A multiterritorial experience and a multiple scope as a challenge to primary English phonological teaching

Yvon Rolland

A MULTITERRITORIAL EXPERIENCE AND A MULTIPLE SCOPE AS A CHALLENGE TO PRIMARY ENGLISH PHONOLOGICAL TEACHING

Yvon ROLLAND, Professor in SLA and Multilingualism,

EA7387 DIRE, University of Reunion

Multiterritorialism-blended space-phonology-cognitive-learning-linguistics

Our study deals with Primary Master students in Reunion experiencing a multiterritorial programme in Australia to help them reach English phonological proficiency.

Cognitive learning paradigms are based on multiterritorialism and the blended cognitive space theory. Cognitive linguistic paradigms help students to deal with a multishape reality. Metacognitive strategies can be explained by a multiple connectionnist and somatic affective approach implying body and mind, space and sounds.

This experience was a real challenge given the age factor, negative mental representations and our educational context.

A multiterritorial experience was offered to thirty students. Our methodology is based on qualitative, descriptive data. 30 students were assessed through an interview, followed by a decisive intensive phonological English course was organised in typical spaces of interest. A teacher training session was set up in Australian classes. Students had to present their experience. They eventually had a double questionnaire to fill in.

Thanks to new territories, the data show an improvement in regard to English phonological acquisition.

Notre étude concerne des étudiants de master de professorat d'école de La Réunion sur un programme de formation multiterritorial en Australie leur permettant d'améliorer leur compétence phonologique en anglais.

Les paradigmes cognitifs d'apprentissage sont basés sur la multiterritorialité et la théorie des espaces entremêlés. Les paradigmes linguistiques cognitifs aident les étudiants à gérer une réalité multiple. Les stratégies métacognitives peuvent être expliquées par une approche affective et sommative multiple impliquant le corps et l'esprit, l'espace et les sons.

Cette expérience est un défi compte tenu du facteur âge, des représentations négatives et du contexte éducatif.

Une expérience multiterritorriale est proposée à trente étudiants. Notre méthodologie est basée sur des données qualitatives et descriptives. 30 étudiants sont testés oralement, puis un stage intensif est organisé dans divers sites touristiques. Un stage de pratique professionnelle est lancé dans des classes australiennes. Les étudiants doivent ensuite parler de leur expérience. Deux questionnaires leur sont soumis.

Grâce à de nouveaux territoires, les données montrent une amélioration de l'acquisition phonologique de l'anglais.

Multiterritorialité-espace partagé-phonologie-cognitif-apprentissage-linguistique

Our study concerns Primary Master students at the university school of education in Reunion experiencing a blending multilingual identity experience triggered by an Australian territorial programme to help them reach English phonological proficiency.

We shall first define key words related to our topic. Multiterritorialism signifies new real physical environmental spaces which create mental imaginary spaces connected by analogy (Fauconnier & Turner 2003, 104-105). Multilingualism is concerned when individuals use several languages in everyday life (Kramsch, 2009). Learning phonology means a conscious process (Krashen 1988, Cohen 1998). While phonetics deals with the study of speech sounds, phonology deals with rhythm, intonation and the abstract functioning of phonemes (Roach 2000, 44). Phonetics and phonology are deep in the center of identity construction (Krashen 1989). Reunionese French students learning English are multilingual subjects (Coste 2010, 150). Languages are not learned separately but contribute to favouring interaction between language items and territorial experience (CEFRL 2005, 11).

My research will be threefold, offering first, a study of a multiterritorial and a multiple scope as an asset to improving phonological abilities, then a review of obstacles in this process seen as a real challenge to achieving the project, and finally, the setting up of a multiterritorial multilingual experience to reach better phonological proficiency.

1. A MULTITERRITORIAL AND A MULTIPLE SCOPE AS AN ASSET TO IMPROVE PHONOLOGICAL ABILITIES

The students'dynamic multiterritorial itinerary is based on multiple cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Oxford 1990, Moore 2006, 156 & Randall 2007, 45).

