

Some techniques in the correction of pupils' mistakes and mispronunciations of lexical “en” in the dictation lesson

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Résumé

L'étude s'est déroulée dans les classes de 5^{ème} et 6^{ème} secondaires de quelques écoles de Kikwit. Cet article suggère quelques techniques appropriées d'enseignement, susceptibles d'aider les enseignants d'anglais en 5^{ème} et 6^{ème} secondaires à corriger les fautes des élèves, dues à la mauvaise prononciation et orthographe du lexical “en” observés pendant les leçons de dictée. La méthode d'observation systématique a permis de relever les fautes commises par les élèves dans la prononciation et l'orthographe de lexical “en”. La technique documentaire a servi de recenser, collectionner et proposer les techniques susceptibles de résoudre ce problème d'enseignement d'une langue aussi importante qu'est l'anglais.

Mots-clés : lexical, en, pronunciation, Anglais

Abstract

The study took place in the 5th and 6th secondary classes of some Kikwit schools. This article suggests some appropriate teaching techniques, which can help teachers of English in 5th and 6th secondary to correct the mistakes of students, due to the bad pronunciation and spelling of lexical "en" observed during dictation lessons. The systematic observation method made it possible to identify the mistakes made by the pupils in the pronunciation and spelling of lexical "en". The documentary technique served to identify, collect and propose techniques that could solve this problem of teaching a language as important as English.

Keywords: lexical, pronunciation, English

I. Introduction

As language, English has taken on important role all over the world and several countries have introduced it into their schools curricula, that is, a compulsory subject in their educational system, either in primary or in secondary schools.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, our country, there is also such in English program which has been designed for English teachers in secondary schools with an aim to reach: to enable learners to listen, speak, read and write English correctly for the purpose of communication. And this is done by a variety of skills, of which, there is a room for the correction of lexical “en” mistakes and mispronunciations any teaching activities.

Pupils of secondary schools have got a lot of difficulties in the spelling of English words in general and that of lexical “en” in particular and its pronunciations where it occurs. We have observed that English teachers do not train their pupils to be aware of the above situation. In fact, an English teacher should be aware of English knowledge in general and that of phonetics in particular. As Nasr (1972) says “the teacher of foreign language is very well aware of the existence of, and he is always being told in books, on method and at training courses”.

From teachers' general knowledge, pupils will acquire good knowledge of the language and – “en” when listening, speaking, reading and writing. The teachers may also give them factual information with reference to the good model of the spelling and the pronunciation of “en”. Mac Carthy (1978) clearly indicates that “the teacher sees to it that a good model pronunciation is presented to the learners' ear at all times and can offer advice as to which of several varieties or alternative head best be imitated and adapted.”

Our writing springs from a particular problem faced by pupils when learning English as a foreign language through a dictation lesson but on how to correct pupils lexical “en” mistakes and its mispronunciations. Before going ahead, we will try to find and give some suggestions to solve the problem. Our study is based on answers to such questions as: why do English teachers face difficulties in the correction of pupils' lexical “en” mistakes and mispronunciations in a dictation lesson? How do teachers correct their pupils' mistakes and mispronunciations? To answer the above questions, we have thought of such a study as: approaches and suggested techniques in the correction of pupils' lexical “en” mistakes and mispronunciations in a dictation lesson.

We also aim to suggest some solution in order to improve teachers' abilities, to promote pupils' listening and writing skills, to help teachers and learners understand the correct spelling “en” and its pronunciations in any environment.

As Freakha (1988) mentioned “before teaching a dictation lesson, the teacher might have a result to reach. He might ask himself questions such as..... What may I do to control my pupils' understanding? Is there really anything that? I may do to help them retain materials taught?” this reminds us of the ultimate purpose of this study.

II. Methodology

To write our article, we had to select some methods. We referred to the library analysis approach, in order to have and descriptive analysis methods, to describe and analyses how teachers proceed during their dictation lessons. Further, we have referred to classroom observation, to see how English teachers correct their pupils' lexical “en” mistakes and mispronunciations. As Nkoy (2002) indicates that “appropriate procedures depend on the relationship of the researcher and the domain of research, the types of data being collected and the particular situation in which field work is being conducted.”

III. Learners' mistakes and mispronunciations

During our classroom observations, we have noticed that fifth and sixth forms learners have many difficulties when pronouncing and writing lexical-en, we have perceived that most English teachers have neglected the dictation lesson in their materials design, that's why, learners write as they heard without taking care of the pronunciation.

