**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA**

THE TEACHING OF ORAL ENGLISH IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS: A CASE

STUDY OF S.D.A. SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, AKYEM SEKYERE

RICHARD OSEI-TUFFOUR

(7150080018)

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**DECLARATION**

**Student's Declaration**

1, Richard Osei-Tuffour, declare that this dissertation, aside the quotations and references contained in published works, which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work and it has not been submitted either in part or in whole for another degree elsewhere.

**Signature** …………………………………….

**Date** ………………………………….

**Supervisor's Declaration**

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

**Name**: Dr. Charlotte Fofo Lomotey

**Signature**: …………………………

Date: ,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my children; Henry, Henrietta, Edward, Kelvin, Doreen and Prince. It is also dedicated to my sisters; Lily Tuffour and Doris0 Serwaa Tuffour.

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## ABSTRACT

The research work looked into the teaching of oral English in S.D.A Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere. It discussed related works and the topic, the importance of oral English and motivation for the teaching of oral English, the number of times teachers teach the subject and how familiar they are with the topics under oral English. The work also discussed among other things students' reasons for not taking this aspect of the English language seriously. They attributed this lack of seriousness on their part to various reasons among which are unavailability of text books, audio machines, lukewarm attitude teachers exhibit towards the teaching of oral English. The results of the study proved that most students have so many challenges with respect to English. The author of this work used qualitative method of research in this study. This is because, it is said to be the most appropriate method when undertaking a research work in languages. The framework of this dissertation was to look at the challenges confronting students and teachers of English in S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem – Sekyere with respect to Oral English.

## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 2.0 Background to the Study

English Language has become a world language rather than the language of only English speaking countries such as United Kingdom and United States of America. This is because the number of people who use English as a means of communication exceeds much more than the number of people who speak it as their mother tongue.

Crystal (2003). Ike (2009) defines communication as "the process by which people share information, ideas and feelings". It involves spoken and written words, body language, personal mannerism and style the physical environment or anything that adds meaning to a message. Language is therefore an important aspect in communication because it is the vehicle that conveys meanings to two or more persons in a communication encounter. English Language has also been accepted as the sole official language in many countries in the world. It has been a strong unifying and integrating force that has succeeded in bringing together and helping in forging cooperation among races of the world, especially among the varied ethnic groupings in Ghana. The language has also become the medium of instruction for all levels of education in Ghana. It is used for writing minutes of meetings, memoranda, official letters and publications (Sabmi 2001). In fact, it has become the official language in all facets of the Ghanaian life such that it is considered prestigious by every Ghanaian. This is because every Ghanaian who wants to succeed in the world of work needs English to be able to perform. It is therefore believed that a good grasp and performance in English is a ticket to a good performance in other subjects or field of discipline.

Surprisingly, current events have signaled a deterioration in the standard of English among Senior High students, and it has been a source of concern to people in charge of teaching the language in our schools. It is important to note that with the exception of Ghanaian languages and French examinations, all other subjects are conducted in English. As such, a good knowledge of English would enhance proper understanding of the questions and finally affect the answers that the students provide. In writing these answers, students tend to make a lot of errors. Apart from the errors in these other subjects, students have been found to commit errors in both written and spoken English. These errors, when not checked, have the potential to contribute immensely to poor performance among students, and this will negatively affect their final grade in English.

In a world where people interact with one another on daily basis, one cannot only use written language but speech as well. This means that speech plays an extremely important role in communication. For students to better master English speech, they need to be taught how to produce speech sounds (that is; vowels and consonants), as well as non-segmental features of English. Apart from using it for their everyday interactions, English speech or oral English is examined as part of the English final examinations. Unfortunately, it appears there is not much attention given to this aspect of English and this makes it difficult to determine how students are prepared for this crucial aspect of the language. For example, there is overwhelming evidence that most English teachers in Ghanaian Senior High Schools do not teach the oral aspect of English. Rather, they focus all their attention on only the grammar. A lot of factors may account for this. For example, most teachers usually feel uncomfortable and incapable to handle spoken English and as a result, the test has been reduced to only listening comprehension with no emphasis on speaking. And even if it is taught, the mechanics, that is,

how it is produced is never taught. Another factor that may contribute to this is the fact that the test itself is listening in nature. In this sense, a tape is played for students to listen to and then choose the answers that they consider correct from a set of possible answers. While students are expected to compulsory answer the questions in this area, one wonders whether they perceive the right pronunciation and also identify the correct sounds in the words.

In most universities in Ghana, spoken English is a course offered to students. The fundamental aim of this is to prepare them to be able to teach oral English. However, one cannot tell the extent to which teachers in Senior High Schools have been trained in spoken English. This aside, it is not also known whether teachers themselves have the relevant books they use in teaching this aspect. In addition, the environment outside the classroom also plays an important role in relation to speech training. This is because it is not only in the classroom that the students learn speech. For instance, they can learn through radio and television just to mention a few. In spite of this, students may have problems producing the sound of English, and when this happens, it may impede effective communication. Thus, it is pertinent to train students in English speech in addition to writing, reading comprehension and grammar so that they can perform better in and after school. This study examines the teaching and learning of oral English in a Senior High school in the Atiwa District in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

The background of the students in the school under study with respect to Oral English is nothing to write home about. As a matter of fact, teachers of English in this school seldom teach the Oral English aspect of the English Language. Several factors account for this unfortunate situation. Among which are lack of audio gadgets to practise oral skills, lack of knowledge on the topics to be treated under Oral English, to mention but a few.

## 1.2.    Statement of the Problem

Due to the new wave of cultural awareness which is moving across the country, people have drawn much closer to their local languages. This in one way or the other has affected the learning of the English Language. Although English has established itself as the official language in the country, it has become a challenge for students to display some amount of flexibility in the use of the language especially in the oral form. As already indicated, if students are unable to use oral language, their utterances may sound unintelligible. Eventually, they may become unsuccessful at oral communication. The reason for this poor performance in oral English communication can be attributed to most teachers' inability to teach the phonetics and phonology of English.

It is no secret that there are teachers of English who are not trained to teach English, but have degrees in other subjects such as Psychology, Fine Arts, Sociology and Social Work. This usually happens when such teachers are posted to schools where their services may not be needed. In such situations, rather than leaving for other schools, they forcibly agree to stay and teach subjects they have not trained in, and often, English language becomes the most available subject because it is studied by all and so more teachers are most always needed to teach it. Apart from the pressure of such teachers being a challenge, some English teachers also cannot teach the subject well, especially in the area of speech work.

It is interesting to note that speech work is an essential part of the subject most especially because it is examinable at the end of the students' stay in school. However, if teachers cannot teach this area effectively, then students are likely to also have problems with their speech, especially in situations where they may be expected to utilize these features.

Incorrect pronunciation may also lead to problems in communication. In addition, students' inability to produce the English speech sounds can also negatively affect their performance in the oral English examinations. This is because they may choose an answer that may not be the right one. When their scripts are marked, a lot of marks may be deducted and this means that the students will lose these marks. Eventually, results in low marks and low grade in the English language paper, and since English is a core subject, a low grade may mean that students may not be able to enter university.

In the opinion of Gubbins and Holt (2002), basic English language knowledge has steadily become a necessity in everyday activities. This is because good pronunciation is needed for effective communication. However, with teachers' inability to teach speech work and its resultant effect on students' performance, it can be argued that a problem exists in our Senior High Schools, including those in the Atiwa district, and this needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, there is no known study on how teachers in Senior High Schools in the district teach this aspect of English, as well as whether students have any problems with speech work or not. Without mincing words, students in the two Senior High Schools in the district, have serious challenges with speech work. Teachers of English in these schools seem to have focused their attention on the other aspect of the English Language. That is, comprehension, summary and grammar. It is against this background that this study is undertaken to examine the teaching and learning of oral English in this school (SDA Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere).

## 1.2    Objective of the Study

This study seeks to examine the teaching and learning of oral English in Senior High Schools in the Atiwa District of the Eastern Region. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1.  to examine the English sounds that students find difficult to produce and challenges or problems they encounter in the learning of oral English

2.  to determine the aspects of oral English that teachers teach;

3.  to determine the implications of the results for classroom practices;

## 1.4    Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1.  what are the English sounds that students find difficult to produce and what problems or challenges they encounter in the learning of oral English based on the results?

2.  what aspects of oral English do teachers teach?

3.  what implications may these have on classroom practice?

## 1.4    Relevance of the Study

This study would be of tremendous significance to students learning language, teachers of English and any other person who use English as a language. This study has the potential to assist teachers of English to have a deep insight into some possible problems faced by students in the learning and speaking of English. The results of this study would create an awareness of the possible challenges that students face in the learning of oral English. This way, teachers may make a conscious effort to develop strategies and skills that will help students overcome

their difficulties in this area. More importantly, this research would draw the attention of English teachers to the need to adopt modern linguistically structured approaches to language learning as those might to minimize the possible difficulties that students face. Finally, the study would also direct the attention of the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the Ghana Education. This way, likely modifications to the English language curriculum and syllabus may be possible as those modifications are likely to minimize problems confronting the Ghana Education Service (GES) with respect to the teaching of oral English.

## 1.5    Limitation

The research was conducted only in one of the two Senior High schools in the Atiwa District. It could have been expanded to over three or four senior high schools in other adjoining districts. However, this was not possible because of certain constrains: This included financial and time constrains: The researcher did not have enough to travel throughout the Eastern Region for data/even though the results obtained can be said to cut across almost all students in the region. Also, the time used for the study was not enough for the researcher to cover all schools in the adjoining districts. The study is therefore limited to this school because it is where the researcher teaches.

## 1.6    Organization of Chapters

The rest of the study is organized as follows: chapter 2 is a discussion of the literature review. This includes a discussion of what is speech, why it is important, the place of speech in the society, causes of students' speech problems, the English teacher and speech problems,

improving speech problems and a review of related literature. Chapter 3 describes the data and procedure adopted in the study, the description and discussion of the participants, data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study. In the chapter, the analysis revealed that the students have difficulties in their speech due to a number of problems. Finally, chapter 5 presents a summary of the results. In this chapter, the researcher brings to light ways by which students' English speech could be better improved.

One of such ways is the provision of a good foundation regarding the production of the English speech sounds. The chapter finally concludes with implications for the teachers of English as well as suggestions for future research.

## 1.7    Conclusion

This chapter provides a foundation within which this research study is built. It has discussed the background to the study, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, the relevance of the study and the limitations.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.0     Introduction**

This chapter aims at reviewing what other researchers have already written on the teaching of oral English. The chapter also presents a review on what pronunciation is, the importance of the teaching and learning of oral English and its effect on learner's improvement of speaking skills as well as factors influencing the teaching and learning of oral English.

**2.1     Teaching of Oral English in Ghana**

A pilot study conducted by Adeyinka (1998) revealed that students recognize the value of spoken English in contemporary society. He asserts that students would appreciate it very much if teachers of English adopt more communicative approaches in teaching oral English. In consonance with this, Odoi-Anim (2005), observes that the current approach in English language pedagogy in Ghana that sees language as a grammar rather than a means of communication is deficient. One can realize from Adiyinka's claim that it is one thing furnishing teachers in the classrooms with the required logistics for the teaching of Oral English, and another thing actually teaching it, because some English teachers treat this aspect of the language with laxity and "contempt". Kpodugbe (1986), for instance, notes that nobody really takes the teaching of the spoken English seriously. The few who do deal with it at the segmental level and leave the suprasegemental level". As a result, students are left half-baked, making the serious ones doubt the competence of their teachers.    Another problem is the situation prevailing in some community schools. Teachers of English in such schools and their classrooms are not equipped with logistics to help them teach effectively.

**2.2      Functions of oral language**

One of the functions of oral language is the maintenance of social relationships. Most people spend a great deal of their everyday lives in 'chat'; where that the primary purpose is to be nice to the person they are talking to. Brown and Yule (1983, p. 19) declare that "such primarily interactional chats are frequently characterised by constantly shifting topics and a great deal of agreement on them". From this assertion, it can be deduced that one way of maintaining social relationships is to interact with one another through listening and the spoken word. Brown and Yule (198, p. 21) add that this kind of action yields a situation in which "The participating speakers should end up feeling comfortable with each other and friendly".

**2.2.1   Stress**

In speech, words are formed from a combination of sound units. Each word has a set of sounds that are produced together to form a sound unit. There are words with one or more units. For instance, "gather" is made up of two sound units, and these units are "ga+ther", that is, the first two letters form a unit while the last four letters from another unit. The units of sounds that come together in a single utterance are referred to as syllables. There are words with one syllable while others have as many as six or more syllables.

In oral English, some degree of pressure is exerted on certain syllables in a word or in words in a sentence. This means that the various syllables of a word or words in a sentence are not uttered with the same degree of energy or force. This varying degree of force on a syllable is known as stress. Dolphyne (1988, p. 10) defines stress as "the relative energy with which a syllable is uttered". This is a working definition of stress for this study, and it agrees with that

of Williams (1988, p. 26) which explains it as "the degree of force with which a sound or syllable is uttered".

In English, some syllables are pronounced with stronger effort than others. The syllables with stronger energy exerted on them are said to have primary stress while those with less energy exerted on are said to have secondary stress. Therefore, primary stress is where a syllable receives the strongest degree of force, while the secondary stress is a stress that is not as strong as the primary stress. Every word in English has at least one syllable being stressed.

