

# SUBJECT: ENGLISH PHONOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AS FACED BY KISANGANI IBTP THIRD YEAR'S UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS.

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**KEY WORDS:** *Phonology, Challenges, Students, Remedies.*

### **General view on the topic**

The topic has been chosen from an unfortunate observation made on the mispronunciation of English words by G3 IBTP students on the field. It is inspired by a poor experience as teacher of English at IBTP Kisangani mainly on the phonological level.

The work consists in bringing out some commonly used mistakes and find out their origin; finally propose some remedies in order to allow students improve their speeches in English.

Three questions have led this research to get through; they are stated as follows:

Are there some forms of phonological mistakes that third undergraduate (G3) students at IBTP Kisangani often make during their conversation in English?

Is it possible to identify the origin, or the source of phonological mistakes students from IBTP often make?

Does it exist remedial ways that can help Kisangani IBTP G3 students overcome daily phonological mistakes they make in English?

There might be many forms of phonological mistakes that G3 students at IBTP Kisangani often make during their conversation in English.

It could be possible to identify the origin or the source of phonological mistakes students from IBTP often make.

Some remedies might exist to help IBTP G3 students overcome daily phonological mistakes they make in English.

### **4. Aims & Objectives**

The work mainly aims at pointing out various forms of mistakes often made by G3 IBTP students in English and helping them identify those mistakes before envisaging how to overcome them.

Three objectives are stressed to be found throughout this research paper.

- The discovery of phonological mistakes that are likely used by students while speaking English.
- The second objective consists in seeking the origin of phonological mistakes often made by students.
- The search of remedies that can be proposed by researchers to students.

In general, objectives will be achieved when students will be aware of mistakes they make, when they will identify the source of mistakes and happen to avoid them. The full success will be obtained when students will try to know how better utter English sounds.

Such themes related to the phonological mistakes likely used by students in English have already been tackled by other researchers, each one referring to his/her own approaches and methods. They have also devoted their time to circumscribe phonological problems that often occur in English during students' conversation in a given specific setting. Following analysts need to be mentioned:

Among researchers mention can be made on Corder (1970) who, throughout his book entitled "error analysis" comes to the result according to which "Errors are the result of interference in the learning of a second language from the habits of the first language". It means that error can be found in the writing covering a phoneme, a word, a phrase, a clause, a discourse.

Similarly, the southern Africans Baba Tshotsho, Lyly Mumbembe and Madola Cekiso (2015) wrote a book entitled "International Journal of Educational sciences within which their study aimed to investigate the learning problems encountered by Congolese French-speaking students, who come from a French-speaking background in which a language other than English was spoken as primary language, and which were commonly referred to as second language of English. The interpretation and discussion of the findings revealed that Congolese students faced challenges in the use of language with regard to vocabulary choices, tense use, and pronunciation, use of prepositions, conjunctions, articles, punctuation and demonstrative pronouns.

On the other side, Kembo-Sure (2004) added, Congolese faced many difficulties in pronunciation or spelling English confused with French words. Their spelling errors are linked to their French-background.

However, this paper differs from the previous in the fact that it circumscribes difficulties of pronunciation at IBTP Kisangani precisely addressing G 3 students acquiring English.

Regarding the way the work has been carried out some methods and techniques such as contrastive, documentary, interview have contributed to collect data and get through the paper.

To begin with, this method consists in opposing two sets, two languages on a specific aspect such as phonological or syntactic levels of interpretation. On the other hand from the comparative method, it has been revealed the minimising of the distance between two views of the same data point and maximising views from different data points. Essentially, it minimises the distance between positive data to a minimum and maximises the distance between negative data to a maximum. In this paper, distance between English and French in the use of English words by G3 IBTP students is better stated.

Once more the work studies the development of languages by performing aspects, one after another- It refers to the comparison of two or more languages having the same descent having the same ancestor from whom they share backwards properties.

Analytical method has been of great value in the achievement of the expected results. Interview, questionnaire and documentary techniques supported the analysis through various exercises proposed to students and pronunciation checking.

