

Auto stressed suffix “ette” in teaching English at secondary school in Congo

Roland Giscard ONDZE OTOUBA, Université Marien N’GOUABI (Congo)

Email : rolandondze@gmail.com

Abstract

This research work deals with the teaching and learning of English auto stressed suffix “ette” at secondary school. It drives data from “Terminale” learners and teachers of English at *Ecole Militaire Préparatoire Général Leclerc*. Classroom observation and questionnaires were used to collect relevant data. The analysis and interpretation of data demonstrate the non-teaching and learning of English auto stressed suffix during English courses. In fact, teachers lack the pedagogical strategies of teaching different English pronunciation items. This could be coupled with the non-organisation of in-service training or teaching workshops by INRAP to reinforce teacher’s training skills. Thus, this research work provides a lesson plan elaborated for the purpose of teaching, learning and assessing English auto-stressed suffixes in secondary school classes.

Keywords: Auto stressed, Congo, Suffix, Teaching, Word stress.

Résumé

Ce travail porte sur la prononciation anglaise notamment sur l’enseignement-apprentissage de l’accent du suffixe “ette” au secondaire. Cette étude s’appuie sur un corpus écologique recueilli à l’école Militaire Préparatoire Générale Leclerc en classe de Terminale. L’observation de classes et les questionnaires des enseignants et apprenants sont des outils de recherche qui ont permis de recueillir des données fiables. L’analyse et l’interprétation de ces données montrent que les différentes notions de la prononciation, particulièrement les suffixes auto accentués ne sont pas enseignés et appris pendant les cours d’anglais. En fait, les enseignants manquent de stratégies pédagogiques sur la notion. Aussi, l’INRAP n’organise pas des séminaires et des ateliers d’apprentissage appropriés pour renforcer les compétences des enseignants. Par conséquent, ce travail de recherche propose un plan de la leçon en vue de faciliter l’enseignement, l’apprentissage et l’évaluation de l’accent tonique portant sur le suffixe “ette”

Mots clés : Accent tonique des mots, Auto accentué, Congo, Enseignement, Suffixe.

Introduction

This work aims at simplifying the teaching process of English auto stressed suffix in different classes at secondary school. In fact, a poor command of English suffix stress can affect the pronunciation of words and in many cases their meanings. In order to develop learners’ oral skills, it is compulsory to provide them with lessons on suffix stress so that they become equipped with better communicative competences. It provides pedagogical guidance related to the teaching of English suffix stress for a good pronunciation of French borrowed words to simplify its implementation in English language during the learning process. This study has been carried out at *Ecole Militaire Préparatoire Général Leclerc* following these two research questions. (1) How to teach English auto stress suffix? (2) What prevents the implementation of this English pronunciation item in classes? This research work sorts out in the domain of applied linguistics or didactics. The first hypothesis of this work is that English auto stressed suffix could be taught, learnt and assessed as any other English language items through the exploration of the explanatory method couple with the 3Ps teaching method. The second

hypothesis shows that the secondary school teachers could not teach and assess English suffix items because they lack training, strategies or activities to deal with English suffix lessons in classes. However, English Syllabus deals with the English suffix stress items: (G.O.2 *expressing orally*, S.O.2.4 *word stress* and S.O.2.7 *prefix and suffix*) to be taught, learnt, and assessed in high school. Understanding and mastering some language items such as pronunciation is a crucial aspect of language learning, but it is still a challenge for high school learners. Accordingly, the teaching and learning of English auto stressed suffix could help learners master the stress from the auto suffix. They could correctly pronounce English words with added suffixes in order to enhance their ability to communicate effectively. Thus, this paper deals with the previous works on English word stress items, the English auto stressed suffix in teaching process, the data collection method and analysis, the major findings and the practical suggestions.

1. Previous works on English word stress items

This section reviews some relevant available works related to the study of English word stress items in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in the Congo. The following authors are selected to enlighten the audience.

Kuusisati Cheeklin et al. (2022) focus his studies on material package that could facilitate the teaching of pronunciation items; word stress, sentence stress and speech rhythm in order to make learners familiarize with the English phonological system. As a matter of fact, the authors (2022, p.14) mention that “*Prosodic feature of a language are rarely use in isolation, instead they are interconnected and occur at the same time as other prosodic features and segmental features*” The analysis of this passage shows that prosodic features refer to the properties of the language such as word and sentence stress, intonation and rhythm, whereas segmental features deal with an individual sound. Emphasizing on the context that might facilitate the implementation of prosodic features, Cheeklin et al. think that they are interconnected and occur at the same time to create an intelligible pronunciation of the target language.

