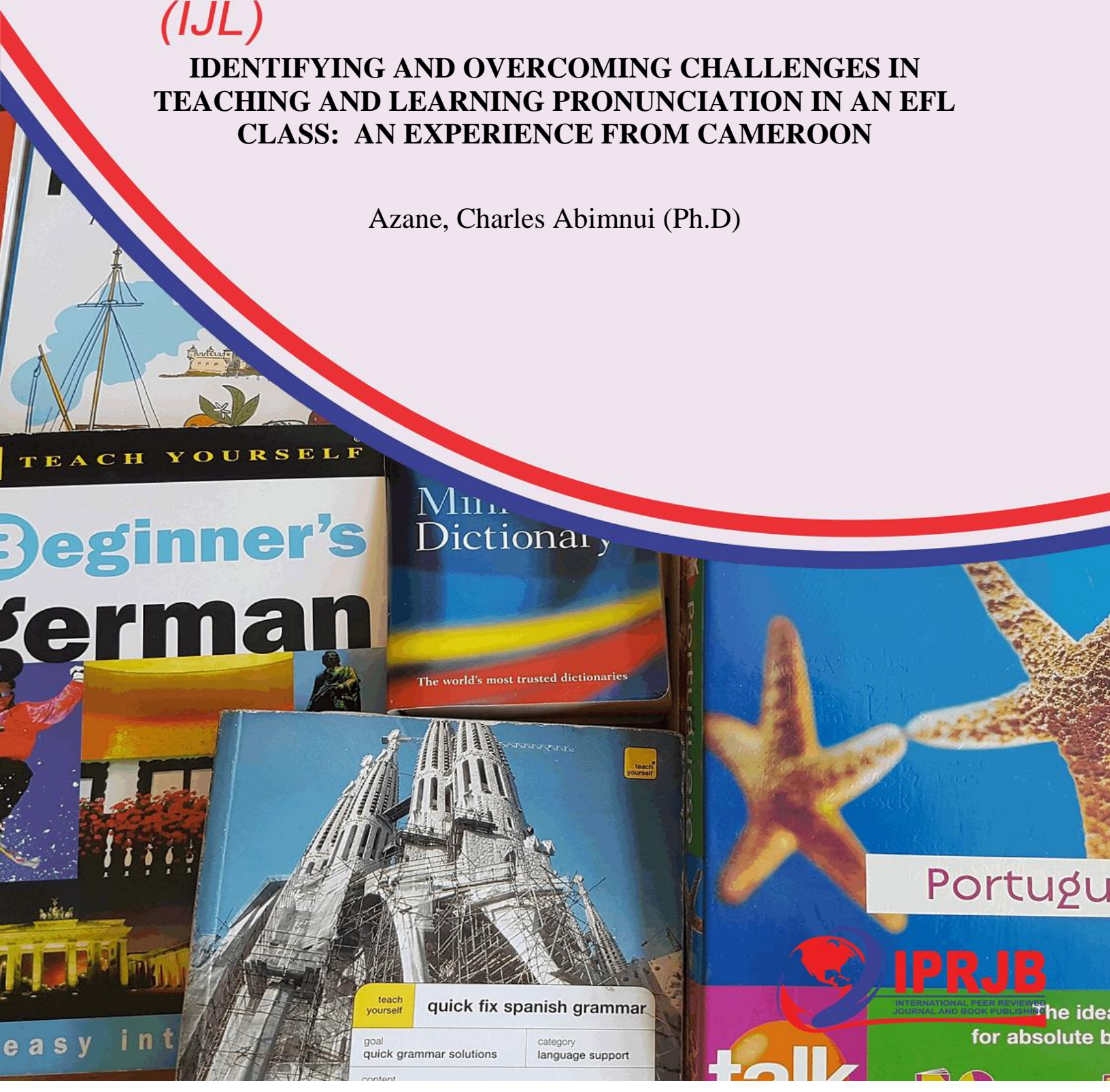


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**IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN
TEACHING AND LEARNING PRONUNCIATION IN AN EFL
CLASS: AN EXPERIENCE FROM CAMEROON**

