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AN ACOUSTIC ANALYSIS OF SYLLABLE WEIGHT IN EDUCATED NIGERIAN SPOKEN ENGLISH

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Abstract
Previous studies have indicated that Nigerian-English bilinguals have difficulties in realizing prominence in English stressed and unstressed syllables. Hence, there is hardly a difference in the articulation of heavy and light syllables in the spoken English of many Nigerians. The possibility of inappropriate intelligibility among non-Nigerian listeners becomes unavoidable. This study, therefore, attempts some acoustic analyses of syllable weight in Educated Nigerian Spoken English (ENSE). The work was anchored on the Moraic theory by Hyman (1985). The study adopts the survey research design and obtained data from a sample of 80 subjects. Twenty words containing both light and heavy syllables and a passage were presented to the respondents as the instrument for data collection. These were read and recorded with an Infinix 40i phone. The data were further uploaded into an HP laptop and analyzed both perceptually and acoustically using Praat – a software for phonetic analysis. Simple percentages were used to analyze the participant's production and a native baseline who served as the Control was equally used for the SBE model. The researchers were interested in discovering some acoustic details like the fundamental frequency (f_0), intensity, frequency, formant structure and pausing among others. The researchers discovered that speakers of ENSE hardly realize syllable weight as it is in SBE. Light syllables were most of the times realized as heavy syllables and vice versa. It was also noted that some speakers flattened all the syllables in a word. The researchers, therefore, conclude that most ENSE users realize syllable weight in their spoken English differently from the SPE model.

Introduction
There is no satisfactory definition of the syllable by linguists or language experts. Matthews (1997, p.397) defines a syllable as "a phonological unit consisting of a vowel or other units that can be produced in isolation, either alone or accompanied by one or more less sonorous units". Eyisi (2003, p. 251) defines it as: "a segment which may constitute a single sound or a sequence

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of sounds of a given language produced with one chest pulse and possessing a peak of prominence which is usually the vowel or a syllabic consonant". The segment referred to here is the syllable nucleus which the preceding group of consonants within the syllable forms the onset, and the following consonants form the coda. The foregoing definitions indicate that there is yet to be a satisfactory definition of a syllable. Notwithstanding, they all point to its structure and provide a good guide to using the term. The various definitions equally highlight its constituents such as vowels and consonants with the vowels or syllabic consonants forming the peak of prominence and also acting as a unit of rhythm (Eyisi, 2003; Crystal, 1987). A syllable can be produced in isolation or in combination with one or more sonorous units (Matthews, 1997). It is the concern of this study to find out the articulatory and acoustic features of the English syllables as realized by educated Nigerians. The focus is on English syllables with consonant clusters either at the initial or coda positions, especially those features that might be peculiar to spoken English among educated Nigerians when compared to standard British English. It will also consider whether the forms of consonant cluster reduction in Standard Nigerian English (SNE henceforth) could bridge the gap regarding international intelligibility. Soneye and Oladunjoye (2015, p. 256) observed that:

> Permissible complex nature of syllables structure differs significantly from one language to another. Speakers of English as a Second Language (ESL) generally, and in Nigeria in particular, resort to cluster reduction through several ways, as a means of simplification. One or more methods of simplification are often employed: some elide, some insert epenthetic vowels, others may substitute for other phonemes.

The consequence of these noticeable simplification processes is that, it creates different cluster patterns at the onset, for instance: play /plei/ and strike /straik/; and at the coda, e.g. act /ækt/, help /help/ and asked /æskt/. These positions are noticed across various varieties of English (Szigetvari, 2007).

Statement of the Research Problem

It has been claimed that the Nigerian English prosodies are significantly different from SBE pattern. The stress, tone, intonation and rhythm of the SNE have been extensively discussed in available literature (Sunday, 2008; Simo-Bobda, 1995; Akindele, 2021, Josiah and Ngor, 2022). But studies on syllable weight have not been far-reaching. This necessitates this investigation. The researcher asserts that learners of English with Nigerian tonal languages' background have seeming problems with the realization of heavy English language syllables with prominence on the one hand, while deemphasizing the weak syllables on the other hand. Hence, there is hardly a difference in the articulation of heavy and light syllables in the expressions of NSE. The possibility of loss of intelligibility by a non-Nigerian listener becomes inevitable in a number of cases. In view of this problem, the study thus becomes relevant.