Talking about some strategies and procedures that might facilitates the implementation of sentence stress Cheeklin et al. (2022, p.15) write: “*Every word with more than one syllable has one syllable that is stressed more than the other one or ones. Similarly, in sentences some word are stress more than others. This phenomenon is called word stress and sentence stress respectively*”. This assertion deals with the phenomenon of stress in a language, both at sentence stress and word stress levels. In polysyllabic words, one syllable is always pronounced loudly than the others. Similarly, in sentence stress, certain words or phrases are typically stressed more than others. Concerning the stress placement, Cheeklin et al. (2022, p.16) argue that “*The placement of word stress depends on the origin of the word. They claim that English words come, for instance, from Germanic, Latinate and French origins, and the origin of a word may for example affect the stress pattern of words with prefixes*”. It results from this passage that the stress placement of English words may be different depending on the origin of each word since English is a language that covers several loan words which are sometimes from other languages such as Germanic, Latin and French. Each of these languages has its own rules for word stress. Therefore, the origin of a word might affect its stress pattern, and this can be attested with words that have prefixes. For example, the word “produce” can be stress on either first or second syllable due to its different grammatical categories (whether it is used as noun or verb). In fact, the noun form comes from Latin, while the verb form derives from the French word “produire”.

Kuusisati et al. have suggested some linguistic issues that could facilitate the teaching of word stress, sentence stress and rhythm. In fact, they develop some works to explain the difference between stressed and unstressed syllable, the place of stress marks in words and the

pronunciation of English sentences. However, no item has been selected in order to show its teaching and assessing process in different pedagogical classes in secondary schools.

Ndongo Ibara et al. (2019) deal with the relevance of teaching English compound word stress at secondary school. This research work aims at reinforcing the learners' oral skills while learning English. Since English sounds are very tricky, the teaching of this pronunciation item makes learners to be familiar with the phonological system of the target language. In this respect, Ndongo Ibara et al (2019, p.47) argue

Besides, concerning learners 'lack of motivation toward the English course and the focus on some language items, just, for their examination, the teaching of English sounds aims to develop the learners' competence, confident and improve the learners' level of proficiency in spoken English.

It results out that the teaching and learning of English sound is firstly doomed to failure. This is justified by the fact that teachers of English interest the secondary school in lessons of Grammar, Vocabulary, language functions and reading comprehension in order to help them face formative and summative evaluations. Secondly, Ndongo Ibara et al want to demonstrate that the teaching of English pronunciation items help these learners to develop their oral skills. Talking about some strategies and procedures that could help both teachers and learners face English pronunciation items, Ndongo et al thinks that the 3Ps method (Presentation, Practice and Production) is the best teaching method that would fit to help both teachers and learners cope with the English compound noun stress accordingly in classes. In clear, the selected teaching method starts by the addition to these 3Ps, "Beginning" stage and ends by the "Evaluation". In the Beginning, Ndongo et al suggests that the teacher should check if learners are familiar with the notion of compound noun in English and then they should select compound noun focused on the English disyllabic word stress.

Implementing the day's lesson from the above method, Ndongo et al (2019, p.50) write: *"The teacher provides a list of noun/noun compounds with explanation on their stress. In addition, while learners are following, the teacher explain some rules on stress noun/noun compounds and, gives them a task"*. In this passage, Ndongo et al unveil that, Presentation is the stage where a teacher of English should be clear and concise. That is, the teacher should give a list of compound nouns to illustrate the conditions that facilitate the stress of compound noun in English. This step help learners be aware of the selected conditions that they will take into account to provide their own examples in Practice and Production stages. As a matter of fact, Ndongo et al (2019, p.50) mention that: *"the teacher asks learners to read noun / noun compounds written on the board and then provide their own examples orally"*. In this stage, the secondary school learners are requested to practice the taught lesson by pronouncing loudly the selected compound noun words on the board and to give their own examples orally under the teachers' guidance. In this stage learners exercise themselves on how to stress the English compound noun orally, whereas in "Production", Ndongo Ibara et al (2017, p.66) suggest that: *"The teacher asks learners to write their own noun/noun compounds on the board with stress marker and pronounce them"*. Obviously this stage deals with writing skill where learners are requested to write their own compound nouns and stress them accordingly on the board. In fact, this stage aims at justifying the secondary school learner's abilities to stress or locate the stress mark at the right place following the conditions or rules by the teacher. In Evaluation stage, the authors (2017, p.53) suggest a set of exercises based on the compound noun stress that teachers would use to reinforce the learners understanding in this pronunciation item during the learning process. These different exercises could be related to *multiple choice and True or false*.

