

Original Paper

English Pronunciation Learning Challenges: A Case study of Mundu EFL learners in Chad

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the pronunciation components in the prescribed English Language Syllabus for High Schools as well as the pronunciation instruction in some selected High Schools in Moundou, Chad, in order to determine the impact on learners' production with respect to this phonological feature. The content analysis method was adopted for the investigation. Data were drawn from consultation of the National English Language Syllabus for High Schools in Chad, and 44 English Teachers' logbooks for the 2021/2022 academic year. These logbooks were collected from 6 Government High Schools in Moundou. Two research questions guided the collection of data which were later on classified, put in numerical data and analysed within the framework of the Factors Affecting Pronunciation Theory. Results of the study revealed a total lack of pronunciation prescription in the English language syllabus and a zero percent representation of pronunciation related lessons in English language classes. Hence, it could be concluded that pronunciation instruction in English language lessons, to a greater extent, has been neglected in some High Schools in Chad. This has created enormous challenges resulting to poor pronunciation, segmental feature errors, and deviances in supra-segments, etc., in the speech production of learners.

Keywords

Pronunciation instruction, English Language Syllabus, Logbooks, Sub-Skill, (Supra) segmental

1. Introduction

Teaching/learning pronunciation has not received constant attention by researchers on language teaching approaches. The Direct method in the 18th century and the Audio-lingual method in the 19th century were methods which showed a popular interest in teaching pronunciation (Celce-Muria, Brinton & Goodwin, 1997). These approaches advocated the use of various teaching techniques such as listening to native-like speech models, repeating recorded models, minimal pair drills, practices of

stress, intonation, rhythm (Moreley, 1991, as cited in Hismanoglu, 2016). As a result, learners improved their English pronunciation.

But, by the 1960's the approach in use was the Cognitive and the Grammar Translation Method. Through this approaches no consideration was given to teaching/ learning pronunciation because it was assumed that native—like pronunciation was an unrealistic objective and it could not be achieved (Hismanoglu, 2016). Therefore, the teaching/learning of pronunciation had been neglected in favour of grammar and vocabulary, and simply eliminated from many language programs (Suter, 1976; Suter & Purcell, 1980, as cited in Hismanoglu, 2016).

However, the emergence of the Communicative Approach in 1980's boosted the interest in teaching/learning English pronunciation because oral communication was believed to be the primary use of language and therefore should be central to the mode of instruction (Carey, 2002, as cited in Hismanoglu, 2016). Thus, a wide range of teaching techniques including listening, imitating, phonetic training, minimal pairs, visual aids, practice of vowel shifts, stress shifts, reading aloud, recitation, etc. were strongly recommended (Lee, 2008, as cited in Nikbaht, 2001).

Since then, pronunciation, as sub-skill of speaking, has become an interesting area for Second Language Acquisition researchers. Thus, considerable research (Sahatsahatsana, 2017; Qian, 2009, as cited in Sudrajat, 2016; Mabyou, 2017; Grass & Selinker, 2001, as cited in Li, 2016; Ercan, 2018; Safotso, 2018; Gilakjani, 2011; Islam, 2020) have been carried out on difficulties Non Native Speakers encounter to pronounce English speech sounds. From a contrastive perspective, few studies (Al-Zayed, 2017; Himadri & Sharma, 2018; Li, 2016) have been undertaken to show similarities and differences in sound system between English and other languages.

Little research has been conducted on external factors which influence the learning of pronunciation. In line with the identified gap, the present study aims at investigating the representation of pronunciation components in the English Syllabus for High Schools in Chad as well as the teaching of this sub skill in some selected high schools in Moundou, in order to determine the impact on learners' pronunciation. Hence, the present study claims that the provision of adequate components of pronunciation in the syllabus and their proper instruction significantly affect learners' pronunciation competence.

2. Theoretical Considerations

The theory of factors influencing pronunciation, the importance of the intelligible pronunciation and its components, and teaching objectives of the English syllabus for High Schools in Chad are discussed in this section.

