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*IMPACT OF CLASS CLIMATE ON
LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE IN EFL CLASSES: CASE
STUDY OF CEG DJASSIN AND CEG DOWA*

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to:

- The almighty God for having kept me in good health from the beginning of training till now;
- My late father Léon NAINTEY.
Very early, you left me. The gap you left in me still stays lively;

.

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GLOSSARY:

BAPES: Brevet d'Aptitude au Professorat de l'Enseignement Secondaire.

BEPC: Brevet d'Etude du Premier Cycle.

CAPES: Certificat d'Aptitude au Professorat de l'Enseignement Secondaire.

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a very powerful tool for any human being. It is an important tool for everyday life. So, not being able to communicate is a very dangerous problem and a handicap for every human being. Learning another language is one of the most important and valuable parts of any person's education. But, it is especially important for people working in the field of education.

English is a widespread language and one of the most popular and most spoken in the world. It is an international language that people use in great meetings as official language. English is nowadays very important and has become an unavoidable tool for every field. It has become a compulsory need for today's world. The English language has almost swallowed everything in the world. It is used in almost every domain; namely: in the science; in medicine; in technical domain; for computer language or even in business field.

Henceforth, we have to know English so as to communicate effectively with people in many developed countries. So, we cannot deny the importance of that language in our daily life. In our country Benin, English is a foreign language and is only taught in the secondary schools from "6ème" to "11e". EFL teachers encounter many problems in the teaching of that language. But, they seem to ignore that students are exposed to it only at school.

However, some EFL teachers blame their students as being lazy learners. As for the students, they think that English is a very difficult language because they hardly understand what their teachers of English do in the class. As a result, they do not perform well. These teachers seem not to be aware of the fact that one of the most important aspects for a good

teaching/ learning to take place is the environment in which the latter is done.

So, an efficient teacher makes an effort to create an effective teaching / learning environment in their classrooms so as to make their students perform well in English. These complaints of EFL teachers and learners deserve to be taught about. It is then, important to find appropriate solutions to make students interested in the English language and perform well. It is in this regard that I decide to work on the topic: *The impact of class climate on learners' performance in EFL classes*.

To create a good teaching/ learning environment means to create an atmosphere which can help maintain students' interest, motivation and involvement in a classroom situation.

Moreover, the learning environment includes the physical aspect of the class. So, creating a motivational and friendly atmosphere is also creating a place where everybody feels comfortable; confident and at ease; a place where the surrounding are neat and orderly. It is a place where there is a mutual respect.

The learners I am concerned with are students from the first to fourth forms (6ème to 3ème). I mean learners who are in the first cycle of the secondary school.

With that purpose, I structure my research work in five different chapters as follow:

Chapter 1: this chapter is entitled "introduction to the study". It is composed of the statement of the problem; the purpose of the study; the research hypotheses; the significance of the study and the definition of some key concepts;

In chapter 2, entitled "literature review", I point out some researchers who have already dealt with the topic at hand;

In chapter 3, I talk about the methodology I have used to carry out my work;

In chapter 4; I deal with the collection of the data and the analysis of the information I have collected;

The chapter5 is about the recommendations and suggestions I have made to solve the problem raised in this research work and finally, the general conclusion.

CHAPTER ONE: introduction to the study

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The intention of any teacher is to see his students interacting and performing well in his subject. But, unfortunately, we notice with amazement that today, students are very reticent to English classes because many of them see it as boring and so they decide not to attend English classes any more.

According to some learners, this reticence is due to their dislike of the atmosphere of EFL classes and to the personality of some EFL teachers. So, having noticed and witnessed this issue, I have decided to shed light on the importance of this problem and to give my own opinion about it. This attitude of some English learners toward English classes brings about their poor performance in English tests and examinations.

Therefore, after some analysis of the problem at hand, I try to link the students' lack of interest and poor result to the possible impact of the type of the climate prevailing in those classes and also to the EFL teachers' reluctance to make use of the motivational skills in their classes. This is what has inspired me to choose this topic, the analysis of which I think, will be of a great profit for EFL teachers in Benin Republic while planning their lessons.

1.2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Anytime we have a problem, we seek for solutions to solve it. Some problems are so urgent that the need for urgent solutions becomes necessary. In the teaching-learning process, we are often confronted with some difficulties which need urgent alternatives.

To talk about the impact of class climate on learners' performance in EFL classes, I mean that this aspect has been neglected by EFL teachers. In classroom situation, the transmission of knowledge or know-how involves students, the teachers, and type of climate prevailing in the classroom. By climate, I mean the atmosphere that the teacher creates while delivering his lessons. This atmosphere should be friendly, fair and relaxed before students feel secure and comfortable for learning

My objective in carrying out this study is to get information, the analysis of which can help us as teachers of English to be and those already on the field, to adjust our role in order to create a relaxed and favourable atmosphere for teaching-learning and also to bring back learners to be confident in themselves for a real learning.

The purpose of my study is to examine the fundamental causes of EFL learners' poor performance in our secondary schools and the impact that a classroom atmosphere can have on their performance. The present study will expose EFL teachers to some strategies that could help them to create motivational atmosphere in their classrooms.

1.3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In order to carry out a good and reliable study, I have seen it necessary to set some hypotheses. It is important to point out that my modest experience after my training courses in CEG DJASSIN/Porto-Novo more precisely in the first cycle helped me in the formulation of the following hypotheses:

- ✓ The performance of EFL learners depends on the type of atmosphere created by the teachers in the classroom.

- ✓ Students' poor performance is due to teachers' inability to motivate them.
- ✓ A good mastering of the classroom management helps create an efficient teaching/learning atmosphere.

1.4: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

My concern in carrying out this study is to proffer solutions to the different factors that contribute to the bad performance of EFL learners in Benin secondary schools. So doing, I hope to participate to the improvement of the teacher's effectiveness by helping them develop motivational skills while doing their job. Moreover I intend to draw EFL teachers' attention on the important fact of planning their lessons taking into account their students' interests.

My research work is significant because it helped me know that the creation of a positive atmosphere in the classroom helps the teacher quickly reach his goals without any problem with the learners. It helped me be aware of the fact that the performance of the students depends on the type of atmosphere the teacher creates in that particular place.

