

Problems Related to the Teaching of English Pronunciation in Pre-service Institutions: A Study at the Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana

Dauida Aba Mensima Asante-Nimako*

Wesley College of Education, Languages Department, Kumasi, Ghana

Corresponding Author: Dauida Aba Mensima Asante-Nimako, E-mail: mensidave@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to find out the problems related to the teaching of English pronunciation in the pre-service training institutions. Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana, was used as a case study. Out of the problems, deductions were made to make recommendations. Three tutors of English and twenty students were purposively sampled for the study. Through the use of interviews, three key findings, realized from the research include the following: First, the mode of correcting students' mispronunciation. The manner in which some tutors correct students' mispronunciation was found to be very discouraging to the students; second, the less attention given to English 'pronunciation' as one of the aspects of English language teaching/learning was a concern; In any case, though pronunciation was not conspicuously part of the English course outline, it did not imply that there was no form of pronunciation teaching. Thus, during the teaching learning process pronunciation teaching go on directly or indirectly. In terms, of other subject areas other than English language, pronunciation teaching hardly happens. More importantly, another vital problem found was the poor foundation at the basic level of education. The student teachers should in-turn have a better grounding in English pronunciation to teach the pupils in the basic schools in Ghana. Unfortunately, the ill tradition of unintelligible pronunciation goes on, which the researcher terms it the 'dark cycle'. The views of students and tutors were gathered through recording and transcription of interviews. The research generally reveals the need for language teachers and curriculum planners to factor in pronunciation as a vital aspect of building up students; especially, student- teachers who will complete soon and go and teach younger ones, ensuring the avoidance of 'dark cycle' as the researcher's term, explained in the 'key words'.

Key words: 'Dark Cycle', First Language, Second Language, Blood Vomiting, Blood Coughing, Transforming Teacher Education and Learning

INTRODUCTION

'Pronunciation' is a very vital aspect of English language. Its importance cannot be over-emphasized. This study seeks the problems related to the teaching of English pronunciation in the pre-service training institution; Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana. The intention is that, upon discovering the problems of the teaching English pronunciation, meaningful suggestions could be made to ensure improvement in teaching and practice of intelligible English pronunciation. Hismanoglu (2006:103 citing Morley 1991:484) explains what pronunciation involves; to him, "The pronunciation class was one that gave primary attention to phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, environmental allophonic variations and combinatory phonotactic rules, along with ... attention to stress, rhythm and intonation." This implies that pronunciation in general and English pronunciation in particular is not limited to phonetics but stress, rhythm and intonation among others are very much

involved. Thus, in terms of teaching English pronunciation, the approach must be holistic. In communication, wrong pronunciation of words could be very disastrous. Consider a scenario in the hospital, where, in a communication between a doctor and a nurse, the word 'haemoptysis' which means 'blood coughing' if mispronounced as 'haematemesis' which means 'blood vomiting', could result in the wrong medication and even lead to the death of the patient. Similar problem could reflect in the mispronunciation of the words 'mileria' (a skin disease in babies) and 'malaria' (a type of fever). Until such instances are realized, the importance of pronunciation is less appreciated. Robertson (2002: 19 citing Otlowski, 1998) indicated that pronunciation must be seen as "a crucial part of communication". This buttresses the fact that pronunciation is very vital, since people communicate all the time. Citing (Morley, 1991:488), Robertson (2002:8) postulates that "Intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communication competence" One's pronun-

ation should be reasonably understanding to his listeners for successful communication which will boost the competence of that individual (the speaker). On the contrary, an individual who is hardly understood by his/her listeners may surely suffer embarrassment and lose his communication competence. This reflects the importance of teaching and learning of English pronunciation in pre-service training institution, where student-teachers are being trained to go and teach pupils at the basic level of Education in Ghana. Based on the importance of pronunciation discussed, the study researched into the problems related to the teaching of English pronunciation in the pre-service training institution; Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of related literature discusses three issues. These include good or bad pronunciation, problems of English language teaching, and pronunciation and the curriculum.

Good or Bad Pronunciation

What can be considered as a good pronunciation and bad one? In as much as the terms are relative to an individual, it is obvious that one's pronunciation may be considered as a problem when the listener struggles to comprehend. Robertson (2002:11) says, "In a world of numerous different teachers with localized dialects, one cannot begin to postulate even an image of 'perfect pronunciation' without meeting barrage of questions, most of which will succumb to different answer by different nationality teacher"; Thus, difficult to declare what 'perfect pronunciation' is. By the existence of different cultures in general, including different languages, the different native languages of individuals have influences on their English language to make it sound unique. It therefore becomes difficult to declare which one is perfect and which one is not. In the teaching of English pronunciation, it may be very vital for teachers to be conscious of this and accommodate all students in terms of their pronunciation. However, this does not imply that where there is difficulty in comprehending a speaker's pronunciation, nothing should be done about it. Robertson (2002:11 citing Kenworthy 1996:3) indicates that he prefers to see the strong term 'perfect pronunciation' reduced to 'comfortably intelligible pronunciation'. In this sense, irrespective of one's native language, his/her English pronunciation should be intelligibly understood by listeners without any strain. The teacher of English will now have to employ this as an encouragement to help curb the pronunciation problems of his/her students in order for the students to have the ability to express a comfortably intelligible English pronunciation.

