Ikwerre Phonological System and their Implications in Oral English Learning

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Abstract

This paper explores the phonological system of the Ikwere language and its impact on oral English learning among native speakers of Ikwere lanuage in Rivers State, Nigeria. The paper aims to describe and analyze the phonological structure of Ikwere, including its sound inventory, syllabic structure, and tonal system, while examining how these features influence the pronunciation and adaptation of English sounds. The study was conducted amongst Ikwere laguage native speakers in se;ected four secondary schools in the Ikwerre, Emohua, Obio/Akpor, and Port Harcourt Local Government Areas. It also adopted the Inter-Language Hypothesis and the Phonological Transfer Model theory. the work investigates the interaction between the phonological systems of Ikwere and English languages; focusing on how learners' native linguistic background shapes their English pronunciation. The data collected through questionnaires. The findings indicate that many Ikwere students

have limited awareness of their native phonological system, including its consonant and vowel features. Pronunciation difficulties in English are attributed to inadequate exposure and insufficient language training than to direct interference from Ikwere phonology. Also, despite their challenges, students exhibit greater familiarity with English phonology compared to their native language, reflecting a disconnection from their linguistic heritage. When Ikwere phonemic charts and resources are incorporated into learning, students show improved understanding of English sounds. The study recommends training programs for teachers in phonetics and phonology, incorporating Ikwere phonological resources into English teaching. The paper recommends research should carried on the additional factors that influencing English language acquisition amongst Ikwere speakers.

Introduction

Nigeria is a country located in West Africa. It is a linguistically diverse nation with over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups and more than five hundred languages spoken, (Ethnologue, 2022). These language differences are as result of the country's geographical location, which has created ground of various culture and languages. Despite this diversity, English language still remains the official language and the primary language of instruction in schools.

The teaching and learning of English is a second language for most Nigerians has resulted why many students struggle to acquire the language due to various factors including; inadequate teaching materials, ineffective teaching materials, ineffective teaching methods and linguistic interference from their indigenous languages (Adegbija, 2004; Bamgbose, Adegbija, 2004; Bamgbose, 2005).

The Ikwere language is one of the many languages spoken in Nigeria, specifically in the Rivers State. It belongs to the Niger-Congo language family and is spoken by approximately two hundred thousand people (200,000) (Ethnologue, 2022). Despite its significance the uniqueness of langiage, , Ikwere language still remains largely remained under-studied language, particularly in relations to its phonological system (Alerechi, 2007). Ikwere language is classified as a member of the Igboid branch of the Niger-Congo language family (Williamson, 1985). The language is closely related to the Igboid language, including Igbo and Isu

(Alerechi, 2010). It contains slight varieties in speech utterances among the various speech communities.

Ikwere language has different dialects. The language of Ikwere varies in dialects, based on different clans that make up Ikwere land. This means that every tribe in Ikwere has a recognized a variety which is slightly varies from one clan to another. Ikwere language is highly honoured by Ikwere people and also proudly spoken by them wherever they find themselves. The challenge in the language is the application of the language in writing or reading fluently. Hence, this work is to investigate into the phonological system of Ikwere and its implication for English language learning.

Oral English language teaching has been extensively researched and explored in various studies. The linguistic, cognitive, and cultural factors that influence the process have been examined, and effective teaching methods have been proposed. Phonology is the study of the sound system of a particular language which includes the distribution and patterning of speech sounds (Ladefoged, 2001). Understanding the phonological systems of a language is crucial for effective language teaching and learning of that language.

Linguistic element such as phonology, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc., play a crucial role in language learning (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Harmer, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Krashen, 2007). According to Morley (1991), learner's phonological awareness and syntactic knowledge significantly impact their ability to learn English pronunciation and grammar.

In carrying out this work, the descriptive survey design and library research was employed for the purpose of examining the implications of the phonological system of Ikwerre on oral English language learning among Ikwerre native language speakers. The population of the study area comprises Ikwerre native speakers learning the English language in secondary schools in Ikwerre, Emohua, Obio/Akpor, and Port Harcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State. The population for the study is the Ikwerre native speakers learning English language in some selected Secondary school in the four local government areas where the native speakers are found

The instrument for data collection in this paper was a closed-ended survey questionnaire, which consisted of twenty multiple-choice objective questions, having four options (A to D) to be administered to Ikwerre speakers learning the English language in the selected secondary school.

