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ARTICLE DE RECHERCHE

Some Mbujimayi EFL Learners' Difficulties with English Sound Production and Perception

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Résumé

Cet article s'efforce d'identifier les difficultés que rencontrent les apprenants d'anglais comme langue etrangère à Mbujimayi, en tracant leurs origines. L'auteur note entre autres la difference entre la prononciation et l'orthographe en anglais, la resyllabification, les lettres muettes, l'absence des certains sons dans la langue maternelle de l'apprenant etc… Il propose l'usage des certains sons connus de l'apprenant au debut de l'apprentissage, explicattion par l'enseignant à l'apprenant de l'articulation des sons anglais….comme techniques pour surmonter ces difficultés…

Mots-clés :

Abstract

This article tries to identify difficulties that Mbujimayi EFL learners encounter in uttering and perceiving English sounds. Showing their sources, the author mentions the difference between pronunciation and spelling ,resyllabifications, silent letters,laack of some sounds … He suggests the use of known sounds by the learner at the early stage of learning, explanation of how to produce sounds or use pronunciation patterns appropriately etc… ,to overcome these difficulties.

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1. Introduction

The importance of phonetics as an indispensable foundation of all study of language, be it purely theoretical or practical, is now generally admitted (Westernmann and Ward 1933). In a foreign or second language learning too, the teaching of pronunciation should also be given the same priority since correct pronunciation has to be taught and learnt ,but not picked up naturally as in the mother tongue acquisition (O'connor 1980) and Hubbard et al.(1987) On the above grounds, an important advancement has been made in language teaching in encouraging the scientific teaching of pronunictaion like any other branch of language schoolwork. This has the merit of making it possible to find out the exact nature of every speech sound used in any language. Therefore, pronunciation should be an integral part of an English teaching programme from the early stages just as is the teaching of structures and vocabulary. As it is mostly the case, the acquisition of a second or foreign language pronunciation becomes progressively difficult often at early adolescence. In the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo (henceforth DRC) and in Mbujimayi particularly where English is studied as a foreign language, it is questionable if the simple imitation of the teacher by the learner is sufficient to make him/her acquire an acceptable pronuniciation. In fact, not being a native speaker, his/her pronuniciation can not be taken as a model. The present paper aims at examining the actual situation of pronunciation teaching to Mbujimayi EFL learners at specific level as well as at secondary level to see problems faced by those learners in articulating and perceiving different English sounds . It is hoped that such learners and their teachers will get empowered with enough insights, techniques ,strategies and skills that will help them improve and cope with their respective pronunciation matters . To attain these objectives I will have to conduct a kind of field investigation on the national English language program

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in DRC ,especially by examining and analysing critically the content of its syllabuses and the related classroom activities undertaken in order to find out the importance and the role devoted to the teaching of pronunciation in Mbujimayi together with some typical as well as peripheral difficulties those learners meet in acquiring English pronunciation as to help them overcome and remedy these possible difficulties. Besides, I will retrospectively and introspectively draw on my own experience as both foreign learner and current teacher-researcher of English as a foreign language ,to reveal the absence or scarcity of pronunciation in the contents of
syllabuses, materials and classroom activities at different levels of EFL settings in Mbujimayi and in DRC generally.

2. Some Specific and Secondary Mbujimayi Efl Learners' Pronunciation Difficulties

It is important to keep in mind that any investigation of speech as communication must be concerned with both the production and perception ends (Gimson 1980). Paulston and Bruder's 1976) in their book entitled Teaching English as a Second Language,the latter insist that pronunciation practice cannot in any real sense be divorced from listening practice. Accordingly, this fact makes listening and speaking co-dependent. Some of the typical and minor pronunciation problems faced by Mbujimayi EFL learners can be stated as follows : the chaotic nature of English spelling ,the assimilation and dissimilation of sounds in connected speech ,the aspiration of voiceless stops in English ,the strong and the week forms realisation , clusters,stress and intonation in English ,the absence of pronunciation materials in syllabus and national curriculum design … Here bellow I explain how these can prevent learners to perform in English pronunciation.