Jonathan Pierrel (2010) is interested in teaching English word stress. In fact, the author thinks that learners find problems to stress English words while learning the target language in classes. As a matter of fact, English stress generates rules due to the different categories of suffix features (Auto-stressed, Pre-stressed and Neutral stress) and, sometimes those rules are not regular because there are some exceptions due to the origin, the nature or the morphology

of words in English language. In this connection Jonathan Pierrel (2010, p.2) writes: “*effective word stress teaching plays a non-negligible role in learners’ instruction. Stressed word appropriately improve vowel quality, at least prevent him from being distorted, as may result with incorrectly word stressed*”. In this passage, Pierrel tries to enlighten the relevance of teaching English word stress items in order to help learners identify the stress placement in English different English word categories. Therefore, the author underlines the quality of vowels as a phonological feature that could enable learners to distinguish stressed syllables from non-stressed syllables in English polysyllabic words.

Talking about the study of English suffixes and the stress placement with the suffixes (-tion, -ic...), Pierrel (2010, p.2) enlightens in the following example (1).

a- admini'stration, infor'mation, ope'ration

b- Demo'cratic, scien'tific, eco'nomic

It results from the example (1) that the suffixes “ic” and “tion” belong to pre-stressed suffixes. This means that the stress placement is located on the first or second syllable of a word from the syllable that bears the suffix to the beginning of that word. Concerning the classification of suffixes, Pierrel (2010, p.121) mentions:

Neutral suffixes: they do not influence the placement of the stress. Non- neutral suffixes: these affixes shift the placement of the stress to a specific syllable in the word. We can divide this category in two sub –categories: Non –stressed suffixes: these suffixes have an effect on the stress placement and move another syllable of the word than the suffix. Stressed suffixes: These suffixes draw the stress on themselves.

It comes out from this passage that suffixes are divided into two categories namely neutral suffixes and non-neutral suffixes. The first category does not influence the stress placement, whereas the second influences the stress placement of English words written with the suffixes. To clarify, the second category covers the pre-stressed and auto-stressed suffixes. In fact, pre-stress suffixes refer to penultimate and antepenultimate. They influence the position of the stress either in the first or the second syllable after the suffix. However, auto-stress suffixes are stressed in the syllable that bears the suffixes at the end of the word. As a matter of fact the example (2) evidences:

- a- *Words with a neutral suffix:* (re'tirement, re'lationship) the syllables do not influence the placement of the stress.
- b- *Words with pre-stressed suffix:* the pre-stress suffixes are syllables that cover the stress on the antepenultimate syllable (de'mocracy, pho'tography) and on the penultimate syllable (geo'graphic, geo'logic).
- c- *Words with Auto stress suffix:* (Nove'lette, nee'dee, Congo'lese). All of these words are stressed in the syllable bearing the suffix.

Jonathan Pierrel has worked on the different features of English suffix stress in teaching and learning process. In fact, the author has mentioned that this English pronunciation item covers three features such as: neutral suffix, pre- stressed suffix and auto-stressed suffix. To clarify, illustrations and explanations have been provided in general, whereas no selection has been done in connection to the learners ‘level in a lesson plan in order to help both teachers and learners face these features in classes.

2. English auto stressed suffix in teaching process

This section aims at discussing the relevance of teaching English auto stressed suffix at secondary school. In fact, INRAP syllabus of English involves six (6) components such as: Pronunciation, Grammar, Vocabulary, Reading comprehension, Language functions and Topic study. Therefore, the pronunciation teaching items are concerned with sounds, stress and intonations or rhythms. The following table illustrates the English suffix stress items.

Table 1: The English suffix stress items in the syllabus

General objective	Specific objectives	Contents	Class
G.O2: <i>Expressing orally</i>	S.O.2.4: <i>Producing sentences in different verbal forms 2.7.</i>	<i>English suffix stress items</i> Pre stressed suffix, Auto stressed suffix, Neutral suffix	Terminale A

The above table shows that the English teaching programme for the “Terminale” classes is designed to the needs of the learners to grasp the suffix stress during the learning process. The concept English suffix is an essential component of the language morphology that could help to form new words and to contribute to its flexibility and expressiveness in English language. Accordingly, a suffix is a morpheme that is added to a word in a final position to modify or change its meaning or function. Thus, there are different categories of suffixes which are: Derivational suffix, Inflectional suffix, Pre stressed suffixes, Neutral suffix and Auto stressed suffix.

In fact, derivational suffix changes the category of the word by creating adjectives from nouns, and verbs into nouns, to quote only a few, and allow to form a new word through the base. It also can alter the part of speech. The following example (3) evidences.

- a- “er”: to teach- teacher
- b- “able”: to read -readable
- c- “ance”: import-importance
- d- “ment”: establish - establishment

It appears that, when adding the suffixes (**-er, -able,-ance,-ment**) to verbs, these latter change to nouns. The following example (4) deals with the creation of nouns too.

