

## SYLLABIFICATION: A CASE STUDY OF PRONUNCIATION PATTERN OF IGBO LEARNERS OF GERMAN

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### Abstract

This study identified syllabification errors in the spoken German of selected Igbo learners. It also categorized the identified syllabification errors and further analysed possible causes of the errors identified. These were done with a view to providing insights into the level of competence of the learners. The data for this study was derived from recorded reading of purposively selected German text from *Sicher B1 German course book* by final year L<sub>2</sub> Igbo students of German in three Nigerian universities. The study is a quantitative study and the data collected were analysed using Interlanguage theory of Larry Slinkers (1972). The results showed that the syllabification errors in the spoken German of selected Igbo learners were related to effects of consonant clusters. The study found that 60% of the respondents omitted consonant clusters on the first, second and third syllable, while about 40% inserted vowels between consonant clusters and about 40% inserted vowels after the coda of a closed final syllable, hence, the errors identified were categorized as being related to consonant deletion, vowel epenthesis and vowel epithesis. Finally, the study concluded that the selected Igbo learners of German have not yet fully mastered the syllabification system of German and hence were easily influenced by their native language (Igbo) while reading a texts in German.

**Key words:** Syllable, vowel, consonant Clusters, Epenthesis, Epithesis.

### 1. Introduction

It has been proven that when two different languages come into contact with each other, the possibility of interference, especially between the first language and the second language, cannot be ruled out. Language learning comes with several challenges more so when the languages have different structures. In consonance to this trend, many Nigerian German learners combat with learning difficulties, especially in the Area of phonology. German is a language spoken in Europe by the Germans living in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. German language is unique with consonant clusters ranging from 2 to 7 syllables in a single word; it can be described a language with a CCCC.V.CCCC syllable structure (Laeufer, 1995). The Igbo language, on the other hand, is a language spoken in Eastern Nigeria by the Igbo people. According to Emenanjo (1996), the Igbo language is an open language with CVC syllable structure and does not permit up to seven consonant clusters in a single word.

Globalization has made foreign language learning to trend in recent times. The search for greener pasture has led Igbo folks, especially the young to learn foreign languages such as German with an intense desire to travel to Germany for academic or work purposes. To fulfill these endless desires, Igbo young people engage in learning German language and in so doing they encounter a lot of challenges in the learning

process. Among the problems faced by these learners, syllabification errors rank high. This study focuses on the analysis of syllabification errors in the spoken language of Igbo learners of German. The difficulties in pronouncing German words by Igbo learners of German is the major motivation for this research and this research investigates the root cause of these Errors, categorize and analyse the identified errors committed by the selected Igbo learners of German. To achieve this, the study investigates the recorded reading of purposively selected German passages from *Sicher B1 German course book* by final year L<sub>2</sub> Igbo students of German in the three universities: the Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife (OAU), University of Ibadan (UI) and the University of Nigeria, Nsuka (UNN).

Studies examining the difficulties faced by Igbo learners of German have mainly focused on lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic problems. Over the years little attention has been paid to the phonological errors made by Igbo learners of German. The investigation of syllable errors in the spoken language of Igbo learners of German provides insight into the level of competence of these learners. This study aims to fill this gap.

## 2. Literature Review

Due to the fact that German and Igbo languages belong to different language families, there are a number of people in Nigeria who face the challenge of combining knowledge of the two languages, either as bilingualism or for heuristic reasons. However, scholars in this field have conducted several studies that offers possible solutions to the issues that foreign language learners often face in the learning process. Unegbu (2016) examined a contrastive analysis of English and Igbo syllable structures and their implications for teaching. The study examined the differences in the syllable structures of the English and Igbo languages and their pedagogical implications. Bahrami (2012) examined the syllable structure of the German and Persian languages. The aim of the study is to examine the pronunciation problems that arise from the systematic comparison of the syllable structures of German and Persian within the framework of optimality theory. Tanir (2020) reviewed the work done in this area and examined the learning difficulties of Turkish students learning German as a second language. The aim of the study is to investigate the learning difficulties of Turkish students in their basic studies in German as a second language. In addition, Cecilia Eme and Uba (2016) examine a contrastive study of the phonology of Igbo and Yoruba. The aim of the study is to identify the phonological problems faced by Igbo learners of Yoruba and Yoruba learners of Igbo when learning Yoruba and Igbo as their second language, respectively. Lay's (2017) study on German as a foreign language among Chinese learners reveals that the mother tongue as well as the first language had influence on learning difficulties. Further academic studies on learning difficulties in foreign language acquisition have been conducted by several researchers (Vinitzskaya & Foley 2004, De Angelis, 2005; Leung, 2005, 2006; Tremblay, 2006; Bardel & Falk, 2007; and Tanir, 2020), and they generally address the linguistic dimension. All of these studies are highly relevant to this research, as the theoretical assumptions in the field of second language acquisition are discussed in detail here.

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

Interlingual (IL) Theory has made an enormous contribution to explaining the errors made by learners in language learning. Historically, interlingual theory is not the only approach to correcting errors identified during the process of second language acquisition or foreign language acquisition. Two other prominent

