SEARCHING FOR A MODEL OF ENGLISH : THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN TOGO

Messan A. ADOTEVI
Département d'Anglais
UNIVERSITE DE LOME
TOGO

INTRODUCTION

The general question of a model of English for the EFL classroom was once formulated in these terms:

Teachers of English abroad, especially perhaps those to whom English is a Foreign tongue must have asked themselves from time to time in recent years if all is well with the basic aim of their teaching . All language – learning is essentially imitation, but imitation of what or whom ? If native users of English do not all speak or write English alike , what is the foreign teacher to do ? Which form of English should he adopt as a model for himself and his pupils ? There are in fact several variant forms of the language with some claim to serve as a model ; hence the difficulty . (Christorphersen, 1960 : 127-8).

The question of the model of English that should be taught in the schools and universities in French-speaking West Africa is not, however, a real issue at this moment . As in other EFL areas, a native speaker model is considered appropriate here. Still many a teacher of English in the West Africa context (EFL or ESL) would relate to the question raised above, or to the terms of the following dilemma :

As a Swede teaching in the English department of a Swedish University, I am constantly faced with the problem of choosing a suitable variant or English to teach to undergraduates : British or American English, different styles of discourse and linguistic variants used by different strata of the population, to mention the most obvious ones. Obviously, at university level, one does not normally have to face the naive learner who demands to be taught what is 'right' or 'wrong' in English. Most undergraduates have greater sophistication and are more sensitive to the subtler nuances of language than that. Yet the problem of finding a suitable variant to teach in not an easy one to solve. (Tottie, 1977 : 203).

Speaking of the language problem in African education two decades ago Strevens (1969) contended that anglophone countries of Africa were in a transitional period that would eventually see, as it were, Africans using English in national and international communication "in ways that are just as identifiable as Australian or American" and made this prediction :

Before very long it is likely that the common features of African English – or at least of a west African or East African or Central African variety – will have been authoritatively described in modern linguistic and phonetic terms. Once this has been done it is a relatively small step in principle (though a very large one in practice)to the construction of specialized course materials for teaching English in which it is *African* English that forms the implicit and explicit target (Strevens, 1969 :195).

The least one can say at this stage is that nobody as yet actually teaches an African variety of English, and doubts are often raised as to whether such varieties of English (e.g. West African English) exist at all and are identifiable in ways such as predicted by Strevens, or are desirable targets in the classrooms. Under such circumstances the question clearly is "what model of English sustains the efforts of Togolese teachers of English?

1.   Is West African English a Suitable Target for West African Students ?

We have already said that a native-speaker-model is the generally accepted target in EFL areas (Togo, Benin, Senegal, etc.). We must now add that even in ESL countries like Ghana or Nigeria where the local varieties of African English are said to exist the native speaker remains, paradoxically enough, the target in the classrooms.

Todd (1982) reports that "With the exception of Liberia, it would be accurate to claim that in most West African states, standard English is equated with British norms" (P.286). And it will be just as accurate to say that in reality few West Africans speak English like Englishmen or like Americans (American norms are not disputed today) and most speak it identifiably like Africans. Strevens' contention that the latter do so "because of the failure of English teaching, not because of its success" (1969 :196) – does bring out the discrepancy between the product emerging from the schools and the "British English" policy.

Should West African English, then, be perceived as the target in the schools ?

1   Should we say English in West Africa or West African English ?

The idea appeared in the early sixties, advocated by Halliday et al (1964), that local varieties of English could perfectly be adopted as models for the teaching of English as a second language. These "new Englishes" (as they are sometimes called) provide the countries

where they exist (former British colonies) with " their own 'model' of English and permit the school generation to orient their learning towards a home – grown product rather than an imported one" (Halliday et al 1964 : 294).

West Africa for example has a number of such countries (e.g. Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra-Leone etc.) and "an educated West African English' is emerging to replace 'British English with RP' as a model. It is still English as a foreign language, and the teaching of English is still an L2 operation" (Halliday et al , 1964 : 294).

Strevens (1981) now assumes that this 'educated West African English' has emerged as a full grown product, with an identity of it own, and it meets the "two basic criteria"

he and his colleagues once indicated as determining "whether a variety of English is acceptable for use as an educational model" (Halliday et al, 1964 : 296)[1] . But the reality of what is known as West African English is still an elusive one . Strevens seems to posit – so do Platt et al (1984) – its existence rather than to refer to something indisputably established and recognized.

