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Tease - Teaching English Approach: A Stopgap Measure to Improve English Learning Process at "ESI/UNILI" First Year Students

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Abstract:
This article aims at helping improve the English learning process of first year engineering students ("ESI/UNILI"). Actually, the result findings have shown that the majority of students has a poor background in English especially in reading and spelling English words. Moreover, learning English seemed to be a waste of time because of lack of motivation and its low marking grade at the state examens. But nowadays English is becoming a business language in DRC. Many foreigner investors employ candidates who know at least how to read and speak English. As a result, many people are required to know how to read and spell some English words, including "ESI" students, for them to get a job.
Thus, in the context of this study, the research has explored Tease-Teaching English approach as a combination of the two concepts which resulted into teasing and rebuilding learners' motivation. The research, therefore, suggests to our readers a procedure to allow both L2 learners and teachers to build up confidence and self-esteem by utilizing some Kiswahili sounds in order to produce English sounds more easily. By doing so, learners can be to improve what they've learned in secondary schools. This study concludes that there is a necessity of revisiting our teaching methodology by taking into account the background and the level of the learner.

Keywords: A stopgap measure to improve, English learning process, "ESI/Unili" First year students, Tease- teaching English approach

1. Introduction

In the early 60's and throughout the 70's, audio-lingual method used to be the most obvious movement of the general acceptance with a public notice. This was a period of questioning and searching for more communicative use of language in classroom practice with a heavy emphasis on interest in the affective aspects of language teaching and learning. Such approaches were Curran's Counseling Learning, Lozanov's Suggestopedia, Gattegno's Silent Way, to mention but a few (Donald L. Bouchard & Loius J. Spaventa, 1980, p. vii).

However, over the years, these methods have gone through changes that provide useful information about innovations based on new technology. In the context of this study, the combination of Bowen's contextualizing pronunciation practice approach (Donald L. Bouchard & Louis J. Spaventa, 1980, p. 63) and Mrs. Mary N. Irungu's Sound and Read Book 1 (1989) has resulted into a realistic view approach in TEFL named Tease-Teaching English as foreign language. Thus, this article is intended to equip the reader with useful ideas and techniques so as to help "ESI/UNILI" students recover from discouragement and regain self-confidence through the production of sounds and spelling of English words.

In short, this approach might not be suitable for every teaching situation, but it will prove to be a useful tool for experienced teachers as a measure to improve the English learning process for first year "ESI"/UNILI students.

2. Research Questions

Code for the 7 types of Questions
D: Descriptive F: Functional S: Structural H: Hypothetical,
C: Contrast I: Incident P: Personal

- Do you think English is important to be taught in a French speaking country such as DRC (P)?
- From your observation, how would you grade the level of English in general at secondary schools and at university (F)?
- What could possibly be the causes of the regression of the level of English in different schools and at university (H)?
- What are the causes of this situation (I)?
- Does the national curriculum address effectively this situation (F)?
- Does the assessment of English teachers follow the profile of a qualified teacher(S)?
- In most of the cases, how do schools recruit English teachers (F)?

- Can anybody who knows English be given a chance to teach English(C)?
- Do you think it is necessary to review teaching methodologies in order to improve English learning process in general and at ESI/Likasi in particular(P)?
- What would you recommend to improve the English learning process at ESI/Likasi (F)?

3. Methodology and Limitations

The research was carried out within the Likasi area among six form pupils in technical schools and first year ESI/Likasi and included their teachers. Thus, research instruments used in this study were 40 self-administered questionnaires, ten in-depth interviews and participant observation in classes. The study also relied on research publications, media sources and online resources as part of the literature review, which have either significantly contributed or defined the particular field under study (Magret D. Lecompte & Jean J. pp. 301-7). This eventually gave the researcher the opportunity of using his own analytical and critical thinking skills in order to test established educational theories and determine the context in which Tease-Teaching English Approach can be applied, toward the success of the educational experience.

On the other side, common limitations in educational research include the validity of educational research, the lack of ontological understanding. Besides, the most limiting factor in teaching is a fixation in traditional methods (Abadía, 2015). Likewise, the use of Tease-Teaching Approach in this study does not guarantee a successful result because of the changing realities of students every year. Nevertheless, the researcher strives to adapt it to the time and environments because what is valid to ESI/Likasi students in application of this approach might be not valid for law students.

