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**EFL LEARNERS PRONUNCIATION
DIFFICULTIES THE CASE OF ALLADA
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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DEDICATION

To God, the Almighty

To my Dear father **Charles YEI**;

To my Dear mother Solange **TOSSA**;

To my wife **Rosaline SETONDJI**. May you find in this works the result of all your sacrifices towards me.

To my brothers and sisters who supported me throughout my studies.

To all English as a Foreign Language teachers.



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INTRODUCTION

The English language is getting more and more important in the world. It is ranked as the first spoken language spread worldwide. However users of English as Foreign Language find it difficult to pronounce some words correctly. In the anglo-saxons' countries, people speak English as their native language. But, for many non-English speaking countries all over the world, English is used as a Foreign Language. Many students' main desire is to speak English well, by using a pronunciation which can be easily understood both by their fellow-students and by English people. It is for them that my study is obviously intended. According to Nelson (1958: 13) "A Language is an arbitrary sound made by a group of human as a means of carrying on affairs of their society".

Pronunciation instruction is a prominent factor in foreign language teaching/learning. Since sounds play an important role in communication, foreign language teachers should give proper attention to teaching pronunciation in their classes. It is obvious that communication is a mutual relationship between the speaker and the hearer. This means that one must comprehend what he/ she hears in the target language and must produce the sounds of the language he/she is trying to learn accurately. Therefore, pronunciation instruction is of great importance for successful oral communication to take place since it is an important ingredient of the communicative competence (Hismanaglu, 2006). Pronunciation must be viewed as more than correct production of individual sounds or isolated words. Instead, it must be viewed as a crucial part of communication that should be incorporated into classroom activities.

Indeed, the way English is taught and learned in Benin does not enable learners to improve their pronunciation. Such a statement is so much verified that most learners are at loss as far as English language practice is concerned. So, there is

a need to set forth some strategies and methods to Benin English learners as well as their teachers.

However, this situation does not prevail in Benin alone. It has been proved that in most of African countries where English is learnt and taught as a foreign language, learners are confronted with the same problem in similar or slightly similar situation.

Generally speaking, the inefficiency shown by learners with regard to fluency in English (proper pronunciation) is due, not only to the educational materials teachers use or those the school holds for the English language teaching, but also to the Socio-economic environment in which the school and its members live. Students also do not make any effort to be fluent in English but they do recognize that they need English for many purposes, especially in their day- to- day life.

Therefore, my research is carried out to improve these negative trends. It aims at answering the following questions:

- why is it important to have proper pronunciation?
- what about the issue of pronunciation?
- why do EFL learners have pronunciation difficulties?
- how can learners study English pronunciation and improve their fluency in English even by themselves?
- what efficient strategies can teachers use to teach their students pronunciation abilities?

My research work, which is mostly intended to learners of English as Foreign Language, puts a particular stress on all these matters. As a matter of fact, it is divided into four chapters. Chapter one concerns the problem identification that deals with the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the

significance of the study and the limitations of the study. The second chapter refers to literature review. It reports what some writers' state about the topic and attempts to point out the possible links which exist between this literature and my work. As for chapter three, it emphasizes the research methodology and the results and the data analysis. The fourth and the last one is based on some recommendations towards the government and school authorities, and suggestions to teachers, students and their parents.

CHAPTER ONE: THE IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEM

1-1- The statement of the problem

All the problem in this study is embodied in the first line of the linguist and University lecturer Williammoulton'sslogan : "Language is speech not writing" in moulton (2000) "The best ways to speak English". In other words, language is learned to be spoken. The best way to learn a language is to hear it spoken and to speak it.

In the context of EFL learning, learners should be able to communicate "freely" after many years of study. What we can notice today in our schools is that the best students in English are those who are the best grammar processors and those who are good at writing. The result is what we are used to seeing today; those students are incapable of speaking English fluently even if they have spent at least seven years in secondary school and four years at the university to learn English. They also complain about the fact that they could not exchange orally with their fellows, despite their importance attached to language. It should be noted here that language learners always face some difficulties and problems while learning a foreign language. One of the most remarkable difficulties noticed in this process happens to be the pronunciation of the foreign language words. This is due to some factors such as mother tongue interference, age, environment, personality, etc. Rivers (1986:125) urges that all experienced persons in the English Language who have a great difficulty in understanding what people are trying to say is not due to their lack of knowledge of vocabulary and language structure, but because of the sounds they produce that seem peculiar. This sentence emphasizes that most of the people learning a foreign language encounter some pronunciation problems. Therefore, they fail in oral communication although they are sufficiently *equipped* with other skills of the language.

It is true that Benin students are learning English as a foreign language. But being a French speaker cannot be an excuse behind which they can easily hide. There should be a difference in terms of fluency between someone speaking English as first language and another one speaking it as a foreign language. English is a very important language. It is the language of globalization for many reasons:

- In communicative field, English is very important in a world where 75% of the world communications are in English. English is most used language for information. It is the language of computer sciences. Most of the computer programs are first achieved in English before being translated into other languages. English is also the language of web.
- In the economic field, English is used for international trade and for sea and air transport. The importance of spoken English here cannot be ignored because people need spoken English to interact with their counterparts from neighboring countries.

For all these reasons, anyone who wants to speak English must be able to speak it fluently and accurately. Actually there is a difference between someone who is speaking English as his/her mother tongue and our students, the latter speaking it as a foreign language. It will, therefore, be very interesting if that existing barrier between native or near native speaker of English and the non-native speaker, like Beninese students, can be slightly uplifted. Let's now show the purpose of the study.

1-2-The purpose of the study

As the study focuses on the pronunciation difficulties faced by EFL learners, I certainly have some objectives to reach:

First, my research work aims at helping EFL learners pronounce sounds properly so as to speak correct English. Here, these sounds will be represented by symbols called the ‘‘International Phonetic Alphabet’’. I will consider how these symbols are used to represent both the consonant and vowel sounds of English words.

Secondly, what I would like to fulfill is to help EFL learners improve the ability in listening and communicating with the natives using the English language and any users of the English languages as well. This will help them understand and be understood by the users of English language. In addition, good communication in English depends mainly on proper pronunciation.

Thirdly, I want to encourage learners’ actual production; build pronunciation awareness, intonation and practice through class.

Finally, I would like to use some methods and strategies to improve pronunciation abilities.

1-3-The significance of the problem

This study is important in many respects:

- The research work is important, because a good communication depends on proper pronunciation. It determines the speaker’s dignity. An argumentation, which is fluently and eloquently presented, is at eighty percent convincing for the hearer.

-The importance of the study testifies then the usefulness of such a topic for the interests it brings to our society and the educational community. So, pronunciation is the ability of using the correct stress, Rhythm and intonation of a word in a spoken language. It is the first and most important clue native speakers notice during a conversation. Knowing grammar and vocabulary are important but useless if one is unable to pronounce words correctly.

- Moreover, this research work is not to achieve a perfect imitation of a native accent, but simply get the learner to pronounce accurately enough to be easily and comfortably comprehensible to other speakers. The study also aims at solving some problems that hinder English phonetic ability.

Nativespeakers of the English language do not naturally face pronunciation difficulties. The next part of chapter will give the limitations of the study.

1-4-The scope of the study

The present topic will be vague if I do not specify the scope it covers. My research work is about EFL learners' pronunciation difficulties with a special reference to ALLADA secondary schools. It is concerned with English as a foreign language. It focuses on an aspect of English: *spoken English*. It is true that a good pronunciation means the understanding of English phonemes that is phonetics which is the study of sounds. My study paper also deals with the system of sounds that occur in English. It is limited to learners and teachers as they are the main pedagogical actors in learning teaching process and their difficulties related to pronunciation. My research work resorts to words identification and how they are pronounced.

Moreover I have tried to propose some rules that guide proper pronunciation for learner as well as teachers.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This part of the work concerns the books and documents I went through while gathering information on my topic. Throughout my research, I have found some works by distinguished authors, educators and linguists which are related to my topic. My concern for this topic is to show how important the overcoming of pronunciation difficulties is in the English language learning. It also leads me to put a stress on the methods and strategies useful to make English learners acquire good English pronunciation for fluency enhancement.