Objectives of the Study

With the introductory background to the study presented in section 1,0, the specific objectives of the present research are to:

i. show how the weight of syllables is realized in ENSE;
ii. indicate the fundamental characteristics of syllable weight (heavy and light syllables) in ENSE;
iii. reveal how light syllables influence the rhythm of ENSE;
iv. demonstrate the relationship between the syllable-timed nature of ENSE and the weight of syllable in ENSE.

Conceptual Clarification

Educated Nigerian Spoken English (ENSE): The Nigerian English sub-variety is usually categorized into varieties I, II, III and IV corresponding to basilect, mesolect, acrolect and the sophisticated varieties respectively (cf, Banjo, 1971; Udofot, 2004; Brann, 2006). Among these strands, Educated Nigerian English (ENE) is classified as the acrolectal strand, the model adopted in this study. ENSE is recognized as a variety of the English language spoken by educated Nigerians. This simply narrows this variety treated here to the educational parameter. This parameter attracts far more attention than all others, perhaps because it is expected to be the model for others, and thus realized with the perception of a standard model of the spoken English in Nigeria (cf Banjo, 1971; Jowitt, 1991, 2019; Josiah and Babatunde, 2011).

Literature Review on Syllable Weight

Hickey (2004) investigates the origin and structure of *Englishes* in Asia and Africa. The author is of the opinion that the varieties of English spoken in these continents show specific linguistic features that vary systematically from structural properties of other varieties of English. He observes that the structural variation of the *New Englishes,* especially when compared to the standard forms of British English, is often ascribed to the influence of the indigenous languages spoken in the country. The study further states that "the background languages of countries where English is spoken have had a decisive influence on its manifestation there" (Hickey 2004, p. 529). This process can best be likened to transfers in second language acquisition. The work cites Schneider (2003), in the proposal that the phonology of a new variety of English will show features which, in many cases, linguists can identify as transfer phenomena from the phonology of indigenous languages. Hickey (2004, p. 519) further asserts that some "salient phonotactic features of Asian and African *Englishes* is the reduction of final consonant clusters. As with many of the phonological features, this is determined largely by the phonotactics of the background languages". The work examines the extent to which some structural properties of the emerging new English varieties can be influenced by LI transfers. The examination is done with instances of syllable-final consonant cluster reduction, a phonological process that has been well described for several varieties of English and whose peculiarities in New English varieties are often ascribed to LI influence (Hickey 2004). The phonological process of syllable-final consonant cluster reduction occurs with the domain of the coda in a syllable and would undoubtedly influence the weight of the syllable. The present study has benefited from Hickey (2004). For instance, knowledge of the phonological process highlighted in the work contributes immensely to the present study, which seeks to investigate the realization of syllable weight in ENSE.

The perception of syllable weight became prominent with in Allen (1973) and McCarthy (1979). Grammars frequently categorize syllables for prosodic purposes, treating one class as heavier (i.e. more stress-attracting) than another. While such categorization is usually dichotomous, complex and gradient scales are also attested with various organizational criteria (Ryan, 2016). In an attempt to comprehend the broad view about phonological forms of words and phrases, it is pertinent to categorize syllables into classes so that one class patterns as prosodically "heavier" than another. Ryan (2016) cites an instance that, in many languages, the location of stress in words is determined by weight, such that stress skips over one or more light syllables in order to land on a heavy one. This renders syllable weight as a salient determinant of stress in stress-timed languages. Heavy syllables are perceived as typically longer or more prominent than the light ones. Whether this assertion is equally applicable to Nigerian spoken English constitutes a major concern to this study. McCarthy (1979) equally

identifies syllable structure as the one that stress rules mostly refer to, and syllabic weight being the principal aspect referred to. The author states that, it is this distinction between heavy and light syllables that affects the placement of stress. First, in many languages, the notion "heavy syllable" invokes a disjunction of syllables containing long vowel or diphthong and syllables with short vowels but closed by a consonant. Second, though heavy syllables often attract the stress, they sometimes reject it or attract its subject to some limitations of say, distance from a boundary. Third, the weight of some heavy syllables may itself vary from a particular language, perhaps again under boundary conditions.This amplifies the importance of weight in syllables. The weight determines whether such a syllable attracts stress or not, though the proposition is not applicable to all languages. In some languages, it may vary due to the boundary conditions it finds itself.

