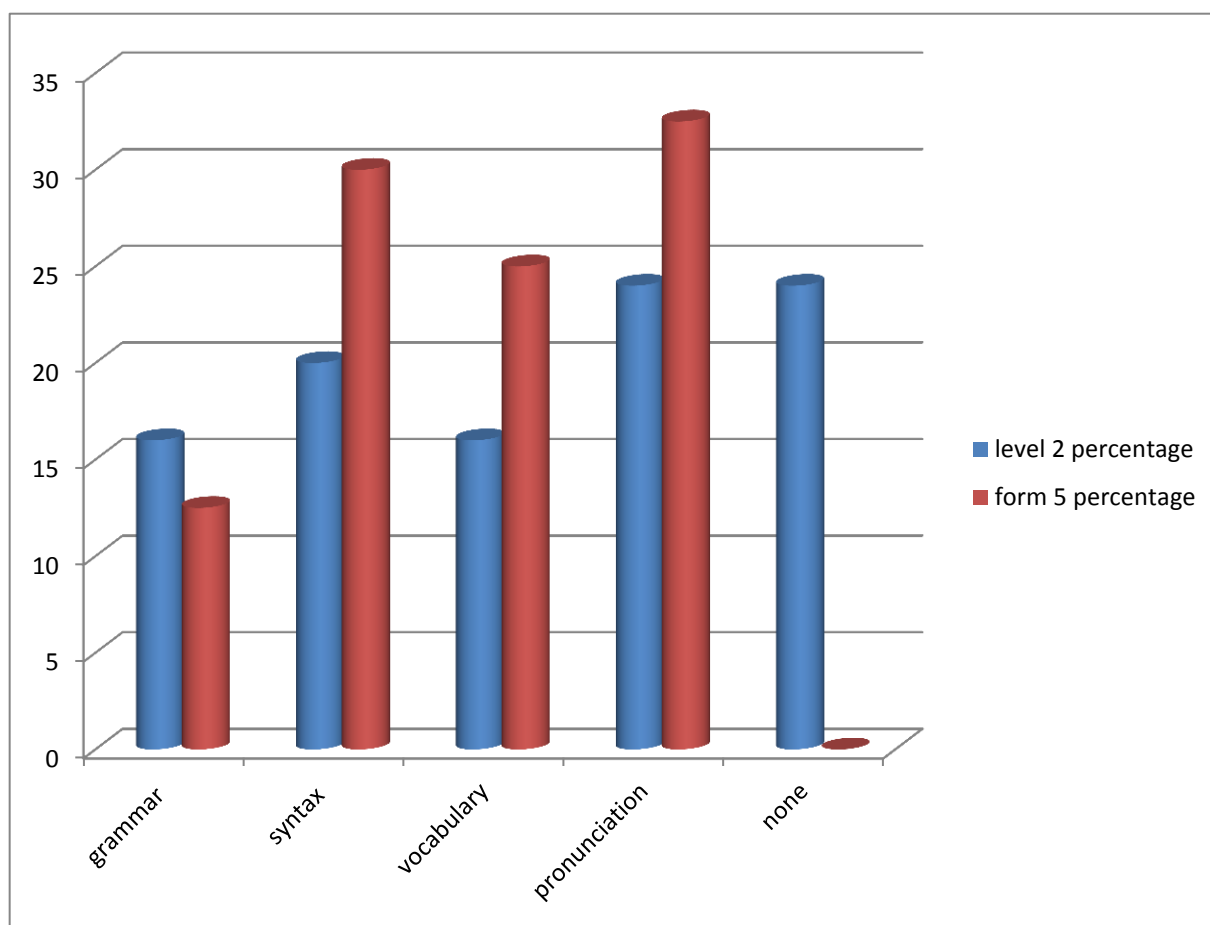
informants comprehensibility of English, the researcher went ahead to know aspects of the language in which they face difficulties. This is done in order to confirm the above claim.

Table 5: Students' problematic areas in aspects of English

| Respondent's answers | Frequency | | Percentage | |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| | LEVEL 2 | FORM 5 | LEVEL 2 | FORM 5 |
| Grammar | 4 | 5 | 16% | 12.5% |
| Syntax | 5 | 12 | 20% | 30% |
| Vocabulary | 4 | 10 | 16% | 25% |
| Pronunciation | 6 | 13 | 24% | 32.5% |
| None | 6 | 0 | 24% | 0% |
| TOTAL | 25 | 40 | 100% | 100% |

The table above shows that both undergraduates and secondary school students face difficulties in grammar. That is, 4 (16%) level 2 students face difficulties in grammar as opposed to 5 (12.5%) form 5 students. When it comes to Syntax, 5 (20%) students face difficulty at the undergraduate level whereas up to 12 (30%) students face difficulty at the secondary school level. Also, 4 (16%) of the undergraduate students have a difficulty in vocabulary while 10 (25%) students face such problem in secondary school. Talking about pronunciation, 6 (24%) students find it difficult to pronounce certain words well as opposed to 13 (32.5%) students who face such problem at the secondary level. Again, 6 (24%) students do not face difficulties in any of the aspects of language at the undergraduate level whereas at the secondary level, no student is free from the above difficulties. As such, undergraduate students who have an upper hand in education are far better than secondary school students who are their juniors. The above results can better be explained diagrammatically in the diagram below.

