



UNIVERSITE D'ABOMEY-CALAVI  
(UAC)

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FACULTE DES LETTRES, ARTS ET SCIENCES HUMAINES (FLASH)

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DEPARTEMENT D'ANGLAIS

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## MEMOIRE DE MAITRISE EN ANGLAIS

THEME:

COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS IN EFL TEACHING / LEARNING IN  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BENIN: THE CASE STUDIES OF CEG LE  
MERIDIEN AND CEG1 OF ABOMEY-CALAVI

Réalisé par:

Maximin Comlanvi ABENI

Sous la direction de :

Docteur

Taofiki KOUMAKPAI

## Dedication

To God, the one who gave me life and intelligence to write this research work.

To my wife, Marie-Rose Florentine GNIMAGNON and my sons Gnonnan, Sitou  
and Tchanmi.

To my deceased father Alexis ABENI and my mother Ablavi AMOUSSOU.

To my brothers and sisters, Nestor; Irenée; Denis; Béatrice and Aimée.

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**COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS IN EFL TEACHING / LEARNING IN SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN BENIN: THE CASE STUDIES OF CEG LE MERIDIEN AND CEG1 OF  
ABOMEY-CALAVI**

## Introduction

Language in any human society is an important human heritage. The significance of language in human life cannot be over-emphasized. It is indeed central not only to our social interactions and relationships, but also in distinguishing us and enabling others to ascertain the position in the society. This would explain why people with speech or hearing disabilities find it difficult to integrate and participate fully in their communities. What this means is that every language community has developed unique modes of using its language. At the same time, each language has been molded in a special way to serve the needs of the community that speaks it. In this way, every language is a unique system and therefore, a resource for humankind. It is because of the many unique systems in each language that we talk of linguistic diversity. This linguistic diversity, like bio-diversity, is an important feature of our universe. The many languages spoken by the various world populations signify the communication problems, which human societies are likely to face in their day to day interactions.

Language is the most natural device used by humans to communicate among them.... As language is used for many purposes, any language user develops different abilities. He may need to: write reports, narrative, expository or argumentative texts; read books or any other written works; listen to the radio and watch TV; speak on the telephone etc.

The learning of a foreign language is not always an easy thing. The teaching of English language in a French-speaking country involves many troubles that a well-advised teacher of language must be able to know for a better teaching / learning of a foreign language in a class, in a society or in a country. However, the fact to be a good student or a good teacher doesn't simply mean to know

to speak English fluently. Teachers must know what to do in a specific time in order to make their students accept to attend their English courses. At a time, where some students are interested in speaking English many other dislike it because they find this foreign language complicated or difficult to be learnt. In order to bring this group of students to change their perception about the English language, teachers, schools administrators, parents and state government need to be aware of the problems of communication in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in the Beninese educational system.

Very often, the language user is involved in the communication of both receptive and productive skills. The objective of teaching a language is to enable the learner to behave in such a way that she or he can participate to some extent and for certain purposes, in the activities of the community where she or he is and which may be different from his native community. These varying aspects of participation require different levels of skills in language performance. They also imply some division of linguistic behaviour into different types of skills which have conventionally different names: writing (the ability to produce printed or written text), speaking (the ability to use one's voice to produce words or to make a speech), listening (the ability to use one's ear to pay attention to what someone is saying), and reading (the ability to use one's eye and sometimes one's voice to understand and say written words).

Teaching and learning are reciprocal processes that depend on and affect each other. When teaching does not take place effectively, it implies that there are stages in the learning process that have not been attained. Differently put, when students fail to learn in the classroom, it amounts to saying that the teacher has failed to effectively communicate the knowledge.

Learning doesn't happen in a vacuum. Before it can happen, there are many variables that occur in an environment that follows the learners to process the

knowledge transferred by the teacher. The success of learning depends upon the strategies used by the teacher to convey the subject matter. Finding ways of creating predictable, orderly classrooms, establishing rules, and coping with the procedural demands of the classroom have largely been left to the inventiveness and good intentions of the classroom teacher (Everston, 1996). The teacher then plays an important role in the classroom.

English teaching and learning in French speaking countries has some problems and these problems are of a great preoccupation for EFL teachers. As such, a lot of researches have been carried out in this field. In that connection, I have decided to investigate on the communicative strategies to English teaching and learning so as to improve students' performance. This research hopes to enlighten educators of arduous challenges that students faced in learning the English language so that they may strive to improve and consolidate their teaching skills thus, making language teaching and learning more effective and meaningful for both teachers and students. The role of English in the world is quite important as it is in many other developing countries. New technology and the adoption of the internet have resulted in a major transition in terms of business, education, science, and technological progress, all of which demand high proficiency in English. Mergers, associations, and takeovers are common and English is used as the means to communicate, negotiate and execute transactions by participants where one partner can be a native speaker of English or none of the partners are native speakers of English.

All these are the motives which have aroused my curiosity in carrying out this research work on the topic entitled: "Communication challenges in EFL teaching / learning in secondary schools in Benin: the case studies of CEG le Meridien and CEG1 of Abomey-Calavi.

Learning English is not an easy task. Language teaching and particular English language teaching is a complex activity which requires some specific dispositions. Taking into account these complex characteristics that this subject sometimes requires, can we make a serious study without thinking about some appropriate strategies to deal with its teaching? To answer such a question, it is first necessary to explore the word strategy and clarify some key concepts in strategy.

Strategy is a plan designed to achieve a particular long term aim; otherwise, it is the art of planning and directing an academic activity in a classroom. According to some investigators, strategy can be defined as general tendencies of overall characteristics of the approach used by language learners. It is also defined as study habits or detailed procedures in dealing with specific aspects of language learning such as: looking up words in a dictionary. Taking into account the different explanations obtained from some dictionaries and some investigators, we can finally say that strategies are techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire foreign language knowledge.

For this reason, teachers must adopt strategies and use them during their teaching. According to Donn Byrne, (1989), "*teaching a language is developing a set of performance to the learner*" in other words, teaching is a developing art which inquires innovative and creative ideas to enrich the learner's knowledge. In this respect, it is obvious that teachers should find out the best and adequate strategies so as to facilitate teaching in their classroom.

So, helping to work out such strategies is the aim of this research work which is divided into two parts and four chapters. The first chapter which is the gist of the work includes the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, and the concepts clarifications.

The second chapter is about the literature review, theoretical framework and the Methodological approach of the study. In fact, eminent EFL specialists have developed many communicative strategies of teaching and this chapter too displays some of those strategies.

Chapter three presents the results of the study and the major problems derived from the investigations.

Chapter four gives an approach of solution to the problem.

# **PART ONE: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND FIELDS; LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

## **Chapter One: Research dimensions and fields**

### **1-1: Problem Statement**

Since the colonial period, many changes had been brought into the educational system of our country. One of those changes brought is the teaching of English

in our secondary schools. Since then, English has been part and parcel of the Benin school syllabi. A striking phenomenon is that most of the learners do not show interest in that language. It is true that from the beginners' level, one can notice a great motivation about English learning. But as learners move upward to upper classes this motivation disappears. Students spend between 11-13 years (6 years in primary school and between 5-7 years in secondary school) learning English, but a portion of students are still not able to master the language upon completing secondary school. Some English teachers do not make their students be interested in learning English activities. This generates the loss of these students' interest for learning English. The way they use to teach English to these students is one of the factors which urge these learners to dislike it. These teachers still stick to the traditional method of teaching and they consider themselves as the key figures in their classrooms. They regard themselves as the centre of knowledge and the learners are mere receivers of the given knowledge. The teaching is carried out with authority and the learners can be beaten if she / he does not obey or if she / he reacts negatively to the god of the class who is the teacher. A continual fear reigns between teachers and learners. Some teachers keep crying, beating and rebuking their learners. The latter act as defensive and unmotivated students. In such an atmosphere some students try to follow. But most of them are demoralized and turned off. When teachers don't use correct techniques or methods in their teaching, a certain inhibition is created at the level of the learners. Classroom activities are not vivid and the learners are finally viewed as simple machines that are expected to imitate and repeat their responses.

There are various factors that could have contributed to this failure. Learners' learning methods, motivation, perceptions, teachers' teaching methods and / or approach, syllabus, and lesson plan among others. Therefore it is imperative to understand learners' views and experiences in learning a second / foreign

language in order to identify the difficulties and impediments that they encounter in the classrooms.

Using good methodology is a way to bring students participates actively to the four skills in general. Moreover, parents don't buy books to their children. And those who really want to progress meet on their way such a handicap and finally give up. The level of poverty of the whole country is not always conducive to the buying of reading materials. Parents prefer to spend their little money on mathematics books, than spending it on English book. Some schools do not buy the prescribed textbooks and they do not have school libraries. In education, the triangular relation is vital. That is: students' parents have to play their role, the students themselves and the play their role, the students themselves and the school authorities, theirs. Teachers should show to their students how to use library catalogues to find useful books. It is good to have a library but another thing is to use it. In that connection, teachers should encourage their students to go to library and teach them the different strategies which could help them to find interesting books to read.

Another problem is that of motivation and it is also a problem of educational policy. Students are not informed about the different advantages they can draw from learning English.

## **1.2- The purpose of the study**

My objectives in carrying out this research are:

- 1- To gather learners experiences and views pertaining to issues on English language learning communication problems in secondary schools and colleges in Benin.

- 2- To gather learners' and teachers views on English language teaching and learning in secondary schools in Benin.
- 3- To gather suggestions on ways to enhance English language learning and teaching in educational system in Benin.

The purpose of this research is to gather English as a foreign language, learners' and teachers' perceptions pertaining to their experiences in learning English language in secondary schools. Achieving success in language learning implies the development of learners' receptive and productive skills.

So, the incapacity of our learners to perform well in English after so many years of English teaching / learning constitutes the first fold of the purpose of this study.

The second fold of my purpose is to create a good collaboration or atmosphere among teachers and students for real change for the benefit of weak students. Communicative strategies which are well selected can encourage not only students and teachers to achieve best performances in the four skills but can also enable weak students to improve their performance.

Another fold of my purpose is to show the role and the importance of learning / teaching English as a foreign language in second cycle of secondary schools.

What is the significance of the study under consideration?

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

The study is meant to analyze the relevance of communicative strategies in the process of English teaching as a foreign language in Benin. What is obvious nowadays is that students are not interested in the learning of the target language. This implies that teachers should find other more efficient methodologies to teach to their students. The significance of my study is to

analyze the reasons of these facts and contribute to the findings of the best solutions to help teachers as well as students to improve their performances. In fact, some teachers don't use strategies which can motivate students to be interested in their teaching. Sometimes this is due to their ignorance of the adequate strategies or because they fail to master the concerned strategies. This interest of my study consists in bringing EFL teachers to improve their strategies as far as communicative strategies are concerned.

Some rare training organized often deal with general theories about English teaching. My research will sensitize teachers who must need to know and understand the impediments that learners' experiences in learning the four skills via listening, speaking, reading and writing in order to prepare effective lessons and to guide learners in developing their languages proficiency. Therefore, it is pertinent that learners need to be given the opportunity to express their views pertaining to their learning experience to ensure that teaching and learning is effectively carried out in the classrooms.

Furthermore, this research work is useful since it intends to show the relationship between learning English and communication. A good learner of English will certainly be a good communicator. So he/she can easily communicate with people from Anglophone countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, the USA and Great Britain. This work is also significant since it highlights the learning of English as a means to broaden one's knowledge and awareness about world information.

Finally, this research work can pave the way for other researchers who are interested in the same topic. This they can choose to deepen my researches in order to shed more light on the difficulties confronting both EFL learners and teachers in the development of the skills.

## 1.4- Concept clarifications

### 1.4.2- Definition of communication

According to the "OXFORD Advanced Learners Dictionary", the word communication has different meanings:

1.1.1- Communication: (noun) the act of communicating.

Ex: Among the deaf and dumb communication may be carried out by means of the finger alphabet.

