Morpho-Phonological Misuse of English: A Cause of Poor Performance amongst Cameroonian Secondary School Students

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Introduction- This work sets out to undertake a modification of a research endeavour undertaken in 1987 on An Error analysis of the Spoken English of Cameroonian Undergraduates; an M.A. thesis of the University of Ibadan which was never published and about three decades down the road the problem still persist and actually affects many users of English language in a multilingual community such as ours. It became very pertinent when the situation of secondary school students in their speech and performance in English Language in examinations especially the G.C.E. examination, a prerequisite for entrance into the University remained poor. Thus this work is revised to investigate the extent to which Anglophone students deviate in their Morpho-Phonological use of English and how these deviations contribute to their poor performance in English Language as well as impede communication between them and other users of the language. The first thing to note is the fact that English is the medium of instruction in Anglophone schools in Cameroon. In other words, all school subjects are taught through the medium of English.

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MORPHO-PHONOLOGICALMISUSEOFENGLISHACAUSEOFPOORPERFORMANCEAMONGSTCAMEROONIANSECONDARYSCHOOLSTUDENTS

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I. Introduction

This work sets out to undertake a modification of a research endeavour undertaken in 1987 on An Error analysis of the Spoken English of Cameroonian Undergraduates; an M.A. thesis of the University of Ibadan which was never published and about three decades down the road the problem still persist and actually affects many users of English language in a multilingual community such as ours. It became very pertinent when the situation of secondary school students in their speech and performance in English Language in examinations especially the G.C.E. examination, a prerequisite for entrance into the University remained poor. Thus this work is revised to investigate the extent to which Anglophone students deviate in their Morpho-Phonological use of English and how these deviations contribute to their poor performance in English Language as well as impede communication between them and other users of the language. The first thing to note is the fact that English is the medium of instruction in Anglophone schools in Cameroon. In other words, all school subjects are taught through the medium of English.

Technological advancement has reduced the world to a global village with English language playing a hegemonic role as a world medium of communication. Facebook, Whatsapp, Imo, radio, telephone, television, yahoo are some of the media through which these students undertake communication world-wide. Consequently, poor use of English language does not only affect communication breakdown within the classroom and its environs, resulting to poor performances in examinations but also outside, during interaction with many contacts the world over.

This study is limited to two levels of Linguistic analysis. These levels include, phonology and Morphology. Here, we observe that students mispronounce words influenced by English Spelling which lack a one on one correspondence for orthography and pronunciation. This can be observed in the word **"heir"** which is realised as ***[hƐ]** instead of **[Ɛ͘ə]** in RP and also the word **"quay"** realised as ***[Kway]**

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instead of **[Ki]** as well as the word **"colonel"** realised as ***[kolonel]** instead of **[kɜːnl]** in RP.

There is also the factor of MT interference which also adversely affect the pronunciation of words by these students. This is observed in the mispronunciation of different English words by students from diverse linguistic backgrounds who replace different English sounds with those found in their indigenous languages thus, resulting to lack of intelligibility between them and other users of the language. Some cases in point include the replacement of the voiceless alveolar plosive **/P/** for its voiced counterpart **/b/** by some **Bafut speakers** such that the word **"Peter"** **/Pitə/** is realised as **/bita/**. This is also the case with some **Lamso' speakers** who replace the RP diphthong **/ɔʊ/** for **/u/** in the words **"Coat"**, "goat" and "hole"; such that these words are erroneously realised as ***[kut], *[gut]** and ***[hul]** respectively.

In the same token, in writing, students often use inflections wrongly such as in the past tense morpheme **"ed"** in **"hited"** and "diversed" as well as the plural morpheme **"s"** in * **"furnitures"** and "informations". There are also, the inappropriate derivations like **"hegemonous"** from "hegemony" instead of "hegemonic" These actually result to strange Lexicons leading to communication barriers and poor performance in Examinations.

To investigate this topic, fifty students each were drawn from six secondary schools located in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. This gave a total of 300 students. Only government schools were selected for this exercise because the students from government schools come from diverse background and are more representative of the entire population of the nation.