approaches were popular in this field before the emergence of interlingual theory in the early 1970s: (a) contrastive analysis and (b) error analysis. These two approaches are equally considered in Interlingual theory in the field of applied linguistics. Contrastive analysis is pedagogically linked to behaviorism and structuralism and flourished in Europe and North America in the 1950s and 1960s. Scholars such as Charles Fries, Robert Lado, and Max Weinreich were the outstanding researchers in this field. Later, in 1967, when Stephen Pit Corder's groundbreaking work, *The Meaning of Learners' Errors*, was presented, error analysis became a new and more welcome model, replacing contrastive analysis. Error analysis was now seen as a better model for taking learning errors into account. Both contrastive analysis and error analysis were criticized as insufficient for describing second language errors. Due to this shortcomings, a way was paved for interlingual theory in the field of second language acquisition. Hence, interlingual theory was used to describe and explain the errors made by learners when acquiring a second language. The interlingual hypothesis was made visible in 1972 by Larry Selinker in his groundbreaking article "Interlingual." Scientists such as Lennberg in 1967, who believed that language acquisition was an age-limited process, were the catalyst for Selinker's interlingual theory. Larry Selinker developed the construct of "interlingual" to clarify the view of learner language as an autonomous linguistic system and not just a collection of errors. His essay "Interlingual" (Selinker, 1972) was intended to stimulate research into the structure and development of the linguistic system underlying the language spontaneously produced by adult second language learners. Interlinguistic theory assumes that the language of the second language learner is subject to systematic rules that differ from those of the language being learned and from those of the learner's native language. For this reason, language learners do not simply copy what native speakers do, but create a completely new language system of their own. Selinker called this provisional language system an "interlingual." According to Selinker, the interlingual is based on three basic principles: overgeneralization of patterns found in the language being learned, transfer of patterns found in the learner's native language, communication strategies, and fossilization (the phenomenon whereby the learner's language no longer develops).

### 3. Research methodology

The study derived its data from recorded reading of selected German passages from the Sicher B1 German course book by 25 male and female Igbo final year students of German at three Nigerian universities, namely: University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu State, University of Ibadan, Oyo State, and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Osun State. Ten (10) words purposively selected from the text because they contain consonant clusters consisting of two, three, four, five, six, and seven syllables. These consonant clusters occur in the first, second, third, and fourth syllables. A version of the text with the ten words underlined was used by the researcher to assess the students, while the version given to the respondents to read had no underline on any of the words. The exercise focused on the pronunciation of words based on the German syllable system. The exercise was recorded as the respondents read the text.

#### 4. Data presentation and analysis

Raw scores of the final year Igbo learners of German in OAU, UI and UNN.

**Table 1: Identification of syllabification errors in the spoken German of selected Igbo learners**

S/N	Gender and age of students	Task	Point per task =10 marks									Total point = 100 %
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
		Bildung /'bildɔŋ/	zusammengerechnet /tsu'zaməŋgərəçnət/	ersttaunlich /ɛɐ'ʃtaʊnlɪç/	jährlich /'jɛ:rlɪç/	Schulgeld /'ʃu:l'gɛlt/		Zwischen anschießende /'anʃli:sndə/	Fachhochschule	entscheiden /ɛnt'ʃaɪdn/		
1.	Male/ 21 Years	00	10	10	00	10	00	00	00	10	00	40%
2.	Male/ 21 years	00	10	10	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	20%
3.	Male/ 20 years	00	00	10	00	00	00	10	10	00	00	30%
4.	Female/ 24 years	00	10	00	10	00	00	00	00	00	00	20%
5.	Male/ 25 years	00	00	10	00	10	00	00	00	00	00	20%
6	Male/ 23 years	00	10	00	00	10	00	00	00	00	00	20%
7	Female/ 24 years	00	10	00	00	00	00	10	00	00	00	20%
8	Female/ 23 years	00	00	10	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	10%
9	Female/ 27 years	00	00	10	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	10%
10	Female/ 19 years	00	00	10	00	00	00	10	00	10	00	20%
11	Female/ 21 years	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	10	00	00	10%

12	Female/ 21 years	00	10	10	10	00	00	00	10	00	00	40%
13	Female/ 21 years	00	10	00	00	00	00	10	00	10	10	40%
14	Male/ 24 years	00	00	00	00	10	00	00	00	00	00	10%
15	Female/ 23 years	00	00	10	00	00	10	00	00	00	00	20%
16	Female/ 23 years	00	10	00	00	00	00	10	00	00	00	20%
17	Female/ 22 years	00	10	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	10%
18	Female/ 21 years	00	10	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	10%
19	Female/ 22 years	00	00	10	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	10%
20	Female/ 20 years	00	00	10	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	10%
21	Female/ 21 years	00	10	10	10	00	10	00	00	00	00	40%
22	Female/ 24 years	00	00	00	00	00	00	10	10	00	00	20%
23	Female/ 21 years	00	00	10	00	10	00	10	10	00	00	20%
24	Female/ 19 years	00	00	10	00	00	00	10	00	00	00	20%
25	Female// 24 yrs	00	00	00	00	00	00	10	10	00	00	20%

The first respondent hails from Anambara State, and speaks Igbo fluently; studying German at the Obafemi Awolowo University. He got 40 points in tasks 2, 3, 5 and 9, in which he either replaces a vowel with another vowel, omits consonant clusters or inserts a vowel between consonant clusters. In task 1 with two consonant clusters on the second syllable, the respondent replaced the vowel /i/ with /u/ and pronounced /'bɔldɔŋ/ instead of /'bildɔŋ/. In task 3 with three consonant clusters in the first syllable, the respondent omitted /ɛɐ / on the first syllable. He pronounced /'ʊʃtaɔnliç/ instead of /ɛɐ'ʃtaɔnliç/. In task 6 with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, the respondent omitted /ts/ and inserted a vowel /i/ between /t/ and /v/. He pronounced /'tɪvɪʃən/ instead of /'tʃvɪʃən/. In task 7 with four consonant clusters on the second syllable, the respondent inserted /n/ at the end of the syllable and pronounced /'aŋʃli:səndən/ instead of /'aŋʃli:sndə/. In task 8 with five consonant clusters on the 3rd syllable, the respondent omitted /x/ on the second syllable and pronounced /'fɑx'hɔ:ʃu:lə/ instead of /'fɑx'hɔ:xʃu:lə/. In task 10 with seven consonant clusters on the 2nd syllable, the respondent omitted /kç/, added /x/ and pronounced /'dʊʃnitlix/ instead of /'dʊkçʃnitliç/.