2.1. The Irregular Nature of English Spelling

Depending on the relationship between pronunciation and spelling, languages are divided into two main groups: (1) phonographic (or phonetic) and (2) non phongraphic languages (Biselela 2010). Phonographic languages are according to Hornby (2005) those having a system of spelling that approximates closely to the system of sounds. Similarly, Biselela (opcit) describes the difference between these two types of languages when he clarifies that the phonographic languages are those presenting much one to one correspondence between their graphic symbols and their phonemes . While non-phonographic languages are those which do not generally speaking show one-to-one correspondence between graphemes and phonemes. Swahili and Ciluba are instances of phonographic languages (in DRC) whereas English is a non-phonographic language. Furthermore ,making reference to reading ,(Biselela 2010) shows that phonetic languages are easier to sound out than non – phonetic ones. This fact accordingly, makes the reading difficult since there is generally a very large gap between its sound and orthography. e.g: Ciluba "kulama " :[k u l a m a] (phonographic) English : to maintain [m e I'n t e I n] (non-phonographic)
The lack of passable correspondence between English letters and sounds causes main problems to Mbujimayi EFL learners who seem to be unable to discriminate which sounds to produce and perceive from a given environment. Put otherwise, the spelling of English is one of the most important sources of learners' mispronunciation since different spellings may stand for one sound. This is the case of the phoneme [i:] in meet, meat, siege, seize, police, key, quay, people. However reverse situation is also possible that is, one letter representing different sounds as for the letter (a) in mad [m æ d], made [m e I d],car [k a:], village[v I l I gz] or (o) in donkey [ ], home [əu], woman [u], women [ ], who [u]. Talking of the same matter O'connor (1988: 7) adds that in ordinary English spelling, it is not always easy to know what sounds the letter stand for. An illustration are the words city, busy, women, pretty, village where the letters , y, u, o, e and a which all stand for the same vowel sound; that is, the one occuring in sit. Similarly in banana, bather, man and many, the letter (a) stands for five different vowel sounds. It would be much more useful if the reader could always be certain that one letter represented one and only one sound, that when s/ he saw a letter s/he would know at once how to pronounce it. All the phenomena described above are sources of Mbujimayi EFL learners pronunciation difficulties since in front of such situations, learners are embaraced .

2.2. Silent letters (Sound) and elision

In his book The Use of English, (Quirk 1978) and Koneru (2011) rightly observe that many letters in English are not pronounced at all. There is a loss of the original relationship between sound and spelling. The fact that a sound disappears or is not clearly articulated in certain contexts is known as elision Gimson (1976) ,Hartmann and Ward (1976). According to Hornby (2005), elision is a process in connected speech by which a sound is left out in order to make the articulation easier or a case where a sound (consonant or vowel) is left out. As a matter of fact, elision is for English speakers a very clever way to save time and effort. This happens when unstressed vowels tend to be very weak and reduced in English and are consequently left out. This phenomenon is known as elision of vowels. That is, when an unstressed vowel is following a stressed syllable,it is often left out in pronunciation. This is referred to as syncope which, according to Hartman and Stork (1973) is the loss of one sound or letters from the middlle of a word. This is considered as a secondary problem for one to handle pronunciation and ,any learner who is not informed about it,will be lost.
e.g: Slow speed Stressed syllable Normal speed Int(e)resting ['intəresti] ['Intrəsti] Sev(e)ral ['sevərəl] ['sevrəl]
In these words, it is very frequent that the vowel between parentheses ( ) is omitted. Very frequently, this vowel is [ə] or [ɪ]. The loss of stress and thus of prominence, affects the vowel quality and changes it into a weak vowel,less prone to be prominent. In very colloquial English,the initial vowel or syllable of word may be omitted if it is unstressed.This is called aphesis, that is "the omission of one or more words from the beginning of an utterance'' (Hartman and Wad 1976) as in evening for good evening or [baut] for about. An alternative term is aph(a)eresis. e.g : Slow Very Fast Utterance [bik z] [k z] Because About [about] [baut]
In the examples above, the utterance because becomes ''cause'' while about becomes « bout » in pronunciation. This phenomenon is very often heard with native speakers in connected speech. Other similar cases include those where the consonant [t] and [d] in a middle of cluster of three consonants in a word are normally lost and those where [nd] and [d] in the end of words are also frequently omitted. For instance.
e.g: ''wind mill'' Becomes [win(d) mil] ''restless'' Becomes [res(t)less]
In this list above, the underlined sounds are not sometimes noticeable in pronunciation. Another case of elision according to (Gimson 1976), occurs when a plosive is in the middle of a cluster of three consonants formed by two words, this plosive is normally lost. e.g:''first three'' Becomes ''firs three'' [f :s ri :] ''banned Becomes ''bann for life'' [bændfəlaif] for life''
Some consonant clusters are notoriously difficult to pronounce