1.5: DEFINITION OF TERMS

Classroom climate: Amborse et al (2010) defines classroom climate as "the intellectual, social, emotional and physical environment in which our students learn. Climate is determined by a constellation of interaction, the tone instructor set, instances of stereotyping or tokenism, the course demographics (for example, relative size of racial and other social groups enrolled in the course), student-student interaction, and the range of perspective represented in the course content and materials" (p170).

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

This chapter is about the different authors who have written about the topic. It takes into account classroom management, motivation, teacher personality and class size.

✓ 2.1. Classroom management

For effective teaching strategies, strategies which can help the students master the message or lesson must be used by the teacher. These strategies, element of classroom management are very fundamental for teaching and learning. The viewpoint about this have been approached by many authors. Thus Rivers (1987) has confirmed that the primary function of the interaction is to maintain social relationship. In fact, daily communication remains interactional. Rivers has also stated that being able to interact in a language is essential. Therefore, language instructors should provide learners with opportunities for meaningful communicative behavior about relevant topics by using learner-learner interaction as the key to teaching for communicative purposes because communication derives essentially from interaction. So, teaching effectively for good results requires many things from the teacher who must not follow strictly the traditional methodology as A. McIn mentioned in 1980 by showing a provocative view of the traditional role of the teacher. This approach, also called a lockstep must be changed for a new one so as to adopt some behaviors and attitudes which favor learning.

But if a teacher fails to use appropriate methods while teaching and does not even know his real role in a class situation, this results in some problems such as disturbance, discipline, troubles in the classroom, which prevents the teacher from conveying his message or reaching his final goal.

In this case, learning is negatively affected as the work is done in total insecurity and surely leads to students' failure.

As a matter of fact, classroom management has failed and left place to only great disorder in which no learning can take place. So, incapable of managing the classroom, the teacher is sometimes obliged to leave it so as to avoid physical aggression. This failure is often due to non-preparation of the lesson, the non-mastery of good teaching strategies, some instructions which are not clearly stated for the students and the teacher's bad behaviors in class.

Besides, if the teacher is not aware of the students frequent bad mark in his subject and does not make any remediation work to increase their performance, it can always be source of bad behaviors and indiscipline in this classrooms to cope with all these problems, the teacher has an important role to play in order to manage efficiently his classroom. Then, during his first lesson, he must set out clearly his code of conduct to be respected by learners and also by himself so that a vivid and good atmosphere is created in the classroom. He must avoid any kind of discrimination and settle groups of work according to students' desire. This idea is developed by D. Byrne in 1976 when he largely demonstrated the importance of group work in teaching and learning.

Furthermore, M. Long (1977) and S. Statman (1980) supported the same point of view. Before going to school, the teacher must prepare correctly his lesson and submit students to various activities with clear and precise instructions. While doing activities, the teacher must not forget the paramount roles he has to play such as controller, assessor, organizer, prompter, participant and resource in order to manage efficiently the classroom; a view of approach by L. McInan in 1978. He showed the

relationship between some different students' groupings and different teacher 'roles.

In this, what is important to be done is to use the different learning strategies adequately, be consistent and react immediately to the students' bad behavior during an activity. Here, punishment should not be a regulating factor for a bad-behaved student but the teacher advice can help restore order in the classroom. The teacher's guide to classroom management by Duke, D.L. Meckel. A. (1984) developed in a large scale these different points.

✓ 2.2: Factors that favor a good classroom management

To some extent, other factors contribute to a good classroom management. Among these we can mention the teacher relationship with learners. In fact, the teacher should not be too close to the learners and should try to give positive feedback to learners' responses. Because giving negative feedback may be discouraging and intimidating to them, especially if the students are shy. If a great attention is paid to these sensible facts, we can notice a large participation of the students to the classroom activities.

In addition, when all the different above mentioned factors are taken into account by the teacher in a class situation, not only do they increase the learners' reaction to activities, but they also improve their performance and success. That's what Glasser W.G (1969) had explained in his book school without failure.

Finally, a well-managed classroom helps avoid discipline problem which hinder classroom works and constitutes an obstacle to the student performance and success. Not only does the classroom management have

influence on students' performance, but the role of teacher's personality is not to be neglected.

✓ 2.3. The Teacher's Personality

To be successful class teacher, one must ask oneself the basic question "how well do I get along with my learners?" The answer to this question depends largely upon your personality according to Burnham(2011) everyone knows what personality is, but no one can define it. Even though the definition is complex most people agree that personality is the extent to which one is able to interest other people. Indeed, an exemplary teacher must be able to influence others (his/her learners) to think with him on things wholesome right. His personality must be such as to develop habits and skills which interest and serve his/her learners.

According to Wright (2011), the teacher's personality is a motivating force which can change people attitude to learning (p.32). Therefore, EFL teachers' personality definitely affects their learners one way or the other. This then demonstrates the need for placing top priority on the understanding of personality.

In fact, various professional EFL teachers have different personality which helps them to be successful. It is important to understand one's own strengths and weaknesses to succeed in a career. The type of person you are has a direct impact on how well you promote learning. According to Leavit (2011) sincerity; personal integrity; humility; courtesy; charity and wisdom are the characteristics of EFL teachers. Thus, they should try their best to make their teaching learning successful. A teacher should be a reference on three dimensions

- Academic dimension
- Pedagogical dimension
- Socio affective dimension

Indeed EFL teacher should have a solid academic background and show affection and good example to his/her social environment. Besides he/she should benefit from a reliable professional training before starting his/her career. As for Postman Weingarten, a class teacher should be honest, fair, self-confident, flexible, realistic, optimistic and humble.

Pujade(1983) addresses also the question of teacher's personality. In his book *"Le corps de l'enseignant dans la classe"* insists on the importance of our body and clothing in the fulfillment of our difficult but noble task of teaching. He added that the physical appearance, the voice, the way a teacher looks, gives him /her power to have a good teaching-learning atmosphere. He said *"Moins la class suit, comprend, plus il faut utiliser tout son pouvoir. . . sa presence physique ,quoi, la voix , le regard"* (p.62): The less learners follow you, understand, the more you have to use all power . . . your physical presence what else, your voice, your sight (my own translation).

