

**THE EFFECTS OF WRONG PRONUNCIATION ON THE MEANING OF FRENCH WORDS:
A CASE STUDY OF FRENCH STUDENTS OF WESLEY COLLEGE
OF EDUCATION, KUMASI**

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Abstract: Pronunciation of French words may seem tricky and difficult as a result of the several sounds that come with the words. In the attempt by students to pronounce these French words, learners refer to English words that sound similar. This however affects the pronunciation of some, and thus hides their meanings. This study investigates the effect of wrong pronunciation on the meanings of French words, a problem identified among French students of Wesley College of Education. The mixed method was employed and 70 respondents; made up of 60 students from level 100 and 10 students from level 200 were selected and used in collecting data for the study. Questionnaires, observation and reading test were used as the key instruments to collect data. The results from the study indicate that many French learners pronounce two different words in exactly the same way. Some of these learners do not actively listen to the difference in sounds of French words. The maternal languages (L1 and L2) of learners contributed immensely to the wrong pronunciation of French words which in turn affects their meanings. Suggestions for correct pronunciation of French words are also offered to enhance easy understanding of French words.

Keywords: Pronunciation; learners; wrong pronunciation; mixed method; sounds

LES EFFETS D'UNE MAUVAISE PRONONCIATION SUR LE SENS DES MOTS FRANÇAIS : UNE ÉTUDE DE CAS DES ÉTUDIANTS FRANÇAIS DU WESLEY COLLEGE D'ÉDUCATION, KUMASI

Résumé : La prononciation des mots français peut sembler délicate et difficile en raison des nombreux sons qui accompagnent ces mots. Lorsque les élèves tentent de prononcer ces mots français, ils se réfèrent à des mots anglais dont la sonorité est similaire. Cela affecte cependant la prononciation de certains d'entre eux, et cache ainsi leur

signification. Cette étude examine l'effet de la mauvaise prononciation sur la signification des mots français, un problème identifié parmi les étudiants français du Wesley College of Education. La méthode mixte a été utilisée et 70 répondants, dont 60 étudiants du niveau 100 et 10 étudiants du niveau 200, ont été sélectionnés et utilisés pour la collecte des données de l'étude. Des questionnaires, des observations et des tests de lecture ont été utilisés comme principaux instruments de collecte de données. Les résultats de l'étude indiquent que de nombreux apprenants français prononcent deux mots différents exactement de la même manière. Certains de ces apprenants n'écoutent pas activement la différence entre les sons des mots français. Les langues maternelles (L1 et L2) des apprenants contribuent énormément à la mauvaise prononciation des mots français, ce qui affecte leur signification.

Mots-clés : Prononciation ; apprenants ; mauvaise prononciation ; méthode mixte ; sons

1. Introduction

It is necessary to pronounce words correctly to avoid ambiguity. Pronunciation is an important aspect of every language. This is because language skills are mediated through speech in real-life interaction. Many French language learners feel uncomfortable when orally producing foreign-sounding words, so they cling to their native accent when speaking in French. Many students see pronunciation as the hardest part of learning French. The new sounds, the silent letters, and the liaisons combine to make the French Language very tricky. Proper pronunciation is said to be the reproduction of language sounds in such a way that the intended message is passed easily, and is properly understood by any fluent speaker of the language in question. It can also be said that good pronunciation is the one that native speakers actually notice. This means that when French words are pronounced wrongly, there is the tendency to have different meaning or no meaning at all of the words and it will obviously be noticed by the natives. Thus, phonetics has become necessary in the teaching of foreign languages such as the French language. It allows teachers to examine the differences between the sounds of source and target languages and explain these differences to learners. It also enables learners to better understand and speak the language they are learning. Pronunciation, which refers to the way a word is spoken, contributes to how an individual is understood by the one listening. Therefore, wrong pronunciation leads to misunderstanding. This has therefore raised series of questions which are of great importance to this study. This study has three objectives: examining the causes of wrong pronunciation of French words; analyzing the effect of wrong pronunciation on the meaning of French words; analyzing the effect of wrong pronunciation on the meaning of French words. Based on these objectives, we will answer the following questions: what are the causes of wrong pronunciation of French words? What is the effect of wrong pronunciation on the meaning of French words? What are the measures that can be put in place to correct wrong pronunciation? Based on the above research questions we provide the following hypothesis: firstly, wrong pronunciation of French words could be caused by influence of English language. Secondly, wrong pronunciation could lead to misunderstanding of the words pronounced. Finally, wrong pronunciation could be corrected by multiple repetition

