

DISCRIMINATION OF SOUNDS IN TEACHING ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This article suggests some didactic strategies that could facilitate the teaching of English sounds focusing on sound discrimination framework. One case of English sound discrimination has been selected to illustrate the contrast between two sounds based on one spelling: [u:] vs [ju:] spelt as “ew”. It results from the classroom observation and the teachers’ questionnaire that the selected item is mentioned in the official syllabus of English course at secondary schools, but it is not really taken into account in classes. This is due to the fact that the secondary school teachers have not been prepared to face such an item. Otherwise, teachers of English lack didactic strategies to teach and assess sound discrimination items. Thus, this article shows that the sound discrimination items can be taught and assessed as other English language items thanks to the provided practical suggestions.

Key words: *Sound discrimination, Pronunciation, Teaching, Learning.*

Résumé

Cet article suggère quelques stratégies didactiques qui pourraient faciliter l’enseignement des sons anglais en se focalisant sur la discrimination des sons. Un cas d’étude sur la discrimination des sons anglais a été sélectionné pour illustrer le contraste entre deux sons basé sur une écriture : [u:] vs [ju:] épéle comme «ew». Il ressort de l’observation et du questionnaire que l’item sélectionné est mentionné dans le programme officiel du cours d’anglais aux secondaires, mais il n’est pas vraiment pris en compte dans les salles de classes. Cela est dû au fait que les enseignants du secondaire n’ont pas été préparés à faire face à ce type d’enseignement. Autrement, les enseignants d’anglais manquent de stratégies et de capacités pour enseigner et évaluer les items de la discrimination des sons anglais. Ainsi, cet article montre que les items d’enseignement de la discrimination des sons peuvent être enseignés et évalués comme d’autres items de langue anglaise grâce aux suggestions pratiques fournies à la fin de ce travail.

Mots clés: *Discrimination des sons, Prononciation, Enseignement, Apprentissage.*

Introduction

The main purpose of this article is to suggest some didactic strategies that could facilitate the teaching of English sounds in classes. In fact, the study of individual sounds and sound discrimination appears in the

official English syllabus at secondary schools. According to the syllabus, sound discrimination is concerned with the contrast of English sounds (simple vowels, diphthongs, triphthongs and consonants) in relation to their different spellings. That is, the pronunciation of some English consonants and vocalic sounds is made tricky due to ambiguity arising from their written form. As a matter of fact, one case of English sound discrimination is selected to illustrate the contrast between sounds based on orthography: *the contrast between the long vowel [u:] and the sound combination [ju:] spelt as "ew"*. The mastery of this study is liable to enable the secondary school teachers and learners to be confident regarding the appropriate pronunciation of the English vowels and consonants. However, it appears that the English sound items are not taught in the secondary school classes accordingly. Consequently, learners encounter a lot of difficulties to read texts and to utter their own writing productions. As such, this work seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How to teach the contrast between the long vowel [u:] and the sound combination [ju:] spelt as "ew"? (2) What prevents the implementation of this English pronunciation item in classes? In the light of these research questions, it may be hypothesized that (1) *the contrast between [u:] and [ju:] spelt as "ew"* could be taught thanks to the suggested didactic strategies below, and (2) the secondary school teachers could not teach English sound discrimination items because they lack training, strategies or activities to face these English lessons autonomously in classes. As a matter of fact, the implementation of the suggested strategies could enable the secondary school learners to be able to explain the contrast between the simple vowel [u:] and the sounds combination [ju:] based on "ew" through the text reading and their own oral productions in the different pedagogical classes. Thus, this article includes the literature review, the data collection methods and the practical suggestions of the selected item.

1. Previous works on English sound teaching

This section aims at reviewing some previous works related to the teaching of English sounds in secondary schools. In this paper, I select the following authors:

Gilakjani (2011) addresses the following question: why is pronunciation so difficult to learn? He thinks that the problem that learners face when

speaking a foreign language is mental. In this connection, he (2011: 1) asserts that: *“what is generally accepted among psycholinguists and phonologists who specialized in this area, is that the difficulty of learning to pronounce a foreign language is cognitive rather than physical, and that it has something to do with the way ‘raw sound’ is categorized or conceptualized in using speech”*. This quotation underlines the fact that the problem that prevents learners to utter a foreign language is “cognitive”; that is, it is linked to the learners’ mental abilities. Since, the invisible part of the language is used to speak, these learners need mental efforts to create harmony between the brain and the language uttered. Moreover, vocabulary and grammar are not sufficient in communication process because the EFL learners need to know first how to pronounce sounds, words, or sentences before using them in their daily conversations. That is the reason why, Gilakjani (2011:2) states:

An area of concern and indeed one of the top priorities of EFL students after completing elementary English courses is pronunciation. It is important at this point in time to make a distinction between speaking and pronunciation as it is sometimes wrongly applied interchangeably. Pronunciation is viewed as a sub-skill of speaking. Generally, if we want to change the way a learner pronounces words, we have to change the way they think about the component sounds of those words.