The methods of investigation include oral and written tests and observation. The 50 students in all the schools comprised only form five students, who were at the verge of writing the G.C.E. examination. Thus must have completed work in the programme, for English language.

a) Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks which couched this study include; Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) by Lado (1957) and Error Analysis by Pits Corder (1967).

b) Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH)

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was first used in the field of SLA to explain why some features of the target language were more difficult to acquire than others. Lado (Ibid) in the preface of Linguistics Across Culture states that: *The plan of the book rests on the assumption that we can predict and describe the pattern that will cause difficulty in learning and those that will not cause difficulty by comparing systematically the language and the culture to be learned with the native and culture of the student.* (1957: VII) He further claims in the text as follows: *In the comparison between native and foreign language lies the key to ease or difficulty to foreign language learning…Those elements that are similar to the learner's native language will be simple for him/her and those elements that are different will be difficult.* (pg. 1-2)

This theory is based on the hypothetical assumption that second language learners will often transfer features from the first language to their second language. This theory has as advantages the fact that it demands for the description and contrast of the L1 and L2 of learners which leads to the prediction of the difficulties anticipated in the L2 and ways to overcome them. However, there were a number of weaknesses with this theory ranging from lack of description of the various languages, the need for a degree of accurate prediction of difficulties and the one way direction of interference from L1 to L2. Due to these weakness there was the introduction of error Analysis(EA) which adequately compliments CAH.

II.   Error Analysis

Error Analysis in SLA was founded in the 1960s by Stephen Pit Corder and his colleagues. Error Analysis was an approach influenced by Behaviourism through which applied Linguists sought to use the formal distinctions between the learner's first and second languages to predict errors. This theory showed that Contrastive Analysis was not able to predict a great majority of errors, although its most valuable tenets have been incorporated into the study of Language transfer. Error Analysis resulted to a finding that many learners' errors are produced by learners making faulty inference about the rules of the new language. Corder (1967) undertook a new perspective in the analysis of errors which hitherto were regarded as "flaws" but were later discovered to actually be signs to prove that learning was taking place. He thus made a distinction between errors and mistakes. He stated that errors are systematic while mistakes are not. Corder (Ibid) proceeded to classification of errors ranging from the basic types which included omission, addictive, substitutive or related to word order and at the level of language, including phonological, vocabulary or lexical as well as syntactic errors just to name these. He went further to state that Errors may also be viewed according to the degree to which they interfered with communication. From this perspective, we distinguish between global and local errors. Global errors hampers the understanding of an utterance while local errors do not affect the understanding of an utterance.

a) Data Presentation and Analysis

There were written and oral tests. The written test investigated aspects of morphology while the oral test dwelt on aspects of phonology. There was observation of both aspects.

b) Presentation of Data on the Written Test and Analysis

The written test comprised five sections; A, B, C, D, and E. The first two sections had five questions scoring a mark each. Therefore, the ten questions on the two sections had ten marks altogether. The 3rd section C had ten questions with one mark per question giving a total of ten marks. The fourth and fifth sections had ten and twenty questions respectively with one mark per question, hence giving a sum total of thirty marks for both sections. This test therefore was on to a total of fifty marks altogether. In the sections below there is a presentation of the various tests and table one presents a summary of the general performance.

Section A: Complete the following sentences by filling the blank spaces with the appropriate forms of the words in brackets.

1. (install) The students paid their fees by _____.
2. (delay) DHL workers were on strike, so the parcel had a _____ of three days.
3. (gossip) Never tell your secret to Mary because she is a _____.
4. (betray) She experienced a _____ from a member of her family.
5. (detail) You have to answer the three questions in _____.

Many students had problems with this section. In fact, in filling the blanks spaces, a number of them introduced words which do not exist in Standard British Expression (SBE).

There were wrong forms like ***installmentally*** for ***in instalments***, ***delayance*** for ***delay***, ***gossiper*** for ***gossip***, ***detailly*** for *in* ***detail***, ***betrayer*** for ***betrayal***. Such usage mar the writing of students and affect their performances in examinations like the G.C.E.

Section B: Choose the best alternative from A, B, C, and D to fill in the blank spaces in each of the following sentences:

1. The director bought_____ for his office.
A) Some pieces of equipment
B) Several equipments
C) Many equipments
D) A lot of equipments

2. My aunt travelled with _____.
A) Many luggages
B) Many pieces of luggages
C) Much luggage
D) Several luggages

3. The rich woman always wear _____.
A) Many pieces of jewellery
B) Much jewelleries
C) Plenty of jewelleries
D) A lot of jewelleries

4. The radio announced _____ on the competitive examination.
A) A lot of informations
B) Much information
C) Some informations
D) Several informations

5. The carpenter made _____ for the refectory.
A) Several furnitures
B) Some furniture
C) A lot of furnitures
D) Much furnitures

In this section the goal was to test words which do not take the plural morpheme *'s'*. We found out that many students selected forms with *'s'* on words like information, furniture, equipment, luggage, and jewellery producing wrong forms like **informations, furnitures, equipments, luggages,** and **jewelleries.**

Section C: Write the past tense forms of the following words:
Recur, regret, plait, develop, target, slam, vomit, trek, equip.