In fact, when we had looked at pupils' texts, we had found a lot of mistakes of lexical-en such as:

- Cold, collid, colled, colded/kɒld/ instead of called /kɔɪld/
- Wer, wen, well where /wer/ instead of were /we/ instead of were /wɛ/
- Wos, whos, wose, yoes / wɔs/, /j ɪs/ instead of wes /wDz/
- Wantit, wonted, wantid /wɔntɪd/, wɔnt d/ instead of wanted/wDntd/
- Lift, leaft, lift /l ft/ instead of left /left/
- Sed, sid, saed /sɪd/ or /seɪd/ instead of said /sed/

- Escapet, escapt, escapid/ Is'ke p d/ instead of escaped/ s'kept/
- Spen, spred, sprid /'spen/ or /'sprd/ instead of spead /'sped/
- Nidid, nudit /naɪdɪd/ or /naɪdɪt/ instead of needed /nɪdɪd/
- Asket, askit /aɪskɪt/ instead of asked /aɪskɪd/
- Limit, limitit /lɪmɪtɪt/ instead of limited /lɪmɪtɪd/

IV. Teachers' way of correcting mistakes

During the correction step, we observed that some teachers did not precede this step accordingly. The teachers wrote themselves the dictation passage on the chalkboard while pupils were correcting some mistakes on their pieces of papers before they exchange their sheets of papers. When the teachers have finished, they asked pupils to exchange their sheets, but they didn't notice that some pupils have already corrected their mistakes. Others teachers did not remind the spelling and the pronunciation of lexical "en" and "ed". Some others wrote the dictation passage on the chalkboard with blanks spaces and asked their pupils to read and fill in the blanks with the appropriate verbs in the past tense or past participle, this was done by some clever pupils. This way was not beneficial to pupils who faced difficulties in the spelling and the pronunciation of lexical "en" and "ed". Doff (1988) suggested "the important way in which the teacher can improve the students' chances of learning successfully is by being sensitive to the needs of individual students recognizing that students are different and have different needs and problems"

When observing these ways, we have found that the teachers have proceeded in a wrong way. Instead of collecting first their pupils' sheets of the dictation passage, second, they send one pupil on the chalkboard and write his own dictation passage or any pupil's dictation passage, then, they begin to correct mistakes with the guidance of the teacher by using the good pronunciation of the lexical-en or ed and or by using the phonemic transcription of the verbs in different environments of ed. When finished to correct, the teacher will distribute the pupils' sheets by exchanging it's and allow them to underline the misspelling and the incorrect form of lexical "en" and "ed". In this case all pupils will be interested and condensed. Such a kind of approach will allow pupils to get profit to correct their neighbors' lexical-en mistakes and their own mispronunciations.

V. Description and pronunciation of "en"

In this point, we want to explain the "en" suffix, its different pronunciation, time and space to deal with from National English Syllabus. In linguistics, the inflectional morpheme "en" stands for both, the simple past tense and the past participle of regular and irregular verbs.

Crystal (1985) replicates and writes that-en form is "a term used in English grammatical description to refer to past participle form of the verbs, eg. I have taken". The same source indicates that "the 'ed' ending is also common in this function, eg. I have worked, and may be seen as an alternative symbol"

From the above quotation, we understand that the inflectional-en has got different forms in its realizations, that is, its realizations depends on whether we have a regular or an irregular verbs.

5.1. Forms of "en"

In English, the lexical-en has different forms. We will make a distinction between lexical-en of regular verbs and that of irregular verbs. The former is that of the past tense and past participle of regular verbs, which is made by adding "ed" to the base of the verbs.

Eg:

1. I worked hard yesterday,
2. She had worked hard yesterday,
3. John played football well last year,
4. John had played football well

The latter, that is, the simple past tense and the past participles of irregular verbs are not made by the suffix-en, but each of them has got his own way.

Eg:

1. I cut my fingers yesterday.
2. She had cut the mango-tree.
3. Pupils spoke English well
4. Pupils had spoken English well since two years.
5. She became a nurse for two years.
6. She has become a nurse for two years

5.2. Pronunciation of “en” form

Greenbaum and Quirk (1990) provide us with the following different pronunciation of “en” of regular verbs:

- a) /ɪd/ after bases ending in /d/ and /t/ eg: Want-wanted /'wɒntɪd/ repeat-repeated /rɪpɪtɪd/ decide-decided /dɪsaɪdɪd/ need- needed /'n ɪdɪd/
- b) /d/ after bases ending in voiced sounds other than /d/, including vowels
Eg: call- called /'kɔ:d/
Budge – budged /bʌdzd/
Buzz – buzzed /bʌzd/
- c) /t/ after bases ending in voiceless sounds other than /t/.
Eg: pass – passed /'past/
Pact – packed /'pakt/
Watch – watched /'wɔ:tʃt/

We have try to describe the lexical “en” in the above lines and we must indicate that there is no rule for the irregular verbs. The place and time of teaching-en inflection keep our interest where and when should the lexical-en inflection be taught?