Classic theories have been used by researchers to provide various explanations to difficulties learners encounter to learn English pronunciation. These theories include Selinker's (1969) Inter-language Analysis Theory, the Contrastive Analysis Theory adapted by Rustipa (2011, as cited in Sudrajat, 2016) and the Theory of factors influencing pronunciation adapted by Celce- Murcia and Ucla (2013, as cited in Ikhsan, 2017). In this study, the theory of factors influencing pronunciation has been adopted in this

study to analyse data. This theory holds that the learning or the acquisition of a second language is affected by various factors, notably, age, motivation, personality, influence of learner's language, quality of instruction and exposure to the target language. Since this study focussed on external factors that affect pronunciation, only pronunciation instruction and exposure to the target language have been taken into consideration as external factors to explain difficulties learners encounter in their process of learning pronunciation.

Overall, recent studies (Nun, 2003 as cited in Jati & Barti, 2009; Cook, 1996; Otlowski, 1998; Yates, 2002, as cited in Gilakjani, 2011) have viewed pronunciation as the production of English sounds while speaking. Roach (1983) held that these sounds should be produced in an accent chosen as a standard, that is, the British accent that is also called Received Pronunciation/ BBC pronunciation or the American accent that is also known as General accent/Networks accent. These two accents are viewed as correct standards (Gimson, 1980, as cited in Islam, 2020).

However, this study holds that the aim of learning/ teaching English pronunciation is not to reach the Native-like accent. Instead, it aims at helping Non- Native Speakers of English to develop a manner of speaking which is clearly intelligible to ordinary people (John, 1956). In other words, a talk which is easy to be understood. Diverse names have been attributed to this intelligible speaking. Some people call it "comfortable intelligibility" (Scovel, 1988, as cited in Gilakjani, 2011) while others refer to it as "good speech" or "good communication".

Many studies conducted on the importance of intelligible pronunciation concluded that poor English pronunciation may lead to misunderstanding and ambiguity between the speaker and his hearers (O'Connor, 1980; Wulandri, 2009, as cited in Jati & Barli, 2009). For Li (2006), intelligible pronunciation makes communication interesting and helps learners feel more comfortable. Islam (2020) viewed it as the most important criterion for successful communication. Whereas many other studies (Gelvanovski, 2002; Hudson, 1980; Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994 as cited in Nikbakht, 2011) viewed the importance of the intelligible pronunciation from the perspective of social value, prestige and professional competence.

Since the goal of pronunciation for learners of EFL is not to attain the perfect accent of native speakers of English but to pronounce sounds in an intelligible way, pronunciation aspects to learn /teach should be realistic. To this end, Dalton and Seidlhofer (1999, as cited in Nikbakht, 2011) suggested teachability and learnability as the major characteristics of teaching/learning aspects of pronunciation. In other words, the phrase "teachability and learnability" refers to aspects of pronunciation which appear to be easily taught and learned. Li (2016) held that teachable and learnable aspects of pronunciation should be included into the Syllabus. For example, segmental and supra-segmental features of pronunciation have been suggested by several studies (Yates, 2002, as cited in Li, 2016; Darwing & Munro, 1997; Godwin, 2014, Grant, 2014; Sicola & Darcy, 2015; Thomas & Derwing, 2015, as cited in Buri, 2016) as teachable and learnable aspects of pronunciation.

Learning/teaching segmental and supra-segmental features of pronunciation requires the articulation of

consonants and vowels which pose serious problems to learners of EFL and the practice of stress, length of vowels and intonation patterns (Li, 2016).

Considering that this study seeks to investigate the correlation between the teaching and learning of pronunciation, this could not be done without looking at the English Syllabus for High schools in Chad. The original title of the curriculum in French is *Programmes réactualisés pour l'Enseignement Secondaire: Classes de Seconde Unifiée, Premières Littéraires et Scientifiques, Terminales Littéraires et Scientifiques*.