To achieve my goal, relevant books, articles, and educational papers have been reviewed. As such, this chapter includes the review of literature related to the factors affecting the pronunciation and to the methods and strategies for teaching process.

2-1. Factors Affecting EFL Learners pronunciation in Benin secondary schools

As far as English teaching / learning is concerned, there are works which reveal some key problems EFL teachers and learners face while teaching or learning such a language. Among them we have the following: large class sizes; limited time; insufficient resources; mixed ability students; The Native Language Factor; The Age Factor; the Amount of Exposure; and Motivation. In continuing from the first part of this series, I consider the last four factors and show how these techniques should be applied to English Foreign Language teaching or learning setting.

2.1.1. The Native Language Factor

Avery and Ehrlich (1987:9) learners of a language speak the target language in a different way: sometimes slightly different and sometimes highly

different from the way nativespeaker do, which we call “foreign accent”, the nature of which is determined to a large extend by a learner’s native language. This is known as mother tongue interference. That is to say, every language in the world has different varieties and different accents. Therefore, the way we speak is a part of our identity. As a result, there may not be any difference in the pronunciation of /ɪ/ and / i/,and then a foreign accent carries the sound characteristics of the learners’ native language. Indeed, a language is a part of a culture, thus it is inevitable that mother tongue must be interference, which is native language influence, in the pronunciation of the target language. Whorfian Hypothesis had endorsed this view. According to Sapir and Whorf(1987:5), peoples’ view of world influences their language and they also adopt the view of the world around them through the experience and categories of their language. As a user of the French language, we have difficulty in some English words and sounds, which are not found inour native language. For example, /θ/ and / ð / sounds do not exist in our language, and that is why EFL learners in secondary schoolencounter pronunciation difficulties with the words that include those sounds and thus never obtain a native-like accent, so they produce those sound under the influence of their mother tongue.

Since the French language is not a tonic language, French students have also some problems with stress, intonation, and rhythm which determine the overall rhythm and melody of a language can be transferred from the native language into the target language (AveryEhrlich, 1987:10) because Benin learners think that if they speak or pronounce the words with a strong stress, they will be better understood. A well-trained English teacher in phonetics and phonology can reduce the negative transfers of sounds to a greater extent. So, he should use specially prepared pronunciation teaching techniques.

2-1-2.The Age Factor

According to Krashen(1988) this factor is one of the most important one in the learning of the pronunciation of a foreign language. We can say that if someone pronounces a language with a native-like accent, s/he must have probably started to learn it during their childhood. Children of immigrants may be given as an example. Since these children start their second language learning process in target language speaking people environment, they have more advantages than the children who try to learn the target language in their motherlands because there are indispensable differences between the language a group uses and the language of mainstream classrooms and workplaces. At the same time, if young children are exposed to more than one language before the age of puberty, they seem to acquire all languages equally well since it has been claimed that children are better at learning than adults. As Krashen (1988: 43) mentions acquirers who begin to exposure to a second language during childhood generally achieve higher second language proficiency than those beginning as adults. He also states that lateralization may even be complete by age 4, not by puberty.

Some researchers and neurolinguists have claimed that there is a strong connection between language learning and lateralization. Lenneberg hypothesized that lateralization is a slow process that begins around the age of 2 and is completed around puberty. He had also added that right hemisphere in children is more active in the language function but as child develops the two sides of the brain become specialized for different functions and thus lateralization takes place. The critical age hypothesis claims that there is such a biological timetable (Brown, 1987:42). It has been claimed that there is a critical age period for language learning, but it is widely discussed whether there is a critical period for language or not. Obviously, foreign language teaching scholars have outlined many views about the critical age hypothesis.

Generally speaking, it coincides with the period when lateralization is taking place and when it is complete. This was hypothesized by Lenneberg who was one of the wholehearted supporters of critical age hypothesis.

In sum, since children are better in learning the language in short run, teaching pronunciation process should be started in puberty because it has been claimed that beyond puberty it is quite difficult to teach the learners to acquire a native-speakers like language accent. As a result, the age of the learner is highly important in the pronunciation learning of a foreign language due to the factors mentioned above. The aged learners pick up the correct pronunciation a little bit late, so the foreign language teachers must be very patient in this sense, and must prepare special pronunciation drills and have the students repeat. They will obtain an acceptable level of good articulation in the long term.

2-1-3. The Amount of Exposure

Kenworthy (1987:6) mentions that exposure can be a contributory factor, but it cannot be a whole and necessary factor for the development of pronunciation. If a learner is aware of the necessity of being exposed to the target language, s/he should make use of its opportunities. If the learner does that, s/he will be more successful in case of improving his/her pronunciation. The best ways of being exposed would be native speakers, videos shows, films, cds, radio or TV programs, computer assisted language teaching programs, and etc. Also, the amount of exposure is crucial and it must make the students creative and active, not passive and dull. Therefore, the dose of exposure must be adjusted with caution.

2-1-4. Motivation

According to Brown (1997:114- 115) the motivation is thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action. He also

stated that learning a foreign language requires some of all three levels of motivation which can be global, situational, or task-oriented. For example, a learner may possess high global motivation but low task motivation on the written mode of the language.

On the one hand, some factors such as intelligence, aptitude, and self-confidence have much contribution to the formation of motivation. For example, to motivate the less intelligent people will be more difficult than the intelligent ones because these people cannot appeal to their needs. Motivation, of course, is a number of different kinds of attitudes and can be divided into two basic types: instrumental and integrative motivation (Brown, 1997: 115-117). First one refers to the instrumental goals such as furthering a career, reading some kinds of materials, translation, etc. An integrative motivation is the one which is employed when the learners want themselves to be in the culture of the second language group, to identify themselves with and become part of the society.

Needless to say, teachers may need to discern the source of a student motivation in order to meet particular needs. That is, pronunciation teaching must be directed according to the needs, expectations, attitudes, intelligence, etc. of the learners. If the learners' main goals are to make translation from the native language to the target language, less time may be needed for pronunciation activities, and therefore teachers will spend less time for motivating them. If the learners are highly motivated to have a better pronunciation, they can develop a concern for pronunciation, and become more eager to take part in the activities, and pay more attention to discriminate the sounds of the target language, so they try to produce better sounds and utterances. At the same time, motivation can be achieved by paying attention to the learners' concern for pronunciation because learners generally are not aware of that the way their speech is full of irritation and misunderstanding for the hearer.

Consequently, some factors that are effective in pronunciation accuracy are examined here. All of these factors exert much influence on the learners. We cannot change and affect some of these factors, for example, it is impossible for us to change the age and phonetic ability of the learners. It is clear that the influence of age is undeniable in language learning process. Children are more successful than the adults. When we take into consideration the children of immigrants, we see the difference between their counterparts. Since they start their learning process in their early ages in the target language spoken country, they can be able to speak the target language with a native like accent. So, if a learner starts his/her foreign language learning period abroad, in other words, in a place where the target language has been spoken, s/he will get a better pronunciation because there are differences between the language learning environments, that is to say, to learn a foreign language in classrooms is different than to learn it abroad. So, if we don't have any chance to change the conditions mentioned above, cannot we do anything to train our learners with a near-native like pronunciation? Is it impossible to help them to well-trained learners having good pronunciation? Of course the answers of these questions are "No". For that reason, here we will state some useful techniques to correct these negative factors over the pronunciation of EFL learners in Benin secondary school and suggest some possible solutions.

2-1-5-Teaching for cultural understanding

How can we advocate, to use fluently a language if we are not in touch of its culture realities? Such an affirmation would be erroneous, for the weight of culture in the acquisition of a foreign language is enormous. This importance has been indeed recognized by Hardley (1993) in her attempt to insert language teaching in a context

As a matter of fact, she exposes the various conceptions on the issue. We discover that cultural input can only be the affair of a language teacher, and that students themselves must be ready to internalize the language culture through the social habits, philosophy and ways of thinking is a given situation to help students be familiar to the language culture, some strategies for teaching culture is needed. Some strategies are then borrowed from Lafayette (1978) who counsel that culture facts be inserted into lessons' contents; cultural contexts be designed to enlighten more language learners. She actually suggests to "use the target language whenever possible to teach cultural content" (p.374)

Apart from these approaches, Alice Omaggio (1993) explained that native informant can constitute a key element in the process of familiarization to culture. She urges that: "Native speakers might be invited to come to the classroom for informal discussion with students on specific topic, or they must be asked to participate in an audio or video-taped interview or situational role-play" (p.376).