Aboltina(2011), Honorary consul of Latvia in Mexico said when describing her best teacher: "He is tall, handsome, clever, and capable of anything creative". She put a special emphasis on teachers' health physical appearances as one of the conditions which create acceptance.

✓ 2.4: Motivation and Language Learning

Motivation is the most used concept for explaining failure or success of a learner. Also motivation has been regarded as one of the main factors that influence the speed and amount of success of foreign language

Learners (Gardner, 2006). For instance, Gardner (2006) reported "Students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels" (p. 241). He further added that "If one is motivated, he/she has reasons (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities" (p. 243).

In another development, Elliot, Kratochil, and Cook (2000) see motivation as an internal state that arouses to action, pushes us in particular directions, and keeps us engaged in certain activities. They added that learning and motivation are equally essential for performance and they enable us to acquire new knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, motivation provides the impetus for showing what we have learned, and that more motivated people achieve higher levels but Harmer (2004) cautioned that motivation that brings students to task of learning English could be affected and influenced by the attitudes of a number of people.

In teaching, motivation is one of the factors that influence success or failure in learning a language, particularly a second language or foreign language (Gardner, 2006). In the same Petty (1998) argued that if students do not want to learn, their learning efficiency will be slow such that they may learn virtually nothing, and if you know how to motivate students, you can highly increase their learning. Apart from motivation and attitudes, researches show clearly that home environment has a part to play in students' poor performance in schools (Suleiman, 1999; Mapuri, 1999).

To give an idea about the specific role of motivation, we would like to refer to what FELICIEN BOLATO (1996) states that "*if motivation is present, teaching can be facilitated but without it learning becomes difficult*" (p.30). About the real meaning of the motivation, he (1996) says that "*it is what makes us act: It is advised to work towards a goal or to reach*

an objective" (p.31). A child, he says has a natural context in which he/she organizes the various activities that make up his/her life. He means that there is a need for methods that means creativity and spontaneity to new and unexpected experience.

Generally, the foreign language learning begins in our secondary schools. Most of the time, learners are so constrained by their native language that need active help to be able to react spontaneously to foreign language teaching FelicienBaloto suggests presenting the language by using appropriate visual aids which should be adapted to the need of learners . Putting an emphasis on the methods to be used, motivation still remains and Turner Lizzie (2005)says that "*whichever study methods or course one chooses; the most important method is to stay motivated*". In spite of this method, the way in which English as a foreign language must be learnt by beginners is different .Faye B. Roberts(2007)supports her, stating that laughter is the best motivation. That means the best way for student to learn language is in a relaxed environment while communicating with others.

Stressing on the means of learning WALLACE states that: "*the classroom atmosphere is one of the most effective means to foster students*"speaking in the new language (p.19). He thinks that student has to feel at home with himself and his environment before being involved in the classroom activities. In this respect, he affirmsthat : "*unless the student feels at home with the teachers and his fellow students, he will not be able to achieve in this free and wholesome atmosphere*", it is necessary for the teacher to give each student a feeling of satisfaction in attaining some goals however small during each class hour to prevent students from being

embarrassed in any way:to be as patient as possible with the students mistakes to encourage those who are having great difficulty(p20).

In the same trend, MUTHS (1994) and MERTZ (1995) shows us how they make this relaxed environment by stating: “*experimenting with ways to make my classes more interesting and lively, I tried using colored paper for handout*” (p.22).

Drawing more teacher attention to what to do to facilitate learning with beginners, IGNACIO LOPEZ CORRIA(1999) talks about some of the activities developed to motivate learners in halogen club where he teaches. He says that:

To enhance the English classroom atmosphere and encourage learning, advertisement, warnings, bulletins, posters, board pictures, puppets, drawings, photos . . . from the English speaking countries on the walls. The students are surrounded by items that resemble the culture of the target language(p.1).

This helps the beginners and gives them the feeling of learning the language. English teachers must always try to find new approaches or strategies which can help to introduce practical use of English as foreign language in the classroom as successful teaching to beginners depends on the method and teaching materials teachers use.

SHIMED(1991) says that attitudes towards English language learning are attributed to two basic problems: methodology and conceptual difficulty. He indicates that the need of methodological simplicity and obvious complexity of the phenomena makes the study of language attitudes a difficult understanding. Methodological simplicity can indeed be achieved too through the use of what the students are familiar with.To support the former idea, MAKSUTKYZY RSALIYEVA NURSAULE (2005) advocates that “teaching a foreign language successfully does not depend only on one’s knowledge from books but also on methodology” (p.42).Of

course it will be good to be aware of methodology as much as possible, but also a teacher should be creative.

Beginner always waits for something interesting from their teachers. Teachers must bear in mind that they must use teaching material which are in connection with the topic. The author adds that *"the secret to be a successful teacher seems to be unpredictability when students do not know what you are going to do next; they are always alert to keep their attention"* (p.43). So, it would be good to create from time to time some activities through the use of teaching aids in order to draw students' attention on what you are teaching them.

For VERGINA FRENCH ALLEN(1983), when a student feels no real need to learn something, a feeling of need must be created by the teacher. This shows the importance of providing beginners with appropriate teaching materials that can help them create this feeling. In fact, these teaching aids help learners take active part in the classroom activities. They prompt interaction and fluency from the students and also help them learn better. Beginner learners remember things faster and better and express themselves in an easy –relaxed atmosphere even when they make mistakes .Teaching aids give beginner learners a lot of opportunities to speak their mind .They play a key role in teaching/learning English as foreign language, they help and prevent learners from being confused about the new input they are dealDOBSON (1974), stresses on the importance of motivation by stating that

a primary responsibility of the teacher is to revive motivation. Without strong motivation, students will fail in they attempt to bridge the gap between the manipulation and communicative phase of language learning and they hope of speaking English fluently will never be realized (p.15).

Thompson and Ditch in their explanation hope teachers assume roles of co-learners and facilitators rather than authorities. That means EFL teachers can only succeed in their tasks as effective teachers by giving voice to their students, by considering them in a teaching learning purpose. In fact, the power of the teacher is his/her students and to make use of this power, is to manage well with his/her class by motivating, creating and developing good condition for learning.