The second respondent comes from Imo State, he speaks fluent Igbo. He studies German at the Obafemi Awolowo University. He scored a total of 20 points in tasks 2 and 3, in which he pronounced the words correctly. In task 1 with two consonant clusters on the first syllable, the respondent replaced /i/ with /u/ on the first syllable and pronounced /'bɔldɔŋ/ instead of /'bildɔŋ/. In task 4 with three consonant clusters on the 1st syllable, the respondent replaced /ɛ:/ with /a:/ on the first syllable and pronounced /'ja:ɛliç/ instead

of /'jɛ:ɐliç/. In task 5 with three clusters on the first syllable, the respondent replaces /u:l/ with /ʊ/ on the first syllable. He pronounces /'fʊgɛlt/ instead of /'fʊ:lɡɛlt/. In task 6 with three consonant clusters on the second syllable, the respondent omitted /tʃ/ and inserts /t/ and replaces /i/ with /ai/ on the first syllable. He pronounces /tʃvaɪfən/ instead of /'tʃvɪfən/. In task 7 with four consonant clusters on the 2nd syllable, the respondent replaces /an/ with /auf/. He pronounces /'aufʃli:sndə/ instead of /'anʃli:sndə/. In task 8 with five consonant clusters on the fifth syllable, the respondent omitted the cluster /x/ in the fifth syllable. In task 9, the respondent omitted /ɛnt/ in the first syllable and inserted /ai/ and /ə/ on the final syllable. In task 10, the respondent added the cluster /x/ on the final syllable.

Respondent number 3 comes from Imo State, speaks Igbo fluently. He is studying German at Obafemi Awolowo University. He scored 30 points in tasks 3, 7 and 8. In task 1 with two consonant clusters on the second syllable, the respondent replaced /i/ with /ʊ/ on the second syllable, pronouncing /'bʊldʊŋ/ instead of /'bildʊŋ/. In task 2 with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, the respondent replaces /ɛ/ with /ə/ on the third syllable and pronounced /'tsuzaməŋgərəçnət/ instead of /tsu'zaməŋgərəçnət/. In task 4 with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, the respondent replaces /ɛ:/ with /a:/, he pronounces /'ja:ɐliç/ instead of /'jɛ:ɐliç/. In task 5 with three consonant clusters in the first syllable, the respondent replaces /u:l/ with /ʊ/. He pronounces /'fʊgɛlt/ instead of /'fʊ:lɡɛlt/. In task 6 with three consonant clusters on the 2nd syllable, the respondent replaces /tʃ/ with /t/, he pronounces /'tɪvɪfən/ instead of /'tʃvɪfən/. In task 9 with five consonant clusters on the second syllable, the respondent replaces /ɛn/ with /ai/ on the first syllable and inserts /ə/ in the second syllable.

Respondent 4 comes from Anambra State, she speaks fluent Igbo. She is studying German at Obafemi Awolowo University. She scores 20 points in tasks 2 and 4. In task 1 with two consonant clusters on the second syllable, the respondent replaces /i/ with /ʊ/. She pronounces /'bʊldʊŋ/ instead of /'bildʊŋ/. In task 3 with three consonant clusters in the first syllable, the respondent replaces /ɛv/ with /ge/ on the first syllable. She pronounces /gɛʃtaʊnliç/ instead of /ɛv'ʃtaʊnliç/. In task 5 with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, the respondent replaces /u:l/ with /ʊ/. She pronounces /'fʊgɛlt/ instead of /'fʊ:lɡɛlt/. In task 6, which also has three consonant clusters in the first syllable, the respondent replaces /tʃ/ with /t/. She pronounces /'tɪvɪfən/ instead of /'tʃvɪfən/. In task 7 with four consonant clusters in the second syllable, the respondent replaces /an/ with /ɛn/ in the first syllable and inserts /ə/ between the clusters in the third syllable. She pronounces /ɛn'ʃli:səndə/ instead of /'anʃli:sndə/. In task 8 with five consonant clusters in the third syllable, the respondent omitted the /x/ cluster in the first syllable, the respondent pronounced /'fahɔ:xʃu:lə/ instead of /'faxhɔ:xʃu:lə/. In Task 9, also with five consonant clusters on the second syllable, she inserted /ə/ in the last syllable. She pronounced the word as /ɛnt'ʃaidən/ instead of /ɛnt'ʃaidn/. In task 10 with seven consonant clusters in the second syllable. She omits /kç/ and pronounced /dɔʃnitliç/ instead of /'dɔkçʃnitliç/.

Respondent 5 comes from Imo State, he speaks Igbo fluently. He studies German at the Obafemi Awolowo University. He scored 20 points in all tasks. In task 1 with two consonant clusters on the second syllable, the respondent replaces /il/ with /ʊ/ and pronounces the word as /'bʊdʊŋ/ instead of /'bildʊŋ/. In task 2 with three consonant clusters in the fourth syllable, the respondent omits /ç/ on the last syllable and also stresses the word incorrectly. Instead, he pronounces /'tsuzaməŋgərəçnət/ instead of /tsu'zaməŋgərəçnət/. In task 4, he replaces /ɛ:/ with /a:/ on the first syllable. He pronounces /'ja:ɐliç/ instead of /'jɛ:ɐliç/. In task 6, he

replaces /tʃ/ with /ti/ and puts /a/ on the first syllable. He pronounces /tiv'aɪfən/ instead of /'tʃviʃən/. In task 7, he replaces /anʃ/ on the first syllable with /ʊn/ and also inserts /ə/ on the fourth syllable. As a result, he pronounces /'ʊnʃli:səndə/ instead of /'anʃli:sndə/. In task 8, he omits the /x/ in the first and second syllable. He pronounces /'fahə:ʃu:lə/ instead of /'faxhə:xʃu:lə/. In tasks 9 and 10, the respondent avoided the consonant clusters because they were very difficult for him to pronounce.