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IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING CHALLENGES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING PRONUNCIATION IN AN EFL CLASS: AN EXPERIENCE FROM CAMEROON

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Abstract

Purpose: There are still gaps in knowledge with regard to reliable research-based information on what works and what does not work in pronunciation teaching. This gap can be filled by increased academic research on this topic, especially from other teachers' experiences and practices. This paper investigates some factors hindering the English as a Foreign Language learner (EFL) learners' acquisition of English pronunciation and reviews issues with English pronunciation instruction from a teacher's perceived challenges.

Methodology: The setting that defines the EFL learner is presented in a case study of an institution of Higher learning, Prepavogt in Yaounde. The participants are 51 students who are in the first year of their studies in a Management and Finance department. Data was collected through observation and analyses of audio tape recordings of students' oral productions as part of a pre-test and post-test TOEFL examination preparation during the 2020/2021 academic year. Textual data representation is favored as the objective was to supplement qualitative statements with some data.

Findings: The findings reveal the factors that affect the students ease of learning pronunciation. These emanated from factors such as the novelty in exposure to the practice of phonetics, the influence of mother tongue, and lack of interest. Segmental features; such as vowels, consonants and suprasegmental features like intonation and stress were all identified as posing serious problems that affected intelligibility. From the pre-test to the post-test, observed individual student improvement are indicators that the teaching strategies, coupled with the supporting audio-visual material, were successful in arousing students' interest, and developing improved pronunciation.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: With the popular decry of how pronunciation skills training are done in secondary schools, which have been proven to be unhelpful, this study demonstrates that appropriate target and focused teaching with supporting equipment, and teacher motivation is needed to train for effective and intelligible standard pronunciation in English among the Cameroonian EFL learners.

Key words: *Pronunciation, EFL learners, action research*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Amid the plethora of confusing categorizations of who qualifies as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) learner or community (see Moag, 1992), within Cameroon, arriving at a clear-cut dichotomy is still subject to some debate. This is particularly due to the country's complex bilingual nature in French and English. I say complex because of the politicized socio-linguistic landscape that affects the practice of official bilingualism in French and English. To this could be added the merging of the Francophone and Anglophone school systems that seeks to blur the discordance between the two linguistic cultures and hence the boundary between EFL and ESL, and lastly, the fact that a Francophone can choose English as his first language and vice-versa with an Anglophone.

However, in my opinion, the conceptual status of EFL applies better to a Francophone learner of English in a strictly Francophone environment or educational system. This definition offers the position favored in the present paper, a position also highlighted by Safotso (2017) when he encapsulates on the fact that when English in Cameroon is taught to French-speaking Cameroonians, it is called English as a Foreign Language. To this I add a further precision that that these schools should be inherently oriented towards the francophone educational sub-system. This premise is what qualifies Prepavogt, the case study and the students in a Business English and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) class as EFL learners.

The ability to speak English proficiently includes a number of sub-skills for the enhancement of communicative competence. These are grammar, vocabulary, pragmatics and pronunciation. Fraser (2000a) argues that among all these, pronunciation skills stand out as the most important with arguments that good pronunciation guarantees intelligibility. However, in spite of this importance of pronunciation, the teaching of it in EFL classrooms is not receiving the required focus and importance it deserves. When students leave secondary education to higher education where institutional focus on pronunciation is heightened or where they begin to consider study abroad options with requisite demands for English proficiency test results such as with TOEFL and IELTS, getting them ready becomes an arduous tasks.

Pronunciation in the English language is a topic of great theoretical interest and practical relevance, yet within the Cameroonian school context, it is unfortunately not receiving great focus. For both the Cameroonian Anglophone communities and francophone learners of English communities, there is the need to incorporate pronunciation into the oral skills of the English language users both at the segmental and supra-segmental features levels.