1.1.2- Communication: (n) that which is communicated.

Ex: News- This communication is confidential

1.1.3- Communication: (n) means of communication (roads, railways, telephone, telegraph, lines connecting places, radios, TV and Internet invented recently). Rx: A world of communication. Communication by satellites.

Keeping on my investigation I can read:

1.1.4- Communication: (n) XIVth century from Latin communicare

- To be, to put oneself in relationship with
- To communicate with a friend: two fellows who communicate with each other

1.1.5- Communication: (n) it is the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium. Ex: television is an effective means of communication at the moment I am in communication with London.

1.1.6- Communication: (n) It is a letter or message containing information or news. Ex: a telephone communication

1.1.7- Communication: (n) the successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings. Ex: there was a lack of communication between Pamela and her

parents.

1.1.8- Communication: (n) it can be a social contact. Ex: she gave him some hope of her return, or at least of their future communication

1.1.9- Communication (n): means of sending or receiving information, such as telephone lines or computers. Ex: satellite communications; a communications network

From all the above definitions, I can summarize the ideas saying that « communication » is the noun derived from the verb “to communicate” which is itself, taken from Latin “communicare”.

Thus “to communicate” means “to be or put oneself in relationship with someone or with many others.

The contrary of the word “to communicate” is “to keep one’s thoughts, not to tell anything to put contact with others”.

We understand clearly that the act of communicating consists in having contact with a fellow, a friend or a neighbor in order to inform him about an interesting subject.

In my work, I am not going to deal with “means of communication: roads, phone, railways” (stated in 1.1.3), but with the act of communicating which requires the use of the tongue in oral speech and the use of a pen in written communication.

The definition above can help us guess the different kinds of communication.

#### **1.4.3- The different kinds of communication: oral, written and non-verbal**

**Nonverbal communication** describes the process of conveying meaning in the form of non-word messages. Research shows that the majority of our communication is non-verbal, also known as body language. In fact, 63-93% of communication is non-verbal. Some of non-verbal communication includes chronemics, haptics, gesture, body language or posture; facial expression and

eye contact, object communication such as clothing, hairstyles, architecture, symbols, info graphics, and tone of voice as well as through an aggregate of the above.

Speech also contains non-verbal elements known as paralanguage. These include voice lesson quality, emotion and speaking style as well as prosodic features such as rhythm, intonation and stress. Likewise, written texts include nonverbal elements such as handwriting style, spatial arrangement of words and the use of emoticons to convey emotional expressions in pictorial form.

**Oral communication**, while primarily referring to spoken verbal communication, can also employ visual aids and non-verbal elements to support the conveyance of meaning. Oral communication includes speeches, presentations, discussions, and aspects of interpersonal communication. As a type of face-to-face communication, body language and choice tonality play a significant role, and may have a greater impact upon the listener than informational content. This type of communication also garners immediate feedback.

### **Written communication and its historical development**

Over time the forms of and ideas about communication have evolved through the continuing progression of technology. Advances include communications psychology and media psychology; an emerging field of study. Researchers divide the progression of written communication into three revolutionary stages called "Information Communication Revolutions".[citation needed] During the first stage, written communication first emerged through the use of pictographs. The pictograms were made in stone; hence written communication was not yet mobile.

During the second stage, writing began to appear on paper, papyrus, clay, wax, etc. Common the third stage is characterized by the transfer of information

through controlled waves and electronic signals.

Communication is thus a process by which meaning is assigned and conveyed in an attempt to create shared understanding. This process, which requires a vast repertoire of skills in interpersonal processing, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, gestures, and evaluating, enables collaboration and cooperation.

Misunderstandings can be anticipated and solved through formulations, questions and answers, paraphrasing, examples, and stories of strategic talk. Written communication can be clarified by planning follow-up talks on critical written communication as part of the every-day way of doing business. A few minutes spent talking in the present will save valuable time later by avoiding misunderstandings in advance. A frequent method for this purpose is reiterating what one heard in one's own words and asking the other person if that really was what was meant.

#### **1.4.4- Motivation in the process of learning a foreign language**

Motivation is generally considered a very, if not the most, powerful drive in learning. Williams and Burden (1997) define motivation as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal which leads to a conscious decision to act and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals).

This definition suggests that in doing an activity, a person's motivation is initiated by some kind of arousal which may be generated by motives or influences coming from the person himself or herself (internal motives) or outside the person (external factors). This motive drives the person to consciously make a decision to do an action in a particular manner in order to reach some goal(s). When the activity has been started, the person is required to sustain effort in order to attain the pre-determined goal(s).

Motivation is a complex issue. It is not only a matter of creating interesting learning tasks. The presence of arousal, decision on whether to do an action and persistence in doing an activity for some goal(s) are not a simple matter; they are influenced by internal and external factors. Some of the internal factors include curiosity, personal relevance, attitude, confidence, developmental age and stage, and gender. The external factors include both immediate contexts such as classroom, school and home, and wider contexts like cultural, social, educational and political contexts. These internal and external aspects together influence the learner's attitude. For example, when the society and the government have a positive attitude towards English, such as by considering that this language plays significant roles in social, educational, economic and political lives, learners in that context are likely to develop a positive attitude which will foster motivation.

Considering the significant roles that motivation plays in learning, *efforts should be made in order to arouse and maintain learner's learning motivation*).

The question is how can motivation be aroused and maintained?

Studies indicate that both integrative motivation (which involves an interest in learning due to a personal interest in the target language community and culture and instrumental motivation which involves an interest in learning in order to achieve a particular goal such as finding a good job, developing one's business and studying abroad can lead to successful learning. While motivation may be seen as the cause of learning achievement (for example Gardner, 1985), some studies suggest that the learner's motivation can be caused by learning achievement. In other words, better learning achievement or learning success leads to stronger learning motivation. On the other hand, a learning failure can lower motivation.

#### **1.4.5- Motivation in the classroom**

Studies have tended to confirm the following general principles for maximizing students' motivation in the classroom. Motivation is likely to be highest when:

- Learners do not experience frequent failure and harsh criticism.
- The curriculum material is interesting and relevant; topics are sufficiently challenging, but not overwhelming.
- Learners are encouraged to set their own goals and are then supported in achieving them.
- Learners are given the opportunity to make choices and exercise some control over what they do in class and the manner in which they do it (greater autonomy).
- Collaborative group work is used frequently.
- Teachers reverse students' negative thinking about their own capabilities, and enhance positive self-belief by encouraging open discussion about learning, learning strategies, effort, and ability.
- Teachers remember to apply the principle that learners' motivation and confidence are enhanced by respect and approval from others.
- If a reward system is used in the classroom it should ensure that all students attain rewards if they put in sufficient effort.

## **Chapter two: Literature review, Theoretical framework and Methodological approach of the study**

### **2.1- Literature review on the problem**

As noted earlier in this research, English language, is a foreign language in the Beninese Society and therefore, needs to be included in the curriculum of all levels of education primary, secondary and tertiary institutions if it must be understood as a second or foreign language. In spite of its introduction at various levels of education, learning of English Language has remained a teething task at all educational level. In particular, the English language competence of the Beninese secondary school students has been on a steady decline since 1990.

Many other researchers as well as West African Examination Council (WAEC) have observed that the performance of students in English language has been very poor. A similar trend of decline in English language proficiency among students of Beninese secondary school has also been noted by researchers who have observed that there is deficiency in communication in English language. What all this means is that although, English language has been taught as a subject and of course, as a second language in the primary, secondary schools in Benin, students have not really shown competence in its use. The way students use English language in schools and colleges shows that their awareness and competence in the language leave much to be desired.

Various factors have been deduced for poor performance of students in English Language. These are:

- Inadequate materials for the teaching of English;
- English language teachers do not have relevant educational qualifications and experience to teach the subject
- Inadequate or inappropriate teaching
- Irrelevant and unsuitable curriculum
- Classroom environment
- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Poor relationship between student and teacher
- Poor school attendance and health problems
- Learning through the medium of a second language
- Loss of confidence and emotional or behavioural problems

## **2.2- Critical analysis**

### **Teaching methods as a cause of learning difficulty**

Insufficient or inappropriate teaching, particularly in the early years, can be a major cause of learning difficulty. Students from backgrounds where there has not been an opportunity to develop what might be termed 'school-learning readiness' are potentially at risk when they enter unstructured early school programs. The philosophy underpinning early years education is that children should be encouraged to develop at their individual rates; but the outcome can be that without direct teaching some children fail to acquire crucial knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enhance their progress. Instead they experience frustration and failure and develop increasingly negative feelings toward learning in school. To prevent this problem, all effective early intervention programs tend to place due emphasis on explicit teaching. The use of explicit teaching methods in the early stages of learning in no way precludes the

student from ultimately developing independence in learning; indeed, direct teaching in the early stages facilitates greater confidence and independence in later stages.

It takes very little time for lack of success to undermine a child's confidence and interest. There is nothing organically wrong with the student but he or she quickly becomes locked into a failure cycle and attracts the description of slow learner, lazy, or poorly motivated. The 'Matthew Effect' – the poor getting poorer— comes into play and the child falls more and more behind classmates (Stanovich, 1986). There is clear evidence that students who are failing in first year of school generally are still having learning problems in later years (for example, Morris, 2003). For those who get off to a bad start, nothing recedes like success. It is fairly characteristic of some contemporary classroom approaches based on constructivist philosophy that they rely heavily on students' good independent learning aptitude, high intrinsic motivation, and positive group-working skills. These attributes are singularly lacking in many at-risk students. Their problem is compounded when direct teaching is frowned upon because it is incompatible with constructivist learning principles. Strategies such as drill and practice, regular revision, and corrective feedback for example, are not systematically used. For children who get off to a shaky start such programs do nothing to help them improve. Direct and explicit forms of instruction appear to achieve most in the early stages of learning basic academic skills. Over many decades, despite the popularity of student-centered, activity-based learning approaches, clear research evidence supports the value of direct and explicit teaching, often delivered through the medium of interactive whole class teaching. Where explicit teaching is used, students with learning difficulties appear to make much better progress and become more confident and effective learners. Direct teaching not only raises the attainment level of all students but also reduces significantly the prevalence of learning failure. Effective teaching practices are those that provide students

with the maximum opportunity to learn. These practices increase achievement through maintaining students' attention and on-task behaviour (academic engaged time). This active involvement includes listening to instruction from the teacher, asking and answering questions, discussing with teachers and peers, working on assigned tasks independently or with a group, and applying previously acquired knowledge and skills. Studies have shown that students who are receiving explanations, cues and direct instruction from the teacher spend more time attending to the content of the lesson and participating more fully. Effective lessons, particularly those covering basic academic skills, tend to be under teacher control and have a clear structure.

Based on a meta-analysis of outcomes from many different types of teaching approach, Swanson (1999) draws the conclusion that the most effective method for teaching basic academic skills to students with learning difficulties combines the following features:

- Carefully controlling and sequencing the curriculum content to be studied.
- Providing abundant opportunities for practice and application of newly acquired knowledge and skills.
- Ensuring high levels of participation and responding by the children (for example, answering the teacher's questions; staying on task).
- Using interactive group teaching.
- Modeling by the teacher of effective ways of completing school tasks.
- Direct strategy training (teaching children how best to attempt new learning tasks).
- Making appropriate use of technology (for example, computer-assisted instruction).
- Providing supplementary assistance (for example, in-class support; homework; parental tutoring).

It is unfortunate that some methods of teaching that are known to reduce educational failure and raise achievement levels are not willingly adopted in schools.

There is a general resistance among teachers to any approach that seems too highly structured and likely to reduce their freedom and autonomy to use their own preferred methods and style provides an excellent critique of the ways in which contemporary thinking about teaching methods creates a barrier to the implementation of effective special education. Two examples of approaches that are known to be highly successful but are not widely used in schools are direct instruction and precision teaching.