Such a choice is fair for the effective and efficient use of the language and highly appreciated in our country if we set up a program of exchange between Africa English speaking countries and our country.

In the same way, Hardley(1993) puts forward the advantage to use audio-tape interviews to come nearly to the same results as in the case of the native informants. She likewise puts in the same range the videotaped interviews. She asserts that: "Videotaped interviews and situational role-plays are excellent for providing natural authentic linguistic exchanges that include paralinguistic information as well. They can be used to demonstrate not only conventional gestures and other cultural features, such as appropriate social distance, eye contact, and the like" (P.380)

Her proposal appears as a valuable bring-in to the quality of language acted out and the fluency development as a whole. English teachers can make use of this tool to help their learners pay a fine attention to what they listen, to discriminate pronunciation, to appreciate links and similarities between their own culture and target language culture.

Apart from teaching for cultural understanding, teachers need to find methods and approaches to improve pronunciation abilities in their classroom.

2-2- Helping students develop more accurate oral production

2-2-1- General Suggestions and Procedures for Pronunciation Teaching

The "how can I become fluent in English" without paying attention to its pronunciation is absurd. Pronunciation is that part of phonetics which deals with how English sounds are uttered according to a standard pronunciation but many learners studying English in our schools do not focus on pronunciation. They do not pay attention to it as most of their teachers do. Indeed an effective teacher has at least "to correct pronunciation mistakes", (C. B. Paulson, 1976)

According to him, there are three basic strategies to get students to achieve a decent pronunciation if imitation is not sufficient:

(a) By giving linguistic descriptions (they should very simple, not deteriorate into long linguistic lectures).

(b) By comparing the sounds to one in the native language. By native language, or the first language that is L1 (Language one), in Benin context the first language refers to the local languages and the second language is French. The teacher is expected to compare English sounds with another language sound well known by the learner. If the teacher is to correct a student who pronounces

['kɛit] instead of [kæt] for the English word "cat", the teacher can resort to the French vowel [a] and tells students that the "a" in cat, is exactly pronounced like the "a" in the French word "patate"

(c) "By medication of English sound", For instance the teacher can compare the English vowel [æ] to the vowel [a:] which is nearer to it in pronunciation.

As far as Joanne K, Worthy (1993) is concerned, he urges teachers to "check" that their learners are hearing sounds according to appropriate categories and to help them develop new categories if necessary" (p.2)

That is to say, the teacher himself should speak English with a good pronunciation. He should provide students with sounds from a native or near native English speaker so that they imitate it. Joanne (1993) continues his suggestion telling teachers to be highly skilled at noticing them out.

But if learners themselves take no action and do not try to monitor their efforts, the prospects of change or improvement are minimal. Let us finish the pronunciation section by having a glance at Joane Rajadurai's (2001) approach of pronunciation teaching. It is an investigation made by Rajadurai on Malaysian TESL students.

2-2-2- Rajadurai's Approach Of Pronunciation Teaching

Pronunciation has often been viewed as a skill in foreign language "Learning that is most resistant to improvement and therefore the least useful to teach, But in actual fact, pronunciation cannot be dissociated from speaking; it is part and parcel of speaking skill acquisition. It is therefore necessary to use every method to make students acquire pronunciation skills. The method applied by Rajadurai (2001) to Malaysian students with success can also be applied to our students here in Benin.

The rationale of Rajadurai's investigation is that "it is artificial and counterproductive to discriminate pronunciation from communication and other aspects of language use"(p.2).He submitted learners to a pronunciation training of which goal is not native speaker's approximation but comfortable "intelligibility" (Abercrombie 1991 :93) .The former goal is deemed neither realistic nor appropriate to these young adults' learners. Comfortably intelligible pronunciation according to Abercrombie is pronunciation which can be understood with little or no conscious effort on the part of the listener. That is to say pronunciation must reflect two considerations. First, it should reflect national or ethnic identity and second it should have a degree of international intelligibility (Brown, 1986). For such students, the English chosen was patterned on the Received Pronunciation (RP) although students were frequently exposed to British and American English as other models. The course design was based on two main views: training in supra segmental features and in segmental features.

The training in the supra segmental was the most important part of the course since the suprasegmental system is the key to pronunciation teaching which takes into account the whole spoken language in general. This view hinges on the notion that segmental features work only on individual sound and phoneme accuracy and does not in itself characterize native-like pronunciation. Rajadurai's course also emphasized the awareness raising in... stress, intonation, rhythm, weak forms, reductions, linking and assimilation activities. Here are some typical examples of supra segmental training proposed by Rajadurai

a.) Practice shifting the stress

Here the purposes of the practices are to show learners how English language shifts/changes the place of stress within a word according to the kind of affixes (prefix or suffix) added to the word.

e.g. Photograph ['fəʊtəgrɑ:f]
Photographer [fə'tɒgrə:fə]
Photographic [fəʊtə'græ:fɪk]
Politics ['pɒlətɪks]
Politician [pə'lɪtʃɪn]
Political [pə'lɪtɪkəl]

b.) The use of weak forms

e. g. What am I doing?

I'm doing it for fun.

I'm happy as a king

It is a dark night.

Where are my glasses?

Charles has bought a car

Joane Rajadurai makes learners read first the above sentences in their own handout which contain the sentences. Then he makes them listen to the same sentences uttered by native speaker taking into account or not the Received Pronunciation (RP). By this way, students can simultaneously read the sentences as they listen to them spoken. The objective is to show learners how weak forms are swallowed in a real language use situation. This practice will make listening easier to students, because the activities have already made them accustomed enough to various weak form pronounced in context . Easy listening will surely make them pronounce well.

However students were exposed all the same time to important contrastive aspects of English segmental system as illustrated below.

Minimal pair practice. By minimal pair practice, he makes learners listen to the same phoneme in many different sentences and then learners are asked to discriminate them.

- Contrasting (e.g. [l] and [r] :

Flog/ frog; bleed/ breed; belly/ berry; alive/ arrive.

- Contrasting /θ/ with other commonly confused sounds

e. g. **Thin/ tin; sin/ shin;**

Thank/ tank; sank/ shank

Thick/ tick; sick/ chic

The courses in general focused both on micro-level and macro-level skills (Morley, 1991). According to Morley, the micro-level training highlights discrete elements of pronunciation and voice by using language lab sessions; video and audio recording (to encourage self monitoring); pronunciation games; the use of verse rhythms and jazz; chants, plus the use of International Phonetics Alphabet (IPA) symbols.

The macro-level skills training features oral communication activities like role-play, group discussions, problem-solving tasks, speeches and drama. Macro-level skill activities are seen as sequences during which students have opportunities to apply everything they have learned before.

Students exposed to rajadurai's training recognized at the end of the training that pronunciation means " ... speaking clearly and correctly" and "being understood by those around them". They also ascertain that "it is important to pronounce well in order to enhance their self image and ensure that they would not be laughed at "They have understood as I have, that pronunciation makes

self personality.

Most of them value the training in segmental production much more than training in supra segmental elements. It can be understood since segmental training is rule-governed and seems more rational and easier to learn whereas the supra segmental training has no rule and seems more confused for learners. For the purpose of speaking abilities, it is better for them to value the supra segmental training since supra segmental training are typical examples of language use in real life situations. Supra segmental activities provide students with language situations which resemble those they are going to meet in their day to day life. The majority of them suggested that pronunciation should be taught in foreign language learning .

2-3. Techniques for correcting Pronunciation Problems of EFL Learners

It is important for the learners to acquire an accurate pronunciation. The obvious argument in favor of pronunciation teaching stems from the techniques adopted by linguists in making a phonological analysis. When we look at the contrast between a minimal pair like *bit* and *beat*, we can see that mastery of the difference between the phonemes / ɪ / and / i / is necessary if the two words are to be adequately differentiated. Thus, the learner must learn the differences in the pronunciation of these two sounds because if he does not learn, he will be misunderstood. For example, 'Hit the ball!' or 'Heat the ball!'. We can increase the number of this type of example. Teaching of pronunciation should be an integral part of an English teaching program from the early stages, and it must not be a luxury to be left to the advanced level studies of the language. It must be borne in mind that during pronunciation teaching, certain methods or techniques should be applied because teaching of pronunciation is not a simple task, on the contrary it must be the essential part of language teaching program.

