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MONOPHTHONGISATION OF CLOSING DIPHTHONGS IN THE SPOKEN ENGLISH OF UNDERGRADUATES OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY WUKARI

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Abstract
*This research examines the phonological analysis of monophthongisation of closing diphthongs in the spoken English of selected undergraduates of Federal University Wukari. Closing diphthong is a speech sound in which there is a glide from one vowel quality to another. Monophthongisation is a phonological process whereby one of two vowel elements of a diphthong changes to a single vowel. The specific objective of the study is to analyse the monophthongisation of the closing diphthongs in the spoken English of the respondents. The respondents were randomly selected from five departments in the university. Forty students were selected from each of the five departments giving a total number of 100 male and 100 female students, thereby making it 200 respondents. Questionnaires, reading aloud-task and voice tape recorder were the instruments used for data collection. Simple percentage method was used to analyse the data. The overall performance of the respondents reveals that out of the 2000 number of elicitations, only 216 was recorded as the correct elicitations articulated by the respondents which stood at **10.8%**. This is an indication that the respondents find it very difficult to correctly pronounce all the five English closing diphthongs (/eɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aɪ/, /aʊ/, /əʊ/) in the test items. This means that the respondents monophthongise these diphthongs as [a], [i], [o], [o:], [ɔ] as the case may be. For instance, they monophthongise the closing diphthong in 'affid**a**vit' /æfəd**eɪ**vɪt/ as [afid**a**vit] (/eɪ/ for [a]). It was equally discovered that female respondents performed better than their male counterparts. Likewise, respondents from the Department of English performed better than their counterparts in other departments. In a nutshell, the respondents found it very difficult to correctly articulate the English closing diphthongs and therefore, erroneously monophthongise them. In a bid to solving the pronunciation problems, suggestions and recommendations are given.*

Keywords: monophthongisation, closing diphthong, pure vowel, phonological process, vowel lengthening

Introduction
It is a known fact that ideas, information, feelings, and emotions cannot be shared among people that occupy a geographical location without a language. This means language is essential paraphernalia that makes human communication possible. That is why Hall (1968:158) defines it as "an institution where human communicates and interacts with each other by means of habitually used arbitrary oral auditory symbols." In other words, language is a vital tool for human communications and interactions. Likewise, Sapir (1921:18) sees language as "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols." There are various languages spoken by different people in the world today. Some of them include English, French, Hindi, German, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. Communication function is the key importance of any spoken language in any part of the world today.

The English language is considered as the second most spoken language of the world after the Mandarin Chinese language. It has been established that English, German, Dutch, Norwegian, and even Danish belong to the Germanic group of language as they are derived from the same original ancestor. All of these languages were developed from a primitive language spoken in prehistoric times by the early Germanic tribes. In the same vein, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese (called Romance languages) and so on are the offspring of Latin which was one of the Italic families (Teresa, 2003).

The history of the English language really started with the arrival of the three Germanic tribes who invaded Britain during the 5th century AD. These tribes were the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes, who crossed the North Sea from what today is Denmark and Northern Germany. At that time, the inhabitants of Britain spoke a Celtic language. But most of the Celtic speakers were pushed to the west and the north by the invaders - mainly into what are now called Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The Angles came from "Englaland" and their language was called "Englisc" - from which the words "England" and "English" are derived (Richard and David, 2008). Over many centuries, the English language has been influenced by a number of African and other languages of the world.

Most of the African countries gained their independence from the European powers during the latter part of the 20th century. The roads to independence were different for different countries and painful for many. As a result of the struggle to invade and colonise other countries, the English language started to spread across the world. The spread gave room to what is called World Englishes. In a bid to categorise the various types of English in the world, Kachru (1992:26) describes the English language in terms of three concentric circles thus:

> ...these circles include the **inner** circle, the **outer** circle,

and the **expanding** circle. This division represents the type of spread and the pattern of acquisition. The inner circle refers to those countries that use English language as their mother tongue; examples are the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand. The outer circle refers to the countries that use English as an official language either in education, governing or running the affairs of a state. Such countries include Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, and South Africa. Moreover, the expanding circle refers to those countries that use English as a Lingua Franca. Examples of such countries are China and Japan.

As shown in the above excerpt, the English spoken in Nigeria automatically belongs to the outer circle because of its official purposes. It is important to note that Nigeria consists of a federation of separate regions based on ethno linguistic affiliations (the main ethnic groups are Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa). English has been spoken since the early 17th century in Nigeria. The position of English is particularly strong given the enormous diversity of the native languages found in Nigeria. As a result of this, the English Language is chosen as an official language, and as the language of instruction, especially and virtually in every institution in Nigeria. Therefore, the diversity of native languages paves way for phonological problems or errors encountered in the English language in Nigeria. Thus, this study intends to analyse the monophthongisation of diphthongs in the spoken English of selected students of Federal University Wukari, Taraba State.