### **2.2.1- Curriculum**

It is not only teaching methods that can contribute to learning difficulties, the content of the curriculum can also create problems. Concepts may be pitched at an inappropriately high level relative to the students' ability, or the rate at which new content is introduced may be too rapid. This problem is often more evident in secondary schools where high academic achievement is stressed.

According to Howe (1999) many (perhaps most) learning difficulties are not caused by cognitive deficits in the learner but are due to students not having the necessary prior level of knowledge or skill needed for the task at hand. Van Kraayenoord (2002) states, 'Students will quickly become disengaged if classroom teaching does not connect with their lives, and if it does not engage them as learners with topics and issues that have interest and meaning for them'.

Brennan (1985) suggested that curriculum content should be selected for students with learning difficulties on the basis that it is *real, relevant, realistic and rational*.

In this context 'real' means the curriculum should cover topics that feature in the child's life and can be taught in concrete or experiential ways. 'Relevant'

implies that in learning this topic the embedded knowledge, skills, strategies and values will be useful to the child. 'Realistic' means it is feasible that the child can attempt the work successfully given his or her age, ability, prior knowledge and motivation. 'Rational' implies that the student understands that there is value and purpose in engaging in this learning.

### **2.2.2- Classroom environment**

The physical environment of the classroom can exacerbate learning difficulties. The noise level and multiple sources of distraction can have a detrimental impact on the attention span and on-task behaviour of some children. Factors such as temperature, lighting, presence or absence of stimulating display material, availability of resources, adequate working space on desktops, and so forth, can all make learning easier or more difficult for children. Sources of background noise such as air-conditioners, ceiling fans, or moving furniture can be particularly frustrating for distractible students and for students with impaired hearing –whose hearing aids amplify all such environmental sound. Classroom environment is a particularly important factor to consider in the case of students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The evidence is that such students need a calm, structured and highly predictable learning environment if they are to develop better attention to task and improve self-regulation. How children are seated and grouped during lessons also influences time on task, motivation and participation. For example, studies have revealed that on task behaviour can be significantly better – and students are often more productive – when they are seated in rows rather than in informal groups; yet the common practice in many classrooms operating under constructivist principles is to have children seated in groups to facilitate cooperative learning and discussion. It is not uncommon in primary schools to find classes physically arranged for group work with four or five students seated together around a table, but the students are actually working on

different individual assignments. This potentially very distracting arrangement can result in poorer achievement because students have difficulty maintaining concentration. It is also clear that any form of group work can be problematic for students with behavioural or attention problems. Class size is one feature of the learning environment. It is commonly believed that the smaller the class the better it is for students' learning. The commonsense argument suggests that with smaller classes teachers are much more able to identify learning problems, provide individual attention, and adapt instruction to individual differences among students. The reality, as revealed in the studies, indicates a much more complex picture. Simply reducing class size does not automatically result in higher achievement and lower failure rates because many other factors such as behaviour and quality of teaching are important. When class size is reduced teachers may still tend to teach small classes in exactly the same way they taught large classes, with no adaptations made and limited individual attention for students. A few studies have even found that large classes actually produce a higher general level of achievement, possibly because the teacher is obliged to use a fairly structured approach and maintain good classroom management. However, a sufficient number of studies have shown clear benefits from smaller classes and three tentative conclusions can be reached:

- Classes size begins to have a positive effect when classes contain fewer than 20 students.
- The benefits are most apparent in the early years of schooling (age 5 to 8 years).
- Smaller classes seem to be of most benefit to children from disadvantaged backgrounds and for students in other at-risk categories.

### **2.2.3- Socio-economic disadvantage**

Socio-economic disadvantage – particularly extreme poverty – represents one possible domain over which teachers have little or no direct control; but it is important that they understand the impact that a child’s background environment can have on his or her ability to learn in school. Evidence has accumulated over many years to indicate that socio-economic status is correlated with school performance.

#### **2.2.4- Poor relationship between student and teacher**

For optimum learning to occur there needs to be good rapport between teacher and students. Students want teachers to have faith in them and to care about them. In a previous chapter it was noted that one of the ways in which some students with learning problems handicap themselves is by failing to seek help from the teacher even though they need it. If students do not feel at ease with the teacher they are even less likely to seek assistance

#### **2.2.5- Poor school attendance and health and physical status**

Poor school attendance can be due to unavoidable factors such as health problems, or to avoidable factors such as truancy. Poor attendance is not confined to children from poor home backgrounds although it is more common in such groups. It is obvious that frequent absences from school impair the continuity of learning within the curriculum. Absences can have a negative impact on examination results, and poor academic results can begin a child on a downward spiral in terms of confidence and motivation.

Chronic health problems (for example, asthma, diabetes) are a common reason for school absence; but health problems can also impair a student’s energy level and ability to concentrate while in school. In particular, conditions that cause pain or discomfort (for example, juvenile arthritis) are very problematic from a classroom learning perspective. Students with certain types of physical disability may experience headaches preventing them from completing work or participating in the lesson. Lack of sleep can also contribute

to learning difficulties in school, mainly by impairing attention and concentration span. Some children are allowed to stay up until very late at night on a regular basis, and then attend school having had perhaps only five hours sleep.

### **2.2.6- Learning through the medium of a second language**

It is easy to understand how difficulties arise for students attempting to learn a new language, and at the same time trying to learn new curriculum concepts, knowledge and skills through the medium of the new language. The challenge for all new immigrant children in school is enormous, and is most problematic if the student is above primary school age when arriving in a new country; language learning through immersion is somewhat easier for younger students. Often new immigrant children, after a brief but intensive introductory course at a language centre, are left to sink or swim in an unfamiliar language environment and must pick up what they can through incidental learning. The fact that they have difficulties in coping is reflected in their over-representation in special and remedial groups. Some students with English-as-second-language (ESL) are misidentified as learning disabled or even mildly intellectually disabled.

Some of the classrooms learning problems for students from non-English speaking backgrounds include:

- Listening comprehension difficulties due to limited vocabulary, poor grasp of syntax, and the speed at which others speak.
- Reading difficulties due to differences in basic phonology, limited sight vocabulary, and (when reading fiction) not having had firsthand experience of situations or contexts being described.
- Inability to engage meaningfully with new information, concepts and problems due to lack of understanding of the associated language.

- The communication difficulty can also limit social interaction with other children.

To overcome some of the learning obstacles it is recommended that teaching be carried out using a bilingual approach so that the mother tongue can supplement and support the learning of the new language. However, this ideal practice is not feasible in many cases because the regular class teacher may not be fluent in the child's first language, and bilingual aids or volunteers are not always available.

Teachers may lack the skills to teach English as a second language within the context of their own school subjects, and they may have a poor understanding of culturally and linguistically different students. For this reason they may have inappropriate expectations of their ability.

#### **2.2.6- Loss of confidence and emotional or behavioural problems**

A lack of confidence in one's capacity to do well, or a fear of failure, can impede a young learner just as effectively as an absence of knowledge or mental skills'. Students with learning difficulties hate to be identified and labeled because they feel that others look down on them and marginalize them. Gorman (2001) observes that even the best of intentions in setting out to help children with learning difficulties can result in stigmatizing the child and undermining his or her self-confidence. The way in which schools identify students with learning difficulties and then provide remedial intervention through in-class support or group withdrawal can intensify the problem in the child's eyes; he or she feels different and degraded by being identified as someone with a special problem. Vareene and McDermott (1999) have pointed out that when we say there is 'something wrong' and we provide conspicuous special help we make matters worse. We have seen already that humiliation and loss of feelings of self-worth can result in students giving up completely and making no real effort in school.

In many ways this is a natural adaptive response to what the students perceive to be a hopeless situation. Based on the various messages these students receive from teachers, parents and peers they have constructed very negative and damaging images of themselves as failures with little hope of change (Ravenette, 1999).

Emotional and behavioural problems can be both a cause and an effect of learning difficulty. In individual cases it is often difficult to determine whether an emotional or behavioural problem is the primary underlying cause of a learning difficulty, or is the outcome from such difficulty. Teachers often say a student is failing in school because of his or her emotional problems, inappropriate behaviour, or bad attitude, but it is more likely in many instances that these are negative consequences arising from persistent failure. It is known that bad school experiences can contribute to or exacerbate any preexisting emotional problems due to outside causes, such as stress and conflict within the home environment – so the interaction among potential causes is complex.

### **2.3- Theoretical approach of the study**

Teachers instructing students in learning English as another language often face with a variety of common and student-specific problems. Instructing students in the English language involves building a student's reading and speaking vocabulary and understanding of written and spoken English language. To facilitate a positive learning atmosphere for students and encourage them to practice and continue to learn the language, teachers should find ways to correct these common problems and reinforce the core information students need to effectively communicate in English.

#### **2.3.1- Going off schedule**

Teachers of foreign languages may first notice that their lesson plans change over the course of the class. Classes may progress slowly despite their efforts. Students learning a second language often learn at different paces and generally learn material differently. Encouraging students to practice the skills learned in class and incorporating listening exercises, such as learning poems or parts of a favorite story in the new language out of class, students may be able to stay on track with your plan of instruction at a slightly slower rate. Tutoring or other supplemental activities can allow you to assist those students who need extra instruction on some material and maintain a close pace to the schedule you have set.

### **2.3.2- Using other languages**

Another noticeable issue for English language teachers is having students fall back on their native language for conversation. It is often easier for students to communicate in their native language instead of English. It is usually frustrating for students to rethink and reword their thoughts into the new language clearly. Diversifying your student groups so that not all of the students in one group speak the same native language will discourage students from reverting to their native language to communicate and encourage them to use the one they have in common.

### **2.3.2-Written versus spoken English confusion**

Students may be able to hear and understand spoken English but confuse sentence structure and grammar when writing the same thing. A grammatical problem in writing is another problem teachers face in teaching English language. It can be difficult for students to write clearly in a second language, as their native language may have different requirements for tenses and placement for sentence structure. Teachers often face problems with sentence formatting and grammatical requirements needed for writing to be coherent.

### **2.3.3- Building vocabulary base**

Building up a student's English vocabulary is one of the first issues teachers instructing students in a second language face. Thinking about one object and remembering two identifying names for it can be confusing for younger and older students. Incorporating interactive lessons to identify common objects and images is a great starting place for building vocabulary for everyday items. Activities and practice material focusing on recognizing and using words with the correct spelling are key elements of instructing students in English as a foreign language.

## **2.4- Methodological approach of the study**

### **2.4.1- The research population**

The objective of my research is to investigate on the different problems students and teachers have on teaching and learning English as a foreign language and suggest strategies which can help teachers to improve their ways of teaching so as to help their students to better their performances in English.

To reach my objectives, I have used some methods of investigation I will mention later. The research population is constituted of learners and teachers.

### **2.4.2- The target population**

The target group is composed of students and teachers. To carry out my plan, I have selected two secondary schools in Atlantique / Littoral Department. The setting of my research work is therefore CEG le Méridien and CEG1 of Abomey-Calavi.

My main objective in choosing those two secondary schools is to see the reality of what is happening as far as teaching and learning of English as a second or

foreign language is concerned in state schools. I have mainly done my research by taking into account the advanced students: those who are in form five and form six. Moreover, I have also addressed to the authorities of those schools without forgetting English teachers in the six schools, some questionnaires related to teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language.

Here is a table showing the number of students and teachers involved in the study.

### 2.4.3- The selected schools

Schools	Number of teachers	Number of students	
		5 <sup>TH</sup> year of English	6 <sup>th</sup> year of English
CEG le Méridien	20	38	32
CEG 1of Abomey-Calavi	15	22	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>

### 2.4.4- Methods of investigation

The methods of investigation I have used in this research work are the following:

- Research on line
- Class observation
- Questionnaire addressed to both to students of form five, form six and to English teachers.

