

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PROFILE IDENTIFICATION IN BENIN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The aim of this survey is to settle a mechanism for English teachers' profile identification at the step of in-service by comparing the processes at work in secondary schools and even the experiences which affect systematically their pedagogical performances. This work investigated the potentialities and the characteristics of the qualification of appointed English teachers in Benin secondary schools, that means their professional profile identification. Most of the relevant literature addresses the identification of English teachers profile, but very little research has examined this process in Benin as a French speaking country. Questionnaires, interviews and class visits are appropriate study means to the process of identification. Fifty (50) learners from a variety of schools and thirty (30) teachers of English were selected for the survey. The findings revealed that teachers have fundamental roles and responsibilities since they are appointed in classes. Also, it was demonstrated that teachers' profile identification contributed to their performance in learning situations and consequently to improve learners' outcomes.

Keywords: English teacher, profile, identification, Benin, secondary schools

Rezumat

Scopul sondajului prezentat în articol este de a stabili un mecanism de identificare a profilului profesorilor de limba engleză la etapa de in-service prin compararea proceselor de lucru în școlile secundare și chiar a experiențelor care afectează sistematic performanțele lor pedagogice. Acest articol înglobează cercetarea potențialităților și a caracteristicilor calificării profesorilor de engleză, angajați în școlile secundare din Benin, adică identificarea profilului lor profesional. Majoritatea literaturii relevante ce ține de tematica dată se referă la identificarea profilului profesorilor de engleză, dar foarte puține cercetări au examinat acest fapt în Benin, ca țară vorbitoare de franceză. Chestionarele, interviurile și vizitele la clasă sunt mijloace de studiu adecvate procesului de identificare. Cincizeci de elevi din diferite școli și treizeci de profesori de engleză au fost selectați pentru sondaj. Constatările au relevat faptul că profesorii au roluri și responsabilități fundamentale, deoarece sunt numiți în clase. De asemenea, s-a demonstrat că identificarea profilului profesorilor a contribuit la performanța acestora în situațiile de învățare și, în consecință, la îmbunătățirea rezultatelor elevilor.

Cuvinte-cheie: profesor englez, profil, identificare, Benin, școli de cultură generală

Introduction

Teaching a language has many features. A teacher does not only teach and pay attention to students' language skills, such as reading, writing, listening and speaking, but also helps, facilitates and encourages students to have enthusiasm, good attitudes, and motivation towards English. Furthermore, teachers have to understand what students learn, how and why such

learning influences them, how lessons could be beneficial for them in the future (Derakhshan, 2015). Hence, language teaching requires teachers to help students learning to develop both academic and personal abilities.

However, teaching English becomes a crucial issue when it is taught as a foreign language. Teaching English as foreign language is a demanding task when it comes to the place where English serves limited exposure (Khan, 2011). It is shown by researchers' teaching experiences in several schools of Benin. An instructed man for most people in Benin Republic is the one who is fluent in the languages they learnt at school. A part from this primary value which is given to languages, understanding English nowadays in Benin presents many opportunities in every domain. What may be the implications of the educational system to allow those who are educated to speak and understand English language?

The only possible answer to this question is that the approach used to teach the language may be communicative. The former approach adopted by the system did not encounter the role of speaking since very few succeeded in speaking the language. But the new one, the competency based-approach in the field of language teaching is a communicative approach. It assumed that the goal of language teaching is to develop in learners the ability to communicate in the target language in real life situations. The content of EFL lessons or learning situations include semantic notions and linguistic structures and also language skills are integrated. Teachers' role in the approach is to facilitate communication, to guide, to monitor students and to correct their errors and mistakes. So EFL classes should have teachers with some qualities to play the major role in the learning and teaching process.

1. Problem Statement and Objectives

Teachers' proficiencies are needed to achieve the task correctly. Among all these competences they are supposed to enhance the development of communicative skills of learners. So, as it was reported, English language teachers' profile will determine the understanding of students. Considerable research shows, that teachers' profile results in higher achievement and more positive improvements among students (Wichadee, 2007, in Hanan A. T. & Nowreya A. A., 2014). Teachers' profile also depends on the attitude of the latters. Hashemi (2005, in Hanan A. T. & Nowreya A. A., 2014) states that attitudes towards something is the extent to which students accept the subject and their opinion towards it, while the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005) defines attitudes as "the way someone thinks and feels about somebody or something" (p. 85). Due to the large number of benefits and the amount of literature provided, it was important to look at the effects teachers' profile can have in different contexts. This study analyses the role of teachers' profile in the light of classrooms observations, students and teachers' perception through their responses from the questionnaires, in the context of Benin schools particularly.