We shall first analyse cognitive strategies.

*COGNITIVE STRATEGIES

Cognitive strategies are mainly developped from multiple learning and linguistic paradigms.

-Learning paradigms

Learning paradigms are directly related to multiterritorial data. They include interactionnism, environmentalism (Ellis 1995, Andersen 1983), socioconstructivism and the blended cognitive space theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2002).

Interactionnism favours comprehension and collaboration between a native speaker and a student as well as interaction between the learner and the environment. Environmentalism is based on acculturation and means territorial experience (Brown 1980). In this particular learning process, socioconstructivism is also indirectly relevant. The new territories imply group leanrning and social interaction as well as mediation into the learner/knowledge cognitive duality (Vygotsky 1962). Knowledge and identity are negociated through the repetitious practice set up by foreign teacher trainers (Bruner 1983). Besides, group learning is a positive step to motivational strategies (Bandura 2004).

We must also integrate the conceptual blended space theory, which has been applied by scientists in cognitive science, psychology, linguistics and cognitive neuroscience. It states that the mind is metaphorical in nature. It influences identity and pronunciation learning thanks to real situations implying two blended mental spaces, on the one hand, a real experience lived on a concrete physical space made of a real territory, and, on the other hand, an abstract imaginary space made of memorised sounds and words. Sound, rhythm and intonation are consciously perceived and memorised thanks to complicated interactions between the brain and its environment (Fauconnier and Turner 2002, 78). This leads to perceptual similitude and analogical thinking: newcomers to the language easily lend themselves to unconventional associations based on the word music and its similitude to other words. They imbue sounds and words with their bodies and personal and emotional feelings (Kramsch 2009, 30). Learning is thus both a very personal and physical encounter with a territorial language and a memorised resonance (Kramsch 2009, 58). When learners visit typical places of interest and learn the language, it helps them to perceive visual meaning, auditory forms and it favours the memorizing of analogical mental images (Fauconnier & Turner 2002, 14). This is why experiencing and facing new typical territories gives a vivid resonance to learning sounds, rhythm and intonation.

We shall now procede to linguistics and analyse which paradigms are involved.

-Linguistic paradigms

Linguistic paradigms help students to deal with a multishape and multiterritorial reality.

Phonology, the distinctive physical reality of a phoneme, the IPA and phonetic transcription, are unavoidably linked to structuralism and its now traditional pedagogical methodology including minimal pairs ("Look ! two kangaroos") and tongue twisters

("look ! two kangaroo through the two blue bushes"). Students perform them when visiting these places of interest, such as parks. Pragmatic linguistics is focused on its speech act theory, its communication skills (listening, reproducing, interacting) while sociolinguistics integrate English sound varieties in the learning process. Speech analysis and speech marks (Culioli 1982) add cognition through an inductive process known as multilingual awareness. It is now admitted that a good segmentation phonological ability in L1 greatly favours the mastering of L2 ad L3 (Gaonac'h 2006).

Multilingualism and its Dynamic Model (Herdina & Jessner 2006) insist on strategic competences allowing subjects to switch codes and build up a multilingual identity. A multiterritorial experience favours a phonological reconstruction through comparison. This process is necessary to reach the multilingual competence. Similar and different sounds have to be compared : "Snake", for instance, which will be used and repeated in the Australian park should be perceived as being prununced differently in Britain and in Australia.

We shall now insist on metacognitive strategies.

*METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES

Metacognitive strategies can be explained by a multiple connectionnist, neuroconstructivist and somatic affective approach implying body and mind, and consequently territory and sounds.

The connectionnist approach focuses on parallel processing units and insists on the implementation level to explain the learning process. Liberman (1967) adds his speech theory approved by Halle, stating that both sound reception and production share the same brain modules. Sound prediction while listening and implicit distinctive learning while practising will be activated at the same time. Connectionnism, associativism and analogy imply echoïc working memory, made active through silent oral reproduction of a scene and a tongue twister like "two kangaroos through blue bushes" (Randall 2007, 27).