Here, some methods and types of teaching pronunciation will be handled to determine its importance in language teaching process.

2-3-1. Initial Teaching Technique

This technique focuses on areas which are the essential to basic communication such as introducing stress and intonation, the fall or rise as the difference between spoken questions and answers, the development of a polite and interested way of speaking. Hubbard et al. (1983:209) explain this: ‘It is a PEN’ always precedes ‘It is a BLUE PEN’ and initial presentation of the present continuous tense is often with intransitive verbs, therefore, there is no object, which would mean a second stress (i.e. He’s running / She’s sleeping, etc.). This example shows this method fits well with a structural syllabus (Demirezen, 1986: 108-125) symbolizes the sustained, rising and falling intonation with the following signs: → , ↑ , ↓, and give some examples and activities for classroom application. He uses [→] for incomplete sentences and statements wherein the speaker intends to say something like (but...). [↑] is used for yes/no questions in statement forms, yes/no questions in interrogative forms, when phrases or clauses precede the main clause as a breath-group often heard in lectures and speeches, special calls for children, and stressed word, phrase or clause in a series. Lastly [↓] is used for questions with ‘or’, asking questions with question words, declarative statements, in giving commands, and some emphatic statements. Here are some examples and activities.

a. In sum → / Since 1999 → / If you wait → / She is a nice girl → / It is doubtful→

b. What I am trying to say ↑ / Mary ↑ / Are you interested in music ↑ / Do you love her ↑ / I am crazy ↑ / You are unhappy ↑

c. I don’t understand you ↓ / Who is it ↓ / She fell into the lake ↓ / Do you want an apple or orange ? ↓ (choose one) / He looked under the desk in the kitchen and in the closet ↓

2-3-2. Remedial Teaching Technique

This is a systematic approach and deals with the problems of individual sounds (Hubbard et al., 1983:209-210). It can be considered as consisting of two separate approaches – Instant Remedial and Planned Remedial. For Instant Remedial, the strategy will divide into four parts: 1. Imitation 2. Demonstration 3. Association 4. Explanation. For example, teacher first of all draws attention to the ‘offending’ sound and pronounces it in isolation to be imitated by the learners. If this becomes inefficient, then teacher shows the students how the sound is formed by putting his tongue between his teeth to produce /θ/ or /ð/ by using demonstration part. However, certain sounds are not easily made visible, so the teacher may adopt the process of association. In this process, sounds must be isolated and attention must be drawn to the similarities between two sounds in terms of whether they are voiced, lateral, and dental, etc. Finally, explanation may help as the teacher explains in the mother tongue if necessary, how the sound is formed and gives instruction to the students to move their tongue forward, round their lips, etc. If, despite instant remedial works, the ‘offending’ sound still causes problems for the learners, then Planned Remedial work is needed. In this section, teacher should not insist, but make a note of the problem and plan a short remedial drill for the lesson. (Some of these drills will be explained in the following sections)

Remedial teaching can easily be applied to individual sounds by using a similar technique used by the TPR Method. Teacher may use a board and colored chalk or rods to indicate a sound which is represented by different spelling. For example, the three possible pronunciation of the regular [-ed] ending / t / and / d / and /id / can be represented by different colorful chalk or rod, and words can be written in three columns on the board: blue is for / -t / , red is for / -d / , and yellow is for / -id / .

The [-ed] ending is the item written in the appropriate color while everything else is written in normal white. For example,

BLUE RED YELLOW

Jumpedsaved waited

Washedbegged folded

That is to say, the color coding can be used over and over as the teacher can indicate the pronunciation of the [-ed] ending by writing it in appropriate color.

2-3-3. Drilling Technique

For drilling technique there are many useful drills for purifying and teaching the correct and accurate pronunciation of the utterances and words. Here we will handle some of the common ones.

2-3-3-1. Word - association Drill

This is one of the easiest ways to give the students practice on specific problem sounds while the manifest purpose of the drill appears to be vocabulary study.

Concentrating on the phonemes / æ / and / e /, the teacher may ask the students for antonyms of the following words: *sick, sit, thin, more*. The students would respond with *well, stand, fat, less*. In this type of drill it is useful to call the students' attention to the fact that the words they will select all contain / æ / or / e /. For example,

1. In which of the following word, do we have /æ/ sound?

- a .bed b. bad c. but d. bear e. beer

2. In which of the following word, do we have /e/ sound?

- a. bag b. mail c. get d. lake e. feet

3. In which of the following words do we have two /æ/ sounds?

- a. handicap b. butterfly c. breakfast d. bankrupt e. walkman

2-3-3-2.Saturation Drill

This type of drill is suitable for all positions of the problematic sound. For example, let's take / s / sound as a problem sound. It can be drilled in its three positions by means of saturation drill.

<i>Initial</i>	<i>Medial</i>	<i>Final</i>
see	leasing	peace
seep	pistol	niece
seem	classic	purse
seed	faucet	curse
sip	paucity	less

2-3-3-3.Illustrating A Learned Sound

In this type of drill, students give examples of the sound being studied. For example, to practice the diphthong / aɪ/ first, students listen to the sound pronounced by the therapist. Then, they are challenged to listen to discriminatingly by indicating whether the sound is pronounced but the therapist as 'right' or 'wrong' in a series of correct and incorrect pronunciations such as / aɪ/ , / oɪ/ , /etc. When the sound has been set, the first student starts a chain with a phrase 'I try'. The second student repeats the phrase, and adds his own, 'I try but I cry'. The third one picks up the last part and says 'I cry but I sigh', and goes on.

2-3-3-4.Mobility Drill

As Rochmis and Doob mentioned (1970: 29) achieving lightness of utterance and mobility of the tongue at conversational speech is a very important aspect of drilling. It is often neglected on the general belief that a student can make and hear the sound at the conversational speech. The following drill is an example for flexibility of the /ə /sound.

Step 1: Ask your students to suggest 5 simple words beginning with / b / such as: bat - boat - bike - ball – boy.

Step 2: Encourage them to pronounce these words with a strong emphasis, and then add the word ‘the ’, maintaining the pattern of stress. the bat - the boat - the bike - the ball - the boy.

Step 3: Substitute the words ‘to the ’ maintaining the pattern. to the bat..... , to the boat....., etc.

Step 4 : Continue to amplify the phrase, holding the pattern, but changing its drill.

From the.....

There is the..... bat, etc.

With and without the.....

Because of the.....

2-3-3-5.Comparative Drill

In this type of drill, words almost similar in every respect except the one element to be drilled are placed in juxtaposition. Since we tend to confuse sounds that are similar these drills with stimulate accuracy in hearing, performance, and judgment. Most standard texts in voice and diction are

excellent sources of such drill material. For example, this drill may be effective if two sounds are confused such as /f-v/, /p-b/, /θ-ð/, /æ-e/, etc. For example,

1 . A sample comparative drill for /f-v/ and /p-b/ sounds

fee- bee feat- peat freeze-breeze visa-Pisa fig-pig
freed-breed
fly-ply veer-beer fled-bled fact-pact fester-pester

2. A sample comparative drill for / æ - e/ sounds

sat-set band-bend sand-send bad-bed pan-pen

It will readily be seen that above drills have certain fringe benefits in that the words are arranged according to the vowel scale. Vowels that are commonly confused are best drilled in this type of drill. The students' own participation in composing such drills is worth the time it takes because he'll drill more intelligently and therefore establish new patterns more firmly and quickly. At the same time, it will give him/her a technique to apply to other areas where drill may be needed (Rochmis and Doob, 1970:27-28).

2-3-3-6.Substitution Drill

This type of drilling may be applied by substituting any sound instead of the other sound. For example, /t/ instead of /θ/ or /d / in place of / ð / , etc. Here are some exercises for classroom application.

1. This is thin / tin.
2. Did you see her lunge / lunch?
3. Was it a brand / bland reporting?
4. He is our king / kin.
5. It is cheap / chip.
6. Don't tape / tap.