A word which has one syllable means that the syllable is usually stressed, but when it has more than one syllable, usually one syllable is stressed and the others unstressed. What teachers of English teaching speakers of African languages should bear in mind is that English is a stress-timed language, and that the English system of stressed and unstressed syllables in words and sentences is unfamiliar to students whose first language has a system where each syllable is given about the same amount of stress.

### 2.2.2 Intonation

The overall meaning of an utterance comes not only from the actual words and stress patterns, but also from the rise and fall in pitch. The sound changes as a result of the rise and fall of the voice when speaking is termed intonation, especially when the rise and fall in pitch creates an effect on the meaning of what is said. Dolphyne (1988, p. 14) defines intonation "as the variations which take place in the pitch of the voice in connected speech". The functions of pitch in English is related to whole phrases or sentences at a time. Pitch variations are used to differentiate between sentences with different grammatical functions. For instance,

i) She slept. (This is statement, using falling pitch)

ii) She slept? (This is a question, using rising pitch)

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Intonation adds considerably to the meaning of a particular sentence. By this, intonation reveals the attitude behind the voice, that is, it expresses the speaker's mood. Fei-Donkor (2003, p. 32) states "intonation is as important in conveying meaning as the grammar and words themselves that make up utterances". The same set of words can convey completely different meanings depending on the intonation used on them. From the above discussion, therefore, intonation can be described as the set of patterns a speaker uses on his focused words to convey his intended meaning. It is an integral part of the language, and communication may break down when a speaker does not use the recognised patterns.

In a study, Odamtten (1994) reveals at least ten different tunes or patterns of intonation, each conveying a set of different meanings. Some of the shades of meaning they convey are commands, statements of facts, surprise, excitement, disbelief, persuading (cajoling), and questions/answers to *wh-* question and *yes-no* questions. In this study, all the tunes have been grouped into two tunes. The reason is that the West African Examinations Council (2005), on the Regulations and Syllabuses for Senior Secondary Schools Examinations, expects both teachers of English and candidates in West Africa to emphasize and be aware of the following:

*Candidates should be made aware of the different forms English intonation takes in relation to the grammar of the language and the attitude conveyed by rising patterns. They should also realize that whereas the normal place for the changing pitch in an intonation pattern is on the last stressed syllable of the utterance, placing the changing pitch elsewhere implies a contrast to the item on which this changing pitch falls. Candidates should note, in addition, that any unstressed syllable following but continues the rise if the patterns is rising.*

(pp. 246-247)

### 2.2.3  Functions of the tunes

i)     They express the speaker's feeling about the person to whom he is speaking the person he is talking about, and the topic he is talking about'

ii)    They convey the speaker's mood, anger, happiness or worry' The choice of the appropriate intonation conveys these different moods.

iii)   The tunes convey the prevailing atmosphere either in general or between the speaker and those he is speaking to. The use of the appropriate intonation patterns will indicate whether the atmosphere (situation) is formal or informal, sad or happy, and hostile or friendly.

iv)    The tunes again convey the relationship between the speaker and those or the one he or she is talking to, whether they are friends or foes, peers or younger or older, superior or inferior or equals in rank, and whether their relationship is familiar or distant, and new or long-standing.

The intonation patterns or tunes used on focused word; that is, the important words that convey each piece of information, clearly indicate these relationships.

### 2.3     Listening comprehension

Brown and Yule (1983) assert that the term *listening* is used in language teaching to refer to a complex process that allows us to understand spoken language. Listening, the most widely used language skill, is often used in conjunction with the other skills; speaking, reading and writing. Listening is a goal-oriented activity. Here, listening involves "bottom-up" processing where listeners attend to data in the incoming speech signal. Listening again involves "top down" processing, where listeners utilize prior knowledge and expectations to create meaning. Listening is not just a skill in language performance, but is also a critical

means of acquiring a second language. Listening is the channel in which we process language in real time. This involves employing pacing and units of encoding and pausing that are unique to spoken language.

In listening comprehension, it seems naturally reasonable to assume that the listener would understand the language addressed to him by the speaker. Sadly, this apparently natural process does not seem to produce the desired results. One of the possible reasons of this occurrence is that students or learners are taught to speak slowly and clearly, and their teachers of English address them in public style, which is also slow and clear (Brown & Yule, 1983). This is a problem because native speakers, much of the time, do not speak slowly and particularly clearly. Another possible reason that causes learners not to be able to understand the language addressed to them is that they are often only exposed to one accent of English, usually only that spoken by their instructors and as spoken only by them. The reason in this second cause is that the normal habit of simplification which characterizes the accent may be lost when the teacher speaks slowly and 'artificially' clearly.

In listening comprehension, it is expected that students would:

i.   Listen with rapt attention

ii.  Focus and follow the flow of ideas or the trend of conversation.

iii. Guard against any form of distraction

iv.  Be cautious in choosing their answers.

v.   Listen for specific information.

vi.  Obtain the gist of what is being said, and also follow directions and instructions

vii. Be able to identify and interpret intonation pattern

viii. Be able to recognized the function of structures, such as interrogative as request

ix.     Be able to distinguish between phonemes, for instance /*d*/ and /*θ*/

## 2.4     Importance of pronunciation/oral English teaching and learning

Communication in English at the international level has turned into a worldwide phenomenon. It is in this vein that Philipson (2003) intimates that its significance is not only considerable in the fields of politics, commerce, technology and media but is mostly irreplaceable in the spheres of professional qualifications, education systems and economy as it brings vigour to all its aspects. According to Kirkpatrick (2007, p. 16), "English is a language of business, marketing and other important area of life". Ghana, having been colonized by Britain, adopted English as its official language during independence to serve as a medium for politics, education, the media, trade, as well as a lingua franca. Gubbins and Holt (2002) add that basic English language knowledge has steadily become a necessity also in business as it helps not only to bound good business and public relations but also makes communication with business partners and competitors easier.

Good pronunciation is therefore needed to facilitate effective communication. In connection with this, Phillipson (2003) claims that without English, the processes of globalization and internationalization would be impossible. As a result of English language's worldwide impact, more than a quarter of the world's population is nowadays fluent or competent in English (Crystal, 2003). The number of speakers who use English as their second language heavily surpasses those who use English as their mother tongue (Underhill, 2005). This also means that an English conversation is most often held by participants who share neither a common first language nor a culture and for whom the English language is the foreign language they have chosen for their communication (Gubbins & Holt, 2002).

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Although the necessity of improving the pronunciation of English has been made evident to both teachers and learners, many students still mispronounce some sounds. With respect to the importance of teaching and learning of oral English, Miskulastikova (2012) intimates that teaching English will expose learners to as many activities as possible in order to make them realize what their pronunciation is like in comparison with the pronunciation of native English speakers. In this regard, Underhill (2005) also asserts that the important thing in teaching English is to help students to make their speech sound intelligible to their listeners.

Furthermore, Gilakjani (2011) emphasizes on the importance of oral English by saying that it is the most important skill of spoken English. This is to say that before one becomes a proficient speaker of English, he/she should be able to pronounce words correctly. Hismanoglu (2006) also adds that the importance of teaching pronunciation cannot be over emphasized. In addition, Goodwin (2001, p. 117) notes that "the teaching of pronunciation is so crucial to our students". In support of this argument, Lund (2003, p.16) observes that "pronunciation is the only aspect of language that calls for a close interaction between the cognitive and physiological processes. In acquiring new sounds, we are also dealing with a complex re-organizing of the articulatory processes".

Good English pronunciation will make people understand the speaker easily and be willing to listen to him/her. Conversely, poor English pronunciation may confuse people and lead to misunderstanding, even if one uses advanced English grammar or vocabulary. While we can use simple words or grammar structures to make people understand us, we cannot use simple pronunciation. Not surprisingly, pronunciation instruction plays a significant role in English, especially those who teach it as a second language, should place the teaching of pronunciation at the centre of their teaching. This will help learners develop the abilities that

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will cater for their communication needs. Pronunciation is however neglected in classes because teachers do not have enough time during lessons. Sometimes, even when teachers make up time to teach, attention is usually given to drills and this discourages learners (Machackova, 2012). Scrivener (2005) also argues that neglecting pronunciation may be due to teachers themselves feeling more uncertain about pronunciation than about grammar and lexis. They may also feel that they do not have enough technical knowledge to help students appropriately.

Mikulastikova (2012,p.12) opines that "the fact that teaching English pronunciation is usually neglected may not always be the result of teachers' indifference but it can rather express teachers doubts of not being able to teach English pronunciation the right way". Kelly (2007), p.13) however, argues that teachers of English should note that they do not have to be experts in phonetics before they could teach pronunciation. In his view, once a teacher has basic knowledge in phonetics he/she can help learners to benefit from that knowledge. Thus, teachers do not need to know everything concerning pronunciation before they can teach it since they are not native speakers of English.

Wray and Bloom (2006, p.6) further contend that "much careful thought has been given to the selection and the teaching of vocabulary of English, but pronunciation with its complementary sounds has been neglected in spite of the warning and advice given by some phoneticians". People generally take great pain to read widely in order to increase their command of idioms, forgetting that their pronunciations need to be clear enough to an acceptable standard for perfect intelligibility. To this, Sharkey (2003, p. 27) confirms that "the main aim of improving English grammar is not to achieve a perfect imitation of native accent, simply to get the learner to produce accurately enough to be easily and comfortably

comprehensible to other competent speakers". He reiterates that the teaching of pronunciation should aim at making the speaker speak a kind of language that will be understood by other speakers and to understand other speakers when they speak. However, when the individual words are not well pronounced, they will result in unintelligible meaning.

## 2.5    Views on English pronunciation teaching and learning

Hismanoglu (2006) claims that the conventional wisdom of the late 1960s and early 1970s held that native-like pronunciation could not be taught anyway, the cognitive code approach de-emphasized pronunciation in favour of grammar and vocabulary. He argues that it was during those years that questions were asked about the roles of oral English in the ESL/EFL curriculum. The question was whether the focus of the programmes and the instruction methods were effective or not. Hismanoglu (2006) also indicates that pronunciation programmes until then was meaningless, non-communicative drills and exercise activities. However, with the emergence of the communicative approach, foreign language teaching now focuses on both fluency and accuracy. Carey (2002) maintains that though oral English is not an explicit feature in this mode of instruction, it has stressed the prominence of pronunciation. Students can be expected to perform well in the pronunciation of English if the pronunciation component becomes an integral part of oral communication. Unfortunately, although the communicative approach to foreign language teaching makes pronunciation teaching better than before, teachers still feel reluctant to teach it.

In view of this, MacDonald (2002) conducted a study to find out why teachers of English do not teach oral English. Six participants were chosen. They indicated that pronunciation was not enough to meet the needs of the students they were then teaching. The six teachers also added that they were not good at teaching it. He chose a seventh respondent

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who also expressed his dislike for pronunciation and as a result teaches it infrequently. MacDonald further chose the eighth teacher who also expressed her dislike for pronunciation. She added that her teaching skills are more unsatisfactory in terms of teaching pronunciation than for the other aspects of English. From the results, MacDonald concluded that English teachers mostly do not place emphasis on pronunciation compared to the other aspects of English.

On learners' perspectives on communication, Tergujeff (2013) in a study, reports on an interview with EFL learners with the aim of exploring learners' perceptions and views on oral English teaching. He selected ten EFL learners studying in the public educational system in Finland as participants for the study. The interviews were categorized into themes and learners were encouraged to speak freely about the oral English instruction they were receiving and to share their opinions on that. In addition, learners were asked to discuss their goals in learning oral English. Tergujeff's study revealed that learners considered intelligible and fluent speech to be their main goal in English pronunciation. He also found that the learners did not express aspiration for native-like accent, and did not have an accent preference.

Kang (2010) studied adult ESL learners' perspectives of pronunciation studies in inner circle countries. She selected 238 adult ESL students from language institutions for the study. She interviewed only 25 out of the 238 students selected. The students' comments implied that ESL teachers' English models have an extremely important effect on the learning of oral English. In other words, teachers' attitudes toward varieties of accents can play a critical role in shaping learners perspectives and expectations of language learning particularly in oral English. Some writers are also of the view that teaching pronunciation should aim at making the speakers speak a kind of language that will be understood by listeners, (Kelly, 2000;

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Maduekwe, 2007). Based on this argument, Riddell (2001, p. 62) argues that "indeed I believe strongly that students should be exposed to as many different accents, dialects and varieties of English and that we are doing students a disservice if we expose them only to what is in British referred to as the queen English".

## 2.6    Factors influencing the learning of Oral English

There are many factors influencing the learning of English pronunciation or Oral English. These factors are categorized into two, namely *internal* and *external* factors.

### 2.6.1   Internal Factors

These are factors which are incorporated into learner's individual language. They include native language, age, personality, motivation, and cognition (Mikulastiva, 2012).

### 2.6.2   Native Language

Second language learning problem generally arises out of interference of the first language. Interference is a technical term used to refer to the effect of transferring the habit as associated with one's first language to the language being learnt. There are two types of interference from the first language. These are interference from the sound system of the first language and interference from the grammar and texts of the first language. In this study, I shall consider the former type of interference.