This work also attempted to inquire about problems of English teaching in Benin secondary schools. It aimed more specifically to get an insight into the reasons why English is not well taught in Benin.

2. Research questions

- What can justify the fact that some students are not good at English language in Benin secondary schools?
- Why are many English teachers not able to speak fluently English after some years of English language studies?
- What can be the problem of the educational system in Benin as far as English teaching is concerned?
- What can English teachers do in order to better implement English teaching techniques and methods in Benin secondary schools?

3. Hypotheses

- Teachers are not well trained and equipped to teach the English language.
- Many English teachers are not able to speak English language.
- The problem of the educational system in Benin, as far as English teaching is concerned, can be located at the level of knowledge transmission methods and techniques.
- To better familiarize with English teaching techniques and methods, English teachers can be trained to update techniques and methods they use.

4. Literature Review

The question of English teachers' profile has been tackled in its different aspects by several researchers. This part of the research work consists of giving the point of view of some of those authors and researchers about it.

Teaching English language involves some qualities from the one who teaches it; some teachers are really not ready for the job for many reasons. First, there is a shortage of teachers' training. In some countries problems regarding a severe shortage of trained English teachers are reported (Nunan, 2003; Salahuddin, Kkan, Rahman, 2013). The most comments were about the shortage of trainings experienced by the majority of teachers. Most teachers in poor rural areas find themselves teaching English without sufficient English training (Copland, Garton, & Burns, 2014). Teachers sometime feel unconfident in what and how they teach. These statements correspond with the study done by Emery (2012), who specifies that English teaching process tends to be challenging when it comes to the teachers' teaching qualification, language proficiency level, and training since these points can determine teachers' confidence. Since teachers may get only basic preparation in the supportive theory and practical application, they may then struggle for embodying teaching methods effectively (Bulter, 2005; Littlewood, 2007). Teachers are not well prepared psychologically, didactically and pedagogically. Emery (2012) outlines some issues that occur because of insufficient preparation for teaching: teachers' inabilities to deal with challenges that

take place in teaching context because of the lack of training, teachers' poor language ability, and teachers for whom English is not their subject area being hired to teach it. Such challenges take place in a rural area because rural areas lack proper and good teaching and learning tools (Mishra, 2015).

Then there is a limited mastery of teaching methods. Some teachers argue that their teaching method is monotonous. Implementing various teaching methods and techniques is difficult because the teachers do not merely think of how to transfer four language skills, but also how to remain students' motivation and enthusiasm in learning and practicing English (Ansari, 2012). Besides, there is unfamiliarity to IT. Most teachers recognize honestly that they have no idea how to use electronic devices, such as LCD projector, laptop, online stuff, and so on. Conrey (2010) says that "teachers often struggle with an inadequate knowledge of specific technology, technology-support pedagogy; and technology-related-classroom management".

Moreover, there is teachers' lack of personal development. Developing English teaching really depends on the teacher's motivation. Teachers do not try to develop and enrich themselves with training and innovations in English language teaching. They are not creative, innovative. In addition, they described the difficulty they faced in teaching songs to students. In K13 (*Curriculum* of 2013) there is topic about songs in which they sometimes do not teach it because they cannot sing. Another thing is that regarding teachers' unfamiliarity to IT, P2 found it reluctant to practice or take TOEFL test.

Students' lack of vocabulary mastery, hindered the students' understanding of the subject. Some students might have lack of vocabulary which prevents them from actively participating in class. The main problem in achieving teaching and learning goals is students' lack of vocabulary. With regard to this issue, Hasan (2016) states that one of the most challenging tasks that students encountered is mastering vocabulary. Maruyama (1996) as cited by Hoa and Mai (2016) also points out one of the three reasons why students have difficulties in vocabulary mastery: it is because English is not used by the students in their daily life, which makes them feel not needing to learn the words.

Another factor is students' lack of parents' support. The lack of students' motivation can be caused by the absence of their parents' support. Some students do not bring any books to school due to the forgetfulness, while other students intentionally leave their books in the desk of the classroom. Teachers believe that such thing would not have happened if students' parents supervised and controlled their children learning at home. It is what happens in Benin secondary schools. Parents do not even provide their children with classroom furniture. Other parents do not care about children's assimilation at school. Students won't succeed in English if their parents do not encourage doing so. Copland, Garton, and Burns (2014) state that students do not have any idea on the purpose of leaning English, "an attitude which may be exacerbated by their parents".