Federal University Wukari is located in Wukari, Taraba State. It was founded in 2011 among other nine federal universities. It is a conventional university that offers a broad range of courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Some of these courses include Crop Production, Physics, English and Literary Studies (English), Business Administration, Soil Science and Laboratory, Agricultural Extension, Food Science and Technology (FST), Philosophy, Sociology, Economics, Biology, Adult and Continuous Education, Biochemistry, Medicine and Surgery, Private law, and many more *(*FUW Student Handbook, 2021/2022*).*

Statement of the Problem

Although many scholars have extensively worked on this concept, there are some lacuna that are still left to cover. Scholars like Hayes (1990) worked on diphthongisation and co-indexing and Utulu (2014) worked on monophthongisation and vowel lengthening process. Both of them paid little or no attention to other aspects of phonology which equally pose pronunciation difficulties to ESL speakers in Nigeria. In other words, they failed to see how it affects the spoken English of undergraduate students especially in North Eastern Nigeria. Hence, this research intends to fill the gap by analysing the monophthongisation of the closing diphthongs in the spoken English of selected undergraduates of Federal University Wukari, Taraba State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to analyse the monophthongisation of closing diphthongs in the spoken English of undergraduates of Federal University Wukari. Likewise, the specific objectives of the study are to describe respondents' realisation of the English closing diphthongs in their spoken English; discuss the respondents' performance based on their demographic information; determine their overall performance in the test items; and suggest or recommend possible solutions to the problem.

Phonology and the English Phonemes

Phonology is a branch of linguistics that is concerned with the logical arrangement of speech sounds in the world languages. It has conventionally focused largely on the study of the systems of speech sounds in languages. (Mcmahon, 2002). According to Yule (2010:42), "phonology is essentially the description of the system and patterns of speech sounds in a language". The speech sounds in English, for instance, are the twenty vowel and twenty-four consonant phonemes.

In linguistics, a phoneme is considered as the smallest sound unit in a language that is capable of given a distinctive meaning, such as <b> in **bull** and the <p> in **pull**. In other words, it is a minimal unit of sound capable of distinguishing words of different meanings. Phonemes are said to be language specific. That is for the fact that they are functionally distinctive in English. This means they can cause a change in meaning. This may not be so in another language. For instance, /b/ and /p/ may not cause a change in another language. It should be noted that all phonemes are usually written between two slashes /b/ and /p/. Likewise, it should be noted that different languages have different phonemes.

English Vowels

A vowel is a sound that is produced with the involvement of vocal cords. It is also a type of grapheme (letter) in the alphabet of a language. Examples of vowels as letters of alphabet include <a>, <e>, <i>, <o>, and **<u>**. A vowel is a grapheme or letter of the alphabet (*a, e, i, o, u,* and sometimes semi-vowels) that represents a phoneme produced by the relatively free passage of breath through the larynx and oral cavity. The vowels are the main sounds of syllables which is called nucleus. They are also the major group of phonemes in the English language. It is important to note that spoken English has approximately twenty distinct vowel sounds. There are three main types of vowels. These include simple, complex and

more complex. Simple vowels are referred to as monophthongs or pure vowels. In the production of monophthong, the tongue and the mouth are placed in one position. The complex vowels are diphthongs or gliders in whose production the mouth and/or the tongue move as they are articulated. Finally, the more complex are called triphthongs. Examples of monophthongs include /iː/, /ɪ/, /ɜː/, /e/, /ɔː/, /ɒ/, /uː/, /ʊ/, /ɑː/, /æ/, /ʌ/ and /ə/; diphthongs are /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɪə/, /eə/, /ʊə/, /aʊ/ and /əʊ/ while triphthongs are /eɪə/, /ɔɪə/, /aɪə/, /aʊə/ and /əʊə/ (Yakubu, 2019).

Monophthongs

Monophthong means one sound. Every pure vowel is made up of a single sound, which is either short or long. Therefore, monophthongs are pure vowels. Monophthong is basically a vowel. The word monophthong is derived from the old Greek language. *Mono* means one or single, and –*phthong* refers to sound or tone. This originated from the basic word 'phthalein', which means to speak, create sound with the voice (Aziz et al., 2021). The word 'monophthong' shows that a vowel is spoken precisely with one mouth position and one tone. For example, when one says 'meet', while he/she is producing the sound of the <ee>, nothing changes from that sound.

A monophthong can be a word in a language and as such, it can as well be an independent syllable. There is no other shorter and independent syllable than a single monophthong. As earlier discussed, a monophthong can also be referred to as a 'simple vowel'. The English monophthongs are twelve which are /ʊ/, /uː/, /æ/, /ɑː/, /ɒ/, /ɔː/, /ɪ/, /iː/, /ə/, /ɜː/, /e/ and /ʌ/. Below is the English monophthong or pure vowel chart.