Problems of English Language Teaching

Opportunity for students to express themselves in class

The problems of English pronunciation reviewed included less opportunity for students to express themselves in class. Robertson (2002:6 citing Dash 2002) indicated that "students

in government schools receive almost no opportunity to speak in the L2 in classes that are still teacher-centered" When a class is teacher-centered and the students do not get the opportunity to speak, they neither get the opportunity to express themselves nor have their mistakes corrected. This does not help such students to build up their English pronunciation skills. In relation to the study, if student-teachers of Wesley college of Education, Kumasi, Ghana and in colleges of Education in general have such pedagogical problem, it might be a contributing factor to their English pronunciation problems.

Spelling and pronunciation

Another problem reviewed was spelling. Rodman and Fromkin (1978:159) stated that "Writing has, however affected speech only marginally and most notably in the phenomenon of spelling pronunciation". Many English words are not pronounced the way they are spelt. Without having knowledge about their correct pronunciation, one may pronounce the words as they are spelt. For example, the word 'island' [aɪlənd] is not pronounced as [ɪslænd] neither is the word 'pneumonia' [nju: məʊniə] pronounced [pənuj: məʊniə]. With their reference to spelling pronunciation, they discussed how spelling has affected speech especially since the sixteenth century. Rodman and Fromkin (1978:159) made reference to the struggle between those who were of the view that words should be pronounced according to their spelling and those who felt words should be spelt according to their pronunciation. They indicated that at that time /h/ sound was not pronounced in honest, hour, habit, hospital etc. Also most of the words underwent change from /t/to/e/ such as anthem, author, and theater. This is how the issue of spelling is a pronunciation problem; in terms of teaching, when the teacher himself/herself is not well abreast with the changing trends and does not have a good grasp of comfortably intelligible pronunciation, which becomes another problem altogether. They clearly stated that, "The most important of such changes stem from the eighteenth century under the influence and 'decrees' of dictionary-makers and the school teachers." This shows how instrumental teachers especially are, in terms of language in general and pronunciation in particular. Teachers, in the mist of all the problems of the teaching of English pronunciation must do their best to curb the pronunciation problems of their students, though the competence of their pronunciation skills is another issue worth discussing.

Influence of L₁ on L₂

Naturally, considering Nunan's (1991) view, the influence of L₁ on L₂ is an obvious problem in pronunciation teaching. It is thus likely to be a challenge for student-teachers of the pre-service training institutions as well as the pupils they in-turn teach when they complete their training. Nunan (1991) indicated that:

"Teaching of pronunciation is dealt with from different points of view because the influence of the first language seems prominent in the case of pronunciation and only gifted learners can attain mastery over pronunciation, though they start learning language after puberty". Deducing from

Nunan's (1991) view, the problem of pronunciation does not only linger around the L_1 influence on L_2 but also about the age at which they begin their pronunciation lessons. By puberty age, all the wrong pronunciation skills would not only be learnt but well adopted by the individual. This will make 'change' difficult for such an individual at that puberty age. It may be more helpful for L_2 learners of English language to resort to English pronunciation training at an early age. This is very vital considering Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin's (1996) view on pronunciation; to them, "There is a threshold level of pronunciation of non-native speakers of English, If they fall below this threshold level, they will have oral communication problems no matter how excellent and extensive their control of English grammar and vocabulary might be. There is therefore the need for student-teachers of pre-service training institutions to make conscious effort to overcome the challenge of the influence of the L_1 on L_2 and attain the threshold level of English pronunciation which Celce-Murcia et al (1996) made reference to. The influence of L_1 on L_2 can be very challenging to the teacher as well as to the student. In reference to Chinese students, Hsiang-Pao, Chuen-Yn and Chi-Fen, (1994) addressed the problem of 'dropping final consonants' while students are speaking. In Chinese, there is no consonant + vowel + consonant structure (CVC structure); consonants would never appear at the end of the word. This is quite different from English. Influenced by Chinese, (Influence of L_1 on L_2), students omit final consonants while speaking and this results in semantic misunderstanding amongst communicators. They adopted activities that helped to alert students to final consonants and regulate their English language habits in putting final consonants at the end of words or sentences (in speech). There is obviously the need to improve one's pronunciation irrespective of the Influence of L_1 on L_2 .

Pronunciation and the Curriculum

Robertson (2002:10 cited Morley 1991:496) that "students can be expected to do well in pronunciation of English if the pronunciation class is taken out of a 'meaningless isolation' and becomes an integral part of the oral communication class." The main purpose of pronunciation is for communication; thus, if the curriculum and teaching is made so practical that the use of pronunciation is realized in the classroom irrespective of the subject under study, obviously it will go a long way to improve the communication between the teacher and the student and education for that matter. On the contrary, the times allocated to the topics on the course outlines of pre-service training institution, Wesley College of Education may not be sufficient to go the extra mile and make room for pronunciation teaching.

Before this, Robertson (2002:4) had indicated in his work, the inclusion of pronunciation in government school curriculum, as one of the ways he thinks could improve pronunciation. Teaching pronunciation should not be a study with a status comparable to Physics, History or English subject, but should be studied as a fundamental aspect of the embodiments of the English subject. Preferably, pronunciation teaching in pre-service training institution, Wesley College

of Education should have been presented in the light of 'language across the curriculum' where all teachers, irrespective of their teaching subject will correct student-teachers' mispronunciations. However, this raises the concern about whether subject teachers in general and language teachers in particular have intelligible pronunciation skills or ability to correct others.

METHOD

The researcher used the qualitative research design in this study. This research design was selected due to its advantage of giving detailed and comprehensive information. The non-probability sampling method; specifically, the purposive sampling method was used to sample respondents due to the fact that the researcher believed those respondents could provide the needed information to help make the research a successful one. This section discusses setting and participants, data collection and data analyses.