4. Result Findings

This research captured the respondents' concern for improving the English learning process, its impact on education in a French speaking country, and the necessity of revising teaching methodologies so as to help ESI/Likasi students to improve their communication skills in English. In response to the question: " Do you think English is important to be taught in a French speaking country such as DRC? ", the majority of our respondents said "yes" pointing out that English is becoming one of the requirements to access to knowledge worldwide and to get jobs easily. They also recognized that English allows people to do business since most of the neighboring countries belong to the commonwealth. However, the compiled result findings on the second research question show that there was not a significant difference on how respondents see the level of English in general at secondary schools and at UNILI in particular among ESI students as shown Table 01 below.

Teachers	Very Low	6	28.60%
	Low	14	66.70%
	High	1	4.80%
	Very High	0	0.00%
	Total	21	100.00%
Students	Very Low	5	17.20%
	Low	23	79.30%
	High	1	3.40%
	Very High	0	0.00%
	Total	29	100.00%

Table 1: Teachers and Students' Consideration of the Level of English in Schools and at UNILI

Table 01 reveals that the majority (37) of our respondents have found a low level of English while only few (11) see it very low. This was confirmed by one of respondents, in response to research question number three. She argued that this low level of English is due to the lack of qualified teachers. Teachers, according to her, seem not care about learners; they speak quickly and allow confusion among their students. They do not use appropriate methodologies in order to make learners use and enjoy the language. Therefore, learners do not have the motivation to learn English as they feel that it is a waste of time. Others said that the recruitment of English teachers is not good, including several cases in which those who teach English were not professionally trained. They come from different English language centers where teachers teach slang and other colloquial terms. Therefore, they are not prepared for the proper formation of their students' English skills (cf. App.C. no. 1, 2, 3).

Among respondents who answered positively to the rest of the questions, students were among many respondents who subscribed to the idea that in one way or another, learners develop a bad attitude which eventually does not motivate them to learn English. Another respondent added that, "this way of teaching disturbs us and it does not motivate us to learn." Moreover, we also found out while teaching English classes that students have difficulties in producing English sounds which they merely assimilate to the Swahili ones. Some words with the sounds /ai/; /u: / or /o/ at the first syllable are mispronounced and sound Kiswahili. For instance, instead of;

- That kind dog is not wild. /ai/
- That child wants to cry. /ai/

- The sky is blue. /ai/
- She has a big good book. /u:/
- Plants have roots. /u:/
- This boy is causing trouble. /o/

(see Roach, P. 2009, p. 16)
But the sentences are pronounced:

- That cound dog is not waid. /ai/
- That chaild wands to crai. /ai/
- The scai is bleu. /ai/
- Shi ase he big good book. /u:/
- Plants eve ruts. /u:/
- This boy is cosing trabole. /o/

Finally, respondents were asked, "What would you recommend to improve the English learning process at ESI/Likasi?" Both teachers and learners recommended an adaptation of the national curriculum starting from kindergartens and primary schools in order to help students handle the language. Formation of qualified teachers is needed by organizing seminars, debates and conferences, some said. This can create motivation to actually speaking and reading in English. Thus, English clubs, video debates and other formative sessions are necessary to improve the English learning process. Another respondent said, "teachers should review learning materials and come up with new methodologies which give students motivation to learn English and like it" (cf. App.C.no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

5. Discussion

The general views given by respondents are that a lack of motivation, the lack of qualified English teachers and the ineffectiveness of the national curriculum to address the low level of English in technical schools and at university, need careful attention for the sake of a good formation for English language educators. This concurs with Wallace (1997)'s Action Research for Language Teachers. One of his statements stipulates that "none of the books discussed here replace a good research methods course, and all novices in research should seek more experienced peers for suggestions and insights prior to delving deeply into a research project."

