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Strategies for an Effective Teaching of  
Reading Comprehension in EFL Classes:  
A case study of CEG D'APPLICATION

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to:

My dear parents, Mr Symphorien A. HOUSSOUKPE and Mrs Elise SONDJO

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading is a means of communication with somebody who is not bodily present. English language just like all languages has some skills but the one that draws my attention here is the reading skill. There are a lot of recent researches that suggest that students who are trying to learn a second language would benefit greatly from a strong focus on reading. In academic setting, reading is assumed to be the central means for learning new information and gaining access to alternative explanations and interpretations (Grabe and Stoller 2001).

Considering the fact that students learn English during years in secondary schools before going to university, we can think that they should be able to listen, speak, read and write correctly that language. But we notice that even after their stay in secondary schools, students cannot speak English and the few that try it are not so fluent. Likewise, it is too difficult for them to read English texts. They cannot write correctly a paragraph in English without using French word because of the lack of vocabulary.

All these difficulties deserve questioning. That is why I have made some investigations to find out whether the problem is in the way reading skill is taught or whether the it is due to learners' lack of interest and good will through the theme “**Strategies for an effective teaching of reading in EFL classes: A case study of CEG D'APPLICATION**”. Thus, my investigation is conducted in four classes at CEG D'APPLICATION in Porto-Novo and consists in observing some teachers' and learners' attitudes towards reading on the one hand and analysing the sets of questionnaires addressed to both teachers and learners on the other hand.

This research work will be divided into the following five (5) chapters that will shed light on my topic.

- The first chapter, entitled **Identification of the study**, deals with the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the work as well as its limitation.

- Chapter two treats of **the Review of related literature** where I will talk about the different concepts related to the theme, what different authors have said about.
- **Methodology of the dissertation** is the third chapter of the work and will be about the target population, the instruments of analysis and the procedure of data analysis.
- The fourth chapter is devoted to **the findings of the study**. Here, I will present the results of class observations and the questionnaires on the one hand and I will analyse the collected data on the other hand.
- The last chapter deals with **my suggestions** towards the different actors involved in the educational system of Benin.

## **Chapter One: IDENTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

In this chapter, I will display the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance and the limitation of my work.

## **I- Problem statement**

Reading is a little bit complicated and this is true no matter what language the text is in. Moreover, it is even more complicated if you read in a language which is not yours.

Despite the fact that some people take it as a joke, for many others it is a hard and laborious task. That is perhaps more noticeable in schools, where students are required to read and perform some tasks. Students who really enjoy reading are able to make use of this competence in other areas as well. Studies show that students who like to read score better in most subjects than students who do not like to read (Krashen, 2004, pp. 35-36). Therefore, it is important to consider reading as something more than “just” a subject in school. Reading is assessed all the time during the academic year and for final exams. We can notice that on all exam papers of formative and summative evaluations in Benin Republic reading is always assessed. Despite the fact that reading is assessed, students fail dangerously in providing appropriate answers to questions.

We all know that it is only by reading that we comprehend. In the academic setting, reading is assumed to be the central means for learning new information and it is the primary means for independent learning. But most students fail in reading. By choosing the topic Strategies for teaching Reading in EFL classes, I want to know what makes most of students not be involved in reading and provide some strategies that teachers may use to teach reading to their students. I also want to remind teachers that reading just as other skills is an important part of their teaching of English language and that many structures can be taught through it.

## **II- Purpose of the study**

I am aware of the fact that many students' level in English in general and in reading skill especially is decreasing. Therefore, reading to comprehend a text in English becomes for them a great problem. We also have to remember that English is taught in Benin as a foreign language and most of the time a mother tongue influences students' learning. So they need to be in contact with texts dealing with their immediate environments, and topics that they find interesting. I want to draw teachers' attention on strategies to use efficiently for teaching reading and how they can get their students involved in reading. Then, it becomes the teachers' job to know and to use efficient strategies to get students involved in a reading class and by so doing increase their level in reading comprehension. It will be very helpful for students.

## **III- Research questions**

For many years, teaching reading comprehension is based on a concept of reading a text and completing some tasks such as such as identifying words, finding main ideas, answering by true or false, answering questions, comparing and contrasting..... Teaching reading comprehension is viewed as a mastery of these skills. Sometimes, instructions are given in such a way that does not really help students for comprehension. In other words, I notice that many teachers teach reading the same way. Students have to complete the same tasks and it does not really help them improve their reading. Considering all this, some questions can be asked:

- a) Is there something lacking in the way reading is taught to students?
- b) Why do most students lack interest in reading?

## **IV- The significance of the study**

Some researches indicate that we build comprehension through the teaching of comprehension strategies and environments that support an understanding of the texts we read. Then, it is important for teachers to teach their students active strategies and skills to help them become active and purposeful readers. My study derives its importance from some aspects: teaching reading in a foreign language is not that easy.

Sometimes, we notice that teachers are not trained and this affects their teaching. Students also have problems to learn reading and their most important problem is vocabulary. My research work is significant because the use of effective strategies for teaching reading will surely help teachers improve the quality of their teaching and also learners' performance. But the work also has restrictions, which will be dealt with in the following lines.

#### **V- Limitation of the study**

My study is not an absolute solution to difficulties faced by teachers while teaching reading nor is it a panacea to all the problems faced by learners. But it is an attempt of solution to problems. My investigations are limited to the area of CEG D'APPLICATION. But its findings will be useful to all teachers and learners in Ouémé department in particular and in the whole Benin in general.