Setting and Participants

The Wesley College of Education is one of the Training Colleges in Ghana located at Tafo, Kumasi in the Ashanti region. It was established by the Methodist Church in 1918. During the season of the study, (2012/2013 Academic year), Wesley College of Education, as an institution comprised 69 teaching staff including the Principal and two (2) Vice Principals, seventy-one (71) non-teaching staff, and eight hundred and eighty-five students (885) students (consisting of two hundred and ninety-nine (299) first year students; two hundred and ninety five (295) second year students; and two hundred and ninety-one (291) third year students). The third year students were out stationed on their off-campus teaching practice, where teachers go to their various villages to supervise their teaching. Thus, it was only first and second year students as well as some teaching and non-teaching staff members who live on Wesley College of Education campus. The community was guided by a pattern of life from dawn to dusk especially with regard to the students. They attend devotion, breakfast, lunch and supper together, among other college functions. This is the reason why communication is paramount in the college. Besides, teachers and students also communicate during class hours and obviously, students communicate a great deal amongst themselves and pronunciation is vital in all these communications. The average number of students in many of the classrooms is thirty (30). With regard to the class number, teachers are more likely to give better attention to all students when the class number is less. There is a library in the college though there is the need for a bigger one. There is also an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) laboratory in the college. There is a language laboratory which is solely used by the French department in the college; due to this, the place is called 'the French lab' and not 'the language lab'.

Data was obtained through observation and interviews. Three teachers and twenty students of Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana, were sampled for the research work. The teachers who were interviewed were those who

taught English language in the institution and the students as well offered English language as a course and could provide the researcher with the needed information. Out of the nine (9) teachers of English, three (3) were sampled and used for the research work. Out of a student population of 885 students twenty (20) students (ten first year students and ten second year students) were selected for the focus group interviews. The third year students were not selected since they do not reside on campus because they were on an out program.

Data Collection

Since the Researcher used observation and interviews, it has been explained below, how each instrument was used to gather data to contribute to the success of this research.

Observation

The researcher used the complete observation method in this study. This was to ensure that the teachers give off their natural output and do not pretend. The observations were done before the interviews. The researcher observed the comprehension lessons of each of the three teachers of English six times. The information taken during the first two observations of each teacher was not analyzed. This was to avoid noting pretentious behavior on the part of the teachers due to nervousness or anxiety. However, the last four observations out of the six observations of each teacher were used for this research work. Though initially the teachers were a bit hesitant for fear of being judged, they later accepted willingly upon the assurance the researcher gave them of their security. The findings of the observation are presented along with that of the interview thematically.

Interview

In organizing the interviews, the three teachers of English were interviewed individually at different times and place as chosen by the respondents. Twenty students (ten (10) first year students were interviewed as a group as well as ten (10) second year students (also in a focus group). The researcher however incorporated the information of the first and second year students since they were similar. The semi-structured interview format was adopted. Each of the interviews took a period of about forty - five (45) minutes. The researcher used the interviews due to its advantages which include the fact that it is purposeful, conversational and answers research questions, Owu – Ewie (2011). In other words, interviews provide opportunity for the respondent to give more information to help make the research successful. The observations were noted and the interviews were recorded and transcribed to support the presentation of information in the study.

Data Analyses

The Researcher used the thematic method in analyzing the data through categorization and coding. Thematic analysis is commonly used in qualitative research in analyzing data

(Guest 2012). It does so by examining themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is worth mentioning that coding is a primary process in developing themes (Guest & MacQueen, 2012). This is done by recognizing vital points in the data and noting it to explain it further. In other words, coding is the systematic way of organizing and gaining meaningful parts of data as it relates to the research question. And that is basically how the researcher analyzed the data. The data was presented through the narrative logic approach. Due to the fact that the researcher recorded and transcribed the interviews, the data was clearly available to be analyzed. The Researcher chose the thematic analysis due to its advantages among which include the “flexibility it allows researchers” (Braun et al 2006), to address several human concepts of knowledge; and it as well helps interpret themes supported by data (Guest 2012). All this was done considering the findings of the observation as well.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the presentation of data, it is worth noting that the exact words of interviewees have been quoted (italicized) in order to reflect the exact views on some pronunciation problems in their presentations.

The following were found to be the problems related to the teaching of English pronunciation in the institution:

Poor Foundation at the Basic Level

Indeed the students of pre-service training institutions grew and schooled through the basic level till the stage they find themselves. Thus, upon admitting that they have pronunciation problems, one cause that was identified is the fact that they had poor foundation at the basic level. One student said: *“There should be good trained personnel to start the training so that they could get up with it.”* The student believed that if he/she had had a good training at the basic level it would have helped her.

Poor foundation of pronunciation training of individuals at the basic level obviously contributes to problems of English pronunciation teaching and learning. Agreeing with Higgs et al (1982) a beginner learner of English language must be taught pronunciation. Pronunciation must be taught at the basic level of education. It is therefore obvious that there may be problems when this is overlooked or not properly done. When this basic need is overlooked, it will result in having grown –ups with poor pronunciations that will in turn influence other young people and society negatively. Another aspect of the interview revealed that the teachers acknowledge that students of Wesley College of Education have pronunciation problems. A Teacher said:

Exactly! They have problems with er pronunciation. And for me, the problem stems from the fact that, when they were in basic school, even through the S.H.S. and what not, many of them were not taken through pronunciation, correct pronunciation.