Spencer (1971) examines the wide range of uses and users of the English language in West Africa and notes :

As one might expect , there are well established terms necessitated by the use of English in natural and external environment previously foreign to it. A new flora and fauna _had to be coped with : hence such items as silk cotton tree, a pleasant arboreal oxymoron for a very elegant tree, not, however exclusive to West Africa ; or grass-cutter, a small West African rodent._ In addition there are the compounds which have been created to refer to objects or institutions which are either truly indigenous, or the result of the syncretism arising out of the meeting and the mingling of European and African cultures: such terms as, for example, _chewing – stick_ (a piece of wood from a particular kind of plant or tree used for cleaning the teeth), _head – tie_ (length of cloth tied decoratively round the head of a woman), _market mammy_ (woman trader), _mammy wagon_ (hybrid vehicle with a locally built body serving as both lorry and bus, and capable of carrying goods and – very uncomfortably – passengers from town to town) ... (Spencer, 1971 : 28-29).

Spencer goes on to point out a number of English terms which have not resisted, so to say, the semantic influences from the local culture pattern – for example kinship terms such as "sister," "cousin" are often used in ways that would totally confuse the white owners of the language, or such uses of the English phrasal verbs as "dress up"(for example "Every morn-

ing I dress up for breakfast").

Furthermore, what should the teacher make of the use of the phrasal verb 'dress up' as in the example above, or normalization such as 'the absents' and 'the presents' which have all found their way into the classroom – authentic products imported from the world just outside the school ? Should he accept them as 'West African use' or should he treat them as errors ? It is hard to tell.

The term 'West African English' is widely used today but it does not translate the reality that some linguists assume. Spencer says that "there is certainly a sufficiency of terms and expressions peculiar to the use of English in this region to justify the term "West Africanism", even if it is not in many cases easy to say how widespread they are or how permanent they are likely to be" (1971 : 28).

Todd (1982) doesn't believe in the indisputable existence of the so-called West African English either, since, as he argues:
...a definitive study has not yet been made of standard West African English, although studies of Ghanaian and Nigerian English exist. It is a written standard based mainly on British norms, although it reflects West African culture especially in vocabulary. Standard English is, for the moment , the only variety of English in West Africa with recognized orthography and the aim of most educated West Africans is that their use of the standard language should differ in no fundamental respect from standard British usage (Todd, 1982 : 285).

Tregidgo (1987) doesn't say anything different, and he also , like Spencer, shows a concern for related language problems in the classrooms : Where English is a second language as opposed to a foreign language, it becomes to some extent the property of the non-native user ; it is adapted to his or her own purposes, and reflects his or her own culture. Africans themselves have often resisted this notion, especially in the presence of a British teacher, _and claim to want to learn standard British English._ The fact remains that in West African countries English has already been adapted in certain characteristic ways ; in pronunciation, in vocabulary and general expression, even in certain marginal points of grammar ; and many teachers will find difficulty in deciding how far to go in 'correcting' certain features in order to make them conform to the British norm. Should one, for example, accept a storey-building ; He has travelled (for He is away) ; We are tight friends; they were making noise , etc. , all of which are commonly used in West African English ? Should one try to reduce the degree of formality in writing, or in greetings, which is ingrained in West African culture ? Such questions remain

highly debatable (p. 192).

Throughout his discussion of the use of English in ESL communities in sub-Saharan Africa, Gorlach (1991), Shows his malaise as to identifying 'Englishes' or English on the continent – a malaise that clearly reads in the title of the chapter that deals with the topic : "English in Africa – African English ?" He then says he is using the terms " African English" and "West African English" only "loosely" (p.123) throughout the discussion, just as Quirk (1988) points out that we all have only talked, so far, pretty freely of 'Nigerian English', 'West African English' ..., hypostatising what remains at best rather general abstractions (p.234).

And so the problem – English in West Africa – West African English ? – remains and is not easily solved.