Fig. 1: The English Vowel Chart
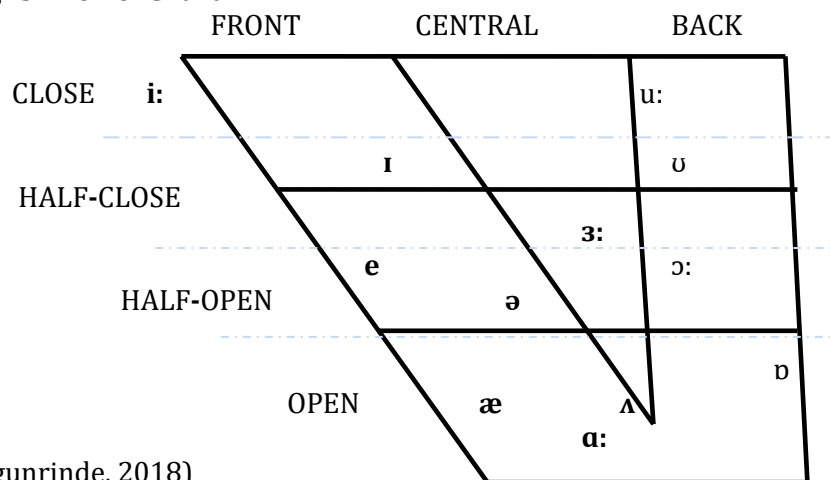
Culled from (Ogunrinde, 2018)

The table 1 below shows the English monophthongs with their descriptions and examples of words in which they can be found.

Table 1: The English Monophthongs and Their Descriptions

S/N	Monophthongs	Description	Words
1	/iː/	front close spread	**tea**, q**ueue**
2	/ɪ/	front half-close spread	b**ui**ld, p**i**t

3	/e/	front half-open spread	s**e**t, s**ai**d
4	/æ/	front open spread	p**a**t, pl**ai**t
5	/ɑ:/	back open neutral	b**a**th, f**a**lcon
6	/ɒ/	back open rounded	h**o**t, wh**a**t
7	/ɔ:/	back half-open rounded	r**aw,** p**or**t
8	/ʊ/	back half-close rounded	p**u**t, w**oo**l
9	/u:/	back close rounded	f**oo**t, s**ou**p
10	/ʌ/	central open neutral	j**u**g, t**ou**gh
11	/ɜ:/	central half-close neutral	g**i**rl, s**ear**ch
12	/ə/	central half-open neutral	**a**go, **a**way

Extracted from (Ogunrinde, 2018)

Diphthongs

According to Jones (2006:144), "a diphthong is a sound in which there is a glide from one vowel quality to another." In other words, it is a speech sound that is formed by the combination of two phonemes (vowels) in one syllable such that the sound starts as a single vowel and later moves towards another one (as in eye, ear, and heir). Atoye *et al* (2018:45) further explain the concept thus:

> ...a vowel in whose production there is a glide from the tongue position for one vowel to the tongue position for another vowel. It is imperative to note that a diphthong is only one vowel though it has two elements. The time spent in pronouncing a diphthong is about the same as the time spent in pronouncing a long vowel. The only difference is that a diphthong begins as one short vowel and ends as another, with the first part sounding much longer and stronger than the second part, as in /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, and /eɪ/. Diphthong /eɪ/, for example, is about three quarters /e/ in its production and as the glide to /ɪ/ occurs in the last quarter, the loudness of the sound decreases. The /ɪ/ part is therefore shorter and not so loud.

As can be deduced from the above definition, a diphthong is a speech sound that has two successive vowels which are articulated in a single syllable in which the tongue glides from one position to the other in its production. English has eight diphthongs which are /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /eɪ/, /əʊ/, /aʊ/, /ɪə/, /eə/ and /ʊə/. They are further divided into two parts namely: **centring** and **closing**. Examples of centring diphthongs are /ɪə/, /eə/ and /ʊə/, while examples of closing

diphthongs are /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /eɪ/, /əʊ/, and /aʊ/. The easiest way to remember them is in

terms of three groups as shown in the diagram below:

Fig. 2: The Chart of English Diphthongs
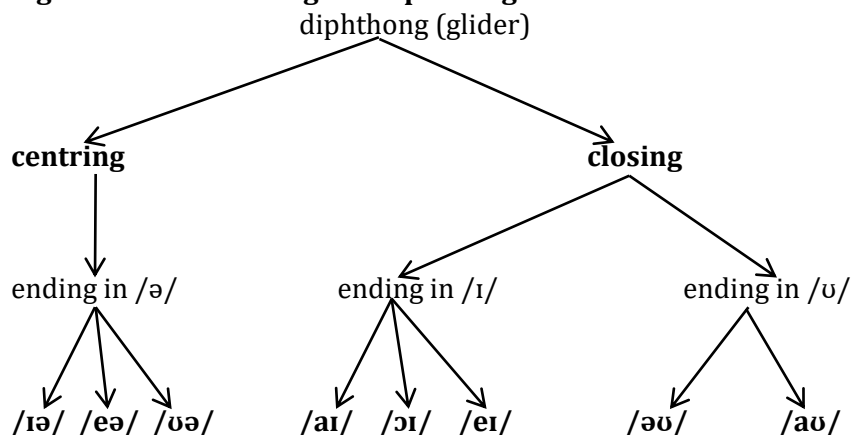
Closing Diphthongs
The closing diphthongs have a particular feature that is common to them, which is, gliding towards a closer vowel sound. The reason is that the second part of the diphthong is weak, and they do not often reach a position that could be called close. However, it is constant that there is a glide from a relatively more open vowel to a relatively closer vowel. Therefore, the first category of the closing diphthongs is the three diphthongs that glide towards /ɪ/. These are briefly explained below:

- **/eɪ/** - The starting point is the same as the /e/ of 'set', and 'den'. Examples of this diphthong include 'lace', 'mate'.
- **/aɪ/ -** This diphthong begins with an open vowel which is between front and back; it is quite similar to the /ʌ/ of the words 'cup', 'run'. Examples of /aɪ/ are 'wine', 'rice'.
- **/ɔɪ/ -** The first part of this diphthong is slightly more open than /ɔ:/ in 'all', 'war'. The following are the examples of /ɔɪ/: 'oil', 'point'.

The second category of the closing diphthongs glide towards /ʊ/, so that as the tongue moves closer to the roof of the mouth, there is, at the same time, a rounding movement of the lips. This movement is not a

large one, again because the second category of the closing diphthongs is weak. This is succinctly explained below:

- **/əʊ/ -** The vowel position for the beginning of this is the same as for the "schwa" vowel /ə/, as found in the first syllable of the word 'around'. The lips may be slightly rounded in anticipation of the glide towards /ʊ/, for which there is quite noticeable lip-rounding. The examples of this type are 'go' and 'hope'.
- **/aʊ/ -** This diphthong begins with a vowel similar to /aɪ/. Meanwhile, this is an open vowel, therefore a glide to **/ʊ/** would necessitate a large movement, and the tongue does not often reach the **/ʊ/** position. Here, there is only slight lip-rounding. Examples of this type are 'out' and 'loud' (Roach, 2009:18).

Until research is carried out to ascertain the claim, it is assumed that some Nigerian speakers of English usually monophthongise most of these closing diphthongs.

Monophthongisation
Some scholars like Jensen (2004) and Nurhamidah *etal* (2016) agree that vowel lengthening, vowel shortening, monophthongisation and diphthongisation

are among the phonological processes. That is why, Essien (2020) is precise in discussing vowel lengthening and monophthongisation as some of the phonological processes. In addition, Hayes (1990:64) clearly expounds diphthongisation as a "phonological rule that allows only long vowels and doubly-linked segments." However, the focus in this research is monophthongisation.

Monophthongisation is a phonological process through which one of the two vowel elements of a diphthong, usually the second element is deleted, leaving the stranded one lengthened (in Nigerian English, see example 1 in *table 2* below). In other words, monophthongisation is a phonological process whereby one of two vowel elements of a diphthong (either the first or the second vowel) changes to a single vowel, and it is usually lengthened. For instance, among some Nigerian speakers of English, closing diphthong /aɪ/ in 'pint' /ˈpaɪnt/ is monophthongised ([i]) and pronounced as [pint] (for such example, see example 10 in *table 2* below). However, some scholars claim that the single vowel that is usually retained in the process is commonly one of the two

vowel elements of the diphthongs. Nevertheless, it is not so in all cases in the English spoken in Nigerian; the single (monophthongised) vowel may be an entirely different vowel (see example 10 in *table 5* below). More so, monophthongisation has a common process or rule, which is presented below.

+ Diphthong → [Monophthongisation P.]
→   + single vowel

It was revealed that the monophthongised diphthongs were lengthened for two main reasons. First, there is a necessity to preserve the weight of the deleted vowel. Second, there is a need to reflect the components of the falling Fundamental Frequency contour of English final open syllables. Nevertheless, it is suggested that these two factors appear to underlie the simplification of the same set of closing diphthongs in many non-native English accents of Asia and Africa, such as Zimbabwean (Shona) English, Indian English, Nigerian English among others (Utulu, 2014). The *table 2* below explicates a few examples of possible monophthongisation of closing diphthongs in Nigerian English.