Figure2: Showing students' areas of difficulties in the aspects of language

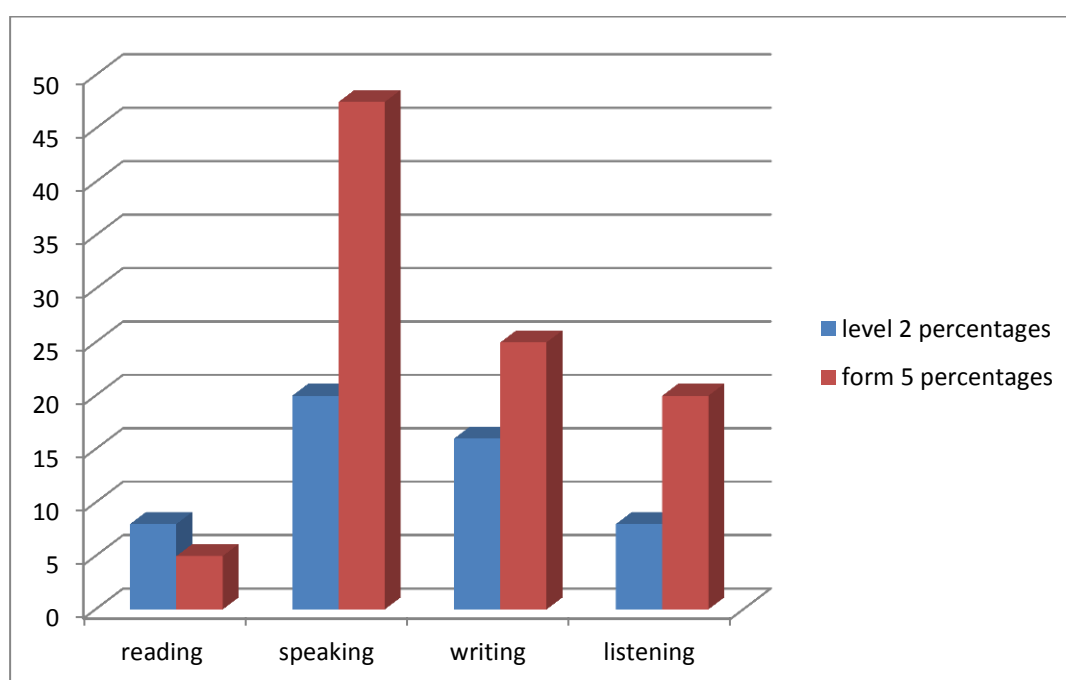


The above chart shows that 24% of the students in level 2 found it difficult to understand English because of their weakness in pronunciation compared to 32.5% who had the same problem at the secondary level. While, 20% could not come to terms with the syntax of English at the undergraduate level, 30% had such difficulties in form 5. For those who faced challenges in grammar, 16% was registered in level 2 while only 12.5 was registered in form five meaning form five students faced less difficulties in grammar. The scores for vocabulary in level 2 were 16% while in form 5 we registered 25%. Then the other 24% at the undergraduate level was left for those who did not have difficulties in the above aspects of language whereas form 5 had nil. The researcher continued by wanting to know what language skill they face difficulty in.

Table 6: Students' areas of difficulty in language skills

| Respondents' answers | Frequency | | Percentage | |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form 5 |
| Reading | 2 | 2 | 8% | 5% |
| Speaking | 5 | 19 | 20% | 47.5% |
| Writing | 4 | 10 | 16% | 25% |
| Listening | 2 | 8 | 8% | 20% |
| None | 12 | 1 | 48% | 2.5 |
| TOTAL | 25 | 40 | 100% | 100% |

The results showed that 2 students found it difficult to read both at the undergraduate level (8%) or in form 5 (5%). In level 2, 5 (20%) other students could not express themselves well while a good number of form 5 students were faced with such difficulties. They were 19 (47.5%) students in all who could not express themselves well in English. In writing, only 4 (16%) level 2 found it difficult and 10 (25%) form 5 students saw the task very challenging. Considering listening as a skill, 2 (8%) students had some difficulties at the undergraduate level as opposed to 8 (20%) who had the same problems at the secondary level. 12 (48%) did not face difficulty in any of the skills at the undergraduate level while only 1 (2.5%) student claimed to be competent in all four language skills. In presenting the results in a chart we will have a clearer view and understanding of the findings.

Figure 3: Showing the different language skills in which students face difficulty

The above chart shows in a clearer way the results of the findings. The findings revealed that 48% of the students do not face difficulty in any of the language skills at the undergraduate level as opposed to 2.5% at the secondary level of education. In reading, 8% found it challenging at the undergraduate level whereas only 5% found it challenging at the secondary level. Then only 20% of the level 2 faced an obstacle in speaking while a total of 47.5% found it difficult to do in form 5. Again, a score of 16% was registered at the undergraduate level of education which was opposed to 25% at the secondary level in term of writing skills. Also, only 8% of the level 2 students had problems when it comes to listening meanwhile 20% faced the same problems at the secondary level of education. From the above results, we can say that level of education is an important factor that helps in the comprehensibility of English.

3.2 Analysis of language tests

In this section, the researcher presents the results of the analysis of the different language tests she administered to students to be answered and returned immediately.

3.2.1 Assessing students' Intelligibility of assimilation

A test on intelligibility was given based on specific segments. It was to assess the intelligibility of assimilation with regards to level of education. The test reveals interesting scores on the intelligibility of aspects of assimilation to both undergraduates and Form Five students (the population chosen for the study). The scores are based on the ability of the informants to identify words read to them and write them correctly. The detailed account of the overall performance of the informants in assimilation with the targeted pronunciation is presented in the following tables.

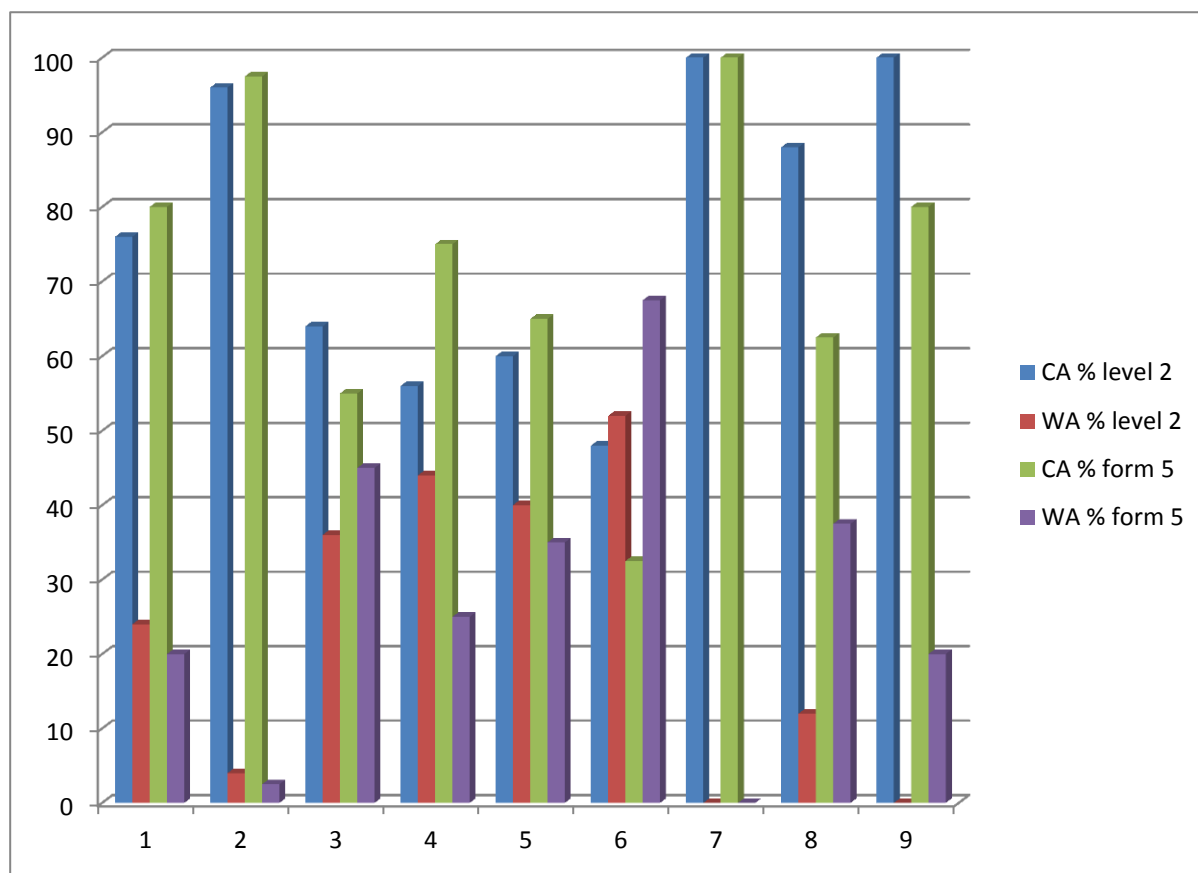
Table 7: Test on assimilation to students.