In this section, the goal was to test the doubling and non-doubling of base final consonants when adding a suffix. There was a mix up as some words which did not require the doubling of base final consonants were doubled while others which required the doubling of base final consonants were not doubled as can be observed in the forms below:

Table 1 : Doubling and Non-Doubling of Base Final Consonants

WORD	CORRECT FORM	WRONG FORM
Recur	recurred	Recured
Regret	regretted	Regreted
Plait	plaited	Plaitted
Develop	developed	Developped
Target	targeted	targetted
Slam	slammed	slamed
Vomit	vomited	vomitted
Trek	trekked	treked
Equip	equipped	equiped

Section D: Listen to the following words and spell them correctly

Correct Forms Wrong Forms

Duly----------------------duely

Truly---------------------truely

Grammar----------------grammer

Grateful------------------greatful

Argument----------------arguement

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Faithful-------------------faithfull

Interfere------------------interfer

Mother-in-law------------------Motherinlaw

Into----------------in to

Nowadays------------now our days

Across----------------across

In fact---------------infact

Calendar-------------calender

Sometimes---------------some times

Interpret------------------interprete

Nonetheless-----------------none the less

Separate---------------------separate

Even though----------------eventhough

In spite of-------------------inspiteof

Until--------------------untill

On the spelling drill we discovered that many students had problems writing out the words correctly. We had many cases with the deviant forms indicated above. Once more such problems adversely affect the work of these students.

Section E: Select the appropriate word in bracket for each pair to fill in the black spaces for each pair.

1. (stationary, stationery)
   a) The trained remained _____ for a few moments, before lurching forward along the track.
   b) The headmaster bought some _____ which he distributed to the teachers.

2. (moral, morale)
   a) The 250,000FCFA cash donation of the governor, boosted the _____ of the players.
   b) It is a _____ obligation for each parent to discipline his/her child.

3. (temporal, temporary)
   a) She was recruited on a _____ basis.
   b) Life on earth is _____.

4. (betrayal, betrayer)
   a) The _____ of the principal by a member of staff was terrible.
   b) The _____ of the principal was identified.

5. (Portable, potable)
   a) I carried my _____ radio in my hand bag.
   b) The drought resulted to acute shortage of _____ water.

Again, the students had difficulties with distinguishing the pairs of words in section E.

The total performance on 50 is presented on table two below:

Table 2 : General Performance of the written test for candidates of the different schools:

SCHOOL	Range of Marks /50	Total No of students in each range	Percentage with each range
BGS Molyko	0 – 25	33	66%
	25 – 34	16	32%
	35 – 50	01	2%
	SUB TOTAL	50	100%
GHS Tiko	0 – 25	39	78%
	25 – 34	11	22%
	35 – 50	00	0%
	SUB TOTAL	50	100%
GBHS Limbe	0 – 25	34	68%
	25 – 34	16	32%
	35 – 50	00	0%
	SUB TOTAL	50	100%

GBHS Down Town	0 – 25	35	70%
	25 – 34	15	30%
	35 – 50	00	0%
	SUB TOTAL	50	100%
GBHS Bamenda	0 – 25	33	66%
	25 – 34	16	32%
	35 – 50	01	2%
	SUB TOTAL	50	100%
CCAST Bambili	0 – 25	36	72%
	25 – 34	13	26%
	35 – 50	01	2%
	SUB TOTAL	50	100%
	0 – 25	210	70%
	25 – 34	87	29%
	35 – 50	03	01%
	GRAND TOTAL	300	100%

Up to 210 students out of 300 could not score an average of 25 out of 50 marks for this test. Therefore 70% of the candidates never secured an average score. 87 students out of 300 scored from 25 to 34 marks on 50 giving a total of 29%. Only 3 out of 300 students scored from 35 and above representing a meagre 1%. Such problems contribute to the poor performance recorded in the G.C.E. Ordinary Level English Language paper. For more than ten years, I have marked the G.C.E. Ordinary Level as well as the recently introduced Advanced Level English Language examinations, the performance have been deplorable. In fact, more than 90% of the candidates who sit for these examinations lost 10% to 20% of the marks on the rubric called Accuracy in listening and reading comprehension, essay and directed writing, where word usage is tested.

c) *Presentation of Oral Test (Phonology) and Analysis*

From the oral test, a total of 50 questions were set to test various aspects of English sound segments and supra-segments. These sounds are found in some carefully selected words of English language and each student was made to read some of the words in isolation while others were read in sentences of the appropriate contexts. The students' rendition were taped in a recorder and analysed. The exercise were grouped in seven sections and labelled from A to G.

d) *Analysis of Sound Rendition*

In SECTION A, the following words were written on papers and the students were each asked to read them out in turns. The words included: *quay, colonel, plumber, yacht, heir, sword, listen, bomb, debt*, and *castle*.