Students' low concentration can also hinder their understanding. It causes of course problems in comprehending knowledge transferred by the teacher. "Teaching goals cannot be achieved one hundred percent because some students do not concentrate in classroom" said a teacher. Khajloo (2013) says that students do not concentrate on English learning, otherwise they will do their best and get good scores.

Further, students' boredom is a big obstacle to the understanding of English. A teacher testifies that some of her students get bored in studying English when she teaches a certain topic. It is because some of her students have already studied that in their primary schools and private courses. Ajibola (2010) and Khajloo (2013) indicated that these students have higher academic level than others and when they listen to repetitive low-level content, they find it unattractive and boring.

Moreover, students' lack of discipline does not allow to comprehend what is taught. The discipline issue was linked to the classification of the students' classes. One teacher described that such an issue is not encountered in class A, which is the class of smart students, being however faced in other classes (Class B, C, D). Copland, Garton, and Burns (2014) found that discipline problems were related to "the age and sex of students, differentiation, parental attitudes, inexperience, not sharing learners' first language, and keeping students motivated" (p. 746). We have all the same problem with speaking. Teachers agree that students are closed to English speaking. Their performance in speaking cannot obviously be improved.

In addition to the problem of speaking, there is a pronunciation problem. Teachers stipulate that most students commit errors in pronouncing words. This corresponds to Mukattash (1983) who found that most inaccuracies are committed regarding pronunciation, morphology, syntax, and spelling. This is also strengthened by Khan (2011) who considers that "specific problems connected to pronunciation, stress, and intonation become an issue for students".

A part from those problems cited above, lead to confidence issue. Students are timid in performing their speaking skills. Some teachers say that when they ask their students to retell or read, or speak in front of their classmates they get timid. Copland, Garton, and Burns (2014) argue that many students are timid in front of their classmates, particularly in speaking a foreign language since it can be face-threatening. Another thing is that many students are afraid to make mistakes, especially in pronunciation or spelling. And so there will not be any improvement in their speaking skill because they are afraid of making mistakes. Fatiloro (2015) said that the presence of a competitive student in the classroom makes others have an awful attitude.

5. Methodology

This chapter is about the methodology that has been used to collect data for this study. The instruments used for the research work are the questionnaire and the interview. Through these instruments data were collected serving to

complete the investigation in the concerned field of work, in order to draw convenient conclusions.

5.1. Design of the Study

In the theoretical account of this research work, both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used. There are many explanations to quantitative research, yet Aliaga & Gunderson (2002) describe it as "explaining a phenomenon by collecting quantitative (numerical) data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods such as statistics" (p. 3). On the other hand, Reswell (1998) defines qualitative research as a process of understanding a social or human phenomenon, based on methodology research traditions. Researchers aim at generating a complex, holistic view, at analyzing and describing the standpoint of the subject within a natural context.

In this research work, we explore the factors that affect positively English teaching in Benin secondary schools. We have chosen this topic because we had the opportunities to observe and live a certain number of things which brought into mind certain questions: Why don't students who have studied English from the form of 6^e to Terminale speak and write it correctly? Do English teachers convey properly their messages? Are English teachers well equipped to teach in front of students? In order to have reliable information; fifty questionnaires were issued for teachers of English and one hundred for students.

5.2. The Sample Populations

The first key participants in teaching are the teachers. The teacher is the center of the teaching and learning process. They are decisions makers in the classroom and they are the one who can judge English teaching is performed in their classroom and state out the influence of this latter on their classes. They are supposed to know whether some of their goals are reached and to analyze how it impacts the teaching and learning processes.

Fourty teachers of English have been sampled in Benin secondary schools: five teachers in Natitingou, five teachers in Parakou, ten in Bantè, ten teachers in Porto-Novo and ten in Cotonou. Here is the teaching experience of all the participants:

Teaching experience	Frequency	Percentage
One (01) year	00	00%
Two (02) years	00	00%
Three (03) years	15	30%
More than three(03) years	35	70%
Total	50	100%

Table 1: *The Professional experience of the interviewed teachers*

The table above shows the teaching experience of the sample teachers of English; this experience is shown by the number of the years they have been teaching EFL. Thirty percent of them have been teaching for at least three years, seventy percent have been teaching for more than three years. None

of them has less than three years of teaching experience. In conclusion all the teachers are not beginners in the educational field.

5.3. Research Instruments

Data collection combines three different parts. The first part is based on the questionnaires addressed to both students and teachers. The second part is based on an interview with teachers of English and classroom observations. Those instruments are related to the effects of English language teaching on acquisition of EFL. To present the results of the questionnaire statistics figures and tables are used.