This curriculum is an updated version and was enforced by the Ministry of Secondary Education in 2008 making compulsory subjects and courses listed in for Government, Private and Community schools as well. As far as the English course is concerned, the content is structured in topics, skills, functions and sub-skills by level. Weekly loads (generally 3 hours per week for arts classes and 2 hours per week for science classes) are provided also. The underlying language learning approaches adopted in the syllabus include approaches such as The Student-Based Approach (SBA); The Communicative Approach (CA); and The Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) to specifically develop translation skills in learners. With regard to grammar, vocabulary, and reading teaching techniques, teachers are required to teach: a) grammar inductively; b) vocabulary in context; d) reading in three stages as it follows: Pre-reading, while reading and post-reading.

Curriculum and syllabuses are viewed as pedagogic regulations which require strict respect on the part of teachers. Nomaye (2006, p. 61) states: “*les programmes officiels sont des contraintes car les inspecteurs et les conseillers pédagogiques ne cessent de rappeler les enseignants au respect des programmes et horaires*”. This statement could be translated as: “Syllabuses are compulsory. In fact, pedagogic inspectors and pedagogic counsellors should always remind teachers to show respect to its contents and allocated hours”.

Teachers' logbooks are useful toolkits which help pedagogic inspectors and vice-principals to check the regularity of teaching objectives in terms of teaching contents and allocated hours prescribed by the syllabus as well as the learning assessment.

3. Review of Related Studies

This section reviews some of the studies which focus on the Instruction as a factor affecting the learning of English pronunciation. Much research (Face, 2006; Reeder, 1998; Shively, 2008; Flege & Fletcher, 1992, as cited in Ikhsan, 2017) have investigated how instruction affects various aspects of pronunciation and highlighted one important principle: pronunciation improves as the level of instruction increases.

In this light, Nkongho (2021) investigated on English pronunciation difficulties of Ffulde-French speaking learners, paying attention to fricative and affricate sounds. The paper aimed at identifying and analysing some pronunciation difficulties that Francophone students face in an attempt to render these categories of sounds during their English productions. With the use of Contrastive Analysis and

Interference theories, the identified segmental changes were accounted for through phonological rules. Findings showed that Ffulde-French learners of English face difficulties in pronouncing words with Fricatives and affricates for two reasons; Restriction in the environment of occurrence, and complete absence of a significant number of the said classes of sounds in the Ffulde language. A way out to this problem is through constant drilling of learners by their instructors. In another study, Ryu (2002) examined the problem of adult language learners' pronunciation and came to the conclusion that adults' pronunciation could be improved by motivation and instruction. Other studies (Rose, 2010, as cited in Tanner, 2012; Mikulastikova, 2012) which investigated students' problem of pronunciation produced same findings as they showed that instruction improves students' pronunciation.

However, other studies conducted on the correlation between instruction and the learning of pronunciation identified inadequate instruction as one the crucial factors which inhibits the learning of pronunciation. Sahatsahatsana (2017) examined Thai students' opinions on problem they face in phonetic learning and concluded that there were several factors, among which inadequate instruction, that negatively influence phonetic learning of Thai students. In the same vein, Ercan (2018) pointed out the inadequacy of instruction as a preventing factor which affects Turkish learners' pronunciation. Then, Quian's (2011) study on preventing factors from native –like pronunciation yielded similar findings as it revealed that the problem of pronunciation was attributed to a wide range of factors which include educational factors. Lastly, Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011, as cited in Mbaionom, 2019) viewed the lack of pronunciation instruction as one of the major factors influencing the learning of pronunciation.

From the curriculum or syllabuses perspective, Safotso (2016) investigated the pronunciation components in teaching English for Academic Purpose in Cameroonian Universities. The study revealed that little or no importance is given to pronunciation as no phonology related features are provided in some programmes.