Almost all the words in this section were poorly rendered by all the students. The pronunciations were influenced by the orthographic forms of the words resulting to strange renditions and the pronunciation of silent letters as follows.

Table 3 : Orthographic Induced Pronunciation of some English Words

WORD	WRONG Pronunciation	CORRECT Form
Quay	*Kwey*	kiʒ
Colonel	*kolonɛl*	kɜ:nl
Plumber	*pɒmna*	plɔmə
Yacht	*yatʃ*	jɒt
Heir	*hɛ*	ɛə
Sword	*swɒd*	sɔd
Listen	*listin*	lɪsn
Bomb	*bɔmb*	bɔm
Debt	*dɛbt*	dɛt
Castle	*kɑstl*	kɑsl

From the forms rendered on table three above, it is obvious that pronunciation needs special attention in the programmes of the students. Pairs of homophones could be placed side by side to teach words not regularly used. In that light **key/ki/** and **quay/ki/** could be taught together. In the same token **heir/ɛə/** and **air/ɛə/** could be taught together.

The words in group B included: *thin, thing, this, that, father* and *mother*. Here, there was the testing of voiced dental fricatives as well as voiceless dental fricatives. The first sounds of the first four words and the medial sound of the last two words were tested

We realised that many students replaced the voiceless and voice dental fricatives with the voice and voiceless plosives respectively. This can be seen in the wrong forms presented below.

Table 4 : Pronunciation of Dental Fricatives

WORD	WRONG Form	CORRECT Form
Thin	tin	θɪn
Thing	tiŋ	θɪŋ
This	dis	ðɪz
That	dat	Ðæt
Father	fadɑ	faðə
Mother	mɔdɑ	mʌðə

The dental fricative are not found in the indigenous languages of the students so the tendency is to replace them with closer consonant sounds.

The forms produced will be represented below:

Document, education, December, asked, boys, girls and *bags*.

The words tested in group C were mixed exhibiting different features. These words include:

Table 5 : Pronunciation of some English Words Depicting Deletion and Replacement of Sounds

WORD	WRONG Form	CORRECT Form
Document	dɔkɪmɛnt / dokumɛnt	dɔkjuməat
Education	edukeʃɔn	edjukeɪʃn
Asked	ɑs	ɑskt
December	digzɛmbɑ	disɛmbə(r)
Boys	bɔs	bɔɪz
Girls	gɛls	gɜːlz
Bags	bags	bagz

Here, the problems of wrong rendition ranged from cluster simplification, consonants insertion and replacement and orthographic influence and extension of the plural morpheme**'s'** to forms requiring *'z'*. Therefore in words, **document** and **education**, there is the deletion of the **jod** sound **/j/** after **/k/** to produce the wrong forms presented above. This true of the word "asked" whereby the final cluster of consonants is simplified by the deletion of **/k/** and **/t/** for **'boys', 'girls'** and **'bags'** the plural morpheme **/s/** which is realised is not changed in those words; resulting to the mispronunciation of the words as seen in the tables above.

The words tested in group D comprised some vowels sounds. The words include: *love, sit, seat, teacher, healer, tour,* and *hay.* The rendition is present on the table below:

Table 6 : Words Testing Some Vowel Sounds

WORD	WRONG Form	CORRECT Form
Love	lɒf	lʌv
Money	mɔni	mʌnɪ
Sit	sit	sɪt
Seat	sit	sɪt
Teacher	titʃɑ	titʃə
About	abɑut	əbaʊt
Healer	hilɑ	hilə
Tour	tɔ	təʊ
Hay	he	heɪ

We realised that some of the vowels found in the words pose problems to the students, hence the vowels were replaced giving the forms presented above. Therefore the vowel **/ʌ/** found in '*love'* and '*money'* were replaced by /ɔ/. For the words '*seat'* and '*sit'*, there was no distinction between the vowels /i/ and /ɪ/ as found in SBE. The vowel /ə/ found in '*teacher', 'about'*, and '*healer'* were replaced by the vowel "a"

Table 7 : Introduction of Glides Between Triphthongs

WORD	WRONG Form	CORRECT Form
Power	pɑwɑ	paʊə
Lower	lowɑ	ləʊə
Fire	faya	faɪə
Liar	laya	laɪə
Loyal	loyɑl	lɔɪə
Player	pleyɑ	pleɪə

In fact, no candidate got any of these words correct. All these monosyllabic words were rendered in disyllables. This was done through the introduction of glides /j/ and /w/ between the diphthongs aʊ, ɔʊ, aɪ, ɔɪ, eɪ and the schwa ə producing the wrong forms presented above. So far, the analysis has dwelt mainly on segmental features. English language makes great use of supra-segmental features of stress, intonation and rhythm. In the written test, of this work, two tested aspects of stress were tested. There was the testing of the placement of stress on some English names and the use of stress in distinguishing word classes. Sentences which had English names and words of different classes were given to the students to read. The sentences were as follows:

a. Susan and Comfort made great progress (N)in their work while Collins and Edith are yet to progress(V)in the areas negotiation and marketing.

b. Eunice exports(V)local crafts while her husband Thomas controls import items like cars, furniture and clothing.

c. Mary who was born in the month of August was an august (adj) visitor in the anniversary celebration.