Number of these activities may be increased and it is also possible to apply 'practice sounds and 'contrast sounds' exercises such as,

1. Exercises to practice /a/ sound

- a. The dog gave a sharp bark.
- b. The argument started when the guard refused them entrance
- c. The yard was so dark.

2. Exercise to contrast / a/ and / ʌ/ sounds.

- a. That hut was certainly hot.
- b. Did he rub or rob?
- c. Hand this cup to the cop.

2-3-4. Tongue Twisters

This type of activity is known as a word or phrase which is difficult to say quickly. In the literature there are different ideas about the applicability and the usability of this activity. Celce-Murcia(1987:5) states that there is a little transfer from practice to natural communication. But, if it is needed and necessary, they can be used. Here are some sample tongue twisters taken from Dalton&Seidlhofer (1994:132-133).

1. Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.
2. Did peter Piper pick a peck of pickled peppers?
3. If Peter picked a peck of pickled peppers
4. Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

We can say that the techniques mentioned above may be used to ensure that the EFL learners will be able to pronounce the target language accurately. As mentioned before, teaching pronunciation is one of the significant aspects of foreign language teaching and at the same it is a very serious task. Therefore, it should be studied in the early stages of the language teaching program in order to correct the factors affecting the pronunciation of the learners in a negative way and also to overcome the negative influence of mother tongue interference, fear, making mistakes, etc. While doing this, the techniques mentioned above may be applied to language teaching program during the teaching process. As a result, language teachers must be aware of these techniques or methods and should apply any of them while teaching pronunciation. It must be borne in mind that teachers are the models for their learners, so first of all they should have good pronunciation; otherwise, they can harm their students.

CHAPTER THREE: THE METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This part of the study deals with the different methods used to collect data and the findings of the study

3-1. Methodology of the study

To go further in the development of the topic, I have chosen a sample population on which the research is focused. Teachers and students are the main basic human resources involved in any pedagogical system. In this section, I will therefore focus my attention on this school community. I have chosen this population because when English pronunciation difficulties are at stake, English learners and teachers are the first to be considered.

In fact, to have reliable data, I visited 10 secondary schools located in Allada district. In each school, I met three teachers and ten students. There are CEG (Allada, Sekou, Attogon, Dessa, Ayou, Lon-Agomey, Union Ava couffo, Lissegazoun) private schools: college (Aimécésaire, la Gloire);

The research population turns therefore around an average of hundred (100) learners and thirty (30) teachers.

3-1-1. Data collection methods

Data are collected through questionnaires, interviews and classroom observation.

3-1-1-1. Questionnaires

Since the research work is actually based on the teaching / learning environment, there is no doubt that the identified target population which is supposed to be the valuable source of information includes students of secondary school level, I mean “ Quatrième and other upper classes” and

teacher of secondary schools. So I have addressed students and teachers by distributing questionnaire forms to them. Then, the research is not only based on written documents available in libraries or on internet but also it goes further by moving to some fields or area where pronunciation matters have been debated: role playing interaction, listening to music watching TV or listening radio.

As a matter of fact, teachers' questionnaire is composed of eight questions. The first question is to know the way teachers can help the learners pronounce words correctly. The second and third questions are to find out if the production of all the individual sounds is necessary. From question N^o3 to question N^o5, I focus on the importance of pronunciation in the communication and the reason for teaching pronunciation. From the sixth to the eighth questions, accent is made on different elements which are involved in pronunciation.

Student's questionnaire is composed of ten questions. The first question deals with the number of years they have spent learning English. This is the first question because it will help me know if the students are post beginners or not. If he/she has learned English for less than 4 years, I conclude that they are beginners and there is no need for me to continue the rest of the questionnaire with them. The second question helps to know if the students have an idea on pronunciation. The third, the fourth and the fifth question help to know if the students recognize all English Alphabet letters and have ability to pronounce English words. From the question N^o6 to question N^o7, I check the reason why students have pronunciation problems. I conclude that there are some rules and factors affecting their pronunciation. From question N^o8 to question N^o10, I focus on the importance of the pronunciation. This part deals with the methods and strategies student use to pronounce words correctly. These can help them use some rules of pronouncing any words in English.

3-1-1-2. Interviews

This research instrument consists in going to the interviewees and to ask them questions about the topic under consideration. I conducted my interviews to cross check the results of the questionnaires. I just questioned students and teachers orally without forgetting the topic of my investigation. I took down answers coming from both teachers and students about the most important questions on speaking skill teaching and learning. I did this in order to hear from them the way they pronounce some words or phrases and so get aware of the difficulties they come across.

After the interviews, I went to the school listed above for classroom observations.

3-1-1-3. Class observations

Classroom observations help me to crosscheck in classroom realities what both teachers and students have said in the questionnaires.

The purpose of carrying out that class observation in those schools is to experience how they pronounce English words and phrases, how they use phoneme (vowel sounds or consonant sounds) to make statement. With classroom observations, I see how far performance can be different from competence. The school learners have drawn my attention about pronouncing words because of the great number fearing to speak English except to greet their fellow by saying “good morning” or “good afternoon.”

Before I enter a classroom, I asked permission from school authorities and I took a rendez-vous according to the teachers’ time table.

3-2. Data presentation and analysis

In this chapter I will present the data collected through my research work. While I am presenting the data, I will try to analyse and interpret them.

3-2-1. Teachers' responses

The **Teachers' responses** are presented in the following tables

- 1) Choose the best way for learning English pronunciation.

Table 1: what is the best way to learn English pronunciation?

Choice of the best way	Frequency	Percentage
Reading text book	00	00%
Imitation and practicing	21	70%
Speaking	09	30%
Total	30	100%

As far as this question is concerned, most of the teachers (70%) have found that the best way to learn English pronunciation is through imitation and practicing whereas (30%) used it through speaking. It shows that the majority of teachers are quite conscious that imitation and practicing are important in developing pronunciation

Question 2: Table 2

Question	Responses				
	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Is it essential to pronounce all the individual sounds in foreign language?	6	20%	24	80%	100%

Shows that 80% of the teachers have ticked “NO”.The reason seems to be that individual sounds are not necessary .This can be justified by the fact that the ability to make themselves understood depend more on their ability to reproduce the phrasing and stress pattern, the melody of the language than the ability to articulate each individual sounds.

2) Pronunciation of English words.

Table 3:

Question	Responses				
	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Do you teach your learners how to pronounce English words?	30	100%	00%	00%	100%

The result of this table shows clearly that all of teachersteach. We notice thereby that the pronunciation is important in teaching language.Without adequate pronunciation the learners’ ability to communicate is limited

4) The way learners find pronunciation

Table 4: How do learners find English pronunciation?

Choice of way	Frequency	Percentage
Easy	00	00%
Difficult	30	100%

As far as the result of this table is concerned, 100% of the teachers have said that the learners find the pronunciation very difficult. This shows that English graphemes do not always match with sounds. For instance, each of the four words that follow contains the graphemes ‘‘a’’ in common with four different realisation ‘‘Lack’’ lady ‘‘water’’ ‘‘lapel’’ The former word is realized with the vowel sound [æ], the second with [eɪ] , the third with [ɔ:] and the latter as [ə]

Question 5: What is the most important thing in the communication?

Table 5 :

Teachers preference	Frequency	Percentage
a) Vocabulary	03	10%
b) Grammar	00	00%
c) Pronunciation	27	90%
Total	30	100%

A glance at the results on the graph1 shows that most of the teachers have found that pronunciation is the important thing in the communication. 10% of the teachers have preferred vocabulary whereas none of them chose grammar. This shows that the majority of the teachers are quite conscious that pronunciation is the most important thing. Good understanding depends on proper pronunciation.

6) What are the language features involved in pronunciation?

Table 6: The different feature involved in pronunciation

Choosing pronunciation feature	Frequency	Percentage
d) Segmental alone	3	10%
e) Suprasegmental alone	6	20%
f) Segmental and suprasegment	21	70%
Total	30	100%

For this table 70% of the teachers have said that the segmental and suprasegmental are the language feature involved in pronunciation. 10% of them have opted for segmental whereas 20% of the teachers have chosen suprasegmental. These figures imply that there are two major groups of the feature involved in pronunciation.

7) What are the different concepts of pronunciation?