The interference from the sound system of the first language means that non-native speakers of English use different accents. These varying accents are as a result of the fact that each language has a different set of phonemes and the learner transfers his or her own sounds to the English he or she is learning. Again each language has a distinct stress and intonation systems. All these affect the way English is pronounced. It is thus concluded that the

interference of the sound segment, stress and intonation systems of the first language influence performance in speaking and listening skills of English.

Dolphyne (1997) supports this assertion by providing the following examples:

*Unemproyment is a problem (by the Asante speaker, for 'unemployment is a problem)*

*\*He cot it (by the Ga speaker for he cut it)*

*\* It is my sue (by the Gurenne speaker for 'it is my shoe').*

From the above given examples, Dolphyne (1997, p. 36) says that in Ghana this type of interference helps to identity a speaker's identity, as she puts it "…… and this is why it is sometimes, possible to tell which part of Ghana a speaker comes from his spoken English alone."

Tweedy (2012, p. 12) opines that "a learner's first language can have significant influence on the level of accentedness and intelligibility of the new language". This means that when a learner transfers the features in his/her L1 into the L2, there will be interference and this will pose a problem for him/her in learning the second language. Learners' native language plays a central role in the precise acquisition of pronunciation in a new language. In other words, the first language of every learner has influence on the learning of their target language. The interference of the mother tongue can cause errors in aspiration, stress and intonation in the target language and therefore affect the pronunciation of the learner (Zhang, 2009). Studies as well as experiences from teachers show that the learners' first language plays a major influence on learning the sound system of another language (Nation & Newton, 2009). Systems that appear similar in both languages may not necessarily be the same and even when the sounds seem to be the same, their articulation may be different.

In addition to this, Sharkey (2003) claims that the second language filters through the learner's first language facilitating acquisition. He adds that similar features may facilitate easy learning while unfamiliar features are likely to pose problems. Once learners are conditioned by their mother tongue sound system, it becomes difficult for them to articulate sound and correctly pronounce words in English (Sethi&Djamija2010). This may be the reason for which non-native speakers of English are not able to articulate certain sounds in English due to the absence of such sounds in their mother tongue. As a result, they tend to substitute with sounds from their first languages which are similar to those that they are not able to articulate. When that happens, words in English may be mispronounced. To minimize such problems, teachers need to be aware of the phonology of their learners' native languages in order to help them attain intelligible and comprehensible pronunciation.

### 2.6.3 Motivation

Cook (1996, p. 72) asserts that "students will find it difficult to learn a second language in the classroom if they have neither instrumental nor interactive motivation". Motivation in this context has to do with the very reason why the students need to learn the second language. If the student fails to pursue the target language (TL) purposively, then its phonetics and phonology becomes rather daunting to learn. The language teacher therefore needs to be abreast of the economic, social, political, religious as well as the academic use of the English language and its sound systems for onward communication to his/her students. By doing this, the teacher is motivated as are his students. Cook (1996, p. 78) puts it this way, "in the ideal teacher's world, students would enter the classroom admiring the target language, wanting to get something out of the L2 learning for themselves and thirsting for knowledge". He believes that the teacher must be aware of the preconceptions and reservations of the students, their

opinion of him and how they view the course, because these are the ingredients for high success in teaching and learning. This in itself is very high motivation, and according to Cook, motivation also goes in both directions. High motivation is one factor that causes successful learning.

Motivation appears to be a very influential factor as some non-native speakers are more concerned about their pronunciation, which is usually influenced by their sense of responsibility to help them to achieve comprehensible pronunciation. Motivation can be intrinsic (internal) or extrinsic (external). Motivation, though, seems intuitive that a person with higher motivation to learn a language will acquire it better than one without it (Tanner, 2012). A learner of a language like English can obtain encouragement from people to motivate him/her to continue performing. Encouragement of this nature can be in the form of gifts or verbal comments, thus extrinsic motivation. A person can also be extrinsically motivated when he/she makes an effort to learn the target language for a particular purpose. For instance, students who need to study English in order to take a better job or to communicate with relatives who live in an English speaking country are also likely to achieve better results (Mikulastikova, 2012).

Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is when the learner is internally motivated seeing that he/she is making progress. With regard to intrinsic motivation, Sharkey (2003) outlines several factors that make learners work on their pronunciation:

Learners want to improve themselves;

Learners want to become part of the target language community;

Learners want their speech to be intelligible to their children;

Learners want to improve their employment perspective;

Learners want to improve their everyday communicative skills.

In a related study, Tweedy (2012) examines the pronunciation accuracy of a group of university students studying intermediate Spanish. He measured the students' attitude toward acquiring near-native-like pronunciation. He carried out a research on a pronunciation attitude inventory and made a statement based on the results. Tweedy revealed that a student's motivation towards achieving a target language's pronunciation was a principal variable in their accuracy of actual pronunciation output in Spanish.

Similarly, motivation can contribute to learners' success in learning English. In support of this, Masgoret and Gardner (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of 75 different samples from earlier studies totaling 10,489 learners. While the specific type of motivation was never identified, their analysis showed that higher motivation leads to higher language achievement. This indicates that motivation plays an important role for the language learner. Zhang (2009) concludes that if learners have high motivation to have a better pronunciation, they will become more eager to take part in the activities. He adds that they will also pay more attention to discriminate the sounds of the target language, and grasp any opportunity for using the target language. In conclusion, motivation is very important influential factor that cannot be generalized since every learner is distinct in his/her own way. In effect, identifying the kind of motivation that will suit each learner helps teachers to create a supportive classroom atmosphere for pronunciation learning.

### 2.6.4 Cognition

Szyszka (2015, p. 94) defines cognition as "a variety of human traits involved in thinking reasoning, processing information, and acquiring a new knowledge. "A multi-cognitive approach to teaching pronunciation concerns the thinking processes involved in

perceiving and producing speech sounds, and emphasizes the necessary cognitive skills and abilities needed in mastering pronunciation" (Hietanen, 2012, p. 42). Hietanen refers to the central cognitive aspects of pronunciation as "the triangular base of pronunciation" (p. 42), which includes the perception, recognition and production of sounds. With these three, the learner is able to retain whatever is learned and retrieve it easily when there is the need to do so. He describes the cognitive complexity of acquiring and remembering sounds that:

In order to perceive a sound, one has to be exposed to it at least in passing through the sensory memory; to have it registered, at least temporarily, it should be stored in the short memory; however, in order to retrieve and produce a sound at least, it has to be retained and consolidated in the long term memory through rehearsal (Hietanen, 2012, p. 42). Some linguists believe that cognitive abilities that are stronger with some students than with others can lead to faster language progress (Mikulastikova, 2012). As a result of the different cognitive abilities of learners, they may not be able to learn pronunciation at the same rate.

### 2.6.5  Personality

Shoebottom (2012) states that introverted or anxious learners usually make slower progress, particularly in the development of oral skills. They are less likely to take advantage of opportunities to speak, or to seek clarification with regard to sounds production during instruction. Students who are introverts are usually afraid of expressing themselves orally; they do not look for any opportunity to speak. On the other hand, students who are extroverts usually seek to taking part in every conversation possible, ignoring their mistakes (Mikulastikova, 2012). Personality can therefore contribute to learners' successful learning of pronunciation when they are extroverts but introverts might have difficulty because pronunciation learning depends on practice than listening.

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**2.7      External Factors**

External factors include attitude of teachers and learners, culture, context of teaching, instruction, exposure, lack of a standard and the inability to distinguish between sound and letters.

**2.7.1    Attitude**

According to Gilakjani (2012), attitude is an individual's belief or view point toward a thing, an idea or a person as a result of the individual's personal interest; it can also be as a result of the learning environment. The attitude of teachers are their likes and dislikes toward the teaching of pronunciation. In view of this, Elliot (1995) indicates that teachers tend to view pronunciation as the least useful of the basic language skills. They therefore sacrifice teaching pronunciation in order to spend valuable class time on other areas of the English language. He adds that teachers may feel justified neglecting pronunciation thinking that for adult foreign language learners, it is more difficult to attain target language pronunciation skills than other facets of second language acquisition.

Gilbert (2008) also supports this claim by suggesting that teachers tend to think that the teaching of pronunciation is very technical. Those who also try to teach it do so as if it was a course in phonetics, and this also tends to discourage the students from learning it. Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011) shifted from the attitude of teachers to that of learners. They note that some learners are more adept at acquiring good pronunciation. Even within one homogenous classroom, there is often a large discrepancy among the pronunciation ability of the students. This phenomenon has led many researchers to study the personal characteristics that contribute to learners' success in foreign language acquisition. In a study on pronunciation accuracy of university students studying intermediate Spanish as a foreign language, Elliot (1995) found

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that subjects' attitude toward acquiring native or near-native pronunciation, as measured by the Pronunciation Attitude Inventory (PAI), was the principal variable in relation to target language pronunciation.

### 2.7.2 Culture

Language is intimately related to or is part of culture. As times and values change, so does language also change to reflect the needs of the people using it. Thus, it is imperative to have knowledge about the culture associated with the new language in order to correctly convey meaning. Notably, students whose culture possesses a lower status than the culture whose language they are exposed to, achieve the language skills slower (Mikulastikova, 2012). When one is exposed to a particular culture, he learns the language spoken by the cultural group to enable him learn other customs effectively.

### 2.7.3 Exposure

When we speak of the exposure that a learner has to the target language, it may come in the form of their current day-to-day life as well as the amount of prior instruction a learner receives in the target language. According to language learning theories, learners acquire language primarily from the input they receive, and they must receive large amounts of comprehensible input before they are required to speak (Gilakjani, 2011). Gilakjani adds that adult learners may have little opportunity to surround themselves with the native target language inputs, whereas children who are possibly in English-speaking schools for hours during the day have greater opportunity to learn pronunciation.

Szyszka (2015) also recognizes the importance of close contact with native interlocutors in developing a target language sound system. Therefore, when L2 learners seek

to communicate language, a higher level of L2 pronunciation attainment may be hypothesized. In support of this, Mikulastikova (2012) asserts that students who have already been exposed to some foreign language have greater chances to acquire a new language easier than students who have never encountered one. Students who have the possibility to meet with native speakers lose the fear to communicate. Native speakers provide a linguistic model and an appropriate feedback for students (Shoebottom, 2012). Such students have the opportunity to learn that language faster. Zhang (2009) however deviates a little from Szyszka and Mikulastikova as he argues that exposure can be a contributory factor, but it cannot be a whole and necessary factor for the development of pronunciation. In this sense, he believes that with the other factors interfering in pronunciation learning, exposure alone cannot make a learner successful.

### 2.7.4   Instruction

Pronunciation instruction is also external pedagogical factor that can influence pronunciation learning outcomes. Mikulastikova (2012, p. 28) intimates that "it depends also on teacher's teaching skills and abilities to determine how successful students are in terms of their language development. In addition to this, students who are exposed to some ELT also in other subjects reach greater progress". This means that instruction plays a key role with respect to the learning of pronunciation because teachers who use appropriate techniques to teach can help learners improve their pronunciation abilities than teachers who do not. Foreign language instruction generally focuses on four main areas of development: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Zhang & Yin, 2009).

These authors add that foreign language curricula emphasize pronunciation in the first year of study as it introduces the target language's alphabet and sound systems, but rarely

continues this focus past the introductory level. Lack of emphasis on pronunciation development may be due to a general lack of recognition on the part of second language acquisition researchers, second language teachers and students, that pronunciation of a second language is not very important (Gilakjani, 2011). Furthermore, Szyszka (2015) maintains that pronunciation, which is typically viewed as a component of linguistic rather than conversational fluency, is often regarded with little importance in a communicatively-oriented classroom.

### 2.7.5   Context of teaching

One of the sources of poor oral English in second language situations is the context of teaching. As a reminder, one of the main characteristics of every human being is his or her ability to communicate to others concerning every aspect of his or her activities. Every normal human being achieves this mainly by means of two types of sensory stimulation. Cruttenden (2001, p. 93) declares these sensory stimulations as "auditory and visual". By these, man associates what he or she hears with the physical activities that accompany it. This idea is drawn from children. From a need to communicate, children begin to produce themselves the recurrent sound patterns with which they have become familiar. The same thing occurs with learners in second language learning context. This means that every teacher of English serves as an oral model for learners of the language. By implication, learners look up to their teacher to memorise and imitate their speech. Here, if a teacher of English provides the wrong pronouncing or speech model, the learner will learn this bad model. The danger here is that as soon as this bad model is fossilized, it becomes very difficult to carry out any successful remedial work for the majority of such learners.

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**2.7.6 Lack of a standard**

According to Kachru (1990, p. 56) the diffusion of English is seen in terms of "three Concentric Circles: the inner Circle, the Outer circle, and the Expanding Circle". The Inner Circle is composed of countries that use English as native or first language. These countries are United Kingdom, United State of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The Outer Circle consist of countries that use English as a second language, and some of these countries are Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Singapore, Pakistan, Philippines Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Zambia. Finally, the Expanding Circle comprises countries that use English as a foreign language. Some of the countries in the Expanding Circle are China, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, USSR (now Russia and her liberated countries), and Zimbabwe.

Among these three circles, it is the Inner Circle's English version that is codified and widely serves as a standard and model for both Outer and Expanding Circles learners and users of English. This is the version used in schools in Ghana. Nowadays, the freedom of the press has made the media, especially the electronic media more powerful in the society. This way, many young people imitate the pronunciation of their favourite broadcasters. Unfortunately, many of these broadcasters tend to use deviant forms of pronunciation, stress, and intonation patterns in their speech.