In analyzing data, frequency counts and percentages were used to show the relationship between the variables under consideration. This was done by counting the number of the respondents. Additionally, the undecided responses were divided by the total number of respondents.

Literature Review

The phonological system of Ikwere language has been a subject of interest in recent years, particularly in the context of oral English language learning. Ikwere language is one of the predominant languages spoken in Rivers State, Nigeria. It is spoken by the Ikwere people, and it is a vital part of their cultural heritage and identity. However, the language has a distinct phonological system that differs significantly from that of English. The difference has implications for Ikwere speakers learning English as they often transfer phonological features from their native language to English. Understanding the phonological system of Ikwere language and its implications for oral English language learning is crucial for developing effective teaching methods and materials.

This literature review aims to explore existing research on the phonological system of Ikwere and its implications for oral English language learning. It will examine the current state of Ikwere phonology and oral English language learning. This review seeks to contribute to the development of effective teaching methods and materials for Ikwere speakers learning English.

The conceptual review aims to explore the concepts related to the phonological systems of Ikwere language, their implications for oral English language learning, and the language teaching practices that promote linguistically inclusive education.

The concept of phonological systems refers to the sound system of a language, including the sounds, sound patterns, and sound rules that govern the language

(Tip, 2002). In the concept of Ikwere, Aleruchi (2010) explains that the phonological system of Ikwere is characterized by a unique sound inventory, syllabic structure, and tone system.

A study by Adenike (2001) has shown that the phonological systems of Ikwere language can affect the pronunciation, intonation, and stress patterns of English spoken by Ikwere speakers. For example, a study by Awobuluye (2005) found that Ikwere speakers tend to replace the English sound /v/ with the Ikwere sound /b/ due to the phonological differences between the two languages. Again, Osisanwo (2003) emphasizes the importance of phonological awareness in Ikwere language and its impact on English pronunciation. He argues that Ikwere speakers' pronunciation of English is influenced by their native language's phonological system. This idea was supported by Adegbija (1997), who focused on phonological transfer and concluded that Ikwere speakers' pronunciation of English is influenced by their native language's phonological system.

In the concept of vowel harmony, Igboanusi (2001) expressed that Ikwere speakers tend to apply their native language's vowel rules to English words. Hence, the implications of Ikwere phonology for oral English teaching strategies, Njuku (2003) recommends that teachers use a variety of approaches to teach English pronunciation and intonation patterns. Eze (2002) suggests that teachers should be aware of the phonological differences between Ikwere and English. To improve and be accurate in English language sounds pronunciation, one must be involved in training and practice. This is the reason Uche (2004) states that training improves pronunciation.

The concept of language teaching practices refers to the methods, strategies, and techniques used by teachers to teach a language (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). In the context of linguistically inclusive education, Kuma (2010) emphasizes that language teaching practices aim to recognize and value the linguistic diversity of students, promoting cultural inclusion and linguistic diversity. A study by Afolayan (2018) found that using linguistically inclusive language teaching practices improved language learning outcomes for diverse learners.

Language teaching practices have evolved significantly, with various approaches and methods being developed to enhance language learning. Each approach has its strengths and limitations, and a balanced approach that incorporates elements of multiple methods is likely to be more effective.

The concept of linguistically inclusive education refers to an approach to language teaching that values and respects the linguistic diversity of students (Kuma, 2010). This approach aims to promote language learning success and academic achievement by recognizing and addressing the linguistic needs of learners. For instance, a study by Odugu (2012) found that culturally responsive practices improved the academic achievement of diverse learners.

Ikwere Consonant Sounds

There are twenty-eight consonant features of Ikwere, namely: /m/ /n/ /ɲ/ /ŋ/ /ŋʷ/ /p/ /b/ /t/ /d/ /k/ /g/ /kʷ/ /gʷ/ /ƥ/ /ɓ/ /ʧ/ /ʤ/ /f/ /v/ /s/ /z/ /ɣ/ /hʷ/ /h/ /ɾ/ /j/ /w/ /l/. They are orthographically represented as "m n ny nn w p b t d k g kw gw kp gb ch j f v s z gh wh h r y w l". Alerechi (2007:98) observes that the number of the phonemic consonants in each of the dialects varies. It ranges from twenty-six to twenty-eight. Worthy to note is that the Ikwere consonant occurs in morpheme initials and morpheme medial positions in verbs and sometimes in nouns (Alerechi, 2007). It is only /m/ that occurs at morpheme finals; some examples were given to prove this point.