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistically diverse nation. It boasts of over five hundred and twenty two (522) living languages (Taiwo, 2009; Akindele, 2017), including the English language. Akindele (2019, p. 294) observes that "the contact of these languages with English over the years has brought a variety known as Nigerian English (NE). This variety (NE) has been observed to have a significant deviation from Standard English (SE) in its spoken form as well as other areas. This was confirmed in previous studies on Nigerian English phonology (c.f. Atoye, 1989; Eka, 1993; Akinjobi, 2006; Sunday, 2008). In relation to the present study, Akinjobi (2004a, 2004b); Sunday (2004, 2010) and Akindele (2011) investigate the realization of syllables and syllabic consonants, vowel weakening and unstressed syllable obscuration, compound and phrasal stress and variable word stress in Educated Yoruba English (EYE). The rhythm of SNE was studied by Eka, 1993; Udofot, 2007; Akindele, 2015). The significant difference between these previous studies and the present one is that, the previous studies were more or less variationist or sociolinguistic studies while this study focuses on analyzing the syllable weight as realized in Educated Nigeria Spoken English (ENSE). ENSE has evolved as a sub-variety among other sub-varieties of Nigerian English (NE). NE prosody is said to be characterized by marked differences in the spoken form, especially in the English rhythm (Akindele, 2019, p. 31). Being that the rhythm operates within the domain of a syllable and any deviation affecting it can affect the weight of syllables, it becomes an acute problem that deserves a detailed study. Besides, more phonological investigations from other sub-varieties of NE need to be explored in order to make a concrete claim for NE phonology. It will also make room for the identification of areas of convergence and divergence between NE and SBE. This study, therefore, becomes relevant because it will help to contribute to the current debate on the need for the standardization and codification of NE among the comity of world Englishes. Using an instrumental analysis, the study examines whether syllable weight in ENSE conforms to SBE and the implication for NE description within the Expanded Circle Englishes (ECE) perspective. Udoh (2003) treats the syllable in its introduction to phonemic analysis. The work states that:

> The syllable is an important building block for higher domains in phonemic hierarchy. It provides some kind of link between suprasegmental phenomena, like tone, stress, nasalization, length, among others which can best be analyzed and described in terms of the syllable.

This position amplifies the importance or relevance of the syllable in phonology. Udoh's (2003) investigation sees the syllable as "a unit of pronunciation made up of a cluster of segments defined by a sonority peak". According to her, the syllable acts as a structural magnet to other lower sonority elements surrounding the peak. This implies that it is a combination of consonants and vowels that form the syllable. Within the syllable, it is the vowels that form the sonority peak, though she also notes that, in some languages, consonants can serve as a peak,

for example, the syllabic nasals in most African languages. The author cites Leggbo, (a language in Cross River) as an example, where alveolar nasals are realized as peaks. The following words are cited as examples:

/nzuŋ/	'nose'
/'ntɔtɔŋ/	'ashes'
/mkpa/	'spear'
/nɲɔŋ/	'jigger'
	(Udoh, 2003, p. 26)

The most important aspect of Udoh's (2003) study that relates to the present study is that it heralds a new interest area in the classification of syllables which this study investigates. The author further states:

> Today, a more popular classification is in terms of weight, where a 'light' syllable contains a non-branching rhyme and 'heavy' syllable has a branching 'rhyme' of either a long vowel or diphthong which may optionally be followed by a consonant.