for Mbujimayi EFL learners. An example of this is the occurrence of two and especially of three successive consonants. The alternative to ease this articulation is dropping one consonant, usually the one in the middle. This is known as simplification of clusters. e.g : [æskt] [æst] (4)''asked'' [lists] liss[l s:] ''lists''

2.3. Linking

Linking is a peripheral problem in dealing with sounds matters since phrases and even whole sentences are pronounced as one smooth sound instead of a series of separate words Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) ; Gimson (1976). As such, linking is the connection of the final sound of one word or syllabe with the initial sound of the next word or syllable. According to Gimson (1976), Hornby (2010) ,Hartman and Stork (1976) this is the ability to speak English smoothly. If one practises linking words his/her speech will become much more native like and if one does not link words together, his/her speech sounds choppy. Therefore, when native English people speak, they generally do not pause between each word, but move effortlessly from one word to the next, which is advisable even for EFL learners. There are special ways of doing this. For instance, linking of vowel to vowel, linking – r and intrusive – r, linking of consonant to consonant.

2.2.1. Linking of vowel to vowel

When a word or syllable ends in [i:], [ ], [e], [a] or [ ] and the following word or syllable begins with a vowel, there is a linking glide represented with the phonetic symbol [j]. e.g : « Say it » [s e i j i t] my own [m a ə u n].
Gimson (1976) explains that some glide in the direction of [ɪ] is likely to be made when the following vowel has a quality near to that of the first element of the diphthong especially of the wide diphtongs [a .]. e.g:May end, the boy often, my ◡uncle Similarly, when a word or syllable ends in [u:], [ə] or [a] and the following word or syllable begins with a vowel there is a linking glide too. But this time, it is representend by [w]. For instance: (7)''blue ink'' [b l u k] ''how is'' [h a z] ''flour'' [flau ə]

2.2.2. The linking – r and the intrusive – r

In their Dictionary of Language and Linguistics (Hartmann and Stork 1976), define the linking – r – as the fact that [r] is used intervocalically between syllables or words whereas, the intrusion is in the addition of a speech sound between syllables or words in connected speech, usually for ease of pronunciation. The intrusive – r , is by similarity that the [r] linking usage extends to all [a :, : ə] endings, even when there is no historical (spelling) explanation. Such intrusive [r] is to be heard particularly in the case of [ə] endings e.g: Russia and China [r ərən t a nə] Drama and music [dra : mərən ən miuz k]
Less frequently similar links, unjustified by the spelling are made with final [a :, ə :] : e.g :Shah of Persia [a :r əv p : f ə] law and order [l : r ənd : d ə]
The RP system of linking [r] strongly inspires the creation of analogous links in similar phonetic contexts. For (Gimson 1976) ,with some speakers however, fear of using the intrusive [r] may inhibit such liaison, a vowel glide or glottal stop being used''. e.g :The door opened [ə d :ə pand] or [ə d :? ə pənd]

2.2.3. Linking of consonant to a vowel (Resyllabification)

We talk of resyllabification if a word ends in a consonant and the next word begins with a vowel, we use the consonant to begin the syllable of the following word : e.g:''Down and out'' ''rushout'' “ far away”
This is the same in a consonant cluster ending words like in : .e.g : « Left arm » « Pushed up » Technically this is known as phonetic resyllabification or phonemic resyllabification.

