

## How the Teaching of English Pronunciation can be improved in Pre-service Training Institutions; A study at Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana

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### ABSTRACT

The focus of this research was to discover how the teaching of English pronunciation in the pre-service training institutions in Ghana could be improved. It was a study at Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana. The purposive sampling method was employed to select three tutors of English and twenty students for the study. Interviews and observations were done to gather information. As part of the findings; Pronunciation teaching must be included in course outlines of the colleges of Education. The Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL) programme should factor in pronunciation when suggesting the review of the course outlines of the Colleges of Education (which are being transformed into University Colleges as of the preparation time of this paper). This will contribute to improving pronunciation teaching. Also, Pronunciation must be well taught at the basic level as the pupils grow with the knowledge and in-turn pass it on to other pupils/students in Ghana. This is because students of the Colleges of Education, complete their course only to go and teach the pupils in basic schools. It is obvious that when pronunciation is not well taught at the basic level, it goes a long way to affect individuals even unto adulthood. In addition, better methods of teaching pronunciation, if employed, will help improve it. Again, a campus FM should be established and utilized appropriately to educate and improve pronunciation. Teaching pronunciation through the media can be helpful if only it is carefully planned. In addition, the language laboratory stereotyped for only the French students, should be upgraded to a standard language laboratory where all other language teachers and student-teachers will benefit from. In sum, if all who may need to contribute to ensure the improvement of pronunciation teaching play their role well, its improvement will become a reality.

**Key words:** Transforming Teacher Education and Learning, Frequency Modulation, Intelligible pronunciation

### INTRODUCTION

Communication involves the use of language to express one's thoughts or ideas or feelings. It is both verbal and non-verbal. Correct pronunciation is therefore crucial to verbal communication. In this work, the focus is on the improvement of pronunciation in English language which is a second language ( $L_2$ ), official language and the medium of instruction in all formal education in Ghana. The research focuses on how the teaching of English pronunciation can be improved in pre-service training institution; a study at Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, Ghana. Robertson (2002:8) citing (Morley, 1991:488) postulates that "*Intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communication competence ...*" Pronunciation is thus very important in verbal communication. Less intelligible pronunciation could result in unsuccessful communication; listeners are likely to hear different words which may be meaningless due to less intelligible pronunciation. Thus, since the process of teaching and learning involve communication; intelligible

pronunciation is very crucial to successful teaching and learning process. This makes 'pronunciation' a very important topic for discussion in the Educational sectors and thus in academia.

The researcher deemed it fit to briefly discuss Higgs, Theodore and Clifford's (1982) graph of learner needs (In Figure 1 below) due to the fact that it enables one to identify the loop holes in the language development of individuals; especially, those who are learning English as a second language. The graph shows how students' needs change over the course of learning a language. Three levels of learner needs were outlined which include the level of the beginner whose needs are basically pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar; the level of the intermediary whose needs are grammar, vocabulary and situational language; and the level of the advanced learner whose needs are a balance of the five aspects as displayed in the figure below.

When the teaching of the various aspects of language is addressed inappropriately in correspondence with the level of

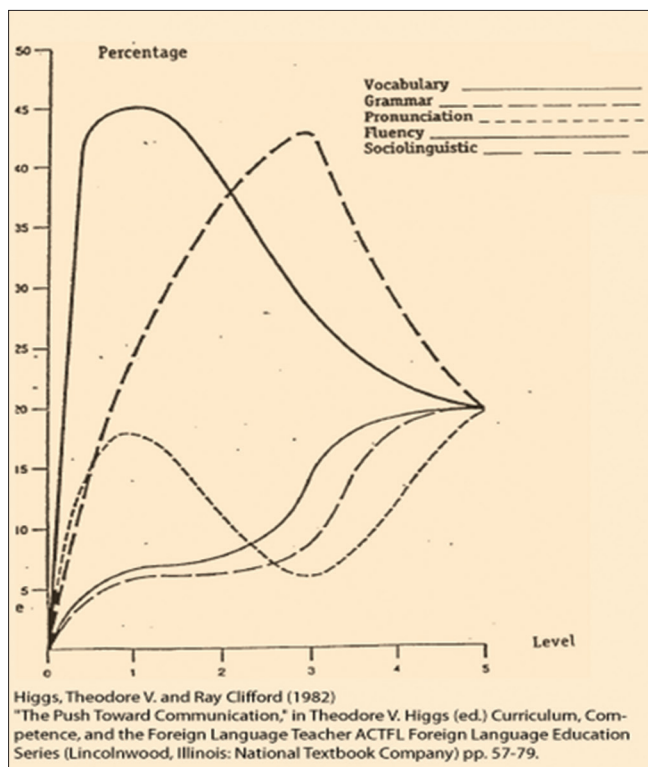


Figure 1. Higgs et al Graph of Learner Needs

the learner, it may contribute to a teaching and learning problem. On the contrary, when the blend for each stage is duly accomplished, it might ensure an improvement in the learner's language skills. Thus, when the pronunciation needs of students are understood, their development can be successful since one will know when and how much of what they need; and this will ensure the improvement of language as well as its teaching. From the chart, it is clearly indicated that pronunciation is one of the vital aspects a learner needs right from the beginner level. It is of great importance that the beginner students in Ghana will have intelligible pronunciation training in order to avoid pronunciation problems in the future; more attention should probably be given to students' pronunciation in particular and pronunciation teaching in general. In the case of this research, the students of the Colleges of Education are obviously not in basic schools but their language needs virtually demand that they are given tuition as though they are of the beginner level. When the course outlines of the colleges of Education ignore the basic needs of the learner, per this context, it will not contribute to the improvement of the students' pronunciation teaching and learning.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Under the review of literature, the following are discussed: How pronunciation teaching can be improved and perspectives about pronunciation teaching.