## **Chapter two: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter is a collection of various authors' definitions of some concepts and points of view, selected information and relevant quotations drawn from the literature including books and reports. It emphasizes different theoretical aspects of the topic: "**Strategies for an effective teaching of reading in EFL classes: A case study of CEG D'APPLICATION**".

Throughout this chapter, I will make a brief account of what some authors and experts said and wrote about the definition of reading comprehension, reading strategies and reading skills.

## **II. 1 Definition of reading**

Rivers (1981) claims that

*“Reading is the most important activity in any language class, not only a source of information and pleasurable activity, but also a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge”* (p.259) but students have not yet grasped the importance of reading to understand that it demands their active participation. Their attitudes during reading lessons do not help them to carry out an effective reading but it prevents them from extending their knowledge of language and enjoy reading.

In *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, 'reading' is defined as *“an act of reading something”*. This is a general and simple definition of the concept of reading.

Koda puts that reading is *“converting print into language and then to the message intended by the author”* (Koda, 2007, p. 1). She also claims that

*“Comprehension occurs when the reader extracts and integrates various information from the text and combines it with what is already known”* (Koda, 2004, p. 4).

Urquhart & Weir claim that

*“Reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print”* (Urquhart & Weir, 1998, p. 22).

This means that the reader should know the different set of codes existing in this language in order to easily recognize or decode words and their meaning.

Grabe puts that,

*It is the ability to read taking general comprehension as the example requires that the reader draw information from a text and combine it with information and expectations that the reader already has. This interaction of information is a common way to explain reading comprehension though it does not reveal much about the specifics of reading. Readers need to develop essential reading processes and abilities such as rapid word recognition, vocabulary development, text structure awareness, and strategic reading. (See Grabe and Stoller pp187)*

## **II. 2 Reading skills and strategies**

The term reading skills and reading strategies are used interchangeably in literature on reading. A number of scholars and researchers have come up with different definitions that look at the concept from different angles. Roe claims that reading strategies are all the approaches that readers use to enhance understanding (Roe, 2009, p.84). Hudson acknowledges that there has been much confusion as far as good definitions are concerned (Hudson, 2007, p. 105-107). However, he uses the definition of Paris, Wasik, and Turner which states that:

*“Skills are applied to text unconsciously for many reasons, including expertise, repeated practice, compliance with directions, luck, and naive use. In contrast, strategies are actions selected deliberately to achieve particular goals. An emerging skill can become a strategy when it is used intentionally. Likewise, a strategy can ‘go underground’... and become a skill. Indeed, strategies are more efficient and developmentally advanced when they become generated and applied automatically as skills”*

Paris et al. (as cited in Hudson, 2007, p. 106).

This definition coincides with Grabe and Anderson's explanations (Grabe, 2009, p. 220).

Grabe puts that ‘*strategies are cognitive processes that are open to conscious reflection but that may be on their way to becoming skills*’ (Grabe, 2009, p. 221). Anderson defines a skill as ‘*a strategy that has become automatic*’ Anderson as cited in (Grabe, 2009, p. 221)

## **A- Reading strategies**

There are a number of different reading strategies that readers use in order to get a better understanding and outcome of a text. Among others Roe, Hudson and Grabe have compiled lists of the most important and commonly used reading strategies. Some of these are:

- Activating prior knowledge
- Answering questions and Elaborative Interrogations
- Constructing mental images
- Forming questions
- Making associations
- Monitoring
- Previewing
- Summarization
- Text-structure awareness and story grammars
- Using graphic organizers
- Rereading
- Adjusting speed
- Concentrating
- Selectively reading

(Grabe, 2009, p. 228; Hudson, 2007, p. 120; Roe, 2009, p.88)

All these strategies are valuable tools in teaching pupils how to become better readers and thus better learners. In addition to the ones mentioned above, I will add four examples of what Siemens calls “ a real-life purpose and real-life expectations” (Siemens, 2007, p. 149). The first means intentional use of reading in order to achieve a purpose and by real-life expectations is meant that most people normally have certain expectations about the text they are working with. These expectations can help the reader guess and predict the subject of a text and thus facilitate understanding and reading (Siemens, 2007, p. 149).

## **B- Reading Skills**

As mentioned earlier, Hudson defines skills as automatized strategies (Hudson, 2007, pp. 77-79, 106). Thus there are a number of skills that will improve reading capacity. Hudson groups these into four categories, namely word-attack skill, comprehension skills, fluency skills and critical reading skills (Hudson, 2007, p. 79). Each of these skills encompasses numerous subskills.

### **1- Word-attack skills**

By word-attack skills or decoding skills is meant the skills that are needed to transfer the orthographic symbols into language (Hudson, 2007, p. 79). Subskills in this category will first and foremost have to do with the ability to recognize different aspects of the text like syllables, word boundaries, upper and lower case letters etc (Hudson, 2007, p. 79)

### **2- Comprehension skills**

Comprehension skills are skills where the reader uses his background knowledge and context to understand what is read (Hudson, 2007, p. 79). Subskills in this category can be grammatical competence, knowledge of how the language is built up, apply metacognitive knowledge etc (Hudson, 2007, pp. 79-80).