This study is in tandem with the foregoing observation made by the researcher. It therefore, stands as a suggestion for further research from the author which is now taken up for examination in ENSE.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Moraic theory (Hyman, 1985). The theory is one of the non-linear, multi-tiered approaches in phonological analysis which was first proposed by Hyman (1985) and advanced by Hayes (1989) in the study of compensatory lengthening in Yana and other languages (Utulu, 2014). The theory of mora emanated from debates about exactly how the internal representation of the syllable should be portrayed in language. This approach argues that the syllable contains neither an onset nor a rhyme. Rather, every syllable contains one or more moras (Hyman, 1985). Some other phonologists investigating this subject area such as: McCarthy and Prince (1986) and Oostendorp (2005) propose that a syllable's quantity or duration is a function of its number of weight-bearing units ('moras'), which are represented with the Greek letter 'μ'. Because of the strong interrelationship between the subject of phonological weight and phonological quantity and the mora, the mora is seen to be a unit that must be encoded in phonological weight theory. A **mora** (plural *morae* or *moras*; often symbolized **μ**) is the smallest unit of timing, equal to or shorter than a syllable, that theoretically or perceptually exists in some spoken languages in which phonetic length (such as vowel length) matters significantly. For example, in the Japanese language, the name of the city *Ōsaka* consists of three syllables (*O-sa-ka*) but four morae (*O-o-sa-ka*), since the first syllable, *Ō*, is pronounced with a long vowel (the others being short) (Hayes, 1989). Thus, a short vowel contains one mora and is called *monomoraic*, while a long vowel contains two and is called *bimoraic*. Extra-long syllables with three morae (*trimoraic*) are relatively rare. Such metrics based on syllables are also referred to as syllable weight. The general principles for assigning moras to segments are outlined in Hayes (1989), and Hyman (1985), as presented below:

i. A syllable onset (the first consonant or consonants of the syllable) does not represent any mora.
ii. The syllable nucleus represents one mora in the case of a short vowel, and two morae in the case of a long vowel or diphthong. Consonants serving as syllable nuclei also represent

one mora if short and two if long. Slovak is an example of a language that has both long and short consonantal nuclei.

iii. In some languages (for example, Latin and Japanese), the coda represents one mora, and in others (for example, Irish), it does not.

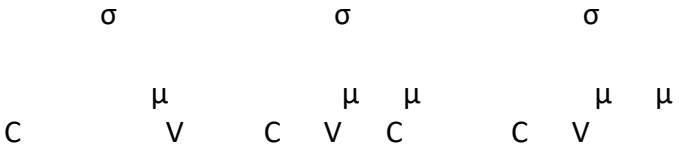
iv. In some languages, a syllable with a long vowel or diphthong in the nucleus and one or more consonants in the coda is said to be trimoraic.

In general, monomoraic syllables are called "light syllables"; bimoraic syllables are called "heavy syllables", and trimoraic syllables (in languages that have them) are called "superheavy syllables". Oostendop (2005) is equally of the perception that, the syllable does not consist of an onset and a rhyme, but of two morae (from the Latin word meaning ‘a short period of time’ or ‘delay’). The main generalization includes the following:

(1) i. heavy syllables consist of two morae; and
ii. light syllables consist of one mora.

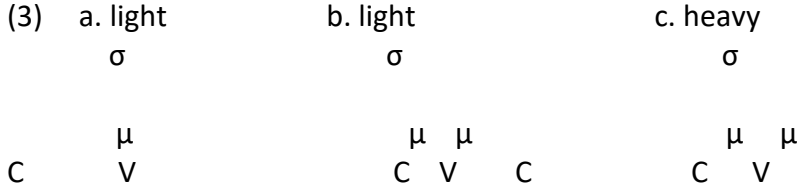
Suppose we are dealing with a language in which closed syllables and syllables with a long vowel are heavy, whereas other syllables are light, then, we can represent syllable structure in this language in the following way:

(2) a. light b. heavy c. heavy



In a language in which only long vowels count as heavy, we get the following structures

(3) a. light b. light c. heavy



(Figures adapted from Oostedorp, 2005)