Within the sphere of this review, it is important to make a distinction between two types of instructions: Notably, instruction as a contributing factor and instruction as a preventing factor. The former refers to adequate features of pronunciation that are prescribed in the syllabus and really taught. Whereas the latter refers to the absence of adequate features of pronunciation in the syllabus, as well as the absolute lack of pronunciation instruction.

Unlike the above previous studies, the current study, on the one hand, aims at analysing pronunciation features prescribed in the English syllabus for High Schools in Chad, and on the other, to examine some English teachers' logbooks in order to provide explanations to problems Chadian EFL learners encounter in learning pronunciation.

4. Methodology

This section presents the instruments for data collection and the method of analysis as well.

The content analysis method was adopted in this study whereby, data were drawn from the consultation of two documents:

a) The National English language Syllabus for High Schools in Chad which has as original title: *Programmes r áctualis és de l'Enseignement Secondaire General*.

b) Some English language Teachers' logbooks for 2021/2022 academic year.

There were in all 44 logbooks, collected from 6 Government High Schools in Moundou between January and May 2022. These logbooks covered the whole secondary cycle.

Two major research questions guided the collection of relevant data notably;

a) What are the various components that make up the contents of English language syllabus of the classes under investigation?

b) What is the frequency of lessons on the pronunciation sub-skill in English language teachers' logbooks?

To answer the above research questions, data collected were categorised in skills and sub-skills notably; Reading & Listening, Speaking & Listening, Writing, Grammar, Vocabulary and Pronunciation. They were presented in terms of number of lessons prescribed, and number of lessons taught under each skill and sub-skill. The number of pronunciation features prescribed in the syllabus and the number of pronunciation lessons taught in classes were analysed within the framework of the theory of factors affecting pronunciation, and the overall insights of pronunciation learning/teaching as well.

5. Presentation and Analysis of Data

Various data collected from the English Language syllabus for High Schools in Chad, and from some English teachers logbooks are presented and analysed on statistics tables in this section.

5.1 Data Collected from the National English Language Syllabus

In this sub-section, data collected from the English Syllabus are presented and analysed per level.

Table 1. Data Obtained from 2nd English Language Syllabus

Skills and Sub-skills	Learning objectives outline	Total number of prescribed Items
Reading and Listening	1. Skimming to obtain the gist	5
	2. Scanning to locate specific information	
	3. Identifying main points of a discourse	
	4. Understanding text organisation	
	5. Recognising discourse indicators	
Speaking and Listening	1. Expressing explicit information	3
	2. Expressing meaning through stress	
	3. Expressing meaning through	

	intonation	
Writing	1. Producing various types of text	5
	2. Summarising a text	
	3. Using discourse indicators	
	4. Writing a discourse	
	5. Letter writing	
Grammar	1. Articles	16
	2. Prepositions	
	3. Postpositions	
	4. Possessive case	
	5. Present tenses	
	6. Past tenses	
	7. Future tenses	
	8. Conditionals	
	9. Modals	
	10. Passive voice	
	11. Adjectives	
	12. Direct and indirect speech	
	13. Explanative sentences	
	14. Since-For-Ago	
	15. Translation of “ on”	
	16. Translation of “ used to”	
Vocabulary	-	0
Pronunciation	-	0

This Table provides a general view of what the English syllabus prescribed as lessons to be taught in form 5 in various skills and sub-skills. The table shows that **05** items are prescribed in Reading and Listening; **03** items are prescribed in speaking and listening; **05** items are prescribed in writing; **16** items are prescribed in Grammar; no item is prescribed neither in vocabulary nor pronunciation. This analysis reveals that pronunciation as a sub-skill has been neglected in the syllabus.