There is every indication that there is little attention on pronunciation at the basic level as well, though it could be a suggestion for future research. This is because the students

admitted that if they had had a good basic training they would have been better. Moreover, the personal experience of one of the teachers who was interviewed and recounted that his basic school teacher could not teach him the correct pronunciation of the word 'meadow' makes this point so true.

Less Opportunity for Students to have their Mispronunciations Corrected

Due to the fact that pronunciation is not conspicuously part of the course outline of Wesley College of Education, Teachers of English sometimes teach pronunciations only when students make mispronunciations of English Language. A teacher said: "*Yes I do, I do. Emm, a lot; because, when, anytime students mispronounce a word, I take time to correct them. I make them go into the dictionary to see how the word is pronounced and I teach them how the words are transcribed*".

The researcher agrees with Robertson (2002:6 citing Dash 2002) that when very few students have the opportunity to talk in class; there is little opportunity for students to have their mispronunciations corrected. During the observation for example, only few students had the opportunity to contribute in class. Eventually, only a student had her mispronunciation corrected. The student mispronounced the word 'awesome' as/ausʌm/and the teacher of English corrected that it should be pronounced as/ɔ:səm/. For other mispronunciations, colleague students only laughed and teased. As far as classes continue to be teacher-centered, there will be less opportunity for students to have their mispronunciations corrected by teachers of English. How often teachers of English correct students' mispronunciations is not sufficient.

Mode of correcting Students' Mispronunciations:

The problem surrounding correcting students' mispronunciation is the mode of correction. During the observation, the researcher observed that students laughed at individuals who mispronounced words. In addition, when teachers of English on few occasions prompted students about their mispronunciations other students laughed. Though all the three Teachers of English indicated that they correct students' mispronunciations, students expressed their problem of embarrassment due to how Teachers of English correct them, when they do. One student said:

When we are doing comprehension; like they they do when we pronounce the thing. But the way they will correct you 'no', they will say 'say it again' (laughs) they will say 'say it again'/egein/but you think it was the right pronunciation, say it again, but at times you feel embarrassed to like, say it again. And even when they say the right word because you are embarrassed you will not listen to what they say.

During the observation, the researcher observed that teachers of English hardly correct students' mispronunciations but whenever they did, members of the class laughed at the individual who had committed the pronunciation error. In the situation of the student who mispronounced the word 'awesome', the teacher of English exclaimed: "What!" After which she corrected the student to pronounce it as/ɔ:səm/.

And this made her mates laugh at her. Another student said, *It's good to be corrected but at times how, how it is done it is make, it is, that's they complicative the whole thing so I will say the teachers should also come down for us/es/. And during correction will be because we are grown ups and if you embarrass me and how you will say it will make me embarrassed. So how they correct us should be in a nice way.*

The students' responses quoted above agree with Robertson (2002:13) that students valued pronunciation as a vital part of their instruction and wanted more correction on their mispronunciation both within and outside the classroom. The researcher agrees with Robertson (2002) that error correction is a team effort, so the teachers as well as the students must cooperate in achieving this. Whereas the teachers correct students without humiliating them, the students must also have the humility to accept corrections. In this context, the student-teachers must learn not to laugh at others for their errors but should encourage one another to build up their knowledge holistically. It is the teacher's 'overall responsibility' to correct student's error, and that must be done properly.

How often other Subject Teachers Correct Students' Mispronunciations

The rather destructing problem is the issue of 'language across the curriculum'; where all teachers should get involved in improving pronunciation rather than only tutors of English. Students appreciated the fact that it is only tutors of English who sometimes correct their mispronunciation and not other subject tutors. A student had this to say: "*It is hardly done but I think with the English tutors they try that but with the Science and Mathematics tutors they just forget them*".

Since the Mathematics and Science teachers were particularly accused of not usually correcting students' mispronunciation, the researcher informally inquired of a mathematics teacher if she corrects students' mispronunciations. She had this to say: "*Occasionally, especially if it is a mathematical term, but if it is not, I hardly look at that*". Again, upon asking a Physics and Chemistry teacher, he said that he seldom corrects students' mispronunciation. At times he looks out for the facts and not the pronunciation. At times too he may just not want to embarrass the person, he added. From the answers the mathematics and science teachers gave, it is evident that other subject teachers of Wesley College of Education hardly correct students' English mispronunciations. This does not help the students to attain the threshold level of pronunciation which Celce – Murcia et al (1996) postulate.

Poor Example from Some Tutors

Another problem of pronunciation regarding pronunciation teaching is the fact that students indicated that some tutors themselves do not know how to pronounce words correctly and thus cannot teach the students good pronunciation. One student said this: "*Some of the teachers too, they also they don't know how to pronounce some of the words.*" Another student agreed to this and said "*Sure, Sure*".

During the observation, the researcher observed some

mispronunciations from tutors. There were instances where a tutor mispronounced the word 'that' /ðæt/as/da: t/. Another mispronounced the word college /kɒlɪdʒ/as/kɒleɪdʒ/. The gravity of the problem lies in the fact that, it is tutors of English who were observed and thus making such errors. This confirms that indeed some tutors also do have pronunciation problems. It implies that there is a great need to improve the teaching and learning of pronunciation even on the part of the tutors of English as well as other subject teachers.