### **3- Fluency skills**

Fluency skills mean the ability to read larger sequences of a text without being ‘‘interrupted’’ (Hudson, 2007, pp. 80). These ‘‘interruptions’’ often occur because a reader has to spell difficult words or because he does not understand certain words or parts of text and reads it over again. These interruptions lead to slow and fragmented reading. A fluent reader’s subskills are the abilities to recognize words and letters clusters fast. The fluent reader will also read fast and has a large vocabulary (Hudson, 2007, p. 80)

#### **4- Critical reading skills**

By critical reading skills is meant the ability to “analyze, synthesize and evaluate what is read” (Hudson, 2007, p. 80). Subskills in this category can be recognizing arguments, the ability to discuss pro’s and con’s, seeing the cause-and-effect etc (Hudson, 2007, p. 80).<sup>1</sup>

## **Chapter Three: METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

This chapter is about the methodology used to collect the data for the study. In addition, the area of my investigation and the sample population are limited to CEG D'APPLICATION where the questionnaires are addressed to teachers and students, especially those in the first cycle.

To collect the given data, I have used some instruments such as class observation and questionnaires.

### **III. 1 The target population**

By considering the topic of the study, the achievement of the investigation has taken into account both EFL teachers and learners in CEG D'APPLICATION. Moreover, let's notice that this school is at Porto Novo near the Teachers Training School. The observation has been carried out in two classes of first form and two classes of second form. Questionnaires have been given to teachers and learners. So, for my investigation, I have worked with 110 students. The main reason of the sampling of this research population is that I notice the decline of students' interest in reading comprehension. So I would like to work on this topic to help teachers reduce to some extent difficulties they face while teaching reading in EFL learners classes and suggest some alternatives for an improvement of learners' abilities to read and then to increase their motivation and interest in reading English materials.

### **III. 2 The research instruments**

To collect reliable data, I have carried out class observation in EFL classes especially in the first and second forms. I have also designed questionnaires to both learners and teachers of those classes.

#### **A- Class observation**

A class observation allows the researcher to have his/ her own opinion based on the facts he /she has observed in the visited class. With class observation, you can make decisions from what you have observed. I explain to the teachers to be observed the reasons for my investigation and tell them that it is only for the data collected from

their classes that I will use in my work. My class observation was based on some criteria which are the following

- ✓ how the teachers introduce the topic of the text and teach the new lesson,
- ✓ how the teachers distribute questions to learners,
- ✓ learners' reaction and participation,
- ✓ the Teacher's Talking Time (TTT) and Students' Talking Time (STT) and
- ✓ how learners concentrate on the task given by the teacher.

Above all, I have used an observation checklist on the role of a teacher, from *The Good Language Teacher* by Luke PRODROMOU, in *Teacher Development Making the Right Moves* edited by Thomas KRAL, cited by OUSSOU J.(2011, P 36)

The role of the teacher observation checklist I have used is as follows:

#### THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

##### Observation checklist

Questions on the observation checklist	Options	
1. Was the lesson mostly testing or mostly teaching?	Testing	Teaching
2. Did comprehensive questions check comprehension?	Yes	No
3. 3. Were corrections made gently?	Yes	No
4. 4. Was the teacher's reaction to student errors encouraging or discouraging?	Encour	Discour
5. 5. Has the teacher spend the required time for each stage?	Yes	No
6. 6. Was the teacher friendly?	Yes	No
7. 7. Had the students show interest in the lesson?	Yes	No
8. 8. Were the students relaxed?	Yes	No
9. 9. Did the teacher go through the three stage of teaching reading?	Yes	No
10. 10. Was STT superior to TTT?	Yes	No
11. 11. Did the teacher vary his/her position in the room according to the activity?	Yes	No

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 12. 12. Did the teacher indicate how much time students had to do for each activity?                             | Yes | No |
| 13. 13. Did the teacher give chance to many students to go to the board?   | Yes | No |
| 14. 14. Did the teacher use checking techniques to focus students' attention?                                    | Yes | No |
| 15. 15. Did the students get the opportunity to use English to talk about topics that interest them?             | Yes | No |
| 16. 16. Did the teacher tell students the objectives of the course before starting?                              | Yes | No |
| 17. 17. Did the teacher's voice vary sufficiently to make his/her meaning clear and command students' attention? | Yes | No |
| 18. 18. How many different roles did the teacher adopt during the lesson?  |     |    |

### **B- The questionnaires**

For my investigation, I have addressed two types of questionnaire that I have distributed to learners and to teachers in CEG D'APPLICATION.

One hundred and ten (110) questionnaires have been distributed to learners. All the questionnaires have been returned since I have been there helping them for any question of comprehension.

About fifteen (15) questions compose learners' questionnaire.

The first question is about the frequency at which learners read. The second one helps me to know if it is only under teachers' guidance that students read or if they read both at home and at school. The third one is about students' capacity to read texts themselves. Question number four is about students feeling as far as texts provided by teachers are concerned. Question five allows me to know the kind of material that students themselves read. The sixth one helps me to have an idea of topics that students enjoy reading about. Question number seven is about the importance of learning English at school for students. The eighth question allows me to have an idea about the reason why students attend English classes. To help me get an idea of the aim of students in attending English classes, question number nine is put. Through question number ten, I try to know whether students like reading comprehension classes and question number eleven is about students' participation in reading

comprehension classes. Question number twelve allows me to know what students think about the length of texts provided by teachers. The thirteenth question helps me to know whether students have vocabulary problems while reading. Question number fourteen allows me to know if students come across texts dealing with their immediate environment while reading and the last one is about students understanding of texts while reading.

The sample can be found in the annex page at the end of the research paper.

