

**LANGUAGE TRANSFER: THE CASE OF TELECONFERENCING
TEACHING/LEARNING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT THE GHANA
TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

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ABSTRACT: *This research work seeks to assess how computing, through teleconferencing could be used to contribute to the effectiveness of language teaching/learning in Africa, in general, and in Ghanaian universities, in particular through socio-cognitive and communicative language teaching approaches, explorative and investigative research. The study addresses the impact of French language on teaching/learning of English via teleconferencing teaching and learning in English. Language transfer has always occurred face-to-face delivery of teaching and learning but this research seeks to emphasise the results of learners' performance through technology in didactics known as teleconferencing teaching and learning with the particular emphasis on errors committed. The study applies cognitive and socio-cognitive approaches to teaching/learning of languages via teleconferencing as well as using contrastive analysis to analyse common errors Francophone learners commit in English language (L3). It was discovered that the errors committed were due to language incompetence or perception blind spot or due to their background as francophone learners who have English language as L3, as well as overgeneralisation and wrong application of English structures. The paper stresses that language transfer or negative transfer either face-to-face teaching/learning or teleconferencing is concomitant of human existence, particularly in language teaching and learning.*

KEYWORDS: Teleconferencing teaching/learning, Technology in Didactics, Language transfer, Error Analysis, Communicative Approach, Cognitive Approach, Socio-cognitive Approaches

INTRODUCTION

Teleconferencing teaching/learning is a new phenomenon in Ghanaian universities that Ghana Technology University College started in 2014 with the aim of teaching Faculty and Staff of Ecole Polytechnique d'Abomey-Calavi, Benin, English Proficiency for five months.

Ghana Technology University College, Language Centre carried out a 5 month teleconferencing teaching in English language to ascertain that an African University could move to the second stage of development of ICT which is usually characterized by the change from static and stagnant web pages to dynamic, interactive and integrative communicative teaching learning approach.

Language transfer or linguistic influence (positive or negative transfer) has always been the face to face delivery of teaching and learning but this research seeks to emphasize the results of learners' performance through technology in didactics known as teleconferencing teaching

and learning by using socio-cognitive and contrastive analysis approaches to assess Francophone learners' difficulties and offer remedies accordingly.

Teleconferencing teaching in English language is a process of imparting language skills from a teacher/instructor/lecturer to learners/students by using computers, video and telecommunications to share sound and images (live presentation of teaching/learning) at the remote without learners travelling to attend face-to-face lectures. It has therefore become necessary to investigate the kind of influence that French language could have on the performance of learners who pursued English Proficiency programme via teleconferencing teaching and learning at the Ghana Technology University College, for five months. 'For without adequate knowledge of what precisely students' difficulties are, years of precious remedial teaching and learning can be wasted; and unless each student is made aware of his own systematic and recurrent errors, he cannot learn from them.' (Yankson, 1989:1) In other words, identifying learners' learning difficulties will extremely help the educational stakeholders and francophone learners in general to be conscious of linguistics interference so as to enable them to improve on their literary competence in learning and teaching English language in Anglophone and francophone countries, particularly in Africa.

Discussing learners' errors is therefore linguistically important in language acquisition. (Corder 1967) This is because, if second/third-language learners' errors are pointed out to them, they will then be better equipped to refine their strategies (Agor, 2010). My task in this study is to analyse the learning difficulties (errors in English language) that were uncovered through teleconferencing teaching and learning among Francophone learners. In other words, what kind of language transfer was realised via teleconferencing teaching and learning in English proficiency programme at the Ghana Technology University College? Before the discussions of the specific errors learners committed via teleconferencing, let us see some common errors that Francophone students normally commit.

Examples of common errors committed by francophone learners of English

For example, in English a preposition is used before a day of the week: "I am going to Church *on* Sunday." In French, instead of a preposition the definite article is used: "Je vais à l'église le dimanche." Francophone students who are studying English may produce a transfer error and use the definite article instead of a preposition. Francophone learners can equally translate the same sentence into English as "I go to the church the sunday"

A Francophone learner will say: *J'ai 20 ans* and will be tempted to translate it as I have *20 years old*. This is because "*J'ai*" means in French *I have* in English and therefore this error occurs as a result of overgeneralization or negative transfer.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study:

- To explore how Francophone students' knowledge in French influence the teaching/learning of English language via teleconferencing.
- To analyse the common errors that Francophone learners make when learning English language as L3 via teleconferencing.
- To assess the linguistics significance of the errors committed by Francophone learners.