2.2.4. Linking of consonant to consonant

When there is a link of two same consonants, we do not pronounce the sound twice, but make it longer. In a phonetic transcription, we will represent it with the length mark [:] which means that the sound is elongated in the same way as with lengthened vowels (Gimson 1976). This is different from elision in that here, the same sound (two stops) following one another can not be pronounced twice, instead it is made long while with elision the sound simply desappears or is darkly uttered. e.g : « Big girls » [b : :lz] « nice summer » [na s: mə]
Note that when a plosive is followed by another plosive, affricate, lateral or nasal, the first plosive is unreleased. This is as a matter of fact, another case of consonant to consonant linking.

2.3. Lack of the sound in the native system

To a large extent, Mbujimayi EFL learners have specific problems in pronouncing the English sounds which do not exist in their mother tongues or else in placing stress on a wrong syllable. Generally,vowels are the most troublesome sounds for EFL learners . This is because, English vowel system has twenty vocalic sounds that is 11/12 simple vowels and 8 diphthoongs while many other languages have fewer vowels : 6 in French, 7 in lingala and Swahili ,5 in Kikongo and 6 in ciluba,. The lack of the vowels such as [i :, œ, :, :, u :] and diphthongs like [au, əu, , ə], etc in the learmers languages has much impact on their mispronunciation and misunderstanding of English sounds. For instance, learners whose first languages have no [e] sound will not easily utter word like [l e I t] instead, they will understand or pronounce it as [l e t]. These sounds typical to English do not exist in Mbujimayi EFL learners previous languges and cause them problems in pronunciation. They are: [æ, I, , , , , I, I, I, ə, ə, Iə, , , ḍ , t , , , h, r, l].
For instance a case of the English spelling where the letters t and h stand for the sounds[ ] or [Õ,] a learner from Mbujimayi would pronounce it as: [tIn]
e.g Thin [sIn] Instead of [in]
[fIn]
This mispronunciation would be justified by the fact that there is no sound having the same place of articulation as these two sounds correspondingly in the learners previous languages. What happens is that as these sounds are missing in their languages phonetic systems, their habits force them to put them in the similar boxes in their languages phonetic systems e.g: Make [m eI k] for a native speaker becomes [m e k] Heard [h : d] for a native speaker becomes [h e d]
Regarding the above difficulties of learning a new language, (Westerman and Ward 1976) on their part justify that the untrained student of any new language hears in terms of his/her mother tongue. Further (Ellis 1982) sustains that difficulties facing L2 learner is imposed by his/her first language. Put differently, two languages cannot coexist peacefully but they must interfere. This interference results from the failure of structures from previously known language (s) to fit into the pattern of the target language. (Richards et alii 1985); (Richard 1974). There is a sort of hybridism between the source or any other mastered language and the target language.

2.4. Aspiration

According to Hartmann and Stork (1976:46) “ Aspiration is the articulation of a stop consonant with an audible puff of breath. But for (Gimson 1980), we talk of aspiration when

there is a cloud of air in the production of the consonant [p, t, k] in a stressed syllables. For instance: pin, tin, kin ['phIn, thIn, KhIn]. Many Congolese languages like ciluba have far fewer aspirated sounds that non trained students may have troubles in perceiving and producing these aspirated sounds . Morever, it is clear that initially in accented syllables [p, t, k] and [b, d, g] are
distinguished by the listener mainly through the presence or absence of aspiration rather than through the presence or absence of voice. Discussing about aspiration, (Rivers and Temperley 1978: 151) explain that if a French unaspirated [t] is used in English where an aspirated [th] is expected, it may sound to English speakers like [d], such that tie will sound like die. The opposite situation may also occur. English speakers sometimes think the French are irrationally calling the famous dish a guiche, rather than a quiche. This is because the lack of aspiration of the French initial consonant is to English ears, a cue for the perception of an initial voiced or plosive in this case, English [g]. Obviously, error made in this area can make English difficult to understand for native English speakers and vice versa. But, it is better to mention that the degree of the problem will vary depending on one's native language awareness of English pronunciation rules and personal differences in language learning ability.