As far as English teachers are concerned, I have elaborated thirty (30) copies of questionnaire which is made up of eleven (11) questions that I have distributed to them. The first question is about their status and the second helps me to know for how long they have been teaching. Question number three helps me to know if they have ever been trained to teach English. The fourth is about teachers' academic highest qualifications whereas question number five enquires on their highest professional qualifications. The sixth one allows me to have an idea about the place of reading in their teaching of English. Question number seven is about finding interesting and relevant materials for teaching reading comprehension. The eighth one helps me to know if students take part actively in reading comprehension lessons. Question nine allows me to know how teachers find the vocabulary contained in the prescribed book. Question ten deals with what teachers think about teaching reading in EFL classes and the last question helps me to know if the prescribed books allow teachers to reach their goal. But only twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire have been returned.

The sample of this questionnaire also can be found in the annex.

### **III. 3 The procedure of data analysis.**

All the data gathered are edited for the consistency of the responses. A coding scheme is prepared and the presentation of data is done through a number of statistical computations. Frequencies are worked out and percentages were cross-tabulated. From the beginning till the end of the study, tables are used to illustrate the data where necessary. I have been helped by the computer. The following chapter will show the results of the study.

## **Chapter Four: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

## IV. 1 Presentation of the findings

### A- Class observation

Class observation is an instrument which enables the researcher to collect reliable and trustful information about the events which occur in a classroom. Therefore, I have undertaken four class observations for my investigations. With these class observations, I can form my own opinions or take decisions based on events and facts I have observed during my visits.

For each visit, I have sat at the bottom of the class and observed each step of the teaching and learning process and took notes.

My aim through the visit is to observe how the teacher introduces the topic of the text and teach the new lesson, how he/she distributes questions to learners, learners' reaction and participation, the Teacher's Talking Time (TTT) and Students' Talking Time (STT), how learners concentrate on the task given by the teacher.

From the observations, I notice that all of the four teachers used the authorized book by the curriculum, document d'accompagnement *6ème* and document d'accompagnement *5ème*. The students sat in groups of 5 or 6 as recommended by the Competency Based Approach. Before starting, the teachers warmed up their learners through songs that they sang happily. They revised the last lesson with their learners for about four or five minutes. However, all the visited teachers did not state clearly the objectives of the lesson. Objectives must be clearly stated to let students have an idea of what they have to do.

They started the reading comprehension lesson, but before this, they carried out the pre-reading activity that consists in asking some questions related to the topic of the text to students to check their background knowledge. At this stage, I have noticed that the learners did not react promptly to answer the questions; some gave more or less good answers and few gave correct answers. The others' reaction showed that they had not understood the questions or did not know the answers. In some classes, there were some learners who checked at every time meanings of words from the dictionaries before understanding questions and answering them in their copy book. That made their work too slowly.

Here, the problem of background knowledge is raised. A short analysis can be made as far as lack of background is concerned. Despite the fact that this school is situated in an urban area, students are not interested in going to library to read books. Students come from a variety of familial, social, and cultural background. Some families read very little, have few reading material available, and do not encourage independent reading. This is not very helpful for them. Let us notice that some teachers did not spend much time on the pre-reading stage and I may say that this stage did not occur very well.

Therefore, the teacher has to help them build their background knowledge through class demonstration and pictures or photographs. Classroom discussions about some new events may also be useful. If the reading texts contain vocabulary, concepts that seem difficult to them, the teacher must help them understand the text through a pre-teaching vocabulary.

I have also noticed that the teachers achieved the three stages of reading comprehension step by step. They introduced more or less the topic before asking learners to read the text quickly and answer questions in their copy-book. The timing was not given and respected for each activity by some teachers. Some students behaved as frustrated because they have not finished and the teachers stopped them. From these observations, I have notice in the four visited classes that some learners were not interested in the lesson because they were chatting and whispering despite efforts made by teachers to have their attention. Some students even left their classmates read and answer questions for them when it was about the group work. Some did not bring or have their students' book, so, they preferred to do Science or French language exercises.

All these reaction is a sign of lack of interest. This may be due to the fact that some students come to class without their students' book and the teachers cannot follow the exact timing for each activity. Consequently, some exceed the normal time for dealing with reading comprehension. Teachers were more or less friendly with students and I suppose that it is to avoid class management problems. They gave students opportunities to use the language by reading questions and answers before

going to the board. Corrections were made gently in lockstep with justification by students who were really following to show comprehension.

## B- Questionnaires

The questionnaires used to collect data are of two types: the questionnaire to the EFL learners and the one to the teachers. In order to have clear view of the finding related to each type of questionnaire, I have decided to break down the findings into descriptive tables that enable a better understanding of the statistical data.

### 1- Learners' questionnaires

**TABLE 1:** The importance of reading for EFL learners

N <sup>o</sup>	Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	How often do you read?	Regularly	82	74.54
		Sometimes	28	25.45
2	Do you read at home or only at school?	At home	11	10
		At school	88	80
		Both	11	10
3	Have you ever read an English text by yourself?	Yes	20	18.18
		No	90	81.81
4	Do you like the texts provided by your teachers?	Yes	48	43.63
		No	62	56.36
5	Which kind of material do you read?	Books	80	72.72
		Magazine	08	07.27
		Newspaper	12	10.90
		Cartoons	10	09.09
6	What do you enjoy reading about?	Short stories	30	27.27
		Films	14	12.72
		Football	36	32.72
		Music	14	12.72
		Dance	16	14.54

**TABLE 2:** Importance of English language for EFL students

N	Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Is learning English at school important for you?	Yes	110	100
		No	00	00
2	You attend English classes because it is	Motivating	100	90.90
		Compulsory	10	09.09
3	Your aim in attending English classes is	To get higher marks	20	18.18
		To go abroad	90	81.81