VI. Place and time of teaching “en” infections

The teaching of lexical-en inflections is part of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Congolese schools in general, during grammatical structures such as tenses of the verbs in particular and also during vocabulary, readings dictation, conversation and composition lessons. The teacher can take profit of teaching sounds and structures.

The outcome of our analysis has been that teachers do not use appropriate techniques to correct pupils' lexical-en mistakes and mispronunciations. This article is based on some suggested techniques, we found available to help teachers to correct their pupils' lexical-en' mistakes as well as learners themselves. It is better to begin the correction with:

6.1. Mimicry-memorization technique

When we applied this technique, the procedure at the correction step would be:

- The teacher asks the pupils to exchange sheets and sends a pupil to write his dictation passage on the blackboard.
- Together with pupils, they correct the dictation passage which is written on the chalkboard to have a model or a correct passage by using the mimicry memorization technique.
- The teacher has to pronounce the past tense or the past participle which is mistaken and asks his pupils to repeat after him, they correct by imitating their teacher's pronunciation.

Eg:

Teacher: called / kɔld/

Pupil(s): called / kɔld/

At the end of the correction, the passage becomes a model, the teacher asks pupils to underline the lexical en mistakes on their classmate's sheets.

When using this technique, the teacher has the facility to help his pupils to discriminate the 'ed' pronunciation in its different environment and write down the correct spelling of the past tense or past participle. Lado (1964) argues, that "the first step is to let the students hear a word or sentence from the dialogue and to ask them to repeat it as soon as they can".

6.2. Props technique

The props technique is available when the student's fail to imitate well, or when imitation is not enough. We break the difficult into syllables and individual sound until the class can imitate successfully, when the teacher wants to use this technique, he should know ahead the difficult items to show his pupils then their proper articulation and the teacher will write the corrects spelling by separating the syllables. For example: call/ed = called, escape/d = escaped/ and when the verbs are inseparable units such as: said, were, told, the teacher will emphasize on their pronunciations and spelling to break his pupils' difficulties. For example: /s d/, /w /, /t l d/,

Lado (1964) adds that "the most effective prop is an articulator hint, not a full description of the sound (...) the articular hint should then be a minimal comment direct at the specific distortion introduced by a student".

6.3. Self-correction technique

The self-correction technique is used to check the individual understands of the lexical-en through the correction step of the dictation lesson.

The procedure will be as follows:

- During the correction step, the teacher sends one pupil to write his dictation passage on the chalkboard.
- After the pupil has finished to write, the teacher starts to ask the writer to read the passage, then he asks the rest of the class a question to know if the passage is correct? If not, the pupil who knows the correct spelling of the mistaken verb will help his friend to correct his own mistakes. When finished, the pupil can or will recognize his lexical-en mistakes. Then with the help of the teacher, a pupil will be able to correct his own lexical-en mistakes. Nkwoy (2002) adds that “the self-correction or pupil-correction technique consists of putting a pupil in front of his own dictation and the teacher guides him with some questions in order to correct his lexical-en mistakes.”

6.4. Peer-correction technique

During the correction step, the teacher takes first his pupils' dictation sheets and second he sends one of them to write his dictation passage on the blackboard. After that he starts asking all the pupils to have a look at the dictation passage and asks them to correct their classmate lexical-en mistakes before the teacher distributes by exchanging their dictation sheets. Here, the teacher will guide them until they finish the correction. This technique can be suggested as pupil-pupil's correction done by classmates. It is used when the student is unable to correct himself the mistakes, the teacher may ask other pupils to correct by means of their teacher's questions, such as:

- Is the verb or the tense in the first sentence correct? - What is the correct spelling of...?
- Is the verb in the second sentence into the past tense?
- Pronounce or spell the verb “said, spoken, spoke?”
- Go and write the correct form?

In this way, the teacher has to provide this technique through his guidance and their classmates' correction to make others repeating it for the better understanding. In some ways, peer-correction technique is dynamic than self-correction. Here, there are more pupils to react with, and therefore, there is a great possibility of correction.