### How Pronunciation Teaching can be Improved

With respect to pronunciation development, Winsor (2009:11) believes that in developing oral language and

vocabulary, some language experience approach could be used in teaching to bring about great improvement. She outlined practical examples of what she implied:

*"Viewing and discussing large picture - Looking at a Picture of Animals on A Farm  
 Shared reading of literature - shared reading of Little Cloud (Carle 1996)  
 Interacting in real- life experiences - Nature walk research  
 Participating in or learning about - Sharing Thanksgiving celebrations."*

### Cultural objects or events

Winsor's (2009:11) contribution is worth discussing since it is more practical than theoretical. The mother brain behind her outline is that the language must actually be experienced. Thus, as pupils view large pictures in the teaching process, they experience it themselves and can 'discuss', which makes the approach more meaningful. This is because it is during the discussions that pupils or students get the opportunity to express their views orally and would learn more vocabulary and better pronunciation. This however, depends on the quality of the teacher in question. If the teacher does not encourage a pupil centered class then this language experience cannot be effective. As far as the teacher or facilitator appreciates the importance of good pronunciation, he or she will correct students' wrong pronunciations during shared reading and more.

Likewise, shared reading will make children "*grow in vocabulary and also build concepts about books and print*", Winsor and Crawford (2011:15). The researcher agrees to this, except that students are still likely to pronounce words the way they do. It can only be effective if the teacher supervises properly during discussions so that students do not learn wrong pronunciation from one another, or tease other mates so much that they become discouraged. There would definitely be room for positive influence but acquiring good pronunciation skills will, to a large extent, depend on the pupils' ability.

In any case, Zhenjian (2003:148) postulated that: "*Reading aloud is used as the major and magic way to improve students' Oral-English.*" This buttresses the fact that, to some extent, reading aloud contributes to improving people's pronunciation. It is only when one reads aloud and is heard that he/she can be corrected upon making an error. He added that "*Reading aloud is a kind of comprehensive practice of pronunciation.*" Zhenjiang (2003:149). Pupils or students may understand pronunciations better when they read aloud. Reading aloud could be adopted by pre - service training institutions to purposefully improve their pronunciation acquisition. The last two concepts of Winsor (2009:11) outlined '*Interacting in real life experiences*' and '*participating in or learning about cultural objects or events*'. These are even more practical and to a large extent could help improve pronunciation acquisition.

Pronunciation teaching can be improved when tutors have "*a (good) grasp of articulatory phonetics; a well-trained ear; knowledge of the phonology... of both the mother tongue(s)... and the target language*", Ashby (1995:2).

Obviously, how can a blind man lead another blind man? They may both fall into a ditch. Tutors must therefore have good pronunciation skills, so that their followers could be trained correctly. If many tutors are well trained holistically, (not only phonetic skills but pronunciation skills, knowledge and teaching skills as well), good pronunciation acquisition will be improved. To add to this, Ashby opines that “*At tertiary level, I recommend beginning any language programme with a short introductory course in articulatory phonetics ...*” Ashby (1995:3) Borrowing this idea, if the curriculum of colleges and schools will strongly inculcate articulatory phonetics, it may contribute to improving pronunciations of students in Ghana. However, it must be noted that “*Phonetics is not an instant remedy for all pronunciation problems*”, Ashby (1995:1). Though phonetics helps curb the problem of pronunciation, there are other aspects of pronunciation that only phonetics cannot solve.

To add to this aspect of improving pronunciation teaching, Robertson (2002:4 -5) outlined factors that when addressed could help improve pronunciation, some of which have already been mentioned in our discussions above.

These factors include the following:

- 1) Include it in government school curriculums
- 2) Add it to private school courses
- 3) Train and certify teachers in pronunciation teaching.
- 4) Carefully monitor results
- 5) Draft new teaching programs
- 6) Devise a new cultural consideration methodology
- 7) Devise a culturally acceptable approach
- 8) Draft new comprehensive books?
- 9) Teach teachers about the target culture, Pronunciation and the curriculum.