Respondent 6 comes from Abia State, speaks Igbo fluently, and studies German as a second foreign language at the University of Nigeria, Nsuka. The respondent scored a total of 20 points in items 2 and 5. In task 1 with two consonant clusters on the second syllable, the respondent replaces the vowel /i/ in the first syllable with another vowel /ʊ/. He pronounces /'bʊdʊŋ/ instead of /'bildʊŋ/. In task 3 with three consonant clusters in the first syllable, the interviewee replaces /ɛv/ with /gɛ/ on the second syllable and pronounces /'gɛʃtauntliç/ instead of /'ɛvʃtauntliç/. In task 4, she replaces /ɛ:/ with /a:/ on the first syllable and also pronounced /'ja:ɛliç/ instead of /'jɛ:ɛliç/. In task 6, he replaces /tʃ/ in the first syllable with /ti/ and places /a/ between the consonants. She pronounces /tiv'aɪfən/ instead of /'tʃviʃən/.

Respondent 8 comes from Enugu, she is 19 years old and speaks Igbo as her mother tongue, she speaks English as her first foreign language and is learning German as her second foreign language at the University of Nigeria. She scored 10 points in all tasks. In task 1, she replaces /i/ with /ʊ/ in the first syllable. She pronounces /'bʊdʊŋ/ instead of /'bildʊŋ/. In task 2, she replaces /tʃ/ with /t/ in the first syllable and also omits /ç/ in the last syllable. She pronounces the word as /tu'zaməŋgərənət/ instead of /tsu'zaməŋgərəçnət/. In task 4, she replaces /ɛ:/ with /a:/ on the first syllable. She pronounces /'ja:ɛliç/ instead of /'jɛ:ɛliç/. In task 5, she replaces /i/ with /ʊ/ on the first syllable. She pronounces the word as /'bʊdʊŋ/ instead of /'bildʊŋ/. In task 6, she replaces /tʃ/ with /t/. She pronounces /'tɪvɪʃən/ instead of /'tʃviʃən/. In task 7, she replaces /n/ with /i/ on the first syllable and puts /ə/ between the consonants, he pronounces /'aɪʃli:səndə/ instead of /'anʃli:sndə/. In task 8, she omitted /x/ on the first syllable. Due to this omission, she pronounces /'fahə:xʃu:lə/ instead of /'faxhə:xʃu:lə/. In task 9, she omits /t/ in the first syllable and inserts /ə/ between the consonants of the last syllable. She pronounces /ɛn'fɑidən/ instead of /ɛnt'fɑidn/. In task 10 with the highest number of consonant clusters, she omits /kçʃ/ on the first syllable. She pronounced the word as /'dʌnitliç/ instead of /'dʊkçʃnitliç/.

Respondent 9 comes from Ebonyi State. Her mother tongue is Igbo, She is studying German at the University of Nigeria. She scored 10 points in all tasks. In task 1 with two consonant clusters on the second syllable, she replaces /i/ with /ʊ/ on the first syllable. She pronounces the word as /'bʊdʊŋ/ instead of /'bildʊŋ/. In task 2 with three syllable clusters on the fourth syllable, she replaces /tʃ/ with /t/ on the first syllable and omits /ç/. She pronounces the word as /'tuzaməŋgərənət/ instead of /tsu'zaməŋgərəçnət/. In task 4 with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, she replaces /ɛ:/ with /a:/ on the first syllable. She pronounces the word as /'ja:ɛliç/ instead of /'jɛ:ɛliç/. In task 5, which also contained three consonant clusters on the first syllable, she replaces /u:/ with /ʊ/ on the first syllable. She pronounced /'ʃʊlgelt/ instead of /'ʃu:lgelt/. In task 6 with three consonant clusters in the first syllable, the respondent also replaces /tʃ/ with /ti/ on the first syllable. She pronounces /'tɪvɪʃən/ instead of /'tʃviʃən/. In task 7 with four consonant clusters on the second syllable, she replaces /n/ with /i/ and inserts /ə/ on the second syllable. For this reason, she pronounces the word as /'aɪʃli:səndə/ instead of /'anʃli:sndə/. In task 8 with five consonant clusters on the

third syllable, she omitted /x/ in the second syllable. She pronounced the word as /'faxhɔ:ʃu:lə/ instead of /'faxhɔ:xʃu:lə/. In task 9, also with five consonant clusters in the first syllable, she replaces /ai/ with /i:/ in the second syllable and inserts /ə/ in the third syllable. She pronounced the word as /'entʃi:dən/ instead of /entʃaidn/. In task 10 with seven consonant clusters on the second syllable, she omitted /kç/. She pronounces the word as /'donitliç/ instead of /'dɔkçfnitliç/.

Respondent 11 comes from Enugu, speaks fluent Igbo as her mother tongue, and studies German at the University of Ibadan. She scored a total of 10 points in task 8, which was the only task she was able to complete without omitting consonants or inserting vowels. When reading the text, she made several mistakes in tasks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10. In task 1, with two consonant clusters on the first syllable, she replaced /i/ with /ʊ/ in the first syllable, pronouncing the word as /'bɔldɔŋ/ instead of /'bildɔŋ/. In task 2, with three consonant clusters on the fourth syllable, she replaced /ts/ with /t/ on the first syllable and omitted /ç/ on the last syllable. She pronounced the word as /tu'zaməŋgərənət/ instead of /tsu'zaməŋgərəçnət/. In task 3, with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, she replaced /au/ with /ʊ/ in the second syllable, pronouncing the word as /ɛv'ʃtɔnliç/ instead of /ɛv'ʃtəʊnliç/. In task 4, with three consonant clusters in the first syllable, she replaced /ɛ:/ with /a:/ in the first syllable. She pronounced the word as /'ja:ɛliç/ instead of /'jɛ:ɛliç/. In task 5, which also had three consonant clusters in the first syllable, she replaced /u:/ with /ʊ/ in the first syllable and pronounced the word as /'ʃɔgɛlt/ instead of /'ʃu:lgɛlt/. In task 6, with three consonant clusters in the first syllable, she replaced /ts/ with /t/ in the first syllable, pronouncing the word as /'tɪvɪʃən/ instead of /'tsvɪʃən/. In task 7, with four consonant clusters in the second syllable, the test subject omitted /l/ in the second syllable and inserted /ə/ in the third syllable, pronouncing the word as /'anʃi:səndə/ instead of /'anʃli:sndə/. In task 9, with five consonant clusters on the first syllable, she replaced /ai/ with /i:/ on the second syllable and inserted /ə/ on the last syllable. Due to this replacement and insertion, she pronounced the word as /'entʃi:dən/ instead of /entʃaidn/. In task 10, which had the highest number of consonant clusters (seven consonant clusters on the second syllable), she omitted /kç/ and no insertion was noted.