Table 2. Data Obtained from 1^{er} English Language Syllabus

Skills and Sub-skills		Learning objectives outline	Total number of prescribed Items
Reading	and	1. Understanding graphic presentation...	2
Listening		2. Interpreting and comparing diagrams	

Speaking	and	1. Taking an interview	4
Listening		2. Expressing meaning through stress	
		3. Expressing meaning through intonation	
		4. Reformulating and paraphrasing information	
Writing		1. Taking notes	6
		2. Summarizing a text	
		3. Filling in a form	
		4. writing a report	
		5. writing an application letter	
		6. Writing an argumentative paragraph	
Grammar		1. Auxiliaries	17
		2. Prepositions	
		3. Modal auxiliaries	
		4. Quantifiers	
		5. Present tenses	
		6. Past tenses	
		7. Perfect tenses	
		8. Conditionals	
		9. Adverbs	
		10. Passive voice	
		11. Adjectives	
		12. Reported speech	
		13. Exclamative sentences	
		14. Imperative sentences	
		15. Translation of “on”	
		16. Conjunctions	
		17. Irregular plural	
Vocabulary	-		0
Pronunciation	-		0

This Table provides a general view of what the English syllabus prescribed as lessons to be taught in form 5 in various skills and sub-skills. The table shows that **02** items are prescribed in Reading and Listening; **04** items are prescribed in speaking and Listening; **06** items are prescribed in writing; **17** items are prescribed in Grammar; but **no** item is prescribed neither in vocabulary, nor in pronunciation. This data analysis shows that no attention has been given to the pronunciation sub-skill.

Table 1. Data Obtained from Tle English Language Syllabus

Skills and Sub-skills	Learning objectives outline	Total number of prescribed Items
Reading and Listening	1. Skimming for the gist 2. Scanning for specific information 3. Identifying the main points of a discourse 4. Understanding text organisation 5. Recognising discourse organisation	5
Speaking and Listening	1. Taking an interview 2. presenting a report 3. Interpreting and comparing diagrams	3
Writing	1. Taking notes 2. Summarising a text 3. Filling in a form 4. writing a report 5. writing an application letter 6. Using discourse indicators	6
Grammar	1. Tenses 2. Conditionals 3. Modals 4. Passive and active voice 5. Imperative and exclamative forms 6. Infinite and 'ing' forms 7. Had better 8. Would rather 10. Direct and Indirect speech 11. Adjectives 12. Discourse markers 13. Adverbs 14. Nouns 15. Articles 16. Prepositions 17. Clauses	17
Vocabulary	1. Prefixes 2. Suffixes	2

Pronunciation

-

0

This Table provides a general view of what the English syllabus prescribes as lessons to be taught in form 5 in various skills and sub-skills. The table shows that **05** items are prescribed in Reading and Listening; **03** items are prescribed in speaking and Listening; **06** items are prescribed in writing; **17** items are prescribed in Grammar; 02 items are prescribed in vocabulary but **no** item is prescribed in pronunciation. This analysis revealed that the pronunciation sub-skill is not given any attention in the syllabus.

In the light of these analyses, it could be concluded that the pronunciation instruction is not the focus of the English syllabus for high schools in Chad, since any feature of pronunciation has not been formulated in terms of learning objectives.

5.2 Data Obtained from English Teachers' Logbooks

The presentation and the analysis of data collected from teachers logbooks are provided in this section.

Table 4. Distribution of English Language Teachers' Logbooks Per Level

No	High schools	2 nd	1 ^{ere}	Tle	Total
1	Lycee Scientifique Adoum Dallah	03	03	04	10
2	Lycee Litteraire Adoum Dallah	03	05	06	14
3	Lycee de Doumbeur	03	03	02	08
4	Lycee Scientifique Djarabe	00	02	02	04
5	Lycee Litteraire Djarabe	00	00	02	02
6	Lycee de Belaba	02	01	02	05
	Total	11	14	18	43

This Table provides a view of teachers' logbooks that have been consulted for this study. There are 11 logbooks in 2nd, 14 in 1^{ere} and Tle. This gives a total number of 43 logbooks consulted.