Firstly, Robertson (2002:4) suggests that ‘pronunciation’ be included in government school curriculums. When it is included in government school curriculums, it would ensure good exposure to the training of Ghanaian students in pronunciation of English and will generally improve the standard of pronunciation amongst both teachers and students. He adds that it should also be included in private school courses. Indeed, to have a fair training opportunity for all Ghanaian students, pronunciation should not only be included in the curriculum of government schools but also in private ones. It may be interesting to search or do research on a comparison of which of the type of schools mostly include pronunciation in their curriculum. He thirdly states that teachers should be trained and certified in pronunciation teaching. Teaching Pronunciation should not be a study with the status comparable to Physics, History or the English subject, but should be studied as a fundamental aspect of the embodiments of the English subject. This will improve the quality of pronunciation teaching especially in pre-service training institutions. To Robertson (2002:4), students’ results must be carefully monitored to help improve their pronunciation skills. Upon observing and monitoring their results, one could tell how much help and which kind of help each student needs to build up. In his view, new teaching programs should be drafted. It is obvious that when one lives with old measures in new seasons, it does not boost success.

Indeed, new teaching programs could be drafted with respect to teaching of English pronunciation especially in pre-service training institutions, the focus of this research. As far as such programs would be properly organized it would yield positive results in the teaching of pronunciation in pre-service training institutions. When new programs are drafted and results of students are monitored, it will help improve pronunciation skills of students as well as teachers. It will in turn curb the problem of L<sub>1</sub> (first language) influence on L<sub>2</sub>, the second language. More importantly, he adds that new comprehensive books should be drafted. Indeed books should be upgraded to a better standard, considering pronunciation skills. In this research work, the comprehension books of the college in question could be assessed together with how Tutors handle key words in their comprehension passages with regard to pronunciation. Lastly, Robertson (2002:5) outlined that teachers should be taught the target culture, pronunciation and the curriculum. This would to a large extent facilitate the teachers’ view on the importance of pronunciation and contribute very well to its improvement in relation to the curriculum. Celce-Murcia et al.(1996) outlined and discussed a number of variables to consider in syllabus construction. These variables they outlined include learner, setting, institution, linguistic, and methodological. Thus, when curriculum planners are including anything in general and pronunciation in particular in the curriculum they must consider those factors mentioned and discussed by Celce-Murcia et al.(1996). This will help have a more comprehensive and beneficial curriculum.

Personal effort is essential to improving pronunciation as well as pronunciation teaching. When both the teacher and the student improve themselves, more can be achieved to improve their pronunciation skills. Sharpling (2012) indicated that self-study books that are useful could be read or cassettes could be listened to or practiced for about fifteen minutes a day to help improve pronunciation. Students’ attitude to reading as well as availability of such books and cassettes will contribute to the realization of this suggestion.

### Perspectives about Pronunciation Teaching

This section tries to highlight views of different scholars on pronunciation teaching. There have been a number of approaches towards teaching pronunciation. These include fluency-building activities; such as effective listening exercises, fluency workshops, discussion wheel, values topic; using multi-sensory carefully modes such as visual and auditory reinforcement; just to mention a few.

Celce - Murcia et al.(1996) postulated the communicative approach that, because the primary purpose of language is communication, the use of language to communicate should be central in all classroom language instruction. It is thus expected that language is used in the classroom especially as a medium of instruction. In Ghana, English language is used as a medium of instruction in schools from basic school to the highest level of education. One perspective they mentioned about pronunciation teaching is by the use of fluency-building activities, Celce - Murcia et al.(1996:291). Effective listening exercises can contribute in enabling one acquire

pronunciation skills. The four language skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing systematically. One naturally listens sub - consciously to learn how sounds are produced, before one can knowledgeably imitate to speak correctly (correct pronunciations). Thus, in one of the perspectives, training people to be able to listen effectively will aid pronunciation teaching. This element could be used in our Ghanaian schools and colleges to better improve pronunciation.

Generally, workshops seek to motivate people to do things right and to introduce them to new good methods of doing things. To Celce -Murcia et al.(1996: 291), organizing fluency workshops will obviously expose new skills and beneficial information that will aid members to better pronounce sounds of a language; thus, a good way of teaching pronunciation. This is worth considering by curriculum planners of education in Ghana. The discussion wheel and values are both forms of games that aid pronunciation acquisition, and thus a perspective of teaching pronunciation.

Another perspective of teaching pronunciation is by multi-sensory modes including visual and auditory reinforcements. Visual reinforcement could be used in pronunciation teaching, through charts, diagrams, sketches on the board, overhead projector, flash cards, and wall chart. This gives a special touch to the teaching/learning process and subconsciously but massively ignites students' interest in acquiring good pronunciation. More of this kind of reinforcement should be introduced in the pre- service training institutions in Ghana, for the students to in-turn practice it in the basic schools.

Auditory Reinforcement is one of the ways through which pronunciation could be taught. Celce-Murcia et al. (1996:295-296) cited Firth (1992) who mentioned the use of auditory reinforcement such as a mnemonic device, or 'memory peg'. One listens to some sounds with the hope of remembering how to make that sound. Though its efficiency is not assured; to some extent, it is helpful in pronunciation teaching. For example students may be made to repeat /z/ for some seconds, touching their Adam's apple to help them note how voiced sounds are produced and how to reproduce /z/ in particular. This is a 'listen and imitate method', one of those discussed by Celce-Murcia et al.(1996:295-296). They then listed phonetic training, as another perspective in teaching pronunciation. That is, the use of articulatory descriptions, articulatory diagrams and phonetic alphabet. Especially where students are trained to be able to read phonetic transcriptions properly, it contributes a lot to successful teaching of pronunciation. The students become comfortable in correctly producing the various phonetic sounds.