1   Another kind of 'Heresy' ?

A memorable reaction to Halliday et al.'s previously discussed proposal was Prator's polemical paper "The British heresy in TESL" (1968) in which he poses the problem that interests us most here and expresses his position in a forthright way :

...The heretical tenet I feel I must take exception to is the idea that it is best, in a country where English is not spoken natively but is widely used as the medium of instruction, to set up the local variety of English as the ultimate model to be imitated by those learning the language (Prator, 1968 : 459).

Many of Prator's arguments seem just as valid now to refute Strevens' later stand on the adoption of West African English for teaching purposes, not only in the ESL contexts, but in the EFL areas as well.

Strevens justifies his position as follows :

In many parts of the world, ..., those who use English have attitudes towards their local L2 form of English not greatly different from the attitudes which native speakers have towards their L1 form of English: they take it for granted as part of their corporate cultural identity. But these identities are not the same in the two cases ; it is part of the identity of the L2-using community not to be the same as the British or Americans. Language education in a given country, therefore, may need for pragmatic reasons to include English, but the pedagogical model selected for English must reflect local or regional characteristics. It must (a) be mutually intelligible with all other national and international forms, but (b) it must also be different from all others, and (c) recognizably an L2 form, not an L1 form (1981 : 88).

So in Strevens' opinion, a local form of English is suitable for ELT purposes provided that it exist in terms that he has indicated "and is felt by the local speech community to be a desirable form" (1981:88). We may wonder, in case the local English "passes", so to speak, the intelligibility test, whether the other necessary differences Strevens demands matter at all ! And as regards the "speech community" that is to "feel" whether the local form of English is desirable, does it include the whole range of speakers – that is , speakers of pidgin English, "near–pidging" (Strevens' term), etc. – or is it limited to the educated elite, which is always a small minority in black Africa ?

Kachru is another linguist who has written so extensively about the state and use of English in "the outer circle"[1] that one can hardly discuss the issue we are concerned with here without mentioning him. He argues that :

A non-native model may be treated as a competitive model for teaching English as L2 if it fulfills certain conditions. In attitudinal terms, a majority of L2 speakers should identify themselves with the modifying label which marks the non-nativeness of a model : for example, _Indian_ English speakers, _Lankan_ English speakers, _Ghanaian_ English speakers. A person may be a user of Indian English but may not consider it the "norm" for his linguistic performance. There is thus a confusion between linguistic norm and linguistic behavior (Kachru, 1982 : 39).

It appears through this and the ongoing discussions that the question of identification with the local English is a tricky one. We may assume that educated speakers of the local form–that is, those who substantially use the language in their daily lives or activities – are the persons who should normally identify with it. But they don't, as Sey appositely remarks :

The linguist may be able to isolate features of Ghanaian English and describe them . But once these are made known to him, the educated Ghanaian would strive to avoid them altogether. The surest way to kill Ghanaian English, if it really exists, is to discover it and make it known" (1973:10, quoted in Gorlach, 1991:133).

It is worth noting, furthermore ,that while some Nigerians are diffident about claiming the existence of a Nigerian English and some others boldly say there is no such thing as Nigerian English (cf. Jibril,1982), others have no problem proclaiming, as it were, its existence and even identifying a standard form of it (e.g. Akere, 1982; Bamgbose, 1982).

Hence the timely remark by this Nigerian educator that _"one obvious implication of this discrepancy is that, for a long time to come, standards of correctness in Nigerian English will most likely remain a vexed question. A byproduct of this state of uncertainty is that_

many teachers of English in Nigeria will continue to be like the blind leading the blind, with the ultimate destination being hazy and cloudy" (Adegbija, 1989:176).

It so appears that the "heresy" Prator once denounced has survived, and the number of "heretics" has somewhat grown – to the dismay of many. Kachru, one of the "heretics", is reported to have said, with regard to the discrepancy just discussed, that if Nigerian, or Ghanian, or West African intellectuals or educational authorities have such a problem with English it is because , like other non-native users of English elsewhere, they "seem to pass through linguistic schizophrenia, unable to decide whether to accept a mythical non native model, or to recognize the local functional model instead" (p. 982:50).