**TABLE 3:** Learners' attitude to reading comprehension and difficulties

N	Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Do you like reading comprehension lessons?	Yes	80	72.72
		No	30	27.27
2	Do you participate in reading comprehension lessons?	Yes	61	55
		No	49	45
3	How do you find the size of the text	Short	44	40
		Long	66	60
4	Do you have vocabulary problems while reading English texts?	Yes	90	81.81
		No	20	18.18
5	Do you come across texts dealing with your immediate environment?	Yes	60	54.54
		No	50	45.45
6	Do you understand the text you read?	Yes	64	58.18
		No	46	41.81

## 2- Teachers' questionnaires

**TABLE 1:** The need for effective EFL teachers

N	Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	What's your status?	APE	02	10
		ACE	04	20
		Vacataire	14	70
2	How long have you been teaching English?	Less than 5 years	08	40
		More than 5 years	12	60
3	Have you ever been trained to teach English?	Yes	07	35
		No	13	65
4	What is your highest academic qualification?	BAC	00	0
		DUELII	1	5
		Licence	12	60
		Maîtrise/Others	7	35
5	What is your highest professional qualification?	BAPES	5	25
		CAPES	2	10

**TABLE 2:** Teachers attitude and difficulties

N	Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	What is the place of reading in your teaching of English?	Very important	14	70
		Important	06	30
		Less important	00	00
2	Do you find interesting and relevant materials for your teaching of reading?	Yes	20	100
		No	00	00
3	Do your students take part actively in reading?	Yes	12	60
		No	08	40
4	How do you find the vocabulary contained in the prescribed book?	Too difficult	00	00
		Difficult	10	50
		Easy	10	50
5	How do you find teaching reading in EFL classes?	Too difficult	01	05
		Difficult	09	45
		Easy	10	50
6	Does the prescribed book help you reach your objectives?	Yes	12	60
		No	08	40

## IV. 2 Analysis of the findings

### A- Findings related to the learners' questionnaires

The learners' questionnaire is made up of sixteen (16) questions. They are classified in three descriptive tables in order to allow a better analysis and understanding of the data.

The first six questions compose the first table entitled 'importance of reading for EFL learners'. To the first question, seventy four point fifty four percent (74. 54%) of the students who took part into the investigation state that they read regularly and twenty five point forty five percent(25. 45%) said that they sometimes read. This rate of percentage is worth being taken into account because most of the students like reading. From this, we can say that they are motivated to read. When we continue the analysis, ten percent (10%) of learners read at home, eighty percent (80%) of them read at school and ten percent (10%) of them read both at school and at home. From this, we can conclude that school is the only place where most students read a lot. This may be due to their social background because in some families, reading materials are not available.

To the third question, eighteen point eighteen percent (18.18%) of students answer that they read a text by themselves and the remaining eighty-one point eighty-one percent (81. 81%) say that they have never read a text by themselves. We can conclude here that the majority of the students need a guide to read and if at home there is nobody to help them, they do not have a chance to practice reading. Therefore, school is the only place where they read because the teacher is around.

Forty three point sixty three percent (43. 63%) of students like the text provided by the teacher while fifty six point thirty six percent (56. 36%) do not like. I can say that most of the students do not find interesting the reading materials provided by the teacher. Teachers should know that the choice of books or reading materials have a major impact on students' motivations to read. Grabe says *that texts materials should complement students' intellectual levels and be at appropriate levels of difficulty* (See Grabe and Stoller 2001).

To the fifth question, seventy two point seventy two percent (72. 72%) of students read books, seven point twenty seven percent (07. 27%) read magazine, ten

point ninety percent (10. 90 %) read newspaper and nine point nine percent (09, 09%) read cartoons. From this we can conclude that most students prefer reading books even if some have other preferences. That is good because if they like reading books, it means that they are preparing themselves to become intensive reader. Twenty seven point twenty seven percent (27. 27%) of the learners enjoy reading about short stories, twelve point seventy two percent (12. 72%) about films, thirty two point seventy two(32.72%) enjoy about football. Twelve point seventy two percent (12. 72 %) of students enjoy reading about music and the remaining fourteen point fifty five percent (14. 54 %) enjoy books about dance. We can see here that students just have different interest as far as reading is concerned but most of them like football may be because of the predominance of boys in the classroom.

We can say briefly that students are motivated to read despite the fact that they have different interest in reading. Some of them even try to read at home by themselves. But if they do not have help they will no more be motivated to read. Teachers have to select texts that fit their interest to help them come into play otherwise their level will decrease.

Let's go to the second table entitled 'the importance of English language for EFL learners' which is composed of two questions.

To the first question, one hundred percent (100%) of students agree on the fact that learning English language at school is important for them. All the learners are aware of the importance of learning English language at school. They know that by learning English, they can travel to many countries and work. They know that they can continue their studies abroad. From this percentage, we can say that this is why they are motivated.

Ninety point ninety percent (90. 90%) of students attend English classes because they find it motivating against nine point nine percent (09. 09%) who find it compulsory. This may be because they have a goal but what is noticed here is that they do not find English classes compulsory. About the aim in attending English classes, eighteen point eighteen percent (18.18%) state that it is to get higher marks while eighty one point eighty one percent (81.81%) agree on the fact that it is to speak it or to go abroad.

Throughout the analysis of this table, I can say that these learners do not have problem of motivation since they have a purpose which is the first element of motivation. So, where do difficulties and lack of interest come from? May be their problems come either from the teachers' behaviours, the way they teach reading, the strategies they use, the reading materials, length of the text or difficulties to understand vocabulary. Therefore, let's analyze table number three entitled 'learners attitude to reading and difficulties'.