Within the secondary school systems of both sub-systems of education, the listening and speaking skills feature on the curricula. However researchers like Sokeng (2010) are remarking that the teaching of listening and speaking in schools and especially of English speaking and listening in the Francophone secondary schools is rare. The commonly identified pattern of instruction is by occasional teacher reading or the best student in class reading aloud and the rest of the students listening in silence. For the practical element of speaking, students are given phrases to repeat within denominational categories like 'meet and greet', introduction of self and others', going 'shopping', 'making offers, accepting and refusing offers', 'making requests' and

‘asking for directions’. This approach is rather wanting as the basic skills in articulating sounds properly is lost.

Pronunciation must be viewed as more than correct production of individual sounds or isolated words but rather as a crucial and integral part of communication that should be incorporated into classroom activities. It is an approach which if practiced will see language instructors consciously highlighting elements such as sounds, syllables, stress and intonation, creating a basic awareness of pronunciation on their students and helping them build the interest in pronunciation practices. Once the students understand the functions of these elements, they will know what to focus on and can build upon this basic awareness. The careful preparation and integration of pronunciation can play an important role in supporting the learners’ overall communicative prowess, whereupon, and by contrast, its absence could be the justification of a multiplicity of pronunciation variations and infelicities which we now comfort ourselves with under the misnomer of ‘cameroonizations’ and ‘nativisations’ of standard English word stock and expressions.

Background

During the course of my teaching of Business English and TOEFL preparation for first year students in the Management and Finance unit of Prepavogt Yaounde, one of the most encountered difficulty observed was in English pronunciation. First and foremost, it is worth noting that an international English proficiency level rater such TOEFL and TOEIC rate Cameroonians in their first year in a University or tertiary level institution of having learned English for a minimum of 15 years, (the cumulative period from nurse school, primary education, secondary and high school, up to first year in the University). With this categorization, one would expect to find students who possess some advanced communicative competency in English, but this is rarely the case.

Nforbi and Siéwoué (2016a) observe that most French-speaking Cameroonians in general and students in particular do not speak English eloquently because they possess no mastery of the tense and aspect system of English. Ngasu Betek (2020) projects immense problems with EFL acquisition of irregular verbs as she points to over-generalization of rules, simplification of rules and mother tongue influence being some of the encroaching factors. The fact is EFL learners come in to the University with immense lapses in English grammar, communication and pronunciation, and these were all evident with my students.

Again, these learners are naturally constraint due to the influence of their Mother tongue (L1), which is French. The phonological patterning of French being quite different from English, together with their linguistico-socio-cultural background, presented foundational challenges in their acquisition of English pronunciation aptitudes. These learners were observed to have challenges in producing not only segmental and suprasegmental features but also possessed remarkable traits of disinterestedness, which in my opinion is promoted by the great socio-political divide of historic proportion in Cameroon. In this regard, I make reference to the fact that Francophone Cameroonians were misled to thinking that English and the Anglophone are unimportant to the existence of the Francophone Cameroonian. Atechi, (2015) who asserts that, the attitudes of French-speaking Cameroonians towards English have drastically changed from

extremely negative to extremely positive since the 1990s supports this. This clearly shows that prior to the 1990s, the English language and the Anglophone culture and sub-system of education were undermined by the Francophones, whereby even in schools the official bilingualism status was not implemented as English was not taught to francophones. Rather French was imposed on to Anglophones in a bid to discard English and ‘frenchify’ the Anglophone.

Today, the Anglophone subsystem of education is now literally being invaded by children of Francophone background, a phenomenon which Anchimbe (2007) sees as an identity opportunism, as Francophones now weigh the immense advantages that can accrue from speaking, knowing and operating in English. This rush is of significance to the Cameroonian socio-linguistic landscape as it has seen the emergence of an English-immersion-type educational systems with the advocacy of courses taught simultaneously in English and French across schools. However, the successful implementation is still questionable due to the bottlenecks involved in putting English and French on equitable basis in terms of course coverage.