Silberman(1973) described teacher as advisor, supporters, learners, facilitators and senior partners. As the metaphor used by Silberman shows it, EFL teachers cannot create a relaxed atmosphere in their classes by putting a barrier between them and the learners. They should rather be close to the students like a partner. The activities developed in EFL classes should be student- centered, which will motivate the students because they feel that they are at the center of the learning and preoccupation in the class. When the activities are student-centered, the learners see themselves very important to be at the heart of the lesson. And this brings them to be involved and motivated. As John Dewey says, "the deepest motive of the human nature is the desire to be important"(p11). That means, students become very powerful when they notice that the teacher takes care of them and focuses on them.

The role of the teacher is to provide appropriate experiences in an appropriate context to ensure that students are involved in a teaching-learning process which strives to optimize their future as far as English language is concerned. For this to happen, teachers must be prepared to become aware of and to keep abreast of the knowledge of crucial factor such as creating a relaxed and good climate for any real teaching-learning situation. He appeals to teachers' professional consciousness to help

learners in their effort of improving their abilities in English learning. Learners' devotion resulting from this represents a kind of external motivation which not only creates a climate of confidence between learners and teachers, but also provides learners with self-confidence. It prompts them to take actively part in class and better their learning acquisition.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methods I used to conduct this study. It provides information about the setting, the participants, data collection instruments, data collection procedure and data analysis. But before starting the description of the methodology, it is important to state once more the research hypotheses:

- ✓ The performance of EFL learners depends on the type of atmosphere created by the teachers in the classroom.
- ✓ Students' poor performance in EFL classes is due to teachers' inability to motivate them.
- ✓ A good mastering of the classroom management helps create an efficient teaching/ learning atmosphere.

3.1. The setting

The present research work is carried out in "Ouémé" precisely in Porto-Novo from Monday, May 11th, 2015 to Tuesday, July 3rd, 2015. It takes into consideration two secondary schools namely: CEG Djassin and CEG Dowa. I decided to work in these schools because it will be easier for me to quickly gather information from the respondents there.

3.2. Participants

In the present research work, both EFL teachers and learners are involved because no teaching/learning can take place without the two. So, they are the ones providing me with information related to the topic. They are 30 EFL teachers and 90 learners. I selected seventeen EFL teachers in CEG Djassin and thirteen in CEG Dowa. 50 learners from CEG Djassin and 40 in CEG Dowa are selected. The tables below will give more details about the participants.

Table1: Information about teachers

| Schools | Participants | Gender | | Teachingexperience | |
|-------------|--------------|--------|-----|--------------------|-------------|
| | | F | M | 1-8 years years | More than 8 |
| CEG Djassin | 17 | 5 | 12 | 10 | 7 |
| CEG Dowa | 13 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 6 |
| Total | 30 | 9 | 21 | 17 | 13 |
| Percentage | 100% | 30% | 70% | 56.66% | 43.33% |

From the table above, as far as the gender is concerned, 9(30%) female and 21 (70%) males responded to the questionnaire they were addressed. 17 (56.66%) were the participants who had a teaching experience of one to eight years and 13 (43.33%) had a teaching experience of more than eight years.

Table 2: Information about learners

| Schools | Participants | Girls | Boys | Third form | Fourthform |
|-------------|--------------|--------|--------|------------|------------|
| CEG Djassin | 50 | 18 | 32 | 30 | 20 |
| CEG Dowa | 40 | 15 | 25 | 20 | 20 |
| Total | 90 | 33 | 57 | 50 | 40 |
| Percentage | 100% | 36.66% | 63.33% | 55.55% | 44.44% |

From the table above, there are 33(36.66%) girls who took part in this research work and 18 of them are from CEG Djassin and 15 are from CEG Dowa. 57(63.33%) are boys and 32 from CEG Djassin and 25 are from CEG Dowa. As far as the levels are concerned, 50(55.55%) are in the third form and 30 of them are selected from Djassin secondary school whereas 20 are from Dowa secondary school. Talking of those who are in the fourth form, they are 40 covering 44.44% and 20 participants are selected from each school.

3.3. Data collection instruments

In order to collect information, I made use of interview, questionnaire and classroom observations.

✓ *Interviews*

Interviews are a systematic way of talking and listening to people and are another way to collect data from individuals through conversations. Interviewing is a way to collect data as well as to gain knowledge from individuals. Kvale(1996) regarded interviews as *"... an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data."*(p.14). Interviews are also ways for participants to get involved and talk about their views.

There are different forms of interviews: general interview, formal interview, informal interview and semi-structure interview. For my study, I have used the informal interview and it was carried out during the marking papers of "BEPC" and "Baccalauréat" exams in CEG D'Application. With informal interview no predetermined questions are asked in order to remain as open and adaptable as possible to the interviewee's nature and

priorities. This enables me to get numerous and relevant information so as to deal with the matter of the *"impact of class climate on learners performance in EFL classroom"*. I have tried to select the appropriate method for addressing the needs of the research question. My role has been to land the discussion and to make the informants generate questions whose answers can elicit valid response. Through the interviews, I intended to get the respondents' views of the concept of classroom climate on students' performance.

To carry out the interviews, I often negotiate the day, the time, and the place some days before the interviews. Indeed, I explained to them the purpose, the interest and the importance of the interview. These explanations generated a trustful atmosphere between them and me. They agree to collaborate with me for this work. They are of a great importance in this study because they show frank collaboration with me and their contribution enables us to obtain the information we want to get straight forward.

✓ Questionnaire

Another way for gathering information related to the topic was questionnaire. I addressed questionnaire both to EFL teachers and learners. I handed out the questionnaire to EFL teachers in the marking centre of "BEPC" and "Baccalauréat" exams. Some of them filled in their questionnaire on the spot, whereas the others were collected a day after. As for the ones given to the learners, they were handed out and taken back on the spot, a week before their final exams. They enabled me to collect reliable information. There are two types of questions: open questions and close questions. An open question is a question in which the researcher does not provide the respondents with a set of answers from which to

choose whereas a close question is a type of question in which some list of answers are provided by the researcher. In the present study, I design the questionnaires in a way that the data collected should be quantitative. So, I make use of close questions as well as open questions to collect information from EFL teachers. I have made such a choice because it has proved to be the one with which respondents really feel free and more confident to answer. I have provided sample of each questionnaire in the appendix.