When these sentences were rendered, we realised that the students had no clue in the placement of English stress. The primary stress of the names were on the second syllables instead of the first while no distinction was made in stressing the words used as verbs, nouns and adjectives. Therefore, the underlined words, which were tested in the following sentences were generally stressed as follows:

Table 8 : Words Used to Test Stress Usage

WORD	WRONG Form	CORRECT Form
Susan	Suˈsan	ˈSusan
Comfort	comˈfort	ˈComfort
Progress(N)	proˈgress	ˈprogress
Collins	Coˈllins	ˈCollins
Edith	Eˈdith	ˈEdith
Progress(V)		proˈgress
Eunice	Euˈnice	ˈEunice
Exports(V)	ˈexports (V)	exˈports (V)
Mary	Maˈry	ˈMary
August (N)		ˈAugust
August(adj)	ˈAugust (adj)	auˈgust (adj)

Each item tested on the different sections of the oral exam scored a mark. Altogether fifty items were tested; all the items were marked on fifty. A summary of the performance is presented on the table below;

Table 9 : General Performance of the Oral test for all the Candidates of all the Schools

SCHOOL	Range of Marks /50	Total No of students in each range	Percentage with each range
BGS Molyko	15 – 20	11	22%
	10 – 14	20	40%
	0 – 9	19	38%
	SUB TOTAL	50	100%
GHS Tiko	15 – 20	07	14%
	10 – 14	18	36%
	0 – 9	25	50%
	SUB TOTAL	50	100%
GBHS Limbe	15 – 20	6	12%
	10 – 14	10	20%
	0 – 9	34	68%
	SUB TOTAL	50	100%
GBHS Down Town	15 – 20	10	20%
	10 – 14	21	42%
	0 – 9	19	38%
	SUB TOTAL	50	100%
GBHS Bamenda	15 – 20	07	14%
	10 – 14	15	30%
	0 – 9	28	56%

	SUB TOTAL	50	100%
CCAST Bambili	15 – 20	09	18%
	10 – 14	16	32%
	0 – 9	29	58%

From the table nine it is clear that the performance on the oral test was poorer than the written test. No student scored an average mark; that is 25 on 50 in this test. The highest scores ranged from 15 to 20 marks and this was obtained by only 50 candidates out of 300 who were tested giving a percentage of 16.6%. 150 students representing a total of 50% scored between 0 to 9 marks out of 50 marks and 100 out of 300 representing about 33.3% scored between 10 to14 marks out of 50.

e) Presentation and Analysis of Data on Observation

Alongside the written and oral tests, there was participant observation of the students in class as they took the tests. Wrong expressions such as *much better* and *much faster* for *better than* or *faster than* and *prolongation* for *extra time* were common in the speech of the students. There was the use of redundant forms like **red** in **colour** and **tall** in **heigh**t as well as needless repetitions like **return back** and **extreme end**. These forms eventually affect the writing and performance of these students especially in examinations. Most of the deviant morphological and phonological uses of English arise from negative transfer of the multiplicity of language spoken in the environment alongside English. The students need to consciously study the rules governing word formation in English and apply them in their usage. English speech sounds must be taught, learnt and applied in pronouncing English words. Students should endeavour to listen to the native speakers' speech through BBC for example and many other avenues available today with great improvement on world communication media. There is need to cultivate a reading culture amongst students whereby students will be exposed to correct written forms of English. English pronunciation is not adequately handled in the syllables and curriculum. This should be given prominence if we have to improve on the speech of our children.