However, Wallace's (1997) assessment on teaching resonates with Bowen's Contextualizing Pronunciation Practice (see Donald L. Bouchard & Louis J. Spaventa, 1980, p. 63). This approach states that "oral communication has come to be a central study, and the philosophy on which classroom activities are based has correspondingly changed to reflect the present oral emphasis. The audio-lingual method of foreign language teaching accords pronunciation a central role in pedagogy and takes seriously the goal of acquiring an adequate command of the spoken language". In fact, in the contemporary classroom, pronunciation has not experienced a diminished interest as opposed to phonology in linguistic theory. That is to say "pronunciation remains the entrée to the linguistic system of a new language, and a student cannot be said to havemastered a second language unless he has a command of its spoken symbols" (p. 63).

This is vividly captured by Hooper (1961) who says that, "it is clear enough by now that there is no significant correlation between the ability to do grammatical exercises and the ability to write and read well. People learnt, spoke, and wrote English well before it was ever taught in grammar lessons." Hooper (1961) considers that teachers should primarily focus on spelling and reading before moving to grammar (p. viii). This was confirmed by the majority of our respondents who said that teachers should pay attention to the way they teach English. Sometimes, they simply mispronounce words and speak very quickly, leaving learners confused (cfr. App.C. no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Moreover, Mrs. Mary's Sound and Read Books One and Two consist of helping reading beginners who have reading and spelling problems regardless of age or standard. However, it is worthwhile to say that scholars such as Swan (1980), Hermans et al (1989), Holt et al (1995), and Chandler (2002) have done an incredible work on grammar and semiotics trying to help learners understand grammatical rules which are also important in the learning process. But in the current study, I see a perfect combination of the two approaches which can combine into one, namely Tease Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

This approach consists of putting the learner in a position of producing English sounds based on what they have in their first language, in this case, Kiswahili. The new sounds that the learner produces are neither English nor Kiswahili, but they are actually rooted in Kiswahili for most of our students (Fitikides, 2000). Wilson (1970)'s work on "Simplified Swahili" argued that, "Swahili is an easy language, for there are few languages with so few exceptions to contend with. Furthermore, although the vocabulary has little or no similarity to that of European languages, there is often a close similarity between various Swahili words relating to a particular subject, and many words can, by following typical patterns, be made into nouns, adjectives or verbs with a common root"(p. 1). From this point of view, it is, indeed, easy for a Swahili speaker to assimilate some English sounds to the Swahili ones. Some Swahili words such as "cupboard sounds "Kabatshi" in Swahili; cup sounds "nkopo"; basket sounds "mbeketi", goal sounds "golo"; bath sounds "bafwa", to win sounds "ku-wina".

This confirms explanations by Roach (2009) on assimilation as part of aspects of connected speech. Assimilation, according to Roach (2009), is an instance which occurs in cases where a phoneme is realised differently as a result of resembling some other phoneme belonging to a neighboring word. In other words, assimilation is the change in pronunciation of a phoneme under the influence of its surrounding sounds (Aspects of connected speech: http://image.slidesharecdn.com).

Therefore, some Swahili vowels and especially consonants are likely be assimilated into English sounds such as Swahili vowels A as in "far' but cut short e.g. bata (a duck); E as in "bed" e.g. embe (a mango) or U as the "oo" in "food" e.g.

nusu (half). Like Swahili consonants B as in "bad" e.g. baba (father). C combined with H as in "each" e.g. muchele (rice); D as in "date" e.g. dada (sister); Y as in "you" e.g. yote (everything) or Z as in "zoom" e.g. zamiri (consciousness). Combinations of sounds are also a nice illustration of this phenomenon such as CH as in "church" e.g. chache (few); DH as "TH" in "that" e.g. fedha (silver); NY as in "lanyard" e.g. nyanya (a tomato orgrand-mother) or SH as in "shop" e.g. shida (a difficulty), to mention but a few. Thus, Tease Teaching English approach is meant to lead students to the right way of producing English sounds based on Kiswahili rather rejecting it. In other words, the instructor asks learners to produce the sounds and spell the words the way they can (Tease them) and then correct them the way they should sound in English. By doing so, students feel more confident and motivated to repeat and practice more in and outside the class because they feel free to make mistakes. Making mistakes is actually the engine in the learning process so as to say "Learn from mistakes". It is only when learners have mastered the production of sounds that the teacher can move easily to other subjects. To illustrate, here is a sample of the procedure in application of Tease Teaching English approach:

- Step one: Classify the English alphabets according to their sound as

follows,
A B F I O Q R
H C L Y U
J D M W
K E N
G S
P X
T Zed
V
Zee
(Alphabet Sounds, 2015)

In this way, alphabets can be easy to pronounce. However, if one knows how to pronounce 'I', it will also be easy to pronounce 'Y', which has the same sound (diphthong). Indeed, this way of classifying alphabets makes it easy to find a letter and hear two or three letters in the same order.