In concrete, G3 students had been proposed selected words, phrases and sentences in order to check the degree of performance that their English pronunciation, stress and intonation had attained. The objective is to find out forms of mistakes, their origin and certainly propose remedies. Documentary technique has been helpful thanks to the books access which allows the gathering of information related to the topic. to gather useful data for the making up of this paper This study's samples were selected from various sources: books, research papers and reviews from different libraries. Learners also provide data especially G3 (third undergraduate) students.

## 2. Phonological Challenges faced by I B T P G3 Builders in English

### 1. Phonological mistakes on last unstressed vowel sounds

Phonological interpretation refers to the way sounds are uttered by a speaker or a reader of words, phrases or sentences. There are specific expressions that the majority of students don't happen to pronounce well. May be it is due to the culture simply to mean the first language or the mother tongue whose linguistic interferences are often unwillingly invited during the utterance of those particular words.

The Bantu speakers generally use CVCV (Consonant Vowel Consonant Vowel). That is to say many words end in vowels. The majority of G 3 students being Bantu speakers have difficulty to pronounce English words when these words don't end with a vowel. They are unconsciously bound to add a stressed vowel that does not initially exist.

Examples:

- a. Because /bɪ'kɒz/ as /bɪ'kɒze/
- b. Most /məʊst/as /məʊste/
- c. When /wɛn/ as /wɛne/
- d. from /frɒm/ or /frəm/ as /frɒme/ or /frəmu/
- e. out /aʊt/ as /aʊte/ or /aʊti/
- f. Just /dʒʌst/ as /dʒʌste/
- g. him /hɪm/ as /hɪme/ or /hɪmi/
- h. take /teɪk/ as /teɪke/ or /teɪki/
- i. people /'pi:p(ə)l/ as /'pi:p(ə)le/
- j. not /nɒt/ as /nɒti/ or /nɒte/

For some observers, former teachers might have deviated them. The same effects produced by similar causes.

### 2. Intonation mistakes

To speak well a language is also to care about intonation. Many Bantu languages are tone languages the case of Lingala or Ciluba whose reference to the tone can change the meaning of a sentence or a phrase.

Ex: moto na moto abwaki moto amemi na moto na mayi ya moto tango atuti moto na nzeti mpe akati motema.

The motor-cycle rider hit violently his head against a tree when he overturned in hot water and died on the spot with his client he carried

In Ciluba: one word covers three meanings depending on the pronunciation thanks to different syllable stresses.

**example:** 'Ci'lamba: a bridge

-Cilàmba: a dress, cloth

-Ci'lamba :cooked

English Intonation comes from the extra emphasis (stress) that native speakers and good non-native speakers place on certain words. The rhythm in English comes from the emphasis that is placed on some words and not on others. Cimwanga (2019) agrees with a difficult cohabitation between official, national and local languages in DRC. He asserts that local languages undergo morphological and phonological influences of two principal foreign languages French and English.

Native speakers place extra emphasis on the key words when they speak to make them stand out. In this research, I B T P G3 students use to change stresses when they are reading or speaking. Their intonation is neither British nor American accents. It is certainly African.

**Examples:**

1. Exist /eg'zɪst/, /ɪg'zɪst/ with the stress on the second syllable. Instead of stressing the second syllable they stress the first /eg'zɪst/ ɪg'zɪst/, /'egzɪst, /'ɪgzɪst/.

Anyway the question of syllable accentuation remains the tough challenge for students and frankly speaking need an extra work. That's why Yang, R., & Allison, D. (2003). within E S P (English for Specific Purpose) argue that ESP is welcomed and is much needed . They put stress on training students with appropriate expressions for specific purpose. General English or passive vocabularies are always useful to students. They frequently tend to forget or misuse them.