✓ Class observation

Another instrument I have used for data collection is classroom observation. Classroom observation is a method of evaluating and recording specific information about what is going on within a classroom. It can make teachers more aware of how they behave in their classrooms and of the needs of students in their classroom. Classroom observation can be a guide for teachers so that they can reflect on their own teaching practices. Many teachers, even experienced ones, are not always aware of the nature of their interactions with individual students. Consequently, one of the most important purposes a classroom observation is to improve teachers' classroom interaction with their students. Feedback from individual classroom profiles derived from the classroom observations, has been found to help teachers understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and has consequently enabled them to significantly improve their instruction. Through feedback, teachers can become aware of how their classroom functions and thus bring about changes they desire. There is a growing evidence that feedback from the classroom observation can be used to improve teaching. Teachers could positively change their attitude and behaviors toward pupils after receiving feedback from classroom

observation. The overall purpose of classroom observation is to evaluate the way in which teaching impacts upon students' learning and to ensure that all learners' needs are met. Classroom observation enables the researcher to gather information on whatever happens during the teaching and learning process. This tool has been a powerful instrument because it enables me to collect reliable and trustful event which occurs in the classroom. I carried out the observation from May 11th to June 2nd,2015 in four different classes, both in CEG Djassin and CEG Dowa . I often negotiate the time and the date with the teacher I am going to observe. For the observation, I focused on how the teachers interact and cooperate with their students. I paid attention to the general atmosphere of the classrooms and to the students' working condition. I always sit at the bottom of the class so as to observe each step of the teaching-learning process.

Chapter 4: The findings of the study

4.1. Data analysis

4.1.1. The interview:

Interview is one of the instruments I have used to collect information in my research work. The respondents I have chosen for this interview are all teachers of English. They are fourteen in number. Six of them are professional whereas the 08 left are non-professional. Among the six, two of them have CAPES and four are BAPES holders. As far as the eight remaining are concerned, four received no training at all and the four left are about to get their professional certificate. From the interview, I realized that 40% of my respondents are not aware of the importance of the classroom climate on the students' performance. They justified their answers by saying that climate does not have anything to do with students' performance. They also said that if students follow their teachers' explanation, they would perform well.

However, some interviewees (especially the professional ones) asserted that no good teaching/learning can take place if the learning environment is not well prepared. According to them, a good EFL teacher should be an open-minded person, he should not be somebody who loses his temper all the time.

As far as the relationship between the teacher and his students is concerned, 30% of the respondents said that a remarkable gap should be noticed between the teacher and his students. They explained themselves saying that getting close to them could lead to discipline problem and lack of respect to the teacher. But, 70% affirmed that if there is not a good relationship between the teacher and his students, the latter will not be

interested to his course and that anywhere they see him, they will not show any respect to him.

Also, they asserted that not in any kind of relationship should an EFL teacher get involved with his students. The only relationship he should get involved should be the one which can help him deliver his lessons successfully. Finally, 30% of the respondents said that the most important thing for effective teaching is the competence of the teacher and that if he/she has this competence, everything will go well in his/her class. They argued that when the students fear the teacher, they can learn well their lesson. So, the more they fear their teachers the more they learn. In this way, they thought that the objective of the teacher should be to get a good feedback from the students and not an active class. They seem to give priority to the official curriculum regardless the way in which it should be carried out.

4-1-2- The questionnaire

To carry out this study, I designed two kinds of questionnaire, one to the EFL teachers and the other one to the learners. I distributed 30 samples of questionnaire to EFL teachers and 90 to the learners. I collected all those that have been distributed to EFL teachers (100%) and only 80(88.88%) have been collected from the learners. The information below is the answers I was given by the respondents and my own interpretation about them.

✓ Results from EFLteachers' questionnaire

Table 1: Do you think the climate prevailing in the classroom could affect EFL learners' achievements? Justify.

| Answers | Participants | Percentage |
|---------|--------------|------------|
| Yes | 20 | 66.66% |
| No | 3 | 10% |
| May be | 7 | 23.33% |

We can notice from the table above that 20(66.66%) of the participants think that the atmosphere that prevails in the classroom affect learners' achievements. They justify their answers "Yes" by saying that a good learning atmosphere increases not only the great number of students' participation which is the first step to their good achievements but also strengthens the relationship between the teacher and his learners which facilitates more contact between the two.

3(10%)do notapprove that the class climate can impact learners' performance. According to them, what mattersthe most is the quality of instructions the teacher gives to his students. This shows that they are not aware of the concept of class climate in the teaching/learning of a language at all.

7(23.33%) of them doubt whether the climate existing in the classroom could affect learners' achievements or not. So, this category of

participants believes that class climate is important but not a necessary factor for the students' achievement. For them, if the learners can follow what the teacher is doing, they will surely perform without any constraints of whatsoever. From the information above, we can see that more than half of the respondents are aware of the importance of the creation of a good teaching /learning atmosphere for learners' better achievement.

Table2: Is there any link between the classroom climate and students' performance? Justify.

| Answers | Participants | Percentages |
|---------|--------------|-------------|
| Yes | 22 | 73.33% |
| No | 08 | 26.66% |

The table above reveals that 22(73.33%) teachers agree that there is a link between the classroom climate and the EFL students' performance and the 08 (26.66%) left do not think so. The formers justified themselves saying that the performance of the students always depends on the type of atmosphere in which the teaching /learning is taking place whereas the latter said that class climate and students' performance are two different concepts .some of them even said that "climate" is a geographical word. So, it cannot be linked to the language teaching at all. After analyzing this table, one can easily see that some teachers still do not know whether the classroom climate could have any impact on learners performance.

Table 3: which kind of class atmosphere do you think can favor a language learning class?

| Answers | Participants | Percentages |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| A relaxed one | 19 | 63.33% |
| A negative one | 00 | 00% |
| A friendly one | 11 | 36.66% |

From this table, we can see that 19 participants(63.33) think that the type of class climate which can favor a good learning should be the relaxed one. The 11(36.66) remaining ones think that it is the friendly atmosphere that can establish a favorable teaching/learning in the classroom. None of them(00%) prefers the negative environment for a real teaching /learning event. A deep analysis of the data shows that a relaxed atmosphere plays an important role in the process of learning.