Table 2: Possible Monophthongisation of Closing Diphthongs in Nigerian English

S/N	Words	Diphthong	**British English** Transcription	Monoph-thongised Sound	**Nigerian English** Transcription	Phonological Process
1	M**a**jor	/eɪ/	/m**eɪ**dʒə/	[e]	[m**e**dʒɔ]	/eɪ/ → [e] or [e:]
2	S**a**dist		/s**eɪ**dɪst/		[s**a**dist]	/eɪ/ → [a]
3	Cont**a**gious		/kənt**eɪ**dʒəs/		[kɔnt**a**dʒiɔs]	
4	M**a**trix		/m**eɪ**trɪks/		[m**a**triks]	
5	Sl**a**vish		/sl**eɪ**vɪʃ/		[sl**a**viʃ]	
6	S**a**cred		/s**eɪ**krɪd/		[s**a**krɛd]	
7	Sach**e**t		/sæʃ**eɪ**/		[saʃ**ɛ**t]	/eɪ/ → [ɛ]

8	Ball<u>et</u>		/bæl**eɪ**/		[bal**ɛ**t]	
9	Ber<u>et</u>		/bər**eɪ**/		[bɛr**ɛ**t]	
10	P<u>i</u>nt	/aɪ/	/p**aɪ**nt/	[i]	[p**i**nt]	/aɪ/ → [i]
11	hor<u>i</u>zon		/hər**aɪ**zn/		[hɔr**i**zon]	
12	M<u>i</u>lo		/m**aɪ**ləʊ/		[m**i**lo]	
13	Annoyance	/ɔɪ/	/ən**ɔɪ**əns/	[ɔ]	[an**ɔ**jans]	/ɔɪ/ → [ɔ]
14	Sl<u>ow</u>	/əʊ/	/sl**əʊ**/	[o]	[sl**o**]	/əʊ/ → [o]
15	b<u>ou</u>ntiful	/aʊ /	/b**aʊ**ntɪfl/	[a]	[b**a**ntiful]	/aʊ/ → [a]

The above is the pre-data collected from some Nigerian speakers of English in order to ascertain if monophthongisation actually exists in Nigerian English. As shown in *table 2* above, it is assumed that monophthongisation is evident in the English spoken in Nigeria but this will not be established until the findings of this research later reveal it.

Methodology
The method used in collecting the data was a questionnaire, read-aloud task and tape sound recorder. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section 'A' contains demographic information of the respondents. The pieces of information therein include sex, and departments. Section 'B' contains 10 test items (closing diphthongs: two test items each for the five diphthongs).

The target population was made up of selected undergraduates of Federal University Wukari, Taraba State. They were drawn from five departments (Physics, English and Literary Studies (English), Business Administration, Agricultural Extension and Food Science and Technology (FST). Forty respondents each were selected from the five departments making it a total of two hundred respondents.

The descriptive analysis method was employed using a simple percentage. Descriptive analysis accounts for the number of frequency recorded in respondents' performances of their correct and incorrect articulations of the test items. The descriptive analysis is, therefore, presented in simple percentage. The total number of responses on each item in the questionnaire is rated hundred percentages (100%). The respondents, who have similar or the same responses to a particular question, are summed up and placed over 200^z multiplied by one hundred. For example, $\frac{x}{200z} \times \frac{100y}{1}$ where x is equal to the total number of the respondents with similar or correct responses on a particular item and 200_z is equal to the total number of the respondents while 100_y is equal to the total percentage.

Data Presentation and Analysis
The respondents' performance in the articulation of test items based on their demographic information and the analysis of respondents' monophthongisation of closing diphthongs in their spoken English are succinctly discussed below.

Respondents' Performance in the Articulation of Test Items Based on Sex and Departments
The sample population of the study comprises of 100 males and 100 females making 200 respondents. The *table 3* below

presents the analysis of the respondents' performance in the articulation of the test

items based on sex.

Table 3: Respondents' Performance Based on Sex

Variables (V)	No of Resp.	No. of Test Items: Words with Closing Diphthongs = 10	Articulation of Resp.		Total Obtainable Score Per Variable (V)
			Correct Freq. (%)	Incorrect Freq. (%)	
Male	100	10	86 **(8.6%)**	914 (91.4%)	1,000 (100×10=1,000)
Female	100	10	130 **(13%)**	870 (87%)	1,000 (100×10=1,000)
Total	200		216 (10.8%)	1,784 (89.2%)	2,000

In *table 3* above, the analysis shows that despite the poor performances in the male category who recorded 8.6%, the female performed better with 13%. The result of the finding is in accordance with Steinberg's (1993) view that females are more endowed in language proficiency than males.