The following example justifies the theory:

2. Deceive /dɪ'si:v/ with the stress on the second syllable. Instead of stressing correctly , they stress /'dɪsi:v/ The first syllable is stressed.
  3. Educate /'ɛdʒəkɪt/ there is stress at the beginning. Instead of stressing the right one, they stress the second and the third syllables/ ɛ'dʒɔ'kɪt/.
- Once more the reference to French the first language acquired fully scientifically occurs unwillingly and misleads young learners of the second language.
4. Pronunciation /prən'ʌnsɪ'eɪʃən/. The fourth syllable is stressed. The strong vowel /ʌ/ and sounds too strong to be unstressed, but not strong enough to be the stressed syllable. G3 students' unstressed /eɪ/ and the strong vowel /ʌ/. So the first, third and last syllables are stressed.
  5. Refrigerator /rɪ'frɪdʒəreɪtə(r)/ here the right stress is placed on the second syllable but the analysis of data reveals that students' put stress on the first, third and fifth syllable.
  6. Organize /'ɔ:rgənəɪz/ becomes /ɔ:rgə'naɪz/
  7. Swimming /'swɪmɪŋ/ becomes /swɪ'mɪŋ/
  8. Happy /'hæpi/ changes into /hæ'pi/
  9. Deserve /dɪ'zɜ:rɪv/ becomes /'dɪzɜ:r'v/
  10. Hospital /'hɑ:spɪtl/ changes into /hɑ:s'pi'tl/

*The useful therapy for removing such mistakes may be getting into the laboratory, the use of the apparatus, earphones, headphones but also just regular training can contribute to relieve this recurrent shortcoming.*

**3. Nasalization problem**

Nasal sounds are produced thanks to the impanation of some body parts such as nose, nostrils, larynx, pharynx, lungs etc. examples: n, m, ng, nt, nd. Linguists such as Ferguson, Charles, Larry Hyman, and John J. Ohala, (1975), suggested the value of training nasalization to students who learn English as a second language. Because this language aspect seems often a tough task to fulfill by new learners of English.

Like many other languages, English has nasalized vowels. In linguist-speak that means that you lower your velum while making the vowel sound or speak with a nasal sound. Nasalization occurs mostly in the vicinity of nasal consonants m, n and ng. The mastery of nasalization will certainly assert the overcoming of an important challenge phonological aspect.

The students nasalize where there is no need of nasal sound and absence of nasalization where it should be. This phenomenon is influenced by the local languages of each other. On the tracks of Ferguson & al, Huffman, Marie, and Rena Krakow, (1993) reveal the hard task and challenges faced by students who have English as their second language. They declare also that the failure to render correctly nasal sounds on a due place can deviate the listener. That deviation can bring about a very negative impact on the semantic level.

Sincerely speaking, many local languages don't observe nasal sounds. The same unfortunate observation is noticed in French.

Ex: être content: être cota.( to be happy)

Examples:

1. Go back= Go /bæk/ as Go /bæŋk/
- Go back Mulumba

This phenomenon is curious simply because students add a nasal where it is not needed. This observation becomes more astonishing when on the contrary students suppress nasals where they initially occur. Examples below reveal these two phenomena upper evoked:

2. Project= Pronject
3. link = /lɪŋk/ as /lɪk/
4. limp = /lɪmp/ like /lɪp/
5. then' (/ðen/) as /ðene/
6. can't' (/kænt/) as (/kæt/
7. uncle /'ʌŋkəl/ as /'ʌkəl/
8. Black /'blæk/ as/'blænk/
9. Lamp /'læmp/ as /'læp/
10. Introduce / ,ɪntrə'dju:s/ as / ,ɪtrə'dju:s/

#### 4. Lexical mistakes

This section concerns the spelling of words, the manner of writing English words as they initially appear in the dictionary or encyclopedia. Among four principal linguistic rules Morphology needs to be stressed much simply because it is the starting step. If a word is not better spelt and written it deviates syntax, the pronunciation and the meaning .

Just like any human languages, English has got its proper way of pronouncing words regardless of the apparent spelling. Michell & Myles(2006) agree with the point that the first language has certain impact on the second either in morphology or phonology because the applicant often refers to the first in order to interpret the second. Here the special point is put on phonetics. It can be understood that as French is the language of education in D. R. Congo, students tend to write and read many English words just as they hear them and write as such. Dzahene ( 2010) recognizes the negative influence of Kiswahili in English. The word meeting loses its stress on the first syllable in English to receive it on the second syllable in Kiswahili. Linguistic interference from French to English is once more felt. Students do not refer to their mother tongues but principally to French.