1.2 Aim and objectives

The goal of pronunciation instruction is not to ask learners to pronounce essentially like native speakers. Intelligible pronunciation should be the key. As such this paper seeks to explore the factors that affect the acquisition of pronunciation, both segmental and suprasegmental, to EFL learners. It also has the objective of bringing to the forefront the importance of pronunciation to the EFL learner and as such, by presenting a teacher’s success story, challenges other teachers to reflect on their practices and put in appropriate teaching strategies and tools to facilitate the acquisition of pronunciation by their students.

1.3 Problem

There is inadequate focus on pronunciation skills teaching to Francophone learners in the secondary school levels, such that when they come to universities where they need to hone pronunciation skills the task becomes arduous and complex for the teacher and the learner. In my Prepavogt language classroom, I observed that many students were clueless on phonetic sound symbols and suprasegmentals, while others had developed tremendous disinterest and even a phobia for English in general. Yet this is an institution wherein English was required for the students’ transition to further studies in France, where the Masters classes were to be taught entirely in English. While the students’ written grammar could be observed to have acceptable standards in spelling and adherence to writing conventions, reading skills and speaking skills manifested a lot of pronunciation irregularities.

1.4 Research Questions.

Two research questions were constituted for this study:

1. What difficulties do students face in trying to acquire intelligibility in English pronunciation?

2. What learning strategies, courses and materials are effective strategies for the development of functional intelligibility, increased self-confidence, and speech modification strategies among EFL students?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Cameroonian researchers within the domain of language teaching and learning such as Nforbi and Siéwoué (2018) have questioned specifically the pronunciation skills component covered within the curricula in schools in Cameroon. This is because of the perceived dearth in pronunciation skills among EFL learners in Cameroon, to which they believe is ill-handled by the course allocation. Similarly Sokeng (2010) decried the neglect of oral skills in the classroom and in the official exams, putting forth suggestions that English be taught and tested following the TOEFL model, to enhance learners' language proficiencies.

Pronunciation is one of the most difficult skills to acquire (Martínez-Flor et al. 2006), warranting extra effort from the instructor as well as the learners if heightened competence is to be achieved. The importance of pronunciation thus cannot be over-emphasized. Referred to as the production of speech sounds, pronunciation is a process that involves an instructor or instructional guided assistance in the creation of awareness of the sounds of a language, the audible repetition of the sounds, correction, reproduction and transcription of words and sentences. Yates and Zielinski (2009) add that pronunciation is the production of sounds that are used for making meaning. James (2010) includes to the production of word sounds the element of prosodic standardization, as important for acceptable pronunciation. By acceptable pronunciation, reference is made to the necessity of other people understanding the speaker, and granting communicative value to his speech. For this to be achieved, though it has been argued by many scholars, making recourse to a near – native accent is not negligible. In concordance with James (2010) this paper holds that a gross avoidance of achieving a near-native accent may yield other accents which can create confusions and misjudgments. If a speaker has a heavy English accent for instance, this may cause negative judgments about his/her personality and competence, as such speakers need to strive towards acquire a near native in order to attain intelligibility in English. Again, I have observed in my experiences that training individuals in foreign languages without immersing them into the socio-cultural sphere of the target language will yield strange renditions, far removed from the native expectations of the target language.

Most often neglected but albeit very important is the teaching of pronunciation in universities. As a lecturer of English Language, it certainly features as a core component within the language specialty in my institution, yet as a minor, students of the literature specialty will not be so concerned in taking a course in phonetics and if and when they do, limit it to a semester.

2.1 The importance of pronunciation in English

In order to achieve communicative competence, pronunciation instruction should be directed primarily towards attaining functional intelligibility and communicability, which imply removing barriers in understanding the spoken word and utterances. It should also be directed at developing the learners' self-confidence through reassurances that they can be understood by all other users of the language. Butler-Pascoe and Wiburg (2003), frame these as the: the

development of English that is easy to understand; not confusing to the listener; meets peoples' needs; and results in communicative competence. The acquisition of pronunciation intelligibility helps learners feel more comfortable in using English, develops in them a positive self-awareness as non-native speakers in oral communication, and develops their speech consciousness, personal speech monitoring skills and speech adjustment strategies. These are all helpful for the edification of the learner both within the classroom and in the society.