1. Review of related literature

Literature has a lot to offer on the pronunciation of words in general. In a related article, Fiadzawoo et al (2017) indicated clearly that teaching pronunciation is highly neglected and this invariably affects most language learners. In relating to others' point of view, they stated Asher and Garcia (1969) who observed that pronunciation is less studied than other aspect of language due to its nature in terms of research. In view of this they concluded by emphasizing the need to add pronunciation teaching to the studied courses and also stating that transcription of oral texts phonetically has been introduced in colleges of education. Demirez (2010) and Liu (2011) depict that, students in multilingual context such as Ghana, could face challenges with the acquisition of correct pronunciations of French words. For this reason, Fiadzawoo (2017) advises teachers to use the target language fluently and appropriately in the teaching and learning of French language. Loren E. Pederson (2016) provides an excellent solution to this difficult and embarrassing problem of students not being able to pronounce words correctly in the French Language. Pederson (2016) outlines phonics and phonetic similarities between words and letters. In this, sentences are practiced with accompanying sounds to enhance correct pronunciation in a bid to show off mastery of French sounds and also for the language to be spoken with ease, pride and confidence. Principles of French phonetics and variations in the pronunciation of French words include discussion of vowels, consonants, syllables, liaison and intonation. French students in Wesley College of Education are taken through vowel and consonant sounds of the French language. To Walz Joel (1980), applied linguists feel that the type of error learners make in pronunciation actually influence the construction of pedagogical materials and teaching techniques. He indicated in his article "An empirical study of pronunciation error in French", learners of a similar language background share common error when it comes to pronunciation. This however adds to our view that maternal languages of students have effect on the pronunciation of French words in particular. Joseph A. (1985) also states the Report of the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies advocating that second-language instruction should concentrate on speaking and understanding before other skills are developed, and with the advent of methodologies such as the natural approach to L2 acquisition, it is likely that a strong emphasis on speaking will continue in our classrooms for years to come. He further explained that little or no time is devoted to the creative teaching of pronunciation in many classrooms today. One way to remedy this problem might be to spend a minimal amount of time (even as little as five minutes daily) on the improvement of pronunciation..." He also stated that learners of second language are exposed to cluster of sounds from both L1 and L2 which potentially cause pronunciation problems. Yiboe (2001) stated in a study which aimed at finding the effect of maternal language or L1 (Ewe) on the target language which is French and in it all it was realized that some phonemes in French are not well pronounced. We therefore share the views of these authors and stand to say that pronunciation has to do with the relation between the sounds and the letters of the alphabets. Learners of the French language need to connect sounds and letters according to new conventions and the resistance of the influence of familiar ones. It is this influence that makes pronunciation of French words a complex task. The most important features of French pronunciation are the vowel sounds and the role of the

syllable. Below are the various sounds and difficulties that hinder the ability of learners to do a good pronunciation that is not far from that of the natives.

2. Nasal Vowels

They are the ones that make it sound like the speaker's nose is stuffed up. They are usually known as nasal sounds. In fact, nasal vowel sounds are created by pushing air through the nose and mouth, rather than just the mouth is done for regular vowels. It is necessary for students to listen, practice, and they will surely be used to these nasal vowels to avoid wrong pronunciation of words. In French, there are four nasal sounds and they are very essential in the pronunciation of words. When these nasal sounds are not correctly pronounced, the meaning of the word is greatly affected. Examples of these nasal vowels are indicated below.

- An [ɑ̃], eg. Tante [tāt] au lieu de [tɛ̃t].
- En [ɑ̃], eg. Enfant [ɑ̃fɑ̃] au lieu de [ɛ̃fɛ̃t]
- In [ɛ̃], eg. Inbécile [ɛ̃besil] au lieu de [inbesil]
- On [ɔ̃], eg. Bonbon [bɔ̃bɔ̃] au lieu de [bɔnbɔn]
- Un [œ̃], eg. Lundi [lœ̃di] au lieu de [lɛ̃di]

Nasal vowels are important in the pronunciation of French words. The sentence stated below is full of nasal vowels and must be well pronounced to avoid its meaning being hidden or changed. However, it is observed that, not only the nasal vowels are responsible for such inability as far as sounds are concerned. It was also noticed that sounds emanating from “liaisons” are also other contributing factors that hinder learners’ pronunciation. This is evidenced in the sentence below:

“Les enfants sont dedans”. [lezɑ̃fɑ̃sɔ̃dɑ̃dɑ̃]

Liaison is often made in sentences with French nasal vowels thus aiding in correct pronunciation of French words. The words “**Les enfants**” should be liaised for effective pronunciation. This is however pronounced as [lezɑ̃fɑ̃] which omits the “**ts**” making it silent. When these two French words are not well pronounced or in a case, the ‘**ts**’ is not omitted, its meaning will be very difficult for the listener to grasp. Examples of liaisons in French is seen in these two groups of words;

Petit Pain and Petit ami

In the first group which is “petit pain”, the final consonant **t** of the masculine, singular adjective, petit (small) is silent. It is not pronounced. In French, “petit pain” is pronounced [pəti.pɛ̃]. In the case of “**petit ami**”, it is pronounced [pəti.tami]. The letter **t** is pronounced when the adjective is followed by the vowel “**a**” which is in the singular noun “**ami**”. The liaison is made, and the consonant **t** becomes part of the syllable at the beginning of the word **ami** that follows.