Neuroconstructivism adds a gradual process from intuitive, implicit, non conscious epiphonological to explicit, conscious metaphonological abilities and finally to an unconscious automatic fluency process (Gombert 1990).

Finally, somatic theories of the self, explored by Damasio (1994), integrate two inseparable data : body and mind. Rational cognition and the neo-cortex cannot exist without emotions and the limbic brain that are vivid thanks to the learning context/territory (Kramsch 2008, 66, Goleman 1997). The body remembers neural patterns associated with emotions that triggers off somatic markers or feelings generated by a vivid

pronunciation in a new territory experience. Episodic or affective memory is strongly generated by the learning territorial context. Besides, sensory channels are complementary from auditory to visual, kinaesthetic (emotional) steps ("listen, look (animal+rounded lips, do, click, touch (animal) and say" : "oh ! no ! a koala !").

This shows that cognitive, metacognitive, social and affective strategies are triggered by a vivid multiterritorial environment.

This multiple learning is nevertheless a real challenge.

2. A MULTIPLE PHONOLOGICAL LEARNING AS A REAL CHALLENGE.

The first obstacle to phonological learning is certainly the age factor.

*THE AGE FACTOR

The age factor is the first challenge. Troubetskoy (1986, 54), as a linguist put forward the theory of the phonological sieve explaining that we are deaf to foreign sounds. Young adults have less plasticity in their hemispheres and are more influenced by their mother tongue which has a different sound frequency range.

The other obstacle comes from negative representations.

*NEGATIVE REPRESENTATIONS

There are also negative representations in our learning ways. In our minds, a language course has to be in a precise classroom. English is perceived as a subject learned at school, not abroad in a park. Lists of words and grammar rules are still seen as the language basics, implying that without memorising by heart these fundamentals, the language will not be acquired. Words are memorised as words, not as human experiences.

Multilingualism is still seen as favouring language interference. Interference is no more considered as an obstacle, but as a normal step in the multilingual learning process.

Multiterritorialism is often neglected when it comes to phonological learning.

We saw that a good mastering of one's mother tongue helps to master other languages. Our educational system takes the official language into account, not the mother tongue. When it comes to language awareness, English is compared to French as a national language, never to Creole, as the regional one. The problem is also for English teachers in Reunion who don't necessarily know Creole.

Our educational context is also one of the obstacles to be taken into account.

*OUR EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Our educational context fails to offer a logical continuum in which space, environment and phonology are unavoidably neglected. At primary level, teachers are not English

specialists. The learning continuum between primary and secondary tuition is not fully operational. Curricula are based on communication and fail to offer a balance between phonological form/forms and meaning. Our French education system is strongly influenced by a Cartesian rational culture that relies on the neo-cortex and ignores the affective dimension of the limbic brain triggered by exciting territories in the learning process (Damasio 2008, Kramsch 2009).

By setting up an experience in Australia, we have tried to overcome these obstacles.

3. A MULTILINGUAL IDENTITY EXPERIENCE IN NEW SPACES

This experience in new spaces was offered to thirty students as a trigger to English phonological proficiency.

Our research methodology is experimental and based on qualitative, descriptive and inductive data (Seliger & Shohamy 1990, Maxwell, 1999). Thirty Reunionese primary students were assessed through an interview in Reunion (Research data : B2 Vantage level with Pronunciation / Rhythm criteria B2 Oral Production "Hints about your English learning experience"). Two obtained a B, eighteen a C and ten a D. This showed a majority of students did indeed have phonological problems in English.