It is like a cycle. For several years now, tutors with poor pronunciation have been handling students, right from early school days until the highest level of education. It is however not surprising if students frankly indicate that some teachers do not even know how to pronounce words correctly. Practically, students have admitted that they have pronunciation problems; in a year or two, they will become teachers to younger ones, still pronouncing words wrongly and their students (pupils) pick up from them. Those students (some) tend to become teachers and the tradition of teachers using poor pronunciation goes on. And this 'dark cycle' as the researcher terms it, will not cease until pronunciation teaching is addressed appropriately. The students shared their experiences with the researcher showing lack of knowledge of good pronunciation on the part of teachers. A student said: "Sometimes when you get a word wrong (w'ehu?-an Akan word meaning 'do you see?') and you ask/eyi/a teacher how to pronounce it, they will tell you that it's an assignment, go and find it yourself." Another student said: ".that you should consult your dictionary and it shouldn't be that way."

To add to that, another student gave another example of an instance where a teacher corrected him, not to pronounce the word 'issues' as /ɪʃju: s/ but as /ɪʃju: s/.

The other time I thought emm!, I had been saying issues/ɪʃju: s/from basic school through my senior high school till date but the other time I was talking to a master and I said, did the issue/ɪʃju:/and he said 'hei!, what are you saying? It was there that the master taught me. They told me that it was/ɪʃju:/and I felt embarrassed because there were a lot of my friends over there so it feels really bad when you are being corrected.

The tutor who made this correction lacks the knowledge about the difference between British accents and American one. Otherwise, he/she could have rather prompted the student about the different accents since both pronunciations are correct. It is evident in this example that some of the tutors lack the knowledge of the different pronunciations of the British and American accents of the English Language.

One other example which depicts lack of knowledge on the part of tutors and thus expresses the fact that they are more likely to give poor example to students is a statement made by a tutor of English during the interview: "English is a stressed timed language but our local languages are mostly syllabic timed languages" The truth is, English Language is also syllabic. This all points to the fact that tutors in general and tutors of English in particular also do some knowledge on pronunciation. and thus sometimes give poor examples to students. In addition to that, the researcher also had an instance where a tutor of English shared an experience about

a word 'a meadow' which he used to pronounce as/amədu/(a Ghanaian Akan name of a male) at his basic level of education, only to get to a higher level to learn that it was/mi: dəʊ/ (According to the tutor). Interestingly, after the interview, the researcher checked the dictionary only to learn that the word 'meadow' which the teacher pronounced as/mi: dəʊ/ is pronounced/mədəʊ/. Below is a part of the experience the teacher shared:

...One example I have is 'one man and his dog went to mow a meadow' That word there 'a meadow' we used to pronounce it 'amadu'(a Ghanaian Akan name of a male)/a: mɛdʊ/... So when I saw the first part of the structure 'One man and his dog went to mow 'a meadow' then 'a meadow'/mi: dəʊ/So I came back, I went to the dictionary and found out the meaning of meadow.

It was when the tutor got to an older level that he realized he had been using the wrong word right from childhood. If his teachers had taught the pronunciation well, he would not have had such an experience. From the statement of the tutor of English above, one can tell that, the tutor checked the dictionary with the interest of discovering the meaning of the word and not how it is pronounced. This does not show a good example for students to emulate. The researcher agrees with Ashby (1995:2) that teachers need a good grasp of all that goes into pronunciation not only knowledge about phonetics.

Influence of L₁ on L₂

Since Yule (1996:191) postulated that L₁ is acquired and L₂ is learned, it seems more difficult for Wesley College students to develop L₂ pronunciations appropriately. L₁ influence on L₂ as a strong factor of less intelligible pronunciation as was deduced from the interviews. A student said:

It's like being born in Africa here, specifically in Ghana here, we have certain tribes and every tribe has its own dialect. And because of that, it's like we are being trained that way. Our pronunciations are different so it becomes difficult when you are being introduced to a different language altogether. Learning it is not easy.

This reflects the difficulty L₂ learners of English usually face based on the fact that the system of the target language may be almost entirely different from their mother tongue. Probably, there is more difficulty in learning language than acquiring it. A tutor gave practical explanation to the mother tongue (MT) influence:

I will also look at mother tongue influence, that's MT influence, and err in our mother/mɔ:ɒ/tongue, the way words are pronounced, when we look at the, even the structure when you have in most African languages, the consonant vowel consonant structure and in English you look at err a group of consonantal clusters before a single vowel is introduced. For example in the word 'strength' – there is only a single vowel. But most of the African languages do not behave like that. So, speakers of, or learners of English try as much as possible to insert a vowel in the middle of consonantal clusters and this is one of the causes of poor pronunciation among our students.

The example the tutor gave above expresses the fact that because the L₁ of the L₂ learner of English involves con-

sonant vowel consonant (CVC) such as ‘mɛda’ in Akan (A Ghanaian language which means ‘I will sleep’) the learner has the tendency of inserting vowels within consonants of the target language (English language) which may have consonantal clusters such as the example he gave – ‘strength’. In the tutor’s statement above, it was evident that he suffers from the problem of L₁ influence on L₂. Particularly, he pronounced the word mother/mʌðə/as/mʌdʌ/ due to the fact that phonologically, the sound/ð/is not part of the sounds of his mother tongue and thus naturally finds a substitute for that as the sound/d/. By this problem, the researcher agrees with Jahan (2011 citing Nunan 1991) that the influence of L₁ on L₂ is a big problem which needs to be dealt with from different points of views. This is because even a tutor of English who is aware of this pronunciation issue still has a problem with pronunciations of English. This emphasizes the fact that pronunciation must be given the necessary attention and training of teachers in this regard should not be left out.