3. Accents

French accents play a vital role in the pronunciation of French words. They usually go with different sounds which enhance effective pronunciation of French words. The frequent French accents are the **Accent aigu** – (parlé, été, aménager etc.) which usually takes the (é) sounds when it is placed on the alphabet [e]. **The accent grave**:- such as in the words (mère, père etc.), which usually take the [ɛ] sound when placed on the alphabet "e". On the letter "e", a French accent has an impact on the pronunciation: the accentuated vowel (è) as in the English word (bed). Here is an example: "très" which means "very". Accent on the vowels (a) and {u} however, in the French language has a grammatical role only to differentiate two identical words. **The unaccented "a"** is basically a verb form of the infinitive (avoir) and the **accented "a"** is a preposition. The words "café" and "résumé" are originally French, and in English we often write those words without the accents. In French, however, the accent marks are not optional. It is necessary for French learners to examine the difference between the two accents. When these accents are seen in words they should be pronounced as such to avoid wrong pronunciation. French students of Wesley College of Education misidentify the distribution of a pattern found in the English language and their maternal languages and extend it to the French language. Words like **hospital** and **signature** are usually extended to the French language as the French has its versions to be "**hôpital**" and "**signature**" which are quite similar. Thus, pronunciation of these two words in the French language might be highly influenced by the English language. A number of words of French origin feature a final (e) that is pronounced in English but are normally silent in the French Language. Many French letters are silent and a lot of them are found at the end of words. However, not all final letters are silent. Some words give a general idea of which letters are silent in French. The word **petit** has the final "t" to be silent in the context of no liaison. Whereas the word **oeuf** has the final 'f' pronounced. This concludes the fact that not all French words have the final letter **words** silent when it is pronounced.

4. Causes of wrong pronunciation

Samuel (2019) indicated that an acceptable pronunciation is "a pronunciation in which people can understand what one says and the speaker's language is pleasant to listen to; in other words, the speaker is informally intelligible". He explains further that "Good pronunciation doesn't have to come from a native speaker but just has to be understood easily". This assertion by Samuel is debatable in the sense that if we should just stress mutual intelligibility to the negligence of good pronunciation, then there is no need to teach phonetics to students from the local background. Factors that lead to problems in pronunciation include the influence of the mother tongue. Much is not known about a child's understanding of any language before he or she is born. Surprisingly, right at birth, it is believed that the child prefers the mother's voice to others. A child is used to the mother's voice and will acquire the language that the voice produces very easily. It is known that at a very tender age, a child gets to know the difference between the mother tongue (L1) and other second languages (L2). It is however said that the L1 has much influence on the L2. The orthographic forms ("spellings") of second language (L2) words affect L2 learners' pronunciation, little is known about the pronunciation of known words in experienced learners. The various orthographic forms of the

French language have effects on the pronunciation. Example is seen in the French word “parler” which is in the infinitive form and the past participle “parlé” of this same verb. Both of them have the same sound in pronunciation but different spellings. The orthographic forms affect experienced instructed learners' pronunciation of known words. Thomas Moore Devlin (2019) states that; “the greatest obstacle to speaking French for a non-native is literally pronouncing it”. True, pronunciation can be an issue in any foreign language, but French pronunciation is especially tough. And one of the main problems is that it seems like the French language has arbitrary rules about not pronouncing certain letters.”

5. Impact of wrong pronunciation

There is no doubt that students are always faced with challenges of pronunciation, emanating from the following points mentioned below:

5.1 Limited vocabulary

Most students tend to avoid using certain words in French for fear of pronouncing them wrongly. If they find the words difficult to pronounce, they decide not to use these words at all in their speeches. The more they struggle to orally produce words, the less willingly they try to use them. This however results in the fact that students avoid using certain words in French thus limiting their vocabulary in French. In a case of such nature, most language learners, particularly French will not acquire adequate vocabulary that would enable them to express themselves freely and effectively in the French language. It is evident that wrong pronunciation affects communicative ability. For effective communication to take place, there is the need for French sounds to be produced in a manner that could be correctly recognized by native speakers, but not necessarily sounding exactly like native speakers to be clearly understood.

5.2 Effect on listening

When words are pronounced wrongly, listeners fail to identify the sounds, words or phrases of French and they are confused with others. When listeners fail to recognize sounds from words that are wrongly pronounced, the meaning of the word is however affected. Whenever sounds are used, pronunciation is however tested for either wrongly or correctly done. Despite the fact that pronunciation is an aspect of the external speaking skills, words do have an internal impact on the mind's ears when they are pronounced either wrongly or correctly. Pronunciation improves or affects listening depending on how it is done. Wrongly pronounced words in French results in the fact that listeners need to guess what sound is being produced, thus making it difficult for listeners to understand the ideas that are being conveyed. Being able to pronounce a sound correctly enhances effective listening comprehension. If sounds of a French word is produced wrongly, listeners find it very difficult to comprehend. It is often said that, “If you can't say it properly, you likely can't hear it properly”

5.3 Effect on intonation

Wrong pronunciation affects the intonation of the word thus hindering its meaning. In French, intonation leads to interrogation and later it falls to declaration. It begins with a higher pitch and later falls within a sentence. Intonation in French however depends on the sentence

type. Therefore, if a learner does not use them correctly, the meaning of that particular sentence is affected. Intonation is what gives the French language its unrepeatably flair. In French, all syllables are pronounced at the same intensity, and the final consonants are liaised onto the next word. French has a very unique melody. It is often flat and high with rising patterns, unlike English which generally uses falling patterns more and has a greater difference in stress: For conversational use, it is however essential for proper intonation to be practiced. Declarative and interrogative sentences have a different intonation in almost all languages, and French is no exception and this is as a result of the higher pitch of the last syllable in the last rhythmic group of the sentence. It is important for French learners to take some time and practice this difference separately to enhance effective basic communication. Proper intonation needs to be practiced in most frequently used phrases like; “Parlez-vous anglais?” (Do you speak English?) – Interrogative and, perhaps, ‘Vous parlez anglais (You speak English) – Declarative that way, you’ll be able to practice intonation while simultaneously learning basic communication. If this is not well done. communication will be deeply affected. Hence correct pronunciation of words in the above sentences would enhance their interrogative and declarative nature for effective communication.

