

## **Strategies and effects of Competency Based Approach on English as a Foreign Language courses: the case study of exam classes in CEG1 Parakou (Benin)**

**Author:** Mathias HOUNNOU AZOUA

*Faculty of Letters, Arts and Human Sciences, University of Parakou, Benin*

E-mail: [mathias.azoua@yahoo.fr](mailto:mathias.azoua@yahoo.fr) , Phone : 00229 97601220

### **Abstract**

This study aims at evaluating strategies and effects of CBA on EFL teaching and learning in exam classes of CEG1 Parakou (Benin). Questionnaires and interviews have been used as instruments in order to gather information from EFL learners, teachers and school officials to validate or not our research hypotheses. Relative frequencies, barplot and curves of evolution have been performed on collected data via Excel and R softwares. Our results showed that for exam classes in this school, English courses are attributed to experienced and graduated teachers. Teachers use various strategies in English teaching. Most of teachers implement their course plan and warm-up before starting lesson. They give regularly activities carried out as individual, pair and collective works. The analyses point out most of surveyed learners asserted their classroom presented basic materials. However, concerning materials used by teachers, most of students indicated that their teachers used only books for English course and rarely combine books and Audio/Video tape. The digital tools (ICT) using is almost absent in their English teachers' techniques. In the same way, many of learners haven't appropriated and sufficient materials. As for mastering of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, learners mostly have low levels. This influences motivations and performances of learners in class and exams. From the four to ten past years, learners' performances analysis through class marks and success rates in exams showed very unsteady trends. Whether BEPC or BAC exams, success rates are often weak and inferior to 50%. During the past four years, class results in English revealed many learners haven't reached the threshold of 10/20. The reform of CBA is not yet suitable for training competent learners in Benin current context. Reduction or suppression of recurrent strikes, recruitment of qualified teachers, supply of adequate equipment, teachers and learner's motivations, and well playing roles of learners' parents are required for proper implementation of CBA and therefore improving learner's skills and performances.

**Keywords:** EFL teachers and learners, strategies, performances, exam classes, CEG1 Parakou.

## 1-Introduction

Education stands for fundamental basis for the sustainable development to nations worldwide. Language is the vehicle by which teaching and learning took place for population satisfaction. Moreover, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, the rapid progress of science and technology has turned the world into ‘a global village.’ The dual advents of globalization and new technologies have brought about some impetuous changes, bringing people closer in the daily activities. Consequently, there is a pressing and growing need for people from different nations to communicate with one another. In fact, this communication can be achieved more easily through a common language among all languages spoken worldwide. In this context, English appears to be a language that has conquered the world in almost every field. English has become a global language over the world (Mensah, 2016). English covers many domains of human beings’ daily life (Moumouni, 2016). There is no way to deny the fact that English is the most common and popular language in the world. Because the English language is a storehouse of world knowledge, it has been chosen as the medium of instruction for higher studies in general in many regions of the world including the gulf countries and, of course, the English language teaching in particular (Crystal, 2003).

Nowadays, the development of English language is favored by economic trend. It also increases opportunities in business and job market. In worldwide, English speaking countries have retained over 70% of the world’s economic power (FAO,2010). This strategic role makes it more than a necessity for non-English speaking countries to open up to them for a better development perspective. It is for this reason that almost all the nations in the world have adopted the teaching and learning of English by making it part and parcel of the school curriculum.

Many non-English speaking countries in the word and in Africa mainly, in the side of their maternal and official language, develop some curricula and strategies to train their citizens. Benin is one of these African countries, which Education system is compound essentially of three levels: nursery, primary, secondary, and higher level. It is many years since, this country invests in English teaching and learning. English as foreign language is teaching starting form secondary school (Gaye, 2003). The educational authorities of Benin introduced English as one subject in each class from first form to seventh form of secondary. By the past, the training system of learners took place with approach called Objective Based Approach (OBA) in which the learners receive knowledge and notions rawly from the teacher. Ten (10) years ago, the Objective Based Approach (OBA) was changed by Competency Based Approach (CBA), a current curriculum in which the learners are the central elements of knowledge building (Hounhanou, 2017).

The present research work aims at studying the strategies and techniques developed in this approach context for EFL teaching and learning on the one hand, and to analyze the effects on EFL learners’ skills, their motivations and their exam success, on the other hand.

### **1.1. Scope and importance of the study**

English has become a global language over the world. Indeed, not only does it allow people to create and maintain relationships regardless of their origin. It also increases opportunities in business and job market (Nkwetisama and *al.*, 2012). It is more than ten years since; the area of competency Based Approach (CBA) has invaded secondary educative system of Benin. Since then, English is teaching as one subject from first to seventh form. New methods and strategies of teaching, learning, and of evaluation are developed so as to improve the students' knowledge and to meet the challenges and constraints of job markets. In this case of raising knowledge, we could expect that qualitative changes in students motivation to learn English, in their marks sheet, results and in their skills to speaking, listening, reading and writing.

It is within the framework to study these different aspects related to EFL teaching and learning in CBA context, we have chosen such topic. This theme deals with analysis of strategies and effects of CBA on EFL teaching and learning: the case study of classroom exam in CEG1 Parakou (Benin).

### **1.2. Purpose of the study**

The aim of this study is to analyze strategies and skills developed by teachers and learners. Another goal of our study is to reveal the effects of CBA on the process of EFL teaching and learning by assessing the skills, motivations and learners' results.

Through this research work, we are going to point out the factors that affect the EFL learners' performances, motivation in exam classes mainly.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Research**

The general objective is to analyze the main strategies and effects of CBA on EFL teaching and learning: the case study of exam classes in CEG1 Parakou (Benin).