However, we look at it, pronunciation mastery has a significant role in language learning as it stands as a main supporting block for measuring competency in speech production. Students' speaking performance both in the classroom and in real life situations are judged as successful based on how they speak and articulate the sounds of the words. Correct pronunciations are an essential component for successful communication. Several language aspects determine the success of oral communication in the English language, such as the proper construction of sentences within grammar and syntactic appropriateness. Again if words are not well pronounced the entire message will be lost.

2.2 Challenges towards acquiring pronunciation intelligibility

Drawing from Moyer (2007), one of the most observable problems with EFL students' acquisition of appropriate pronunciation in English is the lack of motivation. Within our EFL classrooms, we find students whose enthusiasm needs to be reawakened due to the fact that they had gone through secondary school with the 'fallacy of English unimportance' imbued unto them, evident in the tomfoolery and escapism in which they engaged with the English classes. These acts kept their brains exempt from picking up even basic English words and pronunciation. It is not uncommon to hear them make a mimicry of English words, sentences and the users rather than pay attention and practice by positive imitations. Considerable exposure to the language was thus lost, leading to a natural shutting down of their language processing faculties in their brains. For as the behaviourists and cognitivist linguistic will argue, LAD (the Language Acquisition Device) dies. This is also known as fossilization (Selinker 1992).

Further challenges within the Cameroonian EFL difficulty in pronunciation in English come from the distribution of the bilingual French and English populations in Cameroon. With the dominant Francophone population and Francophone led government unfavorable linguistic policies, the French language is gradually over-taking the two Anglophone regions as the language of popular usage. For example, in Buea in the South West Region, within the on-going Anglophone crisis, the presence of the militia in unprecedented numbers, mostly francophones, has seen the proliferation of French in every sphere of the social activity in Buea. There seem to be an influx of francophones to the extent that the language is heard at every corner, from militarized checkpoints, to taxis, bars and churches. Similarly, Anglophones in the French zones are constraint to speak in French most of the time, as it is the language for administration.

Since learning a new language and speaking it is especially difficult for foreign language learners because effective oral communication requires the ability to use the language appropriately in a variety of interactions, the absence of authentic environments to practice English is also detrimental to them. Besides, it has been reported that in most Anglophone zones the population

speaks more of pidgin rather than English, making it again an unfavorable ground for authentic out-of-class practice for the EFL learner.

2.3 Cultural and curricula considerations

When we come to think of verbal communication as transcending phonetic confines to include extensions into the supra-segmentals and non-linguistic aspects, then features of speech such as pitch, stress, intonation and non-linguistic aspects such as body language, gestures and facial expressions do not depend solely on classroom activities for their acquisition. Their acquisition will automatically pose a problem to EFL learners within the above-described background. Due to minimal exposure to the target language and contact with native speakers, the English as a foreign language learner will often face difficulties when required to pronounce words. The English language competency is not limited to only phonological aspects but also includes sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence. When speakers from diverse first language backgrounds engage in oral communication, pronunciation will most often be associated to sociolinguistic and discourse competency dimensions. This is because sound produced by a speaker does not only carry a message which is interpreted word for word by a listener but also can include an unspoken message. Pronunciation, which physically shapes the speech and carries the spoken and unspoken message, is, thus, an important component to be mastered in EFL learning. To this can be neuro-cognitive-motor skills, which imply practically engaging with speakers from the L1 speech community for effective pronunciation development. For as the adage goes ‘one cannot learn to ride a bicycle by reading it from a text book, one must practice on a real bike.