5.4 Effect on grammatical structure

Grammar is basically the study of words and their usage in forming sentences. It includes how words are formed in a language, particularly French. Wrong pronunciation of a word in a sentence can cause a wide range of grammar problems which can have negative impact on interactions. Incorrect grammar usually leads to unclear communication and miscommunication. In considering the sentence below, it is obvious that grammatical structures need correct pronunciation of words to enhance effective communication.

J’ai parlé avec la dame [ʒɛpaRleavɛkladam]

In a sentence like this, if a French learner does not duly observe the accent which has been discussed earlier, the meaning of the sentence would be unclear to the listener. The word ‘parlé’ in the sentence is pronounced [paRle]. If a learner pronounces it [paRl] the structure of the sentence would be affected thus effective communication would not take place. It is explained that the required past participle of the word ‘parler’ has been changed to present tense thus making the auxiliary invalid and also creating miscommunication as well as distorting the structure of the sentence. In French, the sound of certain words is changed in a particular sentence due to different grammatical structures. French learners use these different structures to direct their listeners’ attention to a particular word in a sentence to create a variety of sentence structures. Similarly, the initial sentence can be changed from complex to simple when the word ‘**parler**’ is indicated as such in the sentence below;

Je parle avec la dame [ʒɛpaRlavɛkladam]

In this particular sentence, the word ‘**parler**’ has to be pronounced [paRl] to indicate that it has been used in a simple present tense. It has however been examined that sounds of

words that emerge from wrong pronunciation influence the grammatical structure of a sentence. No matter how perfect one's vocabulary and French grammar, it can still be difficult for listeners to understand when words are wrongly pronounced. Camille Chevalier-Karfis (2020) indicates that words have different grammatical values in French. She cited the word 'tout' which can be an indefinite adjective, an adverb, a noun, an indefinite pronoun or a neutral pronoun. In the article "Everything about the French Tout & Pronunciation of Tous", the word 'tous' exhibits different grammatical values in its pronunciation. The 's' at the end of the word is pronounced in some cases and of course in other cases it is silent to enhance effective grammatical function of the word in a sentence.

6. Methodology

The research methodology which is adopted in the collection of data for the study includes the research design, our target population, the sample selection and the sample procedures which will eventually propel us to determine the research instruments to be used, the data collection procedures as well as the methods of data analysis.

6.1 Research design

The design for the study is an Action research. The researchers made use of Pre-test, Intervention and Post-test design. As the research involved activities, a number of weeks and months were used. In the first week, the researchers conducted a Pre-test which exposed the difficulties in pronunciation in the learners. During the intervention, which took about 6 weeks, the researchers chose to focus on methods such as Phonic, Syllabic and Mother and Child to rescue the situation. Finally, the researchers conducted a Post-test to ascertain the fact that the problems identified in the Pre-test are well catered for.

6.2 Population

The research was conducted in Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, more precisely in the French department. We took into consideration the levels 100 and 200 students and the tutors of the department as well as teachers in the language department. The total number of students in both levels is 134. The level 100 comprises of 35 females and 25 males. The level 200 comprises of 74 students, 51 females and 23 males. Ten tutors, comprising of 3 French tutors and 7 English tutors were selected randomly from the language department.

6.3 Sample selection

We would have considered all the students in the French department including the level 300 students but we selected the level 100 as beginners and the level 200 as the middle class, because, during the time of our research, the level 300 students were not on campus due to the effect of the **covid19** pandemic. And so, out of 60 level 100 students, 25 males and 35 females, we selected 30 students randomly, 15 males and 15 females, representing 50% of the total number in the first year. Also, out of the 74 students in level 200, we selected 40 students randomly, 20 males and 20 females, representing 54.1% of the total number in the second-year class. The above information is illustrated in the tables below.

TABLE 1: LEVEL 100 STUDENTS

Gender	Selected number of students	Percentage	Total number of students	Percentage
Male	15	50%	25	41.7%
Female	15	50%	35	58.3%
Total	30	100%	60	100%

In level 100, the total number of students is 60, comprising of 25 males and 35 females, representing 41.7% and 58.3% respectively. Out of this number, we selected 30 students representing 50% of the total students in the first year. Out of the 30 students selected randomly, there are 15 males and 15 females, representing 50% each.