- [tè] "Pound" (verb) for consonant morpheme initial.
- [Obàrà] "Blood" (noun) for consonant morpheme medial.
- [Gwuzoru] "Stand" (verb) for consonant morpheme in medial and initial position.

IkwereLanguageConsonantChart

According to Donwa-Ifode and Ekwulo (1987), cited in Cyrus (2017), it is established that Ikwere has thirty-one phonetic consonants and twenty-eight phonemic consonants.

Table 1 Representation of Ikwere Consonant Phonemes

Valued Consonant Symbol	Description	Phonemic illustrations	Orthographic Symbol	Orthographic Transcription
/p/	Voiceless plosive Bilabial	/párù/-Carry /pú/-germinate	p	párù pú
/b/	Voiced plosive Bilabial	/bė/'them' /bánàm/- entered	b	bè bánám
/t/	Voiceless plosive Alveolar	/tɔ/-loose /itè/-wrestling	t	tolam itê
/d/	Voiced plosive Alveolar	/dɔwá/-tear /dɔrsl/-pant	d	dówá dros
/k/	Voiceless velar Plosive	/kèlátʃi/-'thankGod' /nkita/'dog'	k	kèláchi nkita
/g/	Voiced velar Plosive	/gwejá/-bring /ɔgèʧi/-Godstime	g	gwèyá ogechi
/kʷ/	Voiceless labialized velar plosive	/okwè/-game /àkwá/'cry'	kw	ókwè akwa
/gʷ/	Voiced labialized Velar plosive	/ágwà/-character /igwê/-bicycle	gw	ágwà igwê
/ƥ/	Voiceless bilabial implosive	/ɔƥátá/-localbed /iƥè/-wrapper	kp	ókpátá ikpè
/ɓ/	Voiceless bilabial implosive	/mɓè/-time /iɓógó/-'forest'	gb	mgbè igbógó
/ʧ/	Voiceless palatal affricate	/ʧi/-God /ɔtʃɔmmá/-looking good	ch	chi óchómmà

/*d*ʒ/	Voiced palatal affricate	/*nd*ʒɔ/-ugly /*ákd*ʒ*i*/-'cola-nut'	j	njò aji
/f/	Voiceless labiodental fricative	/*f*ù/-germinate /ʊ*f*è/-conny	f	fù ʊfè
/v/	Voiced Fricative labiodental	/*ov*ù/-heart /*v*ù*r*ù/-carry	v	ovù vùrù
/s/	Voiceless fricative alveolar	/*is*ù/-lazy /ó*s*ó*r*ó/-toilet	s	isù osóró
/z/	Voiced fricative alveolar	/*z*è*r*ù/-avoid /ózù/-enough	z	zèrù ózu
/ʃ/	Voiceless fricative Palatal	/*o*ʃì/-theif /*n*ʃì/-smell	ʃ	oshni nshni
/ʒ/	Voiced fricative palatal	/ʒ*i*/'blownose' /*n*ʒ*i*/-husband	z	zi nʒi
/h^{w}/	Voiceless labialized velar fricative	/*h*^{w}è/-fan /*h*^{w}*o*si/-insert	wh	whèe whoshi
/h/	Voiceless glottal Fricative	/*h*eru/-carry /*ruhu*/-face	h	heru ruhnu
/r/	Voiced alveolar tap	/*r*ɔ/-gossip /ɔ*r*ó/-house	r	Ro óró
/j/	Voiced palatal Approximant	/*j*è/-give /ɔ*j*I/-friend	y	ye óyi
/ɣ/	Voiced velar Fricative	/*i*ɣ*e*/-'gung /ɔɣaranja/-strong	gh	ighele ogharnaya
/w/	Voiced labialized velar approximant	/*w*ù/-boil /I*w*aI/-money	w	wù