But we would and actually can see Quirk (1988) in the role of Prator fighting this other "heresy". As he remarks:

We have a vision of education systems confronting a complexity undreamed of in Germany or Japan, where there is unquestioning acceptance of an external (i.e. native) standard for the teaching of English. And I wonder how realistic the vision is . How likely is it that a minister of education in Delhi or Lagos will provide resources for teaching to a model derived from nonnative norms - - especially any that could be characterized as low on the cline of Englishness ? It is not encouraging to reflect that, although Kachru has been publishing on Indian English for 25 years - - prolifically, eloquently, elegantly - - there is still no grammar, dictionary, or phonological description for any of these nonnative norms that is, or could hope to become, recognized as authoritative in India, a description to which teacher and learner in India could turn for normative guidance, and from which pedagogical materials could be derived (p.235-6).

The question, then, whether West African English should become the target in West African schools is, as it is, a vexed question – because, for one thing, not many West Africans or local educational authorities consider such a move desirable (Gorlach, 1991)[2] and, for another, and perhaps more importantly, no such English has been described or given a status in terms such as those demanded by Quirk for example. As was noted earlier on, such designations as Ghanaian English, Nigerian English, or West African English are just being used "loosely" or "freely"– although no one can deny that the English language has been adapted in certain ways (phonological, grammatical, etc.), so as to be capable of expressing the socio-cultural reality of the milieu.

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[1] See notes p. 20
[2] See notes p. 20

2. What model of English for ELT purposesin TOGO ?

In EFL areas there exists no local L2 form of English : consequently the most suitable pedagogical model is usually a native-speaker model. In foreign-language teaching generally, the normally accepted target is that of the educated, metropolitan native speaker. Exceptions can occur : Togo provides a possible counter – example . In Togo, English is a foreign language , but with Ghana and Nigeria so close, and given the wide public acceptance of West African English, it is not unreasonable if in Togo, too, this ESL form becomes the target even in an EFL country. West African English seems a more suitable target for Togo children than British or American English (Strevens, 1981:90).

Perhaps the idea of West African English becoming the target in Togolese schools and institutions of higher education would appear, at present at least, as the fad of some starry-eyed intellectuals. Although considered in light of the general concern of easing the language burden for the African student, or developing culturally suited materials for our situation, the proposal may seem attractive.

2.1 The Togolese context of Teaching / Learning English

Education in Togo as in most parts of Africa South of the Sahara, is a second language education (French in Togo). As such it is plagued with all the problems created by the fact that young students have to learn a foreign language – the medium of instruction in the school – while being taught in the same language. Perren (1969) observed the situation in English – speaking Africa and noted :

The result has been, often enough, that children have begun secondary courses with quite insufficient ability to do more than memorize selected texts or parts of them, with very low reading skill and without the ability to discuss, question or criticize facts, ideas or doctrines. They have indeed passed unsuitable examinations on this basis, but it can be questioned whether they have been educated into citizens whose full potential can be exploited. The situation persists into university education and possibly colors the teaching as well as the learning (Perren, 1969: 202).

The same words can still describe the situation today, not only in anglophone countries, but in francophone areas as well. Recent research focused on these latter areas has demonstrated that the students do not understand what the teacher says; and do not understand what they read in their books – which is in fact a real literacy problem in the classroom, and at

all levels (Champion 1986; Chaudenson, 1989).

Lafage (1985) reports that when the deterioration of education in Togo became so acute as to become the concern of public opinion – and much to the embarrassment of the educational authorities – it was French, the medium of instruction in the schools, that was first incriminated. And rightly so.

The following passage from The Village of Waiting (1988) in which the author, George Packer, recounts his experience as a Peace corps Volunteer teaching EFL in Togo describes a situation I know well, and is eloquent about what kind of, and how, teaching/learning "happens" in the literacy – impoverished classroom :

Then there were the copybooks. In the almost complete absence of textbook, these lined notebooks became the students' lifeline. They also seemed to take the place of thinking. In their copybooks students wrote down with the care of medieval scribes every word their teacher deemed important enough to utter. Enter a mistake in one and it might never get corrected ; lose one and a student might as well quit school. I once had to correct a geography teacher's exam. One of Kafui's questions was
"Qu'est-ce que le Nil ?" (What is the Nile ?) In response, every student wrote : "Le Nil est loin des plus grands fleuves du monde" – a piece of nonsense translating to "The Nile is far from the biggest rivers in the world." I had marked twenty five answers wrong before I understood the mistake. The class had thought she said "loin des plus grands" instead of "l'un des plus grands" ("one of the biggest …") and duly inscribed the mistake in their copybooks. The sentence had gone from mouth to copybook to exam like a defective product moving along an automated assembly line.
Kafui laughed at the error, at the students' stupidity – but not at the system that wanted mimicry without thought. They should have listened better, she said (p. 54).