2.5. Assimilation

As a secondary problem for not well trained speakers of English, assimilation is a phenomenon behind some learners mispronunciation . As such, it is known as one of the aspects of connected speech; as opposed to the pronunciation of individual words or phrases in isolation. For Meyer (2002), and Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) assimilation is a general process whereby adjacent sounds of different properties become more similar in terms of the voicing, place of articulation, or manner of articulation. In other words, it is the alteration of speech sound to make it more similar to its neighbors or a process of simplification by which a speech sound as influenced by the surrounding sounds to make them more similar (Gimson 1976: 292). For instance, the consonant [n] changes to [m] or [n] depending of the consonant that follows. e.g:''One beer'' [w mb ə], ''One cup'' [w kh p]
Here, assimilation consists of the nasal / n/ becoming /m/ before a bilabial stop /b/and / / before stop /k/. This transition case from one consonant to another makes articulation possible especially when the speech rate is fast. However, it is important for the learners to be able to make assimilation unconsciously. Unlike other languages, assimilation occurs very frequently in English both between words and within words. It happens in three different directions: (a) Progressive Assimilation (b) Regressive Assimilation and (c) palatalisation. In progressive assimilation the sequence of sounds A+B, the sound A changes the sound B (Gimson 1988 : 290). This means that the conditioning sound
precedes and affects the following. Very clear examples are the rules for the regular plural and regular past tense. e.g:Plural Conditioning Sound Assimilated sound ''bags'' [b œ] + s ending [b œ → z] ''books'' [b k] + s ending [b ki → s]
The plural + alveolar + alveolar After voiced morphemes [s] + Fricative becomes + Fricative sounds including - Voice [z] -voice [g] becomes [s] + [z] alv+fricvoice After voiceless stop [p, t, k] The most tense morpheme [I] + stop alveolar voice becomes [t] after voiceless sounds [t] becomes [d] after voiced sounds [d] Past tense Conditioning Sound Assimilated sound e.g:''laughed'' [l œ f] + d ending [l œ f → t] ''moved'' [m u : v] + d ending [m u : → vd] This progressive assimilation also happens in contractions. e.g :Contraction Conditioning sound Assimilated sound ''It' s'' [It + z] [It →s]
Here are the explanations of what happens : [¹ t Z] →[tz] [I t S] → [ts] Alveolar alveolar Alveolar Alveolar Plosive fricative Plosive Fricative Voiceless voiced Voiceless Voiceless
There is regressive assimilation in a sequence of sounds A+B, when the sound B changes the sound A. In other words, the assimilated sound precedes and is affected by the conditioning sound. This is the most common type of assimilation in English. The following examples of '' One beer'' " one cup" are instances of regressive assimilation.
e.g : [w n b ıə] [w m b ıə] Alveolar Bilabial Bilabial Bilabial Nasal Plosive Nasal Plosive Voiced Voiced Voiced Voiced
A voiced alveolar nasal [n] before a voiced plosive bilabial [b] becomes a voiced bilabial nasal /m/ [w n k p] [w k p] Alveolar Bilabial Bilabial Bilabial Nasal Plosive Nasal Plosive Voiced Voiced Voiced Voiced
This type of assimilation occurs frequently in modals "has to" "have to" (expressing obligation) and "used to" (expressing habitual action in the past): e.g : ''have to'' Becomes ''haf to'' ''has [z]to'' Becomes ''ha[s] to''
[h v t ə] [h f t ə]
Voiced voiceless labiodental labiodental fricative [v] fricative [f] before avoiceless stop [v] [t] [f] The last type of regressive assimilation that is common in native speech is when we find a sequence of sibilants [s,z, , , t , d] consonants which are either devoiced or voiced whenever they precede a precede a voiced o r voiceless sound sound respectively ,or else they are palatalized before palatal consonants e.g: [+voice + fricative [z]] + alveolar [– voice +fricative +palatal/ /] ''his [z] shoe'' Becomes ''hi[ ]oe'' ''this [s] show'' Becomes ''thi [ ]ow'' ''his [z] sign'' Becomes ''hi [s :] igh'' [h z u :] [h I u :]
Alveolar palato – alveolar Fricative Fricative Fricativefricative Fricative Voiced Voiceless voicelessvoiceless (22) [Ć s [əu] [Ć əu] Alveolar Palato – alveolar palato – Palato-alveolar alveolar Fricative Fricative Fricative fricative Voiceless Voiceless Voiceless Voiceless (23) [h z s a] [h s S a] Alveolar Alveolar Alveolar alveolar Fricative Fricative Fricative fricative
The last sort of assimilation is palatalization. In this type, a sequence of sounds A+B, A and B are combined into C. This is a reciprocal assimilation where the first sound and the second in a sequence come together and, create a third sound that is,a sound A + a sound B = sound C. This means that the sequence A+B creates a new palatal sound. This case is found in ciluba with the sequence "mon dieu" which becomes … For (Gimson 1988 : 17) ''The palatalization is when the front of the tongue may articulate against or near to the hard palate''. This is an essential part of the [,] sounds in English words such as she [j] sound initially e.g: yield. However , all cases of palatalization involve an alveolar consonant + the approximant [j] e.g : Sound a Sound b Sound c Examples [s] → [ ] Issue He's coming thi year [z] → [ ] Does your dog bite ? [t] [j] → [t] Is that your dog ? [t s] → [t] He hates your wife [d] → [d] Did you pass the exam ? [d z] → [d] He needs your help
A learner who always does not pay attention to all these sorts of assimilation may fail to produce or perceive English speech in this respect.