- a- “ity”: able- ability
- b- “ness” mad-madness

The analysis of example (4) shows that the creation of English nouns is possible when the suffixes (**-ity and ness**) are attached to adjectives, whereas the example (5) below deals with adjectives.

- a- “al” natural,
- b- “less” meaningless,
- c- “y” windy
- d- “ous” dangerous

In fact, when the suffixes (-less, -al, -y, -ous,) are attached to nouns, it results to the formation of English adjectives.

Talking about inflectional suffixes, they do not change word class but rather indicate grammatical information such as past tense and past participle of regular verbs (-ed), plural (-s), possessive ('s), and the progressive marker (ing) as in the example (6) below.

- a- cats
- b- sells
- c- Debbie’s book.
- d- looked
- e- listening

It results from the example (6) that the suffix ‘s’ added to the base ‘cat’, gives only the grammatical information to the word which expresses plurality. Then, when the suffix ‘s’ is attached to the root ‘sell’, this latter is conjugated in third person singular of the present simple tense preceded by a third person pronoun (he, she, it) or a singular noun phrase. Finally, the suffix ‘s’ in Debbie’s’ is a mark of possession, it refers to possessive case in English, while other suffixes indicate tenses or aspects as in verb ‘looked ’and “listening”, the suffix ‘ed’ added to

the root **‘look’** indicates the past tense or the preterit with regular verbs. For the second case, the **ing** attached to the verb **listen** results from the association of the auxiliary **be** and that verb. Inflectional suffixes do not drastically alter word meaning like derivational ones do. They provide important grammatical markers necessary for clear communication in classes. The inflectional suffix do not change the category of the word. When adding ‘s’ to the word ‘cat, it is clear that ‘cats’ remains a noun.

Moreover, working with the stress placement, Pre stressed suffix, Auto-stressed suffix and neutral suffix are the target teaching and learning items. Firstly, Pre stressed suffixes are words made of suffixes and stressed on the antepenultimate and penultimate syllables from the suffix to the beginning of the root as in the example (7)

- a- re’**lation**, geo’**logic**
- b- de’**monstrate**, de’**mocracy**

It results from the example (7) that the suffixes added to the base change the stress position of the words. In (7.a), the stress mark is located on the first syllable, whereas in (7.b) the second syllable is stressed. Secondly, Auto-stressed suffixes are roots combined with the following suffix letters: **ette**, **-ee**, **-ese**, **-eur**, **-ette**, **esse**, **-oon**, **-teen** as in the words *ro’sette*, *nee’dee*, *car’toon*. Thus, these words are stressed on the syllable that bears the suffix. Finally, Neutral suffixes are English words made of suffixes **-ment**, **-ship**, **-ly**, **-ed**, **-dom**, **-able**, **-ful** as in ‘**Membership**’, ‘**freedom**’. In fact the combination of these suffix letters with the base does not affect the initial stress placement of the selected words.

Elsewhere, it is important to mention that the English suffix stress items are requested to be taught, learnt and assessed in order to help the secondary school learners grasp the spoken language during the learning process. As a matter of fact, pronunciation items refer to English sounds, word stress, sentence stress and connected speech items. Thus, the selected item (word stress) plays a significant role in effective communication and comprehension for English language learners. Furthermore, incorporating word stress into the curriculum promotes phonological awareness and sensitivity among learners. It encourages them to pay attention to sound patterns within words and develops a deeper understanding of English sounds.

Emphasizing on the correct pronunciation through an understanding of word stress, learners could enhance their speaking, listening and reading skills and communicate effectively in real-life situations. Following the relevance of the selected item, teaching learners the rules and patterns associated with the Auto suffix, teachers empower them to confidently navigate the complexities of stress placement in English words. Mastering auto stress suffixes allows learners to decipher unfamiliar words by recognizing common patterns and avoiding the mispronunciation and mistake. In that way, Koudissabaka (2018, p.117) writes:

Mistakes in word stress are common causes of misunderstanding in English. Stressing the wrong syllable in a word could make the word very difficult to hear and understand. Even if the speaker might understand, mistakes with word stress could make the listener feel irritated, or perhaps even amused, and could prevent good communication. Therefore, English word stress should be taught to help non-native students not doing such mistakes during the learning process.

The above assertion unveils that the knowledge of auto stress suffixes enables learners to expand their oral competence. A bad stress in a word can lead to listening and comprehension difficulties. These phenomena occur regularly in interactions between teachers and learners, and among learners themselves. This skill proves invaluable when encountering new words in various contexts when meeting this incorrect accentuation of a word like “present” stressed at the beginning of the first syllable (**p**resent) to mean a verb. However, when it is stressed on the second syllable (pre**s**ent) it refers to a verb. This ability to stress words through the application of suitable patterns enhances both written and spoken communication skills.