Lastly, they mentioned 'minimal pair drills' as another method. Indeed all these methods or perspectives of pronunciation teaching are worth adopting by the pre-service training institutions. However, it is important to note that the application of these methods is varied.

Another empirical perspective important for discussion is that of Jenkins (2002). Jenkins (2002) focused on "Global English and the teaching of pronunciation." She researched into the pronunciation of global English and gave some teaching implications.

Jenkins (2002) opined that the term "Global English" was being used increasingly. This implied that English is spoken in every part of the world. She wrote that English is no longer spoken only by its native speakers in the UK, North America, Australia, and New Zealand and those who learn English for communication with the native speakers; but English is also spoken among non - native speakers. The use of English among non -native speakers, she said, is referred to as "English as an International Language" or EIL.

In her research, Jenkins (2002) analyzed the interactions between non - native speakers of English. Her aim was to find out the features of British/American English which were essential for intelligibility pronunciation and the features which were not essential for intelligibility pronunciation. She put her findings into a pronunciation core for teaching which is known as the lingua Franca Core. This was to indicate that it was intended as a guide for lingua franca interactions between native and non - native speakers.

She found the following as the main features of the Lingua Franca Core:

- "All the consonants are important except for 'th' sounds as in 'thin' and 'this'."
- "Consonant clusters are important at the beginning and in the middle of words. For example, the cluster in the word 'string' cannot be simplified to 'sting' or 'tring' and remain intelligible."
- "The contrast between long and short vowels is important. For example, the difference between the vowel sounds in 'sit' and 'seat'."
- "Nuclear (or tonic) stress is also essential. This is the stress on the most important word (or syllable) in a group of words. For example, there is a difference in meaning between 'My son uses a computer' which is a neutral statement of fact and 'My SON uses a computer', where there is an added meaning (such as that another person known to the speaker and listener does not use a computer)."

On the other hand, she found that many other items which were regularly taught in English pronunciation courses appear not to be essential for intelligibility in EIL. She outlined those as the following:

- "The 'th' sounds (see above)."
- "Vowel quality, that is, the difference between vowel sounds where length is not involved, e.g. a German speaker may pronounce the 'e' in the word 'chess' more like an 'a' as in the word 'cat'."
- "Weak forms such as the words 'to', 'of' and 'from' whose vowels are often pronounced as schwa instead of with their full quality."
- "Other features of connected speech such as assimilation (where the final sound of a word alters to make it more like the first sound of the next word, so that, e.g. 'red paint' becomes 'reb paint')."
- "Word stress."
- "Pitch movement."
- "Stress timing."

Though the above were found to be regularly taught in English pronunciation courses, she believed they were

essential or intelligible in EIL interactions. That is, it is vital that one learns the key aspects of pronunciation such as she mentioned above; stress timing, pitch movement but to mention a few, that does not directly help one to be intelligible in pronunciation. It helps to improve one's pronunciation but does not necessarily help one to be intelligible in English as an international language (especially with other non-native speakers). However, it was pointed out that those sub-topics are said to be essential to the native speaker, either because they aid intelligibility or because they are thought to make an accent more appropriate. After presenting these findings she outlined the implications of the findings to pronunciation teaching. According to her, the following are the implications of her findings for pronunciation teaching which is very relevant to this study:

- *“Students should be given choice. That is, when students are learning English so that they can use it in international contexts with other non-native speakers from different first languages, they should be given the choice of acquiring a pronunciation that is more relevant to EIL intelligibility than traditional pronunciation syllabuses offer...”*
- *“The non-core items are not only unimportant for intelligibility but also socially more appropriate. After all, native speakers have different accents depending on the region where they were born and live. So why should non-native speakers of an international language not be allowed to do the same?”*
- *“Finally, students should be given plenty of exposure in their pronunciation classrooms to other non-native accents of English so that they can understand them easily even if a speaker has not yet managed to acquire the core features. For EIL, this is much more important than having classroom exposure to native speaker accents.”*

Firstly, Jenkins (2002) propagates the choice of topics for pronunciation teaching to a level of international intelligibility than courses on pronunciation that may be relevant to traditional level of interaction. This will draw the pronunciation of non-native speakers closer to that of the native speaker, thereby improving the intelligibility of English pronunciations even among other non-native speakers of English. This point, if deemed laudable, calls for a review in the topics on the course outlines of the schools and colleges in Ghana with regard to pronunciation teaching; talking about review, the researcher should first indicate the need to include pronunciation conspicuously on the course outline of pre-service institutions in general as well as the basic level. It is believed that some of the non-core items may even make them less intelligible to another non-native speaker of English. The needs of the individual must be addressed towards achieving intelligibility in the EIL. On the contrary to Jenkins' (2002) view about 'th' sounds seen as not essential to international intelligibility, the researcher believes that that is one of the aspects which poses problem of international unintelligibility. The German or Ghanaian who may have a challenge of in producing the/θ/'th' sounds, in communication with the native speaker might pose a challenge in understanding. It is only upon a period of time that the native

speaker may try to adjust to the manner of pronunciation of the non-native speaker. Intelligibility corresponds more to a moderate effort in understanding a non-native speaker. Thus, if due to the mispronunciation of/θ/'th' sounds, the listener strains, then intelligibility has not been achieved.