6.5. Teacher-pupil correction technique

Here, the teacher behaves like a participant in the classroom management. This technique can be used when the teacher realizes that his pupils face difficulties to correct their own or neighbors' lexical-en mistakes.

When using this technique, he may feel that he should take care of the correctness of lexical “en” because the pupils are extremely mixed up about what the correct lexical-en should be. In this case the teacher can re-explain his pupils' lexical-en structure.

At the correction step, the teacher sends one pupil to write his dictation passage on the chalkboard, after that, they exchange sheets and start the correction. So, when the teacher notices that his pupils are unable to correct the lexical-en such as those of irregular verbs, the teacher may apply this technique by giving them the correct spelling. As:

- Correct the lexical-en of the verbs: say, teach, go, - Pupils write: seed, sayed, teached, goed.
- Look! Class, is these verbs correct?
- No, answer from is pupils
- Ok, look class! Say = said, teach = taught, go = went

When the correction is finished, the teacher will allow his pupils to underline the lexical-en mistakes on their classmates' sheets.

6.6. Prompts correction technique

When using or applying this technique in the correction step, the teacher has to write the dictation passage on the blackboard with some blanks. And he gives some prompts orally and makes his pupils repeat them several times. Then, he sends one of them to write the prompts they have repeated. When the first pupil fails, he sends the second one by making him repeat the prompt and correct their classmate's lexical-en mistakes/ this is a good way of giving weak students or pupils a chance to say something. Haycraft (1978) mentioned that "this technique consists of saying the sentence; the teacher wants the students to practice or to write correctly. The teacher says the sentence several times and student repeat it until they are familiar with the structure" and "they can consolidate the spelling and the pronunciation through reading sentence aloud"

Many prompts for language come from the teacher and it is also possible to indicate the tense you want by written signs on the board. Prompts of this kind are also valuable because they bring variety and you accustom the student to react in English different things around him, whether written, spoken or seen.

Being more explicit, Doff (1988) concuss and writes the teacher gives prompts orally, and gets the students to give examples or to write in a sentence. This would keep the more active and give students practice in writing the structures themselves".

6.7. Question and answer technique

This technique consists of asking pupils' questions which these have to answer. This is better, not to ask question in rote around the class otherwise those furthest away from the questioning know, they can relax for some times before their turn comes, while those who have already answered can sit back and dream, the more the teacher involves his students, the more motivated they will be. Haycraft (1978) adds that: Questions are a way of compelling the attention of your students. If someone is yawning in the back row, ask him a question. However, don't start with the name of the student you are addressing, (...) when you finally name x, the other students will be interested to know whether his answer is going to correspond with theirs.

The question-answer technique should be designed and graded to practice the patterns, have studied before. In the question-answer technique, the responses are governed by the form of the question and by some situation or information that is known to the student. At the correction step, the teacher will send one of these pupils to write his dictation passage on the blackboard. After he has finished, the teacher applies this technique after they have exchanged their sheets.

The teacher is going to ask questions to his pupils to call on their attention and to remind them about the past tense and past participle of verbs. One of the procedures can be as follow:

Teacher: what is the tense of the verb in the first sentence? Pupil one: the tense of the verb is present tense. T.: Is the tense of the verb present tense?

P₁: No sir, the verb is in the past tense.

T.: What is the past participle of this verb? Go and correct.

P₂: The past participle tense of this verb is wanted.

T.: How do you get this past tense or past participle? P₃: I add- “ed” at the end

T.: Is the spelling of the verb in the second sentence correct?

P₄: No it isn’t

T.: Go and correct the spelling of that verb

P₅: The correct spelling is: called for example T.: What is the verb in the third sentence?

P₆: The verb is to write

T.: Is the past tense of write correct?

P₇: No, sir

T.: Go and correct

P₇: The past tense of write is “wrote”.

The teacher will make interest to his pupils by using this technique until the passage will be finished. He creates an activity for sake of attracting and helping his pupils to give right answers in order to remind them what has been taught and how they should write the lexical-en and to avoid mistakes and mispronunciations.

VII. Conclusion

This article has been devoted to some suggested techniques for the correction of lexical-en mistakes through a dictation lesson. We have called on those techniques because we have found them available and more practical. The use of each of them depends on the teacher, the level of his class and many more other factors. This is to say that, the techniques are to be varied according to whom and to what is being taught. The same activity can be done in quite different ways and with quite different results according to what technique the teacher applies during the correction step of his dictation lesson.

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