As a matter of fact, when the secondary school learners are attuned to the patterns of stress within words, they are better equipped to recognize these patterns when listening to native speakers or engaging in conversations. This heightened awareness strengthens their ability to grasp the spoken English accurately. Besides, the teaching of suffix stress could allow learners to know the syllabification of words. In this respect, learners would be able to identify the syllable into words and separate them into syllables. That is, they would be able to separate the specific syllable suffix from the rest of the root as in the example (8) below.

- a- De-ri-va-tion-**al**
- b- Ros-**ette**
- c- Trans-form-at-**ion**

Obviously, the teaching of suffix stress equips learners with the necessitate tools to navigate word formations. Learners will learn to form and create new word through suffix and they will also have a deeply knowledge about the meaning of the suffix that will give a new sense to a new word formed as in the following table (2).

Table 2: Word formation

N°	Suffix	Meaning	Base word	Suffix-added
1	ian, ic, ical	Relating to	Paris 'geology, 'alphabet	Pa'risian, geologic, alpha'betical
2	ious, ity	Quality of, state of	'Mystery; 'possible	Mys'terious, possi'bility
3	eer	Engaged in something	'engine	Engi'neer

By incorporating the explanatory and the 3Ps methods, teachers of English could effectively guide learners on how to correct English word made of suffixes. Koudissabaka quotes that *"In the presentation, the teacher draws up a list of words with the chosen script ("ee"). And as the learners follow along, he explains the rules of accentuation, i.e. how to accentuate a word with this script"*. The author highlights the importance of understanding stress patterns in order to enhance pronunciation and word recognition skills. This step sets a solid foundation for learners to grasp the concept. In Practice, Koudissabaka (2018, p.113) mentions: *"At this point, the teacher asks the students to pronounce the words on the board and then asks them to give their own examples orally"*. This could include exercises such as: identify auto stressed syllables in words with different suffixes or practice proper pronunciation through repetition drills. Through consistent practice, learners develop confidence and accuracy in stressing suffixes. Finally, Koudissabaka unveils: *"In the production phase, the teacher asks learners to write their own words on the board, in the same writing, but with the accent on the stressed syllable, then he asks them to pronounce them"*. This could involve tasks such as creating sentences or short dialogues using words with auto stress suffixes. By actively producing language with proper stress patterns, learners internalize the concept more effectively. This comprehensive teaching process empowers learners to confidently navigate the complexities of English word stress while enhancing their overall language proficiency. Finally, the incorporating of English auto stress suffixes into language curricula means that the secondary school learners of the Congo should be equipped during the learning period so that they would face these items during the formative and summative evaluations.

3. Data collection method and analysis

This section analyses and interprets the data collected from observation, questionnaire addressed to teachers and learners, and the major findings on the teaching of English word stressed at *Ecole Militaire Préparatoire Général Leclerc*.

3.1. The analysis of the classroom observation.

It is worthy to remind that this observation method aimed to check if the English word stress items are taught, learnt and assessed in the selected classes. The following observation card illustrates the different English word stress items.

Table 3: Observation checklist

English word stress items	Contents	Observation
English suffix stress) Pre stressed suffix) Auto stressed suffix) Neutral stress suffix	<i>Not taught, learnt and assessed accordingly</i>

The analysis of my classroom observation period unveils that the English word stress items mentioned in the English syllabus of INRAP are not taught, learnt and assessed in Terminale classes. This means English word stress is not implemented in classes, since there is no teaching card model that INRAP assigned to deal with the teaching of this item. Besides, no lesson has dealt with English pronunciation in general and English word stress items in particular at EMPGL. Obviously, the observation of the classroom has been dealt from 5 February to 21 May 2023. During this time, two teachers of English have accepted to be observed. Therefore, the frequency of classroom observation shows that the two classes of Terminal (A1/A2) have been observed twelve (12) times according to their timetables. Elsewhere, the following table illustrates the link between the taught lessons and pronunciation items, the way these items have been implemented in classes, and the teachers' objectives of including these items in other English components.