Table 7: The different components of pronunciation.

Choosing pronunciation components	Frequency	Percentage
A phonology alone	00	00%
Stress and rhythm	00	00%
A phonology, stress, rhythm and intonation	30	100%
Total:	30	100%

This result confirms that 100% of the EFL teachers have found the concept of pronunciation phonology, stress, rhythm and intonation. The purpose of this question is that when talking about pronunciation, four important aspects must be kept in mind: phonology, stress, rhythm and intonation.

Question 8: In your opinion, how is pronunciation useful in language use and language system?

As far as this question is concerned, most of the teachers have said that pronunciation plays a very important role in conveying our meaning in discourse, for practical transaction as well as personal interactions. Here, again, it might be to move from larger to smaller units. To start with, spoken discourse usually takes place within a specific speech event, such as everyday conversation, service encounters and school lessons.

3-2-2.Students' Responses

One hundred students have been handed over the sample of questionnaire. Seventy eight students have given back their answers to me. Their responses are presented in the following tables.

1) How long have students been learning English?

Table1: Length of English learning.

Year of learning English	Frequency	Percentage
For 2 to 3 years	9	11.50%
For 4 years	14	18%
For More than 4 years	55	70.50%
Total	78	100%

Table 1 : shows that 12% of the students have studied English for 2 to 3 years whereas 18% have learned English for 4 years. The majority of them (70%) have learned English for more than 4 years. This result is a confirmation of the target population in which I have made my research. In fact, I chose to work on post-beginners. Such learners are supposed to have learned English for at least 3 years.

2) Learners' ideas on pronunciation of the English sounds

Table 2:

Question	Responses				
	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Do you have an idea on pronunciation of the English sounds?	8	10%	70%	90%	100%

As far as this question is concerned, most of the learners (90%) have ticked "no" whereas 10% have ticked "yes". This shows that they neglect the importance of pronunciation in English language learning.

3) How many alphabet letters are there in English?

Table3: English alphabet letters

Number of English alphabet letters	Frequency	Percentage
24	00	00%
26	78	100%
20	00	00%
Total	78	100%

For this question 100% of students have found that they have twenty six English alphabet letters. This shows that they really learn the English language.

Question 4 Table4: Knowledge of English alphabet letters

Question	Responses				
Do you know how to pronounce each of them?	yes	%	No	%	Total
	78	100%	00	00%	100%

This table shows that 100% of students have said that they know how each of the alphabet letters is pronounced. No one denies it. The result shows clearly that students know about spelling the English language.

5) How do students pronounce English words?

Table5: Student ability to pronounce English words.

Ability to speak English	Frequency	Percentage
a) Very well	15	19.23%
b) Very little	63	80.77%
c) Not at all	00	00%
Total	78	100%

As far as this table is concerned, the majority of students (81%) have pronounced very little whereas 19% of them have pronounced it very well. This indicates that they have a pronunciation problem.

Table 6/ question 6

Question	Responses				
	yes	%	No	%	Total
Does your mother tongue influence the way students pronounce words in English?	06	08%	72	92%	100%

The result of this table 6 shows that 92% of learners have said that their mother tongue influences the way they pronounce. Learner's errors of pronunciation derived from various sources. Among these a particular sound may not exist in the mother tongue, so that the learner is not used to forming and therefore tends to substitute the nearest equivalent he or she knows (the substitution of /d/ or /Z/ for the English "Th" as in "that" is a typical example).

Question 7/ Table 7

Question	Responses				
	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Do learners pronounce the English language the same way they do in French?	100	100%	00	00%	100%

For these table learners all of them (100%) are aware of the English language pronunciation being different from French language pronunciation because English is a stress time language which French language is not. On the contrary it is a syllable time language.

8) What is the importance of listening and repeating session?

Table 8

Importance of listening repeating	Frequency	Percentage
Know how the word is pronounced	70	89.74%
Meaning of the word	08	10.26%
Total	78	100%

From Table 89.94% of the students have found that the important of listening and repeating are to know how the word is pronounced whereas 10.25% have found meaning of the word. In notice, hereby, that listening and repeating sessions are the most activity which can help students get how words are pronounced.

9) What is the importance of the pronunciation in process of learning English?

Table 9:

Question	Reponses				
	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Do students know the importance of the pronunciation in their life?	08	10%	70	90%	100%

The result of this table shows that most of the students are not more informed about the importance of the pronunciation in their life. So, this indicates the fact that they are not interested in it.

10) How is pronunciation useful in English language learning?

Table 10

<u>Meaning of pronunciation</u>	Frequency	Percentage
Production	25	32%
Perception	08	10%
Production and perception	45	58%
Total	78	100%

For this question, 58% of the students have found that the production and perception is useful in English language where as 32% of the students have

preferred the production. Only 10% of them have opted the perception. We notice hereby when talking about the pronunciation in language learning, we mean the production and the perception of the significant sounds of particularly language in order to achieve meaning in context of language use.

3-3. Interpretation of results

Our interpretation of the results obtained, will hinge around two main points: The English teaching methods and the students.

3-3-1. The English teaching methods

3-3-1-1. The English teaching Curriculum

From the results obtained, I can understand that teachers recognize that pronunciation is the source of understanding. However students find it difficult (cf Q5). When I questioned learners about the spelling of English alphabet letters, all of them are able to pronounce it. Unfortunately the English teaching curriculum is not designed appropriately so as to help both students and teachers achieve their precious goals. I would like that what is taught to students must focus more on phonetic ability.

Teacher can get into class some spoken input: audio book, podcasts, DVD, radio tapes etc.... When listening, students must pay attention to how sounds and words are pronounced. The only sequences of English they listen to is one spoken by their teacher.

In other words: the teachers must set achievable goals that are applicable and suitable for the communication needs of the students. 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 segmentals and Suprasegmentals, linking pronunciation with listening comprehension, and allowing for

meaningful pronunciation practice. With the teacher acting as a "speech coach" rather than as a mere checker of pronunciation, the feedback given to the student can itself encourage them to improve their pronunciation. Another thing is the kind of evaluation students are subjected to at their final examination. Tests are more written than spoken. If a teacher gives oral interrogation for students some headmasters find it invalid and unreliable as a test.

We all know, however, that language is learned to be spoken and how the learners get the pronunciation if they are not subjected to many spoken text. Moreover, the learners have the right sounds, but have not learnt the stress patterns of the word or group of word or they are using an intonation form their mother tongue which is not appropriated to the target language.

3-3-1-2. Teaching methods

Teaching pronunciation is an essential component of communication competence. Teachers should include pronunciation in their course and expect student to do well in it. Indeed 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. Without adequate pronunciation the learners' ability to communicate is limited.

According to teachers' viewpoints, pronunciation plays a central role in both our personal and our social lives: as individuals, we project our identity through the way we speak, and also indicate our membership of particular communities. At the same time, and sometimes also in conflict with this identity function, our pronunciation is responsible for intelligibility: whether or not we can convey our meaning. The significance of success in foreign language pronunciation learning is therefore far-reaching, complicated by the fact that many aspects of pronunciation happen subconsciously and so are not readily accessible to conscious analysis and intervention.

All this may explain why teachers frequently regard pronunciation as overly difficult, technical or plain mysterious, while at the same time recognising its importance. The consequent feeling of unease can, however, be dispelled relatively easily once a basic understanding has been achieved (cf Q₄ results).

For most of teachers, learners mispronounce English words because the English has no common point with their native language. No possible contrast exists between English and their mother tongue. They put the stress on the French language: that is the official language in our country (Benin) as an obstacle in pronouncing English (Cf result).

3-3-2. Student

Most of our students learn English for the grades and marks; they don't pay any attention to speaking for communication. For them pronouncing an English word is very difficult .So they are shame or fear to speak during the English session due to pronunciation.

Student's questionnaire(Q₃) showsthat the majority of them have found that they have twenty six Alphabet letters in English and they know how to pronounce each of them, however, they are not able to pronounce English words (cf result). This shows that English graphemes do not always match with sounds. According to students, English language pronunciation is different from French language pronunciation because English is stress time language whereas French is syllable time language.

Learner's errors of pronunciation derived from various sources. Among these a particular sound may not exist in the mother tongue, so that the learner is not used to forming and therefore tends to substitute the nearest equivalent he or she knows (the substitution of /d/ or / Z/ for the English "Th" as in "that" is a typical example) .