- Students' interview

#### **2.4.5- Documentary research**

Through this research online, I have done an exploration on the topic of my research work in order to have the possible documentation related to what I have undertaken. I went to some libraries, consulted some web sites to have a global view on my topic. There, I was allowed to read some specific book articles, journals, at Campus of Calavi, Campus of Porto-novo and Cotonou. I have also read some dissertations, achieved by my predecessors.

#### **2.4.6- Questionnaire to students**

The numbers of questionnaire handed out to the students are about one hundred and twenty copies.

#### **2.4.7- Class observation**

I have observed the way some English teachers teach in their classrooms in the two selected schools. My first and foremost intention is to identify the phases of teaching that are planning, implementing and assessing during a class interaction.

I am also interested to discover the environment in which the course of English is taught, the different materials that are being used by the teachers of English during the lesson, and to control the cohesion between the Students' Talking Time (STT) as well as the Teacher's Talking Time.

I have also observed the dominance of feedback from teachers and students during these moments of class observation.

#### **2.4.8- Questionnaire addressed to EFL students and EFL teachers**

For reliability sake, I have addressed some questionnaires to students as well as to teachers. All in all, one hundred and twenty students were chosen to answer the questionnaire. The questionnaire addressed to the students is about the following aspects:

- Their appreciation of the teaching and learning of English and material
- Their personal efforts inside and outside the classroom
- Their feeling and their suggestions.
- The whole questionnaire is attached to the annex pages.

As the teachers are the main agents who give the knowledge to students, I have also addressed some questions to them. They concern the following points:

- The availability of teaching materials, especially materials that are curriculum and the existence of a library.
- The steps used to teach the English language.
- The atmosphere that prevail during the teaching.
- The link the materials used have with their culture.
- The difficulties they meet during the teaching

**NB:** the detail of the questionnaire is attached to the annex pages.

#### **2.4.9- Interview with students**

The description of the questions on the interview

As students sometimes don't give objective answers to the questionnaire addressed to them, I have decided to interview them in order to have trustful data.

**Question 1: Do your parents often provide you with English materials on programme?**

I ask this question to check the responsibility and the commitment of the parents.

**.Question 2: Do they help you read at home?**

In question 2, it was clearly asked to students if their parents help them read at home.

Through such a question my desire is to understand if parents really play their role of guide at home, if they help them, if they accompany them in their effort of mastering English learning activities.

**Question 3: Do you have a library in your school?**

As for this question, my purpose is to know if adequate means (that is to say) libraries are available in students' school which can enable them to have interesting materials that they can read so as to improve their performance in learning English.

**Question 4: Do you go there?**

Besides; question 4 was asked to check if the students who had library in their school go there regularly in order to borrow books from the library to practice English learning at home.

**Question 5: Does your teacher often give you homework on English activities?**

This question is intended to check the responsibility of teachers. I want to know if after dealing with English teaching at school the teachers help their students to make practice on English learning by giving them homework about English activities.

**Question 6: Do your teachers praise you correctly when you give good answers?**

Finally, question 6 attempted to get students view so as to know the aptitude and the attitude of their teachers towards them during the teaching activities. In a word, I wanted to know if the teachers praise their students when they had good marks, since praising students can boost them because they will be more interested.

**2.4.10- The contact procedure**

A letter of recommendation was given to me by my supervisor. I have to hand it over to the schools where I intended to conduct my investigation.

When I reached those schools, I introduced myself with my identity card and I explain how they could help me achieve my objectives.

One class of form five and one class of form six were given to me in each secondary school. For the interview, and for the class observation, the headmaster of each school introduced me to the English teachers and their students. I was welcomed by them and this allowed me to carry out my investigation successfully.

**2.4.11- Data collection process**

All the 120 students randomly selected for the study were given the questionnaire to examine their experience with the teaching and learning of English Language as well as the conduciveness of their school environment to effective learning. All 120 copies of the questionnaire were returned properly filled, thus representing 100% return rate.

In addition to the questionnaire, observation was also used as instrument for data collection. This was done to authenticate the veracity of answers given by

students in the questionnaire. According to Babbie (1979: 216), "The greatest advantage of the field research method is the presence of an observing, thinking researcher on the scene of the action"

## **PART TWO: RESULTS OF THE STUDY, MAJOR PROBLEMS FROM THE INVESTIGATIONS AND AN APPROACH OF SOLUTION**

## Chapter Three: Results presentation and problems derived from investigations

### 3.1- Data display

**Table 1:** Instructional resources or media used by teachers

Instructional resources or media	Frequency	Percentage
Chalkboards	68	56,66%
English workbooks	57	47,5%
Posters	22	18,33%
English textbooks	28	23,33%
Dictionaries	37	30,83%
Charts	17	14,16%
Television	00	00%
Radio	01	0,83%

The results in table 1 show that the majority of teachers (68) 56,66 % used chalkboards, 47,5 % of them used English workbooks, 18,33% used posters to teach. 23,33 % used English textbooks. Dictionaries are used by 30,83 % of them. 14,16 % of them used charts. None of them use TV. Only one teacher (0.83%) uses radio

**Table 2:** Appropriate methods used by teachers

Appropriate methods	frequency	percentage
Lecture methods	61	50,83%
Intensive reading of textbook	52	43,33%
Group method	6	05%

Debate method	1	00,84%
Total	120	100%

### Observations

Results in Table 2 show that the lecture method and intensive reading of textbooks are the only teaching techniques frequently used in public secondary schools in Benin for teaching English language. The group and debate methods are occasionally used.

### Question 3: Do you learn English language in environment conducive to learning?

x=yes y=no

**Table 3: Environmental factors**

Environmental factors	Schools overcrowded		Comfortable furniture		Classrooms ventilated		Classrooms lighted	
	x	y	x	y	x	y	x	y
Frequency	100	20	18	102	15	105	17	103

### Observations

Mean scores and standard deviations for all items on environmental factors showed that secondary school students in Benin do not learn English Language in environment conducive to effective learning. The students agreed that their schools are overcrowded, that the furniture is not comfortable for proper sitting and that classrooms are without proper lighting and ventilation. They disagreed that their schools have well stocked libraries, adequate chairs and tables, and adequate classrooms.

#### Question 4

**Do you regularly ask questions to your teacher during English courses?**

X=Yes

Y=No

**Table 4:**

Respondents	Choice	Frequency	Percentage
120	X	74	61,66 %
	Y	46	38,34 %

#### Observations

In table 4, 38,34 % of the students claim that they don't ask questions to their teacher during English courses whereas 61,66 % of the students claim that they ask questions to their teacher during English courses.

#### Question 5:

**Do you like the way your English teacher delivers his or her lesson?**

**Table 5: Lesson delivery**

Lesson delivery	Frequency	Percentage
yes	94	78,33%
No	26	21,67%
Total	120	100%

## Observations

Table 5 shows us that 78,33 % of the students have replied that they like the way their English teacher delivers his or her lesson on the contrary of 21,67 % of them who have said that they don't like the way their English teacher delivers his or her lesson.

### Question 6:

**Does your English teacher use the modern means of communication or Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to teach you English?**

**Table 6:** ICT to teach English

ICT to teach English	Frequency	Percentage
yes	03	02,5%
No	117	97,5 %
Total	120	100%

## Observations

As far as table 6 is concerned, the majority of the students who answer that question recognize that their teachers do not use modern means of communication or information and communication technology (ICT) during English courses.

### Question 7:

**Do you understand your teachers if they explain the course in English?**

**Table 7:** Clarity of course

Clarity of course	Frequency	Percentage
yes	07	05,84%
No	113	94,16%
Total	120	100%

**Observations**

In table 7, 05,84 % of the students have replied that they understand if their teachers explain the course in English whereas 94,16 % of them have said that they don't understand if their teachers explain the course in English.

To sum up, we can say that there is some problem of listening

**Question 8 :**

**Are you able to converse or discuss with your classmates in English during English courses?**

**Table 8:** Interaction in class

Interaction in class	Frequency	Percentage
yes	08	06,66 %
No	112	93,34 %
Total	120	100%

**Observations**

Results in table 8 show that 06,66% of the students have claimed that they are able to discuss or converse with their classmates and course mates in English

during English courses on the contrary of 93,34% of them who have said that they are not able to discuss or converse with their classmates and course mates in English during English courses.

To conclude, we can say that there are some problems of listening and speaking English.

**Question 9:**

**Do you have difficulties to speak English in classroom?**

**Table 9:** Difficulty to speak English

Difficulty to speak English	Frequency	Percentage
yes	102	85 %
No	18	15 %
Total	120	100%

**Observations**

Results in Table 9 show us that 85 % of the students have argued that they have difficulties to speak English in classroom whereas 15 % of them have replied that they don't have difficulties to speak English in classroom.

All in all, we can say that there is some problem of speaking English.

**Question 10:**

**Do you mix other languages with English when speaking English in classroom?**

**Table 10:** Using other languages in EFL Classes

<b>Using other languages in EFL Classes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
yes	103	89,16 %
No	17	10,84 %
Total	120	100%

### **Observations**

In table 10, 86,28% of the students have replied that they mix other languages with English when speaking English in classroom on the contrary of 13,72% of them who have claimed that they don't mix other languages with English when speaking English in classroom.

All in all, we can say that there is some problem of speaking English.

### **Question 11:**

**Do you have difficulties to write an essay in English in classroom?**

**Table 11:** difficulty in essay writing

<b>Difficulty in essay writing</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>percentage</b>
yes	107	89,16%
No	13	10,84%
Total	120	100%

### **Observations**

Table 11 shows us that 88, 93% of the students have admitted that they have difficulties to write an essay in English in classroom.

11, 07% of them have recognized that they don't have difficulties to write an essay in English in classroom

To sum up, we can say that there is some problems of writing English.

### Question 12:

**Do you often benefit special activities on reading English inside and outside the classroom?**

**Table 12:** Supplementing activities

<b>Supplementing activities</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
yes	54	45 %
No	66	55 %
Total	120	100%

### Observations

As far as the results in table 12 are concerned, 45 % of the students have admitted that they benefit special activities on reading English inside and outside the classroom meanwhile 55 % of them have recognized that they don't benefit special activities on reading English inside and outside the classroom.

### 3.2- Teaching service

**Question 1: How long have you started teaching English?**

**Table 13:** Years spent in teaching

<b>Years spent in teaching</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
One year	9	25,71 %
Two years	6	17,14 %
Three years	5	14,28 %
Four years	5	14,28 %
Five years	4	11,42 %
Six years	2	05,71 %

Seven years and +	4	11,42 %
Total	35	100 %

### Observations

Results in table 13 show us that 25, 71 % of them have been teaching English for one year; 17, 14 % of them have been teaching English for two years; 14, 28 % of them have been teaching English for three and four years; 11, 42 % of them have been teaching English for five years; 05, 71 % of them have been teaching English for six years; 11, 42 % of them have been teaching English for seven years and +.

To sum up, we can say that there are many young teachers in the teaching profession.

### Question 2:

**Do your students like your English course?**

**Table 14:** English language course liking

English language course liking	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	100%
No	00	00%
Total	35	100%

### Observations

Results in table 14 show that many teachers, 100 % of them, confess that their learners like the way they teach in class.

**Question 3:****Are you often trained in teaching English or not?****Table 15:** Training

<b>Training</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	09	25,71 %
No	26	74,29 %
Total	35	100 %

The aim of question n°3 is to know about teachers' qualifications.

74, 29 % of the respondents teachers have claimed that they are not often trained on the contrary of 25, 71 % of the respondents' teachers who have claimed that they are often trained...

**Question 4:****According to you, is motivation important in an English class?****Table 16:** Importance of motivation

<b>Importance of motivation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	35	100 %
No	00	00 %
Total	35	100 %

observations

Table 16 shows that all the English teachers are aware of the great usefulness of motivation in an academic field. All the teachers involved in this study say “yes”. This allows me to say that 100% of these teachers recognize the great importance of motivation in their work.