Table 4: Pronunciation items from other English components

Other English components	Taught lessons	Pronunciation items
Grammar	Present perfect tense	Sound discrimination
Language functions	Asking and giving direction	Silent letter
Reading comprehension	Reading: Text: AIDS	Pre stressed (word stress)

The above table pictures some English pronunciation items implemented during the teaching of other English sub-disciplines. These English pronunciation items are particularly sound discrimination. In fact, observing the lessons of Grammar based on the ***English present perfect of regular verbs***, the teacher has emphasized on the pronunciation of present perfect suffix “ed” which is pronounced either [t], [id] or [d] at the end of some regular verb. Then, the teacher makes the pronunciation contrast between these sounds from his way of pronouncing. Finally, he gets learners repeat after him to allow them pronounce distinctly these sounds. Observing the lesson of language functions on ***asking and giving direction***, the pronunciation item implemented is the silent letter [I] in the following verbs: “**would, should, could**” using for asking and giving direction. While pronouncing or repeating, learners are not equipped with rules or explanations that could help them use these pronunciation freely. Regarding the lesson of Reading comprehension, the teacher implement the notion of word stress by emphasizing the accent higher in certain syllables of the word like: contami'**nation**, co'**mmunicable**, '**treatment**. Then, the teacher was correcting the mispronunciation of these words and asking learners to repeat after him without teaching them English word stress.

3.2. The analysis of questionnaire addressed to teachers

This section deals with the analysis and interpretation of data collected from teachers of English about the teaching of English word stress in general and Auto stressed suffix in particular.

Question 1: Is the teaching of Pronunciation mentioned in INRAP syllabus?

The objective of this question is to know whether English pronunciation items are permitted to be taught in INRAP syllabus of English. The table below demonstrates.

Table 5: English pronunciation in INRAP syllabus

Responses	Respondents	%
Yes	06	60
No	04	40
Total	10	100

The table (5) above results that the majority of teachers at EMPGL have confessed that the English pronunciation items are mentioned in INRAP syllabus, whereas a few of them ignore this English sub-discipline in the official syllabus of the target language.

Question 2: Which English pronunciation items do you often teach? Justify

This question inquires about the English Pronunciation items teachers often teach at EMPGL.

Table 6: The taught items of English stress

Pronunciation items	Respondents	%
Sound	06	60
Stress	02	20
Connected speech	02	20
Total	10	100

The table above highlights that the selected item of English pronunciation by teachers at EMPGL is sound. This means that, the majority of teachers (60%) have selected the teaching of English sounds, whereas few of them are focused on stress and connected speech teaching items in different classes. Obviously, the above results derive from the classroom observations where sounds are implemented through Grammar, Language functions and Reading comprehension lessons.

Question 3: Which English suffix stress item do you often teach?

This question is asked to know the English suffix stress item teachers often implement in classes. The results of the investigation evidence.

Table 7: English suffix stress items

Suffix stress types	Respondents	%
Auto stressed suffixes	02	20
Pre stressed suffixed	06	60
Neutral suffixes	02	20
Total	10	100

The table above shows that the selected English items are often taught in different pedagogical classes: Auto stressed suffix (20%), Pre stressed (60%) and Neutral suffix (20%). But, through the classroom observation data, the teaching of the selected items lays on Grammar and Vocabulary lessons to create or form new English words. That is, they are not taught as English pronunciation items focusing on the rules that could help to identify the stressed and unstressed syllables of the formed words.

Question 4: Have you been trained to teach English pronunciation items?

The purpose of this question is to check if the selected teachers have been trained to teach English pronunciation items during the training period. The table below evidences.

Table 8: Teachers’ training on English pronunciation

Responses	Respondents	%
Yes	06	60
No	04	40
Total	10	100

The analysis of this table shows that most of teachers (60%) at EMPGL agree that they have been trained to teach Pronunciation items. But, (40%) of them confess that they have not been trained to teach Pronunciation. As a result, the trained teachers reveal that they have received strategies and techniques to teach English sounds and stress items in different pedagogical classes at secondary schools and mastering their oral skills. However, the second group mentions that the course of English phonetics and phonology they learnt have not provided them with didactic strategies that could help them face the teaching of English pronunciation items in secondary schools.

3.3. The analysis of questionnaire addressed to learners

This section deals with the analysis and interpretation of data collected from learners of *Terminale* classes about the learning of English word stress in general and Auto stressed suffix in particular.

Question 5: Which language item do you often learn to increase your oral skills?

The objective of this question is to collect the learners’ information about the English language item they often learn in classes in order to increase the oral skills. The table below shows the result.

Table 9: English language item increasing the oral skills.

Responses	Respondents	%
Grammar	06	20
Vocabulary	10	33,33
Language Function	05	16,66
Pronunciation	04	13,33
Reading comprehension	05	16,66
Total	30	100

The analysis of this table unveils that Grammar, Reading comprehension, Language functions and Vocabulary are the selected English language items that the majority of learners confess they often learn to increase their oral skills, whereas few of them select pronunciation. In fact, the learners’ choices are due to the fact that they are motivated to learn items that are often taught in classes and these items are assessed during the exams. Teachers do not often teach or make learners familiar with the learning of English pronunciation items in classes. That is the reason why, pronunciation is not selected by these learners even though it is one of the most important language items which might improve their oral skills.