TABLE 2: The level 200 students

Gender	Selected number of students	Percentage	Total number of students	Percentage
Males	20	50%	34	45.9%
Females	20	50%	40	54.1%
Total	40	100%	74	100%

In level 200, the total number of students is 74, representing 100%. Out of this number, we randomly selected 40 students, representing 54.1% of the total number of students. Out of the selected students, 20 are males and 20 are females, representing 50% each.

6.4 Research instruments

In order to unravel the basis of our research, as well as find the causes and remedies to the problem in question, we used observation, questionnaires and reading tests as research instruments. The questionnaires were distributed to 70 students and 10 tutors through whose responses we derived the causes and proposed possible solutions to that effect. It is also very important to note that the researchers conducted series of observations during French lessons, taking into consideration the attitude of the students, the teacher's teaching approach, the correction tools and the mode of evaluation of the students' efforts. Again, reading tests have been conducted on the students to fish out the source of their inability to pronounce the French words correctly. The test was based on their reading book entitled "Plus fort que la raison", written by T.S. N'guetta. In the course of the research, we examined the situation, set out strategies and implemented them through a step-by-step procedure within the semester in order to improve upon the practice. The activities were planned into pre-intervention, intervention and post-intervention periods. At the pre-intervention level, a reading test was conducted on the first chapter of the book and numerous pronunciation errors were recorded, among which 20 were taken for consideration in our analysis below.

7. Analysis of the results of pre-intervention

After the pre-intervention test, it was realized that the majority of the learners of French in the institution of our study have serious problems with the pronunciation of French

words leading to ambiguity in their meanings. Most French words were pronounced using the English accent. Below is the analysis of the results of pre-intervention test.

TABLE 5: Some selected wrong pronunciations

Items	Wrong pronunciation	Number of students	Percentage	Correct pronunciation	Number of students	Percentage
1-La journée	La [dʒumi]	18	90%	La [ʒuRne]	2	10%
2-La douche	La [duʃ]	20	100%	La [du]	0	0%
3-Manger	[mādʒe]	9	45%	[māʒe]	11	55%
4-Les femmes	[lɛsfɛm]	11	55%	[lɛfam]	9	45%
5-Dans un tel	[dɛnsyntɛl]	19	95%	[dāzœtɛl]	1	5%
6-La station	La [steiʃn]	12	60%	La [stasjɔ]	8	40%
7-Ces courses	Ces [kɔsis]	12	60%	Ces [kuRs]	8	40%
8-Observer	[ɔb:zɛRvɛR]	20	100%	[opsɛRve]	0	0%
9-En direction	En[dl'rekʃiɔn]	19	95%	En [diRɛksjɔ]	1	5%
10-En allant	En [alɪnt]	20	100%	[ānalā]	0	0%
10-Mon frère	Mon [flɛl]	18	90%	Mon [fRɛR]	2	10%
11-Travail	[trævel]	19	95%	[tRavaj]	1	5%
12-Famille	[famili]	13	65%	[famij]	7	35%
13-Au revoir	[olevwa]	16	80%	[oRəvwaR]	4	20%
14-Pendant	[pɛndɛnt]	11	55%	[pādā]	9	45%
15-La radio	La [reidio]	6	30%	[Radjo]	14	70%
16-Important	[impɔrtɛnt]	15	75%	[ɪpɔRtā]	5	25%
17-L'information	L'[infɔmeʃn]	13	65%	[ɪfɔRmasjɔ]	7	35%
18-Poison	[pɔizn]	13	65%	[pwazɔ]	7	35%
19-Poisson	[pɔisn]	8	40%	[pwasɔ]	12	60%

The above table indicates the poor pronunciation skills by learners of French in the institution of our study before the intervention. The analysis of the pronunciation of French words in this table reveals the ambiguity in the meaning of French words that learners of this language are faced with. We are considering these French words and how they are pronounced by the learners during the pre-intervention test in the above table. The item 1 in the table indicates that 18 learners representing 90% of the learners pronounced the word wrongly. Only 2 learners representing 20% were able to pronounce the word «journée» correctly. This is a clear indication that learners in our institution of study have problem in the pronunciation of French words leading to ambiguity in their meanings. For item 2, none of the learners was able to pronounce the word correctly representing 100% or a total failure. This is an indication that the learners' pronunciation of the French word was grossly influenced by English language, hence the wrong pronunciation of the word in question.

In the case of item 3, 9 out of 20 learners, representing 45% of the learners pronounced it wrongly. The rest, which is 11 representing 55% did a good pronunciation of the word. Majority of the learners pronounced correctly may be due to the fact the word is used on

