

DEVIATION AMONG GHANAIAN BASIC SCHOOL PUPILS USE OF ENGLISH IN THE CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY OF BONO AND AHAFO REGIONS

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is to discuss some deviations and innovations basic school pupils in the Bono and Ahafo regions of Ghana use in their classrooms and how these deviations are applied to their communication in the classroom. A descriptive survey design was adopted to help achieve these objectives. A qualitative approach was adopted to help explain the study better. A total population of 9,219 pupils and a sample size of 400 pupils were observed for the study. The findings of the study revealed that in the area of phonology, pupils replace the inter-dental fricative /ð/ with a voiced alveolar stop /d/. They also used the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ in place of /t/ a voiceless alveolar in their speech. Again, most pupils also use the trill /r/ in place of the /l/ sound both in writing and articulation. Under semantics, pupils usually transliterate statements from their L1 into the target language (English) and tend to use hyperbole for emphasis. Furthermore, over-generalization of syntactic rules was found as one of the innovations pupils make in classroom communication. Spelling pronunciation was also found as part of the innovations basic school pupils use in classroom communication.

Keywords: Coinages, Plural Markers, Semantic Extension, Spelling Pronunciation, Transliteration

INTRODUCTION

The study sought to find some deviations Ghanaian pupils in the Bono and Ahafo regions use in their classrooms. The study finds English terms that are pronounced differently by school pupils in the Bono and Ahafo Regions of Ghana owing to ignorance of the target language, hearing difficulties, or most crucially first language influence (Riaz, 2021). According to some (e.g., (Arthur-Shoba & Quarcoo, 2012)), Ghanaian English (GhE) is a "new" variation of English. (Adjaye, 2005; Huber et al., 2008; Koranteng, 2006) all identified distinctive structural and phonological traits as well as lexical elements Dako, (2001) referred to as "Ghanaianisms" that reflect the local cultural and linguistic milieu. GhE demonstrates "a lot of intra- and inter-individual variation," according to Huber (2008, 74), depending on the speaker's linguistic heritage and degree of education.

Student Pidgin (SP), which is more frequently heard among young people in Ghana, is another aspect of the language that they utilize (Dako, 2001; Forson, 2006; Osei-Tutu, 2008) In secondary schools and university institutions, male students primarily employ this English-related variant (Forson 2006; Osei-Tutu, 2008).

With the growing trend of the use of the English language as a medium of communication in Ghana and all over the world, there is a need for teachers of the English language to acknowledge the fact that deviations are inevitable. Owing to the fact that Ghanaian English has its linguistic characteristics, some of which differ from British English, the differently spoken terms indicated in this study cannot be regarded as being mispronounced (Sey, 1973). When asked why English was kept as the official language even after independence, Sackey, (2010) responded that "the country had no single indigenous language of government, law, education and social intercourse at all levels. ", tacitly reinforcing the importance of English in the public spheres of life in the country. When he writes that the "English language has come to stay as a communicative tool for social, political, and economic development," Sarfo (2011, p.460) captures the core of English in Ghana.

Due to its significance in both domestic and foreign affairs of the country and the formation of the New Englishes, interest in English has increased during the past 25 years. Different professionals in Ghana speak various dialects of English depending on their degree and exposure to the language (Sarfo, 2011). Ghanaian English (GhE) is the name given to the English that well-educated Ghanaians who were raised and had their higher education in Ghana and who primarily use English for communicative reasons generate (Ngula & Nartey, 2014). We hasten to note that there is a continuum of more or less effective approximations to the standard, in addition to educated GhE (Sey, 1973).

The English language as a second language and official language as well as the medium of instruction in schools cannot be undermined in any way. Because all assessments are given in English, the government made English the language of instruction from primary school through to university; in its current language policy of Ghana, announced in August 2002. Indigenous languages are to be used as the medium of instruction in classrooms where students are linguistically similar. The new policy was enacted to help students develop a high level of proficiency in the language and prevent delaying the introduction of English to young students (Ngula & Nartey, 2014).

We find ourselves in a somewhat challenging situation of being unable to explicitly and confidently tell whether the few instances of occurrences in the rather small data qualify as innovative features, especially when the pervasive and widespread use is crucial in determining such features (Bamgbose, 1998). This is because most of the existing scholarship on GhE has used small data sets. As a result, some of these inherent limitations in earlier research on the innovative features of GhE have somewhat supported purists' arguments against the technology, who claim that what are frequently referred to as innovative features are inter-language challenges or aberrant language usage, flaws, and fossilized errors.