Similarly, the result of the analysis reveals that out of the total obtained scores of 400 per test item, respondents from the Department of English only articulated 76 correct frequencies which stood at 19% which is below average as against their counterparts in Physics, Business

Administration, Agricultural Extension, and Food Science and Technology (FST) who recorded very poor performances of 36 (9%), 30 (7.5%), 40 (10%) and 34 (8.5%) respectively. Although, the performance of the respondents from the Department of English is below average, it is still better than its counterparts from other departments. This might be as a result of the special training acquired by the respondents from their Department in courses like phonetics and phonology, and the regular use of the Multi-media Language Laboratory equipment. The result is shown in *table 4* below.

Table 4: Analysis of Respondents' Performance Based on Their Departments

Variables (V)	No of Resp.	No. of Test Items: Closing diphthongs (2 x 5 = **10)**	Articulation of Resp.		Total Obtainable Scores Per Test Items
			Correct Freq. (%)	Incorrect Freq. (%)	
Physics	40	10	36 **(9%)**	364 (91%)	400 (40×10=400)
English	40	10	76 **(19%)**	324 (81%)	400 (40×10=400)
Business Administration	40	10	30 **(7.5%)**	370 (92.5%)	400 (40×10=400)
Agricultural Extension	40	10	40 **(10%)**	360 (90%)	400 (40×10=400)
FST	40	10	34 **(8.5%)**	366 (91.5%)	400 (40×10=400)
Total	200	10 (2 words x 5	216	1,784	2,000

diphthongs)   **(10.8%)**   (89.2%)

Analysis of Respondents' Monophthongisation of Closing Diphthongs
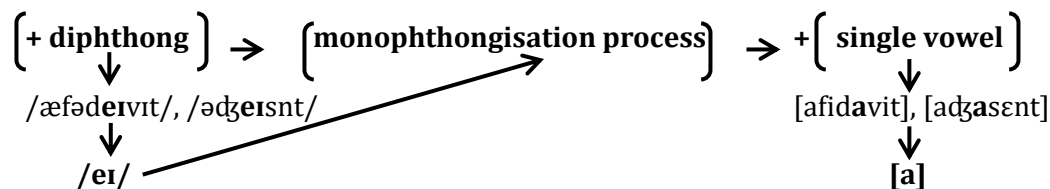This section shows the respondents' realisation of the test items which include selected English words with closing diphthongs /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aɪ/, /aʊ/ and /əʊ/. The respondents replaced some diphthongs with monophthongs (monophthongisation). The *table 5* below explains it better.

Table 5: **Monophthongisation of Closing Diphthongs**

Respondents' performance

Diphthongs	Test items	Correct / RP transcription (articulation)	No of respondents	Correct articulation	Total correct articulation (%)	Total wrong articulation	No of times each test item is articulated (400)	Respondents' monophthongised sounds
/eɪ/	affid**a**vit	/æfəd**eɪ**vɪt/	200	18	35	365		[a]
	Adj**a**cent	/əʤ**eɪ**snt/	200	17	**(8.8%)**	(91.2)	400	[a]
/aɪ/	hor**i**zon	/hər**aɪ**zn/	200	22	39	361		[i]
	st**i**pend	/st**aɪ**pend/	200	17	**(9.8%)**	(90.2%)	400	[i]
/ɔɪ/	s**oy**a	/s**ɔɪ**ə/	200	12	30	370		[o], [ɔ]
	b**uoy**ant	/b**ɔɪ**ənt/	200	18	**(7.5%)**	(92.5%)	400	[o], [ɔ]
/əʊ/	g**oa**t	/g**əʊ**t/	200	25	52	348		[o]
	dep**o**t	/dep**əʊ**/	200	27	**(13%)**	(87%)	400	[o], [ɔ]
/aʊ/	s**ou**nd	/s**aʊ**nd/	200	38	60	340		[a]
	owl	/**aʊ**l/	200	22	**(15%)**	(85%)	400	[o:]
total	10 words	5 diphthongs	200	216	216 (10.8%)	1,784 (89.2%)	2000	

It was discovered from the poor performance of 8.8% that the respondents did not correctly pronounce closing diphthong /eɪ/ in the test items. They articulated 'affid**a**vit' and 'adj**a**cent' as [afid**a**vit] and [adʒ**a**sɛnt] instead of /æfəd**eɪ**vɪt/ and /əʤ**eɪ**snt/. The phonological process that took place during their pronunciation of English words with closing diphthong is monophthongisation. Therefore, the respondents monophthongised the closing diphthong /eɪ/ as [a] thus:

$$\left[\text{+ diphthong}\right] \rightarrow \left[\text{monophthongisation process}\right] \rightarrow +\left[\text{single vowel}\right]$$

/æfəd**eɪ**vɪt/, /ədʒ**eɪ**snt/   [afid**a**vit], [adʒ**a**sɛnt]

/**eɪ**/   [**a**]

This problem could be as result of the transfer of MT's 'total correspondence of grapheme-phoneme orthographical structure where a grapheme is pronounced the same way it is written. For instance, /a/ in a Yoruba word is pronounced as /a/ as well. Therefore, respondents wrongly pronounced /a/ in '**a**ffid**a**vit' as [a] instead of /æ/ and /eɪ/ respectively.