- To discuss how Francophone students/learners could minimise these errors.
- To investigate the kind of influence that French language could have on the performance of learners.

Research Questions

The work sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is teleconferencing teaching and learning in English?
2. What common errors are committed among learners via teleconferencing teaching and learning in English as L3?
3. Could the errors committed face-to-face method of learning/teaching be the same as using teleconferencing platform in English language education?
4. How could these errors be minimized in teleconferencing teaching and learning in English as L3?

Theoretical framework of language acquisition and transfer

The fulcrum of this study stems from the behaviourist learning theory that old habits get in the way of learning new habits and there is never peaceful co-existence between two language systems in the learner, but rather constant warfare. (Rod 1999:19). That is to say, the impact of previous knowledge of learners in first or second language on learning a third language (L3) cannot be overemphasised.

Rod (1999:22),

“Errors, according to behaviourist theory, were the result of non learning, rather than wrong learning.”

Rod assertion might be partially true when learners refuse to learn but it cannot be accepted when learners learn wrong structures or poor pedagogy is adopted in teaching and learning, committing errors will then be inevitable. It is against this background that Brooks (1960), according to Rod (1999), wrote:

‘Like sin, error is to be avoided and its influence overcomes...’

One can deduce from the above quotation that just as we have to avoid evil, error must equally be avoided or averted in teaching and learning languages.

According to Corder,(1994:20), the process of learning is seen as one of a body of implicit knowledge upon which the utterances in language are based.

This implies that learning a second language or a foreign language is a dynamic process and the previous knowledge system can influence the target language positively or negatively. Language already developed can therefore, serve as a tool in learning new language features (Amuzu, 2003).The assumption is that in the learning process, the learner is using the mechanism of transfer knowledge to identify features, similarities and differences in structures of the target language put at the disposal of the learner (English or French), (Amuzu, 2003). According to cognitive theories, second or third language learning is not limited to input alone as explained by the behaviourist. (Amuzu,2003)

In other words, didactically and pedagogically, learners learn from known to unknown through cognitive and socio-cognitive approaches. It is always expedient for teachers of language to bear this assertion in mind.

Socio-cognitive Approaches to Communicative Language Teaching

Socio-cognitive approaches lay emphasis on learning and acquiring language skills through formal or informal interactions (linguistics or language setting) by imitation, mimicking or apprenticeship. (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986; Gee, 1996). Acquisition of language skills together with communication is concomitant of social interaction.

Teleconferencing simply means conducting a conference by using computers, video, and telecommunication to share sound and images with others at remote sites (Sabin, 1996). While Carla Lane and P.S. Portway (1994) explain teleconferencing as,

“meeting through a telecommunication medium.

It is a generic term for linking people between two or more

locations by electronics. There are at least six types of teleconferencing: audio, audio-graphic, computer, video, business television (BTV), and distance education.” (www.studymode.com)

Teleconferencing can be represented as follows:

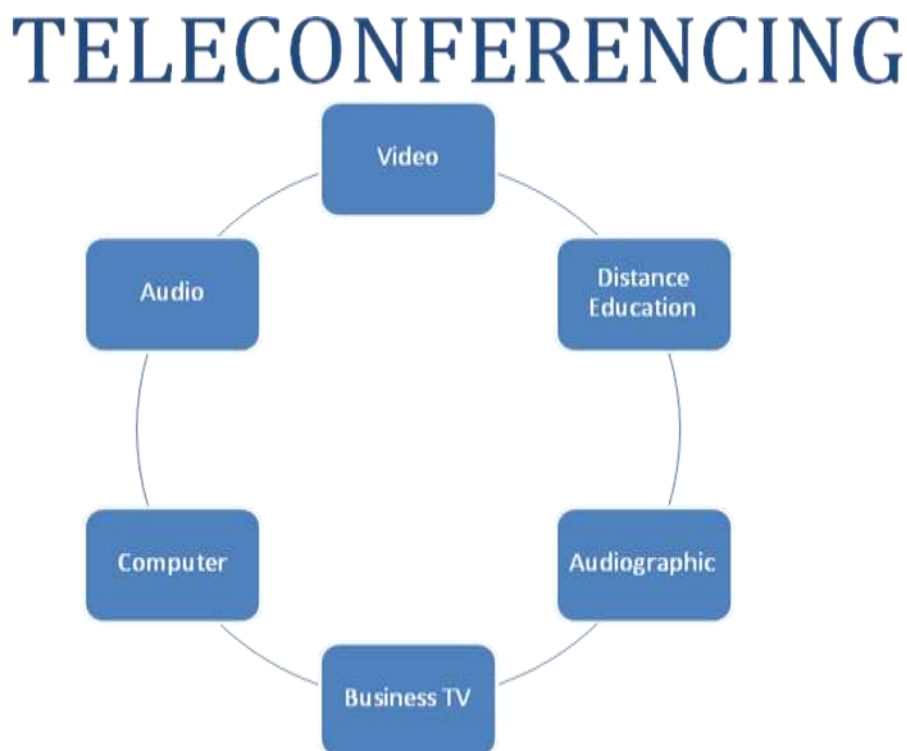


Diagram 1: Depicting the Composition of Teleconferencing (Tabiri, 2015)

Through the above means, the faculty and staff of Ecole Polytechnique d'Abomey, Calavi in Benin were able to learn English Language for five months successfully.

According to Warschauer and Meskill (2000)

“The key to successful use of technology in language teaching lies not in hardware or software but in "humanware.”

This implies that technology is not just about software or hardware but rather it is all about the proper application, effective and efficient use of technology in teaching and learning. How can teachers make judicious use of technology in teaching and learning languages? Teachers or lecturers adopting socio-cognitive and communicative language teaching approaches is therefore crucial in pedagogy and didactics and not just seeking to have all linguistics resources in technology.

METHODOLOGY

The study applied both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect empirical data for analysis. This ensured attainment of balanced data/results for contrastive analysis. Purposive sampling strategy was used to select the study site and participants. Twelve (12) Faculty and Staff members from Ecole Polytechnique d'Abomey, Calavi in Benin were selected for the research. These faculty and staff members of Ecole Polytechnique d'Abomey, Calavi in Benin were taught via teleconferencing for five (5) months from Ghana Technology University College, Accra campus.

The main method used to collect data was the results of Final Examinations (formal assessment) via 5 months teleconferencing teaching and learning in English language.

The following English courses were taught as well as learners writing Final Examinations all via teleconferencing.

Course Title	Course Code
• Listening and Speaking (Oral Expression)	GTUC ENG 187
• Correct Usage	GTUC ENG 189
• Reading and Comprehension	GTUC ENG 190
• Introduction to Grammar	GTUC ENG 191
• Writing and Composition	GTUC ENG 192

The learners were taken through the aforementioned courses to enable them to acquire all the four language skills in English language.

Purposive sampling strategy was used to select the study site and participants. This was to ensure that only lecturers or participants who could easily be taught and grasped the skills in teleconferencing teaching and learning were selected. It was the belief of the researcher that after taking learners through English lessons via teleconferencing teaching, they would be

able to communicate, function efficiently as well as improving teaching and learning in their country.

The study site involved a Beninois' tertiary institution called Ecole Polytechnique d'Abomey-Calavi (EPAC).

Table 1: Staff and faculty of EPAC-Benin who took part in teleconferencing teaching and learning in English from the Ghana Technology University College-Tesano Campus, Accra.

Learners	Male	Female	Total
Staff and Faculty of EPAC	8	4	12

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section discusses and analyzes specific errors committed by learners at the Ecole Polytechnique d'Abomey, Calavi-Benin, during the teleconferencing teaching and learning.

Diagram Depicting Language Transfer



Diagram 2: Language Transfer

The above diagram emphasises and depicts pedagogically that language transfer is concomitant of human existence, particularly in language teaching and learning. In other words, the centre of learners' linguistics difficulties in either French (L2) or English (L3) is the Mother Tongue. In short, Francophone learners' L1 and L2 have a simultaneous concomitant impact on English language (L3).

We have to stress that due to the adoption of communicative language teaching approach during the teleconferencing teaching and learning, errors committed might be pardonable

because the objective for the whole programme was to encourage fluency without sacrificing accuracy. Through the application of cognitive and socio-cognitive approaches to teaching/learning of languages via teleconferencing as well as using contrastive analysis to analyse common errors Francophone learners commit in English language (L3), I was able to group and analyse the errors committed by learners at the end of their formal assessment through the adoption of a theory-driven approach as follows:

I. Course Title: Correct Usage (GTUC ENG 189): ERROR CATEGORIZATION

This course comprised four sections namely: section A- Objective Test (Figurative language/Basic ICT and Idiomatic Expressions), section B- (Fill in personal record form), section C-(Appropriate usage/expressions- learners were asked to indicate by the letter **C** if is correct and by **W** if they found it to be wrong as well as re-writing the correct sentences) and section D- Translation (25 sentences in French into English). For the purpose of this work, I have grouped and analyzed errors committed through translation as follows:

A. French Language (L2) Interference

1. "When we have sleep we go to bed" instead of one goes to bed when one is (feeling) sleepy/we go to bed when we are sleepy.
2. "I am beninese" instead of I am a Beninois/Beninese.
3. "Who love punish well" instead of spare the rod and spoil the child.(Qui aime châtie bien)
4. "My friend have hungry" instead of my friend is hungry.
5. "Call out minima/Call Amina" instead of *Appeal by prosecution against the leniency of a sentence*(**Appel à minima**)

B. Ignorance or Perception Blind Spot

1. I hope on yours shoulder to order this problem; instead of I count/rely on you to solve/settle/sort out this issue/problem.
2. "Be wase" instead of be wise
3. "My friend is angry" instead of my friend is hungry.
4. "I am living in five days" instead of I am leaving in five days

C. Overgeneralization of Language Rules

1. "Call out minima/Call Amina" instead of *Appeal by prosecution against the leniency of a sentence*(**Appel à minima**)
2. "If he went at foreign he would see my friend" instead of if he had gone abroad/overseas, he would/should seen my (lady/girl/female) friend (S'il était allé à l'étranger, il aurait vu mon amie)

D. Wrong Application of Structures

1. "I must going to do my assignment" instead of you must/have to do your homework/assignment
2. "My friend has hungry" instead of my friend is hungry.
3. "May God bless you abondly" instead of God bless you abundantly.
4. "My brother is born the Tuesday, July 1995 at Cotonou" instead of my brother was born on Tuesday, July 15, 1995 in Cotonou.

II. Course Title: Introduction to Grammar (GTUCENG 191): ERROR CATEGORIZATION

This course comprised three sections namely: section A- Objective Test (Concord/Agreement and Subjunctive), section B- (Transformation of sentences into indirect/reported speech), and section C-(Conditional sentence). The two main sections that needed to be discussed in this work are reported speech and conditional sentence.

A. French Language (L2) Interference

1. The lecturer said to stop making that noise instead of the lecturer told them/him/her to stop making that noise.
2. The director says that he shall be there instead of the director says that he will be there.
3. The lecturer said that had stoped make the noise instead of the lecturer told them/him/her to stop making that noise.
4. If he had have gone abroad he had seen my mother instead of if he had gone abroad he would have seen my mother.

B. Ignorance or Perception Blind Spot

1. He says that the bus would be late instead of he says that the bus will be late.
2. Rebecca said that she is French instead of Rebecca said that he was French
3. The director says that he would been there instead of the director says that he will be there.
4. If he went abroad he would have seen my mother instead of if he had gone abroad he would have seen my mother.
5. Twenty five minutes ago Peter said that their son were coming today instead of twenty five minutes ago Peter said their son was coming today.

C. Overgeneralization of Language Rules

1. On Tuesday he said that my friend has been coming today instead of on Tuesday he said that his friend was coming that day.

2. The lecturer said that stopped making that noise instead of the lecturer told/ordered/commanded him/her/them to stop making that noise.
3. The Registrar said that, Firmin was do it instead of the Registrar said that Firmin would do it.

D. Wrong Application of Structures

1. She said that Michael had took the pen instead of she said that Michael had taken (the pen)/it.
2. John said that they were running when he had seen them instead of John said that they had been running when he had seen them.
3. He said that he didn't know where was the hospital instead of he asked where the hospital was/he wanted to know where the hospital was(located)
4. She said that she would do it tomorrow instead of she said that she would do it the next day.

III. Course Title: Reading and Comprehension (GTUC ENG 190)

A. French Language (L2) Interference

1. A computer need... “ instead of a computer needs

B. Ignorance or Perception Blind Spot

1. “traffic lights” instead of traffic lights
2. “...a machine that can be instructed to different jobs” instead of a machine that can be instructed to do different jobs.
3. “CPU is acronym of Central Processing Unit. Instead of “acronym “
4. “... particular” instead of particularly

IV. Course Title: Writing and Composition (GTUC ENG 192)

Learners were asked to answer one compulsory question (Guided composition by filling in the spaces provided with the most appropriate word or expressions in English to make the composition meaningful) in section A and any other one from section B (Free range composition). We have decided to analyse the results gathered through the Guided Composition so as to ensure uniformity of data as all the learners answered this question.