2.6. Sight Words, Homophones, Homographs

As a specific pronunciation problems to EFL learners, these different types of words are also at the basis of learners' difficulties in pronunciation, mainly in reading. Quoting (Paulston and Bruder 1976: 104) "Sight words, are known as words which have a pronunciation which is different from other words with

a similar spelling". For instance, ''double o'' words which are commonly pronounced [u] like in look, took, book, shook, good, contrasted to a number of other common words with ''double o'' but, are pronounced [u:] like in too, food, mood. As to homophones, Koneru (2011: 21) views them as " Words with different spellings but pronounced the same" . For instance: Heir, air ; two, too, to ; nights, knight. Koneru (Op cit) defines homographs as words with the same or similar spellings but have different pronunciation. For instance: lead [li :d] meaning ''guide'' and lead [led] meaning ''metal''. Hartmann and Stork (1976) explain that if these words differ in both sound and meaning; they are called heteronyms. They give the example of bow "shooting arrows'' and ''bow of a ship''.

2.7. Stress Stressing is known as a supprasegmental problem. In English, it is more free than in local previous languages and, EFL learners think that there are not guidelines or rules in English which should guide them to place stress and intonation on the right syllable.No simple way of knowing which syllable or syllables in an English word must be stressed, exists. Finacchiaro and Brumfit (1983) describe two separate kinds of stress. That is ,word stress which may occurs on any syllable of a word, and is fixed that is, speakers are not free to vary it ,except within certain very restricted situations. However,the position of stress within a word needs to be learned as a part of the pronunciation of that word. Word stress may be phonemic, for instance in meaning. Difference between 'present' always a noun or adjective and 'present' (adverb) or else as is more usual. Sentence-stress however, is not fixed in English. It may be placed anywhere in the sentence according to the speakers intention, attitude, emotion, etc. Such situation has an impact on the Mbujimayi EFL learners pronunciation. This may be well exemplified by the contrast between.

e.g: Where did YOU go yesterday ? With focus on the person WHERE did you go yesterday ? With focus on the place and Where did you YESTERDAY ? With focus on the time

In Paulston and Bruder's (1976: 91) words, "English is characterized as a free stress language". That is, the stress is not dependent upon the place in the utterance, but can occur on any syllable depending upon various factors. For instance, the meaning of single words can be changed by shifting the stress in contrast to French in which the stress falls on the last syllable of an utterance: "the man is going to con-dúct the orchestra"; "the soldier received a good conduct medal''.