As shown in *table 5* above, the respondents did not properly pronounce the words having the closing diphthong /aɪ/ as it is evident in 9.8% as the correct articulation recorded. Instead of pronouncing the /i/ in 'hor**i**zon', 'st**i**pend' as a closing diphthong /aɪ/, they ended up monophthongising it as [i]: /hər**aɪ**zn/, /st**aɪ**pend/ for [hor**i**zon], [st**i**pɛnd] respectively. This could be as a result of mother tongue interference.

Additionally, the respondents monophthongised the closing diphthong /ɔɪ/ in 's**oy**a' /s**ɔɪ**ə/ and 'b**uoy**ant' /b**ɔɪ**ənt/ as [o] or [ɔ]: thereby pronouncing [s**o**ya], [s**ɔ**ya], [b**o**yant] and [b**ɔ**yant] as the case may be. As revealed from *table 5* above, only 7.5% correct articulation was recorded, which is an indication of a very poor performance in these test items. This could be as a result of orthographically related problem.

As shown in *table 5* above, a poor performance of 13% also reveals that the respondents also had problem in articulating closing diphthong /əʊ/ correctly. Instead of pronouncing 'g**oa**t', 'dep**o**t' as /g**əʊ**t/, /dep**əʊ**/, they pronounced the words as [g**o**t], [g**oː**t], [dɛp**o**t], [dɛp**ɔ**t] as the case may be. In other words, they

monophthongised/əʊ/ as [o], [oː], [ɔ] respectively. This could be as a result of the respondents' mother tongue interference because closing diphthong /əʊ/ is not attested in most African languages. This shows that the respondents have a problem in the articulation of the closing diphthong /əʊ/. This could be as a result of the difference in the sound systems of the L1 and L2 of the respondents.

Moreover, the poor performance (15%) in the articulation of the test items shows that the respondents have a problem in pronouncing the closing diphthong /aʊ/. They monophthongised it as [a], [o] or [oː] as the case may be. They pronounced 's**ou**nd', 'owl' /s**aʊ**nd/, /**aʊ**l/ as [s**a**nd], [**o**l], [**oː**l].

From the table above, the analysis of the overall performance of the respondents reveals that out of the 2000 test items that were pronounced, only **216** was recorded as the correct elicitations articulated by the respondents which stood at **10.8%**. This is an indication that the respondents found it very difficult to produce the closing diphthongs in the test items. Then, **1,784** were recorded as the wrong elicitations showing a poor performance of **89.2**% (see figure 3 below for clearer explanation). In other words, the respondents have a serious problem in the pronunciation of the closing diphthongs: /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aɪ/, /aʊ/, and /əʊ/ in the test items, thereby monophthongising them as [a], [i], [o], [oː] or [ɔ] as the case may be. *Table 6* below explains this better.

Fig. 3: **Respondents' Overall Performance in Articulation of the Sounds in the Test Items**
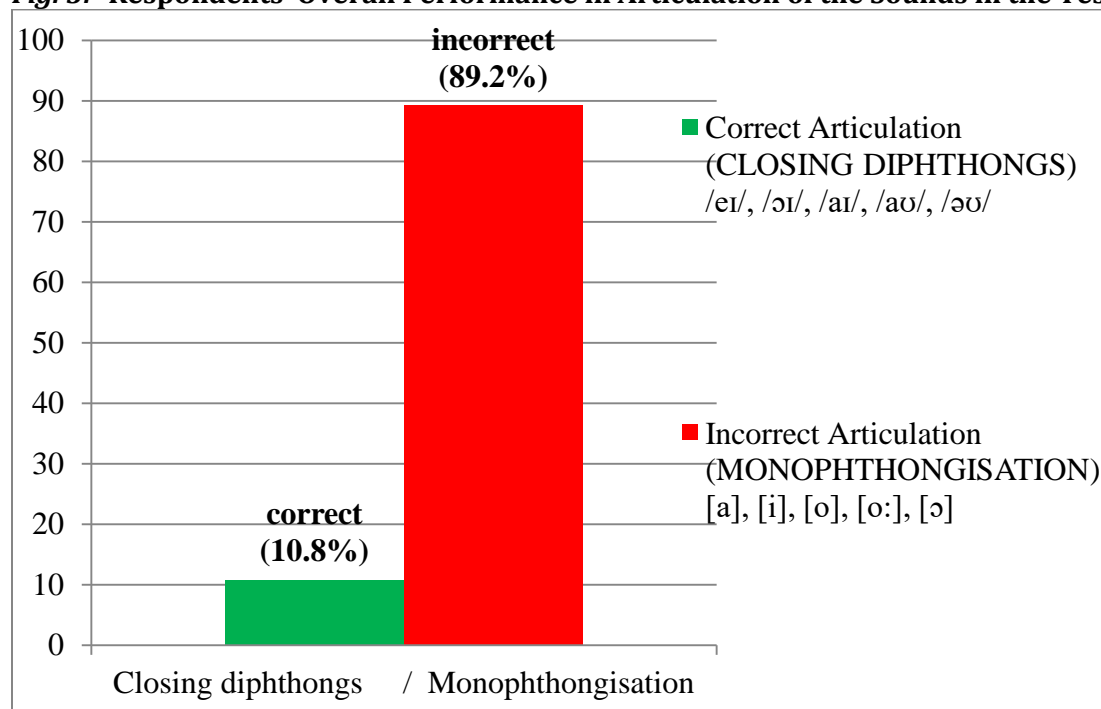