**Question 5:**

**Mister or Madam, are you motivated to deliver your English course?**

**Table 17:** Teachers’ own motivation

<b>Teachers’ own motivation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	22	62,85 %
No	13	37,15 %
Total	35	100 %

Table 17 confirms that 62, 85 % of the teachers in this survey are motivated to do their job whereas 37, 15 % of them are not motivated to deliver their English course.

**Question 6:**

**Do you propose to your students some entertaining activities such as singing songs, games, or other activities in English language?**

**Table 18:** Use of entertaining activities

<b>Use of entertaining activities</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	20	57,14 %
No	15	42,86 %
Total	35	100 %

The responses to question n°6 show that many teachers are more aware of the proposal of some playful activities or other activities in English language during English lessons.

**Question 7:**

**Do you use some modern means of communication such as radio, television, video or internet to teach English in your class?**

**Table 19:** Use of ICT to teach

<b>Use of ICT to teach</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	02	05,72 %
No	33	94,28 %
Total	35	100 %

It is clear to see in table 19, that 94, 28 % of the respondents teachers confess that they have never used such modern and technological tools to teach English. Only 05, 72 % of them accept to use modern means of communication and technology at school.

**Question 8:**

**Do you encounter some difficulties when teaching English?**

**Table 20:** Difficulty in teaching

<b>Difficulty in teaching</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No	02	05,72%
Yes	33	94,28 %
Total	35	100 %

Table 20 shows that with a total number of 35 teachers, 33 of them (80 % of teachers) state clearly that they are daily confronted with various difficulties during their English lessons. For these teachers, most of their difficulties are related to the incapacity of some students to understand various schools tasks.

### **3.3- Results analysis**

#### **3.3.1- Use of instructional resources/media or modern means of communication**

This study has revealed the dominance of textbooks, dictionaries, chalkboards, workbooks and posters in the teaching of English Language in secondary schools in Benin. Modern media such as audio and video tapes, language laboratories, programmed texts, flash cards; computers, magazines and newspaper are rarely used. These findings agree with those of Kolawole (1998) who found that the teaching of English Language is bedeviled with many problems such as inadequate period of teaching, method of teaching and lack of adequate and useful resources. What this means is that secondary school teachers in Benin are not altering their instructional practices in spite of the coming of the new instructional technologies. Traditionally, teachers have depended on textbooks and the chalkboards as media for disseminating knowledge in the classroom. With the current practice by English Language teachers in secondary schools in Benin, their students are greatly deprived without access to modern instructional media. English Language teachers in public secondary schools in Benin are still the chief performers and dispensers of knowledge in the classroom. With the coming of new instructional technologies, Galliher et al (1995) asserted that teachers' roles are beginning to change. Paris (2002) stated that the teachers' role as the "sage on stage" who dispenses knowledge will shift to a role in which teachers are facilitators of learning when technology is integrated into the school curriculum. With the application of modern technology in the classroom, instruction can be more

student-centered and individualized.

Teachers need to know that we are living in a fast-changing world and the old methods of teaching with “chalk and talk” and textbooks styles of teaching are nowadays out-dated. Teachers today have tremendous activities to do with modern means of communication and information and communication technology (ICT) when they are involved in the teaching setting. Student may be demotivated because they always see their teachers doing the same signs or gestures when he/she explains the course. To make attractive and pleasant their course, teachers have the obligation to use modern and technological means to motivate their students who were not interested in English courses.

For example, teachers can use radio to make students listen to the words or conversation of ordinary or famous men and women living in countries where English is used as a first language. By this way of doing things, students can learn English phonetics through English native speakers. This can help students to have a good pronunciation of the English words. The use of radio in teaching can motivate the learners to get interested in speaking English well.

Another manner of teaching students English is what can be done through television. The teacher can provide some video cassette recorder or VCD that students can visualize in order to make comments on people who are debating, discussing on critical issues of our time. Television is a marvelous channel of communication in the field of education.

### **3.3.2- Use of Instructional Techniques**

Gallihier et al. (1995) states that teachers must assume the role of "resource brokers". The implication of this is that teachers should become familiar with a variety of instructional delivery methods, rather than rely on one "best way". The findings in this study run contrary to the above assertion as the English Language teachers in public secondary schools in Benin still depend heavily on

the traditional lecture method in English lessons. While the intensive use of prescribed textbooks and the use of lecture method in delivering English lessons are prevalent, the debate and group methods of teaching are occasionally used.

In addition to the use of the lecture method, Cleve (1992) and Oluikpe (1979) advocated the use of method such as guided controlled and free writing techniques in essay writing. The goal of controlled expression is to instill in the learner the facilities needed to produce clear piece of composition free from all grammatical errors. This is based on the premise that the use of language is the manipulation of fixed patterns, which are learnt by imitation, and not until these have been learnt that originality occur in their writing endeavours.

The technique advocated here includes, presenting teachers model essays, reading other materials such as journals, novels and magazines, and allowing students free expression so that their language experience can be enriched.

### **3.3.3- The teaching and learning environment**

Our observation of the schools visited revealed the following environmental deficiencies:

Many schools, especially those in urban centers, are located in areas where there are busy movements and activities of many people. It was observed that many people used the schools' premises as short cut to their destinations. Many people often move through the paths and across the playing fields in many of the schools.

Many schools have dilapidated buildings with leaking roofs and cracked walls. Many of these dilapidated buildings are still being used for classroom activities. We also observed that most of the schools, especially those in urban areas, are

not only overcrowded with some classroom housing as many as 70 to 100 pupils, that the teacher had little or no room to move around to give individual attention to students.

There is no electricity in the majority of the schools.

It was also observed that most of the schools have no adequate staff rooms and offices.

We observed that most of the schools have no libraries, and where they are available there was scarcity of books in the shelves mainly English books.

### **3.3.4- Interaction in English classes**

From my investigation, I remark that students do not fear to participate in English interaction with their teachers during the lessons. Students need to be more encouraged by teachers to speak, even if they make enormous mistakes.

As the Competency-Based Approach programme is now being implemented in Benin, most educators are focusing on the STT (Student Talking Time) which gives more freedom to students to speak the target language whereas the TTT (Teacher Talking Time) is reduced. Nowadays, teachers are not anymore considered as the absolute masters of knowledge. Teachers give today more chance to students to express themselves in class.

### **3.3.5- English lessons delivery**

The group of students who like English is more important than those who dislike that foreign language. The 26, 29 % of students can reserve their opinion on the English language if they are really motivated. It belongs to teachers to improve the negative opinion that students have about English. The language teachers should find imaginative ways to attract students at their course.

Most students are unable to understand their teachers and lecturers because they estimated that their teacher speak too fast during conversations, when

giving instructions or explaining a topic. The second reason is due to uncertainty of meanings of words. As a result, the learners misunderstand their teacher's intended meaning of the conversation and instruction, thus replying or responding incorrectly conversation or discussion in the classroom because they are either not familiar with the topic or the speakers speak too fast. It results in them asking the speakers for clarification or temporarily putting aside the ambiguous topic and seeking clarification at a later period.

In addition, they claim their experience about being unsure of meanings of certain words during a conversation which made them reluctant to respond or reply to the speakers. They fear the speakers will view them negatively as being incompetent in the language.

From these results, we can say that students hesitate to speak English with their teachers and friends in or outside the classroom because they worry about making grammatical mistakes and feel embarrassed of their low language proficiency. This is due to the negative physical response, such as a smirk, that they receive from other more proficient speakers when learners speak incorrectly. They feel self-conscious about their speaking proficiency because they have negative preliminary presumptions about proficient speakers' views towards them as being slow learners, incompetent and dull, among others. As a result, they are not fully involved in classroom activities even though they are constantly encouraged to speak freely by their teachers without being judgmental. Therefore, these negative experiences and fear of negative judgement from others hinder effective language learning and development among the EFL learners. Learners need to be aware that making mistakes are parts and parcel of language learning and teachers need to constantly reassure and encourage them to continue learning. Krashen (1992) states that one of the causes of speaking anxiety among students is due to teachers who expect them, usually beginners, to perform beyond their acquired competence. This can cause detrimental effects on learners'

motivation and confidence. They experience difficulty speaking fluently due to unfamiliarity with some English vocabulary. This causes the students to incorporate other local languages and dialects with English to ensure their meanings, intentions or thoughts are unambiguous.

During my investigations, I remark that students experienced problem comprehending passages and they required longer duration to complete the reading materials. They encounter many unfamiliar words which hamper their reading comprehension and fluency. Besides, they have to constantly refer to English and bilingual dictionaries to look up for the meanings of the unfamiliar words. In these situations, learners need to be taught and reminded to skim and scan reading passages especially when a limited time frame is given. E.g: during reading exercises or tests. Meanwhile, some say that they occasionally encounter unfamiliar words which hamper their reading comprehension but are able to make sense of the passages by referring to the base forms, prefix or suffix to guess the meanings of the words.

Writing is one of the most difficult skills to master in learning a language. The findings in Table 11 show that students have difficulties to write an essay. They require longer period to write an essay as they experience difficulty procuring ideas to plan their essay outlines in the pre-writing stage.

Another reason is that, because of specially low and average proficiency students, they require longer time to write in the writing stage and this is because they have to mentally construct sentences in their first language or mother-tongue before translating into English. At the same time, the learners also spend a large amount of time looking up unfamiliar English words using bilingual dictionaries or online translator.

Finally in the revising stage, they have to make sure that their sentences are grammatically correct and comprehensible in addition to ensuring that their

ideas, sentences and paragraphs are arranged coherently and cohesively.

### **3.4- Teachers' data interpretations**

The results show that teachers are aware of their great responsibility in providing students with opportunities to learn rather than opportunities to be correct or incorrect. Nowadays, most of the English teachers are thinking about what can be done in class to teach English in better ways. Many teachers use the “warming-up” activity to arouse in their students a certain desire to learn English. There are many ways to get interested in learning English. The “chalk and talk” method is not the only one. Teachers can use visual aids, English magazines, televisions, radio, and internet to attract their students to learn English. Teachers can provide constructive encouragements to students in recognizing their efforts. Teachers can also emphasize that mistakes are useful and that all of us learn from them.

74, 29 % of teachers recognized that the main problem for learners in English is their deficiency in required vocabulary, and the fact that English is a foreign language. That problem of vocabulary deficiency can explain why several students get bad grades in English today. Facing such a difficulty, teachers need to adopt effective pedagogy in class to improve the learners' communication skills. Teachers have a great responsibility to know their students and to give them the possibility to get involved in class activities. The good teacher shouldn't be nervous, severe or unkind towards a bad student who dislikes English. Teachers have always the opportunity to turn the bad students in good ones when they are more human towards them.

25, 71 % of the informant teachers don't know why some of their students are reluctant to learn English. This displays that, these teachers are not aware of their educational mission. The lack of teacher training in Benin can be the cause of this fundamental factor. Teachers who have not got any formal training themselves cannot know how to manage their class easily, and to find solutions to concrete problems. There are different kinds of students in a classroom and

it can be difficult for untrained teachers to control or guide their students when they have no any formal experience in the teaching field.

Teachers recognize the great importance of motivation in their work. As English is a foreign language, many students find it boring or difficult to be learnt. Students prefer to speak their mother tongue and French at school rather than English. Teachers can use humors as indispensable tools in promoting a positive relationship with their students.

An important number of respondent teachers confessed that they explain to their students the importance of English in the world nowadays.

Other teachers tell me that they explain to their students the various advantages and opportunities that they can get in life if they speak English fluently.

As far as teachers' motivation is concerned, 37, 15% say "no". This is a very sensible question, and the position of unmotivated teachers in this study represents a great concern for everyone who belongs to the word of education. The lack of motivation of many teachers today can also explain the difficulties of English accuracy and the poor level of students in the target language. All teachers should essentially learn to motivate students as one says "there are not bad students, but only bad teachers".