daily basis right from the basic school, hence a basic French word. The item 4, is in contrast with item 3 of our table where 11 out of 20 learners representing 55% found it difficult to pronounce the word «femmes» This word is problematic to most Anglophone learners because it is not pronounced as it appears to learners. It is unique in its pronunciation. In item 5, only 1 learner representing 5% was able to pronounce the word correctly. The rest of 19 learners representing 95% got it wrong. The problem of the learners with this word is the lack of knowledge to link French words and pronounce them as one word. The next item which is 6, also demonstrated learners' inability to pronounce words with French accent. 12 out of 20 learners, representing 60% did pronounce the word wrongly. Here, the pronunciation of the word is largely influenced by the English accent. Items 6 and 7 show the same performance of the learners in percentages. The words in both items have the same spelling in English and French but different in pronunciation. The eighth item demonstrates that learners' inability to differentiate between French words and English. For this reason, none of the learners was able to pronounce this word correctly. All the learners pronounced the word as in English. For item 9, only 1 learner, representing 5% pronounced the word meaningfully. The rest 19 representing 95% were unable to identify the correct pronunciation of the word. The case of item is not far different from item 8. Item 10 is also in the category of item 5 where learners have little or no knowledge of linking French words in pronunciation. For this reason, all the 20 learners could not pronounce the word representing 100% failed to pronounce the word correctly. In the case item 11, learners representing 90% of the selected number failed to pronounce the word correctly except 2 of them which represent 10% did so correctly. This was as a result of the interference from the mother tongue. The item number 12 also revealed the learners' inability to pronounce the French word to give it the right meaning. Here also, 19 of these learners representing 95% grossly failed to identify its correct pronunciation except 1, representing 5%. Learners in this case took the word to be an English word due its orthography. In item 13, 13 learners representing 65% defaulted in the pronunciation of the word, but 7, representing 35% were able to pronounce the word correctly. The cause of failure here is due to influence from the English language. The Item 14 also revealed almost the same weakness in the learners' way of pronouncing the French words. 16 out of 20, representing 80% of the learners had problem in identifying the correct way of pronouncing the word, but 4, representing 20% made it. This was also due to interference from mother tongue. In the case of item 15, majority of the learners still demonstrated their inability to pronounce the word in its right sound, hence 11 of them representing 55% failed while 9 representing 45% were able to redeem themselves. Item 16 seems to reveal some improvement in the learners' performance. It may be due to their familiarity with the word in question, hence majority performed well in its pronunciation. 14 of the learners representing 70% got it right while 6 of them representing 30% got it wrong. The learners performed badly in item 17, it may be due to their day to day use of the word in English language. Usually, words that have the same spelling in both English and French influence learners' pronunciation hence, 15 of them representing 75% pronouncing it wrongly while 5, representing 25% pronouncing it correctly. In the case of item 18, 13 representing 65% of the learners got it wrong while 7 representing 35% got it right. Item 19 is not different. The performance is the same as to what pertains to both wrong and right pronunciation of the word in question. In the last item which is item 20, the learners

performed quite better. 12 out of 20 representing 60% have access to good pronunciation while 8 of them representing 40% got it wrong. The success here may be due to the fact the word «Poisson» a daily food is mostly consume by many for that matter most of the learners might have been familiar with that word.

There are two major challenges confronting learners of French in Wesley College of Education that the researchers have identified, especially in the area the pronunciation of French words: the first problem deals with the interference from the mother tongue. It is an undeniable fact that most French letters are not found in our local languages and for that matter are not used in the mother tongue. Learners of French language in Ghana must make constant efforts to identify such letters and practice them as required in the new language (French). The second problem is the influence of the English language (accent) on the pronunciation of French words. It must be noted that English and French are sister languages and for that matter have certain common vocabularies in use. These vocabularies may differ or have the same meanings but not the same pronunciation. Learners of French in Ghana who use these words in English will definitely have challenges in the pronunciation of these vocabularies in French and therefore need thorough practice to be able to pronounce these words correctly in order to bring out their meanings in the French language. The prime objective of this study is to help learners of French to overcome these challenges in order to appropriate the learning of French language. Looking at the performance of learners of French in terms of the pronunciation of French words that reflect their meaning, learners at the pre-intervention level have little or no knowledge on how most French words are pronounced. This confirms the fact that this study is very important and would find solution to the problem of the pronunciation of French words that impedes the study of French among learners of this language in Ghana.

8. Intervention

As we earlier stated in the Research design, the researchers used Phonic, Syllabic and Mother and Child approaches to remedy the situation. In the Phonic approach, the researchers' first taught students the sound of the Alphabet on the letter cards as well as the sound of the words on a word card. Students are taught to associate upper case with lower case letter symbol, associate sound with letter symbol, blending sound to form words and finally varying initial, medial and final consonant to form new words. This helped them to identify sounds from letters as shown in tables 6 to 9 below. Another approach used was the Syllabic one which uses syllables to teach pronunciation and reading. The researchers selected words which could be separated into syllables from the students' reading textbook. The teaching of these words was divided into three phases. In the first phase, words that could be divided into two syllables were used by the researchers. Words like 'matin', 'bureau', 'bonjour', 'levier' and 'enfants'. The researchers split these words into and the students to pronounce the syllables after them.

Matin	_____	ma / tin
Bureau	_____	bu / reau
Bonjour	_____	bon / jour
Levier	_____	le / vier

Enfants _____ en / fants

During the phase two, words which have three syllables were used in improving students’ pronunciation. In this phase, students looked at the flashcards on which the researchers had written the words and pronounced them after the teacher as it was done in the phase one.

Direction _____ di / rec / tion
 Achever _____ a / che / ver
 Aujourdhui _____ au / jour / dhui

Then, the researchers used words with four or more syllables. The same method was practiced by the students to arrive at decoding and pronouncing the words correctly in the few examples below.