2.8. Weak Forms of Words

This appears to be a superficial problem but a source of difficulty with English sound production and perception for foreign learners that are not trained in this matter. However, it is argued that English spoken with only strong forms sounds wrong and that the use of weak forms is an essential part of English speech, O'connor (1988) and Gimson (1980). On the other side, Hubbard, et alii, (1987) explain that the weak form is linked to the idea of sentence stress that is, certain of the unstressed words change their pronunciation from the way they are said when they are in isolation and have different phonetic form in the sentences or phrases. In fact, O'connor (1988) cites 35words (prepositions, pronouns, adverbs, auxiliaries (modals) articles, conjunctions... and) that may have weak forms in English. They are: as, but, than, that, he, him, his her, them, us, do, does, am, are, be, is was, has, have, had, can, shall, will, would, must, a, an, the some, at for, from, of, and to,which have weak forms. However, whenever these words are not stressed, they are final in the group (exceptions for he, him, his, her, them and us).

2.9. Syllabus and Curriculum

Richards, Platt and Weber (1985) define a language syllabus as the description of the language contents of a language course in order in which they have to be taught. As such, it lists and sequences the language items which have to be taught to facilitate the teaching and the learning of all the planned materials. Designed by the teacher, a syllabus must specify what a teacher have to teach in his/her classroom .Therefore a syllabus can be seen as a coursebook to which curriculum requirements are to be applied so as to guide teachers and learners . But, a
curriculum is concened with making general statements about language learning ,teaching purpose and experience ,evaluation and the role and relationships of teachers and learners . As such, it is an official document issued by the Minister of Education services and contains the banks of learning items and suggestions that can be used in the class.

3. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Resorting to my retrospection and introspection as a learner and a teacher - researcher I have disclosed two levels of difficulties phenomena underlying Mbujimayi EFL learners difficulties to cope with the English sounds production and perception as far as classroom activities are concerned. This, apart from the educational authorities responsabilities as far as the official documents designing for the organization of the teaching in the country. The first level is specific to EFL samples in learning English and is based on the illogical / irregular relationship between letters/orthography and English sounds, homographs,homophones,letters or sounds doubling , suprasegmental problems (like stressing and intonation),individual pronunciation problems due the fact of some sounds typical to English which do not exist in the learners'respective languages and are likely to cause problems since they have different places and manner of articulation ,voice , dipthtongs etc . Second , I have found that some areas problems raised here, are not typical to Mbujimayi EFL learners but, are peripheral or secondary .That is ,even native speakers have problems in coping with them .Therefore, their mastering cannot totally prevent learners to perform rather well or not to be understood. They are issues related to English connected speech like elision, silent letters, linking, intrusive, contraction, aspiration ,sight words weak and strong forms of words etc As to official documents organizing teaching in the country,a critical look at the national curriculum,contents of syllabuses, teaching materials at different levels of English as Foreign Language (EFL) in Mbujimayi reveals that pronunciation hardly has any appropriate room nor is it taught at the initial stage as recommended by most language specialists like (Gimson ,1986 1990), Hubbard et al.(opcit), O'connor (opcit) . The term curriculum appears as an official document which defines the teaching objectives of a language course, specifies its contents, the teaching methods … That is, this document determines what to teach and learn, guides the language teachers and suggests language inputs etc. Morever, any language teaching is backed up by a curriculum which fixes materials for learning, methods, objectives, recommendations, the ways in which skills have to be taught Cunningsworth (1994). Unfortunetely ,a scrutiny of "Programme national d'anglais " SMAFOS (1982) has shown it defective or flawed in that it shows openally skills which it has been assigned to teach or learn (active vocabulary,understanding ,reading ,writing) but has stayed mute /silent as to how teaching /learning pronunciation can be dealt with in the country. Syllabuses , as localized documents which account and record what actually happens at the classroom levels as teachers and learners apply a particular curriculum,are determined and given form and