Table 5. Lessons Taught per Skill and sub-Skill in 2nde

Schools	classes	Reading	Writing	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Total
Lycée Scientifique Adoum Dallah	2 ^{nde} S1	04	01	09	05	00	
	2 ^{nde} S2	02	00	09	05	00	
	2 ^{nde} S3	04	00	09	05	00	
Lycée Litteraire Adoum Dallah	2 ^{nde} L2	02	00	19	04	00	
	2 ^{nde} L3	02	00	17	01	00	
	2 ^{nde} L4	02	00	16	02	00	

Lycée	de	2 ^{nde} L1	02	00	05	01	00
Doubeur		2 ^{nde} L2	01	00	06	01	00
		2 ^{nde} S1	01	00	09	00	00
Lycée Belaba		2 ^{nde} L1	02	00	11	00	00
		2 ^{nde} S1	03	00	10	00	00
Total	11	25	01	114	24	00	164
Percentage		15.24%	0.6%	69.51%	14.63%	0%	

This Table provides an overview of English Language lessons that were taught in 11 classes of form 5 in 2021/2022 academic year. The analysis of 11 teacher's logbooks displays that 114 lessons representing 69.51% were taught in Grammar, 25 lessons representing 15.24% were taught in reading, 24 lessons representing 14.63% were taught in vocabulary, 01 lesson representing 0.6% was in writing. No lesson was taught in pronunciation. This analysis reveals that there is overwhelming attention on the teaching of grammar skills whereas no consideration is given to the pronunciation sub-skill.

Table 6. Lessons Taught per Skill and sub-Skill in 1^{ere}

Schools	classes	Reading	Writing	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Total
Lycée Scientifique	1 ^{ere} S1	03	00	14	00	00	
Adoum Dallah	1 ^{ere} S2	04	00	12	00	00	
	1 ^{ere} S3	03	00	12	00	00	
Lycée Littéraire	1 ^{ere} L1	05	00	16	06	00	
Adoum Dallah	1 ^{ere} L2	07	01	18	03	00	
	1 ^{ere} L3	05	00	06	01	00	
	1 ^{ere} L4	06	00	22	00	00	
	1 ^{ere} L5	04	01	19	02	00	
Lycée de	1 ^{ere} S1	00	00	01	00	00	
Doubeur	1 ^{ere} L1	00	00	01	00	00	
	1 ^{ere} L2	00	00	01	00	00	
	1 ^{ere} L3	00	00	02	00	00	
Lycée Scientifique	1 ^{ere} S1	03	02	11	06	00	
Djarabe	1 ^{ere} S2	00	01	16	05	00	
Lycée Belaba	1 ^{ere} L1	03	00	08	02	00	
Total	15	43	05	167	25	00	240
Percentage		17.91%	02.08%	69.58%	10.41%	0%	

This Table gives an overall picture of the English Language lessons taught in 15 classes of lower sixth form in 2021/2022 academic year. The analysis of 15 log books shows that 167 lessons representing 69.58% were taught in grammar, 43 lessons representing 17.91% were taught in reading, 25 lessons representing 10.41% were taught in vocabulary, 05 lessons representing 02.08% were taught in pronunciation. No lesson was taught in pronunciation. Like in the preceding tables, the analysis shows that no importance is attached to the pronunciation sub-skill.

Table 7. Lessons Taught per Skill and sub-Skill in T^{le}

Schools	classes	Reading	Writing	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Total
Lyc ée Scientifique	TD1	03	01	08	00	00	
Adoum Dallah	TD2	04	01	08	00	00	
	TD3	02	00	06	00	00	
	TD4	02	00	06	00	00	
Lyc ée Littéraire	TA1	09	02	21	03	00	
Adoum Dallah	TA2	08	01	16	02	00	
	TA3	11	03	19	02	00	
	TA4	09	01	16	02	00	
	TA5	08	00	15	01	00	
	TA7	03	01	11	01	00	
Lyc ée de Doumbeur	TA1	05	03	11	01	00	
	TD1	04	00	04	00	00	
Lyc ée Scientifique Djarabe	TC	02	00	14	00	00	
	TD	02	02	17	00	00	
Lyc ée Littéraire Djarabe	TA1	02	00	14	00	00	
	TA3	02	02	17	00	00	
Lyc ée de Belaba	TA4	05	01	11	03	00	
	TD	02	01	13	00	00	
Total	18	86	20	197	16	00	319
Percentage		26.95%	06.26%	61.75%	05.01%	0%	