/l/	Voiced alveolar Approximant	/*l*è/-'look' /illi/'-neck'	l	lè ille
/m/	Voiced bilabial nasal	/ḿɓɔ/-'comb' /*mm*ǎ/-'machete'	m	ḿgɓo mmά
/n/	Voiced alveolar Nasal	/*nár*ù/-'take' /ɔnu/-'mouth'	n	nárù onu
/ɲ/	Voiced velar nasal	/ɲẽ*g*ά/-give /ɲ*e*/-who?	ny	nyégά nyé?
/ŋ/	Voiced velar nasal	/ŋĩŋà/-rinse /ǎŋ*ár*à/-gardenegg	ṅ	ṅĩṅà άṅàrà
/ŋʷ/	Voiced labialized Velar nasal	/ŋŋʷẽr*ẽ*/-wife /ŋ*w*ɔ/-child	nw	nnwẽrẽ nwo
/ʔ/	Voiceless glottal Plosive	/ɔjiʔa/-maize	'	oji'a

One important thing to note in the table presented above shows that those sounds frequently occur at the initial and medial positions, except /m/ that appears in initial, medial, and final positions.

Vowel Sounds of Ikwere Language

The Ikwere language has nine oral vowel sounds: /i/, /I/, /e/, /ɛ/, /a/, /o/, /ɔ/, /u/, and /ʊ/. These nine vowels are presented as; i, I, ẹ, a, o, ọ, u, ụ in orthography. There are also about eight phonemic nasal vowels: /ĩ/, /Ĩ/, /ẽ/, /ã/, /õ/, /ũ/, /Ũ/, /ɔ̃/. In orthography of Ikwere, the nasal vowels are represented by inserting /n/ between the consonant and vowel of the syllable affected.

For Examples:

- Ruhnu – "face"
- Omenu ihnu – "It happens in front."

Ikwere Vowel Chart

Table 2 Representation of Ikwere vowel phonemes

Fixed Symbol	Description	Phonemic Illustrations	Orthographic Symbol	Orthographic Transcription
/i/	Close front unrounded vowel	/ti/-Shout	I	ti
/I/	Close front unrounded vowel	/ akai/-your Hand	ị	Akai
/e/	Close-mid front unrounded vowel	/Íbe/-Pear	E	Íbè
/a/	Open-mid front rounded vowel	/ásá/–Seven /tsá/-Cut(v)Ripe	A	Chá
/o/	Open-midback rounded vowel	/ókám/– Thatcható–Three	O	ókám ató
/ɔ/	Open back rounded vowel	/ɔbárá/-blood /ɔro/-house	O	Ɔbárá Oro
/u/	Close back rounded vowel	/éɓélù/-Farm /ɓu/-kill	U	Égbélù gbu

/ʊ/	Close-mid back rounded vowel	/rùmù/-Laugh /erù/-Mushroom	ụ	rùmù èrù
/ɛ/	Close-mid front unrounded vowel	/ɛgo/-Money	ẹ	ego

The table below presents the varying distribution of the vowels in word-initial, medial, and final positions. The table also shows that all the vowels can occur in all environments except the close-mid back rounded vowel /ʊ/, which can only occur at the medial and final positions.

Table 3 Vowel Distribution

Phonemic Symbol	**Word Initial**	**Word Medial**	**Word Final**
/i/	Ikpa–Corn	/tiálo/-Shout	Ndi–Food
/I/	/iwai/-money	/ʧ*ɪ*t*ù*rù–God Decided	/ʧ*goziri*/-God
/*e*/	/è*d*è/-'Cocoyam'	/ópepe/-fan	/*ik*è/-Strength
/*á*/	/*áhú*ą́/-Name	/óbara/-blood	/*npá*/-Father
/o/	/ó*g*ó/-Inlaw	/*á*k*ó*t*ó*/-snuff-container	/*á*t*ó*/-Three
/ɔ/	/ɔɓ*á*r*á*/-'Blood'	/ɔb*ɔ*tʃ*ɪ*/-'Day'	/ó*gwo*/-indebte
/ʊ/	/ʊʧè/-Thought	/vùrù/-carry	/*ikw*ù/-'mate'
/ʊ/	/*ú*rè/-Wednesday	/ór*ʊ́m*/-'my Error'	/or*ʊ́*/-Error

Nasalization

There are also about eight phonemic nasal vowels /ĩ/ /Ĩ/ /ẽ/ /ã/ /õ/ /ũ/ /Ũ/ /ɔ̃/. In the orthography of Ikwere, the nasal vowel is represented by inserting /n/ between the consonant and vowel of the syllable affected.

For examples:

- Ruhnu – "face"
- Omenu ihnu – "It happen in front".