Specifically, it will be to:

- Study the different techniques and strategies developed in EFL teaching and learning in CBA context
- Analyse physical conditions (materials) of teachers and learners in EFL teaching and learning.
- Evaluate the EFL motivation in terms of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills
- Assess the effects of this approach (CBA) on EFL learners outcomes

### **1.4. Research questions and hypotheses**

The main research questions that rise from this survey are formulated as follow:

- Are there any specific strategies and techniques developed in CBA context for EFL teaching and learning?
- Are adequate materials available for teachers and learners for facilitating implementation of English courses?
- Are the learners motivated for the speaking, listening, reading and writing EFL?
- What are EFL learners' performances (marks sheets, final results) with this approach (CBA)?

These different questions will be applied to secondary exam classes (3<sup>ème</sup> and T<sup>le</sup>) in CEG 1 Parakou.

The formulated hypotheses of research are as follows:

- The specific strategies and techniques are developed in CBA context for EFL teaching and learning.
- The physical conditions (materials) of teaching and learning are main factor for class motivation and learners success.
- The mastering of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills influence EFL motivations and performances
- The CBA reform improves EFL learners' outcomes in terms of English class marks and success rate in exams.

## 2- Literature review

### 2.1. Concepts clarification

#### 2.1.1. Definition of Competence and Competency-Based Approach (CBA)

**Competence** is a set of skills, knowledge and behaviours someone needs to have achieved in order to perform tasks or activities at school and in the world of work (Sullivan, 2005). Kouwenhoven (2003) defines competence as the capability to choose and apply an integrated combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes with the intention to realize a task in a certain context. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005), competency is the capability to apply or use a set of related abilities required to successfully perform "critical work functions" or tasks in a defined work setting. Competencies often serve as the basis for skill standards that specify the level of knowledge, skills and abilities required for success in the classroom. It is also considered as a system of conceptual and procedural parts of knowledge organized into operating schemes that help identify a problem-task and its solution through an efficient action within a set of situations (Piaget, 1959).

As stated earlier, the Competency Based Approach is also referred to as the pedagogy of integration or to an outcomes approach (Nkwetisama, 2012, p: 519). Richards and Rodgers (2001) hold that the competency based approach (CBA) focuses on the outcomes of learning. It addresses on what the learners are expected to do rather than on what they are expected to learn about. The CBA advocates defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of knowledge, skills and behaviors that students should possess at the end of a course of study. The competency-based approach (CBA) to teaching English is similar to communicative teaching, which you are familiar with. In some ways you could consider it as

‘very good’ communicative teaching at work stands as one step which further brings the learners to apply to what they learn in class to real-life situations outside the classroom. Emphasis is given to the productive, interpretive and interactive competencies:

- Productive skills: speaking and writing
- Interpretive skills: reading and listening
- Interactive skills: speaking and writing

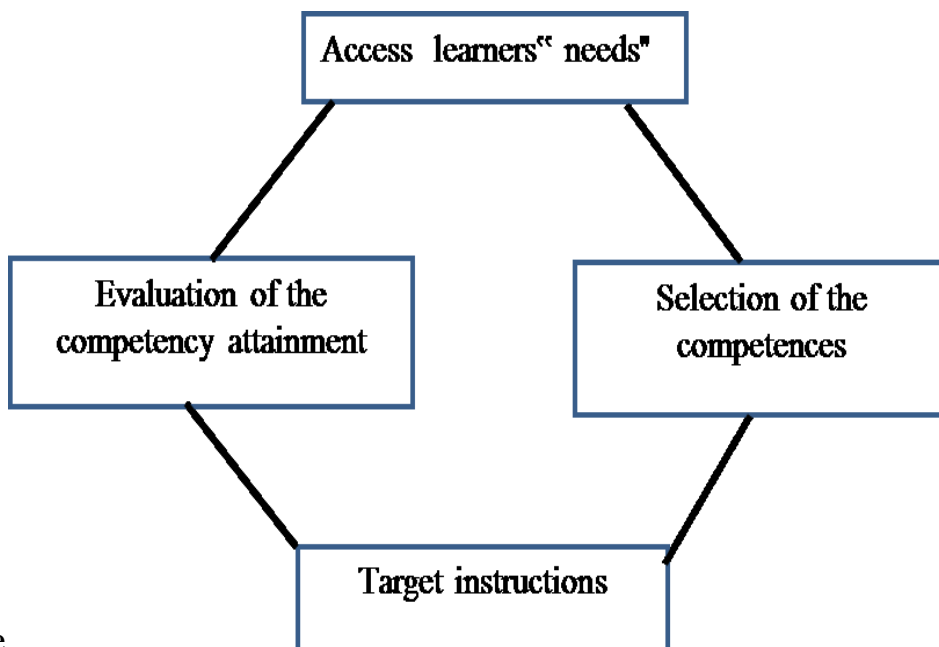
The linguistic competency (vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation) and strategic competency (strategies to help learn and use the language better) are viewed as ‘supporting competencies’. These competencies are not the main objective of study, but are tools that learners use in order to better speak, listen, read and write in English.

### 2.1.2. Components of the Competency Based Approach (CBA)

Weddel (2006) outlines the components of competency based education and argues that the approach consists of the following:

1. An assessment of the learners’ “needs”
2. The selection of the competencies
3. The target instruction
4. An evaluation of the competency attainment

The representation of this component can be present as follow (figure 1):



**Figure**  
Approach (CBA)

sed

**Source** (Nkwetisama, 2012: 520)

From the figure above, it is observed that the four components do not function in isolation. The approach starts with the assessment of needs of the students, moves to the selection of the

expected competencies, then to the target instruction from where it moves over to the evaluation of the rate of attainment of the competence, and then back to the assessment of the needs. It is thus a cyclical movement.