III. Recommendations

a) A need for qualified teachers and teaching strategies

A large number of teachers with a good command of English are greatly needed, (Ma, 2006). In order to meet a demand of modern society, English teachers are supposed to pay more attention to learners' development in their competence and focus on a more effective and successful method. However it is obvious that the traditional approaches to English language teaching still dominate our classrooms. The language teachers, should not focus on reciting anymore, but focus on teaching learners from their own understanding of language learning and help them gain increased confidence and competence. Learners should be provided with various types of courses to enhance their English proficiency and promote familiarity with good approaches in the teaching of phonetics and morphology. If approaches are boring the learners will not study pronunciation and word structure diligently because these require a lot of hard work. Therefore positive and interesting measures must be taken to attract their attention educationally (Ma, 2006). Therefore the teachers' own enthusiasm is what motivates learners the most (Laidlaw, 2005).

b) A New Perception of Pronunciation Learning

Phonetic symbols are not difficult to learn and teach, but before learners can do so, language teachers must learn how to use them effectively to correct learners' accented pronunciation and intonation. It does require a lot of practice before a strong command of the symbols is possible. Phonetic symbols should be introduced to learners as early in their education as possible because pronunciation and intonation are the foundations of verbal language. Once learners have some facility in reading words, they no longer need instruction in this skill unless there is a special need (Anderson et al., 1985). If bad habits are formed, it will require double the effort later to correct them. Learning phonetic symbols may not be worth doing for its own sake. It is invaluable as a tool for decoding and pronouncing words correctly. Emphasis should be placed on applying the knowledge of phonetic symbols to actual pronunciation rather than to the learning of generalizations. The knowledge of the phonetic symbols and letter sound combinations should also support the growth of students' English vocabulary (Lu, 2002). If the teaching of phonetic symbols was stipulated in the curriculum, learners at all levels could be using them to unravel the pronunciation of unfamiliar English words.

c) An awareness of the importance of pronunciation and a learner-centred approach

All students can do well in learning the pronunciation of a foreign language if the teacher and student participate in the total learning process. Success can be achieved if each has set, respectively, individual teaching and learning goals. Pronunciation must be viewed as more than correct production of phonemes. It must be viewed in the same light as grammar, syntax and discourse, that is, a crucial part of communication. Research has shown and current pedagogical thinking on pronunciation maintains that intelligible pronunciation is seen as an essential component of communicative competence (Morley, 1991:513). With this in mind, the teacher must then set

achievable goals that are applicable and suitable for the communication needs of the student. The students must also become part of the learning process actively involved in their own learning. The content of the course should be integrated into the communication class, with the content emphasizing the teaching of segmental and supra segmental aspects, linking pronunciation with listening comprehension, and allowing for meaningful pronunciation practice. With the teacher acting as a speech coach rather than a checker of pronunciation, the feedback given to the student can encourage learners to improve their pronunciation. It is of importance to concern ourselves with the fostering of learner motivation, as it is considered to be the most effective and proactive power relationship which lead to positive learning atmosphere (Thanasoulas, 2002). If these criteria are met, all students within their unique goals can be expected to do well learning the pronunciation of a foreign language. For language acquisition, once learners consciously notice the input, it becomes intake and output, and develops long-term memory (Schmidt, 1990, 1995, Ellis, 1997).

Careful consideration must be given to being aware that the pronunciation of any one learner might be affected by combination of many influential factors such as age, gender, prior experience (Pennington, 1994).

The key is to be aware of their existence so that they may be considered in creating realistic and effective pronunciation goals and development plans for the learners.

d) The usefulness of language learning strategies

Introduction to the use of LLS is essential to the learners' achievement in language learning. Learners are being encouraged to learn and use a broad range of LLS that can be tapped throughout the learning process. This approach is based on the belief that learning will be facilitated by making learners aware of the range of strategies from which they can choose during language learning and use (Cohen, 2003). Cohen states that providing strategy training with explicit instruction in how to apply LLS as part of the foreign language curriculum is the most efficient way to heighten learner awareness. Rather than focus students' attention solely on learning the language, teachers can help students learn to think about what happens during the language learning process, which will lead them develop stronger learning skills (Anderson, 2002).

e) Integration of English pronunciation into the curriculum

Because pronunciation is everywhere it is possible to deal with pronunciation through what is already in the curriculum. This involves two basic ideas. First teachers need to be aware of what is in the curriculum and what will be doing with the learners and how this relates to sound structure. So in order to do this, teachers need to have quite a good idea of what

sound structure entails. The decision that the teachers make on what particular aspect of pronunciation recovered within a certain phase of a curriculum need to be based on their overall knowledge of sound structure. The second major idea is that of learner centredness. Using this type of approach, it might be best to do this based on what's observed in the classroom. Teachers can focus their attention on areas where learners need particular help on as demonstrated by their own performance. This is more efficient than basing what teachers are doing on assumption that may or may not be right.