Table 6: Monophthongisation of Closing Diphthongs

| | Correct Articulation / | | Respondents' Articulation | |
| | RP Version | | (Monophthongisation) | |
Closing Diphthongs	Test Items	Correct / RP Transcription (Articulation)	Respondents' Monophthongised Sounds	Respondents' Emerging Patterns
/eɪ/	affid**a**vit	/æfəd**eɪ**vɪt/	[a]	[afid**a**vit]
	adj**a**cent	/ədʒ**eɪ**snt/	[a]	[adʒ**a**sɛnt]
/aɪ/	hor**i**zon	/hər**aɪ**zn/	[i]	[hɔr**i**zon]
	st**i**pend	/st**aɪ**pend/	[i]	[st**i**pɛnd]
/ɔɪ/	s**oy**a	/s**ɔɪ**ə/	[o], [ɔ]	[s**o**ya], [s**ɔ**ya]
	b**uoy**ant	/b**ɔɪ**ənt/	[o], [ɔ]	[b**o**yant], [b**ɔ**yant]
/əʊ/	g**oa**t	/g**əʊ**t/	[o], [o:]	[g**o**t], [g**o:**t]

	dep**o**t	/dep**əʊ**/	[o], [ɔ]	[dɛp**o**t], [dɛp**ɔ**t]
/aʊ/	s**ou**nd	/s**aʊ**nd/	[a]	[s**a**nd]
	owl	/**aʊ**l/	[o], [o:]	[**o**l], [**o:**l]

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

It was discovered through this study that female respondents performed better than their male counterparts in the articulation of closing diphthongs without erroneously monophthongising them. Likewise, it was revealed that respondents from the Department of English and Literary Studies performed better than their counterparts in other departments.

As a result of the recorded poor performance which stood between **8.8%** and **15%**, it was revealed that respondents cannot correctly pronounce all the five English closing diphthongs: /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aɪ/, /eə/, /ʊə/, /aʊ/, /əʊ/ in the test items. They pronounced all of them as monophthongs (monophthongisation). In other words, they monophthongised the closing diphthongs thus: affid**a**vit /æfəd**eɪ**vɪt/ for [afid**a**vit], st**i**pend /st**aɪ**pend/ for [st**i**pɛnd] and so on. In a nutshell, the closing diphthong /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /aɪ/, /eə/, /ʊə/, /aʊ/, and /əʊ/ were monophthongised as [a], [i], [o], [o:], [ɔ] as the case may be.

From the table above, the analysis of the overall performance of the respondents revealed that out of the 2000 times the test items were pronounced, only **216** was recorded as the **correct** elicitations articulated by the respondents which stood at **10.8%**. This is an indication that the respondents found it very difficult to produce the closing diphthongs in the test items, while **1,784** was recorded as the **wrong** elicitation showing a poor performance of **89.2**%.

Conclusively, the respondents found it very difficult to correctly articulate the English closing diphthongs and, therefore, conveniently monophthongise them. In a bid to solve the pronunciation problems faced by the respondents, the following recommendations are given: First of all, teachers of English should undergo special training in phonetics and phonology to improve their knowledge and skills in spoken English. Also, there should be a periodic language conference, workshops and seminars to improve the teacher's pronunciation patterns, so as to minimise the interference of their mother-tongue.

Moreover, teachers should not confine themselves to only checking the meaning and use of words in the dictionaries but also check the accurate transcription and pronunciation of such words. They can as well install phonetiser application in their gadgets.

The government should provide good language laboratories, libraries and other facilities so as to encourage teachers and by so doing, the students under their tutelage will automatically benefit.

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