| No | Segments | Pronunciation | CA | | % | | WA | | % | |
|------|------------------------|------------------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| | | | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form 5 |
| 1 | Please yourself | pliʒɔ:sɛlf | 19 | 32 | 76 | 80 | 6 | 8 | 24 | 20 |
| 2 | Don't miss your chance | dəʊntmɪʃʊəfæns | 24 | 39 | 96 | 97.5 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 2.5 |
| 3 | Defend your thesis | dɪfɛndʒɔ: θɪsɪs | 16 | 22 | 64 | 55 | 9 | 18 | 36 | 45 |
| 4 | Open the door | əʊpm ə dɔr | 14 | 30 | 56 | 75 | 11 | 10 | 44 | 25 |
| 5 | On the table | ɒnnəteɪbl | 15 | 26 | 60 | 65 | 10 | 14 | 40 | 35 |
| 6 | She is going to school | ʃi:zgɒnəskʊl | 12 | 13 | 48 | 32.5 | 13 | 27 | 52 | 67.5 |
| 7 | Give me the news paper | gɪmɪðɛnju:speɪpə | 25 | 40 | 100 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8 | It has a hard cover | ɪt əs ə hɑ:ɡkʌvə | 22 | 25 | 88 | 62.5 | 3 | 15 | 12 | 37.5 |
| 9 | Has she finished? | hæʃʃi: fi:nɪʃt | 25 | 32 | 100 | 80 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 20 |
| MEAN | | | 19.11 | 28.77 | 74.44 | 71.94 | 5.89 | 11.23 | 25.56 | 28.06 |

The above table shows that some aspects of assimilation in connected speech are more intelligible to undergraduates. The results show that undergraduates understand the concept of intelligibility more than form five students. This is seen in a segment like *don't miss your chance* which makes use of coalescent assimilation, there were up to 24 out of 25 for undergraduates and 39 out of 40 for Form Five who identified the segments giving 96% and 97.5% respectively. Equally, in a segment like *defend your thesis*, which is equally an example of coalescent assimilation, we had 16 (64%) in level 2 and 22 (55%) in form 5 for the correct answers. In general, as far as coalescent assimilation is concerned, the students found it challenging to identify the segments thereby making it unintelligible.

Concerning progressive or forward assimilation (a phenomenon where a sound influences the following sound), *she is going to school* was identified by only 12 (48%) level 2 students and 13 (32.5%) form 5 students of the sample population. In the case of regressive or backward assimilation, the findings showed that, up to 22 (88%) level 2 and 25 (62.5%) form 5 students understood the aspect. This is seen in a segment like *it has a hard cover*, to show that majority of the segments were intelligible to the respondents. Summarily, the average score for the correct and wrong answers on the test of assimilation was 19.11 (74.44%) and 5.89 (25.56%) for undergraduates and 28.77 (71.94%) and 71.94 (28.06%). This result shows that though the concept of assimilation is a bit intelligible to informants, there is still a lot to do in order for the respondents to be fluent in their speech. And the level of education plays a lot as the speech of undergraduates is more intelligible compared to that of Form Five students. This result can as well be presented and explained using a chart. This will ease comprehension as the diagram gives a clear explanation of the results.

Figure 4: Showing students' results on the intelligibility of assimilation



The chart above explains the findings detail. Segment 1 received a score of 76% and 24% at the undergraduate level for both correct and wrong answers, while the scores registered for correct and wrong answers in form 5 was 80% and 20% respectively. In the second segment we had 96% / 4% for level 2 and 97.5% / 2.5% for form 5 respecting correct and wrong answers at each level. The third segment shows that 64% of level 2 students gave the correct answer contrary to 55% at the secondary level thus, registering 36% and 45% for wrong answers at both levels of education. The fourth segment presents 56% and 75% for CA and 44% and 25% for WA respectively. We had 60% and 65% for CA in segment five while WA was 40% and 35% respectively. Also, the sixth segment shows a score of 48% / 32.5% for CA and 52% / 67.5% for WA. In the seventh segment the CA's registered 100% at both levels of education whereas the WA's had a nil. Again, the result of the eighth segment was presented as such; 88% / 62.5% for CA's and 12% / 37.5% for WA's at both levels of education. Finally, the ninth segment gave the following result; 100% / 80% for CA's and 0% / 20% for WA's. The next section will discuss the intelligibility of elision to informants.

3.2.2 Assessing students' Intelligibility of the feature of elision

A test was designed to assess the informants' ability to identify and write sounds which are elided in rapid speech which is a major determining characteristic of connected speech. Some words and segments in which some sounds which could be deleted were found were tested on the informants. The information presented on the table below is the results got from the test.

Table 8: Test on elision to students.

| No | Segment | Pronunciation | CA | | % | | WA | | % | |
|----|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| | | | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form 5 |
| 1 | Calm | kɑ:m | 12 | 18 | 48 | 45 | 13 | 22 | 52 | 55 |
| 2 | The cupboard is empty. | ðəkʌbədɪzɛmtɪ | 22 | 30 | 88 | 75 | 3 | 10 | 12 | 25 |
| 3 | It is not ordinary. | ɪtznɒtɔdnəri | 25 | 40 | 100 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Sit down. | sɪdaʊn | 25 | 27 | 100 | 67.5 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 32.5 |
| 5 | We need a rural approach to it. | wɪni:d ə ru:rələprəʊftəɪt | 18 | 2 | 72 | 5 | 7 | 38 | 28 | 95 |
| 6 | I need a plumber this morning. | aɪni:d ə plʌməθɪs mɔ:nɪŋ | 15 | 24 | 60 | 60 | 10 | 16 | 40 | 40 |
| | | MEAN | 19.5 | 23.5 | 78 | 58.75 | 5.5 | 16.5 | 22 | 41.25 |