Table4:who do you think should create the teaching/learning environment in the classroom?

| Answers | Participants | Percentage |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| The students | 07 | 23.33% |
| The teacher | 18 | 60% |
| Both of them | 05 | 16.66% |

The table above shows that 07(23.33%) respondents think that students are the one to create the teaching learning environment in the EFL classroom. According to them, no matter how willing or motivated the teacher could be, if his students do not want to work, any teaching/learning can take place.18 (60%) of them think that it's for the teacher to create this atmosphere in the classroom. As for this category of respondents, for a teaching/learning to take place, all depends on the teacher because he is the decision maker.Thefive remaining persons(16.66%) think that both the teachers and the students have their role to play in the creation the classroom atmosphere. They explained their answers saying that the teaching/learning gathers two categories of persons (the teacher and the learners) so each of these persons should participate in the creation of his learning or teaching environment.

Table 5:what do you think can be the cause of students' poor performance in EFL classes?

| Answers | Participants | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| The teacher's lack of efficiency | 08 | 26.66% |
| The students' laziness | 07 | 23.33% |
| Students lack of motivation | 13 | 43.33% |
| Other reasons | 02 | 6.66% |

This table shows the different possible causes of students' poor performance in EFL classes some teachers know. The information in the table above shows that 08(26.66%) of the respondents, think that the students' poor performance should be linked to some teacher lack of efficiency. 07(23.33) of them think this should be linked to the learners laziness in English language. 13 (43.33%) other affirm that this is due to the

students' lack of motivation. two 02(6.66%) other said that the causes of this problem is far to be among the three above but they should be found elsewhere.

Table 6: Do you appropriately use the techniques and drills that maximize students' talking time?

| Answers | Respondents | Percentage |
|-----------|-------------|------------|
| Yes | 08 | 26.66% |
| Sometimes | 16 | 53.33% |
| No | 06 | 20% |

From this table, one can see that 08(26.66%) of the respondents give the opportunity to their students to talk during the teaching/learning process whereas 16(53.33%) others use this techniques too but not regularly. But, the 06(20%) remaining do not use it at all.

Table 7: When do your students perform well the most?

| Answers | Respondents | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| When you teach them songs | 18 | 60% |
| When you shout at them | 02 | 6.66% |
| When you call them by their names | 10 | 33.33% |

The table above shows that 18(60%) EFL teachers get their students to perform the most only when they teach them songs. 02(6.66) others said that it is when they shout on them that work. They explain their answer saying that some students are too stubborn and the only way to make them work is through shout. The 10(33.33) remaining affirm that it is by calling them by their names that they perform well.

Table 8: Do you think the teacher’s personality could have an impact on learners’ performance? Justify.

| Answers | Respondents | Percentage |
|---------|-------------|------------|
| Yes | 17 | 56.66% |
| No | 13 | 43.33% |

As we can read from the table above, 17(56.66%) teachers by answering “Yes” think that the teacher’s personality could influence students’ performance. According to them, when a teacher is not shy and smiles, he creates a pleasant atmosphere for learning. Consequently, many participate actively in the learning process. Whereas 13(43.33%) do not think so. For them, the teacher’s personality has nothing to do with students’ achievement. The great achievement of learners depends on their will to work harder.

Table 9: How do you proceed in getting your students loving your classes?

| Answers | Respondents | Percentage |
|--|-------------|------------|
| By keeping good relationship with them | 13 | 43.33% |
| By giving them good marks all the times | 03 | 10% |
| Through your good ways of managing the class | 14 | 46.66% |

As we can see in this table, 13(43.33%) respondents make their students love their classes by keeping relationship with them. For them the only way for a teacher to make his students love his classes is to develop a good relationship between him and them all the academic year long. 03(10%) others said that their way of making their students love their classes is by giving them good marks. The 14(46.66%) remaining respondents think that the right way for them to make their learners love their classes is their ability to make good use of the classroom management.

✓ Results from students' questionnaire

The information below is results I got from the respondents. They are ninety students from both CEG Djassin and CEG Dowa/Porto-Novo.

Table 1 Doyou like English?

| Answers | Respondents | Percentage |
|---------|-------------|------------|
| Yes | 83 | 92.22% |
| No | 07 | 7.77% |

From the information above, one can see that 83(92.22%)students out of the ninety like English. It shows that more than half of the respondents like the English language. Whereas 07(7.77%) affirm that they don't like it. So, the rate of those who like it is higher than the one of those who do not like it.Hence fore, one can see that the majority of the students like English. But, for the rest who don't like it, it may due to their teachers' reticence to motivate them.

Table.2. Who makes you like English?

| Answers | Respondents | Percentage |
|----------------------|-------------|------------|
| Your parents | 09 | 10% |
| Your English teacher | 70 | 77.77% |
| Your friends | 11 | 12.22% |

The table above shows that 09(10%) of the respondents are made to like the English language by their parents.70 (77.77%) others are made to like it by their teacher. The 11(12.22%) remaining are made to like English by their friends. This shows clearly that the majority of them are encouraged to like English by their teachers. It also means that some teachers do not encourage their learners to be interested in their subject. The students who are made to like it by their parents or friends do not see their teachers' way of teaching motivate.

Table3: How do you view your English classes?

| Answers | Participants | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| As an opportunity for learning | 57 | 63.33% |
| As a disturbing time | 14 | 15.55% |
| As an opportunity for speaking | 19 | 21.11% |

This table shows that among the respondents to this question, 57(63.33%) of them see their English classes as an opportunity for

learning.14 (15.55%) others said that they see their English classes as a disturbing time. So, they don't have any interest in learning English. As for the 19(19%) remaining, English classes are an opportunity for them to practice the language. We can see that the opinions vary from one student to another. From this information, one can notice that some EFL teachers do not give opportunity to their students to speak during the teaching /learning process. So, they are the ones who speak all the time.

Table4: Does your English teacher appreciate you during the teaching/learning process?

| Answers | Participants | Percentage |
|-----------|--------------|------------|
| Yes | 52 | 57.77% |
| Sometimes | 21 | 23.33% |
| No | 17 | 18.88% |

This table shows that from the ninety respondents 52(57.77%) recognize that their teacher appreciate them during the teaching /learning process. 21(23.33%) others say that their teachers appreciate them but not regularly. As for the 17(18.88%) remaining participants, they affirm that their teachers do never appreciate them.