At the same time it means that the teachers need to be very flexible in their approaches to dealing with the class. What is important here is implementing a task-based model more than a presentation based model of language teaching. This type of integration for pronunciation means that the basic approach of the classroom needs to be founded on learners actually doing things with language, not listening to presentations from their teachers all day (Walker, 2010). Long range oral communication goals and objectives should be established to identify pronunciation needs as well as speech functions and the context in which they might occur (Morley, 1998). These goals and objectives should be realistic, aiming for functional intelligibility (ability to make oneself relatively easily understood), functional communicability (ability to meet the communication needs one faces), and enhanced self-confidence in use (Gillette, 1994; Jordan, 1992). They should result from a careful analysis and description of the learners' needs (Jordan, 1992; Moley, 1998). This analysis should then be used to support selection and sequencing of the pronunciation information and skills for each sub-group or proficiency level within the larger learners group (Celce-Murcia, Bring on, & Goodwin, 1996).

To determine the level of emphasis to be placed on pronunciation within the curriculum, programmes should consider the following particular variables:

1. The learners (ages, educational backgrounds, experiences with pronunciation instruction, motivation, general English proficiency levels)
2. The instructional setting (academic, workplace, English for specific purposes, literacy, conversation)
3. In situational variables (teachers' instructional and educational experiences, focus of curriculum, availability of pronunciation materials, class size, availability of equipment)
4. Linguistic variables (learners' native languages, diversity or lack of diversity of native languages within the group)
5. Methodological variables (method or approach included by the programme).

f) Strategies for English pronunciation instructions

There are a significant number of strategies for English pronunciation instruction that can help learners

meet their personal and professional needs. They are as follows:

– Identify specific pronunciation features that cause problems for learners
– Make learners aware of the prosodic features of language (stress, intonation, rhythm)
– Focus on developing learners' communicative competence

g) Make learners aware of prosodic features of language

Word stress, intonation, and rhythm are the prosodic features of language. They are extremely important to comprehensibility. Teachers should include prosodic training in instruction (O'Brien, 2004; Bailly & Holm, 2005; Gauthier, Shi & Yi, 2009). They might begin with listening activities. For example they can ask students to listen for rising intonation in yes/no questions, compare question intonation in English with that of their native languages, and then imitate dialogues, perform plays (O'Brien, 2004), and watch videos in which yes/no questions are used (Hardison, 2005).

h) Focus on word stress

There are a number of activities teachers can do to help learners use word stress correctly. Lead perceptions exercise on duration of stress, loudness of stress, and pitch. These exercises will help learners recognize the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables (Field, 2005). For example, learners can be taught to recognize where stress falls in words with two or more syllables by learning the rules of parts of speech and word stress (e.g., the primary stress is on the first syllable in compound nouns such as *air*plane, *land*scape). Learners can also use a pronunciation computer programme, such as American speech sounds (Hiser & Kopecky, 2009), to learn the duration and loudness of stress. Do exercises on recognizing and producing weak, unstressed syllables (Field, 2005). For example, one exercise helps learners identify computer voice recognition mistakes that have occurred because of mispronunciation of weak vowel forms (e.g.,--Alaska if she wants to come with us// instead of –I'll ask if she wants to come with us// [Hancock, 1998, p. 80]). Present pronunciation rules for stress (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994). For example, teach learners that in reflexive pronouns, the stress is always on the syllable – self (e.g., her*self*, them*selves* [Grant, 2010, p. 57]). Teach word stress when teaching vocabulary (Field, 2005). For example any time that new words are introduced, point out to learners where the major stress falls. Use analogy exercises (Field, 2005). Words sharing similar stress patterns are easier for listeners to remember (Aitchison, 2003). For example, give learners a list of words with similar stress and ask them to state

the rule (e.g., in compound adverbs of location, such as out*side*, down*town*, and in*doors*, the stress is on the final syllable [Hancock, 1998, p. 69]).

i) Focus on unstressed syllables

There are many exercises that a teacher can use to focus on unstressed syllables, or weak vowel forms, in connected speech. Liang (2003) discusses three strategies to teach weak vowel forms. Use functions words introduce weak forms through the grammatical category of function words, such as articles, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, and prepositions. Present sentence drills where both strong and weak forms appear. For example, the teacher can read a passage while learners underline the weak forms in the passage. Allow learners to practice using weak forms in conversation in order to simulate real-life speech encounters. For example, the teacher might focus the lesson on the ability to do things. Student A can play the role of an interviewer, and student B can be the interviewee. Student A asks a list of questions regarding student B's ability to do things. For example, student A asks, --Can you swim?// Student B uses both the strong and weak form of the vowel in can and can't in an answer such as this; "I can't swim very well, but I can try".