Most Speakers belonging to different regions and nationalities in the world speak the English language according to their native language constraints and in this case, the target audience for this research mainly speaks Twi as their first language therefore the variation from them may be affected by this language. The study sought to identify some of the variations used innovatively by pupils and how they use them to express themselves.

Even though there is more room for improvement with research on what makes Ghanaian English what it is, there are several research studies in that area that seek to describe what is now known as GhE. Some known researchers worth mentioning are Sey 1973, who identifies the reduction of final consonant clusters for example, /fɛ:s / for “first”; and the devoicing of final consonants; for example, /si:f/ for “sieve” as characterizing educated Ghanaian English. Bobda, (2000) largely confirms Sey’s observations with a few differentiations. The pronunciation of GhaE changed somewhat throughout time and this is evident in research that followed the era.

Adjaye, (2005: 283-284) noted that certain pronunciation traits connected to certain ethnic groupings are giving way to more universal pronunciations. Ngula (2011), who focused on Spelling Pronunciation is a characteristic of GhaE pronunciation, on which Ngula (2011) has worked extensively. He makes the valid point that spelling pronunciation permeates the English spoken by educated Ghanaians and that this is largely caused by two interrelated factors: the incongruous relationship between English orthography and sound, and the opposite situation in the L1 spelling pronunciation qualifies as one of the novel features of pronunciation. These give Ghanaian English a unique flavor from that of typical local English. Akpanglo-Nartey, (2012) and Lomotey (2016) all sought to identify the distinct features of GhE from different perspectives.

The University of Pretoria, Library Services (2012) claims that the term “standard English” may occasionally be deceptive due to certain presumptions it conveys for many individuals. Two of these incorrect presuppositions are listed by Strevens (1985, p. 6) as follows:

Standard English is the language that the vast majority of English speakers use; it has exceptional qualities because it is seen as being either widely used or sanctioned by the government, and it is preferred above Standard French. Strevens makes an effort to make sense of this. He contends that “a minority of the world’s 700 million English-users” utilize Standard English, and that “it is certainly not standard by statistical preeminence.” Additionally, he claims that there is no official group that “pans on English usage and establishes what should and should not be included within Standard English and what should be excluded. “Strevens claims that Standard English “has no local base” in his definition of the term. The fact that “Standard English is accepted throughout the English-using world” and that “it is spoken with any accent” is another crucial point he argues (Strevens, 1985, p. 6).

In conclusion, we must concur with Wright (1993) that, despite what some may think, the only English standard that educational authorities can rationally adopt in the interconnected national governments of today is the international standard.

Deviation is sometimes referred to as an institutionalized mistake that is publicly acknowledged and universally accepted, but it is nonetheless seen as a welcome departure from the usual (Crystal, 1994). The fact that the expression was created may qualify it as a deviation. Researchers studying second languages generally concur that learners' lexicons are likely to exhibit novel structures through borrowings or switching in use, and these lexicons frequently draw inspiration from the L1, particularly in circumstances where concepts exist in the L1 for which there is no clear equivalent in the L2 (Green, 2012; Tabiri, 2016)

Green (2012) claims that L2 lexicons may be considered extremely creative since learners use morphology or lexis from the L2 in ways that native speakers of that language are unlikely to do because they are bound by what they know of "accepted" word formation patterns, such as variations and unconventional shapes. A variety of techniques are used by learners to build their lexicons.

So-called performance faults are inevitable, especially in real-time speaking, and are widely recognized even though we consider L2 speakers to be language users rather than language learners. However, it is argued that 'innovations' would be a better term for deviating features that frequently appear and take the same form in both EFL and ESL production and appear to be the result of similar cognitive processes for all non-native speakers, not just ESL speakers (Ranta, 2022). It would make more sense to think about grammatical innovations in EFL and ESL as restructurings of the elements of the language or creating new forms from the language-internal affordances that are already there, rather than as completely novel, 'invented' structures, even though the term 'innovation' seems to suggest something completely new and unforeseen, especially in the case of grammar (as a fairly 'closed' system).