Ikwere is a nasalized language. Nasal sounds play a major role in the Ikwere language. According to Cyrus (2017), the presence or absence of nasal sounds in Ikwere language makes a difference to the meaning of words:

/*s*ũ/ - Pound
/*s*u/ - Wash
/ʃĩ/ - Smell
/ʃ*i*/ - Cook
/*g*^{w}u/ - Sing
/g^{w}ũ/ - Swim

Vowel Harmony

While Ikwere consonants occur at the morpheme-initial and medial positions, the vowel can appear in all positions or environments. The language also has a principle of vowel harmony, which requires neighboring vowels to have similar properties. According to Westermann and Ward (1999:127), Ikwere vowels are divided into two sets by a principle called vowel harmony.

Tones

Tone is the use of pitch of the voice to make a difference to the meaning of the word or utterance. Some scholars of the Ikwere language, like Williamson (1980), Worukwo (1983), Alerechi (1987), and Azunda (1987), discovered five different tones in Ikwere: low tone, high tone, down step, falling, and rising tone. These tones are marked by symbols as seen below:

Low (̀) ,High (́) Down step tone (-), Falling tone (̂) and Rising tone (̌)

Rising tone is rare in some dialects of Ikwere. Tone can be used to distinguish the meaning of words that are identical, citing examples with the dialect of Isiokpo:

- íbù–fat–HL
- íbú–load–HH
- àznú–Back–LH
- àznù–Fish–LL
- àjàh–Sacrifice–LL
- ájáh–Sand–HH

Tone performs lexical and grammatical functions in any language it is used. The lexical functions and the meaning of words depend on tonal placement, as seen in the examples above.

Williamson et al. (2010) identified eight classes of noun tone. According to these authors, these numbers range from four to eight, depending on the dialect used or in question.

Ikwere Syllabic Structure

Ikwere syllabic structure includes V, CV, N, and CGV.

Looking at the example by Alerechi (2007a)

- c
hief
/ki
ng/
eze
e z e
VCV

- ọ
gò
for
Inla
w
ọ g ò
V.CV

- tó for loose
  t ó
  CV
- e.g^{w}u for (to give name)
  e. g ^{w} u
  V.CGV
- a.hja for (Market)
  a. h j a
  V.CGV
- rwe for (to swallow)
  r w e
  CG.V
- m.ma for(beauty)
  m. m a
  N.CV

Summary of Syllabic structure

V - Stand to vowel
C - Consonant
CG - Consonant and glide
CGS - Consonant glide and vowel e.g /swe/ 'grow'
S - Vowel or syllabic nasal – e.g /O/
CS - Consonant and vowel e.g /ré/ 'sell'

Oral English Language Teaching

Oral English language teaching has been extensively researched and explored in various studies. The linguistic, cognitive, and cultural factors that influence the process have been examined, and effective teaching methods have been proposed. Linguistic factors such as phonology, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc., play a crucial role in language learning (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Harmer, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Krashen, 2007). According to Morley (1991), learner's phonological awareness and syntactic knowledge significantly impact their ability to learn English pronunciation and grammar.

Cognitive factors such as motivation and learning strategies significantly predict language learning (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). To Bialystok (2001), learners' early knowledge and learning experiences influence their ability to learn English.

Cultural factors such as cultural background and sensitivity also impact language teaching and learning (Kuma, 2010). Culturally responsive teaching practices improve oral English learning. In Guy (2000), culturally responsive teaching practices can improve oral English learning by building rapport and trust with learners from diverse backgrounds. Again, Ladson-Billings (1995) expressed that incorporating learners' cultural experiences and references into lessons increases engagement and motivation. In fact, culturally responsive teaching practice enhances academic achievement.

Effective teaching methods such as communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching enhance oral English. Task-based language teaching improves oral English proficiency and communicative competence.

Oral English teaching refers to the instruction and practice of speaking and listening skills in the English language. It is an important aspect of language instruction, focusing on developing learners' speaking and listening skills. In the English language, oral English is the study of the phonology of English. It is the study of the sound system of English, including stress, intonation, and syllabic structure.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

This part presents the analysis and result of the data collected, its interpretation and presentation of the findings in an attempt to obtain solution to research question. The data relating to the research questions are analyzed by employing the simple percentage method and frequency count. All results are presented in a tabular format. The initial number of sample element selected for the study were Ikwere native speakers learning English language in four local government areas of Ikwere ethnic nationality, and responses of the student from the four secondary schools were used for the study.

Research Question One

Can you identify the Ikwere consonant and vowel sounds?