- Step Two: Provide words that have those classified sounds and direct learners to repeat them. Leave those words at the blackboard and ask learners to take dictation. They will probably produce sounds of their own (see V. Result Findings).
- Step Three: Collect the results of the dictation of two or five students and ask students to write at the blackboard, then correct together with them the dictation and make them repeat again the correct sentences until you are sure of a good result in another dictation of the same sort of sounds. In support of the majority of our respondents, I concur with Abadía (2015) who stipulates that research is important to educators in several ways. When an individual starts a career that will lead to teaching others, he will be exposed to research publications and media sources which have either significantly contributed or defined the particular field under study. In the first stages of developing an inquisitive acumen, educators have to rely on research findings that have effectively brought progress to the process of transmitting knowledge and explaining learning. This, our study on ESI/Likasi is one of our respondents' recommendations that "teachers should come up with new methodologies in order to help students in the learning process of English at university in a French speaking country, in this case at UNILI" (cfr. App.C. no. 5).

6. Conclusion

Inasmuch as engineering studies (ESI/Likasi) are concerned, the conclusion and recommendations on improving English learning process, relate to Bulungo's (2014) recent report on teaching English in technical schools in DRC. In the general conclusion of his report, Bulungo (2014) observed that, "A special attention toward the teaching of electrical English terms for safety is necessary for electricians and electric consumers, in order to reduce or eliminate these hazards --- Nowadays many electric devises are being produced with notice written in English. So, electricians must be acquainted to the numerous English terms used in their domain, Electricity. For an electrician to get acquainted with the English words introduced in electricity, a facilitating teaching approach of these terms is worth being supported."

Thus, learners will be helped to improve their English, as well as being prepared to saving lives by 'reducing and eliminating hazards' as Bulongo (2014) claimed. Throughout this article, the researcher has strived to suggest to our readers a procedure which will allow both L2 learners and teachers to rebuild confidence and self-esteem by utilizing some Kiswahili sounds in order to easily produce the range of English sounds. Revisiting our teaching methodology in order to help learners improve what they've already learned in secondary schools is clearly necessary.

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Appendix

Table 01: Teachers and Students' Consideration of the Level of English in Schools and atESI/UNILI

Field Research Interviews

- 28/11/2015, at Tutazamie, Likasi. To interview a teacher from ESI/UNILI on the assessment of English teachers and their selections.
- 05/12/2015, at Tutazamie, Likasi. To interview a teacher from ESI/UNILI on teaching methodologies of English in technical schools.
- 07/12/2015, at Mivuka, Likasi. To interview a teacher from ESI/UNILI on the causes of low level of English in technical schools in general and particularly at ESI/Likasi.
- 11/12/2015, at Mivuka, Likasi. To interview a teacher from Polytechnics/UNILIon the economic situation influence the learning process of English and recommendations on teaching in English.
- 11/12/2015, at Mivuka, Likasi. To interview a teacher from ESI/UNILI on the effectiveness of the national curriculum as far as English is concerned.
- 12/12/2015, at Mivuka, Likasi. To interview a student from ESI/UNILI on how teachers should revisit their teaching methodologies in order to help students improve their English.
- 14/12/2015, at Tutazamie, Likasi. To interview a student from polytechnics on the assessment of English teachers and their selections.
- 14/12/2015, at Tutazamie, Likasi. To interview a student from ESI on the effectiveness of the national curriculum as far as English is concerned.
- 14/12/2015, at Tutazamie, Likasi. To interview a student from ESI on the effectiveness of the national curriculum as far as English is concerned.
- 14/11/2013 at Mivuka, Likasi. To interview a student from Polytechnics/UNILI on the economic situation influence the learning process of English and recommendations on teaching in English.
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