Mademoiselle _____ ma / de / moi / selle
 Communication _____ com / mu / ni / ca / tion
 Nationalité _____ na / tio / na / li / té

Finally, the researchers made use of “Mother and Child” approach in dealing with the situation as this enriches students’ vocabularies. In this approach, the students were put into groups and were presented with cardboards bearing words from which they were required to develop more words. For instance: In “Enseignement”, we can develop words like “enseigne”, “gens”, “sein” etc.

TABLE 6: Pronunciation of vowels

FRENCH WORDS	ERRORS	DIFFICULTIES	CORRECT PRONUNCIATION
Plus, une, but	[plu], [un], [but]	[y]	[ply], [yn], [by]
Commence	[kɔ̃mɛs]	[ã]	[kɔ̃mās]
Matin	[matin]	[ɛ]	[matɛ]
Levier	[livie]	[ə]	[ləvje]
Divorce	[dɪvɔ̃s]	[i]	[divɔ̃Rs]

TABLE 7: Pronunciation of consonants

FRENCH WORDS	ERRORS	DIFFICULTIES	CORRECT PRONUNCIATION
Achever	[atʃiva]	[ʃ]	[aʃəve]
Aujourdhui	[odʒudi]	[ʒ]	[oʒoRdy]
Bureau	[bulo]	[R]	[byRo]
Famille	[famil]	[j]	[famij]
Juste	[dʒust]	[ʒ]	[ʒyst]

In the course of analyzing the errors in the areas of pronouncing the French vowels and consonants, many conflicts were detected as in the tables bellow:

TABLE 8: Conflict in vowels

FRENCH	VOWELS		ENGLISH
But	[y]	[u]	Stool
Attendre	[ā]	[ɛ]	Attend
Fenêtre	[ə]	[I]	Female
Autobus	[y]	[a]	Autobus

TABLE 9: Conflict in consonants

FRENCH	CONSONANTS		ENGLISH
Chose	[ʃ]	[tʃ]	Choose
Juge	[ʒ]	[dʒ]	Judge
Clair	[l]	[R]	Clear

Also, our attention was drawn to the problem of “liaison” which has gone a long way to affect the pronunciation of the students in the course of their reading. This was also attended to in the course of our intervention in the table below.

TABLE10: Problem of liaison.

FRENCH WORDS	WRONG PRONUNCIATION	CORRECT PRONUNCIATION
En allant	[ɛnalɛnt]	[ānalā]
Dans un tel	[dāœtɛl]	[dāzœtɛl]
Les enfants	[lɛāfāt]	[lɛzāfā]
Quandàlui	[kāalu]	[kātaly]
Tout en	[tuɛn]	[tutā]

Again, we realized our students have a great difficulty in deriving sounds from letters when the letters are combined. Consequently, we took it upon ourselves to go down to their level by taking them through the combination of the letters of alphabet to form sounds in the table below.

TABLE 11: Combination of letters to form sounds

Letters	Wrong pronunciation	Correct pronunciation	Example
An	[ɛn]	[ā]	Devant/danser/banc
En	[ɛn]	[ā]	Encore/lent/rapidement
Oi	[oi]	[wa]	Foie/droit/choix/voie
Ch	[tʃ]	[ʃ]	Cheval/chemise/chaise
Tion	[ʃjɔ]	[sjɔ]	Animation/aviation

-ais /aix/ait	[ajs]	[ɛ]	Anglais/mais/paix
-er	[ɛR]	[e]	Lever/manger/chanter
-ll-	[l]	[j]	Famille/fille/feuille
-s-	[s]	[z]	Maison/chemise/devise
Au/eau/aux/eaux	[u]	[o]	Chauffeur/peau/animaux

It is important to note that, after a term of vigorous attempt in taking them through these basics discussed above; we have used the same reading passage to assess the students. During the assessment, we realized there has been a massive improvement in their efforts. This is shown in the post intervention table below.

TABLE 12: Post intervention results

Items	Wrong pronunciation	Number of students	Percentage	Correct pronunciation	Number of students	Percentage
1.La journée	La [dʒuni]	6	30%	La [ʒuRne]	14	70%
2.La douche	La [dutʃ]	2	10%	La [duʃ]	18	90%
3.Manger	[mādʒe]	5	25%	[māʒe]	15	75%
4.Les femmes	[lɛsfɛm]	8	40%	[lɛfam]	12	60%
5.Dans un tel	[dɛnsyntɛl]	7	35%	[dāzœtɛl]	13	65%
6.La station	La [steiʃn]	1	5%	La [stasjɔ̃]	19	95%
7.Ces courses	Ces [kɔ̃sis]	6	30%	Ces [kuRs]	14	70%
8.Observer	[ɔ̃b:zɛRvɛR]	10	50%	[opsɛRve]	10	50%
8.En direction	En[dl'rek ʃiɔ̃n]	4	20%	En [diRɛksjɔ̃]	16	80%
9.En allant	En [alɛ̃t]	3	15%	[ānalā]	17	85%
10.Mon frère	Mon [flɛ]	7	35%	Mon [fRɛR]	13	65%
11.Travail	[trævel]	9	45%	[tRavaj]	11	55%
12.Famille	[famili]	0	0%	[famij]	20	100%
13.Aurevoir	[olevwa]	4	20%	[oRɔ̃vwaR]	16	80%
13.Pendant	[pɛndɛ̃t]	0	0%	[pādā]	20	100%
14.La radio	La [reidio]	0	0%	[Radjo]	20	100%
15.Important	[impɔ̃rtɛ̃t]	2	10%	[ĩpɔ̃Rtā]	18	90%
16.L'information	L'[infɔ̃mɛʃn]	1	5%	[ĩfɔ̃Rmasjɔ̃]	19	95%
17.Poison	[pɔ̃izn]	0	0%	[pwazɔ̃]	20	100%
18.Poisson	[pɔ̃isn]	0	0%	[pwasɔ̃]	20	100%

