

Let's talk about the H factor!



Does Nigeria speak English?

Short answer: Yes

British influence in the region began with the prohibition of slave trade in 1807.

Also due to the influx of Christianity. Spoken by private school, libraries, hospitals; but it is spoken less frequently in rural areas and amongst people with lower education levels.

What is the H factor?

The H factor is a speech problem that is marked by the inclusion of the [hə] sound in places where it shouldn't be.

The H factor is when a H is added to the front or in some cases the back of a word usually before or after a vowel. This addition is seen as unnecessary to most speakers of English.

It also comes from the over emphasis of the [hə] in a word and in words that begin with [hə] taking the sound away completely.

Where did it originate from?

The H factor is a speech impediment that was developed from the Yoruba tribe/language.

The H factor developed from the fact that Yoruba does not have a H in their native vocabulary.

This is not the case with Igbo and Hausa which has many phonetic sounds for H within their spoken languages.

Yoruba may not be the most popular of the three languages spoken Hausa takes the number 1 spot but it is the native language of the capital city (Lagos then Abuja) and easiest to learn making it very attractive to the surrounding area.

Due to this being the case and many people speak English with a H factor as Yoruba dominated the Phonology.

Yoruba is a tonal based language while English is stressed based. Also, Yoruba has an open syllabic system while English has a closed syllable.

[Tonal language- a language where different words with different tonal inflections will convey different meanings. For example, a single word could be said with four different tones]¹

[Stressed Language- English is a stress-timed language. That means some syllables will be longer, and some will be shorter.]²

Due to most Nigerian languages being phonetic, words are also spelled as they are pronounced

Silent letters make it very difficult for English learners as they give no clue as to how to correctly spell out and pronounce the word.³

This is not only applicable to Nigeria but all L2 learners. In fact, most of the common spelling mistakes seen in English writing will be words which feature one or more silent letters.

Most Nigerian languages are Phonetic. Every sound is pronounced.

As Nigeria is mainly an oral culture, even though people speak English, new words are spoken phonetically.

Igbo tribe is one of the larger tribes in Nigeria to have a written language. This has made the learning of written English language accessible to them.

This correlates with the fact that most major authors and works of literature come from the Igbo tribes.

H factor is Schools

In recent years due to research from Oluwabukola Omolara Bamidele in 2019 'The /H/ Phenomenon: Over Generalised Or Confused? The Nigerian Yoruba-English Speakers As A Case Study' schools within the country have attempted to rectify the H errors within their classrooms.

Due to how natural the sound is to the mouth mistakes are being reinforced instead. For those who can afford private boarding schools this is not a major problem as they away from the general population and teachers are well vetted and trained in their areas. For those in government facilities that is unfortunately not the case; as many teachers themselves are not qualified or given the training to combat the problem.

How to treat the H factor?

The H factor can be treated just like with the Chinese language that doesn't have an R sound; the H sound is something that is heavily focused on when Nigerians come to the UK.

For many years the H factor both within spelling and speaking was seen as a sign of slow development which put many students from Nigeria in SEN classes and speech therapy for dyslexia when in actuality it was due to the effects of Phonology.

Bibliography

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