Seventy two point seventy two percent (72.72%) of students like reading comprehension lessons against twenty seven point twenty seven percent (27.27%) who do not like it. This may mean that students want to read being motivated. But, others may like it because for them it is the opportunity to copy down other lessons or do Science exercise. Eighty one point fifty five (81.55%) of learners participate in the reading comprehension lessons against forty five percent (45%) who do not participate. We notice that students do not participate very well in reading comprehension classes. This may be due to the fact that they do not understand texts or have vocabulary problems. Some students also may be afraid of giving wrong answers and may lack vocabulary to express their opinion. Only forty percent (40%) find the texts' size short against sixty percent (60%) who find it long. This means that if the texts they read are long, they are afraid of continuing reading them because these texts need a great deal of concentration. As they are not used to focus their attention on something for a long time, they give up reading. So, the length of texts is an obstacle for students in reading. It causes their lack of interest. Eighty one point eighty one percent (81.81%) have vocabulary problem while reading but eighteen point eighteen percent (18.18%) do not have this kind of problem. As students do not read a lot, they do not discover and learn new and hard words by themselves. Their only one way to learn new words is when the teachers teach those words to them. This behaviour consequently slows down the desire of reading. Fifty four point fifty four percent (54.54%) of learners come across texts dealing with their immediate environment against forty five point forty five percent (45.45%) who do not. This is not to be neglected because the more a text fits with a student's immediate environment the more it allows

quick understanding. This has a consequence on students' desire and motivation to read.

Fifty eight point eighteen percent (58.18%) of students do not understand texts when they read but forty one point eighty one percent (41.81%) understand. This seems normal since most of them have vocabulary problems and texts do not fit with their immediate environment.

### **B- Findings related to the teachers' questionnaires**

In order to analyze the data from the EFL teachers, the questions are put into two tables presenting the rate of percentage to facilitate a better understanding.

From the first table, we can notice that only ten percent (10%) of the teachers are Permanent Teachers i.e. civil servants, twenty percent (20%) are under contract Agents and seventy percent (70%) are part time teachers. This means that they are not perhaps qualified to teach English. They are just there to fill the lack of qualified English teachers in secondary schools. The government enrolls young people from the university to teach without any qualification. This is attested by the respondents' answers to questions number 4 and 5. In fact the majority of the teachers are holding academic qualifications to teach learners.

What is bad is that sixty percent (60%) of them have been teaching English for more than 5 years against forty percent (40%) who have been teaching it for less than 5 years. But, only thirty-five percent (35%) of them have been trained to teach English but the majority, the remaining sixty-five percent (65%) have never been trained to teach English. Let's notice that some of them have already started teaching before having been trained for teaching. There is really a need for effective or qualified EFL teachers. The government is trying to remedy the problem but there is still much to do to improve teachers' efficiency, especially EFL teachers. Teachers' qualification has a direct consequence on students' level and by so doing in the educational system.

The second table is entitled 'teachers' attitude and difficulties'. In fact, seventy percent (70%) of teachers state that reading is very important in their teaching of English. Thirty percent (30%) say that it is important and none of them finds it less important. This means that they all are aware on the importance of reading and take it

into account in their teaching of English. One hundred percent( 100%)of the EFL teachers say that they find relevant texts to teach reading despite the fact that students say it does not fit with their immediate environment and some of them even find texts long and difficult to be understood. This may be because students have background knowledge and vocabulary problems. Sixty percent (60%) of EFL teachers state that their students take part actively in reading lessons against some forty percent (40%) who find their students inactive during reading lessons. This may be due to the fact that they do not understand texts and questions provided by the teachers. Fifty percent (50%) of teachers find the vocabulary in the prescribed book difficult for students while the remaining fifty percent (50%) find it easy for students. Most students have vocabulary problems and it will be advisable for teachers to help the learners build their vocabulary through various and regular activities they would assign for their learners. Five percent (05%) of the teachers find it too difficult to teach reading in EFL classes, 70%find it difficult and only twenty five percent (25%) find it easy. This may be due to the fact that most of them have not been trained.

As far as the prescribed book is concerned, sixty percent (60%) of the teachers say that it helps them reach their objectives while forty(40%) say no. It will be advised to teachers to vary the texts they propose to their students and not hold on to the prescribed book. They can add other texts to the prescribed ones if they do not meet their objectives, or do help them to deal effectively with the topic they want to teach. Teachers have to know their students' interests to find texts that fit with those interests in order to make their class vivid and interesting.

## **Chapter Five: SUGGESTIONS**

In this chapter, some alternatives have been proposed for the problems pointed out in chapter one and also for problems noticed from my findings.

### **V.1 Suggestions to the school authorities**

The administration of schools should help English teachers create English clubs by giving them adequate materials for working. Libraries with adequate materials and equipments are really needed to help students improve their learning. Teachers also can organize competitions in schools for reading English texts or for reading comprehension. They may offer English books or dictionaries or reward the winners during cultural day to motivate other students. Trips to English speaking countries are not to be neglected but rather promoted because they give both teachers and students the opportunity to be in contact with the language. Pedagogical Advisors should regularly go to visit classes in order to have an idea of what teachers are doing in their different classes. They should know if teachers are really applying what they gain from their training and if those who have not yet been trained are improving their teaching. This will also enable them to know how the teaching is being performed and take appropriate measures for improvement.