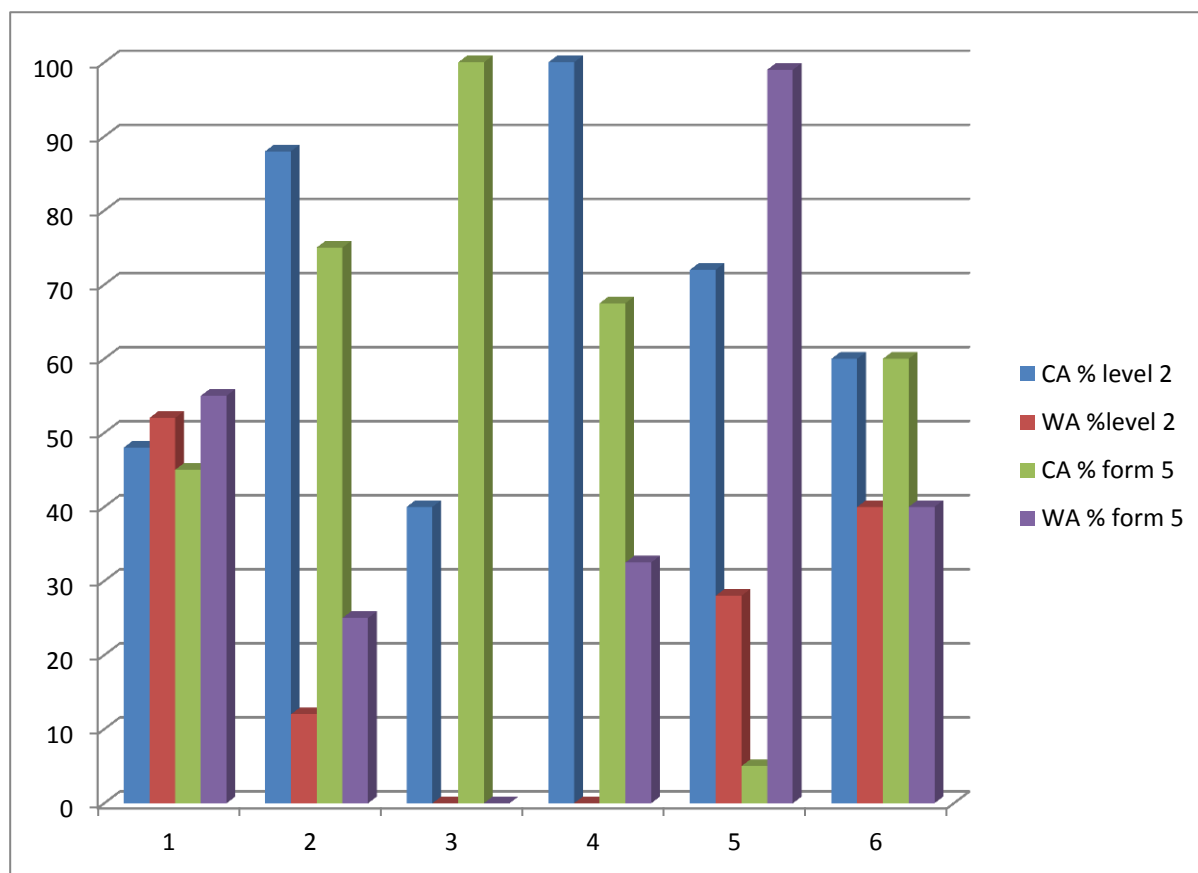
The responses from the table above reveal that in connected speech, elision tends to pose more intelligibility problems to informants. This problem can be analysed at two levels: at the level of words and at the level of segments. At the level of words, a word like *calm* which is an example of what Simo Bobda and Mbangwana (1993) as an example of contextual elision was highly unintelligible to Form Five students given that only 18 (45%) students gave the correct answers and more than half of the respondents gave the wrong answers opposed to the results of the undergraduates which was 12(48%) and 13 (58%) for correct and wrong answers respectively. In the same light, the table shows some words like *ordinary* and *rural* which are likely to pose intelligibility problems elided in connected or rapid speech. Talking about the word *ordinary*, all the respondents (both at the undergraduate and secondary level of education) had the correct answer. Whereas, concerning the word *rural* up to 18 (72%) level 2 students gave the right option and only 2 (5%) form 5 students. It should be noted that, the pronunciation [ɔdnəri] is more common in everyday speech than [rurəl]. This goes further to explain why *ordinary* is more intelligible than *rural*.

Another important element to take note as far as intelligibility is concerned is the fact that sounds are also deleted across segments in connected speech. Thus, segments like *sit down* posed an intelligibility problem to Form Five students. The results proof that 27 (67.5%) students gave the correct answer while 13 (32.5%) did not. Their inability to score at least 80% shows that they have a big problem concerning this aspect. The results equally show that the concept of intelligibility applies mostly to undergraduates as all of them gave the correct answers giving a percentage score of 100%.

Finally, a segment like *cupboard* is highly intelligible to informants (Form Five students) as it was identified by 30 of the 40 informants giving a percentage score of 75% against 25%. The fact that this segment is intelligible to informants implies that, when the [p] is deleted the segment may not pose any intelligibility problems. The scores of the undergraduates superseded that of Form Five students, they had 88 and 12% respectively. The same applies to [b] in the word *plumber* where the [b] is silent.

In summary, we may hold that undergraduates face lesser problems of intelligibility compared to Form Five students. This is because the mean recorded for both levels are 78 against 58.75 for correct answers and 22 against 41.25% for the wrong answers in respective order of the levels. This implies that level of education is a very important factor as far as intelligibility is concerned. The chart below gives a detailed explanation of the findings.

Figure 5: Showing students' results on the intelligibility of elision



Looking at the chart above we notice that only 48% of level 2 student gave the correct answer for segment one while the result for form 5 was even lesser than that of level 2. They scored 45% for correct answers meaning this aspect was very challenging to the informants since more than half of the informant failed in that particular segment. In segment two, the results were pleasant as the informants scored more than 50% for correct responses. They registered 88% and 75% at both levels respectively. Segment three was just awesome as the informants scored a 100% each for correct answers at both levels. The fourth segment was not that different in scores. The undergraduates scored 100% while form 5's came with 67.5% for correct answers. Segment five showed a drastic change on the path of form 5 students. The scores they registered for correct answers was only 5% whereas level 2 students registered 72%. Thus, 95% did not understand the segment as such did not know what was required of them. The last segment in this selection registered a unanimous score of 60% at both levels of education. This goes a long way to show that level of education is a tool for intelligibility.