Table05: How do you feel when your teacher appreciates you?

| Answers | Respondents | Percentage |
|------------|-------------|------------|
| Happy | 88 | 97.77% |
| Sad | 00 | 00% |
| Don't care | 02 | 2.22% |

The table above shows how students feel when their teachers appreciate them. Almost all of the respondents 88(97.77%) have confirmed that they are happy to be appreciated by their teacher. None of them is feels sad when they appreciate him. Only 02(2.22%) of don't mind to be appreciated by their teacher or not.

Table6: Is there any friendly relationship between you and your EFL teacher?

| Answers | Responses | Percentage |
|---------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 59 | 65.55% |
| No | 31 | 34.44% |

This table presents the information about the relationship between EFL learners and their teachers. 59(65.55%) of the students, by "Yes" confirm that there is a friendly relationship between them and their English teachers. whereas 31(34.44%) remaining, say that there is no any friendly relationship between them and there EFL teachers. Here, we can see that though some teachers create a friendly relationship between them and their students, others do not care about it or see it as useless. That could be a cause of students' poor performance in their classes.

Table7: what is the atmosphere in your English classes?

| Answers | Respondents | Percentage |
|---------|-------------|------------|
| Vivid | 55 | 61.11% |
| Serious | 22 | 24.44% |
| Dormant | 13 | 14.44% |

From the table above, we can easily notice that 55(61.11%) students qualify their English classes as being vivid. 22(24.44%) other respondents believes that the atmosphere prevailing in their English classes is too serious. Whereas the 13(14.44%) remaining find it as being dormant. So, some EFL teachers do not warm their students up and others do not allow them to work in a relax way once they start their courses and put too much pressure on the learners. They make the learners concentrate all the times as in mathematics' classes.

✓ 4.1.3:Results from the classroom observations

The teachers: From the 4 teachers I observed, almost all of them are aware of the importance of creating a good teaching /learning climate in their classes before starting to deliver their lessons. They tried to prove this through their way of warming their learners up and the jokes they made throughout the teaching and learning session. They made their students talk all the session long.Though the classes were crowded with students, they tried to manage them and worked in a good and relaxed atmosphere. Discipline was kept. Moreover, one could easily notice that there is a friendly relationship between those teachers and their students. Because learners were not afraid of addressing them. Furthermore, one should mention those teachers'activemobility in their classrooms all the session long. They went from row to row to see how students are working. Anytime they notice that the class is becoming dormant, they ask the students to sing or stand up and shake themselves.

But the only bad remark I have made during my observations, was with a teacher who all the time sat on his desk and always asks the students to go to the board. He does not explain well the activities he gives to his students and just ask them to do it. Whenever they ask for more clarification, he cries

and insults them in the vernacular language "Gungbé. In fact, this teacher is a stammer. He loses his temper all the time in such a way that students are afraid of asking him questions during their learning process. The atmosphere in such a classroom was not pleasant at all and one could even notice it through students shout and complaints.

Students: they work in difficult conditions due not only to physical classroom environment but also to the social environment. They work in groups of 5 or 6 students. But due to the lack of furniture and reading materials, students work in large groups. It is true that their only objective is marks. But many of them find the English language easy and show interest in it saying that they could be good if their working conditions were better and if their EFL teachers could help them improve their level in English. Indeed, others are suppressed by their teachers in so far that they become anxious and afraid of talking the floor during the teaching/learning process. They do not feel comfortable for their teachers do not show interest in all of them during the courses. As a result, they are not active and do not react promptly during English classes.

Classrooms: the physical environment of the observed classrooms does not reflect the standard of what a place where a good teaching and learning could take place. The classrooms' buildings are too old and full of students. There is a lack of tables and benches in some classes and some of the ones available are not in good conditions. However, they are well arranged in so far as teachers can easily go through rows and circulate from group to group.

From the analysis of the different results, I have seen that it urges to find appropriate solutions to difficulties Education in Benin in general and in "DJASSIN" and "DOWA" secondary schools in particular are confronted

with. So, in the following chapter, I am going to make some recommendations to Benin Educational authorities so as to find alternatives to those problems. Then, I address some suggestions to teachers, students and school principals and their staff in order to improve EFL teaching and learning in Benin.

Chapter 5: Recommendations and suggestions

5.1. Recommendations.

Before an efficient teaching/learning can take place, many factors are to be considered. That's exactly the real motive that leads me in the formulation of these recommendations. This proposal, far from being the best to save our educational system especially, the secondary one.

None ignores that our country Benin is confronted with many problems especially the financial and material ones. It's a developing country which all the times ask for help from the developed countries. Still, we can do something by ourselves with the little means we dispose. It is quite true that many efforts have been made but, they are not enough compared to the different needs we have in our secondary schools in the domain of EFL teaching.

My recommendations go this way:

5.1.1. Recommendations to the government.

In order to create a relaxed atmosphere in classes, the government has their own stones that they should bring to the building size. So they should:

- Invest more financially in the creation of some secondary schools,
- Demolish the colonial buildings and rebuild new ones,
- Do their best to modernize our educational system by providing our secondary schools in general, CEG Djassin and CEG Dowa in particular with some reading materials,
- Provide schools with comfortable benches and tables

-Regularly organize the in-service training for recruited teachers and also recruit the newly trained ones otherwise it will be a great loss for them,

-Verify if the recruited teachers do not have speech problems or the auditory problems/ troubles because stammers and deaf quickly get angry meanwhile, a teacher especially an EFL one should be patient;

5.1.2. To the school authorities:

Our secondary schools authorities should be very careful in recruiting EFL teachers and put aside corruption. They should recruit well-trained EFL teachers to teach English because education is a very sensible domain that one should not play with. Also, they should assist the teachers they have recruited to see in which condition they are working and what they could do to help them. Moreover, they should get in contact with the governmental authorities to share with them the different kind of challenges EFL teachers are going through in their classes so as to find appropriate solutions to them.