Even though there are several studies on student performance in the classroom, not much research is done in the area of innovations made by these pupils, especially in the Bono and Ahafo regions to enhance their learning and classroom experience. Against this backdrop, several attempts are made in the classroom to enable pupils or students to acquire the language. Language in its natural form has a lot of deviations. These deviations are evident in areas like grammar, reading comprehension, essay writing, and literature. Language researchers argue that "SLA is influenced to varying degrees by the learners' first language (L1)." Foreign accents in learners' L2 speech provide unmistakable evidence in favor of this notion Maniam (2010 p. 4). Although the terms recommended in this study are not always applicable, they do apply to the great majority of pupils in the Bono and Ahafo regions.

This work seeks to identify deviations that basic school pupils make when using the English language. It is also tried to describe how these deviations are innovatively applied in their communication in the classroom.

METHODS

The present study's research design is qualitative in character. A qualitative research design, according to Denzin and Lincoln, (2002) enables the researcher to demonstrate a

broader and in-depth grasp of how individuals make sense of their circumstances or interpret occurrences. Its qualitative study was made through observation through purposive sampling. Population, according to Best and Kahn (2006), is a collection of people who share one or more characteristics and who the researcher is interested in. Creswell (2013) adds that for the results to be generalizable, the population should reflect the researcher's target audience. There was a total of 9,219 pupils in the Sunyani municipality. All pupils in the research location made up the study's whole population. However, just one set of kids was chosen because it was impossible to deal with the full population. Consequently, the study's sample consisted of 400 pupils who were chosen because they have received (and will continue to receive) instruction in English at all educational levels and utilize it in a variety of classroom activities. Participants had any speech or hearing impairments that may have impacted the quality of the data collected, and all participants were solicited verbally.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This is focused on pupils in the Bono and Ahafo regions of Ghana. The deviations will be grouped under four different sub-headings which are: (1) Phonology; (2) Semantics; (3) Transliteration (Use of Hyperbole); (4) Syntax (Pluralization); and 5. Orthography (Spelling)

Phonology

Sey's research on GhE where certain vowels are given the same sounds examples are: /æ/ "cat", /ɑ:/ "palm", /ə/ in the second syllable of "letter", all three vowels are pronounced as /a/; /ʌ/ "bus", /ɒ/ "hot", both vowels are pronounced as /ɔ/; /u:/ "food", /u/ "put", both vowels are pronounced as /u:/; /ə:/ "first" pronounced /ɜ:/; /l :/ "meet" /i/ "six", pronounced /i:/.

Bobda's research shows a correspondence between R.P. central vowels and front vowels in GhaE; where R.P. central vowels /ɜ, ə, ʌ/ are expected, GhaE pronunciation realizes the front vowels /ɛ, a/ respectively. Bobda's perception of the pronunciation of the words "relative" and "callous" in GhaE is at variance with what is generally heard in the country. The words are pronounced "relative" [rɛleitiv] and "callous" [kalɔs]. With a few variations, Simo Bobda (2000) substantially confirms Sey's findings.

Irrespective of the above variations identified in GhE, pupils who are new to learning the language developed their innovations to help them understand and communicate effectively in class. Some of the identified modifications in phonology are written in Table 1 below.

Table1. Pupils' Pronunciation and Their Correct Forms

	Sound	Transcription	Deviations	Orthography
a.	/θ/	/sʌmθɪŋ/	sometin	Something
b.		/θɪŋ/	Tin	Thing
c.	/ð/	/ð:z/	Dis	These

Pupils find it difficult to pronounce certain sounds that they are not familiar with. An example is the inter-dental sounds. They replace the interdental fricative /ð/ with a voiced alveolar stop /d/. They also use /θ/ which is a voiceless dental fricative in place of /t/ a voiceless alveolar in their speech this is because they do not have the dental sounds in their mother tongue (L1). This result is in agreement with Sey (1973) who found the reduction of final consonant clusters and the devoicing of final consonants as features that characterize educated Ghanaian English.

Most of them also use the trill /r/ in place of the /l/ sound both in writing and articulation. For example, instead of saying:

Place /pleiz/, they rather say prace /preis/.
Glass /glæs/ grass /gras/
Forest /fɔrist/folest /fɔlest/

This is a result of the interference of their mother tongue (L1) which also affects their ability to do translations. Most students also find it difficult to break words into syllables for easier pronunciation. In the English language, the relationship between letters in the spelling of words and sounds of spoken language is not consistent but predictable (Foorman et al., 1998). Thus, consistency alone cannot help pupils to decode unfamiliar words.