3.2.3 Assessing students' Intelligibility of liaison

The tendency in connected speech is to strive for a fluent, harmonious and melodious speech. This results in the insertion of a phoneme where it is not expected or the production of a sound in the phonetic shape of a word. As Simo Bobda and Mbangwana (ibid: 84) point out, the English language does not allow a final vowel to precede another vowel beginning a word. Thus, a [w] or [j] is often heard at word boundary between two sounds according to the quality of the final vowel. The test consisted segments in which sounds were inserted where they were not attested orthographically. The results got were analysed and presented in the following table.

Table 9: Test on liaison to students

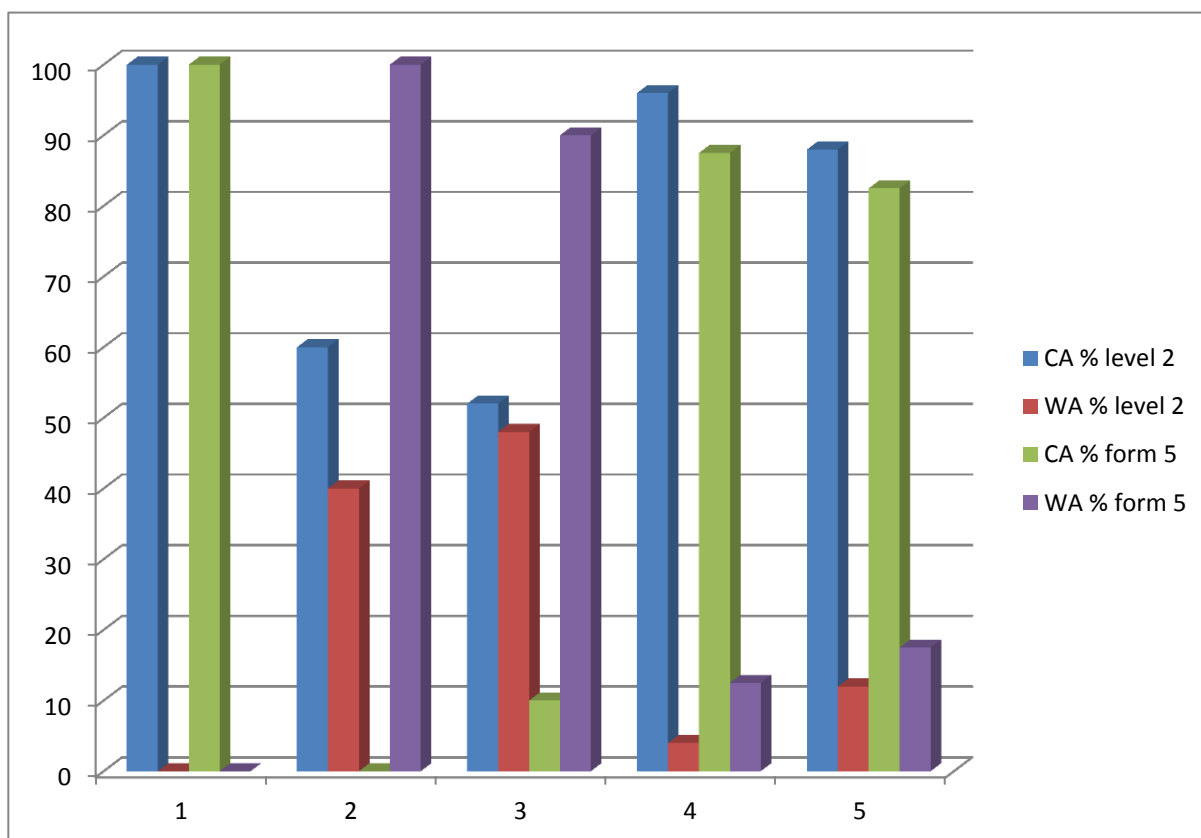
| No | Segment | Pronunciation | CA | | % | | WA | | % | |
|----|--------------------|---------------|---------|--------|---------|-------|---------|--------|---------|-------|
| | | | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form5 | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form5 |
| 1 | That is the answer | θætɪzðɪjænsə | 25 | 40 | 100 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | To be or not to be | təbɪjənətəbi | 15 | 0 | 60 | 0 | 10 | 40 | 40 | 100 |
| 3 | Pretty Agnes | prɪtɪjægnɪs | 13 | 4 | 52 | 10 | 12 | 36 | 48 | 90 |
| 4 | You all | juwɔl | 24 | 35 | 96 | 87.5 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 12.5 |
| 5 | Allow us | əlaʊwʌs | 22 | 33 | 88 | 82.5 | 3 | 7 | 12 | 17.5 |
| | | MEAN | 19.8 | 22.4 | 79.2 | 56 | 5.2 | 17.6 | 20.8 | 44 |

The above table shows that the concept of liaison equally posed a lot of problems of intelligibility to the informants. As far as this test is concerned, words that are common were used so that the students could actually recognize and write them down. Despite this, it still proved to be difficult for the informants. In places where [w] was inserted, we discovered that simple words constituted into segments was not totally intelligible to the students under study. The segment *you all* was recognized by 24 (96%) out of 25 students at the undergraduate level and 35 (87.5) out of 40 students at the lower level meaning undergraduates understood the segments more than form five students.

Equally, the insertion of [j] between a final vowel and a following vowel posed a problem of intelligibility to most informants as only 4 (10%) of the informants in the secondary schools could identify and write the answer correctly as opposed to 13 (52%) who had it correct at the undergraduate level.

In general, the test results reveal that liaised sounds are more intelligible to undergraduate students than form five students. It gives a mean of 79.2 against 56. In presenting the result on a diagram we will have a better understanding of the findings. This is explained in detail in the diagram below.

Figure6: Showing students' results on the intelligibility of liaison



A statistical presentation of the results show that the first segment was intelligible to all the respondents as they scored a 100% at both levels of education. No form 5 student could give the correct answer in the second segment thus scoring 0% while the level 2 students scored 60%. The third segment was challenging to the respondents as they scored 52% and 10% both at the undergraduate and secondary levels of education respectively. The fourth segment was quite intelligible to the respondents as they registered a score of 96% and 87.5% for level 2 and form 5 respectively. The last segment equally registered a score of 88% and 82.5% at the undergraduate level and secondary level. Thus meaning, the segment was intelligible to the respondents. The last test is a reading exercise which will be presented and analysed in the following section.

3.2.4 Assessing students' Intelligibility of sentences in connected speech

Six sentences comprised of assimilation, elision, and liaison was given to the informants to read. They were as follows: 1) *Please raise your hand* and 2) *What the urban population could use is better trains* was to test assimilation; 3) *The windmill is locked* and 4) *A lot of people are homeless* was to test elision; 5) *To be or not to be* and 6) *You all should be early tomorrow* was analysed in the light of liaison.