Question 6: Which English suffix stress items do you often learn in the class?

The main purpose of this question is to know the English item lesson learned in classes at EMPGL. The following table highlights the data collected.

Table 10: English Auto stressed suffixes

Suffix stress types	Respondents	%
Auto stressed suffixes	07	23,33
Pre stressed suffixes	16	53,33
Neutral suffixes	07	23,33
Total	30	100

The table above shows that the selected English suffix stress items are often learned in different pedagogical classes: Auto stressed suffix (23, 33%), Pre stressed (53, 33%) and Neutral suffix (23, 33%). But, through the classroom observation data, the learning of the selected items lays on grammar and vocabulary lessons to create or form new English words. That is, these suffix stress items are not learnt as English pronunciation items focusing on the rules that could help to identify the stressed and unstressed syllables of the formed words.

3.4. Major Findings and discussion

This section summarizes the major findings related to the teaching and learning of English suffix stress in general and the auto stressed suffix “ette” in Terminale classe in particular. The first major finding is the teachers’ incapacity to deal with English auto stressed suffix. As a matter of fact, teachers are not equipped with the appropriate knowledge or training of teaching strategies and learning activities that could help them prepare or elaborate lesson plans on the selected item. This means, during their last training period at university, the selected teachers have not well trained to teach pronunciation items. That is why, Lamy Nkounkou (2017, p.65) mentions that *“This incapability of creating strategies and exercises on English pronunciation is due to the fact that teachers themselves still have great problems of pronunciation in English”*. Obviously, teachers themselves have no background in phonetics, so they cannot even give a rudimentary knowledge to learners. Yet, these lack of knowledge methods cannot help learners effectively to improve their English pronunciation at school.

The second major finding is the lack of workshops or seminars on the teaching of English suffix stress items. Obviously, the teaching and learning of English word stress is recommended by INRAP from “6eme” to “Terminale”. However, this institution does not organise workshops or seminars on how to implement pronunciation items in different pedagogical classes. Therefore, the observation data reveals that English suffixes are taught and learnt in vocabulary and Grammar lessons in order to enable learners create or form new English words. Consequently, the secondary school learners at EMPGL are not skilled or interested in the pronunciation of the formed words in classes. In this context, Boubazolele (2021, p.25) argues that *“the teaching process is a way or a plan that will be carried out by the teacher by setting the main stages of teaching a given language notion”*. In fact, the author invites teachers of English to select an appropriate teaching strategy that could boost the learning process of the selected item. That is why, this dissertation focuses on Explanatory and 3Ps (presentation, production, practice) methods in order to suggest the teaching and learning strategies and testing activities in the English auto stressed.

4. Practical suggestions

This section provides the didactic strategies that could help both teachers and learners deal with English suffix stress items such as: *creating new words, locating stress placement of words, knowing the meaning of suffixes* in different pedagogical classes. As a matter of fact, these strategies are focused on the Explanatory method couple with the 3P’s method through Pre-requisites checking, Presentation, Practice, Production and Evaluation stages.

Pre-requisites checking is the first stage where the teacher is requested to check with learners the list of English suffix stress (*Auto stressed suffix, Pre-stressed suffix and Neutral suffix*), the different spellings of Auto stressed suffix (*ee, ette, eur, oon, ese*), and the new English words formed from the auto stressed suffix “ette” (*roulette, rosette, couchette...*). Finally, learners are asked to follow the teacher’s presentation of the day’s lesson.

Presentation is the stage where the teacher should provide illustrations and explanations justifying the stress placement and the pronunciation of English words made of the suffix “ette”. Secondly, the teacher is required to pronounce, write the following lists of the selected borrowing words made of “ette” on the board:

1-ba’vette, ba’guette, ban’quette, (shortened part),

2-Sex'tette, quin'tette, oc'tette, (group sense part)

3- 'etiquette, 'omelette, 'Palette.

4-monkette, broette, cadette.

Finally, the teacher explains: “the letters “ette” are suffix when they are part of the stressed syllable of a dissyllabic word that could be shortened (1) and give a group sense to the root (2). But, they are not auto stressed suffix when the above two conditions are not attested as in (3) stressed on the first syllable and (4) “ette” mean the female gender of the words from French”.

As a matter of fact, the above illustration and explanation are provided in order to develop learners’ writing and oral skills through the formation and the pronunciation of English borrowing words made of “ette” as a true and false suffix.