5.1.3. To the EFL teachers.

The creation of relaxed atmosphere in the classrooms mostly depends on EFL teachers who are the main actors to motivate their students. Therefore, to create a favorable teaching/ learning atmosphere in the classrooms and make students perform well, they should:

-Do their best to create a good relationship with their students;

-Divers their teaching method so as to motivate their learners to find interest in coming to their courses;

- plan their lessons taking into account their students' socio-cultural environment needs;

- not be harsh with their students;

- Be fair with all of their students in whatever situation;

- Create a vivid atmosphere within their classrooms throughout the teaching /learning process;

- Be open- minded with their students and ready to help them in their academic needs;

- try to master at least the names of the majority of their students;

- Establish a code of conduct in their classes from the very beginning of the academic year;

- Have a good mastering of the classroom management technique;

- Give more opportunity to their students to speak or practice the language for they are the ones learning the language.

5.2. Suggestions.

5.2.1. Suggestions to EFL teachers.

For the success of the teaching/learning of the English language, EFL teachers should be patient and bear in mind that they have an important role to play in the future of their learners. So, they should do the best they can to create a very fair learning atmosphere in their classes that is paramount to the learners in the process of their learning.

Also, they shouldn't consider the level and behaviors of learners to live them on their own. That's why they should learn much about child

psychology which will allow them to read and understand their students' attitudes hence, the necessity of the training. Moreover they should take the human dimension into consideration in order to easily convey their messages.

Moreover, I suggest that those teaches who are not yet trained especially those "vacataires", come to the advanced teacher training college to get trained.

5.2.2. Suggestions to the government.

Having seen the importance of the English language nowadays, and the financial problems our country Benin is going through, I suggest that our government enter in partnership with developed countries especially the English speaking ones in order to be helped by them. They should also negotiate with those countries to have embassies in their countries. In the same way, our government should also find a well-placed land to them in Benin where they could settle.

Moreover, I suggest that the government negotiate for teachers of English to be, a yearly journey in some English speaking countries so as to enable them to have direct contact with native speakers and improve their pronunciations.

Furthermore, I suggest that our supreme authorities provide our secondary schools with some materials which could help them decorate their classes in an attractive way that could motivate students. Also in their recruitments, they should allocate more places to trained teachers of English before any other candidate because education is a matter of professionals not of anybody. As for the newly recruited ones, the

government should organize training for them before they step in any classroom.

CONCLUSION

Education in Benin in general and in the secondary schools of Djassin and Dowa in particular, undergoes some crises as far as EFL teaching and learning is concerned. Teachers often encounter some difficulties in their teaching job and mainly while trying to get students involved and interested in the English language learning. Teaching is not an easy task. Therefore, EFL teachers have a responsibility in the success as well as in the failure of the English language teaching and learning. Through my research work, I tried to show widely all the interest that EFL teachers can gain in creating a friendly atmosphere to learners in general. Because when one considers the growth of the Information and communications Technology in this millennium, the usefulness of the English language is no longer to be proved. I carried out my investigation by using a descriptive methodology which has enabled me to define, in the first chapter, my objectives and to state the main reason for my research.

To achieve my aim, I tried to expand my knowledge about the topic by reading some authors interested in the role of motivation; the teacher's personality and the classroom management in the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The reading materials I have read led me to get more information about how learners can be motivated to perform well in our secondary schools and also how teachers can create a good teaching / learning environment in their classes. Then I made a deep analysis of the report of the reading materials. In the third chapter, I described the different procedures I used for data collection. So, to collect data, I interviewed some EFL teachers and some experienced people in the teaching field. In addition I have undertaken class observation to know

more about students' working condition and what really happens in English classes.

Then, I addressed teachers and students by giving them some questionnaires to be filled in order to know more about teachers' relationships with their students. Also, to get teachers' opinion about the aspect of classroom atmosphere and its impact on their learners' achievement. In chapter four, I analyzed the different results I have got in the previous chapter. From this analysis, I noticed that students work in difficult conditions, not only for physical environment but also for the teaching and learning process in general. As far as teachers are concerned, although some of them are aware of the fact that a relaxed atmosphere is necessary for teaching/learning, they do not practice the creation of such an atmosphere in their classes. They make pressure on students, getting the latter anxious.

I noticed from this study that the uneasiness in the teaching of English in general and in the creation of a friendly atmosphere in particular is a real fact which calls upon the different actors of our educational system. Then the responsibility in the problem solving comes to the government as well as to teachers, the students and the secondary schools staff. It is in this regard that, in chapter five, I have made some recommendations and suggestions to the Government, to teachers, to students.

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APENDIX

Questionnaire to EFL learners

The questions below are designed to help me get information and opinions about my research work. Please, tick only the appropriate box which expresses most your answer. Your identity will be kept confidential, only your answer will be used as illustrations in this research work.

1- Do you like English?

Yes No

2- Who makes you like it?

Your parents English teacher

Your friends

3- How do you view your English classes?

As an opportunity for learning As a disturbing time

As an opportunity for speaking

4- Does your English teacher appreciate you during the teaching /learning process?

Yes sometimes No

5- How do you feel when teacher appreciates you?

Happy sad I don'tcare

6-Is there any friendly relationship between you and your EFL teacher?

Yes

No

6- What is the atmosphere in your English classes?

Vivid

Serious

Dormant

Thank you very much

Questionnaire to EFL teachers:

1- Do you think the climate prevailing in the classroom could affect EFL learners' achievement?

Yes No May be

Justify.....
.....
.....

2- Is there any link between the classroom climate and learners' performance?

Yes No

Justify.....
.....
.....

3- Which kind of climate do you think could favor a language learning class?

A relaxed one A negative one
A friendly one

4- Who do you think should create the teaching /learning environment in the classroom?

The students the teacher of them.

5- What think can be the cause of students' poor performance?

The teacher's lack of efficiency The students' laziness Students' lack of motivation

Other reasons.....
.....
.....

6- Do you appropriately use the techniques and drills that maximize students' talking time?

Yes Sometimes No

7- When do your students perform well the most?

When you teach them songs when you shout on them

8- Do you think the teacher's personality could have an impact on learners' performance?

Yes No

9- How do you proceed in getting your students loving your courses?

• By keeping good relationship with them

• By giving them good marks all the time

• Through your ways of managing your classes