### **2.1.3. Characteristics of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA)**

The first apparent **Feature** of the CBA is the focus on learning and pupils' activities (learner-centered) rather than on the teacher's role. The CBA is socio constructivist approach based on training students to construct their own knowledge to be able to use it in the daily life. According to Richards and Rodgers (2002, p. 146) and Nkwetisama (2012, p520), the essential features that included in implementing the CBA syllabus are:

- A focus on successful functioning in society: It aims to give students a chance to learn to cope with problems in the society.
- A focus on life skills: The CBA not only interests on teaching knowledge but also on teaching a function of communication in real life.
- A task or performance-oriented instruction: The focus on clear behaviors rather than on the ability talk about language.
- The outcomes that are made explicit a prior: Outcomes are recognized and decided by both learner and teacher.
- The continuous and the ongoing assessment: Assessment is the important integrated part for implementing the CBA which considered not only in exams but also in an ongoing instruction.
- The individualized, student-centered instruction: According to the content, level, and space, objectives of the lessons are stated via individual requirements.

In addition to these characteristics, there are additional ones that are relevant to such approach: -Regarding the competency-based approach, all the types of syllabuses, the grammatical, the lexical, the functional, the situational, and the task based syllabi, are important in teaching foreign language because their aim is to enhance the learner's role. So, they are important in developing CBA program.

-Richards (2006) identified the nature of objectives according to the competency based approach. He said that "Objectives are broken into narrowly focused sub objectives, so that both teachers and students can get a clear sense of progress" (p. 42). In the CBA the objectives must be realized in the learner production as competencies, other way the teacher cannot move to other item till the learner achieves proficiency in learning the item was studied.

- Each approach needs specific teaching materials in order to realize the aim of its foundation. Therefore, the authentic materials fit the CBA since as Phillips and Shettlesworth 1978; Clarck 1989; Peack 1997 ( cited in Richards, 2001) claimed that this kind of materials motivate the learner because they provide him with information in interesting way, bringing the real life situation and cultural information to the classroom, supply learner with real exposure to the target language, and meet the needs of the learner because they approach the real life to him (cited in Richards, 2001, p.152).

### **2.1.4. Meaning of Strategies and effects in the study**

In teaching and learning context, strategies stand for methods and techniques used in order to succeed an activity, examination etc. In class situation, different strategies can be developed in creating some interactions. In this case, Kanuka and Anderson (1998) recommend different

types of interaction: student to student, student to teacher, student to group (small and large groups). Concerning the building up of pieces of knowledge, Perret-Clermont (1980) highlights the role of the cognitive conflicts and shows that confrontation of ideas/representations between individuals is the source of development. This consideration leads to the learning strategies such as individual work, pair work, group work, collective work, etc. These strategies aim at developing in the learners some qualities inherent to good citizenship: being endowed with a sense of creativity, initiative and cooperation.

Moreover, **effects** include here, various consequences (positive or negative) of CBA functioning in English learning environment such as students motivation in English course, and their mastering of different skills( listening, speaking, reading and writing). They take into account learners performances in different exams (BEPC, BAC; etc) and in English subject.

### **2.1.5. Definition of teaching and learning in CBA context**

**Teaching** is a process by which students are motivated to learn (Woodburn, 2013). According to the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary, to teach is to give someone on knowledge or skills. In Cambridge Advanced learner's dictionary, to teach means to give someone knowledge, to train someone, or to instruct him/ her. Thus teaching can then be viewed as a powerful tool in education. It is a kind of interaction which happens between the teacher and his learners. **Learning** on the other hand can be defined in the Oxford dictionary as gaining knowledge or a skill in a subject or activity to become aware of something by hearing about it from somebody else. In Cambridge dictionary, to learn is to get knowledge or skill in a new subject or activity. Learning according to Kochhar (2004: 25) involves changes occurring over a relatively shorter period of time which enable the learner to respond more adequately to the situation. There are various aspects of the process of learning.

### **2.1.6. Teaching and Learning**

#### **2.1.5. 1.Types of Teaching and Learning activities**

This means the CBA is eclectic in that it requires the use of different methods and techniques. According to Biolobrzaska (2006), the learning approach is a series of activities that learners are expected to do in order to be competent in their life tasks. For him "the learning cycle is some new activities which learners should respond to it (discussion of issues raised in the activity) and should give the reflection that lead them to do another new activity and so on (p. 96). Nowadays, the Beninese textbooks contains a variety of the learner's tasks in or outside the classroom and all of them aim to develop his competences in the real life situation. The following types of activities mentioned by Richards (2006, pp. 19-20) are stated as follows:

a) Information-gap activities: this refers to the one that students in the classroom go beyond practice of language forms and they use their linguistic and communicative skills in order to obtain information.

b) Task-completion activities: it is also called warm-ups tasks. This kind of activities motivate and push the learner to interact during a lesson e.g. games, puzzles, and songs.

c) Information gathering activities: the role of the students is to conduct surveys, interviews and search to collect information they are in a need of.

d) Information -transfer activities: it focusses on mental use of language. Learners are expected to transfer information from text to graphic or putting sentence elements in sequence.

All the Beninese Educational syllabuses aim to promote the learner through doing a series of activities. Some of these activities can be done in the classroom and the other should be done outside the school and it can be done individually or in groups. For example, a project work represents the practical part of a syllabus which should be prepared outside the class and then presented to the teacher.

### 2.1.5.2. Teacher's Roles

The common role of the teacher under the Competency Based Approach is the role of facilitator. In this context Dobson (2003) claims that Facilitator is ‘‘a person who helps learners learn by discovering things for themselves’’ (p. 64). According to Harmer (2001) the role of the teacher changes according to the task, and an effective teacher knows how to choose the relevant role in the appropriate position, and he further said that the role of facilitator is wide in meaning. Thus, he suggested a set of precise roles that go in harmony with the term facilitator (p. 57). Controller, when teacher act as controller he expected to act in different ways in comparison to his role in the state where students are working in group (ibid, 2001, p. 58). Davies and Pearse (2000) add some explanations about this role. He stated that he transmits information, controls occurrence of activities from the front and motivates to participate in the class with the correction of errors (p. 127).