The next issue certainly emanates from the EFL curricula. EFL curricula within secondary schools do not emphasize pronunciation, as they focus on grammar with the elements of parts of speech and extensions in the introduction of the sound system of English and the alphabet. A number of factors, one being the large class sizes and absence of audio-visual material, may account for this perceived absence of emphasis on pronunciation development. Again, it may stem from a philosophy that minimizes instruction in pronunciation with more attention being paid achieving conversational aptitudes than linguistic prowess. According to Elliot (1995), teachers tend to view pronunciation as the least useful of the basic language skills and therefore they generally sacrifice teaching pronunciation in order to spend valuable class time on other areas of language. Still in Cameroon, where teachers are divided between which standards of English they define themselves, or, their teaching by, it is not uncommon to perceive the negative attitude of scoffing at someone who tries to speak differently by pronouncing as close as possible to native English expectations. This may just be discouraging in the teaching practice for pronunciation classes, as it is presumed that it is a thing for the native speakers and Cameroonians must speak with their ‘cameroonization’ and cameroonized versions. The consequence is that most students discover the exploration of phonetics only at the university level making it thus difficult to follow and to be able to achieve near native fluency.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research following the narrative style is used in this paper to collect and present the data. The researcher was interested in assessing EFL students’ challenges with pronunciation and

assisting them through his pedagogical approach at overcoming these challenges. Their oral productions and mark sheets at the end served as important indicators of progress in the acquisition of pronunciation and hence communicative competence. The participants are 51 students in an institution of higher learning, Prepavogt in the Management and finance unit. The observations took place during the 2020/2021 academic year and involved natural classes in TOEFL preparation.

3.1 Procedure

In this study, alongside the standard TOEFL training, intensive and explicit phonetic lessons were given to enhance students' pronunciation and ability to understand native speakers' speeches in the TOEFL listening exercises, as well as their ability to speak with clarity and proper articulation of the sounds and words during oral examinations. As such pronunciation instruction was employed to correct English pronunciation elements which turned out to be erroneously uttered by the participants in a conscious and directed learning approach.

Before the start of the academic year, Prepavogt embarks on a two-week training program for its newly admitted students (a phase popularly referred to a '*mise en niveau*', some sort of foundational classes, prior to effective resumption of classes). During this period some main courses are selected and the newly enrolled students are drilled in them for two weeks and tested at the end. Within this scheme, slots were reserved for the TOEFL preparation lessons which I taught. The Challenge this year was to look for strategies to enhance the communicative prowess of the students and improve on the TOEFL score. Precedent results had also shown great failure in the listening section, which from interviews with the students was blamed on the inability to properly understand the speech of the speakers. It is for this reason that for this 2020/2021 session, I undertook to experiment with an approach that consciously targeted the honing of pronunciation skills.

3.2 Instruments

Traditionally for the TOEFL class, the two weeks were dedicated in presenting the program and engaging in intensive training with the students that lasted for 2h ours and 30 minutes per session. Only two sessions were possible for this phase after which the students were administered a standard pre-test from TOEFL and the papers graded. Focus was on the read aloud and oral expression add-ons wherein the students' oral productions were capture with an android phone recorder. For each student's presentation the student was asked to state their names before they spoke, which made it easier to attribute the speech productions to the rightful speakers. Erroneous productions were grouped under three prominent categorizations of pronunciation aspects: These were sound; (consonants and vowels with special focus on the realization of the 'th', 'ss', 'j', 'ge', 'ing' etc); stress positions and intonation. The second classification was with regard to questions and statement intonations and stress and the demarcation of verbs and nouns of same word forms. The last category involved the pronunciation of plural forms ('s', 'es' etc) and the realizations of different phonemes ('ed', 'd', 't' etc).

For each student a portfolio was created in which was documented the errors he or she made. The errors were obtained from the student's recording which were listened to several times by

the researcher and the errors written down. The collection by audio recording and subsequent documentation of the errors made by each student was replicated several times during the regular classes when schools resumed. At the end of the 13 weeks these students were given the same material they had before and their oral productions were recorded. The data was then compared to their early performances. A TOEFL post-test was also administered and their results compared for test score improvements.

Most importantly is the fact that the action research endeavor was an on-going one in the sense that as instructor, I had a portfolio of the students' pre-recorded lapses in pronunciation and overall performance and I could employ targeted teaching, calling each student up and emphasizing on their perceived weakness to help them improve. The portfolio had ample space for observational comments that were used as feedback as well as a monitor of student active participation in class. These again served as important reflections for the planning of the following academic year's TOEFL preparation training of the newly enrolled students.