- Class Situation Observations

The class situation observations were made in two different classrooms of Benin secondary schools from the form of 6ème to Terminale. It was made by assisting English teachers in their classrooms. We used to move from class to class in order to see how English teachers use various teaching techniques and methods; the observation also concerns the students' reaction to their teacher's intervention. Then, observation of the interactions between teachers and students is also made.

- Questionnaires Addressed to Teachers of English

Unlike the one addressed to students, the questionnaire addressed to the teachers of English is composed of fifteen questions. The first one is about the number of years EFL teachers have been teaching. The second is to have their view about the frequency of attendance of training sessions. The third question is to know if learners always understand class sessions. The fourth one is to know if there effectively is a continual training for EFL teachers. The fifth is to collect teachers' opinions about the other current teachers' profiles. The sixth intends to determine teachers' attitudes which may hinder the subjects understanding of students. The seventh is to know the reasons for which some teachers are not well trained. The eighth is to establish whether they reach the goals of teaching English. The ninth is about teachers' satisfaction with learners' performances after a class sequence. The question number ten is meant to check whether the teacher prepares his lesson plan. The eleventh one is to know whether the teacher has ever attended a training session, and the twelfth respectively refers to the advantages of being trained. The thirteenth is about the teachers' self-evaluation as competent English language specialists. The fourteenth is to inquire about the major difficulties encountered related to the English language teaching in classes. The last, the fifteenth, claims suggestions for English teaching improvement.

- Interviews

The interview is a systematic way of exchanging verbally with people in order to collect information. It is carried out to get knowledge from individuals. Interviews are also ways for participants to get involved and talk about their views. In addition, the interviewees are able to discuss their perception and interpretation in regards to a given situation.

There are different forms of interview: general interview, formal interview, informal interview and semi-structured interview. We have used the informal interview. With the informal one, no predetermined questions are asked in order to remain as open and adapted as possible to the interviewee's nature and priorities. This enables to get numerous and relevant information as to deal with English language teachers' profile. We have tried to select an appropriate method for addressing the needs of the research. Our role has been to start over the discussion and make the informants generate answers to thematic questions. Through the interviews, we intended to get the respondents' view about the qualities of English language teachers. To carry out the interview we often negotiated the day, the time and the place some days before the interview. Indeed, we explained the purpose, the interest and the importance of the interview. These explanations generated a trustful atmosphere between the respondents and us. We found it necessary to have for the interview some members of the administration as being the representatives of the school authorities being able to provide any kind of information related to the schools' affairs.

5.4. Data Analysis and Findings

The data collected from the interview with some vice principals of Benin secondary schools, confirmed that most of the English teachers are not well trained for their job. They all agree that English teaching training is in dire need. One of them argued that "... if I may conclude, the majority of English teachers' training experience is insufficient". It is also argued by another one that "although English teachers have joined a number of trainings, it is still not enough". The vice principals are always in contact with teachers and they should have an idea of the capacities of the latter ones.

Meanwhile, one of the teachers interviewed show dissatisfaction with herself by asserting: "...perhaps I am the one who do not develop myself through joining training and updating English innovation in education". It is also stated by another teacher, "I sometimes feel unconfident in what and how I teach". Looking for the reason why some English classes are not successful, one of the teachers argued that his teaching method is monotonous. "...my teaching method is monotonous. I enter the class, I teach, I close the class by giving them suggestion to join the study club. That is all". Implementing various teaching methods and techniques is difficult because the teachers do not merely think of how to transfer four language skills, but also how to remain students' motivation and enthusiasm in learning and practicing English.

Affirmation	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Learners are always motivated to attend English classes	Yes	00	00%
	No	50	100%
Frequency of students' motivation to learn English			
Sometimes		32	64%

Every class	11	22%
Rarely	07	14%
Total of answers	50	

Table 2: *Teachers' work frequency and percentage*

The results in the table above show that all the targeted teachers, while teaching English language, find that the majority of their students are not motivated by the learning process. Hence, they justify this state of things by the fact that learners are bored with their same teaching methods and techniques. Some of them state that they don't even know how to attract learners' attention on what they teach. For them, the ways of making a class vivid and interesting varies from one teacher to another. Moreover, they add that the way some of them are trained is not, yet, what it should be to effectively teach the English language. Some of them recognize that teaching is not an easy task. Making someone discover something new in a foreign language is hard.