**Organizer**, "The teacher has to initiate students to collaborate through pair and group work " (Bader, 2007, p. 47). The teacher has to organize students in pair or in group. He has to initiate, to explain the content of activities, and end tasks when time is over (Harmer, 2001, p. 58).

**Assessor**: Dobson (2003) thinks that "the Assessor is a person qualified to carry out assessment" (p. 62). Therefore, his role is to give feedback, correction, and grading to their students (Harmer, 2001, p. 59). He also informs the learners about their progress, trying to combine encouragement with honest evaluation and useful feedback (Davies & Pearse, 2000, p. 127).

**Prompter**: "Prompter could refer to the teacher’s role in helping a student to remember and formulate a point" (Hedge, 2000, p. 29). Prompter provides students with clarifications of questions when they could no longer follow what are doing (Harmer, 2001, p. 60).

**Participant**: Sometime the teacher chooses to share with his students some activities. When it goes well, students feel satisfied (ibid, 2001, p. 61). Resource "Person who provides students with materials beyond the textbook" (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986, p. 48). According to Harmer



(2001) Teacher is a resource person who guides his students to look for information instead of providing them with the desired information (p. 61).

**Tutor:** Teacher behaves as tutor when he approaches his students with more personal contact, thus the student feels supported and helped from their teacher. This usually occurs when students get organized in group and the teacher work with individuals and small group (ibid, 2001, p. 62).

**Observer:** The teacher expects to use his ability to observe and listen to his students (Chelli, 2010, p. 26). In order to help the teacher for respecting the learning styles of his students and to select to them the appropriate activities (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986, p. 48). We can infer that this entire role fit the application of competency- based approach in teaching writing, since it help learner in realizing autonomy in learning, and the teacher in this state only helps the ongoing of the learning process.

In sum, the teacher's role in the competency-based approach is not simply to give information to learners, but to help students take an active role in their own learning.

### **2.1.5. 3. Learner's Roles**

The competency-based approach focuses on the learner's role rather than on the teacher's role. The learner plays the central actor inside the classroom he/she learns through a series of activities that are proposed by the teacher. Therefore, learners in the CBA are characterized as active persons who can search to develop himself/herself and make self-assessment in order to be successful learners. Thus, they will be able to face problems in their daily life. According to the Schools Programs (2005) learners obtain and retain language best when the topic has drawn their interests and when they are active participants in their learning; for example, finding personal meaning, learning cooperatively with peers, and making connections to life outside the class (p.4). At this level, Chelli (2010, p. 80) argues that this program is developed according to socio-constructivism and learners are responsible in their learning. She states that:

The learner should go through a process of personal appropriation, questioning his own convictions. This leads the learner to revise his prior knowledge and its scope to compare his own representations with those of his classmates, to search for information and validate it through consulting various sources of documentation and people in possession of information.

### **2.1.5. 4. Assessment in the Competency-Based Approach**

Assessment is one of the important elements in this approach and the teacher know how to assess students' production. Any one might think of evaluating, assessing, and testing as synonymous terms but they are not exactly the same. Evaluation designates the judgments we make about students and their progress toward achieving learning outcomes on the basis of assessment information'' (Williams, 2003, p. 297). However, according to Longman Dictionary (2002) the term assessment is defined as "A systematic approach to collecting information and

making inferences about the ability of a student or the quality or success of a teaching course on the basis of various sources of evidence"(p. 35). On the other hand, a test is a method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge or performance in a given domain'' (Brown, 2004, p. 3). A test is prepared in administrative way that occurs at determined time in a curriculum when learner finish specific theme of learning, and it is expected that student get some competencies, and know that his answers are being scored and evaluated. However, Assessment is a continuing process.

## **2.2. Competency-Based Approach in Benin education**

### **2.2.1. Overview of Competency-Based Approach in Benin education**

Actually, the Competency-Based Approach is the current teaching approach at work in all Beninese schools, private and public ones. As previously mentioned, the Competency-Based Approach was adopted in 1990 and after initial experimentation, the program was accepted and adopted in all public and private schools in Benin (Bancole – Minaflinou, 2013; Hounhanou, 2017). The English program is composed of learning situations which are then divided further into sequences. Each learning situation begins with a warm-up, a brainstorming activity, and a starter situation. Most of the starter situations are sets of pictures. It is up to the teacher to use them or design activities for the starter situation. These activities should accomplish the following goals: be challenging, motivating, and pose problems related to life; be clear, precise, and understandable. To teach the sequences, the teacher should bear in mind the following three phases: the introductory phase: it enables the learners to activate their previous knowledge in order to prepare their mind to acquire new knowledge. This phase offers great opportunity for EFL teachers to use higher order questions to develop cognitive skills of their learners. Unfortunately, not all EFL teachers know how to formulate such questions.

The second phase consists in making English real; in this phase, the learner brings his abilities to do research work, experimentation, and synthesis. The teacher deals with a set of activities related to vocabulary, grammar, and functional language. Teachers use the Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP) phase framework when introducing each of these language items. Various strategies are used by teachers for the suggested activities. The main strategies are as follows:

- a) Teaching aids: chalkboard picture, books, puppets, realia.
- b) Short and varied activities such as gap filling, unscrambling, making up sentences, just to mention a few.
- c) New information is presented in contexts that are connected to learners' lives.
- d) Teaching in themes (this means that the teacher connects many activities with one theme. For example, if the theme is "food", then the teacher can use a song about food, a poem about food, a role play about food...).
- e) Establishing classroom routines.

- f) Giving learners the opportunity to move (to meet the needs of kinesthetic learners).
- g) Making the classroom rich and interesting. While using the strategies, teachers have learners do individual work, pair work, group work, role play, projects. In dealing with pair or group work the teacher gives clear instructions. She/he must present the new language to the whole class before asking the learners to work in pairs or groups.