Respondent 12 comes from Enugu State, speaks Igbo fluently as her mother tongue, she is studying German at the University of Nigeria Nsuka. She scored 40 points in all the task, In task 1 with two consonant clusters on the first syllable, she replaced /i/ with /ʊ/ in the first syllable. She pronounced the word as /'bɔldɔŋ/ instead of /'bildɔŋ/. In task 5, with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, she replaced /u:/ with /ʊ/ on the first syllable, pronouncing the word as /'ʃɔgɛlt/ instead of /'ʃu:lgɛlt/. In task 6, also with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, she replaced /ts/ with /ti/ on the first syllable, pronouncing /'tɪvɪʃən/ instead of /'tsvɪʃən/. In task 7 with four consonant clusters on the second syllable, she omitted /ʃ/ in the second syllable and inserted /ə/ in the third syllable, the respondent pronounced the word as /'anli:səndə/ instead of /'anʃli:sndə/. In task 9 with five consonant clusters on the second syllable, she omitted /t/, replaced /ai/ with /i:/ and inserted /ə/ into the second syllable. She pronounced the word as /ɛŋʃi:dən/ instead of /entʃaidn/. In task 10 with seven consonant clusters on the second syllable, she replaced /kç/ with /x/ in the first, pronouncing the word as /dɔxnitliç/ instead of /'dɔkçfnitliç/.

Respondent 13 comes from Enugu, speaks Igbo fluently, She scored a total of 40 points in all the tasks. In task 1, she replaced /i/ with /ʊ/ on the first syllable and pronounced the word as /'bɔldɔŋ/ instead of /'bildɔŋ/. In task 3 with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, she replaces /aʊ / with /ü/ on the second syllable,

she pronounces the word as /ɛɐ̃'ʃtʉnliç/ instead of /ɛɐ̃'ʃtaonliç/. In task 4, also with three clusters on the first syllable, she replaced /ɛ:/ with /a:/ on the first syllable. She pronounced the word as /'ja:ɛliç/ instead of /'jɛ:ɛliç/. In task 5 with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, she replaces /u:l/ with /ʊ/ on the first syllable and pronounces /'bʊdʊŋ/ instead of /'bildʊŋ/. In task 6 with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, she replaces /ts/ with /t/ on the first syllable, pronouncing the word as /'tɪvɪʃən/ instead of /'tʃvɪʃən/. In task 8, she omits the /x/ in the second syllable. She pronounces /'fəxhɔ:ʃu:lə/ instead of /'fəxhɔ:xʃu:lə/.

Respondent 14 comes from Anambra State, speaks fluent Igbo, He studies German at the University of Nsuka. He scores 10 points in all the task. In task 1 with two consonant clusters on the second syllable, he replaces /i/ with /ʊ/ on the first syllable. As a result, he pronounced /'bʊldʊŋ/ instead of /'bildʊŋ/. In task 2 with three consonant clusters on the fourth syllable, he replaces /ts/ with /t/ and omits /ç/ on the first and fourth syllables and inserts /ai/ between the consonants, pronouncing the word as /tu'zaməŋgərainət/ instead of /tsu'zaməŋgərəçnət/. In task 3 with three consonant clusters in the first syllable, he omits /ʃ/ in the second syllable and adds nothing. He therefore pronounces /gɛtaonliç/ instead of /ɛɐ̃'ʃtaonliç/. In task 4 with three consonant clusters in the first syllable, he replaces /ɛ:/ with /a:/ and pronounces /'ja:ɛliç/ instead of /'jɛ:ɛliç/. In task 6 with three consonant clusters in the first syllable, the respondent replaces the cluster /ts/ with /ti/. He therefore pronounces /'tɪvɪʃən/ instead of /'tʃvɪʃən/. In task 7 with four consonant clusters in the second syllable, the respondent omits /ʃ/ on the second syllable and added /ə/. He pronounces /'anli:səndə/ instead of /'anʃli:sndə/. In task 8, he omits /x/ in the second syllable. In task 9, he has omitted /t/ in the first syllable and inserted /ə/ in the last syllable. In task 10 with the highest consonant clusters, he omitted /kç/ in the first syllable.

Respondent 15 is from Anambra State, speaks Igbo fluently as her mother tongue. She is studying German at the University of Nigeria. She scores 20 points in all the tasks. In task 1, she replaces /il/ with /ʊ/ on the first syllable. She pronounces /'bʊdʊŋ/ instead of /'bildʊŋ/. In task 2, she replaces /ts/ with /t/ on the first syllable and omits /ç/ on the second syllable. In task 4, she replaces /ɛ:/ with /a:/ and pronounces /'ja:ɛliç/ instead of /'jɛ:ɛliç ɛliç/. In task 5, she replaces /u:/ with /ʊ/ on the first syllable and pronounces the word as /'ʃʊlgɛlt/ instead of /'ʃu:lgɛlt/. In task 7, she omitted /ʃ/ in the second syllable and inserted /ə/ in the third syllable. She pronounces /'anli:səndə/ instead of /'anʃli:sndə/. In task 8, she has omitted /x/ in the first syllable and inserted /n/ in the fourth syllable. Therefore, she pronounces /'fəhɔ:xʃu:lən/ instead of /'fəxhɔ:xʃu:lə/. In task 9, she replaces /ɛnt/ with /ai/ in the first syllable and inserts /ə/. The interviewee pronounces /ai'ʃaidən/ instead of /ɛnt'ʃaidn/. In task 10, she omitted /kçʃ/ in the first syllable and no insertion was detected in the pronunciation.