The author observes that the mora takes the position of skeletal points. The C’s and V’s in this figure represent root nodes signaling consonants and vowels. This implies that the phonological timing in this model varies a little from that in x-slot theory where onset consonants do not count for timing, for instance. The concept of “syllable weight” has long been discussed in some scholarly literature. For instance, Allen (1973) had observed that certain syllable types are light and some heavy, and some even comparatively heavier. These variations determine the application of certain phonological processes, notable amongst them is stress assignment. In line with this observation, Hyman (1985) and Hayes (1989) ascribe short vowels to one mora, which are then read off on the weight scale as “light syllable”. In the same vein, they ascribe long vowels, diphthongs and vowel-plus-coda sequence to two moras and labelled them as “heavy syllables”. By implication, the criteria for the computation of phonological weight are predicated on:

i. the quality/quantity of vowel, i.e. long vowels versus short vowels; diphthongs versus monophthongs,

ii. a closed syllable, i.e. a (C)V(C) syllable structure tagged ‘Weight-by-Position’ by Hayes (1989), and

iii. the number of moras represented in the moraic template.

Research Design

The design adopted for this study is the survey method. The rationale for this is because this design enables the researcher to gather information about variables from a representative sample of the entire population. This design is essentially cross sectional and describes and interprets what exists at present (Emaikwu, 2011) in the phonology of the syllables. It is more objective, being based on statistical facts and observations of many phenomena, measuring what exists without questioning why it exists (Olaitan and Nwoken, 1988). The survey research design, is therefore, considered the most appropriate in investigating syllable weight in ENSE.

Method of Data Collection

A production study was undertaken with eighty (80) speakers comprising 30 males and 50 females, aged 18-40. The respondents comprised: 10 lecturers and 40 students from the Federal College of Education, Obudu; 15 students from the Mass Communication Department, Cross River State University of Technology, Calabar and 15 students from the English and Literary Studies department, University of Calabar, Calabar. Each word had a designated unstressed syllable for representing each of the three positions – onset, nucleus and coda (ONC). Vowel heights and coda consonant patterns were varied but not controlled by the respondent. For instance, nouns such as example, omission, lavender, vampire, perspective and hurricane, were used in order to get all possible syllable shapes in all positions occurring without primary stress as final CVC and CV syllables will get primary stress in verbs and adjectives. This is because it is assumed, according to Gordon (2004), that there is nothing different in the phonetics of the rhyme durations of different lexical classes in English and that the difference in their class systems lies in the phonology of the language. Besides, for each subject, one word from each category is randomized into carrier phrases, and the sentences were then duplicated while the two sets are equally randomized. The duration of the syllables in the text read is measured using Praat – a software for speech analysis experimented by Boersma and Weenink (1992-2010). An android mobile phone is also used to record the reading of each participant and then uploaded into a computer for the analysis using the aforementioned software.

Method of Data Analysis

The production of each of the participants is first uploaded into a computer laptop and, with the help of Sound Converter Application (SCA), all the recorded sounds are converted to WAV format which makes it compatible for acoustic analyses in Praat where acoustic parameters such as duration, intensity and pitch are analyzed. Acoustic measures of each of the ENSE articulation on the segmented syllables in the produced items are entered on a table and the overall results derived in decibels (dB) and milliseconds. Simple percentage method is used to analyze the participant's performance and a native baseline who served as the control was equally tracked, using the software. The production is also transcribed perceptually and analyzed metrically as light or heavy mora. The quantitative and qualitative methods are also employed for the data analyses. This is done in order to provide adequate comprehension of the research problem and exactly how to solve it. The rationale is to use the quantitative method to arrive at a satisfactory result for the tested phonological items. The quantitative method employed include the use of mean, standard deviation and independent sample t-test as statistical tools, while metric grid, comprising a framework with columns for relative peak and rows for the rhythmical structures, is used for the qualitative analysis. The emphasis of the metrical grid framework is on the Peak and Valley alternation of the syllables by the

participants. For the qualitative analysis, only samples of regular patterns as determined by the statistical results are analyzed.