A. French Language (L2) Interference

1. “He was in/(has) frequented Sunyani Secondary school instead of He attended Sunyani Secondary school.
2. He holds an Honours distinction/grade” instead of he holds an Honours degree.
3. He has experiences in the differents institutions.

4. "...English Lecturer to the Ghana Technology University College Lecturer" instead of ... English Lecturer at the Ghana Technology University College

B. Ignorance or Perception Blind Spot

1. "18th of Literature instead of 18th century Literature.
2. "...and left to Mount Mary Training College instead of "...and continued/proceeded..."
3. "He has considerable teaching French/knowledge in teaching..." instead of "...experience in..."
4. "He has worked/tought in the Ghana institutions:..." instead of he has taught in the following institutions:

C. Overgeneralization of Language Rules

1. He has frequented instead of he attended
2. "...where he has trained as ..." instead of where he was trained as..."
3. "...a Full Time French as an English Lecturer in the Ghana Technology University College" instead of a Full Time French and English Lecturer at the ..."
4. "...has teached in the secondary institutions" instead of he has taught in the following institutions
5. ...Applied Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, 18th december 2014 Literature, ..." instead of 18th century Literature,..."

D. Wrong Application of Structures

1. "... is a Full Time French as English Lecturer from the Ghana Technology University College" instead of "... is a Full-Time French and English Lecturer at the Ghana Technology University College"
2. His special domain interests include:..." instead of his special academic/research..."
3. He would holds a Diploma level/ofMinistry Studies instead of he also holds a Diploma in Ministry Studies.
4. His special central interests include: ..." instead of his special academic/research..."

From the foregoing discussions, the readers can realize that the errors committed via teleconferencing teaching/learning might not be different from face to face method of learning/teaching. In other words, it was found through the work that there are no real differences between errors committed face-to-face and teleconferencing teaching/learning of English language (L3). This work also lays emphasis on the assertion of Chaudron (1987), that errors are seen in a new light not as bad habits to be avoided but as natural by-products

of a creative learning process that involves rule simplification, generalization, transfer, and other cognitive strategies.

Didactics and Pedagogical Implications to Research

As it has been pointed out, there are no real differences between traditional method of teaching languages and teleconferencing teaching and learning with the exception of poor internet connectivity and power outage that can hinder effective teaching/learning during teleconferencing. However, the following recommendations are very crucial when it comes to teleconferencing teaching/learning.

It is pedagogically advisable to use more teaching aids when teaching Francophone learners either face-to-face or teleconferencing so as to minimise errors in language teaching/learning thereby making teaching English language self-explanatory and tangible.

Also, teachers or lecturers must learn to repeat words or sentences in context to facilitate swift comprehension by learners because repetition is the strongest tool against forgetfulness and dullness.

Moreover, instant evaluation must be employed to encourage mastery of course contents or lessons.

Furthermore, it is didactically significant to record lecture notes in order to afford learners the opportunity to revise lessons and to make lessons tangible and practical after teleconferencing teaching.

It is clear from the discussions that teaching Francophone faculty or staff English language through teleconferencing will promote swift acquisition of language skills and accelerated development in Africa as the problem of language barrier will rapidly be curbed.

Finally, valuable information from archaeology to zoology are easily accessible in this technological era. It is for this reason that I think there cannot be any swift development without the use of technology in teaching/learning languages. It is an indisputable fact today to be educated formally without being computer literate that is why I can say that education without technology in didactics today is illiteracy.

CONCLUSION

Through the systematic study of English and French with a view to identifying their structural differences and similarities), socio-cognitive and communicative language teaching approaches as well as error analysis I was able to assess the causes of language/negative transfer such as French language interference (L2), ignorance or perception blind spot, overgeneralization of language rules and wrong application of structures and their impact on teaching/learning of English via teleconferencing. It is expected that this study will contribute immensely to scholarship as we have sought to examine and analyze the kind of linguistics or language transfer that French language could have on English language via teleconferencing teaching and learning in Africa. This research work sought to answer a major contemporary question of Applied Linguistics. That is, how Information and Communication Technology (ICT particularly, teleconferencing could be used to contribute to the effectiveness of language teaching/learning in Africa, in general, and in Ghanaian universities, in particular

through socio-cognitive and communicative language teaching approaches, explorative and investigative research.

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