In short pronunciation, acquisition doesn't depend on only learner's abilities but it is also a function of the schools environment, the educational means available with the school and the school environments.

All these factors encourage me to make some recommendations and suggestions that will be the main purpose of the following chapter

CHAPTER FOUR: SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As said earlier, my intention is not only to raise pronunciation problem but also try to give some solutions to them, as regard to the topic (EFL Learners pronunciation difficulties). My suggestions and recommendations which mostly focus on English pronunciation difficulties, will be directed to school authorities, to the government in general, to the teachers and then to the English learners.

4-1. Recommendations to the government

This mouth bawling goes directly to the way English teachers should be recruited in our schools, the kind of curriculum which can enable students to be fluent in English and conducive to good fluency development in English. That entire requirement is actually the government obligations. Teacher recruitment must undergo careful considerations of their abilities and competence.

Young teachers must be involved in many in-service activities for professional development as far as TEFL methodologies for speaking skills teaching are concerned. Our government must give young teachers of English more opportunities to obtain further training in teaching strategies after their many years of graduation. Government or school owners must increase teacher's salaries because most teachers instead of working for their own development and achievement used to do extra work to supplement their meager salary. This situation can be easily understood; a teacher's salary in Benin is extremely low in comparison with the work the teacher is supposed to do.

School authorities must equip every school with teaching materials and teaching aids in order to facilitate the task for teachers. Thus the English language curriculum must be revised leading to the systematic use of audio-visual material such as video clips and films. The revised curriculum will then

give place to more spoken English. School authorities jointly with government should organize linguistic trips to our neighboring English speaking countries to help our students and teachers get the authority to speak with native and near-native speakers.

The national educational authorities must facilitate the training of English teachers not only here in Benin but also facilitate their training in English speaking countries to enable these teachers to grow professionally. The government needs to organize seminars, workshops and teaching conferences for English teachers. The seminars may have for example as topic: "more spoken English in English classes"; "English teaching in Benin: the need to focus on speaking skills" etc....The American Peace Corps authorities in Benin organize before regularly such seminars for their volunteer English teachers.

The government should help schools by setting up appropriate libraries both for students and English teachers. As reading helps to make sounds, students' vocabulary and the lexical background become strong and rich. Through reading, intellectual background can also facilitates students' fluency at English; so government and school authorities will play an important role if we want things to change really.

4-2- Suggestions to teachers and to school authorities

My suggestions to teachers are some techniques and strategies that can be used by them for their own development.

4-2-1: Strategies for English pronunciation Instruction.

There are a significant number of strategies for English pronunciation Instruction that can help learners meet their personal and professional needs:

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

4-2-1-1:Identify specific pronunciation features that can cause problems for learners

Contrastive analysis hypothesis suggests that by contrasting the features of two languages, the difficulties that a language learner might encounter can be anticipated. (Crystal,2003). Features of many language were catalogued by linguistic, but It was not possible to systematical predict which area of English would be difficult for learners of particular native languages. A less predictive version of the hypothesis was eventually put forth that focused on cross linguistics influence, which claims thatprior language experiences have an impact on the way a language is learned, but these experiences do not consistently have predictive value (Brown, 2000). From these work, linguistics have been able to develop lists of sounds that native speakers of particular languages may find problematic in learning English. For example, speakers of Asian languages may have difficulty producing /l/ and /r/ sounds; speakers of Spanish may have difficulty distinguishing between and producing /sh/ and /ch/ sounds. These lists for specific language backgrounds are now featured in pronunciation texts, such as Sounds Right (Braithwaite,2008), and pronunciation software programs, such as American Speech Sounds (Hiser and Kopecky, 2009).

Teachers can also learn a great deal by observing the English learners in their classes as they communicate with each other. By noting the place where

communication breaks down and determining the pronunciation features that caused miscommunication to occur, teachers can identify pronunciation features that they should focus on in class. When students are giving presentations or working together in pairs or groups, the teacher might use a checklist similar (Grant, 2010) to note when a student is not understood or when several students make the pronunciation mistake. This information can become important for subsequent pronunciation lessons. The checklist can also be used to make learners aware of particular features of speech that have the potential to cause problems for intelligibility and to help them develop their own pronunciation goals. Teachers and learners can work together to complete a learner pronunciation profile that includes (a) an inventory of the sounds and stress intonation patterns that the learner does well and those the learner wants to change and (b) a questionnaire about when and how the learner uses English (Grant, 2010). This profile can help learners develop pronunciation goals and check their progress toward achieving those goals.

4-2-1-2. Make learners aware of the 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 and Holm, 2005; Gauthier, Shi, and 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).

Allow learners to practice using weak forms in conversations 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."

4-2-1-3. Focus on developing learners' communicative competence

The communicative approach to pronunciation teaching requires teaching methods and objectives that include whole-person learner involvement (Morley, 1991: 501). Morley states that three important dimensions the teacher should catered for in any pronunciation programme; the learner's intellectual involvement, affective involvement, and physical involvement. The learner's involvement in the learning process has been noted as one of the best techniques for developing learning strategies, that is, the measures used by the learner to develop his language learning (Morley, 1991:506). It is the teacher's responsibility to develop the learning process so the learner has the greatest chance to develop the learning strategies that are unique to each individual learner. The teacher also has a special role to play in the communicative learning programme, a role that Morley describes as one of speech coach or pronunciation coach (1991:507). Rather than just correcting the learner's mistakes, the 'speech coach' supplies information, gives models from time to time, offers cues, suggestions and constructive feedback about performance, sets high standards, provides a wide variety of practice opportunities, and overall supports and encourages the learner. It can be seen the teacher's role is not only to teach but to facilitate learning by monitoring and modifying English at two levels, speech production and speech performance.

4- 2- 3. Care for a good pronunciation

Apart from the cases where the use of the first language or the mother tongue is absolutely necessary for understanding. The teacher should try as much as possible, to speak only the target language (English). This in fact, enables sufficient exposure to the target language, which is a pre-requisite condition for a good acquisition. This means that teachers should be systematically well trained in phonetics, as said earlier. Learners will little by little keep in mind the way words are pronounced in their environment. Especially the teacher must be a model for students to imitate. So when the teacher has a very bad pronunciation, students are very likely to have a bad pronunciation. And we all know the misunderstanding problem, the mispronunciation that this can bring about.

Students shouldn't be exposed to any type of English. School authorities should make sure that the teachers are providing students with (especially beginners) good pronunciation and they will be able to pronounce words in relation to the standard, the Received Pronunciation. This is essential because mispronunciation can easily lead to misunderstanding. For example most students pronounce "to work" [wɜ:k] and to walk [wɔ:k] the same way. Similarly most students and some teachers don't succeed in uttering consonant sounds [θ] and [ð] So instead of "thing" [θɪŋ], throw [θrəʊ], them [ðəm], mother [mʌðə], you hear [fɪŋ] or [tɪŋ] for thing, [frəʊ] or [trəw] for throw [vəm] or [dɛm] for them, and [mʌdə] or [mʌvə] for mother.

When students are exposed to such bad pronunciations and they happen to meet a native speaker, they get lost because they think the words used by the latter are not in their lexicon. The native speaker also gets lost because he/she doesn't know about those pronunciations. So, every teacher should

systematically master phonetics. And at teachers in-service training sessions they should largely practice phonetics. Phonetics practice should normally be done with students by their teachers during English classes.

4-3. Suggestions for students.

When talking about English language learning, students are the most concerned. That's why this part is devoted to the behaviors and attitudes students must have to correctly learn English. If not, their teachers' effort can never be rewarded.

4- 3-1. Speak English every time.

The only way to learn a language is to speak it. So students who are willing to acquire English should seize any occasion to speak it with constant care to avoid "communication breakdown": which is according to Roberson, P. (1998)

"When you, students are speaking a foreign language there are times when the other person does not understand you or you do not understand the other person this is what we call communication breakdown".

Sometimes "communication breakdown" is due to a pronunciation mistake to a grammar or vocabulary mistake. Just as you are able to analyze and correct your grammar and vocabulary mistakes, you need to be able to analyze and correct your pronunciation mistakes when you are speaking.