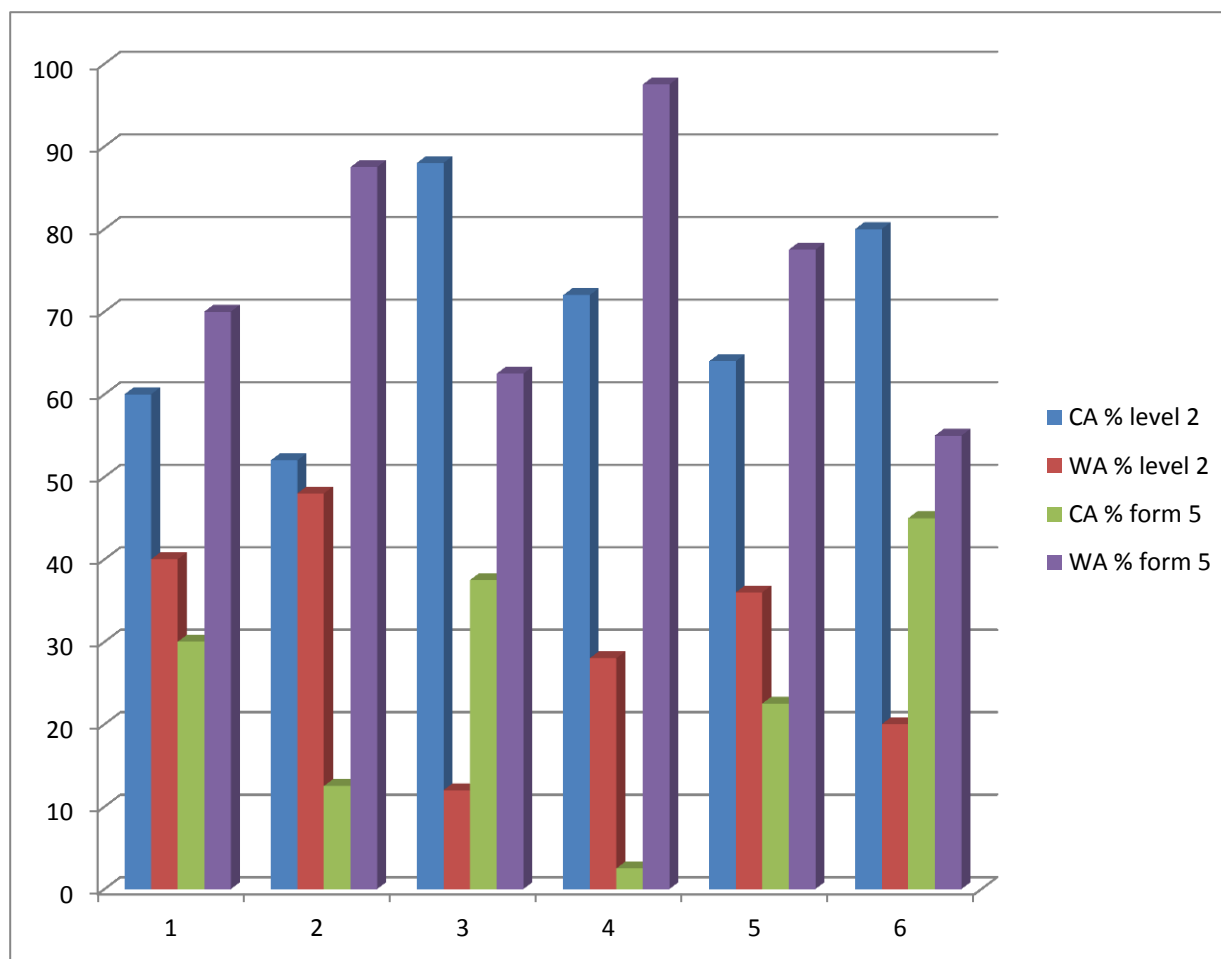
Table 10: Sentence intelligibility

| No | Segment | Pronunciation | CA | | % | | WA | | % | |
|------|---|--|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| | | | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form 5 | Level 2 | Form 5 |
| 1 | Please raise your hand. | pli:zreɪʒɔ: hænd | 15 | 12 | 60 | 30 | 10 | 28 | 40 | 70 |
| 2 | What the urban population could use is better trains. | wɒtði:bm pɒpjəleɪʃŋkəʊzɪzbetət reɪnz | 13 | 5 | 52 | 12.5 | 12 | 35 | 48 | 87.5 |
| 3 | The windmill is locked. | ðəwɪnmɪlɪslɒkt | 22 | 15 | 88 | 37.5 | 3 | 25 | 12 | 62.5 |
| 4 | A lot of people are homeless. | əlɒtəpi:pl | 18 | 1 | 72 | 2.5 | 7 | 39 | 28 | 97.5 |
| 5 | To be or not to be. | təbɪjɒnətəbi | 16 | 9 | 64 | 22.5 | 9 | 31 | 36 | 77.5 |
| 6 | You all should be early tomorrow. | Ju:wɒlʃu:dbɪjɜ:ɪtəmɔʊə ʊ | 20 | 18 | 80 | 45 | 5 | 22 | 20 | 55 |
| MEAN | | | 17.33 | 10 | 69.33 | 25 | 7.67 | 30 | 30.67 | 75 |

The above table shows that form five students face a lot of problems in pronunciation and this in turn leads to problems of intelligibility. Though the sentences are intelligible, the informants could not make use of assimilation, elision or liaison in rapid speech. This is seen in the case of assimilation where the informants found it difficult to blend [z] and [j] to have the [ʒ] sound in the first sentence. The findings showed that, only 12 (30%) students had the correct pronunciation in form five whereas 15 (60%) students gave what was required at the undergraduate level. Also, they could not blend [d] and [j] to have the [dʒ] sound in the second sentence. This equally showed that 5 (12.5) informants at the secondary level could understand the sentence while 13 (52%) did so at the undergraduate level.

Elision is another aspect which equally poses intelligibility problems to form five students most often at the level of the sentence. Only 15 of 40 students pronounced the word windmill correctly. Most of the informants pronounced the [d] in the word meanwhile it was supposed to be silent. The results registered where 37.5% against 62.5% for form five and 88% against 12% for undergraduates. In the case of sentence four, only 1 of 40 students gave the correct pronunciation of the word *of* in rapid speech. The results are as follows; 2.5% against 97.5% for form five and 72% against 28% for undergraduates both for correct and wrong answers respectively.

Then the findings revealed that only 9 of 40 students in form five liaised sentence five well. They inserted [j] in the sentence. This gave a result of 22.5% against 77.5% while, the undergraduates registered a score of 64% against 36% respectively. 18 of 40 students liaised sentence six correctly by inserting [w] between *you* and *all* giving a score of 45% against 55% to form five students and 80% against 20% to undergraduates. Summarily, the averages for the answers given as far as this test is concerned stands at 25% against 75% for form five students and 69.33% against 30.67% for undergraduates both for correct and wrong answers respectively. This is better and explained in the diagram below.