Table 4 Response on Can you identify the Ikwere consonant and vowel sounds?

S/N	RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS.	PERCENTAGE
A	Yes	23	23
B	No	65	65
C	Somehow	12	12
D	Neutral	-	-
	Total	**100**	**100**

Sources: Researcher Data 2024

From the table 4 above, Twenty-three (23) students, representing (23%) accepts that they can identify the Ikwere consonant and vowel sounds. Sixty-five (65) students representing (65%) accepts that they cannot identify Ikwere consonant and vowel sound. Twelve (12) students representing (12%), accepted that they may be able to identify Ikwere consonant and vowel sounds. While no student is neutral about it.

Research Question Two

Do you find it difficult to pronounce the English (Phonemic) vowel and consonant sounds?

Table 5 Respondents were asked if they find it difficult to pronounce the English (Phonemic) vowel and consonant sounds.

S/N	RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS.	PERCENTAGE
A	Yes	17	17
B	No	57	57
C	Sometimes	20	20
D	Never	6	6
	Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Research Data 2024

From the table 5 above, 17 respondents representing (17%) students accept that they find it difficult to pronounce the English and vowel sounds. 57 Students

representing (57%) shows that they do not find it difficult it to pronounce the English and vowel sounds. 20 representing (20%) students shows that sometimes they can pronounce the English vowel and consonant and sometimes they cannot. About 6 respondents, representing (6%) students never about it.

Research Question Three

Have you experience difficulties with oral English due to differences on Ikwere language.

Table 6 Students response if they have experienced difficulties with oral English due to differences on Ikwere language.

S/N	RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS.	PERCENTAGE %
A	Yes	13	13
B	No	80	80
C	Sometimes	7	7
D	Others specify	-	-
	Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Researchers Data, 2025

From the table 6 above, 13 (13%) students respondents shows that they experienced difficulties with oral English due to differences with Ikwere language. 80 respondents representing (80%), shows that they have not encountered any difficulties with oral English due to differences with Ikwere language. 7 students representing (7%) shows that they sometimes experience difficulties with oral English due to differences on Ikewere language. Also, there is no other areas of difficulties with oral English due to differences with Ikwere language.

Research Question Four

Can you easily distinguish between the English phonemic (consonant and vowel) sound from Ikwere sounds?

Table 7 : showing students ability to easily distinguish between the English vowel and consonant sound from Ikwere sounds.

S/N	RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS.	PERCENTAGE %
A	Yes	66	66
B	No	30	30
C	Sometimes	4	4
D	Neutral	-	-
	Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Researcher Data 2025

From the table 7 above, 66 students representing (66%) agree that they can easily distinguish between the English vowel and consonant sounds from Ikwere sounds. Also, 30 students representing (30%), showed they cannot distinguish between the English vowel and consonant sounds from Ikwere sounds. 4 students, representing (4%) reveal they can sometimes distinguish between the English vowel and consonant sounds from Ikwere consonant and vowel sounds. While no student was neutral about it.

Research Question Five

Do you think English language teacher should use Ikwere language vowel and consonant sounds examples to explain English sounds to aid understanding?

Table 8 Students respondents show that majority do not need examples from Ikwere consonant and vowel sounds to aid understanding

S/N	RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS.	PERCENTAGE %
A	Yes	30	33
B	No	56	61
C	Sometimes	10	2.1
D	Neutral	4	4.3
	Total	**100**	**100**

Sources: Researcher Data 2025

From the table 8 above, 30 students representing (33%) revealed that they need example from Ikwere consonant and vowel sounds to aid understanding of English vowel and consonant sound. 56 representing (61%) shows that they do not need examples from Ikwere consonant and vowel sounds to aid understanding of English vowel and consonant sound. 10 students, representing(5.1%) suggested they can use Ikwere consonant and vowel sounds to aid understanding of English vowel and consonant sounds sometimes when the need arises. While 4 students representing 1.3%) are neutral.

Research Question Six

Have you ever used Ikwere language resources (Phonemic chart) to aid your oral English learning?

Table 9 Students respondent show that they have not use Ikwere language resources to aid oral English learning.