It is not necessary to pronounce every sound perfectly to be understood; only a few parts of each sentence are really important but these parts are essential. The native speaker depends on hearing these parts clearly. Therefore you need to know which parts of a sentence must be clear

and how to make them clear.

So when trying to speak English with native speakers the learner must pay attention to his pronunciation. If this condition is taken into account, the student must try to speak English in any occasion. When he/she calls a Ghanaian shoe-maker to polish or to mend his/her shoe; he/she can start discussion on any topic.

When he/she goes to Missebo market to buy things, instead of speaking French he must speak English. Of course the type of English spoken by those people is not necessarily an academically accepted one, but the objective here is to reinforce or practise the language. It is more to acquire automaticity than accuracy in pronunciation and style. Later the student can polish his “broken” English by listening or reading good English

4-3-2. Stop worrying about gossips.

Of course it is difficult for us to frequently speak English in a francophone environment. People think we are boasting or showing off and they even sometimes say it openly. Hearing this idea people make us deter from practicing our English. But it is enough to really believe that. As a good mathematics student regularly does mathematics exercises on a board with some friends, an English student should regularly speak English with his friends. Both mathematics and English are imported knowledge, so we should get rid of the backward mentality that someone who often speaks English is showing off. Similarly, we should stop thinking that when people look at us while we are speaking English, they have bad ideas about us; it might be admiration. So, no matter the case, we should be steady on our ways.

4-3-3. Listen to radio and watch TV English programs.

Listening to radio and watching TV programs help to reinforce students' exposure to the language. It might be better to start from radio programs of less difficult accent such as GBG (Ghana Broadcasting Corporation) moving through BBC to VOA. In fact, the American accent seems the most difficult, at least for the learners of English as a foreign language. However, the radio wave distribution in our country cannot allow students to get easily GBC and VOA in their radio. Only BBC can easily be obtained everywhere on frequency Modulation (FM) in our country. And with only BBC, students can listen to any kind of English they want. They have only to choose it from BBC programs. If students want to listen to Network Africa on BBC, it is an African news sequence to 08:30 PM from 5:30 AM, totally presented for Africa and about Africa.

To reach their goal, students must have with them a radio with recorder which can help them record a whole program so that they can listen to the same program as many times as they want in order to get accustomed to the words, as they listen to the same words more than two times.

Experiences have shown that the brain has the capacity of recording new words without knowing them when we are used to listening to people who speak a language. So in the beginning, they do not understand anything. They will only hear sounds they cannot decode. But progressively, they will start to distinguish articles and simple words they knew. So for the first months of the exercise, they should not be discouraged by the fact they don't understand anything. Comprehension will finally emerge.

4-3-4-Be an active member of English clubs.

This is absolutely essential because, those clubs offer a more relaxed atmosphere to express oneself. Conversation clubs appear less demanding even

if teachers sometimes lead them. What is preferable would be English clubs enlivened by pupils themselves with some teachers playing the role of monitors, advisers or mentors. What is interesting in English conversation clubs is that there is no bad mark pressure weighing on students psychology. Therefore, it is not a waste of time to devote two hours a week to attend English clubs.

In English clubs, I suggest students to perform role-play activities such as plays, poetry and English songs learning: activities in which they learn English all the time without anybody's help. Students can also role play journalists by giving news in English. They could also discuss on topics like, AIDS, sex unemployment etc ... They may also have listening activities in their clubs. English clubs are then typical places where learners can develop every English language skill. A good atmosphere is often present in an English club and nobody can deny that it help to learn much in a friendly climate. Pronunciation and vocabulary are often emphasized in an English club.

4-4 - Suggestions to students' parents

As students cannot do anything without their parents' help, I would like also to give some suggestions to parents. In fact, parents must provide their children with the minimum tools they need to excel in English. Parents should buy for their students at least a text-book, a dictionary and a radio tape. They should 'pay for students to go to English language exposure trips in English countries. Parents shouldn't think that their Children, who go to English clubs, are going for hooliganism. Parents need to understand their students. They need to change the old mentality about school and trust their children. That's why a strict collaboration between school authorities and parents must be advisable. They can therefore know what really happens in schools in order to trust their children.

Suggestions to parents are just something. The most important of the task goes to children themselves who must know what they want. Students have

more to gain from their studies than any other school actors. Students will be the first to benefit from good spoken English.

Other suggestions could be made in the direction of the Ministry of National Education to solve some problems related to practical considerations in the Benin educational system but this is going to be the topic of a further study

CONCLUSION

Pronunciation Can be one of the difficult parts of a language for EFL learners to master and one of the least favorite topics for teacher to address in the' EFL classroom. All learners can do well in learning the pronunciation of a foreign language if the teacher and learner participate together in the total learning process. Success can be achieved if each has set 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 an important 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. With this in mind, the teacher must then set obtainable aims that are applicable and suitable for the communication needs of the learner. The feedback given to the student can encourage learners to improve their pronunciation. If these criteria are met, all learners, within their learner unique aims, can be expected to do well learning the pronunciation of a foreign language.

English pronunciation remains, without any doubt, a great problem for the learners of English as Foreign language especiallyfor the learners of secondary schools from Allada district. Many factors explain this fact. Among these, I can state on the one hand the influence of too many native languages onmaking English sounds, the absence of English particular sounds in their native languages on the other hand.

To improve their pronunciation, students should imitate their teachers a lots, repeat sounds, words and sentences, interact orally, learn by heart sentences, rhymes, self-correct through listening to recordings of own speech, learn and perform dialogues.

Anyone who says that you can get a good English pronunciation without hard work is talking rubbish, unless you happen to be one of the very small number of lucky people to whom pronunciation come fairly easily. One of the most important things to remember is that everyone can improve, even if they have no great talent for language. You may never sound like a native English speaker, but at least you will have got as close to it as you can

Government should recruit graduate teachers academically trained in our universities and will train them professionally in teaching field. Government should provide our schools with language teaching learning materials and equipments such as language laboratories, radios, CD.

This can foster the English language teaching and learning in EFL countries. It will increase the interest of learners of English as a foreign language. Investigations have shown that many English teachers hide behind the lack of means and don't create any strategies and classroom techniques for English teaching and learning for fluency acquisition. Teachers must know that although English is a foreign language, it doesn't exonerate them from working harder to facilitate English teaching and learning to take place in their classrooms.

Students jointly to the parents have their own part to play in their seeking for solution to their English pronunciation difficulties.

Learners of English as foreign language should pay attention to their facial muscles, tone, and voice in the process of making sounds. This will help them to stop forever "talking English in French".

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ANNEXES

INVESTIGATION METHOD

Questionnaires to Students

Name: Class :

Date:

This questionnaire is framed about pronunciation difficulties faced by EFL Learners. Please, answer all the questions by ticking youcorrect answers.

1) How long years have you been learning English?

2 to 3 years

4 years

More than 4 years

2) Do you have an idea on pronunciation of the English language?

Yes

No

3) How manyalphabet letters are there in English?

24

26

20

4) Do you know how to pronounce each of them?

Yes

No

5) Are you able to pronounce English words?

/ery well

Very little

Not a

6) Does pronunciation influence the way you pronounce words in English?

s

7) Do you pronounce English words the same way you do in French?

8) What is the importance of listening and repeating English in learning language process?

To Know How the word is pronounced

Mean of the word

9) Do students know the importance of the pronunciation in their process of learning language?

Yes

No

10) How is pronunciation useful in English learning language?

Production

Perception

Production and perception

QUESTIONNAIRE TO TEACHERS

This questionnaire is framed about EFL Learners, pronunciation difficulties

1) What is the best way to learn English pronunciation?

By reading text book

By imitating and practicing

speaking

2) Is it essential for learners to be able to pronounce all the individual sounds in foreign language?

YES

NO

3) Do you teach your learners how to pronounce English words?

Yes

No

3) How do learners find English pronunciation?

E

D iculty

5) What is the most important thing in the conversation?

Vocabulary

Grammar

Pronunciation

6) What are Language features involved in pronunciation?

Segmental alone

Suprasegmental

Both

7) What are the different concepts of pronunciation?

Phonology alone

Stress and rhythm

Both

8) In your opinion how is pronunciation useful in language use and language system?