4.0 FINDINGS

In this study, the research had add-ons or extensions in reading aloud and oral examinations in a traditional TOEFL preparation training which was administered during a two-week preparatory class phase of the institution, Prepavogt. In this session a pre-test was administered and a recording of the students' reading and oral expression recorded. Errors were then identified under the three key clusters and recorded in the students' individual portfolios. The analysis of these portfolios yielded data that answered the research questions aforementioned.

4.1 Factors affecting the acquisition of pronunciation intelligibility

Pertaining to research question 1, the need was to identify areas of difficulty encountered by each student, or again to identify general patterns in English pronunciation difficulty from all the students. From the pre-test recordings and classification of each student's errors, insightful patterns were established. The first observation came from listening over and over to the audio recordings where it was observed that the major pronunciation impediment stemmed from their mother-tongue influence, and an unawareness of the sound clustering in English. Inaccuracies recorded ranged from the inability to produce certain specific sounds, to manifested ignorance the existence of the sounds. Some examples recorded were as follows: /θ/ and /I/ and /i:/ in thirteen and thirty; the /ð/ in the = [dzeh], the affricate /tʃ/ in China and fricative /ʃ/ chin = shina/ shin; /tʃ/ in temperaTURE =[-tur in French]; /dʒ/ in George = [-je in French]; the voiced and voiceless inter-dental 'th', (thing = sing), the rounded 'o' (ball = bahl); while the gh rendered like /f/ (laugh= mute giving lau) and the word 'air' was rendered with strong 'h' to sound like 'hair'. Their French mother-tongue was evidently the major factor as English was 'frenchified'.

Difficulty was also recorded in achieving the intonation required for questions of 'wh', 'yes/no questions and 'tag questions. Where the expectation was for a rising intonation at the end of a yes/no question, the production would be flat or rising. Similarly the production of the different stress patterns for homographic words was also problematic with difficulty noticed with popular words such as exPORT and Export, Increase and inCrease. Also noted were difficulty in

pronouncing the ‘es’ as in experienCES, the ‘ed’ as in experiensD, WantID as their productions bordered around experineSED, with the extra syllable added or simply omitted in wanted (want), among many others. Visible lapses in pronouncing the plural forms with ‘s’, ‘s+es’, ‘ss’, ‘ss+es’ and possessives were recorded. The students clearly did not distinguish between for example, ‘bus – buses’, ‘use- uses’, etc and in most cases never pronounced the ‘s’ as this is usually silent in French where plural dependency is with the article accentuation and not the plural inflection in a word, for example: ‘la maison = LES maisons’ where ‘s’ is mute in the plural version.

4.2 Teaching strategy and materials for effective pronunciation

With regard to research question 2, specific strategies were employed in the provision of training for the improvement of the phonetic, suprasegmental and non linguistic elements of the students. In order to help improve on the identified errors made by the students and the overall ability to correctly pronounce in English specific videos with sub-titles were sourced and played. Each of the videos emphasized a specific cluster related to the identified pronunciation problem. For example, a video on phonic practice will present a sound cluster such as ‘sh’. The learners will watch the video stressing on the production, follow the instructions of saying the sound cluster aloud as in **sh..sh..sh..sh..** and at the end attempt at delivering the word **SHrimp**. At the same time vocabulary is enhanced as they see a picture of a shrimp. Some representations are presented below. It is worthwhile noting that at the end the students could see the referent picture of the pronounced word studied.

- a) ar....ar....ar... ar... stAR
- b) ou...ou..ou...ou....hOUse
- c) ir...ir...ir...ir...shirt
- d) ck...ck...ck...ck.... clock

A similar pattern was applied for phonic conversation practice also. For example, in an attempt to learn the ‘or’ within a string of words the practice was as follows: First, the phonic practice of the sound via video playback occurred, ‘..or...or...or...or..’ followed by the students repeating it four times and stressing it in a sample sentence ‘ **I need this repORt**’.