As far as teaching skills are concerned, 42, 86 % of teachers say that they don't include entertaining activities in their courses. It will be useful to teachers to uses games and songs in class to involve and satisfy students' need for competency, accuracy and fluency in English. Teachers can for instance imagine pleasant strategies to be implemented in their classes. Personal strategies to enhance motivation include for teachers to be sincere, positive, enthusiastic and suppositive. Teachers can also devise imaginative ways to arouse motivation in students.

The use of modern means of communication and technology in education is not widely developed in Benin. But, there are many private schools in Benin

which begin to train their students with modern technology in their curricula. The implementation of technology and modern devices at school can facilitate and improve the way English is taught nowadays in our schools. Students can gain positive and considerable knowledge through these different channels of communication.

Finally, many teachers are confronted with various difficulties during their English lessons. For these teachers, the lack of a formal training is a serious handicap for them. These difficulties can decrease their capacities to do their job well. Many English teachers don't use modern and technological devices, and some of them say that they have never been trained to use computers in their lives and they find difficult to use it in classrooms.

A greater number of schools in Benin are not well equipped and they lack reliable and adequate materials that will enable them to do well their work. Authorities at all levels should be aware of these problems in our educational system and find adequate ways to solve them.

There are some students who do not possess English textbooks in classes. Other students neglect to do their exercises at home. Some students even speak French during English classes. All these problems represent real communication difficulties that teachers face when they are in their classrooms. The difficulties of teaching a foreign language are known by all teachers around the world. It remains for all actors of education to really think about the weakness of our educational system. A good policy of education is better than a faulty one that cannot enhance the development of a modern country like Benin.

It remains to the state government to play its important role in solving the problems of communications during English classes.

### **3.5- Interview results**

The interview was based on specific points such as parents' responsibility and contribution to their children education, the role that academic authorities should play, and the materials they should set up in their school so as to motivate their students to learn English. The personal effort which should be made by the students themselves in the domain of learning English; the English teaching strategies taught to students by the teachers, individual impressions of the students about the methods or technics used by their teachers; their attitude towards students; their motivation about the ways they teach their students.

In fact, the first question raises the problem of the lack of reading materials. The feedback on this question shows that more than 54 % of the students never have their reading materials and only 25 % of them have. This fact points out the irresponsibility of most of the parents who can't provide adequate materials to their children. Moreover, those parents are unable to help their children read at home. We notice this irresponsibility through the feedback to question 2. Indeed, more than forty-percent of the students state that their parents never help them read at home. When students are asked to know whether they have library at school, only a few of them reply they have, whereas more than 73% of them say no. The irresponsibility of academic authorities is also pointed out at this level. Among the minority of the students who have library in their school, only 9 % of them go to read in those libraries. The feedback on the results of this question mentions the lack of interest students have in reading.

This lack of motivation explains the bad ways teachers carry out their teaching job. In fact, many teachers don't know how to manage so as to motivate their students; this can be noticed through the results on question 5; more than 76 % of students say that their teachers never praise them when they read well.

To round off, we can say that the interview was relevant because it enabled the awareness of the modern strategies. Since the students are the most important actors in EFL classroom, I have elaborated the above questions to sensitize parents, students, academic authorities on the different problems they are submitted to, the role that each of them should play to help students improve their performances in reading.

### **3.6- Problems**

From my investigation, I have concluded that teachers and learners face the following difficulties in teaching and learning English as a foreign language:

For teachers, there are many obstacles such as:

- Heavy teaching loads.
- Large size classes (45 – 60)
- Insufficient English language skills and native speaker cultural knowledge.
- Lack of teaching materials mainly technology aids.

As for the learners, they wish they could speak English fluently but most of them think that English is too challenging for them to be competent because of these difficulties:

- Interference from the mother tongue particularly in pronunciation, syntax, and idiomatic usage.
- Lack of opportunity to use English in their daily lives.
- Challenging English lessons.
- Being passive learners.
- Being too shy to speak English with classmates.
- Lack of responsibility for their own learning and lack of motivation.

#### **3.6.1- Learning English: a difficult subject to Beninese students**

In our schools, English language is viewed as a difficult subject to learn.

Learners depend on the English teachers as authorities. English is not used to answer teacher's questions and is not spoken during English class. Learners tend to depend heavily on translation and dictionary use to find meanings. There is a lack of support to use English in the home environment and the community. Learners are found to have limited vocabulary as English reading materials are not always available. Learners display unwillingness and lack of motivation to learn English as they do not see the immediate need to use the language. Learners have inadequate or insufficient exposure to the language as there is a limited opportunity to use English outside the classrooms. English is not perceived as an important medium for communication as they use mother tongues both for academic and personal interactions. Learners express unwillingness and high anxiety to use English to communicate despite acknowledging that English is important for their future. There are critical problems in English language teaching and learning because some schools lack resources, or the students are out of 35 to 45 in a classroom, and it's very difficult to work with this number of students. Besides, some teachers don't use other activities or strategies of motivation for learning of this language.

### **3.7- Causes**

#### **3.7.1- Lack of learners motivation**

Lack of motivation may be the result of many factors such as the way in which that subject is presented to them; most of the time students find the contents have nothing to do with the actual world. Many students, I believe, feel that staying in school six hours a day, is a complete waste of time because subjects don't meet their wants or needs; on the other hand most of the students don't have goals to achieve, they don't know where they want to go then, I think, teachers must always be looking for methods and strategies to motivate and make learning challenging to get better results and one of them is to take into

account the multiple intelligence to prepare activities.

Students skip class, and when they do show up it's likely due to fear of failure more than anything else. They may lack any semblance of attention during class, chatting with classmates, doodling in their note books or, (gasp!) in their textbooks. What experienced English or other foreign language teaching professional hasn't faced the problem of reluctant, unmotivated learners? One key to increasing motivation is to use activities matched to the personalities, learning styles and characteristics of the learners as often as practically possible.

### **3.7.2- Insufficient time, resources and materials**

The first, and perhaps most important, issue is the amount of time that it takes to acquire a second language in school. While it takes one to three years to develop conversational proficiency in English, they need five to seven years to develop academic English; that is, the English needed for reading, writing, speaking, and listening in the content areas. So what can you do when charged with teaching English or a foreign language in only one or two hours per week? One of the only times that was ever successfully accomplished was with the pouring out of Holy Spirit on the apostles during Pentecost. (Acts 2:1 – 11) Add too little time to a decided lack of resources and virtually zero other resources in many third-world classrooms and you have a critical teaching / learning situation indeed. But there are ways, even on the lowest budget, of producing virtually free or very inexpensive English language teaching and learning aids for use in the EFL or foreign language classroom.

About lack of resources, insufficient time and over-crowded groups, the responsibility is of our educational system but teachers have to use their creativity to overcome the problem. I have found so useful using practices of Dynet method as circuit training, choral and groups activities to work with either small or large classes and to get resources. I have used many strategies

from taking the students toys until I make the students prepare cards and posters that have been used before with other courses.

### **3.7.3- Over-crowded English classes**

One of the common problems in teaching English, in this case, is the over-crowded class where a teacher can find more than thirty students in a very small classroom, without a tape recorder, no television, no posters, no DVD or sometimes without markers neither board. It is always difficult to carry out activities where students can improve their communicative skills; it is not possible to personalize teaching and as consequence not good results are shown every day. Besides this, the class-time is often very short (once or twice a week, one or two hours daily), so the lesson plan is not developed as it is programmed and next class is often a review of the last one stopping the teaching-learning process. The teacher does not know what problems there are in the students learning process, he or she cannot solve them because it is difficult to distinguish a specific learner with a specific learning problem.

The number of learners in a classroom can range from one, for those who teach individual private learners, to 15 or twenty learners in a typical classroom up to “multitudes of 35 or 40 or even 50 or more learners packed into a language learning situation. Forget anything even remotely resembling “individual attention”. Either the throng “gets it” or they don’t with little available to the teacher. When I’m faced with over-sized groups I immediately implement strategies using choral, small group and pair work to help in lessening the load on both me and my large group of learners. I also separate out a few of the more “advanced” learners to help me with group work elements. It doesn’t solve all the problems, but it’s a good start.

## **Chapter Four: Suggestions, Advice and Recommendations**

### **4.1- Suggestions to improve English learning in Benin**

#### **4.1.1- The reform of the educational system**

Taking into account all that has been said above, it becomes a necessity to reform the educational system or the English teaching system in our country:

1. By introducing English language teaching since the first year of kindergarten (CESE). Such an early introduction will enable the three-year-old learners to acquire English as a second language together with the first foreign language, French
2. By recruiting and training kindergarten's teachers who will teach English through acquisition. Students would acquire the language through repetition and assimilation. Fluency would be emphasized. They would acquire the language for all the three years in kindergarten and three years in primary school (CE1).

The syllabus for CESE and that for the primary school will be designed in such a way that language components will be "broken" into Units and Units into topics

to facilitate acquisitions.

Only two skills, listening and speaking are to be taught at that level. Nevertheless, by the middle of the third class in primary school (CE1) learners may start writing and reading.

In the seventh year (CE2) the language will be taught through the other skills: all of the four skills are then dealt with: language learning starts there. I think that six years will be enough to acquire the basic notions of the language.

When students reach 6è they will keep on with English learning till Terminale.

Once the first six years of acquisition have been accomplished, the learning process will go easier and consequently learners will speak better.

3. By taking all other legal disposals: for instance new texts, new books, teachers' pre-service and in-service training for the full success of the reform.

In 6è, the language learning with explicit rules will be kept on and reinforced: the teacher will introduce his lessons through communicative activities, vocabulary and reading taught systematically. At this level, having acquired and learnt English for years, they will be happy to complete their knowledge. Nevertheless, teachers will teach with appropriate aids (Personal computer PC, TV, Radio Cassette) and other modern techniques referred to above. The language itself must be presented and spoken as correctly as possible.

From secondary school to university, different materials will be used, re-used, taught and reinforced for a solid mastery, later on in active life they will practice and carry out research for the development of science and technology in Benin.

The early introduction of English will be a benefit mainly for a quick master of English in our country.

#### **4.1.2- The reform: a vital necessity for English learners**

Generally, English is considered more spoken in international trade and politics than French.

Moreover it's so important that job applicants are required to know how to speak it well, before postulating for any job in many countries USA-United Kingdom Canada, etc.

In business, most of the correspondence, letters, fax, messages are written in Shakespeare's language. Even domestic appliances manual for owners are usually written and explained in English.

Besides, the best scientific research works are published in that language, showing therefore its international supremacy.

As a result, it is a vital necessity to start its learning and teaching very early in our educational system.

#### **4.1.3- The implications of the reform**

The present reform, the introduction of English learning language and teaching very early in the educational system, implies certain practical arrangements:

- ✓ First, our ministries in charge of education will design and adopt a new decree fixing the conditions in which that reform must be carried out;
- ✓ Then new RFL teachers will be recruited in a great number, trained and appointed in the schools all over the country;
- ✓ Teaching English as a Foreign Language Association (TEFLAB) will be encouraged and given means to work properly.

#### **4.1.4- The necessity to be in good health**

To teach and learn English effectively, students and teachers must be at their best, physically and mentally. They cannot study well if they are upset, ill or tired. Following the simple rules given here, they will do much to keep themselves in good condition. First, they must get plenty of sleep, fresh air, and

exercise. They must eat enough of the right foods, they must obtain medical attention for illness and for any ears or eyes defects that need to be corrected, they must avoid or improve situations that cause them worry and anger. If they have serious physical or mental difficulty, they must not keep such worries to themselves. They must talk to their parents and teachers, who can help them.

#### **4.1.5- The necessity to be used to practical learning English skills**

Furthermore, taking notes is a skill that a high school student should develop. Since he will need this skill to know the main ideas of the text, to take into account these main ideas to answer questions asked about the text. This skill may also help students note the central idea of the subordinate ideas, it helps the readers list the ideas in their order of importance and arrange subordinate points into chronological order. Taking meaningful and useful notes also enables the students to make a list of key words from which he can guess the main themes of the text so as to better understand the text.