Data Presentation, Analyses and Results

This section presents the data, analyzes same and collates results obtained from the study. Table 1 presents the perceptual analysis of syllable weight in triphthongs. It also shows the simple percentages made by the respondents on each test item. Table 2 presents the perceptual analysis of syllable weight in compound words and the simple percentages derived from each test item.

Table 1: Perceptual Analysis and Presentation of Syllable Weight in Triphthongs

Test Items	Words	Transcription	GWU	EGR	WR in 1st syllables	WR in 2nd syllables	Percentage %
TI 1.	higher	/haɪə/	/aɪə/	/ha.jə/	63(79%)	17(21%)	100
TI 2.	fewer	/fju:.ə/	/u:ə/	/fju:.. wa/	15(19%)	65(81%)	100
TI 3.	layer	/leɪə/	/eɪə/	/le.ja/	20(25%)	60(75%)	100
TI 4.	joyous	/ʤɔɪəs/	/ɔɪə/	/ʤɔ.jəs/	58(76%)	22(24%)	100
TI 5.	player	/’pleɪə/	/eɪə/	’ple.jə/	55(69%)	25(31%)	100

Table 2: Perceptual Analysis and Presentation of Syllable Weight in Compound Words

Test Item	Words	Transcription	G WU	EGR	WR in 1st syllables	WR in 2nd syllables	Percentage
TI 1.	firewood	/'faɪ.əwʊd/	faɪə	/'fa.jawud/	35(44%)	45(56%)	100
TI 2.	wardrobe	/'wɔ:drəʊb/	wɔ:d	/'wɔdrɔʊb/	23(29%)	57(51%)	100
TI 3.	textbook	/'tekst.bʊk	tekst	/'tes.bʊk	33(41%)	47(59%)	100
TI 4.	chalkboard	/'tʃɔ:k.bɔ:d/	tʃɔ:k	/'tʃɔk.bɔ:d/	20(25%)	60(75%)	100
TI 5.	workshop	/'wɜ:k.ʃɒp/	wɜ:k	/'wɔk.ʃɔp/	12(15%)	68(85%)	100

Key:

GWU --------- Gloss Weight Unit
WR ---------- Weight Realized
TI ---------- Test Item
EGR ----------Experimental Group Realizations

Moraic Analyses of the Data and Discussion of Results

Figure I – V presents the moraic analyses of the test items that are triphthongs while Figure VI - X presents the moraic analyses of compound words as listed in the tables.

Data Presentation and Moraic Analysis of Syllable Weight in Triphthongs

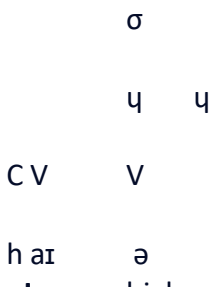


Figure I: higher

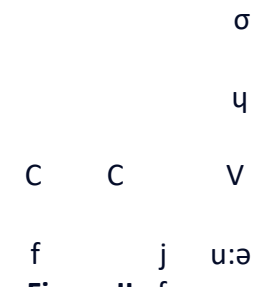
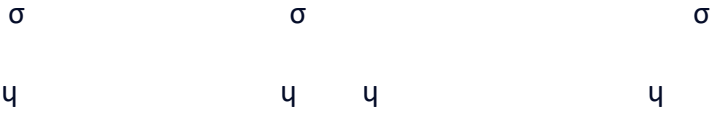