It appears that, the lessons of English pronunciation should be added during the learning process in order to help learners grasp the difference between speaking and pronunciation. In other words, pronunciation is incorporated or bound to speaking to enable learners be familiar with the sounds system of the target language during the oral communication. Talking about the learners’ problems when learning English pronunciation, Gilakjani points out that the learners’ stress, intonation, motivation and instruction are factors that block the EFL learners in schools. As a matter of fact, the author clarifies that the above factors are reinforced by the teachers’ professional attitudes. These attitudes unveil that teachers do not teach pronunciation items like other English components because they are not well equipped with appropriate tools or background. In this connection, Gilakjani (2011: 5) states:

Teachers tend to view pronunciation as the least useful of the basic language skills and therefore they generally sacrifice teaching pronunciation in order to spend valuable class time on other areas of language. Possibly, teachers just do not have the background or tools to properly teach pronunciation. Teachers have taught what they thought was pronunciation via repetition drills on both discrete word or phrase level, or give the students the rules of pronunciation like the vowel in a CVC pattern.

Obviously, Gilakjani mentions that the teaching of pronunciation is still side-lined, neglected and underestimated in classes. In fact, teachers of English who consider it useless in the English teaching process lack the appropriate knowledge (basic notions on phonetics and phonology) or methodology to deal with the English pronunciation items in classes. Meanwhile, they overestimate other aspects of the language teaching items such as vocabulary, grammar and others because they have been trained to teach them and they possess some appropriate books which can help to prepare lessons for the secondary school learners. Additionally, Gilakjani emphasizes on the learners' personality and mother tongue as other aspects which hamper the learning of English pronunciation items in classes. Thus, to teach pronunciation effectively, Gilakjani (2011: 9-10) suggests that a curriculum design is useful to focus on the supra-segmental, to have an academic research and classroom experiments, and to improve the training for teachers. Insisting on the teachers training, the prospective teachers should be trained on the teaching methods related to English pronunciation items in order to motivate the secondary school learners practice them when dealing with the target language during the learning process. Moreover, focusing his attention on the difficulties of pronunciation encountered by learners during this process, the author tries to answer the question related to the difference between speaking and pronunciation when he (2011:12) argues:

The difficulty of learning to pronounce a foreign language is cognitive rather than physical. Many learners of English as a second language have major difficulties with English pronunciation even after years of learning the language. The fault which most

severely impairs the communication process in EFL/ESL learners is pronunciation; not vocabulary and grammar. It is important at this point to make a distinction between speaking and pronunciation as it is sometimes wrongly applied interchangeably. Pronunciation is viewed as a sub-skill of speaking.

The above passage shows that pronunciation should be taken into account when teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language. In fact, what prevents the non-native learners to have a good pronunciation is their mental; the way words appear in their mind since they confuse letters from sounds. They may have a rich vocabulary and a good mastery of grammar but, since the speaking skill is also related to pronunciation lessons, these learners would always make a lot of mispronunciations which might impede them to have an effective communication.

In fact, it is true that children have more potential than adults to learn a language with a good accent; they can easily acquire the right pronunciation because at a given age of life people cannot anymore study a second language and get a proficient pronunciation. Actually, there is a biological and neurological period which ends around the age of 12. After this period, it becomes extremely difficult to attain the complete mastery of a second language especially pronunciation. It is evident that age is an important aspect to be taken into consideration when learning and teaching English in classes. Another factor which can affect the learner's pronunciation mentioned by Gilakjani is the attitude of a learner. In fact, learners who are more concerned about their pronunciation do better and can finally achieve the intelligible pronunciation when Gilakjani (2011:5) enlightens:

It seems as though some learners are more adept at acquiring good pronunciation. Even within one homogenous classroom, there is often a large discrepancy among the pronunciation ability of the students. This phenomenon has led many researchers to study the personal characteristics of the learners that contribute to their success in foreign language acquisition. In other words, if the students were more concerned about the

pronunciation of the target language, they tended to have better pronunciation...