Three main competencies are to be developed and even compulsory for the teacher to know: disciplinary competencies, Transdisciplinary competencies and transversal competencies (Hounhanou, 2017). The disciplinary competencies can be viewed as subject-related assets to be developed in EFL learners so as to enable them get involved in effective interaction with speakers and writers of the English language. In EFL teaching and learning in Benin, there are three disciplinary competencies:

- Involving in appropriate oral communication (Disciplinary Competency N°1 or DC1);
- Reacting to a written or oral message (Disciplinary Competency N°2 or DC2);
- Writing texts for a variety of purposes and functions (Disciplinary Competency N°3 or DC3).

Thus, these three disciplinary competences deal with the four language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

**The transversal competencies** are considered, for the main, as learning tools for all subject matters. They include making use of the available information; problem solving; using critical thinking and working cooperatively in collaboration.

**The trans disciplinary competencies** are taught and learnt in every specified fields. They relate to social behavior, that is why they are considered as competencies for life.

The final phase is the one of assessment: this phase deals with self-assessment (objectification and projection) and evaluation. Simply stated, it is an exit card giving opportunity for the learner to state, “This is what I learned today and this is how I learned it”. Learners may also state that, “These are the problems I have with understanding or this is what I may do with what I learned; “this is projection”. This phase holds learners accountable for their learning. Evaluation is part and parcel of the teaching and learning processes. As far as the CBA is concerned, English testing is designed according to the competences that go along with the target language.

### **2.2.2. Current Situation of EFL Classes in Benin**

In Benin, EFL Classes struggle with the same challenges and structural issues found throughout the primary and secondary schools system. The language is not taught through communicative uses to enable learners to know how to use it in real world to communicate the wants and the needs. This does not comply with the idea expressed by Nunan (2003, p. 6) who stated that “language is not viewed as interlocking sets of grammatical, lexical, and phonological rules, but as a tool for expressing meaning”. An overemphasis on rote-memorization has negatively impacted the development of critical thinking skills in the classroom. Unlike China, Taiwan, and Japan where rote memorization is culturally embedded (Li, 2007), Beninese EFL learners do not have any major advantage with this passive way of learning. They simply act as “parrots” repeating concepts or recalling information they do not understand. They make no connection

between new and previous knowledge learned. Learners view schools as places for “cramming” a few days before exams instead of internalizing and automatizing information. Paul and Elder (2008) deplored such a situation by stating that “in a class that consists mainly of structures with periodic quizzes and examinations, learners can often get a passing grade by cramming the night before quizzes and tests”. In EFL Classes, this practice takes the form of learners memorizing verb forms and sentence structure formulas instead of learning to actively use English as a tool for communicating their ideas, thoughts, and beliefs. A Beninese student graduating from High School with their high school leaving degree has undertaken seven years of English study lasting from the sixth until the seventh grade during which he/she learns English as a mandatory subject. However, there are many learners who find themselves unable to adequately express themselves in English at the end of these seven years of study. The lack of results and progress in English proficiency from a rote-memorization model of learning EFL demonstrates the need for a remodeled approach to encourage the active learning and mastery of English as a communicative tool.

### **3-Research methodology**

For data collection, a descriptive methodology allowed us to identify different strategies used in CBA context, and then evaluate the effects of this approach on the performances and qualities of EFL teaching and learning in secondary exam classes of “CEG1 Parakou”. We have described how the data were collected during research followed by their statistical analysis.

#### **3.1. Targets and sample population**

The targets considered in this investigation are the school stakeholders such as teachers, learners and school administration. The study sample consisted of fourteen (14) English teachers, and twenty-two (22) and thirty-three (33) EFL learners respectively from seven form (Terminale) and fourth form (3<sup>ème</sup>). Indeed, to know what exactly happens in teaching/learning process, teachers and learners are the real actors to question and to observe in class situation. We encountered teachers (males and females), education professionals, in order to get reliable information about the material and methods they used in their teaching on the one hand, and the mechanism by which they motivate and develop the speaking skill in their EFL learners on the other hand. The administration allowed us to access statistics of these classes since CBA was settled or implemented. Most of them had no objection to our arrival or incursion through our different research designs.

#### **3.2. Methods of investigation**

##### **3.2.1. Documentary research**

The documentary research used in this work was based on documents collected through several sources. Previous research works have been consulted. These included scientific articles, Dissertations and Theses related to this survey. The combination of all these sources of

information available online (through Google, Google scholar, E-library and Science Direct) and sometimes on libraries, has allowed us to carry out our research work.

### **3.2.2. Field investigation and techniques of data collection**

So as to obtain useful information, we have conducted a survey involving main actors of our school study. We used some instruments and techniques of collection such as interviews, questionnaires, class observation and triangulation for field investigation. The questionnaires were addressed to students, teachers, and interviews are achieved with teachers and members of school administration. The triangulation was used for checking sources of information (Apostolidis, 2005).

### **3.2.3. Questionnaires**

The questionnaire is considered as the most common tools used for gathering information about a specific topic using a set of clear questions for a specific population. According to Brown (2001) a questionnaire is “any written instrument that presents respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers”. In order to collect data on strategies used in EFL teaching and learning, the questionnaires are both addressed to students and to teachers.

#### **3.2. 3.1. The questionnaire to the students**

The student’s questionnaire is composed of ten (10) questions in order to know the strategies the students use in their EFL learning, their motivation and their difficulties. It includes the three types of questions: open, closed and mixed questions.

#### **3.2. 3.2. The questionnaire to the teachers**

So as to get similar information, the questionnaire to the teachers has also been designed in the same way, but specified with its differences.

#### **3. 2.4. Interviews**

“An interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose. It goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of view as in everyday conversation and become a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge”. (Kvale, 1996). Hence, we interviewed some teachers who have some experiences in the teaching of exam classes. Furthermore, we discuss with administration authorities about exam class performance and results in school examinations and in exams (BEPC and BAC) mainly in English. The aim of these interviews is to get more information about students’ performances showing the trend and impacts of this approach.

