

Evaluating the acquisition of the present perfect and present perfect continuous tenses by 4th form pupils: Case of Izirangabo, Mulezi Wa Bana and Walungu secondary schools in Walungu, South Kivu (2019-2020)

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ABSTRACT: Teaching and evaluating English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are challenging ventures. Teachers of English as a Foreign Language must constantly adapt to their students' needs. In many ways, this means to select various subjects for the learning process. Evaluation is that step of the process at which the teacher examines the value of his/her learning material in order draw to conclusions that it is success or failure. In the case of this study, an accent is put on the evaluation of the acquisition of the present perfect and the present perfect continuous tenses by 94 form four pupils selected in 3 schools of Walungu District in South Kivu DRC. To achieve the research, a questionnaire was submitted to those learners to assess them on the basis of a written exercise and then define together what happens so that they fail. At the end, it has been noticed that a number of causes at the origin of the poor mastery of these English Language include the lack of background knowledge of the Conjugation at the above-mentioned tenses of English verbs, and the late exposure to the language in their respective schools. That has led to suggesting helpful measures to decision makers of the DR Congo in a bid to improve the learning of this second language.

KEYWORDS: Acquisition, Evaluation, Present Perfect, Present Perfect Continuous, Pupils.

1 INTRODUCTION

Secondary school students of the Democratic Republic of Congo learn English as a second language of education. The first being French that begins from the nursery school up until the end of the studies. French is the language of administration in the D.R. Congo.

English becomes a school subject from the ninth year of education, that is, the 3rd form of secondary school. The 4th form is therefore the second year of learning English. Teachers are required to be very skilled enough to help students make at this level a quick and rapid acquisition of this language. Nevertheless, whenever we listen to their students' English speech, we realize that they face serious problems when using the present perfect and present perfect continuous tenses. They usually use other tenses like the simple past tense, whereas the present perfect or present perfect continuous was expected. We read in their mind a kind of confusion between the two tenses. That is why this research attempts to find out the areas of difficulties and suggests some remedy proposals to handle the matter.

The present study was carried out in Walungu administrative territory, Ngweshe collectivity in South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It investigates the level that 4th form secondary school pupils have reached after they have attended lessons based on the present perfect and present perfect continuous tenses. It also analyses the different causes that hinder the actual mastery of these tenses.

To reach the goal, both library and field work methods were used. In fact, a questionnaire was submitted to the above-mentioned pupils from the target schools. Throughout this questionnaire, I intended to have an overview on the students' background on forming and using these two tenses. In addition, I made some interviews to the same students, their teachers and officials from the selected schools. During the interviews, I surveyed them about what might have hindered the

learners' mastery of these tenses. It was at Izirangabo, Mulezi wabana and walungu high schools for the school year 2019-2020.

2 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A ten question-test was selected on the basis of what they have studied in clear accordance with the national curriculum of 4th form. Each testee was given a well-printed sheet of paper containing ten alternative questions were he/she had to tick the one he/she thought was grammatically correct. At the top left corner of the sheet of paper, he/she had to mention his/her school and the section under study; what enabled me to study the results per variable at the end.

3 PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

Can a location, section and/or a teacher's level influence the acquisition of a given language? The results I got are in one way the answers to such a question.

1. Izirangabo high school organizes scientific Maths section under the control of the Kivu Baptist community branch of Walungu. I selected this school because of the qualification of its teachers. There are four 4th form students only. Their English teacher graduated in English language teaching and has taught English since 10 years. Is this experience a fundamental aspect for a good teaching-learning activity? One may wonder.
2. Mulezi wa bana is the biggest secondary school among the catholic schools in Walungu. It organizes pedagogy section to the ownship of resurrection nuns. Teachers there are all qualified in English Language Teaching. There are 46 students in the 4th form.
3. Walungu secondary school finally, organizes the Literary Section. This school belongs to the CELPA (Communauté des Eglises libres de Pentecôte en Afrique) a protestant community of free Pentecostal churches in Africa. There are 43 students In the 4th form and the teacher of English has no qualification in English Language Teaching.

The chart below is a systematic representation of the scores obtained by the students per school.

N°	School	section	Student number	Success	%	Faiture	%
1	Izirangabo	Scientific maths	05	02	40%	03	60%
2	Mulezi wa bana	Pedagogy	46	30	65,2%	16	34,7%
3	Walungu	Literary	43	11	25,5%	32	74,4%

The above chart reveals there is more cases of failure than success. Globally, 94 students sat for the test. 43 (45.7%) of them succeeded and 51 (54.3%) failed.

4 RESULTS FOUND

A tense is any of the forms of a verb that, according to **A.S. Hornby (2010: 104)**, may be used to show the time of an action expressed by the verb". That is why, when expressing actions in our daily speech, we need to use verbs conjugated in a particular tense and time. The present perfect and the present perfect continuous tenses are part of the so many verb tenses used in communication to express actions at their respective tenses.