Another implication drawn is the fact that though the non-core items, such as word stress, pitch timing but to mention a few, as outlined above is unimportant in relation to intelligibility, it is appropriate that it is learned by non-native speakers of EIL. This is clarified by the fact that even though the non-core items are not relevant to pronunciation intelligibility, it is socially appropriate that all non-native learners of EIL are allowed to learn the same principle. After all, aside studying the same non-core points they still do have different core issues to address in terms of language needs. In the context of pronunciation teaching in Ghanaian education, the implication is that though the non-core points may be irrelevant to pronunciation intelligibility, it is still socially appropriate to learn them. The psychological discomfort of not being able to express oneself exposes the need to give Jenkins's (2002) non-score point attention.

## METHOD

The qualitative research method was employed in this research. This choice was adopted due to the in-depth information drawn out of it. Specifically, the research instruments that the researcher used are observation and interviews. The non-probability sampling method was used because the researcher believed that those specific respondents were the right persons to provide the needed information, irrespective of the instrument used. The complete observation method was employed. The comprehension lessons of three tutors were observed six times. The first two were not analyzed in order to avoid using data which does not reflect the actual situation. With regard to the interviews, three (3) tutors of English, ten (10) first year students and (10) second year students were interviewed. The semi-structured interview format was used. The interviews were organized within a period of about forty-five (45) minutes. Alshenqeeti (2014) citing Schostak (2006:54) points out that “An interview is an extendable conversation between partners that aim at having an ‘in-depth information’ about a certain topic or subject, and through which a phenomenon could be interpreted in terms of the meanings interviewees bring to it.” The researcher believed that through interviews this could be achieved to ensure the success of the research.

The received data was analyzed by the thematic method through categorization and coding.

## HOW CAN TEACHING OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION BE IMPROVED IN THE PRE-SERVICE TRAINING INSTITUTION, WESLEY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, KUMASI, GHANA?

As part of the outcomes of the interview, respondents suggested ways through which pronunciation can be improved. In addition, any related point to an observation has been well discussed alongside. The following were found to be

the ways through which English pronunciation teaching at pre-service institutions, and for that matter, Wesley College of Education could be improved:

### **Pronunciation should be Taught from the Basic Level of Education**

The researcher agrees with Higgs et al. (1982) that pronunciation should be taught to the beginner. This buttresses the fact that when pronunciation is taught right from the early days of schooling of the learner, it will make the learner a better person in terms of pronunciation. Though some sort of speech work is included in the basic level of education course outlines in Ghana; how well it is taught is another issue. Some of the teachers who are to teach these sounds may not be well versed in the teaching of English pronunciation. Students of pre – service training institutions teach the pupils at the basic level of education after their period of study. It is thus important that these students are trained very well in all aspects including pronunciation since their make-up will automatically influence the young pupils they teach. Ill-trained teachers may have the tendency of impacting negatively on their students.

### **Pronunciation should be Included in the Course Outlines of Pre – Service Training Institutions**

Apart from the fact that pronunciation should be taught at the basic level of education, it should also be well taught at the pre – service training institutions. The researcher agrees with Robertson (2002) that pronunciation teaching should be included in government and private schools. It is thus very necessary to include pronunciation teaching in the syllabuses of Wesley College of Education. All interviewees, tutors and students alike admitted that pronunciation should be taught in the training college and the basic level, though some interviewees felt that pronunciation could not be taught in isolation. A teacher said this:

*Yes, I think that in the first place, the teaching of oral/’ɔrəl/English should be made compulsory at the Training College level because these are teachers who are going out to teach others; so, if it is made compulsory and ‘err’ is captured in the course outlines or the syllabuses, err both students and teachers will be wild awake to take it serious.*

Since students of Wesley College of Education are being trained to become teachers to younger ones in few years to come, it is vital that they possess good pronunciation skills in order to be able to influence the younger students positively. Unfortunately, some of the students do not have knowledge about what actually goes into pronunciation teaching. Hismonoglu (2006 citing Morley 1991) indicated the meaning of pronunciation as a “...consideration to phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, environmental allophonic variations, and combinatory phonotactic rules, along with attention to stress, rhythm and intonation.” This implies that there is more to pronunciation than just word drills. In the pronunciation class, stress and intonation, rhythm, but to mention a few, are inclusive. It was revealed that some students

thought that pronunciation teaching is all about word repetition. A student said:

*Pronunciation, like, they should make it like, one whole topic. Like, they should include it in the syllabus in English One whole topic for pronunciation in English so that we get time to learn most of the words and how they are being pronounced.*

Another student said:

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

This shows that some students are naïve and think that pronunciation involves only word drills. All these indicate the need for pronunciation to be taught in the institution. And even if pronunciation involved only word drills, the researcher would have still deemed it wise to include in the course outlines for the sake of the pupils the student-teachers go in to teach at the Basic level of Education. Although Phonetics (The scientific study of speech sounds) is taught at Wesley College of Education and in all other colleges of Education in Ghana (as of 2017), it is not an instant remedy to the students’ pronunciation problems, Ashby (1995). Thus the need of continuous study of pronunciation irrespective of the academic level of the individual.