#### **3.2.5. Class observations and participation**

The secondary school ‘CEG1 H. C. MAGA of Parakou’ located in front of EFMS, ex-ENIAB, and not far from University of Parakou. We have observed and followed for two months the English teachers for exam classes mainly Terminale C and 3ème M2, during their teaching class. I have observed first the way each teacher accomplished the act. I have been also

interested in the teacher's attitudes regarding the different strategies used in lesson teaching and in learners' evaluation. Secondly, I have observed the arrangement of the class and the reaction of the learners, their motivation and their performances. Thirdly, the different materials (books, pen, copy books, table, board, chalk etc.) used in English teaching and learning.

We participate in several activities of classroom. Indeed, we have supported for lesson teaching, exercises correction, correction of examination copies. We have participated to pedagogical animations of every Wednesday during our survey period.

At the end of each observation, we spent a few minutes on discussion and we exchanged ideas on issues which were relevant to our research with teachers and students.

### 3.2.6. Data analysis

Data collected were inserted by using Excel software and analyzed via software (R Core Team, 2018). Descriptive statistics including numbers and frequencies (percentages) were calculated for each variable strategies and techniques used in teaching English, teaching materials and degree of motivation of learners and teachers were appreciated. Listening, speaking, reading and writing skills of surveyed learners were represented in a strip chart. The curves were generated to assess the evolution of success rates of applicant learners for BEPC and BAC exams, and their English annual performances in the classroom during these last four to ten school years.

## Results and discussions

### 4.1. Qualification and techniques/strategies developed in EFL teaching

Table 1 refers to the qualification of English teachers and their teaching experiences. 57.14% and 42.86% of the teachers surveyed have respectively Bachelor degree ("Licence" in English) and Master degree ("Maîtrise" in English). As for their Professional qualification, only 35.71% have BAPES and 21.43% are holder of CAPES, the other (42.86%) haven't got professional degree. On EFL part-time teaching experience, most of them have been teaching for more than five years ago (78.57%) including 35.71% of teachers having more than ten years experiences, against 21.43% with experiences ranging from one to five years. This result show that, in this school (CEG1 Parakou) that there are experienced and graduated teachers (at least three years at university) who are selected as Teacher of English. Nonetheless, most of them haven't professional degree.

**Table 1:** Teachers' qualification and experiences (teachers' questionnaires)

Research variables	Answers	Number	Percentages (%)
Teachers' Academic qualification	BAC	0	0.00
	DUEL(in English )	0	0.00
	Bachelor degree (Licence in English)	8	57.14

	Master degree (Maîtrise in French)	6	42.86
Teachers' Professional qualification	BAPES	5	35.71
	CAPES	3	21.43
	No answer	6	42.86
Teaching experience	One to five years	3	21.43
	Five to ten years	6	42.86
	More than ten years	5	35.71

Table 2 deals with the strategies and methods used by the teachers. The survey findings reveal that most of teachers (71.43%) always prepare their lessons plan. Only 28.57% of them prepare sometimes or occasionally. This results show the awareness degree of teachers for their lesson plan preparation before the implementation in course situation.

Moreover, 57.14% of teachers used only warming-up, and 21.43% practiced both warming-up and brainstorming before starting learning situation. Only 7.14% of them started directly the learning situation.

In addition, 85.71% of teachers give activities that enable their students to speak after the explanation. 14.29% of them read and explain most of the time.

Furthermore, in class, 42.86% of teachers give on time individual, pair and collective works to their learners. Most of them (57.14%) focus on pair and collective work in lesson situation.

Our findings indicate that a proportion of 42.86% of teachers give homework for making work to their learners. While 57.14% of them haven't given any answer. No report presentation like homework has mentioned.

Besides, 57.14 % of the teachers reformulate when their students don't understand lesson while a part of 42.86 % repeat lessons for them.

Globally, the teachers use various strategies or techniques in lesson situation, and for home work.

**Table 2 :** Methods, strategies for EFL teaching (teachers' questionnaires)

Research questions	Answers	Number	Percentage (%)
a) Do you prepare your lesson?	Sometimes	4	28.57
	Always	10	71.43
	Never	0	0.00
b) What do you do before starting learning situation?	A warming-up	8	57.14
	A brainstorming activity	1	7.14
	Both (warming-up & brainstorming activity)	3	21.43
	Starting directly lesson situation	1	7.14
c) Which methods do you do for teaching?	I read and explain most of the time	1	14.29
	I give activities that allow students to speak after the explanation	4	85.71

d) What strategies do you use for making work learners in class?	Individual work ; Pair work and collective work	6	42.86
	Pair work and collective work	8	57.14
	Only collective work	0	0.00
e) What techniques do you use for making work learners at home?	Homework	6	42.86
	Report presentation	0	0.00
	No answer	8	57.14
f) What do you do when your students don't understand the lesson?	a- I repeat it	6	42.86
	b- I reformulate it	8	57.14
	No answer	0	0.00

#### 4.2. Analysis of physical conditions on EFL teaching and learning

Table 3 is related to physical conditions (materials) of classroom. The analyses show that 72.73%, 96.36 %, 63.64% and 100.00% of the students surveyed assert respectively that there are many tables and benches, good chalk board, cleaned classroom, and available duster and chalk.

Regarding materials used by the teachers, most of the students (96.36%) indicate that their teachers used only books for lessons. However, 3.64 of learners mention that their teachers combine books and Audio-Video tape for lesson.

For digital tools (ICT) using, almost of the whole learners (98.18%) maintain that none of their teachers use ICT in learning situation. Only one student asserted that his teacher uses a computer for lesson.

As a result, approximately half of students surveyed (50.91%) said to have an English Notebook or textbook.