S/N	RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS.	PERCENTAGE %
A	Yes	20	20
B	No	79	79
C	Never	1	1
D	Neutral	-	-
	Total	**100**	**100**

Sources: Researchers Data 2025

From the table 9 above, 20 (20%) students respondents show that they have used Ikwere language resources to aid oral English learning. 79 representing (79%) students respondent show they have not used Ikwere language resources to aid oral English learning. 1 student respondent, representing (1%) show never known about Ikwere phonemic chart in learning oral English language. No student was neutral about it. Every student had respond to the question.

Research Question Seven

If yes, did it help to understand English sounds better?

Table 10 Response of Students if the use of Ikwere phonemic chart helped them understand English vowel and consonant sounds.

S/N	RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS.	PERCENTAGE %
A	Yes	60	75%
B	No	20	15%
C	Never	15	7%
D	Neutral	5	3%
	Total	**100**	**100**

Sources: Researcher Data 2025.

From the above table 10, 18 students representing (75%) respondents accepted that the use of Ikwere phonemic chart helped them understand English vowel and consonant sounds. 20 students, representing (15%) respondents accept that the use of Ikwere phonemic chart did not help them understand English vowel and consonant sounds. While 15 students were never (7%) and 5 students were neutral with (3%).

Research Question Eight

How important is it for English language teachers to be aware of Ikwere language cultural nuances and custom.

Table 11 Students response reveal that it is somehow important for teachers of English language to be aware of Ikwere language, cultural nuances and custom.

S/N	RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS.	PERCENTAGE %
A	Not important	14	14
B	Somehow important	49	49
C	Very important	31	31
D	Important	6	6
	Total	**100**	**100**

Sources: Researchers Data 2025

From the table 11 above, 14 students (14%) respondents show that it is not important for teachers of English to be aware of Ikwere language, cultural nuances and custom. 49 students respondents representing (49%) reveal that it is somehow important for teachers of English language to be aware of Ikwere language, cultural nauces and custom. 31 students respondents which cover about (31%) show it is very important for teachers of English language to be aware of Ikwere language, cultural nuances and custom. And about 6 students representing (6%) respondents reveal that it is important for teachers of English language to be aware of Ikwere cultural nuances and custom.

Research Question Nine

How confident are your ability to adapt your learning of oral English if exposed to sounds from Ikwere language?

Table 12 Students respondents reveal that they are very confident in their ability to adapt their learning of oral English if exposed to sounds from Ikwere language.

S/N	RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS.	PERCENTAGE %
A	Not confident	27	27.3
B	Somewhat	16	16.2
C	Very confident	34	34.3
D	Confident	23	22.2
	Total	**100**	**100**

Sources: Researcher Data 2025

From the table 12 above, 27 students representing (27.3%) respondents, show that they are not confident in their ability to adapt their learning of oral English it exposed to sounds from Ikwere language. 16 students respondents, representing (16.2%) show somewhat ability to adapt their learning of oral English if exposed to sounds from Ikwere language. 34 students respondents representing (34.3%) show very confident to be able to adapt their learning of oral English if exposed to sounds from Ikwere language. While 22 students respondents, representing (23.3%) reveal that they are confident in their ability to adapt their learning of oral English if exposed to sounds from Ikwere language.

Research 13 Question Ten
What is your preferred method of learning Oral English?

Table 13 Students respondents reveal that translation method is preferred in learning oral English

S/N	RESPONSES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS.	PERCENTAGE %
A	Immersion	28	29%
B	Translation	59	60.2%
C	Bilinged instruction	10	7.1 %
D	Other specify	3	4.0%
	Total	**100**	**100**

Sources: Researcher Data 2025

From the above table 13, 28 students, representing (29%) respondents reveal that they prefer learning oral English by immersion. 59 students, representing (60.2%) respondents show they prefer learning oral English by translation. 10 students, representing (7.1%) respondents show they prefer learning oral English using bilingual instructions. 3 students respondents representing (4.0%) show other methods but could not specify any method.

Conclusion
The main objectives of the paper were to describe the phonological system of Ikwere, including their sound inventory, syllabic structure and tone system; to examine the implications of Ikwere language sound including the influence on pronunciations; and to provide recommendations for English language teachers on how to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of Ikwere speakers. The research observed that pronunciation difficulties in English are more attributable to inadequate exposure and insufficient language training than to direct interference from Ikwere phonology.

The findings in research question one (1), as revealed in table 4, shows that Ikwere students cannot identify the Ikwere consonants and vowel sounds. The response revealed that most Ikwere students do not understand the vowel and consonant sounds in Ikwere.