Emphasizing on the learners' attitude to acquire good pronunciation of English as a second language, Gilakjani traces that some learners do not have the same abilities to acquire a good pronunciation where others are more concerned about their communicative skills. They take into account the pronunciation aspects, whereas others are more focused on the writing aspects because they get heavy tongues. In addition, the mother tongue (L1) may also affect the pronunciation of the learner. As a matter of fact, the transfer from the learner's first language to English as a foreign language appears quite difficult since the English sound system undergoes a great change and many sounds of English may not exist in the learner's native language. This can cause mispronunciation due to the fact that the learner will tend to adapt the absent sound to the most closed sound of his native language instead of pronouncing the right sound of the target language. Yet, it is important to mention that this work still follows the linguistic process. So, it needs to be transposed into didactic process from the appropriate teaching strategies and learning activities in order to motivate both teachers and learners face the English sound discrimination in classes.

Kenworthy (2002) states some principles in teaching and learning pronunciation. As a matter of fact, the author mentions several needs to remember when teaching and learning pronunciation. Talking about the teacher's role, Kenworthy (2002: 1) unveils that teachers play the role of "*Helping learners hear*", when he writes that:

The first teachers' consideration is making learner to easy hear with the purpose to help them perceive sounds. Learners will have a strong tendency to hear the sounds of English in terms of the sounds of their native language. The task of the teachers, by checking their learners that they can hear the sounds according to the appropriate categories, is to help them develop new categories if necessary.

Kenworthy shows the first duty of teachers which stands for helping learners perceive sounds easily. They should motivate them to listen to the way English sounds are uttered during the oral communication. They train them about the types of English sounds; that is, vowels and consonants to help them develop their oral skills when earing the target

language. In fact, learners perceive sounds through lessons and exercises because there are some English sounds which do not occur in the first language. Next, the teachers' role is to help learners be familiar with these sounds, to demonstrate how these sounds are made, and to show the ways or rules justifying the relation between sounds and letters. This is to avoid confusion in the secondary school learners' minds when implementing lessons related to pronunciation. When teaching sounds of English, teachers' demonstrations are needed to bring more precisions and to help learners alternate from one aspect of pronunciation to another; such as, from individual sounds to intonation or stress. Talking about stress and intonation in teaching pronunciation, Kenworthy (2002:02) mentions that:

The other important thing for the teacher is emphasizing on important part from pronunciation aspects for the students; such as, stress or intonation. Learners need to know what to pay attention to, and what to work on because learners may miss something important. For example, they may not realize that when a particular word is stressed or said in a different way, it can affect the message that is sent to the listener. Teachers need to make learners aware of the potential of sounds, the resources available to them for sending spoken messages.

Kenworthy raises the relevance of teaching sounds in connection to intonation and stress in order to help learners master their speech sounds in a group of words or sentences. In fact, stress deals with the pronunciation of a word, whereas intonation refers to the pronunciation of a group of words when the author underlines that *"a word stressed, said in a different way can affect the message sent to the listener"*. That is why, teachers have to focus on the learners' sound production in a word and a group of words to help learners realising meaningful oral messages. Therefore, the learner's progress needs to be assessed from their feedback in order to measure the intonation degree. In this respect, Kenworthy asserts that learning pronunciation is so complex that the teacher should provide some types of exercises or activities that will be helpful for the secondary school learners. They will provide the most opportunities for practice or implementation in classes.

Therefore, Kenworthy suggests that teachers have to diversify exercises to evaluate by taking into account the level of the learners. That is, the assessing of the learners' progress is a crucial factor in maintaining motivation because they cannot measure their pronunciation production without the teacher's control. That is why, he mentions that the importance of the learner's willingness is to take responsibility for their own learning. The teacher may be highly skilled at noticing mispronunciations, but if learners do not practice and try to monitor their own efforts, the prospects of change or improvement are minimal. Thus, the author provides some principals that can facilitate the teaching and learning of English sounds. However, the provided principals are too general and they lack the didactic transposition. That is, no precise category of sound, no learners' level and no lesson plan have been elaborated to help both teachers and learners deal with this language item in classes accordingly.

Roach (2009) focuses his work on the relevance of teaching and learning pronunciation aspects. Firstly, he tackles the Received Pronunciation as the English pronunciation accent requested to foreign teachers and learners of English when he (2009:05) writes:

This course deals almost entirely with RP. There is, of course, no implication that other accents are inferior or less pleasant sounding. The reason is simply that RP is the accent that has always been chosen by British teachers to teach foreign learners, and is the accent that has been most fully described and has been used as the basis for textbooks and pronouncing dictionaries.