This Table displays a general view of lessons that have been taught in various skills in 18 upper sixth classes for 2021/2022 academic year. The analysis of 18 logbooks shows that 197 lessons representing 61.75% were taught in grammar, 86 lessons representing 26.95% were taught in reading, 20 lessons representing 06.26% were taught in writing, 16 lessons representing 05.01% were taught in vocabulary. No lesson was taught in pronunciation. These data reveal similar result as in preceding tables whereby the pronunciation sub-skill has been given no attention.

Conclusively, these analyses reveal that there was an absolute absence of pronunciation instruction in the English language teaching as no pronunciation lesson was taught in the high schools concerned. This weakness stems from the neglect of pronunciation instruction in the syllabus. Therefore, it could be concluded that the absolute absence of pronunciation instruction and the total lack of pronunciation prescription in the syllabus are identified as the major educational factors. These factors predict that Chadian learners of EFL will certainly encounter challenges in the process of acquiring pronunciation skills.

6. Discussion of Findings

It is important to remind that this study aims at investigating components of pronunciation in the English syllabus for High Schools in Chad, and examining the pronunciation instruction in order to know whether the teaching of the prescribed pronunciation features affect learners pronunciation. The analysis of data revealed that pronunciation was absolutely neglected both in the English syllabus and in the pronunciation instruction as no pronunciation lesson was integrated in the syllabus, neither was it taught in English classes. This result corroborates with many other previous research works which found out that the teaching of pronunciation was eliminated in many language programs (Suter, 1976; Suter & Purcell, 1980, as cited in Himanoglu, 2016).

Although the Communicative Approach is mentioned in the English syllabus as an underlying approach of language learning, the Grammar-Translation Method appears, in the light of the data analysis, as the predominant teaching approach because no pronunciation lesson was prescribed to the detriment of grammar lessons. Since no attention has been given to pronunciation, it could be said that the English Syllabus for High Schools in Chad compels teachers to teach only grammar to the detriment of other sub-skills, especially pronunciation.

The effect of this method on the learning of pronunciation has been pointed out in some previous studies. For example, Mbaionom (2019) identified the use of Grammar Translation Method as the most important factor preventing the learning of pronunciation of Chadian learners of EFL. While Howlader (2011, as cited in Mbaionom, 2019) states that the teaching of pronunciation has never been the focus of Grammar Translation Method. As far as the current study is concerned, findings revealed that no pronunciation lesson was taught in English classes. This means that pronunciation instruction is not given any due consideration. This finding is also in conformity with a considerable number of previous research as they reveal that teaching pronunciation is not given any importance in L2 classrooms (Hismanoglu, 2016; Baker, 2011a, Bruns, 2006; Couper, 2016; Levis, 2007, as cited in Burri, 2016).

A wide range of reasons have been provided to explain why pronunciation instruction has not received any attention in L2 classes. Some reasons include teachers' negative perception of pronunciation. In fact, Mbaionom (2019) showed that some Chadian English teachers thought of pronunciation as the most difficult component of vocabulary to teach. In addition, Harner (2011, as cited in Gilkjani, 2016)

revealed that teaching pronunciation was a waste of time. While Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011, as cited in Mbaionom, 2019) pointed out that it is viewed as the least useful sub-skill. Other reasons include the lack of professional training (Olijra, 2017, as cited in Mbaionom, 2019; Burgers & Spencer, 2000, Foste et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2012; Sicola & Darcy, 2015 as cited in Burri, 2016), the lack of high quality teaching materials and the lack of time to practice pronunciation (Harner, 2011, as cited in Gilakjani, 2016). On the contrary, in the context of the current study, the main reason that could be advanced for learners' difficulties to grapple with this aspect of English language study is the absolute negligence of pronunciation instruction given that the syllabus does not integrate any features relating to the teaching and learning of pronunciation. Teachers on their part, do nothing other than show strict respect of the syllabus and by so doing they refrain from teaching pronunciation. It is important to remind here that syllabus instructions are compulsory in Chad.