Respondent 16 comes from Enugu, she is 23 years old, speaks fluent Igbo as her mother tongue, English as her first foreign language and German as her second foreign language. She is studying German at the University of Nigeria. She scored 20 points in all tasks. In task 1, she omitted /i/ and /l/ in the first syllable and inserted /ʊ/. She therefore pronounced /'bʊdʊŋ/ instead of /'bildʊŋ/. In task 3, she omitted /ʃ/ and /n/ in the second syllable and inserted /s/. In task 4, she omitted /ɛ:/ and inserted /a:/ in the first syllable. In task 5, she omitted /u:/ and /l/ and inserted /ʊ/ in the first syllable. In task 6, she omitted /ts/ in the first syllable and inserted /ti/. In task 8, she omitted /o:/ and /x/ in the second syllable and inserted /ʊ/. She pronounced /fəx'hʊʃu:lə/ instead of /'fəxhɔ:xʃu:lə/. In task 9, she omitted /nt/ in the first syllable and inserted /ə/ in the

last syllable. She pronounced /ɛnt'faiðən/ instead of /ɛnt'faiðn/. In task 10, she omitted the entire consonant cluster /kçf/ in the first syllable.

Respondent 17 comes from Enugu State, speaks Igbo fluently as her mother tongue, she is studying German at the University of Nigeria. She scored 10 points in all tasks. In task 1, she replaces /i/ with /o/ on the first syllable. She therefore pronounces /'bölduŋ/ instead of /'bilduŋ/. In task 3, she omits /ʃ/ in the second syllable. In task 4, she replaces /ɛ:/ with /a:/ in the first syllable. In task 5, she replaces /u:/ with /o/ in the first syllable. In task 6, she also replaces /ts/ with /ti/ on the first syllable. In task 8, she omits /x/ in the second syllable. She also pronounces /fax'ho:ʃu:lə/ instead of /'faxho:xʃu:lə/. In task 9, she dropped /n/ and /t/ in the first syllable and added /ə/ in the last syllable. She pronounced /ɛ'faiðən instead of /ɛnt'faiðn/.

Respondent 18 comes from Abia State, speaks fluent Igbo, She is studying German at the University of Ibadan. She scored a total of 20 points in all the tasks. In task 1, she replaces /i/ with /o/ on the first syllable, like the previous respondent. In task 2, she replaces /ç/ with /x/ on the 3rd syllable. She pronounces the word as /tsu'zaməŋgərəxnət instead of /tsu'zaməŋgərəçnət/. In task 5, she replaces /u:/ with /o/ on the first syllable. In task 6, she also replaces /ts/ with /t/ on the first syllable and inserts /ai/. In task 7, she replaces /i:/ with /u:/ on the second syllable and inserts /ə/. In task 8, she omits /x/ in the second syllable, pronouncing /fax'ho:ʃu:lə/ instead of /'faxho:xʃu:lə/. In task 9, she omitted /t/ in the first syllable and inserted /ə/ in the last syllable. She pronounces /ɛn'faiðən/ instead of /ɛnt'faiðn/. In task 10, she omits /kç/ in the first syllable and pronounces the word as /'dʊʃnitliç/ instead of /'dʊkçʃnitliç/.

Respondent 19 comes from Enugu State, speaks Igbo fluently as her mother tongue, She is studying German at the University of Nigeria. She scored a total of 10 points in all tasks. In task 1, she replaced /i/ with /o/ and /l/ on the first syllable. In task 2, she replaces /ts/ with /t/ on the first syllable. In task 4, she replaces /ɛ:/ with /a:/ on the first syllable. In task 5, she replaces /u:/ on the first syllable with /o/. In task 6, she replaces /ts/ with /t/ and inserts /ai/ on the first syllable. In task 7, she replaces /i/ with /ai/ in the second syllable. In task 8, she omits /x/ in the first syllable and does not insert a word. In task 9, she replaces /ai/ with /i:/ in the second syllable. In task 10, she omits /kçf/.

Respondent 20 comes from Enugu State, speaks fluent Igbo, She is studying German at the University of Nigeria. She also scored 10 points in all tasks. In task 1, she omitted /i/ and inserted /o/ in the first syllable. In task 2, she omitted /ç/ in the 3rd syllable and inserted /x/. In task 4, she also omitted /ɛ:/ in the first syllable and inserted /a:/, like the previous respondent. In task 5, she omitted /u:/ from the first syllable and inserted /o/. In task 6, she omitted /ts/ and /i/ and inserted /ti/ and /ai/ in the first syllable. In task 7, she omitted /ʃ/ and inserted /ə/ in the third syllable. In task 8, she dropped /x/ in the second syllable and added /n/ in the fourth syllable. In task 9, she omitted /ai/ and added /i/. In task 10, she omitted /kçf/.

Respondent number 21 is from Enugu State, speaks Igbo fluently, She scored 40 points in all the tasks. In task 1, she omitted /i/ from the first syllable and inserted /o/. In task 5, she omitted /u:/ and /l/ and inserted /o/. In task 7, she omitted /n/ in the first syllable and inserted /o/. In task 8, she omitted /x/ from the first syllable and inserted /i:/ in the last syllable. In task 9, she inserted /ə/ in the 3rd syllable. In task 10, she omitted /çf/ in the first syllable and made no insertion.

Respondent 22 comes from Anambra State, speaks fluent Igbo, She is studying German at the University of Nigeria. She scored 20 points in all the tasks. In task 1, she replaced /i/ with /o/. In task 2, she replaced /ə/ with /o/. In task 3, she replaced /au/ in the second syllable with /o/. In task 4, she replaced /ɛ:/ with /a:/ in the first syllable. In task 5, she replaced /u:/ with /o/. In task 6, she replaced /ts/ with /t/ on the first syllable. In task 9, she left out /n/ on the first syllable. In task 10, she omitted /ʃ/ on the first syllable.