*A MULTITERRITORIAL COURSE

Eventually, a two-week decisive territorial intensive English course was organised by Thebarton College, Adelaide, South Australia. This was set up in specific spaces near Adelaide. It was organised in typical places of interest such as parks, museums, while discovering new cultures, animals, plants, historical characters, ways and customs and it was focused on phonology and Aboriginal and Australian cultures. Words like « kangaroos », « koalas », « dingos », « wallabies », « emus », « Tasmanian devils », « cockatoos », « wombats » were practised and used in tongue twisters. This insistence on new territories was part and parcel of our experience. A primary teacher training session was eventually set up in Australian classes. Students had to teach French and to focus on French pronunciation as compared to Australian prounciation: a reference to Creole words was constantly given. For example, the word « zoreil » was compared to « réveil » and « snake » to be better pronounced.

*SECOND ASSESSMENT

Students had to make an oral and visual presentation of their experience in Australia in front of the Australian organizers (Research data : Second assesment, B2 Oral Production Vantage level). Two obtained an A, twenty a B, eight a C. They eventually had a double

questionnaire to fill in which focused on their multiterritorial experience and the multilingual phonological process involved (Research data: FRPA). All admitted a great improvement in their pronunciation and rhythm skills, and in their multilingual phonological consciousness. Besides, they all gave a spontaneous written account on their Australian adventure and unanimously said that the linguistic territorial course had been tremendously beneficial.

The challenge we had to face was to integrate a territorial course to trigger English phonological acquisition. We knew that an immersion programme would be efficient, but wondered if adding an improved multiterritorial version would help more. Thanks to this new exciting real territory experience, the data show an improvement with regards to English phonological acquisition and identity multilingual consciousness. Sounds and rhythm should no longer be seen as pure abstract passive elements, but should actually be physically, mentally and affectively integrated. This restricted experience based on learning by living exciting unforgettable episodes should be extended to check its validity.

We cannot but thoroughly agree with Fauconnier and Turner, when they rightly confess that "there should be a conceptual blending in the way we learn, the way we think, the way we live" (2002).

References :

BANDURA, A. 2004, *Auto-efficacité : le sentiment d'efficacité personnelle*, Bruxelles, De Boeck.

BRONCKART, et BULEA, J-P., E. et M. POULIOT, 2005, *Repenser l'enseignement des langues : comment identifier et exploiter les compétences*, Villeneuve d'Asc, Septentrion.

CAUSA, M., 2002. *L'alternance codique dans l'enseignement d'une langue étrangère*, Berne, Peter Lang.

DABÈNE, L.,1996, Pour une contrastivité revisitée, *Éla,* 104, p. 393-400.

DALGALIAN, G., 2000, *Enfances Plurilingues*, Paris, L'Harmattan.

DAMASIO, A.R., 2008, *L'erreur de Descartes : la raison des emotions*, Paris, Odile Jacob.

ELLIS, R. 2003). *Task-based Language Learning and Teaching*, Oxford, OUP.

FAUCONNIER G., et TURNER, M., 2003. *The way we think: Conceptuel blending and the mind's hidden complexities*. New York, Basic Books.

GAJO, L., 2001, *Immersion, bilinguisme et interaction en classe*, Paris, Didier.

GOLEMAN, D., 1997. *L'intelligence Émotionnelle*, Paris, Laffont.

GOMBERT, J.E., 1990. *Le développement métalinguistique*, Paris, PUF.

HERDINA, P. et JESSNER, U., 2002. *A Dynamic Model of Multilingualism*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.

JESSNER, U., 2006, *Linguistic Awareness in Multilinguals*, Edinburgh, EUP.

KRAMSCH , C., 2009, *The Multilingual Subject*. Oxford, OUP.

MARTINEZ, P., et al. 2008, *Plurilinguismes et enseignement*, Paris, Riveneuve Editions.

Maxwell, J.A., 1999, *La modélisation de la recherche qualitative*. Fribourg, Editions Universitaires de Fribourg.

MOORE, D., 2006, *Plurilinguisme et école,* Paris, Didier.

RANDALL, M., 2007, *Memory, psychology and second language learning,* Philadephia, John Benjamins.

ROACH, P., 2000, *English phonetics and phonology,* Cambridge, CUP.