### **V.2 Suggestions to English teachers**

In this part, I would like to remind teachers and especially English teachers that despite the fact that teaching is a very great job with many difficulties, they should be humble and patient with students to help them gain the knowledge. They should train themselves in order to improve their teaching.

Teachers also should organize meeting among themselves to share new information about their subject and evaluate their own teaching in order to improve things. English workshops are good programmes but teachers can also organize them in such a way that they meet and discuss about the next class section or strategies to teach students to enhance their reading comprehension. Non-trained teachers will gain a lot from this. Thus, I would like to address them some specific suggestions that they may take into account.

### **A- Building vocabulary and background knowledge**

Vocabulary and background knowledge are great problems for students. Students do not understand the meaning of words and the only one solution that they find is to check in dictionary though it is not the best way of learning new words. Teachers have to help them build their own vocabulary by assigning them daily exercise and by teaching them vocabulary. Pre- reading activities are important to build background knowledge. Class discussion about the text topic, storytelling and story reading sessions are also to be taken into account. Pictures, videos, object are also efficient.

### **B- Selecting appropriate reading materials**

It is important for EFL teachers of secondary schools to select appropriate reading materials. It will help them to enhance learners' reading abilities. Considering the three criteria to evaluate texts (suitability of the context, exploitability, and readability) suggested by Nuttal (1996), teachers should have them in mind when they choose reading materials.

#### **1- The suitability of the context**

Teachers should find learners' interest and need and then select texts for classroom study. Some learners complain about the length of texts during my investigation. In fact when a text is too long, it frights the learners and they do not want to read till the end. Just, at first sight, they feel like giving it up. Long texts with unknown words are a great problem for them. Teachers should not hold on the prescribed book texts only but they can choose texts for their learners taking into account their needs and interest. They may choose texts written by African writers that deal with our environment and context.

#### **2- The exploitability of the text**

Teachers should think about the purpose of the reading lesson, the integrating reading skills, and simulating real life purposes before selecting the text.

### **3- The readability level of the text**

To calculate the readability level of reading materials, teachers assess the learners' level considering lexical, structural and passage difficulty. The readability of texts is evaluated when, for example, the combination of structural and lexical difficulty is too high above the learners' reading level, the fact is that they will not be able to identify themselves with the given text or enjoy the text, for they may perceive it as difficult.

### **C- Using effective reading strategies**

In this part, I would like to set teachers' role in helping learners develop good reading strategies. So, to improve learners reading strategies, the challenge for teachers is to know and understand the effective reading strategies and help students become good and independent readers. Strategies help learners increase their comprehension through different activities they require. Here are some strategies that teachers may teach students to give them full academic success.

#### **1- Guessing and predicting from context**

Students need to be taught to guess the meaning of words based on the context of the reading and to draw from the reading an ability to predict what might happen in the next paragraph.

#### **2- Skimming**

Skimming a text involves running eyes over it quickly to get the main idea. The goal of skimming is to learn the main points in a larger selection of writing rather than answer one specific question. When students skim a reading passage, they should be pulling all the most essential information out of a piece. The most straightforward way to skim a given passage is to read the entire first paragraph, the entire last paragraph and read the first sentence of each additional paragraph

#### **3- Scanning**

It is used when looking for a specific piece of information in a given text. When a student scans, he looks over the selection quickly to locate the particular piece of information he needs and reads only that information, but carefully. Once he finds this

information, he stops reading. Scanning is a fast form of reading that does not pay attention to every detail given in the text.

#### **4- Activating Prior Knowledge**

Also called schema, relevant background knowledge, prior knowledge, or just plain experience, it is a strategy that helps students make connections to the text they are reading. Good readers constantly try to make sense out of what they read by seeing how it fits with what they already know. When we help students make those connections before, during, and after they read, we are teaching them a critical comprehension strategy that the best readers use almost unconsciously.

There are three main types of connections students make as they read:

- Text to self
- Text to world
- Text to text

When students learn to make connections from their experience to the text they are currently reading, they have a foundation, upon which they can place new facts, ideas, and concepts. As good readers read, they think about what they are reading and consider how it fits with what they already know. In this way, they build upon the schema that they already have developed.

#### **5- Ask Questions: Before, During, and After Reading**

Readers generate questions before, during and after reading. Questions related to the text's content, structure and meaning. They ask questions for different purposes including those that clarify their own understanding.

#### **6- Elaborative interrogation**

Elaborative interrogation is a simple strategy to enhance memory for facts. The strategy involves reading a fact to-be-remembered, asking **why** and then trying to generate an answer. Elaborative interrogation involves three steps:

- ✓ Read the fact to be remembered
- ✓ Turn the fact into a why question
- ✓ Answer the why question

### **7- Concept mapping**

Concept mapping (also called webbing, concept webbing, mind-mapping, or semantic networking) is an effective strategy for helping students develop a conceptual understanding of complex prose. It can be used whenever students are studying passages with a large number of concepts and they need to see how important ideas relate to each other.

It requires students to identify important concepts and the relationships between those concepts. By creating a concept map, students are organizing the ideas in their minds and a visual representation of the ideas

### **8- Making Connections**

There are three different kinds of connections (text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world). Students then use this knowledge to find their own personal connections to a text. Strategic reading allows students to monitor their own thinking and make connections between texts and their own experiences. Students who make connections while reading are able to understand the text they are reading. It is important for students to draw on their prior knowledge and experiences to connect with the text. Students gain a deeper understanding of a text when they make authentic connections

### **9- Rate Adjustment**

Poor results are inevitable if the reader attempts to use the same rate for all types of material and for all reading purposes. Students must learn to adjust their rate to their purpose in reading and to the difficulty of the material they are reading. They can use a maximum rate on easy, familiar, interesting material or in reading to gather information on a particular point, and a minimal rate on material which is unfamiliar in content and language structure or which must be thoroughly digested. The effective reader adjusts his rate. To understand information, they may skim or scan at a rapid rate. To determine value of material or to read for enjoyment, they may read slowly.