j) Focus on developing learners' communicative competence

Communicative competence is the aim of pronunciation teaching and learning (Savignon, 1997; O'Brien, 2004; Gatbonton et al., 2005; Low, in press). Savignon (1997) stressed the need for meaningful communicative tasks in the language classroom, including those that focus on pronunciation. Pronunciation exercises that relate to daily use of English include, for example, role plays of requests that leaners have to make (e.g., to ask a boss for a day off or to ask a bank teller to cash a check) (Grant, 2010). Learners can become careful listeners in their own conversations. Pitt (2009) shows that learners need exposure to conversation so they can hear variation in pronunciation. By using audiotapes and videotapes, teaches can give learners meaningful exposure to variation in pronunciation and increase their communicative competence.

k) Theories about teaching pronunciation and language strategies

There have been various arguments and support for the effectiveness of pronunciation training on learns' achievement in communication competence. Morley (1998) states that, "pronunciation plays an important role in overall communication competence". Young (2004) suggested that from the traditional ways of learning English, students neglected the basic knowledge of speaking. This may have been enough to meet the demands of English in the years when we had

less communication with foreign countries. However, oral communication began to be more important when they arrived in this century with extended forms of communication with Western countries. Yong (2004) asserted that understanding by reading and writing would no longer be sufficient for the development of the economy and that communicating face to face personally or through the internet needed to be understood.

The focus of the pronunciation training in this study followed Smith's (1981) arguments that consciousness and awareness raising are important in second language acquisition though Krashen's (1985) position was that pronunciation is acquired naturally. Furthermore, clear instruction was important to the effectiveness of pronunciation training (Spada 1997, Pennington 1998) but this was contested by Suter (1976) who was not able to find a positive effect from instruction. Acton (1984) reported in detail on a programme of instruction focusing on the link between pronunciation, affect, personality, and social context, which was designed to help learners whose pronunciation had fossilized. However, no empirical evidence of its success was offered. Derwing, Munro and Wiebe (1997) found a positive outcome of instruction which focused on general speaking habits as opposed to a concentration on individual segments. Derwing, Munro and Wiebe (1998) also found that both instruction in segmental accuracy and instruction in general speaking habits and prosodic features, led to improved pronunciation. Morley (1994:16) suggested that the focus on pronunciation teaching nowadays should be on designing "new-wave instruction programs". Moreover, she stresses that these new instructional designs should take into account not only language forms and function, but also issues of learner self-involvement and learner strategy training. Students who have become active partners in their own learning have developed the skills to monitor and modify their speech patterns. Teachers' awareness of learning opportunities might create potential for a deeper understanding of language learning and language classroom interaction. Alwright (2005:9) defines the learning opportunity as a more developmental unit of analysis and assesses for well planning in language learning.

Pronunciation practice is also important for the students who plan to study or are currently living abroad. Increasing their pronunciation skills beforehand can build confidence and make them feel less reluctant to venture out to speak English. Students' personal attitude and self-esteem are major factors in improving English pronunciation. It is not merely exposure that matters, but how the students respond to the opportunities of listening to English spoken by a native or of speaking themselves (Kenworthy, 1987).

Language learning can help students to improve their language competencies (Oxford, 1990a). Canale and Swain (1980), whose article influenced a number of works about communication strategies in ESL/EFL teaching, recognized the important communication strategies as a key aspect of strategic competence. An important distinction exist however, between communication and LLS. LLS are used generally for all strategies that ESL/EFL learners use in learning the target language and communication strategies are one type of LLS. Oxford (1990a) defined that LLS are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active and self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence.

Through the years, researchers interested in pronunciation learning have examined many variables in attempting to explain successful second language pronunciation ability. Studies have not been numerous, but have been productive. Research has shown (Vitanova & Miller, 2002) that learners can see improvement in both segmental and supra-segmental areas of pronunciation. However, once learners have mastered the basic sounds of English and identified some of the supra-segmental differences between their L1 and English, it is time to help them learn some strategies so that they can study more effectively on their own (Vitanova & Miller, 2002). Oxford (1986b) explains that learning strategies are of great importance because they improve language performance, encourage learner autonomy, are teachable, and expand the role of the teacher in significant ways. Given the pronunciation instruction that promotes learner strategy awareness more basic knowledge about the relationship between learning strategies and pronunciation is needed (Morley, 1998). Research into potentially important variables affecting pronunciation has been surprisingly absent from the literature (Peterson, 2000).

IV. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that our students have a lot of problems with the English language which happens to be the medium through which all the other subjects in the school curricular is taught. The problems occur in the various levels of language. From this study it is evidenced that the phonological component is more challenging than the morphological component. It is imperative to employ student centred approach in teaching language and much emphasis should be given to speech. This is very important in the global village world of today where communication in English is not limited to a particular locality where we will continue to make do with the local varieties like Cameroon English (CamE) but opened to many people the world over and especially to the native speakers of the language. It is

also very imperative for good bilinguals to keep their languages apart.

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