ROLLAND, Y., 2011, *Apprendre à prononcer : quels paradigmes en didactique des langues ?* Paris, Belin.

ROLLAND, Y., 2013, Apprentissage phonologique dans une approche didactique plurilingue. *Les Cahiers de l'Acedlé*, avril 2013, ISSN 1240-1080.

ROLLAND, Y., 2014, L'apprentissage phonologique plurilingue en contexte institutionnel multilingue : réflexions. *Travaux et Documents* n°46, BTCR, FLSH, Université de la Réunion.

SELIGER, H.W., et SHOHAMY, E., 1990, *Second Language Research Methods*, Oxford, OUP.

SINGLETON, D., 1989, *Language Acquisition : The Age Factor*, London, Multilingual Matters.

STRATILAKI, S., 2011, Trajectoires plurielles et représentations chez les élèves plurilingues, *Les Cahiers de l'ACEDLE*, volume 8, numéro 1.

TAGLIANTE, C., 2005, *L'évaluation et le CECR,* Paris, CLE International.

TROUBETZKOY, N .S., 1986, *Principes de phonologie,* Paris, Klinsieck.

ZARATE, G., et al., 2008, *Précis du plurilinguisme et du pluriculturalisme,* Paris, Editions des archives contemporaines.

Reasearch Data

•Survey/Enquête (30 Primary Master students)
 1. Quel âge aviez vous lors du séjour en Australie?

2. Quelle langue parlez en famille ? cochez la bonne réponse
le créole
le français
les deux

3. L'anglais est pour vous votre
langue 2
langue 3
Cochez la bonne réponse

4. Combien de temps avez vous appris l'anglais ?

5. Comment qualifieriez vous votre niveau en anglais avant le séjour en Australie ?
faible
correct

6. Et après ?
faible
correct
satisfaisant
très satisfaisant

7. Comment vous situez vous avant et après ce séjour ?
Niveau B2 Interaction orale, cochez la bonne case avant et après :
« Je peux participer à toutes sortes de conversations sur la plupart des sujets d'intérêt général, souligner ce qui me semble important et transmettre différents degrés d'émotion »

Avant :	**Après :**
Non	Non
Oui en partie	Oui en partie
Absolument	Absolument

•Questionnaire (PEL-CARAP/FRPA) to 30 students
Questionnaire Etudiants d'anglais (Portfolio B2 -CARAP Savoirs et savoir faire)
Avant et Après le séjour, cocher oui ou non :
Avant :

Je le faisais	**Oui Non**
Je me demandais si le créole et le français me servaient à apprendre l'anglais	
Je me demandais si l'anglais ressemblait à ce que je connaissais déjà	
Je notais les ressemblances et les différences	
Je mélangeais parfois les langues	

Après :

Je le fais	**Oui Non**
Je me demande si le créole et le français me servent à apprendre l'anglais	

Je me demande si l'anglais ressemble à ce
que je connais déjà
Je note les ressemblances et les différences
Je mélange parfois les langues

Avant :
Je savais   **Oui   Non**
Les langues sont plus ou moins différentes
Je savais reconnaître et reproduire les sons en anglais
Je savais reconnaître les syllabes accentuées en anglais
Je savais quand la voix monte ou descend

Après :
Je sais   **Oui   Non**
Les langues sont plus ou moins différentes
Je sais reconnaître et reproduire les sons en anglais
Je sais reconnaître les syllabes accentuées en anglais
Je sais quand la voix monte ou descend

- Phonological Tests (in 1 minute) : B2 Level (Harris/Tagliante, 2005)
  Pronunciation / Rhythm criteria
  1. Introductory test B2 Oral Interaction « Hints about your English learning experience »
  2. Second assesment test B2 Oral Interaction « Presentation of the multiterritorrial experience »
  Intelligibility degree (Harris/Tagliante, 2005)
  A=Perfectly intelligible
  B=Intelligible
  C=Fairly intelligible
  D=Unintelligible