content by curricula which are constructed by official decisions based on endorsed learning and teaching objectives of language courses. Syllabuses of English teachers in Mbujimayi have no elements of teaching pronunciation in their contents ,likewise makes its teaching still surprisingly and shockingly ignored in many settings, although the listening and speaking skills are somewhat included in their syllabuses and taught to equip learners with adequate communicative competence. At secondary school and higher education, a pronunciation course as component in the English course is hardly given any considerable place at all. Given that most teachers do not have useful strategies or techniques for teaching pronunciation and as they do not know what strategies are appropriate when they meet specific problem and simply avoid pronunciation instruction in the classroom by employing shrewd tricks. Again, due to pedagogical reasons, it might be helpful to think about the teachability learnability scale as introduced by Dalton (1994) which suggests that there are certain aspects of English pronunciation which appear to be easily taught; namely, phonemes, stress, assimilation, aspiration, etc conversely, others such as intonation, are extremely dependent on individual circumstances and thus practically impossible to separate out for direct teaching. Based on the exploration and critical analysis of the different approaches to pronunciation teaching and what seems to be teachable and learnable for EFL classroom settings,some techniques and activities, that are also shared by many researchers in influential pronunciation like Dalton (2002), Gilbert (1995), O'connor (1988) and (www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/../pronunciation/_accessed 22nd February, 2022), appear to be useful for learners and teachers alike. They are suggested and elaborated below: - Utilisation of Known Sounds: at the early stage of learning, especially young learner can be helped with the sounds of the target language with those of

his/her mother tongue. This will eventually help the learner produce EFL sound pattern to a considerable extent. - Explanation: explanation of how to produce sounds or use pronunciation patterns appropriately should be held to a minimum through direction about what to do with the speech organs This can help some young and adult EFL learners in some circumstances. - Communication activities: the teacher can design communicative tasks, such as dialogues or conversations for both young and adult EFL learners according to their linguistic level in order to practice particular sounds, especially those which are not available in their mother tongue, for example, [,] ,diphthongs etc. Besides, the learner can be taught some useful communication strategies, such as retrieval strategies, rehearsal strategies, cover strategies which will help him/her give impression that his/her pronunciation is better than it really is. - Written version of oral presentations also known as phonetic transcription that will help learners detect, identify and correct errors or mistakes committed in their oral presentations. - Modeling and individual correction: in this technique, the teacher reports the results of analysis of learner speech sample individually. The young or adult learner gets feedback from the analysis and stops repeating previous errors or mistakes. - Reading aloud: The learner can be given a piece of spoken text to read out loudly. Here the teacher's job is to identify pronunciation errors and mistakes made by the learner, and then gives feedback that will help the learner improve his/her standard pronunciation.

In this study it was then noticeable that teaching pronunciation has little room in the EFL syllabus, material and classroom in Mbujimayi. Therefore, I side with the view that it is desirable to teach pronuniciation as soon as possible (gimson 1986). I also suggest with Morley (1991) that teachers must perform their role of a speech coach or pronunciation coach who, rather than just correcting the learners errors and mistakes but, supplies information about how speech organs are working as for producing some sounds typical to English, how to stress words, how to aspirate,assimilate ….gives models , offers cues, suggestions and constructive feedback about the performance, provides a wide variety of practice opportunities, and overall supports and encourages the learners,in the classroom. The learners on their side have to take into account the differences existing between their previous languages phonetic systems to adapt to English one so as
to overcome the possible difficulties they may encounter and to cope with pronunciation matters.

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