A student confirmed their challenge and said:

Honestly, we are having a lot of problems pronouncing such words. As a matter of fact, English Language is not our mother tongue we are just trying to learn it from our colonial masters. And I don't think we can be perfect and as good/gu: d/as our colonial masters.

The problem of the influence of L₁ on L₂ keeps reflecting in the statements of the tutors of English and students. In the statement the student made above, he mispronounced the word ‘good’/gʊd/as/gu: d/. The researcher agrees with Olenka (2009), that it is very difficult to achieve native-like pronunciation in any language. Perhaps this buttresses the point a student made above indicating that he does not think that we can be perfect as the colonial masters. In spite of that, it is very necessary for the L₂ learner of English to produce the English sounds correctly, such that one can comprehend. Though difficult, it is necessary to possess a ‘comfortably intelligible pronunciation’ Robertson (2002:11 citing Kenworthy 1996);

Pronunciation is Conspicuously not Part of the Course Program

The researcher agrees with Robertson (2002:8 citing Morley 1991:488) that one needs to possess intelligible pronunciation to become competent in communication. It is thus vital to address problems that may relate to the teaching of pronunciation since through intelligible pronunciation one is able to communicate confidently and successfully, and the relationship between a teacher and students involve communication. To enhance this communication it is essential to teach pronunciation. When less intelligible pronunciation negatively affects the communication process between the tutor and his/her students it is very likely to have a consequence on their academic performance. Through the observation as well as the interviews, it came to light that pronunciation is not very much taught at Wesley College of Education; however, teachers of English sometimes do correct students’ mispronunciations though the mode of correction is another issue. During the observation, the researcher noticed that even tutors of English hardly correct students’ mispronunciations.

In one comprehension lesson the researcher observed that the teacher corrected a student’s mispronunciations only once. Students of Wesley College of Education have less intelligible pronunciation which was confirmed through the observations and interviews.

Many students and tutors admitted that pronunciation is not very much taught as part of the course outline. About two out of ten students remembered and said they are taught vowel sounds and consonants in their phonetics class. One student said:

Only vowel sounds and consonant sounds. They just give us few examples like how/eyi/like/a/will be in this word and that's all, they don't teach us how words are pronounced... That's all that they do; for you to describe it.

Tutors confirmed that indeed apart from about three topics: Vowels, Consonants and minimal pairs, there is no other aspect of the course outlines that is allocated for pronunciation teaching. This finding is in line with the view of Underhill (2010) that pronunciation has been neglected as compared to the other aspects of language, and it must be included and integrated in the language learning as a whole. Earlier, a student indicated that, in teaching the phonetics, the tutors focus on the description of sounds not the pronunciations. Interestingly, it was realized that students do not even know all that go into pronunciation teaching. It was evident in their statements that some thought pronunciation teaching was limited to word repetition and for that reason it was not necessary to include it in the course outline. A student said: *“Like, they should include it in the syllabus in English One whole topic for pronunciation in English so that we get time to learn most of the words and how they are being pronounced.”* Another student replied:

I will, I will ok I will agree but I will disagree with him because we are matured how are we going to include emm! word pronunciation in our, at our level? You know some teachers may see this to be unnecessary. If this should be implemented, it should be done before getting to this place.

In any case it is a fact that pronunciation teaching is not limited to learning only how words are pronounced. A tutor of English indicated that it was necessary to include pronunciation teaching in the course program of Wesley College of Education. He said: *“Of course ... that is the area that is needed critically, because the students are going out to teach. And how do you teach other children when your pronunciation is very weak.”* Another thought it should not be taught in isolation. Yet another Tutor said *“why not”*, expressing that the oral aspect of the language is as important as the written aspect. The major problem therefore is that, pronunciation is not even included in the course program of Wesley College of Education. Though vowels, consonants and minimal pairs are a part in teaching pronunciation, the researcher agrees with Ashby (1995) that phonetics cannot remedy the pronunciation problems of students. This implies that pronunciation must be included in the course outlines of Wesley College of Education and not just phonetics; stress intonation and more should be included. In this era where the

Colleges of Education in Ghana are undergoing a transmission to full tertiary educational level through T-TEL (Transforming Teacher Education and Learning) program, some of these loop holes in the curriculum must be looked at. Agreeing with Robertson (2002:4) the inclusion of pronunciation in government school curriculum could improve pronunciation. To him, teaching pronunciation should not be a study with a status comparable to Physics, History or English subject, but should be studied as a fundamental aspect of the embodiments of the English subject. Preferably, pronunciation teaching in pre-service training institution, Wesley College of Education should have been presented in the light of 'language across the curriculum' where all teachers, irrespective of their teaching subject will correct student-teachers' mispronunciations.

Lack of Equipment

One more relevant problem of pronunciation teaching identified is lack of equipment. Given that pronunciation is conspicuously not part of the course program, it is not surprising that it was indicated that there was no equipment in aiding English pronunciation teaching. Paramount amongst the equipment indicated to be absent is an 'English language laboratory'. There were no other equipment in aiding teaching and learning of English pronunciation. Interestingly, one of the tutors of English who had been in the institution for about twenty (20) years indicated that there used to be an English language laboratory in the institution (Wesley College of Education):

... But as far back as 1950s there was a nice language lab at Wesley College... Yes, which other schools around like St. Louis, Akrokerri, Offinso, Mampong came to utilize. But even currently there is no language lab in any teacher training college in Ghana. So it looks like in terms of language development, we are retrogressing.

If indeed this assertion is true then, it shows retrogression in our language development since the English language laboratory which other Training Colleges utilized several years ago is no more. All the tutors of English requested an English language laboratory. The fact is that there is a language laboratory in the institution stereotyped to be for only the French laboratory (probably because it was funded by the French) and thus called the 'French lab'.