Semantics

The two most important contributions to the recording of Ghanaianisms, which are defined as vocabulary terms exclusive to Ghanaian English, are without a doubt Sey's (1973) and Dako's (2003) books. These Ghanaian dialects mostly developed through coinages and semantic processes that involved semantic expansion, limitation, or both.

Semantic shift, according to Sey (1973: 72), is "defined as the rearrangement of the characteristic patterns within the semantic field of a word so that, for example, its central contexts become marginal and vice versa; or archaic and technical words come to replace commoner and everyday words, in ordinary everyday discourse."

Coinages are word combinations and derivative terms that are produced but do not have the same meaning as Target English (T.E.). According to T.E. constructive patterns, or new phrases are created to communicate local ideas or experiences, as Quarcoo (1994) puts it. Semantic extension refers to terms that have their Target English meaning but also have other, unrelated meanings in GhaE, but most of the time it is easy to connect these expanded meanings to the Target English meanings. Semantic limitation describes situations in which a word's meaning is constrained to a small portion of its Target English semantic scope. When a term has a limited GhaE meaning and an extra, unrecognized Target meaning, this is referred to as semantic restriction and extension.

Under Semantics we will focus on the meanings of pupils' sentences and some innovations mostly on their essay writings.

Examples from sample essays can be seen below:

- a. *“first of all you will school a big Gate in my school and when you enter inside beside you left hand you will see a football part where whenever we are playing a football match we play.”*
- b. *Me homfamenanso me ka se me rekaa, adeɛɛkye me. “I have not fine but when a say I’m continion tomorrow will come.”*

Pupils write narratives as well as formal and informal letters under composition. Although a number of them can express themselves with very few mistakes, others find it very difficult to do so. Others too can express themselves but spell the words as they hear them and not the standard orthography.

Transliteration

These are also some sentences from a sample essay:

“Oman panyinnsobɛɛbabi”. “The president of the State to is invited their.”

“Again the admistration have designed a new cloth and everyone have seen it they will lunch and give it out.”

These sentences above are meaningless to the reader. Semantically, most students do a lot of transliteration from the L1 to the English language. Many examples can be seen in Fig.6 and Fig. 7 in the appendix.

“The job is for my father’s friend but unfortunately he was sick on his leg so he can’t go with his sicking leg”.

Pupils tend to transliterate their L1 which is Twi into L2 to make it easier for them to communicate their thoughts. For example, in the sample sentence above *“he was sick on his leg”* is a transliteration of the Twi statement *“Na ɔyare wɔ ne nan”*.

“His dad lost his job and life became hard for them”. This statement is a transliteration of the phrase; *“Abraboye den ma wɔn”*.

“I was late but I got stuck at where the incident took place to see the poor little boy who was almost seven to eight years crying unconditionally”.
“Akwadaaw’adibeyɛmfienɔɛkɔmfienwɔtwe”.

“Trouble does not look for trouble themselves”. *Aɛɛmpɛnnipa, nnipanaɛpɛasɛm*. These examples support Pak-TaoNg’s (2003) assertion that students’ writing involves understanding and gathering of information that reflects their thoughts. In effect, pupils express thoughts in writing according to how they perceive and understand a particular topic or sentence.

Use of Hyperbole

English language learners may use hyperbole as a communication strategy to express emphasis, add humor, or make their statements more engaging and memorable. By employing exaggerated language, learners can capture the attention and interest of their conversation partners. The use of hyperbole by English language learners in communication

can vary based on individual proficiency levels, cultural backgrounds, and personal communication styles.

Pupils coin words to help them express their thoughts with ease. For example; “He was driving with an *excess speed*”. In this example, the pupil uses the expression “excessive speed” to paint a picture of the intensity of the rider’s speed.

“The young girl was *bleeding very badly*”. The pupil in this sentence, used the phrase “bleeding badly” to depict how profuse blood oozed from the young girl. This is to give readers a vivid description of the kind of pain the girl was going through at that particular time.

“*In a moment*, I thought the girl was dead”. The pupil shows from this phrase that within a short space of time, she thought her friend had died. It is realized from these examples that pupils try to exaggerate when expressing their thoughts or sending messages to create a visual effect of the veracity of incidents that might have occurred.