The findings suggest the work of Kuma (2010), who confirmed that language teaching practices should aim to recognize and value the linguistic diversity of students and promote cultural inclusion.

Again, in a work by Odugu (2012), it was expressed that culturally responsive practices improved the academic achievement of diverse learners.

Research question two (2) was analyzed in table 5, showing the percentage responses to the difficulty in pronouncing the English (phonemic) vowel and consonant sounds. The result revealed that Ikwere students do not find it difficult to pronounce the English vowel and consonant sounds. This finding also reveals that whether they understand Ikwere consonant and vowel sounds or not, they can easily learn English phonemic sounds.

The findings suggest that constant training, according to Uche (2004), improves pronunciation. Therefore, teachers should engage the students in constant training to enhance pronunciation and mastering of the sounds.

Reseach question two (2) analysed in table 6 which indicated if the Ikwere students have ever experienced difficulties with oral English due to the differences of Ikwere language. The responses revealed that the Ikwere students do not experience any difficulties with oral English due to the differences between Ikwere and English language. And this is because most Ikwere students do not understand Ikwere vowel and consonant sounds.

According to interference and transfer theory by Fries (1945:9) and Lado (1957:1, cited in Olagoke 1975:25), it is stated that a scientific and structural analysis of the mother tongue and the target language is necessary to predict the error and difficulties a learner will encounter.

This research therefore suggests that teachers should be acquainted with the knowledge of linguistic diversity as a backup to be able to explain to the students the differences when the need arises. It also suggests that students should have basic knowledge of Ikwere phonological system to be able to identify differences when it comes in contact with English language.

Reseach question two (2) analyzed in table 7, findings revealed that Ikwere students can easily distinguish between the English vowel and consonant sounds. It also revealed that they have understanding of English phonology more than the Ikwere phonology, as Ikwere phonology appears to be strange to them.

Again, the finding revealed that only English language vowel and consonant sounds have been mastered by the respondents (students). Some students asked if Ikwere has consonant and vowel sounds.

This research suggests that Ikwere language policymakers and planners should promote the knowledge of the phonological system of Ikwere. Include the native language in curriculum for study in school. Also, it suggests that teachers should be trained on the structures of Ikwerre language to be able to teach it in school.

Research question three (3) analyzed in table 8, the findings revealed that many students have not used Ikwerre language resources (phonemic chart) to aid oral English learning.

It also revealed that very insignificant learners have used Ikwerre (phonemic chart) resources to aid oral English learning.
Research question three (3) analysed in table 4 The findings revealed that the Ikwerre (phonemic chart) language resources helped those who used it to understand English vowel and consonant sounds.

The research suggests that the teacher of English language should use the Ikwere language resources as a support in teaching Ikwere students learning English vowel and consonant sounds. This, according to Morin (2007), creates phonetic awareness. Comparing Ikwere and English phonemic charts develops students' phonetic awareness, essential for accurate pronunciation. Kenstowicz and Kisseberth (1979) opine that language resources facilitate easier sound production. Hence, phonemic chart helps teachers illustrate sound correspondence between Ikwere and English, facilitating easier sound production. Again, Brown (2007) expressed that phonemic chart helps students develop accurate pronunciation of English sounds, reducing interference from native language interferences.

Research question three (3) analyzed in table 5., the findings revealed from the respondents show that learners and students will be very confident in their ability to adapt their learning of oral English if exposed to consonant and vowel sounds from Ikwere language.

The findings also revealed that few people are not confident. This is because of their unexposed to the vowel and consonants of Ikwere phonemic sounds.

Therefore, this research suggests that students should be exposed to the phonemic sounds of their native language to be able to have the phonemic awareness. This will help to compare the native language phonemic chart and English phonemic charts and to develop students' phonetic awareness, essential for accurate pronunciation (Morin, 2007, p.56).

Again, the research suggests that Ikwere language examples could be used for the sake of the few who requested for its use, as it can facilitate effective teaching and learning of English vowel and consonant sounds. This approach leverages students' existing linguistic knowledge, promoting better understanding, retention and application of phonetic concepts.

Research question three (3) analyzed in table . revealed that respondents or students of Ikwere learning the phonemic sounds of English language prefer translation method. The findings also revealed that some learners prefer the method of immersion.

This research therefore suggests that teachers of English language teaching oral English should use the translation method as well as the immersion method so that students will learn and master the sounds.

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