9. Post-intervention

After the intervention, we proceeded to the post intervention analysis whose outcome is in sharp contrast with the pre-intervention results. The post-intervention results demonstrate clearly the success of the study conducted after taking the learners through several pronunciation skills to help correct the wrong pronunciation of words, the table turned as compared to the pre-intervention table. From table 12, the first item shows a remarkable result. Only 6 of the learners representing 30% could not pronounce the word correctly in French as

compared to 14, representing 70% who were able to do so. The next item, which is item 2 displays a more positive result. 18 of them who form the majority of the learners representing 90% did pronounce the word correctly while the remaining 2, representing only 10% failed to pronounce the word «la douche» correctly. For item 3, 5 learners, representing 25% got it wrong while 15, representing 75% performed well. The item 5 deals with liaison where initially 95% of learners got it wrong but now, reduced to 35% significantly. This means that, at the post-intervention stage, 13 learners representing 65% did well in pronouncing and linking the sounds of the word correctly however, 7 of them representing 35% could not get it right. Surprisingly in item 6, only 1, representing 5% failed to pronounce the word correctly. The rest 19, representing 95% pronounced the word correctly. The item number 7 also presents a good result where 14 learners who represent 70% did a good pronunciation while only 6, representing 30 % could not pronounce the word correctly. It is only the item 8 that that displays equal result of performance where 50% of the learners pronounced the word well whereas 50% could not. This is because the word «observer» plays double standards both in English and in French and its pronunciation is almost the same except at the end of the word. Item 9 also reveals a good performance of learners in that 16, representing 80% were able to pronounce the word correctly except 4 of them who represent 20% could not do well. In item 10, only 3 representing 15% did not correctly pronounce the word but, the majority who represent 85% performed excellently. The item number 11 is not different. Only 7, representing the minority were unable to perform. The rest 13, representing the majority performed creditably. In the same vein, the majority which constitutes 11 learners performed well while 9 of them representing 45% could not. In the following items: 13, 15, 16, 19, and 20, all the learners representing 100% in each of these items were able to pronounce the words without difficulty. Again, in item 14, only 4 representing 20% could not redeem themselves. The rest of the learners who constitute the majority of 16 interestingly did well. Item 17 also unveiled a good performance in that, 18 out of 20 of the learners did wonderfully well in pronouncing the word as compared to 2 of the learners who were unsuccessful. The last item which is item number 18 has again shown a significant progress such that 19 learners representing 95% did well in pronouncing the word correctly leaving 1 only. This also indicates an excellent performance.

10. Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the study conducted in Wesley College of Education, we came out with the following recommendations for learners and tutors of French language.

First of all, listening to French audios either on CDs or French channels should be prescribed to all learners of French irrespective of their level of study in all colleges where French is taught as foreign language.

Secondly, tutors of French in Wesley College of Education should create some periods set aside for reading practice for all learners of French in the institution. In addition, every learner of French should possess and make judicious use of a French dictionary that caters for pronunciations of words to enable learners improve upon their reading skills. Again, due to the fact that learners have difficulty in pronouncing French words correctly, tutors should lay emphasis on phonetic lessons and encourage learners to make efforts to communicate with

speakers of French language. The researchers also recommend that imitation of French words be emphasized during oral lessons in order to improve the pronunciation skills among learners of French language.

Finally, learners of French language in Wesley College of Education should be exposed to francophone environment for a longer period, at least two semesters to develop their listening and oral skills since they are being trained to be teachers of French in Ghanaian basic schools. Dans l'ensemble, l'article est de très bonne qualité et propose des solutions très pratiques pour pallier le problème de prononciation chez les apprenants.

Conclusion

This study came up as a result a problem detected among learners of French in Wesley College of Education on the wrong pronunciation of the words in French language that should give a clear meaning of the language. On the other hand, wrong pronunciation of words in the French language does not make meaning. The cause was identified in the following areas: the pronunciation of vowels, consonants, combination of letters, the conflict between vowels and consonants and the issue of liaison (linking of sounds or words). The study was meant to address the problem of wrong pronunciation among learners of French in this institution. The comparison of the pre-intervention results vis-à-vis the post-intervention results is evidence of the potency of this study. The results of the analysis of the post-intervention revealed that, at least 90% of the problem of wrong pronunciation of French words is drastically reduced hence, a motivation to learners and tutors of French in our institution of study.

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