The following chart presents all the results in terms of success and failure for all the pupils.

Question	Success Number	Percentage	Failure Number	Percentage
No 1	80/94	85.1	14/94	14.8
No 2	20/94	21.27	74/94	78.72
No 3	05/94	05.30	89/94	94.68
No 4	80/94	85.1	14/94	14.8
No 5	24/94	25.53	70/94	74.4
No 6	90/94	95.7	04/94	04.25
No 7	08/94	08.5	86/94	91.7
No 8	04/94	04.25	90/94	95.7
No 9	90/94	95.7	04/94	04.25
No 10	60/94	63.8	34/94	36.1

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN AMERICA? WRONG OR RIGHT?

The students had to underline one of both options. In so doing, 80 students over 94 succeeded it and 14 students over 94 failed it. As we can see, the 85,7% who succeeded must have mastered the use of the present perfect tense pointed out by Mills D at al (1981: 106) in these words: "the present perfect tense....is also used with ever/never when it indicates the first time"; and the 14,8% who failed did not master this use.

As for the second question, 20 (21.27%) students over 94 succeeded it and 74 ones over 94 (78,72%) failed it saying that it was grammatically correct whereas it was not. It was constructed as the follows: "*It has just rain*".

I assume that my testees failed it because of the "just" inside the sentence, ignoring that it should be followed by the past participle of the verb under conjugation. This shows that they have not yet mastered a large number of verbs in the past participle.

The 3rd question intended to know whether the statement: "*I have already payed school fees*" Was wrong or right. Only 5 students over 94 succeeded the question e, i 5,30% and 89 students over 94 e, i 94,68 said it was right. They assumed that "payed" was the past participle of the verb to pay. The inherent mistake committed by most of my subjects was due to the fact that the past participle of a large number of verbs was not mastered. Yet, the adverb **already** also might had misled them if they considered the use Murphy.R (2010: 14) states in these words: "the present perfect tense is used with, ...already to say that something happened sooner than expected. " This sameness can be also observed in the 5th question where 24 students over 94 e, i 25,53% succeeded to say that the statement: *I have never succeed in maths*; was wrong and 70 students over 94 e, i 74,4% said it was right. It was difficult for them to notice that "succeed" therein is an infinitive whereas it should be the past participle "ed" morpheme that should be added to this infinitive. And maybe they made resource to the use of the present perfect pointed out by Mills, D at al (1981: 106).

Considering the question number 4 which was: *the teacher has not yet come*; 80 students over 94 e, i 85,1% succeeded it and 14 students over 94 e, i 14,8% failed it saying that it was wrong whereas it was right. I found that a large number of them have mastered the definition of Mr East wood J. (2006: 11) which says that "the present perfect tells us about the past and about the present. When we use the present perfect present, we look back from the present, ...We can use the present perfect for an action in a period leading up to present ". And Murphy.R (2010: 14) says that "yet" shows that the speaker is expecting something to happen and that it is used in question and negative sentences.

As for the question number 6, my testees seemed to have mastered the use Murphy.R (2010: 18) writes in these words: " we use the present perfect continuous tense for an activity that has recently stopped or just stopped. There is connection with now". The question was: **How long you been waiting?** 4 students over 94 e, i 4.25% failed it and 90 students over 94 students e, i 95,7% succeeded it saying it was right.

The 7th and 8th questions were investigating the use of "since" and "for". The first is used with a definite time to indicate the length of an action while the latter is followed with a period of time indicating the duration. They were both constructed as follows: *I've waited since two hours* and *I've studied English for two years*. For the 7th, only 8 students over 94 e, i 8,5% succeeded it and 86 students over 94 failed it saying that it was right. They did not make resource to the use pointed out by Tim.D at al (1981: 106) in these words: "We use the continuous form with" "since" and "for"...for an action which has been going on continuous. "As for the 8th, 4 students over 94 said it was wrong and 90 students over 94 said it was right e, i 4.25% against 95.7%. They really did not master the above use.

The 9th question was investigating the form of the present perfect continuous, formed with **have +been + verb + ing**. After correction, I found that, a great number of my testees mastered it because 90 students over 94 e, i 95, 7% said it was wrong and 4 students over 94 e, i 4,25% said it was right. The question was: *Have Binja already finished writing the text?*

At the end, they had to answer the question: *Everything is going well. We don't have any problem so far.* The majority succeeded it because the result were 63,8% e, i 60 students over 94 saying it was wrong and 36,1% e, i 34 students over 94 said it was right. The objective here was to know whether they mastered the *form that Mills D. at al* (1981: 105) write in these words: " we form the present perfect tense with **have + the past participle** of the main verb." They noticed that there was a "have" but no past participle of the main verb.

Throughout these results, it has been noticed that these students' failure to use the present perfect and the present perfect continuous tenses is attributable to all the partners of education (parents, officials, teachers and the students themselves).