Roach emphasizes on RP which is an accent typically adapted to non-native speakers and listeners of English language in the world. Actually, RP is the accent of English which is used for textbooks and dictionaries by British teachers to be taught and learnt in foreign countries. Otherwise, Roach encourages the non-native teachers of English to motivate learners practice this accent during the learning process of the target language in classes. This is illustrated when Roach asserts that if you are a learner of English you are recommended to concentrate on RP initially, though when you have worked through the course and become familiar with this, you will probably listen to other accents of English, and identify ways in which they differ from RP. In fact, Roach

recommends EFL learners to deal with RP so that they could be listened to others and to identify the different accents of English spoken all over the world. Additionally, Roach tackles the aspect of symbols because, learners of EFL need to master symbols used in dictionaries in order to be proficient in RP. That is why, Roach (2009:06) unveils that: *“A problem area that has received a lot of attention is the choice of symbols (...) In the past, many different conventions have been proposed and students have often been confused by finding that the symbols used in one book are different from the ones they have learned in another.”* Thus, Roach invites the foreign learners to study RP symbols so that they will be able to deal with some exercises of transcription in books of Phonetics and Phonology and to be familiar with the different symbols used from one dictionary to another. To enlighten, Roach unveils the advantages of having a common set of symbols for pronunciation teaching materials and pronunciation entries in dictionaries. Emphasizing on symbols used in some books and dictionaries without dealing with RP, it would be a mistake for teachers to teach pronunciation because the lack training in RP and may bring the EFL learners about confusion due to the diversity of symbols which exist in English. To illustrate, learners may be in trouble with the form of the sounds [oo] and [θū] which are not different in English. This means, if the teacher is not trained with RP, it will be difficult for him/her to train EFL learners to be excellent in pronunciation and help them exchange with natives. In this regard, Roach (Ibid.) enlightens: *“no pronunciation course that I know has ever said that learners must try to speak perfect RP; to claim this mixes up models with goals: the model chosen is RP, but the goal is normally to develop the learner’s pronunciation sufficiently to permit effective communication with native speakers?”* In fact, Roach insists on RP as a model to follow for EFL learners because its goal is not to make them be perfect, but to develop their pronunciation so that they could communicate with native speakers. Furthermore, Roach does not only put emphasis on foreign learners, but also on teachers and language-teaching theorists when he (Ibid.) unveils that:

Pronunciation teaching is not popular all the time with teachers and language teaching theorists, and in recent years it has been fashionable to treat it as a rather outdated activity. It has been claimed, for example, that it attempts to make learners try to sound like native speakers of RP, that it discourages

them through difficult and repetitive exercises and that it fails to give importance to communication.

The author demonstrates that pronunciation teaching is not an easy matter due to difficult and repetitive activities to perform. That is why, foreign learners consider pronunciation as an old-fashioned activity which discourages them to communicate orally. Therefore, Roach shows that if everything difficult is eliminated from the teaching process, it may end up doing very little beyond getting learners to play little communication games. Otherwise, to remedy problems related to the teaching of pronunciation, teachers should exclude technical terms which may seem to be difficult for learners, and to create some pronunciation games through which learners can practice pronunciation easily. Beyond the study of accent and symbols to facilitate the English pronunciation teaching, Roach also suggests the study of sounds when he (2009:09) writes:

To produce speech sounds, seven articulators are needed to be in contact. (i): the pharynx which is divided into two, one part being the back of the mouth and the other being the beginning of the way through the nasal cavity. (ii): The velum or soft palate which allows air to pass through the nose and through the mouth. (iii) The hard palate, often called the 'roof of the mouth'. (iv): The alveolar ridge which is between the top front teeth and the hard palate. (v) The tongue, (vi) the teeth (upper and lower), and (vii) the lips.