The nature and difficulty of the material requires an adjustment in rate in conformity with students' ability to handle that type of material

### **10- Rereading**

When learners read through the whole text two or three times, they will find that their own comprehension of the text improves, especially if their goal is to find how information is presented or arranged in that text.

### **11- Visual Imagery**

Good readers construct mental images as they read a text. By using prior knowledge and background experiences, readers connect the author's writing with a personal picture. Constructing mental images while reading is effective when the reader is actively engaged with the text. Creating mental images while reading improve comprehension

### **12- Reading for Detail**

Careful reading or reading for detail is probably the most commonly used reading strategy. This is a slower reading process that starts at the beginning of a passage and proceeds to the end. When reading for detail, students should read every sentence, but they should not try to know the exact meaning of each word

### **13- Previewing**

Previewing is absolutely essential for students to get a sense of what the text is about. Materials that are usually helpful for previewing are newspaper headlines or titles, images or photos. For example, the teacher chooses a newspaper article with a great headline. Before reading the article, he asks students what they think the article will be about, based on the headline.

### **14- Visualizing**

Some students, especially those who are visual learners, need to “see” the information. Visualizing involves organizing the information in a visual way, usually through the use of a mind map.

### **15- Asking and Answering Questions**

Students ask themselves questions when they preview an article. Students need to come up with questions they would like answered in the text and pay attention to how they are answered. As an example, after reading the title of a text, the teacher asks students to come up with three questions they expect the article will answer and then read to see if they find the answers.

### **16- Summarizing**

After the reading, students should be able to summarize what they've read. This may be a short oral summary or a full paragraph. Summarizing includes a very important skill: getting the gist. Summarizing is not retelling everything that happened as it happened, and students need to not only tell the difference, but also learn to give back information in a clear concise manner.

## CONCLUSION

Considering the fact that students' ability to read and comprehend text is decreasing, I have carried out some investigations at CEG D'APPLICATION to find out whether the problem comes from teachers' way of teaching or students' lack of interest and motivation. When teaching reading skills, it should be stressed that reading is an activity with a purpose. Reading is done for a variety of reasons. A person may read to gain information, verify existing knowledge, or for enjoyment. Reading researches show that good readers read extensively, integrate information in the text with existing knowledge, have a flexible reading style and are motivated.

The purpose for reading also determines the appropriate approach to reading comprehension. For example, a person reading poetry for enjoyment needs to recognize the words the poet uses and the ways they are put together, but does not need to identify the main idea and supporting details. On the contrary, a person using a scientific article to support an opinion needs to know the vocabulary that is used, understand the facts and cause-effect sequences that are presented, and recognize ideas that are presented as hypotheses. The methodology used is made up with: class observation, collecting data and analysing the results. Teachers need to help students build vocabulary and background knowledge. They also have to choose materials that fit with students' immediate environment and interest in order to motivate them to read. After that, they need to know and teach effective strategies to their students. School authorities also have to help teachers and students. Some suggestions have been made to both school authorities and to the English teachers. This study cannot pretend to deal with all aspect of reading since it covers only the area of CEG D'APPLICATION.

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**ANNEX**

**Questionnaire to EFL students**

The questionnaire below is designed to help me get your opinion about my research work. Please tick the box that expresses most your answer.

1- How often do you read?

Regularly  Sometimes

2-Do you read at home or only at school?

At home  At school  Both

3- Have you ever read an English text by yourself?

Yes  No

4- Do you like the text provided by your teacher?

Yes  No

5- Which kind of material do you read?

Books  Magazine  Newspaper  Cartoons

6- What do you enjoy reading about?

Short stories  Films  Football  Music  Dance

7- Is learning English at school important for you?

Yes  No

8- You attend English classes because it is

Compulsory  Motivatin

9- Your aim in attending English classes is

To get higher marks  To go abroad

10- Do you like reading comprehension lessons?

Yes  No

11- Do you participate in reading comprehension lesson?

Yes  No

12- How do you find the size of the texts?

Short  long

13- Do you have vocabulary problems while reading texts?

Yes  No

14- Do you come across texts dealing with your immediate environment?

Yes  No

15- Do you understand the texts you read?

Yes  No

### Questionnaire to EFL teachers

The questionnaire below is designed to help me get your opinion about my research work. Please tick the box that expresses most your answer.

1-What is your status?

APE  ACE  Vacataire

2- How long have you been teaching English?

Less than 5 years  More than 5 years

3- Have you ever been trained to teach English?

Yes  No

4- What is your highest academic qualification?

BAC  Diplôme II  Licence  Maitrise/Others

5- What is your highest professional qualification?

BAPES  CAPES

6- What is the place of reading in your teaching of English?

Very important  Important  Less important

7-Do you find interesting and relevant materials for your teaching of reading?

Yes  No

8- Do your students take part actively in reading comprehension lessons?

Yes  No

9- How do you find the vocabulary contained in the prescribed book?

Difficult  Easy

10- How do you find teaching reading in EFL classes?

Too difficult  Difficult  Easy

11- Does the prescribed book help you reach your goal?

Yes  No