**Table 3:** Available materials as physical conditions (students questionnaires)

Research questions	Answers	Number	Percentage (%)
<b>a) What are the physical conditions (materials) of your classroom?</b>			
- Many tables and benches?	Yes	40	72.73
	No	15	27.27
-A good black board?	Yes	53	96.36
	No	2	3.64
-A cleaned classroom?	Yes	35	63.64
	No	20	36.36
- Classroom well lighted (electricity)?	Yes	51	92.73
	No	4	7.27
- Duster-chalk available?	Yes	55	100.00

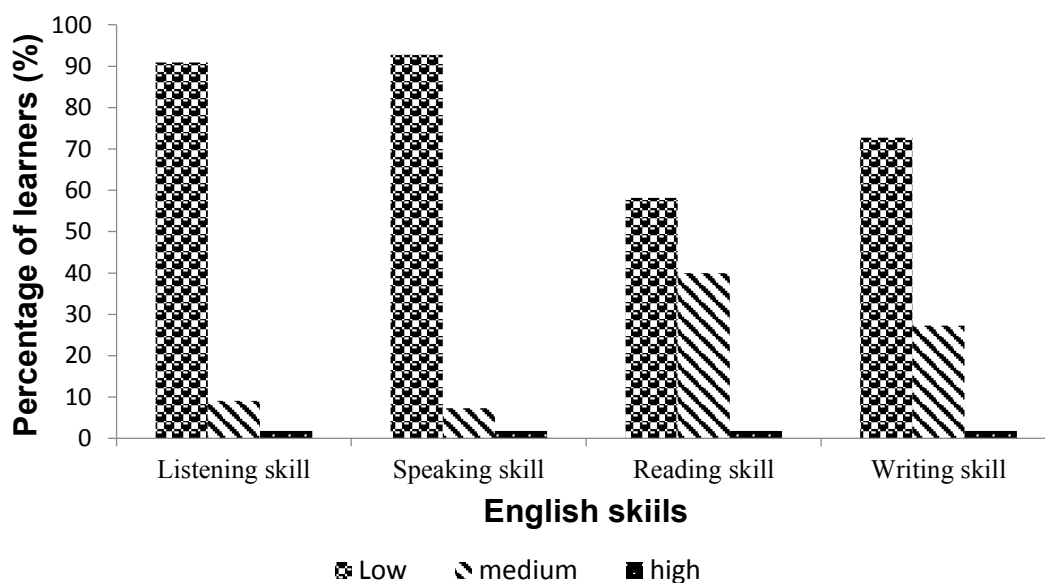


	No	0	0.00
<b>b) What materials does your English teacher use for his lesson?</b>	Only Books	53	96.36
	Only audio-video tapes	0	0.00
	Both books and tapes	2	3.64
<b>c) Does your teacher use digital tools (ICT) in learning situation?</b>	No	54	98.18
	Yes	1	1.82
<b>d) If yes, choose appropriate ICT used by our teacher for teaching</b>	Computer	1	1.82
	Video projector (sliders)	0	0.00
	No answer	54	98,18
<b>e) Do you have a note book for activities or an English textbook?</b>	Yes	28	50.91
	No	27	49.09

### 4.3. Evaluation of EFL learners mastering in speaking, listening, reading and writing skills

The analysis of the figure 2 show that low level skills of learners in English learning. More than 90% of students surveyed said their levels in listening and speaking are low, against less than 5% of them having medium levels. Concerning reading and writing skills, approximately 60% and 70% of students are respectively low.

It is therefore clear that most students have low levels of English language skills (listening, speaking reading and writing). The low levels thus recorded could be explained by the learners demotivation for English lessons. Thus, their low marks in English, lack of will and recognition of the usefulness of English language are worth noting. Inadequate teaching tools and materials and sometimes unsuitable teaching and learning techniques are real bottleneck. The social context dominated by daily French speaking, the disgust of learners for reading, the influences of other subjects all these are taught in French and definitely favored the weak levels.



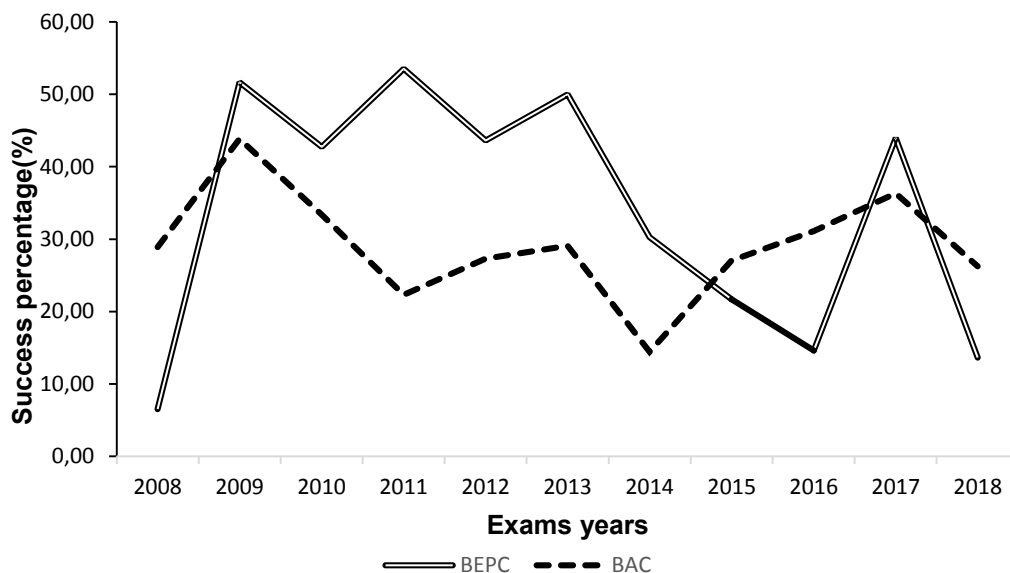
**Figure 2:** Learners levels in English skills  
(Source: Survey data analysis on students' questionnaires)

#### 4.4. Effects of Competency –Based Approach (CBA) on EFL learners' outcomes

Success rates for different exams have evolved into a jagged one. For the BEPC exams, success rate, which was more than 50% between 2009 and 2011, has been declining since 2013, reaching a rate of almost 15% in 2016 followed by a sharp recovery in 2017 and a drastic fall in 2018 (figure 3).