Roach demonstrates that the seven articulators described above especially the pharynx, the velum or soft palate, the hard palate, the alveolar ridge, the tongue, the teeth and the lips are the main articulators which contract themselves within the mouth in order to produce different sounds. Thus, it is thanks to that contraction that derive sounds like vowels. Emphasizing on vowel sounds, Roach highlights that English has a large number of vowel sounds; the first ones to be examined are short vowels. The symbols for these short vowels are: i, e, æ, ʌ, ɒ, ʊ, ə. These vowels tend to be long, the symbols consist of one vowel symbol plus a length-mark made of two dots (:). Thus, they are: i:, ɜ:, ɑ:, ɔ:, u:?. Roach mentions the two kinds of vowel sounds especially

short and long. Dealing with the difference between short and long vowel sounds, Roach (2009:19) asserts that:

If we compare some similar pairs of long and short vowels, for example *i* with *iː*, or *ʊ* with *uː*, or *æ* with *aː*, we can see distinct differences in quality (...) as well as in length. For this reason, all the long vowels have symbols which are different from those of short vowels. So, it is important to remember that the length mark is used not because it is essential, but because it helps learners to remember the length difference.

Roach establishes the difference between both short and long vowel sounds in terms of quality and length. Therefore, to help learners distinguish long and short vowels, two dots are added to long vowel symbols in order to indicate their length in terms of pronunciation. Moreover, the author keeps on tackling diphthongs and triphthongs as other vowel categories. Talking about diphthongs, he (2009:20) mentions that: “*Diphthongs are sounds which consist of a movement or glide from one vowel to another.*” This means that diphthongs are referred to as the category of vowels made of two sounds with a short movement from the first to the second vowel sound. And that movement is called the ‘glide’. In this perspective, Roach unveils that a vowel which remains constant and does not glide is called a pure vowel, and one of the most common pronunciation mistakes that result in a learner of English having a ‘foreign’ accent is the production of pure vowels where a diphthong should be pronounced. Because, diphthongs are like long vowels in terms of length.

Then, Roach focuses on EFL learner’s accent based on diphthongs because diphthongs are like long vowels. This means that, when pronouncing diphthongs, the first part is similar to long vowels in terms of duration or length. The first vowel of a diphthong which constitutes the most dominant or the most audible part than the second one. Thus, he illustrates through the word ‘eye’ [aɪ] in which the pronunciation looks like *aaaaaɪ*. As a result, the [aː] sound is louder and stronger, whereas the [ɪ] sound is shorter and quieter. Therefore, most of EFL learners do not take into account the lengthening of diphthongs when producing them in their speeches. In this regard, Roach enlightens that foreign learners must, therefore, remember that the last part of English diphthongs must

not be made too strongly. To do with triphthongs, Roach (2009:23) highlights that a triphthong is a glide from one vowel to another and then to a third; all produced rapidly and without interruption. He means that a triphthong is a rapid production of three vowel sounds without interruption. In fact, the glide moves from the first, the second to the third vowel sound. Roach tries to demonstrate the production of a triphthong through the word 'hour' which is made of two vowel sounds especially $aʊ$ ending with a schwa ($ə$). 'Hour' is pronounced $[aʊə]$.

Emphasizing on the composition of triphthongs, Roach makes the following remark that: "*the triphthongs can be looked on as being composed of the five closing diphthongs with ə added on the end. Thus we get: $ei+ə = eiə$, $ai+ə = aiə$, $ɔi + ə = ɔiə$, $əʊ+ə = əʊə$, $aʊ+ə = aʊə$. However, to help identify these triphthongs, some example words are : $eiə$ 'layer', 'player' ; $aiə$ 'liar', 'fire' ; $ɔiə$ 'loyal', 'royal' ; $əʊə$ 'lower', 'mower' ; $aʊə$ 'power', 'hour'. Here, Roach tries to demonstrate that triphthongs result from the combination between the five closing diphthongs: ei , ai , $ɔi$, $əʊ$, $aʊ$ and the schwa $ə$ at the end of each of them. Also, Roach provides some example words where those triphthongs can be located such as $eiə$ in the words 'layer', 'player' ; $aiə$ in 'liar', 'fire' ; $ɔiə$ in 'loyal', 'royal' ; $əʊə$ in 'lower', 'mower' ; and $aʊə$ in 'power', 'hour'. Finally, Roach has developed some aspects and rules which deal with the teaching and learning of English sounds. However, the knowledge that he has provided is too linguistic and difficult for teachers and learners to implement in the secondary school classes. That is why, didactic transposition is needed in order to eliminate the tricky notions of English phonology while teaching and learning sounds in English lessons.*

2. Data collection method and analysis

The purpose of this section is to provide some research instruments to collect data in the secondary school classes. Thus, observation and questionnaire are the selected methods to collect the appropriate data dealing with the teaching of English sound discrimination items.