Respondent 23 comes from Anambra State, speaks Igbo fluently, She is studying German at the University of Nigeria. She scored 20 points in all tasks. In task 1, the respondent replaced /i/ with /o/ in the first syllable. In task 2, she replaced /ts/ with /t/ in the first syllable. In task 4, she replaced /ɛ:/ with /a:/ in the first syllable. In task 6, she replaced /ts/ with /t/ on the first syllable. In task 7, she omitted /n/ in the first syllable and inserted /ə/ in the second syllable. In task 8, she omitted /x/ from the first syllable. In task 9, she omitted /n/ in the first syllable and inserted /ə/ in the second syllable. In task 10 with the highest consonant clusters, she omitted /kç/ in the first syllable.

Respondent 24 comes from Abia State, speaks fluent Igbo, She is studying German at the University of Nigeria. She scored a total of 20 points in all tasks. In task 1, she replaced /i/ with /o/ on the first syllable. In task 2, like the previous respondent, she replaced /ts/ with /t/ on the first syllable. In task 4, she replaced /ɛ:/ with /a:/ on the first syllable. In task 5, she replaced /u:/ with /o/ on the first syllable. In task 6, she replaced /ts/ with /t/ on the first syllable as expected. In task 8, she omitted /x/ on the second syllable without inserting a vowel. In task 9, she omitted /t/ in the first syllable and inserted /ə/ in the second syllable. In task 10, she omitted /kçʃ/.

Respondent 25 comes from Enugu State, speaks perfect Igbo, She is studying German at the University of Nigeria. She scored 20 points in all tasks. In task 1, she replaced /i/ with /o/ in the first syllable. In task 2, she replaced /ts/ with /t/ on the first syllable. In task 3, she omitted /ʃ/ from the second syllable. In task 4, she replaced /ɛ:/ with /a:/ on the first syllable. In task 5, she replaced /u:/ with /o/ on the first syllable. In task 6, she replaced /ts/ with /t/ on the first syllable. In task 9, she omitted /n/ from the first syllable and inserted /ə/ in the last syllable. In task 10, she omitted /kçʃ/ in the second syllable.

#### 4.2 Categorization of the Identified Errors in the spoken language of selected learners

According to the errors identified above, the respondents used three methods when reading the German text. These are: consonant deletion, vowel epenthesis and vowel epithesis. Nevertheless, in this study all errors are categorized on the basis of these three categories. Ellis (1997, p. 23) points out that “classifying errors in this way can help us to diagnose the learning problems of learners at each stage of their development and to show how error patterns change over time”.

##### 4.2.1 Consonant Deletion

The result of the identified errors shows that consonants deletion errors are prominent in all the tasks and they occurred in different syllables as the consonant clusters increase from 2-7. The analysis showed that in task 2, with three consonant clusters on the fourth syllable, Respondent 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24 and 25 deleted the consonant cluster, /çnət/, /t/. /ç/, /tʃ/ and /ə/ on the first and second syllable

respectively. In task 3 with three syllables, respondents 4, 7, 11, 13, 14, 16, 22 and 25 deleted the clusters /ɛp/, /ɛʃ/, /aʊ/, /ʃ/ and /n/ in the first and second syllable. In task 5, respondent 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 24 and 25 deleted /u:l/ cluster in the first syllable. In task 6, all respondents deleted the cluster /tʃ/ in the first syllable. In task 7, respondents 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 7, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 23 deleted the clusters /an/, /anʃ/, /n/, /l/, /ʃ/, /i:/ in the first and second syllable. In task 8, respondents 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24 and 25 deleted the cluster /x/ and /o:/ on the second and third syllable. In task 9, with five consonant clusters on the third syllable, respondents 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 deleted /an/, /ent/, /ai/, /ʃ/ and /nt/. In task 10, which contains seven consonant clusters on the first syllable, respondent 1,3 - 25 deleted the consonant clusters /kç/, /kçʃ/, /ʃ/ on the first and second syllable. This analysis shows that the subjects deleted several consonant clusters during the reading process.

#### 4.2.2 Vowel Epenthesis

Insertion is one of the strategies used by the respondents to maneuver the consonant clusters. These are evident in all the tasks. In Task 1, all the respondents inserted /ʊ/ on the first syllable. In task two, respondent 3 inserted /ə/ on the second syllable. In task 3, respondents 4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17 and 25 inserted /ge/ on the first syllable. In task 4 all respondents inserted /a:/. In task 5 all respondents replace /ʊ/ on the first syllable. In task 7, respondent 1 and 2 inserted /ə/ and /au/ on the first and second syllable. In task 8 respondent 4 inserted /ɛ/ on the third syllable. In task 9, respondent 2 and 3 inserted /ai/ and respondent 6, 7 and 9 inserted /i:/.

#### 4.2.3 Vowel epithesis:

In task 7, respondent 1 added /n/ in the last syllable and in pronouncing the word, the respondent pronounced /'anʃli:sndən/ instead of /'anʃli:sndə/. In task 9 all the respondents added /ə/ at the final syllable as they pronounced the word. They pronounced /ent'ʃaidən/ instead of /ent'ʃaidn/. In task 10, some of the respondents added /x/ in the final syllable and pronounced the word as dɔkçfnitlix/ instead of /dɔkçfnitliç/. With these few examples, it is apparent that the respondents committed epithesis errors while reading the German text presented to them by the researcher.

### 4.3 Analysis of the possible causes of the errors identified according to the interlanguage theory

The identified errors are analyzed according to the three basic principles of Interlingual theory. There are: the over generalization of patterns, transfer of patters from the learner's native language and fossilization.