The wrong use of English by Ghanaian broadcasters has become a source of worry to Mr K. B. Asante, a retired diplomat. He commented on it in his speech delivered on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Ghana Journalists Association. His comment as captured in the "Daily Graphic" (issued on 16th August, 1997) follows thus:

The English language is the official language and the press should assist people to obtain a fair command of English by taking pains about its language. Many have not much to read apart from the papers. Unconsciously, people absorb the language of the press just as they pronounce words as they hear on radio and television.

He has always been referring to the pronunciation of the word "country" by some journalists and Ghanaians, whenever he gets the opportunity to comment on English pronunciation. According to him, many Ghanaians are saying / kauntri/ instead of /kʌntri.

### 2.7.7 Inability to distinguish between sound and letters

English is unpredictable and complex. This is because there are irregularities in spelling and pronunciation. These irregularities in spelling as well as their effects on pronunciation means that teachers have to do explicit teaching of the phonetic symbols so that students can check the pronunciation of new words as they look them up in the dictionary. This is supported by Riddell (2001, p. 16) as he posits that "what students need is some representation of sounds of English so that when they look up a word in a dictionary and see its phonic transcription, they can work out the standard pronunciation". He adds that "letters and sounds are not the same. Letters are written and sounds are spoken, but sounds are represented by letters in written words" (p. 16). In this regard, a letter can represent many sounds and a sound can also be represented by many letters. For example, the letter, "*th*" can represent the sounds [*θ*], [*t*] and [*ô*] as in '*three'*, *Thomas'* and '*this'* respectively. The sound [*iː*] can also represent the letters "*ee*", "*ea*" as in '*see'* and '*sea'* respectively.

Sethi and Djamija (2010, p. 11) opine that "there is no one-on-one spelling pronunciation between the letters of the Roman alphabet and the sounds of English, while English has 44 sounds (20 vowels sounds and 24 consonant sounds), the Roman alphabet has

only 26 letters". With their contention, pronouncing English words based on the letters will result in wrong pronunciation of words. For example, the word "thick" begins with the letter '*t*' but both '*t*' and '*h*' together (*th*) make in this word. In this case, the correct pronunciation of the word "thick" is [*øtk*] and not 'thick' as [*tik*].

Roach (2009) also contends that English pronunciation should be viewed in terms of its alphabet. According to him, symbols are not sounds but they are used to represent sounds in writing. He therefore calls on the teachers to make time to teach students the symbols and their corresponding sounds. Finally, the ability to connect letters in written words to sounds in spoken words helps learners to stick words in their memories. The ability to distinguish between letters and sounds make it easy to distinguish between similar words (Adams, 1990). This explains that before one is able to correctly pronounce words, the person must be able to relate letters to their corresponding sounds. This knowledge will help him pronounce 'tick' as [*tik*] and 'thick' as [*øtk*], rather than pronouncing both the same way.

## 2.8    Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the literature review as it relates to the teaching and learning of oral English. Specifically, it discussed the concept of English pronunciation, the importance of teaching and learning English pronunciation and the factors influencing the learning of English pronunciation. With regard to factors that influence the learning the learning pronunciation, both internal and external factors were discussed. The internal factors include age, personality, motivation, cognition, and native language while the external factors also include culture, instruction and exposure. The internal factors are within the learners and which they may not be able to control. These factors have negative impact on learners with regard to pronunciation learning.

The external factors are however variety of factors outside the learners or those factors that are not in-born and which they may be able to control. Again, the inability of learners to distinguish between letters and sounds is also a problem that affects the learning of pronunciation because of the irregularities in spelling and pronunciation. In effect, all these factors influence the learning of pronunciation. The literature review also related the problems and findings of other researchers to this study. This chapter has re-emphasized the importance of carrying out a study of this nature so that more information about the teaching of oral English with regard to some specific sounds could be found.

The study intends to discuss the lowest ebb to which the teaching and learning of oral English. This may be due to the over reliance on already prepared Cassette/CD work on the part of the teachers. Most of them do not do any serious teaching on oral English. They wait till the approach of final exams (WASSCE), and then, they rush candidates through the so called Cassette work.
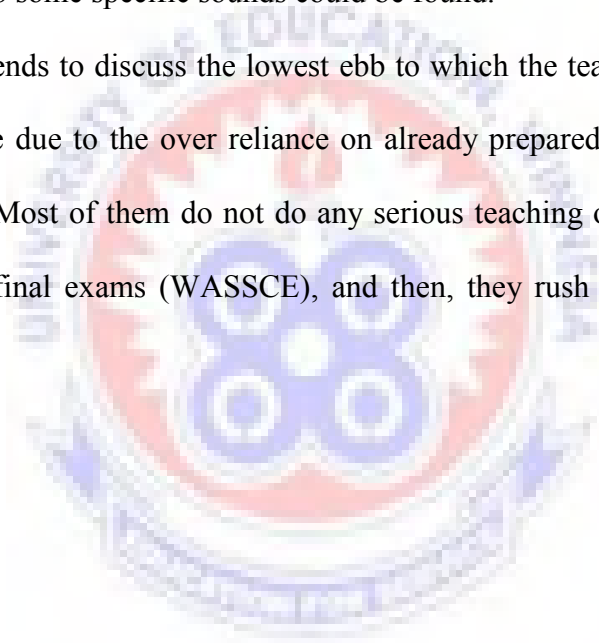
## CHAPTER THREE

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.0    Introduction

Research is conducted to solve problems and to expand knowledge (Drew, 1980). He further stresses that research is a systematic way of asking questions and a systematic method of enquiry. In this chapter, the procedure adopted for this study is discussed. This includes the description of participants, collection of data and analysis of data that formed the basis for the study on the teaching and learning of oral English at the SDA Senior High School in the Atiwa District. This study is descriptive in nature and the analysis employs mainly qualitative measures.

### 3.1    Research Design

A research design refers to the plan and structure of the instigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Owu-Ewie (2012) also observes that a research design provides the most valid and accurate answers possible to the research questions stated. The design for the present study describes the procedure employed in carrying out the research and the conditions under which the data was obtained. As the main purpose of this research is to investigate the teaching and learning of oral English of SDA Senior High School in the Atiwa District, this section discusses the plan and set-up of the work. It also discusses the techniques of data collection that were used.

Research designs provide the most valid and accurate answers possible to the research questions stated. In this study, qualitative research design has been adopted. Qualitative

research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), provides a deeper analysis and allows for a richer and an in-depth understanding of how people make meaning of their situation or interpret phenomena. Bailey & Howard (1999) also argue that since validity is an essential element, the researcher should attempt to present accurate findings. To this end, different data sources were employed to investigate the teaching and learning of oral English of SDA Senior High School in the Atiwa District. The researcher chose qualitative research design because it is said to be the most appropriate design when it comes to language research.

## 3.2    Population

A population, as asserted by Best and Kahn (2006), is a group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common and of interest to the researcher. It also refers to the group of interest to the researcher, the group to which he or she would like the results of the study to be generalized (Gay, 1987). The accessible population included teachers and students of SDA senior high school. The students selected for the study were from SHS 3. The classes chosen for the research were four (4) in number. The programmes offered in the school are Home Economics, Agric Science, Business, and General Arts. The researcher chose SDA Senior High School from other schools in the district because he teaches in the school and had personal experience about students' inability to correctly pronounce certain sounds and words.

There were 10 teachers and 100 students involved in the study. The breakdown of the students is as follows: 40 from General Arts, 20 from Business, 20 from Agric Science, and 20 from Home Economics. Each student had studied English from the basic level to the SHS level. Authorities of the school were duly informed, after which the teachers and students were

also informed about the study. This ensured that both teachers and students fully co-operated with the researcher any time he visited the schools.

## 3.3    Sampling technique

Since the researcher wanted to have adequate knowledge of the difficulties students could have in their speech, a greater number of the school's population was used for the present study. This is because a small number may not give the needed information to the researcher (Selinger & Shohamy, 1989). These authors argue that a small population in a study tends to magnify the effects of individual variability, thus presenting a possible distortion.

Simple random sampling technique was used in order to get a fair distribution of the population. The participants were selected because they would be able to provide the needed information for the research and also because these students are directly involved in the teaching and learning of English. During the sampling, both blank sheets and the numbers needed for each specific class were written separately on pieces of paper. These pieces of paper were mixed up and put into an empty box for students to pick from. Students who picked the sheets with numbers were selected while those whose sheet did not have any number were neglected. The numbers which were picked sum up to (100) representing the sample for the study.

### 3.3.1  Students

The students were selected from the four (4) programmes: 40 students from General Arts (10 boys and 30 girls). The General Arts programme has more students chosen because it has the largest number of students in the school. Also, there are more students from this

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programme because interactions during classroom activities reveal that they have a higher number of speech difficulties than students in other programmes. Twenty (20) students were chosen from Home Economics. These students were also chosen because they have difficulty producing most English sounds during reading activities. Also, since most of the parents are business-oriented; their priority is for their wards to learn a trade in addition to their theoretical knowledge. This means that most of the students are not really interested in learning how to pronounce words but to acquire skills for everyday activities.

Twenty (20) students (6 girls and 14 boys) were chosen from the Agric Science class. In this class, most of the students mainly focus on practical activities, rather than on English speech. As a result, they tend to have a number of speech problems, especially in the production of the sounds. Twenty (20) students (11 boys and 9 girls) were also chosen from the Business class as they have also been found to have pronunciation difficulties. This is especially reflected in their speech exercises. Table 3.3.1 presents the number of students according to programme.

*Table 3.3.1. Students and their programmes*

| Programme | Boys | Girls | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| General Arts | 10 | 30 | 40 |
| Home economics | 0 | 20 | 20 |
| Business | 11 | 9 | 20 |
| Agric Science | 14 | 6 | 20 |
| **Total** | **35** | **65** | **100** |

### 3.3.2 Teachers

Ten (10) teachers of English were chosen for this study. This was to solicit their views on the teaching and learning of oral English. In addition, it was to ascertain why students tend to find it difficult producing some English sounds and words.

*Table 3.3.2. Summary of teachers*

| Gender | Male | Female | Total | Degree professional | Degree (non professional) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher | 6 | 4 | 10 | 10 | - |

### 3.4    Data Sources

All research studies involve data collection (Gay, 1992) and are designed to either test hypotheses or answer research questions. This study aims at answering research questions with data from the basic source, thus, students and teachers. Data were collected by using different means. These are production test for students and questionnaire and interview for teachers. These are discussed in section 3.5.

### 3.5    Instruments for Data Collection

Selinger and Shohamy (1989) observe that the use of a variety of methods to collect data helps to give the research findings validity through triangulation, the sourcing of the pattern or behaviour through different sources. Based on this, the instruments used for the present study are a questionnaire, an interview and a production test. These three instruments were used in order to obtain varying responses from both students and teachers. The instruments are described as follows:

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### 3.5.1    Production Test

A test is a standard set of questions that requires the completion of a cognitive task to it subject (MacMillan & Schumacher, 1997). This cognitive task can focus on the participants' achievement, ability, interests, attitudes, values or skills. This test can also ensure that an individual knows his or her ability to learn or choose to do. A test measures the individual's current performance. The production comprised a short reading passage with words that had the English vowels /æ/, /ʌ/, and /ʊə/ and the consonants /v/, /∂/, /θ/, /z/, /j/.

These sounds were specifically selected to represent most English sounds that are not found in the student's first language (L1). These were also used in order to test the level of difficulty the students have in producing them. In all, 25 students, made up of five students from each class took part in the production test. Apart from the passage, the students were asked to identify the correct pronunciation (transcription) of 11 words and underline the sounds of these letters (**th, dg, an, a, u, xi, ow, ve, ze, ca**) found in the words. This test was used to ensure that students could identify the correct pronunciation of words that they use in their day to day speech and writing activities.

### 3.5.2    Questionnaire

A questionnaire was designed for teachers to elicit information from them. In all there were 22 items on the questionnaire. The researcher used questions that are as flexible as possible. This was to elicit more answers as possible to meet the needs of the study. The questions were selected with the essence of making the discussions less difficult. The questionnaire mainly attempted to seek information about the teaching of oral English and why SHS students in the Atiwa District appear to have difficulty in producing some English sounds

and words. Some of the questions were open-ended while others were close-ended. This was done in order to ensure that significant information which was not covered by one would be catered for by the other. The questionnaire was distributed to all the teachers and collected at a later time.

### 3.5.3   Interview

According to Kvale and Brinkman (2008), the word *interview* comes from Latin and middle French words meaning to 'see between' or 'see each other'.  It is a face to face or one-to-one conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee where questions are asked and answers are given. The researcher used interview because it establishes good rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is also conversational in nature and with this, the interviewee feels very comfortable to answer every question given by the interviewer. For this study, an interview with the aim of listening of students' speech was prepared for the SHS students in the Atiwa District. This also allowed the researcher to gather detailed information on the topic and any other important information which could not be obtained through the use of the questionnaire.