2.1. Classroom observation

Classroom observation is a research method which gathers both teachers and learners from the teaching and learning of the target item in classes. For the sake of this work, it aims at checking whether the teaching of

English individual sound and sound discrimination items are taken into account during the English teaching process. The table below illustrates the English individual sounds and sound discrimination that are requested to taught, learnt and assessed at school in the official syllabus.

Table n°1: Observation checklist

English Sound items	Contents	Observation
Individual sound teaching items	Consonants Simple vowels (short and long vowels) Diphthongs Triphthongs	<i>These English sound items are not taught, learnt and assessed in classes accordingly.</i>
Sound discrimination teaching items	Consonants vs vowels Short vowels vs long vowels Simple vowels vs diphthongs Diphthongs vs triphthongs	

The classroom observation reveals that individual sounds and sound discrimination items are not taught, learnt and assessed in classes accordingly. This means that, during the observation period, none of these items has been implemented as a full lesson, whereas in grammar lessons, the teacher who dealt with the simple present of ordinary verbs put an emphasis on the pronunciation of third person singular which is formed by adding “s”, “es” or “ies” at the end of a verb. Then, he used repetition to explain the phenomenon that makes the third person singular endings sound [s], [z], [ɪz] instead of constituting a lesson on this language item. In addition, when observing the lesson about the simple past of ordinary verbs, transcription has been used to explain learners that “ed” may be pronounced as [t], [d] and [ɪd]. In fact, this could enlighten the learners’ understanding about the different utterances of the suffix “ed” justifying the past of regular verbs. It is noticeable that teachers incorporate the teaching of sound items when tackling grammar lessons. Here, pronunciation is not considered as a course, but as a

supplementary exercise or explanation of grammar which should not be the case. Otherwise, the observed teachers of English teach individual sounds and sound discrimination items within lessons of Vocabulary, Grammar, language function and Reading comprehension through sound repetition and description.

2.2. Questionnaire addressed to teachers

The questionnaire addressed to teachers is analysed individually in order to enlighten the teachers’ views about the teaching of English sound based on sound discrimination at secondary school.

Question 1: Which English sound teaching item do you often teach in classes?

This question enquires about the English sound teaching items that teachers of English often train learners in classes. The following table illustrates:

Table n°2: English sound teaching items

Expected answers	Respondents	Percentages
consonant	05	50
vowel	04	40
Sound discrimination	01	10
Total	10	100

This chart unveils that English vowels and consonants have been chosen by learners as the most taught and learnt sound items at CEG “Angola Libre” since the selected teachers encourage learners to implement these pronunciation items in classes. As a matter of fact, 50% of the selected teachers deal with vowels, 40% of them prefer consonants, whereas only 10% of them interest in sound discrimination. This means that sound discrimination is not ignored by teachers since they are limited on the inspectors’ term planning even though it is mentioned in the English syllabus.

Question 2: Which method do you often teach English sounds in the class of 3^e?

This question aims at identifying the method teachers often use to teach English sounds in classes. The following chart gives data.

Table n°3: Sound discrimination teaching methods.

Respondents	Number of respondents	Percentages
Transcription	04	40
Explanation	00	00
Repetition	06	60
Total	10	100

The above table shows that transcription and repetition constitute the most dominant methods that help the secondary school teachers implement sounds of English language, whereas the explanation method is not taken into account. Because the selected teachers have not been train to explain the similarities and dissimilarities between English sounds in relation to letters, they could not deal with the explanatory method in order to contrast English sounds at junior secondary school classes.

Question 3: How do you find the teaching of [u:] and [ju:] based on “ew”?

This question aims to collect the selected teachers’ opinions about the contrast between [u:] and [ju:] in the selected pedagogical class. The chart below illustrates:

Table n°4: Teachers’ opinions about the contrast between [u:] and [ju:]

Respondents	Number of respondents	Percentages
Frustrating	02	20
Interesting	01	10
Boring	01	10
Important	06	60
Total	10	100

From the discussion with the teachers' sample population about the relevance of teaching English sound discrimination in classes, the obtained results emphasize on "important" by the majority of the selected teachers. As a matter of fact, 60% of teachers want to know more about this language item. In fact, they have discovered from our discussion that the contrast between the simple vowel [u:] and the sound combination [ju:] may serve to explain not only the difference between other simple vowels and sounds combination, but also to discriminate both types of sounds with their letters during the English teaching and learning process.

Question 4: How often do you teach sound discrimination?

This question checks the frequency of teaching English sound discrimination in classes.

Table n°5: Frequency of teaching English sound discrimination.