Practice is the stage that aims to reinforce the learners’ speaking abilities on the learning of the English auto stressed suffix “ette”. In fact, the secondary school learners are requested to pronounce the selected words above and to provide their own examples (*Novelette*, *sermo nette*, and *pai llette*) made of the selected auto stressed spelling **orally** thanks to the teacher’s explanations.

Production involves the learners’ abilities to form and pronounce words made of the suffix “ette”. In fact, the selected learners are authorised to write their oral words on the board, underline the suffix and stress them accordingly. The following are illustrations and explanations of stress on the syllables wearing the suffix “ette” in English language (*bavette*, *rosette*, and *novelette*) by the learners themselves. Finally, they are authorized to copy down the summary of the lesson in their copy books.

Evaluation provides a set of testing activities and their answers in order to improve and stimulate the learning of English suffix stress items by high school learners. As a matter of fact, three (3) exercise types could help learners implement the selected items during the learning process in classes. The first exercise is about “Multiple choice”. This exercise aims at making learners justify whether the words in the list with the letters “ette” are *stressed* in the final syllable or *not stressed*. The second exercise is based on “True or false” where learners are requested to explain if the stress placement is true or false from the suffix letters (**ette**) in different words. The third exercise deals with “Blank filling” where the learners are asked to fill in the blanks with the corresponding answers: *Auto stressed suffix* or *not auto stressed suffix*.

Conclusion

This research work investigated the teaching and learning of English auto stressed suffix. It aimed at depicting different problems that hinder the teaching and learning of the select item in Terminale classes. Before embarking on the core element, a number of supporting details have been provided in the introduction to clarify the objectives, scope, the research interest, and the research working hypothesis. The first section was devoted to the review of the related literature. This section went through a selected list of previous research works related to the teaching and learning of English auto stress suffix and pronunciation. In fact, Ndongo Ibara (2015, 2019, and 2023) used didactic process in order to raise teachers’ and learners’ awareness on the teaching and learning of English auto stressed suffix at school. However, Jonathan Pierrel (2010) and Kuusisati Cheeklin et al. (2022) worked on English word stress particularly in linguistic view. The second section focused on the relevance of teaching English auto stress suffix in English learning process by using explanatory method couple with the 3Ps; the selected methods used to teach English pronunciation item in secondary schools in the Congo. The third section dealt with the analysis and the interpretation of the collected data from the classroom observation and questionnaires addressed to teachers. The results of the analysis unveil the reasons that impede teachers to deal with English auto stressed suffix teaching. Thus, the teacher’s failure could be attributed to their training. Actually, teachers did not get an efficient

training to help them cope with English suffix stress items. This proves that teachers lack pedagogical strategies to face the teaching and learning of the selected item. The last section was wholly dedicated to the elaboration of practical suggestions to equip teachers with a sample of a lesson plan. As a matter of fact, the teaching and learning strategies were combined by the explanatory method via 3P's method. Thanks to these methods, English pronunciation items such as auto stressed suffix could be taught, learnt and assessed like other English lessons accordingly.

References

- BOUBAZOLELE, Théophile, 2021, "Teaching English Sentence Stress at Secondary School: A Case Study of Wh-question in the Class of "Terminale A" at Ecole Militaire Préparatoire Général Leclerc", ENS, UMNG.
- INRAP, 2009, *Programme et Guide pédagogique Anglais*, INRAP Editions – Brazzaville, Programmes 2002 – Edition 2009,
- KOUDISSABAKA, Gasthère, 2018, "L'enseignement-apprentissage de l'accent des suffixes « auto-stress » dans les classes de Seconde A au Lycée Nganga Edouard", Master, ENS, UMNG.
- KUUSISATI, Cheeklin et al., 2022, Introducing stress and rhythm: A material package for teaching English word stress, sentence stress, and speech rhythm to Finnish comprehensive school pupils. Master's Thesis English Department of Language and Communication Studies University of Jyväskylä November 2022.
- LAMY, Nkounkou, 2017, 'Teaching and learning English dissyllabic word stress at secondary school', Master, ENS, UMNG.
- NDONGO IBARA, Yvon Pierre et al., 2019, *Teaching English Compound Noun Stress*, Marien N'GOUABI University, Congo
- NDONGO IBARA, Yvon-Pierre, 2023, *A Pedagogical Based Approach to Teaching English Pronunciation*, Moldavie: Generis Publishing.
- NDONGO-IBARA, Yvon-Pierre, 2015, "Framing English sound-letter parallelism teaching". *Revue Francophone Liens, Nouvelles séries*, no.20, p.37-47.
- PIERREL, Jonathan J. 2010. *Developing Materials for Teaching Word Stress in English*, Muncie, India: Ball States University.