The interview schedule for the students had 16 items. It included close and open-ended items to help them express their views on problems they have in English speech. The first set of questions focused on the personal data of the students. This included their age, names, and the occupation of their parents. It also included questions about the level of education of their parents and the age at which they began speaking English. The next set of questions was specifically meant to gather information relevant for the study. Two English teachers in the school assisted the researcher to conduct the interview after they had been taken through the

schedule. The interview schedule was given to the respondents to study for some time before the discussions were held. This was done to allow them time to think through and provide relevant answers.

## 3.6    Data Analysis

Data analysis in research is defined as the phase of the study that includes classifying, coding and tabulating data according to the research design appropriate for the data. The analysis follows the collection of data and proceeds to interpretation or application. It is therefore the process of evaluating data using analytical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided. The analysis of data is just one of the many steps that must be completed when conducting research. Data obtained from the test were analyzed to form the findings and conclusions.

In the production test, all the readings were played back to allow the researcher determine how the students produced the sounds. After this, the sounds were grouped and analyzed based on the right and wrong production. Also, the scripts from the sound identification test were marked after which all sounds produced were counted. This included those that were correctly produced and those that were wrongly produced. The responses from the interview and questionnaire were also grouped under themes to reflect what teachers and students actually said about the teaching and learning of oral English. Simple statistical analysis (percentages) was used to represent the frequency of teachers' and students' responses.

**3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the procedure adopted for the study. It highlighted the design for the research sources of data, the population used, sample size as well as the research instruments used for data collection. The technique used in analyzing and interpreting the data in order to better explain this research was also discussed. The next chapter presents the findings from the analysis of data collected.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## DATA ANALYSIS

## 4.0     Introduction

In this chapter, a detailed analysis of the results of the data collected is discussed together with the views of all the teachers and students involved in teaching and learning of spoken English. The results on the teaching and learning of oral English in Senior high schools in the Atiwa District were obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire, interview and the production test. The chapter is divided into three parts: the first section presents analysis of the questionnaires that was administered to the teachers of English. The results showed that the final year students of the Akyem Sekyere S.D.A Senior High School have difficulty in English pronunciation due to numerous issues surrounding the teaching and learning of oral English. Some teachers also indicated that their students have problems with their English pronunciation in almost all the subjects taught in the school; i.e. History, Economics, Food and Nutrition, and Agricultural Science. Moreover, some teachers also admitted that students have problems with English pronunciation because of the lack of materials for the oral English class.

The second section presents a discussion of the interviews conducted for the students to find out why they have problems with pronunciation. The results showed that there are factors that contribute to their inability to accurately pronounce English sounds. These include poor foundation in English, first language interference, the home environment unattractiveness of oral English lessons, lack of audio machines and textbooks.

The last section discuses results obtained from the production test. The result showed that most of the students have difficulty in correctly pronouncing English speech sounds. For example, the analysis showed that because the sounds /v/ and /z/ are not found in the Akan sound inventory, learners substituted them with /f/ and /s/ respectively. Then again, /ð/ and /θ/ which are dental fricatives were also substituted with /d/ and /t/

## 4.1     Production Test

Thirty-five (35) students were involved in this test. The outcome of the diagnostic reading test and identifying the correct sounds is going to be discussed. The outcome of the diagnostic reading test reveals how sounds of the English, particularly, those that are not found in their L1 are produced by students. These sounds pose a challenge to them in their speech, for instance, /v/, /z/, /o/, and /θ/. A short passage was given to the students to read and it was found out that students tend substitute the above English sounds with the following sounds which are predominantly found in their mother tongue (L1); /f/, /s/, /d/ and /t/. Then again, the second activity which involved the identification of pronunciation of 11 words was undertaken and it emerged that the students have little or no knowledge on the sounds that are represented by these letters. (**th** as in *them*, **dg** as in *gadget*, **an** as in *anther***a** as in *sack* then **u** as in *judge*, **xi** as in ob*noxious*, **ow** as in *throw*, **ve** as in *heave*, **ze** as in *zealously*, **ca** as in *canvass*, **th** as in *thank*.

With the exception of correct sounds of underlined letters, students could provide only one sound for one letter underlined that is **K** representing **C** as in the word canvass, the rest of the sounds students provided were not correct. By and large, the production test outcome showed that there is lack of knowledge of correct production of the English sound on the part

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of the students, thereby affecting them negatively on the correct pronunciation of words both in writing and in speech.

### 4.1.1 Diagnostic Test

A diagnostic test is defined by Chan (2001) as a test or tool designed to help teachers and learners of English as a second or foreign language discover specific problem area in the perception of spoken English. Chan further intimates that speech perception plays an important role in the acquisition of L2. In view of this, the researcher chose a short passage which contained some familiar words of English in conducting the diagnostic test. The result shows that students have problems in the right production of the sounds of English. Particular emphasis is made on those that are not captured in their language such as /ŋ/, /æ/, /z/, and /ʃ/ as reflected in their reading. The results of the diagnostic test are presented in Table 4.1.1.
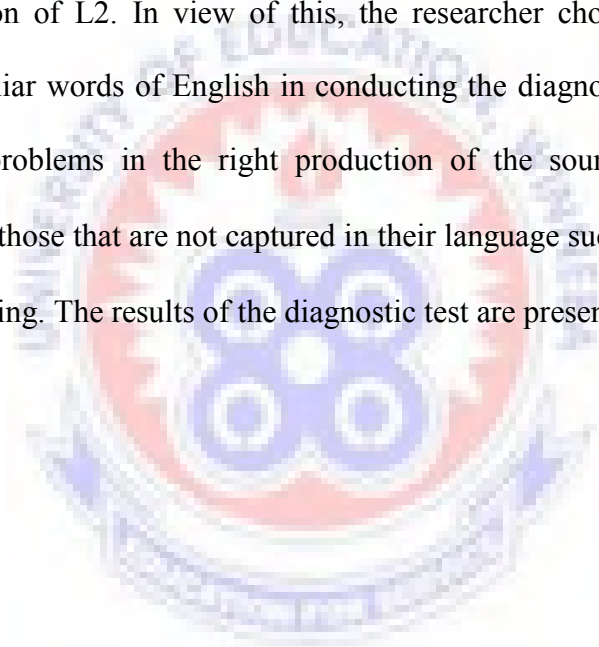
*Table 4.1.1. Summary of scores for diagnostic test (pronunciation)*

| Words | Sound? | Number of students who scored correctly | Percentage (%) | Number of students who scored wrongly | Percentage (%) |
|-------|--------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Obnoxious | | 8 | 23 | 27 | 77 |
| Them | | 5 | 14 | 30 | 86 |
| Throw | | 10 | 28 | 25 | 72 |
| Gadget | | 12 | 34 | 23 | 66 |
| Heave | | 16 | 46 | 19 | 54 |
| Sack | | 3 | 9 | 32 | 91 |
| Zealot | | 18 | 51 | 17 | 49 |
| Canvass | | 35 | 100 | 0 | 100 |
| Thank | | 0 | | 35 | 100 |
| Anger | | 4 | 11 | 31 | 89 |
| Judge | | 10 | 29 | 25 | 71 |

The researcher grouped the outcome of the diagnostic test according to the number of students, marks obtained and the percentage of the marks obtained. From the table, only 8 representing 23% out of 35 students could pronounce the word **obnoxious** correctly. Twenty-seven students representing 77% were not able to produce any of these target sounds in the word **obnoxious** correctly. The (10) of them used the letter (z) in place of the letter (s). This is an indication that the sounds (ʃ) is in their L1 that is why 8 could produce it only that those

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who were not able to produce it correctly had no knowledge about the letters that could be used to represent that sound.

In furtherance of this, only five students out of the 35 (15%) were able to produce the first sound /ð/ as in the word **them.** The rest (30) students representing 85% could not produce this sound. All of them replaced the sound with /d/ thereby pronouncing the word wrongly. This is so because they know the production of /d/ that is found in their language instead of the sound /o/ which is not available in their language but it is in English. When students were asked to pronounce the word **throw**, only 10 out of the 35 were able to pronounce the diphthong /ʊə/. The other 25 students produced it as the monophthong /o/. When it came to the pronunciation of the word **judge**, 10 students produced the sound /ʌ/ in the word judge and 25 could not but rather produce it as /a/ because that might be the only /a/ in their language.

Eighteen (18) students had the production of this sound /dʒ/ in the word **gadget** correct because that sound is found in their language. The researcher is of the opinion that this problem is not peculiar to these students only since there are similar results from a research undertaken by Mikulastikova (2012).He found that Czech speakers also find it difficult to differentiate between /æ/, /e/ and /ʌ /, in words like *bad/bed, cap/cup.* When it came to the pronunciation of **heave**, 21 students were able to produce the /v/ sound in the correct manner and 14 produced it wrongly, replacing it with the sound /f/. This may be due to the fact that /v/ may not be found in their languages, hence, substituting it with /f/ which is nearest to /v/.

**Sack** was pronounced as **sa:ck** in place of **sæck** by all the students with the exception of 5 of them. This may stem from the fact that the sound /æ/ which is a foreign sound is not found in their language thereby replacing with the sound /a/. The reason why only 5 students

could produce the sound correctly clearly shows the difference between the two groups which is quite similar to what Tweedy (2012) intimated by citing Cunningham Florez (1998, p. 34) that "learners' ability to recognize and internalize foreign sounds differ since the rate at which each learner understands concept taught will be different from other". When it came to the turn of /k/, all 35 students were able to produce it in the word **canvass**. It was not a surprise to the researcher because the sound /k/ appears in their inventory of phonetics.

All the 35 students who took part in the diagnostic test, could not produce the /θ/ in the word **thank**. This stems from the fact that this sound which is an English one, is absent in the mother tongue. The students therefore substituted it with /t/, a sound found in their local language. There is the assumption that learning English sounds that are absent in students' stockpile of sounds is difficult because students have outgrown the language acquisition stage as intimated by Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson (2000, p. 46). They intimate that "younger learners acquire second languages automatically from mere exposure, while older learners have to make conscious and labored efforts". This is why students have difficulty in producing the consonants sounds that are not present in their mother tongue but present in the English orthography. Students are expected to learn those sounds not found in their language. It is a herculean task for them since they might have passed the language acquisition stage. As asserted by Lado and Ladefoged, similar sentiments have been expressed by Stevenson (1974), he argues that "different psychologists agreed that the best time to learn a language is before puberty when achievement of childhood bilingualism is possible".

Eleven (11) students could not give the accurate production of the /**z**/ sound while 24 did. Those who failed to produce it correctly substituted it with /**s**/.It is difficult to explain why these students were not able to produce this sound. This is because although it is not used in

their languages, there is a similar sound in most Ghanaian languages, the only difference being the way it is represented in the orthography. With respect to /ŋ/ in the word **anger**, the letter /n/ was produced instead of the former. Twenty-nine (29) students got the production of the above sound wrong while six (6) students were able to produce it correctly. The information in Table 4.1.1 is presented in Figure 4.1.1.

From Figure 4.1.1, it can be seen that the word **canvass** is the only one that scored the highest mark (100%).The reason for this is that the target sound /k/ is found in the sound inventory of the students. It is possible that they produced it because they have been using it frequently in their speech.



*figure 4.1.1 Summary of scores for diagonostic test (pronunciation)*
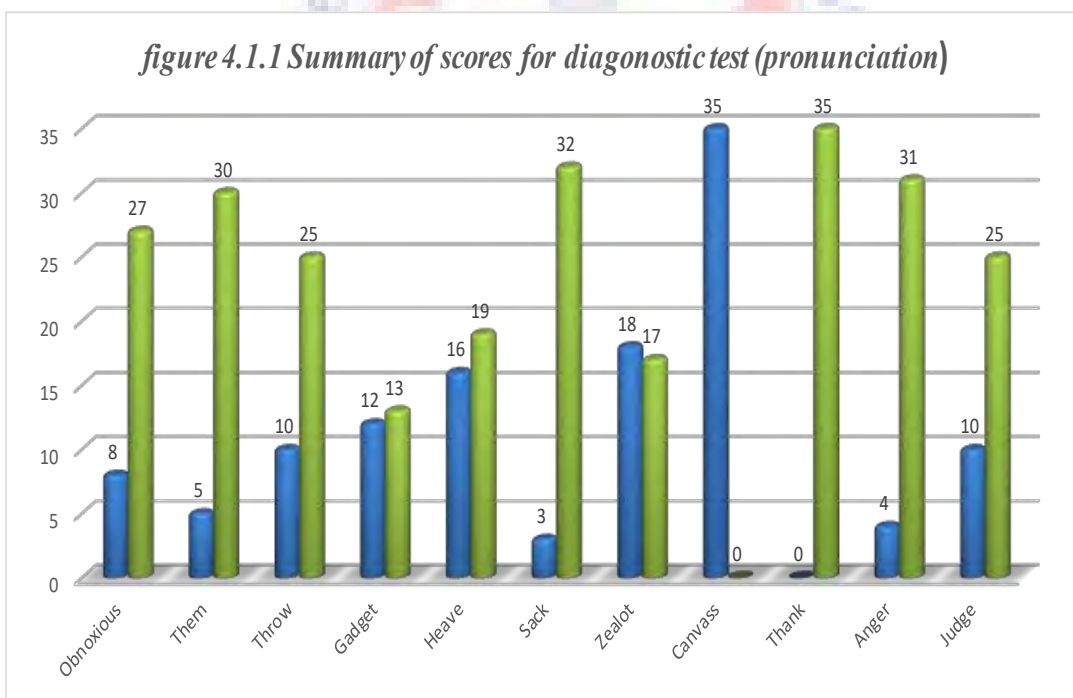
The word **zealot** with the sound /z/ scored mark 51%. It is a fact that the initial letter of that word is not in their phonetic environment; student didn't face any challenge in

pronouncing of producing the word. Words students were able to produce perfectly were gadget and heave. Regarding the pronunciation of the rest of the words, performance of students is also shown on Figure 4.1.1.