The situation is such that only French students have French lessons there as arranged by the administration through time tables. Thus the administration of Wesley College of Education must be involved to curb the issue of 'language laboratory' since a good language laboratory should be able to serve the purpose for all the languages being taught in the institution. Apart from, a good language laboratory, tutors indicated that other equipment such as electronic dictionaries, electronic books, and personal computers with pronunciation software programs could be provided as equipment of pronunciation teaching. Even cell phones could be used in the classroom to enhance pronunciation teaching. A tutor said this:

...PC's with Cambridge Dictionary because we have one with Audio...And we have some on the net...record-

ed, electronically recorded books. There are some books that are recorded. They can get ...the American accent-ed, the Caribbean accents in all the collection.

Lack of reading on the Part of Students

It was revealed that lack of reading causes poor pronunciation. When a student was asked how reading could solve the problem of poor pronunciation, he had this to say:

May be if you come across a long word and you try to break it into syllables or go to find – in dictionaries they have break it into phonetic pronunciations – so you go to find it in the dictionary and see how it is pronounced in the dictionary.

Although the view point of the student is plausible, the fundamental problem associated with the assertion lies in the lack of skill to read and interpret transcription of words in dictionaries. A teacher said this during the interview:

... and then when you also look at er, related to the lack of exposure, you see that many of our students pick up the dictionary, and they cannot really identify the sounds in, yes. So that even though the pronunciation guide has been offered adequately in the dictionary, they still cannot articulate the sounds and therefore it's not meaningful to them... they are not reading, do you understand?

As far as students have not been well trained in pronunciation, this point is not practical; since it implies that even if students liked reading they could not possibly check the pronunciation of difficult words from the dictionary. In principle, however, lack of reading is one of the problems associated with pronunciation teaching as deduced from the research.

Environmental Influence

Environmental influence is one of the problems associated with the teaching of English Pronunciation at Wesley College of Education. A tutor of English acknowledged that environmental influence is a factor. He implied that the media was a major problem; that is, the kind of pronunciations made by the media. The media is a major communication channel in real life situation. Many people listen to the news or several other programs presented through the media in general, be it the television, radio, or internet. It is assumed that the pronunciations expressed through the media are correct, since media men and women are specially trained. Thus, members of society in general pick words which are mispronounced and adopt them, once a media person has been using it.

The media is a major cause and contributor to the problem of poor pronunciation of people in general and of students in particular. This is a problem of pronunciation teaching since it adds to the work of the tutor who will have to make extra effort to curb students' poor pronunciation. He said this:

A lot of the FM stations, if you listen to the way they speak the language, it's very horrible. And our students are tuning to these stations all the time; so they take particular DJ's and how they pronounce words; and, they also want to speak like them.

Another teacher indicated that one of the environmental

causes of poor pronunciation is the wrong example given by people that society expect should know better such as parliamentarians, lawyers, teachers. He had this to say:

... in Ghana here, you realize that people who are, you know, learned, popular scholars still pronounce words wrongly. And, and I think that that has also been a causative factor to wrong pronunciation in the system; because if they realize that teachers, politicians, lawyers, ...many many people who are known to be versed in the language pronounce words wrongly, then probably people have come to accept...

It is not out of place to realize that some people of respectable positions still pronounce words wrongly. This is due to the existence of the 'dark cycle' as the researcher terms it. The 'dark cycle', in my view, is the process where the basic level pupil who never gets well trained in pronunciation grows through all the levels of education (still not getting any proper training in pronunciation) and eventually becomes an example in society for other younger persons to look up to. Since students look up to some people of certain respectable positions, wrong pronunciations from such persons may easily influence those young ones negatively.

Imitation of Peers

Again a tutor explained pointing out that peer imitation is another problem related to pronunciation teaching. This is a situation where students imitate their friends. The tutor had this to say:

Yes, they imitate their friends. Peer group. Because it seems that some of the students they, think that those who came from certain schools have a class, so when they tend to pronounce them anyway they pick from them. Others do not know at all. They don't know how to pronounce certain words.

Obviously, even if picking words, just from people of high status become a problem of negative influence due to the 'dark cycle' how much more imitation of colleague students? It is obvious that peer imitation may act as a terrible and rapid catalyst of less intelligible pronunciation among young students.

Discouragement from Mates

One other factor that poses as a problem of teaching of English pronunciation is discouragement from friends. This is a very sensitive point that goes a long way to affect the individual. The students indicated a number of challenges they encounter from colleagues which discourages them from speaking the English language.

As far as English pronunciation is concerned, the more you speak the better your pronunciation among other factors. This is because one tends to get used to the correct way of pronouncing words and sentences since you may be corrected to become a better speaker. Unfortunately, the students expressed the reverse; here are some of the answers they gave to the question of whether they liked speaking English or not. A student said: *"Mm ok, for me I will say no; because, err when am speaking the English*

and I get it wrong they they will even use to tease you (laughing) and even call you as your name that you have get the word wrong." In the above statement, a student indicated that he does not like speaking English because when he commits an error, the colleagues laugh and call him names. This is a reason many of the students gave to explain why they do not like speaking English. This does not help to promote English pronunciation teaching. Another student said:

I love speaking English when am in campus but when I go home I don't speak because of the illiterates, they will be saying you you you let me say, you you you are guy guy.(all laugh) They will be making fun of you that you this guy you like speaking English. He just want to show that he is the only one who has been to school before. So when I go to the house I don't like speaking English.