### **Pronunciation should be Made Compulsory for all Students**

Apart from the fact that it should be included in the course outlines it should also be made compulsory at Wesley College of Education in particular and the colleges of Education in general, where all students will take that course. This will ensure that all students equally benefit from pronunciation teaching to be able to produce comfortably intelligible pronunciation. Making pronunciation compulsory, will to a large extent help improve the pronunciation skills of students of Wesley College of Education.

### **Better Methods of Teaching**

Better methods of teaching should be adopted in English pronunciation. Though pronunciation is not conspicuously taught at Wesley College of Education, the method of teaching was an issue that came up during the interview. A tutor said this:

*Ya! The phonic. In methodology we have the whole – word approach, the look and say and the phonic method. The look and say, that’s where you the teacher you pronounce the words and the students, follow you. Right? And that should be done, not very often; at the initial stage it should be done. And then when you have developed the interest in reading you teach them the phonic with the letter sounds are put in. ok?*

When pronunciation is included in the course program of Wesley College of Education, it may be worth it to consider the view of Ebong and Sabbadini (2006) so that

pronunciation of sounds, words, and connected speeches could be taught through songs. Fluency workshops proposed by Celce – Murcia et al.(1996) may also be considered and implemented. In addition, the researcher agrees with Celce – Murcia et al.(1996) that multi-sensory modes including visual and auditory reinforcements could be adopted in teaching pronunciation at Wesley College of Education. Visual reinforcement could be used in pronunciation teaching, through charts, diagrams, sketches on the board, overhead, projector, flash cards, and wall chart.

Teachers also expressed knowledge of good methodology in teaching pronunciation. A teacher said:

*So the teachers do not pay attention. So when I was handling this aspect of methodology, I told them that every lesson there should be a pronunciation drill. That's where you treat the key words. And when you are selecting the key words, other factors must come in. You have to look at words that are often mispronounced.*

In the statement above, the teacher of English was indicating how he teaches to students of Wesley College of Education to in-turn teach the young pupils. He continued to outline a number of teaching methods of pronunciation:

*Then second: there are certain words that the children are not familiar, you pick those words. And don't write the words before you teach the pronunciation. That's where you have the mistake. May be if you consider the method of ... pronunciation. So first you should model the pronunciation before the students read the word. If you write the word first, the students will feign pronouncing the word. And once the child has pronounced the word you the teacher ... So the child will not take into account. Look at this word s – a – y – s. We pronounce it as/seis/but it should be says/sez/. Very good. So the moment you write it on the board, they will say ah! Says/seis/'Kofi says/seis/die se mi nim' {As for 'Kofi/seis/I know}.*

This method of teaching pronunciation is very vital to be used when pronunciation is included in the course program of Wesley College of Education.

### Provision of Equipment

Paramount amongst the need for equipment indicated was an English language laboratory. A teacher said,

*I think that these days we are going technology and I think that the school should think about a paradigm shift. And this paradigm shift should look at the setting up language labs, language laboratories in our training college system so that the students can be sent there and they can test their own pronunciations and 'emm', it will go a long way to help them. Currently, I don't see even a single teacher training college in Ghana that has a single language lab. But as far back as 1950s there was a nice language lab at Wesley College*

To the above teacher of English, the fact that there used to be an English language laboratory and it is no more indicates that there is retrogression with respect to language development and particularly English pronunciation. To him, the language laboratories will enable learners to experience the

language (Winsor 2009). In the language laboratory, students and teachers alike could listen to correct pronunciations, record their pronunciations, know their short falls and practice to improve their pronunciations. Another teacher shared his experience:

*...So all across, I for example have gone through the university system, I have learnt under a very good lecturer of language, and we never entered the lab. So if you do not become conscious of it, you will do what others are doing in the system. So I think that the lack of language labs in the system, in our schools contributes-----*

Though all the three teachers of English requested for 'an English language laboratory, it has been indicated that, there is a language laboratory at Wesley College of Education but has been allocated to the French Department. In the institution, it is only French teachers and students who use the place. The times for use have even been administratively planned through time tables. It is therefore not as simple as just getting up to send students of English for any pronunciation lesson since French classes are often organized there. It is for this reason teachers of English requested for an English Language laboratory. The change could therefore be effected from the administrative level since it is even administratively accepted as the French laboratory for which reason all the teachers of English indicated that there is the need for an 'English Language laboratory'

To improve pronunciation and pronunciation teaching, the 'French lab' as it is termed, should however be converted into a proper language laboratory where all other languages taught in the institutions can have access to.