**4.1.2 Identification of the correct transcription of words**.

This part looks at students' ability to transcribe words apart from producing them in isolation and pronouncing them in words. Eleven words which have all the seven sounds; both the vowel and consonant sounds were selected and used. For example, the student who understands what he is doing should be able to identify the *th* sound in *them /ð/.* In the same vein, he should also be able to identify /**a**/ as /æ/ in *sack* and the same /a/ in *have*. Students were expected to transcribe the sounds representing the underlined letters in each of the words. The results have been grouped according to the sounds identified by students. Table 4.1.2 shows how the students identified the sounds representing the underlined letters in each of the words.

*Table 4.1.2. Identification of the correct transcription of words.*

| Words | Number of students who scored correctly | Percentage (%) | Number of students who scored wrongly | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Obno**xi**ous | 5 | 14 | 30 | 86 |
| **Th**em | 4 | 11 | 31 | 89 |
| Thr**ow** | 4 | 11 | 31 | 89 |
| Ga**dg**et | 6 | 17 | 29 | 83 |
| Hea**ve** | 11 | 31 | 24 | 69 |
| S**a**ck | 3 | 9 | 32 | 91 |
| **Z**ealot | 7 | 20 | 28 | 80 |
| **C**anvass | 16 | 45 | 19 | 55 |
| **Th**ank | 3 | 9 | 32 | 91 |
| **A**nger | 4 | 11 | 31 | 81 |
| **J**udge | 6 | 17 | 29 | 83 |

Results from Table 4.1.2 shows that all the students could not identify the sound used for the pronunciation of the words; (throw, gadget, thank and obnoxious). Instead, they substituted the words with the following sounds:

[gaget] for [gʌʤt]

[tank] for [θank]

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[obnochious] for [ɔbneʊkɹəs]

Only 3 students representing 9% could also transcribe the correct sound of **them**: **Th**, the rest pronounced it as **[dem]** for **[∂em].**

This revelation is not far from what Sethi and Dhamija intimated in (2001, p. 72) that "…, the students' inability to pronounce words correctly could also be as a result of trying to pronounce words based on a one-on-one correspondence between letters and sounds of English." For example, majority of the students substituted the sounds with letters– a clear indication that they were confused on the concept of both sounds and letters. Figure 4.1.1 also reveals that the word that most students were able transcribe is **canvass** representing 55%. Aside this, they could not really transcribe **heave, judges,** and **zealot**, but only with 31%, 17% and 20% respectively. For **anger** and **sack;** 11% and 9%, **throw, gadgets, thank, obnoxious** and **them** with 11%, 17%, 9%, 14% and 11% respectively. This outcome paints a picture of students' limitation as far as the concept of oral English is concerned. The information in Table 4.1.2 is represented in Figure 4.1.2
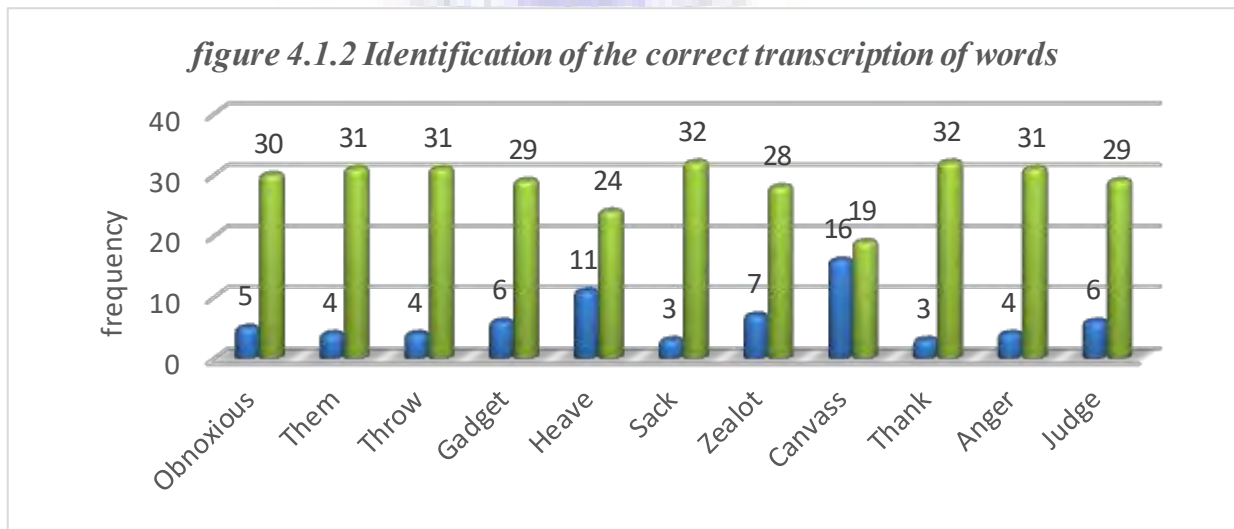


*figure 4.1.2 Identification of the correct transcription of words*

*Table 4.1.3. Representation of letters with the correct sounds*

| Letters | Number of students who scored correctly | Percentage (%) | Number of students who scored wrongly | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| xi | 1 | 3 | 34 | 97 |
| th | 0 | 0 | 35 | 100 |
| ow | 0 | 0 | 35 | 100 |
| dg | 1 | 3 | 34 | 97 |
| ve | 23 | 66 | 12 | 34 |
| a | 0 | 0 | 35 | 100 |
| ze | 22 | 63 | 13 | 37 |
| ca | 35 | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| th | 0 | 0 | 35 | 100 |
| an | 1 | 3 | 34 | 97 |
| ju | 2 | 6 | 33 | 97 |

Table 4.1.3shows that all the students do not know the sounds that represent the underlined letters in a<u>n</u>ger, obno<u>x</u>ious, <u>th</u>em, ju<u>dg</u>es, ga<u>dg</u>ets, s<u>a</u>ck, <u>th</u>ank. This is so because they used the following sounds to substitute given letters in the words in the words above. For **anger**, 34 students used /n/ for /ŋ/. Thirty-four (34) students used /z/ instead of /ʃ/ in **obnoxious.** All the 35 students used /d/ for /ð/ in transcribing **them**. Also, 33 students used /a/ instead of /ʌ/ for **judges** while 34 substituted /dʒ/ with /j/. Instead of using /æ/ in transcribing **sack,** all the 35 students used /a//æ/. Again, all of them used /t/ in place of /θ/ in transcribing **thank**.

Table 4.1.3 again shows that the students could represent only three letters with the correct sounds. Such letters were **ca** (100%), **ve** (66%) and **ze** (63%). Students were not able to transcribe the rest of the letters with their respective sounds. This is a clear indication that they are oblivious to the sounds that are used to represent these letters as in *an* **in anger,** *xi* **in obnoxious,** *th* **in thank,** *th* **in them,** *ow* **in throw,** *ju* **in judges,** *dg* **in gadgets and** *sa* **in sack**. The results on Table 4.1.3 also show that most students do not know the sounds that represent these letters. They are ***anger, obnoxious, them, judge, gadget, sack,*** and ***thank***.



*figure 4.1.4. Representation of letter with the correct sounds*
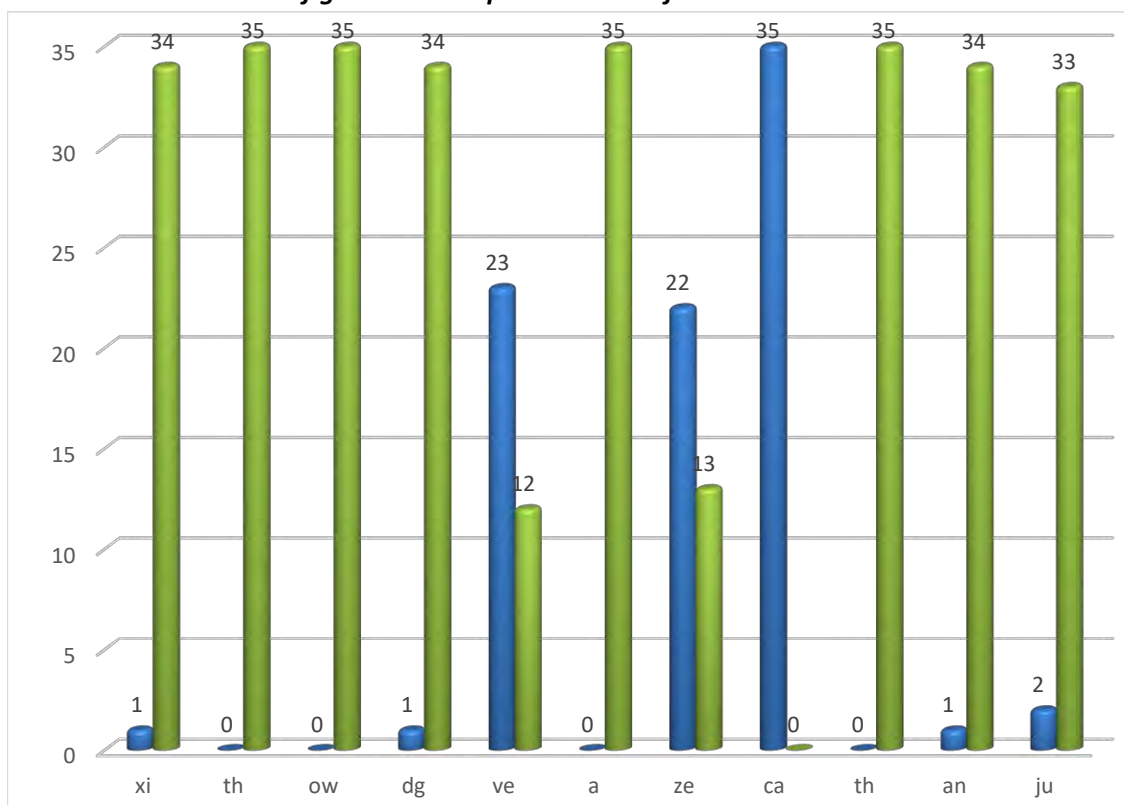
From Figure 4.1.4, the scores show that the students were able to represent only three (3) letters with the correct sounds such letters were **ca** (94%), ve (66%), and ze (37%). The rest of the letters were not represented by any sounds. This means that the students do not know those sounds that are used to represent these letters. They are **an** in anger, **xi** in obnoxious, **th** in thank, and them, **ow** in throw, **ju** in judge, **dg** in gadget and **sa** in sack.

*Table 4.1.4 Individual Students substituting various sounds with letters*

| For /ʃ / in obnoxious | For /ŋ /in anger | For /ð /in them | For/ʊə / in throw | For /ʌ / in judge | for /ʒ /in gadget | for /æ / in sack | for /θ / in thank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student1,5 6, 27, 29 33, 34, 35 used **h** | Student1 8,9,10 15,19,20,21,22, 23,24, 25, 26,29,30 Used **n** | Student1,5 7, 9,11,19,20, 21,22, 25, 31, 32 used **d** | Student1,3,5, 8,9,6,11, 12,16,21, 29, 30, 34 Used **oo** | Student1,3,4, 7,8,10.17.21, 22,23, 28, 30, 31, 34, 35Used**a** | Student 1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,8,9,10,11, 12,13,14, 15,18,19, used **j** | Student 1, 2,9,11, 13,17,19, 22, used **a** | Student 1,5, 11,12, 13,15,16,17, 18,19,20,21, 22,23,24, 25,used **t** |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student 2, 5, 7, 11, 12, 17, 21, 25, 28, 30, 33, 34, 35 Used **ie** | Student2,4, 5,12,13,16,18, 19, 20, 24, 26, 29, 31, 34 used **a** | Student 3,4,5,7,8,9, 12,15,16,17, 18,23,24, 35 used **t** | Student 2,4,7,10,13, 18,22,24, 25, 27, 29, 33, 35 used **o** | Student 2,6,19, 20, 22, 25, 29, 30, 31, 35 used **j** | Student 16, 18, 19, 23, 28, 30, 35, used **ɛ** | Student 3,4,5,6, 7,8,12,15, 16,18.20,21 ,22,23,24, 25 used **a** | Student 2, 4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 30, 32, 35used**n** |
| Student 34,7,10,11, 14,15, 16,17,22,23, used **z** | Student 3,6, 18, 29, 34, 35 Used,**g** | Student 6, 27, 33, 34 used **u** | Student15,19, 24, 26, 30, 31 used **u** | Student 5, 30, 33 used **e** | Student 17,21,22, 23, 28, 32 Used **dj** | Student 10, 15, 17, 27, 30, 34 used **k** | Student 3,4.7,9.10 19, 23, 29, 31, 33 used **f** |
| Student 8 Used **shi** | Student 7 Used **h** | Student 10, used **do** | Student 17, 20 Used **ou** | Student 9 Used **u** | Student 20, used **ai** | Student 14, used **c** | Student 6,8,14, used **k** |
| Student9, 11 13, 27, 30 used **s** | Student11,17, 26, 30 used **an** | Student13,14 used **o** | Student23, 29, 33 used **v** | Student11, 16, 25, 28, 31, 35 Use d**o** | Student24, 29, 30, 32 used **dg** | | |

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| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student 12, 21, 30, 31, 33 used **e** | Student 14, 35 used **e** | | | Student 12 Used **t** | Student25, 29, 34, 35 used **g** | | | |
| Student18, 19,20 used **ks** | | | | Student13, 20, 25, 31, 35 used **p** | | | | |
| Student 24, 25, 30, 34, 35 used **x** | | | | Student 14,15,18,25 31, 32, 35 Used **b** | | | | |

Apart from this, 23students (66%) could represent the letter **ve** with the correct sound, 8 students (23%) used /**h**/ for /ʃ/, 15 students (43%) used /**n**/ **for /ŋ/,** 12 students (34%) used /**d/ for /ð/,** 13 students (37%) used /**o:/ for** /ʊə/, 15 students (43%) used /**a/ for** /ʌ/**,** 15 students (43%) used /**a/ for /æ/**, 17 students (49%) used /**j/ for** /dʒ/, 16 students (46%) used/**t/ for /θ/**. Also, 33 students representing 94%could also represent the letter **ca** with its correct sound /k/.