Responses	Respondents	Percentage
Once a week	01	10
Twice a week	05	50
Once a month	03	30
Twice a month	01	10
Total	10	100

The above table shows that the majority of teachers enable learners to implement English sound discrimination twice a week, whereas the other think about once a month, twice a month and once a week. In fact, these teachers claim that pronunciation items are taught in lessons of vocabulary and Reading comprehension through transcription and repetition. That is, during the lesson implementation, teachers usually make learners repeat sounds they transcribe when pronouncing difficult words from texts.

Question 5: Have you been trained to teach pronunciation item?

This interrogation aims at checking whether the selected teachers of English at CEG *Angola Libre* have been trained to teach pronunciation items. The following table enlightens.

Table n°6: Teachers' pronunciation training

Responses	Respondents	percentage
Yes	00	00
No	10	100
Total	10	100

This table unveils that no teachers at CEG *Angola Libre* has been trained to teach English pronunciation items during the initial training at university. As a matter of fact, they lack didactic strategies and techniques that could help to deal with sound discrimination items in classes. Thus, all teachers argue that they have no background to teach and assess English pronunciation items because Ecole Normale Supérieure has not equipped them with the appropriate knowledge and didactic strategies that could facilitate the teaching of pronunciation lessons autonomously in classes. Otherwise, the lectures of Phonetics and phonology taught before 2012 at E.N.S did not show the previous prospective teachers how to transpose or to eliminate the linguistic aspects of English phonetics into English pronunciation items at secondary school.

3. Major findings and discussion

The section discusses the major findings from the classroom observation and the teachers' questionnaire about the teaching of sound discrimination contrasting [u:] and [ju:] in secondary schools. It appears that, the teachers of English are not trained on English pronunciation items. They have not been equipped with appropriate strategies and testing activities to face these items in classes. Otherwise, during the training period at ENS the selected teachers of English were well equipped with English phonetic knowledge that can help them express intelligibly, whereas they did not gain the didactic strategies that could help to teach sound discrimination items in classes. That is the reason

why, the observation data reveal that the individual sounds and the sound discrimination items are not taught, learnt and assessed accordingly. Obviously, the selected items help teachers of English and secondary school learners to demystify the phonemic system of the target language when Ndongo Ibara (2016:414) writes: *“It appears that once this course is acquired by students, teachers will no longer be obliged to write whole lessons on the board, but they can dictate their course because students are already familiarized with English sound patterns”*. The author wants to show that the teaching of English sounds would facilitate the oral communication between a teacher and learners.

It is worth mentioning that ENS does not work together with the secondary school inspectors or researchers in order to skill teachers on teaching strategies to face these English items in programmes. Next, the lack of workshops organization prevents teachers to find out solutions related to problems that hamper the implementations of English sound teaching items accordingly. Consequently, teachers’ incapacities to implement lessons about sounds become obstacles for the secondary school learners when Barber (2013:01) states: *“Un enseignant ne peut pas que se contenter de ses savoirs académiques, il doit avoir une formation lui apportant des compétences didactiques et pédagogiques”*. Barber mentions that, in addition to linguistic knowledge, teachers are requested to be trained on the appropriate didactic strategies that could help them to facilitate the English learning process. As a result, learners are not familiar with the sound system of English language while reading texts, listening to the teacher and communicating orally in classes. That is why, talking about the relevance of pronunciation teaching, Widya Astuti (2020:153-154) writes: *“The study of pronunciation has also become an important aspect in teaching English as a foreign language. In learning process, student may face difficulty which is crucial to be described and analysed. One of them is difficulty in pronouncing English words”*. In fact, Widya tries to demonstrate that during the English learning process, the most visible difficulties are attested in pronouncing English syllables, words and sentences. This means that learners are incapable of sounding and stressing a word or group of words accordingly. Since, the language is firstly spoken, it is important for the EFL teachers of English to include lessons of pronunciation items in order to help learners avoid mispronunciation and misunderstanding during the oral communication.

4. Practical suggestions

This section aims at suggesting the didactic strategies that could facilitate both teachers and learners deal with the contrast between [u:] and [ju:] from the 3Ps (Presentation, Practice and Production) coupled with the explanatory method in classes. In fact, the 3Ps teaching method starts with the Beginning and ends with the Evaluation stages, while the Explanatory method aims at matching illustrations with the explanations to enlighten the different conditions that could distinguish two sounds spelt alike during the English sound teaching process.