The laboratory should be furnished with other gadgets to help improve pronunciation such as a teacher suggested below:

*And then we should have PC's with Cambridge Dictionary because we have one with Audio. And we have some on the net, which helps in pronunciation. Then we have the software that also – but the software it is synthetic. You understand that. It is synthetic in the sense that you can't get purely human voice. It is imitated human voice. Ahan! So sometimes the way a word will be pronounced, it will feel different. That is one of the strategies, but you can get about ninety percent of the words, correctly pronounced. If it is possible among your suggestions you can have these recorded, electronically recorded books.*

Other equipment such as electronically recorded books and electronic dictionaries were mentioned. The teachers realize how important it is to have equipment; since, it will help improve pronunciation and pronunciation teaching. In addition, cellular phones could even be used to improve pronunciation teaching. Good pronunciation software could be uploaded on cell phones where both the teachers and students could listen to correct pronunciations of sounds, words and connected speeches in class to help improve pronunciation and pronunciation teaching.

### Establishment of Campus FM

One other way of improving pronunciation as indicated by the respondents is through Campus FM. A teacher said this:

*You see we could have, you see if we had a campus FM, then I think Teachers of English in the various campuses can come together and then think about areas that they can broadcast, they get early morning broadcast so that the students listen to them. But we don't have anything of this nature; we don't have a language lab, we don't have anything.*

To the teacher of English, when a campus FM is established, the teachers of English could plan and run pronunciation programs for students to listen to, especially in the morning. This is because the new learnt pronunciations could be used through the day to help learners get used to them. These include correct pronunciations of sounds, words, and sentences (connected speech), introduction of other aspects of pronunciation such as stress and intonation. Realistically, there are other FM stations already running pronunciation programs; but, if it is a campus FM, the time the program is run can be included in the college's activities with the view of ensuring that all students listen to the lessons. Practically, when administrative measures are put in place, this could be achieved. It could help improve pronunciation at Wesley College of Education. On the contrary, if the programs that are run on the campus FM are not carefully and properly organized, it could rather worsen the pronunciation problems existing. This is due to the 'dark cycle'. If the teachers who may be teaching on the FM pronounce wrongly with respect to wrong word pronunciation, wrong stress and intonation, etc students will rather be exposed to poor pronunciation than intelligible pronunciation.

### Utilization of Findings of Academic Research Works

Again, a teacher indicated that, when academic research findings, such as this research work, are used and not left to sit on shelves, it would generally help improve the system in general and pronunciation in particular. He said:

*Academic exercises must not remain in the libraries, but they must be used: information findings and suggestions must be used in the classroom. Because I know that many people have done research on these things but sometimes they don't come to the people who need them.*

It is therefore hoped that this research work will get the necessary attention to help improve pronunciation and pronunciation teaching at Wesley College of Education. In Figure 2 below, how English pronunciation teaching can be improved have been outlined and presented in a smartArt Graphics.

### Education on the Need for Pronunciation Teaching and Learning

Students and people in general should be made to see the effects of poor pronunciation and be educated on the need for pronunciation learning. A teacher made an interesting example of pronunciation and meaning:

*Yes! It should be; because, you see, when you mispronounce a word, you make it very difficult for the person you are speaking with to understand you. Sometimes, even wrong pronunciation can change the meaning of an expression. For example, if you are coming to my*