**4.1.4    Summary**

Students in their effort to transcribe certain words used letters to represent the correct sounds. For example in transcribing the word **thank** /*θank*/, they used /t/ as in /tank/. In this wise, almost all the 35 had challenges producing and identifying the consonant sounds /θ,ð,ʃ,ʒ/and the vowel sounds /æ, ə, ʌ/. Students eventually substituted the above sounds with sounds that are available in their L1.

**4.2    Questionnaire**

The purpose of the questionnaire was to know teachers' perspective about the problems they face in teaching of English orals and whether students in SDA Senior High School have any challenge in giving the correct speech production in oral English.

**4.2.1    Frequency of oral English lessons**

The results as shown in Table 4.2.1 represent the number of times oral English lessons are delivered.

*Table 4.2.1. Frequency of oral English lessons*

| ITEM | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE (%) |
|------|-----------|----------------|
| Weekly | 1 | 10 |
| Fortnightly | 1 | 10 |
| Monthly | 2 | 20 |
| Once a while | 6 | 60 |
| **Total** | **10** | **100** |

Table 4.2.1 shows that teachers of English teach oral English at different times within a term. For example, one teacher representing gave the indication that he teaches oral English once a week. One other teacher representing also said that he teaches the subject fortnightly. Two teachers representing also said they teach it once a month. The last group of teachers of 6 indicated that they teach the subject once a while. It is very clear from the table that of the 10 teachers, only 4 who seem to be teaching oral English within a month. This is a clear indication that less than half of the teachers usually teach oral English while it is not clear what the 6 mean by teaching 'once a while'. It can be argued that most teachers of English do not dedicate much time to the teaching of oral English.

### 4.2.2 Familiarity with oral English topics

Table 4.2.2.1 represents results obtained from teachers regarding their familiarity with topics under the oral English aspect of the English language in SHS.

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*Table 4.2.2.1. Familiarity with oral English topics*

| ITEM | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE % |
|------|-----------|--------------|
| Yes | 4 | 40 |
| No | 6 | 60 |

The table shows that few teachers know the topics to be taught in oral English than those who do not. It is very also important to know that teachers are obliged to know the topics that fall under the oral English aspect of the English language curriculum. Nevertheless, the results show that most of them are not aware of the topics to be taught under oral English. Unfortunately for some students, they are not likely to be introduced to oral English at all as the teachers cannot teach the subject. Eventually, the effect is that there is the likelihood that such students' performance in oral English in their final exams will be appalling.

There was another question that sought to find out if teachers were particular about the pronunciation of the students. Responses to that question are presented in Table 4.2.2.2.

*Table 4.2.2.2. Concern teachers show regarding students' pronunciation*

| ITEM | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE % |
|------|-----------|--------------|
| Yes | 7 | 70 |
| No | 3 | 30 |

The responses indicate that more teachers are very much particular about the English pronunciation of the students. This means that it is very much likely that seven teachers were

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able to identify difficulties that might confront the students as far as English pronunciation is concern. It is interesting to note that the three who said *no* to the question asserted that they do not pay attention to students' pronunciation because of several reasons. Two of such reasons they claim are the non-existence of materials to help them teach oral English and the interference of the mother tongue (L1). They remarked:

> *I don't bother myself with my students' pronunciation. As you may be aware, there are several problems that go with pronunciation especially, they are not native speakers of English. The materials to help me teach are simply not available, how can I monitor the way students speak? Again, one feels that these students have difficulties in English pronunciation since there is the interference of their mother tongue. It will be a herculean task to correct their pronunciation*

With regard to the question on whether teachers are of the view that their students have any difficulty in learning oral English, all of them answered 'yes'. The researcher probed further to indicate some of the pronunciation areas they think post a challenge to them. The following came out: vowels and consonants, intonations, polysyllabic words, phonologically-conditioned morphemes and stress. The responses from the teachers suggest that the students indeed have problems in almost all the areas of pronunciation.

Again, when the researcher asked teachers about whether they encounter any difficulty in the teaching of oral English, 8 responded positively. They gave a litany of problems among which are lack of materials, social factors and many others.

> *Audio and audiovisual machines are not available in my school.*

> *Students don't have oral English books; neither do teachers have guide books.*

*CDs are not available in the school.*

*Students' L1 interferes with L2*

*Hardly do teachers of oral English get in-service training,*

*Inadequate training in oral English is my bane.*

*I am not well versed in the subject matter of oral English.*

The answers the teachers gave may not be peculiar to their school; it may cut across all other schools in Ghana and even outside it. For instance, Iyorza (2012) did a study on teacher's problems regarding the teaching of oral English in Nigeria. The results showed that teachers complained bitterly about the lack of teaching materials such as audio-visual media. When probed further, the teachers alluded to the following causes of such problems as:

*Refresher courses are not organized at all by the employer, i.e. G.E.S for teachers of oral English.*

*Teachers of oral English have insufficient knowledge and mastery of the subject,*

*Materials for oral English are not provided and it is another affecting debilitating factor affecting teachers and students as far as oral English is concerned.*

*Students' foundation in oral English is weak because practice of speech work is practically nil in their English language lessons.*

Upon this finding, many a researcher has asserted that the players in the teaching and learning industry are not doing much to solve such problem. One of such researchers is

Sotiloye (2007). He is of the view that this important aspect of the English language syllabus has not been paid much attention to by students, school authorities and government as a whole.

Based on these responses, teachers were asked about the way the problem could be minimized. The responses were obvious: some of them intimated that they should be given in-service training regularly to help build the capacity as far as teaching of oral English is concerned. Provision of materials like audio-visual and audio machines, teachers' manual, CDs and textbooks was also a concern some of them expressed. Two of the teachers wrote that both teachers and students ought to constantly practice speech work so as to enhance students' pronunciation in English.

In the last set of questions, the researcher asked teachers whether they think that the lessons on oral English as prescribed in the syllabus are sufficient. All the ten teachers indicated that they are adequate and that students are bound to fail in their final examination if the exercises are not elaborated. From all these answers emanating from the questionnaire, it can be pointed out clearly that there are problems regarding the teaching of oral English in the school investigated. It is important to indicate that there could be effective teaching of oral English through the use of audio and sometimes audio-visual materials. Unfortunately, the responses from teachers are an indication that there is total absence of these materials whenever they are delivering oral English lessons. The resultant effect at the end of the day is that teachers will pretend to teach and students will pretend to learn. In the long run, students cannot grasp the basic concept thereby performing poorly in the oral English examination which may go a long way to affect the overall performance of the English language in WASSCE.

**4.3 Interview**

This tool was mainly used to seek information regarding the difficulties students have in the teaching and learning oral English. All the hundred students accepted the fact that they are taught oral English in school but the manner in which it is taught is the matter to be discussed. Table 3 represents how students responded on the number of times they are taught oral English.

*Table 4.3. Frequency of speech work done by students*

| ITEM | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Weekly | 13 | 13 |
| Fortnightly | 25 | 25 |
| Monthly | 15 | 15 |
| Once a while | 45 | 45 |
| Any other | 2 | 2 |
| **Total** | **100** | **100** |

From the table, the results indicate that a greater number of respondents, that is, 45 respondents representing 45% responded that oral English is taught to them 'once a while' while 25 respondents representing 25% also said that oral English is taught fortnightly. Then again, 15 respondents representing 15% asserted that their taught oral English once in a month. 13 of them representing 13% admitted that, they are taught oral English once in a week; and the last

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2 respondents representing 2% intimated that oral English is taught as and when the teachers feel like doing so.

This is a clear indication that students' face problems in speech since they are not frequently taught oral English. They asserted that this does not help them to grasp much of the oral English concept. This confirms what Gilakjani (2011) says about students. He remarks: *students having little meaningful exposure to the target language inhibits their acquisition.* In the same vein, on the results of whether students enjoy speech lessons or not, 45 students said 'no' and that they do not enjoy oral English lessons and these are some of the reasons they assigned:

*There are no gadgets for oral English in my school. The teachers handling oral English do not produce the sounds for us to listen.*

*I have great difficulty in articulating most of the sounds correctly.*

*I have my personal CD from which I rehearse the production of sounds.*

*I sometimes get help from my teacher when I am speaking*

One student responded 'yes'. This suggests that when students close from school and go home, they have no opportunity to practice the production of sounds and the pronunciation of the words practice in the classroom. Meaning that the only chance they have is when they come to school and practice speech work. Unfortunately, if the school is unable to provide such opportunities for speech work, students will forever be condemned to these speech problems. When the researcher asked students whether they have textbooks or any other books for oral English, only twenty responded 'yes' but the rest responded 'no'. With regards to the

question on the availability of machines in the school, all the students said 'no' they do not have such machines in their school to practice speech work in oral English.

## 4.4 Summary

It is clear from the above that, when it comes to the number of times a teacher teaches oral English, most teachers do not attach much seriousness to it, since most of them said they teach once a while. With regard to teachers' familiarity with the topics to be treated under oral English, most said 'no'. This is an indication that oral English is relegated to the background. If teachers admit that they are not familiar with the topics to be treated under a sensitive aspect of the English Language, then where lie the fates of students as far as WASSCE is concerned?

Regarding concerns shown by teachers, with respect to their students' pronunciation, the results showed that though teachers may not be familiar with the topics under oral English and do not teach it frequently they are very much particular or concerned about how their students pronounce words in English

## 4.5 Conclusion

Adeyinka (1998) claims that it is one thing furnishing teachers in the classrooms with the required logistics for the teaching of Oral English, and another thing actually teaching it, because some English teachers treat this aspect of the language with laxity and "contempt". Kpodugbe (1986), for instance, also notes that nobody really takes the teaching of the spoken English seriously. The few, who do, deal with it at the segmental level and leave the suprasegemental level". As a result, students are left half-baked, making the serious ones doubt the competence of their teachers.

The researcher having used these three research instruments obtained results which revealed several critical issues emanating from the questionnaire and interview conducted. These issues call for some interventions to be instituted so as to ensure effective teaching and learning of oral English. The production test as a research instrument brought to light students' lack of knowledge of many of these sounds of the English language. (/θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʤ/, /ʌ/, /æ/, /v/, /ʒ/, /ʊə/). In a similar manner, the outcome is the reflection of the challenges confronting students with regard to the teaching and learning of oral English. The researcher is of the hope that these findings will be an impetus to charting a new course for the teaching and learning of oral English for the school understudy in particular, and Senior High Schools in Ghana in general.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.0    Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the research presented and analyzed in Chapter 4. The analysis begins with an overview of the objectives of this study in an attempt to provide answers to the research questions posed in the study and subsequently outlined the major findings of the study. The chapter also outlines recommendations for improving the teaching of English pronunciation and suggestions Ghana Education Service (GES) for further research in this field. Finally, implications for theoretical development and practical applications are also discussed.

### 5.1    Summary of findings

The findings support the notion that students of S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere, are unable to articulate the sounds /ɵ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /ʤ/, /æ/, /ʌ/, and /ə/. As a result of this, they tend to substitute these sound with /t, f, d s, z, e or a/respectively when pronouncing words with the sounds in the question. The main research tools employed in the study were diagnostic test, questionnaire, and interview. The data presentation and analysis revealed some findings about the teaching of pronunciation. The following is the summary of the findings:

The production test revealed that a greater number of students had much difficulty articulating the sounds. Many of them could not completely pronounce a single word out of the target words in the diagnostic test, while others also correctly pronounced few of the 11 words. From the presentation and analysis of the data on the production test, it was revealed that students did not perform well in the test that required the appropriate pronunciation of words,

accurate transcription of sounds and the identification of sounds. The performance of students in the production test was an indication that the students had major problems articulating the consonants /ɵ, ɖ, ʃ, dʒ/ and the vowels /æ, ʌ, ə/ both in words and in isolation. They substituted the sounds /ɖ,ʃ,dʒ/ with /d, s, z/ respectively, /ɵ/ with /t/ in words initial or /f/ in word final /æ/with /e/, and /a/ with /e/ in word initial or /a/ in word final.