Examples:

Words such as those recorded in the following samples are pronounced with reference to French:

1. Object /'ɒbdʒɪkt/ as /'ɒbzekt/( objet)
2. Refuse /'refju:s/as / refyz /( refuse)
3. Character /'kærəktə/as / 'karakter/( caractère)
4. Son /'sʌn/as / spn / ( un son)
5. What /'wɒt/as /wʌt/( watt)
6. Man / mæn / as / mʌ n/( manne)
7. Young /'jʌŋ/as / yɒŋg / or / yu:ŋg/( younge)
8. Network /'netwɜ:k/as /netwo:k /( netwok)
9. Examination /ɪg zæmɪ'neɪʃən/as /ɪg zæmɪ'neɪʃɪən/(examination)
10. Fashion /'fæʃən/as / fʌʃɪən /( façon)

#### 5. Remedies for Kisangani IBTP G3 students overcome daily phonological mistakes

Throughout the present analysis, specific phonological mistakes and their probable origins have been revealed. Therapies are needed to overcome these mistakes. The main actor to remove these mistakes is first the student. Bokula (2005) wrote that sharing the same environment people tend to confuse concepts from one medium for another.

The second will be the teacher helped by the machines and adequate environments. The third instance is the environment in which students evolve. It is true that in a French speaking country such as DRC, students get less time to practice their English. They ought to meet in the laboratory or centres of English to reinforce their capacities in speaking among club-mates.

Higher schools and universities should regularly organize public lectures and workshops in English in order to train learners and give them the taste of the language.

Students should spell words phonetically (as they hear them) *before* memorizing the correct form. It might lead to a few mistakes, but they will also realize most words have at least one part that looks exactly like it sounds.

There are various procedures proposed by phoneticians all over the world to help applicants improve their English pronunciation such as the following:

This phonetic spelling strategy may be applied by both teacher and applicant

To read very slowly and then emphasize some key words syllables

To lead students, write through dictation what they hear and then try to confront with the true spelling

To compare the students' performance with initial words spellings

To convey students correct themselves their probable mistakes, they have to check and get determined to improve their performance.

To convey students into open discussion about some words, phrases and sentences whose pronunciations have not been correctly realized.

To recall some rules connected to better pronunciation.

To bring students up to another higher step of phonetic translation and better pronunciation thanks to the repetition drills, the use of the machines, the application of rules with hear-phones

## 6. Findings

In terms of findings, the analysis of shortcomings observed within students in pronouncing English words has revealed the followings things:

- a. The principal source of phonological mistakes is L1 interference (French into English)
- b. The second and more prominent source of difficulties remains the local language culture. Many local languages don't observe nasal sounds.
- c. Bantu and many African languages often end words pronunciation with vowel sounds whereas in English it is not always the case
- d. The third source of challenges is on morphological spelling. Students keep confusing English words with French and local languages structures.
- e. Traditional teachings without appropriate machines are responsible for shortcomings found within IBTP G3 students. Teachers sharing the same culture with students fall into the same phonological trap in mispronouncing English words, phrases or sentences.

## 7. General Conclusion

The analysis of this topic stressed mainly on finding out some English phonological difficulties faced by IBTP G3 students in the use of Shakespearean language. Of course the work consisted in pointing out probable sources of shortcomings and propose accordingly appropriate remedies in order to help the target students improve their pronunciation in English.

As mentioned in the lines above, origins of mistakes made by students in phonology derive from three principal factors: the interference of the first language that is French in English; this aspect affects not only phonological level but also morphological one. Another factor which is external is the influence students' local languages which don't generally observe certain phonological features such as nasality etc. The last factor may be the environment in which students live. Their teachers belong to the same milieu, beyond this fact there is the self-discipline that the learner should keep. The student is bound to join his club-mates or attend regularly public lectures and workshops to improve his English mainly in phonological aspects. The application of ICT in the teaching process is very needed in order to overcome challenges and improve the language use.

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