This implies that it is not only literate colleagues who discourage others from speaking English language but illiterate colleagues also discourage others from speaking the English language as expressed in the example above. When students are discouraged from speaking the English language it poses as a problem of English pronunciation teaching. The student may not be encouraged to speak the language and stands to lose a chance of being corrected to improve his/her pronunciation.

CONCLUSION

In sum, as the aim of the study, the researcher found the problems related to the teaching of English pronunciation represented diagrammatically as Figure 1 below:

Deducing from the problems of pronunciation teaching the pre-service training institution, Wesley College of Education, the researcher suggested the following to remedy the problems:

- Pronunciation should be well taught from the basic level of education.
- Inclusion of 'English pronunciation teaching' in the course program: T-TEL should factor this in their focus of building up the colleges of education into well groomed full tertiary institutions.
- Pronunciation should be made compulsory for all students.
- Better methods of teaching should be employed.
- Provision of equipment; especially, the "French lab" as it is called should be upgrade to a standard language laboratory which will function indeed as a language laboratory and not only that of one language (French or English or Ghanaian Language). Technologies such as electronic books and more, should not be overlooked.
- Establishment of campus FM: Where pronunciation program will be held for the benefit of all students. In that context, the caliber of personalities who hold the pronunciation program must be competent.
- Utilization of findings of academic research works.
- Education on the need for intelligible English pronunciation teaching and learning: As far as pronunciation continues to be underplayed, it may never get the im-

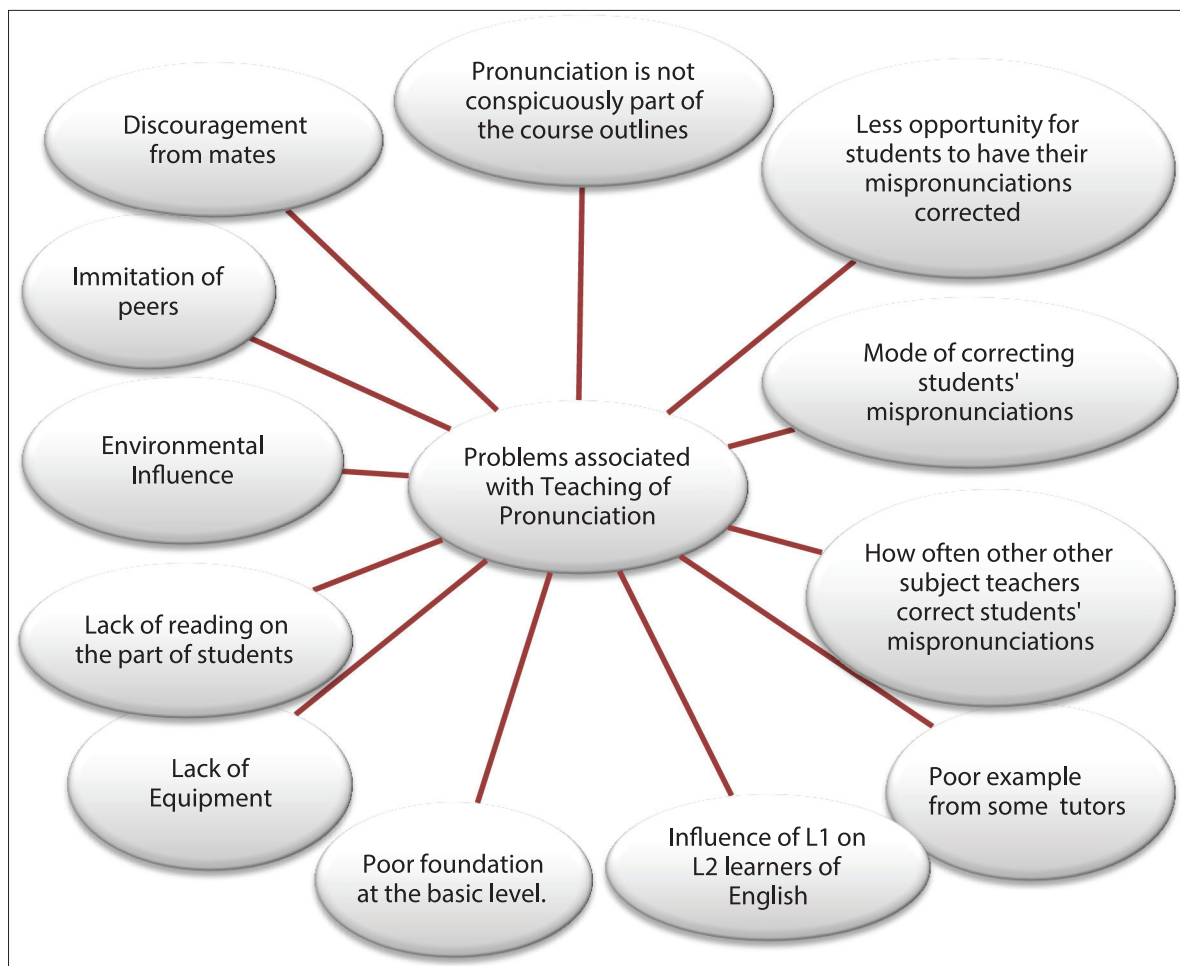


Figure 1. Problems Associated with Teaching of English Pronunciation

proved attention that it needs.

- Supervision by circuit supervisors
- In – Service training on pronunciation teaching: The teachers themselves should periodically have training sessions on pronunciation to better equip them to the task.

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