Similar trends have been observed in the BAC exams with abrupt drops of success rate since 2010, 2011 (year of the first BAC in CBA program). A slight recovery is noted over the past four years (figure 2).

These results reflect the high failure rates often recorded in various exams. The ups and downs in the rate of results could be explained by several factors including the recurrent strike movement, lack of supporting measures from government, lack of qualified teachers and adequate equipment for the proper implementation of CBA approach, the lack of responsibility of the students' parents, and especially the laziness, the unconsciousness and the weakness of the learners' level.

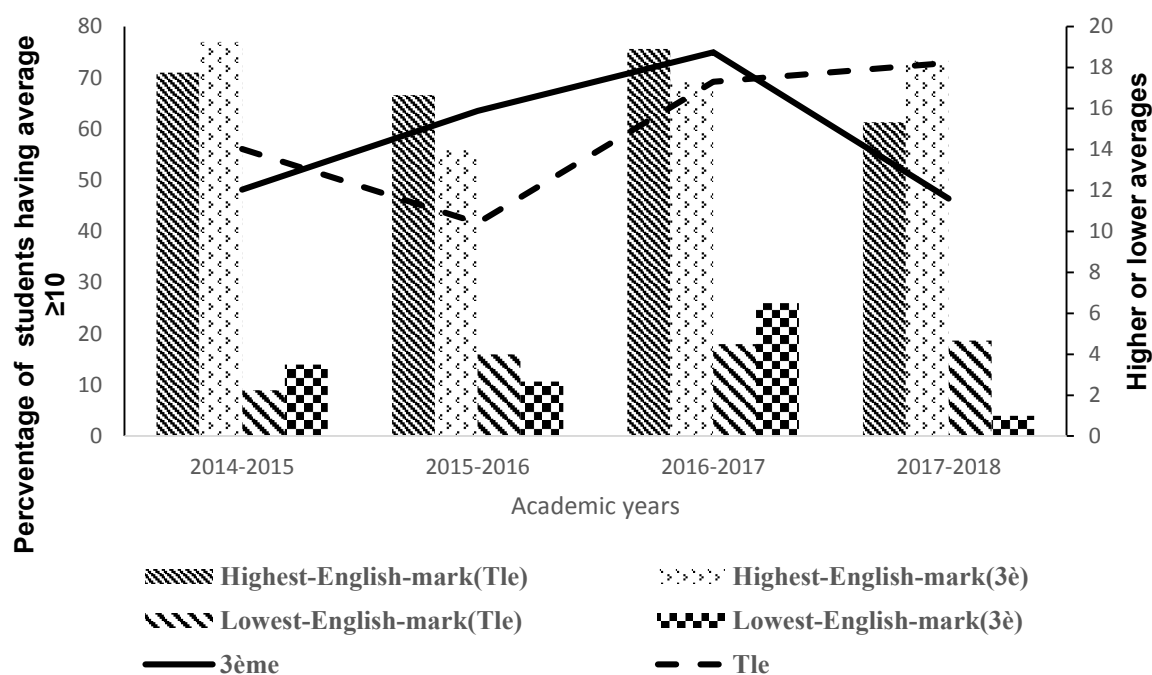


**Figure 3 :** Evolution of success ratio in BEPC and BAC during ten past years.

(Source: Analysis from data of CEG1 Parakou success ratio in exams)

Whether in 3ème or Terminale, the annual average assessment in English over four school years has shown that it is only over two years that half of assessed learners have reached the threshold of 10/20 (figure 3). This result reflects the low and insufficient level of many learners in English.

In addition, over this four-year period, annual averages in English have fluctuated widely, ranging from 2.25 to 18.91 in Terminale and from 1 to 19.25 in 3<sup>è</sup> (figure 4).



**Figure 4** : Learners performances in English lesson during four past years

(Source: data analysis based on school notebooks)

## Conclusion

Through this survey, we have evaluated strategies developed in CBA context for EFL teaching and influences of this approach on learners' outcomes in terms of class marks and success rates in exams. The results showed that for exam classes in this school, English courses are attributed to experienced and graduated teachers. The teachers use various strategies or techniques in course situation. As strategies, most of them do their course plan, and warming-up before starting the course situation. Activities carried out at the time as individual, pair and collective works are regularly given by many teachers. They practiced the reformulation when the learners don't understand course explanation. Moreover, the analyses point out most of exams learners surveyed assert their classroom present sufficient basic materials (tables, benches, good black board, cleaned classroom, duster, chalk). However, regarding materials used by the teachers, most of students indicate that their teachers used only books for English course and rarely combine books and Audio-Video tape for English lesson. The digital tools (ICT) using is almost absent in their English teacher's techniques. In same streamline, many learners haven't appropriated and sufficient materials. As for mastering of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, the learners mostly have low levels. This influence motivations and performances of learners in class and exams. During last four to ten years, the analysis of their performances through class marks and success rates in exams have shown unsteady trends. Either BEPC or

BAC exams, the success rates are often weak and inferior to 50%. On last four years, class results in English revealed that many assessed learners haven't reached the threshold of 10/20. In assumption, the reform of CBA is not yet suitable for training competent and competitive learners in Benin present context. The reduction or even suppression of recurrent strike demonstrations, recruitment of qualified teachers, supply of adequate equipment, teachers and learners motivations, and the well playing roles of learners' parents are required for proper implementation of CBA and therefore for improving learners performances (skills, class marks and success rates in exams).

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