Figure II: fewer



C V C V C C C V

l eɪə ʤ ɔɪə s p l eɪə

Figure III: layer **Figure IV:** joyous **Figure V**: player

Data Presentation and the Moraic Analysis of Compound Words

σ σ σ σ

ɥ ɥ ɥ ɥ ɥ ɥ

C V C V C C V C C V C

f eɪə w ʊ d w ɔ: d r əʊ b

Figure VI: firewood **Figure VII:** wardrobe

σ σ σ σ

ɥ ɥ ɥ ɥ ɥ ɥ ɥ ɥ

C V CCC C V C C V C C V C

t ɜ: kst b u k tʃ ɔ: k b ɔ: d

Figure VIII: textbook **Figure IX:** chalkboard

σ σ

ɥ ɥ ɥ ɥ

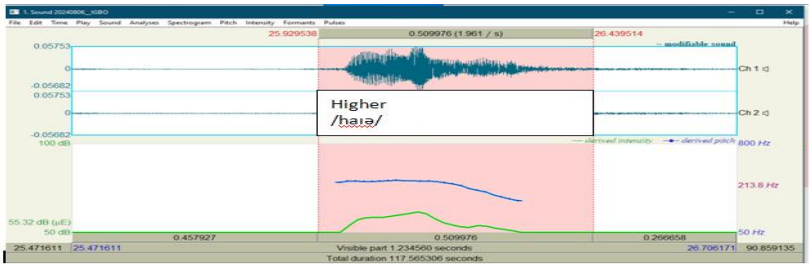
C V C C V C

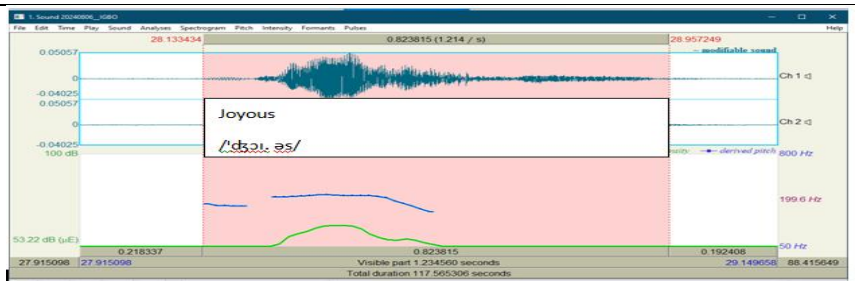
w ɜ: k ʃ ɒ: p

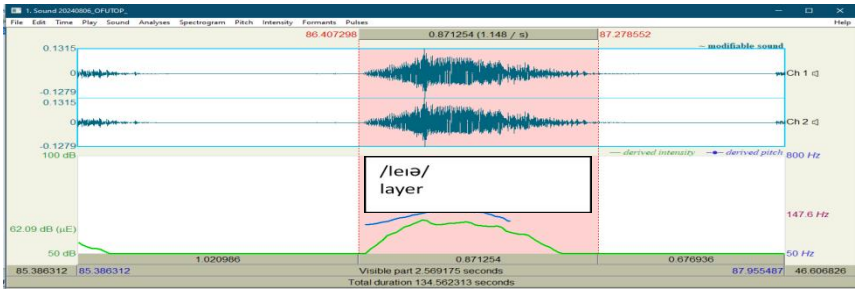
Figure X: workshop

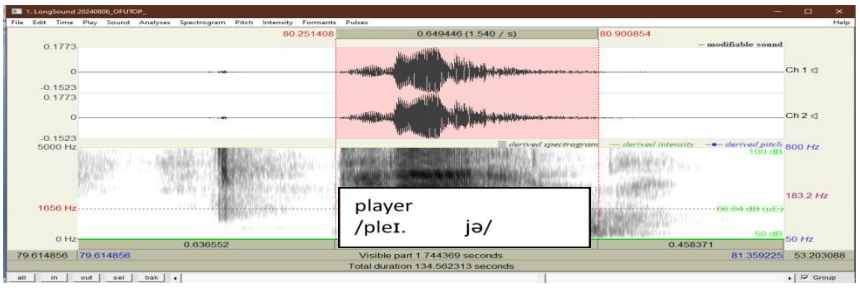
Acoustic Analyses of Syllable Weight in ENSE