There were sessions for phonemic sounds practice, short and long conversations and lectures. The resource ‘learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org’ was particularly useful as it provided sessions of interactive practices which students enacted with the help of the video. After watching a video on a thematic conversation, such as ‘meet and greet’, or ‘shopping’, the video was replayed with the words appearing in dialogue boxes over the heads of the actors. This was followed by another session with some missing words and finally empty dialogue boxes. The students were challenged to enact the conversations in real time with the video or else a next slide will flash-up before they finished saying the current. This was particularly useful for pronunciation, vocabulary and speech speed development. Students were also challenged to practice the sound several times in isolation, then in a word, and finally in a sentence context.

Among the assignments given which involved individual and group work for recording own speech and conversations, transcribing and analyzing, classroom sessions had a strict all English communication rule. Students were encouraged to speak in only English during the class

sessions. Everyone was assigned to be the other's monitor. In addition to organizing debates, a five-minute free speech practice was instigated where the teacher will inadvertently step out leaving the students to chitchat and even make noise. The rule was that this interaction was to be carried out strictly in English. Standing by at the corridors eavesdropping, the teacher will then step back in after a while, and isolate a few discrepancies he captured. These will then be corrected and the class will be resumed. This practice also served as moment for reducing the stress and boredom most of these students exhibited during the classes.

5.0 DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

From the findings, and in an attempt to answer the research questions, it was observed that mother tongue influenced immensely the EFL students pronunciation in English. Elements such as sounds, stress and intonation of learners' native language, were evident in the production of English sounds.

Aside from the recorded evidence, it was also observed that attitudinal factors also accounted for the difficulty in communicating intelligibly by EFL learners with regard to pronunciation. Within Cameroon, the Francophone student has been brainwashed with a negativity towards English and the Anglophone connection such that when they begin to realize it, their brain has already formed a strong resistance in assimilating English linguistic rules. By contrast if the students had been more concerned with the pronunciation of target language from the onset, their pronunciation achievement would have been better and faster. Positive language attitudes permit learners to have positive orientation toward learning, as a result attitudes play a very crucial role in the process of language learning, and more especially so in learning pronunciation. This affective variable can be extended to the teachers also with the teacher constantly inspiring and motivating the students and in the use of practical pedagogical approaches. The use of audio-visual material is of tremendous importance in the teaching of pronunciation in English.

Two major conclusions in this study serve as the basis to EFL teachers and the Cameroonian language policy makers. First and foremost are the hindering factors to the EFL learner acquisition of pronunciation aptitude in English which are the mother tongue influence and insufficient target language exposure. It is worrying to note that international classifications of the English linguistic proficiency rates of our nationals based on when they started schooling puts us at an average of 15 years of learning English from infancy. Yet within an EFL classroom, English standards do not reflect these expectations. The political attitude does not support francophone learners ideologically to practice English and pronunciation regularly. The valorization of the EFL learner mother tongue over English, even in situations where linguistic equality is needed is not helping the situation. These learners in their youth miss out in making the most of the learning environment, and resources only to realize later that they need these skills.

Recommendations

Suggestions are directed towards the improvement of teaching to the EFL teacher in order to help learners improve their English pronunciation. Apart from the natural expectation that an EFL teacher should be accurately trained in pronunciation, the teacher is expected to be someone

who goes to class armed with an awareness of his or her learners' needs and problems in pronunciation. One of such strategies as identified in this paper is for the EFL teacher to set out targeted identification strategies to identify individual needs of the learners, and then source appropriate materials and tools to teach and help improve the learner's pronunciation problems.

This study also recommends that lessons in phonetics and phonology should not be by-passed or treated casually. Likewise, lessons in the major varieties of English, such as the British and American varieties and Received Pronunciation should be explicitly taught.

Lastly, the study recommends that successes will be quickly registered if EFL teachers incorporate pronunciation in other language activities, as this will help learners to adapt themselves to the sound systems of a new language and overcome their affective problems related to the learning of English language.

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