The findings revealed that only two students representing 7% of the 35 students could articulate /ɵ/ in word pronunciation and transcription. The findings also revealed that some of the eleven chosen sounds in this study do not exist in the students' first language. Thus, that could account for their inability to articulate them. It was also found that some students were inconsistent in pronouncing some words because they could not identify certain sounds in same positions in those words. For instance, a student could not pronounce **though** /ɵʊə/. This difficulty could be as a result of the revelation of the findings from the interview. Some English teachers did not teach in the English language during their lessons. The teacher who also made an attempt to teach did not make his lesson as practical as possible. Further revelation from the diagnostic test showed that some of the students tried to match letters with sounds and this resulted in the wrong representation of sound.

The findings of the interview showed that some teachers did not teach the consonant and vowel sounds at all, while one teacher who tried teaching them did not also teach them how these sounds are produced, but only taught them how they are used to form words. The interview of the teachers revealed that they did not teach phonetics as expected of them. For instance, by using a video that shows how each of the sounds is articulated might ease students' difficulty to produce sounds accurately. For example, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011,

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p. 63) suggest to the Ghana Education Service (GES) that "it is essential for learners and teachers to work with recorded voices so that the speech they are discussing is external to both of them, and can be referred to objectively without distortion". They add that computer technology makes this type of recording and play back extremely easy. Teachers adapting and using this strategy in their phonetics lessons will help learners to overcome sound articulation difficulty.

The responses from the teachers during the interview revealed that the teaching of pronunciation is an important aspect in the teaching of English as a second language. They however mentioned certain factors that affect its teaching and learning. Some of the factors mentioned by the teachers include lack of in-service training and workshops for teachers to equip them with knowledge and skills in teaching phonetics; negative attitude of teachers and learners toward the teaching and learning of phonetics; mother tongue influence on the target language learning. Finally, one of the teachers mentioned that most of the students have no basic knowledge in oral English that will make it easier for them to build on. This could also be as a result of lack of prior exposure to speech work on the part of students.

With regard to the importance of teaching and learning of oral English, the three teachers interviewed stated that teaching phonetics is important because it forms the basis for effective language learning. They also added that it helps students to communicate and be understood easily. The teachers concluded that when students are able to correctly pronounce words, it helps them to understand any sentence or text they read. In view of this, Hismanoglu (2006) notes that the importance of teaching pronunciation cannot be over emphasized. Goodwin (2001, p. 82) also adds that "the teaching of oral English is so crucial to our

students". This means that teaching oral English is necessary and should be given the needed attention.

## 5.2    Implications of findings

The findings of this study have implications for theoretical development and practical applications. In considering the theoretical development, research should be conducted into the English books that have been recommended by Ghana Education Service (GES) to find out how much phonetics is included in these books. This research also created a gap which needs to be filled. The researcher's study was limited to only server sounds but the research revealed other difficulties students had. This difficulty has to do with the vowel sound /ʊ/ which was correctly articulated by only two students representing 7% of the 35 students, though the vowel is in the sound inventory of the students' L1.

In terms of practical applications, the findings of this study can act as an intelligible model to assist both learners and teachers in English language learning and teaching. Firstly, it can assist learners who may not realize the extent to which the absence of certain sounds in their L1 can affect their articulation of sounds in English. This will help them be aware of such difficulty and to make conscious efforts to overcome it. Secondly, it may allow teachers to obtain an awareness of the likely problem to incur when some sounds in English are not found in the learners' L1. As a result of this, they will be able to strategize their teaching to cater for such anomalies. Teachers can also apply the recommended strategies in teaching phonetics for good results by engaging students in more speech work.

**5.3** **Recommendations for improving the teaching of oral English.**

Normally, knowledge of the sounds in English is crucial for oral communication, fluent reading and finally students' ability to perform well in the oral test which forms part of their West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Having considered the findings of the research, it is necessary that same conditions are made to address the issues of the problems with the hope that solutions will be found to help improve the teaching of oral English at the SHS. The following are recommended by the researcher:

a. Last minute approach that some teachers of English adopt in handling oral English should be avoided. By last minute approach, the researcher means to say that some teachers delay the teaching of oral English till the eleventh hour when WASSCE is due.

b. Teachers of English should not decouple the teaching of oral English from the other aspects of the English language. All aspects of the language should be incorporated when it comes to teaching of the language.

c. The Ghana Education Service (GES) should not hide behind the veil of "no-money-syndrome", but rather endeavor to organize in-service training courses for teachers of English so as to equip them with modern trends and techniques in the teaching of oral English on annual basis if it could be possible. This could be done in collaboration with the Applied Linguistics Department of say, UEW or University of Ghana.

d. There seems to be no policy guideline with regard to methods of teaching English language. The researcher therefore recommends that Ghana Education Service(GES) and Ministry of Education to collaborate with National Council of Teaching of English (NCTE) to design appropriate methods of teaching of English language Ghana

Education Service (GES) and for that matter oral English/ phonetics to serve as a blueprint or guideline for teachers of English.

e. The Ghana Association of Teachers of English (GATE) should weed out all 'quack' writers of English books so as to sanitize the environment of teaching and learning of English language.

One of the main purposes of education research is to follow an intensive process of scientific enquiry about philosophical, historical, economic, psychological and sociological, impact on various aspects of education to establish sound educational theories (M Sharif Khan 1990). The researcher therefore recommends among other things that future researchers will be able to scrutinize the approved books of English by the Ghana Education Service (GES) to find out how much phonetics is included in these books. The findings will go in a long way in helping the Ghana Education Service (GES) to getting the right books to improve the teaching and learning of oral English at all levels. The researcher further advises that future researchers can research on suitable methods for teaching phonetics. Again, this study has been able to cover only S.D.A SHS, Akyem Sekyere students. Researchers can expand the number of respondents in examining the articulation of the seven chosen sounds including all the students in the school. There is also the need for other researchers to find out how the English teachers in selected schools in the Atiwa District of the Eastern Region pronounce words in English with the seven chosen sounds. Finally, a research could also be conducted on same sample basic schools to find out how frequent speech work is included in their lessons.

**5.4 Suggestions for future research**

Due to the broad nature of oral English, the author of this work could not cover all areas. For instance, the places of articulation of the various consonants and vowel sounds were

not mentioned in this study. One cannot articulate a particular sound without knowing its place of articulation.

In view of this, the current researcher puts forward the following suggestions for potential researchers to look at:

❖ That future researchers showing interest in oral English should consider looking into places of articulation of consonants and vowel sounds.

❖ That potential researchers in future will have to delve into why cassette/CD work instead of Production Test; the original model when oral English was introduced as part of the English language paper.

❖ That future research work will have to look at what approaches or methods are adopted in teaching oral English in Ghanaian Senior High Schools. The communicative approach of language teaching, a modern approach of language teaching seems to have been shelved by many teachers of English. That is, it has been relegated to the background.

❖ Teaching of oral skills has been decoupled from the other aspects of the language. Brumfit and Johnson (1997, p. 142) intimate that "language is not conglomeration of words but a vehicle to convey meaning." It will be very interesting if one decides to look into the approach adopted by teachers of English.

## 5.5    Conclusion

In conclusion, the aim of the study was to investigate the inability of S.D.A. Senior High School, Akyem Sekyere students to articulate /ɵ/, /đ/, /ʒ/, /ʃ/, /æ/, /ɵ/and /ə/.The results showed that they substituted them with the phonemes /t/, /f/, /d/, /s/, /z/, /e/ and /e/ or /a/

respectively. The vowels /æ/ and /ʌ/ were both substituted with /e/. The analysis of the findings was classified into three sections. A production test which examined three areas, the first being a diagnostic test which was given to the students to read in order to determine the extent to which the substitution of the sound was done; then the students were asked to articulate the vowel sounds and some of the consonant sounds in English to find out their ability to articulate the sound in isolation. Finally, students were asked to represent sound with underlined letters in given words. The second section was the observation on teachers where teachers' lessons were observed to find out whether they teach phonetics and how they teach it.

The third and final section was the interview granted to teachers which also examined five areas, namely; the importance of teaching oral English; the qualification of the English teachers; the attitude of teachers and students towards the teaching and learning of phonetics; the methods used by teachers to teach oral English, and the factors which hinder the effective teaching and learning of oral English. The analysis of the findings revealed that the students actually had difficulty articulating the sounds /θ,ð,ʒ, ʃ,æ, ə, ʌ/. The other revelation of this study had to do with the vowel /ʊ/ which was correctly articulated by only two students representing 7% of the 35 students though the vowel exists in the sound inventory of the students L1. The difficulty of students articulating some specific sounds in English resulted in their inability to accurately pronounce words with those sounds. One cannot perform well in the use of English both in reading and communicating without having much knowledge of the English sounds. The teacher should therefore incorporate oral English into English lessons but should not think that students will pick it up naturally.

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# APPENDIX A

## Transcripts from Interviews with Teachers

The questions below are the interview questions and responses from the three teachers.

**Teacher A**

1. Have you studied pronunciation during any time of your learning? **Yes** / No

2. How long did you study pronunciation? One semester

3. What have you been trained to teach? French

4. Have you attended an in-service training on pronunciation after the completion of your degree program? Yes / **No**

5. Is there the need to teach or learn pronunciation? **Yes** / No

   Why? Pronunciation forms the basis for effective language learning

6. When you have problems communicating in English, is it more likely because of a language problem or a pronunciation problem? A pronunciation problem

7. What methods have you been using to teach pronunciation? Demonstrative method

8. Learning good pronunciation is NOT as important as learning grammar and vocabulary.

   a) Strongly agree    b) somewhat agree    c) somewhat disagree d)**strongly disagree**

9. What do you think hinders the effective teaching and learning of pronunciation in your school? (i) Time allotted for phonetics lessons on school time table is woefully inadequate    (ii) recommended English books for students by the school do not contain much of phonetics   (iii) lack of in-service training and workshops for teachers to update their knowledge in phonetics.

**Teacher B**

1. Have you studied pronunciation during any time of your learning? **Yes** / No

2. How long did you study pronunciation? One semester

3. What have you been trained to teach? I majored in sociology and minored in English

4. Have you attended an in-service training on pronunciation after the completion of your degree program? **Yes** / No

5. Is there the need to teach or learn pronunciation? **Yes** / No

   Why? To help students communicate and be understood easily by others

6. When you have problems communicating in English, is it more likely because of a language problem or a pronunciation problem? Both

7. What methods have you been using to teach pronunciation? Direct method

8. Learning good pronunciation is NOT as important as learning grammar and vocabulary.

   b) Strongly agree    b) somewhat agree    c) somewhat disagree d)**strongly disagree**

9. What do you think hinders the effective teaching and learning of pronunciation in your school? (i) students lack of interest to learn phonetics    (ii)Teachers are also lazy to teach phonetics with the needed attention  (iii) the influence of students' mother tongue

**Teacher C**

1. Have you studied pronunciation during any time of your learning? **Yes** / No

2. How long did you study pronunciation? One semester and also pronunciation was part of the courses I offered

3. What have you been trained to teach? English

4. Have you attended an in-service training on pronunciation after the completion of your degree program? Yes / **No**

5. Is there the need to teach or learn pronunciation? **Yes** / No

   Why? It helps the learners to communicate easily with people and also helps them to understand any sentence or text they read.

6. When you have problems communicating in English, is it more likely because of a language problem or a pronunciation problem? A pronunciation problem

7. What methods have you been using to teach pronunciation? Direct and demonstrative methods

8. Learning good pronunciation is NOT as important as learning grammar and vocabulary.

   Strongly agree b) somewhat agree    c) somewhat disagree d) strongly disagree

9. What do you think hinders the effective teaching and learning of pronunciation in your school? (i) Lack of in-service training and workshops for teachers to update their knowledge in phonetics. (ii) Teachers are also lazy to teach phonetics with the needed attention   (iii) students do not have some specific sounds in their language.

## APPENDIX B

Students are observed on how they pronounced the words with the bold letters in the production test passage.

**Production Test Passage**

If Engli**sh** is not your native language, people may h**a**ve noticed that you come from another country because of your foreign accent. "Why do people usually h**a**ve an accent when they speak a s**e**cond language? Several **th**eories address this i**ss**ue. Many people believe that only young children can learn a s**e**cond language wi**th**out an accent, but applied linguists h**a**ve reported cases of older individuals who h**a**ve mastered a second language wi**th**out an accent. Another common belief is that your first language influences your pronunciation in a s**e**cond language. Most native speakers of Engli**sh** can, for example, recognize people from France by their France accents. They may also be able to identify Spani**sh** or Arabic speakers ov**er** the tele**ph**one, just by listening to their pronunciation.

Does **th**is mean that accents can't be changed? Not at all! But old h**a**bits won't change wi**th**out a lot of hard work, will they? In the end, the pa**th** to learning to speak a s**e**cond language wi**th**out an accent appears to be a combination of hard work, a good ear, and a strong desire to sound like a native speaker. You also need accurate information **a**bout the Engli**sh** sound system and lots of exposure to the spoken language. Will you manage to make progress, or will you just give **u**p? Only time will tell, I'm afraid. Good l**u**ck, and don't forget to work hard!