5 STUDENTS BASED

I personally found that students have actually stopped making efforts in the process of learning English. They think that English lessons are always difficult on one hand and sticking much on a bad and fightable system which has risen into secondary school students called "Mucele" in English "rice". It is a concept that has been created by these category of students consisting of getting access to the test questions before the test takes place (thanks to corruption) using fraudulence maneuver in order to succeed.

To be clear, in the questionnaire, I did not ask them to give their names in order not to suggest the orientation; not to use those maneuver and above all not to bring them to their bad thoughts that; every test should be marked. The latter is attributable to the teachers because throughout the interview, I found that they ignore that various kinds of test should be given to the students in order to prepare them to various types of functions. For example a "quiz" for a molding function; a final "exam" for a function of summation and certification; a "test" for a predictive and diagnostic function; a "Bi-annual exam" for a normative function; elaboration of "a statistics charts" for assessing his/her students ability, ...

The 10 questions given to my testees were not numerous but varied and brief. Even if I have mentioned those bad maneuvers, none of them was resorted to by my subjects; what shows that the disease has not yet been spread in the whole community. Among the 10 given, the failures and success are not attributable to the students only, but also the teachers, it is logical that teachers and students constitute the two poles of the action of teaching-learning process.



6 TEACHERS BASED

The results I got made me think that, even if I considered there schools in the whole territory, I suppose that the said results would be significant and the same if I had to consider nearly all the schools of the territory and have thus a samples more important. The big question here, is to know if all the charges charged to the teachers are actually real. If yes, then the following suggestions have to be looked at:

- have a thorough glance at the text written about the secondary school educational system in the DRC;
- Respect the school program and the long range plan;
- Regularly read books, prepare lessons and respect the hierarchy;
- Initiate students to different types of evaluations or tests in order to prepare them to different ways of viewing questions;
- Organizing during classes, pain works, group works in which groups of students are given topics to perform in front of the class,... To motivate students to speak and learn normally because they feel free and secure to interact with their mates. Motivation helps the teacher get his/her students interested and envolved in the learning activities as stressed by Alatis (1981: 121) in these words: "Motivation is probably the most frequently used term for explaining the success or failure of virtually any complex task. It is easy to figure that success in task is due to the fact that someone is motivated. (...) motivation is a key for learning." Use for example **teacher-students** questions with **students-students** interaction and/or answers or **students-students** questions with **students-students** interaction and/or answers; ...
- Before teaching the present perfect tenses, teachers should be sure that the simple present of "have" has been mastered. In addition, they should check the mastery of a large number of verbs in the past participle. Teachers of English may for example elaborate and develop the methods and techniques current in the teaching of English by pointing out the silent

features of each aspect of these methods. In here, the teacher makes the review before any other new lesson and/or materials, apply clear techniques to make students discover the new materials, create context, ask questions, use visual aids, drawing, ... during the lesson proper and avoid explanations, talkativeness, harassment, terrorism, ... but adopt a fanny and flexible attitude as proposed by **Mr Robinett** (1978: 67). He declares: "Attitudes towards language teaching are changing. More attention is being paid to preparing teachers to be flexible in their teaching and above all to place more emphasis up on the teachers-students relationship and its effects on the process of learning"

- Being the second year of learning English at secondary school in the DRC, 4th form teachers at this level should struggle much to attract students by their ways of teaching otherwise, they will lose interest, what hinders the process.
- Globally seeing things, efforts to improve teaching-learning of English have to be looked at as a **whole situation** right from the early beginning.

7 OFFICIALS BASED

For the rest of the actors, they are actually part of the process of education that interfere with the teaching- learning process and run the risk of hindering the mission given to Walungu secondary schools in particular and the DRC in general. Parents should for example encourage their children to repeat their lessons at home. Officials should avail books, discipline at school, good ways of keeping tests questions, create a good and acceptable areas of teaching by, for example invigilating lessons regularly so as to be aware of the ways the students learn and the problems they encounter, higher qualified teachers of English and put them in good conditions,

8 CONCLUSION

The present dissertation is a two folded studies. First, to be aware of 4th form students' level reached in the acquisition of the present perfect and present perfect continuous tenses. Second, to find out what actually interferes with the mastery of these tenses in order to fight it. That is, we wish to know the pupil's level of mastery of these tenses and why they fail to use them appropriately. The reason is to suggest remedy. The results got proved that they are weak in using the two tenses because only one school among the three selected realized 65, 2% of success in the test, the second 40% and the last 25.5 %. As per variable, learners in pedagogy are more performing than the other sections. It was globally noticed that most of them failed because of a very low background about the past participle mood of verbs. Also, most of the teachers in the target schools are limited about the general use of the present perfect and present perfect continuous tenses. They were, thus, lacking up-to-date English grammar books as noticed during investigation and/or research.

In regard to all the above observations, I have thought of some pedagogical implication e.i some suggestions to all the partners for a better improvement of teaching- learning in this specific class especially at Walungu South Kivu province in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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