#### 4.3.1. Over generalization of patterns

The first interlanguage principle is the over generalization of rules in the target language and it is a process often observed in child language acquisition and sometimes referred to as the developmental process. The learner shows signs of having mastered a general rule but does not yet know all the exceptions to that rule. According to Emenanjo (1998, 46), Igbo language has a CV (consonant + vowel) syllable pattern, for that the respondents approached German with such mind set. In Task 1, all respondents inserted the Igbo rounded semi-closed back vowel /ʊ/ on the first syllable. For this reason, the respondents pronounced /'bɔldɔŋ/ instead of /'bildɔŋ/. In task 2 with three consonant clusters on the fifth syllable, respondent 3 inserted /ə/ in place of the German open unrounded vowel /ɛ/ and pronounced /tsu'zaməŋgərəçnət/ instead

of /tsu'zaməngərəçnət/. being similar sounds, the respondents assumed them to be the same in both languages. In task 2, respondent 5 inserted /ai/ at the final syllable and pronounced /tsu'zaməngərəiçnət/ instead of /tsu'zaməngərəçnət/. Respondents 8, 9, 11, 15 and 19 deleted the consonant cluster /ts/ and inserted /t/ on the first syllable. The respondent pronounced /tu'zaməngərəçnət/ instead of /tsu'zaməngərəçnət/. Respondents 14 and 18 also inserted /ai/ on the fourth syllable in task 2. Respondents 18 and 20 deleted the cluster /ç/ on the fifth syllable.

#### 4.3.2 Native language transfer

Native language transfer contributes to the development of interlanguage rules. While it is not the only cognitive process involved (as Lado claims), there is ample research evidence that it influences the development of interlanguage rules. Selinker (1972, 1992, Weinreich, 1968, p. 7) suggests that native language transfer as a cognitive process whereby certain units in the native language are transferred into the target language. For example, learners may perceive rules of the mother tongue as the same as those of the target language. However, some of the respondents transferred some Igbo vowels and consonants into German and thus mispronounced the word. For example, in task 4 with three consonants on the second syllable, most of the respondents inserted /a:/ and deleted /ɛ:/ and pronounced /'ja:əliç/ instead of /'jɛ:əliç/ because the vowel is common in Igbo language. In task 5 with three consonant clusters on the first syllable, all the respondents inserted the Igbo vowel /ʊ/ and deleted the German vowel /u:/ in task 2, for that, they pronounced /fɔlgelt/ instead of /fu:lgelt/. In task 9, respondent 4 inserts a vowel between consonants because Igbo language do not permit consonant cluster in coda.

#### 4.3.3 Fossilization

The central concept of interlanguage is fossilization, i.e. a situation in which learners stop progressing in learning the target language rules. According to Selinker in Lenneberg, (1967, P.65), fossilization occurs because adults who acquire a second language use general cognitive processes, which he termed latent psychological structure, rather than an innate language-specific one, which he termed latent language structure. However, following this view most of the respondents in this study are fossilized, e.g., in task 8, most of the respondents were unable to pronounce the cluster /x/ on the second syllable, they all pronounced /faxho:fu:lə/ instead of /'faxho:xfu:lə/. In task 10 with seven consonant clusters on the first syllable, all the respondents could not pronounce the clusters /kçfn/ on the second syllable, some pronounced /'dʊnitliç/, while others pronounced /'dʊfnitliç/ instead of /'dʊkçfnitliç/.

### 5. Findings

The analyses above have shown that all respondents used in this study committed errors relating to consonants deletion, vowel epenthesis, and epithesis. These errors were committed in relation to the three major principles of Interlingual theory. The study revealed that:

- a) 60% of the respondents omitted consonant clusters on the first, second and third syllables. 40% of the respondents inserted vowels between consonant clusters. 40% inserted vowels after the coda of a closed final syllable, hence, the errors identified were categorized as being related to consonant deletion, vowel epenthesis and vowel epithesis.
- b) It was discovered that German language has 39 phonemes, consisting of 22 consonants /p, b, t, d, k, g, f, v, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, ç, x, m, n, ŋ, l, R, ʁ, j, h/ and 17 oral vowels /ʊ, i:, y:, u:, ɪ, ɪ, ʏ, ʊ, e:, ei:, ø:, o:, ə/, while

Igbo language has 36 phonemes consisting of 28 consonants /p, b, t, d, k, g, kp, gb, kw, gw, m, n, ɲ, ŋ, f, v, s, z, ʃ, ɣ, h, tʃ, dʒ, l, r, j, w / and 8 vowels /a, e, I, I, O, O ə, u/, because of this German has some consonants phonemes that do not exist in Igbo language, i.e. [ç] [x] [ʒ] [R] [v] and this was the reason for most of the pronunciation errors committed by the respondents. This was evident in tasks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 where respondents could not pronounce [ç] [x] [R] [v] in the first, second and third syllables, hence, they delete consonants clusters and insert vowels between consonants. This is evident in all the tasks that only respondents 1, 12 and 21 scored 40% in all the tasks.

- c) It was also discovered that Igbo language does not tolerate consonant clusters on the first, second or third syllable and that the Igbo language has an open syllable structure, i.e. a CV, VCV or CVV syllable structure while German language permits consonants cluster on the first, second and third syllable and has a VCC.VCCCCC syllable structure (Friederike, 1990, p.45).

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has established that consonant clustering in the first, second, third and fourth syllables imposes major learning problem on Igbo- learners of German in the internalization of German syllable structures. According to the result obtained from the data analyzed, most Igbo learners of German at the Universities, have not yet internalized the German syllable structures, hence, they use the method of consonant deletion, Vowel epenthesis and Epithesis.

The results of the analysis were used as evidence that Igbo German learners in Nigerian universities have not yet fully mastered the syllable structure of German. This underscores the fact that much attention has not been paid to the area of phonology in German language learning in Nigerian Universities, hence learners find it difficult to internalize the correct syllable structure of the target language (German). The study conducted among Igbo learners of German are not only limited to the area of phonology but also other areas of language competence. This calls for a more practical, innovative and efficient method of teaching German in our universities. Finally, the use of language laboratories should be intensified to help these learners to be familiar with the syllable pattern of German.

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