Beginning: This stage focuses on the “pre-requisites checking”. As a matter of fact, the teacher’s job is to check whether learners are familiar with the basic information about **(1)** the English simple vowels: [ɪ, ʌ, æ, ə, i:, ɜ:, ɑ:, ɔ:, u:] and semivowels: [j, w], **(2)** the selection of the sounds [u:] and [ju:], **(3)** the different spellings of [u:]: “ew”, “oo”, “o” and [ju:]: “u”, “eu”, “ew”, “eau” and **(4)** the selection of the same spelling shared by both sounds “ew” in order to illustrate and explain the day’s lesson.

Presentation: When clarifying the new lesson, *firstly*, the teacher’s task is to illustrate the selected sounds [u:] and [ju:] through a list of words such as: drew, chew, blew, dew, mew, few, *secondly*, to provide the explanation which justifies the pronunciation of both sounds [u:] and [ju:] in relation to the selected letters “ew” : *“The letters “ew” are pronounced [u:] when they are preceded by the sounds [l] / [r] / [tʃ], whereas they are realized [ju:] when they are not combined with the above consonants at the final position”*, *finally*, to pronounce the selected words fluently and intelligibly to help learners listen carefully.

Practice: In this stage, the teacher’s goal is to reinforce the learners’ understanding about the day’s lesson. In fact, learners are requested to repeat the above words and to give their own examples (**Dew, flew, new, grew, chew**) orally.

Production: The teacher’s task is to ask learners to write their own examples on the board (**Dew, flew, new, grew, chew**) by providing the explanation which justifies the comparison between the two selected sounds and pronouncing their examples loudly. In fact, the teacher may intervene in case of mispronunciation from the learner during the production stage.

Evaluation: This stage aims at checking whether learners have understood the day's lesson. As a matter of fact, the first exercise (*Blank filling*) should show how learners are asked to fill in the blanks using [u:] or [ju:] with sounds between brackets. This type of exercise helps to see whether learners have understood the contrast between [u:] and [ju:] based on “ew”. The second exercise (*True or false*) should demonstrate how learners are asked to say whether the pronunciation of “ew” at the final position of words is true or false. This kind of activity aims at checking whether learners have grasped the pronunciation of “ew” based on the selected sounds. The third exercise (*Multiple choice*) is concerned with the classification of sounds. In fact, the purpose of this exercise is to verify the learners' mastery of the selected letters by asking them to classify some words according to the sound [u:] or [ju:] and justifying their answers. The last exercise deals with *Matching up*. It aims at making learners match the different pronunciation of the letters “ew” with their corresponding explanations.

Conclusion

This research work has examined the teaching context of English sounds based on sound discrimination framework at secondary school. As a matter of fact, two questions have been asked about the way of teaching the contrast between the long vowel [u:] and the sound combination [ju:] spelt as “ew” and the different factors that could prevent the implementation of this English pronunciation item in classes. And then, the hypotheses of these research questions have been confirmed from the different parts of this article. In fact, the term “Pronunciation” is one of the English language component that covers some teaching items such as sounds, stress, intonation and connected speeches, whereas sound discrimination is one of the English sound teaching items which aims at showing similarities and dissimilarities between letters and sounds. Dealing with the relevance of teaching and learning the contrast between [u:] and [ju:] based on the spelling “ew” (Smith: 2015), there is a need to write that the selected sound item has caused serious problems to the secondary school learners when pronouncing monosyllabic words ending by “ew” in the different English words. Thus, the review of some previous pronunciation works has been achieved to collect linguistic information based on norms and rules for the study of English

pronunciation items as in Gilakjani (2011), Roach (2009) and Kenworthy (2002). However, the selected works lack the appropriate teaching strategies, testing activities and a sample of a lesson plan that could help both teachers and learners deal with sounds contrast in classes. Additionally, the relevant data collected in the class of 3^e at CEG Amitié through the classroom observation and the teachers' questionnaires result that, during the training period at ENS, the lecture of Phonetics and phonology has not provided the previous prospective teachers with the didactic strategies or techniques that could help to teach English sound discrimination items in the secondary school classes. Consequently, learners are victims of pronunciation problems during the English learning process. Thus, the suggested didactic strategies could work to overcome the secondary school teachers and learners' problems of pronunciation thanks to the use of the 3Ps model (presentation, practice and production) coupled with explanatory method (Ndongo Ibara: 2015 and Ondze Otouba: 2015 – 2016) during the teaching and learning of English sound discrimination items in classes accordingly.

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