It is, then, in a context of serious language difficulties (to say nothing of other difficulties, e.g. poverty, the large classes) that the teaching and learning of English take place. It is not surprising that the result of such an enterprise is generally poor . What Obanya (1971) tells us about the situation in Senegal is true of Togo and other francophone countries as well; "English has always been a compulsory subject but people have for long felt dissatisfied with the way it is taught. Almost every Senegalese undergraduate complains of his inability to speak English in spite of years' compulsory study of the language in the secondary school" (p.132).

Secondary school students generally show a very favorable attitude towards English in the beginning, but the motivation is not maintained throughout the school career. Some of the causes of the loss of interest are the overemphasis on theoretical grammar, translation, and the lack of opportunity to use English. Sometimes English is not even used in class. There is also the fact that classroom procedures are too often examination driven, and English has a "general education subject" label attached to it, which makes it a subject routinely taught and tested.

It appears necessary to rebuild, as it were, the teaching of English in Togo today. This requires some kind of reappraisal of the philosophy or general attitude that informs classroom practices and language education objectives. And this is one of the things I believe.

2.2   What I Believe
Since West African English (Ghanaian, Nigerian, etc.) do not exist in a sense earlier indicated, none of them can be taken into the classroom in Togo. Neither the educational authorities – no official document I have consulted on the teaching of English at the various levels says anything about the model of English to be taught, which is an indication that the tradition of teaching an overseas model remains unquestioned – nor do the students I know feel it desirable to teach/learn an English of the neighborhood.

Richards' contention is upheld here – a basic motivational difference between the learning of English in ESL and EFL settings is that, in the latter, "there is always an effort to acquire an overseas standard form of English" (1979 : 107).

If the model in Togo is the educated native speaker model as it is in EFL in general, One may wonder whether this is not setting unrealistic goals for the students or inviting them to do so themselves. Smith (1983) makes interesting remarks about language model and performance target that seem opportune in answering that question :
… PERFORMANCE TARGET relates to the LANGUAGE MODEL but need not be identical to it . The target is what we are aiming for . It is what we want our students to be able to do when they complete their work in our educational system. You will note that , the performance target in a foreign language situation is to achieve the performance level of the educated native speaker . It is the same as the LANGUAGE MODEL. This has always been the goal in the foreign language situation,
yet it is almost never reached . In fact, very few teachers expect any of their students to achieve this level of

mastery, but it is the target nevertheless . This is also often the cause in second language situation but sometimes institutions and teachers aim for the performance level of an educated speaker of the local English variety (p.18).

I believe that, all things considered, ELT in Togo can keep away from the debate of adopting an "appropriate model" of English for the context, without things getting worse than they are in the field at present. The best one can wish is that English teachers in Togo become aware of such debates and, beyond this, of the theories or assumptions that inform their practices – for they may be called upon to justify these any time, or be made to feel inadequate if they can't.

Already, Smith rightly points out that in this and other similar contexts where the model is the educated native speaker model, "non-native English speaking teachers are made to feel inadequate, no matter how proficient they are" (1983 :18). And suppose EFL teachers in TOGO now set out to teach an African model of the language they themselves are not proficient in, or do not know the existence of (assuming that such African Englishes exist!...) what will the outcome be? Utter confusion, without any doubt.

Conclusion

It eventually appears that the existing model of English that is taught in Togolese classrooms -- and more generally in francophone west Africa –can provide the student with the kind of English they need to function in various contexts, non-native and native. The motivation for learning an overseas standard form – which is still very much alive among these students – can only be thwarted by a thoughtless or chancy introduction of a non-native form of English into the classroom. And motivation, as we know is all important for learning to happen.

What does not seem to come up at conferences and seminars on teacher education is how many other kinds of English should teachers be familiar with? Can teachers read scientific English? Is their science education background conducive to such an activity? Are teachers able to differentiate between the social sciences and the natural sciences, and the way the two groups of disciplines are treated by writers? Are books being written for non- native teachers to help them move towards the reading of the two branches of sciences to serve their needs ? At the other end are the trades and vocations? How are teachers to prepare students for the kinds of English that they must know to meet

their purposes in life –to become hotel boys, or tourist guides, or scientists, if they themselves, the teachers, do not learn about these occupations and know how those engaged in them communicate ? ... (Debysuvarn, 1981: 88-89).