Another skill students need to develop to improve their reading is outlining. This skill helps the students have the ability to organize their notes in such a way that they remain meaningful and useful to them. In other words this skill enables them to arrange notes in such a way that the important ideas stand out enabling them to understand clearly which points support each of these important ideas. The arrangements are called outlining. Let us mention that the students must know two main kinds of outlines: topic outlines and sentence outlines. In a topic outline, each item is a key word, or perhaps several words that will help them recall an idea. In a sentence outline, each item is a complete sentence stating an idea. In a word, students must know that both kinds of outlines are useful for them. Outlining notes from their reading will help students to report on it, to make a summary about the text.

Another skill students need to know is making a summary.

Students, who have learned to find the central idea of a paragraph, must learn how to state that idea in their own words, by doing so, they make a summary. To make a summary, they must read the material carefully to find the main ideas for a text, they must express the main ideas in their own words, and they must be brief, exact. They must eliminate all unnecessary words or ideas from their summary. They must know how to combine ideas so that their summary must be briefer and clearer.

#### **4.1.6- Suggestions to teachers: the management of an English class**

The teacher has some specific roles to play in order to enable his or her students to become competent in English. This consists in acting as:

**A manager:** this means that the teacher must be responsible for students learning both inside and outside the class. Therefore he/she must know the needs and wants of the students. He/she should specify the students' objectives in behaviour and look for a variety of materials and teaching aids for whole class, small group, pairs and individuals. Students will learn according to an appropriate syllabus.

**A counselor:** he/she should create an atmosphere of friendliness and trust by listening to students, accepting their ideas and if they have any problem, finding ways to solve them. In this way, students will feel relaxed, confident, assured and not embarrassed. This attitude or behaviour can definitely lower the students' affective filter which may enhance learning.

**A supporter:** this means that he/she should promote students self-reliance by encouraging them to work towards independence. In this case, students will develop to the fullest of their ability.

**A motivator/ stimulator:** the teacher should foster students' expectation and arouse their interest to learn English as a second or foreign language. He/she can reach this objective by asking them warm up the questions or giving them a

purpose for learning English. In this way, students will enjoy learning language and develop a positive attitude.

**A promoter:** it means that he/she should promote thinking skills by encouraging students to participate in discussions and decision making. Students will, thereby, be equipped with skills they can use outside the classroom.

**A language instructor:** teachers can present new vocabulary during English teaching. Teachers should also use English in class, because this is additional language input for the students. Apart from this, teachers should correct students' mistakes in language production but only if the mistakes obstruct communication. In this way, students will learn about language while using the language in an English class.

## **4.2- Advice**

### **4.2.1- Advice for learners**

English as our second foreign Language is not easy to learn. This is because English has its own set of rules in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciations that might be very different from that of the native language of English as a Second Language learner.

By following these ten simple steps, however, non-native English speakers can speak, write, read, and listen to English confidently and effortlessly.

These ten simple steps on how to learn English as a foreign Language are discussed below:

#### **1. Set your English proficiency goal**

Non-native English speakers wanting to master English as a Second Language must set out their English proficiency goals. Goals are important because they

let English as Second Language students be reminded of what they ultimately want to accomplish with their English studies.

Some of the questions that learners of English as a foreign Language must ask themselves when identifying their English proficiency goals include:

- What areas of my English as foreign Language skills do I want to improve? Listening, writing, speaking, and/or reading?
- When do I want to see these areas improved? In one year? In two years?
- How can I measure my improvement? Is it when I can use English as a foreign Language with ease when speaking with my foreign colleagues and friends? Is it when I can use English as foreign Language in calls, e-mails, letters, presentations, or conferences?

## **2. Know your motivations and be constantly reminded about them**

It may take months or years to become fluent in English as a foreign Language. Thus, it would be helpful if English as foreign Language students can stay motivated during their long-term studies of the English language. To identify their motivations in their English as a foreign Language studies, learners must ask themselves, “Why do I want to be great at English?”

Some of the answers to these questions may include:

- I want to put an end to the embarrassment I have felt all these years when I’m unable to speak in English.
- I want to get promoted at work with the help of my high scores in business English tests.
- I want to be assigned overseas where English is used as a language for business.

- I want to enter a prestigious university in a foreign country where English is widely used as a medium of communication.
- I want to expand my business overseas by negotiating with customers, suppliers, or partners in English.
- I want to gain new friends from around the world through the English language.

### **3. Get help from an excellent English teacher**

A study of English as a foreign Language is made more efficient and effective with the help of a skilled and enthusiastic English teacher. Such a teacher can help students of English as a foreign Language by doing the following:

- Spot students' errors in English.
- Explain the errors.
- Help students avoid such errors in the future.
- Foster a learning environment that is conducive to learning English as a foreign Language.
- Encourage students to keep on studying despite some difficulties with English studies.

### **4. Cultivate your willingness to learn English**

Not even the most experienced English teacher could ever help students in mastering English as a foreign Language if these students are unwilling to accept feedback about their weaknesses in English and to improve.

Thus, it is quite important for English as foreign Language learners to request their teachers to give them as much criticism as possible about their English proficiency. However, they must take their teachers' criticisms constructively. It is also very important for English as foreign Language students to try to learn

English with passion. If students are not passionate about English as a foreign Language, perhaps they may need to be reminded about their goals and motivations for studying.

## **5. Study and put your learning into practice**

Arguably, the most important tip for learning English as a foreign Language is to study and put all acquired learning into practice.

As the adage goes, “Practice makes perfect.”

To practice English as a foreign Language, it is best to run through English speaking, listening, writing, and reading.

Some of the ways by which English as foreign Language learners can practice include:

- Read English news or blogs.
- Write e-mails in English.
- Listen to English podcasts or videos.
- Make phone calls or video calls in the English language.

## **6. Use English at work, school, or home**

People who want to learn English as a foreign Language must try to immerse themselves in English as much as possible. This is because immersion will allow them to become very familiar with English – its sounds, words, phrases, and sentence constructions. Immersion will also allow them to understand how English is used in a natural setting and in conversations.

Through immersion, they will eventually find themselves developing the habit of using English with ease and confidence.

To be immersed in English, English as foreign Language learners must try to:

- Read English articles regularly.
- Listen to English news, songs, or conversations.
- Watch English TV programs, videos, or movies.
- Write English letters, e-mails, presentations, blogs, or journals.

## **7. Enlarge your English word bank**

To learn English as a foreign Language, it is essential to be taught about English vocabulary or the words, phrases, expressions, and idioms of the language.

Vocabulary will allow English as foreign Language learners to express their thoughts vividly and meaningfully using proper English words. A limited vocabulary will definitely hold them back from getting their messages across, which could be extremely upsetting.

Some of the ways by which people can learn English as a foreign Language by expanding their vocabulary are:

- Reading English articles
- Playing English Word games
- looking up words in an English dictionary

To learn more and more about English words, beginner students of English as a foreign Language may also want to invest in a quality bilingual dictionary. This is because bilingual dictionaries can help them with translating and comparing English words with the words in their native language.

However, they must not be overly reliant on their bilingual dictionaries.

Once beginner English as Second Language learners have graduated to the intermediate level English proficiency, then they may get themselves a monolingual English dictionary and dispose of the bilingual dictionary.

### **8. Understand the rules of English grammar and don't break them**

To learn English as a foreign Language, non-native English users must understand the rules of English grammar and how these rules are applied. Grammar is simply the set of rules that describe how words, phrases, and clauses are formed into meaningful sentences in English. Some people who are trying to learn English as a Second Language view grammar either as challenging or boring.

Regrettably, such an attitude towards English grammar prevents these people from fully learning English and how it is used correctly. Grammar can be interesting if perceived the right way. With this in mind, people who are trying to learn English as a foreign Language must commit to memory that grammar will help them become fluent in the global language of English.

### **9. Practice pronunciations**

To learn English as a foreign Language for oral communications, non-native English users must familiarize themselves with English pronunciations. The importance of being familiar with English pronunciations cannot be downplayed. If non-native English users are not skilled in English pronunciations, then they are likely to be misunderstood. If they are misunderstood, then they may feel downright embarrassed and utterly frustrated. Thus, people who try to learn English as a Second Language must practice English pronunciations in the following areas:

- pronunciations of specific sounds of English
- English Word stress

- English sentence stress
- English sentence intonation

## **10. Forget about mistakes but learn from them**

In the course of learning English as a foreign Language, non-native English users may realize how often they commit mistakes in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

These mistakes are a natural part of the learning process and somehow expected. Thus, they should not deter learners from studying English as a Second Language. It is, nevertheless, very important for learners to gain knowledge from their mistakes. Committing a few English mistakes is forgivable. However, committing the same mistakes over and over is just absurd.

### **4.2.2- Advice for teachers**

Teaching a language is a complicated process which requires considering and applying a method while performing it and is conducted through a method in a language class. A teaching methodology refers to the way or in which a teacher teaches the learners. The methodology used by the teacher will determine the kinds of work and activities the students will do in class and how well or how poorly the student or learner will be able to learn and use the language. Thus it is imperative that the method or approach used in the classroom meet the needs of the learners. This part is filled with practical strategies for teachers based on the notion that a child's education is the shared responsibility of both content and language teachers. These strategies can be described as follows:

#### ***Preparation***

**Teachers should:**

- observe each other in order to gain insight into each other's practice; the content teacher should observe the language teacher and vice versa
- collaborate to identify language and/or content challenges
- examine content materials together to select a theme and identify objectives of units for both language and content
- identify key terms
- look for appropriate supplementary materials
- adapt written materials.

***Helping language learners adjust*****Teachers should:**

- announce objectives and activities at the outset of the class
- write legibly
- develop and maintain routines
- List and review instructions step-by-step
- Present information in various ways to provide multiple entries into content
- provide frequent summaries.

***Adjust teaching style***

- Lessons should be student-centered.
- Teacher's talk should be adjusted and reduced.
- Higher-order tasks should be increased.
- Teachers must recognize that students will make language mistakes.

***Teaching multilevel classrooms***

- Cooperative learning is a priority, particularly peer tutoring.
- Process writing should become a mainstay.

- Discovery learning and inquiry learning need to be fostered.
- Useful task types are gaps, interviews and questionnaires.

### ***Motivating students and building background knowledge***

- Useful tasks are semantic webbing, listening tasks, class discussion, KWL, small-to-large group sharing.
- Useful materials are realia, graphics and graphic organizers.

### ***EFL teaching techniques can be moved into the content classroom***

- Use of realia, demonstrations, multimedia, hands-on, music and sustained silent reading.

### ***Meeting cognitive needs of learners must be a priority***

- Initial exploration of topics should be done through oral work; expansion and further work on the topic should be pursued through reading and writing.
- Consideration for various learning styles should be made.
- Teachers should teach thinking and study skills, and develop awareness of text features.
- Scaffolding and models for writing should be provided.

### ***Checking comprehension***

- Many opportunities to check comprehension should be built into lessons through sentence strips, journals, role playing, reading logs, cloze exercises, summaries, experiments and a language experience approach.

### ***Lesson plans***

- Should focus on principal vocabulary, oral practice, and collaboration and use of appropriate materials.

### **The classroom environment**

Teachers may need to consider the classroom environment and perhaps:

- have rules clearly displayed and clarified regularly, ensuring all students know the procedures and routines of the class;
- consider arranging the room in a way which maximizes the student's participation and/or comprehension, for example small group work, peer work, quiet individual work area use grouping and cooperative learning as a strategy;
- think of other ways for information to be relayed to students if copying from the board or overhead projector is difficult;
- allow additional time for practice and/or task completion for those students who need it;
- be discreet when assisting students and providing them with adjusted material and/or activities;
- reward students via incentive charts or card systems.