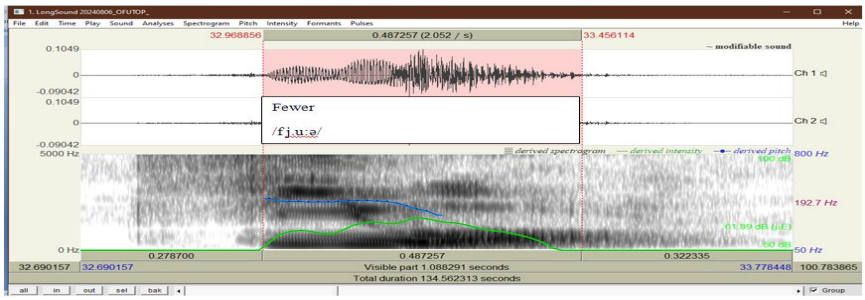
The figures below present the acoustic analysis of syllable weight in diphthongs. The data shows that the TI 1 “higher” has two moras – and ə, TI 2 “fewer” equally has two moras – u – ə; and ɣ- ɕ, TI 3, “layer” has one mora – eiə, TI 4 “Joyous”. Equally has one mora - ɔɪə as well as ‘player’ - eɪə











Discussion of Results

In table 1, the percentage analysis shows that in Test item 1 (henceforth TI), the first syllable in the word "higher" was pronounced as heavy syllable by 63 respondents representing 79% while 17 respondents indicating 21% realized it on the second syllable. TI 2 (that is "fewer") indicates that 15 respondents making 19% realized the weight on the first syllable while 65 making 81% realized it on the second syllable. TI 3, "layer", was pronounced with weight on the first syllable by 20 respondents which is 25% while 60 respondents, which implies 75%, realized it on the second syllable. TI 4, "joyous" had 58 respondents making 76% realizing the weight on the first syllable while 22 respondent representing 24% realized it on the second syllable. TI 5 on the table, "player", had 55 respondents representing 69% realizing the syllable weight on the first syllable while the other 25 respondents, representing 31% realized it on the second syllable. Table 2, presents the perceptual analysis of syllable weight in respect of compound words and their percentages. In TI 1, "firewood", the data analysis indicates that, 35 respondents which is 44% had their weight on the first syllable while 45 of them making 56% realized the weight on the second syllable. TI 2, "wardrobe" had its weight on the first syllable from 23 respondents making 29%, while 57 respondents making 51% had it on the second syllable. On TI 3, "textbook", 33 respondents, which is 41% pronounced it with the weight on

the first syllable while 47 of them which is 59% pronounced it on the second syllable. T1 4 which is 'chalkboard' was pronounced with weight on the first syllable by 20 respondents which is 25% while the other 60 respondents, representing 75%, had the weight on the second syllable. TI 5, "workshop" 12 respondents representing 15% realized the syllable weight on the first syllable while the other 68 respondents, representing 85% realized it on the second syllable.

Findings of the Study

The researcher discovered that speakers of ENSE hardly realize syllable weight as it is in SBE. light syllables are most of the times realized as heavy and vice versa. Unstressed syllables that are supposedly light are most times realized as heavy. It was also discovered that some speakers flatten all the syllables in a word. From the perceptual analysis and reading of the intensity in the acoustic analyses, it was revealed that the respondents use monotonic pitch. That is, the voice remained at a consistent pitch level without any significant rising or falling, thereby making it sound flat or even. Their pitch was not dynamic to mark out the heavy syllables. The implication of this is that, the phonic patterns of the respondents' indigenous or first language interfere with the realization of words in ENSE. It is noteworthy that, most Nigerian languages are syllable-timed while SBE is stress-timed. Wrong syllable partition is another observation recorded. Most speakers of ENSE find it difficult to determine syllable boundaries. This is mostly observed in multi-syllabic and compound words. Many of the ENSE respondents could not realize triphthongs as a nucleaus element. Rather, they realize triphthongs like bisyllables or monophthongs or even as vowel sequences. For instance, a lot of them pronounced higher' as /haja/. The schwa which in SBE is weak and unstressed was realized as strong and heavy. A majority of the triphthongs are not realized as triphthongs. Rather, they are realized as vowel sequencing. For example, a word like *fire* /faɪə/ is realized as /fa.jə/ by most of the respondents.

Conclusion

The paper examines syllable weight in ENSE. From the analyses of the study, it is revealed that, 69% of the respondents realized the syllable weight on the second syllable instead of the first, while 31% realized it correctly on the first syllable. The study therefore concludes that, most ENSE users hardly realize syllable weight appropriately in their spoken English.

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