Syntax

Over-Generalization of the Use of Plural Markers

Table 2. Number (Pluralization)

Singular	Plural	
	Pupil’s Answer	Correct Plural Form
Sheep	Sheeps	Sheep
Furniture	Furnitures	Furniture
Equipment	Equipments	Equipment

Pupils also tend to over-generalize the syntactic rules they are taught in class by adding the plural affix ‘s’ to every word they are to make plural. They even do the same with plural nouns that have zero morphs. This is in line with Schneider’s (2012) study which he found regularization as one of the processes shared by both ESL and EFL speakers. Based on another structure in the target language, the learner constructs a deviation. When learning a language, linguistics can be referred to as the act of applying a rule to things that are not included in the language standard. In this situation, ESL speakers make generalizations by adding the suffix ‘s’ to irregular words. With this kind of process, both ESL and EFL speakers do not qualitatively differ from each other. This is because, in both settings, their cognitive goal is directed towards a second language (Van Rooy, 2011). Table 2 shows examples of the pluralization of some irregular words.

Orthography (spelling)

Table 3. Pupils' Spelling and Their Correct Forms

Pupils' spelling	Correct form
Soo	So
Intresting	Interesting
Chores	Choice
Dat	That
Forcetrated	Frustrated
Boi	Boy
Lern	Learn
Beared	Beard

In the area of spelling, teachers try their best to build upon pupils' vocabulary levels. Teachers at this level normally conduct dictations. The outcome of the dictation sessions indicates that most of the pupils spell words according to how they hear them. The table above attests to this fact. Ngula (2011) in his study argues that spelling pronunciation is a prevalent feature of educated Ghanaian English caused by two factors: 1. the inconsistent relationship between English orthography and sound, 2. the converse situation in the L1 languages which most Ghanaians first acquire. He further suggested that spelling pronunciation is an innovative feature that characterizes Ghanaian English. Fig. 4 in the appendix shows examples of some misspelled words.

CONCLUSION

The study explored the differences in English pronunciation among Ghanaian pupils in the Bono and Ahafo regions due to ignorance of the target language, hearing difficulties, and first language influence. Ghanaian English (GhE) is a new variation of English, characterized by distinctive structural and phonological traits and lexical elements. GhE demonstrates intra- and inter-individual variation depending on the speaker's linguistic heritage and education level. Student Pidgin (SP) is a more common aspect of the language used by young Ghanaians. The Ghanaian government has made English the language of instruction from primary school to university to help students develop proficiency and prevent delays in introducing English to young students. However, the study aims to identify innovative features of GhE using small data sets, as most research has used small data sets. The target audience mainly speaks Twi as their first language, and the study aims to identify variations used innovatively by pupils and how they express themselves in this language. GhE is a unique language with distinct features such as the reduction of final consonant clusters and devoicing of final consonants. Research has shown that GhaE pronunciation has changed over time, with certain pronunciation traits connected to certain ethnic groupings giving way to more universal pronunciations. Spelling pronunciation is a characteristic of

GhE, largely due to the incongruous relationship between English orthography and sound and the opposite situation in the L1. In the Bono and Ahafo regions, there is a lack of research on innovations made by students to enhance their learning and classroom experience. Phonology is analyzed under four sub-headings: phonology, semantics, transliteration, use of hyperbole, syntax, pluralization, and orthography (spelling).

There is no doubt that there are a lot of deviations in schools and classrooms as far as the use of the English language is concerned. Notwithstanding, these deviations are ways pupils innovatively use to communicate their ideas in the classroom. This study creates awareness for teachers to bear in mind the essential role the environment plays in the learning of the English language. Thus, a child's first language in this case Twi, influences the way he/she speaks the target language which is English. These deviating features that consistently appear are a result of similar cognitive processes for all non-native speakers just as (Ranta, 2022) puts it.

Therefore, teachers have to create an enabling environment for the teaching and learning of the English language and provide adequate space for pupils to expressively communicate their ideas in both writing and speech during language lessons to build a strong Ghanaian variety of English.

More so, when a conducive environment is created for pupils, they will not feel restricted and confused by some language rules but be motivated to learn the English language. The study on deviations and innovations is limited to basic school pupils in the Bono and Ahafo regions of Ghana. Conditions at this level of education could differ from the higher levels. A further study could be conducted in Senior High Schools and tertiary institutions to establish how innovations at that level are aligned with findings from the lower level.

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