### **Materials and tasks**

When selecting or developing resources and materials used in an English lesson the teacher should:

- be aware that some students may require more prompts or scaffolds to complete an activity;
- design worksheets which use the same font throughout and have a predictable layout;
- consider using multiple choice answers in place of sentence completion;
- include mnemonic devices or graphic organizers that assist students to remember new material, for example visual webs, organizational charts, first letter acronyms and visual prompts and icons;
- provide visual cues (both gesture and illustrations), being as consistent as possible. For example if one gesture represents "open your book", always use that same gesture, if one illustration represents "happy", always use that illustration

- provide concrete learning aids which facilitate learning by using a ‘hands on’ approach;
- remove unnecessary detail from textbooks or worksheets;
- highlight critical features that are the most important for students to learn
- enable students to access alternate formats, such as large, prints, computers, and simplified texts.

### **4.3- Recommendations**

#### **4.3.1- Recommendations to Benin Government**

The problem of teaching English can be solved if the Government actually is aware of the factors such as: the material and humans’ resource problems.

##### **4.3.1.1- Material problems**

They are related to both infrastructures and teaching aids. The English teaching is sometimes neglected because classrooms are inappropriate, for instance the combination desk and bench in our classrooms is not comfortable for practical group work. The school population is increasing very quickly so the building of adequate classrooms becomes a necessity. I think it will be interesting to have some language classrooms in our schools, some classrooms especially built for the purpose of teaching of the four skills: some classrooms with the furniture easily fashionable are needed so as to facilitate group activities.

##### **4.3.1.2- The need for teaching materials**

The lack of teaching materials can be noticed at the level of schools as I have said while dealing with the problem statement. Very few students have books in their EFL classrooms.

Indeed, families are so poor that they can hardly buy the useful text books to their kids. It is not rare to find in an overcrowded classroom of about 80 students that 10 or 12 students have got text books. How can students know the way to read a language when they have no books to train themselves? I think, training, imitation, practice, drills, etc. are important stages in learning process. It is therefore necessary for the Government to give its contribution to parents who are unable to buy books to their children so as to find definite solution to the problems of lack of English materials which constitute a hindrance to the improvement of students in learning English.

### **4.3.2- Human resource problems**

#### **4.3.2.1- The lack of motivation**

Teaching English is one of the most complex activities EFL teachers have to cope with. In fact, the complexity of the skills requires more preparation which implies more motivation and patience from the teachers. Unfortunately, it is not often the case. Because of the low salary of teachers, their free time is spent through several other supplementary courses in other institutions to complete their salary. As a result, teachers in spite of their good will don't take time to prepare their lessons as they should do. Moreover teachers need to be well-at-ease, if we want them to be more performing and efficient; their living conditions are so bad that it will not be easy to get more from them.

To reduce teacher's reluctance for such difficulties, the government should create teaching facilities including teaching materials to encourage teachers to accept to work in such conditions.

All the above mentioned factors will positively lead them to perform more efficiently.

#### **4.3.2.2- The need for in service training**

Most teachers are not aware of the strategies of teaching. All of them don't seem to know the different strategies to be used to deal with the teaching of the four skills. According to BROWN, (1994-425) *"one of the most interesting things about teaching is that one never stops learning"*. Teachers therefore need to readjust their pedagogical knowledge in order to reach their goals within the framework of their job. That is what should be done if we want English to improve in our schools.

Unfortunately not many teachers are continually trained and even the little number of teachers who are willing to finance their own training give up somewhere along the road. The Government and academic authorities should put into place sponsorship and scholarship programmes to help teachers better their professional performance.

Besides, it is very important to recruit trained teachers who master the new modern techniques.

That is why it is an emergency to reopen teachers training colleges. It is also necessary to revise the EFL curriculum in order to have well-prepared teachers, we mean teachers well-submitted to more practical training instead of teachers who just learn different theories about the skills and other linguistic aspects of the language.

Teaching English should be centered on speaking, listening, writing and reading to reach the purpose. The four skills can therefore be integrated equitably. Most trained teachers are aware of the theories related to EFL teaching, but they don't succeed in matching their theoretical knowledge with practical techniques so as to help the students acquire the four skills in general.

Furthermore, the government has a central and determining role to play in order to solve the problems of communication which both teachers and students are confronted with during English classes. The central government must spend more money in education to enhance the development of a flourishing system of education in Benin.

The government can for instance increase the salaries of all teachers and the other members of the schools administration. This can motivate teachers who are prominent factors to provide a basic and fruitful education to the students. The government can also motivate teachers by granting them some substantial rewards such as prizes, trophies or medals at the end of the school year. These actions can produce or ignite in teachers a burning desire to perform well their mission with more confidence, poise, respect, abnegation and sacrifice. The state government must also insist in the professional training of teachers by allowing them to receive the appropriate and adequate formation tools for their work. The government also needs to provide schools with adequate moral and financial resources. More equipment must be granted to schools in order to facilitate teachers' work to schools.

The government of Benin can also negotiate wisely with the NGOs and grant them some contracts, so that they will be more helpful to create, to build and assist schools in difficulty. These NGOs will be encouraged to do more if they are not haunted by public heavy taxes.

The government can also stimulate students by organizing national contexts where students can participate. The best students who have the best grades in English can be rewarded and given the possibility of travelling into neighboring countries like Nigeria, Ghana or Cameroun.

## **Conclusion**

Researchers have developed strategies or techniques to make teaching and learning English easy for both teachers and students. However learning English has not yet taken a leading place in the educational field in Benin. Many reasons account for the failure of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in our schools. These reasons include particularly the teaching environment and conditions, the way of teaching and other parameters such as the behaviour of the teachers and the students.

This research work aims at developing strategies to foster English as Foreign Language learning in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of secondary schools. So, I have tried to show that although teaching and learning processes are difficult, it is important to

enable teachers and students to gain some knowledge. In my analysis, I have tried to show how significant English is important in the world. Moreover, I have tried to make an exploration of studies that researchers have done in the field of teaching and learning English as a foreign language and this helps me to know first, the conception that some writers have about teaching, the different kinds of communication identified by them and the strategies used by teachers so far. This part of the work enables me to have an idea of teaching materials and the methods of teaching strategies dealt with so far. The analyses I have made on the report of literature review allow me to be aware of the shortcomings that is: the insufficiencies of teaching strategies used so far. Besides, the methodology I use helps me to realize that many had not been done yet in the domain of teaching and learning English strategies: through my work I have also proceeded to development of strategies to teach English and to make its learning attractive so as to motivate students to understand easily English and to obtain good class performance. The questionnaires, the interviews, and classroom observation which I use allow me to be informed about difficulties learners as well as teachers encounter as far as English is concerned. Some of these difficulties are: lack of learners' and teachers' motivation, insufficient time, resources and materials, overcrowded English classes, uncomfortable learning environment, etc. These strategies of research help me to find out the obstacles to the success of communicative activities. Indeed, it is obvious that strategies or techniques have been developed by researchers to facilitate the teaching and the learning of English as a foreign language. However teaching English has not yet been a real success in the educational system in Benin. This is mainly due to the fact that teachers are not motivated to perform their work as they should. Students also are not encouraged to play their role in the process of English teaching. Some of the teachers use strategies which don't help students to improve their performance. Others are not well trained enough to help their students and

interest them in the learning of the subject matter. As nowadays, teaching and learning English as a foreign language requires hard and long previous preparation because of their difficult conditions of living; some teachers don't often succeed in taking time during their lessons preparations to meet their students' needs.

Some people are born teachers; they have the ability and the wish to transfer knowledge or skills from themselves to others and, they have the sympathy and patience to do this in ways that the students can really understand and learn from. We all know teachers who are experts on a subject, but helpless at teaching it, because they lecture to their students without ever trying to find out whether the students are really learning. And we also know teachers who are not highly educated but who are sensitive to feedback from their students and are always adapting what they are teaching to the abilities of the students. Teachers training can help both those who are born teachers and those who are not. It can help the former by giving them shortcuts to methods and techniques which they might take a long time to learn from experiences and it can help those who are not born teachers by training them to be sensitive to what is going on in their classes, and to adapt their methods to the needs of the class.

So Government should reform our educational system by introducing English language teaching since the first year of kindergarten (CESE) and by recruiting and training kindergarten's teachers who will teach English through acquisition

Government should also encourage teachers by improving their conditions of living on the one hand, by allowing them to participate to teacher training from time to time so as to enable them to improve their performances.

Students on their part should know that their teachers can't give them all the vocabulary they need to understand every comprehension text. They should do

personal research, they should try to be interested in English learning, try to practice integrate skills through reading, listening, writing and speaking. They should be curious about what they have not been taught to deepen or complete their training.

Government should improve teachers' salary, and their living conditions as well as their working conditions. Government should also increase financial assistance to state schools.

This can enable the Beninese who cannot afford sending their children to private schools to educate their children in state schools.

To round off, my suggestions consider the different problems discussed so far and propose some solutions to help the teaching and learning of English in our EFL classes.

To sum up, English is being treated as a world language because of its vast presence all over the world. The public secondary schools in Benin are far behind time in offering multiple pathways to the teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

Public secondary schools in Benin should be provided with an adequate and a variety of instructional media. Technologies such as audio and video recordings, language laboratories and computer can be more effective teaching tools for English Language lessons as they offer authentic learning experience when interwoven with existing curriculum.

We are convinced that the high potential for enhanced learning through the provision of conducive-learning environment can be attained in public schools in Benin. It is strongly recommended that the learning environment in public schools in Benin should be given prior attention by state government so that children can learn well.

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#### **D- GLOSSARY**

1. **EFL**: English as a Foreign Language
2. **ESL**: English as a Second Language
3. **CEG**: Collège d’Enseignement Général

## **Annex Pages**

## Investigation questionnaire addressed to students of the selected schools

Dear student,

This questionnaire goal is to gather some information on the communication troubles in EFL teaching and learning inside Beninese educational system. I will invite you to respond truthfully to these questions.

Form:

Questions 1:

What are the instructional resources or media used by your teachers in teaching English language?

Chalkboards ; English workbooks  ; posters ; English textbooks  ; dictionaries  ; Charts  ; Television   
Radio

Questions 2

What appropriate methods teachers use in teaching English language frequently?

Appropriate methods

Lecture method

Intensive reading of textbooks

Group methods

Debate methods

### Question 3

Do you learn English language in environment conducive to learning?

Environmental factors

Comfortable furniture

Schools overcrowded

Classrooms ventilated

Classrooms lighted

### Question 4

Do you regularly ask questions to your teacher during English courses?

Yes

No

### Question 5

Do you like the way your English teacher delivers his or her lesson?

Yes

No

### Question 6

Does your English teacher use the modern means of communication or information and communication technology (ICT) to teach you English?

Yes

No

### Question 7

Do you understand your teachers if they explain the course in English?

Yes

No

Question 8

Are you able to converse or discuss with your classmates in English during English courses?

Yes  No

Question 9

Do you have difficulties to speak English in classroom?

Yes  No

Question 10

Do you mix other languages with English when speaking English in classroom?

Yes  No

Question 11

Do you have difficulties to write an essay in English in classroom?

Yes  No

Question 12

Do you often benefit from special activities on reading English inside and outside the classroom?

Yes  No

## Investigation questionnaire addressed to the teachers of the selected schools

Dear colleague,

This questionnaire goal is to gather some information on the communication troubles in EFL teaching and learning inside Beninese educational system. I will invite you to respond truthfully to these questions.

School:

1- How long have you been teaching English?

1 year  2 years  3years  4 years  5 years  Another

2- Do your students like your English courses?

Yes  No

3- Are you trained to teach English or not?

4- Yes  No

5- According to you, is motivation important in an English class?

Yes  No

6- Mister or Madam, are you motivated to do English course

Yes  No

7- Do you propose to your students some entertaining activities like singing songs, games or other things in English Language?

Yes  No

8- Do you use some modern means of communication like radio, television, video or internet for teaching English in your class?

Yes  No

9- Do you encounter some difficulties when conveying your English course to students?

10-

Yes

No