Figure7: students' results on sentence intelligibility

The figure above shows the results of the findings in detail. In the first segment we registered scores like 60% and 30% for correct answers at both levels of education respectively while 40% and 70% were registered for wrong answers. The second segment saw a score of 52% at the undergraduate level and only 12.5 at the secondary level for correct answers. Level two students boosted the result in the third segment with a score of 88% contrary to form five students who had only 37.5%. It did not end at that the next segment equally registered a great score of 72% at the undergraduate level leaving behind the form five students who came with a score of only 2.5%. In the fifth segment, the level 2's had a drop in their results though not bad. They registered 64% whereas form 5 students had 22.5 percent which is not even half the result of the level 2's. Finally, in the last segment undergraduates scored 80% while the form 5's could barely register a score of 45%.

Conclusion

From the analysis of the tests given to students, it clearly stands out that level of education correlated with intelligibility. The results showed that undergraduate university students performed better in the tests than Form Five students.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, PEDAGOGIC RELEVANCE, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Introduction

In this last chapter of the work, the researcher discusses the findings gives some (pedagogic) implications of the work, gives some recommendations and makes some suggestions for further research in the field of intelligibility.

Summary of findings

The results from the analysis of the collected data revealed interesting facts. The questionnaires were designed to know the students' scale of preference in relation to other subjects. The scores revealed that 68% prefer English at the undergraduate level opposed to 35% who prefer English in Form Five. Meaning 32% against 65% did not prefer English at the undergraduate and secondary level respectively. The results show that form five students pay little or no attention to English. This result is due to the fact that all of them claimed they had no comprehensibility problems as far as English is concerned.

The questionnaire was also administered so as to determine the various aspects of language in which students face difficulties. At the undergraduate level, 16% had difficulties in grammar opposed to 12.5% in Form Five. This shows that form five students handled grammar more than undergraduates. Undergraduates had lesser problems in syntax than secondary school students. The scores were 20% and 30% respectively. It was also interesting to know that only 16% faced problems in vocabulary at the undergraduate level whereas 25% did at the secondary level. Another important element was pronunciation. 24% had problems in pronunciation at the undergraduate level while 32.5% faced the same problem at the secondary level. The results show that 76% have difficulties in either one of the various aspects of language at the undergraduate level while the other 24% do not face any difficulty in any of the aspects of language whereas, at the secondary level, all the students faced a problem in either of the language aspects.

The questionnaire was also designed to know the language skills that pose difficulties to students. The results were registered as 8% against 5% for reading at the undergraduate and

secondary level respectively. This means that Form Five students faced lesser problems in reading as compared to undergraduates. Only 20% found it difficult to express themselves at the undergraduate level while 47.5% faced the same problem. Talking about writing skills, the results showed that only 16% faced difficulty in this particular skill at the undergraduate level opposed to 25% at the secondary level. Also, only 8% had listening problems at the undergraduate level while up to 20% faced the same problem at the secondary level. The reason why undergraduates have lesser problems in writing since they have a good level of listening as such can understand what is being said and write it down. The results show that 52% have a problem with one of the skills whereas 48% do not at the undergraduate level. While 97.5% undergo some difficulties thus, leaving only 2.5% with no difficulty at the secondary level. This means that undergraduates who have an upper hand in education have a sense of manipulating language better than Form Five students.

The tests were designed to assess the level of intelligibility of sounds in company in connected speech in relation to level of education. A test was administered to Undergraduates and Form Five students to check their level of intelligibility and to decipher whether it is a problem of the education level. At the level of assimilation, we realized that students could understand all but one of the segments chosen. More than half of the informants spelt the words correctly because they understood. Thus, the results gave a percentage mean of 74.44% against 71.94% for correct answers to undergraduates and Form Five students respectively while only 25.56% and 28.06% was recorded for wrong answers. These results show that, though the aspect of assimilation is intelligible to the students, the teacher has to take note of their level of education in teaching in class in order not to impede communication.

Elision is another feature of connected speech which was assessed in the test. Concerning elision, we noticed that more than half of the informants wrote what was needed of them but for an instance where less than half of the informants wrote the correct thing. In another instance we see that the difference is glaring as far as both levels are concerned. Undergraduates registered a score of 72% while Form Five students registered a score of 5% thus, bringing into limelight the issue of level of education. The mean of the scores registered for correct answers at this stage for both levels were 78% and 58.75% against 22% and 41.25% respectively. The results show that the students understand elision but then there is a great influence of level of education.

Liaison equally plays an important role in speech. The results of the findings show that this aspect of connected speech is present in the speech of Cameroonians. In most of the instances, more than half of the informants understood the feature at both levels. But for two instances where Form Five students did not understand what was needed and they scored 0% and 10% for correct answers and the other 100% and 90% were for the wrong answers. Meanwhile, undergraduates scored 60% and 52% for correct answers and 40% and 48% for wrong answers at the same task. This shows that the higher the level of education, the greater the degree of comprehensibility of the speaker's speech. The scores registered for this were 79.2% and 56% for correct answers while 20.8% and 44% were registered for wrong answers at both levels respectively.

In addition, sentences used in testing intelligibility were more intelligible to undergraduates than to Form Five students. In all the sentences, not up to half of the informants could understand the sentences at the secondary level. Only 25% could understand the sentences whereas 69.33% did so at the undergraduate level. The results show a clear cut difference at the level of education as far as intelligibility is concerned.

The above shows that students better understand segments than sentences. Thus, language teachers should take note of this when teaching in order for teaching to yield the desired results which is, the teaching of Standard British English.

Pedagogic relevance

The relevance of this work to the teaching of English language cannot be undermined. Language teaching has to do with contextualization. Consequently, this work will be of great help if language teachers contextualize their subject matter taking into consideration the students' level of education. A thorough reading and understanding of this work by an English language teacher can help him or her develop strategies of handling aspects of connected speech in a classroom situation. Knowledge of some of the learners' areas of difficulties will enhance teaching as such giving a way for the intelligibility of aspects of connected speech since the teacher must have known the students' areas of difficulties and come up with teaching methods that can improve learning and understanding.

Recommendations to the stakeholders

Some recommendations were made which could be of help to teachers, educational authorities, learners and future researchers.

To educational authorities

Educational authorities here include the government and the school administration. The government should institute English as a compulsory subject in all departments in the Universities and in Anglophone high schools. This will improve on the level of English of Anglophones who use English as a Second Language. The government should try to ameliorate teachers working conditions in general and those of English language teachers in particular. This will enable the teachers impart good knowledge to students since English is the medium of instruction.