Possible attitudes	Number of teacher who share the same point of view	Percentage	Total of answers
Laziness	40/50	80%	
Conflicts between learners	45/50	90%	
Speaking their mother tongues	50/50	100%	
Noise making of the talkative ones	50/50	100%	50
Indiscipline	25/50	50%	
Off-task activities of students	10/50	20%	
Shyness	40/50	80%	
Agitation	47/50	94%	
No one wants to work	50	100%	

Table 3: *Students' behaviors which hinder the objectives of English learning*

This table shows that some students misbehave in English classes. Though some teachers pointed out that this depends on the teacher's "strategy" the majority agrees that there is misbehavior in the ranks of students. Eighty percent emphasize the laziness of some during English teaching. This attitude is mainly justified by the fact that when some learners work others are just like spectators. Another often observed behavior consists of the conflicts between some learners, especially the beginners. Ninety percent of teachers mentioned it. They also deplore the situation in which most

learners speak their native languages. One hundred percent of the targeted teachers do agree that it usually happens in their classes. Furthermore, the situation of noise is alarming in classes; although it cannot be avoided, as talkative students usually make some useless noise.

Almost all of them affirm that useless noise is observed in classes since the work does not take place in English. As far as indiscipline is concerned, it sometime occurs in groups based on the conflict between students. Twenty percent affirmed that it happens, whereas others affirm that an off-task activity of students usually is observed. Finally, eighty percent emphasize the shyness of some students, who are almost passive in group and who have difficulties in interacting with their mates; and ninety-four percent of them stress the agitation of some restless students resulting from their ages (Period of pre-puberty and puberty). In a nutshell; from some attitudes of learners mentioned, we can easily conclude that teachers face the problem of classroom management. They do not master their classes. Many English teachers do not have the capacities to stimulate their learners to really learn the language. When it is so, everything fails as far as English language teaching is concerned.

6. Research Implications

At the end of the analyses of the data collected, we can deduce that English teachers' profile does not correspond to the task they are entrusted with. Some attitudes from teachers, students, government and learners' parents are among the main reasons of this situation. As we all know, English teachers' qualities are important for the process of EFL teaching and learning, everybody at any level concerning the education should participate in the improvement of the latter.

7. Suggestions and Recommendations

From the different results of the data collection, the real profile of the English language teacher is not yet what it should be; here are some suggestions to allow English teachers to reinforce their capacities as far as English teaching is concerned.

As stipulated by the Article 12 of the constitution of Benin Republic, translated as "The state and the public communities ensure the education of children and create favorable conditions in order to reach this goal ", Political authorities have many duties in the field of education of students in the country. Hence, it is imperative that the government, through the ministry of secondary school, takes seriously the training of English teachers in charge of secondary schools.

Then, if a partnership between English native speaking countries and the responsible of English language training for Beninese EFL teachers could be established, it would help to benefit from the professional rich experiences of those foreign teachers. It would also be very good if the government could invite experts in didactical and pedagogical field. Besides, the government

should provide schools with attractive infrastructures with adequate equipment and furniture. Indeed, the availability of well-equipped schools is one of the important factors which must be taken into account in promoting English language quality teaching.

A good management requires from the teacher to have in his/her charge a reduced number of learners. To solve the problem of overcrowded classrooms in a language class, the government should build many schools and equip them with adequate furniture. Talking about furniture we include teaching and learning materials namely books, dictionaries, pictures, teaching aids and electronic devices such as LCD projectors, laptops, online stuff, computers and so on. Moreover, the government should be more interested in the English language teachers' working and living conditions.

Some say that the best investment is the one involved in the field of education. The ministry of higher education should promote training of teachers and especially teachers of English so that traditional teachers can try to update themselves in order to see the English language teaching improved. This trainings should give to teachers useful practices to update their techniques and methods.

Conclusion

This research has highlighted a wide range of issues faced in teaching English in Benin secondary schools. This study shows that teachers are challenged by lack of training, limited mastery of teaching methods, unfamiliarity with the EFL domain and lack of professional development. In order to face these issues, this study also listed the strategies implemented by the research participants. English teaching has shown its usefulness in many fields of education. Many studies reported better learning and improved level of the English language depends on the teacher's profile, while others found that there are other factors that can contribute to a successful English teaching. Among those factors there are students' difficulties in vocabulary mastery, their low concentration, their lack of discipline, their boredom to learn, their speaking problems.

However, this study found that English teachers' performance improves learning with academic purpose, only not for the whole life of students. Learning new social skills was also found as a challenge for learners. The most evident English teachers' profile feature reported by the class situations observations and by the students through the questionnaire, was the increase of motivation about learning. The competent explanations and the discussions made work more exciting and students reported that English teachers' methods and techniques allow some of them to practice the target language and it helps them to know how to speak and write in English in their real life communication situations.

The study encourages all the English language teachers to reinforce their knowledge and update their teaching techniques and methods in order to succeed in English language teaching in Benin secondary schools.

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