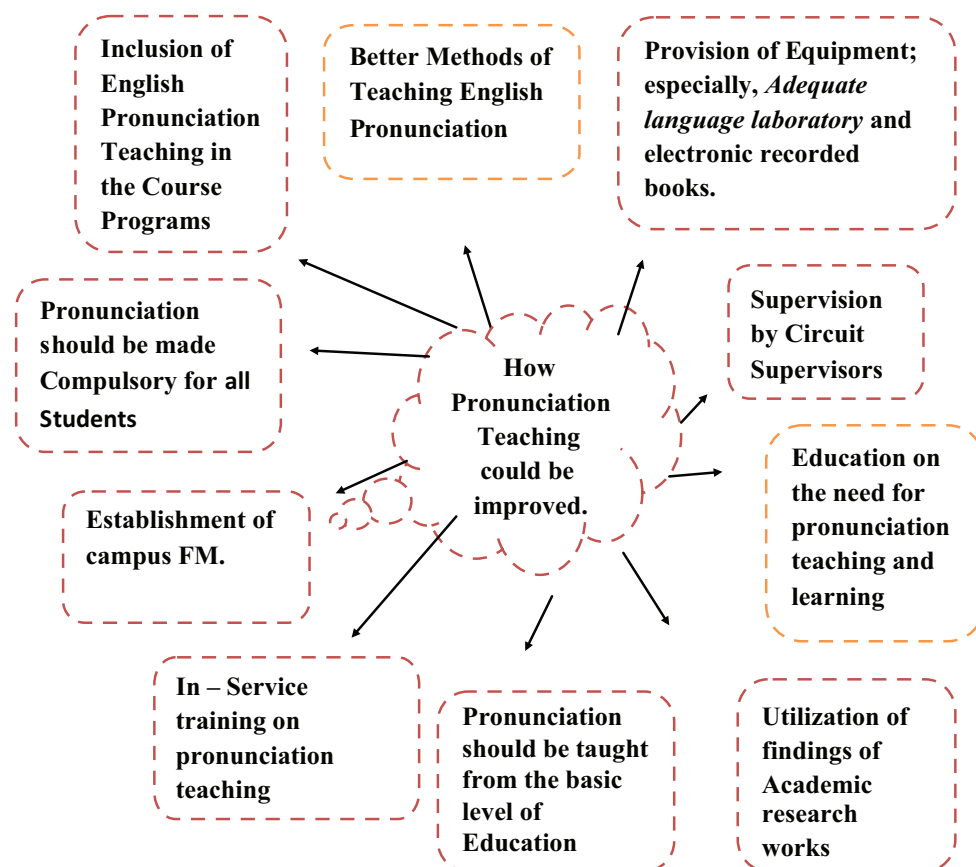


Figure 2. How English pronunciation teaching can be improved



house and you knock at my door, and I say, 'coming' /kʌmɪŋ/. I have not invited you to the house. You may hear it as 'come in' which is not. 'Coming, /kʌmɪŋ/ meaning, wait am coming.

In this example, we see how mispronunciation can affect the meaning of words. An example of a scenario at a hospital reflecting a vital need for pronunciation teaching to be given attention: a situation where in a communication between a doctor and a nurse, the word "haemoptysis" which means 'blood coughing' could be mispronounced as "haematemesis", which means 'blood vomiting' and could result in wrong medication and even lead to death. This is because the causes and treatment of blood vomiting and blood coughing are different. This example confirms how vital pronunciation is. There is yet another example another teacher gave:

Let's look at the word 'friend' and 'fiend'. 'Friend' take away the 'r' and you will get the other word. 'Friend' without the 'r' you get 'fiend'. Now, if I say you are my friend, we understand it. If I say you are my 'fiend', it means you are my enemy, you are a demon; it is used for satan. So by omitting the 'r' sound ... in fact I had a lot of ... there are many many many-----

All these examples indicate the need to educate people (students and teachers alike) on the need for pronunciation teaching.

### Supervision by circuit supervisors

It also came to light that even though speech work may be part of the text books at the basic level, there was the need for circuit supervisors to ensure that it is being taught. A teacher said:

Certainly, I have already said that it is very important and if you look at the text books, you know, the English text books, you know, we have speech work; and I have emphatically said that many of the teachers skip that, so I think conscious effort must be made to teach; because when you get to J.H.S., you know, yes, you have speech work, even S.H.S. we still have speech work there but teachers normally don't teach. Until they are preparing for their oral English

He added that: "It's not just the issue of writing books and then we don't know whether the books are made use of, effectively. Circuit supervisors who come to the field to see what teachers are doing must find out whether the teachers are really teaching speech work." Indeed, there is no presentation of fact to prove that teachers of English at the basic level of Education skip the pronunciation aspect. This could be a proposal for further research; however, the competence of the circuit supervisors in the area of pronunciation and pronunciation teaching is very crucial.

### In – Service training on pronunciation teaching

If circuit supervisors who are to supervise teachers of English are not well versed in the pronunciation and cannot tell whether a teacher is even teaching the correct sound or not, it will bring no improvement. This leads to the fact that there

must be in – service training on pronunciation teaching for circuit supervisors to help improve matters.

Teachers must also be given in – service training based on the fact that in our findings, it was deduced that some teachers also have pronunciation problems. Even during the interviews and observations, this was evident. During the interview, a teacher at a point pronounced the word 'oral' /'ɔrəl/ as /'əʊrə: l/ and the word mother /mʌðə/ as /mʌdʌ/. During the observation, a teacher pronounced the word 'this' /'ðis/ as /dis/. There was every indication that teachers also have pronunciation problems since at a point, students laughed because they noticed the teacher nearly mispronounced the word bring /brɪŋ/ as /blɪŋ/ when he was asking them to 'bring their assignments'. It was embarrassing. All these indicate the need for in – service training to be as well organized for teachers. This will contribute to the improvement of pronunciation teaching. Due to the fact that students usually imitate their tutors, the level of tutors' pronunciation intelligibility may serve as an unconscious pronunciation teaching. The otherwise shall retrogress the situation of the students with regard to intelligible pronunciation.

### CONCLUSION

In sum, the following has been identified as ways through which pronunciation and pronunciation teaching can be improved:

- a. Pronunciation should be well taught from the basic level of education
- b. Inclusion of 'English pronunciation teaching' in the course program
- c. Pronunciation should be made compulsory for all students
- d. Better methods of teaching.
- e. Provision of equipment; especially, English language laboratory and electronic books.
- f. Establishment of campus FM
- g. Utilization of findings of academic research works.
- h. Education on the need for pronunciation teaching and learning.
- i. Supervision by circuit supervisors
- j. In – Service training on pronunciation teaching

Below is a diagram of how pronunciation teaching can be improved in the College of Education:

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