Also, more secondary schools should be created and the classes should be divided into many brooks so as to reduce the problem of over-crowded classrooms. Educational authorities should equip schools with language libraries which have all the English language documents that can be of help to students and other modern facilities. They should equally construct language training centres in schools so the students can practice more on English. This will go a long way to help both teachers and students to read widely and to have up-to-date material.

From the results got above, we can notice that aspects of connected speech are not a myth. So, they can be mastered in the secondary school level of education. In order to solve this problem, educational authorities and curriculum designers should see the need to include aspects of connected speech in the school syllabus. This can be done through the government and the ministry of secondary education. The inclusion of these aspects will warrant students know that they are obliged to learn these elements.

Educational authorities should help in promoting the use of aspects of connected speech in secondary schools by prescribing reference materials like *An Introduction to Spoken English* by SimoBobda and *Sounds and Letters in English* by Kouega in secondary schools. The introduction of these reference materials will be of great help to students as it will make them practice more on some of these aspects of connected speech. They should also evaluate textbooks before recommending them for use. By doing so, the government will know if certain aspects of

language are sufficiently covered. The government should negotiate with the textbook writers to make the price of the books affordable to all students.

To teachers

Teachers are considered very important in the learning process. They should therefore be careful in the way they handle ESL lessons. First, more guidance should be given to students by teachers to always speak English in and out of class. Gardner (1985:10) highlighted this idea through his definition of motivation. He defines motivation as “The combination of efforts plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language.” Students who are not interested in learning have to be motivated in one way or the other. In this light, students should be encouraged to read widely and listen to radio channel like BBC, or watch educative programs that will help improve on their speaking, listening, writing and reading skills and intelligibility in particular effectively. In order to do this, the teacher should acquire up-to-date grammar books and read them because a good knowledge of the subject matter is a prerequisite for effective teaching.

The teacher should also anticipate the learners’ problems and, consequently, prepare lessons that are ranged at the right level and needs. Teachers should equally endeavour to deal satisfactorily with learners’ errors by giving explicit corrections and not simply blame students for making errors.

Also, teachers should try to gain students confidence by possessing adequate skills and having the ability to present new material clearly and effectively. Teachers should encourage learners to use aspects of connected speech in their daily conversation. In order to do so, the teacher needs to use aspects of connected speech when teaching knowing that they are from a training college and have been taught these things. It therefore implies that they are abreast with aspects of connected speech. Teachers should know learners’ areas of difficulties as far as connected speech is concerned. Thus, it will help in assessing teaching materials.

An understanding of this work will equally help teachers have a clear idea regarding where the main problems of the learners or students lie and what should be placed more emphasis in teaching. Teachers should give as many practical exercises as possible on aspects of connected speech to students. Teachers should endeavour to employ different and flexible error treatment

strategies in accordance with the teaching objectives, students' linguistic competence, their affective factors and the effectiveness of the error correction.

In addition, teachers should make their teaching interesting and incorporate all the aspects of language. Teaching and learning styles should deviate from the usual routine of spreading knowledge because all that is needed is around us. Thus, teachers have to look for the positive things in the environment and make use of it. Their teaching materials should be drawn from students' environment and daily experiences taking into consideration the students' daily and environmental needs. To this, Krashen (2004) strengthened that "we teach a language best when we use things that are related to our context." Altering the familiar teaching style is a bit difficult but it requires a lot of courage. Taking into account that some teachers are not confident of the fact that that students will understand but all the same it is said that "no venture, no gain. "This will go a long way to reanimate classroom activities which are needed by the teachers and the learners. Teachers have to make students know the importance of aspects of connected speech in their speech as this is needed in their everyday activities. It is therefore recommended that teaching styles should focus on acquiring better results.

Moreover, teachers should make personal sacrifices in order to develop their teaching skills. They should enrol in local libraries and English language teaching journals and magazines so as to always have up-to-date materials for their lessons. They should focus their attention on how students achieve success rather than to the nature of incentive from the government.

To learners

Learners are the target and the sole purpose for which research of this sort are carried out. In this light, they have to be seriously implicated as far as learning English language is concerned. While their tutors are making it possible to have everything at their disposal, they have to be actively involved in constructing their own knowledge. This moves from being attentive in class to putting in personal extra effort after classes. Learners are encouraged to use games in the learning of English as well as follow-up television and radio programmes in English. They also have to actively participate in extensive reading in order to develop learners' autonomy through transformation of input into intake.

Suggestions for further research

Though this work has made an effort to analyse the intelligibility of some aspects of connected speech to students, there is still much to be done in this domain of academic research. The following study was limited to level of education but further study can be carried out on degree of intelligibility of prosodic features of English to Non-native users of English. Likewise, further research could be conducted on the intelligibility of Non-Native varieties of English like CamE to Non-Native users of the language. Research can equally be carried out on the assessments of segments or suprasegmental features of English. Given that this study was limited to Yaoundé that is undergraduates and Form Five students, the same topic can be replicated in other regions and to other classes in the secondary school and university.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

Questionnaire

Dear respondents,

This questionnaire is designed to serve academic purposes. It is intended to get your opinion concerning English language. Kindly answer the questionnaire as objectively as and sincerely as possible. Either fill in the required information or just place a tick on the appropriate response.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

1) Personal information.

a- Sex: Male Female

b- Age

c- Region of origin: _____

2) What school subject do you prefer/like? _____

3) How long have you been studying English?

4) Do you like English?

Yes No

Justify your answer

5) Do you understand English?

Yes No

Justify your answer

6) Which particular aspect of language do you face difficulty in?

Grammar

Vocabulary

Syntax

Pronunciation

7) Which language skill do you face difficulty in?

Reading

Writing

Speaking

Listening

Thank you very much for your time.

APPENDIX TWO**Dictation exercise**

- 1- Please yourself.
- 2- Don't miss your chance.
- 3- Defend your thesis.
- 4- Open the door.
- 5- On the table.
- 6- She is going to school.
- 7- Give me the newspaper.
- 8- It has a hard cover.
- 9- Has she finished?
- 10- Calm
- 11- The cupboard is empty.
- 12- It is not ordinary.
- 13- Sit down
- 14- We need a rural approach to it.
- 15- I need a plumber this morning.
- 16- That is the answer.
- 17- To be or not to be.
- 18- Pretty Agnes
- 19- You all.
- 20- Allow us.

Thank you very much for your time.

APPENDIX THREE**Reading**

- 1) Please raise your hand.
- 2) What the urban population could use is better rains.
- 3) The windmill is locked.
- 4) A lot of people are homeless.
- 5) To be or not to be.
- 6) You all should be early tomorrow.

Thank you very much for you time