These are very interesting questions for EFL teachers in our contexts. How do we explain the fact that so many ESP or EST "arrangements" fail? Are the needs of special interest groups met in the classrooms ?

And above all is ELT addressing the larger concern of literacy - in a country or countries where English holds the most favored position among the other foreign languages? It can, and it is high time EFL teachers "discovered" this potentiality of their profession in these West African settings.

NOTES
1. It is possible to suggest two basic criteria to determine whether a variety of English is acceptable for use as an educational model. First, it must be a variety actually used by a reasonably large body of the population, in particular by a proportion of those whose level of education makes them, in other respects, desirable models. This means that we would exclude forms of English which have been invented or imported and bear no relation to the professional and educational standards of the country. Second, it must be mutually intelligible with other varieties of English used by similar professional and educated groups in other countries. This establishes a necessary link between, let us say , educated west African English, educated Indian English and educated British or Australian, on the practical plane of intelligibility; and it follows from this that the extent of deviation from Standard English grammar and lexis must be small. (p. 296)

2- Kachru (1988) discusses an "inner circle" of those nations traditionally associated with the English language, an "outer circle" of the nations that are in the process of nativizing (their forms of) English, and lastly an "expanding circle" of nations which are in the process of adopting English in various ways for various purposes.

3. Most educational authorities having inherited the English language and notions of correctness from colonial times, still nominally uphold a British norm, denying that a localized form of English has developed or is emerging: all deviances have to be explained as imperfections arising from incomplete language acquisition (Gorlach,1991:133).

4. By "language Model" Smith says he

"means the written and spoken text which is used in the classroom as examples of the so-called "standard" The textbook and the tapes in the language lab would be included under this heading" (1983: 18).

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LA SANTE EN AFRIQUE NOIRE : DE 1887 - 1960

Benjamin Kokou ALONOU
Département d'histoire et d'archéologie
Université de Lomé
TOGO

« Si la population ne croit pas, tout le programme qui a été élaboré ne peut se réaliser qu'avec une extrême lenteur «. Ainsi s'exprimait en 1923, Albert Sarraut, ministre des colonies, reconnaissant la nécessité absolue pour la France de pratiquer en Afrique une politique volontariste de santé afin d'accroître la population africaine. Cette volonté se traduira dans l'assistance médicale que la France mit en place dans ses colonies pour leur mise en valeur. En effet, le développement économique passant nécessairement par l'augmentation de la population, gage d'une main-d'œuvre abondante, la France se devait d'instituer une politique de santé afin de lutter « contre les principales causes de dépeuplement et de déchéance des races indigènes « (Bauche 1991 : 238).

Quelles sont les principales phases de cette assistance médicale ? Sur quels types d'endémies reconnues graves s'est-elle portée ? Quels sont les résultats obtenus ?
Telles sont les questions auxquelles nous essayerons de répondre à travers notre texte qui se basera sur la prophylaxie de la maladie du sommeil comme exemple.

I- Les origines de l'assistance médicale
L'assistance médicale a été créée en Afrique d'abord pour s'occuper de la santé des troupes militaires et ensuite pour préserver celle des autochtones et des civiles européens. En effet, au début de la pénétration européenne, dès qu'un poste militaire est installé, le médecin militaire de la garnison veillait sur la santé des Européens et des Africains. L'hôpital européen fut en fait l'une des pièces maîtresse des troupes coloniales. Il avait dès le début pour mission principale la protection de la santé des membres du corps expéditionnaire pour qu'ils puissent mener à bien leur travail. L'objectif principal de l'hôpital fut de promouvoir la réussite de la conquête coloniale en préservant la santé des troupes qui sillonnèrent l'Afrique. Mais progressivement, l'hôpital militaire étendra sa mission pour s'occuper de plus en plus des Africains et des civiles européens (Taiglahou 1986 : 345).

En effet, l'assistance médicale eut pour rôle de combattre d'une part la mortalité infantile en diffusant les connaissances élémentaires indispensables touchant les conditions d'accouchement et les soins à donner aux nouveau-nés, et