One unpleasant consequence of the absolute negligence of pronunciation instruction is the much limited exposure of learners to pronunciation learning opportunities. In Chad, only English classes offer real occasions for learners to hear and produce English sounds. Looking at things from this perspective, Kenworthy (1991) as cited in Mbaionom (2019) holds that the more the learner spends time listening and speaking, the better the English pronunciation. Since Chadian learners are not exposed to English pronunciation even through teaching, the challenges in acquiring this skill is obvious.

The conclusion to draw from this discussion follows that the lack of provision of pronunciation features in the syllabus as well as the complete lack of pronunciation instruction in English language classes are some of the main educational factors which inhibit learners' learning of pronunciation. These factors predict various difficulties, notably, segmental and supra-segmental errors that will be committed by learners (Nkongho, 2021). To illustrate, results of another recent study (Safotso, 2018) analysing the speech produced by some post-graduate Chadian students, confirmed that Chadian learners of English actually face difficulties in articulating most English consonants and vowels as well as the placement of correct word stress. These deviances in phoneme articulation and word stress placement, undoubtedly, resulted from the negligence of pronunciation instruction through the above mentioned educational factors. Hence, the lack of provision of pronunciation features in the syllabus as well as the total lack of pronunciation instruction in English classes prevents Chadian learners from learning English pronunciation. To cope with these factors, an adequate provision of pronunciation features should be made in the English syllabus in order to compel teachers to properly teach pronunciation in English classes. If these conditions are met, then, learners will not only improve on their English pronunciation, but will also be able to develop an intelligible pronunciation.

7. Suggestions

Considering the findings of this study which revealed the total lack of pronunciation prescription in the syllabus, and the absolute absence of pronunciation instruction in English classes, educational authorities could take the following into consideration in order to improve on the lapses:

To begin with, the curriculum designers should think of doing a review of the existing syllabus by including more adequate, learnable and teachable features of pronunciation.

Also, Pedagogic inspectors in charge of English language teaching could organise in-service seminars to build teachers' capacity in the teaching of phonological features as a whole given that this is a challenging aspect in every ESL/EFL learning. To this end, special attention could be given to various pronunciation teaching techniques such as minimal pairs, practice of stress and intonation patterns, reading aloud, recitation, articulating difficult phonemes, transcribing sounds into letters, etc.

Lastly, the *Office National des Examens et Concours du Supérieur* which is the national board in charge of organising Baccalaureate Exam, could take into consideration vocabulary and pronunciation as sub-skills to be assessed in Baccalaureate exams as this will oblige teachers to pay more attention to pronunciation instruction.

8. Conclusion

This study has revealed absolute neglect in the aspect of pronunciation when it comes to English Language Teaching in some High Schools in Chad. This lack of consideration is seen through the complete absence of pronunciation prescription in the English syllabus as well as the total absence of pronunciation instruction in English classes. This accounts for some of the root causes of segmental and supra-segmental deviances produced by Chadian learners of English. The teaching and learning pronunciation is difficult (Gilakjani, 2011). Suffice to say here, and strongly that in an English as a Foreign language context as it is the case with Chad, the classroom is the only setting where learners are exposed to English sounds and pronunciation. Therefore, the absence of this phonological element as a sub-skill in the syllabus and lessons is a great cause for concern. Although the scope of this study was limited to the Government High Schools of a particular region, its findings could however be generalised or serve as basis to conduct further studies in other regions in order to have an overall understanding on the prevailing problem of pronunciation. This study sheds light on some weaknesses of the English syllabus of high schools in Chad.

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